

An open Bible with aged, yellowed pages is lying flat on a rustic, textured wooden surface. The lighting is soft, creating a warm and contemplative atmosphere. The spine of the Bible is visible in the center, and the pages are slightly curved at the edges.

How to Get the Most Out of Your Bible



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Part One: Survey of the Bible

I. What Does a Survey of the Bible Involve?

How to Get the Most Out of Your Bible has three major sections: Survey, Interpretation, and Application. At least half of our course will be devoted to the first of these, a survey of the Bible.

A survey course covers matters such as language, history, dating, and authorship. It also provides some information regarding the content and teaching of Scripture.

II. Why Should We Take the Time to Survey the Bible?

Why should we care to put the time and effort into gaining an overview of the Bible's message? Stated simply, the answer is: Because God cared to produce and preserve it for us. Since God Himself has seen fit to provide Scripture to us, it is incumbent on us to do all we can to ascertain its message and live by it.

III. What Has God Done to Give the Bible to Us?

A. Scripture has been *inspired* by God.

All Scripture is God-breathed. – 2 Timothy 3:16

All scripture is given by inspiration of God. – 2 Timothy 3:16, KJV

1. Old Testament passages on inspiration

Moses...wrote down everything the LORD had said. – Exodus 24:4

Write very clearly all the words of this law on these stones you have set up. – Deuteronomy 27:8

Write it on a tablet for them, inscribe it on a scroll, that for the days to come it may be an everlasting witness. – Isaiah 30:8

This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: "Write in a book all the words I have spoken to you." – Jeremiah 30:2

2. New Testament passages on inspiration

All Scripture is God-breathed. – 2 Timothy 3:16

God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways. – Hebrews 1:1–2

The prophets...spoke of the grace that was to come to you [and] searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. – 1 Peter 1:10–11

Prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. – 2 Peter 1:21

3. Definition of inspiration:

Inspiration is “God’s superintending of human authors so that, using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error in the words of the original autographs His revelation to man.” (Charles Ryrie, Ryrie Study Bible, p. 1933)

B. Scripture is *inerrant*.

Inerrancy is a corollary of inspiration. That is, if it came from God, it cannot be in error.

God is not a human, that he should lie. – Numbers 23:19

God...does not lie. – Titus 1:2

C. Scripture is *infallible*.

The Scripture cannot be set aside (“annulled” or “proven false”). – John 10:35

D. Scripture is *preserved*.

For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. – Matthew 5:18

Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. – Matthew 5:18, KJV

Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. – Luke 24:44–45

...from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah... – Luke 11:51

Our dear brother Paul...wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures. – 2 Peter 3:15–16

IV. Why Do We Need a Course on the Bible?

The Bible can be an intimidating book, due in part to its size and age.

A. The books of the Bible – 66 books

1. Old Testament

- a. 39 books
- b. Written over a period of about 1000 years – Genesis, 1450 B.C. to Malachi, 450 B.C.

2. New Testament

- a. 27 books
- b. Written over a period of about 40 years – A.D. 50–90

B. The languages of the Bible

1. Old Testament

a. Hebrew

- (1) Hebrew developed from the Canaanite language spoken in Palestine from 2000 B.C. onward.
- (2) 99% of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew
- (3) Why Hebrew? It was the language spoken by Israel.

b. Aramaic

- (1) The language takes its name from the Arameans or people of Aram. This is the land of Abraham's ancestors, called Mesopotamia by the Greeks.
- (2) It was the universal language of the ancient world from the 8th century B.C. till the 4th century B.C. Jews picked it up while in captivity.
- (3) 268 verses, mainly in Daniel, were written in Aramaic.
- (4) Aramaic was still spoken by Jews in the days of Jesus.

2. New Testament

- a. The New Testament was written entirely in Greek.
- b. Why Greek? It was the universal language of the ancient world in the days of Jesus and the Apostles.

- c. The universality of Greek was a result of the conquests of Alexander the Great in the 4th century B.C.

C. The size and diversity of the Bible

The Bible contains 1189 chapters in 66 books written by 40 different authors over a period 1500 years. The first was written nearly 3500 years ago, and the last approximately 1900 years ago!

V. A Summary of the Bible's Message

As a result of all of this—antiquity, size, diversity—the Bible can be intimidating. This course is designed to remove the intimidation by getting our arms around Scripture. Although the Bible is a big book, it is really about a handful of things:

- The Bible is about *Creation*. At creation God gave Adam and Eve and *orientation* to His world. He showed and told them Who He is and what He wanted from them.
- The Bible is about the *Fall*. The entrance of sin creates *disorientation* between us and God, us and others, us and the rest of creation.
- The Bible is about *Redemption*. Redemption is God making right what has gone wrong in His world. It is God doing something about our plight, by *reorientation* of His creation to Himself and His purpose.

The Bible is about three things: creation, fall, and redemption. What we read in the Bible can further refined and summarized in one sentence: *People in situations before God*.

Although the circumstances in Bible times are different from today, two things have not changed—God and people. And God has provided enough situations (2/3 of the Bible is narrative) that we can see ourselves in its pages, as the one story that unfolds in its pages recounts how fallen people interact with the Creator God, and He redeems them.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE BIBLE



DAVID A. DEWITT

The Old Testament

The First 2,000 Years

From Adam to Abraham and the Patriarchs

The Old Testament covers 4,000 years of history. But the first 2,000 years, or half of the Old Testament time-wise, is covered by the first 11 chapters of the first book of Moses called Genesis.* They are: chapters 1 and 2, **creation**; chapter 3, the first **sin**; chapter 4, the first **murder**; chapters 5 and 10, **genealogies**, i.e. lists of fathers and sons; chapters 6, 7, and 8, **Noah** and the **flood**; chapter 9, the **rainbow** covenant (which you can remember because a rainbow follows the rain of chapters 6–8); and chapter 11, the **Tower of Babel** (which you can remember since the number 11 looks like a little tower).

Genesis 12 starts with **Abraham** (and now we're up to 2000 B.C.). After Genesis 12 we shall no longer memorize each chapter, but we will learn the main events of the book. Abraham was born in a big city with a little name—Ur. Four people left Ur for the city of Haran (and their initials spell the word “SALT”): Sarah (Abraham's wife), Abraham, Lot (Abraham's nephew), and Terah, Abraham's father (Genesis 11:31). In Haran, Terah died, and God promised Abraham He would give him (1) a land, (2) seed (generations of people), and (3) a blessing, if he would go to that land, then called Canaan, which Abraham did (Genesis 12:5).

Now we know three key people: **Adam** in 4000 B.C., **Noah** in 3000 B.C., and **Abraham** in 2000 B.C. **Creation** is the key event at the time of Adam, and **Abraham's move to Canaan** (today's Israel) is the key event at 2000 B.C. Before the flood people lived for about 900 years, so Noah lived 500 years before **the flood**, which was the key event around 2500 B.C. (Genesis 6–8).

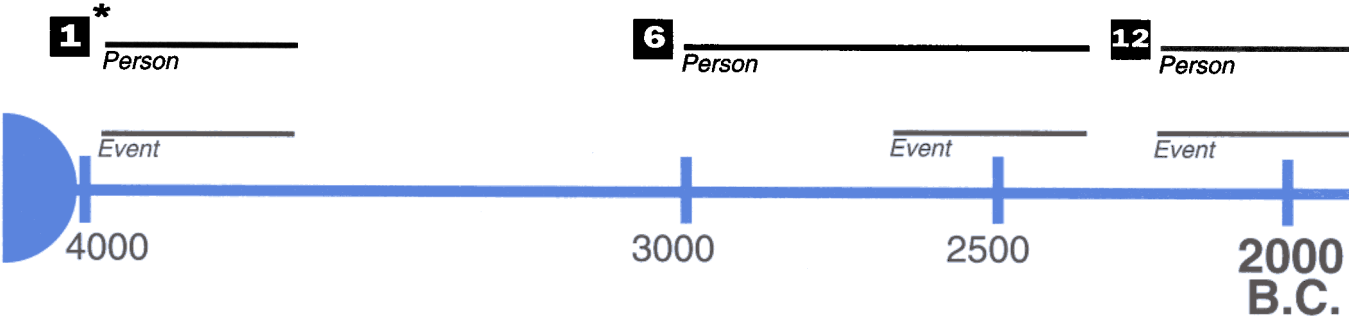
In Canaan Abraham had two sons: Ishmael, who is the father of the Arabs (Genesis 16:11-16) and Isaac, who is the father of the Jews (21:1-5). The Bible follows Isaac. **Isaac** had two sons: Esau and Jacob (25:19-26). Esau became the father of the Edomites (36:1), but the Bible follows Jacob (chapters 27–50). **Jacob's** name was changed to **Israel** (32:28), and he had 12 sons whose descendants became the 12 tribes of Israel (49:1-28). He also had one daughter named Dinah.

Four of these sons are worth mentioning here. Levi was the father of the tribe of Moses and his brother Aaron (Exodus 2:1). The priests were descendants of Aaron (28:1). Judah was the father of the tribe which produced David (Matthew 1:3-6) and 1,000 years later, Jesus (1:16). Benjamin was the youngest son and the father of the tribe of the two main “Sauls” of the Bible: King Saul (1 Samuel 9:1-2) and in the New Testament, Saul of Tarsus, also called the Apostle Paul (Romans 11:1). Joseph was the second youngest son and the one the Bible follows next.

*Though many educators deny creation and believe in long ages of evolution, we believe evolution is contrary to the Bible and the evidence from nature. For further discussion, see the Relational Concepts' study book, *Science, Religion, and the Creation-Evolution Controversy*. We also realize that many Christians date the Egyptian Dynasties as beginning around 3000 B.C., thus backing the flood up to 5000 B.C. and the days of creation before 7000 B.C. This is a possibility since the genealogy lists may not be all-inclusive. But since the lists in Genesis and 1 Chronicles are identical, we arrive at our dates by simply adding up the ages as has been done for hundreds of years. Of course all dates are approximate, and conservative scholars generally agree on the dates after 2000 B.C., i.e., from Abraham on.

The First 2,000 Years

From Adam to Abraham and the Patriarchs



The First 2,000 Years

The First 12 Chapters of the Bible:

Genesis 1 and 2

Genesis 3

Genesis 4

Genesis 5

Genesis 6

Genesis 7

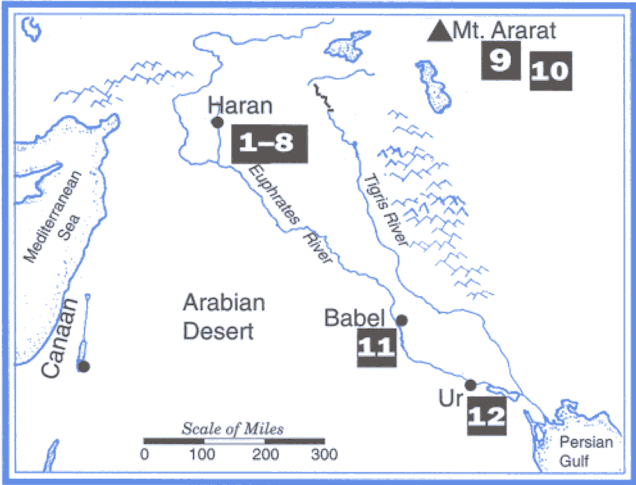
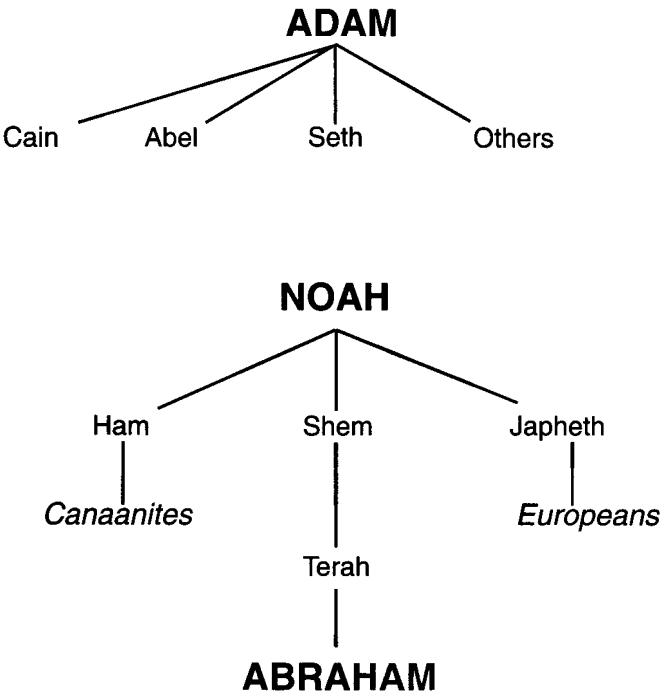
Genesis 8

Genesis 9

Genesis 10

Genesis 11

Genesis 12



*The boxed numbers on this page represent the chapters of Genesis.

The Second 2,000 Years, Part 1

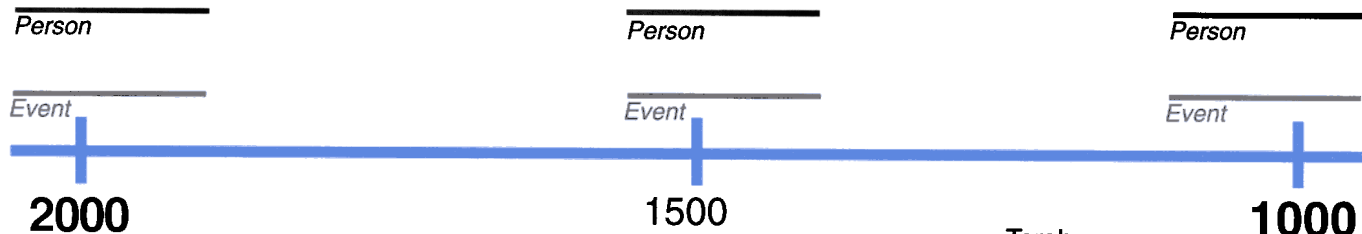
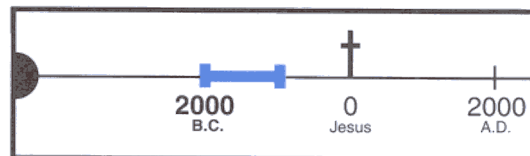
From Abraham to David and the United Kingdom

This section covers the period from **Abraham** (2000 B.C.) through **Moses** (1500 B.C.) to **David** (1000 B.C.), the key figures who frame this millennium of history. Specifically, we shall begin where we left off with Abraham's great-grandson Joseph and end with David's son Solomon. This era can be divided into seven events:

- 1 Joseph entered Egypt** (Genesis 39–47). Joseph was favored by his father Jacob (renamed Israel), but Joseph's brothers were jealous of him, so they sold him into slavery to Egypt. He was bought by a man named Potiphar, a rich man who was captain of Pharaoh's bodyguard. (His name is pronounced pot-of-fur, and if you connect furs with riches, this might help you remember his name.) Because Joseph would not have relations with Potiphar's wife, she had him thrown into prison. While he was there, he interpreted a dream of Pharaoh (the king) which predicted seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. Impressed by his knowledge, Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of handling the food supply for the next 14 years. Under Joseph's leadership, Egypt stored food and was uniquely prepared for the seven years of famine. The famine forced Joseph's family to journey to Egypt or starve.
- 2 Moses led the Exodus** (Exodus 3–20). The Israelites were in Egypt 430 years. They grew to be a nation of about 2 1/2 million people, but they became the slaves of the Egyptians after Joseph died. Then God raised up a new leader named Moses. Around 1500 B.C. Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt across the Red Sea on dry land to Mt. Sinai.
- 3 Israel received the law and the plans for the tabernacle** (Exodus 20–40). At Mt. Sinai, God gave Israel two things: (1) the law and (2) the plans for the tabernacle. So they received the law and built the tabernacle (including its most important piece of furniture, the Ark of the Covenant).
- 4 Israel wandered in the wilderness** (Deuteronomy 1:6–4:43). The Israelites then proceeded north to a city just south of Canaan called Kadesh-barnea. There they sent 12 spies into the land of Canaan—to *take possession, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has spoken to you* (1:21). When the spies returned, two (Joshua and Caleb) said, *We should by all means go up and take possession of it* (Numbers 13:30). But the rest said, *We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us* (13:31). Consequently, the Israelites decided not to go into Canaan, and God condemned them to wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. Everyone 20 years and older (at the time of the decision) died during the wilderness wandering except Moses, Joshua, and Caleb.
- 5 Joshua conquered the land** (Joshua 2–12). After these 40 years, the Israelites conquered the east side of the Jordan River. Then Moses gave a long speech (probably the book of Deuteronomy) and died. Next, God appointed Joshua to lead the Israelites across the Jordan River where they conquered Jericho, Ai, and most of the land of Canaan.
- 6 The judges maintained the land** (Judges 1–16). After Joshua there was a time of individual leaders called judges. Samson and Samuel were two such leaders. Samson was a long-haired warrior, and Samuel was a leader of diplomacy and wisdom.
- 7 Saul, David, and Solomon ruled the land** (1 and 2 Samuel, 1 Kings 1–11). After the judges came a time of kings and prophets. The first three kings were Saul, David, and Solomon. Each reigned about 40 years, but **David** was the beginning of the true **monarchy**.

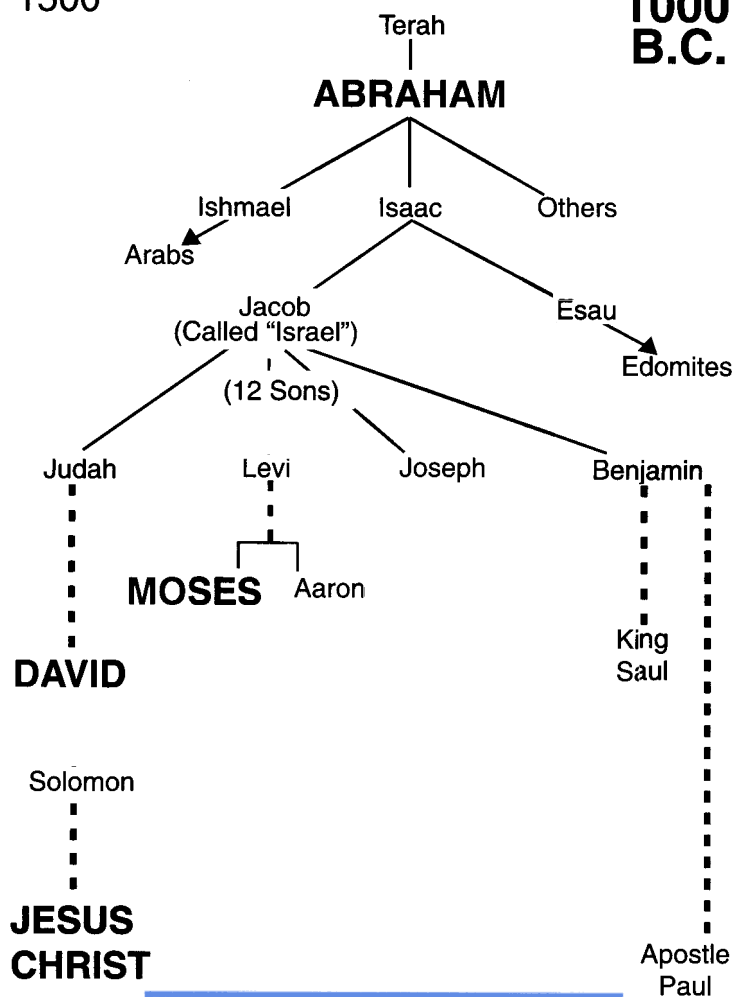
The Second 2,000 Years

Part 1 — From Abraham to David and the United Kingdom



The Second 2,000 Years

- 1* _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____
- 7 _____



* The circled numbers represent the periods of history as we have outlined them - not chapters in the Bible.

The Second 2,000 Years, Part 2

From David to Daniel and the End of the Old Testament

This section covers the period after **David** (1000 B.C.) on to **Daniel** (500s B.C.) and the end of the Old Testament (400s B.C.). This era can be divided into five events which we shall number 8–12.

8 The kingdom split (1 Kings 12). After Solomon, the kingdom split in two. The Northern Kingdom was called Israel, and the Southern Kingdom was called Judah. The first king in the North was Jeroboam (Solomon's warrior), and the first king in the South was Rehoboam (Solomon's son).

9 The Northern Kingdom was exiled to Assyria (2 Kings 12–25). The Northern Kingdom, called Israel, had 19 kings who were all bad.* This kingdom lasted about 200 years and was captured by and exiled (the people were carried away as slaves) to Assyria. For the most part, the Israelites did not return to the land of Canaan until the time Israel became a nation again in A.D. 1948.

10 The Southern Kingdom was exiled to Babylon (2 Kings 12–25, 2 Chronicles 12–36). The Southern Kingdom, called Judah, also had 19 kings and one queen.* Some of their kings were good and some were bad. Judah lasted about 300 years and was then captured by and exiled to Babylon (which had become the world leader over Assyria).

11 The Southern Kingdom was in Babylon 70 years (2 Chronicles 36:5-21). The Judeans were in Babylon 70 years, and the Bible focuses on Daniel. Then Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians who let the Judeans return to Jerusalem. Most of them were from the tribe of Judah, hence the name "Jews," although the tribe of Benjamin and some Levites were also in the Southern Kingdom.

12 The Jews returned to Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 36:22-23, Ezra 1:1–2:1, Nehemiah 2). Three groups under three leaders returned to Jerusalem in the 400s B.C. Zerubbabel returned first with a group who rebuilt the temple, Ezra returned as a religious leader, and then Nehemiah returned as a political governor who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem. With these men and the prophets God raised up to predict the coming of Christ, the Old Testament ends.

The first 2,000 years of the Old Testament were covered in the first **12 chapters** of Genesis.

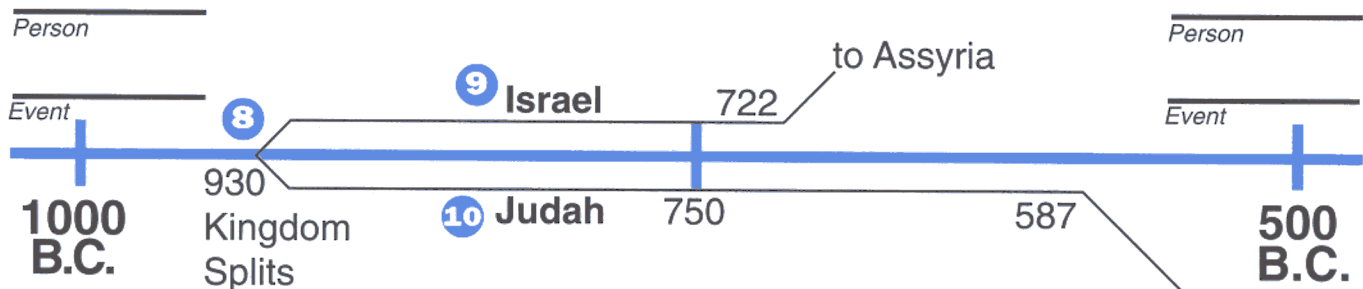
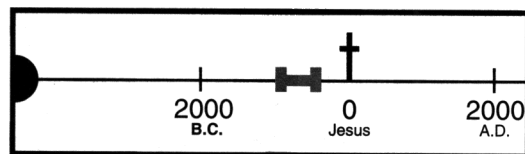
The second 2,000 years were outlined with these **12 events**.

The second 2,000 years is followed by a 400 year gap between the Old and New Testaments. The gap is called the inter-testament times. This period is covered on pages 11-12.

*Some list 20 kings of both the North and the South because one additional king ruled over half of Israel a short time and one additional king was appointed by Babylon in Judah.

The Second 2,000 Years

Part 2 — From David to Daniel and the End of the Old Testament



The Second 2,000 Years

- 8 _____
- 9 _____
- 10 _____
- 11 _____
- 12 _____

Continued on page 12

UNITED KINGDOM

1st King _____
 2nd King _____
 3rd King _____

ISRAEL
 Northern Kingdom

1st King _____
 Number of years _____
 Number of kings _____

Exiled to: _____

JUDAH
 Southern Kingdom

1st King _____
 Number of years _____
 Number of kings + 1 _____

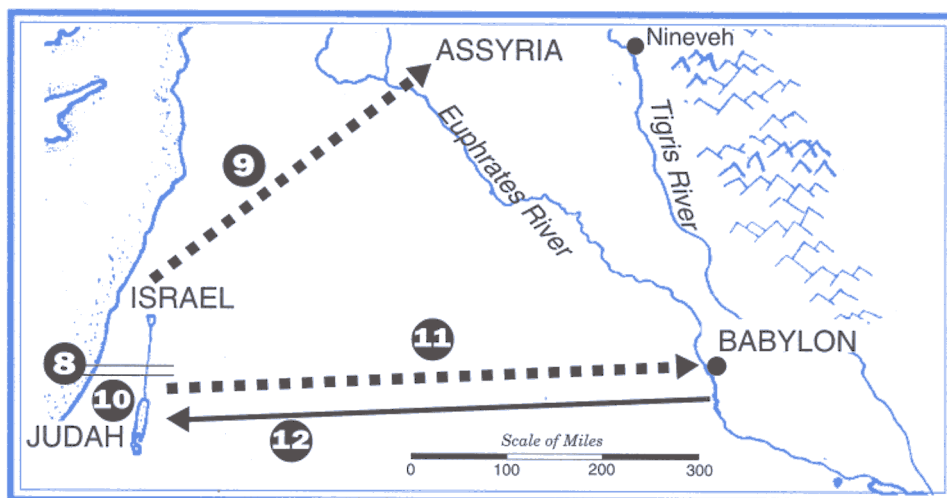
Exiled to: _____

Nation _____

Nation _____

Key Person _____

Return led by: _____



The 39 Old Testament Books

There are 66 books in the Bible. The Old Testament contains 39 of them, covering about 4,000 years (creation to 400 B.C.), and the New Testament has 27, covering less than 100 years (the birth of Christ to about A.D. 96).

The 39 Old Testament books are divided into 3 types: history books, poetry books, and prophecy books.

History Books Genesis through Esther. The history books are the first 17 books in the table of contents of your Bible. They basically follow in consecutive order the overview you have just studied. Genesis ends with Joseph and his brothers in Egypt. Exodus describes Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt after 430 years of Egyptian captivity. From Exodus chapter 20 on through Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, Moses has written the law, mixed with the history of the 40 years the Israelites wandered in the wilderness.

The book of Joshua is about the conquests of Joshua. Judges is about the judges. Ruth takes place during the time of the judges. 1 Samuel is basically about Saul, 2 Samuel about David, 1 Kings about Solomon, and 2 Kings about the 19 kings of Israel and the 19 kings of Judah. 1 and 2 Chronicles are a review, focusing on David and the kings of Judah. Ezra and Nehemiah discuss the return after the Babylonian Captivity, and Esther reveals an event that happened to some of the Jews who stayed behind in Persia.

The Poetry Books Job through the Song of Solomon. Job probably lived sometime between Noah and Abraham. The Psalms were written primarily by David. Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon were written by Solomon.

The Prophecy Books There are three kinds of prophecy books: those written before the Babylonian exile, during the exile, and after the exile.

It's easiest to learn the "after the exile" ones first because they are where you would expect them to be—the last three books in the table of contents—Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

There are only two "exile" books, and one you already know—Daniel (page 7). The other exile book is the one listed right above it, Ezekiel.

The "before the exile" books were written during the divided kingdom, that is, in the times of the 19 kings of Israel and the 19 kings of Judah. These books are also in three groups:

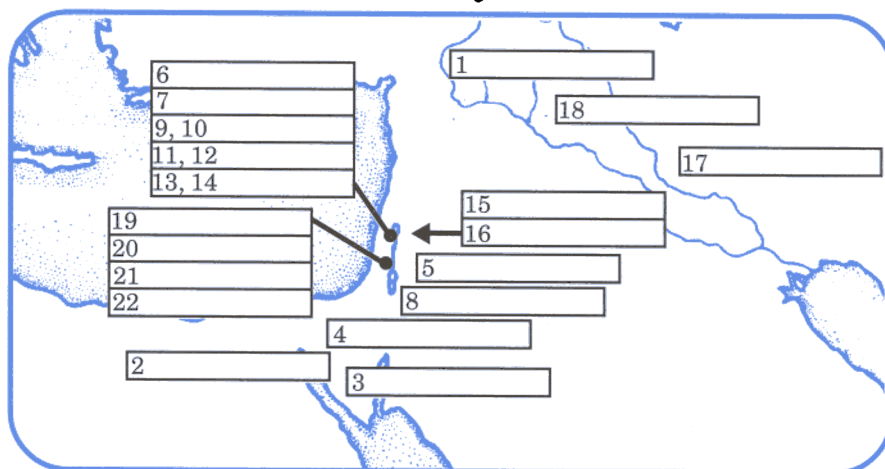
- (1) The Gentile books; Jonah written to Nineveh and Obadiah written to Edom
- (2) The Northern Kingdom books: Hosea, Joel, and Amos
- (3) The Southern Kingdom books, which are simply all the rest of them. So if we haven't covered it yet (like, say, Isaiah or Micah), then it's a "before the exile" Southern Kingdom book.

The 39 Old Testament Books

After studying this page and page 9, open to the Table of Contents page in the front of your own Bible and see if you can tell yourself something about each book of the Old Testament.

1. Genesis
2. Exodus
3. Leviticus
4. Numbers
5. Deuteronomy
6. Joshua
7. Judges
8. Ruth
9. & 10. 1 & 2 Samuel
11. & 12. 1 & 2 Kings
13. & 14. 1 & 2 Chronicles
15. Ezra
16. Nehemiah
17. Esther

The History Books



18. Job
19. Psalms
20. Proverbs
21. Ecclesiastes
22. Song of Solomon

The Poetry Books

- | | |
|------------------|--------------|
| 23. Isaiah | Before the |
| 24. Jeremiah | Exile to the |
| 25. Lamentations | Southern |
| | Kingdom |

- | | |
|-------------|-----------|
| 26. Ezekiel | During |
| 27. Daniel | the Exile |

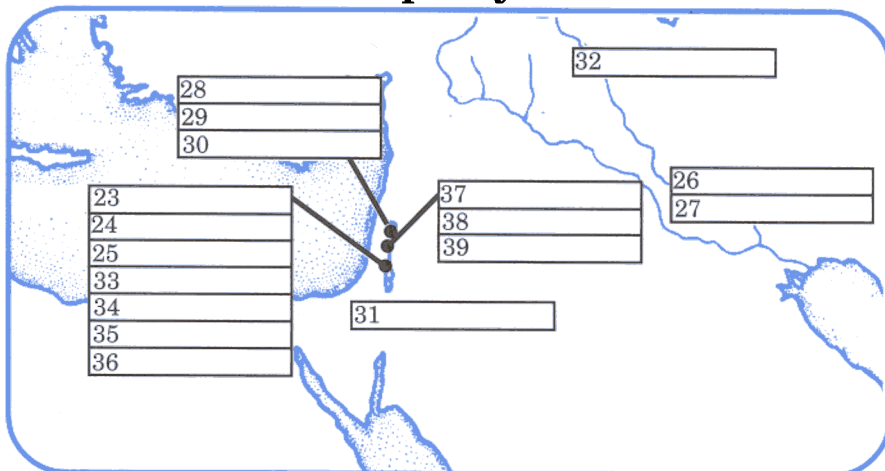
- | | |
|-----------|--------------|
| 28. Hosea | Before the |
| 29. Joel | Exile to the |
| 30. Amos | Northern |
| | Kingdom |

- | | |
|-------------|------------|
| 31. Obadiah | Gentile |
| 32. Jonah | Prophecies |

- | | |
|---------------|--------------|
| 33. Micah | Before the |
| 34. Nahum | Exile to the |
| 35. Habakkuk | Southern |
| 36. Zephaniah | Kingdom |

- | | |
|---------------|-------|
| 37. Haggai | After |
| 38. Zechariah | the |
| 39. Malachi | Exile |

The Prophecy Books



The Second 2,000 Years, Part 3

The Inter-Testament Times

12 **World and Regional Empires**—During the inter-testament time, the Jews returned to their land but continued to be under the control of other empires. These empires were prophesied by Daniel in the 500s B.C. (Daniel 2:31-45).

A **Babylon**—In the 500s B.C., the Jews were held captive in Babylon for 70 years (Daniel 2:37-38 7:4)(see page 7, #11).

B **Persia**—In the 400s B.C., Persia (the Medo-Persian Empire), after conquering Babylon (in 539 B.C.), let the Jews return to Jerusalem and ruled them through Nehemiah. This is how the Old Testament ends. After Nehemiah, Judah was basically ruled by priests responsible to Persia. (Daniel 2:39 a 7:5)

C **Greece**—In the 300s B.C., the Greeks took over through the conquests of Alexander the Great. Alexander was also a friend of Aristotle (the last of the three classic Greek philosophers: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle). He conquered the whole western world in the late 300s but died at age 32, leaving his empire to be divided among his four top generals. One ruled in Macedonia (Greece), one in Asia Minor (Turkey), one in Syria, and one in Egypt. Significant for the Jews is the general in Egypt (called Ptolemy) and the one in Syria (called Seleucid). (Daniel 2:39 b 7:6)

D **Egypt**—In the 200s B.C., the Jews were under the Ptolemies of Egypt and were treated quite well. These Egyptians encouraged the Jews in Alexandria to translate the Old Testament from its original Hebrew into Greek. This translation is called the Septuagint (or LXX) and was the version used at the time of Christ and the Apostles.

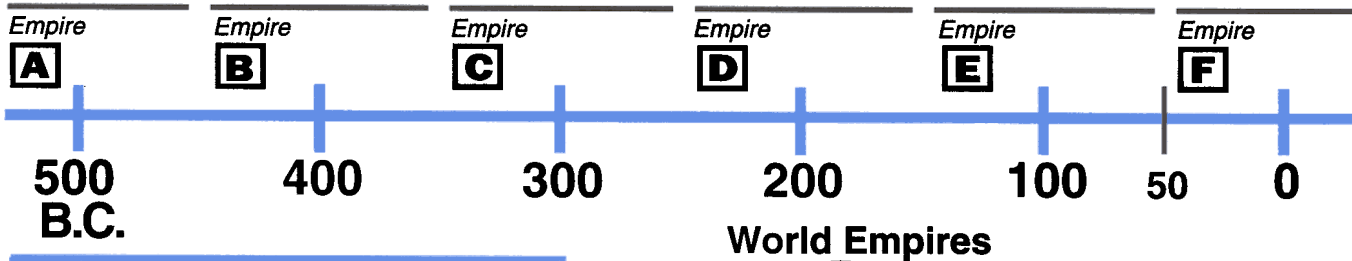
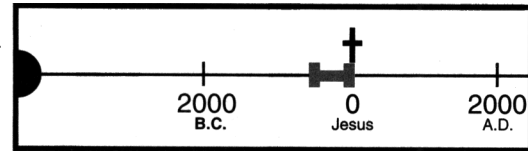
E **Syria**—In the 100s B.C., the Jews were persecuted by the Seleucids of Syria, in particular, Antiochus IV Epiphanes. In 198 B.C., Syria took Judah away from the Egyptians. They appointed Greeks to the priesthood, offered a pig on the Jewish altar, and killed many Jews. About 175 B.C., an old Jewish priest named Mattathias and his sons rebelled against Syria and a guerrilla-type war began. These Jewish soldiers were called the Maccabees (after one of Mattathias' sons) and later Hasmonians (after his father). On December 25, 165 B.C. they reclaimed the temple and restored the sacrifices. This is celebrated yet today with the Jewish feast called Hanukkah. This war went on for years, but by the middle of the first century B.C., the Jews had established their independence.

F **Rome**—About 50 B.C., Rome under Julius Caesar was rapidly becoming the next dominant world empire. (Daniel 2:40 7:7) Because of leadership squabbles within the old Maccabean/Hasmonian family, the appointed Hasmonian ruler used a man named Antipater to negotiate with Rome. Antipater came up with an arrangement where the Jews could more or less rule themselves. Antipater was an Edomite, i.e., an Esau-ite. (They were descendants of Abraham and Isaac through Esau, but they were not Israelites—see pages 3 and 6.)

After Julius Caesar was murdered (in 44 B.C.) and his nephew Augustus Caesar defeated Cleopatra of Egypt and ruled the western world, Antipater's son was appointed by Rome as king of the Jews. He was called Herod the Great. At first, Herod was good for the Jews. He married a granddaughter of a Maccabean leader, built many structures for the Jews, and repaired the temple. But then he went mad, even killing his own wife and sons because he thought they would take away his throne. When the wise men came from the East and went on to Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) looking for "the king of the Jews," Herod killed the boy babies in Bethlehem in an attempt to kill this king (Matthew 2:1-18).

The Second 2,000 Years Part 3

The Inter-Testament Times



The Second 2000 Years

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A _____

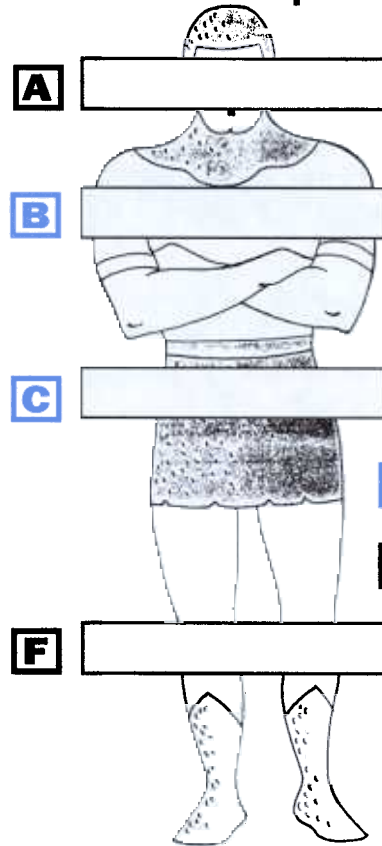
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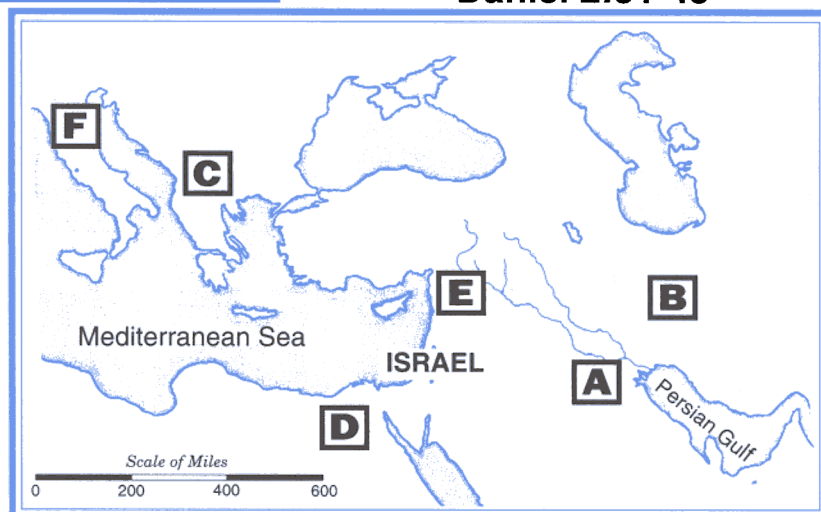
F _____



The Inter-Testament Empires as Prophesied by Daniel

Regional Empires

Daniel 2:31-45



The New Testament

The Life of Jesus Christ, Part 1

- ① The birth of Christ**—Jesus the Christ (i.e., Messiah, literally “the anointed one”) was born of a virgin named Mary in a small town of Judea called Bethlehem (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23, and Luke 2:1-20). Mary had traveled there from her hometown of Nazareth with her husband Joseph (Matthew 1:18-25) because Caesar Augustus declared that a census be taken (for tax purposes). For them, that meant enrolling in Bethlehem (Matthew 1:18-25).
- ② The move to Egypt**—After some time passed, the magi or wise men arrived from the East. They had followed a light in the sky which directed them to Jerusalem. When Herod learned from the scribes and chief priests (who quoted from Micah 5:2) that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, he directed the wise men to go there. Herod planned to murder Jesus because the wise men called Him the king of the Jews. When the magi did not return to Herod, he had all of the boys of Bethlehem, two years old and younger, killed. Joseph was warned about this danger by an angel, so he fled with his family to Egypt (Hosea 11:1, Matthew 2:1-18).
- ③ The return to Nazareth**—After Herod’s death, *an angel appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt*, telling him to return to Israel (Matthew 2:19). So he, Mary, and Jesus went back to their former hometown of Nazareth (Luke 2:39).
- ④ Teaching in the temple at age 12**—When He was 12, Jesus was taken by Joseph and Mary to Jerusalem. There they lost Him for a time and then found Him teaching in the Temple (Luke 2:31-52).
- ⑤ The baptism by John at age 30**—Joseph may have died fairly young, making Jesus provider for the family as a builder, a trade He apparently learned from Joseph (Matthew 13:55). Then, at about 30 years of age, Jesus began His public ministry when He was baptized by John the Baptist (who had begun his own ministry earlier that same year). Christ’s baptism was most likely near the southern end of the Jordan River above the northern end of the Dead Sea (Matthew 3:13-17).
- ⑥ The temptation by Satan**—Then the Spirit of God led the Son of God into the Judean Wilderness for 40 days, to be tempted by Satan (Matthew 4:1-11).
- ⑦ The first disciples**—After the temptation, Jesus returned to the area where John the Baptist was baptizing and met John and Andrew. They were disciples of John the Baptist (John 1:35-42) but now began to follow Christ. Next He chose Peter, Philip, and Nathaniel to be disciples (John 1:44-51). Then they went to a wedding in Cana where Jesus turned water into wine. This is His first recorded miracle (John 2:1-12).
- ⑧ The “born again” discussion with Nicodemus**—After a visit to Capernaum (where Peter’s house became His headquarters), Jesus, along with His new disciples, made a trip south to Jerusalem for the Passover (John 2:12-13). There He threw the money changers out of the temple (John 2:14-25) and told a Jewish Pharisee named Nicodemus, *You must be born again* (John 3:7). (See the Appendix on page 21 for information about the Pharisees.)

The Life of Jesus Christ

Part 1

Events:

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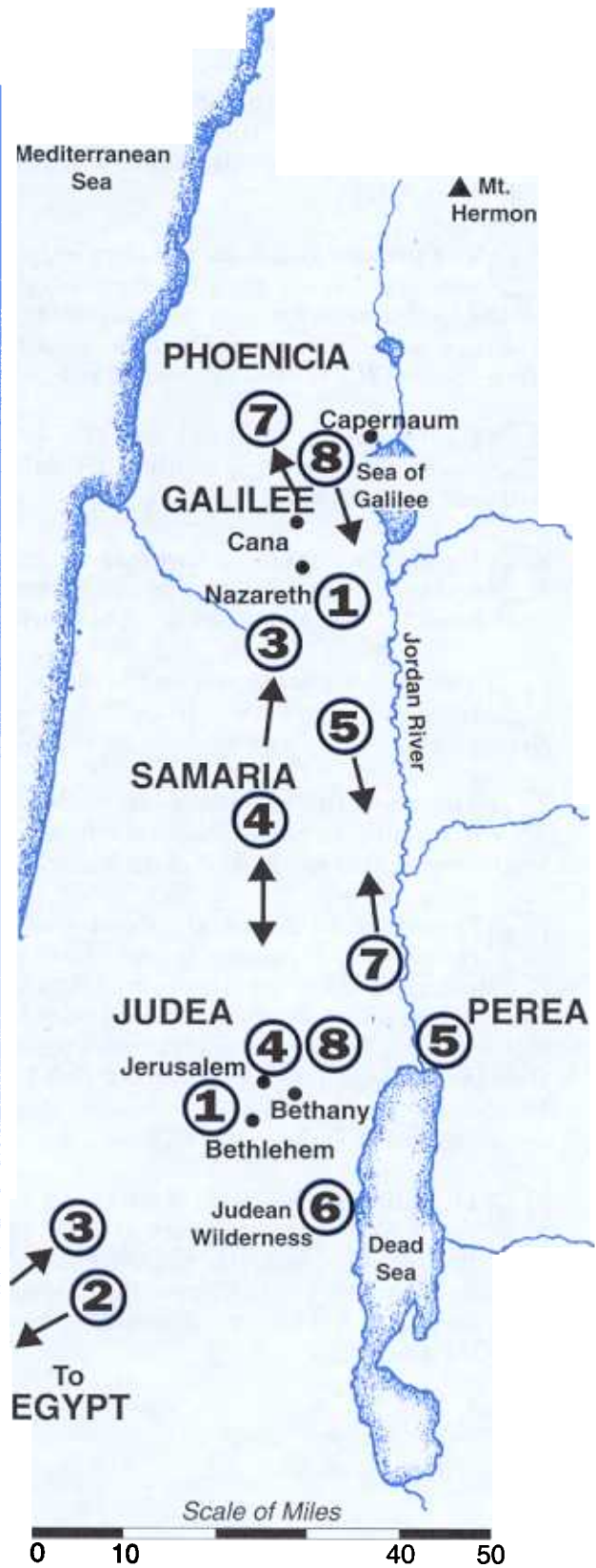
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The Life of Jesus Christ, Part 2

- 9 The woman at the well in Samaria**—After returning to Jerusalem, cleansing the temple, and speaking to Nicodemus (event 8), Jesus and His disciples remained in that area for awhile, and Christ's disciples baptized new believers in northeastern Judea (John 4:1-2, Luke 3:19-20). On their way back to Galilee, Jesus stopped in Sychar of Samaria and told a woman at Jacob's well that He was the Messiah promised in the Old Testament (John 4).
- 10 The greater Galilean ministry**—Upon returning to Galilee, Jesus began His ministry in and around the greater Galilean area. He did much of His teaching and healing in this area. For example, this is when He preached the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). This greater Galilean ministry finished the first year and included all of the second year of His recorded three and one-half years of public ministry.
- 11 Healing at the Pool of Bethesda**—During His greater Galilean ministry, Jesus made at least one trip south to Jerusalem, where He healed a man at the Pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath (John 5).
- 12 Healing a Phoenician woman's daughter**—In the third year, Jesus made two trips north of Galilee. The first was to Phoenicia where He healed a woman's daughter (Matthew 15:21-28, Mark 7:24-30). That was significant because she was a Gentile.
- 13 The transfiguration**—On His second trip north He visited a mountain, probably Mt. Hermon, where He was transfigured *before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light* (Matthew 17:1-13, Mark 9:2-13, Luke 9:28-36).
- 14 The move to Jerusalem**—At the beginning of the fourth year of Christ's ministry, He left Galilee for the last time and headed for Jerusalem, where a few months later He would be crucified for the sins of the world (Luke 9:51-56, John 7).
- 15 Lazarus raised from the dead**—Several conflicts arose between Christ and the Pharisees in Jerusalem because Jesus called Himself the Good Shepherd and one with God the Father (John 10). This caused Him to leave Jerusalem and cross the Jordan. But when Lazarus died, Jesus returned to raise Lazarus from the dead (John 11). When the news of this got out, Jesus once again crossed the Jordan to Perea where He did more ministering, such as teaching on divorce (Matthew 19:3-12) and instructing the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-30). On the way back to Jerusalem this second time, He called Zaccheus down from a sycamore tree at Jericho (Luke 19:2-10).
- 16 The final week**—Some of the events of the last week are as follows: Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem (Mark 11:1-11), the second cleansing of the temple (Mark 11:12-19), much teaching, including the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24-25), the anointing by a woman (Mark 14:1-11), the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17), the Last Supper (Matthew 26:20-29), the arrest and crucifixion (Matthew 26:47-27:56), the resurrection, and appearances (Matthew 28).

The Life of Jesus Christ

Part 2

Events:

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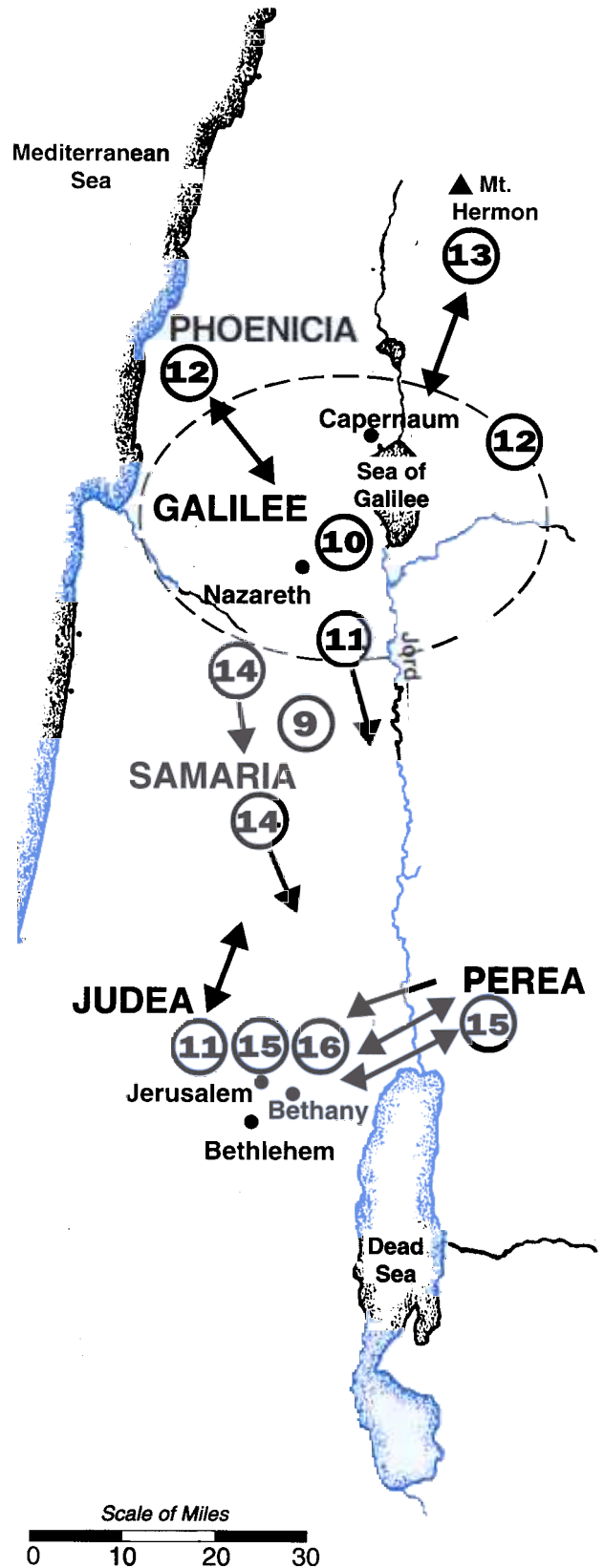
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The Acts and the Epistles of the Apostles, Part 1

The New Testament covers the century approximately from 0 to A.D. 100. It can be broken down into four periods: (1) the life of Christ (0 to A.D. 30), (2) Peter's ministry in Judea (A.D. 30 to 40), (3) Paul's missionary journeys (A.D. 40 to almost 70), and (4) the Apostle John's ministry out of Ephesus (A.D. 70 to almost 100). Here we shall cover the approximately 10 years (A.D. 30 to 40) from the death of Christ to the missionary journeys of Paul. This is primarily the ministry of Peter and an introduction to Paul. It is covered in the first 12 chapters of the Acts of the apostles.

Acts 1 The ascension—After Jesus rose from the dead, He appeared to many people for 40 days (see 1 Corinthians 15:3-8). Then He gathered together His apostles plus a few others (120 in all Acts 1:15) and told them to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:1-8) Then He ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9-11).

Acts 2 The coming of the Holy Spirit—In a few days the Holy Spirit came on them with the sound of a rushing wind. Tongues of fire appeared over the apostles. They spoke in many different languages, and 3,000 were converted to Christianity.

Acts 3-5 Peter and John were arrested and released—Peter preached again. He and John were arrested by the Jewish leaders. ... *they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered, "... we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard"* (Acts 4:18-20).

Acts 6-8 The first deacons—By now there were at least 8,000 new believers (Acts 2:42 and 4:4) who had originally come to Jerusalem for the Jewish holidays surrounding Passover. To help in getting supplies to everyone, the first servers were chosen. One of them, Stephen, was martyred in Jerusalem, and another, Philip, helped the apostles spread the Gospel to Gaza, Samaria, and Caesarea.

Acts 9 The conversion of Paul—About this time a young zealous Jew named Saul (who participated in the killing of Stephen) was headed for Damascus to persecute Christians there. On the way, he was converted through a vision from Jesus Christ. Saul (also called Paul) then stayed out of the main stream for about 10 years to study the Scriptures.

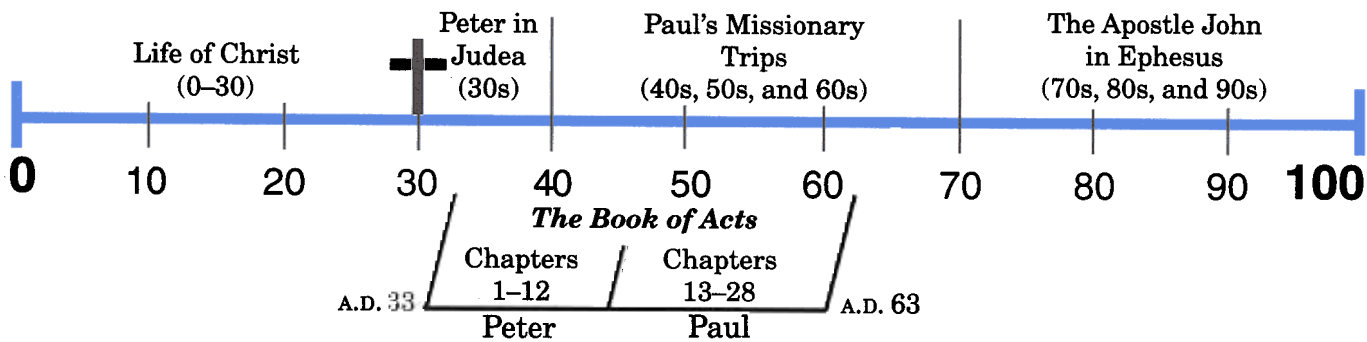
Acts 10 Peter's vision of the food—During this time Peter was leading and teaching Jewish believers in southern Judea. At Joppa (today's Tel Aviv), God gave him a vision of a sheet full of food which the Mosaic Law declared "unclean." Then God directed Peter to the home of a Gentile named Cornelius, where many of his Gentile friends and relatives were gathered. Thus God began to teach that the church was not to be for Jews alone. About this time James, Jesus' physical half-brother, wrote the book of **James** for the Jewish believers who were scattered throughout the Roman world. This is probably the first New Testament book written.

Acts 11 Paul and Barnabas in Antioch—Barnabas, a prominent believer, was sent from Jerusalem to the new growing church at Antioch. He recruited Saul (Paul) to work with him there. Then the believers in Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas with supplies to the needy in Jerusalem.

Acts 12 Peter imprisoned and released by an angel—Herod began persecuting the Christians. He had the Apostle James (the brother of John) killed. He also had Peter arrested and imprisoned. But the believers began to pray, and Peter was released from prison by an angel.

The Acts and Epistles of the Apostles

Part 1 The 100 New Testament Years



The Church in Judea

Acts 1

A.D. 33

Acts 2

A.D. 33

Acts 3-5

A.D. 33

Acts 6-8

A.D. 33-34

Acts 9

A.D. 35

Acts 10

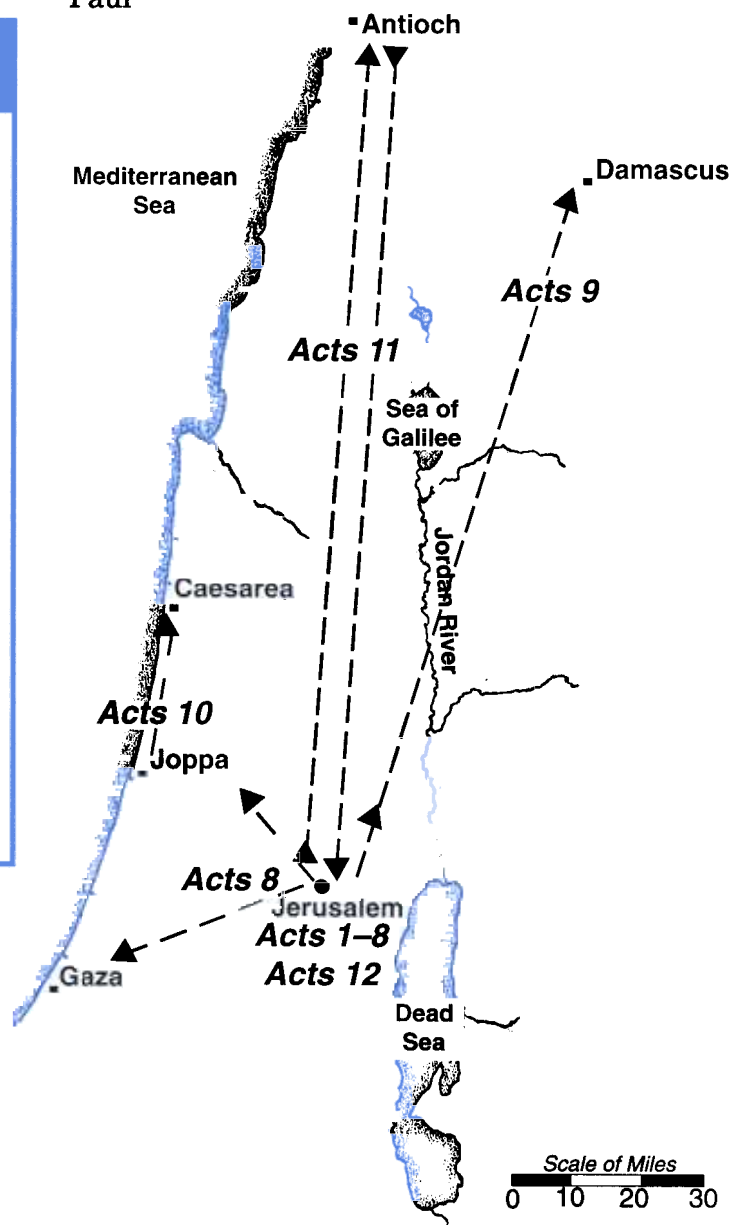
A.D. 41

Acts 11

A.D. 41

Acts 12

A.D. 42



The Acts and the Epistles of the Apostles, Part 2

Acts 13–14 The first missionary journey—Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark began the first missionary journey, but John Mark turned back after they visited Cyprus. The other two continued to Galatia. Later Paul wrote them the New Testament book of *Galatians*.

Acts 15 The Jerusalem Council—The first major issue in the early church was created by Gentiles becoming believers. The apostles were all Jews, Jesus was a Jew, the first believers were Jews, and most of them didn't think of Gentiles as a significant part of the church. But now with believers at Antioch and the first missionary journey concluded, uncircumcised Gentiles, who knew nothing of Jewish customs or the Mosaic Law, were believing in Jesus as their God and Savior. Should these Gentile believers be made to keep the law? Should they be circumcised and keep Jewish sacred days and customs? The Jerusalem Council was organized to answer these questions. Their answer was, No—Gentile believers do not need to become Jews.

Acts 16–18 The second missionary journey—After the Jerusalem Council, Paul left on a second missionary journey from Antioch, this time with Silas. This journey extended to Greece. Timothy joined the team in Lystra and Luke in Troas. The principal city, however, was Corinth, where Paul stayed for a year and a half. During this trip Paul sent Timothy back to see how the Thessalonians were doing. Upon receiving a good report, Paul wrote the books of *1 and 2 Thessalonians* to them. Although not connected with Paul's journey, the Gospels of *Matthew* and *Mark* were written about this time.

Acts 19–21 The third missionary journey—After visiting Jerusalem and Antioch again, Paul began his third missionary journey, spending most of his time (three and one-half years) in the city of Ephesus. Ephesus developed into the third major city for Christianity (after Jerusalem and Antioch). It's also probable that Paul wrote the books of *Romans* and *1 and 2 Corinthians* from Ephesus at this time. Paul then revisited the other Greek cities and, in spite of a warning from the Ephesian elders, returned to Jerusalem.

Acts 22–28 The journey to Rome—Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and then taken to Caesarea where he was imprisoned for two years. While there he made his defense before Felix, the Roman governor at Caesarea. He was then tried before the new Governor Festus, and because Paul appealed to his Roman citizenship, he was sent to Rome to be tried before Caesar. After a dangerous voyage and a shipwreck, he was in house-prison another two years and then brought to trial in Rome. During these imprisonments he wrote the “prison epistles,” the books of *Ephesians*, *Philemon*, *Colossians*, and *Philippians*. At the same time Luke, who appears to have remained with Paul during his imprisonments, wrote the Gospel of *Luke* and the book of the *Acts of the Apostles*.

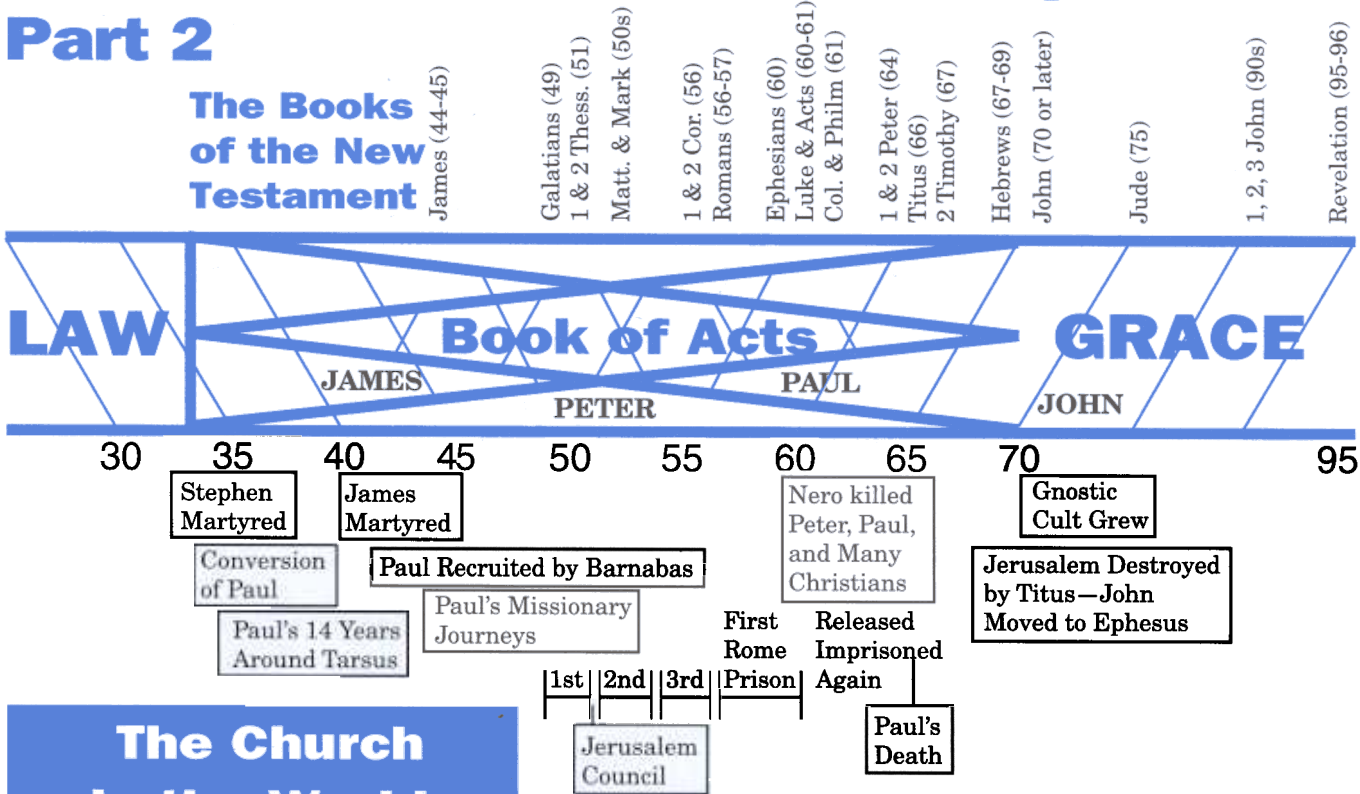
The later epistles The Apostle John moved to Ephesus—A few years later (A.D. 70), the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. About this time, Jesus' half-brother Jude (another son of Joseph and Mary—Mark 6:3) wrote the book of *Jude*. Meanwhile the Apostle John had moved to Ephesus where he escaped martyrdom and lived another 25 years. There he wrote the gospel of *John* and the books of *1, 2, and 3 John*.

The book of Revelation John wrote the Apocalypse while exiled on Patmos—In the 90s A.D. a new persecution began, and John was exiled to an island called Patmos, off the coast of Ephesus. There he wrote the book of *Revelation*, then probably returned to Ephesus, and died there.

This ends the New Testament

The Acts and Epistles of the Apostles

Part 2



The Church in the World

Acts 13-14 (A.D. 45)	The Later Epistles
Acts 15 (A.D. 46)	
Acts 16-18 (A.D. 52-54)	The Epistles of John
Acts 19-28 (A.D. 54-63)	Revelation



Paul's Journeys:

- 1st Missionary Journey
- 2nd Missionary Journey
- 3rd Missionary Journey
- Trip to Rome

Appendix

The Rise of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes

The events of the inter-testament period gave rise to several Jewish sects. Actually, they probably began before the Old Testament ended while Persia ruled over Jerusalem. After the temple and the city of Jerusalem were rebuilt by Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, many of the Jews became lukewarm about their religion (Haggai 1:1-11). In response to this, some groups of more serious Jews got together for mutual encouragement (Malachi 3:16). When Persia fell to Greece, the devout groups resisted the Greek influences upon their Jewish traditions.

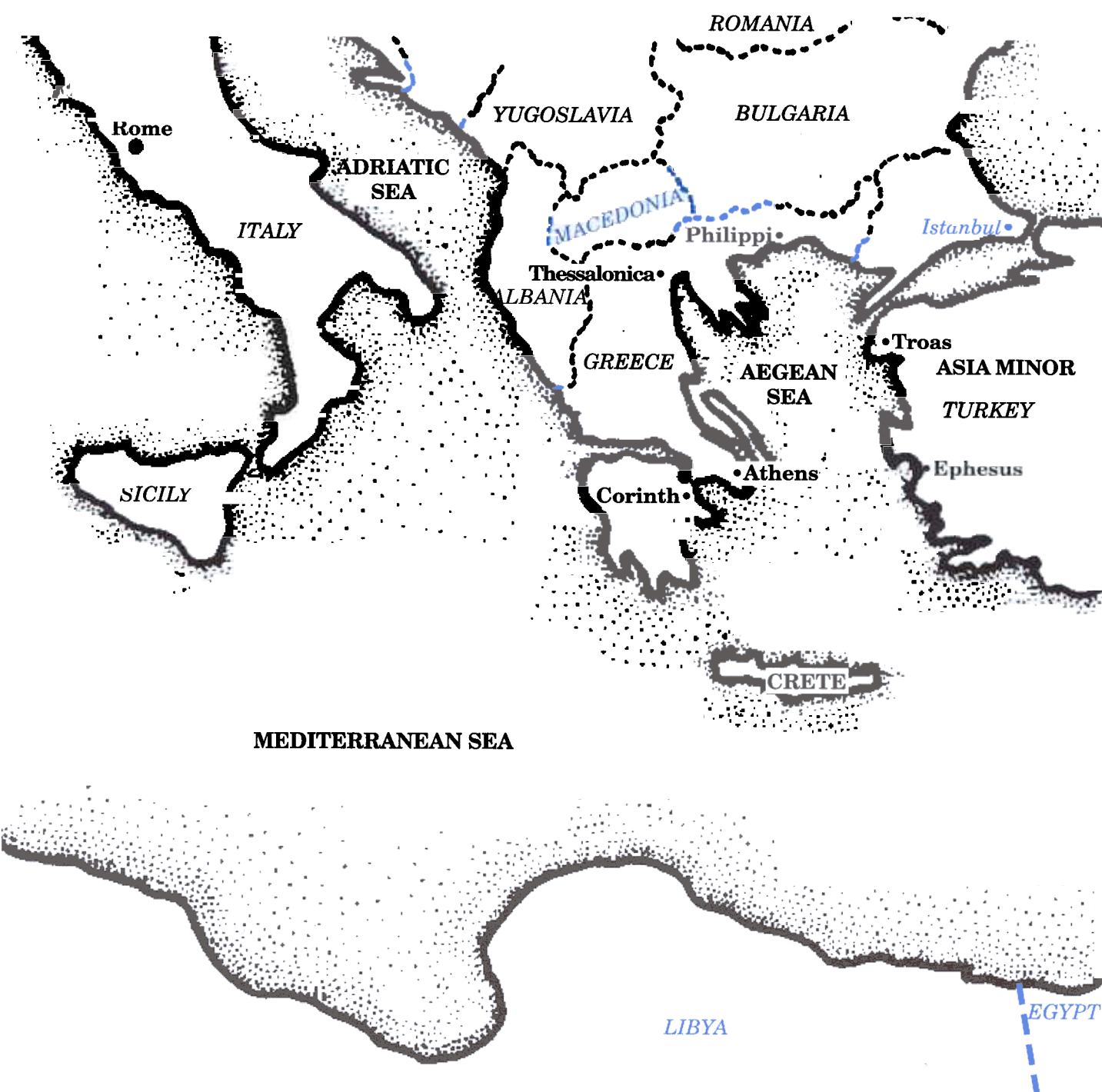
One such group called the **Essenes** objected to any Greek cultural influence and withdrew as ascetic monks, living in their own communes. They refused to go to war or participate in social issues. The Qumran community, living where the Dead Sea scrolls were discovered, was probably such a group.

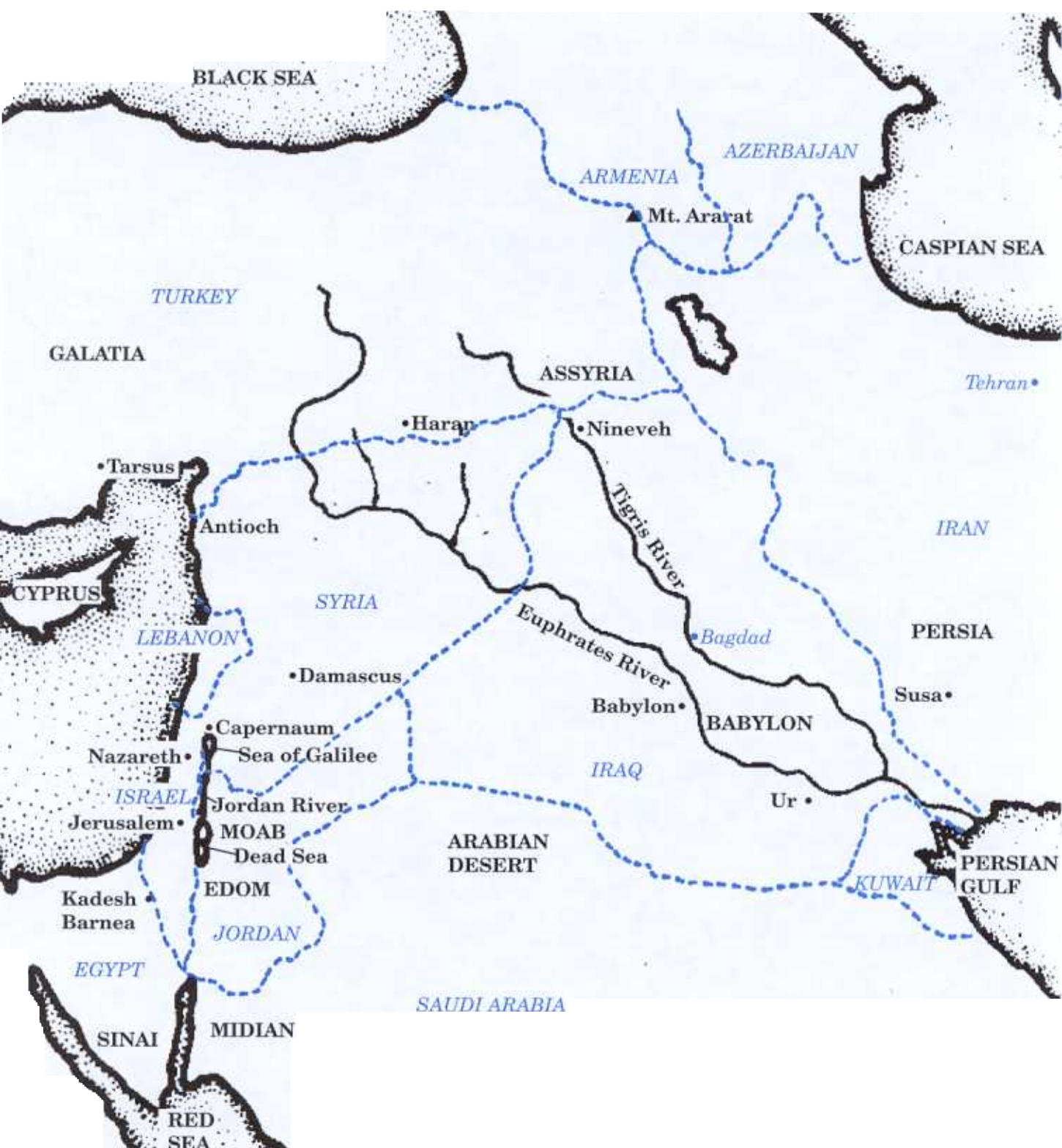
Another group was called the Assideans (sometimes spelled “Hasideans”), meaning “godly” or “loyal people.” When the Maccabees revolted, the Assideans joined them in battle against the Syrian Greeks (1 Maccabees 2:42). These Assideans supported the Maccabeans until the brother and successor of Judas Maccabeas assumed the office of high priest without the proper pedigree or credentials. Then the Assideans separated themselves from his (political and religious) leadership. They then became known as **Pharisees**, the name comes from the Hebrew and Aramaic words for “separatists.” This was about 150 B.C.

Being rejected by the Assideans, now called Pharisees, the Jewish leader (John Hyrcanus) attached himself to a group called the **Sadducees**. It’s not clear when the Sadducees began. They date themselves back to the high priest Zadok, appointed by Solomon (1 Kings 2:35). This is uncertain, but what is clear is that they developed as a liberal sect within the wealthy part of the priesthood, and they became prominent when John Hyrcanus attached himself to them.

So, emerging from the inter-testament time, there are three Jewish sects:

- (1) The **Essenes**, ascetic monks living in isolation, waiting for the Messiah to come to them.
- (2) The **Pharisees**, primarily lay people who were socially and politically involved conservative separatists, who represented the common people and strictly kept the Jewish traditions.
- (3) The **Sadducees**, wealthy liberal priests who denied doctrines such as the resurrection and the existence of angels but promoted the influx of Greek and Roman influences on Judaism.





Part Two: Understanding the Bible

The Bible has both Divine and human authors. That is, although God is the source of the Scriptures, man composed it. God has providentially “superintended” the production, compilation, and preservation of the Bible in order to communicate His message to mankind. The successful communication of any message, whether from God or man, always requires **interpretation**. Interpretation is the process that allows us to understand the author’s **intended meaning**.

□ THE GOAL OF THE READING/STUDY PROCESS IS TO UNDERSTAND THE AUTHOR’S INTENDED MEANING.

Interpretation is not often given sufficient consideration because most interpretation occurs **instantly**, without conscious thought. This is because most messages we receive are **contemporary** and **local**. As a result, we automatically understand the author’s intended meaning because we are familiar with the circumstances, customs, language, and many other factors involved in communication. The Bible, however, was written in the past. Therefore, we must work to **consciously** apply principles of interpretation that we unconsciously use every day.

The proper method of interpretation is called **literal** or **normal** interpretation. The consistent application of the principles of normal interpretation will yield consistent interpretations. The reason varying interpretations of the Bible’s message exist is that all do not “play by the same **rules**.” This lesson will explain the biblical principles of interpretation based on the following facts:

1. All communication has a **historical** context.
2. All communication has a **literary** context.
3. All communication has a **grammatical** context.

I. All Communication Has a Historical Context.

Every book of the Bible was written at a particular time and place and for a particular purpose. These and similar factors make up what is known as historical context.

A. Interpret every biblical text in the light of its **purposes**.

Every author seeks to accomplish a purpose through his writing. His selection of those to whom he would write, the theme of his writing, his tone, etc. are all related to his purpose. Therefore, in order to understand a text’s message, it is helpful to determine the author’s purpose.

1. The purpose for a book may be **stated**.

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. – 1 John 5:13

2. The purpose for a book may be **implied**.

- a. The purpose may be implied by **other statements** within the book.

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – Galatians 1:6 (See also 3:1 and 6:12)

It is apparent from these and other statements within the book that Galatians was written to address false teaching that threatened to win over the recipients of the book.

- b. The purpose may be implied by what is known of the **author** and **recipients**.

For example, Paul wrote two letters to Timothy. In the first, he explicitly stated his purpose:

I am writing you these instructions so that...you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household. – 1 Timothy 3:14–15

Although Paul did not state his purpose in the second letter, it can be easily determined by what is known of the relationship between Paul and Timothy seen in 1 Timothy (see also Acts 16:1–5). In the light of Paul's "mentor" relationship with Timothy, the purpose for the words of his second letter become clear: to prepare Timothy to assume greater leadership responsibilities as Paul's ministry draws to an end (see 2 Timothy 2:1–7 and 4:1–8).

Note: This point assumes that one can determine the author and/or recipients. Often these are stated in the text. In cases where they are not, a good study Bible and/or commentary will be helpful. Recommendations for these and other resources will be included in the next lesson.

- B. Interpret every biblical text in the light of its **chronology**.

As noted in the last lesson, God did not produce the Bible **all at once**. Rather, the Bible was composed over 1600 years. In addition, the last book of the Bible was written **1900** years ago! Therefore, in order to achieve the purpose of understanding the author's intended meaning, it is necessary to place a given book within the time period in which it was written. Often, this can be determined by

statements made in the book regarding events and/or people about which dates are known. Again, a good study Bible or commentary is helpful.

C. Interpret every biblical text in the light of its **geography**.

Most Christians today live thousands of miles from the countries where Bible events took place. Believers should become familiar with the relationships between ancient sites and current boundaries. In addition, it is valuable to learn about the terrain of Bible lands. Bible atlases are valuable resources for this type of information.

D. Interpret every biblical text in the light of its **culture**.

Modern day thought and behavior are different from that of Bible times. Furthermore, there are cultural differences between groups of people mentioned in the Scripture. For example, the Roman culture of Paul's day was totally different from the Hebrew culture of Moses' day. It is important then, to understand the culture behind any given text.

☐ PRINCIPLE #1: A TEXT CANNOT MEAN WHAT IT NEVER MEANT.

II. All Communication Has a Literary Context.

In addition to the historical setting, interpretation is influenced by literary factors. Different literary types are to be interpreted differently. For example, "an apple a day keeps the doctor away" is a **proverb**. A proverb is not a blanket guarantee but rather a **general truth**. The Bible uses various literary types and devices that must be taken into account for proper interpretation.

A. Interpret every biblical text in the light of its literary **form**.

The Bible contains various forms of literature, such as **poetry, narratives, proverbs, parables, letters**, etc. Each of these is to be interpreted accordingly. For example, narrative portions of Scripture **describe** the actions **of** others while epistolary books often **prescribe** actions **for** others. So, Acts 1:12–14 (narrative) describes the fact that the disciples went to Jerusalem. However, it does not tell others to do so. On the otherhand, Paul's letter to the Romans (epistolary) prescribes actions for us:

Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. – Romans 12:1

B. Interpret every biblical text in the light of its literary **device**.

Normal human communication often employs devices such as **figures of speech**. For example, one might say, "my mouth is on fire" if he has just tasted something very hot. In John 10:7 Jesus said, "I am the gate." Obviously, Jesus was using a

literary device to make His point. Just as one's mouth is not actually in flames, Jesus is not actually a gate. *Literal* (or *normal*) interpretation takes into account those times when the Bible employs literary devices.

☐ PRINCIPLE #2: ALL TEXTS ARE NOT ALIKE.

III. All Communication Has a Grammatical Context.

The difference between the original language of a biblical book and the language of readers today creates more obstacles to interpretation. However, these obstacles can be overcome by application of the following rules of interpretation:

A. Interpret every biblical text in the light of its **original language**.

As mentioned in the last lesson, the Bible was written in Hebrew and Greek (and a small portion in Aramaic). Since most of us do not know these languages, it is necessary to obtain a good translation of the Bible that converts the original languages into one's own language.

One factor to bear in mind when interpreting the language of Scripture is that all languages are **univocal** ("one voice"). That is, a word can only mean one thing in a given context. If this were not the case, only one word would be required to construct an entire language because that word could mean anything in any context.

B. Interpret every biblical text in the light of its **larger logical units**.

All communication is **propositional**. That is, all communication is constructed in **sentences**. But sentences are one part of a larger logical chain: words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, chapters, and books. Thus, the context of a given word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, etc. is dependent on these other larger units of which it is a part.

☐ PRINCIPLE #3: A TEXT HAS ONLY ONE MEANING.

Note: Because the Bible is composed of human elements, it is to be interpreted as normal human communication. Thus, the principles of interpretation listed above are applicable to any human communication, not just the Bible. However, the Bible **differs** from other human communication in that, in addition to the human authors, the Bible has one ultimate author--God. Since there is ultimately a single author of the Bible, it has internal **unity**. This means that the Bible will never contradict itself. The following interpretive rules flow from the fact that the Bible has ultimately one author:

1. Interpret difficult passages in the light of those which are **clear**.

If the Bible clearly teaches a doctrine in one passage, another passage cannot contradict it. If you understand the meaning of a clear passage, it helps you interpret a difficult passage in that you already know what it **cannot mean**.

2. Interpret each biblical book in the light of its **overall** biblical context.

We have already noted that each passage must be interpreted in the light of larger logical units. Since the whole of the Bible has but one author, the largest logical unit for biblical texts is the **entire** Bible. Overall biblical context refers to both **content** and **time**. That is, an individual book of the Bible fits into overall biblical teaching and was written at a specific time within God's progressive unfolding of the biblical revelation.

☐ PRINCIPLE #4: THE BIBLE COMMUNICATES A UNIFIED MESSAGE.

Putting It Into Practice

We have seen that one must consider historical, literary, and grammatical factors in order to **properly** interpret communication. Since the last book of the Bible was written nearly 2000 years ago, **effort** must be expended in order to place a passage of Scripture in context and thereby achieve the goal of all Bible study:

☐ THE GOAL OF THE READING/STUDY PROCESS IS TO UNDERSTAND THE AUTHOR'S INTENDED MEANING.

It is not enough for one simply to **know** the rules and principles of interpretation. Rather, these are given so that they might be put to **use** in Bible study. God gave His revelation to us so that we might know His will and **do** it. To that end, this lesson is devoted to the practice of biblical interpretation. The rules and principles will be applied to a chosen passage of Scripture in order to illustrate how the Bible is to be interpreted. The passage to be considered is 1 Corinthians 14:18–19:

I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.

This lesson will show that, in order to determine the author's intended meaning of these verses, one must:

1. Study the **words** of the passage.
2. Study the **sentences** of the passage.
3. Study the **paragraph** of the passage.
4. Study the **book** containing the passage.
5. Study the **correlation** of the passage.

I. Study the Words of the Passage.

A. Choose words to study.

1. Choose **key** words in the passage.

Key words are those that indicate the **topic** of a passage. The passage at hand has to do with "**tongues**." Therefore, it would be helpful to know something about this word.

2. Choose **unfamiliar** words in the passage.

If one is using an up-to-date translation of the Scriptures, the occurrence of unfamiliar words will be rare. In our passage, the author prefers that his readers speak words that are "**intelligible**." If this word is unfamiliar, it will be necessary to determine its meaning.

B. **Define** words in the passage.

1. Define **key** words in the passage.

a. Consult a **dictionary**.

Most often when we want to know the definition of a word, we look it up in a dictionary. However, a dictionary definition offers several **possible** meanings for a word. It is necessary to determine which, if any, definition is appropriate in this context. A Bible student must also realize that a dictionary offers the range of possible meanings based on the word's usage in **contemporary** communication. Because of this, a standard dictionary may not always help with biblical words.

b. Consult a **Bible** dictionary.

A Bible dictionary is designed to define words according to their **use** in the Bible. A given word may have several different usages throughout the Bible; however, because language is univocal, a word has only **one** meaning in a given context (see page four). Therefore, one must choose the definition most appropriate to the text at hand. For example, we have chosen to define the keyword *tongue*. A Bible dictionary lists two primary uses of the word *tongue* throughout the Scriptures: (1) the word is used

literally of the **physical** organ of the mouth and (2) it is used of spoken **languages** or dialects. Which definition fits the text at hand? Note that the author writes regarding “speaking **in** tongues” (indicating a language or dialect) rather than “speaking **with** tongues” (which could indicate the physical organ). Thus, the author was writing about speaking in languages.

2. Define **unfamiliar** words in the passage.

We have chosen to define the word *intelligible*, which may be unfamiliar. To do so, we should:

a. Consult a dictionary.

Again, this will provide a definition of the word as it is used **today**. This may or may not be the Bible’s usage, depending on the translation one is using.

b. Consult a Bible dictionary.

The major advantage of a Bible dictionary is that it defines a word according to the way in which the word is used in the Bible itself. However, one disadvantage is that Bible dictionaries are generally arranged by **topics**, or subjects. As such, they do not provide an **exhaustive** list of every word used in the Bible. Therefore, the word *intelligible* does not appear in most Bible dictionaries. In those cases, the student can survey the Bible’s use of a word by looking up the references that contain it. A **concordance** is the tool that will provide such a list.

c. Consult a Bible concordance.

A concordance lists references to a given word in the Bible. The list may or may not be complete, depending on whether or not it is an exhaustive concordance. Once the desired word has been located, the student can look up the references in order to find the word’s usage elsewhere in the Bible. Use of a concordance for *intelligible* reveals that it is used again in the same chapter we are considering:

Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? – 1 Corinthians 14:9

Thus, *intelligible* refers to words that allow the listener to “know what you are saying.” Intelligible words are words that can be **understood**.

II. Study the Sentences of the Passage.

A. Study the **structure** of the sentences.

All sentences are composed of parts of speech that are designed to give each word a **function** in the sentence. Nouns describe persons, places, or things, while verbs describe action or being, etc. Even seemingly insignificant words such as *to* perform a function. For example, the author of our passage states:

I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue. – 1 Corinthians 14:19

In this context, the word *to* indicates the author's **reason** for preferring words that are understandable: so that others may be instructed.

B. Study the **relationship** of the sentences.

The relationship of sentences to each other is indicated by the use of words which communicate that relationship. For example, in our passage, the author began the second sentence with the word *but* to indicate a **contrast** with the first sentence:

I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But, in the church, I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue. – 1 Corinthians 14:18–19

Since the word *tongue* means “language” and since the author prefers *understandable* words, the text means that, though he has the **ability** to speak in languages that some might not understand, in the church the purpose of speech is to **instruct** others.

The following is a helpful sample list of terms used to connect sentences:

<u>Term</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
but	contrast
just as	comparison
because, for	reason
therefore, then	result
that, so that,	
in order that	purpose
then, so	conclusion

III. Study the Paragraphs of the Passage.

A. Define the **content** of a paragraph.

Just as words are logically arranged to form sentences, sentences are grouped logically in paragraphs. A paragraph begins a **new thought** that supports the overall theme of the text in which it is contained. Since the boundaries of a new paragraph can be difficult to define, the following will be helpful:

1. A new **verse** is not necessarily a new paragraph.

The original manuscripts of the Bible did not contain verse markings. These were added later to help **locate** passages of Scripture. Therefore, verses may or may not begin a new thought in a passage. Most modern translations either indent the text at the beginning of a new paragraph or place the number of a verse that begins a new paragraph in bold type.

2. **Literary** type affects paragraph structure.

As seen on page three, the Bible contains various forms of literature: letters, poetry, narratives, etc. These literary forms may group sentences differently. For example, 1 Corinthians is an epistle (this conclusion can be confirmed by consulting the introduction to the book in any study Bible). As such, it is written as a **letter** with paragraphs formed as we would form them in a letter today. On the other hand, the Old Testament book of Psalms is filled with Hebrew **poetry**. Therefore, the sentences in the Psalms are grouped according to the structure of Hebrew poetry such as **parallelism**. Most modern translations have arranged the text to reflect this structure.

- B. Determine the **message** of a paragraph.

Remember, the message of a given paragraph supports the overall theme of the text in which it is contained. For example, 1 Corinthians 14:18–19 forms a new thought supporting the author’s argument that only understandable words are to be spoken in the church. The preceding paragraph (verses 13–17) contains illustrations of the folly of speaking in unintelligible languages. Verses 18–19 contain the author’s own practice in order to avoid the error of speaking unintelligible languages in the church. The next paragraph, verses 20–21, offers a direct challenge to the readers to think in a mature fashion on this matter.

Once you have defined the content of the paragraphs in a given text, it should not be difficult to determine the message of each paragraph.

IV. Study the Book Containing the Passage.

- A. Read the **entire** book.

It is highly recommended that you read the entire book through at one sitting, if possible. This will provide an overview of the author’s flow of thought and other insights that will aid interpretation. For example, a reading of 1 Corinthians reveals that the church had a number of problems, of which the “speaking in tongues” issue was only one. In addition, the book indicates that the root of these problems was **pride** resulting in lack of love for others (see chapters 8–13). This knowledge will help reconstruct the situation in Corinth with regard to tongues.

B. Determine the **author** of the book.

In most cases, the author is identified in the book or title of the book:

Paul, called to be an apostle. – 1 Corinthians 1:1

In those cases where the author is not identified, a study Bible or commentary should be consulted.

C. Determine the **recipients** of the book.

Again, in most cases this is stated:

To the church of God in Corinth. – 1 Corinthians 1:2

D. Determine the **purpose** of the book.

This is either stated in the book or implied by other factors. The purpose for the book of 1 Corinthians is stated:

Some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. – 1 Corinthians 1:11

Now for the matters you wrote about. – 1 Corinthians 7:1

One can see that Paul had been **informed** of issues in the church to which he responded with the letter of 1 Corinthians. Apparently, the issue of tongues was one about which Paul had been informed. He obviously was aware of this church's misuse of the gift.

As always, in those cases where the purpose of a book is unclear, a commentary and/or study Bible will help.

V. **Study the Correlation of the Passage.**

Although the Bible has many human authors and therefore should be interpreted as a human book, it has but one **ultimate** author—God. As a result, the Bible does not contradict itself.

Its teachings are **consistent** throughout. This means that the student of the Word is free to compare Scripture with Scripture to develop sound teaching. God has chosen to reveal Himself and His plan **progressively** in the Scripture (that is, not all at once). Therefore, issues addressed in one portion of the Bible may have helpful background material contained in another portion.

A. Study related **passages**.

On page four we saw that the overall context of the Bible has to do with both **content** and **time**. That is, both the message and the chronology of Bible books need to be correlated.

1. Compare the **message** of related passages.

Survey the references listed in a Bible dictionary, study Bible, concordance, or commentary. You will discover any passages that contain information related to your text. For example, in looking up references to the word *tongue*, an interesting passage in the book of Acts comes to light:

When the day of Pentecost came, they . . . began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them their own language being spoken. – Acts 2:1, 4–6

From this passage we learn that “speaking in tongues” was indeed practiced as **languages** that were **understandable** to the hearers.

2. Compare the **time** of related passages.

Consult a study Bible or a commentary and you will see that the events of the book of Acts **precede** the writing of 1 Corinthians by many years. In the case at hand, the speaking in tongues on the Day of Pentecost preceded 1 Corinthians by approximately **25** years. Thus, since Acts 2 is the first occasion of speaking in tongues, it defines the purpose rather than 1 Corinthians.

Note: Now that the study of 1 Corinthians 14:18–19 has broadened to include Acts 2, the serious student could go even further by applying the same rules to the Acts passage as those used in 1 Corinthians. In fact, new questions for study arise from Acts 2:

- What is the “Day of Pentecost?”
- Where is Jerusalem in relation to Corinth?
- Why were the disciples gathered in Jerusalem?
- etc.

Use of a Bible handbook, atlas, and concordance would help answer these questions.

B. Apply related **teaching**.

1. Develop **principles** from the passages.

As noted above, the events of Acts precede the writing of 1 Corinthians. Further study of the phenomenon of “speaking in tongues” would reveal that Acts 2 is the first recorded occurrence in the Word of God. Therefore, the original purpose for tongues is clearly set forth in Acts 2: to communicate a message to others in their own language. By the time 1 Corinthians was written, the practice had apparently degenerated to the point that **unintelligible** speech was considered to be a **gift** from God (see 1 Corinthians 12–13). Paul’s letter to the church at Corinth sought to correct this and other errors. The teaching of 1 Corinthians 14 on tongues is consistent with the original purpose set forth in Acts 2. That is why only words that “instruct others” are deemed by Paul to be appropriate for a church service. Thus, the principle of “edifying” or “building up” others is taught in this passage (see 1 Corinthians 14:4–5).

2. **Apply** the principles to your life.

Activity which directly builds up or facilitates the building up of others is to be our **primary** concern in the church. Preaching, teaching, singing, etc. is all to be done for the edification of others, not self-glorification. For those **directly** involved in these ministries, the application is obvious. For those **indirectly** involved, such as ushers, nursery workers, custodians, etc., the principle teaches that these labors are valuable to the extent that they **facilitate** the edification of others in the church (see especially 1 Corinthians 12).

Suggested Bible Study Tools

Good Bible Translations: *New International Version* (NIV), *English Standard Version* (ESV), *New American Standard Bible* (NASB), *King James Version* (KJV), *New King James Version* (NKJV)

Study Bibles: *NIV Study Bible*, *Ryrie Study Bible*

Bible Dictionary: *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*

Bible Concordance: *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*

Bible Commentaries: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 2 volumes; *Tyndale Bible Commentaries* (multiple volumes), *Everyman’s Bible Commentary* (multiple volumes); *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 13 volumes

Bible Encyclopedia: *Baker’s Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 2 volumes.

Bible Doctrine: *Basic Theology* by C.C. Ryrie; *Moody Handbook of Theology* by Paul Enns.

Bible Handbook: *The New Unger’s Bible Handbook*

Bible Atlas: *Moody Atlas of the Bible*

Part Three: Applying the Bible

Introduction

We have seen that the Bible was written over a period of 1600 years by forty different authors. These authors wrote at different times, from different backgrounds, about varied events and circumstances. Yet, the Bible is consistent in its message because, although humans composed the Bible, God is its ultimate Author.

Further, the Bible is one story, focused on Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God's answer to what has gone wrong in His good world. The Bible begins with *Creation*, and the Creator *orienting* the creature to his world. But the *Fall* of man into sin meant that the world became distorted or *disoriented* for him. God has stepped in to *redeem* or make right what has gone wrong by the entrance of sin, and thereby *reorient* His world to His original design. This reorientation will come through the seed of a woman, which will produce God's chosen Redeemer, who will come through His chosen people. The story of the Bible then, is about God's relentless march toward the fulfillment of His promise to redeem His world.

Therefore, despite the fact that the Bible is a big Book containing different types of literature and addressing multiple issues, the message of each passage can be summarized in one phrase: *People in situations before God*. While the particulars of our situations are different from those in biblical times, both people and God are the same, and therefore the Bible's principles are relevant for all people in every age.

In order for the purpose for which God gave the Bible to be achieved, it is necessary that we apply the principles of biblical passages. This section of our course will focus on practical examples of gleaning principles from the Bible, and how these truths can be applied to our lives.

Three Steps to Applying the Bible

I. Step #1: Understand the Original Application

This requires we understand the author's intended meaning by following the principles laid out in Part Two: Understanding the Bible.

II. Step #2: Abstract the Continuing Truth

A. Measure the distance between "then and there" and "here and now":

1. Genre – type of literature
 - a. Poetry: Example – Psalm 121
 - b. Narrative: Descriptive vs. Prescriptive (Judges 6)
 - c. Gospels: Deity of Christ (Matthew 8)

2. Culture
 - a. Parapet: see Deuteronomy 22:8
 - b. Head Coverings: see 1 Corinthians 11
3. Theology
 - a. Progress of Revelation – 7 dispensations

Innocence	Conscience	Human Government	Promise	Law	Church	Kingdom
Creation – Fall	Fall – Flood	Flood – Abraham	Abraham – Mosaic Law	Law – Pentecost	Pentecost – Millennium	Millennium – Eternal State

- b. Refutation of False Teaching (Galatians 5:2; 1 Timothy 1:4)

B. Sidewalk vs. Bridge

1. Sidewalk passages – application comes straight to us (universal sins, universal theology)
2. Bridge passages – apply what is taught about God, about sin, and about grace.

III. Step #3: State the Continuing Truth in Modern Terms

In what situations do we apply the continuing truth today?

Application Practicum

