ARE YOU BORN AGAIN?

Knowing in your heart that you are born-again, and followed by a statement of faith are the two prerequisites to studying and getting the most out of your ICBT materials. We at ICBT have developed this material to educate each Believer in the principles of God. Our goal is to provide each Believer with an avenue to enrich their personal lives and bring them closer to God.

Is Jesus your Lord and Savior? If you have not accepted Him as such, you must be aware of what Romans 3:23 tells you.

23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God:

How do you go about it? You must believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

I John 5:13 gives an example in which to base your faith.

13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

What if you are just not sure? Romans 10:9-10 gives you the Scriptural mandate for becoming born-again.

9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto Salvation.

Take some time to consider this very carefully. Ask Jesus to come into your heart so that you will know the power of His Salvation and make your statement of faith today.

Once you become born-again, it is your responsibility to renew your mind with the Word of God. Romans 12:1-2 tells us that transformation of the mind can only take place in this temporal world by the Word of God.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

The Apostle Paul, giving instructions to his “son” Timothy states in 2 Timothy 2:15:
15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

What happens if we do these things? Ephesians 4:12-13 gives us the answer to this question.

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:

By studying the Word of God, you will be equipped for service in the Kingdom of God and you will also be ready to take the position in the Body of Christ to which God has appointed you. You will be able to walk in unity with other Believers and you will be a vessel of honor to God that can rightly divide the word of truth.

If you are not saved and you do not know what to say, consider this simple prayer.

Lord, I know that I have need of a savior. I believe that Jesus died for my sins and the God raised Him from the dead three days later. I ask to be forgiven and for Jesus to come into my heart and be the Lord of my life. I believe now by faith that God has heard my prayer and I am born-again.

If you have prayed this prayer, accept by faith that your sins have been forgiven. It is important that you tell someone of your decision to accept the Lord. Also, it is our recommendation that you should attach yourself to a local church and undergo water baptism.

For those who have prayed this prayer with sincerity of heart, we welcome to eternal life in the Kingdom of God. May the blessings of God overtake you.

May God grant you wisdom, knowledge, and understanding in all of His ways.

ICBT Directors and Staff
THE VISION

As we have been commissioned by the prophet of God, we now set our hand to write the vision of International College of Bible Theology, so that: "He that runs may read it, the vision having been clearly written and made plain" (Habakkuk 2:2).

1) **UNITY** - To build up the Body of Christ by networking with all churches, as well as with local and international ministries. This networking is to provide experienced leadership ministries to the small, local Church, to encourage unity and fellowship among pastors, church leaders and para-church groups, through active service.

2) **GOSPEL** - To go with the lifeline of the Gospel, wherein we desire to educate with love, integrity, and without compromise.

3) **ONE CROSS FOR ALL** - To cross cultural, racial, and denominational lines for unity, fellowship, networking, and progress. To have an open door through I.C.B.T to all, of like faith, who desire to join with us in a common goal for the highest good. To proclaim one cross for all cultures, races, denominations, and peoples.

4) **GO YE** - To go wherever there is a need; to rich or poor, to majorities and minorities, to large and small churches, to free and incarcerated; to go where many fail to go and to meet the needs before us.

5) **THE CALLED** - To make opportunities available, to those called to minister, to expand their horizons through new associations and experiences. To aid new and/or younger ministers in fulfilling God's call on their lives.

6) **EDUCATION** - God has charged us with propagating the Gospel through education to whosoever will. This education is offered through certificate programs that teach the basics of Christianity and degree programs for those seeking more in-depth levels in Christian teachings.

7) **APPLICATION** - To make available to students the opportunity for education, as well as learning practical application, in traditional and non-traditional settings.

8) **DREAM A DREAM** - To cause all persons with which we associate to catch a vision, to dream yet another dream, and to keep their eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of their faith.

9) **THE CALL** - To encourage each person (all persons) to move out of his/her (their) comfort zone, to be all he/she (they) can be for Christ and to fulfill the call upon their life (lives), to encourage each one (them) to pursue his/her (their) purpose, to live up to his/her (their) potential, and to produce the fruit of the Spirit.
International College

of

Bible Theology

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"
II Timothy 2:15
Between The Testaments

THERE ARE:

74 pages of Commentary
8 Homework assignments
4 Quiz assignments
1 Midterm Exam
1 Final Exam
36 pages of Answer Keys for school sites only (Answer keys are not included in the student’s copy of material.

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the Commentary.

Do Homework I, which covers pages 8-15 in the Commentary.
Do Homework II, which covers pages 15-22 in the Commentary
Do Quiz 1, which covers Homework I-II.
Do Homework III, which covers pages 22-37 in the Commentary.
Do Homework IV, which covers pages 37-45 in the Commentary.
Do Quiz 2, which covers Homework III-IV.
Take Midterm Exam, which covers Homework I - IV.
Do Homework V, which covers pages 45-49 in the Commentary
Do Homework VI, which covers pages 49-58 in the Commentary
Do Quiz 3, which covers Homework V-VI.
Do Homework VII, which covers pages 58-68 in the Commentary.
Do Homework VIII, which covers pages 68-71 in the Commentary.
Do Quiz 4, which covers Homework VII-VIII.
Take Final Exam, which covers Homework V - VIII.

13 weeks in a Trimester: 11 weeks of teaching and 2 weeks of testing. You will need to cover 6.4 pages per teaching session.

18 weeks in a Semester: 16 weeks of teaching and 2 weeks of testing. You will need to cover 4.4 pages per teaching session.

NOTE: The Instructor is encouraged to add his/her personality to the teaching sessions and to add knowledge to the Commentaries. The Instructor had some latitude if they desire to give some outside homework or essays. Before doing so, please check with the administrator of the school.

ALL TERM PAPERS MUST BE COMPLETED AND TURNED IN TO THE INSTRUCTOR BEFORE THE FINAL EXAM. NO GRADES WILL BE GIVEN FOR THE COURSE WITHOUT THE COMPLETION OF THE TERM PAPER.
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I. INTER-TESTAMENTAL PERIOD (BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS)

The New Testament begins with the Romans ruling Palestine. The throne is occupied by an Idumaean king named Herod. At the end of the Old Testament, the Persian Empire ruled Palestine. The throne of Israel was occupied by a Jewish king named Zerubbabel. The time between the Old Testament and New Testaments is about four hundred (400) years, 445 B.C. to 4 B.C.

These four hundred (400) years can be divided into four (4) groups, known as the Persian Period, the Greek Period, the Maccabean Period, and the Roman Period.

A. The Persian Period

1. The Persians were in rule almost one hundred (100) years, 445 - 332 B.C.

2. King Cyrus was lenient/merciful to the Jews.
   a. He allowed many Jews to return to their homeland.
   b. He ordered restoration of Jerusalem with the help of Ezra and Nehemiah.

3. Jewish High Priests were given some civil power, along with their religious duties.

4. Palestine suffered much because of the constant warfare between Egypt and Persia.

B. The Greek Period

1. The dates of the Greek Period were 332-167 B.C.

2. The Persian Empire fell to the Greeks by the sword of Alexander the Great.

3. All nations that he came against fell because Alexander the Great was a brilliant strategist and he had a great army.

4. Alexander the Great was charitable to the Jews and encouraged them to settle in the other lands.

5. Alexander spread the Greek culture and language wherever he went.
a. The spread of the Greek culture and speech was called "Hellenism" or "Hellenization".

b. Many Jews went to Egypt to enjoy the privileges of the Greek population.

6. Alexander the Great died in 323 B.C. with the conquered territory being divided up between his generals.

   
a. This translation is called the Septuagint or Bible of the Seventy.
   
b. This Bible, though available was probably not the one used by Christ and His disciples, since they knew Hebrew and the Hebrew text had been well cared for in transcription.

8. Syria took Palestine in 198 B.C.
   
a. This brought the division of the lands into Galilee, Samaria, Judea, Trachontis, and Perea.
   
b. Antiochus Epiphanes became king in 175 B.C.
      - Tried to abolish the Jewish religion and establish Greek idolatry.
      - Temple worship and all Jewish rites and ceremonies were forbidden.
      - The people were even compelled to eat swine/pig, forbidden meat to the Jews.

C. The Maccabean Period

1. This period came about because of the resistance to Antiochus Epiphanes.

2. It was started by Mattathias and his sons
   
a. After the death of Mattathias, his son Judas fought so hard, he became known as Maccabeus, "The Hammer".
3. The Maccabees defeated Syria.

4. For nearly one hundred (100) years the Hasmoneans ruled. Hasmonean was the family name for the Maccabees.
   a. They ruled both spiritually and politically.

5. They had regained the temple, purified it and again established daily sacrifices.

6. The religious sects of the Pharisees and Sadducees came into being during this period.
   a. Pharisees: The name means “separatist.”
      (1) They did much to interpret the laws and keep the religion; they did much to preserve the faith.
      (2) By the time of Christ, they had become legalistic and hard-hearted.
   b. Sadducees
      (1) They were more social and political.
      (2) They did not believe in the resurrection.
      (3) They were always in conflict with Jesus.

D. The Roman Period - 63 B.C.-70 A.D.

1. Pompey, the Roman general, invaded Palestine killing twelve thousand (12,000) Jewish defenders.

2. Herod the Great became king.
   a. He was great in evil and cruelty, murdering three of his own sons, his wife, his brother-in-law and the infants at the time of the birth of Jesus.
   b. Herod ruled for thirty (30) years
   c. Herod died shortly after the birth of Jesus.
d. He also had murdered all but two of the members of the highest Jewish court, the Sanhedrin.

e. He tried to claim he was a Jew, to win the favor of the people.

f. He rebuilt the temple to win the confidence of the people.

3. Caesar Augustus was emperor and Herod the Great was king at the time of Jesus' birth.

E. Fullness of Time, Galatians 4:4

1. The diaspora means scattering or the dispersed ones.

a. Wherever the Jews went, they established synagogues to retain their racial and religious identities, because they were so far from Jerusalem.

- This is how the synagogues started, as a place of prayer and spiritual worship and instruction.

- The Synagogues provided a ready-made congregation for the Christian message.

2. The Greeks

a. They gave a universal language to the world.

b. Preaching or teaching of the Christian message could be done in a language understood by all men.

c. The Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek by the time of Jesus.

3. The Romans

a. The Roman Empire set up road systems.

- The Roman Legions could move to almost any part of the world because of their road systems.

b. Because of the Pax Romana, Roman Peace, missionaries could travel or sail freely.
- This was a real asset to the Jewish converts because they were free and under Roman protection.

4. Places of importance
   a. Palestine, which links Asia, Africa, and Europe
   b. Jerusalem was the center of the Jewish faith.

5. Birth of Jesus
   a. This was the beginning of the New Testament.
   b. Jesus was born into a Jewish, Greek and Roman influenced world.
   c. Note how important each of the cultures were, in having the time right for the coming of Jesus.
      - Universal language
      - A Bible that could be understood by all
      - The Roman road system
      - Synagogues as places of worship
      - Diaspora, which caused the Jews to live in many cities, thus having many Synagogues

5. All things were set for the fullness of time or the coming of Jesus to establish His Better Covenant.

II. THE TWELVE DISCIPLES

A. Simon Peter
   1. He was also called Cephas.
   2. He had been first a follower of John the Baptist.
   3. Peter was martyred in Rome, where he was crucified head down.
B. Andrew

1. He was Simon's brother.

2. He was also a follower first of John the Baptist.

3. Andrew was crucified on a St. Andrew's, an "X" type of the cross.

C. James

1. He was called "the elder."

2. James was beheaded by Herod in A.D. 44 (Ac.12:2).

D. John

1. John was known as the beloved disciple.

2. He was the brother of James.

3. John was the only one of the disciples to die of natural causes.

4. John and James "the elder" were called the sons of thunder.

E. Philip

1. He was one of the first ones called to follow Jesus (Jn.1:43).

2. Philip died a martyr's death at Heirapolis.

F. Bartholomew

1. Bartholomew was also called Nathaniel.

2. He was a missionary in Armenia and was flayed to death according to tradition.

G. Thomas

1. Thomas was also called Didymus.

2. He was martyred in Calamina, India by being run through with a spear and then thrown into an oven.
H. Matthew

1. Matthew was also called Levi.
2. He was a tax collector.
3. Matthew died a martyr's death in Ethiopia.

I. James “the Less” or “Younger”

1. He was the son of Alphaeus and Mary, sister of Mary, Jesus mother (Mk.15:40).
2. He preached in Egypt and Palestine.
3. Some historians claim he was crucified in Egypt. However, Josephus, Book XX-IX-I, says that he was stoned to death in Jerusalem at the order of the High Priest.

J. Jude, or Thaddeus (Mt.10:3)

1. Jude was the brother of James the Less.
2. He died as a martyr in Persia.
3. This Jude is not to be confused with the writer of the Book of Jude who was the Lord's half-brother.

K. Simon

1. Simon was called the Canaanite or Zelotes.
2. There is nothing known of his manner of death.

L. Judas Iscariot

1. He was the betrayer of Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.
2. Judas hung himself (Mt.26:14-16, 27:3-5).
M. Matthias (Ac.1:26)

1. He was elected to fill the place of Judas Iscariot.
2. He was stoned and then beheaded at Jerusalem.

III. DEFINITIONS

A. Apostle:

An Apostle is a special sent one, a messenger. This term is especially applied to the twelve (12) and also Paul and some other prominent workers with Paul.

B. Centurion:

A Centurion was the Captain of one hundred (100) men.

C. Diaspora:

This word or another form occurs three times in the New Testament (Jn.7:35; Ja.1:1; 1Pe.1:1). It is derived from two Greek words. It means to scatter through, scattered abroad. It refers to the Jews.

Moses told the Jews that if they abandoned the Law, they would be scattered (Le.26:33-37; De.11:27-28, 28:64-68). This was fulfilled when the Israelites went into Assyria, 722 B.C. It was also fulfilled when Southern Israel went into Babylon in 586 B.C. Most Jews did not return to Palestine, but settled in the cities of the Greek and Roman Empire (Ac.2:5, 9-11).

A persecution later broke out, in which the converted Jews, proselytes, were scattered abroad (Ac.11:19). By the actions of their faith, many were converted to Judaism (Ac.13:43). When Christianity began to spread, they were the first reached.

D. Disciple:

A disciple is a follower of another man. In the Gospels, disciple usually refers to one of the twelve (12) followers of Jesus.
E. **Galilee/Galilean:**

Galilee referred to a province of Israel. Some of these residents were followers of Judas of Galilee, who headed a rebellion against all foreign domination.

The Galileans were insistent on their own rights, and refused the rights of others. These political fanatics came into violent collision with Pilate (Lk.13:1-3). Christ's enemies tried to identify Him and His disciples with this party (Mt.26:69; Mk.14:70; Lk.23:6).

F. **Herodians:**

They were a Jewish political party which took their name from the family of Herod. They supported Herod and Rome. Thus, the Herodians derived their authority from the Roman government. They were averse to any change of the political situation, and regarded Christ as a revolutionary character. The Herodians hoped to retain a fragment of national government.

G. **Levites:**

The Levites had charge of the Tabernacle and its services. They were descendants of the tribe of Levi, and took care of the Temple. The Levites are mentioned twice in the Gospels (Lk.10:32; Jn.1:19).

H. **Pharisees:**

They were a powerful religious and political group among the Jews. The Pharisees followed closely the Mosaic law of purity, as well as many man-made regulations. They believed in the resurrection of the dead.

The Pharisees originally came into being during the Maccabean Period, to deepen the Jewish faith. However, they became self-righteous and hypocritical. The Pharisees violently hated Jesus. In Scriptures, They were also known as rulers. The Pharisees were called “separatists” because they separated themselves from the political party in their nation. They were exponents and guardians of the written and oral Law, and in belief, were conservative.

I. **Priests:**

The Priests were ordained by God in the time of Moses, and came from the tribe of Levi. They were princes and ministers, with a function that was strictly religious.
After the Babylon captivity the civil power of the state passed to the priests. The head of the Sanhedrin was the High Priest. In the time of Christ, the priesthood was a religious office. The priests were carnal in spirit, and were persistent enemies of Jesus. It was the High Priest who delivered Jesus to Pilate (Mt.27:1-2).

J. Publicans:

The Publicans were tax collectors employed by the Roman government. From their position of power, they greatly oppressed the people. The Jews who were publicans, were hated by other Jews.

K. Repentance:

Repentance is a literal confession of sin. It is a change of mind, a changed attitude towards God, sin, and oneself.

L. Sabbath:

The Jewish Sabbath ran from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday. As a part of the oral tradition, a burden could not be carried during this time.

M. Sadducees:

The Sadducees were a small, wealthy group of Jews. They were a political party among the Jews, and rivals of the Pharisees. They did not believe in the resurrection, angels, immortality of the soul, or spirits (Mt.22:23; Ac.23:8).

The High Priests were chosen from the Sadducees. The name was possibly derived from Zadok, the High Priest of Solomon's time (1Kg.1:34). In their religious belief, we would consider them the modernists of that day. They were the secularists of the Jewish faith, and would have caused it to become pagan. The group disappeared after the fall of the Jewish nation in A.D. 70.

N. Samaritans:

The Samaritans were a mixed race of Jews and Gentiles. In 722 B.C., Sargon took North Israel captive to Assyria. He left the poor and weaker people behind. Other peoples mingled with the remnant of Israel, bringing them their idolatrous forms of worship. The Jews as a people despised the Samaritans.
Esar-Haddon of Assyria sent them a priest so that they should fear the Lord. This brought about a fear of God, but they still served their own gods. In 535 B.C., the second Temple was built. The Samaritans offered their help, which was refused (Ezr.4:1-3). There was enmity between them and the Jews, which was evidenced in Christ's time (Mt.10:5; Lk.10:29-37; Jn.4:9).

O. Sanhedrin:

The Sanhedrin was the supreme council of the Jews. There were 70 to 72 members, the High Priest being the president. He held office for years, if not for life. Both Pharisees and Sadducees made up the council. The Greek words "hedra," meaning "sitting place," and "hedrion" which means "together with, sitting together with," or "council board, council chamber" or "place of session." The word Sanhedrin is used 22 times in the New Testament, of which 8 are in the Gospels, always translated council. The Sanhedrin can be traced to the time of Jehoshaphat (2Ch.19:8).

In the days of Jesus Christ, the Sanhedrin consisted of a Chief Priest, scribes, lawyers, elders, and representatives of the laity. Christ stood before the Sanhedrin council in the palace of the High Priest. The Sanhedrin had the right to pass the sentence of death. It was this council, before which Peter, John, and Stephen stood (Ac.4:1-7; 6:12-58).

P. Scribes:

They copied and interpreted the Law. They worshiped the letter, rather than the spirit of the Law. The scribes were usually from the Pharisees. Sometimes they were called lawyers (Mt.22:35; Lk.10:25, 14:3).

The scribes were interpreters and teachers of the Old Testament Scriptures. The people held them in high esteem, but they were avowed opponents of Jesus Christ. They were publicly denounced by Him for making the Word of God of none effect by their traditions (Mt.23:1-39; Mk.12:38-40).

Q. Septuagint:

It is the Greek version of the Old Testament Scriptures. Tradition says it was the work of 72 Jews who were brought from Palestine to Alexandria for that purpose (285-130 B.C.). The need for the Septuagint probably came about because of the dispersed Jews who were forgetting their native Hebrew through lack of use, as well as Greek becoming the commonly spoken language.

The Greek speaking Jews generally accepted the Septuagint and its general
circulation paved the way for the spreading of Christianity in the heathen world. With few exceptions, quotations from the Old Testament to the New Testament are from the Septuagint.

R. Synagogue:

In the Greek language, it is “sun”, “ago,” meaning “to assemble, to lead, bring, or come together.” It refers to the place the Jews assembled, a Jewish place of worship and schooling in the Scriptures.

Synagogues date from the captivity in Babylon. The Jews gathered together in small groups because they were no longer able to attend the Temple. They built Synagogues for worship and religious instruction. In this way the knowledge of the Law was kept alive in the minds of the Jews and imparted to proselytes.

Jesus began His Galilean ministry in a Synagogue (Lk.4:14-30). The Synagogue is still a potent factor in the education of Jewish children.

S. Synoptic Gospels:

1. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the Synoptic Gospels. They are called this because they survey the life of Christ from a common viewpoint. All three synoptic Gospels harmonize in their witness to Jesus the Messiah.

T. Zealots:

They were a religious political party of Jews who opposed Roman aggression.
**Chart of the Gospels #1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gospels</th>
<th>Probable Date</th>
<th>Place of Writing</th>
<th>Addresses</th>
<th>Presentations of Christ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>60's</td>
<td>Antioch or Syria</td>
<td>Jews in Syria</td>
<td>Messiah/King Son of David</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Late 50's/early 60's</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Non-Christian Romans</td>
<td>Servant of Yahweh; Redeemer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke</td>
<td>60's</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Non-Christian Roman Official, or other cultured non-Christian</td>
<td>Son of man, compassion ideal man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Late 80's/early 90's</td>
<td>Ephesus</td>
<td>Christians and/or non-Christians in the region around Ephesus</td>
<td>Son of God</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Chart of the Gospels #2

## THE FOURFOLD GOSPEL ACCOUNT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Portrait of Christ</th>
<th>MATTHEW</th>
<th>MARK</th>
<th>LUKE</th>
<th>JOHN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>King and Lion-like</td>
<td>Servant and Ox-like</td>
<td>Perfect man and Manlike</td>
<td>Mighty God and eagle-like</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Angelic reminder Re.4; Ezk.1</th>
<th>First creature lion-like</th>
<th>Second creature ox-like</th>
<th>Third creature manlike</th>
<th>Fourth creature eagle-like</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style of writer</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Preacher</th>
<th>Historian</th>
<th>Theologian</th>
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</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emphasis by writer</th>
<th>His sermons</th>
<th>His miracles</th>
<th>His parables</th>
<th>His doctrines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture of original readers</th>
<th>Jews</th>
<th>Romans</th>
<th>Greeks</th>
<th>The World</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genealogical record</th>
<th>Yes: Mt.1:1-17</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes: Lk.3:23-38</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>A king must have one</th>
<th>A servant needs one</th>
<th>A perfect man should have one</th>
<th>God has none</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Root</th>
<th>Traces the regal line of David through his son Solomon</th>
<th>Traces the physical line of David through another son, Nathan</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Fruit | Leads to Joseph, the legal stepfather of Jesus | Leads to Mary the physical mother of Jesus | |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of main action</th>
<th>CAPERNAUM IN GALILEE</th>
<th>Jerusalem in Judea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Twofold division | Synoptic Gospels - - stress the humanity of Christ | Fourth Gospel-- stresses the deity of Christ |
IV. THE NEW TESTAMENT FROM GOD TO US

There was already a Bible when the first New Testament books were being written. Usually that Book of God was referred to as the Scripture(s) (e.g., Matthew 21:42). We now call it the Old Testament. It was the only Bible of Jesus and the apostles. A couple of decades after Christ's ascension, the Holy Spirit began to move and inspire chosen saints to write letters and historical accounts that would eventually be brought together in a volume to be known as the New Testament.

When we hold a copy of the English New Testament in our hands, it is fair to ask how accurately it represents the original autographs. Involved in the answer is the history of the New Testament, from God (first century A.D.) to us (twenty-first century). It is a fascinating story of miracles, involving stages of transmission, canonization, and translation. The starting point of such a history is Divine revelation.

A. Introduction of the New Testament

The New Testament is the new birthplace of a Christian, because that is where Divine power transformed his life. Spiritually, he feels at home there. There is a hunger in his heart to read and study the New Testament. God gave that written Word, not only for the Believer's Salvation but also for his edification. The New Testament is food for growing, maturing and serving. A sound starting point for such a study project is to survey, which is viewing, the New Testament as a full unit, section by section, and book by book.

B. History of the New Testament Writings

The last words God wrote to man are recorded on the pages of the New Testament. The Book is that momentous and precious.

V. GOD'S FINAL REVELATION

In the Old Testament God had given a partial revelation of Himself, having spoken through prophets and angels. The full and final revelation came by His Son Jesus. "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son" (He.1:1-2a, NIV).

After Jesus had provided atonement for sins, "He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high", because His atoning death was finished (He.1:3). The written Word of the New Testament records the story and revelation of this Son of God.

To say that the New Testament is God's final revelation of Himself, is not to say that the Old Testament is obsolete. The New Testament was never intended to replace the Old
Testament. Rather, it is the sequel to the Old Testament's origins, heirs of its promises, fruits of its seed, the peak of its mountain. The ministry of Christ would be a puzzle or an enigma without the Old Testament. For example, it is the Old Testament that explains Jesus' words, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt.15:24). The best preparation for a study of the New Testament is to become acquainted with the foundation of the Old Testament.

As God's final revelation, the New Testament records the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. The New Testament records the last words and works of Christ on earth, the birth and growth of Christ's Church, prophecies of the last times, and clear statements and interpretations of the Christian faith. Every earnest Christian wants to spend much time studying these final Words of God.

A. Revelation

Revelation is God's communication of truth to man, without which man cannot know God. The word revelation, "apocalypsis," means “uncovering,” or “drawing away of a veil.”

Before there was any Scripture, God revealed Himself to man through such media as conscience, nature, general revelation, and direct conversation with people, special revelation. But, there was needed a form of revelation that would be permanent, explicit, and retentive of a large volume of revealed truth. For that, God chose the written form of human language to be read, learned, and applied by all the succeeding generations.

Let us recall the powerful words of Hebrews 1:1-3 (NIV) studied earlier: "God...has spoken to us by His Son." The Son is the Living Word; the Bible is the written Word of the Son.

B. Inspiration

All the books of the Bible, New Testament as well as Old Testament, came into being by the Holy Spirit's direct ministry of inspiration. Two crucial questions at this point are:

1. How did the human authors know what God wanted them to write?
2. Were their writings without error?

We cannot explain the supernatural process of inspiration that brought about the original writings of the Bible. Paul refers to the process as God-breathed. In 2Timothy 3:16, the phrase “inspired by God” translates the Greek "theopneustia," which literally means “God-breathed.” Peter says the Bible authors were under-girded, or carried along by the Holy Spirit. "Men spoke from God as they were
carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2Pe.1:21, NIV). These verses, along with many others, assure us that when the Bible authors wrote; all their words expressed, without error, the truths that God wanted to convey to mankind. In the original autographs, all the words were infallible in truth, and final in authority. Such accuracy applies to every part of the originals, to matters of history and science as well as to spiritual truths. If the Bible student does not believe this Scriptural infallibility and inerrancy, his study of the Biblical text will be haunted by confusing and destructive doubts.

C. The Original Autographs

The twenty-seven (27) books of the New Testament were written over a period of about fifty years (50), from A.D. 45 to 95, by eight (8) or nine (9) authors. All but a few words and phrases were written in Koionia Greek, which was the marketplace vernacular of the first-century Mediterranean world. It was written in that universal language to make it initially accessible to world leadership.

The writing material of most of the autographs was paper-like papyrus. Some autographs might have been written on animal skins, such as parchment or vellum. Sheets of papyrus, usually about ten (10) inches long, were attached together to make a long, rolled-up scroll, easy for reading. The paged codex, or book, did not supplement the roll until the second (2nd) or third (3rd) century A.D. The Bible text was written in vertical columns with pen and ink, with no space between words, sentences, or paragraphs, and with no punctuation marks. Verse and chapter divisions were not made until centuries later.

Most of the New Testament books were letters, epistles, written to individuals (1Ti.1:1-2), churches (1Th.1:1), or groups of Believers (1Pe.1:1-2). Luke wrote a Gospel and a historical book to share with a friend, Theophilus (Lk.1:1-3; Ac.1:1). It is very likely that the other three Gospels were written to share with individuals or churches.

The present order, the canon, of books in our New Testament is not the chronological order in which the books were written. Chart 1 (previously shown), shows a suggested chronological order of writing for the New Testament books. Study the chart carefully and try to visualize the growing zeal of the saints during the last decades of the first century, as the inspired writings began to circulate from city to city.

D. Transmission

Transmission is the process by which the Biblical manuscripts have been copied and recopied down through the ages, by hand or machine. God caused or allowed
each of the original New Testament autographs to disappear from the scene, but not before copies was already in the hands of His people.

Chart of Chronological Order of the Writing of the New Testament

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOOK</th>
<th>AUTHOR</th>
<th>PLACE WRITTEN</th>
<th>DATE A.D.</th>
<th>PERIODS</th>
<th>PERSONAL</th>
<th>APOSTOLIC LITERATURE</th>
<th>CHURCHES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>James</td>
<td>Jerusalem</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galatians</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Corinth</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Journey</td>
<td>Ephesus</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Thessalonians</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Thessalonians</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Corinth</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Corinthians</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Ephesus</td>
<td>58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Corinthians</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Corinth</td>
<td>61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romans</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Ephesus</td>
<td>61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colossians</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ephesians</td>
<td>Prison</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippians</td>
<td>Prison</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Timothy</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titus</td>
<td>Pastoral</td>
<td>Corinth</td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Timothy</td>
<td>Pastoral</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrews</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jude</td>
<td>Jude</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Peter</td>
<td>Peter</td>
<td></td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Peter</td>
<td>Peter</td>
<td></td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Mark</td>
<td></td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 John</td>
<td>John</td>
<td>Ephesus</td>
<td>85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 John</td>
<td>John</td>
<td>Palmos</td>
<td>96</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 John</td>
<td>John</td>
<td>Palmos</td>
<td>96</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revelation</td>
<td>John</td>
<td>Palmos</td>
<td>96</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(There are various opinions as to the order of writing. For example, some place Galatians later and Mark earlier.)
Scribes handwrote copies of the New Testament Books until the middle of the fifteenth century A.D. when Gutenberg invented movable type for the printing press. Scribal errors have been made in the copies, but God has preserved the text from doctrinal error to this present time. Thousands of Greek and non-Greek manuscripts of all or part of the New Testament text, supportive of the text's purity, exist today. Research has proven that the purity is unrivaled.

Such has been the care with which the New Testament has been copied, a care that has doubtless grown out of true reverence for its holy works. Such has been the providence of God in preserving for His Church in each and every age a competently exact text of the Scriptures that the New Testament is unrivaled among ancient writings in the purity of its text as actually transmitted and kept in use.

When holding a copy of the New Testament in our hands, we may rest assured that it is a wholly dependable translation, which represents the original, inspired autographs of the first century. As Divine author, God wrote an infallible book, inspiration; as Divine protector, He has preserved the text from doctrinal error, transmission.

E. Canonization

Canonization is the identification of writing as being part of the Scripture. It was not enough that God inspired the writings of each book of the Bible. He also gave to His people, in a collective sense, the spiritual perception to recognize in each of these books genuine marks of Divine inspiration and authority. With the Holy Spirit's guidance, they knew what false writings to reject, as well as what genuine writings to accept. It was a long human process over a few hundred years, many of the details of which are veiled in obscurity. But it is clear that God's supernatural hand, working through man, brought His inspired writings into the Canon and excluded other writings.


The Canon of the New Testament is the list of all the New Testament Books that God inspired. Although the last New Testament Book was written in A.D. 100, for the next couple of centuries questions persisted concerning whether some books, such as III John, were inspired. By the end of the fourth (4th) century A.D., the Canon was solidified, being composed of twenty-seven (27) books.

Five (5) of the New Testament Books are historical in content; twenty-one (21) are epistles, letters; and one (1) is apocalyptic, a revelation of visions. The order in which they appear in our Bible is this.
### Chart 2, "Canonical Order of New Testament Books"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HISTORY</th>
<th>EPISTLES</th>
<th>VISIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Matthew</td>
<td>6. Romans</td>
<td>27. Revelation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mark</td>
<td>7. 1 Corinthians</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Luke</td>
<td>8. 2 Corinthians</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Acts</td>
<td>10. Ephesians</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Philippians</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Colossians</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. 1 Thessalonians</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. 2 Thessalonians</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15. 1 Timothy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16. 2 Timothy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17. Titus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18. Philemon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19. Hebrews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20. James</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21. 1 Peter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22. 2 Peter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23. 1 John</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24. 2 John</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25. 3 John</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26. Jude</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To Churches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pauline Epistles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To Individuals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pauline Epistles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Pauline Epistles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observe the following from Chart 2, Canonical Order of New Testament Books:
a. Doctrine is grounded in fact, so the Historical books, Gospels and Acts, precede the Epistles, where doctrine is prominent.

b. Revelation stands last because it is mainly about the end times.

c. Matthew, written especially with the Jew in mind, is a link between the Old Testament and the New Testament, and so appears first in the Canon.

d. John is the Gospel with much interpretation and reflection, written at the end of the first (1st) century, and so it fits best as the last of the four (4) Gospels.

e. Acts is the extension and fulfillment of the Gospels, the proof that what Christ said and did was true and effective. It follows the Gospels very naturally. Acts can be associated with the Epistles without overlooking the historical connection with the Gospels. The accompanying diagram shows such comparisons.

"Comparisons of New Testament Books"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPARISONS OF NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOSPELS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ as Prophet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting: Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founder of Christianity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Christ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

f. Paul wrote most of the New Testament Books, at least thirteen, and his books were among the earliest to be written, see Chart #1, Chronological Writings. So his are the first of the Epistles, Romans through Philemon.
g. The order of Paul's letters in the Canon has various explanations. The first nine, Romans through II Thessalonians, were written to churches; the last four, I Timothy through Philemon, were written to individuals. The key opening epistle, Romans, is the classic book on Salvation and the Christian walk. The Corinthian letters and Galatians, listed together, treat problems of the Churches. Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians are usually kept together because all three were written from prison in Rome and all three focuses on deeper Christian living. The Thessalonican letters are last among the letters to Churches; these look into the future, about Christ's second coming.

h. Paul's letters to individuals, I Timothy through Philemon, appear last. They were among the last letters Paul wrote, (see Chart on Chronological Writings previously shown). Timothy was Paul's closest companion and was serving in the key city of Ephesus. Philemon is Paul's shortest letter and contains the least doctrine of all his writings. The message of his letter to Titus is similar to the message of the two Timothy letters and follows them accordingly.

i. The last eight letters are non-Pauline. For that reason alone they would be placed after Paul's letters, because the Apostle was looked up to as the key writer of Scriptures (2Pe.3:15, 16). They were the last books of the New Testament to be recognized as inspired writings by the Church leaders and councils. That late recognition would explain why they are placed at the end of the list of New Testament Books.

j. Hebrews and James are placed together because both are addressed to Hebrew Christians. If Paul wrote Hebrews it is interesting to observe that it is located next to the other Pauline epistles.

k. The last three epistles, II John, III John, and Jude, are short one-chapter books. This is one reason for their little exposure to the early Church and hence their being placed nearer to the end of the Canon.

2. Forming of the New Testament Canon

The original writing, composition, of each inspired New Testament Book was one thing. The way all twenty-seven (27) were brought together into one
volume, canonization, was a different work of God, but nonetheless supernatural. The sovereign hand of God was in the canonization as much as the composition. If that were not so, an inspired Book might have been excluded from the Canon, and an uninspired book might have been included in the group. In fact, both of those threats hung over the Church for two hundred (200) years. For example, there were strong objections by some about accepting the following books, known as "antilegomena," as canonical: Hebrews, James, II Peter, II and III John, Jude, and Revelation. At the same time, support was given by some Church leaders to regard many other writings as Scripture, including books now within the Apocrypha, such as, I and II Maccabees, Tobit, and Ecclesiasticus; and Pseudepigrapha, such as I and II Enoch, Martyrdom of Isaiah, and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs.

FORMING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON

The twenty-seven (27) inspired books were written in the period A.D. 45-95. During and after those years, non-inspired books were also being written.
b. The four (4) Gospel accounts were brought together after the last one, John, was written; they were called "The Gospel."

c. In the same manner, the inspired writings of Paul came together soon after they were written, and they were identified under the one heading, "The Apostle."

d. The Book of Acts, written by Luke, was early regarded by Church leaders as a pivotal book, the one that connected the Gospels with the Apostle, because it is the sequel to the Gospel narrative and gives the historical background to the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul.

e. The letters of other writers, Peter, James, Jude, and the Apocalypse of John, Revelation, were also recognized to bear Divine authority.

f. We do not know when all twenty-seven (27) books of the New Testament came together for the first time and when they were regarded by leaders of the Christian Church as the complete Canon of the second (2nd) volume of Scripture. But, whenever it was, the recognition was not once-and-for all. Questions, objections, and disputes over the Canon were to rise from within and from without the Christian communities. So the period A.D. 100-400 was one of progressive defining of the Canon.

g. A few highlights of that period of defining the Canon are shown on Chart 3 previously shown.

F. Translations

The original autographs of the New Testament were written in Koionia Greek, which was the vernacular of the entire Mediterranean world. If, during the succeeding centuries, translations had not been made into the languages of the nations of the world, converts of the evangelistic crusades would not have had Scriptures to feed upon for their Christian growth. The prophetic command of Acts 1:8 involving the ends of the earth would have remained an enigma or a puzzle. But, spurred on by the need for new Christians to have the written Word in their mother tongue, many translations were made during the next centuries. It was the natural outcome of Christianity’s expansion to foreign lands via the spoken word.
1. Ancient versions

One of the key ancient versions was the Syriac Bible, which brought the written Word to lands east of Palestine, eventually to China and India. See Map A, Syriac Version, below. Translations of the Gospels and Acts were made as early as the second century, and by A.D. 425 a standard edition of the Bible, called Peshitta, literally "simple," was being used by the Christians.

a. The Latin Vulgate:

It was the most prominent of the Ancient Versions. It was the official Bible of Christendom in Europe for a thousand years. The earliest translations appeared in North Africa in the second century, Map B, and Jerome made his standard version during the years A.D. 383-405.

b. Map B:

This map shows us later European versions that are traced back to the Latin Bible. Those versions are left of the dashed line on the map. Note that the first English, Anglo-Saxon, Bible was based on the Latin version. Observe also on Map B the locations of other ancient versions of neighboring lands, which versions were not derived from the Latin. That phenomenon of active translation work in the early centuries after Christ is a testimony of the New Testament's universal attraction to the hearts of all people. See Map B below.
2. English Bible:

The English Bible has a long and fascinating history, which can be seen when the English text is traced back to its origins. We will appreciate our Bible more when we know the paths over which God has brought it to us. The next few pages are a survey of that history. Study it not just to learn facts of God’s programs, but to enhance our regard for the large variety of English versions, past and present.

a. The earliest versions:

The Christian message reached Great Britain by the beginning of the fourth (4th) century A.D., when the Latin Bible was the people’s Scripture. When English became Britain’s new vernacular with the arrival of Germanic-speaking Anglos, Saxons, and Jutes in the course of the fifth century, the need for English Scriptures arose. Chart 4 (below) shows some of the main partial or complete English translations of the Bible that were made from about A.D. 700 to 1539. (Note the three (3) periods of the English language: old, middle, and new) The new English period extends from the time of the Reformation to the present.
Note the active program of translation during the first decades of the new English period, including work by William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale. It was the reformation that brought a revival of translation activity. This activity was spurred on by renewed interest in Hebrew and Greek manuscripts, and by Gutenberg's invention of movable type for the printing press.

b. King James Version

The King James Version (KJV), also called the Authorized Version, was the outcome of much translation activity beginning with Tyndale (Chart 4). Scan Chart 5 and observe how it continues the survey of Chart 4. Note on Chart 5 the entry of the four major versions: Great Bible, Geneva Bible, Bishop's Bible, and King James Version.

The Geneva Bible excelled in accuracy and was very popular. It contained marginal notes with an interpretation of a reformed theology. For that reason the Church of England rejected it, and a new version of the Great Bible, containing marginal notes of Anglican Theology, as made by English bishops. That Bishop's Bible first appeared in 1568.

The tension and unrest over the two (2) competing versions, Geneva and Bishops', in addition to arguments over other versions, led King James I to call for a new version with no marginal notes of any theological interpretation. The version was made by fifty-four (54) scholars over a period of seven (7) years. It soon became the most popular English Bible. It is still the most quoted and most memorized text. One researcher writes of it, "By sheer merit the Authorized Version established itself as the English Bible."

Two (2) important values of the King James Version are its literal rendering and literary style, which strongly support analytical study.
c. English versions after the King James Version

The modern mission’s era of translation activity began around 1800. It is aptly called modern because the era has not yet ended. In fact, one of the brightest aspects of the Christian witness today is the unprecedented production of new Bible translations. Portions of Scripture are reaching people of many languages and cultures in the remotest parts of the world. In America, new English versions and paraphrases, written in contemporary style, are geared to such needy mission fields as homes without a church and campuses with drifting youth. For the serious Bible student who wants to analyze a Bible text that is virtually the same as the original, minus the translation factor, various excellent versions are available, such as the New American Standard Bible (NASB) and the New International Version (NIV).
King James Version

Great Bible 1539

Queen Elizabeth 1558-1603

Great Bible 1560

Geneva Bible 1560

Most Popular English Bible 1620

Bishops' Bible 1568, 1572

Kings James Version 1611

Hampton Court Conference 1604

Formal revision of Bishops' 1602 ed.

Influence of Tyndale

By Eng. bishops
Does not reach standard of Geneva Bible

Shakespeare's Bible
Exceeds in accuracy

Last ed. 1644

Reformed

Anglican

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Revisions of Bible versions are an important activity of this modern era. The first major revision, known as the English Revised Version appeared in 1881. It was a revision of the King James Version. Chart 6 shows that and other highlights of the modern era.

VI. SETTING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

No Scripture was born in a vacuum. The New Testament Books have their antecedents, and they were cradled in a contemporary setting that involved every phrase of life. If we are aware of those backgrounds before we begin a study of the New Testament, the
Biblical message will be clearer, stronger and more real. That is why the study of the New Testament’s setting is so important.

A. Historical and Religious Setting

The earthbound ingredients of history are people, places, things, actions, and time. God is the Lord of all history, and His blend of the ingredients is sovereignly exercised. That is why there was nothing accidental about the historical and religious setting of the New Testament. We may not always perceive the Divine design, but it is important that by faith we recognize its presence.

All the years before Christ, beginning with the time of Adam and Eve, looked forward to His appearance on the earthly scene.

CHART 7, “Historical Setting of the New Testament”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B.C.</th>
<th>1500</th>
<th>400</th>
<th>45</th>
<th>95</th>
<th>A.D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRE-BIBLE ERA</th>
<th>BIBLE AUTOGRAPHS</th>
<th>WHOLE-BIBLE ERA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRE-CHRISTIAN ERA</td>
<td>O.T.WRITING</td>
<td>400 SILENT YEARS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Old Testament History

Christianity did not emerge mysteriously out of a vacuum. God had been moving among the people of the world, especially Israel, for many centuries before Christ. Then, "when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Ga.4:4-5). One writer connects the Old Testament with the New Testament in these words:

“The Old Testament is a promise and an expectation; the New Testament is fulfillment and completion. The Old Testament is the marshaling of the hosts to the battle of God, and the New Testament is the triumph of the Crucified One. The Old Testament is the twilight and dawn of morning; the New Testament is the rising sun and the height of eternal day.”

The last book of the Old Testament was written about four hundred (400) years before Christ's birth. Knowing the contents of the Old Testament is to
know the religious, social, geographical, and in part, the political setting of the New Testament. The Old Testament was the Bible of Jesus, the Apostles, and the writers of the New Testament. When they spoke or wrote about the Word of God, they quoted to the Old Testament's history and teaching.

The Old Testament is mainly history, but it is sacred history. That is, it reveals especially how God moves in and through the lives of people and the courses of nations. We might also say that the Old Testament is redemptive history, for God actively directs human history for the purpose of redeeming man to Himself. The Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the Old Testament to record what would adequately reveal that redemptive purpose. Thus, the writers have much to say about such crucial facts as these:

a. God is the Sovereign Creator.
b. Man is a sinner in need of Salvation.
c. God is holy, and He judges sin
d. God is love, and He offers Salvation to sinful man.
e. A Savior would be born to die for the sins of man.
f. Man is saved by faith, not by works.
g. Israel was sovereignly chosen to be God's channel of the redemptive message to the world.
h. All history will culminate at the throne of the Sovereign God.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY</th>
<th>NEW TESTAMENT HISTORY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreshadow</td>
<td>Fulfillment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promise</td>
<td>Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem</td>
<td>Solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commencement</td>
<td>Consummation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Four hundred silent years

Around 400 B.C. God ceased speaking to His people and the world through any new portions of the written Word. For four hundred (400) years the prophet’s pens would be dry, hence the designation "four hundred (400) silent years." Prophets still preached, and God still spoke by His Spirit to a continuing remnant of saints. They were studying the Scripture. They had the Old Testament and were watching for their Messiah’s coming. God would always remain the Sovereign mover of history on the local and world-wide scene. God knew when He would be sending His Son to the world, and He used the four hundred (400) silent years to prepare the world for that coming.

Four hundred (400) years made a vast difference to the setting of Judaism. Compare, for example, the ending of the Old Testament and the opening of the New Testament. The last historical events of the Old Testament are the returns, under Ezra and Nehemiah, of the exiled Jews from Babylon to Jerusalem. The first pages of the New Testament record the birth of Jesus Christ. The accompanying chart lists some other changes in that four hundred (400) year picture.

Many factors: Historical, political, religious, and cultural, brought on the changes of those (4) four centuries. In the following pages the highlights of the changes will be surveyed, for the purpose of visualizing and feeling the setting of the New Testament.
Basically, there are three backgrounds in whose shadows Christ moved, the Church was born, and the New Testament Books were written. Those backgrounds are Hebrew, Greek, and Roman. As we study these, try to relate to them as parts of the New Testament with which we are already familiar.

B. Hebrew Background

The Hebrew background of the New Testament is primarily religious because the Hebrew people, the Jews, are the ones to whom the Gospel message was first sent (Ro.1:16).

1. The scattering of the Jews brought about evangelism.

With the Babylonian exile in 586 B.C., the Jews entered a phase of being scattered around the world, such that, by the time of Christ, every large city of the Roman Empire had its large colony of Jews. Towns and villages contained them by the thousands. When the Church's first missionaries,
Paul and others, moved out to the ends of the earth (Ac.1:8), Jews were among the first contacts made (Ac.13:5).

During the silent years, the greatest impressions made upon Judaism originated in the three (3) great centers of Babylon, Alexandria, and Jerusalem. Observe on Map C following for the relative location of these cities.

a. Babylon:

Changes in Judaism that originated in Babylon were carried over into Jerusalem during the silent years. This was because there was a continuing program of migration of Jews from Babylon to Jerusalem, which had begun under Ezra and Nehemiah. Some of the major changes, not all good, were:

b. Theology:

The exile had eliminated idolatry and had fostered a pure monotheism, one God. This was probably the best-learned lesson for the Jews.

c. Tradition:

The Law was amplified to include other writings, mainly the Mishnah and the Haggada, which were together known as the Talmud. The Mishnah was a book of man-made rules of living; the Haggada was the theology and commentary of the Rabbis. The Rabbis formulated their own tradition. The Jews became more and more steeped in traditionalism during those years.

d. Worship:

Synagogues were established as the local places of worship. By New Testament times Synagogues were located throughout the Mediterranean world. The Apostle Paul usually sought out the Synagogue when he first arrived in a city on his missionary journeys (Ac.13:5).

e. Culture and education:

The new profession of teachers and interpreters of the Law, called Rabbis and scribes, originated here. Scholarship was advanced, and culture was developed.
C. Alexandria

A large number of Jews migrated to Egypt a few months after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. When Alexander the Great founded Alexandria in 332 B.C., the Jews constituted an eighth of the population of Egypt, and in Alexandria almost half. He favored them very highly and assigned them a special section of the city. Alexandria became the capital of the Jewish dispersion, Diaspora. The events and movements of that city affected the life of Judaism for centuries to come.

Since Alexandria was a Greek-speaking city, the Jewish population likely gave up its Palestinian Hebrew vernacular as it began learning Greek. Eventually the Jews were without Scripture in their new vernacular so the need arose for a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. Such a translation, later called the Septuagint, was begun around 280 B.C. The rest of the Old Testament was translated by about 180 B.C.

The Jews prospered and multiplied in Egypt during the silent years. By New Testament times there were almost one million (1,000,000) Jews residing there. Egypt was not far from Judea, and the contacts between Jews of both lands were very close. Read Matthew 2:13-18 for one of the first stories of the New Testament, which is about Jesus' parents, escaping with Him to Egypt to flee Herod. The contributions of the Greek background, including the Septuagint translation, to the New Testament setting will be discussed later.
D. Jerusalem

By approximately 450 B.C., Ezra and Nehemiah had led about fifty thousand (50,000) Jews back to Judea from exile in Babylon. They remained in the land, rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and trying in small measure to preserve their religious heritage. Before long the people gave up their allegiance to God and, in their vain pursuit of holiness, surrendered faith for works. The one bright note was that there always remained a faithful remnant in the land awaiting the Messiah.

It was during those silent years that two (2) ruling classes of the Jewish religion appeared, the Sadducees and the Pharisees. As rival religious sects, they became rival political parties by New Testament times. The Sadducees were the political party of the Jewish aristocratic priesthood. They were not popular with the common people.

The Pharisees were the religious leaders of the Jews, often identified in the New Testament with the scribes. They were the most influential leaders and were very popular with the people. The Pharisees taught such sound doctrines as Divine providence, immortality of the soul, and a Messianic hope. They were rigid legalists, and by Jesus’ day their sect had degenerated into an empty religion (Lk.11:37-52).

"Comparative Summary of Pharisees & Sadducees"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHARISEES</th>
<th>SADDUCEES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name means &quot;the separated ones&quot;</td>
<td>Name may be from a word meaning the righteous ones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Largest and most influential sect</td>
<td>The aristocratic minority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme legalism</td>
<td>External legalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little interest in politics</td>
<td>A major concern with politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believed in immortality, resurrection, spirits, and angels</td>
<td>Denied immortality, resurrection, spirits, and angels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regarded Rabbinic tradition highly</td>
<td>Accepted as authoritative only the written Old Testament</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VII. SIX PERIODS OF JEWISH HISTORY

The interval between the Old Testament and the New Testament is a dark period in the history of Israel. The life and fortunes of the Jews depended on what nation was the world power at the time. That was so because, as Map C shown previously in the commentary, the land of Judea was located in the center of the world at that time. It was all too easily preyed upon by the nation in power.

The interval is divided into six (6) periods, named according to those in power.

Chart 8, "Six Periods of Jewish History Before Christ"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIX PERIODS OF JEWISH HISTORY BEFORE CHRIST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>400 B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERSIAN</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Birth of Christ

Rule of the Roman Empire

Fall of the Persian, Greek, and Egyptian Empires

A. Persian Period 400-334 B.C.

Palestine was under the rule of the High Priest, who was responsible to the governor, satrap, of Syria, a province of Persia. The period was uneventful, for the most part, as far as the Jews were concerned.

B. Alexandrian Period 334 - 324 B.C.

Alexander the Great revolutionized the world, showed much favor to the Jews, and exposed them to the process of Hellinization. That brief period of rule came to an end with Alexander's sudden death. By Jesus’ day, many Hellenized Jews had adopted the Greek ways, customs, and speech. They had been freed from an exclusive spirit of Hebrew tradition and ancestry.

C. Egyptian Period 324 - 204 B.C.

This was the post Alexandrian reign of the world by four (4) Egyptian generals who were successors to Alexander. For part of this time, Judea was allowed self-rule. Often the land was the battleground for wars between Syria and Egypt.
D. Syrian Period 240 - 165 B.C.

Israel now entered into the valley of the shadow of death. Uninterrupted martyrdom was the experience of the people during most of the period.

The major internal struggle of these years was between Hellenistic Jews and Hasidic Jews. The latter resisted all forms of diluting their Hebrew heritage. The Pharisees were successors to that group.

Many non-canonical writings were beginning to appear during this period. The two main kinds were:

1. Apocryphal (e.g., I and II Maccabees) - were books recognized by the Roman Catholic Church as canonical, but rejected by Protestants;
2. Pseudepigraphical (e.g., I Enoch) - spurious writings excluded from the Canon by all

It is interesting to observe that during this period, by 180 B.C., the Alexandrian translators translated all the books of the Old Testament into Greek.

E. Maccabean Period 165 - 63 B.C.

This has been called the Period of Independence. Politically, it was a time of revolt by Jewish leaders against Syrian forces. Religiously, it was a time of restoring worship of the Lord in the re-dedicated Temple.

During this period, Palestine was geographically divided into the three familiar divisions of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. Also, it was during this time that the rival religious sects, Pharisees and Sadducees, became political enemies.

F. Roman Period 63 - 4 B.C.

In 63 B.C. the Roman general Pompey brought Palestine under Roman control. He organized the Decapolis league of ten (10) cities, southwest of the Sea of Galilee, to balance the power of Judea. Antipater was appointed Governor of Judea, and Herod the Great was King of Judea by Roman senatorial grant from 37 B.C. to 4 B.C.

For the most part there was little interference by Rome in the religious life of Palestine. The Jews paid taxes to Rome and were subject to the rulers appointed over them by Rome. The conflict and struggles of the Jews of that day were mainly of the heart, and darkness and sin was overwhelming.
When Jesus was born in approximately 5 B.C., the political situation was generally stable, but opposition to the Messiah's coming was quickly demonstrated by King Herod's reactions and decree (Mt.2:1-18).

VIII. GREEK BACKGROUND

The Greek background of the New Testament is chiefly cultural, including such things as language and philosophical perspective. Many influences of that Hellenistic culture were very important, because it paved the way for the world-wide proclamation of God's message of Salvation in New Testament times.

A. The Greek Bible

As noted earlier, the need for a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek arose because Greek had become the new vernacular of the Jews in Egypt. In fact, Greek was by then the common language of the world, as a result of the world conquests of Alexander the Great.

Alexandrian scholars translated the first five (5) books of the Law, Pentateuch, by 280 B.C., and by 180 B.C. all the books of the Old Testament had been translated. By the time of Jesus the Septuagint was in wide use by some peoples. The Hebrew Old Testament was still cherished by Jews as God's Holy Scriptures, and rightly so.

Some of the significant contributions of the Septuagint to the New Testament setting are:

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(Caption: The Septuagint and the Christian Greek Bible)

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1. The New Testament writers:

They had a Greek theological vocabulary to work with as they wrote their books in Greek. For example, the Hebrew word Torah, which referred only to God's Law, had been translated "nomos" in the Septuagint. In those days "nomos" referred to the whole range of codified custom, not exclusively to God's Law. For almost two hundred (200) years, Jews reading nomos in the Septuagint gradually began seeing it as meaning only God's Law in those passages where it should be interpreted as such. By the time the New Testament writers did their composing, the word nomos very adequately served the theological purpose, and their readers identified the word with God's Law, without having to make a mental adjustment to a secular word. In other words, the Greek "nomos theo," “Law of God,” as in Romans 7:22, was perceived precisely the same as the Hebrew “Torah Elohim,” “Law of God,” as in Nehemiah 8:8.

2. When the New Testament canon was complete:

The Septuagint Old Testament and the Greek New Testament formed a unity for the Greek-speaking people, the Greek Bible.

3. The Greek Bible:

This Bible made God's complete written revelation accessible to the whole world, where Greek was the common language.

4. This modern version of Scripture:

Modern Version of Scripture prepared the way for the Jews' acceptance of God's revelation, in a language other than the revered Hebrew language. The barrier of Scripture being rejected in a so-called “unholy” language apparently was not a problem during the first centuries after Christ.

B. Greek Language

By New Testament times Koionia Greek was the international language, an ideal channel for communication in the world-wide program of the early Church. Christ, the Apostles, and early disciples of Palestine spoke Greek, as well as Aramaic. They had Scriptures available in Greek, though it is likely that Christ did not use them during the times He was dealing with the Jew in Palestine. The audiences of the preached Gospel throughout the Roman Empire understood and spoke Greek.
C. Greek Philosophy and Mystery Religion

During the silent years the mind of the Greek thinkers was reaching out to discover the secrets of life and the universe. Because of that, it might be concluded that the Greeks were a ready audience for the message of Christianity.

The answers to the questions of the searching Greeks were in the Hebrew Scriptures. But, the philosophers and false religionists rejected that revelation and laid down their own answers. Some books of the New Testament, such as Ephesians and Colossians, were written partly with those philosophers in mind. The appeal was to accept God's full revelation by His son Jesus Christ (Ep.3:1-13; Co.2:2-3,8).

Among the leading philosophers and religionists of the period were:

1. Plato (427-347 B.C.): He said that this world is only a shadow of eternal realities.
3. Zeno (c. 300 B.C.): He was the founder of the Stoics, who said we should live in accordance with nature.
4. Epicurus (c. 300 B.C.): He was the founder of the Epicureans, whose idea of following God was to pursue pleasure.

IX. ROMAN BACKGROUND

The Roman background of the New Testament is mainly political and social. The status of the Roman empire from its birth, 8th century B.C., to the time of Christ, can be represented by the two (2) words, expansion and peace:

A. Expansion

The founding of Rome was in the eighth (8th) century B.C. The organization of the republican form of government was in the fifth (5th) century B.C. Expansion brought wars, from the fourth (4th) to the first (1st) century B.C.

B. Peace

The rule of the emperors, beginning with Augustus, was in peace. “Pax Romana,” Roman peace, brought law and order in the empire.
Unity and political stability of the Roman Empire, at the time of Christ's birth was one of the bright aspects of the Roman background of The New Testament. Of this one author writes, "Never before or since in history has there been an empire that has united in itself all the civilized peoples of its time as did the Roman."

The Greek influence had not died away, however. Although the Romans were the military and political masters of the world, culturally the Greeks conquered them. The Roman Empire was like a reservoir of the Hellenistic culture, which had spread throughout the Mediterranean world from the time of Alexander the Great.

Some of the characteristics of the Roman background are briefly noted here:

- World Centralization: The unifier was the emperor, the ruler of the Mediterranean world. Worship of the emperor was inevitable, and so a religious clash with Christianity was unavoidable. As an example, Paul was executed by Nero who reigned A.D. 54-68; John was exiled on the Island of Patmos (Re.1:9), during Domitian's reign, A.D. 81-96.

- World Communication: The highways and sea-lanes of the Roman Empire made world traffic possible. When the time came for the missionary journeys of the early Christian, the cities were easily accessible. The Roman system of roads and bridges also helped expedite mail deliveries between cities.

- World Peace: The reigns of some emperors were marred periodically by the times of war, such as Augustus, who ruled from 30 B.C. to A.D. 14. The Roman period was mainly a time of peace. Peace gave rise to the slogan "Pax Romana." The benefit of international peace to the Church's birth and growth cannot be over stated. When studying in the New Testament, we will not read about the kinds of wars that were so commonplace in the years of Old Testament history.

- World Spiritual Disorder: One author describes the spiritual disarray: "Rome became a venerator of all deities, often horribly grotesque, senselessly confused, ill-formed sickly fantasies. The entire Mediterranean world resembled a gigantic cauldron of mixture." Aristocratic society was a picture of moral depravity, idleness of wealth, and pursuit of pleasure. The middle class lived on a higher plane morally and had strong religious feelings. Members were searching for the truth, but never finding it. Many religions found their way into people's hearts. From Egypt came the worship of Isis and Osiris, from Persia, the cult of Mithras, and from Asia Minor, and the cult of Cybele. Many gods and idols, representing secret and nature
religions, were among those who moved in from the Orient. But none brought redemption of sinners and none brought eternal Salvation.

"When the fullness of time came, God sent forth his Son" (Ga.4:4). Concerning preparation, the time was right, for the Law had served its disciplinary and instructive purposes. The time also was right concerning the political, religious, and social climates, because those were conducive to the ministry of the Gospel. It was right regarding need, with a spiritual vacuum waiting to be filled.

The world of Jesus' day was ruled by Gentile Rome. The particular people to whom He primarily ministered were Jews of Palestine. Chart 10 (following) is a summary tabulation intended to describe those two (2) worlds of Jesus' day, Gentile and Jewish.

When we read the New Testament, we should try to visualize the hearts of people, Jew and Gentile, throughout the Roman Empire, hearts that are confused and guilt-ridden. As we do that, we will better understand and appreciate the words and ministry of Jesus, the preaching of the early apostles, and the letters of the New Testament writer.

Chart 10, "World of Jesus' Day"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORLD OF JESUS' DAY</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roman empire</td>
<td>Jewish people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>POLITICAL SETTING</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unification of the Mediterranean world</td>
<td>Under the yoke of Rome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe and easy communication</td>
<td>Expectation of a Believer of their own race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal language</td>
<td>Sanhedrin, (the Jewish organization of local government), had limited power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MORAL SETTING</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degradation</td>
<td>Generally strict standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;To corrupt and to be corrupt is the standard of the times.&quot;</td>
<td>Sadducees sponsored moral compromises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tecitus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTELLECTUAL SETTING</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek and Roman culture highly developed</td>
<td>Education a prominent part of the Jew's life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RELIGIOUS SETTING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Setting</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heathen idolatry</td>
<td>Externally intensely religious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mystic religions</td>
<td>Religious life molded by three sects:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-- Pharisees: rigid legalistic, self-righteous middle class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-- Sadducees: free thinkers, worldly, upper class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-- Essenes: mystic, pious, ascetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophic religions</td>
<td>Synagogues and Rabbis: a thriving institution of worship which arose after the exile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual vacuum</td>
<td>A believing remnant: There were some who looked and prayed for the advent of the Messiah (Lk.2:21-39)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

X. POLITICAL SETTING

Because the New Testament writings have a historical setting, it is natural that they include references to secular rulers of the Bible lands, rulers who were governing the people at the time.

The Gospels and Acts contain most of the New Testament's references to the secular rulers. The average Bible student has difficulty identifying and associating the references, because of confusion over different kinds of rulers. There were kings, governors, procurators, and emperors. The purpose of this section of study is to distinguish between the different titles or rulers, identify the lands of their rule, and learn the names of the rulers who appear in the Bible account.

A. The Lands

All the action of the New Testament takes place in lands of the Roman Empire. That was the world of such references as Acts 17:6. The territorial scope of Roman supremacy is shown on Map D, The Roman Empire. Observe the boundaries of the empire when Jesus was born (5 B.C.). The capitol of the empire was Rome, Italy.
The land of Palestine was a small part of the Roman Empire, but a key part, because of its strategic locations. Practically all the Gospels and much of Acts have Palestine as their geographical setting. When Jesus was born, Palestine was divided into various provinces and sections, as shown on Map F, Palestine during Jesus' Ministry.
B. The Task of Rule

The ruler of the Roman Empire was the emperor. For the Emperor to rule effectively and peacefully so many distant lands, from his throne at Rome, was the burden of his government. How this was done, in the case of Palestine, being the homeland of the Jews will be shown in the next pages.

C. The Titles of Rulers

The provincial system of government set up by Emperor Augustus involved rulers over countries and over provinces of those countries. The names and brief descriptions of their titles are given as follows:

1. Emperor

The emperor was the absolute ruler of the Roman Empire. A surname of the early Roman emperors was "Caesar," such as Caesar Augustus, meaning Emperor Augustus. When Paul said, "I appeal to Caesar" (Ac.25:11), he was referring to the Emperor, who at the time was Nero.

2. Kings

Kings were the highest local rulers of territories in the Roman Empire, subject to the central authority of the emperor at Rome. The Roman Senate approved the king's office. During New Testament times Palestine, in whole or in part, was ruled by kings of the Herodian Dynasty, a succession of rulers from the same family. The dynasty began with Herod the Great in 37 B.C. and ended with the death of Herod Agrippa II in A.D. 70.
Read the following New Testament references to the kings.

a. Herod the Great (Mt.2:1-19; Lk.1:5)

b. Herod Antipas (Mk.6:14-28; Lk.3:1; 13:31-35; 23:7-12)

c. Archelaus (Mt.2:22)

d. Herod Philip (Lk.3:1)

e. Herod Agrippa I (Ac.12:1-23)

f. Herod Agrippa II (Ac.25:13-26:32)

3. Governors

Governors, also called procurators, were rulers of designated territories, appointed by the emperor and directly responsible to him. Much of their work involved finances, such as taxes. They also had supreme judicial authority, such as Pilate had regarding Jesus. Their official residence was in Caesarea. The area of their responsibility was usually that area not ruled by a contemporary king. For example, Herod Antipas was a tetrarch of Galilee, while Pilate was governor of Judea, Samaria, and Old Idumea. Most of the New Testament references to governors are to Pilate, Felix, and Festus. Observe their names on the New Testament Time Chart.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>EVENTS</th>
<th>EMPERORS (CAESARS)</th>
<th>KINGS (HERODS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>B.C.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>BIRTH OF JESUS (6 B.C.)</strong></td>
<td>Augustus (30 B.C. - A.D. 14)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A.D.</strong></td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>Ministry of John the Baptist</td>
<td>Tiberius (14 - 37)</td>
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<td>30</td>
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<td>Gaius Caligula (37 - 41)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Paul's conversion</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>Famine</td>
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<td>Paul's martyrdom</td>
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<td>Destruction of Jerusalem</td>
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<td>120</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Herod the Great**

(37 - 4 B.C.)

**- ALL PALESTINE -**

**Archelaus**

(4 B.C. - A.D. 6)

**Herod Antipas**

(4 B.C. - A.D. 39)

**Philip**

(4 B.C. - A.D. 34)

**Herod Agrippa I**

(37 - 44)

**Herod Agrippa II**

(33 - 70)

**JUDEA, SAMARIA, IDUMEA**

**GALILEE, PERSEA**

**ITUREA, TRACHONITIS, et al**

**ALL PALESTINE**

**CHALCIS & NORTHERN TERRITORY**

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4. Other titles

Proconsuls were deputy consuls serving in the Roman provinces for one (1) year. They had unlimited power in military and civil situations. Two (2) New Testament references are Sergius Paulus (Ac.13:7) and Gallio (Ac.18:12).

All the preceding discussion has been about secular rulers in Palestine. It should be kept in mind that in each local Jewish Community, there were also religious leaders, who molded and to a large extent ruled the personal and religious lives of the Jews. Those were the Jewish priests and the Sanhedrin Council, which was like a Jewish Supreme Court. More will be said about these in later studies. For now study Chart 13 below, High Priests, during New Testament Times.

D. Summary

As noted earlier, New Testament history is not a story that involved international wars or many internal conflicts. The relative peace of the empire, with its provincial form of government, was a setting that favored the beginnings of Christianity. There were times of persecution along the way, beginning with Christ's birth. Those only served to strengthen the people of God. The century of the New Testament, the first century, was in various ways a bright era of world history.
Chart 13, "High Priests During New Testament Times"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A.D.</th>
<th>Significant Events</th>
<th>High Priests</th>
<th>A.D.</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Caiaphas</td>
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<td>33</td>
<td>Death of Stephen</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Conversion of Saul</td>
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<td>36</td>
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<td>Jonathan</td>
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<td>Theophilus</td>
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<td>41</td>
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<td>Simon Matthias</td>
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<td>Elion</td>
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<td>Joseph</td>
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<td>44</td>
<td>Death of James</td>
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<td>46</td>
<td>Famine in Judea</td>
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<td>Ananias</td>
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<td>49</td>
<td>Jerusalem Council</td>
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<td>56</td>
<td>Paul Arrested</td>
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<td>58</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ishmael</td>
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<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td>Joseph</td>
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<td>61</td>
<td>Paul at Rome</td>
<td>Ananus</td>
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<td>63</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jesus</td>
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<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Fire at Rome</td>
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<td>66</td>
<td>Paul's second imprisonment</td>
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<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>Death's of Paul and Peter</td>
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<td>68</td>
<td>Death of Nero</td>
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<td>68</td>
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<td>70</td>
<td>Destruction of Jerusalem</td>
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<td>70</td>
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XI. PHYSICAL SETTING

The physical setting of the Bible is one of the best reminders to us that its message is about real people, just like us, living in real places, in an actual time. An acquaintance with and an appreciation of the physical setting of the Holy Land, helps make the Bible come
alive. In the following pages we will be studying the geography, climate, and everyday living of New Testament times.

A. Geography

Much of the New Testament is action, and action involves places. That is why geography is a key ingredient of the Bible’s setting.

1. Palestine

As noted earlier, the geographical location of Palestine in Bible times was strategic. Of that, one author writes, "Palestine lay on the cross-roads of ancient civilization." The highway from Egypt to Syria and beyond, which ran through Palestine, was one of the most important roads in the ancient world, both for commerce and for strategy.

See the “crossroads location” in Map D below.
a. Gospels

The four (4) Gospels report the journeys and missions of Jesus in Palestine during His brief career. From the Gospels we learn that Jesus spent most of His time in the three (3) provinces of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. Three (3) surrounding areas that He visited occasionally are Perea, Decapolis, and Phoenicia. Locate the six (6) regions on Map F below.

After about a year of limited service in Judea, most of Jesus’ itinerant work was done in and around the region of Galilee. His trips between Galilee and Jerusalem afforded many opportunities of ministries along the way.

Of the many cities and villages that He visited on His evangelistic tours, only about twenty (20) of them are mentioned by name in the Gospels. Most of those appear on Map F.

b. Acts

Most of Acts 1-12 takes place in Palestine. Most of the remaining chapters beyond chapter 13 focus on the missionary journeys and other experiences of Paul in the lands beyond Palestine.
c. Epistles

Most if not all, of the remaining twenty-two (22) New Testament books originated outside Palestine and were written to residents mostly of non-Palestine lands. But the message of the epistles focused on the Holy Land, for the simple reason that Jesus, the Church, and Christianity were born there.

B. Jerusalem

Jerusalem is the geographical heart of Christianity. It was the Holy City in both Old Testament and New Testament times. It is a key city on the international scene today. All world history will culminate there at the end of time, when Christ is enthroned forever (Php.2:9-11).

Study Map G, Jerusalem in New Testament Times, as you make the following observations:

1. The original city of Jerusalem in Old Testament times covered only the ridge marked on this map as "City of David."

2. In Jesus' time, the north wall of Jerusalem was in the location of Hadrian's Wall shown on the map. Soon after the crucifixion, Agrippa I commenced building the third (3rd) wall in the north, which was not completed before the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

3. Note the locations of the Temple area, Herod's palace, Pool of Bethesda, and Gordon's Calvary, traditional site of...
Jesus' crucifixion. Study the accompanying ground plan and drawing of Herod's Temple.

C. Topography

One of the best ways to recall the locations of New Testament cities is to picture the physical features of the land where they are located. This also helps you understand why a city originated where it did, and why journeys followed certain routes. Study the general features of Palestine shown on Map H. The natural
Contours of the land run north-south. As you move from west to east on the map, you will observe six (6) major kinds of contour.

1. Coastal plain

This follows the coast up to the promontory (the peak of the high land that juts over water), of Mount Carmel. Relatively few cities were located here during Bible times, partly because of the absence of navigable harbors.

2. Shefelah, also called Lowlands.

Here the terrain begins to ascend from the low coastal plain. Many cities sprang up here, partly because of the semi-fertile soil.

3. Hill country, also called Judean Hills, and Cis-Jordan Hills.

The average elevation of these is two thousand (2,000) feet. Draw on the map a slightly sweeping curve from Mt. Carmel to Jerusalem. This north-south ridge bisects the lands of Samaria and Judea. The ridge becomes prominent again north of Galilee, after the break at the Plain of Essoraelon, just southwest of the Sea of Galilee. The two major north-south travel routes were along the Cis-Jordan Range and the Jordan Valley. Most of the cities of Christ’s ministry lie along the Judean hills and around the Sea of Galilee. Many cities were built along this ridge, because of the natural fortifications that were needed in Old Testament times.
4. Rift Valley

This is the most consistent feature of the north-south contour. Its average width is about ten (10) miles. For the entire length of Palestine, the depression is below the level of the Great Sea, the Mediterranean. Follow this depression from north to south on Map H as we read the descriptions given below.

a. Valley west of Mount Hermon

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

b. Sea of Galilee

The sea is six hundred eighty-five (685) feet below the level of the Great Sea, the Mediterranean. Many people inhabited this beautiful area in New Testament times.

c. Jordan River

The river is entirely below sea level, from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea. The hot and humid climate of this valley discouraged the building of cities. Jericho was an exception (see Map F, previously shown).

d. Salt Sea, also called the Dead Sea

This is twelve hundred eighty-six (1,286) feet below sea level. The Jordan River flows into it. The sea has no outlet, hence its dense and rich mineral content. A few cities were located on its shores in Old Testament times.

e. Al Ghor, Araba

A hot dry valley, with no cities being built there

f. Gulf of Aqaba

Solomon built a fleet of ships at the north end of this gulf (1Kg.9:26).
5. Trans-Jordan Hills

The rugged hills rise sharply from the low rift valley to the high plateau. Few cities were located here.

6. Plateau

From the fertile tableland of the north to the semi-desert south, this plateau was the scene of relatively little New Testament history. Its rolling land was used mostly for grazing livestock. Jesus ministered at times in the cities of Decapolis and Perea.

As we proceed, visualize the topography that we have just studied. For example, when we read that "a certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho" (Lk.10:30), we should be able to visualize a descending road, one moving down off the ridge.

D. Weather and Climate

1. The climate of Palestine varies considerably.

Palestine is in the same latitudes as the southern United States. Its climate is controlled generally by the prevailing westerly winds from the Mediterranean Sea. However, because of the diversity of topography, the climate varies considerably from place to place. Overall, there are two (2) seasons: A warm, dry summer and cool wet winters. The rainy season lasts from November to March. The rains are usually heavy at the beginning and end of the season. We can see a reference to this in Joel 2:23, a time of the early and latter rains, which is where the terms came from. Average temperatures ranges for Jerusalem, representing recent records, are 41°F to 85°F in August. The more constant temperatures of the Mediterranean Sea cause the moderating effect.

2. Parts of Palestine had a pleasant climate.

The climate of Galilee, where Jesus lived most of His life and accomplished most of His public ministry, was more pleasant in the summer months then that of Judea and the south Jordan valley. Hot desert winds, called "sirocco," plagued the plateau lands east of the Jordan River. This was one of the main reasons for the sparse population there in biblical times.
E. Everyday Life in Palestine

1. The New Testament was written by Middle Easterners about Middle Eastern people.

People of western cultures need to keep that in mind to better appreciate the Bible stories and testimonies coming out of those ancient times. The foundational doctrines, such as man's sinfulness and God's holiness, which are taught in that Middle Eastern setting, are timeless and universal. So, the Bible is not a closed Book to those persons that are not acquainted with the everyday life of the inhabitants of Palestine. But it can be sharper and clearer if that setting at least is mentally visualized and felt.

2. Bible dictionaries and commentaries are among the best sources for learning the local settings of the New Testament text.

The following list is included to suggest a thumbnail sketch of such a setting. No attempt has been made to show how life in New Testament times has advanced beyond the patterns of the centuries before Christ. By and large, the basic patterns and traditional ways have remained the same. The descriptions are of Jewish life in Palestine.

   a. A Palestinian town or city had walls, gates, towers, narrow streets, and busy marketplaces. The favorite location of a city would be preferably on an elevated site, such as Jerusalem on Mount Zion, with fields and grazing plots outside the city limits.

   b. The water supply was from wells, cisterns, streams, and reservoirs.

   c. The average size of the houses of the common people was one-room; their roofs were constructed of beams overlaid with reeds, bushes, and grass; they had earthen floors, with mud-brick walls and a few windows on the street side. The house had a fireplace in the floor in the middle of the room. The furnishings used were mats, cushions, chairs, stools, storage chests, and lamp-stands. They also had a hand mill for grinding grain, cooking utensils, goatskin bottles, and a broom.

   d. Their domestic animals consisted of dogs, donkeys, mules, horses, camels, sheep, and goats.

   e. The foods they ate included barley and wheat bread, oil, buttermilk, cheese, fruits (olives, figs, grapes, raisins,
pomegranates), vegetables, grains, and honey. Eggs, meat, and poultry were eaten, but not regularly; fish was a major food in the cities around the Sea of Galilee. Generally, the people ate two meals a day: breakfast, and late dinner about 5:00 p.m.

f. The dress for both men and women included an inner garment, a tunic, girdles for the tunic, an outer garment called a mantle which was used as shelter from wind, rain, cold, and as a blanket at night. They wore turbans on their heads and sandals on their feet. The women only wore longer tunics and larger mantles, a veil which entirely covered the head in public, and elaborate ornamentations such as earrings and bracelets.

g. Jewish children were educated mainly by their parents. They studied the Hebrew religion and Scripture, reading, writing, and practical skills. The advanced training was for leaders, such as in the schools of the prophets, and by tutors.

h. Worship by the Jewish family took place in each home. There were also called worship meetings in public areas, such as Temple worship in Jerusalem. There was regular participation by residents of the vicinity and participation at the annual religious feasts by Israelites from far and near.

i. Trades and professions included agriculture, such as the growing of grain, grapes, olives(216,684),(669,997), and figs; they raised sheep, fished, went hunting, made pottery, did carpentry, masonry, and metal work; They were tent makers, merchants, and physicians.

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

k. Taxes levied on the Jews in Jesus day included a poll or income tax, “tributum” which is a property tax, duties on food, transfer of property, and sale of slaves; they also had land taxes, customs on exports, and a purchase tax.

l. Travel was usually done in groups, for the sake of safety. The mode of travel was most often by animals, and sometimes by
foot. Meals when traveling included lunch, which had to be brought along, as the main source; overnight lodging was at individual homes, though sometimes there was room at an inn.

F.  The Heaven-Earth Setting

As much as the Bible concerns people and nations, with all their frailties and sins, it is unique because the dimension of the Miracle Worker controls its story. In its pages, heaven touched earth; God comes down and works through man. This heaven-earth setting pervades the entire Book. He, who wants to know what God is communicating in the temporal, local setting, must accept and believe the supernatural dimension. The message is meaningless without it. More will be said about that as we think about how to approach the New Testament and what to look for in our study of its pages.

XII.  HOW TO APPROACH THE NEW TESTAMENT

We should view the New Testament as the fulfillment and interpreter of the Old Testament. The Old Testament pointed forward to the New Testament, and so when passages in the latter look like the Old Testament, such as the lamb sacrifice, Sabbath, Temple, it should not surprise or confuse us. Every New Testament reference to the Old Testament is natural, sound, and necessary. If we are convinced of that, we will feel at home in all passages that refer back to the pre-Christian era. Such passages include: prophesied events of Christ's life and His ministries, application of the Old Testament's doctrines of sin and Salvation, such as in the Book of Hebrews, and prophesied events of end-times about Israel. This approach to the New Testament rests on the foundation that both Testaments are the one Book, the Bible. In that Book is the story of God revealing more and more of Himself and His redemptive work to men.


A.  Survey the New Testament Before Analyzing It

It is important to have an image of the whole, and then execute the parts. That is because a general survey study gives perspective and setting for the analysis of the small detailed parts.
B. Recognize the Key Revealed Truths of the New Testament

1. Redemption:

It is the prominent subject of the New Testament revelation. From the beginning to the end, the whole Bible is the story of redemption. It is God's work of bringing sinners back into fellowship with Him, through the death of His Son. Christ is the Redeemer, and because He is the central figure of the New Testament, the prominence of redemption in its pages is natural. The price of the sinner's redemption was Christ's death on the cross. So the cross is prominent throughout the New Testament.

Because redemption is the prominent subject of the New Testament, we may expect that each of its twenty-seven (27) books contribute to this theme, in varying degrees. The exact degree of the redemption theme depends on the individual purpose of each book. This also is saying that we are not to read, into every passage, the doctrine of redemption, when the doctrine is not there.

2. Sin is man's basic, desperate problem.

Redemption is prominent in the New Testament because it is God's merciful response to man's basic problem. The wages of sin is eternal death (Ro.6:23). So, just as we may expect to read much in the New Testament about Salvation, we may expect to observe equivalent emphasis about sin.

3. The human race has no hope outside of God's grace.

This truth is taught throughout the New Testament, just as it is prominent in the Old Testament. Paul writes that sinners, because they are separated from Christ, have no hope and are "without God in the world" (Ep.2:12). But, God's grace is the shining ray of hope. In the New Testament the word grace appears about one hundred thirty (130) times, thus bathing the passages with the bright hope of Salvation through the gift of God's love.

4. The Gospel is a universal message.

Jesus and His disciples preached the Gospel, Good News, first to the Jews. They were of the favored nation whose roots were in Abraham, to whom was given the promise of eternal blessing (Ge.12:1-3, 17:1-8). In this connection it should be observed that the story of the Gospels is a transition between the Old Testament Law and the post-Pentecost Church era. Israel rejected the Messianic Message. The rejection of that message by the Jews brought the extension of the call of Salvation to the Gentile world.
5. The work of Christ is wholly dependent on the person of Christ.

Jesus could do what He did only because of who He was, the true God-man. He was a genuine substitute for mankind on the cross because He was genuinely human. And He was an acceptable sacrifice because He was sinless and perfect. Because of His humanity, He could identify with those being tempted, He Himself suffered when He was tempted (He.2:18).

Throughout the New Testament, the vital relationship of Jesus' person and His works are constantly brought before us. The life and ministry of Christ is an enigma/puzzle if His Divine-human nature is denied.

6. Miracles are signs of revelation from God.

The New Testament abounds with miracles, most of them performed by Christ. Their basic purposes were to be signs, or revealing truths. For example, John writes that the miracles of Jesus were signs attesting who He was, "the Christ, the Son of God" (Jn.20:31; Mk.8:27-29). There are secondary purposes in the New Testament miracles, such as alleviation of pain in healing a disease, or infliction of judgment for sin; but the primary purpose is to reveal truth about the miracle worker, Christ.

7. The Holy Spirit is an active worker in this age.

All persons of the Trinity are always ministering on behalf of every creature. Their ministries are equally important, though of different character. However, the work of the Holy Spirit today is prominent, being our Counselor, Guide, and Comforter.

8. All world history moves onward toward the last days.

All world history is in God's sovereign control. He directs or permits the course of events in a person or nation's career according to His sovereign and perfect will. All will culminate at the climactic event of the enthronement of Jesus Christ (Php.2:9-11).

A quick scanning of the New Testament shows that very few details of world history are prophesied concerning the two (2) millennia before end times. But grand truths, which give deep, wide, and far-reaching perspective, appear in the Bible text from time to time. For example, "all things...whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities...have been created through Him and for Him" (Co.1:16). It is important for the Bible student not to demand, and so invent, detailed descriptions of history, whether predicted or reported.
The student should embrace the grand truths, interpret, and apply them as God intended them. When we do that, the full sufficiency of New Testament history and prophecy will be apparent.

C. Accept the New Testament as God's Final Instructions for Living

It is possible for Christians to live lives pleasing to God. If that were not so, all of the New Testament's commands, exhortations, promises, and helps would be one vast fraud.

The New Testament contains God's final instructions for living. It was written two thousand (2,000) years ago, when it joined the Canon of Scripture that had been the Bible of Jesus, the Old Testament. It remains timeless in its application. That is why the Apostle Paul, writing to his friend Timothy about their ancient Bible, asserted dogmatically, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2Ti.3:16-17). In the same context, Paul had reminded Timothy that it was the sacred writings that had given Timothy "the wisdom that leads to Salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2Ti.3:15). So it is correct to say that all spiritual lessons derived from passages in the New Testament have something to say, directly or indirectly, about these two (2) timeless, vital life truths. We must open our hearts to its message.
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CHRISTIANS ARE CO-LABORERS

"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

I Corinthians 3:5-11