



**THE NARROW**  
**DBR JOURNAL**

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# Genesis

## Author and Date

- Written by Moses, approximately 1445 to 1405 b.c.

## Background and Setting

- God started everything. The Bible doesn't begin with an argument for God's existence; it begins by accepting that our existence depends on God. The ancient Greek translation of the Bible (called the Septuagint, or LXX) titled this first book *Genesis*, meaning "origins." Eventually, English translators borrowed the word directly. The title used in Hebrew texts simply highlights the very first word, which means "in the beginning."
- The initial setting for Genesis is eternity past. God, by willful act and divine word, spoke all creation into existence, furnished it, and finally breathed life into a lump of dirt that He fashioned in His image to become Adam. God made this human the crowning point of His creation; that is, companions who would enjoy fellowship with Him and bring glory to His name.
- Genesis has three distinct and sequential geographical settings:
  - 1) Mesopotamia (chapters 1–11); 2) the Promised Land (chapters 12–36); 3) Egypt (chapters 37–50). The time frames of these three segments are 1) creation to 2090 b.c.; 2) 2090 to 1897 b.c.; 3) 1897 to 1804 b.c.<sup>1</sup>

# Matthew

## Author and Date

- Written by Matthew, between a.d. 50 and 70
- One day near Capernaum, Jesus passed Matthew at his tax collector's table and called him to follow. Matthew, also known as Levi, immediately left everything to join Jesus. But he took with him certain personal characteristics that affected the gospel he would write. This disciple put his tax-collecting experience to unique use in compiling one of the biographies of Jesus. When writing he approached his task with an accountant's mind. His version of Christ's life placed a higher priority on categories than on chronology. Consequently, parables, miracles, and sayings tend to be grouped by shared characteristics and not by when the events occurred.
- Matthew also took pains to account for the claims of Christ. He frequently noted the ways that Jesus' words and actions fulfilled prophecy.

## Background and Setting

- Although all the gospel writers had the same biography to write, each one approached the subject in a different way. For Matthew, Jesus was the promised King. Matthew backed up this claim by repeatedly pointing out the way that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah.
- The Jewish flavor of Matthew's gospel is remarkable. Even the opening genealogies only trace Jesus' lineage as far back as Abraham. In contrast, Luke, who aimed to show Christ as the

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<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 1.

Redeemer of humanity, follows Jesus' family tree all the way back to Adam. Matthew's purpose was somewhat narrower: to demonstrate that Christ is the King and Messiah of Israel. This gospel quotes more than sixty times from Old Testament prophetic passages, emphasizing how Christ fulfilled all those promises. <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 175-176.

**Week 1: January 1-11**

## **January 1**

### **Genesis 1-2**

The first verse of the Bible declares that God is the Creator. Why do you think the Bible starts with making that very clear? What effect does that have on you as his creature?

### **Matthew 1**

Matthew's gospel is an account of Jesus' life and ministry with emphasis on how the Old Testament shows that Jesus is the promised Messiah. Why does Matthew start his book with the genealogy of Jesus? (hint: think about why this would be important for the original Jewish readers and look at who he starts and ends within this list). Why is Jesus' birth so special?

## **January 2**

### **Genesis 3-5**

Genesis 3 is the entrance of sin into the world. From then on the rest of mankind would be sinful and the world would not be the way it is supposed to be. Eve gave into a lie that Satan told her. Sin promises you something great but never fulfills it. Temptation functions the same today. Write down 5 sins you have recently been tempted with. Gen. 3:15 is known as the "first good news" of the Bible. Why is this verse good news for humankind?

### **Matthew 2**

In vv.10-11, the Magi worshiped Jesus and gave him great gifts. What is the reason for you to rejoice in Jesus' coming? What did he come to do?

## **January 3**

### **Genesis 6-8**

Why does God wipe out humanity with a worldwide flood? (hint: look at 6:5) What does this show about the heart of man? What do you learn about God's character here? (Character means what someone is like)

### **Matthew 3**

Jesus came to die for our sins in place of us and to be the only perfectly righteous person there has ever been to give us his righteousness. This was all done so we could be acceptable to God. Jesus in v. 15 says the reason he got baptized was *"to fulfill all righteousness."* What is he saying here? (Tip: a study Bible is a great resource to help you understand difficult verses)

## **January 4**

### **Genesis 9-11**

What is the sign God gave to humanity that he would not destroy the earth again with a flood? Remember this next time you see one. In Gen 11 the people of Shinar rebel against their Creator. What specific commands of God do they rebel against? In what way are you rebelling against God in your life?

### **Matthew 4**

What can you learn about the way Jesus fought off temptation? (hint: look at Ps. 119:11) How can you be like Jesus and put this same pattern into practice?

## **January 5**

### **Genesis 12-14**

God calls Abraham to leave his home country of Ur and leave on a journey to Canaan because God was going to greatly use him. What does God promise Abraham in 12:1-3?

### **Matthew 5:1-26**

Matthew 5-7 is Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in which he tells us how to properly live in God's kingdom. He begins with the Beatitudes each starting with the word "*blessed*." Blessed means very happy. Jesus teaches that the way to find true happiness is not the way the world says. How does the world tell you that you can be happy? How is Jesus' teaching different from that? (hint: read and think through vv.3-12)

## **January 6**

### **Genesis 15-17**

Genesis 15:6 says that God saved Abraham because he believed in God. Belief in God means he trusted that God was able to do what he said. God keeps the promises he makes. Why is it difficult to trust God when he says something?

### **Matthew 5:27-48**

Jesus shows the people in his time and to us that the standard of God's law is much higher than people normally think. He is showing that not only are acts of sin really bad before God, but it goes even deeper into your heart. In vv.33-37 Jesus says that you must tell the truth. Are you someone who does this? How do you struggle with lying?

## **January 7**

### **Genesis 18-19**

Why does God destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah? (hint: look at 18:20-21) What does this show about God's attitude towards sin? What other things can you learn about God's character here?

### **Matthew 6**

What is the sin that Jesus points out in v.1? How can you know if you are doing things for God in a way that pleases him? Jesus in vv. 9-15 shows us how to pray. Why do you think Jesus tells us to start praying about God himself in v.9? (hint: hallowed means to make holy) Why does he not tell you to immediately bring your requests?

## **January 8**

### **Genesis 20-22**

God tests Abraham's faith when he tells him to sacrifice his son, Issac. What can you learn about Abraham's attitude here? V.14 says "*On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.*" Who is this talking about? (hint: think about who comes in the NT)

### **Matthew 7**

Jesus says in vv.13-14 that it is hard to enter by the narrow gate and walk the narrow road. Make a compare/contrast list of both ways, the wide and the narrow. How can you know which one you are on? (hint: look at vv.16-20). How do you feel when you read that Jesus will one day say "*I never knew you, depart from me?*" (v.23)



## **January 9**

### **Genesis 23-24**

In these passages, God is seen as a God who answers the prayers of his people. What prayers does God answer here? How has God answered one of your prayers in the past? How did you react when he did that?

### **Matthew 8**

Jesus begins his ministry of miracles. His miracles acted as signs which pointed to the fact that he was God. Here he shows the people that he has power over different areas. What are the different areas or realms that he shows himself to have power over? Looking at vv.18-22 what do you learn about what it takes to be a follower of Jesus? (Helpful: Remember this is not only for his 12 disciples but for you and anyone who wants to follow him)

## **January 10**

### **Genesis 25-26**

The birthright that was first Esau's was very important to God because that's how he was going to pass the promise originally given to Abraham and then Isaac. But when Esau was hungry he sold it to Jacob. V.34 says that Esau "despised his birthright." This means that he looked down and was careless for what God said was important. What are you "looking down" on that God says is important? Think about how you have disobeyed either your parents or God this week.

### **Matthew 9:1-17**

Jesus calls Matthew the tax collector to follow him and he immediately does. This was significant because tax collectors were not seen as honorable people in society. People did not like them. The Pharisees then question why Jesus would hang out with such sinful people as those and others. Jesus responds in v.12. What does Jesus mean when he says that he came to treat those who are sick and not those who don't need a physician? (Hint: think about what it means to be spiritually sick)

## **January 11**

### **Genesis 27-28**

Jacob means “he cheats”. How does Jacob cheat or trick in this passage? Look at Jacob’s dream in vv.10-22. What is the promise that God is repeating to Jacob here? Who has he already said this to?

### **Matthew 9:18-38**

We read more about Jesus’ power over different realms which shows his great power. V.36 tells us that Jesus did these miracles because he had compassion for the people. What is compassion? (hint: Jesus felt something and did something about it) How can you be compassionate like Jesus this week?

**Week 2: January 12-18**

## **January 12**

### **Genesis 29-30**

Jacob marries Leah and Rachel. They have lots of kids. Why is this significant as you read the story of Genesis? (hint: think about what's been promised) How does this continue the promises found in this book?

### **Matthew 10:1-23**

Jesus sent out his disciples with the truth that their journey of being Christ's followers would be very difficult. What are the hard sayings of Jesus found here? Jesus does not leave his followers without encouragement either. What are his words of encouragement that make it worth it to follow Jesus? (hint: look carefully at every line, this will make you a good Bible student)

## **January 13**

### **Genesis 31-32**

Jacob throughout his life was cunning and scheming in everything he did. It is not until he wrestles with God that he begins to completely trust God. How do you need to trust God right now?

### **Matthew 10:24-42**

Jesus says that if they persecuted him others will also persecute you for being his follower. Although Jesus does say that we should not fear. Why does Jesus say this? What's his reason? How is it hard for you to follow Jesus? (Helpful: It is not that Jesus says following him will be easy, but he says to not fear)

## **January 14**

### **Genesis 33-35**

If you are led by your flesh (the part of us that is against obeying God) you will always be led to sin. Our emotions also cannot be our guide because they can be wrong. How do we see that come true in the story of Dinah and her brothers? What are the emotions that arise and the consequences of them in this passage?

### **Matthew 11**

In vv.28-30, Jesus calls people who try their very best to get right with God but they just cannot get to God. He offers rest for your soul. This means the freedom of trying to earn your relationship with God by him paying for your sin debt. How must you feel before you can get right with God? (hint: look at 5:3) Why is this a necessary step in getting saved by God?

### **January 15**

#### **Genesis 36-37**

What are the sins you find in chapter 37 with the story of Joseph, his brothers, and Jacob? Remember actions come from the inside, from the heart. In this passage, how do you see sins on the inside that progress to sinful actions on the outside?

### **Matthew 12:1-21**

V.17 says that Jesus fulfilled "*what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah.*" Matthew includes this to show that Jesus is the person prophesied about hundreds of years before this was written. What does this prophecy teach you about who Jesus is (vv.18-21)? List out as many qualities as you can.

### **January 16**

#### **Genesis 38-40**

Judah and Joseph are both tempted with sin. Yet, they respond differently to temptation. Make a list comparing how they responded. What temptation do you have in your life in which you can respond more like Joseph?

**Matthew 12:22-50**

Jesus says in v.34 that *“out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”* He makes clear that if you want to know whether you have a right heart before God, you need to evaluate what comes out of your mouth. How were your words this week? What does that reveal about what’s going on inside of you, in your heart?

**January 17****Genesis 41**

In this chapter, God is using Joseph to do great things for him. What unexpected events had led Joseph up to this point? Why do you believe God wanted to use Joseph? (hint: think about his attitude)

**Matthew 13:1-32**

In today’s passage, Jesus begins telling us parables. In the parable of the sower, the seed is the component that does not change. What is the seed? What are the four soils and what do they represent (hint: it’s something that describes who you are on the inside)? Which soil best describes you?

**January 18****Genesis 42-43**

Joseph reunites with his brothers, yet he is in a different position this time. Joseph places a test on them to see if they have changed their ways or are still acting the same. How do the brothers respond? How is this different from their last interaction with Joseph?

**Matthew 13:33-58**

Jesus gives two parables in vv.44-46 depicting the kingdom of heaven as treasure and pearls. The kingdom of heaven consists of you having a relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus is so valuable that he says it is worth it to give up everything to follow Jesus. What do you have to give up to follow Jesus?

# Exodus

## Author and Date

- Written by Moses, approximately 1445 to 1405 b.c.

## Background and Setting

- In Exodus God saves His people and gives them His Ten Commandments.
- The descriptive title *Exodus* was given to the second book of Moses by the ancient translators of the Greek Old Testament. The title is simply the Greek expression “a going out,” which delightfully understates God’s great acts on behalf of His chosen people.
- Israel’s dramatic exit from Egypt occurred during the Eighteenth Dynasty, a setting of great political and economic strength in Egyptian history. Though born a slave, Moses had entered a culture in rapid expansion and growth. Egypt was a world military, economic, and political superpower. God used the educational and governmental systems of Egypt as well as a wilderness exile in Midian to train Moses. Once ready, Moses represented Israel before powerful Pharaoh Amenhotep II and then guided his people on their wilderness journey.
- Exodus sketches Moses’ early history and records the details of Israel’s departure from Egypt. It concludes after the giving of the law and the construction of the Tabernacle at the foot of Mount Sinai. At that point, despite the people’s terrible sin of idolatry while Moses was on the mountain, God continued to lead Israel to the Promised Land. <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 7–8.



**Week 3: January 19-25**

## **January 19**

### **Genesis 44-45**

In chapter 45 Joseph reveals himself to his brothers. How does he respond to them? How would you expect someone to respond to his situation (hint: think about what he did not do)? In vv.7-8, Joseph gives the reason for why he responded the way he did. Who is the reason?

### **Matthew 14:1-21**

John the Baptist is thrown into prison and ends up getting executed. There are times when God's people are persecuted and their story ends up very good, such as Joseph. Other times, like John the Baptist, the story does not end so well. What are some of God's attributes that are still true even when you are getting persecuted? How can those be comforting?

## **January 20**

### **Genesis 46-48**

In chapter 48, Jacob blesses the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. Who are they? What does Jacob say in the blessing?

### **Matthew 14:22-36**

Peter doubted Jesus' ability to hold him up on the water. Jesus says that he had little faith. Evaluate your trust in God. Describe the last time you doubted God. In what area do you need to wholeheartedly trust God?

## **January 21**

### **Genesis 49-50**

Joseph in 50:20 says that God had a plan throughout all the evil decisions of his brothers. Why was it good that God allowed all that happened to Joseph?

### **Matthew 15:1-20**

Jesus says that what defiles (makes unclean) a person is not about what comes into your body. Instead, it is about what it is on the inside, in your heart. How can you tell if you have a bad heart? What kind of heart do you have?

## **January 22**

### **Exodus 1-3**

Jacob's descendants are now enslaved in Egypt in the book of Exodus. God hears their groaning and comes to save them. What is God's plan to save them and who does it involve? What do you learn about God in the burning bush event?

### **Matthew 15:21-39**

In vv.21-28 Jesus says that his assignment was to the Israelites and not the Gentiles, yet because the Canaanite woman had faith, Jesus healed her daughter. Jesus wants us to believe in his power and in who he is. How do you specifically need to have faith in Jesus right now?

## **January 23**

### **Exodus 4-6**

God was going to use Moses to be his mouthpiece and to save his people from slavery. Although, Moses was unwilling. What were his excuses? What does this reveal to you about Moses' trust in God? How did God respond to Moses' doubts?

### **Matthew 16**

Jesus gives some hard truths in vv.24–28. In your own words, what is Jesus saying here? Why would anyone do what Jesus is saying here?

## **January 24**

### **Exodus 7-8**

We now begin to read the battle between God and Pharaoh. What was God showing about himself here? How was Pharaoh reacting? What does this show you about the heart of man?

### **Matthew 17**

Today we read about Jesus' transfiguration. In other words, he reveals who he is and who he has been for all eternity. What do you learn about the person of Jesus here? What do you learn about Jesus when God the Father says, "*This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him*" (v.5)?

## **January 25**

### **Exodus 9-10**

As you read about the plagues, how do these events make Yahweh (God) different from other gods? What was this supposed to do to the Israelites?

### **Matthew 18:1-20**

Jesus says that to be the greatest in the kingdom you must be humble like a child. Are you humble? Why or why not? Why is this attitude necessary to be saved by God?

**Week 4: January 26 - February 1**

## **January 26**

### **Exodus 11-12**

God at last saves his people and brings them out of Egypt. They are saved through the punishment of another. How does the Passover point to Jesus and what he did for humanity? (hint: look at John 1:29)

### **Matthew 18:21-35**

Jesus in our passage teaches us about forgiveness. He says to forgive not “*seven times, but seventy-seven times*” (v.21). What is he saying here? He also gives a parable about someone unwilling to forgive someone else when they have already experienced forgiveness themselves. What’s the lesson in this parable? How do you need to forgive someone in your life?

## **January 27**

### **Exodus 13-15**

After God took the Israelites out of Egypt, God brought them to the Red Sea. How did the people react to this? Why do you think God brought them there and not an easier way? The people worshiped Yahweh after he had done great things for them. What has God done for you and how will you worship him as a result?

### **Matthew 19:1-15**

Jesus’ definition of marriage is that it is a union between one man and one woman that lasts a lifetime. What book of the Bible does Jesus go to for his definition? What does this teach you about marriage? (Hint: think about when that book was written and where that passage is found; for example: the chapter it’s found in)

## **January 28**

### **Exodus 16-18**

In these chapters, God is seen as a provider for his people. How does God provide for the Israelites? In what ways has God provided for you these past couple of days? What should you do as a result of his care for you?

### **Matthew 19:16-30**

The common theme found in these verses is that Jesus calls us to surrender and give up all to follow him. This could be your desires and idols. What do you need to surrender to follow Jesus today?

## **January 29**

### **Exodus 19-21**

Today we read about the giving of the 10 commandments. In your words, write out and briefly describe what each of the 10 is communicating. Which is one that you struggle with the most?

### **Matthew 20:1-16**

Jesus gives a parable illustrating the fact that humans tend to get upset when others are treated with God's grace. This happens when you think you deserve something and you forget everything is by grace. Grace is getting something you don't deserve. In what ways have you felt better than others?



## **January 30**

### **Exodus 22-24**

God gives laws for society to properly function. What is something you can learn about what God is like after reading these chapters?

### **Matthew 20:17-34**

Jesus says that if you want to be great in the kingdom of God you must serve others and not expect to be served. Why do you think Jesus says this? What is the basis for this statement? How can you serve someone today?

## **January 31**

### **Exodus 25-26**

God is with his people in a special way through the tabernacle. How were the people supposed to treat the tabernacle?

### **Matthew 21:1-22**

We read about Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. He rides in on a donkey. What does this teach you about Jesus? People respond to him differently as he comes to town. What are the different responses?

## **February 1**

### **Exodus 27-28**

God gave specific instructions for the building of the tabernacle and the clothing the priests were supposed to wear. What do you learn about God as you read all these details?

### **Matthew 21:23-46**

Jesus says that there comes a point where God “*takes away the kingdom from you*” (v.43). This comes when someone hears the gospel, continues to reject it, and then God rejects them. How have you responded to Jesus?

# Leviticus

## Author and Date

- Written by Moses, approximately 1445 to 1405 b.c.
- As if to make the point unmistakable, Leviticus includes fifty-six references in its twenty-seven chapters to the fact that God “called to Moses” or “spoke to Moses” and gave him direct instructions about what to say to the people. The content of Leviticus was given to the people by God through Moses.

## Background and Setting

- Leviticus details the laws of approach to and fellowship with God.
- Ancient scholars translating this book from Hebrew to Greek gave it a descriptive title—*Leuitikon*—which means “matters of the Levites.” Later translators borrowed the word directly.
- The Exodus radically changed the way God related to Israel. Until that point in the history of God’s people, the following had never occurred: 1) the glory of God had not been visible among the Israelites; 2) a central place of worship, like the Tabernacle, had never existed; 3) the yearly calendar had no feasts or sacrifices that required participation; 4) no formal structure of priests or other religious workers had been appointed.
- During Israel’s departure from Egypt, however, God made His presence visible to them with a pillar of cloud and fire. At Mount Sinai, Aaron and his family were appointed as priests. The plans for the Tabernacle were also revealed and carried out. These developments set the stage for God’s instructions about lifestyle, worship, and the yearly calendar recorded in Leviticus.
- Leviticus records no geographical movement. The people of Israel remained at Mount Sinai, the place where God came down to give His law (25:1).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 12–13.

**Week 5: February 2-8**

## **February 2**

### **Exodus 29-30**

God cannot be approached in whatever way we want. God must be approached in a specific way. What attribute of God is this describing?

### **Matthew 22:1-22**

There is a parable told about a wedding feast and to come to the wedding you must be clothed in the right garments. These garments must be perfect. Who's garments must you put on to be with God? How can you receive these garments?

## **February 3**

### **Exodus 31-33**

The Israelites give into idolatry as they attempt to worship God through something visible and tangible. What are some idols in your life? Remember this is probably not something you physically worship but something that takes the place of where God should be in your life.

### **Matthew 22:23-46**

Jesus gives us the greatest commandment in vv.37-40. Write in your own words, what this means and give an example of what that would look like for you.

## **February 4**

### **Exodus 34-36**

God gives Moses a glimpse at his glory. In other words, he shows Moses what God is really like. What are all the attributes that God gives about himself in Ex 34:6-7?

### **Matthew 23:1-22**

The Pharisees were different people in public than they were in private. They were hypocrites. How in your life have you seen tendencies towards hypocrisy?

## **February 5**

### **Exodus 37-38**

There were lots of expensive materials used in the making of the tabernacle. God wants your entire life devoted to him. How can you give yourself to God today?

### **Matthew 23:23-39**

Jesus condemns the Pharisees for their hypocrisy. Why do you believe God hates hypocrisy so much? What should you do instead of hypocrisy?

## **February 6**

### **Exodus 39-40**

God gives specific commands to the priests. What are three commands you know God wants you to obey today?

### **Matthew 24:1-22**

Jesus begins to say that he will come again but before he does things in the world will get very crazy. Jesus says to not be afraid. When you read this passage, how does it make you feel? How do you think Jesus wants you to feel?

## **February 7**

### **Leviticus 1-3**

As we begin to read the book of Leviticus, we see there are different types of sacrifices that the Israelites were supposed to do. These offerings were intended to be an act of worship to God. While we do not offer animals and kill them today, you do offer worship to God. How can you specifically worship God today? (hint: remember this is not only worship songs)

### **Matthew 24:23-51**

Jesus says that he will one day come back for his people, yet he does not tell us when he will come back. According to this passage, what are you supposed to be doing while you wait for his return?

## **February 8**

### **Leviticus 4-6**

In today's passages, you read about sin and guilt offerings which were intended to pay for something you did. They would offer an animal and they would have their sin covered. How is this process different in the New Testament? (hint: think about why this is different when Jesus comes)

### **Matthew 25:1-30**

Jesus gives the parable of the talents. His main point is that God has given Christians certain gifts that we are to use to serve God. One day God will ask us what we did with those gifts. Properly using those gifts is what is called stewardship. How can you be a good steward of what God has given you? (hint: think of your time, friendships, abilities, talents)



**Week 6: February 9-15**

## **February 9**

### **Leviticus 7-9**

God consecrated the priests which means that he set them apart for a specific purpose. For this to happen God had to clean them by sprinkling blood on them. How does someone become clean in the New Testament?

### **Matthew 25:31-46**

Jesus talks about when he returns there will be two different types of people that will be separated into two groups. What are the two types of people and what's the difference between them?

## **February 10**

### **Leviticus 10-12**

Aaron's sons are killed because they offer unauthorized fire before the Lord in the tabernacle. They did not take seriously how God wanted to be worshiped. Why is it important to understand how God wants us to approach him and to worship him?

### **Matthew 26:1-19**

Jesus says it is a good thing that the woman poured the perfume on him because it showed that she was willing to give her best to him. Jesus wants your very best. How can you give God your best today? (helpful: this could be at school, doing chores, or other things like that)

## **February 11**

### **Leviticus 13**

Why do you think God gave so many specific instructions about sanitation laws for diseases such as leprosy? (hint: think about what it means for God to be holy)

### **Matthew 26:20-54**

Jesus goes off to pray with his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane. Yet, his disciples get tired and fall asleep. Jesus never excuses them but tells them why praying can be hard and says to make an effort to do it. Explain v.41 in your own words when Jesus talks about prayer.

## **February 12**

### **Leviticus 14**

After reading this chapter, what do you learn about God and what he wants? (hint: think about why God wanted people to be clean)

### **Matthew 26:55-75**

Jesus begins to get accused by his opponents after he is taken away in secret. What is Jesus' attitude when they are accusing him? How does he respond to what they are saying? What do you learn about Jesus' character here?

## **February 13**

### **Leviticus 15-17**

In your own words describe the detailed atonement process in chapter 16. (Atonement means that God covers your sins) This whole process was symbolic because it pointed to something much greater. How does this point forward to what Jesus does for his people when he comes in the New Testament?

### **Matthew 27:1-31**

Pilate gives the people the opportunity to choose Barabas or Jesus to be crucified. They choose Jesus and Jesus does not lash out and say this is unfair. He willingly goes to the cross to die for you. What were Jesus' motivations as he chose to die for you?

## **February 14**

### **Leviticus 18-19**

In 19:2, God describes what he is like and also gives a command to his people. Where else do you find this command in the New Testament? What does it mean for God to be holy? What does it mean for you to be holy?

### **Matthew 27:32-66**

Name all the unusual things that happened when Jesus died. What would you have felt if you were there when this was all happening? What does this teach you about who Jesus was?

## **February 15**

### **Leviticus 20-21**

What is the punishment for disrespecting your parents in this passage? Obviously, you do not get punished the same way. But, we can still learn something about how seriously God views disrespecting your parents. How do you need to respect and obey your parents today?

### **Matthew 28:1-20**

What does Jesus command in the Great Commission? Who is someone in your life that you need to share the gospel with?

# Numbers

## Author and Date

- Written by Moses, approximately 1445 to 1405 b.c.
- Like the other first five books of the Bible, Numbers is identified as Moses' writing by the rest of Scripture. Numbers itself mentions Moses twice (33:2; 36:13) as the recorder of events and commandments.
- Numbers was written in the final year of Moses' life. Biblical sequence requires a completion date for Numbers of shortly before the eleventh month of the fortieth year after the Exodus, since that is the specific date given for Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 1:3).

## Background and Setting

- Numbers records the thirty-nine years of judgment that Israel spent in the wilderness.
- Originally, the Hebrew designation of the fourth book of the Bible was an expression meaning "in the wilderness." The ancient Greek title of this book is *arithmoi*, from which we get the English word *arithmetic*. Later, Latin translators gave the book the title *numeri*, which English has borrowed as its general word *numbers*. The translators were referring to the numberings (censuses) recorded in the book. In another sense, the book numbers the thirty-nine years in which God's people were in the wilderness, counting down the time of their punishment.
- Most of the events in Numbers are set in the wilderness. The people were forced to live as nomads for forty years, though their actual moves were infrequent. Chapter 33 lists a complete itinerary of their travels. The Israelites broke camp roughly forty times in forty years.
- The greatest portion of the book describes the events leading up to the first failed conquest of the Promised Land as well as the final preparations for the second conquest almost four decades later. In between, the tragedy of thirty-seven wasted years is emphasized by being largely ignored.<sup>5</sup>

# Mark

## Author and Date

- Written by Mark, between a.d. 50 and 70
- Unlike the Epistles, the Gospels do not name their authors. The early church fathers, however, unanimously affirm that Mark wrote the Second Gospel. Among these witnesses are Papias, bishop of Hierapolis (about a.d. 140), Justin Martyr (about a.d. 150), and Irenaeus (about a.d. 185). Justin Martyr referred to the Gospel of Mark as "the memoirs of Peter." Irenaeus called Mark "the disciple and interpreter of Peter." Papias also strongly supported the authorship of Mark.

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<sup>5</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 18-19.

## Background and Setting

- The Gospel for the Romans.
- As the chilly shadows of evening lengthen into night, the travelers draw closer to the fire. Among them stands a storyteller, spotlighted by the flames. His story is vivid, colorful, and full of action. His voice conveys a sense of conviction. Some in his audience find themselves deeply moved by the storyteller's account. It sounds to them like good news. If the story is true, then it is the best story ever shared, for it tells about God's personal visit to earth. That rapid, condensed, but fascinating storyteller's approach to the life of Jesus was used by Mark to record his gospel.
- In contrast to Matthew's Jewish audience, Mark seems to have targeted Roman believers, particularly Gentiles. When he employed Aramaic terms, Mark translated them for his readers (3:17; 5:4; 7:11, 34; 10:46; 14:36; 15:22, 34). Further, in some places he used Latin (Roman) expressions instead of their Greek equivalents (5:9; 6:27; 12:15, 42; 15:16, 39). Mark also used the Roman system when referring to time (6:48; 13:35), and he took care to explain Jewish customs (7:3–4; 14:12; 15:42).
- Some of Mark's omissions (primarily the genealogies) make sense if his audience had little interest in such material. This gospel also includes fewer references to the Old Testament and fewer instances that would be of particular interest to Jewish readers—such as details of the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees and Sadducees. When mentioning Simon of Cyrene (15:21), however, Mark identifies him as the father of Rufus, a prominent member of the church at Rome (Romans 16:13). These details support the traditional view that Mark was written for a Gentile audience initially at Rome.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 183–184.

**Week 7: February 16-22**



## **February 16**

### **Leviticus 22-23**

God gave the Israelites specific times and days to worship him, which he called the feasts. Think about your week, when do you have a specific time to worship God?

### **Mark 1:1-22**

Jesus begins his Galilean ministry by saying “*repent and believe*” (v.15). This is the summary of what Jesus taught and proclaimed. What does this mean?

## **February 17**

### **Leviticus 24-25**

God hates when his name is blasphemed by his people. This could be using his name as a cuss word or throwing out the name of God whenever you want. In your life, how have you used the Lord's name in vain?

### **Mark 1:23-45**

What are the two main things you see Jesus doing in these passages? (Hint: look at your ESV section titles) This is important to know because this is the sum of what Jesus did in his ministry.

## **February 18**

### **Leviticus 26-27**

God kept his promises when he promised blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. In the New Testament God says that we have trust in Jesus first and then we obey out of our faith in him. God does bless obedience when you are a Christian. How does that motivate you to obey God?

### **Mark 2**

God heals the paralytic physically and spiritually. What is the more significant healing? Why is it more significant?

## **February 19**

### **Numbers 1-2**

In these beginning chapters of Numbers, the Israelites are numbered. What is the number of men that were able to go to war?

### **Mark 3:1-21**

The Jews were surprised that Jesus healed someone on the Sabbath. Why is Jesus angry and grieved in v.5?

## **February 20**

### **Numbers 3-4**

What is the redemption of the firstborn? (hint: a Study Bible is a great resource)

### **Mark 3:22-35**

When Jesus was told that his mother and brothers came to see him, he replied by saying that those who obey God are part of his family. How can you obey God today?

## **February 21**

### **Numbers 5-6**

What specific things did God want his people to set apart from?

### **Mark 4:1-20**

The parable of the sower shows us how people respond to God's word. What is your typical attitude when you hear God's word in Bible reading, sermons, or small groups?

## **February 22**

### **Numbers 7**

The offerings Israel was to give are similar to the New Testament concept of giving to your church. Do you give financially to your church? How can you be strategic with the money you receive so that you can give to God?

**Mark 4:21-41**

In the parable of a lamp under a basket, we learn that God wants us to talk about truth to the people around us. How can you talk about truth with someone in your life who does not know Jesus?

**Week 8: February 23 - March 1**

## **February 23**

### **Numbers 8-10**

The Israelites celebrate the Passover for the first time since they left Egypt. Why is the Passover important?

### **Mark 5:1-20**

How did the people respond to the healing of the man with many demons? How does Jesus respond to the man after he heals him?

## **February 24**

### **Numbers 11-13**

What's the sin found in these chapters? What do you learn about how God views this sin? Where in your life do you see this sin present?

### **Mark 5:21-43**

Jesus shows his saving power in these verses. What does he save them from? How does Jesus save here?

## **February 25**

### **Numbers 14-15**

How do the people rebel in this passage? What's God's consequence for their rebellion? How do Caleb and Joshua stand out from the rest?

**Mark 6:1-32**

Familiarity breeds contempt. Jesus was not received in his own hometown of Nazareth because Jesus had grown too familiar to them and they thought they knew what he was about. They had preconceived notions about him. How could this also be a problem for you?

**February 26****Numbers 16-17**

The people rebel again, yet this rebellion is different. What was Korah's rebellion? What are two sins that you see the people commit in their rebellion? (hint: think of their attitude towards God and to their leaders)

**Mark 6:33-56**

What are three big things you see Jesus doing in this passage? How do the actions of Jesus compare to what God does for his people in the Old Testament?

**February 27****Numbers 18-20**

What did Moses do wrong in chapter 20? Why do you think God responded the way he did?

**Mark 7:1-13**

Jesus points out the sin of the Pharisees that they were rejecting what God had said and replaced it with something else. What would be an example of this in your life?

**February 28****Numbers 21-23**

The people complain again and God sends judgment on them. Yet, God also shows his mercy. How does he do this? What was the way that the people could get saved and not experience the judgment of God? Jesus says in John 3:14 that he is like the bronze serpent that God provides in this passage. What is the connection? (hint: look at your study Bible)

**Mark 7:14-8:10**

In vv.14-22 Jesus says that what comes out of a person is what makes him unclean, not what he eats. So how can you know what is inside your heart?

**March 1****Numbers 24-27**

In 25:10-13, there is a word that God kept using to describe what led Phinehas to do what he did. What is that word? Why do you believe this was a good thing and God gave great approval of it? (hint: do not think that this description of Phinehas is a bad thing, this is a very good thing because even God is described as having this attribute)



**Mark 8:11-38**

Jesus heals a blind man, yet this healing is done in different parts because this was to show how his disciples and all people come to see Jesus as who he is, as Lord and Savior. His disciples sort of understood who he was at first. But, then fully understood and fully trusted in him. God needed to open their eyes. What is your relationship with Jesus right now?

## Deuteronomy

### Author and Date

- Written by Moses, approximately 1410 to 1405 b.c.
- Moses has generally been accepted as the author of Deuteronomy in large part because the book itself makes that claim. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament support the claim of Mosaic authorship. While 32:48–34:12 was added after Moses' death (probably by Joshua), the rest of the book must have originated with Moses shortly before his death in 1405 b.c.

### Background and Setting

- Deuteronomy records the last words of a great leader—Moses.
- The Hebrew title of this fifth biblical book simply uses two words that mean “these are the words.” Ancient Greek translators based their title on 17:18, which mentions “a copy of this law.” The Greek word actually means “second law.” This emphasizes the fact that much of Deuteronomy is a review of God's Law by Moses in his final days.
- Like Leviticus, the events in Deuteronomy take place in one location. The people of Israel were camped in their final staging area before invading the Promised Land. Numbers 36:13 identifies the location as “the plains of Moab.”
- The first thirty chapters of Deuteronomy record Moses' review and commentary on God's Law. Only two other events are included: 1) Moses' official acts of recording the Law in written form and commissioning Joshua as the new leader (31:1–29); and 2) Moses' death after viewing the Promised Land from the distant peak of Mount Nebo (32:48–52; 34:1–12).
- All of the original recipients of Deuteronomy were the generation that had grown up or been born in the wilderness during the forty years since the Exodus from Egypt. Here they stood on the border of the Promised Land, poised to do what their parents had refused to do.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 24.

**Week 9: March 2-8**

## **March 2**

### **Numbers 28-29**

We read about lots of different offerings the Israelites gave back to God as worship. You are also commanded to give to God, yet not in this same way. But in giving some of your money to your church. How often do you give? While you might not have much, you probably receive something once in a while. What are ways you get money? (birthday money, Christmas, allowance, etc.)

### **Mark 9:1-29**

The father of the boy Jesus heals says he trusts in Jesus but could trust him more. In what way do you need to increase your trust in Jesus?

## **March 3**

### **Numbers 30-31**

The Israelites killed the Midianites because they could not afford to be tempted to go to their old ways. They had to get rid of their avenues to sin. What are your avenues to sin? How can you avoid sin?

### **Mark 9:30-50**

Jesus says that it is sinful if you cause someone else to sin. How have you tempted someone to sin in the past or recent days?

## **March 4**

### **Numbers 32-33**

What are the tribes that are on the East side of the Jordan River?

**Mark 10:1-31**

What was the rich young rulers' problem? Why did he go away sad? What are you holding onto that you do not want to give up to follow God with your whole heart?

**March 5****Numbers 34-36**

Why do the Levites not have an inheritance? (helpful to look in your study Bible)

**Mark 10:32-52**

What does Jesus say true Christian leadership is? What must you become if you want to be a great leader? How can you do that in your life?

**March 6****Deuteronomy 1-2**

The original hearers of Deuteronomy would have been the children of the people who were not able to go into the promised land because of disobedience. Now this generation was excited to finally go into the land. In these first few chapters, Moses is recounting Israel's history. Why is it important to remember what God has done for you?

**Mark 11:1-19**

When Jesus enters the city of Jerusalem he gets angry at the money changers and at what is going on in the temple. Why does Jesus get so angry? How do you know this is righteous anger?

## **March 7**

### **Deuteronomy 3-4**

In 4:9 Moses reminds the people of the importance of storing up God's word in their hearts. How has your Bible reading been? How has your attitude been towards God's word?

### **Mark 11:20-33**

Jesus says in v.24 that he wants to answer your prayers and promises to answer them if they are according to his will. Write out a prayer that is according to God's will.

## **March 8**

### **Deuteronomy 5-7**

In your own words, summarize what God is saying in 6:4-9. How can you grow in your love for God?

### **Mark 12:1-27**

What is the main point of the Parable of the Tenants? What is Jesus teaching? (hint: look at your study Bible for help)

**Week 10: March 9-15**

## **March 9**

### **Deuteronomy 8-10**

Remember in the book of Deuteronomy the people are about to go into the promised land. Yet, God warns them to not be prideful. What is God saying to them in 9:4-5? This also applies in the NT because God says we cannot do anything to gain favor with him and get into heaven. Why can we not get into heaven by ourselves?

### **Mark 12:28-44**

Today at the end of our passage we see the hypocritical scribes and a humble widow. Why do you think Jesus frequently condemns hypocrisy? The widow on the other hand lives a humble and devoted life to God. How can you show humility today?

## **March 10**

### **Deuteronomy 11-13**

God says that Israel will love God if they obey him. How can you show that you love God today?

### **Mark 13:1-13**

What are some of the things Jesus says will take place before he comes back?

## **March 11**

### **Deuteronomy 14-16**

In the beginning verses of these chapters, we see that God says that Israel was to obey because they were God's people. If you are a Christian, you are God's possession. How does the fact that you are a child of God, if you are a Christian, motivate you to obey the Lord?



**Mark 13:14-37**

Jesus can come back at any time. How does that make you feel? How should you live today because of his soon return?

**March 12****Deuteronomy 17-19**

Who is the prophet like Moses? How do you know? What are the consequences for someone who claims to speak for God but does not?

**Mark 14:1-25**

Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper intended for us to remember what he did for us. What can you do to remind yourself of Jesus' sacrifice? Why is it a good thing to remember?

**March 13****Deuteronomy 20-22**

God says that the rules and consequences that Israel dealt with were to make them "*hear and fear*" (21:18). How can you grow in your fear of the Lord as you read Deuteronomy?

**Mark 14:26-50**

In v.38 Jesus tells his disciples that they must be alert because the moment they let their guard down they will give into sin. How can prayer help you with not giving in to sin? Write out a prayer asking God for help in your fight with sin.

## **March 14**

### **Deuteronomy 23-25**

Today we read about the laws that reflect God's holiness. In other words, as we read about these laws we see that God is holy. How do God's laws in these chapters teach you about what he wants and cares about?

### **Mark 14:51-72**

Remember yesterday we read about Peter and the other disciple's prayerlessness. In today's passage, we see the result of Peter's lack of prayer. How does your lack of prayer affect your fight with sin?

## **March 15**

### **Deuteronomy 26-27**

How can you personally give your best to God? How can you personally give your first to God?

### **Mark 15:1-26**

What happens to Jesus in this passage? Who is allowing all this to happen? Why did Jesus go through this?

# Joshua

## Author and Date

- Written by Joshua, approximately 1405 to 1385 b.c.
- Although the author of this book is not named, the most probable candidate is Joshua, who was the key eyewitness to the events (18:9; 24:26). A trusted assistant may have attached such comments as the description of Joshua's death (24:29–33).
- Details like the mention of Rahab still being alive at the time of writing indicate an early date for this book (6:25). Other internal clues, like the ongoing presence of the Jebusites in Jerusalem (15:63), place the completion date before the reign of David (2 Samuel 5:5–9).

## Background and Setting

- Joshua fought the battle of Jericho when the walls came tumbling down.
- This book heads the list of twelve historical books in the Old Testament. The meaning of Joshua's name matches the significance of his role. Joshua means "Jehovah saves" or "the Lord is salvation" and is an earlier Hebrew form of the New Testament name "Jesus."
- When Joshua replaced Moses as leader (Deuteronomy 34), the children of Israel had reached the end of their forty-year wilderness wandering. At that time, Joshua was nearly 90 years old. He eventually died at 110 (24:29) having led Israel in driving out most of the Canaanites and having divided the land among the twelve tribes.
- As the Book of Joshua opens, the nation of Israel is camped on the east side of the Jordan River, awaiting God's instructions. Across the river lived nations so devoted to sinfulness that God would cause the land, so to speak, to "vomit out" its inhabitants (Leviticus 18:25). God would give Israel the land by conquest, primarily to fulfill the covenant He had made with Abraham and his descendants. Through this invasion, God also would pass judgment on the sinful inhabitants (Genesis 15:16). Some of them had possessed part of the land since before Abraham's time (Genesis 10:15–19; 12:6; 13:7). Their persistent moral decline and pagan worship led to God's response. They lost their land.<sup>8</sup>

# Luke

## Author and Date

- Written by Luke, approximately a.d. 60
- The Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts were clearly written by the same individual (Luke 1:1–4; Acts 1:1). Although never identifying himself by name, the writer's use of "we" in many sections of Acts indicates that the author was a close companion of Paul (Acts 16:10–17; 20:5–15; 21:1–18; 27:1–28:16). Only Luke, among the colleagues whom Paul mentions in his own epistles (Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24), fits the profile of the author of these books. That agrees perfectly with the earliest tradition of the church, which unanimously attributed this gospel to Luke

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<sup>8</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 29–30.

## Background and Setting

- A historian's view of the Lord Jesus
- People write biographies for different reasons. Usually, they are convinced the subject of their writing ought to be introduced to as many people as possible. An effective biographer uses good sources and interviews people who can give firsthand accounts of events, words, and habits from the subject's life. A good biographer presents an honest and full record of the subject's impact on others.
- The gospel writer Luke approached his task with each of these objectives. His opening verses describe in detail how he gathered his materials and why he decided to compose his biography of Jesus Christ.
- Luke expressly stated that his knowledge of the events recorded in his gospel came from the reports of those who were eyewitnesses (1:1–2), strongly implying that he personally was not an eyewitness. The prologue makes it clear that Luke's aim was to give an ordered account of the event of Jesus' life, but this does not mean that he always followed a strict chronological order in all instances.
- Luke's acknowledgment that he compiled his account from various extant sources does not invalidate the claim of divine inspiration for his work. The process of inspiration never bypasses or overrides the personalities, vocabularies, and styles of the human authors of Scripture. The unique traits of the human authors are always indelibly stamped on the book of Scripture. Luke's research creates no exception to this rule. The research itself was orchestrated by divine Providence. Most importantly, when Luke wrote, he was moved by the Spirit of God (2 Peter 1:21). Therefore, his account is infallibly true.
- The Apostle Paul referred to Luke as a physician (Colossians 4:14). This is helpful background for Luke's obvious interest in medical phenomena. He gave special emphasis to Jesus' healing ministry throughout his gospel (4:38–40; 5:15–25; 6:17–19; 7:11–15; 8:43–47, 49–56; 9:2, 6, 11; 13:11–13; 14:2–4; 17:12–14; 22:50–51). Luke also displays a physician's sensitivity in including Jesus' compassion for Gentiles, Samaritans, women, children, tax collectors, sinners, and others often regarded as outcasts in Israel.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 189-190.

**Week 11: March 16-22**

## **March 16**

### **Deuteronomy 28**

Write a summary of this chapter in two sentences. What is the main gist of what God is saying here? God desires obedience from you. How do you specifically need to obey the Lord today?

### **Mark 15:27-47**

What does Jesus' death mean? Who were some of the people that were faithful to Jesus to the end?

## **March 17**

### **Deuteronomy 29-30**

In 30:6 & 15, God says he would give his people a circumcised heart. What would a circumcised heart do to God's people? Why is a circumcised heart essential to loving the Lord with all that we have?

### **Mark 16**

As we finish Mark's gospel we read about the tomb that once held Jesus but was left empty because of his miraculous resurrection. Jesus' resurrection is one of the main parts of the gospel and of the Christian faith. Why is Jesus' resurrection so important?

## **March 18**

### **Deuteronomy 31-32**

Moses sings a song of praise before he dies. Notice how he praises God. He knows exactly who God is and how he acts. In 32:3 he says to "*ascribe greatness to our God.*" This means to give glory to the Lord. Why is it important to truly know your God to give him glory and praise him?

**Luke 1:1-23**

In the first verses of Luke's gospel, he says that he is writing so that his readers would have "*certainty*" in *the things they have been taught*" (v.4). God wants you to be certain about what you believe because the Bible is true in all that it says. Who can you go to to ask questions and learn more about the Bible? List some reasons why you need to be confident in who Jesus is.

**March 19****Deuteronomy 33-34**

At the end of chapter 33, God says that the people of Israel are happy to be saved by the Lord. Remember Israel's history and God's kindness to them. With that in mind, why was it important for Israel to remember that they had been rescued by God and not by anything they had done?

**Luke 1:24-56**

Mary magnified the Lord after she was told that Jesus would come from her. Why is it important to praise the Lord after he has done something great for you? What is something the Lord has done for you recently?

**March 20****Joshua 1-3**

Moses gives some instructions to Joshua before he takes over and emphasizes how important God's word is if you want to be successful in following the Lord. According to 1:7-8, why is the word of God essential?

**Luke 1:57-80**

In Zechariah's prophecy, we read about John the Baptist. What was John the Baptist's purpose? How is the Christian's purpose very similar?

**March 21****Joshua 4-6**

As soon as Israel crossed over the Jordan, God commanded them to place stones so that they would remember what the Lord had done for them. How can you remind yourself what God has done for you?

**Luke 2:1-24**

What makes Jesus so different from other babies? According to our passage, what did Jesus come to do?

**March 22****Joshua 7-8**

How seriously do you take sin? How do you think you can take your sin more seriously?



**Luke 2:25-52**

Jesus listened to and obeyed his parents. This shows us a lot because Jesus was both a human boy and God at the same time. He created his parents and yet still obeyed them. How can you obey your parents today and be like Jesus?

**Week 12: March 23-29**

## **March 23**

### **Joshua 9-10**

God says in 10:8 that he would personally defeat Israel's enemies. Israel was not alone as they went into battle. God was going to fight for them. How can this principle help you during tough times? Knowing that God is with you and will help you.

## **Luke 3**

What was the message of John the Baptist? How do you need to repent today?

## **March 24**

### **Joshua 11-13**

God used the evil nations that were originally in the promised land for Israel's good. God sometimes uses the evil in our lives for our good. Where else in the Bible do we see this happen?

## **Luke 4:1-32**

Jesus reads a passage that is about himself found in the book of Isaiah. What are other prophecies that are about Jesus found in the Old Testament?

## **March 25**

### **Joshua 14-15**

Caleb was a faithful man of the Lord. We should be like Caleb because he lived a life of faithfulness from a young age to when he was old. What steps can you take today to trust God and be faithful to him?

**Luke 4:33-44**

In this passage we see Jesus doing the two big things that he did in his earthly ministry. What are those? Think about what's happening in vv.33-41 & vv.42-44.

**March 26****Joshua 16-18**

God promised the people of Israel that they would have their land. Why are the tribal allotments important?

**Luke 5:1-16**

Why did Peter respond the way he did in v.8? What did Jesus mean when he said "*You will be catching men*" (v.10)?

**March 27****Joshua 19-20**

Which tribes of Israel get their land allotments in our passage?

**Luke 5:17-39**

Jesus heals a paralytic and forgives his sin. Why is it a greater thing to have your sins forgiven than it is to be healed?

## **March 28**

### **Joshua 21-22**

In your own words, attempt to summarize what is going on in these chapters.

### **Luke 6:1-26**

Jesus gives us four Beatitudes in today's passage. Describe each one in your own words. (Use a study Bible for help)

## **March 29**

### **Joshua 23-24**

The book of Joshua ends with Joshua leaving the people with a choice: will they serve idols or serve God? You also have to make that decision. Who will you serve? How will you do that?

### **Luke 6:27-49**

What is the difference between the two men in vv.46-49? What's the main idea Jesus is getting you to see?

# Judges

## Author and Date

- Probably written by Samuel, approximately 1043 to 1004 b.c.
- Though Judges does not indicate an author, ancient Jewish tradition assigns that task to Samuel. Samuel's life spanned the end of the period of the judges and the early years of the monarchy in Israel. Internal evidence in the book indicates the writer was at least a contemporary of Samuel who could summarize the period of history, acknowledge the kings, yet also note that Jerusalem was still under the control of the Jebusites.
- A comparison of Judges 1:21 with 2 Samuel 5:6–7 leads to the conclusion that this book was recorded between Saul's rise to the throne in 1043 b.c. and David's capture of Jerusalem in 1004 b.c.

## Background and Setting

- Israel's failure to evict the peoples of the land as God had commanded led to the results God had predicted (Joshua 1:27–2:4). The Canaanite nations became thorns to Israel, and the land was in constant turmoil. In desperate times, the people of Israel would acknowledge their slide into sinfulness and cry to God for forgiveness and deliverance. At each occasion, God would send unique leaders (judges) to deliver them (2:16–19). In Hebrew, the title of this book can also mean "deliverers," or "saviors." The Book of Judges records the careers of twelve God-chosen leaders.
- The Book of Judges represents a tragic sequel to Joshua. In the Book of Joshua, most of the people were obedient to God in conquering the land. Judges portrays them as disobedient, idolatrous, and often defeated. After touching on the final days of Joshua and his death (1:1–3:6), the book describes seven distinct cycles in Israel's stormy relationship with God.
- The seven cycles also demonstrate the repeated four-step sequence of God's intervention in Israel's life:
  1. Israel departs from following God's ways.
  2. God faithfully corrects by allowing military defeat and foreign domination.
  3. Israel cries out for deliverance.
  4. God raises up judges who serve as civil or military champions and lead the people to victories over the oppressors.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 35-36.

**Week 13: March 30 - April 5**

## **March 30**

### **Judges 1-2**

The book of Judges is a book that shows what happens when people continue to live in sin. In the book, we also see God's mercy and grace. Yet, it shows us that if we choose to go after sin it will lead to death and destruction for us. What is a sin you need to get rid of in your life?

### **Luke 7:1-30**

John the Baptist is said to be the greatest man to have ever lived and this comes from the mouth of Jesus (v.28). Yet, with what you know about Jesus' teaching on greatness and humility in the kingdom. How did John the Baptist get to be the greatest man on earth?

## **March 31**

### **Judges 3-5**

Starting in today's chapters we begin to read the action of the book of Judges. Israel had gone to serve foreign gods in the land and had forgotten about the real God they used to serve. God sends judges who are military leaders to rescue the people from oppression. God is merciful to his people even when they rebelled against them. What is your reaction to knowing that God is willing to forgive and embrace you even when you sin?

### **Luke 7:31-50**

What does Jesus mean in v.47, when he says if you have been forgiven you will forgive others?



## **April 1**

### **Judges 6-7**

Who are the people that are oppressing Israel? Who is the judge? What is the sinful problem we see in Gideon?

### **Luke 8:1-21**

The Parable of the Sower teaches us about how we should respond to God's Word. Properly responding to God's Word is listening, understanding, and applying. Which one of these steps is difficult for you and why?

## **April 2**

### **Judges 8-9**

As you read these chapters, note the consequences of not following the Lord. What are the examples you read in the passage of not following what God says? What does this teach you about your life?

### **Luke 8:22-56**

What is the common idea found in this passage? Why is faith so crucial to following Jesus?

## **April 3**

### **Judges 10-11**

The book of Judges depicts a downward spiral of sin. As you get further away from God the more you get into sin. What is the Jephthah's dumb decision? What does this teach you about making foolish promises?

**Luke 9:1-36**

What does it mean to take up your cross daily and follow Jesus? What makes this a hard thing to do?

**April 4****Judges 12-14**

Why is Samson not a good guy? (Use examples from the text)

**Luke 9:37-62**

Jesus tells those who want to follow him to count the cost of being his follower. We read in v.62 that once you decide to follow him you cannot go back and follow the world. How is following the world a temptation for you?

**April 5****Judges 15-17**

Summarize what happens in these chapters about the life of Samson.

**Luke 10:1-24**

Jesus pronounces “woes” to cities that would not repent. These “woes” teach us that the more you know about Jesus and the gospel, the more you will be held accountable because of your knowledge. In other words, the more you know the more responsible you will be held. This is a good thing if you

properly respond to Jesus, it is a scary thing if you choose to reject him. Are you rejecting God? Is there a reason for this? If you are not rejecting him, how have you responded?

# Ruth

## Author and Date

- Probably written by Samuel, approximately 1030 to 1010 b.c.
- Ruth itself offers little help in identifying the author. Ancient Jewish traditions name Samuel as the writer. The closing verses mention David, but not Solomon, indicating a date of composition at the end of or shortly after Samuel's life (Ruth 4:17, 22). Whoever the author was, the effort yielded an enduring work of exquisite storytelling.

## Background and Setting

- The only book in the Old Testament named after an ancestor of Jesus.
- Even the title of the Book of Ruth includes several noteworthy facts: 1) this book is the only one in the Old Testament named after a non-Jewish person; 2) this book is one of only two books in the Bible named after a woman (Ruth, like Esther, serves as the central character of the story). The name Ruth was most likely a shared Hebrew/Moabite term meaning "friendship." As her brief biography demonstrates, Ruth certainly lived up to her name.
- Two geographic locations provide the context of the action in Ruth: the city of Bethlehem, just south of Jerusalem and the country of Moab, to the southeast and beyond the Dead Sea. Moab and Israel shared a distant but shameful ancestral relationship. The Moabites were descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot through incest (Genesis 19:37). Tensions were often high between the two nations. The events in Ruth's life apparently occurred during a time of relative peace between the two peoples.
- The famine that had driven Elimelech and Naomi to relocate to Moab illustrates a method God would use, in addition to foreign conflicts, to discipline His unruly people (1:1). According to the book, the events occurred during the time of the judges (1:1). No famines are recorded in Judges, but the brief genealogy of David indicates that Ruth probably lived during the judgeship of Jair (Judges 10:3–5).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 40.

# 1 and 2 Samuel

## Author and Date

- Author(s) unknown, approximately 931 b.c. or later
- Although the original human author of 1 and 2 Samuel remains anonymous, ancient traditions of Israel assign the writing to Samuel himself (1 Chronicles 29:29). Other possible writers include Nathan and Gad.

## Background and Setting

- The tribes that formed the nation of Israel eventually became a kingdom, and these books tell the story.
- First and 2 Samuel continue the history of Israel where Judges left off. Samuel's life spanned significant changes among God's chosen people. He can be called the last and greatest of the judges (Acts 13:20). Samuel's ministry also made him the first of the prophets (Acts 3:24). He anointed the first two kings of Israel (Saul and David). The two books that now bear his name were originally one scroll, divided for convenience by those who hand copied the record.
- For the first time in Scripture, the events recorded in 1 and 2 Samuel occurred within the borders of the Promised Land. Familiar places like Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Ramah, and Hebron become Jewish cities. Daily life includes continual warfare and strife with the peoples who resisted displacement when Israel conquered the Promised Land. The people demand a king. Saul and particularly David rule the land with power. Samuel lives through the times of upheaval and speaks for God to the people and the leaders.
- The action in 1 and 2 Samuel begins in about 1105 b.c. with the birth of Samuel (1 Samuel 1:1–28). The account ends with David's final words in about 971 b.c. (2 Samuel 23:1–7). The books cover about 135 years of history. During those eventful years, Israel was transformed from a loosely knit group of tribes guided by judges into a united nation under a king. Three men stand as giants among their peers of the time: Samuel, who ministered from 1105 to 1030 b.c.; Saul, who reigned as king from 1052 to 1011; and David, who reigned from 1011 to 971.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 43-44.

**Week 14: April 6-12**

## **April 6**

### **Judges 18-19**

What are the problems that come when God is not your king? (18:1) What would your life look like if God was your king and you were his faithful servant?

### **Luke 10:25-42**

What is Jesus teaching in the Parable of the Good Samaritan? (hint: look at the context in vv.25-28)

## **April 7**

### **Judges 20-21**

Why is it bad if you live your life doing what you want, with no concern for God? (look at 21:25) How can you learn to do what God wants from the bad examples in Judges?

### **Luke 11:1-28**

What are the two things Jesus says to do in v.28? How can you remember to do that as you read your Bible?

## **April 8**

### **Ruth 1-4**

Try your best to summarize the book of Ruth in three sentences.

**Luke 11:29-54**

Why do you think God deems it so important that his people not only know about the Bible but “do” what it says?

**April 9****1 Samuel 1-3**

What did God do that made Hannah break out into praise in chapter 2? How has God been kind to you this week?

**Luke 12:1-34**

Jesus in the parable of the rich fool says that life is not all about the things we have (v.15). You do not get your value from how much you have or how little you have. If you do, your focus is on the wrong thing and God did not create you to worry about the things you have in this life. How is this a problem in your life?

**April 10****1 Samuel 4-6**

Where do you see God’s punishment in these chapters?

**Luke 12:35-59**

Jesus says you have to be ready for his return because it can happen at any time. Are you ready? Why or why not?



## **April 11**

### **1 Samuel 7-9**

The people wanted a king because they did not want God to be their king and tell them what to do. Have you rejected God from being your king? How is it better to have God tell you what to do than yourself or other people?

### **Luke 13:1-21**

What does Jesus say will happen to you if you do not repent? What kind of feeling do you get after you read this?

## **April 12**

### **1 Samuel 10-12**

How can you "*fear the LORD*" and be faithful to God today? (12:24)

### **Luke 13:22-35**

Jesus says you should "*strive to enter through the narrow door*" (v.24) because there will come a day when there will not be another opportunity. God is giving you a chance to repent and trust in him today. What is the result of not entering through the narrow door according to this passage?

**Week 15: April 13-19**

## **April 13**

### **1 Samuel 13-14**

How does Saul disobey God in our passage? How else does he do something foolish?

### **Luke 14:1-24**

What is Jesus teaching in the parable of the great banquet? Remember the context has to do with being humble and admitting you need Jesus.

## **April 14**

### **1 Samuel 15-16**

Saul had disobeyed God and tried to make up for his wrongs through sacrifice. The problem was that God wanted Saul's heart not just a mere action. Why do you think God wants your heart instead of just doing things for him? What does obedience demonstrate about your love for God? (look at John 14:21)

### **Luke 14:25-35**

Jesus gives a parable to illustrate how crucial it is to count the cost of being his follower because it is not an easy life to be a Christian. He tells us this for our good because we do not want to be foolish when we decide to follow him. What will it cost you to follow Jesus? (think about sinful habits you will have to curb, maybe sinful influences, etc.)

## **April 15**

### **1 Samuel 17-18**

David fights Goliath in today's passage. What do you find in common in 17:26, 36, and 46? Look for the reason why David decided to fight for Israel. What was Goliath doing?

**Luke 15:1-10**

Jesus gives these two parables to describe to us the love of God. Jesus intends to show us how great God's love is for those who are unworthy. In these parables, think of two people, us and God. Who initiates the love? Who receives the love? What's the same word found in both vv.7 & 10? Why should this virtue be found in Christians who have received the love of God?

**April 16****1 Samuel 19-21**

David laments in 20:3 "*... there is but a step between me and death.*" Look at Ecclesiastes 9:12 and Hebrews 9:27. The time of your death is unknown, but the fact that it will happen is certain. We are just a heartbeat away from death. What feelings, thoughts, and attitudes does this produce in you?

**Luke 15:11-32**

The parable of the prodigal son is a parable that teaches us lessons on how God saves and how we as sinners need to repent. The father pictures God and the prodigal pictures us. What are the qualities you see in the prodigal son as the story goes on? What are the qualities you see in the father as the story goes on?

**April 17****1 Samuel 22-24**

In what way do you see Saul making foolish & sinful choices in our passage? What is controlling him?

**Luke 16:1-18**

God has given everyone responsibilities and things to be in charge of. How can you be faithful today?

**April 18**

**1 Samuel 25-26**

What does Nabal do that is foolish? How does David do the correct and good thing in these chapters?

**Luke 16:19-31**

What do you learn about hell in the parable that Jesus gives? What do you learn about the Bible in v.31?

**April 19**

**1 Samuel 27-29**

What sinful activity does Saul involve himself in today's passage? Why is that a sin?

**Luke 17:1-19**

How can you serve like the unworthy servant today? How can you be thankful like the one leper today?

**Week 16: April 20-26**

## **April 20**

### **1 Samuel 30-31**

How do Saul and his sons die in the last chapter of 1 Samuel?

### **Luke 17:20-37**

How is Jesus' return and the coming kingdom of God described in this section of Scripture?

## **April 21**

### **2 Samuel 1-3**

How do you see God's faithfulness to David in these chapters?

### **Luke 18:1-17**

How are the tax collector and the Pharisee different? In what way do you need to be more like the tax collector?

## **April 22**

### **2 Samuel 4-6**

2 Samuel 6, recounts what happened to Uzzah when he touched the ark of the covenant. What does this story teach you about God's holiness?

**Luke 18:18-43**

What is the rich young ruler's sin problem? What did that show about the desires of his heart? What kind of attitude does the blind beggar have?

**April 23****2 Samuel 7-9**

Today we read about God's promises to David, which is famously known as the Davidic Covenant. What are all the things God promises to David?

**Luke 19:1-28**

The account of Jesus and Zacchaeus teaches us about the love of Jesus seen in salvation and the repentance of Zacchaeus. How do you see these two truths in this passage?

**April 24****2 Samuel 10-12**

How does David sin in today's passage? What are the consequences of his sin?

**Luke 19:29-48**

Jesus makes his entrance into Jerusalem as the king. As you look at your life, what kind of person are you, one who submits to King Jesus or one who refuses to submit to authority? How can you tell?



## **April 25**

### **2 Samuel 13-14**

The friendship between Amnon and Jonadab warns us about having ungodly friends. What are some reasons it is important to have godly friends?

### **Luke 20:1-26**

What are ways you have rejected God's authority?

## **April 26**

### **2 Samuel 15-16**

How do we see Absalom's ungodliness in these chapters? How do we see David's godliness in these chapters?

### **Luke 20:27-47**

At the end of chapter 20, Jesus gives warnings about the scribes who only cared about being liked by other people and did not care about obeying the Lord from the inside. How have you seen this in your life? How do you need to obey God from the heart?

# 1 and 2 Kings

## Author and Date

- Written by an unknown author, approximately 561 to 538 b.c.
- Though Jewish tradition has suggested Jeremiah as the likely author of 1 and 2 Kings, the books themselves raise some objections. For example, 2 Kings 25:27–30 records events that took place in Babylon in 561 b.c. Jeremiah went to Egypt, but not to Babylon (Jeremiah 43:1–7). The central role of God's prophets in these books does indicate, however, that the author was probably a prophet, someone whose name we would recognize, or one of the many nameless prophets who served God among the people.

## Background and Setting

- These books present a powerful case for the failure of human leadership when it turns away from God.
- Kings come in many shapes and sizes. Their characters vary widely. Some lead successfully while others fail miserably. Some build, only to be replaced by those who destroy. Some fight, some surrender, and some do practically nothing at all. Some kings leave a legacy of good; others a legacy of evil. At their best or worst, however, monarchs demonstrate one overwhelming truth: Kings simply cannot replace God.
- Two streams run through 1 and 2 Kings: 1) the accounts of eyewitnesses to events; and 2) the commentary on those events by the final author. The first accurately conveys history; the second accurately interprets history. Using reliable sources, Kings traces the histories of two sets of kings and two nations of disobedient people, Israel and Judah, both of whom grew indifferent to God's law and God's prophets. That indifference led them to humiliation, defeat, and crushing captivity.
- The author, exiled in Babylon, produced a book that went beyond a compilation of historical records. He also interpreted the lessons from Israel's history for his fellow exiles. He pointed out clearly that their present condition was a direct consequence of God's judgment over long-established patterns of disobedience (1 Kings 9:3–9).
- The book also records God's efforts to confront and warn the people along the way, using the prophets as His spokesmen. The prophets fearlessly foretold the eventual results of national sin, which would culminate in exile. Always, the prophets held out the offer of God's mercy whenever the people would humble themselves.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 52-53.

**Week 17: April 27 - May 3**

## **April 27**

### **2 Samuel 17-18**

How do you see the consequences of David's sin from chapter 11, still present in his life?

### **Luke 21:1-19**

How is it that Jesus could say that the poor widow gave more than the rich? How will you be more generous today?

## **April 28**

### **2 Samuel 19-20**

In what way do you see things going bad in these passages? How do you see David displaying forgiveness in these passages?

### **Luke 21:20-38**

Jesus calls us to "*watch ourselves*" (v.34) and "*stay awake*" (v.36) because we do not know when he will be coming back. He could come right now! What kinds of things would you want to be doing when Jesus comes back? Go and do them today.

## **April 29**

### **2 Samuel 21-22**

David in chapter 22, sings a song of thanksgiving to the Lord for saving him from his enemies. How exactly does David exalt the Lord in this song? What was going on in David's life that serves as the background to this song? (hint: what's been happening in prior chapters)

**Luke 22:1-30**

Jesus initiates the Lord's Supper. This is what we now as Christians participate in at church, called Communion. This is done so that we would "remember" what Jesus has done for us. Why is it good for you to remember the death of Jesus?

**April 30****2 Samuel 23-24**

Why did God view David's census (counting of the people) as a bad thing? What are the options for punishment that God gave to David?

**Luke 22:31-53**

What does Jesus mean when he prays "*not my will, but yours, be done*" (v.42)? What can you do today to act similarly to Jesus' attitude here?

**May 1****1 Kings 1-2**

David says some things to his son before he dies. What are those things?

**Luke 22:54-71**

How does Peter fail to represent Jesus in our passage? How does Jesus react to the pressure of the priests and scribes?

## **May 2**

### **1 Kings 3-5**

What does Solomon ask God for? Why is God so pleased with this request? Why should you ask for wisdom?

### **Luke 23:1-26**

Why did the people hate Jesus so much that they went so far as to pick Barabbas to be released instead? (hint: read Jesus' statement in v.3)

## **May 3**

### **1 Kings 6-7**

Solomon gave God his best in building the temple. How can you serve God and others with all that you have?

### **Luke 23:27-38**

What godly character traits do you see in Jesus today?

# John

## Author and Date

- Written by the Apostle John, approximately a.d. 80 to 90
- Although the author's name does not appear in the gospel, early church tradition strongly and consistently identifies him as the Apostle John. Ireneaus (about a.d. 130–200), who was a disciple of Polycarp (about a.d. 70–160), a disciple of the Apostle John, testified on Polycarp's authority that John wrote this gospel (*Against Heresies* 2.22.5; 3.1.1). Subsequent to Ireneaus, all the church fathers assumed John to be the gospel's author. One of them, Clement of Alexandria (about a.d. 150–215), wrote that John, aware of the facts set forth in the other gospels, and being moved by the Holy Spirit, composed a "spiritual gospel" (see Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* 6.14.7).
- Reinforcing early church tradition are significant internal characteristics of the gospel. While the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) frequently identify the Apostle John by name, he is not directly mentioned by name at all in the Gospel of John. Instead, the author prefers to identify himself as the disciple "whom Jesus loved" (13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20).

## Background and Setting

- The gospel by the disciple Jesus loved.
- When an exciting event happens, some people can't wait to talk about it. Others like to think about the reasons and details for a while before they offer their comments. One of the four biographies of Jesus fits this second category. John must have spoken many times about his experiences with Jesus, but he did not write down his gospel until long after the other three writers had published theirs. The passage of time did not change the central character in John's account, but it allowed him to express some conclusions about Jesus that could best be made after lifelong reflection on the significance of God's visit to earth.
- John's gospel is the only one of the four that contains a precise statement regarding the author's purpose (20:30–31). He declares, "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (20:31). The motivating purposes for writing this book, therefore, are twofold: evangelistic and apologetic.
- John emphasized his evangelistic purpose by using the word "believe" approximately a hundred times in the gospel—twice as often as the synoptics use the term. He composed his gospel to provide reasons for saving faith in his readers and, as a result, to assure them that they would receive the divine gift of eternal life (1:12).
- John's apologetic purpose often overlapped his evangelistic purpose. He wrote to convince his readers of Jesus' true identity as the incarnate God-man whose divine and human natures were perfectly united into one person who was the prophesied Christ ("Messiah") and Savior of the world (1:41; 3:16; 4:25–26; 8:58). John organized his gospel around eight "signs" or proofs (apart from the central sign of the Resurrection itself) that reinforce Jesus' true identity leading to faith.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 197.

**Week 18: May 4-10**



## **May 4**

### **1 Kings 8-9**

Read Solomon's prayer slowly. What do you learn about how to pray to God from Solomon's prayer?

### **Luke 23:39-56**

When did Jesus say the thief on the cross' sins would be forgiven? How kind of attitude did he show to Jesus?

## **May 5**

### **1 Kings 10-11**

What caused the downfall of King Solomon in chapter 11? What did this do to his heart? What kinds of things "*turn you away*" from God (11:4)?

### **Luke 24:1-35**

Who are the people that go to the empty tomb? What happens on the road to Emmaus? How does v.27 teach you about the importance of the Old Testament? (hint: notice who is talking and who this verse is talking about)

## **May 6**

### **1 Kings 12-13**

Who are the two groups of people that give Rehoboam counsel? Whose counsel does he "*abandon*" and whose does he take (12:8)? What big change in the kingdom does this lead to? What does this teach you about the wisdom of people who are older than you?

**Luke 24:36-53**

Jesus explains the prophecies about himself to his disciples and shows that the Old Testament points to him. How exactly does the Old Testament speak about Jesus?

**May 7**

**1 Kings 14-15**

How does Jeroboam's reign end? What does God promise to Jeroboam?

**John 1:1-28**

Who is the Word? How do you know? (use the verses in this passage to prove) Who is the voice? What was his responsibility? How can you be more like the voice today?

**May 8**

**1 Kings 16-18**

What miracle does Elijah perform? How does God use Elijah to beat the prophets of Baal? What did this prove?

**John 1:29-51**

What does John the Baptist mean when says “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (v.29)?

**May 9**

**1 Kings 19-20**

What happens to Elijah in chapter 19?

**John 2**

How does Jesus’ first miracle prove his divinity? What does the incident of Jesus in the temple tell you about Jesus?

**May 10**

**1 Kings 21-22**

What does Ahab do to give into sin in chapter 21?

**John 3:1-21**

What does it mean to be “born again” (v.3)? (hint: look at a study Bible)

**Week 19: May 11-17**

## **May 11**

### **2 Kings 1-3**

What miracles does Elisha perform in these chapters?

## **John 3:22-36**

What exactly is John the Baptist saying in v.30? How can you live that out today?

## **May 12**

### **2 Kings 4-5**

How does God use Elisha in these chapters?

## **John 4:1-30**

What does it mean when Jesus says that he offers "*living water*" (v.10 & 14)? How does Jesus show himself to be the Messiah?

## **May 13**

### **2 Kings 6-8**

How do you see God protecting Elisha? In what way is God displaying his sovereignty over events?

**John 4:31-54**

There was an official who came to Jesus asking that he heal his son. Jesus heals him but warns him against only wanting to see miracles. What does Jesus want from you instead of asking for a miracle?

**May 14****2 Kings 9-11**

What are the sins of the kings in these chapters? How do you see God's justice acting in their lives?

**John 5:1-24**

What does Jesus do in this section? How does Jesus display his divinity? Where do you stand according to v.24?

**May 15****2 Kings 12-14**

How do you see Amaziah being prideful? How does he get humbled? What tendencies do you have towards pride?

**John 5:25-47**

What does Jesus say that makes himself out to be God? Jesus says the Scriptures lead us to see Christ in the Bible and to see the offer of salvation that he gives. Why is it important to remember that as you read you should keep in mind that the Bible points you to Jesus?

## **May 16**

### **2 Kings 15-17**

What are the kings that reign in Israel (the north) from these chapters? Why were the people of Israel (the north) exiled?

### **John 6:1-21**

How does Jesus provide in this section? Why was it bad that the people wanted to make him king then and there? How do you ultimately show allegiance to King Jesus?

## **May 17**

### **2 Kings 18-19**

What is the emphasis in the prayer of Hezekiah? What does that teach you about how you should pray?

### **John 6:22-44**

What does Jesus mean when he says that he is the "*bread of life*" (v.35)? Where or what do you find satisfaction in your life?

# 1 and 2 Chronicles

## Author and Date

- Possibly written by Ezra, approximately 450 to 430 b.c.
- First and 2 Chronicles contain no specific indications of authorship. Ancient traditions favor Ezra the priest (Ezra 7:6), who lived in the time period and was known as a scribe. The genealogical record in 1 Chronicles 1–9 suggests a date after 450 b.c.

## Background and Setting

- The two-part book of Chronicles provides a summary of history back to the beginning—a review that includes material from Genesis to 2 Kings.
- Before video cameras, there were chroniclers. Somewhere in the corner of every throne room sat people whose duty was to record the events of the day. The original Hebrew title for this book meant “the annals of the days.” It became two books around 200 b.c. when the Septuagint translators divided the original long scroll.
- First and 2 Chronicles provide a large-scale perspective for a people during a time of chaotic change. After seventy years of captivity in Babylon, Jews were returning to Israel. This occurred in three phases: 1) Zerubbabel’s group around 538 b.c. (Ezra 1–6); 2) Ezra’s group around 458 B.C. (Ezra 7–10); and 3) Nehemiah’s group around 445 b.c. (Nehemiah 1–13). The exiles needed to see God’s hand in the history of their nation so that they could cope with the setbacks and difficulties of the time in which they lived.
- To put it mildly, the exiles’ future looked bleak compared to their majestic past, particularly the glory years of David and Solomon. The return to the Promised Land could be described as bittersweet—bitter because their present poverty brought hurtful memories about what was forfeited by God’s judgment on their ancestors’ sin, and sweet because at least they were back in the land God had given Abraham seventeen centuries earlier (Genesis 12:1–3).
- The chronicler’s selective genealogy and history of Israel, stretching from Adam (1 Chronicles 1:1) to the return from Babylon (2 Chronicles 26:23), was intended to remind the Jews of God’s promises and intentions regarding 1) the land; 2) their identity as a nation; 3) the Davidic royal line; 4) the Levitical priesthood; 5) the temple; and 6) true worship. God made it clear that none of those had been abolished or erased by the Babylonian captivity. By summarizing the Jews’ unique spiritual heritage, Chronicles encouraged readers to remain faithful to God in difficult times.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 60–61.



**Week 20: May 18-24**

## **May 18**

### **2 Kings 20-22**

Why does Hilkiah tear his clothes when he hears the Book of the Law being read? What does he do after? How can you specifically obey God's word today?

### **John 6:45-71**

Why is it foolish to walk away from God? Think about what Peter says to Jesus in v.68

## **May 19**

### **2 Kings 23-25**

We read the fall of Judah in chapter 25. We are susceptible to falling into sin as well. Why is it important for you to remember that you can also fall into sin? Write out a prayer asking God to keep you faithful

### **John 7:1-31**

In our passage, some people are confused about who Jesus is. You must know who Jesus really is. Who is Jesus?

## **May 20**

### **1 Chronicles 1-2**

The book of Chronicles was written during the time of Exile. This book talks a lot about the promise that God made to David. Now, why would it have been important for Israel to remember what God had said to them while they were prisoners in another land?

**John 7:32-53**

What does Jesus mean when says that he gives "*living water*" (vv.37-39)?

**May 21**

**1 Chronicles 3-5**

What are the families that you read about today?

**John 8:1-20**

What does Jesus mean when he says "*I am the light of the world*" (v.12)?

**May 22**

**1 Chronicles 6-7**

What are the families that you read about today?

**John 8:21-36**

How do you know if you are a slave to sin according to what Jesus says today? How can you be free?

## **May 23**

### **1 Chronicles 8-10**

What tribe is Saul from? How did Saul's life end?

## **John 8:37-59**

How does Jesus describe the devil? In vv.48-59, how does Jesus say that he is God?

## **May 24**

### **1 Chronicles 11-13**

What do you learn about God in the Uzzah and the ark passage? How does this show that God is serious about disobedience?

## **John 9:1-23**

What are some reasons people do not want to submit to Jesus? What are some of your reasons?

**Week 21: May 25-31**

**May 25**

**1 Chronicles 14-16**

What are the themes you find in David's prayer?

**John 9:24-41**

What does it mean to be "*blind*" to your sin? How can you be more aware of your sin?

**May 26**

**1 Chronicles 17-19**

What is the Davidic Covenant found in chapter 17?

**John 10:1-21**

Who is the Good Shepherd? How does Jesus shepherd his people? In what way does v.11 come true?

**May 27**

**1 Chronicles 20-22**

What do you learn about David's life in these chapters?

**John 10:22-42**

Who are the sheep in vv.26-28? What does it mean to follow Jesus?

**May 28****1 Chronicles 23-25**

Who are the people that David organizes in these chapters?

**John 11:1-17**

How could Jesus say the statement in v.4?

**May 29****1 Chronicles 26-27**

God uses people who are not the most famous, important, or significant. How does it make you feel that God wants to use you even though you might not be the most significant person in the world? How do you want God to use you in your life?

**John 11:18-46**

What miracle does Jesus do in this passage? What does Jesus mean when he says that he is the "*resurrection and the life*" (v.25)?

## **May 30**

### **1 Chronicles 28-29**

David gives his final words to Solomon that are also applicable to you today. He says to serve God with a “*whole heart*” and a “*willing mind*” (28:9). How can you serve God in those ways today?

### **John 11:47-57**

Caiphas says something true in vv.49-50. How does this come true?

## **May 31**

### **2 Chronicles 1-3**

2 Chronicles 2:5 is an important verse in this book because it talks about worshiping God with excellence. God deserves our best when we worship him. How can you worship him with your best today?

### **John 12:1-19**

How does Mary give generously to Jesus? How can you give your time, talent, or treasure (money) to Jesus today?



**Week 22: June 1-7**

## **June 1**

### **2 Chronicles 4-6**

What do you learn about the prayer in the prayer of Solomon at the end of chapter 6?

### **John 12:20-50**

What does Jesus demand of you if you want to follow him in vv.25-26?

## **June 2**

### **2 Chronicles 7-9**

The queen of Sheba visits Solomon and gives credit to God for the wisdom of Solomon. Why was it a good thing to have a foreigner, the queen of Sheba, praise God for what God had given Solomon?

### **John 13:1-17**

Jesus knows that his death is coming soon, so he shows them one last act of love by washing their feet. He says that he is setting an example for his followers, what example is he setting for us? What way can you go out of your way and be selfless today?

## **June 3**

### **2 Chronicles 10-12**

After Jeroboam sets up false worship centers in the North, the priests go down to the South to worship the Lord correctly. They do all they can to worship God in the way he wants to be worshiped. What do you need to give up to worship God rightly?

**John 13:18-38**

Jesus tells his disciples that one of the 12 would turn his back and betray him. Judas is revealed to be the one. What was the difference between Judas and the rest of the disciples? Give this some thought because on the outside he looked just like them.

**June 4****2 Chronicles 13-16**

As you read about Asa's life, how does his relationship with the Lord fluctuate as he grows older? How can you make sure your reliance on the Lord stays the same as you get older?

**John 14**

What does it mean that Jesus is "*the way, the truth, and the life*" (v.6)? Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit after he leaves. What are the descriptions of the Holy Spirit according to Jesus?

**June 5****2 Chronicles 17-19**

What are the good and godly things that Jehoshaphat does? What are the bad things that Jehoshaphat does?

## **John 15**

Jesus gives an analogy of him being the vine, his Father the vinedresser, and Christians being the branches. This is to teach us that true spiritual life is only received through a spiritual relationship with Jesus. Abiding in Jesus means to remain and stay connected to Jesus. In what ways does your spiritual life need to be stronger?

## **June 6**

### **2 Chronicles 20-22**

What is Jehoshaphat's prayer about? What do you learn about prayer from his prayer?

### **John 16:1-15**

What does Jesus say the Holy Spirit will do? What is conviction? How do you respond to conviction?

## **June 7**

### **2 Chronicles 23-25**

Amaziah is told an important truth about following God in 25:9. Why is it worth it to follow God even if it costs you something? What will it cost you to follow God?

### **John 16:16-33**

Jesus reminded his disciples and now tells you that if you choose to follow him, it will be hard. But, he says to *"take heart because he has overcome the world"* (v.33). What kinds of hardships will you face for following Jesus?

# Ezra

## Author and Date

- Possibly written by Ezra, approximately 457 to 444 b.c.
- Although Ezra's name does not occur until the seventh chapter of the book that bears his name, he has long been considered the most likely author of both Ezra and Nehemiah. One strong internal clue about authorship has to do with writing perspective. Once his own departure for Jerusalem becomes part of the record (7:28), Ezra switches from writing in the third person to writing in the first. If he wrote 1 and 2 Chronicles, the continued narrative in Ezra makes perfect sense. Ezra begins with the ongoing chronicle of God's people in exile. Babylon had just been defeated by Persia, the new world power. Ezra's own participation in that history allowed him a natural point at which to make the chronicle autobiographical.
- Ezra's scribal duties allowed him access to the various administrative documents quoted in Ezra and Nehemiah. He took advantage of special privileges he had in the royal archives of the Persian Empire.

## Background and Setting

- Ancient tradition indicates that Ezra had a key role in the formation of the Old Testament Scriptures as the recognized canon of God's written revelation.
- Some people set out to be obedient to God and turn out to be heroes. Ezra was such a man. His name represents the historical significance of the times in which he lived. It means in Hebrew "Jehovah helps" and constantly reminds the reader that God was acting behind the scenes to return His people to the Promised Land.
- Events in the life of the people of Israel must always be seen in the light of God's plan for them. He chose them in their ancestor Abraham. He gave them a land. He brought Israel out of the slave markets of Egypt in the Exodus. Hundreds of years later, still before Ezra, God warned His people that if they chose to break their covenant with Him, He would again allow another nation to take them into slavery (Jeremiah 2:14–25). God's repeated warnings were persistently ignored. Immorality and idolatry were the national pastimes. God was faithful and followed through on His warnings.
- In 722 b.c. the Assyrians defeated and deported the ten northern tribes and scattered them all over their empire. Decades later, in 605 to 586 b.c., God allowed the Babylonians to destroy and depopulate Jerusalem. God chastened what was left of His people with seventy years of exile in Babylon. In 539 b.c., Cyrus the Persian overthrew Babylon. A year later, as recorded by Ezra, Cyrus permitted the return of Jews to Jerusalem.
- The Jews were originally deported in three waves (605 b.c., 597 b.c., and 586 b.c.). Their return followed the same pattern over nine decades. Zerubbabel led the first group home in 538 b.c. Ezra followed with the second group in 458 b.c. Then Nehemiah led the third group in 445 b.c. Jerusalem and the temple were eventually rebuilt, but, like the nation itself, they were only shadows of their former glory.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 68.

**Week 23: June 8-14**

## **June 8**

### **2 Chronicles 26-28**

Uzziah sought the Lord at an early age because he was influenced by Zechariah when he was growing up. Who are the godly influences in your life? Who is someone you want to imitate as they follow Christ? Why?

## **John 17**

Jesus prays something really important for his disciples in v.17, "*Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.*" Jesus prays that the Bible would make you more holy. How does God's truth found in his word make you holy? How do you need to improve your daily Bible intake?

## **June 9**

### **2 Chronicles 29-31**

The Chronicler gives a summary statement of Hezekiah's life in 31:21. Reread the verse. How do you see this be true in his life throughout the chapters you read today?

## **John 18:1-23**

This section may lead you to believe that Jesus is just letting things happen to him. He displays his power and control over the last moments of his life. How do you see Jesus in control in this section?

## **June 10**

### **2 Chronicles 32-33**

Manasseh did not follow the Lord as his father, Hezekiah had done. Manasseh was not a good king. Why is he so bad? How does he get humbled and finally start to follow the Lord? What sin do you need to repent of?

### **John 18:24-40**

What does Jesus mean when he says that his *"kingdom is not of this world"* (v.36)? What do you learn about Jesus in this interaction with Pilate?

## **June 11**

### **2 Chronicles 34-36**

What do you learn about God's character in 36:15? What does this teach you about how you should submit to what God says?

### **John 19:1-22**

How do you see Jesus having authority over Pilate?

## **June 12**

### **Ezra 1-2**

What is the prophecy that is fulfilled in chapter 1 of Ezra? (help: look at a study Bible)



**John 19:23-42**

Jesus' last words are some of the most significant words of his entire life. What is the significance behind Jesus' final words, "*It is finished*" (v.30)? (help: look at a study Bible)

**June 13****Ezra 3-5**

Try to summarize the big ideas of each of these chapters.

**John 20**

John gives the reason for writing his gospel in 20:30-31. He writes so that you would believe in Christ. Do you have a saving relationship with Jesus? How do you know?

**June 14****Ezra 6-8**

Ezra gives a great pattern for reading the Bible. Ezra 7:10 says to "*study, do, and teach*" the Bible. Why is the order of these steps important? How can you grow in your "study" of the word of God?

**John 21**

Jesus calls Peter to "*follow him*" (v.19). How do you need to follow and obey Christ today?

# Nehemiah

## Author and Date

- Probably written by Ezra, approximately 424 to 400 b.c.
- Much of this book was drawn from Nehemiah's personal diaries. But although these reports were written in the first person (1:1–7:5; 12:27–43; 13:4–31), both Jewish and Christian traditions have long identified Ezra as the author. Three clues can be cited to back up Ezra's authorship: 1) the two books Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one book (indicated in the Greek Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate); 2) the recurring phrase hand of the Lord in both books points to a single author; 3) the sources used (official Persian documents) probably included Nehemiah's reports and were available to Ezra.

## Background and Setting

- Nehemiah's character provides a powerful case study in leadership, integrity, and faith.
- God puts His servants in unlikely places and gets surprising results. Nehemiah was a king's cupbearer in Persia. His name only appears in this book, though Nehemiah certainly fits in the descriptions of various people in the Hall of Faith listed in Hebrews 11. God worked through Nehemiah as a key participant in the reestablishment of the Jewish nation in the Promised Land after the Exile.
- The Book of Nehemiah grows out of a background of pain and glory. The opening scenes occur in Persia. A new chapter in God's dealings with His people begins. Recent history has included the final carrying out of God's promised judgment, with the Promised Land first invaded by the Assyrians, leading to the deportation and loss of the ten northern tribes. Later the Babylonians sacked, destroyed, and nearly depopulated Jerusalem, deporting the best of Judah to Babylon. God chastened His people with seventy years of captivity in Babylon (Jeremiah 25:11).
- The ensuing years saw the rise of the Persian Empire. King Cyrus eventually set into motion the events leading to the Jews' return to Jerusalem. Ezra, Esther, Daniel, Nehemiah, and Malachi provide the details for these years in the history of God's faithfulness. The last two books share the distinction of being the final records in the Old Testament.
- By the close of Nehemiah, God has allowed His people to reestablish a foothold in the Promised Land. God remains committed to His promises in spite of the fickle nature of His human partners. A four-hundred-year stalemate will follow these events. When God's revelation again takes written form, God will also have taken on flesh and visited the planet.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 72–73.

# Esther

## Author and Date

- Written by an unknown author, before 331 b.c.
- Although Mordecai (Esther's cousin), Ezra, and Nehemiah have all been suggested, the author remains anonymous. The writer may well have been a Persian Jew who had returned to Israel.
- Whoever penned Esther reveals a strong sense of Jewish nationalism and a detailed knowledge of Persian customs, etiquette, and history.

## Background and Setting

- One of only two Old Testament books that bear the names of women.
- Among Jewish people, Esther, the Jewish girl who became a Persian queen, is remembered by her Hebrew name, Hadassah (2:7), which means "myrtle." Her life became a channel through which God continued His protection of His chosen people from the murderous plans of an enemy.
- During the time of Esther, the Persian Empire ruled the world (539–331 b.c.). Esther's husband, Ahasuerus, reigned from 486 to 465 b.c. The events in this book occurred between 483 and 473 b.c.
- Against the backdrop of Jewish history, Esther fits during the time- span between the first return of the Jews to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel around 538 b.c. (Ezra 1–6) and the second return led by Ezra around 458 b.c. (Ezra 7–10). The danger from which Esther rescued her people must have provided an added incentive for many of the Jews to return to Israel.
- Like Exodus, Esther chronicles how vigorously foreign powers tried to eliminate the Jewish race as well as how powerfully God preserved His people. God continually honored His covenant promises to Abraham (Genesis 12:1–3; 17:1–8). Esther also documents the origin of a new annual festival among the Jews, called Purim. It is held during the twelfth month (February to March). The festival celebrates God's deliverance through Esther.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 77.

# Acts

## Author and Date

- Written by Luke, approximately a.d. 60–62
- The opening verses of Luke and Acts strongly suggest that both books had the same writer because both are addressed to Theophilus. The writer of Acts specifically claims to have written an earlier book to this mystery person named Theophilus (1:1) about the life and teaching of Jesus.

## Background and Setting

- The second half of Luke's masterpiece, Acts, records the story of the early church.
- Everyone underestimated the possibility and the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Even those who had advance warning were taken by surprise. The truth of His victory over death transformed the lives of His followers. They became living witnesses to Jesus' resurrection. That good news spread like wildfire.
- Those first disciples were filled with more than a message, however; they were also filled with a Motivator—the Holy Spirit. Their travels, trials, and triumphs changed the course of history. Led by the Holy Spirit, the apostles carried the gospel throughout the world. In fact, this book that describes the early years of the Christian church could most properly be called “The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles.” The Holy Spirit's directing, controlling, and empowering ministry strengthened the church and caused it to grow in numbers, spiritual power, and influence.
- Luke's purposes in writing the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles form a powerful parallel. Luke sought to write “an orderly account” (Luke 1:3) of what Jesus had accomplished during His earthly ministry. Acts simply extended the effort, offering “an orderly account” of what Jesus had accomplished through the early church.
- Beginning with Christ's ascension (His rise into heaven), through the birth of the church on the Day of Pentecost and to Paul's preaching in Rome, Acts chronicles the spread of the gospel and the growth of the church. It also tells of the mounting opposition to the gospel.
- Like the Gospel of Luke, Acts begins with a dedication to Theophilus, whose name means “lover of God.” The name has no history apart from Luke's use in his two books. Whether this was a believer whom Luke was instructing or a pagan whom Luke was seeking to convert is unknown. Luke's positive salutation, “most excellent Theophilus” (Luke 1:3), suggests that the recipient was a Roman official of some importance. Examples of this kind of greeting can be found in 24:3 and 26:25.
- Acts begins in Jerusalem and ends in Rome. Luke's account captures the geographical spread of the gospel throughout the Roman Empire. He provides the story of how God “opened the door of faith to the Gentiles” (14:27).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 203-205.

**Week 24: June 15-21**

## **June 15**

### **Ezra 9-10**

How do we see sin in the people of Israel?

### **Acts 1**

Acts 1:8 is a good summary of the whole book of Acts. The disciples were called to be “*witnesses*” of Jesus. You are also called to be a witness of Jesus because you have read about Jesus. You are called to talk about Jesus because you have heard about him. How will you be a witness of Jesus this weekend?

## **June 16**

### **Nehemiah 1-3**

After the Babylonian captivity, the people of Israel were allowed to return to their land. But, because of their past sin they needed to recommit themselves to the Lord. Nehemiah asks permission from King Artaxerxes to go back to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls. In 2:4, he quickly prays to the Lord for guidance and God answers him. God instantly answered Nehemiah’s prayer. How does knowing that God answers prayer motivate you to pray? What will you pray about today?

### **Acts 2:1-13**

In the early church age, God would use signs to validate what was being said. In these days, there was no written New Testament so God’s words were being expressed verbally by the apostles. The apostles did these signs to show that what was being said was true. These signs were extraordinary things to make the people hearing them believe in what they were saying. The sign in this section is speaking in tongues. Tongues means speaking in a different language that you do not normally speak. This does not happen anymore today. Reread the section slowly. Why do you think this was such an important thing for the people (v.8)?

## **June 17**

### **Nehemiah 4-6**

We see opposition to what God had called Nehemiah to do. What are things that God has called you to do? What kind of opposition can you be faced with?

### **Acts 2:14-47**

What are the three passages that are fulfilled in this section of scripture? Describe what happens in vv.37-41. What are the three things the early church and our modern-day church are involved in, according to v.42?

## **June 18**

### **Nehemiah 7-8**

Ezra reads the word of God to the people for six hours! What are things that distract you in sermons, when you pray, and when you read your Bible? What is a strategy you can use to pay close attention to what you read and hear?

### **Acts 3**

What does Peter do in vv.11-26? What opportunities do you need to take to share the good news of Jesus?

## **June 19**

### **Nehemiah 9-11**

The people of Israel confess their sins. Why is it important for you to confess your sin? What would happen if you did not confess your sin?

### **Acts 4:1-22**

Peter makes it clear in 4:12 that there is no other way to be saved but by Jesus Christ. What does it mean to be saved by Christ?

## **June 20**

### **Nehemiah 12-13**

Nehemiah showed a genuine interest in obeying God. What are some of the final reforms that Nehemiah does before the book ends? How passionate are you in obeying God?

### **Acts 4:23-37**

The early Christian believers gathered, prayed together, strengthened, and encouraged one another. Who can you meet with to pray with them?

## **June 21**

### **Esther 1-3**

Who are all the characters in these beginning chapters?



**Acts 5:1-16**

What was the sin that Ananias and Sapphira committed against the Lord? How do you presently struggle with this sin or have in the past?

# Job

## Author and Date

- Written by an unknown author, possibly before 1445 b.c.
- Few internal or external clues point to a specific author for this book. Moses and Solomon have been suggested, but with little support. The ancient Jewish tradition of Mosaic authorship is based on the proximity of Moses' lengthy stay in Midian, which was a neighbor of Uz, Job's homeland (1:1). Others simply conclude that the mind-stretching and faith-challenging content of Job certainly fits with Solomon's quest for wisdom. These are only educated guesses, not verifiable conclusions.

## Background and Setting

- The most ancient book in the Bible.
- Times change, but people throughout history remain the same. Their deepest questions echo through the centuries. For example, the questions that Job asked thousands of years ago probably crossed your mind in the past week. The Book of Job records the biography of a person who was severely tested. Through Job's experience readers learn a great deal about the character of God.
- The divine inspiration of this book becomes clear in the early scene that occurs in heaven (1:6–2:10). The reader learns that Job suffered because God was contesting with Satan. Since neither Job nor his friends were aware of the big picture, their attempts to explain the suffering relied on ignorance and misunderstanding. Job finally rested on nothing but faith in God's goodness and the hope of God's redemption. God's vindication of Job's trust is the central message of the book. The reader must consider the possibility that trust in God sometimes goes beyond rational or theological explanations of pain and suffering.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 81.

**Week 25: June 22-28**

## **June 22**

### **Esther 4-6**

In a few sentences, summarize what happens in these chapters.

### **Acts 5:17-42**

Read this section carefully. Why does Peter say “*we must obey God rather than men*” (v.29)? (Hint: read the context)

## **June 23**

### **Esther 7-10**

How do you see justice being served in these chapters? Throughout these chapters and the whole book, how have you seen God orchestrating all the events that took place?

### **Acts 6**

In today's passage, there are 7 men chosen to help the leaders of the early church. What were the leaders of the church looking for when they were choosing servants of the church (v.3)? These qualifications were meant to be for anyone who wanted to serve, not just for the leaders. Are you someone that is known to have a good reputation?

## **June 24**

### **Job 1-3**

The book of Job shows us the reality that God allows bad things to happen to his people while they might not even know why it is happening. What are all the bad things that happened to Job? What is a godly response to the fact that God allows suffering in your life?

### **Acts 7:1-19**

What are the books of the Old Testament that Stephen quotes in his sermon? Who are the biblical characters that Stephen refers to in his sermon?

## **June 25**

### **Job 4-6**

Job's friends come to his aid and try to provide comfort to him. Yet, the counsel they give him is incorrect. They will tell him throughout the book that he is suffering because he sinned. That's not true because God said he was "*blameless*" (Job 1:8). When we suffer it does not necessarily mean we sinned and God is punishing us. It could mean that, but not all the time. Why is it important for you to provide the correct counsel and advice to your friends? What's at stake?

### **Acts 7:20-43**

Stephen recounts how God's people had rejected the prophets he had given them, making the point that ultimately people reject God's main prophet, Jesus Christ. How did the Israelites reject Moses? What are the similarities between Moses and Jesus?

## **June 26**

### **Job 7-9**

God was allowing Job to undergo severe suffering in his life. When we go through painful times it can be easy to lose proper perspective and allow our emotions to take over. Why is it dangerous to allow your emotions to take control of you? What does the Bible say you must do instead?

### **Acts 7:44-60**

Stephen preaches truth and the people do not like it at all. They go so far as to murder him. Why did Stephen die for Christ? Where else in the Bible does it tell you that God's people will go through hard times and get persecuted?

## **June 27**

### **Job 10-12**

Job is beginning to complain and failing to trust God. Why is it sinful to complain to God and not trust what he is doing for your good? (cf. Phil. 2:14)

### **Acts 8:1-25**

Simon the Magician wanted to be a Christian for the wrong reasons. What were those wrong reasons? What are the wrong reasons you have wanted to become a Christian?

**June 28**

**Job 13-15**

Why is arguing with God a bad idea? In your life, how have you gone against what God says or wants you to do?

**Acts 8:26-40**

Philip evangelizes to the Ethiopian Eunuch and tells him the "*good news*" (v.35) . What is the good news according to Isaiah 53?

**Week 26: June 29 - July 5**



## **June 29**

### **Job 16-18**

Job's friends were wrong in saying that God was punishing Job for his sin. Not every trial and season of suffering is because of sin. Although it can be because God does discipline his people when they are in sin. This was not the case for Job. Sometimes God uses suffering to make us stronger followers of him. How can suffering strengthen you?

### **Acts 9:1-22**

What happens to Saul in this section? What was Saul doing before this? How did he end up being used as God's instrument? How does this account show you that even you, as sinful as you are, can be saved by God?

## **June 30**

### **Job 19-20**

Job says something true in 19:25. Why is this statement true and correct about his situation?

### **Acts 9:23-43**

Why did the people in Jerusalem respond to Saul with fear in v.26? What was the godly thing that Barnabas did? How can you be more welcoming to others?

## **July 1**

### **Job 21-22**

Job in chapter 21 responds to Zophar and says that the wicked do not always get what they deserve in this life, they prosper in this life. Zophar's wrong point was that Job is wicked because he is not having a good life. This is not always true. Read Psalm 73. What is the connection between this chapter in Job and Psalm 73?

### **Acts 10:1-23**

Peter has a pretty unusual vision from God. In this vision, God communicates to Peter that he is now going to save Gentiles and bring them into his family. A Gentile is anyone who is not Jewish. Why was this such a big deal? (think of the Old Testament)

## **July 2**

### **Job 23-25**

What is Job's main point in chapters 23-24? What does this demonstrate about his trust in God?

### **Acts 10:24-48**

The book of Acts is all about the gospel going out and reaching people. What is Peter communicating in vv.34-35?

### **July 3**

#### **Job 26-28**

Job says that to "*fear the Lord is wisdom*" (28:28). What does it mean to fear the Lord? Why does God say it is wise to fear him?

### **Acts 11**

Reread v.18. Why is it important to know that God is the one who gives people the ability to repent?

### **July 4**

#### **Job 29-30**

What is Job saying in these chapters?

### **Acts 12**

How do you see the power of prayer in this chapter? How does God end up punishing Herod for his sin?

### **July 5**

#### **Job 31-32**

What correction does Elihu give to Job and his friends?

**Acts 13:1-23**

What is the main point of Paul's sermon in Antioch?

# Psalms

## Author and Date

- Written by several authors, approximately 1410 to 450 b.c.
- Although the word *inspired* is often used to describe poetry, that word is used in a special way to describe the Psalms and the rest of Scripture. The Bible claims to be “inspired by God” (2 Timothy 3:16). The content, truth, and reliability of Scripture rest on this claim. God employed many writers to compose His Word, but He remained the Author. The uniqueness of the writers can be seen in their style, experiences, and subjects, but God edited the final content.
- Among the writers of Psalms, at least seven individuals or groups can be identified: 1) King David wrote at least 75 of the 150 psalms; 2) the sons of Korah are credited with 10; 3) Asaph contributed 12; 4) Solomon, 5) Moses, 6) Heman, and 7) Ethan all wrote at least one psalm each. The writers of 48 psalms are best listed as anonymous.

## Background and Setting

- The Hebrews called the book “Praises.”
- A person reading through the Bible knows from the first lines of Psalms that he or she has entered into a new and wonderful part of Scripture. It is poetry written for and about God. Psalms explores the full range of human experience and emotion. People meet God in the Psalms, and they discover a lot about themselves as well. As it defined the proper spirit and content of worship throughout Scripture, Psalms continues to influence and guide the worship of the church today.
- The Psalms were first compiled during the early days of Israel’s extended worship training in the wilderness. The spontaneous and prepared responses to God that make up many of the Psalms were recorded and reused. Even the intense individual meditations, for example Psalm 23, were incorporated as expressions of universal truths about God.
- The Psalms are a product as well as a record of the acts of God in creation and history, particularly the history of Israel. They are the accumulated memories and reflections of a people in relationship with God. The Psalms express and teach proper praise and worship of God.
- The Psalms cover the full breadth of human experience. Some speak in general terms, while others express in very specific terms the shifting events of life. There’s a psalm for almost any kind of day. One way to categorize the Psalms groups them by five general types:
  - Wisdom Psalms: instructions for wise living (137; 119)
  - Lamentation Psalms: meditations on the pangs of life (3; 17; 120)
  - Penitential Psalms: meditations on the pangs of sin (51)
  - Kingship Psalms: meditations on God’s sovereign rule (2; 21; 144)
  - Thanksgiving Psalms: praise and worship offered to God (19; 32; 111)<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 86, 90.

**Week 27: July 6-12**

## **July 6**

### **Job 33-34**

What is the rebuke that Elihu gives to Job?

### **Acts 13:24-52**

Paul continues preaching the gospel. He includes an important component of the gospel message. He talks about the resurrection of Christ. List all the reasons you can think of why the resurrection is so important.

## **July 7**

### **Job 35-37**

Elihu exalts God's greatness and majesty. What are some of the things Elihu speaks about? Why is it a good thing for you to think about the greatness of God?

### **Acts 14**

What is the truth that is being communicated in 14:22 when it says that "*through many tribulations, we must enter the kingdom of God*"? What are ways that you will be opposed for following Christ?

## **July 8**

### **Job 38-39**

God comes in and answers Job. He makes him realize that he does not know a lot of things and should not question God because he is all-wise. Why is it a healthy thing to think about how wise and powerful God is?

### **Acts 15:1-21**

Why are you not saved by who is in your family? Why are you not saved by works? What are you saved by?

## **July 9**

### **Job 40-42**

God rebukes Job because he is accusing and questioning God. In what way was Job wrong? In what way were the friends wrong? What is a proper view of God when you go through tough times?

### **Acts 15:22-41**

John Mark was not trustworthy for a time. However, he did reconcile with Paul later on and was used by the Lord. But, for a time he was not trusted. In what way can you grow in your loyalty and trustworthiness?



## **July 10**

### **Psalms 1-3**

As you read the Psalms, use a study Bible to help your understanding of the Psalms. Take your time and reread these Psalms more than once. What is the main idea of Psalm 1?

### **Acts 16:1-15**

How do you see God being in control of moving people to exactly where he wants them to be? How do you see God being sovereign (in control) over salvation?

## **July 11**

### **Psalms 4-6**

Read the Psalms slowly and thoughtfully. What truth do you learn in Psalm 4?

### **Acts 16:16-40**

While in prison, Paul and Silas prayed, sang songs, and shared the gospel. How was that possible considering how things were going?

## **July 12**

### **Psalms 7-9**

Read the Psalms slowly and thoughtfully. What is the main idea of Psalm 7? What do you learn about God and man in Psalm 8?

**Acts 17:1-15**

How can you be like the Bereans when they examined the Scriptures to see if the things being said were so?

**Week 28: July 13-19**

## **July 13**

### **Psalms 10-12**

Read the Psalms slowly and thoughtfully. What is the truth about God that you learn in Psalm 10?

### **Acts 17:16-34**

Paul got mad at what the people were worshiping. Why does he do this? Why is it a godly thing to be angry at sin?

## **July 14**

### **Psalms 13-16**

Read the Psalms slowly and thoughtfully. Psalm 13 is a lament psalm which means that the psalmist is going through a hard time. He expresses his pain and trust in God. What is a hard time you have gone through or are going through? What do you learn from this psalm about how to go through tough times?

### **Acts 18**

God says to Paul in v.10 that he knows exactly who will be saved in the city of Corinth. God is in control of who is going to be saved. But he does call us to share his message. Who is someone that you need to share the gospel with?

## **July 15**

### **Psalms 17-18**

Read the Psalms slowly and thoughtfully. What are the main ideas in Psalm 17? How is God pictured in Psalm 18?

### **Acts 19:1-20**

The Ephesians demonstrate their repentance by destroying the books they used for sin. Repentance is turning from sin and turning to God. Why must repentance be a total renunciation of your old ways and not just sort of letting go of sin?

## **July 16**

### **Psalms 19-21**

Read the Psalms slowly and thoughtfully. What do you learn about God's creation in Psalm 19? What do you learn about God's word in Psalm 19?

### **Acts 19:21-41**

How do you see persecution in this section of Acts? What does God's word say about how God's people should respond to persecution?

## **July 17**

### **Psalms 22-24**

Read the Psalms slowly and thoughtfully. How is God pictured in Psalm 23? How does this psalm relate to John 10? How does the Lord act as a shepherd for his people?

### **Acts 20:1-16**

What are the places that Paul travels to? What happens in vv.7-12?

## **July 18**

### **Psalms 25-27**

Read the Psalms slowly and thoughtfully. Psalm 25 is very applicable. How do you see the psalmist express his trust in God? How do you specifically need the Lord's guidance right now (vv.4-5)? What sins do you need to confess and have forgiven (vv.6-7)?

### **Acts 20:17-38**

Acts 20:21 gives us the components of the response to the gospel. What are the two components of a proper gospel response? What do the two mean?

## **July 19**

### **Psalms 28-30**

Read the Psalms slowly and thoughtfully. What do you learn about God in Psalm 29? What do you learn about how you should praise God from reading this psalm?

**Acts 21:1-14**

What is Paul's attitude in this section?

**Week 29: July 20-26**



## **July 20**

### **Psalms 31-33**

Read the Psalms slowly and thoughtfully. Psalm 32 is a great psalm giving instruction for how we should confess and repent of sin. What do you learn about how you should confess your sin? Write down your sins and confess them to the Lord.

### **Acts 21:15-40**

How does Paul respond to unjust criticism? What does this show about his trust in the Lord?

## **July 21**

### **Psalms 34-35**

Psalm 34 calls you to recall how the Lord has been good to you. How has the Lord been good to you? How does God care for you?

### **Acts 22**

Paul tells the people his testimony of salvation for them to see how God worked in him. What is a testimony? Why is it that only someone who is a Christian can have a testimony?

## **July 22**

### **Psalms 36-37**

Psalm 37 tells God's people not to be envious when ungodly people prosper and succeed in life. According to this Psalm, why does God say to not be envious? What does God say to do?

**Acts 23:1-11**

What is Paul's attitude in this section?

**July 23****Psalms 38-40**

Psalms 39 teaches us that life is fleeting. Why is it important for you to be reminded that you are fleeting and will one day be gone?

**Acts 23:12-35**

How do you see God being in control in this section of Acts?

**July 24****Psalms 41-43**

The Psalmist says that he "*thirsts for God*" (42:1).. What does it mean to "*thirst for God*"? What kind of attitude does the Psalmist end within this psalm? (look at v.5 and v.11)

**Acts 24**

What are the events that occur in this chapter?

## **July 25**

### **Psalms 44-46**

How can you use Psalm 46 in a time of trouble? What does this Psalm teach you about God?

## **Acts 25**

What are the events that occur in this chapter? How do you see God in charge of evangelistic opportunities?

## **July 26**

### **Psalms 47-49**

What does it mean that God is king over all the earth? Why is this important for you to remember?

## **Acts 26**

What happens in the encounter Paul has with King Agrippa?

# Romans

## Author and Date

- Written by the Apostle Paul, approximately a.d. 56
- No one disputes that the Apostle Paul wrote Romans. Raised as both a Roman citizen and a devout Jew, Paul benefited from the finest education available in his time. He grew up as a Pharisee (Acts 23:6), a member of the strictest Jewish sect (Philippians 3:5). In the months following the resurrection of Jesus, Paul gained a reputation as a ruthless enemy of the followers of Jesus Christ.
- Yet, after his miraculous conversion, Paul helped spread Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. He made three missionary journeys through much of the Mediterranean world, tirelessly preaching the gospel he had once sought to destroy (Acts 26:9). He eventually suffered martyrdom at Rome in about a.d. 65 to 67 (2 Timothy 4:6).

## Background and Setting

- Rome was the capital and most important city of the Roman Empire. It was founded in 753 b.c. but is not mentioned in Scripture until New Testament times. In Paul's day, the city had a population of over one million people, many of whom were slaves. Rome boasted magnificent buildings, such as the emperor's palace, the Circus Maximus, and the Forum, but the slums that surrounded and infiltrated the city marred its beauty. According to tradition, Paul was martyred outside Rome on the Ostian Way during Nero's reign (a.d. 54 to 68).
- Some of those converted on the Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem probably returned to Rome and founded the church (Acts 2:10). Paul had long wanted to visit the Roman church but had been prevented from doing so (1:13). As an example of God's providence, Paul's inability to visit Rome in person resulted in the gift of this inspired masterpiece of gospel doctrine.
- Paul's primary purpose in writing Romans was to teach the great truths of the gospel of grace to believers who had never received apostolic instruction. The letter also introduced him to a church where he was personally unknown. Paul still hoped to visit for several important reasons: to edify the believers (1:11); to preach the gospel (1:15); and to get to know the Roman Christians. He also anticipated their ministry to him by encouragement (1:12; 15:32), by prayer (15:30), and by help with his planned ministry in Spain (15:28).
- Unlike some of his other epistles, Paul's purpose for writing Romans was not to correct aberrant theology or rebuke ungodly living. The Roman church was doctrinally sound but, like all churches, needed the rich doctrinal and practical instruction that this letter provides.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 210–211.

**Week 30: July 27 - August 2**

## **July 27**

### **Psalms 50-52**

What does it mean that God is the judge over all the earth? Why is this important for you to remember that God is your judge? Psalm 51 is all about confessing our sins to God. How often do you confess your sins to God? Why should you confess your sins to God?

### **Acts 27:1-25**

What are the events that occur in this chapter?

## **July 28**

### **Psalms 53-55**

Psalm 54 says that God is your helper and upholder of your life. How is God your helper? How does God uphold your life?

### **Acts 27:26-44**

How do you see God's great control and power in this section?

## **July 29**

### **Psalms 56-58**

What do Psalms 56 & 57 teach you about trusting God in difficult times? Why do you think the Psalmist praises God in Psalm 57 even when he is going through something difficult?

**Acts 28:1-15**

How do you see the virtue of hospitality in this section? How can you be hospitable?

**July 30****Psalms 59-61**

The psalmist in Psalm 61 cries out to God and asks him to *“lead him to the rock”* (v.2). God is not an actual rock but this is used to describe something true about God. Why is God described as a rock?

**Acts 28:16-31**

How can you show boldness in proclaiming the gospel? What are two big lessons you learned from the book of Acts?

**July 31****Psalms 62-64**

What does it look like in someone’s life to *“thirst for God”* (63:1)? Why is it a good thing to *“thirst for God”*? As you look at your life, how do you struggle to believe that God’s *“steadfast love is better than life”* (63:3)?

## **Romans 1**

Based on Rom. 1:16-17, why should you not be ashamed of the gospel? What do you learn about sin in this chapter? According to this chapter, how does someone fall deeper into sin?

## **August 1**

### **Psalms 65-67**

God calls you to praise him for what he has done. Psalm 66:5 says *“Come and see what God has done.”* How will you praise God today? What will you praise him for?

## **Romans 2**

Rom. 2:4 says *“God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance.”* How has God been kind to you? Why does God want you to repent?

## **August 2**

### **Psalms 68-69**

What happens in Psalm 69? Why do you need God’s help today?

## **Romans 3**

Reread Rom. 3:21-26. What did God send Jesus? How did he accomplish salvation for his people? What are Christians saved from?



**Week 31: August 3-9**

### **August 3**

#### **Psalms 70-72**

Psalm 71 is about the Lord being close to the psalmist. How can knowing who God is help you be nearer to God?

#### **Romans 4**

Abraham was saved by faith and not by his works. How did Abraham express his faith in God? How do you need to have faith in God today?

### **August 4**

#### **Psalms 73-74**

What is Asaph's big sin he deals with in Psalm 73? In what ways, do you struggle with this sin?

#### **Romans 5**

According to this chapter, how can sinners have peace with God? What does it mean to have peace with God? How is Christ better than Adam?

### **August 5**

#### **Psalms 75-77**

After reading Psalm 76, why is it good for you to recognize that God is great and majestic?

### **Romans 6**

What does it mean to be a slave to sin? What does it mean to be a slave to righteousness? What would your life look like if you were a slave to righteousness?

### **August 6**

#### **Psalm 78**

Why is it important for you to know that God is the same God today that he was in the Old Testament? Why do you think God wants you to know Old Testament history?

### **Romans 7**

God gives you the power to obey him when you get saved by God and receive the Holy Spirit. Have you ever tried to obey God and just kept failing? What happened?

### **August 7**

#### **Psalms 79-81**

What is the problem of the people in Psalm 81? What does God mean when he calls people to "*listen*" (v.8)?

**Romans 8:1-18**

According to this passage, what are some of the things that the Holy Spirit does? Why is v.18 a good verse for you to remember when you are going through tough times?

**August 8****Psalms 82-84**

Reread Psalm 84:10. Do you love the things of God or things of the world? What does your life show?

**Romans 8:19-39**

God one day is going to recreate a new sinless perfect world. Why is that a good thing for you to think about? How will that affect the way you live today?

**August 9****Psalms 85-87**

Reread Psalm 86:11. What does it look like for you to walk in truth today? How will you fear God today? Take a few minutes and pray about this.

**Romans 9**

What does it mean that God is sovereign over who he saves?

**Week 32: August 10-16**

## **August 10**

### **Psalms 88-89**

The psalmist in Psalm 88 is reliant on God through prayer. In what way do you need to rely on God today? Spend a few minutes praying about that.

### **Romans 10**

God calls Christians to evangelize because that is the way that people hear about Christ. Who is someone in your life that you need to evangelize?

### **Psalms 93-95**

What does Psalm 94:8-11 teach you about God? How will you praise God today?

### **Romans 11:22-36**

Reread Romans 11:33-36. What do these verses teach you about God? How should you respond to what you learn in these verses? (think about how they make you feel)

## **August 13**

### **Psalms 96-98**

Psalm 96:9 says to *“worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth.”* How is God’s holiness connected to fearing him? Psalm 98 is about God being a judge. Why do you need to remember that God will judge you?

## **Romans 12**

God says to be “*transformed by the renewal of your mind*” (v.2). The biggest way God does that is when you read the Bible. How is your attitude when you read the Bible? How does the Bible transform and renew your mind?

## **August 14**

### **Psalms 99-102**

Psalm 100:3 says that you should “*know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his.*” Why do you need to be reminded that God is your maker and you are his? How does that change the way you live today?

## **Romans 13**

What kinds of things do you do to love yourself every day? Now, what kinds of things can you do to love your neighbor as yourself today?

## **August 15**

### **Psalms 103-104**

Why do you need to be reminded today of what God has done for you? What are the things that the psalmist praises God for in Psalm 103?

**Romans 14**

What can you do today to put someone else's preferences before yours?

**August 16****Psalms 105-106**

These Psalms are all about giving thanks to God for what he has done in biblical history. Why is it important for you to know the history of the Old Testament?

**Romans 15:1-20**

According to Romans 15:4, what can reading the Old Testament do to you?



# 1 Corinthians

## Author and Date

- Written by the Apostle Paul, about a.d. 55

## Background and Setting

- Who will settle the argument? When people can't agree on an answer, sometimes they will agree to an arbitrator. One New Testament church became famous for its conflicts and questions—the church in Corinth. Fortunately, they had the Apostle Paul for an arbitrator. First Corinthians was one of several letters that Paul wrote to instruct this struggling church.
- Corinth was located in southern Greece, in what was the Roman province of Achaia, about forty-five miles west from Athens. Corinth sat on a narrow isthmus which not only funneled land traffic through its gates, but also controlled a portage for ships transported overland from the Gulf of Corinth on the west to the Saronic Gulf on the east. The city grew prosperous from all the trade traffic.
- Although officially famous as the host city of the Isthmian games (rivaled in their time only by the Olympian games), Corinth was in-famous for its depravity. Even by the pagan standards of the time, Corinth was so morally corrupt that its very name became synonymous with debauchery and moral depravity. In 6:9–10, Paul lists some of the specific sins for which the city was noted and which formerly had characterized many believers in the church there. Tragically, some of the worst sins were still found among church members. One of those sins, incest, was condemned even by most pagan Gentiles (5:1).
- Like most ancient Greek cities, Corinth had an acropolis (high city) which rose some two thousand feet and was used both for defense and for pagan worship. Corinth boasted of a temple to Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love. The temple and the city employed more than a thousand priestesses, who were “religious” prostitutes. Sexual immorality was rampant throughout Corinth.
- Paul founded the church in Corinth on his second missionary journey (Acts 18). As usual, his ministry began among the Jews in the synagogue but then shifted to the Gentiles after his countrymen rejected the gospel. During the year and a half that Paul worked in Corinth he was assisted by Priscilla and Aquila, two Jewish believers, and by Paul's associates Silas and Timothy.
- The most serious problem of the Corinthian church was worldliness, an unwillingness to divorce the culture around them. Most of the believers did not consistently separate themselves from their old, selfish, immoral, and pagan ways. Paul decided it was necessary for him to write to correct these patterns with disciplinary directions (5:9–13).
- Before writing this inspired letter, Paul had exchanged other correspondence with the church (5:9), also corrective in nature. Because a copy of that correspondence has never been discovered, it has been referred to as the “lost epistle.” Another noncanonical letter followed 1 Corinthians, usually called “the severe letter” (2 Corinthians 2:4).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 218–219.

**Week 33: August 17-23**

## **August 17**

### **Psalms 107-108**

Psalm 107 is about praising God for his redemption. How does God redeem his people?

### **Romans 15:21-33**

How can you be generous today?

## **August 18**

### **Psalms 109-11**

Psalm 110 is the most quoted psalm in the NT. The psalm, although it was written hundreds of years before Christ, is intended to point forward to Christ. How does the psalm describe Christ as king and high priest?

### **Romans 16**

Paul commended other Christians for their great gospel work. He was praising them for the great work they did. Who is someone you will commend for the good work they do for others and God's kingdom?

## **August 19**

### **Psalms 112-115**

Psalm 112 teaches that God blesses those who fear and obey him. What are the blessings for obeying God found in this psalm? Psalm 113 praises God for his uniqueness. Why is there no one else like the Lord?

### **1 Corinthians 1**

The church at Corinth dealt with a lot of sin, this letter is Paul writing to them about how they can resolve their problems and be holy. One of the problems was division. According to the text, what were the Corinthians divided over? According to v.10, what was God telling them to do?

### **August 20**

#### **Psalms 116-118**

Psalm 116 teaches us that we should express our thanksgiving to God. What will you thank God for today? How will you thank God today?

### **1 Corinthians 2**

God has revealed himself through his divine word. The only way you can understand what is written in the Bible is to have the Spirit of God working in you. This means that every time you read the Bible you need God's Spirit to help you understand. What kind of attitude should this produce in you?

### **August 21**

#### **Psalm 119:1-48**

Psalm 119 is all about loving God's word. The goal of reading this psalm is to get you to love God's word. V.11 teaches us that memorizing God's word helps us sin less against God. How does this happen? What verse in the Bible will you memorize today?

### **1 Corinthians 3**

God motivates Christians with rewards given in the future for living an obedient holy life in the present. How can rewards motivate Christians to obey God?

### **August 22**

#### **Psalm 119:49-104**

How have you been slow to obey God (v.60)? How could the psalmist say what he says in v.67 and v.71? How can you do what the psalmist does in vv.101-102?

### **1 Corinthians 4**

V.5 tells us that God will judge every single person in the end. How does that make you feel? How will that change the way you live today?

### **August 23**

#### **Psalm 119:105-176**

V.105 says that God's word is meant to guide you in the right path. How will God's word guide you today?

### **1 Corinthians 5**

God hates sin. How do you see God hating sin in this chapter? What are the consequences for sin found in this chapter? What does this show you about how you should treat sin?

**Week 34: August 24-30**

## **August 24**

### **Psalms 120-123**

Psalm 121 declares that God is the help of his people. Why do you need to go to God for help? How can you receive God's help?

### **1 Corinthians 6**

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 shows us that not everyone will inherit the kingdom of God. Sinners who live in their sin and reject God's offer of salvation will not inherit the kingdom of God. The good news is that God can genuinely change people after they accept God's offer of salvation. How do you need God to change you?

## **August 25**

### **Psalms 124-127**

How does Psalm 124 make you see the necessity of God in your life? How does Psalm 125 make you see the certainty of trusting in God?

### **1 Corinthians 7:1-24**

God has called you to live the life and stage you are living right now. Your calling is to bring glory to God in your particular life stage. How can you live up to your calling today?

## **August 26**

### **Psalms 128-131**

Reread Psalm 130:3-4. Why does the psalmist say “*Who can stand ... if God were to mark our iniquities*” (130:3)? What does it mean to have God forgive your sins? Why does this lead to fearing God?

### **1 Corinthians 7:25-40**

God teaches us about relationships. You have a great opportunity now in your life stage to be “*undivided*” in your devotion to the Lord (v.35). In what area of your life can you be more devoted to the Lord?

## **August 27**

### **Psalms 132-135**

What does Psalm 135 say about idolatry? What is an idol?

### **1 Corinthians 8**

Paul’s main point in this chapter is to choose to love others for the sake of not causing them to sin. Love is going out of your way to sacrifice for someone else. This involves giving up something for another person. Who will you love today? How will you love that person today?

## **August 28**

### **Psalms 136-138**

Psalm 136 is about God demonstrating his loyal love for his people throughout history. God does things in the lives of his people because he loves them. In your life, how has God shown his love for you?



### **1 Corinthians 9**

Paul is a great example of caring for others by serving them and putting their interests above yours. Who can you serve today? What is a way you will serve them today?

### **August 29**

#### **Psalms 139-141**

What attributes of God do you find in Psalm 139? How can God's ultimate knowledge of you motivate you to live obediently today?

### **1 Corinthians 10:1-13**

How does this section teach you about the importance of the Old Testament? God says that you are not the only one who gets tempted in the way you get tempted. How can that be motivating to beat temptation? What is a temptation you have faced this week? What is the promise about temptation found in the last verse of this section?

### **August 30**

#### **Psalms 142-144**

The psalmist prays in Psalm 143:10 for God to "*teach him to do God's will*" (v.10). What is something you know you need to do today that God wants you to do? Pray this verse to God and obey him.

**1 Corinthians 10:14-33**

God gives instructions for dealing with idols in your life. What does God say to do if you have idols in your life? What idols do you identify in your life? The opposite of idolatry would be glorifying God (v.31). God says this is what we must do all the time. How will you specifically glorify God today? To glorify God means to give credit to God.

## Proverbs

### Author and Date

- Created and compiled by Solomon and several other authors, approximately 971 to 686 b.c.
- Proverbs provides a sample of the kind of wisdom that made Solomon famous. He set the standard for wisdom among his people. Perhaps that is why this collection has traditionally been named after Solomon even though he was not the source of the entire book. In fact, the final compilation of these sayings did not occur until the time of Hezekiah, long after Solomon's reign. Two other sages Agur and Lemuel are also specifically mentioned as contributors to Proverbs.

### Background and Setting

- Solomon composed over three thousand proverbs.
- The Proverbs of Solomon contains a collection of 513 of the king's sayings. These are joined by selections from other wise people. Proverbs are simple, moral statements or illustrations that highlight and teach fundamental truths and tendencies in life. They originated as insights drawn from common objects and daily events. The Hebrew word for proverb means "to be like." Many of the sayings are, in fact, comparisons between a vivid image and a vivid desire or consequence. For example, "Like one who takes away a garment in cold weather, And like vinegar on soda, Is one who sings songs to a heavy heart" (25:20).
- The contents of Proverbs reflect a threefold self-identity: 1) general wisdom literature; 2) insights from the royal court; 3) instructions offered in the mentoring relationship of a father and mother with their children. In each case, the purpose of the proverbs is to focus attention on godly living.
- Wisdom Literature describes the part of the Old Testament that supplements the Law (Genesis to Deuteronomy), the History (Joshua to Esther), and the Prophets (Isaiah to Malachi). This category includes Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. In Proverbs, Solomon the sage gives insight into the knotty issues of life (1:6). Though it is practical, Proverbs is not superficial or external because it contains moral and ethical elements stressing upright living that flows out of a right relationship with God. Proverbs contains the principles and applications of Scripture that the godly characters of the Bible illustrate throughout their lives.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 91.

**Week 35: August 31 - September 6**

## **August 31**

### **Psalms 145-147**

Psalm 145:18 says that God is close to those who call out to him. How do you need to call out to God today? Psalm 146 says that your trust should not be in something else or someone else, but God alone. What have you found yourself trusting in that is not God?

### **1 Corinthians 11:1-15**

How do you need to submit to God today?

## **September 1**

### **Psalms 148-150**

The Psalms call you to praise God with music. If you go to the main service you can sing praises to God. When and how will you sing praises to God this week? Why is that a good thing for you?

### **1 Corinthians 11:16-34**

The Lord's Supper is a time when the church intentionally remembers what Jesus has done for Christians. This passage gives us helpful instructions about taking the Lord's Supper. One big thing it tells us is that you should not take the Lord's Supper if you are not a Christian. What has Jesus done for Christians? Why do you need to remember what Jesus has done for you?

## **September 2**

### **Proverbs 1-2**

In Proverbs 1:7 you read the summary statement for the whole book of Proverbs. What does it mean to fear the Lord? How is that related to knowledge (see 1:29)? Why do you need wisdom?

### **1 Corinthians 12**

The body of Christ are all the members in God's church. God calls all the members of the church to serve. How will you serve the church this week?

## **September 3**

### **Proverbs 3-4**

Proverbs 3:5-7 teaches you how to wholeheartedly trust God. Why does God instruct you not to lean on your own understanding? What was a time in your life when you were wise in your own eyes and it did not end well?

### **1 Corinthians 13**

Today we read about true biblical love. What characteristic of love found in this passage do you most struggle with? How can you truly love someone in your life?

## **September 4**

### **Proverbs 5-6**

God tells you in Proverbs 6:6-11 to be a hard worker and not be lazy. What are your lazy tendencies? In what way do you need to work hard this week?

### **1 Corinthians 14:1-20**

God gives gifts to his people so that others would be built up (v.12). How can you build someone up this week at church?

## **September 5**

### **Proverbs 7-8**

Proverbs 8:13 says that if you fear the Lord you must hate evil. What are the sins that the verse refers to? Which of them do you struggle with? What other sins in your life do you need to hate?

### **1 Corinthians 14:21-40**

Church service is intended for believers to learn and grow. What is your weekly church involvement? Church service is all about God. What can you do to make sure you learn and grow when you are at church?

## **September 6**

### **Proverbs 9-10**

There are lots of things and people out in the world that want you to pursue foolishness. How have you seen that happen in your life? What is a proverb in chapter 10 that you need to apply in your life? Why?

**1 Corinthians 15:1-32**

The resurrection is one of the most important doctrines of the Christian faith. What does this section say about the importance of the resurrection? Why does Paul say that if Christ had not been raised then your faith is pointless?



## 2 Corinthians

### Author and Date

- Written by Paul, approximately a.d. 55 to 56

### Background and Setting

- In ancient times, letters were significant. They offered just about the only form of long-distance communication. In a world without electronics or even printing, a handwritten letter was a powerful tool, and only the person or their personal representative carried greater authority. When God revealed Himself in written form, He chose letters as one of His tools.
- The letters written by the Apostle Paul were the result of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Thus, they are God's Word. They also reveal to us a great deal about their human author. Paul's concern and his compassion became part of the permanent record. The last letter he wrote to the Corinthians conveys to us Paul's heart and God's Word to a struggling church.
- Paul's association with the important city of Corinth began during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1–18). He spent eighteen months in Corinth planting and tending a new church. In the years that followed, Paul wrote at least four letters and visited the church twice. Second Corinthians was Paul's fourth letter to the Corinthian Christians.
- The church in Corinth experienced almost continuous spiritual struggles from internal and external problems. Paul had to deal with rampant immorality and divisiveness within the church itself. He also had to confront outside influences in the form of self-styled false apostles (11:5–15).
- In order to create a platform to teach their false gospel, the false prophets began assaulting Paul's character. They wanted to take advantage of the tension between the apostle and the church. If they could convince the people to turn from Paul, the congregation would then be completely vulnerable to their own demonic doctrines. The situation became so critical that Paul intervened personally. He referred to that episode as the "painful visit" (2:1). The tension in the church had broken out into public and personal attacks (2:5–8, 10; 7:12). Paul, realizing he had done what he could, left the city but followed up his visit with what he called the "severe letter" (2:4) that Titus carried to Corinth on Paul's behalf (7:5–16).
- Sometime later, eager for news about Corinth, Paul traveled to meet Titus (2:13). His younger associate gave Paul the news that the majority of the Corinthians had repented of their rebellion against him (7:7). When Paul wrote this letter (2 Corinthians), he was intent on rejoicing for the church (7:8–16), warning them about dangers ahead by confronting the false apostles (chapters 10–13), and, particularly, reestablishing his reputation and authority among them by defending his apostleship (chapters 1–). Paul also encouraged the Corinthians to resume preparations for the collection for the poor at Jerusalem (chapters 8–9), which he planned to pick up on his next visit (12:14; 13:1–2). The Corinthians' participation in the Jerusalem offering (Romans 15:26) implies that Paul's third visit to that church was successful.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 225–226.

**Week 36: September 7-13**

## **September 7**

### **Proverbs 11-12**

What is a proverb from these chapters that you need to implement in your life to help you live righteously? Why this proverb?

### **1 Corinthians 15:33-58**

The resurrection of Christ assures Christians that they will also have a resurrected body. This body will be completely different than yours now. What does the passage say about your new body?

## **September 8**

### **Proverbs 13-14**

What is the instruction God is giving you in Proverbs 13:3? How can you personally apply this truth? What does Proverbs 13:20 tell you about friendships?

### **1 Corinthians 16**

1 Corinthians 16:13-14 are commands for you to do in your life. In what area of your life do you need to be "*watchful*" when it comes to temptation? What is something you need to do "*in love*" today?

## **September 9**

### **Proverbs 15-16**

Proverbs 16:18 gives you wisdom when it comes to a certain sin. What is that sin? How do you struggle with this or have struggled with it? What proverb sticks out to you today? Why?

### **2 Corinthians 1**

Paul says that God is a God of all comfort. There are times when God allows suffering in the lives of Christians for a specific reason. What is the reason Paul gives in vv.3-7?

## **September 10**

### **Proverbs 17-18**

What is a proverb about your words that you need to implement? Why this one? What is a proverb about how you should treat your friends that you need to implement in your life? Why this one?

### **2 Corinthians 2**

Paul says that you are either an aroma of Christ to others or you are an aroma of death to others. Being an aroma of Christ means that other people around you know you are a Christian because you talk about Jesus and you live a godly life. How and when do you need to be more outspoken about Jesus?

## **September 11**

### **Proverbs 19-20**

Proverbs 19:11 says that is a godly thing to overlook an offense. What is a situation in your life that you need to overlook an offense? Proverbs 20:11 says that the way you live is very important. Why is it important to you personally to live righteously?

### **2 Corinthians 3**

God used to relate to his people through the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant was a certain relationship God had with his people. When Christ came he started the New Covenant. In the New Covenant, he relates to his people differently. Through the New Covenant, his people now have the power of the Spirit to change to be more like Christ. Why do you need to rely on the Spirit to grow you? How do you need the Holy Spirit to grow you?

## **September 12**

### **Proverbs 21-22**

According to Proverbs 21:16, why is it bad to stray away from what God says? How can you “*keep yourself out of trouble*” when it comes to your words (21:23)? What is a Proverb in chapter 22 that you need to practice in your life?

### **2 Corinthians 4**

Some people thought that the gospel message was not powerful or valuable because Paul’s life was full of suffering and persecution. He responds by saying that the gospel is like a treasure that is put in an old jar of clay. He says that he is like the jar of clay that is wasting away but the message is still powerful. What makes the gospel message so “*powerful*” (v.7)?

## **September 13**

### **Proverbs 23-24**

Proverbs 23:1-3 says that you should be careful of your desires because they can be “*deceptive*.” Which of your desires are “*deceptive*”? Proverbs 23:22-25 says that you have to listen to your parents because they are your authority. How do you specifically need to listen to your parents this week?

## **2 Corinthians 5**

God says that he has made it possible for mankind to be reconciled to him. What did God do to reconcile sinful people to himself? How does 2 Corinthians 5:21 connect to what God did for you?

# Ecclesiastes

## Author and Date

- Written by Solomon, no later than 931 b.c.
- Solomon, an experienced elder and king, wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes to young people. The dispassionate wisdom that makes up Proverbs is illustrated in Ecclesiastes by an intimate, painful, firsthand wisdom learned in the hard school of life. Solomon warned his readers to avoid walking through life on the path of human wisdom. He pointed, instead, to the revealed wisdom of God (12:9–14) as the true answer to life’s meaning.

## Background and Setting

- Words about life’s meaning from history’s wisest man.
- What makes life meaningful? Will enough friends, success, achievement, money, or recognition lead to happiness? King Solomon had the chance to test all the theories of what brings meaning to life. He took full advantage of his opportunity! In the end he declared them all “vanity.” The Book of Ecclesiastes serves as Solomon’s journal of his failed experiment with life in the fast lane. He discovered that everything that offers to make life full turns out to make life empty. His final conclusion points to the only source of true meaning: “Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all” (Ecclesiastes 12:13).
- Ecclesiastes presents itself as an eyewitness account of a misdirected quest: “I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven” (1:13). Solomon decided to test intuitive wisdom by direct experiments. The risks of disillusionment, despair, and death that Solomon faithfully reported make his experiment a warning to those who would insist on copying Solomon’s behavior rather than learning from his mistakes.
- David recognized his son’s wisdom (1 Kings 2:6, 9) even before God deepened Solomon’s capacity. After Solomon received a “wise and understanding heart” from the Lord (1 Kings 3:7–12), he became known for rendering insightful decisions (1 Kings 3:16–28). His reputation for wisdom attracted “all the kings of the earth” to his courts (1 Kings 4:34). Solomon’s impressive outpouring of songs, proverbs, and opinions set the stage for his personal engagement in the events of Ecclesiastes. Solomon found himself in a position to try anything and everything. He decided to do just that.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 96–97.

**Week 37: September 14-20**



## **September 14**

### **Proverbs 25-27**

Proverbs 25:28 says that if you are not self-controlled you will be overthrown by sin. What area of your life do you need to be more self-controlled? Why is it sinful to be “*wise in your own eyes*” (26:12)?

Proverbs 26:17-22 gives you warnings about being careless with your words. How are you careless with your words? How will you be careful with your words?

### **2 Corinthians 6**

2 Corinthians 6:14-18 says Christians should not have partnerships with non-Christians. He says to “*not be unequally yoked with unbelievers*” (v.14). This does not mean that you cannot talk to or be around non-Christians. God is saying that your closest friends and relationships should not be with non-Christians. Why does God say to have the closest people in your life be Christians and not unbelievers?

## **September 15**

### **Proverbs 28-29**

Proverbs 28:6 says you should value integrity. What is integrity? Why do you need to be someone of integrity? Proverbs 28:11 gives you instructions on what you must do with your sin. What are the instructions? What sins do you need to confess to the Lord? Why is it a good thing to maintain a pattern of confession before the Lord?

### **2 Corinthians 7**

What is the difference between worldly grief and godly grief?

## **September 16**

### **Proverbs 30-31**

Why is it important for you to know that God's word will always prove true (Prov. 30:5)? What are the godly character qualities of the righteous woman in Proverbs 31:10-31? What does Proverbs 31:30 say about what God values?

### **2 Corinthians 8**

According to this passage, what does giving to the Lord have to do with your relationship with Christ? This chapter calls you to give generously to the Lord. How do you need to improve in giving generously?

## **September 17**

### **Ecclesiastes 1-3**

Ecclesiastes is about the life of King Solomon who had everything that he wanted and in the end, he comes to realize that it was "*vanity*" because he was not living for God. Life without fearing God leads to an empty and sad life. He sought satisfaction in every place but God. According to Solomon, what things found in these chapters cannot bring your true happiness?

### **2 Corinthians 9**

God wants his people to give as a result of everything he has done for them. How has God been generous to you? What is the opposite of a cheerful giver? How will you be a generous giver this week?

## **September 18**

### **Ecclesiastes 4-6**

According to 5:1-3 how does a proper fear of God relate to the amount of words you say? What does Solomon say about the vanity of loving money and wanting to be rich?

### **2 Corinthians 10**

There are many opponents to Christianity. Paul gives you how to defend against these false ideas about Christ. He says that Christians are to be on defense and offense not physically but by “destroying arguments”. We defend the truth by knowing the truth and proclaiming it. Have you ever had anyone challenge you about the Christian faith? How did it go? What could you have done better?

## **September 19**

### **Ecclesiastes 7-9**

Why does Solomon say it is better for you to go to a funeral than a party (7:2)? How does thinking about death make you wiser?

### **2 Corinthians 11:1-15**

The Corinthians were being “led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ” (v.3). How can false teaching lead Christians away? Paul says that Satan dresses up as something good but in reality, it is all to deceive. How do false religions deceive people?

## **September 20**

### **Ecclesiastes 10-12**

Ecclesiastes 11:9 and 12:13 call you to remember that you will be judged for everything. Why is it crucial for you to remember that you will be judged for everything one day? Solomon finishes the book in 12:13 by saying the whole point of my book is to *“fear God and keep his commandments.”* How do those two truths if they are rightly applied change the way you live for the rest of your life?

### **2 Corinthians 11:16-33**

Paul recalls the pain and suffering he underwent for being loyal to Christ. What are all the sufferings he went through according to this passage? Why is it good for you to be ready to suffer for being loyal to Christ?

# Song of Solomon

## Author and Date

- Written by Solomon, shortly after 971 b.c.
- Solomon included his own name seven times in the book (1:1, 5; 3:7, 9, 11; 8:11–12). His unequalled reputation as a thinker, writer, and composer point favorably toward the king as the original author. The style of this book also indicates a single, highly creative mind, composing an example of Wisdom Literature as complex and delightful as the relationship about which it was written.

## Background and Setting

- The Song of Solomon expands on the ancient marriage instructions of Genesis 2:24 by providing shameless and spiritual music for a lifetime of marital harmony.
- The oldest songs are love songs. Among the most intimate ever written are these lyrics authored by Solomon and named after him. The ancient Hebrew versions of this book entitle it “Song of Songs.” Based on the biblical record that Solomon composed 1,005 songs (1 Kings 4:32), the title indicates that this was his best.
- Two people dominate this true-to-life, dramatic love song. Solomon the king takes on the role of “the beloved.” The identity of the Shulamite maiden (6:13) remains obscure. Her name may indicate her hometown was Shunem in Galilee. Although some suggest she was the daughter of Pharaoh mentioned in 1 Kings 3:1, the Song itself provides no confirmation. Others have suggested the woman in this song is Abishag, the Shunammite maiden who cared for the aging King David (1 Kings 1:1–4, 15), but there is little evidence of this. We are left with an unknown maiden from Shunem who was Solomon’s first wife (9:9). The relationship immortalized in the Song knows nothing of the sin into which Solomon fell when he added 699 other wives and 300 concubines to his household (1 Kings 11:3).
- Various small groups fill the supporting roles in this love story. “The daughters of Jerusalem” (1:5), Solomon’s friends (3:6–11), and the Shulamite’s brothers (8:8, 9) each supply an outside perspective for the couple.
- The setting includes rural and urban scenes. Part of the story takes place in the hill country north of Jerusalem, where the Shulamite lived (6:13). They may have met while Solomon carried out duties as a vine grower and shepherd (2:4–7). The events of the wedding and the early married life of the couple occur in Jerusalem (Song of Solomon 3:6–7:13).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 101–102.

# Isaiah

## Author and Date

- Written by Isaiah, approximately 700 to 681 b.c.
- Isaiah, the son of Amoz, prophesied in and around Jerusalem during the reigns of four kings of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. The prophet probably grew up in a prominent family, which explains his easy access to the higher levels of Jewish society, including the kings (7:3). Isaiah was a contemporary of fellow prophets Hosea and Micah. His writing style has no rival in its versatility of expression, brilliance of imagery, and richness of vocabulary.

## Background and Setting

- Isaiah is the Old Testament prophet most often quoted in the New Testament.
- Isaiah's thoughts are echoed sixty-five times and his name is mentioned on at least twenty occasions in the New Testament. "Isaiah," which means "the Lord is salvation," shares roots with the names Joshua, Elisha, and Jesus.
- Isaiah grew up in the closing years of King Uzziah's fifty-two-year reign. During those years Judah developed into a strong commercial and military state. Her distant commercial port on the Red Sea and the extensive construction of walls, towers, and fortifications all served as examples of prosperous times (2 Chronicles 26:3–15). Yet the period also witnessed a decline in Judah's spiritual health. Uzziah eventually overstepped his royal bounds by assuming the role of a priest (2 Chronicles 26:16–19). That act sealed his downfall. He was judged with leprosy, from which he never recovered (2 Chronicles 26:20–21).
- The spiritual decline begun under Uzziah continued during the reigns of his son Jotham and his grandson Ahaz. Second Kings 15:34 describes Jotham's passive preservation of the spiritual legacy that had been part of Uzziah's reign. Ahaz, however, actively rejected God's ways (2 Kings 16:2–4). The depth of his idolatry included child sacrifice. Meanwhile, the nation was becoming increasingly weak and under the influence of other nations.
- By the time Hezekiah came to the throne, the Assyrian empire was a threat held at bay only through the payment of crushing tribute. Hezekiah realized that a spiritual reformation was a priority (2 Kings 18:4, 22). Isaiah served as a valuable counselor to Hezekiah. When Assyria did invade Judah, Isaiah's influence caused Hezekiah to trust in God's protection. The nation gained a divine reprieve.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 105–106.

# Galatians

## Author and Date

- Written by Paul, about a.d. 50

## Background and Setting

- Paul's first effort at writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
- Paul's Epistle to the Galatians bears two significant distinctions. First, it represents the earliest of his many letters written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Second, Galatians is the only one of Paul's messages targeted for a region, a group of churches, rather than a specific local church. First and always, Paul preached the gospel as the ultimate freedom found in Christ through justification by faith.
- In Paul's day, the word *Galatia* had two distinct meanings, one ethnic and the other political. In a strict ethnic sense, Galatia was the region of central Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) inhabited by a transplanted group called Galatians. They were a Celtic people who migrated to that region from Gaul (modern day France) in the third century b.c. The Romans conquered the Galatians in 189 b.c. but allowed them a measure of independence until 25 b.c., when Galatia became a Roman province.
- When establishing the boundaries of the province of Galatia, Rome included some regions not populated by ethnic Galatians. This broader term was the primary meaning by the time of the New Testament.
- Paul founded churches in the southern Galatian cities of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe (Acts 13:14–14:23). These were cities in the Roman province, but they were not inhabited by ethnic Galatians. Although Acts notes two brief visits by Paul into ethnic Galatia (Acts 16:6; 18:23), it makes no mention of any churches founded in that region.
- Despite suggestions that Paul might have written his letter to the northern regions he had not visited, his concerns and the needs of the southern Galatian churches make them the more likely recipients of the letter. The apostle received word that the churches he had recently founded were under assault by Judaizing false teachers who were undermining the central New Testament doctrine of justification by faith. Ignoring the express decree of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:23–29), these teachers were insisting that Gentiles must first become Jewish proselytes and submit to all the Mosaic Law before they could become Christians (1:7; 4:17, 21; 5:2–12; 6:12–13). Shocked by the Galatians' openness to that damning heresy (1:6), Paul wrote this letter to defend justification by faith and to warn these churches of the dire consequences of abandoning that essential doctrine. Galatians is the only Pauline letter without an opening commendation for its readers. That obvious omission reflects the urgency he felt about confronting the possible defection and defending the essential doctrine of justification.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 231–232.

**Week 38: September 21-27**



## **September 21**

### **Song of Solomon 1-3**

Song of Solomon is about Solomon writing a love poem to his bride. God created marriage to be between one man and one woman in a covenant relationship. Marriage is a good and godly thing. In what part of the Bible did marriage begin?

### **2 Corinthians 12**

According to v.9, why does God work through weak people? What did God put Paul through and why?

## **September 22**

### **Song of Solomon 4-5**

How can a godly marriage bring glory to God?

### **2 Corinthians 13**

Paul tells the Corinthians to “*examine themselves, to see whether they are in the faith*” (v.5). Why is this a healthy thing to do?

## **September 23**

### **Song of Solomon 6-8**

One of the biggest blessings God gives to his people is the gift of marriage. Why is marriage a good and godly thing?

## **Galatians 1**

Paul in vv.6-10 rebukes the Galatians for turning to a different gospel. Why is it so important to have the correct biblical gospel? What is the gospel?

## **September 24**

### **Isaiah 1-3**

Where in these chapters do you see God's offer of repentance? Where in these chapters do you see God's judgment? How do these two concepts relate to each other?

## **Galatians 2**

V.20 is a great verse about the new life you live in Christ after you have been transformed by God through responding to the gospel. What does it mean when Paul says "*I have been crucified with Christ*"? What is Paul saying when he says "*It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me*"?

## **September 25**

### **Isaiah 4-6**

Isaiah has a vision of God on his throne in chapter 6. What attribute of God is most emphasized here? What does this attribute mean? How and why does Isaiah respond to what he sees? How does God respond to Isaiah?

### **Galatians 3**

V.11 says that “*no one is justified before God by the law, for the righteous shall live by faith.*” Why can you not be right before God by keeping the law? Why do you need Christ to be right before God?

### **September 26**

#### **Isaiah 7-9**

How does King Ahaz fail to trust God in these chapters? How do you see pride in these chapters?

### **Galatians 4**

How did Jesus “*redeem us*” by keeping the law (v.4)? How do you receive what Jesus did for you?

### **September 27**

#### **Isaiah 10-12**

The “*Branch*” in chapter 11 describes Jesus Christ who was yet to come. How does v.2 describe Jesus as he is seen in the New Testament gospels?

### **Galatians 5**

Why do you need the Holy Spirit to produce the fruit of the Spirit? How do you receive the Holy Spirit?

# Ephesians

## Author and Date

- Written by Paul, between a.d. 60 and 62

## Background and Setting

- Ephesians offers a narrative blueprint for the church of Jesus Christ.
- The church in the city of Ephesus received two letters recorded in Scripture. One came from the Apostle Paul, the other from Jesus (Revelation 2:1–6). When Jesus appeared to John and had him write letters to seven churches, He began with Ephesus. Both Jesus and Paul used the church in Ephesus as an example of the challenges and benefits of growing into an authentic living and loving Body of Christ in this world.
- The church in Ephesus probably began under the ministry of Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:26), an exceptionally gifted couple who were left there by Paul during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:18–19). Later, Paul visited Ephesus during his third missionary journey (Acts 19) and spent three years establishing the fledgling church. After Paul's departure, Timothy pastored the congregation for perhaps a year and a half, providing corrective instruction against the false teaching of a few influential men who were probably elders in the congregation (1 Timothy 1:3, 20).
- Located at the mouth of the Cayster River, on the east shore of the Aegean Sea, Ephesus was perhaps best known for its Temple of Artemis, or Diana. That magnificent structure was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Ephesus also served as an important political, educational, and commercial center—a great city in its time.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 237.

**Week 39: September 28 - October 4**

## **September 28**

### **Isaiah 13-15**

What are the nations that God was going to judge?

### **Galatians 6**

How can you bear someone else's burdens this week (v.2)? What is God teaching you in vv.7-8?

## **September 29**

### **Isaiah 16-18**

In chapter 16 we see Moab's sin against God. What was Moab's sin? What are the other nations God judges?

### **Ephesians 1**

What are all the spiritual blessings given to Christians found in vv.3-14? According to this section, why is it a great thing to be a Christian?

## **September 30**

### **Isaiah 19-21**

What are the nations God judges? Why does God judge sinful people?

## **Ephesians 2**

Vv.1-10 gives you a good description of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. What is the bad news according to this passage? What is the good news according to this passage? Grace is receiving something you do not deserve or earn. Why is salvation only by grace alone?

## **October 1**

### **Isaiah 22-23**

What are the nations God judges in these chapters? Why does it mean for God to be perfectly just?

## **Ephesians 3**

Paul prays that he would understand more of God's love for him so that he can love others. Why is it important for you to remember God's love for you to love others? What lengths did God go to show you that he loves you?

## **October 2**

### **Isaiah 24-26**

Why is it important for you to know that one day God will judge the whole earth? What does the resurrection of Christ have to do with God saying "*he will swallow up death forever*" (25:8)?

## **Ephesians 4**

Vv.20-32 shows you what it looks like to live a new life as a Christian. It describes biblical repentance. What sinful habits are stopped in this passage? What righteous habits are started in this passage? What sins do you need to repent of?

## **October 3**

### **Isaiah 27-28**

What are the nations that are faced with the judgment of God in these chapters? How does Christ save humanity from the judgment of God?

### **Ephesians 5**

Vv.1-2 calls you to imitate God's love. How is God's love for you sacrificial? Who will you love and how will you love sacrificially this week?

## **October 4**

### **Isaiah 29-30**

What does it look like to be "*stubborn*" with your sin (30:1)? Why is it foolish to hide from God?

### **Ephesians 6**

The Bible calls you to obey and honor your parents because they are your authority given to you by God. Why is this good for you? How do you need to obey your parents this week?



# Philippians

## Author and Date

- Written by Paul, approximately a.d. 61

## Background and Setting

- The church in Philippi was the first church in a European city.
- If people were to search for joy, they probably would not think to look in prison. But that is where Paul wrote this marvelous letter about joy. Through Paul, the Holy Spirit taught that circumstances don't dictate the quality of joy believers have in Christ. How did Paul find joy in prison? He didn't. He took joy in Christ into jail with him; therefore, joy was his continual companion.
- In New Testament times, Philippi was known primarily as the site of one of the most famous events in Roman history. In 42 b.c., the forces of Antony and Cleopatra defeated those of Brutus and Cassius at the Battle of Philippi, thus ending the Roman Republic and ushering in the Empire. After that battle, Philippi became a Roman colony (Acts 16:12), and many veterans of the Roman army settled there.
- As a colony, Philippi had autonomy from the provincial government and the same rights granted to cities in Italy, including the use of Roman law, exemption from certain taxes, and Roman citizenship for its residents (Acts 16:21). Recognition as a colony provided a source for much civic pride for the Philippians, who used Latin as their official language, adopted Roman customs, and modeled their city government after that of Italian cities.
- The church at Philippi, the first one founded by Paul in Europe, dates from the apostle's second missionary journey (Acts 16:12–40). Among the early converts were Lydia, a wealthy merchant dealing in expensive purple dyed goods (Acts 16:14), and the jailer whose prison housed Paul and Silas until an earthquake set them free and opened the jailer's heart to the gospel.
- Both Acts and the letter to the Philippians reflect Philippi's status as a Roman colony. Paul's description of Christians as citizens of heaven (3:20) would have been particularly meaningful to the Philippians' pride over being citizens of Rome (Acts 16:21). Some of the retired veterans in Philippi may well have been former members of the elite palace guard (1:13) and part of Caesar's household (4:22).<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 245–246.

# Colossians

## Author and Date

- Written by Paul, approximately a.d. 60 to 62
- Like Philemon and the other Prison Epistles (Ephesians and Philippians), Colossians was written during a.d. 60 to 62 while Paul was a prisoner in Rome

## Background and Setting

- Colossians presents a powerful case for the divinity of Jesus Christ.
- How does Christianity spread and grow? The church of Jesus in the city of Colosse began as a second-generation church. Paul and his team planted a church in Ephesus. Epaphras, who probably became a Christian in Ephesus, carried the gospel to Colosse and planted a new church. Later, when Paul heard that the Colossian believers were experiencing troubles, he wrote them this letter, a condensed handbook of the Christian faith.
- Colosse was a city in Phrygia, in the Roman province of Asia (part of modern Turkey), about a hundred miles east of Ephesus. An ancient city, Colosse prospered through the marketing of black wool and dyes. Until New Testament times, the city had served as an important regional crossroads. By Paul's day, however, the main road had been rerouted through nearby Laodicea, causing Colosse to gradually decline in importance. Although the population of Colosse consisted mainly of Gentiles, a sizable Jewish settlement had existed for several hundred years.
- The church at Colosse began during Paul's three-year ministry at Ephesus (Acts 19). Epaphras, who probably had been saved during a visit to Ephesus, had returned home with such good news that the new church had sprung from his testimony. Several years after the founding of the Colossian church, a dangerous heresy arose to attack it. The threat to the church was real because the false teaching had elements that appealed to both the pagan and Jewish backgrounds of the church members. Epaphras was so concerned about this heresy that he made the long journey from Colosse to Rome (4:12–13) to consult with Paul who was a prisoner there. As a result, Paul composed this letter to warn the Colossians against the heresy. Epaphras stayed in Rome with Paul, but the letter was delivered by Tychicus, who was accompanied by Onesimus, the runaway slave returning to his master, Philemon, a member of the Colossian church (4:7–9; Philemon 23).<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 251–252.

**Week 40: October 5-11**

## **October 5**

### **Isaiah 31-33**

How was Judah trusting in Egypt and not in God? What are you tempted to trust in that is not God?

### **Philippians 1**

Paul says that his whole life is all about serving Christ (vv.21-24). He says that he would do this if he continues to live or if he dies. How can you live for Jesus Christ today? Who is someone in your life that needs to hear about Christ? Pray for them right now and make a plan to talk to them.

## **October 6**

### **Isaiah 34-36**

How do you see God's anger on display in chapter 34? Why do you need to remember that whatever God says will come true, even when he comes in judgment?

### **Philippians 2**

How is Jesus the greatest example of selflessness? How was Jesus humble? How will you be selfless today?

## **October 7**

### **Isaiah 37-38**

How does Hezekiah express his confidence in God? How do you see God being true to his word?

### **Philippians 3**

Paul in vv.7-9 shows you how you need to transfer your trust from yourself to Christ. According to these verses, why do you need a righteousness that is not your own? Why does it need to come through faith alone and not by anything you do? How does Jesus' life accomplish perfect righteousness for you?

### **October 8**

#### **Isaiah 39-40**

Why is it good for you to believe that God's word will stand forever and never fail (40:8)? What do you learn about God's character in these chapters?

### **Philippians 4**

God calls you to "*rejoice in the Lord always*" (Phil. 4:4). Make a list of reasons to rejoice today.

### **October 9**

#### **Isaiah 41-42**

How is it comforting to know that God is with his people all the time (41:10)? In what kinds of situations do you need to remember that?

### **Colossians 1**

Paul prays that Christians would know God's truth and live it out in their lives. Why is it important for you to know what the Bible says? Why is it important for you to live out what the Bible says? What do you learn about Jesus in this chapter?

### **October 10**

#### **Isaiah 43-44**

God declares that he is the only God and Savior (43:3,11; 44:6). Why is it important for you to know that there is only one God and savior? What is an idol? Why is it foolish to worship idols?

### **Colossians 2**

Why do you have a record of debt before God? How does Jesus cancel the record of debt for you (2:14)?

### **October 11**

#### **Isaiah 45-47**

How do you see God's ultimate power (omnipotence) in these chapters? How do you see God's ultimate control (sovereignty) in these chapters?

### **Colossians 3**

Paul shows what it means to live as a Christian. What is a sin that you need to put to death? What is a godly trait that you need to have in your life found in this chapter? How do you need to submit to your parents this week?

# 1 Thessalonians

## Author and Date

- Written by Paul, about a.d. 51

## Background and Setting

- First Thessalonians mentions the return of Jesus in each of its five chapters.
- Christians were dying, and Christ hadn't returned. When the gospel was first preached to the Thessalonians, a strong part of the message focused on the expectation of Christ's return. Several years later, the death of some of the believers raised questions in the church. How long would Christ delay? What about those who died in the meantime? How should Christians live? In response to these questions and other concerns, Paul sent the Thessalonians a letter.
- Thessalonica (modern Salonica) stood at the northern end of the Thermaic Gulf in the Aegean Sea. The city became the capital of Macedonia (about 168 b.c.) and enjoyed the status of a "free city" (one ruled by its own citizenry) under the Roman Empire (Acts 17:6). Thessalonica served as a key commercial and political hub on the Via Egnatia, the primary east-west Roman highway in the region. The population in Paul's day reached two hundred thousand people.
- Paul's original visit to Thessalonica during his second missionary journey (a.d. 50—Acts 16:1–18:22) was brief but effective. A church was planted there before the apostle and his companions were evicted (Acts 17:1–9). Within a year, Paul sent Timothy back into the region to obtain a report on the new churches at Berea and Thessalonica. Timothy's good news prompted Paul to write his first letter. At that point the apostle was in Corinth, where he remained long enough to write his second letter to the church. Timothy's report about Thessalonica must have included some details that delighted and some that concerned Paul.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 257–258.

## 2 Thessalonians

### Author and Date

- Written by Paul, about late a.d. 51 or early a.d. 52
- As with 1 Thessalonians and most of his letters, Paul identified himself twice as the author of this letter (1:1; 3:17). Evidence, both within this letter and with regard to vocabulary, style, and doctrinal content, strongly supports Pauline authorship.
- The time of this writing was apparently a few months after the first epistle, while Paul was still in Corinth with Silas and Timothy (1:1; Acts 18:5) in late a.d. 51 or early a.d. 52

### Background and Setting

- In 2 Thessalonians, Christians learn that Christ's coming is no excuse for complacency.
- No one can accuse the Apostle Paul of lacking in persistence. If one of his letters didn't accomplish its goal, he simply would write another one. Within a short time of writing his first letter to the church in Thessalonica, Paul wrote a second time. As before, his primary purpose was to encourage those believers. He saw in them a persistent need for encouragement that matched his own persistent need to minister.
- Some have suggested that Paul penned this letter from Ephesus (Acts 18:18–21), but his eighteen-month stay in Corinth provided ample time for him to write both the Thessalonian letters.
- Paul apparently managed to stay apprised of the happenings in Thessalonica. Perhaps the bearer of the first letter had returned with an update on the condition of the church. Paul was aware of the maturity and expansion of that church (1:3), but he also knew of their suffering under pressure and persecution. There were signs of danger in the seeds being sown of false teaching about the Lord, as well as in the disorderly behavior of some people.
- As Paul took up his pen, he had the following picture of the church in his mind: 1) discouraged by persecution and needing incentive to persevere; 2) deceived by false teachers who confused them about the Lord's return; 3) disobedient to divine commands, particularly by refusing to work. For each of these, Paul had something to offer: 1) comfort for the persecuted believers (1:3–12); 2) correction for falsely taught and frightened believers (2:1–15); 3) confrontation for the disobedient and undisciplined believers (3:6–15)<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 263–264.



**Week 41: October 12-18**

## **October 12**

### **Isaiah 48-49**

What are the promises that God makes in these chapters?

### **Colossians 4**

Paul gives instructions on how to act around non-Christians (vv.5-6). Why is it important to be wise when you are around non-Christians? What kind of effect can you have on non-Christians?

## **October 13**

### **Isaiah 50-52**

These chapters refer to an obedient servant of the Lord who is revealed to be Jesus Christ. What clues in these chapters reveal that this is talking about Jesus Christ?

### **1 Thessalonians 1**

The Thessalonians were a great example of biblical repentance. According to v.9, what do you need to turn from and turn to, if you are to biblically repent? How is Ephesians 4:25-32 similar to the way the Thessalonians biblically repented?

## **October 14**

### **Isaiah 53-55**

Chapter 53 is about Jesus saving his people from their sins by suffering in their place. Read this chapter very carefully. List out all the clues that show you this is talking about Jesus suffering for his people. According to this chapter and 2 Cor. 5:21, how is Jesus the substitute for sinners?

## **1 Thessalonians 2**

Paul is thankful that the Thessalonians received what they heard from Paul, as God's word and not just the words of men. What is the big difference between hearing God's word and hearing the words of men? How should that change the way you listen to God's word?

## **October 15**

### **Isaiah 56-58**

According to 57:15, where does God live? Why is it amazing that God is holy and also chooses to be with his humble people?

## **1 Thessalonians 3**

How can you increase your love for other people this week? What will you do to love someone today?

## **October 16**

### **Isaiah 59-61**

59:2 says that your sins have separated you from God. Why is it that God cannot be around sinners? What makes sin so disgusting to God?

### **1 Thessalonians 4**

God's desire for every Christian is to grow in holiness. This means to be more like Christ. How do you need to grow in holiness this week? God also desires that you abstain from certain things. What things do you need to stay away from this week to be more like Christ?

### **October 17**

#### **Isaiah 62-64**

What are God's attributes described in these chapters?

### **1 Thessalonians 5**

Jesus Christ will return at any time coming like a thief in the night. Why is it important for you to be aware that Jesus will come back in judgment at any time? How can you be saved from the wrath to come?

### **October 18**

#### **Isaiah 65-66**

God is going to judge rebellious sinners and will save those who are humble. When it comes to salvation, why do you need to come to Christ in humility (66:2)? Why do you need to tremble at God's word?

### **2 Thessalonians 1**

How is the judgment that you deserve described in vv.5-9? What is the only way to avoid this judgment?

# Jeremiah

## Author and Date

- Written by Jeremiah during his ministry, approximately 627 to 570 b.c.
- Jeremiah served in two vocations during his lifetime: priest and prophet. His hometown was the small village of Anathoth (1:1). He never married. God instructed him to use his celibacy as an object lesson about the hopelessness of days to come for Judah (16:1–4).

## Background and Setting

- Jeremiah's life was so filled with sorrow and conflict that he has long been known as the "weeping prophet."
- Anyone serious about knowing what life was like for a prophet must read Jeremiah's writing. His books are autobiographical in more intimate ways than in any other prophet. He not only includes the details of his ministry and the responses he received, but he also recounts the difficulties he faced and the rejection and anger he felt. Jeremiah's name means "Jehovah throws," a term used to refer to laying a foundation. It can also mean "Jehovah establishes, appoints, or sends."
- Second Kings 22–25 and 2 Chronicles 34–36 describe the background details of Jeremiah's times. His messages paint word pictures of 1) his people's sin; 2) the invader God would send; 3) the rigors of siege; 4) the horrors of destruction. For forty years Jeremiah faithfully preached an unwelcome message of impending judgment. During that time, five different kings reigned in Judah: Josiah (640–609 b.c.), Jehoahaz (609 b.c.), Jehoiakim (609–598 b.c.), Jehoiachin (598–597 b.c.), and Zedekiah (597–586 b.c.).
- Flagrant idol worship was the primary symptom of the desperate spiritual condition of Judah in Jeremiah's day. Even the horrific practice of child sacrifice, introduced by King Ahaz almost a hundred years earlier and temporarily halted under King Hezekiah, was again part of the religious life of Judah. King Josiah's reforms reached their apex in 622 b.c. with the abolishment of the worst of these practices, but the deadly cancer of sin simply hid in a temporary remission and flourished again after the shallow revival. Jeremiah's messages aimed at many of the ongoing symptoms of moral and spiritual disease: religious insincerity, dishonesty, adultery, injustice, tyranny against the helpless, and slander. Jeremiah's writing did little more than document the headlong rush of his people toward judgment.
- Momentous events on the world stage occurred in Jeremiah's day. Assyria saw its power wane. By 612 b.c., Assyria's seemingly invincible capital, Nineveh, was destroyed. The rising Babylonian empire under Nabopolassar (625–605 b.c.) established its military dominance with victories over Assyria (612 b.c.), Egypt (609–605 b.c.), and Israel (605 b.c.—Daniel 1; 597 b.c.—2 Kings 24:10–16; and 586 b.c.—Jeremiah 39; 40; 52).
- Jeremiah was rarely a lone voice of prophecy. His ministry followed the ringing warnings of Joel and Micah. Jeremiah's early contemporaries were Habakkuk and Zephaniah. In Jeremiah's later years, Ezekiel and Daniel also ministered for God to His scattered people.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 111–112.

# 1 Timothy

## Author and Date

- Written by Paul, about a.d. 62 to 64

## Background and Setting

- First Timothy provides the basis for church organization.
- The Apostle Paul surrounded himself with some amazing friends. Paul, Timothy, Luke, Mark, Titus, and Philemon together wrote or received sixteen out of twenty-seven books in the New Testament. Three of his friends Paul called “sons in the faith”—Timothy, Titus, and Onesimus. Paul honored his friends by writing them powerful letters.
- Timothy was from Lystra (Acts 16:1–3), a city in the Roman province of Galatia. Paul had led Timothy to Christ (1:2, 18; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 2 Timothy 1:2), undoubtedly during his ministry in Lystra on his first missionary journey (Acts 14:6–23). Timothy would be Paul’s disciple, friend, and colaborer for the rest of the apostle’s life, ministering with him in Berea (Acts 17:4), Athens (Acts 17:15), and Corinth (Acts 18:5; 2 Corinthians 1:19), and accompanying him on his trip to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4). He was with Paul in his first Roman imprisonment, and he went to Philippi (Philippians 2:19–23) after Paul’s release. In addition, Paul’s epistles frequently mention Timothy (Romans 16:21; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; Philemon 1). Paul often would send Timothy to churches as his representative (1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10; Philippians 2:19; 1 Thessalonians 3:2); thus this letter finds him on another assignment, serving as pastor of the church at Ephesus (1:3).
- After being released from his first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28:30), Paul revisited several of the cities in which he had previously ministered, including Ephesus. He left Timothy in Ephesus to deal with problems that had arisen in the church there, such as false doctrine (1:3–7; 4:1–3; 6:3–5), disorder in worship (2:1–15), the lack of qualified leaders (3:1–14), and materialism (6:6–19). Paul continued on to Macedonia, from where he wrote Timothy this letter to help him carry out his task in the church (3:14–15).<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 268–269.

**Week 42: October 19-25**

## **October 19**

### **Jeremiah 1-2**

God calls Jeremiah to be a prophet to declare the coming judgment of God and to offer repentance to his people. According to chapter 2, how was Israel sinning against their God?

### **2 Thessalonians 2**

Why do Christians need to be comforted and encouraged when they are in times of opposition? Who is someone you can encourage this week?

## **October 20**

### **Jeremiah 3-4**

God describes his relationship with his people as a marriage. God is the bridegroom and his people are the bride. But, his people were unfaithful to him. How were God's people unfaithful to him?

### **2 Thessalonians 3**

What is God teaching you in v.10? Why does God say it is a good and godly thing to work? What kind of work can you do this week?

## **October 21**

### **Jeremiah 5-6**

How do the people of Jerusalem refuse to repent? How does God respond to their rejection of him?



### **1 Timothy 1**

Paul writes to Timothy and tells him to teach the gospel of Christ. He testifies to how God saved him (vv.12-17). What do you learn about God's attributes in these verses? How does the gospel of Christ demonstrate God's patience? (cf. Rom. 2:4)

### **October 22**

#### **Jeremiah 7-8**

How do you see God being serious about sin in these chapters?

### **1 Timothy 2**

God calls you to pray "*for all people*" (v.1). This includes everyone, from your government officials to your parents. Make a list of 10 people you need to pray for and what you will pray for. Now take some time to pray for them.

### **October 23**

#### **Jeremiah 9-10**

What does 10:23-24 teach you about what should be most important to you? Why is it a great thing to know God in a personal way?

### **1 Timothy 3**

Paul gives qualifications for pastors in the church. Yet, these qualifications are not just for pastors because everyone is to follow the example of the leaders in the church. Which of these qualifications do you need to grow in?

### **October 24**

#### **Jeremiah 11-13**

How is the heart of people described in these chapters? What is the connection between evil hearts and evil actions?

### **1 Timothy 4**

What is the value of “*training yourself in godliness*” (vv.7-8)? What are ways you can train today? How do you need to set an example for others (v.12)?

### **October 25**

#### **Jeremiah 14-16**

How do you see God’s punishment in these chapters?

### **1 Timothy 5**

Why should you honor your pastors? What can you do to show them honor?

## 2 Timothy

### Author and Date

- Written by Paul, about a.d. 66 to 67
- Paul's authorship is claimed by the first word in the first verse of this letter. Scripture and tradition attest that Paul wrote 2 Timothy, the last of his inspired letters, shortly before his martyrdom in about a.d. 66–67.

### Background and Setting

- Second Timothy represents the last will and testament of a great apostle of the gospel.
- Last words often carry special significance. The Apostle Paul saw that the end of life was near, so he wrote to share some final thoughts with his “son in the faith,” Timothy. Paul's words take the form of a powerful, Spirit-inspired last will and testament. The letter also expresses a tribute to the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom Paul could say, “I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day” (2 Timothy 1:12).
- Paul was released from his first Roman imprisonment for a short period of ministry. During that time, he wrote the epistles 1 Timothy and Titus. By the time he wrote this letter, however, he was imprisoned again (1:16; 2:9). His rearrest probably occurred during Nero's persecution of Christians. Unlike Paul's confident hope of release during his earlier imprisonment (Philippians 1:19, 25–26; 2:24; Philemon 22), this time he had no such hopes (4:6–8). In his first imprisonment in Rome (about a.d. 60–62), before Nero began aggressively persecuting believers (a.d. 64), Paul was only under house arrest and enjoyed much interaction and ministry with people (Acts 28:16–31). Five or six years later when he wrote 2 Timothy (about a.d. 66–67), however, the apostle was in a cold cell (4:13), in chains (2:9), and with no hope of deliverance (4:6). Fearful of their own persecution, nearly all those close to Paul had abandoned him (1:15; 4:9–12, 16). So facing imminent execution, Paul wrote to Timothy, urging him to hurry to Rome for one last visit (4:9, 21). History does not report whether Timothy made it there before Paul's death. According to tradition, Paul remained in Roman custody until he suffered the martyrdom that he had foreseen (4:6).
- In this letter, Paul, aware that the end was near, passed the mantle of ministry to Timothy (2:2). The older disciple challenged the younger one in the following areas: He exhorted Timothy 1) to continue to be faithful in his duties (1:6); 2) to hold on to sound doctrine (1:13–14); 3) to avoid error (2:15–18); 4) to accept persecution for the gospel (2:3–4; 3:10–12); and 5) to put his confidence in the Scripture and to preach it relentlessly (3:15–4:5).<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 275–276.

# Titus

## Author and Date

- Written by Paul, around a.d. 62 to 64
- The letter to Titus (along with 1 and 2 Timothy) is the third of the Pastoral Epistles. Authorship by the Apostle Paul (1:1) is essentially un-contested. Paul wrote Titus sometime between a.d. 62–64 while he ministered in Macedonia between his first and second Roman imprisonments.

## Background and Setting

- In a rapidly darkening world, Paul encouraged Titus to teach Christians to live faithfully for Christ.
- The Apostle Paul often extended his ministry by sending letters. He also sent people. Titus served as one of Paul's trusted messengers. He went where Paul could not go. When Paul was imprisoned, men like Titus and Timothy carried on his ministry. Even when he was free, Paul found that the work far exceeded his personal reach. By using Titus, Paul expanded his impact. Paul then used this letter to instruct and encourage Titus on his mission for the gospel.
- Although Titus is not mentioned by name in the Book of Acts, it seems probable that he, a Gentile (Galatians 2:3), was led to faith in Christ by Paul (1:4) either before or during the apostle's first missionary journey. Titus then accompanied Paul and Barnabas to the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15; Galatians 2:1–5), where he witnessed the debate over the way in which new Gentile believers would be treated and welcomed into the church. As a Gentile, Titus would have been particularly sensitive to the impact of the Judaizers, false teachers in the church, who among other things insisted that all Christians, Gentiles as well as Jews, were bound by the Mosaic Law.
- Titus traveled with Paul during the third missionary journey, making his presence felt, especially in Corinth. Paul later mentioned him nine times in 2 Corinthians (2:13; 7:6, 13–14; 8:6, 16, 23; 12:18). Paul considered Titus to be a “brother” (2 Corinthians 2:13), “my partner and fellow worker” (2 Corinthians 8:23), and “a true son” (Titus 1:4).
- Later, Titus ministered for a while with Paul on the island of Crete and was left behind to continue and strengthen the work (1:5), in much the same way as when Paul left Timothy in Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3). Paul indicated that he intended to send Artemas or Tychicus (3:12) to relieve Titus in the ministry on Crete. The apostle wanted Titus to join him in Nicopolis, in the Grecian province of Achaia, for the winter months (3:12). Paul's letter informed Titus of the upcoming plans and offered him direction for his ongoing ministry in Crete.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 282–283.

**Week 43: October 26 - November 1**

## **October 26**

### **Jeremiah 17-19**

How does your heart deceive you (17:9)? What is a time in your life that your heart has deceived you?

### **1 Timothy 6**

Why is it sinful to love money and desire to be rich? How do you need to be content in your life right now?

## **October 27**

### **Jeremiah 20-22**

How is Jeremiah opposed in chapter 20? What is the message that Jeremiah gives to the king and the people in chapter 21?

### **2 Timothy 1**

Paul tells Timothy to not be ashamed of God and his people when persecution comes around. According to this chapter, why should you be unashamed of God and other Christians?

## **October 28**

### **Jeremiah 23-24**

How did the prophets in Jerusalem sin against God? How did God respond to their sin?

## **2 Timothy 2**

Paul gives 3 pictures of what it looks like to follow Christ (vv.3-6) What are those 3 pictures? Why do Christians suffer like soldiers? Soldiers are supposed to be focused and not easily distracted. What are ways you get distracted from following Christ?

## **October 29**

### **Jeremiah 25-26**

Why is God wrathful in chapter 25? Why do you need to know that God is a God who punishes sin?

## **2 Timothy 3**

What is the promise that God gives to Christians in v.12? Why is it necessary for Christians to suffer and be persecuted? What are the benefits of the Bible found in vv.16-17?

## **October 30**

### **Jeremiah 27-28**

Who was the foreign nation that was going to enslave Judah? Who was the king of this nation?

## **2 Timothy 4**

Paul ends his last letter by telling Timothy to preach the word of God no matter what. What do sinful people want to hear (vv.3-4)? Who is someone in your life that you need to preach the gospel to?

## **October 31**

### **Jeremiah 29-30**

What are God's promises to Israel and Judah found in chapter 30?

## **Titus 1**

Paul writes to Titus to call pastors and anyone who calls themselves a Christian to live distinctly. How do the qualifications found in this chapter make Christians stand out from the world? Why is it sinful to *"profess to know God, but to deny him by your works"* (v.16)?

## **November 1**

### **Jeremiah 31-32**

God makes a new covenant with his people meaning that he was going to relate to them differently. This new covenant includes Jewish and Gentile believers if they place their trust in Christ. What are the aspects of the new covenant found in 31:33-34?

## **Titus 2**

Both young women and young men are called to be "self-controlled" (vv.4-6). What is the danger of living a life of a lack of self-control? How do you lack in this area? Take some time to pray to God about this.



## Philemon

### Author and Date

- Written by Paul while in prison, about a.d. 60 to 62
- This letter to Philemon, along with the epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, completes the group called the Prison Epistles

### Background and Setting

- Paul wrote a reference letter for a runaway slave.
- Philemon owned a slave who ran away. His slave, Onesimus, eventually met the Apostle Paul and became a Christian. Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon with this letter of explanation. The letter provides an insightful look into the realities of slavery in the ancient world and shows how Christ elevated the value of a slave from being property to being “a beloved brother” (verse 16).
- Philemon was a prominent member of the Colossian church. He had been saved under Paul’s ministry, probably in Ephesus (verse 19). Wealthy enough to have a large house (verse 2), Philemon also owned at least one slave, a man named Onesimus.
- Onesimus was not a believer when he stole money (verse 18) from Philemon and ran away. Like thousands of other runaway slaves, Onesimus fled to Rome, seeking to lose himself in the imperial city’s teeming population. Through circumstances not recorded in Scripture, Onesimus met Paul in Rome and became a Christian.
- The apostle grew to love the runaway slave (verses 12, 16) and considered keeping Onesimus with him in Rome (verses 11, 13). But by stealing and running away from Philemon, Onesimus had broken Roman law and defrauded his master. Paul knew those issues had to be resolved, and he decided to send Onesimus back to Colosse. It was too hazardous for him to make the trip alone (because of the danger of slave-catchers), so Paul sent him back with Tychicus. The two of them carried Paul’s letters to Philemon and the church at Colosse (Colossians 4:7–9). Paul’s beautiful epistle to Philemon urged the master to forgive the slave and welcome him back into service as a brother in Christ (verses 15–17).<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 287–288.

# Hebrews

## Author and Date

- Written by an unknown author, around a.d. 67 to 69

## Background and Setting

- Hebrews brings the richness of the Old Testament background into the world of the New Testament church.
- All thirty-nine books of the Old Testament were originally given to the Jews. Only one New Testament book was aimed specifically at their needs. That single epistle was Hebrews. This certainly does not mean that God had forgotten the Jews. Other books, like Matthew, Romans, and Galatians have Jewish believers much in mind. All the New Testament books with the exception of Luke and Acts were given by the Holy Spirit's inspiration through Jews.
- Extensive use of the Old Testament, an emphasis on the Levitical priesthood and on sacrifices, as well as the absence of any reference to the Gentiles, support the conclusion that a community of Hebrews was the original recipient of the epistle. Although these Jews were primarily converts to Christ, probably a number of unbelievers were in their midst who were attracted by various degrees to the message of salvation but who had not yet made a full commitment of faith in Christ.
- The contents of the epistle make it clear that this community of Hebrews was facing the possibility of intensified persecution (10:32–39; 12:4). Under this pressure, the Hebrews were tempted to cast aside any identification with Christ. They may have considered demoting Christ from God's Son to a mere angel. Others had certainly done so. These kinds of doctrinal aberrations would explain the emphasis in Hebrews on the superiority of Christ over angels.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 291-292.

**Week 44: November 2-8**

## **November 2**

### **Jeremiah 33-35**

God promises to send a perfectly righteous king to sit on David's throne one day (33:14-18). This righteous king is Jesus Christ. How do you know this is talking about Jesus Christ?

### **Titus 3**

Paul explains what happens when a person gets saved and transformed by God (vv.3-8). Where in this passage do you see who the person was before Christ? What does God do when he saves a person (vv.4-7)? What should come after someone is saved by God (v.8)?

## **November 3**

### **Jeremiah 36-37**

How is God's word rejected in these chapters? Why do people reject God's word?

### **Philemon**

What did Onesimus do to Philemon? What is Philemon called to do? Why must you forgive others?

## **November 4**

### **Jeremiah 38-39**

What happens to the city of Jerusalem in chapter 39? What happens to King Zedekiah in chapter 39? How does this show God keeping his promises?

## **Hebrews 1**

The author of Hebrews was writing to Christians who wanted to go back to the old Judaistic system. He writes so that they would see that Jesus is better than the Jewish system or anything else. What are all the ways Jesus is described in vv.1-4? According to this chapter, why is Jesus better than angels?

## **November 5**

### **Jeremiah 40-42**

What is God's command to the people in chapter 42? The people were struggling to obey God's word. How are you struggling to obey God in your life right now?

## **Hebrews 2**

According to vv.14-18, why did Jesus have to become a human when he came to earth? According to vv.14-15, what did Jesus accomplish?

## **November 6**

### **Jeremiah 43-45**

How did the people of Israel not listen to God by going down to Egypt? How did the people continue their sin in Egypt?

### **Hebrews 3**

According to this chapter, what are the dangers of having a hardened heart? According to v.13, why do you need to exhort one of your friends this week? Who is someone who needs to be exhorted in your life so that they do not give into the lie of sin?

### **November 7**

#### **Jeremiah 46-48**

How does God describe judgment on Egypt (ch.46)? How does God describe judgment on the Philistines (ch.47)? How does God describe judgment on Moab (ch.48)?

### **Hebrews 4**

How does the Bible act like a sword when you read it (v.12)? Why do you need to remember today that God knows everything about you (v.13)? According to vv.14-16, why should you be encouraged to pray?

### **November 8**

#### **Jeremiah 49-50**

How does God describe judgment on Ammon (ch.49)? How does God describe judgment on Babylon (ch.50)?

### **Hebrews 5**

Jesus serves as the high priest for Christians. A high priest was someone who represented the people to God. Why does Jesus need to represent you? According to vv.11-14, why do you need to work hard in studying the Bible? What's a way you need to grow in studying the Bible?

## Lamentations

### Author and Date

- Written by Jeremiah, approximately 586 b.c.
- The author of Lamentations is not named within the book, but internal and external indicators, such as vocabulary and style, point to Jeremiah. References to Jeremiah himself (Jeremiah 7:29; 2 Chronicles 35:25) highlight his tendency to lament over events around him. Jeremiah wrote Lamentations as an anguished eyewitness account of the shameful destruction of Jerusalem. It is likely that Jeremiah saw the destruction of the walls, towers, homes, palace, and temple. He wrote with these painful scenes fresh on his mind.

### Background and Setting

- Sometimes life just makes you want to scream. It can be a shout of victory, a cry of defeat, or a moan of agony, but it expresses the deepest emotions of your soul. Jeremiah lived life with passion. He was seldom passive and often angry. No other book in the Old Testament contains the kind of raw grief that gives this book its name—Lamentations. By allowing us into his pain and sorrow, Jeremiah teaches believers how to deal with suffering.
- Eight hundred years before the Fall of Jerusalem, Joshua predicted the tragedy (Joshua 23:15, 16). Jeremiah had invested forty years in warning his people of coming judgment. Both he and his message had been rejected. Still, when the predicted calamities fell on the disbelieving people, Jeremiah responded with sorrow and compassion. He took no pleasure in the exact confirmation of his prophecies.
- Jeremiah recorded his predictions about the Fall of Jerusalem in the first twenty-nine chapters of the book that bears his name. In Lamentations, Jeremiah provided the details of the bitter suffering and heartbreak that he and others felt over Jerusalem devastation. The defeat and destruction of Jerusalem represented a critical moment in the story of God's dealings with Israel and the world. The facts of the tragedy are recorded in four separate Old Testament passages: 2 Kings 25; Jeremiah 39:1–11; 52; and 2 Chronicles 36:11–21.<sup>41</sup>

## Ezekiel

### Author and Date

- Written by Ezekiel during his ministry, approximately 593 to 570 b.c.
- Like his contemporary Daniel, Ezekiel was born in Judah but died in Babylon. He was exiled from Judah in 597 b.c. There he waited with his fellow exiles during the final years of Jerusalem. Five years after his captivity, Ezekiel received God's call to be a prophet to the exiles. His ministry lasted twenty-two years. This book that bears his name was probably written throughout his years as a prophet. The last prophecy with a date (29:17) was delivered in 572 or 571 b.c., so the book was completed sometime after that date.

### Background and Setting

- Neither the author nor his book are mentioned anywhere else in Scripture.

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<sup>41</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 117–118.

- Ezekiel stands like a lonely pillar in the center of the Bible. His name means “strengthened by God.” The location and the loneliness that surrounded his ministry required the truth of his name. Ezekiel used vivid and memorable visions, prophecies, parables, signs, and symbols to proclaim and dramatize the message of God to His exiled people. Those who listened to Ezekiel were also strengthened by God.
- The Babylonian Empire ruled the world during Ezekiel’s lifetime. After defeating the other world powers (Assyria, 612–605 b.c., and Egypt, 605 b.c.), Nebuchadnezzar turned his attention toward lesser kingdoms. The defeat of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem came in three stages. The first occurred in 605 b.c. when the Babylonians besieged Jerusalem and deported a large group of captives, including Daniel, to Babylon. In 598 b.c. Nebuchadnezzar again besieged Jerusalem. The defeat of the city led to a deportation of ten thousand more captives, including Ezekiel, in 597 b.c. A decade later, the Babylonians again invaded Judah and completely destroyed Jerusalem. The last group of survivors was shipped to Babylon in 586 b.c.
- The background of Ezekiel’s ministry includes religious, domestic, and prophetic factors. Born during King Josiah’s reign, Ezekiel experienced the real but short-lived effects of the spiritual revival that swept the land. Josiah’s death in 609 b.c. set the stage for Judah to plunge headlong into a final abyss of sin. The last years (609–586 b.c.) saw four kings rise and fall in Judah (Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah). Ezekiel witnessed the tragedy of superficial religion.
- Once in Babylon, life went on for Ezekiel and the other captives more as immigrants than as prisoners of war. They were allowed to farm tracts of land, and they experienced other favorable conditions. Ezekiel owned his own home (3:24; 20:1). There were strong domestic temptations to minimize the tragedy of the loss of the Promised Land.
- On the prophetic front, Ezekiel witnessed the work of false prophets who assured the people that God would never allow Jerusalem to fall completely and that they would soon be returned to Judah. They said this despite abundant prophetic evidence to the contrary. Ezekiel’s first prophecies confronted the people’s false hopes. Jerusalem would be destroyed, and their exile would be long. Ezekiel received word in 586 b.c. that Jerusalem had indeed fallen. His message then changed to offer hope beyond the Exile, when Israel would be restored to her homeland, and the final blessings of the messianic kingdom would follow.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 121–122.



**Week 45: November 9-15**

## **November 9**

### **Jeremiah 51-52**

Why was God going to judge Babylon? How does God describe himself in chapter 51?

## **Hebrews 6**

According to vv.13-20, why can you trust God's promises? Why is it a good thing that God cannot lie and cannot change?

## **November 10**

### **Lamentations 1-2**

How do you see the consequences of sin in the book of Lamentations? Why was God just to punish his people? What does this teach you about God's perfect justice?

## **Hebrews 7**

Jesus intercedes for those who place their trust in him and repent of their sins. To intercede is to act on behalf of another person. Why do you need Jesus to intercede for you when it comes to salvation?

## **November 11**

### **Lamentations 3-5**

God says that his "*steadfast love never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning*" (3:22-23). How has God loyally loved you in your life? How has God demonstrated steadfast love to you today?

**Hebrews 8**

How does the Old Covenant with offerings and sacrifices point forward to the work of Jesus Christ in the New Covenant? What does it mean that Jesus was a sacrifice?

**November 12****Ezekiel 1-3**

God gives Ezekiel visions to show his holiness and glory. What does God tell Ezekiel in chapter 2? How is Ezekiel a watchman for Israel?

**Hebrews 9**

For your sins to be forgiven you need to have bloodshed on your behalf (v.22). Why is Jesus' sacrifice upon the cross unique from the OT sacrifices?

**November 13****Ezekiel 4-6**

What does Jeremiah do in chapter 4? What was this illustration showing? What does Jeremiah do in chapter 5? What was this illustration showing?

**Hebrews 10:1-23**

Why is it important to know that Jesus' sacrifice was once and for all and does not have to happen ever again? Why do you need Jesus to be your sacrifice?

**November 14****Ezekiel 7-9**

What is God's attribute that you see most clearly in chapter 7? According to chapters 8 and 9, why is God just to feel and act this way?

**Hebrews 10:24-39**

What is God's warning to those who hear God's saving message and reject it (vv.26-28)?

**November 15****Ezekiel 10-12**

What is the tragic thing that happens in chapter 10? What is the hope God gives his people found in 11:19-20? What does Jeremiah do in chapter 12? What was the point of this illustration?

**Hebrews 11:1-19**

In your own words, write down a definition of biblical faith. How did Noah demonstrate faith in God? How did Abraham demonstrate faith in God?

# James

## Author and Date

- Written by James, the half brother of Jesus, between a.d. 44 to 49

## Background and Setting

- James provided a hands-on, practical manual of the Christian faith.
- Jesus had four half brothers—James, Joses, Judas, and Simon. The Bible makes it clear that after Jesus' miraculous birth, Mary and Joseph had other children (Mark 6:3). Eventually, Judas (whom we know as Jude) and James became believers in their brother Jesus as Lord. But neither James (Mark 6:3) nor Jude (Matthew 13:55) was an early follower. At first, James rejected Jesus as Messiah (John 7:5), but he later believed (1 Corinthians 15:7). He became one of the leaders in the Jerusalem church and authored a very practical handbook of Christian living that bears his name.
- The recipients of this letter were Jewish believers who were scattered (1:1), possibly as a result of Stephen's martyrdom (Acts 7; a.d. 31–34), but more likely due to the persecution under Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12; about a.d. 44). Fifteen times the author refers to his audience as "brethren", which was a common epithet among the first-century Jews. Not surprisingly, then, James displays a distinct Jewish flavor in style and content. His letter contains more than forty allusions to the Old Testament and more than twenty to the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7).<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 298–299.

**Week 46: November 16-22**

## **November 16**

### **Ezekiel 13-15**

How were the false prophets twisting the truth in chapter 13? What was the sin of the elders in chapter 14?

### **Hebrews 11:20-40**

How did Moses demonstrate faith in God? How is sin a "*fleeting pleasure*" (v.25)? What is a sin you are struggling with this week? Why do you need to remember that sin is fleeting and costly?

## **November 17**

### **Ezekiel 16**

What is the picture God uses to show Israel their sin? What are the things God wants Israel to see through this picture? What does God promise in vv.59-63? What does this teach you about God?

### **Hebrews 12**

Why does God discipline his children? How is God's discipline a good thing for Christians?

## **November 18**

### **Ezekiel 17-19**

According to chapter 18, why should you personally be judged for your sins? What is the good news that God gives to you in 18:25-32?

### **Hebrews 13**

God calls you to be *“free from love of money and be content with what you have”* (v.5). How have you been discontent in your life? Why should you be content with what you have?

### **November 19**

#### **Ezekiel 20-21**

How does God respond to the elders' requests? Why does he respond this way? How does God demonstrate his judgment in chapter 21?

### **James 1**

Why does God put trials in the lives of Christians? Why can Christians be joyful when they face trials? God wants you to hear his word and apply it to your life. Why is it foolish to hear and not do? How can you be a better “doer” of God’s word?

### **November 20**

#### **Ezekiel 22-23**

What is the picture God gives in chapter 23? What are the truths God is communicating to his people in this description?



## **James 2**

Why is it sinful for you to treat others with partiality? How will you go out of your way to love someone today?

## **November 21**

### **Ezekiel 24-26**

What did God say would happen to Jerusalem? What are all the nations that God promises to judge? Why is God completely just to judge them?

## **James 3**

How is your tongue a powerful member of your body? How have you sinned with your words this week? How can you use your words for good today?

## **November 22**

### **Ezekiel 27-28**

Why does God tell Ezekiel to sing a lament (sad song) about Tyre?

## **James 4**

According to vv.3-5, what is the result of being friends with the world? According to vv.6-10, what is the result of being friends with God? Why should you not boast about tomorrow?

# 1 Peter

## Author and Date

- Written by Peter about a.d. 64 to 65

## Background and Setting

- The New Testament letter with the widest specific geographic address (1 Peter 1:1).
- Among the disciples of Jesus, Peter remains the most recognizable name. He was probably the first of those Jesus specifically called to follow Him (Mark 1:16–17). Jesus' last recorded words to Peter had the same theme, "You follow Me" (John 21:22). Along the way, Christ replaced his name, Simon, with Peter (Greek) or Cephas (Aramaic), both meaning "stone" or "rock."
- The Lord clearly singled out Peter for special lessons throughout the Gospels. He was the spokesman for the twelve, articulating their thoughts and questions as well as his own. He was probably the primary source for Mark's gospel. Eventually, he wrote two canonical (inspired) letters himself, of which this is the first.
- Peter's audience of believers was facing increasing signs of persecution throughout the Roman Empire. Conditions were ripe for the tactics used by Nero to deflect blame for the burning of Rome from himself to the Christians. Once Nero spread the word that Christians had set the fires, the accusation stuck because the Christians were already hated as those who associated with Jews and were hostile to Roman culture. The vicious persecution that ensued touched the far corners of the empire, reaching the very places mentioned by Peter's salutation (1:1).
- The general addressees of the letter and the ambiguous location of the writer (Babylon—5:13) underscore the tension of the times. Believers established underground networks that would have directed Peter's letter and his envoy to the necessary places. It is likely that Babylon was an alias for Rome. By the way he identified his location, Peter was protecting his own companions. Nevertheless, the apostle realized the scattered and battered Christians needed spiritual strengthening because of the sufferings. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Peter wrote this epistle to encourage them.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 303-304.

## 2 Peter

### Author and Date

- Written by Peter, about a.d. 67 to 68

### Background and Setting

- Second Peter was the last letter from the leader of the apostles.
- Peter's final written message has much of the warmth, concern, and passion that fills the pages of Paul's final letter (2 Timothy). These great men of the faith knew their days were numbered. Peter was keenly aware of the warfare between good and evil that would outlast his life (1:12–15). He wanted to leave a strong dose of encouragement for those believers who would remain. The hope of Christ's coming consistently shines through in the background of his letter. Among his closing thoughts were these words: "Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless" (3:14).
- Since writing and sending his first letter, Peter had become increasingly concerned about false teachers who were infiltrating the churches in Asia Minor. Though these false teachers had already caused trouble, Peter expected that their heretical doctrines and immoral lifestyles would result in more damage in the future. Thus Peter, in an almost last will and testament (1:13–15), wrote to warn the beloved believers in Christ about the doctrinal dangers they would face. Although Peter mentioned no specific recipients in the salutation of the letter, later reference to his earlier letter (3:2) indicates he was writing to the same people who had received his earlier letter.
- Peter does not explicitly say where he was when he wrote this letter, as he does in 1 Peter (1 Peter 5:13). But the consensus seems to be that he wrote this letter from prison in Rome, where he was facing imminent death. Shortly after writing this letter, Peter was martyred, according to reliable tradition, by being crucified upside down.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 309-310.

**Week 47: November 23-29**

## **November 23**

### **Ezekiel 29-31**

How was Egypt going to be punished by God?

## **James 5**

How should thinking about the coming of the Lord change the way you live today? God calls you to keep your word and be faithful. How do you specifically need to keep your word this week?

## **November 24**

### **Ezekiel 32-33**

How do you see God's mercy and grace to sinners in 33:10-20? What is the offer that God gives to you?

## **1 Peter 1**

What is the living hope that God offers to you? What is the connection between the living hope that God offers and Jesus' resurrection? How will you live in holiness today?

## **November 24**

### **Ezekiel 32-33**

How do you see God's mercy and grace to sinners in 33:10-20? What is the offer God gives to you?

### **1 Peter 1**

What is the living hope that God offers to you? What is the connection between the living hope that God offers and Jesus' resurrection? How will you live in holiness today?

## **November 25**

### **Ezekiel 34-35**

How were the shepherds of Israel failing? How does God show himself to be the great shepherd to his people? Where else in the Bible does God say he is the shepherd of his people?

### **1 Peter 2**

God says that there are passions within you that are waging war on your soul. What are some of your sinful desires that lead you to sin? How is Jesus the shepherd of Christians?

## **November 26**

### **Ezekiel 36-37**

God explains the New Covenant that is now experienced in the lives of Christians where God relates to his people in a new way. Why do you need a new heart to obey and follow God? What does God provide to Christians? Why do you need the Holy Spirit to live in you?

### **1 Peter 3**

Why is it important for you to be able to defend Christianity (vv.14-15)? According to vv.14-15, how should you evangelize and defend your faith?

## **November 27**

### **Ezekiel 38-39**

What happens to Gog and Magog? How do you see God being sovereign in these chapters?

### **1 Peter 4**

How is it loving to cover sins committed against you (v.8)? How do you need to show love today? Why does God say you should rejoice when you are suffering for the sake of Christ (vv.12-14)?

## **November 28**

### **Ezekiel 40**

How does God describe the New Temple?

### **1 Peter 5**

God wants you to pray to him because he cares for you (v.7). What are things you need to pray for today? Pray about this now. Why do you need to pray about your temptations to sin today? Pray about this now.

## **November 29**

### **Ezekiel 41-42**

How does God describe the New Temple?

## **2 Peter 1**

Why do Christians need to know that God has already granted them all that is needed to live the Christian life (v.3)? What are God's "*very great promises*" found in vv.10-11?



# Daniel

## Author and Date

- Written by Daniel during his ministry, before 530 b.c.
- Several internal and external references indicate that Daniel wrote this book (8:15, 27; 9:2; 10:2, 7; 12:4–5; Ezekiel 14:14, 20; 28:3; Matthew 24:15). The name Daniel means “God is my Judge.”
- Daniel, a teenager from a noble Jewish family, was captured and taken from Israel to Babylon. Daniel made the most of his exile, successfully exalting God by his integrity and service. He quickly rose to the role of statesman by official royal appointment and served as an advisor to kings and a prophet of God in two world empires (Babylonian, 2:48; and Medo-Persian, 6:1–2).

## Background and Setting

- What Revelation is to the New Testament prophetically and apocalyptically, Daniel is to the Old Testament.
- Long before he faced down a den of lions, Daniel demonstrated courage, wisdom, and integrity. He faced the loss of family and homeland with youthful dignity. He never used outside pressure or the humiliation of slavery to excuse a loss of personal standards. He served God and king without getting the two confused. When he emerged unscathed from the lions’ den, the king knew Daniel had received God’s protection. The king understood Daniel’s ultimate loyalty. Therefore, Daniel left a mark on history because he was a man of God.
- The Book of Daniel opens in the heat and humiliation of Nebuchadnezzar’s siege of Jerusalem in 605 b.c. With Israel’s defeat, treasures from the temple and children from the best families were deported to Babylon. Among them were Daniel and three friends. Daniel’s book continues to record the eventual demise of Babylon and the rise of the Medo-Persian Empire.
- With the exception of the opening verses, the events recorded by Daniel occurred in Babylon. The captivity of the people of Judah had been prophesied by generations of God’s servants. The group that included Daniel was the first of three major deportations from Judah to Babylon. The other two occurred in 597 b.c. and 586 b.c. The defeat came in stages. Eventually, Jerusalem and the beloved temple were destroyed. Daniel provides part of the description of life during the exile years.
- Daniel was probably born during the reign of the last righteous king of Judah, Josiah (about 641–609 b.c.). He was captured following King Jehoiakim’s defeat. He was old enough to remember his homeland. Writing seventy years later, Daniel’s passion for Judah, particularly the temple in Jerusalem, still flowed from his pen.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 127-128.

# 1 John

## Author and Date

- Written by John in about a.d. 90 to 95

## Background and Setting

- First John serves like a cover letter for the Gospel of John, filled with practical ways to live out the Christian life that begins by believing in Jesus.
- The Apostle John made a significant contribution to the New Testament with five books (Gospel of John, 1, 2, and 3 John, and Revelation). His writing represents a wider variety than that of any of the other authors. He composed a gospel, three letters, and a lengthy prophetic work.
- Although he was advanced in age when he penned this epistle, John was still actively ministering to churches in and around Ephesus in Asia Minor. By then, he was the sole remaining apostolic survivor who had had an intimate, eyewitness association with Jesus throughout His earthly ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension. The church fathers indicate that John eventually settled in Ephesus. There he gave oversight to many churches, conducted an extensive evangelistic program, and wrote much of his contribution to the New Testament. One church father (Papias), who had direct contact with John, described him as a “living and abiding voice.” As the last remaining apostle, John’s testimony was highly authoritative among Christians at the end of the first century.
- Ephesus (Acts 19:10) lay within the intellectual center of Asia Minor. As predicted years before by the Apostle Paul (Acts 20:28–31), false teachers had arisen from within the church’s own ranks. These leaders, saturated with the prevailing climate of philosophical trends, began infecting the church with false doctrine, perverting fundamental apostolic teaching. These false teachers advocated new ideas that eventually became known as “Gnosticism” (from the Greek word for “knowledge”). Second only to the battle over the influence of legalistic Judaism in the early church, Gnosticism was the most dangerous heresy that threatened the church during the first three centuries. Most likely, John was combating the early strains of that virulent heresy. Since even the primitive forms of this false teaching were spiritually lethal, John took action. With gentleness and love, but with unquestionable apostolic authority, he sent this letter to churches in his sphere of influence to stem this spreading plague of false doctrine.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 316–317.

**Week 48: November 30 - December 6**

## **November 30**

### **Ezekiel 43-44**

Why is it significant that the glory of the Lord will one day fill the temple?

## **2 Peter 2**

What does God say about false teachers in this passage? How should you respond to false teaching?

## **Ezekiel 47-48**

How is the future temple described in chapter 47? What kind of thoughts and feelings did you have as you read the book of Ezekiel?

## **1 John 1**

According to vv.5-10, why is it important to be honest about your sin to God? How does God maintain being a just God when he forgives sin? Why do you need to be forgiven?

## **December 3**

### **Daniel 1-2**

Daniel and his friends are taken off into exile in the land of Babylon. How did Daniel show his loyalty to God in chapter 1? What can you resolve to not do today? How does Daniel help King Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 2? What do you learn about God in Daniel's exclamation of praise (2:20-23)?

### **1 John 2**

In what ways do you desire the sinful world? Why is it a bad idea for you to chase the sinful world?

## **December 4**

### **Daniel 3-4**

How did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego demonstrate confidence in God? How do vv.17-18 show that they are trusting God? What is Nebuchadnezzar's sin? How does God respond to his sin?

### **1 John 3**

Why is it impossible for someone to say they are a Christian and continue in a lifestyle of sin (vv.8-10)? Does your life show a practice of sin or a practice of righteousness?

## **December 5**

### **Daniel 5-6**

What happens in chapter 5? How is Daniel opposed in ch. 6? How does Daniel show boldness and courage in chapter 6? In what way does your trust in God need to grow?

### **1 John 4**

How did God show you love? Why can Christians love? Why should Christians love? How will you biblically love someone today?

## **December 6**

### **Daniel 7-8**

Try to draw the beasts and throne room of chapter 7. Try to draw the ram and goat of chapter 8. What do these symbolic prophecies make you think about? How do they make you feel?

### **1 John 5**

John gives his summary statement for his letter in v.13, when he says that wrote the letter *“that you may know that you have eternal life.”* How can you *“know”* that you have eternal life?

## Hosea

### Author and Date

- Written by Hosea during his ministry, approximately 755 to 710 b.c.
- Our information about Hosea and his family comes entirely from this book. Hosea and Jonah share the distinction of being the only two writing prophets from the northern kingdom of Israel. Hosea had a lengthy ministry of forty-five years, spanning the reigns of seven kings in Israel and four kings in Judah. Both Isaiah and Micah were contemporaries of Hosea, though they only prophesied in Judah.

### Background and Setting

- God loves us so much that He gives us tough assignments, and then He helps us accomplish them.
- Can you think of anything God asks you to do that seems hard or unfair? If you can't, you haven't been paying careful enough attention to God's Word. Start with some of Jesus' words: "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you" (Matthew 5:44). Hosea's life offers us a heart-wrenching example of just how hard God's instructions can be and just how great His love remains.
- God called Hosea to be a prophet during the closing days of Jeroboam II. Although Israel was enjoying a time of political peace and material prosperity, the nation was also rife with moral corruption and spiritual bankruptcy. Jeroboam II's death ushered in anarchy and the nation rapidly declined. During the next twenty years leading up to the complete overthrow by Assyria, Israel experienced six short reigns, four of which were ended by assassination.
- Hosea spoke for God during those chaotic times. His messages were filled with warnings against Israel's moral waywardness and her violation of the covenant relationship that she had with the Lord. His life illustrated the truth of his messages. Hosea announced the coming judgment.<sup>48</sup>

## Joel

### Author and Date

- Written by Joel approximately 835 to 796 b.c.
- The author identified himself only as "Joel, the son of Pethuel" (1:1). His father's name is not mentioned in the rest of the Old Testament. Even the internal evidence in the book provides little help in identifying Joel's background. Though tradition claims Joel was from the tribe of Reuben, his language and tone seem to indicate that he was from near Jerusalem.

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<sup>48</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 132.

## Background and Setting

- Joel provided the scripture for Peter’s first sermon (Joel 2:28–32; Acts 2:16–21).
- The locusts struck like a firestorm. In their wake they left a devastated nation and a prophet speaking out the “word of the Lord” (1:1). Joel survived the plague of devouring insects and delivered a ringing message of explanation, a bold call to action, and a gift of hope. His timeless words still call those who believe in God to trust even when the waves of devastation and evil seem overwhelming. His message continues to inspire hope, “For the day of the Lord is coming” (2:1).
- Israel discovered that enemies come in many shapes and sizes. They were almost used to the frequent raids by bandits from Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia (3:2). Suddenly, however, destruction came in a new form—swarms of locusts overran the land like an insatiable army. Judah, suffering the ravages of a long drought, now faced economic devastation (1:7–20).
- The national disasters gave Joel a vivid illustration of God’s judgment. Although the locusts were a severe judgment on sin, God’s future judgments will be far worse. On the Day of the Lord, God will judge His enemies and bless the faithful. Joel did not mention specific sins, but he called the people to genuine repentance. He urged them to “rend your heart, and not your garments” (2:13).<sup>49</sup>

## 2 John

### Author and Date

- Written by the Apostle John in about a.d. 90 to 95
- The author describes himself in 2 John 1 as “the Elder.” It fits the apostle’s pattern of not using his own name in his writings. In the Gospel of John he called himself the disciple “whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). “The Elder” conveys the advanced age of the apostle, his authority, and his status during the foundational period of Christianity.

### Background and Setting

- Second John is the only New Testament letter specifically addressed to a woman.
- Even a memo from one of the original disciples has great value—particularly if it was inspired by the Holy Spirit. This shortest of the New Testament books fits on a single sheet of papyrus. In it, John includes only crucial encouragement and warnings. There was much more to say, but he hoped to visit soon (verse 12).
- The primary difference between 1 John and 2 John has to do with the audience. First John is addressed in a general way to Christians. 2 John is written to a particular person and a particular church (verse 1). Both letters warn of the dangers of those false teachers who, influenced by early Gnostic thought, were threatening the church.
- Based on the internal evidence, John was concerned that the individual addressed in the greeting (verse 1) inadvertently or unwisely may have shown these false prophets hospitality (verses 10–11). Apparently, false teachers were conducting an itinerant ministry among John’s congregations, seeking to make converts and taking advantage of Christian hospitality to

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<sup>49</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 136.



advance their cause. The apostle urgently warned his readers against showing hospitality to such deceivers (verses 10–11). Although his exhortation may appear on the surface to be harsh or unloving, the acutely dangerous nature of the false teaching justified such actions, especially since it threatened to destroy the very foundations of the faith (verse 9).<sup>50</sup>

### 3 John

#### Author and Date

- Written by the Apostle John about a.d. 90 to 95
- John used the same identifying term that he used in 2 John. In both letters, he referred to himself as “the Elder.” The term conveys the advanced age of the apostle, as well as his authority, and his privileged role as one of the remaining eyewitnesses of Jesus’ ministry.
- The precise date of the epistle cannot be determined. Since the structure, style, and vocabulary closely approximate 2 John, most likely John composed the letters at the same time, about a.d. 90 to 95. Compare the following passages for those similarities: compare verse 1 to 2 John 2; verse 4 to 2 John 4; verse 13 to 2 John 12; verse 14 to 2 John 12. As with 1 and 2 John, the apostle probably wrote this letter during his ministry at Ephesus near the end of his life.

#### Background and Setting

- Third John records John’s tribute to the practice of hospitality.
- Like 2 John, 3 John is marked by brevity. It fit on a single sheet of papyrus. In it, the apostle announces his intention to visit soon. John’s note to a leader named Gaius challenges and encourages him by using the behavior of two other leaders as negative and positive examples of effective spiritual leadership. John hoped to add much more teaching when he arrived.
- Third John is perhaps the most personal of John’s three epistles. While 1 John appears to be a general letter addressed to congregations scattered throughout Asia Minor, and 2 John was sent to a lady and her family (2 John 1), in 3 John the apostle clearly names the sole recipient as “the beloved Gaius” (verse 1). The name Gaius was common in the first century, and men bearing it appear in a number of New Testament passages (Acts 19:29; 20:4; Romans 16:23; 1 Corinthians 1:14). Beyond this letter, however, no other specific identity for Gaius has been found.
- The composition of this letter was motivated by those who returned from Gaius with a report of the hospitality and support they had received from that brother. Meanwhile, others, like Diotrephes (verse 9), had refused to extend a welcome to visiting teachers from John. The apostle followed up those reports with this note of gratitude and encouragement for Gaius.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 322.

<sup>51</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 325–328.

## Jude

### Author and Date

- Written by Jude about a.d. 68 to 70
- Although Jude (Judas) was a common name in Palestine (at least eight men by that name are in the New Testament), the author of Jude generally has been accepted as Jude, Christ's half brother. Three internal clues reinforce this conclusion:
  - Jude's appeal to being the "brother of James," the leader of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) and another half brother of Jesus (verse 1; Galatians 1:19)
  - The similarities between Jude's and James's salutations (verse 1; James 1:1)
  - Jude's not identifying himself as an apostle (verse 1), but rather distinguishing himself from them (verse 17). These clues negate the other main candidate for authorship, the Apostle Judas (not Judas Iscariot), the son of James (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13), also known as Thaddaeus.
- Early questions about the canonicity of Jude revolve around its relationship with 2 Peter. Jude quotes directly from 2 Peter 3:3 and acknowledges that it is from an apostle (verses 17–18). If Peter had quoted Jude, there would have been no question about canonicity, since Peter would thereby have given Jude apostolic affirmation. The authenticity of Jude, however, was attested by Clement of Rome (about a.d. 96) and Clement of Alexandria (about a.d. 200).
- Since no mention of Jerusalem's destruction in a.d. 70 was included by Jude, and though Jude most likely came after 2 Peter (a.d. 67–68), the former fits into the same narrow time frame as the latter. Jude was probably written about a.d. 68 to 70.

### Background and Setting

- Jude presents a great warning shout from the Lord's brother to stand firm!
- Jude was the second half brother of Jesus to write a New Testament letter (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3). Although Jude had earlier rejected Jesus as Messiah (John 7:1–9), he, along with other half brothers of our Lord, was converted after Christ's resurrection (Acts 1:14). Like his brother James, Jude became a significant leader in the church in Jerusalem following Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. He was also active on missionary journeys with other brothers (1 Corinthians 9:5).
- Jude lived at a time when Christianity was under severe political pressure from Rome and aggressive spiritual infiltration from Gnostic-like apostates who sowed abundant seed for a gigantic harvest of doctrinal error. The exact audience of believers with whom Jude corresponded is unknown but seems to be Jewish in light of Jude's illustrations. He undoubtedly wrote to a region recently plagued by false teachers.
- Except for John, who lived until the close of the first century, all the other apostles had likely been martyred by the time Jude wrote. Christianity was thought to be extremely vulnerable. Thus, Jude called the church to fight, in the midst of intense spiritual warfare, for the truth.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 328-329.

# Revelation

## Author and Date

- Written by the Apostle John in about a.d. 94 to 96
- Four times the author identifies himself as John (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8). Early tradition unanimously identifies him as John the apostle, author of the Fourth Gospel and three epistles.
- There are differences in style between Revelation and John's other writings, but these are insignificant considering the radical difference in subject matter and setting. There are, however, some striking parallels between Revelation and John's other works.
- Revelation was written in the last decade of the first century (about a.d. 94–96), near the end of Emperor Domitian's reign (a.d. 81–96). Although some date it during Nero's reign (a.d. 54–68), their arguments are unconvincing and conflict with the view of the early church.
- The spiritual decline of the seven churches (chapters 2–3) also argues for the later date. Those churches were strong and spiritually healthy in the mid–a.d. 60s, when Paul last ministered in Asia Minor. The brief time between Paul's ministry there and the end of Nero's reign was too short for such a decline to have occurred. The longer time gap also explains the rise of the heretical sect known as the Nicolaitans (2:6, 15), who are not mentioned in Paul's letters. Finally, dating Revelation during Nero's reign does not allow time for John's ministry in Asia Minor to reach the point at which the authorities would have felt the need to exile him.

## Background and Setting

- God made sure His Word had a grand finale. What opened with the overture of Genesis comes to a dramatic conclusion in Revelation. In all its uses, *revelation* refers to something or someone, once hidden, becoming visible. What this book reveals or unveils is Jesus Christ in glory. Truths about Him and His final victory that the rest of Scripture merely alludes to John describes in this expanded revelation about Jesus Christ.
- Revelation begins with John, the last surviving apostle and an old man, in exile on the small, barren island of Patmos, located in the Aegean Sea southwest of Ephesus. The Roman authorities had banished him there because of his faithful preaching of the gospel (1:9). While on Patmos, John received a series of visions that laid out the future history of the world.
- When he was arrested, John was in Ephesus, ministering to the church there and in surrounding cities. Although he could no longer minister to those congregations in person, John received a divine command to address Revelation to them (1:4, 11). Those churches had begun to feel the effects of violent persecution. At least one man—probably a pastor—had already been martyred (2:13). John himself had been exiled. But the storm of persecution was about to break in full fury upon the seven churches so dear to the apostle's heart (2:10). To those churches, Revelation provided a message of hope: God is in control of all the events of human history, and though evil often seems pervasive and wicked men all powerful, their ultimate doom is certain. Christ will come in glory to judge and rule.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 332–333.

**Week 49: December 7-13**

## **December 7**

### **Daniel 9-10**

What are some insights about prayer that you can learn from Daniel's prayer? How can that change or improve the way you pray?

### **2 John**

God hates false teaching because it is information being spread that is just not true about God. What can you specifically do to be careful to not listen to or give support to false teaching? Where can you get true information? Who would you be able to talk to to verify if it is true?

## **December 8**

### **Daniel 11-12**

Daniel 12 is about the end of the world and shows God keeping his promises to the very end. V.12 says that some will rise to *"everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt"*. How does it make you feel when you think about the end of the world and why?

### **3 John**

In 3 John we see a godly example of love in Gaius and a sinful example of selfishness in Diotrephes. Diotrephes was someone who opposed spiritual leadership. Are you someone who opposes spiritual leadership in your life? How can you be more like Gaius in showing purposeful and intentional love to others?

## **December 9**

### **Hosea 1-4**

Hosea is called to marry Gomer who is not loyal to him and is unfaithful in their marriage. God was showing that Gomer represents Israel's unfaithfulness to him when God's people go after other gods. While Hosea represents God's steadfast love for his people. How is this picture similar to what Jesus does for us in the gospel?

### **Jude**

Jude's letter is about defending the Christian faith from false teachers. God calls Christians to protect themselves from false teaching. How does he say you should do that (vv.20-23)?

## **December 10**

### **Hosea 5-8**

God tells Israel and Judah that their sin is not hidden from him. God knows and sees everything. How have you attempted to hide your sin? What does God say you should do when you have done that (6:1)?

### **Revelation 1**

The word revelation means to reveal something that was once hidden. In this first chapter of Revelation, Jesus Christ is revealing himself. This is the glorified Jesus who John worships in v.17. How is the description of Jesus in vv.12-20 different from the way Jesus is seen in the Gospels?

## **December 11**

### **Hosea 9-11**

God punishes Israel for their pursuit of idols. The sinful condition of the heart is still the same with people today. What idols does your heart go after?

### **Revelation 2**

Jesus talks to 7 churches and grades them on how they are doing. Some were living for Jesus while others were being led away by sin. Jesus speaks to them to make them more godly and righteous. While he rebukes some of them, he intends to motivate them. How does reading this motivate you towards holiness today?

## **December 12**

### **Hosea 12-14**

Hosea ends his book in 14:9 by saying that if you are wise you will listen to God's counsel to turn from sin and turn to him in repentance. What have you learned about your sinful tendencies reading this book? What have you learned about God and how he treats his people?

### **Revelation 3**

What are the lessons you learn from each of these 3 churches? What is one specific lesson you can take and apply today?

## **December 13**

### **Joel 1-3**

Why was God promising locusts on Israel? God promises that the Day of the Lord is a time in which God will punish rebellious nations. What does God offer in 2:12-13 and 2:32? What do you learn about God's character in this book?

### **Revelation 4**

John sees a vision of the throne in heaven where there are four living creatures praising God. What is the attribute of God that they continually repeat? Created things are made to worship the uncreated one. How will you worship God today?



## Amos

### Author and Date

- Written by Amos approximately 760 to 750 b.c.
- Among the prophets, Amos was a contemporary of Jonah, Hosea, and Isaiah. In his book, Amos gave his readers two significant clues about himself: his hometown (Tekoa) and his occupation (sheepbreeder). At one point he expressed some amazement that God called him to deliver a message. After all, he wrote, “I was no prophet, nor was I a son of a prophet, but I was a sheepbreeder and a tender of sycamore fruit” (7:14).

### Background and Setting

- Amos was the only prophet to report his occupation before receiving his divine commission.
- God finds people almost anywhere to serve Him. Most of the people we meet in the Bible had minimal formal religious training. God showed little interest in their occupations, positions, or successes in life. He looked for men and women with the right kind of heart. God simply met them wherever they were and gave them directions. We have God’s Word because these men and women were faithful. Among the unusual people God called to be His prophets was a lowly shepherd named Amos.
- Although Amos identified himself as a Judean prophet, God directed him to deliver a message intended for the northern tribes of Israel (7:15). Amos confronted Israel during a time of extended prosperity and security. King Jeroboam II had followed his father Jehoash’s example and “restored the territory of Israel” (2 Kings 14:25). The widespread peace throughout the region was due in part to the subdued threat of Assyria following Nineveh’s repentance under the preaching of Jonah. On the home front, Amos was called to confront the rampant corruption and moral decay that permeated his society.<sup>54</sup>

## Obadiah

### Author and Date

- Written by Obadiah during King Jehoram’s reign in Judah, approximately 848 to 841 b.c.
- Obadiah’s brief writing contains few clues to indicate much about him. The name Obadiah appears frequently in the Old Testament, but none of those instances refer to the prophet. Geographic allusions seem to indicate that he was from the southern kingdom. Obadiah was probably a contemporary of Elijah and Elisha.

### Background and Setting

- Edom ranks as God’s least favored nation in the Old Testament.
- Eight different books devote space to words of God’s condemnation and wrath on the nation of Edom. Among the most serious charges against it were those leveled by Obadiah, in this brief book that bears his name.

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<sup>54</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 140.

- The Edomites traced their origin to Esau, the firstborn (twin) son of Isaac and Rebekah (Genesis 25:24–26). In the womb, Esau struggled with his brother, Jacob (Genesis 25:22), and they struggled thereafter. Genesis 25:30 explains the origin of the nickname Edom. The term means “red” and refers to the “red stew” Esau chose in exchange for his birthright as the oldest son.
- The tensions between Esau and Jacob became part of the heritage of the nations they fathered. Edom resented Israel and repeatedly tried to prevent God’s chosen people from entering and keeping the Promised Land. God instructed Israel to be kind to Edom (Deuteronomy 23:7–8). Later, Obadiah was sent to confront Edom with its sins and to convey God’s judgment on the nation for its treatment of Israel.
- Edom had an ongoing role in biblical history even past the close of the Old Testament. Herod the Great, one of Esau’s descendants, tried to kill Jesus shortly after He was born. The Edomites were eventually wiped out during the conquest and destruction of Jerusalem that occurred in a.d. 70. Their extinction fulfilled Obadiah’s longstanding prophecies that they would be “cut off forever” (verse 10) and that “no survivor shall remain of the house of Esau” (verse 18).<sup>55</sup>

## Jonah

### Author and Date

- Written or told by Jonah during his ministry, approximately 793 to 758 b.c.
- Although Jonah never speaks in the first person in this book, there are good reasons to think he was the author. First, the Old Testament offers other examples of authors writing in the third person (Moses—Exodus 11:3; Samuel—1 Samuel 12:11). Second, certain intimate autobiographical material in this book could only have come from Jonah himself. The fish held no other witnesses. Even the introductory verse that establishes the third person account is characteristic of most of the prophets’ writings.
- A reference to Jonah in 2 Kings 14:25 establishes his hometown as Gath Hopher, near Nazareth. His ministry years coincide with the reign of Jeroboam II (about 793–758 b.c.). Jonah preceded Amos as a prophet to the northern tribes of Israel.

### Background and Setting

- One of the clearest Old Testament examples of God’s love for the world
- God often works through people in spite of themselves. Jonah was a reluctant prophet. He tried to run from his mission. He tried to hide from God. He even offered himself as a noble sacrifice. But he discovered that even attempted suicide couldn’t get him out of God’s plans. God offered him an opportunity to learn to love the people of Nineveh by having him preach a message that transformed the city. Jonah chose to hold on to his hatred. He resented the mercy God poured out on Nineveh because he didn’t fully appreciate the mercy God poured out on him. Jonah’s account ends with a haunting rhetorical question from God, “Should I not pity Nineveh?”
- Jonah represented God to the ten northern tribes during a time of relative peace and prosperity. He and Amos shared very similar political and cultural conditions. Both Syria and Assyria were weak, allowing King Jeroboam II to enlarge the northern borders of Israel.

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<sup>55</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 143.

- Spiritually, however, the nation was in poverty. Genuine faith in God had been forgotten and replaced by religious rituals. Idolatry had rapidly increased. Justice had become perverted and meaningless. Peace and wealth were being misused to bring about spiritual, moral, and ethical bankruptcy.
- God’s judgment was devastating. He eventually allowed the Assyrians to bring destruction and captivity to the northern kingdom in 722 b.c., years after Jonah’s ministry.
- Jonah’s mission to Nineveh probably occurred close to the end of his active years. It appears that God arranged for a couple of plagues (765 and 759 b.c.) and a solar eclipse (763 b.c.) that may have contributed to the softening of Nineveh for Jonah’s message.<sup>56</sup>

## Micah

### Author and Date

- Written by Micah, approximately 735 to 710 b.c.
- The first verse names Micah as the author. Little else is known about this prophet of God, but his name (which means “Who is like the Lord?”) suggests a godly heritage. Micah noted his hometown as Moresheth (1:1), a village about twenty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem. This scant information implies that Micah, like Amos, grew up in a rural area, removed from the powerful and influential. He, like Amos, had been chosen by God (3:8) to deliver a message of judgment to the princes and citizens of Jerusalem and Samaria.

### Background and Setting

- The book that told the wise men where to find Jesus.
- “Order in the court!” The words have a powerful effect on a room full of people. The words demand attention. The judge is about to render judgment.
- The Book of Micah reads like a court document. Micah’s prophecies record God’s judgment on three groups of plaintiffs: 1) Samaria and Jerusalem; 2) the leaders of Israel and Judah; 3) the people in Israel and Judah. God holds nations, leaders, and individuals responsible for their failure to acknowledge or obey Him. Micah’s words ring with an urgency and truth that still apply today.
- The fact that Micah only mentions the names of the kings of Judah probably indicates the reality of Samaria’s defeat in 722 b.c. The prophet did include the northern kingdom in some of his messages (1:5–7), but his attention was primarily directed toward the southern kingdom of Judah. Although Judah’s days were also numbered, the nation outlasted her northern neighbor by several decades.
- During Micah’s lifetime, much of the economic prosperity and political influence that had marked the reign of Jeroboam II soon faded. Conditions between the northern and southern kingdoms rapidly deteriorated. Although Micah’s ministry was directed at both houses of God’s people, the divisions between them created constant hostility. At one point Israel and Syria invaded Judah and took wicked King Ahaz hostage for a while (2 Chronicles 28:5–16; Isaiah 7:1–2). After the fall of the northern kingdom, God used Hezekiah, the good king of Judah, to lead Judah back to

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<sup>56</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 146–147.

true worship.

- Micah witnessed and influenced all of this. His message from God may not have turned the people away from coming judgment, but some listened. God's hopeful notes in Micah's words about the future (5:2) kept alive the hope of God's promise. Centuries later, when wise men visited Jerusalem looking for a child born to be the king of the Jews, the priests knew where to look for the prophecy of the birthplace of God's Messiah (5:2).<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 150–151.

**Week 50: December 14-20**

## **December 14**

### **Amos 1-3**

What are the nations that God was promising to judge? What are the reasons that God was going to judge them?

### **Revelation 5**

Why is Jesus depicted as a lamb that has been slain? Why is Jesus the only one worthy of opening the scroll? Why is Jesus worthy of your worship today?

## **December 15**

### **Amos 4-6**

God says in 5:14-15 to *“seek good and not evil, that you may live.”* God always offers his people the best for them. Why is it difficult at times to listen to God’s wise counsel?

### **Revelation 6**

This chapter describes Jesus Christ the Lamb opening the seven seals to the scroll which are about God’s future judgment. Describe what happens after each seal is opened.

## **December 16**

### **Amos 7-9**

How does God depict the judgment he will bring in chapter 8? How does God depict the judgment he will bring in chapter 9? How does God depict the salvation of Israel in chapter 9?

**Revelation 7**

What are the ways you see God ultimately saving his people on that future day in this chapter?  
According to this chapter, what are the promises of God that should bring Christians hope?

**December 17****Obadiah**

God rebukes the Edomites for being proud and arrogant. How do you see them being proud and arrogant? How does God respond to their sin? In what way are you prideful?

**Revelation 8**

Jesus the Lamb of God now opens the last seal which contains the seven trumpets of judgment. Describe what happens after each trumpet is blown.

**December 18****Jonah 1-4**

Why did Jonah not want to obey God? How did God show Jonah that he was being foolish in not wanting the Ninevites to be saved? What is one lesson that you need to apply from this book?

## **Revelation 9**

The trumpets of judgment continue in this chapter. Describe what happens after each trumpet is blown. What is the way for you to not have to suffer the judgment described in this chapter (v.20)?

## **December 19**

### **Micah 1-3**

How does God describe the judgment of Judah? According to chapter 2, how were the Judeans sinning against God?

## **Revelation 10**

What kind of feeling do you get as you read about God's coming judgment? Why do you deserve God's judgment? How can Jesus remove the judgment that you deserve?

## **December 20**

### **Micah 4-5**

How do you know from textual clues that 5:2-6 is talking about Jesus Christ? How does Jesus Christ change the way you view judgment?

## **Revelation 11**

Why is the blowing of the seventh trumpet different from the other trumpets? How does this chapter show that Jesus will one day reign over all people?



## Nahum

### Author and Date

- Written by Nahum, approximately 650 b.c.
- As is true of most of the prophets, we know little about Nahum's life. This fact highlights the importance of their message. Their primary purpose was to speak for God, not about themselves. In Nahum's case, even the location of his hometown remains a mystery. He called himself an Elkoshite (1:1), but no location fitting that name has been clearly identified. Nahum could have been a survivor living in Judah or an exile living in Assyria.

### Background and Setting

- Jonah's prophecy did come true!
- God gave the ancient city of Nineveh an extra one hundred years of life. Jonah's reluctant missionary visit resulted in a genuine repentance by the city. She avoided destruction but, unfortunately, the change wasn't lasting. The city and the empire she represented soon continued on their evil ways. A century later, God announced her final judgment through the prophet Nahum.
- A century after Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, the Assyrian capital returned to idolatry, violence, and arrogance (3:1–4). Assyria was at the height of her power, quickly forgetting the humiliation of Sennacherib's defeat (701 b.c.) at Jerusalem (Isaiah 37:36–38). Assyria's borders extended all the way to Egypt. Conquered peoples were moved from the homelands to other places, making them easier to control. Samaria and Galilee were resettled by exiles in 670 b.c.
- Assyria seemed like an unstoppable force, yet God announced to the world through Nahum and other prophets that the nation's days were numbered. Nineveh's destruction happened just as God had prophesied.<sup>58</sup>

## Habakkuk

### Author and Date

- Written by Habakkuk, approximately 615 to 605 b.c.
- As with most of the minor prophets, little is known about Habakkuk except minimal internal information in his book. His simple introduction as "the prophet Habakkuk" may imply that he was a well-known prophet of his day. Habakkuk was a contemporary of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zephaniah.

### Background and Setting

- Its writer holds a place of dubious honor as the last prophet sent to Judah before the Exile.

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<sup>58</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 154.

- “It’s just not fair!” Arguments between friends, within families, and between nations often boil down to an issue of fairness. One of the unwritten basic assumptions about life is that it ought to be fair. This assumption leads us into dangerous territory when it comes between us and God. The prophet Habakkuk asked God two very familiar questions about fairness:
  - Why aren’t things fair, God?
  - Why don’t you do something when things aren’t fair, God?
- God’s answers and Habakkuk’s conclusions make his book a valuable spiritual resource.
- Habakkuk prophesied during the final days of the Assyrian Empire and the beginning of the Babylonian domination of the world. The most recognizable world figure of his time was Nebuchadnezzar, prince and then king of Babylon. The Babylonians began their ascent to power in 626 b.c. and by 605 b.c. had defeated their primary enemies.
- Judah got involved in this chapter of world events when King Josiah challenged Assyria’s ally Egypt in the battle of Megiddo in 609 b.c. Josiah was killed during the fighting. Although Josiah had instituted significant spiritual reforms in Judah (2 Kings 22–23), his successors did not follow his godly direction. The nation quickly reverted to evil ways (Jeremiah 22:13–19), causing Habakkuk to question God’s silence and apparent lack of punitive action to purge His covenant people.<sup>59</sup>

## Zephaniah

### Author and Date

- Written by Zephaniah approximately 635 to 625 b.c.
- Among the few facts about Zephaniah included in Scripture, one stands out: The prophet claimed a place in the royal lineage. He appears to have been the only prophet descended from royal blood. Zephaniah was a contemporary of the prophet Jeremiah.

### Background and Setting

- Zephaniah was the only prophet descended from royal blood.
- Standing on a busy corner, the prophet lifts a rough sign inscribed with the short message: “Repent, for the end is near!” People rush by. They don’t notice, or don’t want to notice the message. God has become someone they can ignore.
- Zephaniah’s moment in history was an ancient version of that scene. He repeatedly warned the people: “The Day of the Lord is at hand!” He used this expression more than did any other prophet. His work set the stage for a last-minute revival under Josiah that proved short-lived. Within a few years, Judah was defeated and sent into exile. People who ignored God discovered they could not ignore the Day of the Lord.
- Zephaniah prophesied during a time of almost universal upheaval. The rise of the Babylonians and the fall of the Assyrians left much of the world between conquerors. Judah experienced relative freedom for the first time in fifty years. King Josiah was able to initiate certain reforms that eventually led to a brief spiritual revival in Judah.

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<sup>59</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 157.

- The warnings of impending judgment voiced by Zephaniah probably found little response from the people. The effects of half a century of evil leadership left a nation steeped in sin, and King Josiah's reforms resulted in little more than surface changes. Even the discovery of the Law of God in the temple rubble that occurred after Zephaniah, while it energized Josiah's efforts, had little long-term effect on the attitudes of the people.<sup>60</sup>

## Haggai

### Author and Date

- Written by Haggai approximately 520 b.c.
- This is the second shortest book in the Old Testament. Haggai's biography is even shorter, and neither his name nor his writing offer clues about his background and personality. Although Ezra mentions Haggai twice (Ezra 5:1; 6:14), he adds no details other than to identify Haggai as a prophet. Apparently Haggai and his companion Zechariah succeeded in their ministry, for Ezra reported that the people responded to their leadership and rebuilt the temple.

### Background and Setting

- Haggai helped motivate the exiles to rebuild the temple.
- Solomon said it well, "A time for every purpose under heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). This rule applies particularly when the purpose at hand comes from God. His plans take precedence. Haggai prophesied to a people with an agenda of their own. They were procrastinating over God's instructions. The prophet's task was to convince the people of Israel that the time had come to carry out God's purposes.
- Eighteen years before Haggai prophesied, Cyrus the Persian had allowed the exiled Jews to return from Babylon to their homeland (538 b.c.; Ezra 1:1–4). About fifty thousand Jews had returned under the civil leadership of Zerubbabel. External resistance from neighbor nations and internal indifference from the Jews themselves had brought the reconstruction work to a standstill (Ezra 3:1–4:24). Sixteen years later, Haggai and Zechariah were called by God to stir up the people to 1) rebuild the temple and 2) reorder their spiritual priorities (Ezra 5:1–6:22). The temple was completed four years later (about 516 b.c.). Haggai wrote his book in order to motivate the people to work.<sup>61</sup>

## Zechariah

### Author and Date

- Written by Zechariah during his ministry, from approximately 520 to 518 b.c., with another section written near 480 to 470 b.c.

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<sup>60</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 161.

<sup>61</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 164.

- Like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Zechariah was also a priest (Nehemiah 12:12–16). Born in Babylon, he had joined his grandfather, Iddo, in the first group of exiles to return to Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua, the high priest (Nehemiah 12:4). Because Zechariah is sometimes called the son of Iddo (Ezra 5:1; 6:14; Nehemiah 12:16), scholars have concluded that Zechariah may have lost his father, Berechiah, at an early age and therefore had inherited the priesthood directly from his grandfather.
- Ancient Jewish tradition also holds that Zechariah was a member of the Great Synagogue, a council of 120 members that was originated by Nehemiah and presided over by Ezra. This council later developed into the ruling elders of the nation, referred to as the Sanhedrin in the New Testament.
- Matthew 23:35 reports that the prophet Zechariah was murdered between the temple and the altar. Jesus said that the consequences for Zechariah's death would make up part of God's judgment on his own generation.

### **Background and Setting**

- A prophet who gave his life in God's service.
- When a team is losing, the coach's halftime talk holds special significance. The game isn't over, but the team may be discouraged, and they need an effective motivation to pursue victory.
- Zechariah and his prophet-partner Haggai offered the people of Jerusalem some necessary halftime encouragement. They were losing the contest of wills to the opposition and had stopped rebuilding the temple. God's spokesmen described the benefits that would come if the people worked hard for God, who would ultimately gain the victory.
- Zechariah and Haggai share the same historical background and setting. God had called both prophets into action sixteen years after the arrival of the original fifty thousand Jewish exiles returning from Babylon in 538 b.c. At first the exiles had worked hard to rebuild the temple and repair the city, but opposition had eventually intimidated and discouraged them. All the work had stopped. In 520 b.c., however, Zechariah and Haggai served to spur the people back to action. Ezra 6:15 records that the temple was completed in four years (516 b.c.).<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 167-168.

**Week 51: December 21-27**

## **December 21**

### **Micah 6-7**

What does God require of you (6:8)? What do you learn about God's character in 7:18-19? What is it about God's forgiveness that makes it so different from our human forgiveness towards others?

## **Revelation 12**

According to this chapter, what will happen to Satan one day? How does it make you feel to know that Satan will lose to Jesus Christ on the final day?

## **December 22**

### **Nahum 1-3**

What are all the attributes of God that you learn about in Chapter 1? How does reading this book make you see that God despises sin and will always be just?

## **Revelation 13**

We read about God's enemies that in the end will oppose God's people. What will the first enemy do? What will the second enemy do?

## **December 23**

### **Habakkuk 1-3**

What is Habbakuk's big question he poses to God? God responds to him by saying that those who are righteous followers of God have to trust God at all times (2:4). What led Habakkuk to rejoice even when times were uncertain in 3:17-19?

**Revelation 14**

Three angels give different messages. What are the three different messages? How do vv.14-20 describe coming judgment for unrepentant sinners?

**December 24****Zephaniah 1-3**

What are the attributes of God that you see most in these chapters? Why is God so furious in these chapters? What is the offer of hope that he gives his people in chapter 3?

**Revelation 15**

We read about God's people praising him for enacting justice on his enemies. Write out a prayer praising God for his perfect justice.

**December 25****Haggai 1-2**

The people had returned from the Babylonian captivity to Jerusalem. The problem was that they had neglected the rebuilding of the temple because they were busy with their own lives. What is an area in your spiritual life that you have been neglecting? How do you need to improve in that area this week?

**Revelation 16**

God details the seven bowls of wrath that he will one day dispense. Describe each bowl of God's wrath as they are detailed in this passage.

## **December 26**

### **Zechariah 1-3**

God comforts his people who had returned from exile and he gives visions to do that. Describe the 4 visions that God gives in these chapters. How does each separate vision show that God still cares for his people?

### **Revelation 17**

God describes the last bowl of his wrath. Describe this last bowl of God's wrath.

## **December 27**

### **Zechariah 4-6**

God gives more visions where each is communicating a specific message for his people. Describe each vision. What is God's main message in each separate vision?

### **Revelation 18**

God promises to judge the sinful world system, which he says will one day be like Babylon of the Old Testament, proud and influencing the people to sin. God also promises to judge those who follow the sinful world system. How does the sinful world personally tempt you to sin? How do you need to start guarding against it?



# Malachi

## Author and Date

- Written by Malachi during his ministry, approximately 433 to 424 b.c.
- Because the name Malachi means “my messenger” or “the Lord’s messenger,” some have suggested that the book may have been written anonymously. Only here is this phrase used as a personal name in the Old Testament. Since all other prophetic books consistently identify their authors in the introductory heading, however, there is good reason to identify the author of this last book as the prophet Malachi.
- Ancient Jewish tradition numbers Malachi among the members of the Great Synagogue who collected and preserved the Scriptures. Similar to Revelation 2 and 3, in which Christ writes about what He thinks of the conditions of the churches, here God writes through Malachi to impress upon Israel His thoughts about the nation.

## Background and Setting

- God’s final words in the Old Testament include a promise: “I will send you Elijah the prophet” (Malachi 4:5).
- After Malachi, the next prophet to speak was born more than four hundred years later. John the Baptist picked up the prophetic mantle and prepared the way for Jesus Christ. God’s prophetic silence for four centuries certainly makes His final words worth careful attention. God sent that message through the prophet Malachi.
- During the first return, fifty thousand exiles went back to Judah from Babylon (538–536 b.c.). By 516 b.c., the temple was rebuilt and back in use. Ezra returned to Jerusalem in 458 b.c., followed by Nehemiah in 445 b.c. The people’s desire to return to their homeland had not translated into a desire to walk with God. As time passed, religious practices became meaningless routines, with little attention given to God’s Law. Into this chaos stepped the last of the Old Testament prophets. Malachi rebuked and condemned these abuses, forcefully indicting the people and calling them to repentance. Later, Nehemiah would return from almost a decade back in Persia and add his stinging confrontation of the temple abuses, Sabbath violations, and the Jewish men’s unlawful divorce of their Jewish wives in order to marry foreign women. God’s people sank into anonymity among the lost and aimless nations of the world.
- As over two millennia of Old Testament history since Abraham concluded, none of the glorious promises of the Abrahamic, Davidic, or New Covenants had been fulfilled in the ultimate sense. Despite a few high points in Israel’s history, such as Joshua, David, and Josiah, the Jews seemed determined to turn away from God’s favor. Less than a century after returning from crushing captivity, they were again deeply mired in sin. The long-anticipated Messiah had not arrived and did not seem to be in sight.
- Malachi wrote the capstone prophecy of the Old Testament in which he delivered 1) God’s message of judgment on Israel for their continuing sin and 2) God’s promise that one day in the future, when the Jews would repent, Messiah would be revealed and Godcovenant promises would be fulfilled.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 171–172.

**Week 52: December 28-31**

## **December 28**

### **Zechariah 7-9**

God promises a new future for his people in chapter 8. What does God promise about this new future for his people? God also promises a king for Jerusalem (9:9-10). Jesus is the king that is promised. How do these two verses describe Jesus in his first coming and Jesus in his future second coming?

### **Revelation 19**

The bride of Christ is the people that God has saved and that will one day be reunited with Christ, the groom. There will be a day in the future when the church (the people of God) will marry the Lamb of God (Jesus). How did the Lamb of God show his love for the people of God? Why should God's people look forward to this day with anticipation and excitement?

## **December 29**

### **Zechariah 10-12**

God says that one day Israel will realize that Jesus was the one "*whom they have pierced*" by having him crucified and will "*look*" on him (12:10). In other words, Israel will one day repent and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Have you repented of your sin and trusted in Jesus for salvation? Why or why not?

### **Revelation 20**

Today you read about the millennial kingdom where Christ will reign for 1,000 years with his people, Satan being conquered, and the Great White Throne Judgment. God promises that all these events will happen. Why do you need to believe that these things will take place? How can Jesus the Lamb of God save you from getting judged for your sins and experiencing the wrath of God?

## **December 30**

### **Zechariah 13-14**

Zechariah 14 details the coming day of the Lord where Jesus will come in judgment and salvation. What are all the details from this chapter of this coming time?

### **Revelation 21**

God promises that he will make a new heaven and new earth for those who have trusted in Christ for salvation. According to this chapter, what are 3 reasons, Christians should look forward to the new heaven and new earth?

## **December 31**

### **Malachi 1-4**

God had shown his love to Israel plenty of times, yet Israel was not honoring him. What is an area in your life where you are not honoring God as you should be? What is one commitment you need to make when it comes to honoring the Lord this coming year? How can you make sure you keep up with this commitment?

### **Revelation 22**

Jesus ends the book of Revelation and the entire Bible by saying “*Surely I am coming soon*” (v.20). How does thinking about the coming of Jesus make you feel? Why? How can you be ready for Jesus to come back?