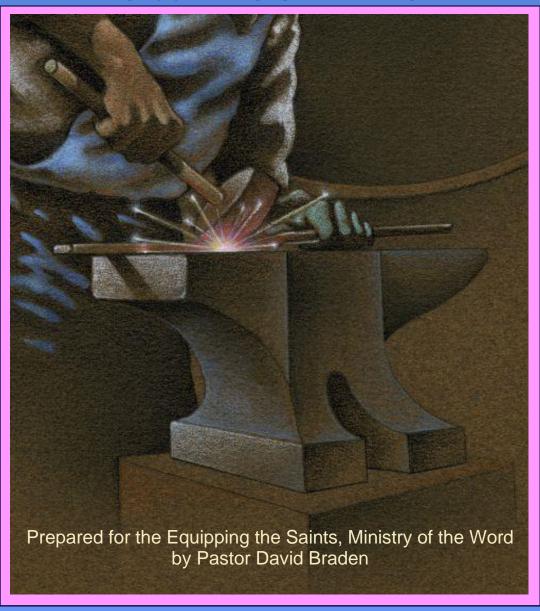
# ABIBLE SURVEY

# IMMANUEL (God with us) In Time and Space

With an emphasis on Christian Formation

# New Testament



Foundations of the Faith 201

"...Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness." I Timothy 4:7

# **A Bible Survey**

# Including

# IMMANUEL (God with us) in Time and Space:

# With an emphasis on Christian Formation

Plus: A Bible Study Aid

# Foundations of the Faith 201 Part 2 The New Testament

"Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness."

I Tim 1:7b

# Prepared for the Equipping the Saints, Ministry of the Word by Pastor David Braden

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# **ABOUT THIS COURSE**

In Genesis 3, man chose to disobey God. This act of disobedience by the man and woman separated them from the perfect fellowship they enjoyed with God.

From Genesis 3:8 to the Omega of Revelation, we see the record of God's actions on the earth to restore man to the place of fellowship with Himself.

The record of God's actions is history because it records real events in real time.

But, it is not just history. It is theological history because every event and every person whose life experiences are recorded provide us, who would come later, a view of God's actions on behalf of mankind.

On the Cover: "Immanuel (God with us) in Time and Space" speaks of our God, in our world, reconciling man to Himself, in real life situations. God was with the heroes of faith in time and space, working out His plan for the ages.

In these records of God's actions, we will see God's men and women as they experience the Immanuel life and provide living illustrations to us of the life of faith and the formation of godly character in their lives over time as they walk with God. The lives they lived provide insight and instructions for us as we live our life with God, as each of us writes our own God-story.

As we study these individual accounts of "God with them," we will see the unfolding of God's plan. We will see the progressive actions taken by God within individual lives, a family, a tribe, a people, a nation and ultimately, to all of mankind.

These accounts of "God with us" will demonstrate His interactions to develop Christ-like character within us, Christian formation.

These interactions of love move mankind continually towards His aim in history: "the creation of a community of loving people with God Himself at the center as its source of life and sustainer/provider and as its most exalted and glorious inhabitant.

General Comment on Writing Style: These workbooks are intended for use in the Foundations 201 Course, Immanuel in Time and Space. My hope is that the information within this document will also be useful as a Bible study aid especially regarding the chapter introductory materials such as context, dispensations, literary background, era time charts and the summaries of the work of building God's community in each chapter.

This study, A Bible Survey, consists of two workbooks. The first addresses the period of time from the beginning through the end of the Old Testament, approximately 400 B.C. The second begins at the end of the Old Testament and continues through the New Testament and to the end of time.

# **IMMANUEL IN TIME AND SPACE**

# INTRODUCTION

# I. <u>Purpose/Goals</u>:

The objectives of this course of study are:

- A. to provide a panorama, a walk through the entire Bible, to give Christians a high level review of the primary actions of God with mankind during the period we call time. As such, we will focus principally on key persons and events of each era.
- B. to show some of the principle characters biblical history in their "Immanuel" (God with us) life and how God worked in the formation of their character.

This goal will be achieved in sections called "Character Studies" by an identification and emphasis on the spiritual disciplines embraced by individuals during the era being addressed.

- C. to show Christians both new and old how to walk the path to Christian maturity by embracing spiritual disciplines illustrated in the Bible.
- D. to learn more about the character of God (who He is) and what He does.
- E. to gain biblical insights for living a God-pleasing life.
- F. to provide a Bible study aid by presenting information such as:
  - context.
  - dispensation,
  - literary style considerations.
  - dates, and
  - key events and key events timetables.

The information provided should be helpful for background and context studies no matter where you are studying in the Bible.

# II. Structure of the Study:

In general, there are 5 parts to most sessions:

- A. Background material for the specific chapter era. This will include materials such as dispensation, literary style, date timelines and context.
- B. A summary of the major events in a given era. Also provided are time charts of these major events.
- C. God's Actions and Man's Responses
- D. Character Studies
- E. Homework assignments for each session

A note about dates: All dates are taken from the Reese Chronological Bible unless otherwise indicated.

# III. Spiritual Disciplines:

Jesus said He came that we might have a more abundant life. (John 10:10)

As a part of this life and in preparation for things to come, the Holy Spirit works within us to form Christ-like (Christian) character.

Christian character does not happen automatically nor will it occur apart from our participation. When I was a young Christian, I would, at times, pray that God would strike me, presumably with a lightening bolt or some sort of supernatural event, and make me a "super-Christian overnight. (Much to my disappointment, it never happened.)

Paul gave us one of the keys to Christ-like character formation in his letter to Timothy when he wrote:

"Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness." (I Tim. 4:7)

The purpose of embracing Biblical disciplines is the formation of Christ-like character. It is a part of our training in the spiritual life. This is how we "place ourselves before God as a living sacrifice." (Rom. 12:1-2)

There are many spiritual disciplines: fasting, prayer, worship, silence, solitude, celebration, guidance, meditation, memorization, to name a few. These disciplines continually appear on the pages of scripture in the lives of God's saints and also throughout history in the lives of godly men and women; e.g.

- The Psalms repeatedly extol the virtues of meditation. (Psalm 1; 119) (meditation)
- Jesus, throughout His earthly ministry, constantly sought a place of quiet and privacy to commune with His Father. (solitude and prayer)
- Paul, after his conversion experience, spent years in the desert in preparation for the things God had called him to do. (silence and solitude)
- David spent his early years in the hills alone with his father's sheep. (solitude and silence)
- The Bereans studied God's Word day after day to "see if these things were so."
   (Acts 17:11) (studying the Word or Bible intake)
  - o Joseph consistently and effectively served those whom God has placed him under. (serving)

# How does this work?

When we embrace a spiritual discipline, we are asking God to form Christ's character in us. But...we cannot actually transform ourselves. Only God, by His Holy Spirit, can do this.

For example, I cannot make myself to be more loving toward my enemies. I might force myself to perform outward duties toward them, but deep in my heart, the love God calls for is not there.

If someone treats me unfavorably, I can zip my lips...but the animosity of being treated with disrespect still exists, unless God makes the change.

Our action to embrace a discipline prepares us and sets us before God as a living sacrifice. He then takes my offering and produces something in me of far greater value than I could ever have imagined or achieved by my own efforts.

# What is a spiritual discipline?

A spiritual discipline is a purposeful, repeatable action that we take, something we can do, in order to receive something from God which we cannot do.

An example from our culture is "the weight room." Athletes who are training for "the big game" will spend hours repetitively lifting weights and embracing other physical disciplines such as running to strengthen their bodies for the testing it will receive from the contest. These are purposeful, repeated actions that they embrace. The difference being that they can strengthen their bodies but we must rely on the Holy Spirit to transform us into the likeness of Christ.

We take up fasting to subdue the appetites of the flesh; but ultimately, it is God by the Holy Spirit that crucifies the old nature.

When we embrace silence and solitude, we become acutely aware of the things that displease God. Our innermost self is revealed. We then take these things to God and ask for His work of grace.

The spiritual disciplines do not contain any power or ability to change us. They contain no moral righteousness. Their purpose is solely to place us before God. When Jesus sought silence and solitude, His purpose was communion with His Father. The silence and solitude were the preparations for this to occur.

A parallel is the discipline of serving. When I serve using the gift of teaching, I am only an empty channel through which the water of life can flow. I prepare and discipline my studies, and then I teach. But it is only in being a channel of God's grace to his people that I receive or impart life. (Even the channel receives cleansing and refreshing from the flow of life through it.) In effect, I place myself in the path of the flow of the Spirit.

In all of this, we acknowledge that it is God who is at work within us for His pleasure. (Phil 2:12-13) Further, this passage instructs us that it is God who is at work within us to will and to work...and that our effort is to be accompanied with fear and trembling." This shows that our efforts are of a serious nature and merit our responsible action.

Even the fact that I am desiring God's grace and the work of His Spirit is an act of grace. (No one in his natural mind desires that the flesh be crucified.)

So, from where does this desire come? Grace alone, by the work of God, the Holy Spirit.

Every discipline we will ever embrace must be saturated with the grace of God.

And, we must remember, we have our part to do. Grace does not respond to inactivity or presumption. Laziness with regard to spiritual growth never appropriated the grace of God.

A final word from Peter, second book, first chapter:

"Make every effort to add to your faith goodness... knowledge...self-control... perseverance...godliness...brotherly love...agape love." (vv. 5-7)

"Make every effort"...something I must do...utilizing every resource and energy I possess...but accompanied by the grace of God to form the character of Christ in me.

# For further Study:

- 1. "Celebration of Discipline, the Path to Spiritual Growth" by Richard J. Foster
- 2. "Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life" by Donald S. Whitney
- 3. "The Renovare Spiritual Formation Bible" by Richard J. Foster, Dallas Willard, Walter Brueggemann, Eugene Peterson

# Disciplines by Author:

1. "Celebration of Discipline, the Path to Spiritual Growth" by Richard J. Foster

Meditation	Prayer	Fasting	Study
Simplicity	Solitude	Submission	Service
Confession	Worship	Guidance	Celebration

2. "Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life" by Donald S. Whitney

Biblical Intake	Prayer	Worship	Evangelism
Serving	Stewardship	Fasting	Silence and Solitude
Journaling			

A further breakdown on Biblical Intake:

Reading...Studying...Memorization...Meditation

# IV. <u>Literary Overview</u>:

The Bible is literature replete with a variety of literary styles.

Literature is a body of writings in prose or verse in which the authors choose words and forms to communicate what they are thinking or what they have experienced.

The Bible is an anthology, a collection of books. In fact, the name Bible comes from the Greek "Biblia" which means "little books."

The two principle literary forms in which the Bible is written are narrative and poetry.

There are a number of general literary styles utilized by the biblical authors in addition to narrative and poetry; e.g. prophecy, wisdom, apocalyptic, parables, allegories, figures of speech, doctrinal treatise, to mention a few.

It is important to recognize that the content of a literary work is communicated through its form and it is the form that provides the meaning. Without an accurate recognition of the literary form, the meaning cannot be properly determined.

For example, there is a great deal of difference between how one interprets the narratives of the Old Testament and the Apocalyptic writings of the book of Revelation.

A parable is interpreted differently than an allegory.

The wisdom literature of Proverbs is interpreted much differently than the lament Psalms.

Each literary style has its own guidelines for proper interpretation.

So, understanding the literary type of a passage and the guidelines for its interpretation become an important part of the biblical interpretation process, i.e. determining the meaning of a passage and the appropriate application.

# Abstract versus real life experience:

Another important element in the literary field is that the Bible presents both abstract information in the form of principles and then seeks to demonstrate that information in the terms of real life human experience. For example, one of the 10 commandments is "You shall not commit adultery." This command is the abstract principle. The account of David and Bathsheba provides the same truth but in a real life situation. In this story, we see the physical actions and the verbal exchanges as David eventually is confronted with his sin and then accepts the consequences for breaking the law of God.

We see a similar illustration with the command: "You shall have no other gods before me." Idolatry is the abstract forbidden practice. And the Old Testament is filled with real life situations both on an individual and national level where idolatry was embraced. We then see the results of violating a precept of God.

# A goal of literature:

One of the goals of literature is to enable the reader to share in the experience of the story. The truths of scripture are not just ideas that are true but that they are true for human experience. We are not simply learning so as to store up "nice-to-know" facts of wisdom. The goal of the Biblical learning process is the application of the truths of scripture to our real-life experiences. And as we do, depending on our faithfulness to the biblical revelation, we will experience the fruitfulness and formation that true scriptural behavior promises.

# The uniqueness of biblical language:

One final area of comment: The Scriptures utilize distinct literary features that set it apart from the ordinary literature that we peruse; the use of images, figures of speech and idioms that are unique to the culture. Some of these figures of speech are metaphors, similes, hyperbole, irony and word play to mention a few.

A good example of hyperbole is used by Jesus in his sermon on the mount when he exhorts his listeners that "if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away." Obviously, cutting off my hand will not change my heart which is the root of the problem of sin. He is using exaggeration for effect to demonstrate the importance of getting sin out of your life.

So, it will be important for the Bible student to understand the meaning of the images, idioms and figures of speech used in the Bible before interpreting a passage.

# V. Introduction to the Bible:

<u>The Bible</u>: The Bible without a doubt, without a challenge, is the greatest, most significant work of literature, history and theology that has ever been written. In its initial formation, its preservation and transmittal, in its translation, proclamation and in its effects (impact on history and effect of life changes), it is the most profound and impactful document of all time.

Its remarkable unity with a diverse selection of authors, the time span over which it was recorded (~ 1500 years) and diverse literary forms blend smoothly to traverse time from the beginning of time to eternity.

In the pages of this book, we discover the roots of our past, we come to know and understand our present and our present dilemma (the problem of man), and we secure an immovable vision and hope for the future.

The Old Testament lays the foundation of God's redemptive history bridging into the New Testament consummation of God's plan in the work of Christ.

The principle theme of the Bible is: "Jesus Christ and the salvation that God offers through Him."

It presents God's plan and His actions to restore "Immanuel" (God with us) in our lives. God shows us in advance, through prophecy, what He is doing in all of time.

# Looking inside:

God's Word is simply amazing.

more than 40 authors writing over 1500 years.

diverse backgrounds – a shepherd, kings, a statesman, farmers, warriors, a doctor, one was royalty turned slave, another a cupbearer to the king didn't talk to one another...didn't compare notes...didn't call a meeting to draw straws to see who would get the major prophets assignments simply gave the Word to those for whom it was spoken and wrote what God had directed.

a great variety of literary styles, one author identifies more than 100 styles of writing:

narratives, poetry, wisdom literature, hero stories, tragedies, good news pronouncements, doctrine and teaching, apocalyptic, letters of rebuke, prophecy, a love story, laments, drama, to name a few

1189 chapters, 774,746 words, 3,506,480 letters over 200 distinct categories of figures of speech, e.g. similes, metaphors, hyperboles

And when you put it all together...seamless, it all fits precisely together like a 10,000 piece puzzle (but a much larger scale) no contradictions, nothing false, no deceptions, no fantasy perfect, unified wisdom for all ages in all of its parts simply amazing.

And all of the words form a unified story of God's great love for mankind and his plan of redemption for mankind who has lost its way.

and all of the words show God at work in the world, in human hearts, making the Immanuel life available to whoever will call upon His name,

I hope that one of the fruits of this course for you will be an increasing appreciation and love for God's Word.

# Difficulties of the Bible:

In addition to the fact that it was written by many different authors over many centuries, in different languages, locations and cultures, the Bible, in most of its translations, is not provided chronologically.

For example, the prophets and writings are inserted after the historical accounts in which they occur and some of the prophetic writings do not indicate the situation to which they were speaking. (There are now a few chronological Bibles available in which the authors have attempted to place all passages in their chronological sequence.

Additionally, there are many sub-plots and self-contained stories. (e.g. Abraham's trip to Egypt) making it difficult to follow the main themes of the Bible; e.g. What does the story of Dinah have to do with the main theme of God's salvation history?

# How to survey the Bible:

There are a number of different ways to sub-divide the Bible in order to conduct a survey of its contents:

- Genesis 1-3 Creation and Man's fall
   Gen.4-Rev. 22 Restoration of man to fellowship with God
- Old Testament New Testament
- 3. Torah

History

Writings (Prophets, wisdom literature)

Gospels

Missions

Letters to churches

Revelation

4. Dispensations: see Excel chart at the end of this chapter

Innocence

Conscience

Civil Government

**Patriarchs** 

Law

Grace

Millenium

- 5. Historical approach trace the chronological sequence of all of the events recorded in the Bible
- 6. Stages of God's revelation:
  - communion:
    - a. with individuals
    - b. with a family

- c. with tribes
- d. with a people
- e. with a nation
- f. with Immanuel
- g. in eternity

It is this sixth category that will be utilized in our review of God's "Immanuel" actions in time and space. Part of the reason in choosing this approach is that it is the least known by most Bible readers and therefore will provide a fresh approach to our high level review of time.

In addition, this approach provides a powerful tool for examining the "heroes of faith" as God was forming the character of Christ in them. We learn of Christian formation as we view the "with-God" characteristics of their lives and discover spiritual disciplines that they embraced in their adventures of life that enabled them to live a God-pleasing life while on the earth. We will also review the accounts of several persons who did not live "God-pleasing" lives and whose wayward steps led them down the paths of destruction and great loss. (e.g. Lot, Saul)

This approach also allows us to view the actions of God in time as he relates first of all to individuals, then to a family, to a tribe, a people, a nation and ultimately to all of mankind.

We will see the broad sweep of God's redemptive motions in time and space on behalf of His "crowning creation."

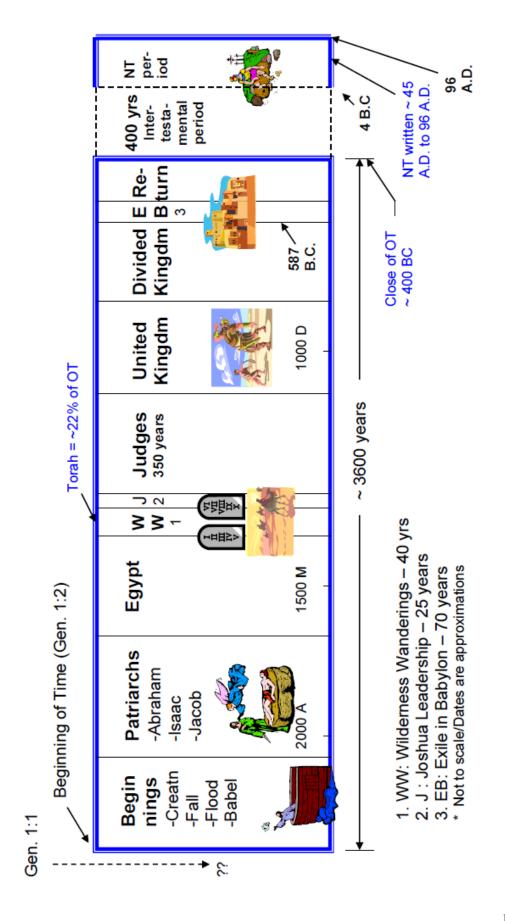
We will also learn much about the character and ways of God.

One of the primary goals of this course of studies is to provide new Christians with an overview of the entire Bible. To accomplish this objective, we will review the major characters and events of the Bible in the light of God's redemptive plan and in the light of character formation.

Several charts are provided at the end of this lesson which demonstrate ways of reviewing the history of God's actions in time.

# God's Plan of the Ages – Creation to the End of the NT Period\*

Note: Vertical lines separate distinguishable eras in Israel's History.



# God's Plan for the Ages – Creation to the End of Time

# Beginning of Time

Completion of Old Testament

Ez.,Neh.,

Esther

Return

Exile

Divided

# Begin-

**Patriarchs** 

nings

Gen. 1-11 God in communion directly with Creation – individuals

Jacob – Joseph

Covenants

Abraham – Isaac plan thru a <u>family</u>

Sin - Flood-





# Ex.- Deut. Exodus Egypt-

Conquest

The people of God on the march

God mediates His

Gen 12-50

10 Commands Moses – Egypt Wilderness Exodus



Begin New Testament Period

# Jos.- I Sa The tribes of srael in the Judges Judges Joshua land



# God's people Sam., Kgs. Kingdom Saul - David become a United Chron. nation



# Kgs. Chron. God's people Kingdom Prophets in rebellion - in difficult times

in daily living and worship in prayer

# Assyria 722 B.C. Babylon 586 B.C. God's people in Kgs. Chron. **Prophets** captivity (Israel) (Judah)

temple/wall

rebuilt

restoration

people in

God's



# End of Time -

# mental period Intertesta-

The

preparation for the coming king 2<sup>nd</sup> temple" Silence "

Greece - Alexander Egypt (Ptolemy) Syria (Seleucid) Macabbean Persia

# Letters to the Churches Acts of the Apostles

Nurturing the church Romans-Jude New Testament

the gospel to the

world"

**Book of Acts** 

Matt.- John

400 - 4 B.C.

Gospels

Day of Pentecostbirth of the church

Collecting Period Interpretation and Application of the Gospel events Writing Period Oral Period

Instructions to churches Martyrs for the missionary journeys Paul's 3

# The Church Age (from Extra-biblical sources)

The Spirit of God within Church Fathers Reformation Constantine His people Dark Ages Pentecost

The Rapture of the Church

Marriage Supper of

God's People With Him Book of Revelation Forever

2nd Coming of Christ Judgment of nations 7-Year Tribulation Throne Judgment The Great White Gog and Magog "The Millenium" Lake of Fire

Eternal doom of Satan The New Jerusalem "IT IS DONE!!"

# ion of the Christ death/resurrec-Salvation WON the people of life/ministry, Immanuel The birth, God with

anguage - roads

Rome – Herod

			CHART	of the DI	SPENS	CHART of the DISPENSATIONS of GOD	GOD	Name of the latest of	
DISPENSATION						Main	Test	Covenant	Result
	4000 BC	3000BC	2000 BC	1000BC	0 B.C	Character			
Innocence						Adam	tree of know-	Edenic	disobeyed God's
3975 B.C 3975 B.C.							ledge of good		command
Gen. 1:28 - 3:8	ST ST						and evil		
Conscience						Adam	appropriate blood	Adamic	murder wickedness
3975 B.C 2319 B.C.							sacrifice for sins		spreads throughout
Gen. 3:9 - 8:14									the earth
Civil Government						Noah	replenish and fill	Noahic	tower of babel -
2319 B.C 1892 B.C.							the earth		astrology, poly-
Gen. 8:15 - 11:32				100000					theism
Patriarchs						Abraham	stay in the land	Abrahamic	propensity to
1892 B.C 1462 B.C.			87 - 197						leave the land
Gen. 12:1 - Ex. 18:27									
Law						Moses	keep the Law	Mosaic	didn't keep the Law
1462 B.C A.D. 29									rejected the
Ex. 19:1 - Acts 1:26									Messiah
Grace						Jesus	accept God's	New	most men will not
A.D. 29- A.D. 96						Paul	gracious gift		accept God's gift
Acts 2:1 - Rev. 19:21									of grace
Millenium						Messiah	obedience to the	New	men will fail to
1000 years							new covenant		accept the Messiah
Rev. 20:1-10							and new king		

# **LESSON # 12**

# Stage 12: **Between the Testaments**

Community focus: Preparation for the Coming King

# I. Context:

In the last lesson of the Old Testament Period, we saw the return of Israel from captivity in Babylon. This return was accomplished through 3 main returns:

- the first under Zerubbabel with about 50,000 persons. Zerubbabel led the people in the rebuilding of the temple.
- the 2<sup>nd</sup> return was led by Ezra who, upon arriving in Jerusalem, was astonished to learn that the people had already begun to intermarry with the people of the land, a practice that was strictly prohibited by God.
- the 3<sup>rd</sup> return was led by Nehemiah, a godly man, who had been the cupbearer to the king of Babylonia. He led the people in rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, a task which took only 52 days. When this project was completed, Nehemiah along with Ezra, led the people in a national revival.

The end of the Old Testament period occurred approximately 400 B.C.

This began the "period of silence" when there were no writing prophets in the land.

# II. Background:

This period of time is often referred to as the "2<sup>nd</sup> Temple" period because the people lived during the time of the reconstruction of the temple (536 - 516 B.C.) and its final destruction in 70 A.D.

It is also referred to as "the silent years." At the end of the Old Testament period, God stopped speaking to His people through the written Word. For the next 400 years, the writing prophets would be quiet. These would eventually be replaced by the apostles and evangelists as they penned the New Testament scriptures.

Even though the pens of the prophets were still during this period, the voices continued as they spoke to the remnant of faithful saints who were studying His Word and looking for the coming Messiah.

# Sources of Information

There are many sources of information regarding the events of this period:

- the Apocrypha
- the Pseudepigrapha

- the writings of Josephus
- the writings of a philosopher named Philo
- the 1946-1947 discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls
- the Targums (Aramaic translation of the OT)
- rabbinic literature which developed during this period

The Apocrypha is a collection of Jewish writings that were collected during this period. These 15 (or 14) books are included in the canon of some major religious groups today (e.g. Orthodox and Roman Catholic), but most groups do not include them.

Pseudepigrapha were books that were falsely attributed to significant persons (e.g. Enoch, Noah). These writings are not considered to be a part of the canon by nearly all major denominations today.

# Cultural Background

The principle cultural background to which the Messiah was born was Hebrew.

This background was principally a religious background because the Hebrews (Jews) were the nation God had chosen as His own special people and given them the prophets, the writings, the temple and the Law. In the NT, the message of the gospel was first delivered to the Jews and then to the Gentiles.

There were three centers of the life and culture of Judaism:

# 1. Babylon

Changes that occurred in Judaism when they were in captivity in Babylon carried over when they returned to Jerusalem.

- a. The exile had fostered in the people a monotheism, "one God."
- b. The Law had been expanded to include others writings, especially the Mishnah and the Haggada which together were referred to as the Talmud. The Mishnah was a man-generated guide for living. The Haggada was the commentary and interpretation of the Scriptures. The Rabbis had formulated their own tradition.
- c. Synagogues were established as the local place of worship.
- d. New career professions of teachers and scribes were established. It was in this cultured class of rabbis and scribes who, in their zeal to preserve the laws and traditions of Judaism, reduced the Jewish religion to a collection of outward forms and ordinances.

# 2. Alexandria

A significant number of Jews migrated to Egypt shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem. When Alexander founded Alexandria in 332 B.C., it is estimated that half of the population were Jews. At this time, the Jews constituted approximately 1/8 of the

population of Egypt.

He gave them citizens rights and was very favorable towards them. He even gave them a special section in the city. Alexandria had become the capital of the Jewish Diaspora (Dispersion).

Alexandria was a Greek-speaking city. Therefore, the Jewish people began learning Greek and slowly the Hebrew language was disappearing from their lips.

The Greek-speaking Jews were then without the Scriptures in their new language. So, a new translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek was begun. The Torah would be completed in 280 B.C. and the rest of the Old Testament about 100 years later. This version of the Hebrew Scriptures was called the Septuagint.

The Jews prospered in Egypt during these 400 years. They also grew in number. By the time of Christ it was estimated that approximately one million Jews were living in Egypt.

# 3. Jerusalem

Approximately 50,000 Jews had returned to Judea with the first return from Babylon under Zerubbabel's leadership.

Many who returned remained in the land and tried to maintain their religious heritage. But even many of these, in the midst of difficulties, were led into a works-based religion instead of that of faith.

There was, however, always a faithful remnant of those who remained true to covenant faithfulness and righteousness.

During this period, two opposing parties were being formed within the Jews, the Hellenists and the anti-Hellenists.

The Hellenists were the political party of the Jewish aristocratic priesthood. They were not popular with the common people. They cared but little for their religion. They conformed to the world-view and were intellectual and worldly. Later they became the Sadducees.

Among their beliefs were:

- They denied the resurrection of the body.
- They denied a belief in future rewards and punishments.
- They denied the existence of angels and evil spirits.

The anti-Hellenists were against most things Hellenists, especially those who opposed traditional Judaism. This group became the Pharisees. They were popular among the people and were the most influential leaders. They had a high regard for the rabbinic traditions (Talmud).

But, by Jesus' day, they had degenerated into empty legalism, "whited sepulcres."

# III. Major Periods within the Inter-testamental period:

# A. The Persian Period: 539 – 333 B.C.

Persia was used by God to open the door for the displaced Jews to return to their homeland and re-establish their way of life. Note that OT prophecy (See Isa. 45:13ff) predicted the actual name of the king of Persia (Cyrus) who would allow their return. Ezra 1:2f records that Cyrus said that the Lord had charged him to build the Lord a house at Jerusalem.

During this period, Palestine was under the rule of the high priests who were responsible to the satrap (governor) of Syria which was a province of Persia. This period of time was mild and, in general, uneventful with regard to persecutions and conflicts.

Persia reached the height of her power around 500 B.C. However, in the time of her 5<sup>th</sup> emperor, Artaxerxes I, she began to weaken.

In 334 B.C. Alexander the Great began his conquest of Persia. His military campaigns against Persia lasted about 5 years.

In 333 B.C., he moved throughout the Palestine area. His conquests also included Egypt and Mesopotamia.

# B. The Alexandrian Period: 334 – 323 B.C.

As Alexander conquers, he imposes the Greek language and culture on all of the conquered nations. As a result of this action, all of the New Testament will be written in Greek and therefore, understandable throughout the known world.

This brief period of rule came to an end with Alexander's death.

It is important to note that, by the time of Jesus, many "Hellenized" Jews had adopted Greek ways, customs and speech and had abandoned an exclusive spirit of Hebrew tradition and ancestry.

# C. The Egyptian Period (Ptolemies): 323 – 204 B.C.

Alexander died in 323 B.C. and four of his generals divided the conquered lands. <u>Palestine</u>, Libya and Arabia went to Ptolemy of Egypt, Seleccus obtained Syria and the Asian countries not given to Ptolemy. (foretold in the book of Daniel) Antigonus ruled in Greece and Macedon and Lysimachus took control of Thrace and much of Asia Minor.

The Palestinian Jews had their own priest as they did under Persian rule, but now had to pay tribute to the Egyptian government. Ptolemy took many Jews to Egypt and gave them religious freedom and the full rights of citizenship. In this environment it is not difficult to predict the difficulty of these Jews in maintaining their separation from the

world.

Judea was, for a short while, allowed self-rule. But often, it became a battleground for wars between Syria and Egypt.

The first copies of the Torah in Greek (Septuagint) were distributed during this period.

By 277 B.C., the 4 kingdoms of the generals had consolidated to 3, the Antigonus dynasty in Macedonia and the Ptolemies and Seleucids.

D. The Syrian Period (Seleucids): 204 B.C. – 165 B.C.

In 198 B.C., the Seleucids gained control over Judea from the Ptolemies. Antiochus III the Great is their leader. (the father of Antiochus IV Epiphanes – the little horn of Daniel 8)

This was not a good time for the Jews. Uninterrupted martyrdom was the experience of many of the people during this time.

Antiochus IV wanted to make a great empire for himself. Part of his program was to "Hellinize" the world (and eliminate Judaism).

In Palestine, he:

- replaced the Jewish priests with unspiritual men,
- outlawed Judaism, abolishing the worship of Yahweh, and
- set up immoral, pagan worship.

In 168 B.C., he forced the Jews to offer sacrifices to pagan gods on pagan altars.

An idol devoted to Jupiter was erected in the temple and later, sacrifices to Greek gods were offered up on the altar in the "Most Holy Place."

# E. The Period of the Maccabees (Hasmonian) 165 – 63 B.C.

The most prominent days of Jewish history between Malachi and Matthew were the days of the Maccabees and their struggles for Jewish independence.

The Jews were continually oppressed, massacred and subjugated by every army that entered Judea. Finally, they rose up to revolt against their oppressors and fight for their freedom.

The most repulsive and climactic persecution came from Antiochus Epiphanes. He invaded Jerusalem, slaughtered 40,000 Jews in 3 days, forced his way into the Holy of Holies of the temple and set up an altar there where he sacrificed a pig as a burnt offering.

He forced the Jews to worship idols and to eat the flesh of unclean sacrifices. In response, they arose under the leadership of an old, loyal patriot named Mattathias.

Mattathias and his 5 sons quickly became the leaders of a great fight for Jewish independence.

The first stand was made and Antiochus openly defied when his commissioner tried to force the people to participate in heathen rites and subjection to the tyrant ruler.

Mattathias, the Jewish leader, refused to submit, killed the commissioner and retreated to a mountain hideout. From there, he rallied the people to follow him and pursue their independence.

Mattathias died within a year of the initial revolt and his son, Judas, succeeded him in the struggle for independence.

Under his leadership and a renewed faith in God, every army that was sent out against him was defeated until they were, at last, successful in throwing off the yoke of the oppressor and gained Jewish independence. Their victory is still celebrated every year at Hannukkah.

For the next 100 years, Judea was governed by the Maccabees.

They cleansed and reopened the temple and worked to restore some of the splendor of the earlier days.

But...the Maccabean leaders became selfish and ambitious. Posturing for position and greed for material gain replaced their patriotism. Party divisions weakened their unity.

This period of fading loyalties gave rise to 3 parties, the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes. (See chart at the end of this session for a comparison of the Pharisees and Sadducees.)

The Essenes – They embraced a stricter discipline than the Pharisees and Sadducees.

They rejected worldly pleasures as evil but regarded continence (self-restraint, esp. regarding sexual intercourse) and control of the passions as virtuous acts.

Many rejected marriage as a safeguard against loose living and infidelity.

"The strict discipline of the group resulted in the absence of strife or disturbance. The only things permitted of the members free will were acts of help to the needy and attitudes of compassion. The sect was noted for its fidelity, integrity and humanity.

Admission to become an Essene was by way of an initial one-year novitiate during which the beginner was expected to manifest the qualities to which the sect aspired. If he passed the first year and was regarded as a suitable candidate, he was required to undergo a further two-year period of testing after which he was admitted to the Essene Society. At this point the candidate took oaths of fidelity and piety toward God and justice toward men after which he was

allowed to take part in the communal food as a fully accredited member of the group." (from Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible.)

The Essenes were in possession of the Scriptures which they stored in clay jars in caves. In the 20th century A.D., a number of these Scriptures were discovered at the community of Qumran. Discoveries included a whole book of Isaiah and numerous other scrolls with portions of text from almost every OT book. The scrolls are dated at ~ 200 B.C. which places them much closer in age to the original OT manuscripts.

The successors to Antiochus were not about to allow their former vassal and tax contributors go so easily. They continued the fight against Jewish independence and invaded the land with a large army determined to put down the rebels.

The brother of Judas was killed in battle and after a year of difficulties and hardship, Judas made an alliance with Rome, the legs of iron and the feet of iron and clay (see Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2.)

Although the alliance at first seemed to promise peace, the Jews would discover a tyrant more cruel than all the others.

The end of Jewish independence came in 63 B.C. when the Roman army under Pompey besieged the city and totally destroyed the temple with merciless massacres beyond description.

## Judah was now under Roman rule.

# F. The Roman Period: 63 - 70 A.D.

In 63 B.C., Aemelius Scaurus lead Pompey's army into Palestine, conquered it and established Roman control and the end of Jewish political independence. <u>The Jews had lost their national identity</u>.

Caesar appointed Antipater as ruler over Judea and his two sons to positions of authority. One of them, Herod, was appointed over Jerusalem. He was about 20 years old at the time.

After several cruel years, Herod was appointed governor over Judea.

- 47 B.C. the library at Alexandria is burned. It was one of the largest libraries in the known world at that time. No works retained at Alexandria survived.
- 44 B.C. Julius Caesar is murdered.
- 40 B.C. Herod the Great is declared "King of the Jews" by the Roman Senate.
- 37-4 B.C. Herod recaptures Jerusalem from Antigonus and rules in Jerusalem.
- 20/19 B.C. Herod the Great begins rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem partly to please

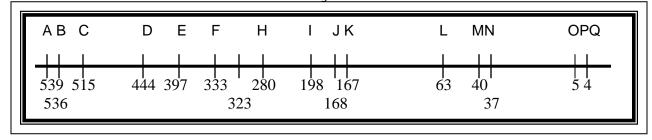
the Jews and also for his own glory. This is the Herod that commanded the slaying of all Jewish boys less than 2 years of age after the birth of Jesus. (Matt. 2:16ff)

- 5 B.C. John the Baptist is born to Zechariah and Elizabeth.
- 5/4 B.C. Jesus of Nazareth is born in Bethlehem.
- 4 B.C. Herod the Great dies. Upon his death, the kingdom was divided between his three sons...Herod Archelaus (see Matt. 2:22) became ethnarch of Judea, Samaria and Idumea, Herod Antipas became tetrarch of Galilee and Perea and Herod Phillip II became tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis.

# IV. Timetable of Major Events:

- A. Decree of Cyrus 539 B.C.
- B. 1st return to Jerusalem 536 B.C.
- C. Temple rebuilt and dedicated 536 516 B.C.
- D. 3<sup>rd</sup> return with Nehemiah, wall rebuilt 444 B.C.
- E. End of OT history 397 B.C.
- F. Alexander conquers Palestine 333 B.C.
- G. Alexander dies 323 B.C.
- H. Begin translation of OT into Greek (Septuagint) 280 B.C.
- I. Seleucids gain control of Palestine 198 B.C.
- J. Antiochus IV desecrates the temple 168 B.C.
- K. Maccabean revolt 167/166 B.C.
- L. Pompey's army conquers Palestine, Egypt and Mesopotamia 63 B.C.
- M. Herod declared "King of the Jews." 40 B.C.
- N. Herod rules Palestine 37-4 B.C.
- O. John the Baptist born 5 B.C.
- P Jesus of Nazareth born 5/4 B.C.
- Q. Herod the Great dies. 4 B.C.

Time Chart of Major Events (B.C.)



# V. Two Questions

1. What is God doing during the period between the testaments?

Prophetic silence does not men inactivity. There was much happening:

- The Greek language was introduced not only to Palestine but also to the known, ancient world.

The Old Testament was being translated into Greek and now everyone in the known world had access to God's written revelation of Himself to mankind.

In this light, preparation was being made to expand God's revelation from a specific nation to all nations. (See table of contents of this document to trace His work from individuals to the world.)

- Rome, with its vast empire, constructed roads that would facilitate quick access by their armies to any part of their lands. These roads would be used by the apostles and evangelists to travel the known world with the gospel.
- There were still those among the faithful who would live to love and obey God. Notable examples are Joseph and Mary, Zechariah and Elizabeth, Anna, a prophetess and Simeon, a righteous and devout man who was waiting for the consolation of Israel.
- God was still sifting and testing His people.

Antiochus IV, a Greek king, planned to transform Jerusalem into a Greek city in which Gentiles would feel equally at home. One of the things he did to accomplish his purposes was to install Gentiles rituals in the Jewish temple.

His plan promised to "put Jerusalem on the map" in an exciting and new way, but at the price of Israel's distinctives embedded in their commitment to live according to the Torah and love and obey Yahweh.

These actions led to the revolt of the Maccabees.

- <u>In general, God was preparing the earth for the arrival of the king.</u> God, Himself, would take on flesh and "come down" and live among Hispeople.
- The written revelation of God preparing all peoples for the coming Messiah is now complete and is carefully guarded and reproduced for the generations yet to come.
- During this period, the Jews are pawns of the "greater powers" of Persia, Greece, Assyria and Rome. Especially with the Greeks, overwhelming attempts were made to convert the Jews to a different culture.

These continuous efforts by conquerors to change their identity, molded within them a strong desire and longing for the promised Messiah, a

coming king who would deliver them from their oppressors.

- Through the prophetic ministry, God was providing the hope of a deliverer, the Messiah. By the time of Christ, there were Jews such as Anna and Simeon who looked forward to "the consolation of Israel."
- 2. Why is there a period of silence after 400 B.C. when there are no writing prophets?

The writing prophets principally ministered to Judah and Israel during the times of the divided kingdom. The principle message of the prophets was to call the people to repentance, to put off their foreign gods and idol worship, and serve the living and true God.

At the end of the Old Testament, Judah has returned to the land of promise. Israel and its 10 tribes have been dispersed throughout many countries.

The messages of the prophets for the Old Testament period and hence the finalization of the OT Scriptures, were then complete.

# VI. God's Actions During the Inter-Testamental Period – A Summary

- 1. He continues to shepherd His people safely guarding, guiding and nurturing those who walk after Him in faith, love and obedience.
- 2. He continues the administration of His overarching plan for mankind, a community of loving people with Him at the center as its Sustainer and most glorious inhabitant (See Rev. 21:1-4)

The events on earth continue according to the plan He had conceived before time began and are in accordance with His pre-determined sequence and timing as is embedded in the prophetic Scriptures.

- 3. He prepares the world for the coming Messiah which was God who would take the form of a human servant and dwell among them. This includes such items as the institution of the Greek language world-wide, Roman roads throughout the known world, and those who persecute His people which created an intense longing for the coming deliverer.
- 4. He raised up godly men and women during this time to encourage and exhort His people and to provide examples of lives lived in fellowship and obedience to God. See Apocryphal literature such as Judith, Susanna, and Jesus Ben Sira in "The Wisdom of Sirach." Even though many do not accept these books as divinely inspired, they are a source of hope and encouragement to the people living during that time much in the same way as we read the lives and writings of men and women who live during our time; e.g. Billy Graham, Brother Lawrence, Martin Luther, John of the Cross, St. Ignatius, Teresa of Avila, Andrew Murray.

5. He safe-guards his Word – the Old Testament. Now that the Old Testament has been given to man, He guides the canonization process and the collection, storage and reproduction of copies for the use of people everywhere. He inspired the translation of the Old Testament into Greek so that people from all countries would have access to God's self-revelation to mankind.

He inspired the Essenes to store copies of the books of the Old Testament in clay jars in caves such that copies of His Word will be found approximately 2 millenia later. When found, a comparison of these 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. texts with copies from the 20<sup>th</sup> century A.D. will show the amazing accuracy of the Old Testament that we have today thereby demonstrating the reliability of the Scriptures.

6. He had spoken in advance through His prophets regarding the Gentile rulers who would have the rule over God's people (e.g. Persia, Rome, Greece. (see Daniel 2, 10, 11)

So...the people during the inter-testamental period had a written, dependable forecast of the rulers and nations that were to come.

When the people saw Cyrus giving the Jews permission to return to Israel and rebuild the temple, they could refer to Isaiah's word in Isa. 44: 28 (written about 712 B.C.) and see another precise marker on the road of history. They could also watch other markers such as the 70 years captivity prophesied by Jeremiah (Jer. 25:12), as the foretold events came to pass.

This gave them a significant hope because Daniel (2:44) also prophesied that all of the kingdoms beginning with the head of gold (Nebuchadnezzar) would be destroyed and replaced with an everlasting kingdom.

So, as far back as 712 B.C., God was already preparing his people with an advance picture of the rising and falling of nations (Dan. 2:21) "He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and set up kings. These were the "times of the Gentiles."

They could take hope in the midst of great evil such as that Antiochus IV forced on the Jews (e.g. desecrating the temple with pagan sacrifices) knowing that his days were numbered. They could look ahead with hope to the kingdom that would last forever.

# VII. Homework Assignment:

- 1. In Matthew, chapter 2, wise men came from the east inquiring: "Where is he who is born "king of the Jews?"
  - a. Where did they get this information?

	b. Why would a question such as this create a stir in the Roman court?
2.	Try to imagine yourself a Jew around 170 B.C. when Antiochus IV was ruling and trying to convert Jerusalem into a Helenized city.
	How would you have responded when pagan sacrifices were offered to pagan gods on the sacrificial altar of the Jewish temple?
3.	How were the Jews affected when the writing prophets ceased around 425 B.C.?
	Did God continue to speak to the Jews prophetically?
4.	In John 8:32 Jesus says to the Jews: "and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free." They replied to him: We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone."
	Can you explain their comment?
	Had they forgotten Egypt and Persia and Greece and Syria and Rome?
5.	Summarize 3 significant things that occurred during the intertestamental period.
	a. b. c.
	Can you think of some other important events or matters that had a significant changing or formative effect on the Jews?
6.	Can you think of any prophecies from Scripture that have not yet been fulfilled that might be fulfilled in our time?
	If yes, what are they and when do you think they might be fulfilled?

# The HOLY LAND BEFORE and AFTER the INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD

~400 B.C. ~5 B.C.

Leaders, Preachers	Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Malachi	"The Silent Years" (no writing prophet) 2 <sup>nd</sup> temple period	John the Baptist Jesus
World Ruling Power	Persia		Rome
Religious groups	No major groups		Pharisees, Scribes, Sadducees, Herodians, Sanhedrin
Language	Hebrew		Aramaic and Greek
Place of worship	Temple		Temple and synagogues

# **Pharisees and Sadducees**

PHARISEES	SADDUCEES
"the separated ones"	"the righteous ones"
Largest and most influential	Aristocratic minority
Extreme legalism	External legalism
Little interest in politics	Major interest in politics
Belief in: life after death, immortality, spirits, angels	Denied these doctrines and were basically anti-Pharisee
High regard for the rabbinic tradition: Talmud which consisted of: Mishnah - man-made rules for living Haggada – theology and commentary of	Accepted only the Old Testament as authoritative for matters of faith and life
the rabbis	

# Periods of the History of the Jews Prior to Christ

539 B.C.	333 B.C.	323 B.C.	204 B.C.	165 B.C.	63 B.C.
PERSIAN	GREEK -	EGYPTIAN	SYRIAN –	MACCABEES	ROME
	Alexander	<ul><li>Ptolemies</li></ul>	Seleucids		

# AN IMPORTANT HISTORICAL (AND POIGNANT) REVIEW

In reviewing God's patient dealings with mankind throughout the different eras of time and man's miserable, rebellious response to God, we can't escape the fact that in spite of the continuing grace, mercy, longsuffering and undying love of God, man has failed in every dispensation.

- o The <u>age of innocence</u> ended with willful disobedience and the judgment of spiritual and physical death.
- The <u>age of conscience</u> ended with universal corruption and the near annihilation of the entire race.
- o The <u>dispensation of human government</u> ended by casting God aside, building for the purpose of exalting self and ended with confusion and dispersion.
- The <u>age of promise</u> (Patriarchs) ended with the people of God out of the land of promise in a foreign land under slavery and oppression.
- o The <u>dispensation of the Law</u> ended with the created crucifying the Creator.
- o The <u>age of grace</u> (as foretold) will end with war against God and His Christ.
- o In the <u>kingdom age</u> (as foretold) which will follow the age of grace under the personal rule of God's Christ and the devil's abilities bound for a season and nations no longer deceived by his evil influences, yet when he is loosed, he still finds a multitude willing to believe his lies and serve him.

God has emphatically shown us that, through the ages, the "heart of man is desperately wicked and only evil continually."

From Eden to Gog and Magog, unregenerated human nature has not, can not and will not change

But...praise be to God, throughout the ages, "to as many as received Him to them He gave the power to become the sons of God." The blood of Jesus Christ is the only hope and remedy for mankind's demise, to set them free from the Adamic nature with its inborn sin and rebellion against God.

# LESSON #13

Stage 13: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

Community focus: The People of God with Immanuel

# I. Background:

Dispensation: the Law (until Christ ushers in the dispensation of grace with His

death on the cross)

<u>Context</u>: 400 B.C.The Old Testament canon was completed.

There has been 400 years of silence. (no new scriptures being

inspired and written)

333 B.C. Alexander the Great conquers Palestine

167 B.C Revolt of the Maccabees63 B.C Pompey conquers Jerusalem40 B.C. Herod becomes "king of the Jews"

4 B.C Death of Herod

The Greek language has been introduced into the Palestine region. Romans roads have been constructed to enable the armies of

Rome to travel swiftly from province to province.

Dates of this:

4 B.C. – 33 A.D.

Period

Apart from the creation week, this is the most important period of

time in history.

Literary Type: The primary literary style is "gospel", a narrative that focuses on the

person and work of Jesus.

It is a "good news" proclamation of salvation through the

incarnation, life, crucifixion and resurrection of God's only begotten

son, Jesus Christ.

# Major Events of this era\*:

A. The birth of Jesus - 5/4 B.C.

B. Pilate arrives in Judea - 26 A.D.

C. Beginning of the ministry of John the Baptist - 29 A.D.

D. Jesus' baptism and temptation - 29 A.D.

E. Beginning of the public ministry of Jesus - 29 A.D.

F. Jesus' first Passover (during his public ministry) - 30 A.D.

G. Death of John the Baptist - 31 or 32 A.D.

H. Jesus' final week on earth - March 28 through April 5, 33 A.D.

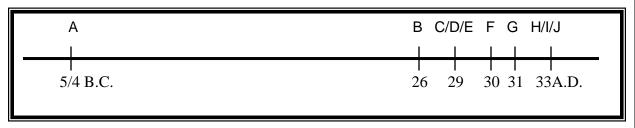
Triumphal entry – Monday, March 30

Christ' final Passover, betrayed, arrested, tried - Thurs. April 2 Christ crucified - Fri. April 3 Christ laid in the tomb - Fri. April 3 (day of preparation for the Sabbath) Christ resurrected - Sun. April 6

- I. Christ Ascended Thurs. May 14
- J. Pentecost/the birth of the church 33 A.D.
- \* Dates are from "Chronological and Background Charts of the New Testament" by H. Wayne House.

Note: A number of authors were surveyed regarding these dates. Variations of up to 3 years exist depending upon the author.

Time Chart of Major Events (B.C.)



# II. Lesson 14 Review:

In lesson 14, we took a look at the 400 years between the testaments. It is often referred to as the silent years but only because of the absence of writing prophets. It was anything but 400 years of silence.

We saw that the land of Judah went through 5 political changes during this period from Persia to Rome. Each time a conqueror came into Judea, there were great upheavals in the cultural, political and religious environment.

For example, when Alexander conquered a land, he immediately set out to Hellenize his new territory. This meant "make it as Greek as possible." This included training the newly conquered peoples to speak Greek. (Hellas is the Greek name for Greece.)

And it often meant abolishing the former religious practices of the land and instituting the worship of the gods of the conquering nation.

This was the period of the  $2^{nd}$  temple and the period in which writers produced the Apocryphal and Pseudipigrapha books.

A question: ""What was God doing during the inter-testamental period?"

Answer: "Preparing for the Coming King"

In today's lesson, we will see God's primary action in forming His community through the most important event of history since creation, the coming of the Messiah which may be called the "Christ Event." (Everything that transpired during His life on earth was important.) This event lasted approximately 37 years (4 B.C. – 33 A.D.) from his birth to his resurrection.

Note scholars vary: e.g. 5 B.C. (birth) to 37 A.D. (death)

# III. The Gospels: Some introductory comments

The 4 gospels are God's permanent witness to the life of Jesus.

- twice as many witnesses as needed in a legal court

 two from his intimate group of apostles two others – Luke and Mark

Matthew: begins with a recitation of Mary's genealogy and then the birth of Christ.

Mark: begins with an account of John the Baptist leading to Jesus' baptism.

Luke: begins with the birth announcements of John and Jesus.

John: goes back to the beginning of time for 5 verses and then introduces

John the Baptist.

They each tell their stories with unique audiences in mind. They often duplicate events that are told by other gospel writers but their records also have their own uniquenesses.

Mark was most likely the first gospel written (late 50s or early 60s). Some scholars believe that other gospel writers may have used some of Mark's materials in writing their own gospels.

Luke (60 A.D.) and then Matthew (60s) were written.

John was the last gospel written most likely in the late 80s or early 90s.

Matthew, Mark and Luke are often referred to as the "Synoptic" gospels because they have much similar material.

John's material, on the other hand, is  $\sim 93$  % unique to John (only 7% found in other gospels.)

The following chart identifies some of the differences:

Synoptics	John
Focused on Jesus' ministry around	Focused on the southern region around
Galilee in the north	Judea
Kingdom emphasis	Focus on Jesus as a person
Jesus, the son of man	Jesus, the son of God
A lot of short sayings, parables	Contains more of the longer discourses of Jesus
Authors report the accounts but with little commentary	John inserts much commentary
1 passover mentioned	John includes 3, possibly 4 passovers

Matthew is writing to Jews and uses a significant number of scriptures from the Old Testament with the hopes of convincing the Jews that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah.

Mark writes to Gentile Christians, especially Romans, and appeals to them by the recording of numerous miracles demonstrating Jesus' power which would get the attention of the Romans.

Luke, a doctor, writes to Theophilus to provide an orderly historical collection of the events of Jesus' life on earth. He is writing to Gentiles and focuses on Jesus as the Son of man, compassionate, an ideal man.

John's gospel is for everyone and is unique in that it specifically states his purpose for writing: "to tell individuals how to have eternal life." (John 20:30-31) He presents the deity of Christ by the use of signs and statements to demonstrate His Divine authority.

# Emphasis:

Matthew: Jesus is the Messiah, the King. Mark: Jesus is the suffering servant.

Luke: Jesus is the son of man. John: Jesus is the son of God.

Question: One of the questions that often arises is: "If the gospel writers recorded the same messages preached and taught by Jesus, why aren't their words exactly the same?

# Some possible answers:

1. Depending on where they were positioned when listening to Jesus, they may not have heard everything that was said. They simply recorded what they themselves heard.

2. Jesus preached the same messages in many different locations. Sermon on the mount

Matthew – went up on a hill Luke account – came down to a level place

In my life, I've taught a number of lessons several times. And even though I generally use the same notes, I never use exactly the same words. I estimate that I may use 75-85% of the same words. But it's never exactly the same unless I simply read my notes exactly as they are. (I generally wander down a few rabbit trails on the way to the end.)

Let's get down to the heart of the gospel?

# IV. Discussion

Question? How would you summarize the gospels?

They're all about Jesus, who He is and what He taught and did!

So...let's talk about Jesus.

In the gospel accounts, we see God putting on flesh and living among humanity. God will now be in direct and personal relationships with mankind.

Jesus experienced the limitations and difficulties of mankind in a physical body. He felt fatigue, pain, hunger, temptation, rejection, opposition, misunderstanding, offense, anger, hatred by those who were jealous of Him, and numerous other evils of man. One of the "Jesus" movies demonstrates His humanity by having Him stumble as he walked along a rocky, hillside path.

God was housed in a female womb for 9 months.

When Mary went to see Elizabeth, Jesus had just been conceived in the previous 1-3 weeks. At that point of His earth-bound life, He was encapsulated in a tiny embryo, an organism in its early stages of development before it has reached a distinctively recognizable form. (This was the form of God when John (at this time in his life – a fetus) leaped for joy in his mother's womb upon Mary's arrival at Elizabeth's home.)

Pretty amazing – a fetus responding to an embryo.

He began as a baby housed in the tiny form of a new-born and grew to childhood, adolescence, a teenager and then an adult man.

## He:

- o drank milk from His mother,
- o cried when He was hungry or needed to be changed,
- o was weaned and potty trained.
- o initially learned from His parents.
- o learned to talk and eventually spoke 3 languages fluently.
- o went to school like all Hebrew children.

- o memorized the Torah (as was required of all Hebrew boys),
- He most likely participated in games and sports that young boys played at that age.
- He had homework and tests.
- He progressed quickly in wisdom and understanding. At the age of 12 He amazed the scholars at the temple in Jerusalem with His wisdom in the Word.
- o Do you suppose that He had colds, the flu or allergies?
- o He learned submission to His parents and community authorities.
- o He worked in His father's carpenter business.
- o He had chores in the home, and
- o He experienced the difficulties of sibling relationships in the home.

He was a respected teacher within his community but was the subject of envy and jealousy among other teachers who thought themselves superior because of their formal training. (He had no public credentials to authenticate his message and ministry.)

Question? Why would people be jealous of Jesus?

There was a significant difference between himself and other teachers...his life perfectly matched his teachings and he taught with authority and not like the other teachers. How valuable would it be to sit for an hour and listen to Jesus teach?

Jesus offered no opinions and didn't quote the respected teachers of the day (except to provide corrections to error). He simply spoke the truth.

His ministry and teachings were confirmed by signs and wonders and by the authority He exercised over demons.

People flocked to him from all parts of the land, many, possibly most, because of what He could do for them. I wonder if there were some who came to Jesus just because they liked Him.

He proclaimed the "good news of the kingdom of God" and how people could find it. No flashy advertisements. He had only one PR guy but he didn't dress the part and at times offended people with his direct approach.

He didn't have the latest hot band on stage to attract a crowd.

He wasn't looking for the wealthy to provide support for His growing ministry. He didn't surround himself with the popular leaders of his day to enhance his growing reputation.

His message was direct. Repent and believe. The kingdom is a gift from God, but also costly. Leave your current life and follow me.

He ministered to everyone that came to him in addition to having a close group of individuals that he personally trained.

Question? How did He chose His disciples? What was His selection criteria?

Guidance from the Father. (I only do what I see the Father doing.)

His trained team became the leaders of the church after his departure. Upon His departure, He entrusted the message of the gospel into the hands of fallible men.

One of the amazing things about Jesus' was what He offered: a personal knowledge and fellowship experience with the living Creator.

Before he left the earth, He also promised them another counselor (one like himself) who would come, dwell within them and be their teacher and guide forever.

It is important to note, that, up until Jesus' coming, the Holy Spirit only came upon prophets, priests and kings. But now He would be with, indwell and come upon all who believed.

And there was no special office or title or level of education or level of accomplishment required of would-be disciples. He simply invited people to come as they were.

Jesus came according to God's plan of the ages. And He only came once God had prepared the people for "his first coming."

Previously (intertestamental period) we reviewed the enormity of God's staggering preparations for Jesus' coming, a process which took 4000 years to accomplish.

These preparations also included His work in which He used "unbelieving" nations to accomplish His purposes:

- the Persians to allow the people to return to their homeland,
- the Greeks to establish a world-wide language.
- the Romans to build access roads to all parts of the known world, and
- the Syrians (Antiochus IV) to create a hunger and longing within the people for the coming deliverer.

This demonstrated His Sovereignty over all of the nations on the earth.

Jesus came in the fullness of time.

All of the preparations were complete.

Each task of preparation was complete and on time.

God is the great organizer and master plan administrator.

Jesus lived on the earth like no one else had ever lived.

His life was the most astounding, unparalleled life in history.

His earthly legacy to man-kind was the greatest collection of teachings ever given.

These teachings were given publicly, recorded by others and eventually made available to all of mankind.

Jesus, himself, didn't write any books. Only once is it recorded that he wrote and that was in the dirt. (Scripture doesn't record what He wrote.)

He not only taught with unparalleled wisdom, but his life perfectly matched his teachings, unlike the leading teachers of His day.

He was, is and always will be, the greatest historical figure ever to put his footprints on the face of the earth.

During this period, God's primary method of interacting with mankind was through Jesus. He lived and worked among the people even though He didn't own a home or have an office complex to work out of.

He called people to be his disciples, to follow Him. This meant that they would be trained to live life as Jesus would live it.

Lesson for us: Our discipleship training is not how to be a successful business person or have a successful ministry. Any discipleship training that we embrace should be designed to create Christ-like living in us.

And so, by looking at Jesus life, we have the perfect example of what we will be when our individual formation is complete.

No one, apart from Jesus, can live the life of God as Jesus did.

Through Him, we receive life from above, the forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit. In addition, the "man of sin" is put to death on the cross. This frees us to become like Jesus.

We receive Him as Savior and Lord and He becomes our constant teacher through the work of the Holy Spirit. So our apprenticeship to Jesus becomes the basic form of our "Immanuel" life on earth.

In addition, He has not left us alone to "have a go" at life by ourselves. He places us into his body, the church, which takes its concrete appearance in the local church of each "born-again" community in each city.

God gave birth to His kingdom on the earth but it is not without its difficulties. He enlists people out of the kingdom of the world and transfers them out of the world's kingdom of "darkness" into his kingdom of light.

The former ruler of these "twice-born" inhabitants of God's kingdom is not at all pleased to see "his people" deserting him for another. This new life with Christ is a warfare as their former master seeks to get them back or at least tempt them to sin to hinder their new life in Christ.

The new Christian finds himself in an unending battle with the world, the flesh and the devil.

Jesus' words: "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father except by me." creates a conflict with all human religious cultures that would tell us there are other ways to the Father. So, the new Christian finds himself "at war with the world."

Question? Why can there be no other ways to God?

Answer: Who can pay the penalty for sin?

## V. Man's response

Initially, it was Jesus' overwhelming popularity with the people that led to his conflict with the ruling authorities and teachers prompting them to want to kill Him. The leading teachers saw multitudes leaving them and following Jesus and this meant the loss of revenues and their life support system.

In general, the ruling authorities, teachers and aristocracy were anti-Jesus. He exposed them for the "phonies" that they were.

However, there were many, even among the priests and teachers, who did recognize and receive him as the Messiah even though they likely did not understand fully what His office as Messiah meant. Most had expected a "warrior-king" to deliver them from the oppression of the Romans. However, Jesus had clearly stated that His kingdom was not of this world.

Jesus' public teachings were recorded by the four gospel writers and put on public records making them available to the entire world. These were His written witnesses.

His disciples were trained and formed by His teachings and then transformed by the coming of the Holy Spirit. These disciples would reproduce the life of Jesus in others as the message of the gospel was transmitted to the world.

#### VI. The Benefits for our Formation

We now understand the goal of "spiritual formation," becoming like Christ. This transformation means that our obedience will now flow out of a heart of love to God and not out of an external obedience to rules and regulations. Our goal is to become a good tree that produces its fruit in the appropriate season.

Simply put, spiritual formation is forming Christ-like character, a condition of the heart.

And it is this "heart of Christ" which enables the church to live and breathe as a living spiritual organism, joined together, each joint supplying the body from the store of gifts within each part.

We live in the "here and now" of the world bearing fruit to God even though we are, in reality, pilgrims on the way to a better and eternal world, our true home.

#### VII. Limits for our Formation

1. The social conditions of the day (e.g. oppression by Rome) distorted the peoples' expectation of the Messiah making it difficult for many to recognize and receive him.

Jesus' behavior and teachings even though attended with signs and wonders, were difficult to receive based upon the cultural assumptions of the day.

- to become the greatest, be a servant of all
- lose your life to gain it
- count it all joy when you are persecuted

God made provision for these misunderstandings through the events of the resurrection and Pentecost and the writings of the apostles which provided scriptural interpretations of the events of the gospels.

2. The Spirit, who would be their teacher and guide, had not yet been given. With the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, the limitations of God in the flesh were eliminated. Now, the person of Christ by His Spirit was available to dwell within all disciples and guide them into all truth.

#### VIII. Instructions for us for our Formation

1. The physical world was the dwelling place of spiritual life and of God Himself when he became incarnated in the person of Jesus. In the physical world, we learn to live within the kingdom of God. The character of Jesus becomes more perfectly ours as we progress in our own personal spiritual formation.

And the life we live in our body becomes the showplace of the fruit of the Spirit.

2. God's coming to us in the person of Jesus was unexpected and incomprehensible to the human way of thinking. (How could God, who is Spirit and without limit, be encapsulated in a limited body of flesh?)

We recognize that "God's ways are not our ways." (Isa. 55:8)

And: "Who can know the mind of God to understand Him?"

God revealed much about Himself in the person of Jesus. "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father."

3. Our discipleship is learned and experienced in the real events of our lives, not just in a few spiritual moments.

As we live out our lives "learning to be faithful in the small things" we qualify ourselves for the true riches which are spiritual. Thus, our secular lives lead to spiritual living and fruit.

## An Itinerary of Events in the Life of Jesus: (as reported in the gospels)

He is born to a virgin (fulfilling Old Testament prophecies. Isa. 7:14)

He goes with his parents to Jerusalem at the age of 12 years and confounds those he talks with because of His knowledge of the Scriptures.

He is baptized by John the Baptist and filled with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit descends on Him like a dove and He hears His Father's voice declaring His pleasure with His son.

He is tempted by the devil. He resists the temptations by quoting Old Testament scriptures.

He turns water into wine at a marriage ceremony. (His 1st miracle)

Jesus talks with Nicodemus about the new birth.

Jesus talks with a Samaritan woman about true worshipers. Her family becomes believers.

He heals a nobleman's son in Cana.

He visits his home town of Nazareth, is initially received and then the people try to kill Him.

He heals Peter's mother-in-law.

He calls four fishermen to follow Him.

"The incredible catch of fish" – Peter is convicted of his sinfulness.

Twelve are chosen and called to be apostles.

He preaches the "Sermon on the Mount."

He preaches and teaches in Galilee.

He is anointed with fragrant oil by a sinful woman.

Jesus again travels throughout Galilee teaching and preaching the gospel of the kingdom.

The Pharisees accuse Jesus of casting out demons by the prince of demons.

Jesus teaches using parables.

He quiets a storm on the sea. The disciples ask: "What manner of man is this?" He restores life to Jairus' daughter.

He sends the twelve out to preach and heal.

John the Baptist is beheaded by Herod.

Jesus feeds 5000.

He walks on the water.

He feeds 4000.

Peter declares that "Jesus is the Son of God."

Jesus begins to tell his disciples that he is soon going to die.

The transfiguration on the mountain occurs with his 3 closest disciples in His company. Peter wants to build tents for Him, Moses and Elijah.

Jesus pays the temple tax by having one of his disciples go to the lake and draw a fish from the water.

Jesus attends the feast of tabernacles.

Jesus heals a man who was born without sight.

Jesus visits Mary and Martha.

He raises Lazarus from the dead.

Jesus begins his last trip to Jerusalem. He is now "on His way to the cross."

Jesus blesses little children.

He talks to a rich young ruler who is unwilling to give up his riches to follow Him.

Jesus again talks of his imminent death and resurrection.

He heals Bartimaeus of his blindness.

He talks and visits with Zacchaeus.

He returns to Bethany to visit Mary and Martha.

#### Now begins His final week up to the cross:

He rides into Jerusalem on a donkey. (His triumphal entry)

He cleanses the temple of robbers and thieves.

He curses a fig tree.

His authority is questioned.

He teaches in the temple.

He is anointed by Mary.

A plot is conceived in which he will be betrayed.

The Last Supper. He establishes a commemorative ordinance (communion) for the church. He identifies his betrayer.

He predicts Peter's denial.

He gives his farewell address. He tells the disciples about the Holy Spirit who will come to be their guide and counselor.

He prays in the garden of Gethsemane. (His disciples fall asleep.) Judas betrays Him.

He is arrested and tried by the Sanhedrin and then by Pilate. (The civil laws regarding trials are abandoned in order to secure a conviction.)

Jesus is beaten and scourged such that his physical features are not recognizable.

He carries His cross to Golgotha and is crucified between two thieves, one who rails on Him, the other who asks forgiveness and receives the kingdom that very day.

He is buried that same day (the day of Preparation.)

#### After His resurrection:

Women go to the tomb and find it empty.

Mary Magdalene sees Jesus in the garden.

Jesus appears to two men on the road to Emmaus.

He appears to 10 disciples in Jerusalem.

He appears to the eleven in Jerusalem.

He talks with some of His disciples by the sea of Galilee.

From the Mt. of Olives, 40 days later, in the presence of disciples, he ascends into heaven.

## IX. Character Study: Jesus

Jesus is the main character throughout the gospels (in fact, the whole Bible)

He is the living demonstration of the perfect man. He perfectly fulfilled the Law of God without error. His life was perfectly consistent with everything he taught.

He was the perfect illustration of all of the spiritual disciplines He embraced. As a child, He immersed Himself in God's Word. Study/Bible Intake

His life was a pilgrimage on earth. This world was not His home. He had no place to call His own. <u>Pilgrimage</u>

His life was an illustration of submission to the Father's will. In the garden, during his final hours, He petitioned the Father regarding any other possibilities instead of the cross. When His Father said no, He embraced His Father's will and, in doing so, went to an awful, suffering death of crucifixion. <u>submission</u>

His life was a life of prayer. From day to day, He was seeking out places of quiet, of solitude where He could fellowship with and hear from His Father. prayer, silence, solitude

His life was given up as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. <u>sacrifice</u> (Sacrifice is deliberately forsaking the security of satisfying our own needs with our resources in the faith and hope that God will sustain us.)

His entire life was spent in serving the Father by serving mankind which God had created. His days were filled with crowds of people to whom He ministered the love of God through gifts of healing and deliverance from bondage. service

He taught the disciples how to pray by giving them an example which we call the Lord's prayer. He begins by praying that God's name by hallowed (recognized as holy). worship

His was a frugal life, this being defined as "The inward reality of single-hearted focus upon God and His kingdom, which results in an outward life of modesty, openness and unpretentiousness." simplicity

Guidance is experiencing an interactive friendship with God that gives direction and purpose to daily life. This he did consistently in His times of prayer and solitude. He commented that He only did what he saw the Father doing. guidance

## Spiritual disciplines summary:

Jesus: study/Bible intake, pilgrimage, submission, sacrifice, prayer, solitude, silence, sacrifice, service, worship, simplicity, guidance

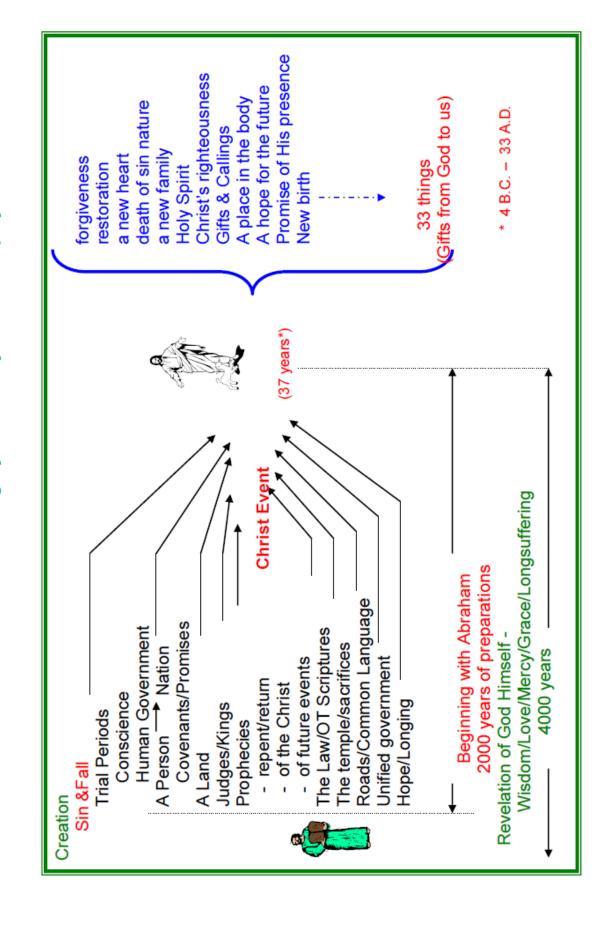
#### X.. Homework assignments:

I did not list all of the spiritual disciplines that Jesus may have embraced.

1. See if you can find illustrations in His life that illustrate the following spiritual disciplines:

- celebration (Utter delight and joy in ourselves, our life and our world as a result of our faith and confidence in God's greatness, beauty and goodness.)
- b. meditation
- c. chastity
- d. confession (sharing our deepest weaknesses and failures with God and trusted others so that we may enter into God's grace and mercy and experience his ready forgiveness and healing.)
- e. fasting
- f. fellowship (engaging with other disciples in the common activities of worship, study, celebration and service which sustain our life together and enlarge our capacity to experience more of God.)
- g. Simplicity single hearted focus on God resulting in a lifestyle of modesty, unencumbered by worldly possessions.
- 2. Can you think of a discipline that Jesus did not do? (I know of 2.)

"The Wisdom, Sovereignty and Ability of God Displayed" GOD PREPARES for the MESSIAH



#### LESSON #14

# Stage 14 – **The Book of Acts**Community focus: The People of God in Outreach

## I. Background

<u>Dispensation</u>: Grace (which began upon the death and resurrection of Jesus

Christ)

<u>Context</u>: Jesus has been crucified and resurrected.

For a period of time after His resurrection, he shows Himself to the

apostles and disciples.

He restores Peter.

He gives the disciples the command to wait in Jerusalem until they

receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Lk. 24:49)

Literary Type: The book of Acts narrates a series of journeys.

It is also an anthology of individual literary genres:

- hero story

- adventure story

- travel story

- conversion story

- miracle story

Drama also figures prominently in the book of Acts as there are 32

speeches in Acts.

Dates: The major events in this era were:

A. Jesus' Ascension 29 A.D.

B. the Spirit comes at Pentecost.29 A.D.

C. birth of the church 29 A.D.

D. Acts of Peter (Acts chapters 1-12) 29 - 45 A.D.

E. Conversion of Saul (Paul) 37 A.D.

F. Death of James 44 A.D.

G. Acts of Paul (Acts 13–28) 45 A.D. – 61 A.D.

o 1<sup>st</sup> Missionary Journey 45–47 A.D.

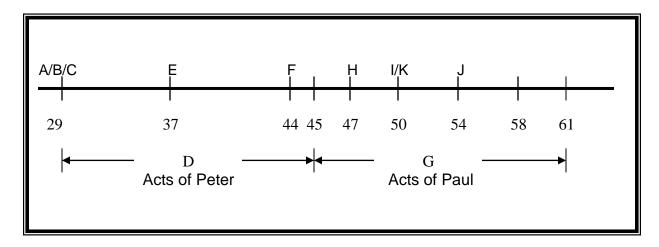
o 2<sup>nd</sup> Missionary Journey 50-54 A.D.

o 3<sup>rd</sup> Missionary Journey 54-58 A.D.

H. Jerusalem council 50 A.D.

## Major Events:

# Time Chart of Major Events (A.D.)



## II. Summary of this era

Acts is the sequel to the gospels that precede it and the background to the epistles that follow it.

The book of Acts tells the story of the birth and growth of the Christian church. It includes the period of time from Jesus' ascension to the imprisonment of Paul.

A key verse in this book is 1:8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth."

As we follow the events of this book, we will see the expansion of the gospel according to the command and prophecy of Acts 1:8.

to Jerusalem Acts 1-7 to Judea and Samaria Acts 8-12 to the ends of the earth Acts 13-28

A key word in the book of Acts is "witness."

The book of Acts can be divided into 2 main sections based upon the leading persons:

Chapters 1-12 The acts of Peter (Jewish)
Chapters 13-28 The acts of Paul (Gentiles)

The focus of the church is seen in the following outline:

Chapters 1-2 the birth of the church
Chapters 3-7 the church grows through trials and testings
Chapters 8-9 the church prospers (9:31)

Chapters 8-9 the church prospers (9:31)
Chapters 10-12 the church receives Gentiles

Chapters 13-21:26 expansion of the church overseas Chapters 21:27-28 Paul (church to the Gentiles leader) on trial and imprisoned

#### III. Lesson 15 Review:

In lesson 15, we reviewed the gospels, the four accounts of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus our Lord, our Immanuel.

We looked at the character and humanity of Jesus and saw that His life perfectly illustrated His teachings. We saw that He modeled nearly all of the spiritual disciplines. (The two that he didn't model were repentance and journaling.)

We identified the principle focus of each of the gospels.

When Jesus taught, every one responded...in one way or another.

Question? What kind of responses did Jesus encounter?

There are two primary responses a person can make to the person and ministry of Jesus:

- 1. believe and proclaim the good news.
- 2. reject the person and message of the gospel and persecute or ignore those who believe in Him.

There is no middle ground with Jesus.

In today's lesson we will see the living picture of what we are becoming in Christ.

The goal of our spiritual formation will now be visible.

#### II. God's Action

In this lesson, taken from the book of Acts, we will see God acting through the Holy Spirit inhabiting his people and empowering them to proclaim the gospel to all peoples throughout the world. Here we see God's plan moving forward in history to create a loving community in which He will dwell.

What follows is an "original monologue" beginning with the time of Jesus' betrayal:

The 11 close disciples of Jesus had been with him for several years, learning how to live in the kingdom of God.

However, they simply were not prepared for the emotional rollercoaster of Jesus' last days on earth. First was his betrayal by that thief Judas in the garden, then came Peter's denial. Next were the mock trials, 6 of them, all illegal, and beatings and scourging of Jesus, the greatest man they had ever known. Finally, they saw him take His last failing steps to the hill where He was mercilessly nailed to a tree.

His lifeless body was taken down from the tree and He was wrapped in cloths as was the custom of the Jews.

Then, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day after His crucifixion, came the first sightings as Jesus began to appear to the disciples after His resurrection. They had experienced an incredible low which reached its depth at His death. Now this was followed by an incredible high, He was alive!

He talked with them assuring them that it was in fact Him, Jesus. He was seen by a number of people for about 6 weeks before He had to leave for the last time.

Then, they watched as he ascended, their hearts now aching once again as their beloved friend rose into the heavens and out of their sight.

An angel told them to wait in the city until they received power from on high. What does that mean? What was this power from on high?

Nevertheless, they did as they were instructed. I imagine that God in heaven must have smiled...finally, a people who would obey.

They got together in an upstairs room with other disciples and waited for God to do something, not suspecting or knowing what He was about to do. They spent their time praying and waiting. 1 day, 2 days go by. Still more days come and go.

"When would it happen?" must have been the question on their lips. How long do we wait?

#### Then, on the day of Pentecost, everything changed.

First, a sound like that of a rushing wind filling the house, then tongues of fire came down and rested on each one. What does this mean? What is happening to us?

No one was left out. Each of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in languages they had never learned. How can this be? Later, some who understood the languages gave interpretations of what they had said and they learned that they had been praising God.

And, in just that amazing moment in time, this collection of roughly hewn humanity became a living organism, the church of Jesus Christ, and a force to be sent into the world that could not be stopped. In the process, this new living organism of people would change the world.

God had been present with individuals, then families and tribes, then with Israel as a nation. But this was not like anything they had ever experienced. Even Joel, although he foretold it in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of his book 750 years earlier, most likely had no idea what he was prophesying. How could he?

Each one heard and saw the manifestations of God's presence. Gifts were given. Lives were changed. The disciples were uniquely empowered for works of service.

And, just as Jesus had said, they were guided into the truth. Now they understood Jesus' teachings and knew that He was, in fact, the "Holy One of Israel," the Messiah.

They would never be the same. The Old Dispensation of the law and its seemingly endless list of do's and don'ts was ended and the new dispensation of the Spirit, of the church, of grace was inaugurated. The New Testament church was born.

The disciples were transformed. In our modern vernacular, they were "morphed," changed. They became different than they were. God was now living within them giving them the power to fearlessly proclaim the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection. People from all parts of the world heard Galileans proclaiming God's deeds of power in their own languages, languages never learned by the disciples of the Messiah. (Acts 2:11) It was a miracle unlike anything they had ever seen or heard.

With the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost and the declarations made to individuals in their native tongues, it became clear that the gospel is now transcending all cultural barriers. The gospel is also offered to the Gentiles. The gospel is no longer the private possession of the Jews. (Bet the Jews weren't very happy about that.)

Peter receives a vision from heaven and visits a Roman centurion, a devout man who feared God. A man who gave gifts to poor people. Amazing, who would a thought...a generous Gentile.

And another amazing thing happens. Peter begins to preach and before he can even finish his sermon, he was interrupted. Even as he is speaking, the Holy Spirit falls on these Gentiles just like it did at Pentecost. (Acts 10:44-48) Peter says it again when he spoke with the elders in Jerusalem: just like it did at Pentecost. Just to make sure we got it. Must mean that this is important, the Holy Spirit is also given to the Gentiles.

This confirms that all classes of people, all nations, all races are now included in the "people of God." This is a direct fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham 2000 years ago that <u>all nations</u> would be blessed by his seed.

The church grows, but opposition to the gospel again rears its ugly head.

Stephen is the first martyr, put to death while Saul looks on approving the stoning. Other Pharisees who stood by watching in their smug self-righteousness, were pleased with the stoning...a hard way to die.

Saul later, while traveling to Damascus to continue his persecution of this new sect called "Christians," is thrown from his mount by a heavenly light and hears a voice: "Saul. Why are you persecuting me?" Paul, in that moment of time, is converted to Christianity. You never know when God is going to burst into your life and change everything. Saul never saw it coming. One moment he persecuted and then, in the twinkling of an eye, he embraced the persecuted.

Peter leads the ministry to the Jews and the church in Jerusalem while Paul travels throughout Asia and the connecting regions preaching the gospel. Jesus had commissioned him to be the "apostle to the Gentiles."

During the next 50 years, the teachings of Jesus were written down by 4 men, 2 of them had been under his teaching for over 3 years.

As churches were being started in different cities, letters of instruction, encouragement and exhortation were sent by the apostles to the new fellowships of believers. These letters:

- interpreted the events of Jesus' earthly life,
- addressed issues and problems that surface within the churches, and provided instructions for the administration of the churches.
- They provided guidelines and clarifications for life in the kingdom of God.

Issues such as the conduct of church meetings, the handling of finances, ministries to widows and orphans and the qualifications for leadership were explained.

Saul, whose name God had changed to Paul, once a persecutor of the church, wrote a lengthy letter to the Romans, people he had never even met, explaining the new life in Christ. It was to become the primer of the community of faith.

"End of Monologue"

## III. Human Response

How did the people respond to these events?

It is not surprising to see a variety of responses to the unique workings of the Holy Spirit. No one had ever seen tongues of fire or heard people speaking in languages they hadn't learned.

Some accused the disciples of Jesus of quaffing one too many ales early in the morning. Others, after listening to Peter's explanation about these phenomena, became believers. About 3000 persons were added to the church in response to Peter's first sermon.

Wherever the gospel is preached, new believers now gather together in "home fellowships" devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, prayers and the breaking of bread. Acts 2:42

In accordance with the "great Commission" in Matthew 28:19-20, they give careful attention to the teachings of Jesus.

The sacraments of communion and baptism are practiced by the local churches.

Prayer is a key discipline of the fellowships and, as we watch the unfolding of the story of the book of Acts, we see Peter, John, Barnabas, Paul and others waiting for God's direction in prayer. Once they receive direction, they are quick to respond.

## IV. What are the Benefits for our Spiritual Formation?

In the book of Acts, which has also been called "The Acts of the Holy Spirit," we see the spread of the gospel to the Palestine area, to Syria, Asia, Galatia, Greece and Rome. As the gospel spreads, new all-inclusive communities are formed which transcend the previous boundaries of the Jewish community. Communities of faith include both Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free, rich and poor.

In these actions, God continues towards his goal of forming an all-inclusive community of loving persons (having no cultural boundaries) with Him at its center and the communities' most glorious inhabitant and sustainer.

The Immanuel life is now available to every nation on the earth.

The spread of the gospel was not without its difficulties. Some Jews believed that maintaining the Laws of the Old Testament was also needed for one's salvation. The Jerusalem council of Acts 15 was convened to address this issue in which Jews attempted to draw new believers back into the old ways of the Jews, keeping the law, the sacrifices, following rules made by man.

Those having the gift of evangelism, e.g. Paul, Barnabas and Phillip, are sent out to virgin areas to preach the gospel and establish new churches. These leaders, in turn, appoint elders and deacons in the churches to remain and guide the new churches when the evangelists go to new assignments.

#### V. Limitations and Difficulties

The fact that a council was needed in order to resolve disputes reminds us that disagreements do exist within the church.

Also, there is a strong tendency towards legalism as people try to reduce the transforming experiences to a set of rules so as to maintain doctrinal purity and the potential for others to have a "life-transforming" experience.

Another problem that surfaced was the danger of "antinomianism," a system of beliefs which held that a person was no longer bound by law (hence "no law") and free to do whatever they chose to do.

The gospel does set us free from the Law of sin and death. However, God prescribes for us a way of life and, in Jesus, declares that "he who loves me will keep my commandments."

Another issue was associated with the indwelling Spirit. The Spirit is our Guide and teacher, but He does not automatically secure unity within the body. (e.g. Paul and Barnabas going separate ways because of a dispute over Mark.)

The Spirit is given as the "earnest" or down-payment of our inheritance in Christ. <u>But</u> having the Spirit is not a sign of spiritual maturity. Growth in Christ is a much-needed

commodity and comes over time embracing spiritual disciplines and faithful obedience to God's Word.

#### VI. Instructions for our Formation

A primary instruction from the book of Acts is the universal nature of God's love. He really is no respecter of persons. He still loves His people the Jews; but a study of the accounts recorded in the book of Acts shows us the great diversity of people reached by the gospel.

The Holy Spirit is absolutely essential to the life of the believer. Jesus told the disciples to wait (don't go anywhere, don't do anything) until you receive power from on high. That power (dunamis) would come by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Throughout the book of Acts, we see many ordinary people doing extraordinary things as the gospel is ministered...healings, exorcisms, snake bites having no effect, even raising the dead (Eutychus – who went to sleep while Paul was preaching.) The same Spirit that empowered the early disciples is said to still be available to us today.

The lives of the New Testament Christians such as Paul and Stephen <u>encourage us to rejoice in whatever circumstance we find ourselves knowing that God is at work in us to do His will</u>. Paul, even though in prison, continued to rejoice even though he was shackled to two guards. By their examples, we learn that the Christian life will test our strength and endurance in the face of suffering.

Another powerful lesson for us in the book of Acts is <u>the changed lives of the disciples</u>. Peter was weak, impetuous and vacillating before Pentecost. After receiving the Holy Spirit, he spoke boldly with anointing and understanding.

However, on another occasion, he was rebuked by Paul for his behavior during a community meal. This shows us that Peter was not yet perfected even though he had been filled with the Spirit.

We also see examples in Acts of people who tried to secure the power of God without true faith and repentance and also with wrongful motives. Needless to say, they got themselves into deep trouble. God gives His gifts to whomever He wills and they cannot be purchased.

## VII. How to start a church in a foreign land:

from Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> Missionary Journey in Acts 15 & 16

(Refer to a Map of Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> Missionary Journey)

The following verses will be discussed on the next page:

15:34 In Antioch – "Let us return and visit the brothers..."
It was on his heart to visit the churches. (no indication of guidance from the H.S. as he will get later.)

15:41	"And he went through Syria and Cilicia strengthening the churches.
16:1	"…came to Derbe and Lystra."
16:4	"went on their way delivering the decisions of the Jerusalem council.
16:6	went through Phrygia and Galatia – forbidden by the H.S. to speak the word in Asia.
16:7	came to Mysia – H.S. did not allow them to go to Bithynia.
16:8	Went to Troas
16:9	vision – man of Macedonia – "Come over to Macedonia and help us."
16:10	immediately set sail for Samothracethen to Neapolis and then Phillipi
16:12	"We remained in the city some days." (gathering intelligence)
16:13	On the Sabbath, went to riverside where there was a place of prayer.
	Spoke with the women there. One responded. (v.14)
16:14	"The Lord opened her heart.
16:15	1st convert – Lydia baptized
	2 <sup>nd</sup> converts – and her house as well
16:16	girl with a spirit of divination
16:26	Paul and Silas in jail – a great earthquake, doors opened, bonds unfastened
	3 <sup>rd</sup> converts – jailor and his family

Phil. 1:1 ...overseers and deacons Acts 16: A.D. 51-52 Phil 1: 63 A.D.

## **Discussion**:

- 1. Paul initially moves in faith to revisit the churches of his 1st journey.
- 2. He continues to travel west without knowing his destination and is twice forbidden by the H.S. to speak.
- 3. He receives a vision.
- 4. He responds immediately in obedience to the vision.
- 5. He spends a few days in Philippi gathering information.
- 6. He attends a prayer meeting and speaks with the women.
- 7. God opens Lydia's heart.
- 8. A supernatural event at the jail.

<u>Summary of Leadings</u>: Paul is led by his heart, forbidden by the H.S., gathers intelligence, he speaks the word, God opens Lydia's heart, a supernatural earthquake looses the chains of the prisoners. The jailor inquires about matters of faith.

A combination of human action, the H.S. speaking and supernatural events.

Paul's journey ~ 1000 miles.

## VIII. What is God Doing Summary?

- 1. The gospel is extended to the Gentiles.
- 2. The Spirit is poured out upon the new believers.
- 3. The gospel is carried to locations throughout the known world.
- 4. Churches are established in the cities where new believers live.
- 5. Leaders are appointed in each church.
- 6. God's plan for a community of believers is extended to "all who will come."
- 7. The teachings of Jesus are recorded and circulated among the churches.
- 8. The writings of the apostles are recognized as authoritative scriptures and are circulated among the churches.
- 9. All but one of the apostles are martyred.
- 10. The extension of the gospel to all nations fulfills God's promise to Abraham which was made at approximately 2000 B.C.

#### VIII. Character Studies

Character Studies: Stephen, Phillip, Barnabas

Stephen – Serving, sacrifice, study

The account of Stephen and his speech before the high priest is recorded in Acts, Chapters 6 and 7.

Stephen was recognized as a man with a good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. (6:3) He was chosen from among the brethren to serve in the ministry of daily food distributions to those in need in the body. This would be similar to church ministries today that are called "Meals on Wheels." This was not a glamorous job and would not receive significant attention or accolades, but it was a much needed ministry in the church. Stephen accepted the appointment and began to serve those who could not physically reward him. (Serving)

Verse 7 indicates that there was a period of time when the number of disciples multiplied. As Stephen continued to serve the widows of the church, God blessed him with a ministry of signs and wonders. In response, a group of men rose up against him, raised up false witnesses, seized him and brought him before the council.

They were not able to withstand his spirit or wisdom and so made false accusations against him. Before the council, he gave an address in which he

began with Abraham and gave a history of God's dealings with Israel. When he told them that they had killed God's Just One, they threw him out of the city and stoned him. (sacrifice)

In his testimony to the council he, by his knowledge of the history of Israel, revealed that he had spent much time in the Word. (study)

Phillip – evangelism/outreach, study

The accounts of Phillip are recorded in Acts, chapter 8.

There are three stories recorded concerning Phillip, the first regarding the Samaritans, the second about a magician and the third about a eunuch from Ethiopia.

The Samaritans were a people that had been imported by Assyria to the region about Samaria when it was taken captive over 700 years previously. The beliefs of the Samaritans were a synthesis of Jewish beliefs and pagan customs from their homeland.

But they were eager to hear Phillip and responded to the gospel he preached. Phillip proclaimed the Messiah to the Samaritans and did signs of healings and deliverances from unclean spirits.

Later, an angel of the Lord appeared to Phillip and told him to travel south on the road to Gaza. He did, and as he was traveling, he encountered a eunuch who was sitting in his chariot reading from the prophets.

Again, Phillip proclaimed the good news about Jesus and the eunuch became a believer.

Phillip was a man who was filled with the spirit of wisdom and power. His ministry was attended by signs and wonders and his preaching led people into the kingdom of God.

He was available to God to preach to any heart that was hungry for God. His knowledge of scripture enabled him to answer questions people may have had about God's Word or about the Messiah himself. (Study)

Barnabas – encouragement, serving

Barnabas might not have stood out in a crowd. He appears to have had a minor support role, often taking a backseat to Paul.

He first appears in Acts 4:36-37 where he had sold a field and brought the money to the apostles to be used for those in need.

In 9:27 we see him encouraging the Jerusalem believers to accept Paul into the fellowship even though he had once persecuted the church.

Barnabas was sent out by the church in Jerusalem to Antioch where he "encouraged them (new believers) that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord." Here he is described as a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.

In 13:2, at Antioch, the Holy Spirit tells the prophets and teachers to separate Barnabas and Paul for a special assignment that He had for them.

In 14:22, they preach at Derbe, "strengthening the souls of the disciples."

Barnabas last appears in 15:30 where he and Paul separate, Barnabas taking John Mark with him believing that he can be fruitful in the work of the kingdom.

Throughout his travels, he is a man of faith, full of the Holy Spirit. He is discerning regarding John Mark and perseveres with Paul when he is stoned.

He is compassionate, humble, a servant, one who was constantly about the business of strengthening and encouraging the souls of new believers.

## Spiritual disciplines summary:

Stephen serving, sacrifice, study
Phillip evangelism/outreach/study
Barnabas encouragement, serving

## IX. Homework assignments:

Summarize the book of Acts in 1 or 2 sentences.		
What is the theme	e of the book of Acts?	
List 2 ways you ca	an apply lessons from the book of Acts to your own life.	
	he first page of this lesson entitled "Literary Types, I s of literary genres. Locate and summarize a story for	
Hero story	Paul Acts 14:19-20 Paul is stoned at Lystra, but gets up and continues his missionary journey the next day.	
Adventure story		
Travel story		

Conversion story	 
Miracle story	

#### LESSON #15

## Stage 15: The books of Romans through Jude

Nurturing the Church

The People of God in the community of faith

Dispensation: Grace

Literary type: Epistle/letter

#### Context:

In the early chapters of the book of Acts, we saw the birth of the church. This community of loving persons empowered by the Holy Spirit began to grow, reaching out from Jerusalem, into Judea and Samaria and ultimately to the far reaches of the earth.

This new family of people, created sovereignly by God, is the continued incarnation of Jesus who is now living in His people by His Spirit. It is a new organism in which people are joined to one another by the Spirit and minister according to the Word of God and by the leading of the Spirit.

The gospels give us the account of the incarnation of the son of God and His saving acts. The book of Acts shows us the historical and geographical development of the people of God who have been recipients of the "gospel of grace." The letters (epistles) provide the <u>interpretation</u> and <u>application</u> of the gospel.

The community of God's redeemed persons is referred to as the "ecclesia" a word which means "an assembly." Several words in scripture are used to identify the ecclesia: the body of Christ, the family of God, the bride of Christ to name a few.

This assembly is the primary place where Jesus' disciples (Christians = "little Christs") participate in the life and functions of the body.

Some of the functions of this new community are:

- corporate worship
- teaching regarding the interpretation of the gospel and the application of its instructions for personal living,
- ministering to one another through individually unique gifts and callings,
- fellowship among the believers
- receiving wise guidance for Christian living through church leaders and apostles
- receiving correction
- sharing of resources such as monetary gifts with those in need

But, since the church is made up of people, there are problems and questions.

All of the New Testament (NT) letters from Romans through Jude address specific community and individual needs and concerns. These letters run the gamut of problems from dealing with sects that would subvert the gospel to individual questions such as a gift collection for traveling ministers. Guidelines for issues such as Christian growth in sanctification are developed and circulated among the churches. Explanations for the meaning and application of the gospel are provided.

The letters function as the wisdom literature of the church; e.g. the book of James has been called the "Proverbs of the New Testament," providing very practical guidance for the walk of faith.

This community of faith is essential for our growth and well-being. It has a strong impact on our growth in knowing who we are in Christ, what we believe and how we should live.

## I. Summary of this era

#### Major Events:

45 A.D. – 96 A.D. New testament letters (epistles) were written to various churches. It was the intent of the authors that they be circulated to other churches.

Subsequently, the letters were recognized to be inspired by the Spirit of God and hence, given equal weight with the scriptures of the Old Testament.

#### These letters:

- discuss doctrine
- warn against false teachings, e.g. Judaizers, Gnostics, docetists
- provide interpretation and application of the gospel events
- provide instructions for ministry and church order and administration
- provide encouragements and exhortations
- utilize Old Testament references
- talk of things to come

Scholars identify 3 successive periods after the resurrection of Christ

1<sup>st</sup> period – 30-45 A.D.: Oral Period: period of oral transmission where the accounts of the gospel are passed on by word of mouth.

2<sup>nd</sup> period – 45-96 A.D. The Writing Period where the New Testament books are put to pen and ink. (96 A.D. being the best estimate as to when the last book of the New Testament, Revelation, was written.

3<sup>rd</sup> period – 96 – 150 A.D. The Collecting Period in which the writings of the manuscripts were collected.

Although there are no known original manuscripts of the New Testament, there are New Testament manuscripts that date back to very close to the collecting period; e.g. John Ryland fragment 115 A.D. (5 verses from the book of John), Bodmer Papyri 200 A.D. (most of John, I and 2 Peter, Jude), Chester Beaty Papyri 250 A.D. (nearly all of the New Testament books, Vaticanus Manuscript 325-350 A.D. (most of Old Testament and New Testament).

#### **Epistle Outlines:**

As you survey the outlines below, note the great variety of topics and instructions provided to the church.

Romans	1:1-16 1:17-3:20 3:21-5:21 6:1-8:39 9:1-11:36 12:1-14:23 15:1-16:27	Introduction Everyone deserves God's wrath Justification Sanctification and Glorification Election and Mercy Live in harmony for God has shown mercy Conclusion
I Corinthians	1:1-9 1:10-6:20 7:1-14:40 15:1-58 16:1-24	Introduction response to the reports of Chloe's household response to questions from the Corinthians the resurrection of Christ and of his followers Conclusion
II Corinthians	1:1-11 1:12-2:11 2:12-6:10 6:11-7:4 7:5-16	greeting and thanksgiving Paul's conduct The character of Paul's ministry of the gospel triumph, credentials, privilege, honesty, pressures, discouragements, motivations, conduct an appeal to the Corinthians the comfort of the ministry
	8:1-9:15 10:1-13:10 13:11-14	the ministry of giving (the collection) vindication of Paul's ministry closing
Galatians	1:1-9 1:10-2:21	greeting In defense of his apostolic authority

	3:1-4:31 5:1-6:10 6:11-18	Scriptural basis for the gospel application of the gospel to their lives conclusion
Ephesians	1:1-2 1:3-3:21 4:1-6:20 6:21-24	greeting Christian doctrine Christian duties closing
Philippians	1:1-2 1:3-11 1:12-30 2:1-30 3:1-21 4:1-20 4:21-23	greeting Paul's thanksgiving and prayer Paul's jail experience Christ's humility and exaltation Paul's confidence final exhortations closing
Colossians	1:1-2 1:3-14 1:15-23 1:24-2:7 2:8-23 3:1-4:6 4:7-18	greeting the preeminence of Christ in the life of the Colossians the preeminence of Christ in His nature and work Paul's ministry the preeminence of Christ over false religions the preeminence of Christ in Christian living Closing comments
1 Thessalonians	1:1-10 2:1-12 2:13-3:13 4:1-12 4:13-18 5:1-11 5:12-26	thanksgiving Paul's defense of his ministry Paul's prayer for their spiritual growth exhortation to sanctification Christ's return the day of the Lord concluding exhortations
II Thessalonians	1:1-2 1:3-12 2:1-17 3:1-15 3:16-18	greeting exhortation to faithfulness the day of the Lord exhortation to continued faithfulness a benediction
I Timothy	1:1-2 1:3-17 1:18-20 2:1-3:16 4:1-6:21	greeting warnings regarding false doctrine charge to wage the good warfare guidance for ministry ministry responsibilities
II Timothy	1:1-2 1:3-18	greeting encouragement in ministry

	2:1-26 3:1-17 4:1-5 4:6-22	examples in ministry the danger of apostasy and how to face it preach the word final exhortations and encouragements
Titus	1:1-4 1:5-9 1:10-16 2:1-10 2:11-15 3:1-8 3:9-11 3:12-15	greeting the character of the elders the Cretans the duty to teach sound doctrine the grace of God heirs of grace final exhortation closing
Philemon	1:1-3 1:4-7 1:8-22 1:23-25	greeting prayer for Philemon Paul's plea for the runaway slave closing
Hebrews	1:1-4 1:5-7:28 8:1-10:18 10:19-13:17 13:18-25	prologue Christ's superiority Christ, the minister and high priest of the new covenant elements of the faith benediction and final exhortation
James	1:1 1:2-1:18 1:19-2:13 2:14-26 3:1-12 3:13-4:12 4:13-5:12 5:13-20	greeting trials and temptations the Word and works faith and works the tongue wars the future meeting specific needs
I Peter	1:1-2 1:3-25 2:1-3:22 4:1-19 5:1-11 5:12-14	greeting reassurances practical holiness the significance of suffering instructions to elders and younger people closing and final greeting
II Peter	1:1-4 1:5-15 1:16-21 2:1-22 3:1-18	greeting growing in Christian character Christ's authority false prophets and teachers Christ's return
I John	1:1-4	introduction to eternal life

	1:5-2:11 2:12-27 2:28-4:6 4:7-5:13 5:14-21	foundational principles purpose of the letter John's motivations love of the world vs. love of God the antichrists' denial abiding in God's Word God's righteousness God's love final comments
II John	1:1-3 1:4-6 1:7-11 1:12-13	greeting walking in truth and love responding to deceivers closing
III John	1:1-4 1:5-12 1:9-11 1:12 1:13	greeting Gaius' service to fellow believers Diotrephes – a self seeker Demetrius is endorsed by John closing
Jude	1:1-2 1:3-4 1:5-7 1:8-16 1:17-23 1:24-25	introduction the danger of false teachers judgment of sin the false teachers the call to be alert closing

## II. Background:

We have been tracing the trail of God's plan for some 4000 years. We've talked about Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David and a host of other principle figures in God's plan. What we've been looking at is our ancestral roots. But it still seems very distant, 2000 years distant and maybe somewhat disconnected from us right here right now.

However, what we began looking at 2 weeks ago in the gospels and then last week in the book of Acts provides us some of the key visible roots that connect us to the past.

Question: What are the principle things about our faith life that are similar to the Christians in the NT church?

- 1. Ours is a life of faith. So was Peter's, Paul's and the disciples we read about in the NT.
- 2. We believe in the One, true God. As did they.
- 3. A changed life is a characteristic of the NT church. This is a visible evidence of our connection to the NT church.

- 4. The Word We both share in the OT Scriptures. The Word is one of the visible evidences of our identification with the NT church.
- 5. The church is another evidence of our connection with the NT church. It is a visible representation of a spiritual reality in each community where they are established.
- 6. And the amazing reality at the heart of the NT church is that God is now living in every true member of the church.

In the O.T., the Spirit came upon a few select people, prophets, priests and kings, but that was not a continual indwelling such as we have within the church today.

This is an amazing lesson that we are looking at today. In it we see the beginnings of the bridge that fills the gap between the time of Christ and our time. What we are looking at is the NT church.

As we view the NT church, we are looking at what God has for us today. In God's space, time continuum, the church bridges the gap between the "then" and the "now."

And these are the final stages of God's great plan in history, a people for Himself, His community with Him at the very center.

He is not going back to a single person, or race or nation. The church, in its post-Pentecost design, is the initial stages of the final product, the community He hs desired from the beginning.

#### III. The Church

The church just after Pentecost is a new born.

It is what God has been working towards ever since He spoke to Abraham about leaving Ur of the Chaldees. It has been His plan before the creation of the world.

He now begins the nurturing process which will ultimately extend into eternity.

As the apostles go from city to city, people are converted, new believers come into the kingdom.

These too, are new borns. They will need a <u>safe sheepfold</u>, a place where they can be nurtured and grow to responsible adulthood. <u>The church is that place</u>. CCW is that place, CCW, along with other churches in the area that God has birthed.

What is this new, living organism called the church?

It is many things.

There are a number of names or designations used in the Bible for this new assembly of believers. In fact, the Scriptures give us 102 names for the church, 35 in the OT and 67 in the NT. Some examples:

- the way
- the bride of Christ Rev. 19:7
- the saints/holy people Eph. 5:3
- the family of God. Eph. 3:14
- my church Matt. 16:18
- the elect Mark 13:20
- fold/flock John 10:16
- sons of God Rom. 8:14
- beloved, my loved one Rom. 9:25
- kingdom of priests Rev. 5:10

#### What is the church?

It's not a building or place, an institution, or "groups of Christians who have formed their own beliefs and forms of worship."

The English word church comes from Greek kuriakos meaning "belonging to God"

Amazing! That means that those who are in the church, the born-again believers, belong to God.

So...from now on, when you hear the word: "church" - think: "belonging to God."

In the NT time, an ekklesia was a political assembly. But the new community of Christians broke with the traditional Greek meaning of *ekklesia* and infused the word with a new, distinctive Christian meaning.

In the Christian community, *ekklesia* came to mean the "called out assembly," the community of believers. The church is therefore, those who are called out by God, those who belong to Him. In a broad sense, it refers to all Christians. In the local sense, it indicates a local congregation of Christians.

When we speak of the church today, we imply the New Testament church:

- the congregation of the New Covenant,
- those who have believed the gospel of Jesus Christ,
- those who have been washed by His blood, and
- have experienced the new birth.

These believers are called to live in a relationship with God and with one another in a community that is the visible expression of a supernatural body.

The church is not a specific denomination (e.g. Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran), but people who have received new life through Jesus Christ. As such, it is a living organism, both physical and spiritual.

Important:

- 1. God started it. (Acts 2)
- 2. God powered it. (Acts 2)
- 3. God guided it. (Acts 10:19ff; 13:2-4)
- 4. God grows it. (Acts 2:47b), and
- 5. God will complete it.

What does the church do?

- Like most living organisms, it gives birth makes and baptizes new believers.
- 2. It teaches believers the things Jesus taught His disciples.
- 3. It is devoted to prayer, the Word, breaking of bread and fellowship.
- 4. The church works at equipping the saints.
- 5. The church ministers to one another through prayer and serving.
- 6. The church is the eyes, ears, hands and feet of Jesus on the earth.

In these new communities we see the continuing incarnation of Jesus as new believers are filled with the Holy Spirit which is the Spirit of Jesus.

These communities are living organisms in which the believers are joined together in ways similar to the joining of the parts of the human body.

This is really an incredible reality. Spiritually, we are members one of another. It is not by coincidence that one of the names of the church is "the body of Christ." Rom. 12:4

The churches are centers of a new life.

They:

- proclaim the good news of Jesus.
- People are birthed into the kingdom and are joined to the community members.
- Instructions take place to:
  - o help new believers growth in their faith,
  - o learn their gifts and callings, and
  - o become engaged in the work of the kingdom.

This is the EEE program we have established at CCW. (Evangelize, Equip, Engage) Why did we do this? because we are the New Testament church and this is the pattern we see in the historical records of the Bible.

The churches become centers of worship and instruction which generally take place in synagogues and homes.

New believers learn how to walk and live their new "with God" life.

This new organism is the "bride of Christ" which He will come and take to be with Him when He returns.

Question? How do we establish a NT church?

- 1. God calls and appoints leaders.
- 2. These leaders, pastors and elders, then guide and form the church by:
  - A. Modeling the character of Christ in their own lives,
  - B. By following the guidelines in Scripture provided in the NT.
    - Acts: devoted themselves to prayer, the apostles teaching, breaking bread and fellowship
  - C. By prayer
  - D. God adds to the church whomever He will.

The ecclesia or church is an assembly of people.

But, as with any people, questions and problems arise. (because we are not yet perfected)

All of the letters from Romans to Jude are written to address specific issues and problems that have arisen in the churches. On the pages following, you will see a top level summary of some of the principle issues in each book. Issues such as:

- "How to live the new life in Christ,"
- qualifications of those aspiring to leadership,
- dispersal of funds,
- bringing discipline to an erring member.

These letters of instructions were written by the first disciples of Jesus and later recognized to be inspired Scriptures.

They receive instruction in <u>matters of doctrine</u>, e.g. in Galatians, Paul counsels them regarding the issue of the Judaizers and Colossians in which he addresses a Gnostic heresy that denied the bodily resurrection of Christ. Other letters such as I John address such important issues as the evidences of new life.

These letters are the <u>wisdom literature</u> of the New Testament. The book of James is often referred to as "The Proverbs of the New Testament."

Most scholars agree that the classic work of the New Testament (apart from the gospels) is the book of Romans in which Paul addresses the work of Christ and its outworking in the life of the believer. Romans became the primer of the New Testament church.

#### Key features

There are a number of things we could call "key features" about the church.

One is that the new life in Christ is a <u>spiritual</u> and <u>eternal</u> life (zoe). This differs from the ordinary life (bios) of those physically birthed into the world. Zoe is a life that proceeds from God and is indestructible and eternal.

A 2nd key feature of the new life in Christ is the <u>empowerment of the Holy Spirit</u> who fills, instructs and empowers each believer.

The Holy Spirit also works within each new believer to transform them so that they are becoming like Christ in every way.

A 4th key feature is the forgiveness of sins and crucifixion of the old nature, that within each person that lives for self and rebels against God and His instructions. Paul tells us in Romans that this old nature has been nailed to the cross and died with Christ. We are no longer bound to live according to the will or dictates of this sinful nature.

It's really amazing as we begin to look at the extremely long list of the things God has done for us.

We are now getting into the list of "What God did for me at the new birth."

#### IV. Benefits for our Formation:

In the community of faith, we find instructions for living our new "with God" life. We join with our brothers and sisters in Christ to worship God <u>and experience God in ways that an individual living apart from the church cannot experience.</u>

In the body of Christ we experience the great blessings of <u>sharing in the gifts and callings of the different members</u>. One person has the gift of healing, another a word of wisdom, another a discernment. The body ministers to itself in ways that cannot be experienced separately.

We also have pastors and elders to shepherd the flock of God. At their hands, we receive protection, guidance, nourishment and healing. (principle functions of a shepherd)

We also benefit from the experiences of others as we each share our experiences in our "with God" life.

We will never be alone. Jesus Himself says that He will never leave us or forsake us. He also tells us that, if we obey His Word, both He and God the Father will come and make their dwelling with us.

#### V. Limits and Liabilities for our Formation

We are now joined with people that come from all walks of life. None of us are perfect. And, we can't go off and live by ourselves. (We could, but it would be to our detriment.)

This creates problems because we all still carry some of the baggage of the past: former belief systems, understandings, cultural preferences, etc.

Doctrinal disputes and preferences will surface. Sin will occur.

Loving, spirit-filled leadership goes a long way to help resolve community internal issues but it is in no way complete and will also be prone to error.

We all have been offended by brothers and sisters in Christ and even by decisions made within the church.

But here is where the letters to the churches can help us "work out the bugs." They describe real struggles that the early church encountered and provide us wisdom from God as to the resolution of many community difficulties. They show us how to be transformed into the likeness of Christ and how to live the "with God' life in community."

The goal is that as our individual lives of faith are joined to a community of faith, we are strengthened in our fellowship and in our relationship with God.

#### VI. Instructions for our Formation

- 1. The community of faith is designed to encourage and guide our relationship with God and with community members.
- 2. In the community of faith, we can experience the love of Christ and also learn how to be loving in practical ways.
- 3. Each community of faith exists to proclaim the gospel which is "good news" to all mankind. In this proclamation is the hope and substance of a life of meaning on earth.
- 4. In the community of faith, we learn how to "put off the old and put on the new." We learn how to live the "Christ-life."
- 5. In the church, we can experience the reality of a supernatural life. By His power within us, we can do and accomplish things not possible to those who are "onceborn."
- 6. The church is set upon the earth to nurture the "twice born."
- 7. In the church, we will find our most meaningful life as we live together and pour out our lives for one another and for the world.
- 8. In the community of faith, we find lasting friendships.
- 9. In the church, we experience the true life of "God with us."
- 10. In the church, we find support and guidance for living our life in fellowship with the Creator of the universe.

- 11. Each Family of God is a unique, albeit imperfect, reflection of the kingdom of God. Each faith community, while existing in a unique culture, is called to witness to the new life they have in Christ that comes from God alone.
- 12. The spiritually mature within the body guide the growth of the younger, newer members.
- 13. In the assembly of believers, we experience the power of God for the growth of the church and individuals. This power is from God and cannot be replicated "under the sun."
- 14. In the ecclesia we experience the true meaning of offering ourselves as living sacrifices to God as we work with the members of the body to "bring in Christ's kingdom."

<u>God's Action:</u> He builds, instructs, nurtures and mobilizes the church.

He raises up leaders for individual fellowships. He gives fruit in character and growth in numbers.

Man's Response: Some believe and become disciples.

Others disbelieve and persecute.

The new disciples become a part of local fellowships and proclaim

the gospel to the ends of the earth.

VII. Character Study: Paul

Paul: serving, sacrifice, study

Paul's life after his conversion was a total "about face" with regard to the sect known as "The Way." Where he initially sought to imprison and silence the new believers, he now poured out his life in service for the Gentiles. Paul's ministry credentials are well documented:

shipwreck 3 times, 40 stripes less one five times, stoning, constantly in dangers, perils in the sea, perils among false brethren, etc. (see II Cor. 11:23-28)

It's difficult to imagine that anyone, other than Christ, suffered more for the cause of the gospel than Paul.

His life was spent serving those who believed. (serving) He laid down his life as a sacrifice for the kingdom of God. (sacrifice)

And, he was an ardent student. He was well-known to have exceeded all of his contemporaries in the credentials of learning. It was these studies that prepared him for the task of taking the gospel to the Gentiles. He was able to go back into the Old Testament, which the Jews revered, and demonstrate to the Jews from their own Scriptures, that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah. (study)

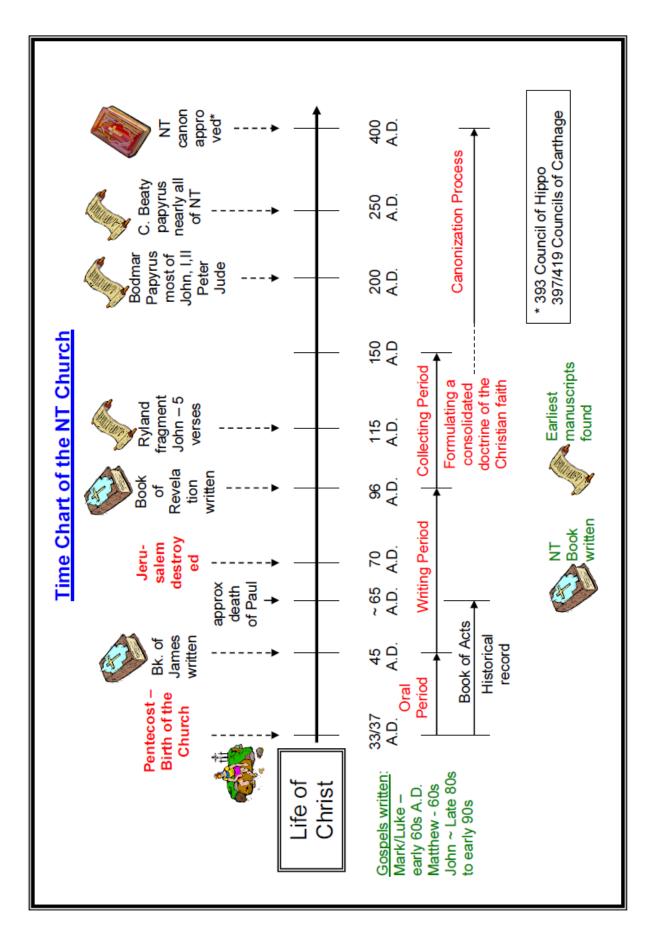
VIII.	Homework assignment:
1.	What is the importance of the "epistles" for us today?
2.	What are the two main foci of the epistles:
	A
	B
	Clue: The gospels give us observations (the facts)
3.	Of what benefit is it to us to know the date when a book is written?
4.	What could you say to someone about the accuracy of the Scriptures if they said: "Well, we don't have any of the original letters today so we don't know if what we have today is accurate."
5.	Using the outlines above, to what Biblical book could you go to get guidance:
	A. when confronted with false teachers:
	B, when confronted with Gnosticism
	C. on foundational principles

Why is it important to know who the author of a book is?

6.

## **An Information Chart of the Epistles**

Book	Author	<b>Date</b> (from NSB)	Themes
Romans	Paul	57 A.D.	Salvation to all by grace through faith
I Corinthians	Paul	56 A.D.	Correcting abuses in the church
2 Corinthians	Paul	56 A.D.	The apostolic authority of Paul
Galatians	Paul	48 A.D.	Refutation of the Judaizers
Ephesians	Paul	60 A.D.	"In Christ"
Philippians	Paul	60 A.D.	The joy of being in Christ
Colossians	Paul	60 A.D.	Refutation of Gnosticism and Judaizers
I & 2 Thessalonians	Paul	51 A.D.	Basics of the faith and applications (I); the "day of the Lord" (II)
1 & 2 Timothy	Paul	62-67 A.D.	Remaining faithful in Christ (I); Instructions regarding the Christian life (II)
Titus	Paul	63 A.D.	Instructions to Titus regarding church leadership and Exhortations to the church
Philemon	Paul	60 A.D.	Paul's plea regarding a runaway slave
Hebrews	? possibly Paul or Barnabas	64 A.D.	Christianity is the true successor to Judaism; the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ
James	James, the brother of Jesus	46 A.D.	Practical instructions to the church "The Proverbs of the NT"
I & 2 Peter	Peter	62-64 A.D.	Why suffering occurs; our eternal reward (I); holy living, refutation of false teachers, encouragement to persevere (II)
I, 2 & 3 John	John	70 – 95 A.D.	Promote fellowship, protect against false teachers (I); refutation of docetism (II); the problem of Diotrephes (III)
Jude	Jude – the brother of Jesus	70 A.D.	Defending the faith and growing in grace; false teachers



## LESSON #16

# Stage 16: The Church Age The Holy Spirit Within Believers

Preparing the Bride of Christ

Literary source: "The Story of Christianity - The early church to the present

day" by Justo L. Gonzalez

## I. Background:

<u>Dispensation</u>: The Dispensation of the Holy Spirit who indwells believers

<u>Context</u>: The gospel had been preached to the uttermost parts of the earth

(see book of Acts) and the church had enjoyed an early period of growth. The gospel stories were passed on by word of mouth

from about 33 A.D. to 45 A.D. (oral period)

21 epistles (letters) were written to the churches to provide an <a href="interpretation">interpretation</a> and <a href="application">application</a> of the events of the gospel. This writing period began around 46 A.D. with the book of James and ended with the writing of Revelation by John the apostle (~ 96 A.D.).

Nero became the emperor of Rome in 54 A.D. and was favorable towards the Jews for a season. Upon the death of two of his key advisors, he became hostile towards Christians and he became an enemy of the church. It is believed by some that Paul, the apostle, was martyred at the hands of Nero in the early 60's A.D.

Rome was burned (by Nero) in 70 A.D. (But Nero blamed the Christians.)

Nero was followed by a succession of Roman emperors including Vespasian, Titus and Domitian.

Domitian banished John, the beloved apostle, to the island of Patmos because of "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." (Rev. 1:9)

Dates of: this Period

96 A.D. to the Rapture

## Literary Type:

Some non-Biblical historical sources

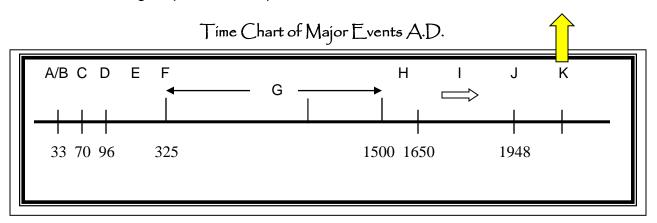
Prophecy - The book of Revelation unfolds as a progression of visions which is consistent with visionary writings.

The title "Apocalypse" meaning "an unveiling" places it in the genres of apocalyptic writing. Apocalyptic writing is a branch of visionary writings that depicts the end of history and the timeless eternity that follows.

## II. Major Events:

Dispensation of the Holy Spirit (the Age of the Church)

- A. Pentecost descent of the Holy Spirit 33 A.D.
- B. The birth of the church 33 A.D.
  - early period of growth
  - persecution until Constantine embraces Christianity
- C. Jerusalem destroyed 70 A.D.
- D. John writes Revelation, the last of the NT books ~96 A.D.
- E. Early church fathers
- F. Constantine embraces Christianity 325 A.D.
- G. The "Dark Ages" 325 to 1500 A.D.
- H. The Reformation 1500 to 1650 A.D.
- I. Period of world-wide evangelism 1650 A.D.
- J. 1948 Rebirth of the Jewish Nation
- K. "The Rapture" I Thess. 4:13-18 (the living and resurrected saints are "caught up into the air")



In discussing the era of the church, we will limit our review to the major persons and events that have the most significant impact on this era.

These include:

- the early church and church fathers
- Constantine and the Imperial church
- the Dark Ages
- Martin Luther and the reformation

## **Background**

In the letters of the New Testament, we saw that the gospel was being preached throughout the earth and that the church had enjoyed an early period of growth. The

gospel stories were passed on by word of mouth during an initial oral period.

Beginning around 45 A.D., letters began to be written by the apostles to the churches to provide an interpretation and application of the events of the gospel. Some of the letters written came to be recognized as "inspired by God" in a way similar to the writings of the Old Testament.

This writing period ended with the writing of the book of Revelation by John in 96 A.D. This was the final book of God's written revelation to mankind. In it, we will see the completion of all events in time.

Question? Can you think of some of the issues that might be related to these letters?

- 1. What authority should be given to these letters? (information or obedience) e.g. It's just Paul's recommendation. (?)
- 2. The authors didn't know at the time that they were writing Scripture.
- 3. How can we determine if they are authentic Scriptures inspired by God?

We also examined the church which was birthed at Pentecost and saw that this is the final stage of God's plan to create a community for Himself in which He will dwell. We saw the richness of God's wisdom in the design of the church and recognized that all born-again believers are joined to one another in the church each having gifts and callings that are useful in strengthening the church.

After the writing period, there was another period from 96 A.D. to about 150 A.D. in which the documents of the New Testament were collected, copied, translated and transmitted throughout the known world.

In today's lesson, we will take an abbreviated look at the period of time known as the "Church Age." It is also the age of grace and the age of the Holy Spirit.

## I. The Early Church

The apostolic fathers were the immediate disciples of the Apostles, the title Father being given to the leaders in the church who excelled in learning, judgment, piety and understanding of the Scriptures. Men such as Irenaeus, Clement, and Justin Martyr provided leadership, wisdom and guidance in resolving the issues of the local church and also served to respond to false doctrines that arose. They took lead roles in guiding the canonization process and the development of a Christian systematic theology. (Their names appear on the chart at the end of this lesson labeled: "Canon – Early Church Testimony.")

One of the continuing problems of the early church was persecution. This began with the martyrdom of Stephen. Each of the apostles, except John, eventually suffered martyrdom. Much of the early opposition to this new group of believers came from the Jews who could not accept the fact that Jesus was their long-awaited Messiah. For example, Paul, on his missionary journeys, was followed by Jews who denounced his teachings and even stoned him at one location.

As time progressed, opposition and persecution began to come from non-Jewish sources.

## Nero

Nero was one of the persecutors of the church.

He had become the emperor of Rome in 54 A.D. and was favorable towards the Jews for a few years. Upon the death of two of his key advisors, he became hostile toward Christians and became an enemy of the church.

When Rome was burned in 70 A.D., many believed that the fire had been ordered by Nero for various reasons. Some said it was:

- to inspire him in the writing of a great epic poem, or
- so he could rebuild the city according to his own purposes.

It became apparent that he was going to be blamed for the fire as long as there was no one else to blame. Since two of the main areas that had not burned had a high proportion of Jewish and Christian populations, he decided to blame the Christians. The pages of history provide ample documentation of the atrocities that followed and were committed under Nero's rule against God's people.

Nero was followed by a succession of Roman emperors including Vespasian, Titus and Domitian.

It was under Domitian's rule that John was banished to the island of Patmos because of "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." (Rev. 1:9) It was here that John received "the Revelation."

## Persecution in the Second century

Although the persecution of the Jews began in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, historical records of persecutions are scarce until the 2<sup>nd</sup> century.

The most dramatic of the records are called "the Acts of the Martyrs" which give details of the arrest, trials and deaths of a number of martyrs.

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, Christians were in a precarious position. Persecution was not consistent from area to area. The general policy of the Roman empire was that Christians were not to be sought, but if they were brought before the authorities, they must be forced to recant or be punished. If anyone believed evil rumors about them, they would be accused and persecution would break out.

Some issues that raised rumors and suspicions were:

- "private love feasts"
- "eat my body and drink my blood"

Because of this kind of misinformation, it was important for Christians to show that the rumors weren't true and to provide pagans with a better understanding of the basic fundamentals of Christianity. This became the task of the apologists.

In addition, a number of cults that surfaced with their false teachings, only added fuel to the fire. Some of the cults were: Gnosticism, followers of Marcion, Arianism and Donatists.

Gnosticism - special knowledge, all matter is evil, world created by a lesser god

Jesus' body - an apparition - left Him before the crucifixion, the body is evil, eons...lesser gods removed from the supreme being

Marcionites the creator and the world are evil

Jehovah, a lesser god, out of evil intent created the world

the God Jesus was not Jehovah

Jehovah is arbitrary, vindictive, keeps a record of disobedience and

watches for opportunities to punish

The God of Christians gives freely and requires nothing.

Jesus not born of Mary

Hebrew Scriptures are set aside.

OT god is an inferior god.

Other cults: Arianism – Jesus not God

Donatist – some had denied their faith under persecution

How were they to be restored?

The heretics had created their own systems of doctrine and the church needed to respond by having some of its teachers prepare expositions of doctrine consistent with the Scriptures.

One of the principle responses to these errors was the creation of the "The Apostles' Creed" It became a symbol of the faith.

Symbol meant the means of recognition; e.g. a token given to a messenger so the recipient of a message would know that it was genuine.

Closer examination of the creed shows that it had much within it that was directed against Marcion and the Gnostics.

The persecution of the church continued into the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## Decius

In 240 A.D., Decius became emperor of Rome. He was an old-style Roman who

wanted to return to the glory days of Rome.

But he had other problems besides the cult that wouldn't worship the gods of Rome:

- Barbarian excursions into the empire were increasing.
- a serious economic crisis
- Ancient traditions were being forgotten

To Decius, the obvious reason for this degeneration of the Roman Empire was that they had abandoned their gods thus provoking their displeasure. He reasoned: If all the subjects of the empire would worship the gods of Rome, then perhaps the gods would once again smile upon them. So his persecution was, in reality, a campaign to restore their ancestral religion. He wasn't trying to create martyrs but apostates.

He issued an imperial decree not to persecute the Christians. But, he also stipulated that all subjects of Rome should worship the gods of Rome. Those who complied would be given a certificate attesting to their compliance.

Decius' persecution was brief. He was succeeded by Gallus who set aside his policy two years later.

Early in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the last and worst persecution broke out under Diocletian. He reorganized the empire and placed the government on the shoulders of 4 emperors, himself being one of them.

## II. The Imperial Church

## Constantine

The empire eventually came to be divided among 4 men: Licinius, Maximus Daia, Constantine and Maxentius. The first 3 recognized each other but declared Maxentius to be a usurper.

By his victory at Milvian bridge, Constantine gained control of the western half of the empire. Constantine then joined with Licinius in ordering an end to the persecution of Christians.

The principle issue with Constantine was not so much his own personal conversion (if it did happen) but the impact of his supposed conversion and rule during his life and after. Some have even estimated that until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the church has lived in its "Constantinian" era and that we are now going through a crisis connected with the end of that era.

## The Impact of Constantine upon Christianity

1. People flocked to the church, but not because they realized they were sinners and wanted to lead a holy life.

Question? What other reasons might they have for getting to the church?

- popular thing to do
- support the emperor
- financial gain thru political appointment to ecclesiastical positions

A second impact of Constantine on the church was the cessation of persecution.

A third impact was the development of an official theology.

- Some Christians sought to show that Constantine was the chosen one of God to bring the history of the church and empire to its culmination.
- Others saw this as a great apostasy and withdrew to the desert to lead a life of meditation and asceticism.

The 4<sup>th</sup> century thus witnessed a massive exodus of devoted Christians to the deserts of Egypt and Syria – the beginnings of monasticism.

- Others simply broke with the church at large, now become the imperial church, which was considered sinful and apostate.

A fourth impact of the reign of Constantine was that of the use of imperial (political) authority to resolve matters of doctrinal dispute. In matters of doctrinal dispute, people simply went to a political authority to gain their approval and denunciation of their opponents.

## III. The Dark Ages

During this period of a new political order, the role of the church was often compromised. The ecclesiastical leaders seemed content to support and obey the rulers. And soon it became customary for the kings to decide who would occupy the office of bishop (overseer).

Throughout the period of the Dark Ages, abuses within the church continued. Ecclesiastical leaders were appointed by persons in political positions of authority but certainly not ordained of God.

Doctrinal disputes were resolved by politicians without regard for the teachings of Scripture.

During the Dark Ages, the church was in shambles. No longer was it the "safe sheepfold" designed by God and birthed at Pentecost. No longer did the shepherds seek to lead, feed, guide and heal the sheep. (They were more inclined towards fleecing the sheep.) No longer were there miracles and gifts and callings.

At one point a church official was discussing the state of the church with a righteous believer. As he was counting the official treasury, He commented: "Look, no longer can the church say: "Silver and gold have I none." The righteous believer replied: "Yes, but also no longer can the church say: "In the name of Jesus, rise up and walk."

The old nature of man had seized a new business opportunity. And the church suffered. The need for a reformation, a renaissance (or new birth) was desperate.

The following is taken from "The Story of Christianity" pp, 6-7 of "The reformation"

"The dissolution (decay, dissolving, breaking up) is such that the souls entrusted to the clergy receive great damage for we are told that a great majority of the clergy are living in open concubinage and that if our justice intervenes in order to punish them, they revolt and create a scandal, and that they despise our justice to the point that they arm themselves against it."

As the 15<sup>th</sup> century came to a close, it was clear that the church was in need of profound reformation, and that many longed for it. The decline and corruption of the papacy was well known.

After its residence in Avignon, where it had served as a tool of French interests, the papacy had been further weakened by the Great Schism, which divided western Europe in its allegiance to two and even three popes. At times, the various claimants to the papacy seemed equally unworthy. Then, almost as soon as the schism was healed, the papacy fell into the hands of men who were more moved by the glories of the Renaissance than by the message of the cross. Through war, intrigue, bribery, and licentiousness, these popes sought to restore and even outdo the glories of ancient Rome.

As a result, while most people still believed in the supreme authority of the papacy, many found it difficult to reconcile their faith in the papacy with their distrust for its actual occupants.

Corruption, however, was not limited to the leadership in Rome. The conciliar movement, which had sought to end the Great Schism and to reform the morals of the entire church, had succeeded in the first of these goals but failed in the second. One of the reasons for such failure was that several of the bishops sitting in the councils were themselves among those who profited from the existing corruption.

Such corrupt leadership set the tone for most of the lesser clergy and the monastics. While clerical celibacy was the law of the church, there were many who broke it openly; and bishops and local priests alike flaunted their illegitimate children. The ancient monastic discipline was increasingly relaxed as convents and monasteries became centers of leisurely living. Monarchs and the high nobility often provided for their illegitimate offspring by having them named as abbots and abbesses with no regard for their monastic vocation or lack of it."

Some of the significant persons and activities of the Dark Ages were:

455 A.D.	Vandals sack Rome
568 A.D.	Lombards invade Italy
622 A.D.	Mohammed flees to Medina
668- 775 A.D.	Constantine IV and V, Popes Gregory I II, III
732 A.D.	Battle of Tours

772 A.D. Charlemagne attacks Saxons

787 A.D. II Council of Nicea

875 – 887 A.D. Charles the Bald, Charles the Fat (Western emperors)

1093 A.D. Anselm bishop of Canterbury1099 A.D. Crusaders take Jerusalem

1291 A.D. End of Crusader presence in the holy Land

1337 – 1454 A.D. Hundred Years War

1380 – 1422 A.D. Charles VI King of France 1380 A.D. Wycliffe condemned at Oxford

1402 A.D. Huss rector at Prague
1422 – 1461 A.D. Henry VI King of England
1453 A.D. Fall of Constantinople

1509 – 1547 A.D. Henry VIII

## IV. The Reformation

Throughout the history of Christianity, few have been the object of as much discussion as was Martin Luther. Some describe him as an ogre who destroyed the unity of the church. Among these constituents, he was depicted as "the wild boar among the vineyard."

But for others, he was a champion of the faith. His preaching and teaching were the instruments to restore the pure gospel to the church.

Even today, a number of Catholic historians agree that his protest was justified and he was correct on many points of doctrine.

His greatest discovery likely occurred in 1515 when he began to lecture on the letter to the Romans centering on the text of verse 1:17. He spent days and nights trying to understand the tie between the gospel and the justice of God and came to his great declaration that "the righteous shall live by faith."

Ultimately, to him, it meant that the "righteousness of God" is that which is given to those who live by faith.

As he continued his discussions with his colleagues, he came to the place of believing that he should challenge the traditional views. He drafted a composition of 97 theses which he proposed be debated in an academic setting.

Much to his surprise, the debate proposed aroused little interest apart from the university.

He then wrote another set of theses, the "95 theses" with little expectation of a response other than that which he had received before.

But these theses caused a stir that would impact all of Christendom. The reason for this response was that within these theses was an attack on the sale of indulgences and its theological basis.

The particular sale of indulgences that prompted his protest was the one authorized by Pope Leo X to collect funds for the acquisition of an important bishopric in Mainz, Germany.

The man who was charged with the collection, John Tetzel, was an unscrupulous man who was willing to make scandalous claims in order to obtain contributions to the collections.

Tetzel and his workers proclaimed that the indulgences they sold would make the sinner "cleaner than when coming out of baptism;" also, that the cross of the seller of the indulgences has as much power as the cross of Christ. Those who would purchase an indulgence for a loved one who had died were promised that "as soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs."

Such claims aroused the indignation of many who knew that Tetzel was misrepresenting the doctrines of the church.

It was at this point that Luther nailed his "95 theses" to the door of the church in Wittenberg.

At length, Luther was taken before the Emperor and a number of the great Lords of the German empire. He was shown a number of books which he had written and asked if there was anything he would like to recant.

It was not the emperor's purpose to engage in a debate on Luther's teaching so, after a day of delay, he again asked: Do you recant?

Luther's response was: "My conscience is a prisoner of God's Word. I cannot and will not recant, for to disobey one's conscience is neither just nor safe. God help me. Amen."

Then with a gesture of victory, he left the hall and returned to his home. Luther had challenged the pope's authority.

The pope was not about to let a rebellious friar question his authority and worked to take action against him.

But, by the time the "Edict of Worms" against him was issued, Luther was nowhere to be found. Luther was in hiding in the castle of Wartburg.

While in hiding, he spent much of his time writing. His most important work during this time was his German translation of the Bible.

The edict against Luther was eventually withdrawn and many German states were granted the freedom to choose their religious allegiance. Many began implementing the Lutheran reforms.

But, in 1529, the edict of Worms was reaffirmed. In response, a number of leaders of the Lutheran movement presented a formal protest. It was from this action that these believers came to be called "Protestants."

Some other principle characters and events of this era were:

Ulrich, Zwingli and the Swiss Reformation
The Anabaptist Movement
John Calvin
The Reformation in Great Britain
Protestantism in France
The Catholic Reformation

## V. God's Actions

God continues to pursue his plan of a loving community in which He will dwell. However, His plan, at this point takes a new turn.

Jesus, His Son, and "God with us" for a season finished His work on earth and ascended into heaven. His redemptive work on earth was finished. It was now time for God to introduce a new dispensation, that of the Spirit.

Even though Jesus was no longer on the earth, believers could experience the "with-God" life by the Holy Spirit which came to dwell within the believer. No longer would the faithful worship at the temple in Jerusalem. The human heart was now the dwelling of "God with us" and would be the location of worship in spirit and truth.

The remarkable work of God was that, when Jesus was on the earth, He could only be in one place, with one person at a time. Now that the Holy Spirit has come, He can be everywhere with everyone at all times.

The Holy Spirit was given to be a guide, a comforter and one who would fill them with power for deeds of service. And...the Holy Spirit was given to be with them forever, they would always have the presence of God with them.

The apostolic church, led by Peter to the Jews and Paul to the Gentiles, empowered by the Holy Spirit led in the evangelization of the known world.

God allowed a period of prosperity, respect and growth to come to the new, rapidly growing church.

During this period, men led by the Spirit authored the New Testament scriptures:

- a. in response to a need to have a reliable historical record of the words and deeds of Jesus,
- b. to respond to specific concerns and questions encountered in the

new churches, and

- c. to refute heresies that tried to subvert the faithful.
- d. to provide encouragement and hope to those experiencing persecution

As the eye-witnesses of the accounts of Jesus passed from the scene of history, they were replaced with the next generation of leaders which came to be called "Apostolic Fathers."

During this early stage of growth and persecution, the Holy Spirit superintended the writing, collection, copying and dissemination (spread out as in sowing seed) of the Holy Scriptures.

God allowed persecutions to come to the churches for several reasons:

- 1. to refine and strengthen the disciples' faith,
- 2. to shape the character of the faithful to be like Christ,
- 3. to aid in the spread of the gospel throughout the world.

In the Revelation of John (subject of Lesson 19), God gave His final revelation of the things to come. In this revelation, He showed in advance the course of history from the church to the end of time. This revelation identifies the works and final destruction of God's enemies and the ultimate glorification of His Son and his bride, the church.

As he did in previous stages at selected times in history, God raised up men and women of God and planted his message in their hearts.

In the days to come preceding the return of Christ, God will again raise up voices declaring His message of a surrendered, holy life.

## VI. Man's Response

Many people have been drawn to Christ and received the redemptive rewards of His work on earth.

Numerous Christians have given up their lives in service to God but also as a sacrifice on the altar of martyrdom.

Today, Christians continue to suffer martyrdom for the cause of Christ.

Others reject Christ, His message and work resulting in eternal loss to their souls. Often, those who reject Him become persecutors of those who love Him.

On the contemporary scene, discipleship to Jesus remains the ideal of the

faith. However, many have not grasped the core teachings of the Lordship of Christ and growth in Christ-likeness. As a result, churches may be filled with people who profess Christ as Savior but have little of the power and life that comes from a Spirit-filled life.

This is a stunning likeness to the church described in Revelation, ch-3 of the church at Laodicea. They thought they were rich, prosperous and in need of nothing. God, on the other hand, saw their true condition that they were lukewarm, wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked. (Rev. 3:14-17)

## VII. Insights for our Formation

Discipleship to Jesus in the fellowship of His church is the only assured path of life under God. (Those who claim they don't need the church are like lambs in the wilderness with no shepherd to protect them from the wolves of the world.) They also miss the blessings that come from being connected to a local body of Christ.

Under the Chief Shepherd Jesus, his people are guided, protected, nurtured, fed and healed.

The path on which He leads us will take us to his grace and mercy, increasing faith, increasing fruitfulness, increasing holiness and increasing glory. Apart from Him, we can do nothing.

As we have seen in history, Christians will suffer persecutions and difficulties. Jesus promised that we would be like him in these things. But He, by his Spirit, is always with us, will not forsake us and will provide a way of escape from any temptation we may face.

His Word also shows us the end of all things.

At present, we only see a dim picture of the things to come. But this limited vision will come to an end and, as it does, we will fully see the rewards awaiting us. This alone should be significant encouragement to each of us to continue running the race.

As we continue "running our race," we move from faith to more faith, from glory to glory. We are being changed into His likeness. We will grow in grace and become increasingly able to walk in holiness and in power.

In this age and in this body, we will not find complete freedom from the evils that surround us. Jesus promised us that even as He suffered, so shall we have sufferings and afflictions in this life.

## VIII. Benefits for Our Formation

Embracing the Lordship of Christ under the direction of the Word of God and the Spirit of God is the single most powerful and beneficial path to transformation.

No other competitors (such as self-help manuals, psychology, man-devised religious systems) come close. No one else can change the human heart. Most worldly systems don't understand the nature of the problem (i.e. sin). Nor do any of them have a sacrifice for sin.

The reason discipleship is powerful to bring change is access to the wisdom, the mercy and grace of God.

It is the power of the Word and Spirit that liberate us from sin and rebellion and guards us against the wiles of the devil and the attractions of the world.

## IX. Homework Assignments:

1. "raptu ———	Summarize the activities on earth during this period from Pentecost to the ire."
2.	Why do Christians need the church?
3.	Suppose that you are a citizen of a nation that worships many Gods. suddenly, your king declares that all of his subjects shall now become
Christ	,
What on yo	are some of the effects, results and impacts such a declaration might have u?

# Why the Apocryphal writings have not been generally accepted by the communities of faith:

- 1. The Jewish community (to which God had entrusted the OT Scriptures) never accepted them.
- 2. There is no evidence that either Jesus or the authors of the NT books accepted them or ever quoted from them.
- 3. The early church fathers (the next line of leaders in the church after the apostles) rejected them.
- 4. No church council accepted them until the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D.
- 5. Even though the Catholic church came to accept them, there were many Catholic scholars, even up through the reformation period (16<sup>th</sup> century), that rejected their canonicity.

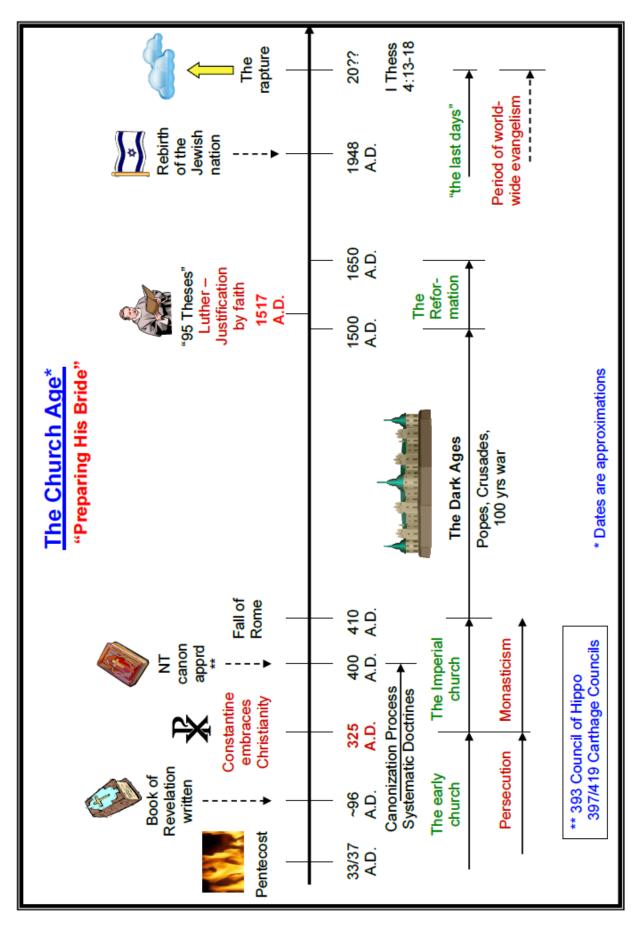
## Guidelines for Acceptance of a document as canonical (H.S. inspired) for the NT:

- 1. Apostolic authority (written by apostles or their associates) apostolic authority means authorship or approval.
- 2. Conformity with the rules of faith Is it consistent with basic Christian teachings? Or...does it contradict known teachings?
- 3. Continuous acceptance and use by the church at large.
- 4. Is it dynamic, does it contain the life-transforming power of God?
- 5. Was the writer confirmed by miracles from God? e.g. Moses Ex. 4:1-9; Elijah I Kings. 18; Jesus Act 2:22

## The reliability of ancient texts:

Book	Author	Date	Earliest Copies	# of Copies
Iliad	Homer	800 B.C.	400 B.C.	643
Historical	Herodotus	480 – 425 B.C.	900 A.D.	8
Historical	Thucydides	460 – 400 B.C.	900 A.D.	8
	Plato	400 B.C.	900 A.D.	7
	Demosthenes	300 B.C.	1100 A.D.	200
Gallic Wars	Caesar	100-44 B.C.	900 A.D.	10
New Testament	Various Authors	45 – 96 A.D.	115, 200, 250,325A.D.*	> 11,000

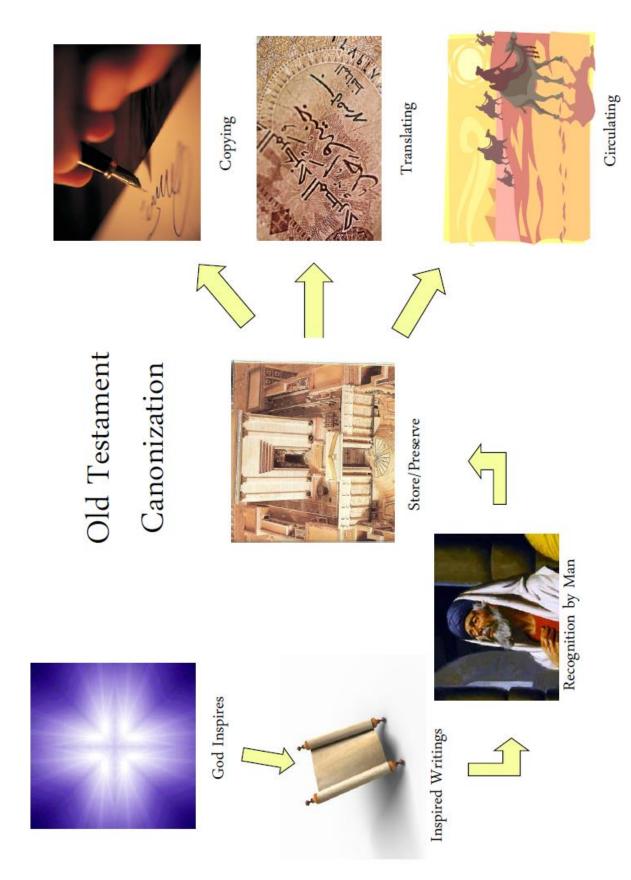
<sup>\* 250</sup> A.D. most of N.T.; 325 A.D. complete N.T.



# CANON - EARLY CHURCH TESTIMONY

Individuals	Polycarp 110-50 X	renaeus 130-202 O	Justin M. 150-55 X	Clement 150-215 X	Tertullian150-220 X		Athanasius 293?	Cyril 315-386 O	Eusebius 325-40 0	Jerome 340-420 0	Augustine 400		Canons	Muratorian 170 O	Barococcio 206 O	Apostolic 300 0	Cheltenham 360 0	Athanasius 367 0	Translations	Old Latin 200 0	Old Syriac 400 0	Councils	Nicea 325-340 0	Hippo 393 0	Carthage 397 0	Carthage 419 0
		1000	1000	- 22		177.55	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	100	10000		0	0		0		-		200		
4	×	0	×	×	×	×	0	0	0	0	0	÷		0	0	0	0	0	-	0	0		0	0	0	0
5	×	0	0	×	×	×	0	0	0	0	0		-	0	0		0	0		0	0		0	0		0
2	×	0	×	×	×	×	0	0	0	0	0			0	0	0	0	0		0	0		0	0	-	0
MA LA CA	×	0	×	0	×	×	0	0	0	0	0			0	0	0	0	0		0	0		0	0	0	0
3	×	0	×	0	×	×	0	0	0	0	0			0	0	0	0	0		0	0		0	0	0	0
200	×	0	×	0	×	×	0	0	0	0	0			0	0	0	0	0		0	0		0	0	0	0
ē	×	0	×	0	×	×	0	0	0	0	0			0	0	0	0	0		0	0		0	0	0	0
3	×	0	×	×	×	×	0	0	0	0	0			0	0	0	0	0		0	0		0	0	0	0
	×	0		0	×	×	0	0	0	0	0			0	0	0	0	0		0	0		0	0	0	0
3	×	0	×	0	×	×	0	0	0	0	0	1		0	0	0	0	0		0	0		0	0	0	0
-	×	0						0						0	0	0	0	0		0	0		0	0	0	0
		27/3	×					0	283	1000	200	+		0	0	0	0	0		0	0		0	0	0	0
7		×		0	×	×	0	0	0	0	0			0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0		0	0	0	0
		×					0	0	0	0	0			0	0	0	0	0		0	0		0	0	0	0
		×		0	×	×	0	0	0			+	-	0		0			-		0			0		2
		×		0	×	2		0						0	0		0	0	+	0	0	-		0	0	-
2		1			100		0		8	0		-	-		0			0			0		200	0		19/19
E E	×	0	×	0	×	0	0	0	0	0	0				0	0	0				0			0		
1 Z Pet						0	0	0	c.	0	0				0	0	٠.	0					~	0	0	0
	×	0		0	×		0	0	0	0	0		1	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0		0	0	0	0
Z JU	×	×				~	0	0	Ç.	0	0			0	0	0	c	0		0			~	0	0	0
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## LESSON #17

Stage 17: The Book of Revelation

## Eternity The People of God with God Forever

## I. Background Information

<u>Dispensation</u>: Kingdom dispensation from the judgment of the living nations to the

new Jerusalem

## Context:

In lesson 18, we reviewed the 20 centuries of the church after the writing of the book of Revelation in 96 A.D.

## This included:

- the church under persecution,

- the Apostolic Fathers who followed the apostles as leaders of the church,
- Constantine and his "Christianization" of the roman Empire
- the "Dark Ages,"
- the Reformation.
- world-wide evangelization

In 96 A.D., with Rome under Domitian, John, the beloved apostle, was banished to the island of Patmos because of "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." (Rev. 1:9) It was here while he was "in the Spirit on the Lord's day that John received the Revelation which God had given to Jesus to give to the 7 churches.

In this book, we will see the completion of God's plan to create a community in which He is the Sustainer and most glorious inhabitant. We will see the judgment and final vanquishing of all of God's enemies. At the close of this book we will find ourselves in the New Jerusalem and time ended. (I've provided a hint at the end of this lesson as to what we will be like at that time.)

All things will have been made new. A new and complete reality has set in: "God with us" throughout eternity.

<u>Date</u>: Revelation, the final book of the New Testament, was written in

approximately 96 A.D.

It completes the revelation of the events that occur from the present

to the end of time.

<u>Literary Type</u>: Prophecy - The book unfolds as a progression of visions which is consistent with visionary writings.

## Major Events this era

- A. the Rapture
- B. the Marriage Supper of the Lamb
- C. The Great tribulation
- D. 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ
- E. The Battle of Armageddon
- F. Satan is bound for 1000 years
- G. Judgment of the Living Nations
- H. The Millennial reign of Christ Rev. 20: 4-5
- I. Fire from heaven consumes the armies of Gog and Magog (Rev. 20:7-9)
- J. Satan loosed (Rev. 20:2-9)
- K. The great white throne judgment Rev. 20:11-15 Judgment and doom of the wicked
- L The lake of fire Rev. 20:10-15
- M. The heavens and the earth purged with fire II Pet. 3:7-13
  The first heaven and the first earth pass away; the sea is no more Rev. 21:1
- N. The New Jerusalem
- O. "It is done!"

See chart "The Church – Rapture to the New Jerusalem" at the end of this lesson for a pictorial representation of these events.

## II. A Summary of the book of Revelation:

The author of the book of Revelation is John, the beloved apostle.

It was written ~ 96 A.D. while John was banished and living on the island of Patmos.

The title of the book is Revelation from the Greek word "apocalypse" which means an unveiling or uncovering of something previously hidden.

In Rev. 1:1 and 19 we see the purpose of the Revelation:

- 1. v.1a: "The revelation of Jesus Christ..."
- 2. v.1b "...to show to his servants the things that must soon take place."
- 3. v.19 "...the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this."

The larger part of the book provides predictions of events that would occur after John's time. Most of the prophetic passages describe divine judgments for sin. The last three

chapters describe Jesus' 1000 year reign and His ultimate victory over all of His enemies.

Purpose: The stated purpose of the book in the first verses is to give the revelation that God had given to Jesus to the churches regarding what was to soon take place. The book is also written to encourage believers to persevere in times of persecution. Christians living in John's time faced the continuous threat of imprisonment and even death for their faith.

Another purpose is to warn Christians concerning the dangers and destructiveness of apostasy (see chapters 2 and 3)

The Revelation does not propose to give every detail of every event throughout the end times. It does give sufficient detail to describe and warn of the crucial events of the end times, show the trends in world history and provides the underlying themes of God's plan for the ages.

## John's writings:

John was privileged to write about the gospel of new life in Christ in three different places using differing literary styles:

- 1. Gospel of John Eternal Life biography
- 2. Epistles of John (I, II, III) Divine Life epistle
- 3. The Revelation Victorious life now and throughout eternity visions/apocalyptic

## Interpretation of Revelation:

- A. There are four main methods of interpretation:
  - 1. Symbolic Revelation is a series of pictures that teach spiritual truths. There are no prophecies or historical events in Revelation.
  - 2. Preterist All of Revelation was fulfilled in the first century. The last two chapters show the eternal destinies.
  - Continuous-historical view applies Revelation prophetically to all of the centuries since the time of Christ. Only chapters 19-22 foretell events after Christ's coming.
  - 4. The Futurist view sees most of Revelation (chs. 4-22) as prophetic of the end times.

This view is sub-divided into the following:

A. those who maintain that the 7 churches identified in chapters 2 and 3 represent periods of church history up to the rapture.

B. Chapters 2 and 3 are not prophetic but describe the churches of John's day. Chapter 4 begins the predictive section.

## B. Millennial Views:

- 1. Premillennialism Christ will come to the earth before the millennium begins. He will take the living and resurrected saints up into the clouds to be with Him. (I Thess. 4:13-18)
- Postmillennialism The second coming of Christ is at the end of the millennium. According to this view, we are now living in the period of the millennium.
- 3. Amillenialism There is no literal reign of Christ on the earth for 1000 years. A common view is that the millennium is a spiritual reign of Christ with His saints in heaven at the present time.

## Outlines of Revelation:

1.	1:1-3:22 4:1-22:21	Things which are Things which shall be
2.	1:1-5:14 6:1-20:15 21:1-22:21	Introduction Judgments Glory
3.	1:1-20 2:1-3:22 4:1-11 5:1-8:1 8:2-11:19 12:1-15:4 15:5-16:21 17:1-22:5 22:6-21	Introduction (prologue) to the book Letters to the seven churches Heavenly worship Seven seals Seven trumpets Seven great signs Seven bowls of God's wrath The seven last events Epilogue and benediction

4. Rev. 1:1 - 8 Introduction
Rev. 1:9 – 1:20 The Revelation of Christ to John
Rev. 2:1 – 3:22 Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia

This section presents characteristic types, both good and bad, of churches and the flavor of their obedience to Christ. Many believe that the future of the church, from the time of the writing of Revelation (things that are), is presented in the form of these letters to the 7 churches that are in Asia. They prophetically represent periods of time and therefore, stages in which the church lives and grows. (things that will be)

Rev. 4:1 – 20:15 Great Judgments upon the Earth

- tremendous upheaval and calamity
- massive battles between good and evil
- people of God on earth suffer greatly but endure

The earth suffers great geological, biological and human devastation. (see esp. ch-16)

The human system of life is rendered non-functional. (18:1 - 19:3)

Christ comes again and wages war against evil.

Last scene: Judgments:

- Satan and his hoards
- human beings (great and small)

Rev. 21:1- - 22:21 The people of God enter into the fullness of God's presence (see Jer. 31:33 – 34)

## III. Human Reaction:

Multitudes of people over the ages have been drawn to the incarnate Christ, the Messiah, and become His disciples. Others have rejected his person and work and will not inherit the kingdom of God.

On the contemporary scene, although discipleship to Jesus is a widespread ideal, many fall far short of the surrendered life and spiritual formation leading to Christ-likeness.

Although there have been shining examples of Christ-like living over the ages, today, we predominantly have a Christian culture without a true discipleship to Jesus. How many have "accepted Christ as Savior" but have failed to embrace Him as Lord and be a student of His life?

This, however, will change.

The period of great judgments described in Rev. 4-20 will eliminate Laodicean (lukewarm) Christians. Many of Jesus' devoted followers will face suffering and death because of their commitment to Christ.

In the new heaven and earth, the people of God will be entirely surrendered to God and His reign.

Sin, evil, death and destruction will entirely disappear as God brings "time" to an end and fulfills his "plan of the ages."

In the current stage of the church, the primary resistances we face are the world, the flesh and the devil. In the final stage these will all be eliminated.

In this present era, our transformation is time-sensitive in that it occurs over a period of time as we follow after God and embrace the disciplines and circumstances of our present world life. Character development is costly and it takes our wise choices directed by the wisdom of God over time to bring it about.

In the final stage revealed to us in the book of Revelation, there are no limitations to "God with us."

Embracing the discipleship of Jesus in the continuing fellowship of His people is the only path of life with God. (God has no "Lone Rangers" in the age of the church.)

We will grow in grace and becoming increasingly able to walk in holiness and in power.

In this age and in this body, we will not find complete freedom from the evils that surround us. Jesus promised us that even as He suffered, so will we also have sufferings and afflictions in this life. But He has also assured us of his continuing presence and that He has always made a "way of escape." We can be victorious over trials. We can grow in grace and truth.

We can become more like Christ every day.

And we know from His word that the end is coming, the end of the world that we now live in. But in its end, we will have been transferred to the new; the old will be done away.

We will dwell with Him in eternity in His New Jerusalem.

Note: For a preview of what we will be like in the New Jerusalem, see the following Scriptures:

- 1. Matt. 16:28 17:2
- 2. I John 3:2

## IV. Character Study – John

Early passages in the gospels give us a picture of the raw John, who he was before he became clay in the hands of the master potter.

Mk. 3:17 Jesus called him and his brother James "sons of thunder." He was ready to make a noise, ready to defend, ready to fight if needed, always seeking for his own advantage.

Lk. 9:49 He wanted to stop a man from praying for a person for deliverance because "he wasn't one of us."

Lk. 9:51-55 When traveling through Samaria, people refused to give them shelter. John asked Jesus if they should call down fire from heaven to consume the offenders.

Matt. 20:20-28 John and James asked their mother to ask Jesus about giving them places of authority when He came into His kingdom.

He spent three years in Jesus' school of discipleship where he learned another quality very different from those displayed in the early pages of the gospel about John. This quality was love. And he became a transformed man. How did it happen?

He saw a new kind of love in the ministry years of Jesus as Jesus poured out his life for all who would come. He saw him, in love, laying down His life for those who had nothing. He saw the master at work, he heard His teachings and he must have felt Jesus' love for himself. There must surely have been external expressions of Jesus' love for John that were visible to the disciples because he became known as "the disciple whom Jesus loved."

And then, he witnessed the death, burial and resurrection of the son of God.

He was present at Pentecost when the Spirit came down with tongues of fire.

He became a man of love and left the life of violence and fighting behind. He was transformed by Jesus' words, His life and His love.

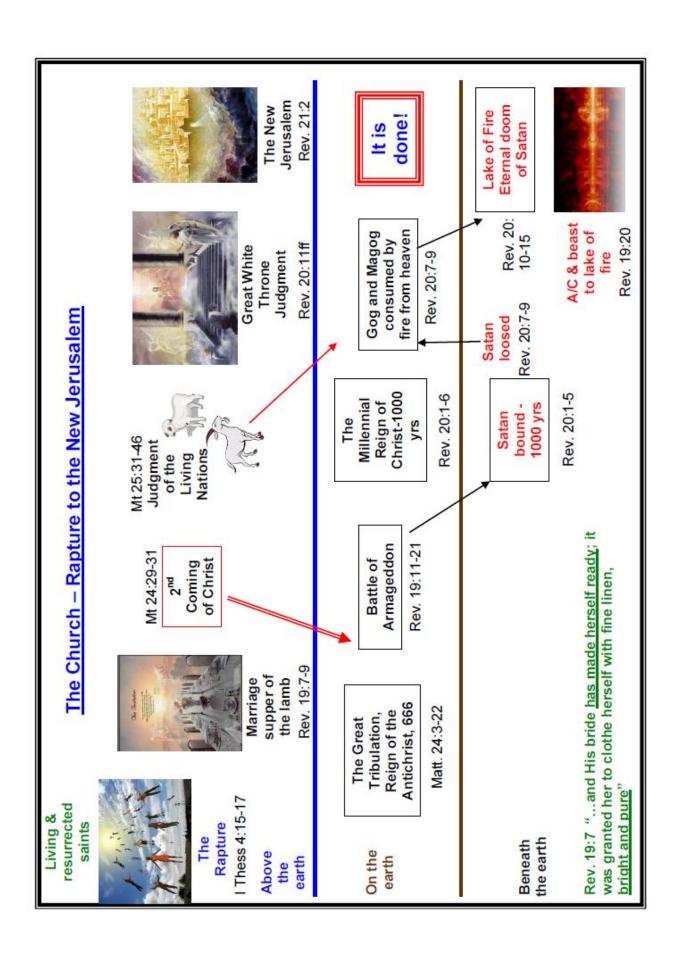
There is an early tradition about John in his old age. He had become too weak to walk but was carried to church meetings on a pallet where he would tell the congregates: "Little children, love one another."

Character Summary: John – transformation "from thunder to love" through seeing, hearing and experiencing the love of Jesus (being with Him)

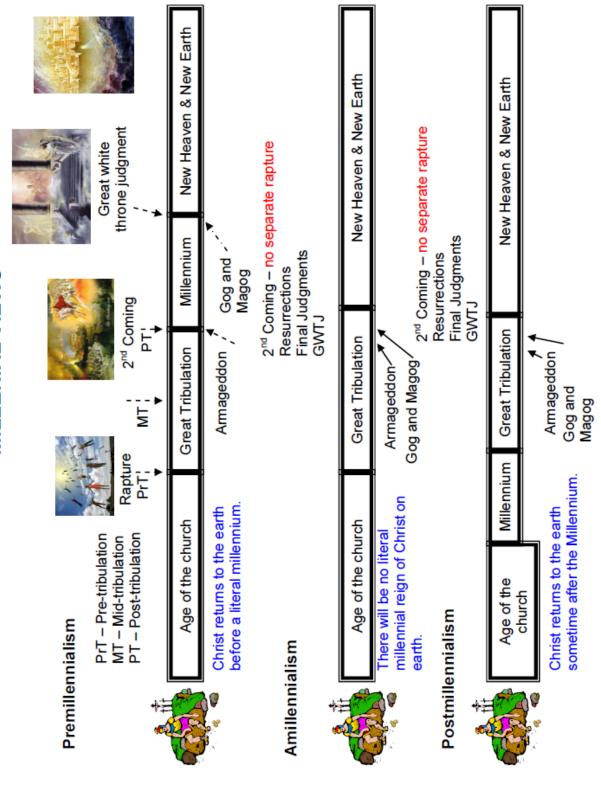
## VIII. Homework assignments:

Is there a reason why we are or are not in the millennium today? (post millennium viewpoint)
Why is the future of the world important to any age?
What was the state of the Christian church during the reign of the Roman empire at the time that John wrote the Revelation?
What are some of the key words in the Revelation?
What unique contribution does Revelation make to the rest of Scripture?
Where was Jesus at the beginning and end of Revelation?
What can we conclude from your answer?

7.	A lot of Revelation concerns conflicts and judgments. What does this tell you about God?
8.	Where will you be when the Great tribulation occurs?
9.	What impact will the mark of the beast (666) have on Christians living today?



# MILLENIAL VIEWS

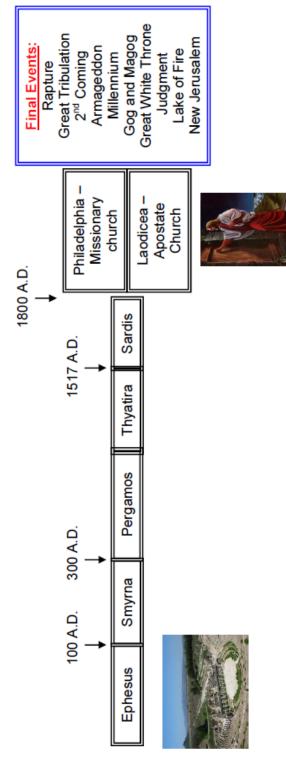




# The Seven Churches of Asia Minor

# Schools of Interpretation:

- Symbolic A message regarding the struggle between good and evil.
- (a series of pictures teaching spiritual truths.
- Preterist Only for the 1<sup>st</sup> century and fulfilled then. Now…only teaching value for Christendom.
- Continuous historical applies Revelation prophetically to all the centuries since the time of Christ.
- Futurist The 7 churches represent periods of church history up to the rapture.



- These were 7 churches that actually existed during John's day.
- Every believer belongs to one of these seven churches, spiritually speaking.

File: Church - Rapture to the New Jerusalem.ppt

# from the descriptions of chapter 1. Letters to the 7 churches: titles Rev. 1:5 The faithful witness The firstborn of the dead He is worthy to open the 7 seals Ruler of kings on earth **JESUS in REVELATION** Rev. 22:1,3 "The Throne of God and the Lamb" He is coming for His people. He will judge His people for what has been done in the body. He brings peace and binds our enemy. Millennial Reign The enemies of the church will be defeated. II Cor. 5:10

## **ABOUT PASTOR DAVID**

I grew up in Illinois; my wife, Brenda, in Oregon. It was a path of many twists and turns to get the two of us connected in California! We entered into our marriage covenant in 1986 after she had agreed to my proposal for a life of adventure. Brenda claims that she scarcely comprehended the adventure that our life would be simply by saying those two little words (I do).



We had both been Christians for a number of years and determined to make God the center of our marriage. In order to make a good beginning, we structured our wedding vows around the instructions of Scripture. We are convinced that this is the reason for our successful, growing relationship.

I received my BS in Civil Engineering in 1966 from the University of Missouri. Having taken ROTC in college, I next served as an officer in the U.S. Army, stationed in Germany.

After returning home to the states, I attended Golden Gate Seminary in California and received a Master of Divinity in 1972.

I worked for three Engineering companies before settling in with GE Nuclear Energy in San Jose, California. I finished my engineering career with 25 years of service at GE.

I was ordained a minister of the gospel in 1991.

Brenda is blessed with musical gifts and has played numerous instruments, e.g. bassoon, flute, guitar, piano, bass. She taught piano to children for 14 years until our move to Wilmington, NC. I also had some musical inclinations, growing up in a musical family in which everyone played at least one instrument. Brenda also has a heart for and is involved in a local "Special Touch" ministry, a ministry to people with disabilities.

Several years ago, we began attending Calvary Chapel San Jose, CA where Don McClure was pastoring. The emphasis on God's Word and the presence of God's Spirit in the worship kept us coming back until we felt confident that this was to be our church home.

Brenda became involved with the Praise team playing flute and singing. She also led the worship for two Women's Bible studies. I became involved in the teaching ministry working principally with the mature adults class (ages around 50-95, they called themselves the "Sonshiners") and also a young married couples class.

Even though we felt like we were settling into the San Jose Fellowship, in early 2004 we were presented with a company relocation, and we began to feel that God was leading us to a significant change, relocating from the West Coast to the East Coast. Little did we know what was in store for us in Wilmington, NC.

We often felt like Abraham who was told to leave his homeland but was given no information regarding what he would encounter when he arrived at his destination.

The next very shocking surprise was my early retirement, something we had not even considered when planning the move to the east coast. Nevertheless, God made it very clear that my engineering career of 37 years was soon to be ended. The retirement occurred almost 5 years in advance of my plan. But God had a bigger (and better) plan. One of my reoccurring supplications to God has been that I would rather be expending the main energy of my life teaching the Word of God than pouring it into the management of engineering projects and writing technical engineering reports. Now, God was giving me the desire of my heart.

I eventually came on staff with a local church and served for 7½ years as an associate pastor teaching Bible studies and ministering principally in the Equipping the Saints ministry. Brenda was involved in several ministries... Praise Team, Special Touch, hospitality/helps, Home Fellowships, to mention a few.

After a 1-year sabbatical in 2014, God has led us to begin a new fellowship which is called Safe Haven Berean Fellowship. Our focus is principally on the Word of God, with both Bible book studies and doctrinal teachings in progress at this time. Principal focuses are on the assurance of salvation, knowing what God in Christ has done for us, learning to live in a way that honors and glorifies God, and a continual focus upon our End Times preparations for our coming King.

Looking back now over the years that led us to this place in life, we are amazed at the Sovereignty of God and how he has orchestrated the events that have brought us to this place in this time. His loving and merciful hand has been seen time and again as he has opened doors and brought us quickly to where He wants us to be. He is, without question, an awesome God.

