

Editor's Note: The following article is a "survey" or outline, of the entire Bible. It will help you understand more about each book of the Bible. You will see that this section is in outline format. We have done this purposely in order to condense a large amount of information into less space. *Please study this material closely.* It is intended to be a study and teaching resource to you.

We have included this to enable you to gain a greater understanding of the Bible. Please keep this material close at hand so you can use it frequently.

This Bible Survey will be an invaluable resource to help you in teaching your people and giving them a better understanding of God's precious Word.

-Frank Parrish

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The word "Bible" comes from the Greek word for "book". The Bible is a library of 66 books written by approximately 40 different authors over a period of nearly 1500 years (1400 B.C. to A.D. 100).

These books are divided into two major divisions:

- The Old Testament (Old Covenant)
- The New Testament (New Covenant)

THE BIBLE'S PURPOSE

One theme unifies all 66 books. The theme is "salvation" or "redemption". The Bible is an account of what God has said and done in history to save (redeem) mankind from the bondage of sin and disobedience against his Creator. This theme is fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ, God's Son.

In II Timothy 3:14-17, the Bible clearly states that its purpose is to:

- 1) Make people "*wise to salvation which is through faith in Jesus Christ.*"
- 2) Equip such believers for "*every good work.*"

Thus, after a person comes to faith in Christ, the Bible is profitable for four things in equipping for "*every good work*":

- doctrine (teaching)
- reproof (showing the wrong)
- correction (showing the right)
- instruction in righteousness (right relationships with God and man)

THE STORY THE BIBLE TELLS

The story the Bible tells may be summarized as follows. God created man in His own image for fellowship and rulership over the earth on His behalf. Through willful disobedience, man lost this unique relationship with God and the destiny for which God had created him.

The Old Testament tells how God actively sought to restore mankind to His intended purpose. He did this by choosing the Jewish nation, through whom He would reveal His salvation and bring it to the whole world. But the Jews, God's specially chosen

servants, violated the covenant by which God had promised to bless them with His salvation and make them a blessing to all nations of the earth.

Thus, they disqualified themselves as God's servants, having been warned repeatedly by the prophets of the consequences of their idolatry and unfaithfulness to the one true and living God, the God of Israel.

The New Testament records the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation to redeem and restore mankind through His Son, Jesus the Christ (Messiah). As God's perfect Servant Who fully met the requirements of God's covenant, He took upon Himself the penalty of death and separation from God in His death on a Roman cross.

Upon His resurrection and exaltation, God now offers forgiveness of sins and restoration of fellowship. God's children the Church - are all who, through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord, receive God's salvation through the working of the Holy Spirit. Through them, the good news of God's gift of redemption is to be brought to the whole world.

The last book of the Bible, Revelation, shows how God's salvation of His Creation will culminate in a new heaven and earth wherein man's fellowship and rulership shall be fully and completely restored ...to the glory of God!

GOD'S ETERNAL COVENANT

INTRODUCTION

The idea of "covenant" is fundamental to both the Old and New Testaments. From the end of the second century A.D., the Church has named the two sections of Scripture we call the Old Testament and the New Testament as the Old and New Covenant.

A. DEFINITION OF "COVENANT "

1. Hebrew: "berith"- an agreement. contract or compact
2. Greek: *the Sepuagint* (the name of the Old Testament version written in Greek) and the New Testament translate "berith" with two words:
"sunatheke" - an agreement between equal parties (bilateral contract);
"diatheke"·an agreement between unequal parties (unilateral contract).
This "diatheke" is the type of covenant we have with God.

B.DIMENSIONS

God's eternal agreement includes three basic elements. One or more of these are found in all of God's covenants, beginning with Abraham.

1. *"I will be your God."*
 - a. Abraham (Gen. 17:7).
 - b. Isaac (Gn.26:24)
 - c. Jacob (Gen. 28:13, 14).
 - d. Moses (Ex. 29:45, 46; Deut. 29:13).
 - e. David (II Sam. 7:24).
 - f. Jeremiah (Jer. 31:33; cp. Heb. 8:10).
 - g. Ezekiel (Ez. 37:27).
2. *"You will be my people".*
 - a. Moses (Deut. 7:6; 29:12, 13).
 - b. David (II Sam. 7:24).
 - c. Jeremiah (Jer. 1:33; cp. He. 8:10).
 - d. Ezekiel (fa. 37:27).
3. *"I will dwell among you."*
 - a. Moses (Ex.29:45, 46)
 - b. David (II Sam. 7·5-14; cp. Acts 7:44-49)
 - c. Ezekiel (Ez. 37:27, 28).

Fulfillment of these covenant dimensions finds its fullest climax in Christ and the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:3, 4; cp. II Cor. 6:16-18).

C. DEVELOPMENT

The "new" covenant **promised** in the Old Testament (Jer. 31:31-34) and fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Heb. 8:8-12) is "new" in the sense that it is different in **quality** and **nature**. The **nature** of the "old" covenant was **external**, written on tablets of stone; the "new" covenant is **internal** written on the heart (II Cor.3:1-6). The **quality** of the new covenant is superior to the old in that the pathway of direct relationship with God is now open to each individual who believes in Christ for salvation. (For further study, please see Hebrews, Chapters 7-10.) Nevertheless both the "old" and "new" covenants have the same three fundamental dimensions.

Development of these is as follows:

1. The Covenant initiated: Genesis - Deuteronomy
2. The Covenant illustrated: Joshua -II Samuel; Job -Song of Solomon
3. The Covenant violated: I Kings - Esther; Isaiah - Malachi
4. The New Covenant initiated: Matthew - John
5. The New Covenant illustrated: Acts; Romans - Jude
6. The New Covenant Consummated: Revelation

CONCLUSION

God's eternal covenant reveals His intention to bless mankind in three basic ways:

1. with Divine headship "*I will be your God*"
2. with Divine relationship: "*you will be my people*"
3. with Divine fellowship: "*I will dwell with you*".

INTRODUCTION TO THE PENTATEUCH

GENESIS THROUGH DEUTERONOMY

I. NAME

- Hebrew: *torah*: "laws, instruction". From verb "to teach".
- Greek: *pentateuch*: "five scrolls". The Five Books of Moses.

II. CONTENTS

A. Events

1. Beginnings (Genesis 1-11).
 - a. creation: Adam and Eve
 - b. fall: Cain and Abel
 - c. flood: Noah and 3 Sons
 - d. Babel and the nations
2. Beginning of God's People (Genesis 12 - Exodus 19).
 - a. patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph
 - b. bondage in Egypt.
 - c. deliverance from Egypt.
3. Revelation at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 20- Numbers 9).
4. Preparation to enter Canaan (Numbers 10 - Deuteronomy 34).
 - a. defeat at Kadesh-barnea.
 - b. wandering in the wilderness.
 - c. second giving of the law on plains of Moab.

B. Themes

1. Creation: God's act (direct and indirect)
2. Election: *God's* choice (privilege and responsibility)?
3. Covenant: God's commitment (unilateral)
4. Exodus: God's deliverance (through blood from slavery for service)
5. Law: God's conditions (requirements)
6. Disobedience: Man's waywardness (explained by the Fall)

C. Authorship: Anonymous

1. Traditional - Moses (1400/1200 B.C.).
 - a. Information included only what Moses had access to (Mt. Sinai)
 - b. Pentateuch claims words of M (Ex. 24:3; Deut. 31:9).
 - c. Quoted by Jesus as from Moses (Mark 7:10; 10:3; 12:26).

GENESIS: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship - Anonymous, attributed to Moses.
- B. Date - Around 1400/1200 B.C.
- C. Sources - "Book of the generations of Adam" (5:1).
- D. Occasion - Need for the people of Israel to understand their origin and roots against the background of the origin and fall of mankind.

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title "Genesis".
 - Hebrew: *bereshith* ("in the beginning").
 - Greek: *genesis* ("beginning").
- B. Theme - The beginnings of God's world and God's people.
- C. Purpose - To show the beginnings of God's chosen people against the background of the beginnings of the heaven, the earth and mankind.
- D. Key verse :(Genesis 1:26; 12:2, 3) "*Then God said: Let us make man in our image, and after our likeness, and let them have dominion...and I will make of you Abraham, a great nation...and by you all the families of the earth shall be blessed .*"

EXODUS: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship - Anonymous, attributed to Moses.
- B. Date - Around 1400/1200 B.C.
- C. Sources - *Book of the Covenant* " (24:4,7).
- D. Occasion - Need for God's chosen people to 1) understand how they were formed as a nation through God's mighty deliverance out of Egypt celebrated in the Feast of Passover, and 2) understand God's laws, ordinances and statutes which they were to obey as His people.

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title - "Exodus".
 - Hebrew: *shemoth* ("names").
 - Greek: *exodus* ("way out").
- B. Theme - The deliverance and redemption which gave birth to a nation chosen of God to be His people.
- C. Purpose - To record how God delivered Israel out of slavery in Egypt in order to enter into covenant with them as His people through whom His nature and salvation was to be shown to a wayward world.
- D. Key verse :(Exodus 19:4-6) "***You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all people s, for all the earth is mine and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.***"

LEVITICUS: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship - Anonymous, attributed to Moses.
- B. Date - Around 1400/1200 B.C.
- C. Sources - Sinaitic revelation from God written down by Moses.
- D. Occasion - Written for Israel so that they might know what God has commanded them to do as His covenant people.

II. CONTENTS

A. Title - "Leviticus".

- Hebrew: *wayyigra* ("and He called").
- Greek: */levitikon* ("pertaining to the Levites").

B. Theme - Manual for holy living for a people set apart for God's service and glory.

C. Purpose - To set forth dearly those ritual regulations concerning access to God and living for God which were required of Israel, God's chosen nation.

D. Key verse: (Leviticus 11:45) "*I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God; you shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.*"

NUMBERS: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship - Anonymous, attributed to Moses

B. Date - Around 1400/1200 B.C.

C. Sources - *Books of the Wars of YHWH* (Yahweh 21:14).

D. Occasion - Need for God's people to be reminded of the reason for their wanderings in the wilderness: that God was trying to reveal their hearts. Would they trust Him as the Lord their God?

II. CONTENTS

A. Title - "Numbers".

- Hebrew: *bemidbar* ("in the wilderness of").
- Greek: *arithmoi* ("numbers").

Two censuses (numberings) taken. (Chap 1 & 26).

B. Theme - Wilderness wanderings during a generation of divine disciplining.

C. Purpose - To underscore the truth that insufficient faith, not insufficient numbers, kept God's people out of the Promised Land.

D. Key verse: (Numbers 32:13) "*And tire Lord 's anger was kindled against Israel, and lie made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the Lord was consumed.*"

DEUTERONOMY: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship - Anonymous, attributed to Moses.

B. Date - Around 1400/ 1200 B.C.

C. Sources - Memoirs of Moses with some from Leviticus in modified form.

D. Occasion - In anticipation of entrance into the Promised Land under a new leader (Joshua), Moses addressed the multitude, popularizing the essentials of Leviticus into something of an "Everyman's Torah" so that all could understand God's law and obey it.

II. CONTENTS

A. Title - "Deuteronomy".

- Hebrew: *elleh haddebarim* ("these are the words").
- Greek: *deuteronomion* ("second law-giving").

B. Theme - A rehearsing of God's law as Moses last will and testament.

C. Purpose - To give a restatement of God's requirements so that His people may obey Him and live when they enter and settle in the land of promise.

D. Key verse: (Deuteronomy 4:1) "*And now, O Israel, give heed to the statutes and the ordinances which I teach you, and do them; that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, gives you.*"

INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORICAL LITERATURE

JOSHUA THROUGH ESTHER

I. HEBREW CANON (8 BOOKS)

- A. Former prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings (4 books).
 - B. The Writings: Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, Ruth & Esther (4 books).
- Greek canon = 12 books (Joshua through Esther).

II. SOURCES

- A. For Joshua through II Kings:
 - 1. "Book of Jashar" (Joshua 10:13; II Sam. 1:18).
 - 2. "Book of the acts of Solomon" (I Kings 11:41).
 - 3. "Book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah/Israel" (I Kings 15:23, 31, etc.)
 - B. For I Chronicles through Nehemiah:
 - 1. "Chronicles of King David" (I Chron. 27:24).
 - 2. "Book of Samuel the seer" (I Chron. 29:29).
 - 3. "Book of Nathan the prophet & Gad the seer" (I Chron. 29:29).
4. "Visions of Iddo the seer" (U Chron.9:29; 12:15).
5. "Writing of Isaiah the prophet" (II Chron .26:22).

III. DATE OF WRITING

- A. Joshua through II Kings (around 561 B.C.).
- B. Chronicles (around 450 B.C.).

IV. HISTORICAL- SPAN

- A. Joshua through II Kings: from entrance into Canaan to release of King Jehoiachin from Babylonian prison cell (1400/1200-561 B.C.)
Total: 650-850 years.
- B. Chronicles: from death of King Saul to Ezra's and Nehemiah's ministry (1011-450 B.C.).
Total: 550 years.

V. THEMES

- A. Prophetic history.
- B. Kingship.
- C. Priestly history: temple and worship.
- D. Human element

VI. AUTHORSHIP: TRADITIONAL

- A. Joshua, Samuel, Jeremiah, Ezra & Nehemiah.

JOSHUA: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship -Anonymous, attributed to Joshua and/or Samuel.
- B. Date - Around either 1440 or 1250 B.C.
- C. Sources - Book of Jashar (10:13).
- D. Occasion - Need of Israelites living in the period of the judges (when every man did what was right in his own eyes) to understand and be reminded of the conquest and division of the Promised Land with the "stone of witness" calling for obedience to God's law (4:19-24; 24:26, 27).

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title - "Joshua ".

- Hebrew : *Yehoshua* ("Jehovah is salvation").
- Greek: *Yesus* ("salvation /deliverer").

B. Theme - The irresistible power of God's people in possessing their inheritance as they walk in full obedience to the Lord.

C. Purpose - To narrate the conquest of the Promised Land by God's people under Joshua and the subsequent dividing of the land as an inheritance for each tribe in fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham.

D. Key verse: (Joshua 21:43, 45) *"Thus the Lord gave to Israel all the land which he swore to Israel to their fathers; and having taking possession of it, they settled there...Not one of all the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass. "*

JUDGES: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship: Anonymous, attributed to Samuel.

B. Date - Around 1000 B.C. (final form of book as we have it finalized as late as 721B.C.,cf. Judges 18:30).

C. Sources - Heroic stories/songs.

D. Occasion - Anarchism between Joshua and Samuel reflected the need for a monarchy to give cohesiveness to the nation of Israel.

II. CONTENTS

A. Title - "Judges".

- Hebrew: *shoetim* ("judges/executive leaders").
- Greek: *kritai* ("judges").

B. Theme - Israel's failure to keep God's covenant results in cycle of oppression and deliverance.

C. Purpose - To show that a centralized hereditary kingship was needed for the well-being of the covenant rulership of the God of Israel in order to maintain its unity and purity.

D. Key verse: (Judges 2:16, 17) *"Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the power of those who plundered them. And yet they did not listen to their judges; for they played the harlot after other gods and bowed down" to them..."*

RUTH: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship - Anonymous, attributed to Samuel.

B. Date - Perhaps around 1000 B.C. (Ruth 4:7).

C. Sources - Unknown.

D. Occasion - Need for tracing King David's ancestry showing that God's love transcends Jewish boundaries.

II.CONTENTS

A. Title - "Ruth"

- Hebrew : *rut* ("Ruth, female companion").
- Greek : *rout* ("Ruth").

B. Theme - Redemption for a Gentile.

C. Purpose - To supply a family tree for King David while making a plea for racial tolerance and kindness toward a widowed Gentile.

D. Key verse: (Ruth 1:16) "*Entreat me not to leave you or to return from following you; for where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God.*"

I & IISAMUEL: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship - Anonymous, attributed to Samuel (1 and II Samuel are one book in Hebrew O.T.).

B. Date - Between 930 and 722 B.C.

C. Sources - *Chronicles of Samuel, Nathan and Gad* (I Chr.29:29).

D. Period covered - Around 1100-1000 B C (end of the judges to height of David's reign).

E. Occasion - Need to account for the transition from a weak rulership of judges to a strong monarchy during the time of Samuel, Saul and David.

II. CONTENTS

A. Title - "Samuel".

- Hebrew: *shemu'el* ("asked /heard of God").
- Greek: *basileron A & B* ("kingdom I & II").

B. Theme -

1. I Samuel: Prophet Samuel and the rise and fall of King Saul.

2. II Samuel: The significant reign of King David, God's chosen ruler.

C. Purpose -

1. I Samuel: To show the transition from a theocracy (God ruling through judges) to a monarchy (man ruling) in Israel under Saul, the king God rejected.

2. II Samuel: To show the establishment of the monarchy under David, God's chosen ruler.

D. Key verse: (I Samuel 8:7; 12:14) "*...they have not rejected you, Samuel, but they have rejected Me from being king over them.. .If both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the Lord your God, it will be well.*"

(11Samuel 7:8, 16) "*...I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you" should be prince over My people Israel ...And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before Me; your throne shall be established forever.*"

I & IIKINGS: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship - Anonymous, attributed to Jeremiah (1and II Kings are one book in Hebrew O.T.).

B. Date - Possibly between 560 and 538 B.C.

C. Sources -

1. *Book of the acts of Solomon* (I Kg. 11:41).

2. *Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel* (I Kg. 14:19; 15:31; 16:5, 14, 27; 22:39; II Kg. 1:18).

3. *Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah* (I Kg. 14:29; 15:7, 23; 22:45; II Kg.6:23; 12:19).

D. Period covered - Around 975-560 B.C.(reign of Solomon to Babylonian exile of the Jews).

E. Occasion - The need to explain the captivities of both the northern and southern kingdoms.

II. CONTENTS

A. Title - "Kings".

- Hebrew: *melchim* A & B ("kings/ kingdoms I& II").
- Greek: *basileion* C & D ("kingdom III & IV").

B. Theme - The rise, schism, decline and defeat of Israel and Judah.

C. Purpose - To show how both Israel and Judah persistently violated their covenant with God, resulting in punishment through captivity at the hands of foreign heathen nations.

D. Key verse: (I Kings 9:4-7) *"...if you will walk before me, as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you, and keeping my statutes and ordinances, then I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father... but if you turn aside from following me... then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them."* (II Kings 17:19,20) *"Judah also did not keep the commandments of the Lord their God, but walked in the customs which Israel had introduced. And the Lord rejected the descendants of Israel, and afflicted them, and gave them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight."*

I & II CHRONICLES: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship - Anonymous, attributed to Ezra (I and II Chronicles are one book in Hebrew O.T.).

B. Date - Around 450-400 B.C.

C. Sources - Samuel, Nathan, and Gad (I Chr.29:29). Nathan, Ahijah, Iddo (II Chr. 9:29).

D. Period covered - Around 1025-560 B.C.

E. Occasion - The return of the Jew from Babylon created the need for a history of Israel, especially Judah, in order to ensure obedience to God's covenant lest the tragedy of the past repeated.

II. CONTENTS

A. Title - "Chronicles".

- Hebrew: *dibre hayyamin* I& II ("affairs/words of the day I& II").
- Greek: *paraklipsis* I & II {"things omitted I& II"}.

B. Theme - The spiritual heritage of the Hebrew nation

C. Purpose - To teach those Jews coming back from exile about their spiritual heritage, so that they might faithfully obey the Mosaic covenant and rituals lest they repeat the errors of their forebears.

D. Key verse: (I Chron. 9:1,2; 10:13) *"So all Israel was enrolled by genealogies . . . And Judah was taken into exile in Babylon because of their unfaithfulness. Now the first to dwell again in their possessions in their cities were Israel, the priests, the Levites, and the temple servants. Saul died for his unfaithfulness...So David reigned over all Israel; and he administered justice and equity to all his people."* (II Chronicles 36:15,16) *"The Lord, the God of their fathers, persistently sent warnings to them by His messengers because he had compassion on His people and on his dwelling place; but they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words, and scoffing at his prophets, till the wrath of the Lord rose against his people, till there was no remedy ."*

EZRA - NEHEMIAH: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship - Anonymous, attributed to Ezra (Ezra and Nehemiah are one book in Hebrew O.T.).

- B. Date - Around 440 B.C.
- C. Sources - Memoirs of Ezra and Nehemiah (Ex. 7:27ff. 8:Hf.; Neh. 1-7; 11:1, 2).
 - census and other lists (Ez. 2:1ff .; Neh. 7:6ff.).
 - edict of Cyrus (Ez. 1:1ff).
- D. Period covered - 538 to 445 B C.
- E. Occasion - Need for returned Jews to record the rebuilding of the temple and the walls and the reforms under Ezra and Nehemiah, so that they might remain faithful to the Lord.

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title - "Ezra".
 - Hebrew: *Esdra* ("Ezra, Yahweh helps").
 - Greek: *Exdras* ("Ezra").
- Title - "Nehemiah".
 - Hebrew : *Nehemiah* ("Nehemiah, comfort of Yahweh")
 - Greek: *Nemias* ("Nehemiah").
- B. Theme - The return of the Jewish exiles, and the reestablishment of the religious life by means of rebuilding the temple and re-instituting the law.
- C. Purpose ·
 - Ezra: To show how the edict of Cyrus occasioned the return of the Jews, the rebuilding of the temple, the instituting of religious reforms fulfilling promises made to the repentant minority by the prophets.
 - Nehemiah :To record how the returns of Jews under Nehemiah occasioned the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem and the eventual recommitment to the Mosaic covenant
- D. Key verses :(Ezra 6:14, 7:10) *"And the elders of the Jews built and prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. They finished their building by command of the God of Israel and by decree of Cyrus and Darius 1md Artaxerxes king of Persia ... Ezra set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach his statutes and ordinances in Israel."*
(Nehemiah 2:17;9:2) *"Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem that we may no longer suffer disgrace... and the Israelites separated themselves from all foreigners, and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers."*

ESTHER: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship - Anonymous and unknown (Mordecai?)
- B. Date - 450-400 B C.
- C. Sources - Unknown.
- D. Period covered - Reign of Xerxes I (Ahasuerus), 486-465 B.C.
- E. Occasion - To record how the Feast of Purim began, since it is not prescribed in the Torah.

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title - "father".
 - Hebrew: *Hadassah* ("myrtle").
 - Greek: *Esther* (from Persian "stara" ("star"?)
- B. Theme - Victory of the Jews over enemies due to divine providence.
- C. Purpose - To give an historical account of how a feast not prescribed in the Torah had emerged from the plot and overthrow of Haman the Persian, and that God will set people in significant positions of influence in order to accomplish His will.

D. Key verse : (Esther 4:14) "*For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter. . .and who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom/or such a time as this?*"

INTRODUCTION TO POETIC AND WISDOM LITERATURE

JOB THROUGH SONG OF SOLOMON, LAMENTATIONS

I. THE BOOKS

A. Nature

1. Poetical

a. Books: Job, Palms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Lamentations

b. Sections of other books:

1. Lament of Lamech {Gen. 4:23,24}.

2. Blessings of Isaac (Gen. 27:27-29) and Jacob (Gen. 49:2-27}.

3. Song of Moses & Miriam (Ex. 15:1-18,21)

4) Prophetical literature.

2. Wisdom

a. Books: Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon and some

Psalms (1,10,14,19,37,49,73,90,112).

II. NATURE OF HEBREW POETRY

A. Definition

Hebrew poetry and song rhymed thoughts rather than words. This is called parallelism: two lines, written together, that express similar thoughts.

B. Types

1. Lyric (song)·Psalms.

2. Didactic (teaching) - Proverbs.

3. Dramatic (story) Job.

III. NATURE OF HEBREW WISDOM

A. Definition

Hokhmah ("wisdom") is practical insights into successful living with God and men.

Hebrew wisdom is unique, in that it is based on fear of the lord.

B. Types

1. Proverbs (mashal)- brief and very pointed sayings about life (Proverbs).

2. Dramatic story (Job).

3. Personification (Prov. 1-9).

JOB: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship - Anonymous and unknown (some scholars attribute authorship to Moses).

B. Date - Unknown {the manners, customs and general lifestyle of Job and his friends are very similar to those of the patriarchal period around 2000-1800 B.C.)

C. Occasion - Really unknown since authorship and date uncertain. Possibly a time when God· people were undergoing suffering.

II. CONTENTS

A. Title - "Job".

· Hebrew: *lyyob* ("Job", possibly "come back/repent").

· Greek: *lob* ("Job").

B. Theme- The significance of suffering

C. Purpose - To show God's nature. His wisdom, power and mercy shown in the suffering of the righteous, and that ultimately we can fully trust in Him and His goodness and justice.

D. Key verse: (Job 42:2,5) *"I know that thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be thwarted... I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee."*

PSALMS: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship

- David - 73 Psalms (Book 1-37; II-18; III-1;IV-2; V-15).
- Asaph - 12 (Psalm 50, 73-83).
- Korahites - 11 (Psalm 42-49, 84, 87, 88).
- Solomon - 2 (Psalm 72, 127).
- Moses - 1 (Psalm 90).
- Ethan - 1 (Psalm 89).
- Anonymous - 50.

B. Date - Most from time of David (around 1000 B.C) with some as early as Moses (around 1400/ 1200 B.C.) and as late as Babylonian Captivity (around 586-538 B.C.). See Psalms 90 & 137.

C. Occasion

1. Book I (Psalms 1-41) probably arranged by David or someone under his direction during his reign, when most were written as largely a book of the prayers of David.

2. Books II (Psalms 42-72) and III (Psalms 73-89) possibly collected at a later period when Israel was undergoing spiritual awakening (Hezekiah 725 B.C. or Josiah c. 625 B.C.).

3. Books IV (Psalms 90-106) and V (Psalms 107-150) are collections of miscellaneous psalms and prayers, some of which were used in pilgrimages to the Temple in Jerusalem and its worship.

II. CONTENTS

A. Title - "Psalms".

- Hebrew : *tehillim* ("praises"; 40 psalms about praise, 75 about prayer)
- Greek: *psalterion* ("songs").

B. Theme - Personal and corporate praise and prayer of God's people.

C. Purpose - To reveal how the God of Israel hears and answers the cries of his people for deliverance, and thus is worthy of their praise and thanksgiving (each of the five major sections -Books I to V - closes with praise).

D. Key verse: (Psalm 145:20, 21) *"The Lord preserves all who love him; but all the wicked he will destroy. My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord, and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever."*

PROVERBS: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship -

- Solomon (1:1-9:18; 10:1-22:16; 25:1-29:27) approximately 375 proverbs
- "wise men" (22:17-2:1:22; 23:23-34).
- Agur (30:1-33).
- King Lemuel (31:1-9, 31:10-31).

B. Date - Most during time of Solomon (around 971-931 B.C.); See I Kings 4:32.

C. Occasion - Need for a collection of the "wisdom of the years" for teaching young men in wise and right living by repetition of wise sayings.

II. CONTENTS

A. Title - "Proverbs"

- Hebrew: *mishlet* ("proverb/parable").
- Greek: *paroimia* ("proverb/parable").

B. Theme - Words of wisdom based on the fear of the Lord.

C. Purpose - To record the practical insight of wise men, so that the younger generation may live wise and godly lives

D. Key verse: {Proverbs 1:7} "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.*"

ECCLESIASTES: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship - Anonymous, attributed to Solomon (1:1.16; 2:7.8).

B. Date - Time of Solomon (around 971-931 B.C.).

C. Occasion - King Solomon's reflection on the vanities of his own life, recorded before *he* died so that others may learn thereby.

II. CONTENTS

A. Title - "Ecclesiastes"

- Hebrew: *qohelet* ("one who assembles").
- Greek: *ekklasiastes* ("one who assembles").

B. Theme - Sermons on life's vanities apart from God.

C. Purpose - To vividly illustrate the emptiness of life's pursuits apart from the fear of the Lord.

D. Key verse: (Ecclesiastes 12:13) "*The end of the matter; all has been heard, fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.*"

SONG OF SOLOMON: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship - Solomon (1:5; 3:7, 9, 11)8:11, 12)

B. Date - Solomon's reign (around 971-931 B.C.).

C. Occasion - Uncertain.

D. Interpretation

1. Allegorical: God & Israel, Christ & the Church.
2. Dramatic love story of Solomon & Shulamite girl.
3. Literal: erotic love songs/ poems.
4. Moral: teach the wonder and purity of true love.
5. Romantic: wedding songs.

II. CONTENTS

A. Title - "Song of Songs"

- Hebrew: *shir has-shirim* ("song of song" = "most excellent song").
- Greek: *asma* ("song")

B. Theme - Love songs of romance between a bride and bridegroom

C. Purpose - To show the beauty and tenderness of the love between a man and a woman, also interpreted as a symbolic "type" of the intimate and deep love God has for mankind.

D. Key verse- (Song of Solomon 8:6) "*Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave.*"

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPHETS

Isaiah through Malachi

I. CLASSIFICATION (according to recipients)

- A. To Israel Hosea & Amos
- B. To Judah: Joel, Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Lamentations, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Haggai, Zechariah, & Malachi.
- C. To Nineveh (Assyria): Jonah & Nahum
- D. To Babylon: Daniel
- E. To Exiles in Babylon: Ezekiel.
- F. To Edom: Obadiah

II. DEFINITION OF PROPHET

- A. Terms (see I Chronicles 29:29).
 - 1. *Nabi* - "one called (of God)".
 - 2. *Ro'eh*- "seer" (from root "to see")
 - 3. *Hozeh*- "seer/prophet" (from root "to see").A prophet is a man called by God to be God's mouthpiece to transmit His word and will (primarily to His people).

- B. Descriptions
 - 1. "*Forth*telling" (frequent) - God's mouthpiece to tell forth God's will, generally for the present.
 - 2. "*Fore*"telling (infrequent) - God's mouthpiece to tell forth God's will, specifically for the present in light of predicted coming events.

III. NATURE OF PROPHECY

- A. Source - Supernatural (II Peter 1:20,21).
- B. Means
 - 1. Dreams &: night visions (Num. 12:6).
 - 2. Visions and heightened senses (Isa. 2:1; 29:7; Amos 1:1; Micah 1:1).
 - 3. Direct encounter with God (II Kings 20:1-6; Isa. 6:1-10; 38:4).
 - 4. Historical events with revelation (Jer. 21:1, 2; 36:1-26; 42:7-22)
 - 5. Life situation of the prophet (Isa. 39:1-8).
- C. Purpose- Ethical (Amos 4:12; cp. II Peter 3:11; I John 3:3).
- D. Perspective- Two-dimensional.
 - "what" and "who" clearer than "when"; thus time dimension not exact but always near (Is.13:6; Ezek. 30:3; Joel 1:5; Obad. 15; Zeph. 1:7,14; cp. Mat. 10:23; 16:28; 24:34; Jam. 5:8,9; 1 Thess. 4:15; Phil. 4:5; Rev. 1:1,3; 22:6,10,12,20).
- E. Pattern - Balanced.
 - 1. Present distress is God's judgment for sin; Therefore, Repent and return to God in light of the coming "*Day of the Lord*" (i.e. judgment on the nations).
 - 2. God will forgive and restore blessing.
 - 3. Glorious future messianic age is coming, including a great personage.

IV. TESTS (for false prophets)

- A. Fulfillment (Deut. 18:20-22).
- B. National righteousness (Deut. 13:1-5; Jer. 23:13, 14).
- C. Personal righteousness (Jer. 23:9-12; cp. Matt. 7:15-20).

ISAIAH: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship - Isaiah.

B. Date- Around 740-681B.C. during reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Mannaseh (1:1).

C. Occasion - Growing threat of the Assyrians underscores the need for God's people to understand and put their trust in the Lord for protection (crisis of 734 B.C. with Israel and Syria; crisis of 701 B.C. with Assyria) .

II. CONTENTS

A. Title-"Isaiah".

- Hebrew: *Yesha' yahu* ("God is salvation").
- Greek: *Esaias* ("Isaiah").

B. Theme- God alone is salvation, therefore trust Him only.

C. Purpose - To call Jerusalem and Judah back to God's covenant and righteousness by placing their trust in Him for salvation and deliverance rather than in the might of surrounding nations.

D. Key verse: (Isaiah 49:6) "*It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.*"

JEREMIAH: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship - Jeremiah/Baruch (36:32).

B. Date -Around 627-575 B.C. during reigns of Josiah, Jehoahaz , Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah (1:1-3).

C. Occasion· The increasing apostasy of Judah, and Judah 's impending destruction by the Babylonians, demands God's word of assessment through Jeremiah.

II. CONTENTS

A. Title - "Jeremiah".

- Hebrew: *Yimeyahtt* ("God establishes / raises up").
- Greek: *Ieremias* ("Jeremiah").

B. Theme - Repentance or removal.

C. Purpose - To warn Judah of coming judgment, in order to bring repentance and return to God, against whom they have rebelled and turned away.

D. Key verse: (Jeremiah 4:14) "*O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved.*"

LAMENTATIONS: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship • Anonymous, attributed to Jeremiah.

B. Date- Around the fall of Jerusalem, 586 B.C. (or as late as 575 B.C.)

C. Occasion - Jerusalem's fall prompts a mournful lament by God's prophet over the tragic destruction of God's holy city.

II. CONTENTS

A. Title- "Lamentations".

- Hebrew: *ekoh* ("alas!/ah!/how!")
- Greek: *Threnoi* ("laments/dirges").

B. Theme - Sorrowful laments over Jerusalem's tragic fall.

C. Purpose· To express the great grief of the prophet Jeremiah over the fall of Jerusalem due to its stubborn refusal to repent from its idolatrous apostasy (rejection of God).

D. Key verse: (Lamentations 2:17) *"The Lord has done what he purposed, has carried out his threat; as he ordained long ago."*

EZEKIEL: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship - Ezekiel
- B. Date - Around 597-571 B.C. during reigns of Jehoiachin and Zedekiah (1:2).
- C. Occasion - Need of Jews exiled in Babylon to know what God had said in warning Jerusalem of its ultimate fall in 586 B.C. and His promised restoration for the repentant.

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title - "Ezekiel".
 - Hebrew: *Yehezqel* ("God strengthens").
 - Greek: *Isekiel* ("Ezekiel").
- B. Theme - Warnings of God's watchman to Judah with promises of restoration of the land and temple for the repentant.
- C. Purpose - To stand as a watchman on the wall to warn of coming judgment on Judah and future restoration of a righteous remnant.
- D. Key verse: (Ezekiel 18:31, 32) *"Cast away from you till the transgressions which you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of any one, says the Lord God; so turn, and live."*

DANIEL: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship - Daniel.
- B. Date - Around 605-536 B.C. during reigns of Nebuchadnezzar, Awel-Marduk, Nariglissar, Nabonidus, Belshazzar, Cyrus/Darius (1:1,21).
- C. Occasion - Need for God's people who are under pressure to be encouraged by Daniel's experiences of deliverance and visions of future events.

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title - "Daniel".
 - Hebrew: *Daniel* ("God is my judge").
 - Greek: *Daniel* ("Daniel").
- B. Theme - God's sovereignty in overruling world powers on behalf of the deliverance of His people.
- C. Purpose - To encourage God's people by showing them He is in full control of the nations and intervenes to deliver His people now and in the future.
- D. Key verse: (Daniel 7:13, 14) *"And behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man... and to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve Him."*

HOSEA: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship - Hosea.
- B. Date - Around 760-723 B.C. during reign of Jeroboam II (1:1).
- C. Occasion - Prophet to the last generation of the northern kingdom of Israel, during which time God spoke through Hosea of His love for unfaithful Israel who had

prostituted themselves by following after and worshipping false gods during the reigns of Jeroboam II through Hoshea, the last king. (See II Kings 14:23-20:21).

II. CONTENTS

A. Title - "Hosea".

- Hebrew: *Hoshea* ("salvation")
- Greek: *Osee* ("Hosea").

B. Theme - Come home to a loving God Who patiently waits for the return of His estranged "wife."

C. Purpose .To picture and proclaim God's mercy and lov• for His wayward people Israel in persistently calling them back to His ways

D. Key verse: (Hosea 14:1) "*Return , O Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity.*"

JOEL: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship - Joel.

B. Date - Uncertain, ranging from 835 to 500 B.C.

C. Occasion - A fourfold locust plague and drought occasions a prophetic call for the leaders of God's people to gather the people for prayer, fasting and repentance.

II. CONTENTS

A. Title - "Joel".

- Hebrew : *Yael* ("Yahweh is God").
- Greek: *Joel* ("Joel").

B. Theme - Deliverance from the destruction of the locust plagues by means of repentance.

C. Purpose - To urge the spiritual leaders to can God's people to repentance, so that the Lord might restore their land and judge the nations in the day of the Lord.

D. Key verse: (Joel 2:25,26) "*I wilt restore to you the years which the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my gnat army which I sent among you . . .and my people shall never again be put to shame.*"

AMOS: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship - Amos (from Tekoa in Judah).

B. Date - Around 760-750 B.C. during reign of Jeroboam II.

C. Occasion - The increased prosperity and spiritual decadence of the reign of Jeroboam II led to pride, selfishness, greed, oppression and moral decay, and thus the call for repentance through Amos. (See II Kings 14:23-15:7; II Chronicles 26.)

II. CONTENTS

A. Title - "Amos".

- Hebrew : *Amos* ("burden /burden-bearer").
- Greek: *Amos* ("Amos").

B. Theme - The burden of impending judgment upon Israel because of her unfaithfulness to God's covenant.

C. Purpose - To warn Israel of coming judgment for her social and spiritual sins resulting from unfaithfulness to God.

D. Key verse: (Amos 8:11) "*Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord God, when I will send a famine on the land; not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord .*"

OBADIAH: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship - Obadiah.
- B. Date - Uncertain, probably just after 586 B.C.
- C. Occasion - If dated around the time of the fall of Jerusalem (586 B.C.), the book would be occasioned by the Edomites' wrongful and wicked aiding of the Babylonians in defeating Judah.

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title - "Obadiah"
 - Hebrew: *Obedya* ("servant of God").
 - Greek: OMio11 ("Obadiah").
- B. Theme - Edom's pride causes her downfall and judgment as she reaps what she has sown.
- C. Purpose - To spell out the cause and nature of the coming judgment on Edom, Israel's constant "thorn in the flesh".
- D. Key verse: (Obadiah vs 3) "*The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rock, whose dwelling is high, who say in your heart, who will bring me down to the ground?*"

JONAH: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship - Jonah
- B. Date - Around 785-750 B.C. (see II Kings 14:25).
- C. Occasion - Nineveh's sinfulness causes God to call a prophet to preach repentance, so that divine judgment may be averted even though the Ninevites are Gentiles. Apparently the Ninevites were "prepared" to listen to God's message through Jonah due to "natural disasters"(plagues in 765 B.C. & 759 B.C. and a solar eclipse in 763 B.C.).

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title - "Jonah"
 - Hebrew: Jonah ("dove").
 - Greek: Jonas ("Jonah").
- B. Theme - The boundless mercy of God for repentant heathen nations.
- C. Purpose - To show a Jewish prophet's narrow-minded ignorance and prejudice in contrast to God's love and compassion for Gentiles.
- D. Key verse : (Jonah 4:2) "That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and repentest of evil [repents of doing harm by bringing judgement up wickedness]."

MICAH: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship - Micah.
- B. Date - Around 735-700 B.C. during reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (1:1).
- C. Occasion - Similar in background to Isaiah, Micah's contemporary. Isaiah is concerned with political evils; Micah is concerned more with spiritual and social evils.

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title - "Micah".
 - Hebrew: Mikayahu ("who is like God?") see 7:18-20

- Greek: Micah ("Micah").

B. Theme - Social reform and personal righteousness based on God's righteousness and sovereignty.

C. Purpose - To outline God's controversy with His people in Judah and plead for their repentance and return to the Lord as individuals and as a nation.

D. Key verse :(Micah 6:8) "He has showed yo11, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

NAHUM: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship - Nahum.

B. Date - Around 660-630 B.C.

C. Occasion - With the death of Ashurbanipal in 627 B.C., the beginning of the end of the Assyrian Empire occurred with Babylon asserting her independence in 626 B.C., and eventually attacking Assyria with the Medes and thus overthrowing the capital, Nineveh, in 612 B.C.

II CONTENTS

A. Title - "Nahum "

- Hebrew :Nahum ("consolation / comfort").

- Greek: Naoum ("Nahum").

B. Theme - Consolation for Judah and judgment for Nineveh's militarism.

C. Purpose-To warn of Nineveh's siege and destruction of Jerusalem due to her great wickedness and cruelty.

D. Key verse :(Nahum 1:7, 8) "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him, but with an overflowing flood he will make a full end of his adversaries, and will pursue his enemies into darkness."

HABAKKUK: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship - Habakkuk.

B. Date - Around 605-598 B.C.

C. Occasion - The first deportation of exiles from Judah to Babylon when Jehoiakim was king causes the prophet to discuss the problem of the suffering of the righteous at the hands of the unrighteous.

II. CONTENTS

A. Title - "Habakkuk".

- Hebrew: Habakkuk ("embrace").

- Greek: Ambakoum ("Habakkuk").

B. Theme- Faith in God's mercy and justice is required when God's people are punished by a nation even more unrighteous.

C. Purpose - To reveal God's ways in judgment and call for a response of faith in Him.

D. Key verse :(Habakkuk 2:3, 4) "*For still the vision awaits its time; it hastens to the end-it will not lie. If it seem slow, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. Behold, he whose soul is not upright in him shall fail, but the just shall live by faith.* "

ZEPHANIAH: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship - Zephaniah (great-grandson of King Hezekiah).

- B. Date - Around 640-620 B.C. (first prophet in Judah since Isaiah and Micah).
- C. Occasion - Possibly the threat of the Scythian invasion of western Judah and Philistia occasions a call to repentance under the reigns of wicked Manasseh and Amon.

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title - "Zephaniah".
 - Hebrew: Sepanya ("God hides").
 - Greek: Sophonias ("Zephaniah").
- B. Theme - Mercy in the midst of wrath as God hides those who humble themselves and seek righteousness.
- C. Purpose - To call the humble to seek the Lord for mercy in the midst of the wrath of judgment.
- D. Key verse: (Zephaniah 2:3) "Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, who do his commandments; seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the wrath of the Lord."

HAGGA I: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship - Haggai.
- B. Date - Around 520 B.C.
- C. Occasion - External opposition and internal preoccupations had halted the rebuilding of the temple by the returned exiles, and thus Haggai spurs the people back to work on the temple.

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title - "Haggai".
 - Hebrew: *Haggai* (...festival").
 - Greek: *Aggaios* ("Haggai").
- B. Theme - Back to rebuilding the temple.
- C. Purpose- To exhort the returned exiles to again initiate immediately the rebuilding of the temple, for God would be with them.
- D. Key verse: (Haggai 2:4,5) "'Work, for I am with you', says the Lord of hosts, 'according to the promise that I made you when you came out of Egypt . My Spirit abides among you fear not.'"

ZECHARIAH: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship - Zechariah.
- B. Date - Around 520-515 B.C
- C. Occasion - The rebuilding of the temple under Zerubbabel and Haggai causes Zechariah to look beyond the immediate situation to the time of the Messiah and God's final consummation of His rule.

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title - "Zechariah".
 - Hebrew: *Zechariah* ("God remembers").
 - Greek: *Zecharias* ("Zechariah")
- B. Theme - Reassuring the remnant of God's preservation and Israel's final victory.
- C. Purpose -To encourage the continued work on the temple under Zerubbabel; to encourage righteous living for the Lord in anticipation of final victory.

D. Key verse: (Zechariah 8:13) *"And as you have been a by-word of cursing among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so will I save you, and you shall be a blessing. Fear not, but let your hands be strong."*

MALACHI: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship - Malachi. (Since the name means "messenger", some feel "Malachi" may not be the name of the author).
- B. Date - Around 433-420 B.C.
- C. Occasion - Discouragement and laxity cause God's people to doubt His love and only grudgingly observe His commandments, claiming that obedience to God's requirements is unprofitable.

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title - "Malachi"
 - Hebrew: *Malachiah* ("my messenger")
 - Greek: *Malachias* ("Malachi").
- B. Theme - Return to reality and sincerity toward God by living holy lives.
- C. Purpose - To call God's people back to purity in worship, holiness in living, and liberality in giving.
- D. Key verse: (Malachi 3:7) *"From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts."*

OLD TESTAMENT: SUMMARY

I. DIVINE REVELATION

- A. General (Genesis 1-11).
 - 1. Through creation (external; see Romans 1:18-21).
 - 2. Through conscience (internal; see Romans 2:12-16).
- B. Special (Genesis 12-Malachi -1)
 - 1. through covenant.
 - a. "I will be your God."
 - b. "You will be my people."
 - c. "I will dwell with you."
 - 2. through commandment.
 - a. by prophets - reveal God's word .
 - b. by priests - represent God's requirements.
 - c. by kings - rule as God's representatives.

II. MAN'S RESPONSE (JUDGES-ESTHER, ISAIAH-MALACHI)

- A. spiritual - idolatry ("you will not be our God"... many gods).
- B. personal - immorality & perversion ("we will not be your people"...many wives).
- C. social - corruption & depravity ("you will not dwell among us"... many sins & sorrows).

III. PROMISED HOPE

- A. the greater prophet - a heavenly savior of man (Deut 18:15-18; Dan 7:13, 14).
- B. the perfect priest - a suffering servant (Isa 52:13-53; 12).
- C. the righteous king - son of David (Isa 9:6,7; 11:1-5).

THE GOSPELS: AN INTRODUCTION

MATTHEW THROUGH JOHN

I. THE FOURFOLD GOSPEL

- A. One Gospel (see I Corinthians 15:3-8 "interpreted events"; Acts 1:1).
 - 1. Jesus' deeds.
 - 2. Jesus' words.
- B. Four portraits: A Unique Perspective (see Ezekiel 1:10)
 - 1. Matthew: Davidic Messiah (lion-like).
 - 2. Mark: suffering Servant (ox-like).
 - 3. Luke: compassionate Savior (man-like).
 - 4. John: divine Messiah (eagle-like).
- C. Two groups.
 - 1. Synoptics (Common material and viewpoint}.
 - 2. Fourth Gospel (92% unique material with more interpretation).
- D. Authorship.
 - 1. Authority/ canonicity.
 - a. Direct or indirect apostolic authorship.
 - b. Apostolic teaching.
 - c. Church usage.

MATTHEW: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship - Anonymous, attributed to the Apostle Matthew (also called "Levi" - see Mark 2:14).
- B. Place of writing - Palestine or Antioch?
- C. Date of writing - A.D.70-80.
- D. Destination - Palestinian or Antiochian Jews/Gentiles.
- E. Occasion -Believers needing teaching in Palestine or Antioch in "all Christ had commanded".

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title - "Gospel of the Davidic Messiah".
- B. Theme - Teaching for the new Israel under the new Messiah.
- C. Purpose - To provide a teaching manual designed to help Jews living in Greek/Roman cultures and Gentile disciples observe all things Christ had commanded as the promised Davidic Messiah of that new Israel.
- D. Key verse: (Matthew 28:18-20) "*All authority. ..has been given to Me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them. . .teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.*"

MARK: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship - Anonymous, attributed to Mark, Peter's reporter (see II Peter 1:14, 15).
- B. Place of writing - Rome (see I Peter 5:13).
- C. Date of writing - A.O. 65 (based on priority of Mark as first written gospel).
- D. Destination - Roman Gentiles.
- E. Occasion - Believers under persecution by Nero in Rome.

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title - "Gospel of the Suffering Servant".
- B. Theme - Christ's example of victory through suffering.

C. Purpose - To encourage the suffering Gentile Christians in Rome by showing them how Christ triumphed through suffering as a Servant Who fulfilled the will of God.

D. Key verse: {Mark 10:45) "*The Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.*"

LUKE: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship - Anonymous, attributed to Luke (first volume of a two-volume work- See Acts 1:1 and "we" sections in Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16).

B. Place of writing - possibly Caesarea/ Rome

C. Date of writing - around A.D 70-85

D. Destination - To Theophilus (possibly living in Rome)

E. Occasion - Roman official needs to know about Christianity.

II. CONTENTS

A. Title - "Gospel of the Compassionate Savior".

B. Theme - An orderly account of Christ's words and deeds.

C. Purpose - To provide an orderly account of Christ's life for Theophilus, a Roman official, so he would know the truth about Christ and His followers.

D. Key verse: (Luke 2:10,11) "*Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people, for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*"

JOHN: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship - Anonymous, attributed to the Apostle John (see "beloved disciple" -13:23; 18:15; 19:26, 27; 20:2, 8; 21:20-24).

B. Place of writing - Ephesus.

C. Date of writing - A.D. 90-100.

D. Destination - Jews and Gentiles around Ephesus.

E. Occasion - Believers and non-believers need to know Who Christ truly is in a time of increased rise of cults and heretical teachings.

II. CONTENTS

A. Title - "Gospel of the Divine Messiah".

B. Theme - Jesus' life and miracles reveal *his* Messiahship.

C. Purpose - To help people believe in Christ as the Messiah, God's Son, and in so doing experience life and relationship with God Himself.

D. Key verse: (John 20:31) "*These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life through His name.*"

ACTS: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship - Anonymous, attributed to Luke (see 16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16 "We" passages)

B. Place of writing - possibly Caesarea / Rome

C. Date of writing - around A.D. 70-85

D. Destination - Theophilus (likely living in Rome)

E. Occasion - Roman official needs to know about Christianity.

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title - "Christ's Ministry Expanded".
- B. Theme - Orderly account of the birth and growth of the Church.
- C. Purpose - To provide an orderly account of the birth and expansion of the Church for Theophilus, a Roman official, so he would know the truth about Christianity (see Luke 1:1-4).
- D. Outline - Threefold outline based on Acts 1:8 with periodic summaries
 - 1. In Jerusalem (2:1-6:1)
 - 2. In Judea and Samaria (18:1-12:1)
 - 3. To the end of the earth (1:1-28:31)
- E. Keystone book
 - 1. Presupposes the gospels
 - 2. Anticipates the epistles.
 - 3. Selectivity:
 - a. Acts of Peter (1-12)
 - b. Acts of Paul (13-28).
- F. Key verse : (Acts 1:8) *"And you shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth."*

INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLES

ROMANS THROUGH REVELATION

I. LETTER-WRITING FORM (21 of 27 N.T. books are letters)

- A. Method of production.
 - 1. Written by author.
 - 2. Written through a secretary.
 - 3. Spoken message recorded.
 - 4. Addressees (recipients) copy verbal message.
- B. Purpose of writing.
 - 1. Specific to certain issues in a local church.
 - 2. General principles and exhortations.
- C. Structure of letter.
 - 1. Sender (Rom 1:1)
 - 2. Addressees (I Cor 1:2)
 - 3. Greetings (Gal 1:3-5)
 - 4. Body (Eph 1:3-6:20)
 - 5. Final farewells (Col 4:7-18).

II. CLASSIFICATIONS OF LETTERS

- A. General (universal) epistles.
- B. Specific (Pauline) epistles.
 - 1. Eschatological (concerned with end times): I & II Thessalonians.
 - 2. Soteriological (doctrine of salvation): Galatians, I & II Corinthians, Romans.
 - 3. Prison epistles: Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Philemon.
 - 4. Pastoral issues: 1 Timothy, Titus, 2 Timothy.

III. CHRONOLOGY OF N.T. LETTERS

- A. Earliest Period: Galatians, James.
- B. Second missionary journey: I & II Thessalonians.
- C. Third missionary journey: I & II Corinthians, Romans.
- D. 1st Roman imprisonment: Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians.
- E. Period of freedom: I Timothy, I Peter, Titus.

F. 2nd Roman imprisonment: II Timothy, II Peter.

G. Post-Pauline: Hebrews, I, II, III John, Jude.

IV. UNIQUENESS OF PAUL'S LETTERS

A. Length - longer (3 times longer than most other letters)

B. Content - theological.

C. Address - communal (to the whole church).

V. PAUL, THE MAN BEHIND 13 LETTERS

A. Divine call & commission (Gal 1; II Cor 3:1-18; Eph 3:1-13).

B. Divine apostolic authority (II Cor 10-13).

C. Deep love for people (I Thess 2:7,8; see Acts 20:19).

D. Divine insight into Gospel's meaning and application (Rom. 1-15).

E. Flexible and adaptable (I Cor 9:21-23).

F. Physical endurance (II Cor 11:23-29).

G. Literary background; excellent communicator (Eph 1-6).

H. Deep experiences with Christ (II Cor 12:2-10).

ROMANS: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship - Paul via Tertius (16:22).

B. Place of writing - Corinth (16:23).

C. Date of writing - A.D. 55-56 (during third missionary journey).

D. Destination - Church in Rome. Rome was a cosmopolitan city of about one million people, the capital of the Roman Empire which stretched from Britain to Arabia. It was the diplomatic and trade center of the then-known world. The beginning of the church in Rome is not described in the New Testament; it may have had its beginnings in the return of new believers shortly after the Day of Pentecost (see Acts 2:10).

E. Occasion - Paul's plan to visit Rome on his way to Spain (15:14-24).

II. CONTENTS

A. Title - "The Gospel of Grace".

B. Theme - A thorough treatise on the gospel of grace.

C. Purpose - To prepare the way for a visit to Rome on his way to Spain by fully explaining the gospel which Paul preached.

D. Outline - Doctrine and application.

E. Key verse :(Romans 1:16, 17) *"For I am not ashamed of the Gospel; for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written: 'The just shall live by faith.' "*

I CORINTHIANS: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship - Paul.

B. Place of writing - Ephesus.

C. Date of writing - A.D. 54 (during third missionary journey).

D. Destination - Corinthian church. Corinth was rebuilt by the Romans in 46 B.C. and had become a strategic center of commerce; it was located in southern Greece on a narrow strip of land between the Aegean and Adriatic Seas. It had a population of approximately 300,000 made up of Greeks, Romans, Syrians, Asiatics, Egyptians and Jews. The city was dominated by the temple of Aphrodite ("goddess of love" in the pagan religion of Greece); the temple had 1000 religious prostitutes whose

service gave rise to the city's infamous immorality. The church was planted by Paul on his second missionary journey (see Acts 18:1-18). I Corinthians is the second of four letters Paul wrote to this church.

E. Occasion - Report by Chloe's household (location of Corinthian church) concerning moral, doctrinal and practical problems; letter of inquiry brought by three members of the Corinthian church.

II. CONTENTS

A. Title - "Practical Christian Living in a Pagan Society"

B. Theme - Correcting church problems at Corinth.

C. Purpose - To answer the issues and problems raised by means of an oral report from Chloe's house and a letter from the Corinthians themselves.

D. Outline - Reply to Chloe's report and the Corinthian's letter.

E. Key verse: (I Corinthians 16:13,14) *"Be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love."*

II CORINTHIANS: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship - Paul.

B. Place of writing - Possibly Macedonia

C. Date of writing - A.D. 55 (during third missionary journey).

D. Destination - Corinthian church. Paul was in Corinth on at least three different occasions. II Corinthians was written just before his third visit, and is the last of four letters Paul wrote to this church.

E. Occasion - Report by Titus concerning the repentance of the majority of the troublemakers. (7:13-15).

II. CONTENTS

A. Title - "Defense of Paul's Ministry and Apostleship".

B. Theme - Explanation of Paul's ministry and apostleship.

C. Purpose - To express joy over the repentance of the majority of the Corinthian church concerning issues addressed in the previous letter, and to reprove a small minority who continued to oppose Paul.

D. Outline - Threefold division, more personal than doctrinal.

1. To the majority: Paul's ministry explained. (1:12-7:16)

2. The collection for the Jerusalem church. (8:1-9:15)

3. To the minority: Paul's ministry defended. (10:1-13:10)

E. Key verse: (II Corinthians 4:5) *"For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus sake."*

GALATIANS: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship - Paul.

B. Place of writing - Probably Antioch in Syria

C. Date of writing - Approximately A.D. 49-50 (Galatians 2:1-10 refers to the famine visit described in Acts 11:27-30)

D. Destination - Churches in Galatia. Galatia was a large Roman province stretching almost from coast to coast through central Turkey. How much of it Paul evangelized is not clear. We do know (from Acts 13 and 14) that he founded churches in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe in southern Galatia on his first missionary journey. He also made two follow-up visits to this area (Acts 16:6; 18:23).

According to the "south Galatian theory," the letter to the Galatians was addressed to believers in those cities and the surrounding areas.

E. Occasion - Wrong teaching by "Judaizers." Judaizers were Jewish believers who taught that Gentile believers must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses in order to receive salvation.

II. CONTENTS

A. Title - "Law vs. Grace".

B. Theme - Combating the legalism of Judaizers.

C. Purpose- To defend Paul's gospel of free grace preached among Gentiles against the "Gospel of Law Keeping" of the Judaizers.

D. Outline - Twofold argument and application.

1. Twofold argument

a. autobiographical argument (1:6-2:21)

b. doctrinal argument (3:1-4:31)

2. Practical application (5:1-6:10)

E. Key verse: (Galatians 2:16) "*...a man is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ... because by works of the law shall no one be justified.*"

EPHESIANS: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship Paul.

B. Place of writing- Roman Prison (3:1; 4:1; 6:20).

C. Date of writing - A.D. 60-62.

D. Destination - Churches in and around Ephesus. Ephesus, the leading city in the province of Asia, was a religious and commercial center of nearly a third of a million people on the west coast of Turkey. The church at Ephesus was begun during Paul's third missionary journey (see Acts 19). From Ephesus, the Gospel spread throughout the province; churches were planted in such places as Colossae, Hieropolis and Laodicea, as well as other towns in the Lycus Valley, which is the general area of the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 (see Acts 19:8-10).

E. Occasion - Converted Jews were inclined to separate themselves from their Gentile brethren, who may have looked down on them. This condition at Ephesus possibly led to the writing of the epistle.

II. CONTENTS

A. Title - "All One in Christ".

B. Theme - The summing up of all things in Christ through the Church.

C. Purpose- To show the summing up and unifying of all in Christ through the Church, which is a "preview of the unity which is to characterize the age to come."

D. Outline - Doctrinal and practical sections.

1. Doctrine "The wealth" (1:3-3:21)

2. Practice "The walk" (4:1-6:20)

E. Key verse: (Ephesians 1:9, 10) "*For God has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of His will, according to His purpose which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth.*"

PHILLIPIANS: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship - Paul

B. Place of writing - Roman prison (1:13, 14).

C. Date of writing ·A.D. 60-62

D. Destination ·Church in Philippi. Philippi was located in the northern Greek province of Macedonia on the Egnatian Way, the great military road that linked Rome with the East. It was first settled by Rome with Italian citizens as a Roman colony; thus it enjoyed special rights and privileges such as self-rule and freedom from imperial taxes. Women enjoyed a high status and took active part in public and business life. Paul began the church on his second missionary journey as a result of his "Macedonian vision" (see Acts 16:9-40).

E. Occasion - Philippians' most recent offering to Paul, who was now in prison for Christ in Rome (4:10-19).

II. CONTENTS

A. Title - "From Prison with Praise".

B. Theme - Thanks for a gift, with personal notes and exhortations.

C. Purpose - To thank the Philippians for their gift sent via Epaphroditus (2:25;4:11::1); to appeal for unity; to give information about Paul's present situation in prison.

D. Outline- Does not follow a strict outline, yet gives profound theological and practical insight.

E. Key verse: (Philippians 1:21) "*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*"

COLOSSIANS: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

A. Authorship - Paul.

B. Place of writing - Roman prison (4:18).

C. Date of writing ·A.O. 60-ftl.

D. Destination-Church at Colossae. Colossae was a small town in the beautiful Lycus Valley, about 100 miles; east of Ephesus. It was the least of the cities which made up this "tri-city area"; Hierapolis and Laodicea were the other two cities. There is no record of how the church began. It may well have been that, during Paul's three years in Ephesus, prominent men from Colossae such as Philemon and Epaphras became believers and returned to their home area, and a church resulted (1:7,8).

E. Occasion - Syncretism (mixed teaching) at Colossae, involving Jewish legalism (2:16,17, 21-23), Greek philosophy (2:8) and Gnostic mysticism (2:18).

II. CONTENTS

A. Title - "Christ Pre-eminent".

B. Theme - Salvation through Christ is sufficient.

C. Purpose-To refute the heresy at Colossae by a positive presentation of Christ's Person and work for and in the believer.

D. Outline ·Doctrinal and practical sections.

1. Doctrine

• Positive: Christ's pre-eminence(1:13-2:7)

• Negative: Against heresies (2:8-2:23)

2. Practice

• union with Christ (3:1-3:4)

b. union in Christ's death (3:5-3:11)

c. union in Christ's resurrection (3:12-4:6)

E. Key verse:(Colossians 2:10) "*For in Christ the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness of life in Him who is the head of the church, rule and authority.*"

I THESSALONIANS: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship-Paul.
- B. Place of writing - Corinth.
- C. Date of writing - A.O. 50-51 (during second missionary journey).
- D. Destination ·Thessalonian church. Thessalonica, capital of the Roman province of Macedonia, was a prosperous port city on the eastern coast of Greece. It was located on the Egnatian Way about 90 miles from Philippi. The church had its beginning during Paul's second missionary journey (see Acts 17:1-20)
- E. Occasion ·Timothy's good report about the church standing fast under persecution .

II. CONTENTS

- D. Title· "Comfort Concerning the Second Coming".
- E. Theme· Encouragement, exhortation and comfort.
- F. Purpose - To encourage the Thessalonians in persecution, and comfort them with the hope of resurrection at Christ's soon return.
- G. Outline - Encouragement and exhortation.
 - 1. Encouragement (1:2-3:13)
 - 2. Exhortation (4:1-5:22)
- E. Key verse: (I Thessalonians 5:2,3,2-1) "*May the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.*"

II THESSALONIANS: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- C. Authorship - Paul.
- B. Place of writing -Corinth.
- C. Date of writing-A.D. 50-51 {several months after I Thessalonians).
- D. Destination - Thessalonian church.
- E. Occasion -Wrong teaching about the imminence of the second coming of Christ.

II. CONTENTS

- C. Title ·"Correction Concerning the Second Coming".
- D. Theme- The coming of the day of the Lord.
- C. Purpose -To correct a misunderstanding that the day of the Lord had already come.
- D. Outline - Encouragement, Correction and exhortation.
 - 1. Encouragement (1:3-1:12)
 - 2. Correction (2:1-2:17)
 - 3. Exhortation 3:1-3:14)
- E. Key verse: (II Thessalonians 2:15) "*So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter.*"

INTRODUCTION TO PASTORAL EPISTLES

I TIMOTHY THROUGH PHILEMON

I. NAME

- A. Addressed to individuals.
 - 1. Not local pastors.
 - 2. District /area oversight.

II. AUTHORSHIP

- A. Traditional- Apostle Paul
- B. Authentication of Authorship
 - 2. Pastoral epistle claim Pauline authorship (I Tim. 1:1; II Tim. 1:1; Titus 1:1).
 - 3. Concern of early church for authenticity in authorship ensured that these epistles were written by Paul.
 - 4. External evidence early; and consistently supports Pauline authorship.

III. PAUL'S MOVEMENTS AFTER ACTS 28

- A. Prisoner at Rome for 2 years; (Acts 28:30, 31; see Phil. 1:19,25-27; 2:24).
- B. Released for further preaching and traveling (Philemon 22).
- C. Journey eastward to visit the churches.
 - 1. Ephesus (I Tim. 1:5).
 - 2. Corinth, Troas, Miletus (II Tim. 4:13, 20).
 - 3. Crete (Titus 1:1).
 - 4. Macedonia (Titus 3:12).
- D. Re-imprisoned in Rome (II Tim 1:8,16,17; 2:9; 4:10).

IV. PAUL'S CO-WORKERS

- A. Timothy
 - 1. Joined Paul on second missionary journey (Acts 16:1-3).
 - 2. One of Paul's closest traveling companions.
 - a. With Paul in Macedonia, Achaia, Asia & Rome.
 - b. Shares greetings with Paul in 6 of Paul's 13 letters (II Cor 1:1, Phil 1:1, Col 1:1, I Thess.1:1, II Thess. 1:1, Philemon 1)
 - 3. Young yet trusted (I Tim. 4:12; cp. I Cor. 16:11; 4:17; Phil. 2:19-22).
 - 4. Responsible for churches in and around Ephesus (I Tim. 1:3; 3:1-5).
- B. Titus
 - 1. Gentile over whom a dispute arose at Jerusalem (Gal. 2:1-5).
 - 2. Mentioned 10 years later in connection with the Corinthian church (II Cor. 1:2,3-2:18; 7:5-15; 8:6,16-23).
 - 3. Responsible 8-10 years later for churches in Crete (Titus 1:5)
 - 4. Ministry in Dalmatia Illyricum, II Tim. 4:10).

I TIMOTHY: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship - Paul.
- B. Place of writing - Probably Macedonia.
- C. Date of writing - Around A.D. 62-64.
- D. Destination - Timothy in Ephesus.
- E. Occasion - Timothy's need for instruction in leading the churches in and around Ephesus.

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title - "Advice to a Young Pastor".
- B. Theme - Instructions in leading and feeding the church.
- C. Purpose - To instruct Timothy in how to organize and administer the work of the church until Paul arrives.
- D. Outline - Organization and administration sections.

1. Church's organization (1:3-3:13)
2. Church's administration (3:14-6:19)

E. Key verse: (I Timothy 3:14, 15) *"..I am writing these instructions to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth."*

II TIMOTHY: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship - Paul.
- B. Place of writing - Rome.
- C. Date of writing - Around A.O.65-67.
- D. Destination - Timothy in Ephesus.
- E. Occasion - Paul's last words before his execution in Rome.

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title - "Paul's Final Advice".
- B. Theme - Paul's last will and testament (see Gen. 49; Deuteronomy; Josh. 23, 24; John 13-17, etc.).
- C. Purpose - To encourage Timothy in properly guiding and teaching the church and to ask him to bring some needed items before winter.
- D. Outline - Informal.
 1. Past (1:3-18)
 2. Present (2:1-26)
 3. Future (3:1-17)
 4. Paul's farewell (4:1-18)
- E. Key verse: (I Timothy 2:2) *"What you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."*

TITUS: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship - Paul.
- B. Place of writing - Nicopolis.
- C. Date of writing - Around A.D. 62-64.
- D. Destination - Titus in Crete.
- E. Occasion - Titus' need for instruction in leading the church.

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title - "Advice to a Pastor in Crete".
- B. Theme - Instructions in leading and feeding the church.
- C. Purpose - To instruct Titus in the shepherding of the church on the island of Crete.
- D. Outline - Organization and administration sections.
 1. Church's organization (1:5-19)
 2. Church's administration (1:10-3:11)
- E. Key verse: (Titus 2:7-8) *"Show yourself in all respects a model of good deeds, and in your teaching show integrity, gravity, and sound speech that cannot be censured."*

PHILEMON: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship - Paul.
- B. Place of writing - Roman prison (vs. 1,9).

- C. Date of writing -Around A.D. 60-62.
- D. Destination - Philemon and church.
- E. Occasion - Return of Onesimus.

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title - "A Runaway Slave Returns".
- B. Theme - A letter of friendly persuasion on behalf of a slave.
- C. Purpose - To appeal to Philemon through "friendly persuasion" to receive back his runaway slave as a brother whom Paul had led to Christ while imprisoned (vs. 10).
- D. Outline - Informal letter, no definite outline.
- E. Key verse :(Philemon v. 17) "*So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me.*"

INTRODUCTION TO GENERAL EPISTLES HEBREWS THROUGH JUDE

I. NAME

- A. General Epistles.
 - 1. Little in common.
 - a. Contents varied: ethical (1John), eschatological (II Peter}.
 - b. Structure varied: I John has no greetings or farewell.
 - 2. General address in common.
 - a. Addressed to believers beyond a local fellowship.
 - b. Entitled by author's name.
- B. Hebrews.
 - 1. Unique: author unknown.
 - 2. No address.

II. BACKGROUND

- A. Persecution.
 - 1. Religious (Hebrews, James).
 - 2. Political (I Peter).
- B. Heresies
 - 1. Gnosticism (I, II, III John written to disprove Gnostic heresy) denied the physical incarnation of Christ and salvation by faith. Gnostics believed instead in salvation by knowledge (Greek gnosis "knowledge").
 - 2. Antinomianism :(II Peter, Jude, James written to refute this heretical teaching) a belief that faith in Christ completely frees a person from the obligations of the moral law.

HEBREWS: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship - unknown. (Paul? Apollos? Barnabas?) There is no clear evidence; only God knows for certain who wrote this book. ..
- B. Place of writing - unknown.
- C. Date of writing - around A .D. 67-68.
- D. Destination - Rome.
- E. Occasion- Increasing opposition against Jewish believers.

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title - "Christ, the Better Way".
- B. Theme - The superiority of Christ over the Old Testament ("better" is used 13 times).

C. Purpose - To show the superiority of Christ, in order to prevent a return to Judaism by Jewish believers who were undergoing opposition for their faith in Christ (10:32-36; 12:3,4).

D. Outline - A word of exhortation ("let us" is used 13 times); a sermon with application (Heb. 13:22; see 10:19-25).

1. Proclamation: Christ's superiority (1:1-10:39)
2. Practice: Faith's superiority (11:1-13:17)

E. Key verse: (Hebrews 4:14) *"Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession."*

JAMES: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship - James Jesus' half-brother).
- B. Place of writing - Probably Jerusalem
- C. Date of writing - Around A.O. 48-62.
- D. Destination - To be circulated among dispersed Jewish believers .
- E. Occasion - Jewish believers facing opposition and antinomianism (see under "Heresies" in Introduction to General Epistles)...

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title - "True Religion".
- B. Theme - True religion *is* practical and works.
- C. Purpose - To explain to Jewish believers that true religion is pure and practical.
- D. Outline - Four sermons
 1. Trials (1:2-18, 2)
 2. Law of Love (1:19-2:26)
 3. Evil Speaking (3:1-4:12)
 4. Endurance (4:13-5:20)
- E. Key verse: (James 1:27) *"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction , and to help oneself unspotted from the world."*

I PETER: SUMMARY

I. BACKG ROUND

- A. Authorship - Apostle Peter/Silvanus (5:12).
- B. Place of writing - Rome.
- C. Date of writing - Around A .D. 62-64.
- D. Destination - Christians in Asia Minor.
- E. Occasion - Christians coming under persecution from Rome.

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title - "Salvation through Suffering".
- B. Theme - Standing fast in God's grace through suffering.
- C. Purpose - To encourage Christians who are under persecution to stand fast for the faith in Christ.
- D. Outline - Three doctrine and application sections.
 1. Declaring: Salvation (1:3-12) Exhorting: Be Holy (1:13-2:3)
 2. Declaring: God's people (2:4-10) Exhorting: Submit (2:11-3:17)
 3. Declaring: Suffering (3:18-22) Exhorting: Rejoice (4:1-5:11)
- E. Key verse: (I Peter 5:12) *"...I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God; stand fast in it."*

II PETER: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship - Apostle Peter.
- B. Place of writing - Rome.
- C. Date of writing - Around A.D. 65-67
- D. Destination - Christians in Asia Minor.
- E. Occasion - Christians facing heretical teachers.

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title - "True and False Knowledge".
- B. Theme - Discerning true and false teachers.
- C. Purpose - To warn believers of false teachers who deny their Lord and scoff at His coming.
- D. Outline - True and false knowledge.
 - 1. True knowledge (1:3-21)
 - 2. False teacher (2:1-22)
 - 3. Christ's return (3:1-18)
- E. Key verse: (II Peter 3:17-18) *"You, therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, beware lest you be carried away with the error of lawless men and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord And Saviour Jesus Christ."*

I JOHN: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship - Anonymous, but likely it was the Apostle John.
- B. Place of writing - Ephesus.
- C. Date of writing - Around A.D. 90-100.
- D. Destination - Christians around Ephesus.
- E. Occasion - Christians facing heretical gnostic teaching that emphasized special knowledge and depreciated Christ's humanity.

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title - "Tests of a True Christian".
- B. Theme - Infallible signs of divine life,
- C. Purpose - To confirm believers in the true knowledge of salvation over against the false teaching of Gnosticism (a heresy which taught that Jesus Christ was not born in human form).
- D. Outline - Threefold cycle.
 - 1. Light and love (1:5-2:28)
 - 2. Right and love (2:29-4:6)
 - 3. Life and love (4:7-5:21)
- E. Key verse: (I John 5:13) *"I write this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life."*

II JOHN: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship - Anonymous but likely it was the Apostle John.
- B. Place of writing - Ephesus.
- C. Date of writing - Around A.D. 90-100.
- D. Destination - Christians around Ephesus.
- E. Occasion - Christians facing heretical gnostic teaching that emphasized special knowledge and depreciated Christ's humanity.

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title - "How to Handle Heretics".
- B. Theme - Refuse hospitality to gnostic deceivers.
- C. Purpose - To express joy over believers who follow the truth, and to warn them of gnostic deceivers who have a spirit of antichrist.
- D. Outline - none; informal.
- E. Key verse: (II John vs. 9,10) "*He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him.*"

III JOHN: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship - Anonymous, but likely it was the Apostle John.
- B. Place of writing - Ephesus.
- C. Date of writing - Around A.D. 90-100.
- D. Destination - Gaius, who was facing heretical gnostic teaching that emphasized special knowledge and depreciated Christ's humanity.

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title - "Showing Hospitality".
- B. Theme - Give hospitality to traveling teachers.
- C. Purpose - To give instruction concerning proper ministry to strangers and itinerant preachers of the gospel.
- D. Outline - None; informal.
- E. Key verse: (III John v. 5) "*Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers.*"

JUDE: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship - Jude Jesus' half-brother, brother of James).
- B. Place of writing - Unknown, possibly Jerusalem
- C. Date of writing - Around A .D. 67-80.
- D. Destination - Christians everywhere.
- E. Occasion - Christians facing heretical teachers.

II. CONTENTS

- A. Title - "Beware of False Teachers".
- B. Theme - Contend for faith against false teachers.
- C. Purpose - To urge believers to contend for the faith against false teachers.
- D. Outline - Problem and answer.
 - 1. Problem: Evil false teachers (vs. 3-16)
 - 2. Answer: Contending for the faith (vs. 17-23)
- E. Key verse: Jude v. 3) "*...I found it necessary to write to you, appealing to you to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*"

REVELATION: SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Authorship - The prophet John (1:1), traditionally identified as the Apostle John.
- B. Place of writing - Island of Patmos, 35 miles off the coast of Asia Minor.
- C. Date of writing - Around A.D. 90-100 during the reign of Emperor Domitian.
- D. Destination - Seven churches in Asia Minor, located in a circuitous route around Ephesus, the leading city in the province.

E. Occasion - Because of the increasing persecution of Christians under Emperor Domitian. John (who himself had been banished for his witness to Christ) writes to the seven churches of Asia Minor concerning the visions God had given him about what was about to take place: tribulation for the saints, wrath for the unrighteous, and the ultimate victory and reward of God's people at the second coming of Christ.

III. CONTENTS

A. Title - "The Consummation".

B. Theme - "Labor pains" characterizing the end of this evil age as it gives birth to the new age when the Lord rules over the new heavens and new earth.

C. Purpose - To encourage persecuted Christians to faithfully endure, by showing them that the end is near when God will reward those who defeat Satan's evil forces and win the victory with Him.

D. Outline - A fourfold vision of the increasing Lordship of Jesus Christ; each vision is introduced by the phrase "*in the Spirit*" (1:10; 4:2, 17:3; 21:10).

1. 1st vision: Christ, Lord of the Church (1:9-3:22)

2. 2nd vision: Christ, Lord of history {4:1-16:21}

3. 3rd vision: Christ, Lord of Lords (17:1-21:10)

4. 4th vision: Christ, Lord God Almighty (21:11-22:5) Epilogue (II:6-21)

E. Key verse: (Revelation 11:15) "*kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He: shall reign forever and ever.*"

PICTURES OF THE WORD: SYMBOLS THAT HELP US UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURES

Painting A Picture,

Jesus, in describing the importance of the Bible, the eternal Scriptures, said, "Man shalt not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt 4:4). He used this quote from Deuteronomy 8:3 as He triumphantly resisted Satan's temptations in the wilderness at the beginning of His ministry. This dramatic and crucial moment will forever stand as a lesson to us in the use of Scripture as a powerful weapon against temptation, sin and the devil.

But there is more to this passage than simply a method for resisting temptation.

As Jesus speaks these words, it is as if He is painting a picture for us. Jesus links the idea of **bread** and **Scripture** and **hunger** together. This is a concept that can be grasped immediately, especially if one has been fasting 40 days like Jesus had been! Later in His ministry, Jesus, the Living Word of God, declares that He is the Bread of Life come down from heaven, and those that eat of it will live (see John 6). Jesus used a kind of **picture -language** called "**parables**" to help people understand - **or see** - more dearly what He was saying.

In the same way, the Holy Spirit used "picture language" throughout the Bible in describing the Holy Scriptures themselves, which were inspired by God. Often spiritual truths can be portrayed more clearly by the use of symbols. These symbols bring a picture to the human mind, making it much easier to understand certain truths.

There are a number of symbols that God Himself chose to describe His own Word. These symbols help us understand more about the nature of the Scriptures themselves. They also assist us in perceiving believer whose life is surrendered to the Lordship of Christ.

This article will briefly examine these God-inspired symbols for the Word of God that the Bible contains, giving further insight into the power and life contained in the Holy Scriptures.

MIRROR

The Image Of Jesus

*"For if anyone is a **hearer** of the Word and **not a doer**, he is like a man observing his natural face in a **mirror**; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who **looks into** the perfect law of liberty and **continues in it**, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the word, this one will be blessed in what he does " (Jas 1:23-25).*

God's Word is a revealer of the human heart. It helps us to better understand our motives and our actions. The Bible reveals to us:

- What we **are like**,
- Why we are that way,
- What we **ought to DO** about what is revealed.

God uses the revealing power of the Word to bring us to a place **of taking action on what is revealed**. If we were to look at ourselves in a mirror and see dirt on our face, food on our chin or our hair mussed up, would we walk away and do nothing? Or would we stop and **take action on what is revealed**? Would we leave the mess that we see, or would we get cleaned up?

The Spirit and the Word, working together, call us to **take notice** of the Bible's corrective instruction in our lives, **be obedient** to what it tells us to do, and *be changed* more into the image of Jesus!

From Glory To Glory

But there is another important lesson to remember about what the Bible reveals. It is the temptation to **see (and judge) others** with the Word, instead of applying what we learn **to our own lives first**. It is too easy to get caught up in our opinions of what we think **others** ought to do with the truths of Scripture, and completely miss the opportunity for the Word to change our **own** lives first.

Second Corinthians 3:18 also describes God's Word as a mirror: "*But we all, with unveiled face, beholding **as in a mirror** the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the **same image** from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*" In this mirror, we see the image of Jesus Himself.

When we put this scripture together with James 1:23-25, we learn an important dynamic of how this scriptural mirror works.

The Word shows us the image of Christ so that we will measure our character and conduct by HIS standards, and then allow God to shape us more and more into His image. When we allow **ourselves to be changed** by the mirror of God's Word, we will end up being of more help to others than if we spent our time trying to correct them (see Matthew 7:1-5).

This process brings us fully into the "*law of liberty*" (James 1:25), a life lived and shaped under the power of God's amazing grace, and then used to help others!

SWORD Armed And Ready

*"And take...the **sword** of the Spirit, which is the Word of God"* (Eph 6:17).

In Ephesians 6:10-18, Paul outlines the armor that every good soldier of Christ ought to have with him constantly. This armor should not just be something the soldier carries; but by constant use, it should become familiar equipment that he skillfully uses.

The Holy Spirit revealed to Paul that believers are in a constant state of warfare. They are wrestling not against other humans "*but against principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age, and against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places*" (Eph 6:12). Because this is true, God has given us five defensive pieces of armament (Eph 6:14- 17), and one weapon for both offense and defense. This one special weapon is the "sword of the Spirit" - the Word of God.

Counter-Attack

Satan's strategy from the beginning of time has always been to question God's Word. Satan sows doubt in people's minds, appeals to their "reason", and tries to tempt them to not take God at His Word by faith.

In Genesis 3:1, Satan approached Eve in the garden of Eden with the opening line of "*Hath God said ...*" He used the question to cause her to doubt a simple, straightforward command from God. She then began to question the command God had spoken, until she convinced herself that she did not need to obey it. The results were devastating for all of mankind from that day forward.

Satan tried the same strategy in tempting Jesus in Matthew 4:1-11. Here again the devil implied doubt about what God has said: "*If you are the Son (If God Satan said this right after the baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3), when God had already declared in an audible voice, "This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased" (Matt 3:17).*

But Jesus, knowing the power of God's Word, used it with authority to both defend Himself from the devil's temptation and counter attack his treacherous lies.

Cutting Through

Hebrews 4:12 shows us another way in which God's Word is the "sword of the Spirit. " This passage describes the Scriptures as "living and powerful, and sharper than a two edged sword". The Word of God contains a life and power by the Holy Spirit's anointing that is not placed upon any other words or books. There are many books filled with words, but only God's Word gives life (John 6:63). There are many sermons that are inspiring and clever, but they can not compare to the power of God's Word.

God declared in Isaiah 55:11 that His Word "*shall not return to Me void [empty, without fruit], but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it*". God was telling us that His Word is powerfully alive. His Word is a force, which goes forth and accomplishes

things. That is because all of God's life and power back up His Word - and ONLY His Word.

The anointing of God flows through His Word. We can never defeat God's enemies or win God's battles without God's Book. God's Word is TRUTH! It is a weapon of Truth - a Sword that can cut through the devil's lies, and break the bondage that can come from believing those lies. It has a delivering power that can cut through the deceptions of our enemy, Satan, and bring freedom to a person in body, mind and spirit. "*And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (John 8:32).

Victory!

A well-known evangelist had just concluded a meeting. As he was leaving the sanctuary, he saw a man lying unconscious on the floor. He was told that the man was a heroin addict in a coma from a recent overdose, and that he would probably die.

The evangelist knew that the man might not hear or remember anything he would say to him at that moment. But the Holy Spirit prompted him to speak to the man the scripture, "*You shall not die, but live*" {Ps 118:17}. So he went over and spoke into the man's ear this verse from God's Word.

The man who was the heroin addict later said he did not remember anything about that night except the words going around and around in his mind, "*you shall not die, but live*". Over and over, he kept hearing that phrase in his mind. The next day, he suddenly awoke from his coma and was immediately sober and in his right mind. He had completely lost his craving for drugs, his addiction had been broken, and he received Jesus Christ as His Lord and Savior that very day!

The Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, is truly **a mighty weapon of warfare** against the deception and bondage of the devil!

"MEASURING ROD" The Very Depths

"*For the Word of God...is a **discerner** of the thoughts and intents of the heart*" (Heb 4:12}. The Word of God is very penetrating. It is like an extremely sharp knife that can cut through even the hardest of substances.

In this same verse, the Holy Spirit says the Scriptures are "*piercing, even to the division of the soul and spirit*". These two phrases in Hebrews 4: 12 show us that the Word of God can reveal the very depths of the human heart, even what appears confusing or hidden. Reading or hearing the Scriptures can reveal the subtle differences between the soul and spirit, and show whether a person is living a **soulish** life or a **spiritual** life.

The Greek word for "discerner" is *kritikos*, from which we get the word "critic". The Holy Spirit purposefully chose this word to describe the role of the

Scriptures in our lives. In this we can see that God's Word provides the standard, or "measuring rod", against which our lives are to be compared.

Under Scrutiny

God's Word gives us something to measure our lives by, to see if we are living in a way that is pleasing to God. However, the Bible does not measure our outward actions alone, which can appear pure to human eyes. His Word also reveals our inward motives, those secret things in our hearts that are behind our actions. "...*But all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account*" {Heb 4:13; see also Proverbs 16:2}.

It would be no stretch of interpretation to say that God's Word tests both a man's earthly life and his spiritual life. His bodily life and his spiritual life alike come under the scrutiny and inspection of the Word of God.

There are times when we might doubt our own motives. Sometimes false condemnation can slip into our hearts. That's when the Word of God can either reassure us or convict us, and help us to know how to respond to God and His work in our hearts. The Holy Spirit will use the Word of God to guide us into righteousness.

To avoid using this "critical discernor" only on others, we should remember the lesson Jesus taught His disciples. In Luke 6:37-42, Jesus warns us against being judgmental and critical of others, especially when we might be blind to an even worse condition in our own lives. A person who is quick to condemn the faults in others, while ignoring his own shortcomings, will be of little help to God in influencing the lives of others for Jesus' sake.

We can serve the Lord and others best by first and foremost applying the discerning power of the Word to our own lives.

WATER Cleansing Word

"...*that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water with the Word*" (Eph 5:26). In this passage, the Holy Spirit, speaking through Paul, uses imagery (or symbolism) to create understanding in the minds of both Hebrews and Greeks. This verse compares the work of the Word of God to being **washed with water**.

Ephesians 5:26 describes a double action:

- The **Living Word** of God - **Jesus**
- The **words** of God - the **Scriptures**.

In both the Jewish and Gentile cultures, before a bride was presented to the bridegroom she received a "cleansing bath". She was then dressed in her bridal clothing and the groom received her as his wife.

Jesus, as the Word of God incarnate (John 1:1-4), gave Himself as a sacrifice for His Bride-to-be, the Church (see Revelation 1:5; Titus 2:14). We are cleansed from sin by His blood, being justified by faith in His Name for salvation. The blood of Jesus provides the Church with a "washing"-a cleansing from sin in our lives. For this we will give Him praise now and throughout all eternity! HALLELUJAH!

Daily Bathing

But there is a second truth at work here that can have tremendous effect on our daily lives if we apply this principle. In John 15:3, Jesus said to His disciples, "*You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.*" The Word of God has a **cleansing power**. This cleansing power of the Word of God acts in both a **spiritual** and **soulish** dimension.

God Almighty has so designed His Word that it can cleanse, restore and rebuild our minds and our spirits as we read it, study it, and open ourselves to the Holy Spirit. There are many good books that say many good things; but there is only one Holy Bible, which is "*given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof for correction for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work*" (2 Tim 3:16-17).

We live in a sin-filled and broken world where we, as leaders, are often exposed to the brokenness of others. This can weigh heavily on our minds and in our spirits. We can have the added burden (if our own failures because we, too, some times fail and fall short of the glory of God (see Romans 3:23)).

But there is a remedy -a regularly daily "bathing" in God's Holy Scriptures! God's Word has power in it, the power of the Holy Spirit. God's Word has a tremendous inward, purifying effect in the heart and mind of the believer in Jesus Christ.

Without Spot Or Wrinkle

Reading the Scriptures daily can give us the strength to repent and replace sin with God's righteousness, peace, joy, guidance, and strength! When we read the Word of God, it will often have the "mirror" effect (mentioned earlier) and reveal our sin. But God is so good! ***The same Word that reveals our defilement ALSO provides us with A MEANS OF CLEANSING!***

So, then, we are **cleansed from condemning** sin by receiving the free gift of the shed blood of Jesus Christ on the Cross; and we are **cleansed from the stains of this world** by the living power of the Word of God. Both work together to make us a fit Bride, "*not having spot or wrinkle*".

LAVEN
Bronze Sea

There is a special insight into the Word for the believer who was raised as a Jew. In the Old Testament, in the Tabernacle, there was a large bronze basin called a laver. In Solomon's Temple, it was called a Bronze Sea: it was 15 feet across and held approximately 8,000 gallons of water for the priests to wash in. (See 2 Chronicles 4.)

This bronze laver was positioned in a special place in both the Tabernacle and the Temple. The bronze laver stood between the worshipper and the rest of the Tabernacle, providing a means of cleansing. A worshipper was required to wash before being allowed to enter into worship.

In Exodus 30:17-21, God commanded Moses to make a statute for the priesthood concerning the bronze laver. Priests were required to wash their hands and feet before they could minister before the Lord. Their hands and feet, just like yours and mine, are what touched the things of this world.

Hands and feet are symbolic of our exposure to the sin-filled, fallen world we must live in.

In the days when Israel worshipped in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple, the priesthood was to go through a **ritual cleansing** before they were allowed to minister to the Lord on behalf of the people. They were to do this **without fail**...otherwise judgment would come and they would die (Exo 30:20).

A Real washing

Since Scripture states that "*all these things* [in the Old Testament] *happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition*" (1 Cor 10:11), we can learn some principles from the bronze laver of the Tabernacle. First, in combining Exodus 30:17- 21 with Ephesians 5:26, we see that the bronze laver is a "type"- a symbol -of the Scriptures. Just as the priests were required to go through **a ritual washing** before they ministered to the Lord and the people, so must we go through a **real washing**.

Our "*washing of water by the Word*" does not just happen at our salvation experience; it must happen **continuously**. The Old Testament priests had to wash **every time** they were to serve.

We, too, need **regular "washings"** of the Word of God to keep us dean and purified from sin and the effects of this world.

Our ministry to others needs to be with **clean hands** and a **pure heart**, in order to be blessed and useful for service (see Psalm 24:4).

Second, we need a **constant washing** with the Word if we want to **regularly** experience the fullness of life Jesus offers. The Word of God feeds both our **spirit** and our **mind**. This helps to keep us **spiritually alive and strong**.

God had a harsh judgement (death) for the priest who did not wash. In much the same way, God calls us to keep our lives free of the spiritual "deadness"

that comes from missing the regular washing by the Word of God. We must be disciplined and **daily read and meditate on God's Word**, in order to be cleansed and to receive spiritual life and strength.

Life And Power

Third, it is a biblical principle that whatever is in the spiritual life of a leader (or parent of a family) can be duplicated in those who follow him or her. Therefore, it is necessary that we are washed by the Word and are alive spiritually. This will help ensure that we are passing along **spiritual life and health** to those we serve, instead of spiritual deadness.

Those we lead need to be taught how important it is to be washed in the water of the Word. It is a very important part of every believer's life. If people are cleansed, and **filled with the life and power** of God's Word, anointed by His Spirit, they will be able to minister powerfully to their family, their church ...and to the world.

SEED Life-Giving Breath

*"...having been born again, **not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible** through the Word of God which lives and abides forever" (1 Pet 1:23).*

God exalts His Name and His very words in the Scriptures. He and His words are also exalted in the preaching of His Word.

But He also exalts His Word in the saving of lost men and women. **For it is by His Word and His Spirit**, and not by testimonies, eloquent arguments, or emotional appeals, that He brings to true salvation those who are spiritually dead.

We owe our natural existence to the Creator's spoken Word and His life-giving breath (see Genesis 2:7). In the same way, we owe *our* **spiritual New Birth** to the power of God's Word activated by the Holy Spirit.

By studying 1 Peter 1:23 closely, we can learn some important lessons. The language structure of this verse in the Greek shows that the bringing forth of this seed to life is **God's action**; He and He alone does it. This means that people can not attain this through study or self effort (see John 1:12, 13). Only God can cause the seed to bring forth salvation life in the human heart.

The **seed** is the Gospel message of the Kingdom of God. Jesus Himself declared in His parable of the sower that the Word of God is seed (Luke 8:5-15). God may allow people to **sow** the seed by preaching the Word, or to **water** or **nurture** the seed. But only **He** can cause it to bring **forth life unto salvation** (1 Cor 3:6-7).

Sometimes we, as leaders, are tempted to "help" God or His Word. We may want to push or force someone into responding. Sometimes we get in God's way and try to take the place of the Holy Spirit.

Instead, we need to believe in the power of God and His Word to perform that which it was sent to do (see Isaiah 55:11). We can sow the seed and plant the truth of God's Word into people, but He must be the One to cause it to grow into life.

A Waxy Buildup

But we **can** play a part in the process of the Word bringing forth life. Our part is revealed in James 1:21, another Verse of Scripture about the seed of the Word of God. "*Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.*" This scripture indicates clearly that we are called to respond to the Word of God as it is brought to us.

There are many truths in this verse in James. This time, let's focus on just two of them.

First, this passage commands us to "*lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness*". The text uses a special Greek word for "filthiness": It is the word *ruporia*, which comes from the root word *rupos*. This word had a special medical application in the Greek language: it meant a "waxy buildup in the ear".

So, with this "word picture" in mind, it is clear that the Holy Spirit is warning us that we are to **rid ourselves of anything that can block our ability to hear God's Word**. The collecting up, or accumulation, of man's sins can make him deaf to God. Attitudes of unforgiveness self-righteousness, hatred, anger, and pride and judgmentalism -along with the more obvious sins of sexual immorality, drunkenness, lying and stealing - can all cause spiritual "deafness".

This kind of deafness is hard to fix because it blocks out one of the most important "medicines" for a cure - the Word of God! Scripture exhorts us to **clean out our spiritual ears** and keep them dean. This truth gives us new insight into what Jesus may have meant when He said, "*For him who has ears to hear, let him hear*" (Matt 11:15).

Only One Lord

A second great truth is in the phrase "*receive with weakness*". The word "meekness" or "meek" is often misinterpreted by the world as "weakness" or "weak ". But the term actually means the opposite. To be meek means to "have power or strength under control". Now why would the Holy Spirit choose "meekness" to represent the attitude of our heart when we are receiving the Word of God?

God created us, and took on human flesh and lived among us; therefore, He knows what our flesh will try to do. Our "*flesh*", or old sin nature, will try to

block the whole Word of God: and receive only the part we like. Our "*old man*" (see Ephesians 4:22-24) wants to take the Word of God and twist it to fit our own liking or advantage.

There can be **only one Lord of your heart**, and it will be **either you or Jesus Christ**. How we treat His Word and apply it to our lives will reveal who sits on the throne of our hearts (see John 8:47). Either we will make excuses for ourselves and justify our sin -or we will be **strong in God** and allow the Holy Spirit to use God's Word to convict, break, mold and shape us **according to God's desire**.

"*Receive with meekness*" tells us to take the seed of God's Word and let it be **planted deeply into our hearts**. We are to let it **take root** in us and **produce much fruit**. We must provide good soil in our hearts into which the Word of God can be planted. We cannot allow "weeds" to grow up around it and choke out the life of the Word growing in us. We must rise up in the strength of God - **under His Lordship and control** -and resist the things that would oppose the Word of God being planted into our lives.

Read Luke 8:5-15 several times, and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you about **the condition of the soil** of your heart.

FIRE **By His Word...**

...is not my word like a fire? Says the Lord" (Jer 23:29).

The Word of God is like nothing else in all the world. Though there are many religious writings in the world today, none of them contains THE FULL TRUTH about God, salvation, and the right way to live except for the Bible, God's anointed Scriptures.

Fire is a profound symbol of the Word of God.

The Scriptures declare that God "*upholds all things by the word of His power*" (Heb 1:3). This ties in with Psalm 33:6-8, which declares that by His word God created the heavens and the earth and by that same word He holds them in place. God's Word is awesome and powerful!

The Holy Spirit shows us this powerful creativity by comparing the Word of the Lord to fire. This comparison suggests three very important actions of the Word in our lives.

1 God's Word As Purifier

There is a kind of fire that only God can bring to our souls. It brings a deep **conviction of sin** as well as an overwhelming **desire for purity**. The Word activated by the Holy Spirit in our hearts is what God uses to begin the purifying process.

Psalm 119:9 asks the question, "*How can a young man [or any person of any age] keep his way pure?*" All of us who have struggled with sin in our own lives have asked this question. The same Psalm answers the question in the same question in the same verse: "*by taking heed according to your word.*"

How do we "take heed" to God's Word?

"Take heed" literally means "to pay attention, take notice". We must not ignore the Word of God. We must carefully pay attention to God's instructions contained there in, **and act upon** those instructions.

The same Psalm just two verses later says, "*Your word have I hidden in my heart that I might not sin against you.*" Certainly this means more than just preaching it, teaching it, or believing it with only our minds. We must take God's Word in to every part of our life and being - so much so that God's Word fills us, and stands like, a mighty mountain at the very center of our being.

It is from this centermost place in our hearts that the Word begins its purging activity. It can reach deep within, to cleanse even the vilest sinner and the vilest sin. God's Word can purify your minds and hearts from foolishness, unbelief, lies, and other thoughts and attitudes that would be displeasing to God.

The Word of God is a **consuming fire**, burning up the chaff in our lives. "Chaff" is the dry, dead husk from the kernel of wheat. It is the waste, or worthless matter that surrounds the healthy seed. We need the purifying fire of the Word of God to burn up what is worthless and unfruitful in our lives, so the life-giving seed that God imparts can grow unhindered!

The power of the Holy Spirit of God works in, through and with the Word of God!

If we want to live a pure life, filled with God's holy power, the Scriptures must be an essential part of the content of our heart. Hide the Word in your heart by reading it often, memorizing it, and doing what it says. Either the Bible will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from the Bible.

2. God's Word As Igniter

The picture of "**fire**" suggests that there is a consuming impulse or energy that comes from the Word.

Jeremiah 20:9 describes how the prophet was trying to resist speaking God's Word to a rebellious people. But he could not keep quiet! **God's word burned within him** and he knew he must declare the whole of God's counsel to God's people.

There is an energizing that comes from God's Word, which enables and equips us through the Holy Spirit to do God's will and word. David, in a moment of great despair, when even his own followers wanted to kill him, "**strengthened himself in the Lord his God.**" Surely this "strengthening" included meditating on the Word and what it revealed of Who God is - reminding him that **his trust is in God**, not circumstances. God brought victory that day because David sought the Word of the Lord (1 Sam 30).

When Jonah finally obeyed God and brought the Word of the Lord to Nineveh, **a great revival was ignited in that city**. It was such a profound revival that even the Son of God commented upon it (Matt 12:41).

God's Word ignites life in the discouraged soul. God's Word ignites conviction, so people will repent. God's Word ignites zeal for the things of God. God's Word is a fire that ignites His people!

3. God's Word As Strengthenener

In ancient human history, people used fire to harden certain tools and weapons made out of wood (such as the tip of a spear). In some primitive parts of the world today this is still being done.

God uses the **fire of His Word** to bring **strength** and **depth** to our convictions. As Christians, and as leaders, we have nothing firm to stand on if we do not stand on the Word of God.

The Bible itself warns us of the danger of being weak or wavering in our convictions. In James 1:7-8 we are told that a person who *is* weak in his convictions and moral strength is "**double-minded**."

This is a unique Greek word, used twice in the book of James (1:8; 4:8) and nowhere else in the New Testament. The word is *dipsuchos*, which literally means "a man with two souls, or having two different minds inside his head." This word gives us the picture of **a piece of wood tossed about by the waves** - coming near the shore, then being drawn back out to sea. It could also be a picture of someone who is drunk and staggers from one side of the street to the other, but never making any progress forward.

A "double-minded" person wavers back and forth between two opinions or two beliefs. This person has not wholly given himself to God or fully accepted all that the Scriptures reveal about Him.

James says this man will never receive anything from the Lord (1:7) and is "*unstable in all his ways*" (1:8). This person desperately needs the strengthening power that comes from the Word of God! Feelings will lead us astray, circumstances may show the facts, but **what we really need is the TRUTH!** And the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth is found **only in God's Word!**

It is in the holy Scriptures that God reveals Who He really is, and what He wants to do for us and through us. His Word will not disappoint us, for not even "*one jot or tittle will pass away*" (Matt 5:18). We can have confidence, unshakable faith, when we know what the Word of God says on any given subject having to do with life and godliness.

The whole world is full of conflicting opinions, each of them fighting for our attention and allegiance. Those opinions change constantly according to what is popular or what seems to fit within our culture at the moment.

My wife and I lived right near the ocean on the Oregon coast. Our weather changed constantly, even several times in one day. It would go from a rainy downpour to bright sunshine and back to rain again. We used to say, "If you don't like the weather, wait for half an hour and it will change!" Men's opinions are like that. They may declare something as absolute truth one day, and deny it just as fervently the next day.

Thank God His Word is not like that!

"Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled (stands firm) in heaven" (Ps 119:89).

Changing A Nation

There are many excellent examples of the **strengthening fire** of God's Word in the Scriptures. One of the most powerful is found in 2 Chronicles 34 and 35. This is an historical account of Josiah's reign in the Kingdom of Judah around 640 BC. He was only eight years old when he became king, and he was one of the few godly kings Judah had.

In the eighth year of his reign, Josiah began to **diligently seek the Lord** (see 2 Chronicles 34:3). He was only 16 years old at the time; but **the result of this young man's earnest seeking of God's face was great spiritual reform in his nation.**

Something profound happened during the reign of Josiah, changing the destiny of the nation of Judah.

While the temple that Solomon had built was under repair, Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law of the Lord (34:14). When the Scriptures were read to King Josiah, he tore his clothes (a sign of repentance in Jewish culture).

Josiah then inquired of the Lord, gathered all of the elders of Judah and **read all the Scriptures** to them. *He* then led all the people, great and small, to the temple where they renewed their covenant with the God of their fathers.

Josiah, **so deeply convicted by God's Word**, cleansed the nation of Judah from every idol, high place, altar and form of worship other than the worship of the one true God (see 2 Kings 22-23). But Josiah did not just cleanse out the bad. He went the rest of the way and **replaced the bad with the good.**

These events brought a time of great restoration to Judah. 2 Chronicles 35:18 says that the celebration of the Passover was so great that *"there had been no Passover kept in Israel like that since the days of Samuel the prophet"* The Word of God is living and powerful! It is a consuming fire! When we allow the entrance of God's Word into a situation, or circumstance, or into our heart, great things begin to happen. We change; and because we change, everything we influence also begins to change.

Without God's Word, we are weakened and our convictions can be easily swayed. We can get caught between two "minds" or beliefs. We can begin to doubt God and the power of His promises.

But with the strengthening fire of God's Word and the grace of God, we can be mightily used of the Lord - even to the changing of a nation!

A LAMP AND LIGHT

Illumination

"*Thy word is a **lamp** to my feet and a light unto my path*" {Ps 119:105}.

This is such a familiar scripture to us as leaders that we might overlook the significance of God's Word as **light**. In Psalm 119:130 the writer declares, "*The entrance of Your words **gives light**; it gives understanding to the simple.*" In to our minds **darkened by sin**, and into situations we encounter in our dark and sin-filled world, the entrance of the Word of God brings light. The Word is a light that can **illuminate** any situation or person, no matter how bound by sin or broken by failure.

We can begin to see how the light of God's Word disperses and defeats darkness by looking at just one word of one verse in the Gospel of John. In John 1:5, the Holy Spirit reveals that "*the **light** shines in the darkness and the darkness did not **comprehend** it.*" That Light is Jesus He is the personification and exact representation of the Word of God; and, as the Word of God, He is the Giver of all the words of God.

The Greek word for "comprehend" is *katalambano*. This is a unique and special word in the Greek language in which the New Testament was written. In His wisdom, God chose this language because it is flexible, yet very accurate and precise in its linguistic characteristics. This word for "comprehend" in John 1:5 is a perfect example.

The Greek word *katalambano* (comprehend) can be interpreted three ways in this verse. All three interpretations are theologically and doctrinally correct and do not contradict each other. Rather, they complement each other in this particular verse. By using *katalambano* in this passage, the Holy Spirit gives us greater insight into scriptural truths. Let us briefly examine the three equally correct interpretations of this word.

The word *katalambano* (comprehend) can be interpreted as:

1. "To seize, lay hold of, overcome"

If we use this interpretation, John 1:5 reads, '*The darkness cannot **gain control** of it.*'

This means that hell, no matter how hard it tries, **cannot** control, stop, diminish, modify or turn God away from accomplishing His purposes. The

devil cannot interfere with or defile what God will do. This should prompt us to praise His holy Name out loud right now!

But we don't have to stop there. This same interpretation of *katalambano* also means that all the demons of hell cannot control, stop, diminish, turn away or interfere with any saint who is full of the Holy Spirit and God's Word and walking in obedience to the Lord's leading! HALLELUJAH!

"*Greater is He [Jesus] that is in me than he [the devil] that is in the world!*" If the Scriptures say it, you can believe it, and that settles it! Satan cannot defeat us! Satan can only harass, tempt, or try to intimidate the blood-washed, Word-filled, Spirit-anointed saint. We don't have to believe the devil's lies or let him have control of our lives, our families, our churches, our cities, or the nation we live in. He is a defeated foe whose head was crushed at Calvary! Let's not let him rob, kill, destroy or darken people's hearts anymore!

2. "To perceive, attain, lay hold of with the mind; to apprehend with mental or moral effort."

This interpretation would make the verse read: "*The darkness is unreceptive and **does not understand it.***"

If the devil had known what God would accomplish at the cross- Satan's absolute defeat (Col. 2:15) and our total freedom from sin (Gal 6:14) -he would have tried to keep Christ from dying there for us! Of course the devil wouldn't have been able to stop what God had planned (Acts 2:23) even if he tried!

Some have suggested that the devil and his minions howled with glee as Christ was on His way to Golgotha where He was crucified. They were not able to understand that the perfect plan of God was actually being fulfilled. Their joy was turned to weeping and gnashing of teeth as they discovered that the cross was our victory, loosing us from the bondage of sin (Rom 6:16) and from the power of death (Heb 2:14).

Imagine their dismay when three days later the dead body of Christ was raised to full immortal, eternal life -sealing forever our salvation in Him (Rom 6:5, 7-11)!

Our adversary knows his days are numbered and he is a defeated foe! **Satan knows that he has no real power. He must, therefore, resort to trickery and cunning deceit** operating through the spirit of this present world system. The devil is not only ignorant of God's ways; he wants us, believers and non-believers alike, to be ignorant and blind to God's ways as well.

Paul exhorts the Ephesian Christians in Ephesians 4:17-24 to no longer walk in the futility of a "**darkened understanding** (vs. 18), but to "*put off the old man*" {our sin nature, corrupt and bound in spiritual darkness - vs. 22), and

"*be renewed in tire spirit of your mind*" (vs. 23). In Paul's letter to the Romans, the Holy Spirit uses the same idea and makes it a command: "*And do not be conformed [fashioned, modeled, patterned] to this world , but be transformed by the renewing of your mind "* (Rom 12:2).

How can we have our minds "renewed"?

It cannot be done through any self -effort of our own. But if the Word of God is truly "*a **lamp** to our feet and a **light** to our path,*" then surely a daily, deep feasting and soaking in the Word of God can radically change us! It can illuminate our understanding and restore our mind.

I personally know a young man who was addicted to drugs. He had so destroyed his mind with these substances that he would hallucinate even when he wasn't taking drugs! His memory was ruined and it was killing him. But God saved him, and the Holy Spirit led him to start reading the Bible every day - sometimes all day long!

Many years have passed, and now this man has graduated from college *and* seminary -and serves God full-time as a Christian leader! His mind was **restored** and his understanding **illuminated** by the Living and powerful Word of God! (Heb 4:12).

God's Word has power - power to heal, power to restore, power over darkness!

3."To quench, extinguish, snuff out the light by smothering it"

With this interpretation, John 1:5 reads, "*The darkness will never be able to eliminate it.*" Physicists tell us that the fastest thing in the universe is the speed of light. But actually there is one thing faster: the speed of darkness! Wherever light comes in. the darkness goes out - fast! Wherever and whenever the light of God's Spirit and His Word are given entrance, hell can't and won't stay around.

There was a witch doctor who was deeply involved in the spiritual realm of the demonic. He used demon powers to see into the spirit world, and he could actually spot Christians coming as they passed by on the street. This man could tell who the Christians were by the **glow of light** he could see on the chests of believers. He could tell the strong believers from the weak ones by the size and **brightness** of this glow.

Some believers were just smoldering, puttering, barely alive spiritually; others wen so bright he could not look at them.

The Christians who were filled with light he would avoid at all costs. The demons inside him would shudder in fear and make him cross the street to walk on the other side just so he would not go near them.

Eventually, Christ caught this man in his arms of love and salvation. When he shared his testimony about coming out of witchcraft and demon-worship, he explained why certain Christians were glowing brightly with light and others

were barely glowing at all. He testified that the light-filled believers were those filled with God's Word! The dim ones were Christians who had only a little bit of God's Word in their heart or life.

James 2:19 tells us that "*even the demons believe- and tremble!*" It is time for God's people to more fully believe and be transformed by the light of God's Word. Darkness cannot smother the light when it is bright, fully lit and being fed by the holy Scriptures.

Light and darkness, the Kingdom of God and Satan's chaotic realm, are totally antagonistic to each other. They are in total conflict with each other -and hell knows it has already lost the war! The darkness will ever be able to eliminate the light!

As ambassadors of Christ and His Kingdom, let us be filled with the light (If His Word - and with Jesus Christ, the Word incarnate, the Light of the world.

HAMMER To Break - And *Build*

"Is not My word . . . like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces ?" (Jer. 23:29).

There is tremendous power in the Word of God. This power is not in cleverly devised words (2 Pet 2:16; 1 Thess. 1:5; 1 Cor. 1:17-25). "*For the kingdom of God is not in word [the words of men) but in power "* (1 Cor. 4:20). The power of the Word is the power of the One Who spoke it, and Who backs up every "*jot and tittle*" of it with His authority.

God describes His own word as a hammer. A hammer is used for two basic purposes: to break and to build. Let's look at these two functions of the hammer of God's Word.

To Shatter The Strongholds

God's heart toward all mankind is always to save, to heal, to reconcile us to Himself. He draws us to Himself with "cords of love".

But sometimes more harsh measures are called for when His reasonable and righteous commands are ignored or rejected. His written Word, just like the incarnate Word Jesus Christ, aggressively pursues, overcomes and conquers demonic strongholds. God sent His Son and His Word to destroy the works of darkness (1 John 3:8) - to *shatter* the strongholds!

Like a hammer the Word breaks through the...

HARDNESS Of Human Hearts

Many indeed have made their hearts a stronghold of the enemy. They harden their resistance to God's Word of grace ...and of warning.

King Manasseh hardened his heart - and became one of the most evil rulers of Judah. 2 Chronicles 33: 1-16 and 2 Kings 21 tell us he built temples to heathen idols, worshipped the stars of heaven and practiced witchcraft. Not only did he do this himself, but he "*seduced Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel*" (2 Chron. 33:9).

The Lord warned Manasseh and the people about this behavior, but they would not listen (33:10). God sent His Word through His prophets, but they ignored the Word He sent. Therefore, God stirred up the Assyrian army to visit judgment upon Manasseh and Judah. The Assyrians conquered the land and put hooks in Manasseh's nose, bound him with chains, and took him captive to Babylon.

God tried to deal with Manasseh through His Word, but Manasseh hardened his heart against God's warnings. God then sent a stronger, more irresistible "word" in the form of Judgment carried out by a foreign invader. This was effective in getting Manasseh's attention, for we read that Manasseh genuinely repented, and God received him back (2 Chron. 33:12-13).

Manasseh further showed that his repentance was genuine by the action he took - he cleansed the land of idols and foreign gods.

Proverbs 21:1 says "*the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; like rivers of water He turns it wherever He wishes*. God does not want to deal harshly with us. He wants us to choose to do what is right in His sight.

Yet for our own good and the good of others, He will deal with us in whatever way necessary to bring us to righteousness. It is always best to keep our hearts yielded and soft - willing to respond to His almighty Hand.

The Word breaks the power of the...

CURSE Of Hell

Satan, who hardened his heart before the world was made, hurls curses at humanity - especially God's people. Proverbs 26:2 tells us "*a curse without cause shall not alight ...* In other words, God will not allow a curse to attach itself to us, unless we have opened a door through sinful behavior or received a curse by believing lies.

This principle is illustrated in Numbers 22-25. The prophet Balaam is employed by a Moabite king to curse Israel, so that the Moabites could defeat Israel in battle

But try as he might, Balaam could not work his way past the Word of the Lord to him that he was NOT to curse Israel. Eventually, God sent an angel to intercept Balaam. As a prophet, Balaam should have seen the angel, but was

blinded by his own greed. The Lord went so far as to speak to Balaam through his donkey (22:28); and Balaam finally repented.

God then used Balaam to bring blessing on the children of Israel! A plan for cursing a nation was turned to blessing by the power of the Word of the Lord (see Deuteronomy 23:5).

Christians need not fear those who would try and use demonic power to curse them. For "*greater is He that is within you, than he (Satan) that is in the world*" (1 John 4:4). Christ actually stripped away all of hell's power and authority at the cross (see Colossians 2:15).

The Word also assures us that there is no name more powerful than the Name of Jesus. For God has "*given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those on heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of the Father*" (Phil 2:9,10}.

There is no curse or demon power that can stand against the power of the Word of God and the Name of Jesus!

No power can stand, not even the...

LIES Of False Doctrines

"*The Spirit [of God] expressly says,*" Paul warned his young disciple Timothy, "*that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons*" (1 Tim 4:1). A quick survey of the seven churches mentioned in the Book of Revelation shows how three of *them* were destructively influenced by false doctrines.

These unbiblical doctrines were destroying the churches. Christ's word to them was "*Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth*" (Rev 2:16). This "*sword*" is none other than the Word of God (Heb 4:12; Eph 6:17). The only thing that can expose and destroy deception and lies is the truth. And the only place to find THE truth is in God's Word.

Jesus also tells us that "*you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free*" (John 8:32); and "*I [Jesus] am the way the truth and the life...*" (John 14:6). The Truth is Jesus Christ Himself, and what He has done and is doing for us **as revealed in the Word of God!** The better we know Jesus and His Word, the less likely we are to be deceived by lies.

Satan is the father lies (John 8:44) and never tells us the truth. He seeks constantly to ensnare people, even leaders, in his lies. But how can we easily know the difference between the truth and demonic deception?

In many countries, bank clerks are taught to identify counterfeit money by spending hours and hours handling real money. They count and touch

genuine bills over and over again. In time, they become so familiar with the characteristics and feel of real money that they can easily detect counterfeit bills by just a quick look or touch.

This same principle works for the Christian. If one regularly and consistently "handles the truth" of the Word of God, it becomes easier and easier to identify the Lies of Satan and doctrines of demons. The more familiar we become with the truth of the Bible, the less likely we are to be deceived!

We must know the Scriptures! The Word of God is a hammer, a weapon given to us by the Lord **to break the power of deception!** Thank the Lord for His Truth! *"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapon of our warfare are not of the flesh, but **mighty in God for pulling down strongholds**, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God" (2 Cor 10:3-5a).*

How easily the Word of God, full of His immeasurable wisdom, shatters the...

ARROGANCE Of Human Reason

Man's mind builds up lofty intellectual arguments against the truth of the Gospel. The people of the Corinthian church were all too familiar with endless philosophical debates. Such discussions were common among the Greeks. Paul addresses this when he writes, *"Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? **Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?**" (1 Cor 1:20).*

Paul, one of the great thinkers of his time, declares with all his heart, *"I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified"* (1 Cor 2:2). This means that if any doctrine or argument is not firmly rooted and established in the Cross of Christ, it will lead one astray, and is not worth wasting time on.

The call of the New Testament worker is to uncover sin and **to reveal Jesus Christ as Savior**. Thus, we must always lift up Christ and Him crucified in our preaching and teaching. We should avoid the clever arguments of men, or useless, flowery words.

We should follow Jesus' example in our teaching, speaking and counseling. He consistently answered the questions, arguments and verbal traps of the Pharisees and others with the **Word of God**. His answers were simple and direct - and contained nothing but the truth! It is *the Truth* that sets people free from intellectual and spiritual bondage.
And nothing but that truth can smash the...

POWER Of The World System

The New Testament uses several Greek words for "world." The most significant is the Greek word *kosmos*. Its original and most basic meaning is "order" or "arrangement".

When used in the New Testament, *kosmos* represents our human society **as a system that is distorted by sin and subject to uncontrolled desires and passions**. This "world system" is influenced greatly by the demonic (Eph 6:12) and is controlled by Satan (1 John 5:19). This warped system operates on basic principles that are not from God (Col 2:20; 1John 2:15-17).

This world system can appear cultured, wise, powerful, even outwardly moral at times. Yet all the unsaved who live in it are thoroughly evil and separated from God. The world system is hostile both to God and to those who have aligned themselves with Him (John 17:14; 1 Cor 2:12). This present *kosmos* is going to be done away with and is even now disintegrating (1 John 2:17; 1Cor 7:31}.

In contrast, Jesus says "*My kingdom is NOT of this world*" (John 18:36). The world system constitutes a dark kingdom; but believers in Jesus Christ - "*the true Light*" (John 1:9) -have been delivered from this dark kingdom (Col 1:13,14). However, Christians must still live their earthly lives on this planet.

This presents Christians with a dilemma: How do we live in this world system, yet not be of this world system?

This *is* a big question, and the complete answer could fill volume of books. But to put it simply: *the "hammer" of the Word of God is our best protection against the influence of the world system*. The truth and promises contained in the Bible are a protection to us; they help us to know how to live **according to God's order and not the world's**.

God's Word tells us that a committed disciple is to "*no longer live the rest of his time for the lusts of men [evil human desires], but rather for the will of God*" (1 Pet 4:2).

Though we must live on this sin warped planet in the society of mankind, we are to do so in a special way. We are to have values, marriages, relationships, business practices, and lifestyles that are distinctly Christian. We must be constantly on *our* guard to not unthinkingly adopt the attitudes, values and practices of the culture we live in.

This can be done by applying the hammer of the Word of God to our thoughts, "*bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ*" (2 Cor 10:5). We need to present ourselves daily to God, and be renewed and transformed in our whole being (Rom 12:1-2). We must subject every thought, desire and attitude to the scrutiny and washing of God's Word on a regular basis.

His Word is able to break through the lies and mind-numbing deceptions of this world. The Bible enables us to keep our hearts and minds pure and undefiled, keeping ourselves "*unspotted from the world*" (Jas 1:27).

The Word of Cod keeps us spiritually healthy. And it can even break tire chains of ...

SICKNESS Forged By Sin And Satan

The Word of God is powerful! The Scriptures have strength and restoring power found in no other writings. However, they *are not "magical"*. Believers in Jesus should not use the Word of God for mystical chants, as some religions do with their sayings.

But when we confess and declare the truth of God's Word with faith, God's power is loosed in our lives and into the lives of others. There was a young man who was in a coma after a serious car accident. The doctors gave him no hope of recovery, and could find no brain activity with their instruments.

But his mother was a godly woman; she believed in the living power of God's Word. She would go daily to her unsaved son's bed side and read out loud from the Bible and pray over her son.

One day, after many months, her son suddenly awoke from his coma. She could hear him speaking, at first weakly, then stronger and stronger. To her amazement, he was quoting the Scriptures!

He told her later that all he could remember were words from the Bible going round and round in his mind, calling to him, drawing him back to reality.

This godly woman's son is now recovered and serving the Lord!

Psalms 107:20 declares: "*He [the Lord] sent His Word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.*" Our adversary, the devil, who "*walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour,*" seeks to put sickness, disease and calamity upon people.

But God's Word and will are greater than Satan's strategies! God's Word assures us that it is the Lord's desire for us to be healed. He reveals His nature to us by His very name Jehovah-Rapha, "*the Lord our Healer*" (Exo 15:26). He prophesied that we would have healing provided for us by what Jesus did on the Cross (Isa 53:4-5). And the Holy Spirit reaffirms to us that healing was released in Christ's atonement (1 Pet 2:24).

Thank God that He "*sends His Word to heal us,*" and that **He has sent the "Word made flesh", Jesus Christ, to be our Healer!**

TO BUILD

Jesus said that **upon the bedrock** of Peter's confession (that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Messiah) He would BUILD His Church (Matt 16:18).

Paul declared that he laid a foundation in the Corinthian church, and "*no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ*" (1 Cor 3:10-11). Paul goes on to say (vs. 10, 12) that **we will all build on that one foundation** with a variety of materials. Some will build with cheap, substandard material. Others will build with durable, high-quality material. What is the difference between the two?

We need to know that **how well we build** and **what we build with** will be judged by fire (1Cor 3:13). It will be judged by the Word of God and the incarnate Word of God, Christ Himself.

The appeal of its appearance, the cleverness of how it is put together, and the wisdom of men will not be the standard of judgment. Our works and lives will be judged with a righteous judgment based upon God's standard, not mankind's.

The Holy Spirit affirms that, with Christ as the Church's chief cornerstone, the Church is built upon the "**foundation of the apostles and prophets**", and "*the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit*" (Eph 2:20-22). The New Testament church understood this: "*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine [teaching] and fellowship, the breaking of bread and in prayers*" (Acts 2:42).

Certainly, the "foundation" in Ephesians 2:20 could not mean the apostles or prophets themselves; even though they were great saints, they were still men with finite lives. Nor could it mean the ministry of those apostles, for their ministries ended with the ending of their lives. The only reasonable interpretation, in light of Acts 2:42, is that the **foundation was the teaching and doctrines given by the Holy Spirit** through them.

These teachings are preserved for us today in the New Testament, the Word of God.

Peter affirms that the apostles' doctrines and prophetic utterances did not belong to them, but were given by God: "*knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but Italy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*" (2 Pet 1:20, 21).

Paul, too, affirms this when by the Holy Spirit he states, "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work*" (2 Tim 3:16-17).

It becomes very dear, then, that regardless of our gifts, or calling, or ministry expression, **we can build Christ's Church with one thing only: God's**

holy Word as found in the Scriptures. And this we must do under the anointing power of the Holy Spirit in obedience to the Lordship of Christ. Scripture, and Scripture alone, is our only totally reliable guide to doctrine, practice and lifestyle.

Built In Us

The Lord also uses His Word to build us up in a very personal way. Eliakim, a high priest in Israel, was said to be "*like a peg driven in a secure place*" (Isa 22:23). Eliakim was a foreshadowing of Christ. This passage reveals a foreshadowing of the role that Christ fulfilled, in Whom the hopes of mankind for salvation and a restored relationship with the Creator would be realized.

As we walk in this intimate relationship with God, He works in us to restore us to the image of Christ, Whose image we were originally created in (Gen 1:26). To do this God uses the Scriptures, quickened and ignited by the Holy Spirit, to shape our hearts and lives.

We humans have such difficulty retaining the "shape" we were designed for. This is where we need the "hammer" of God's Word to drive the peg of His Word deeply into a secure place in our hearts and lives. Jesus desires to fasten His Word permanently into our hearts. He helps give us strong convictions through His Word, so that whatever happens we can be secured and established by His Word.

But a house is not built with one "nail"; and so we must constantly study, meditate on and memorize the Word of God. With daily exposure and application of Scripture "*Line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, there a little*" (Isa 28:10) we are built up in Christ.

FOOD Nourishing The Spirit

I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12).

"Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart"(Jer 15:16).

Scripture is full of a variety of foods that are symbols for the Word of God. Food makes an excellent allegory - not only for the Scriptures themselves, but also for what God's Word does in us and for us. As food is to the body, so Scripture is to the spirit of man.

A balanced, nutritious, daily intake of food helps us grow in healthy ways. It also fortifies the body against sickness, disease and weakness. Food aids in the proper development of tissues and organs - such as our eyes, so we can have good vision. Balanced nutrition promotes the growth and proper function of each part of the body.

A lack of proper foods, on the other hand, can have long-term effects on us besides just hunger.

There are many places in our world today where healthy food in plentiful quantities is not available. And even in *some* countries where there is enough food, people may refuse to eat the foods that would be best for them. Instead, they substitute poor-quality food that can have a negative effect on their health and well-being.

Can you see the parallels between food and the Scripture? It is no mistake or coincidence that the Holy Spirit chose certain types of food and drink to illustrate practical principles of applying the Scripture in daily life. As food nourishes the body, so the Word of God nourishes the spirit... Let's look at four of these as outlined in the Scripture:

MILK Pure And Unadulterated

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

The Holy Spirit is showing us some precious truths in this verse. To see this verse more clearly, we must first look at its setting in the surrounding verses.

The Holy Spirit, through Peter, *is* reminding the new believers that they have been purchased with the priceless blood of Christ, and therefore should live a holy lifestyle (1:13-21). Then Peter rejoices with them over the fact that they have been living such a lifestyle -purifying themselves since the "seed" of God's Word, activated by the Holy Spirit, has birthed them into the kingdom of God (1:22-23). He goes on to remind them that God's Word is eternal, unlike human flesh that is so temporary. And this eternal Word is the word they have received (1:24-25).

Then the Holy Spirit starts the next chapter with an important word, "*Therefore*". Whenever you see that word in the Bible, pay close attention because the Holy Spirit is linking together some important truths. In this passage (1 Peter 2:1) it means: "*Therefore* [since all that was in the previous verses - that we have received new life - is true] *now lay aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and all evil speaking . . .*" This verse commands us to strip off all the old way of life. This is not an option, but rather a divine expectation upon us. Thank God He gives us His Word and His Spirit to help us!

In the middle of this exhortation we are told to desire the pure milk of the Word as newborn babes. What is the Holy Spirit trying to help us understand here? Simply this: that there are two kinds of "milk" with which we can be fed, and they come from two radically different sources: the world and the Word. The world's "milk" is characterized in 2:1 as "*malicious, deceitful, hypocritical, filled with envy and evil speech.*" The milk of God's Word is "pure". The Greek word used for "pure" means "unadulterated." This tells us

that God's Word is guileless, it has no hidden motives or false promises, like so many human teachings or ideas. Its only purpose is nourishing the soul

Appetite For The Word

Two very important principles emerge from a careful study of 1Peter 2:2.

First, we are exhorted **to earnestly long for God's Word.**

In the physical realm, if we are hungry we can eat food that is good for us or food that is bad for us. If we eat good food we are nourished and strengthened. If we eat bad food with no nutritional value, not only do we not receive health from it, but we also lose our desire for good food because we are feeling full.

In the spiritual realm, it is also true that **sin in the life destroys the appetite for the Word of God.** If we are full of the **world's** "milk", it will severely reduce our desire for the "pure milk" of the Word. The Christian who tries to find satisfaction in the "husks" of the world has no appetite left for the things of God. **A spiritually healthy Christian is a spiritually hungry Christian.** God will always respond to spiritual hunger in the human heart (Matt 5:6). And He wants us to be filled and have a healthy hunger for only His Word. This is true whether you are a "newborn babe" in Christ or you are a "grandfather" in the things of God! Second, a *daily feasting* in the Word of God is an absolutely essential part of growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. The final phrase of 2:2 is "*that you may grow thereby.*" The Greek words used in this phrase are very expressive and actually say, "resulting in your making progress in your salvation". Peter is addressing those who are new Christians, and helping them understand that the Word of God is spiritual food. He is also showing us that grow this an expected and desirable part of normal Christian experience.

Our physical bodies do quit growing at a certain point. However, our spiritual growth should continue throughout our stay on earth. In fact, other scriptures seem to indicate that we will continue to grow even in eternity! It would be safe to say that we are not human beings having a temporary spiritual experience, but we are spiritual beings going through a temporary human experience!

MEAT Growing Spiritual Teeth

"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid meat. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid meat belongs to those who are of full age, that is, they have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:12-14).

As we take a closer look at this passage, several principles of growth begin to emerge.

A. Growth

These verses clearly demonstrate the possibility and necessity of personal spiritual growth. God does not want us to remain mere "babes" in our walk with Him, but to be **maturing, growing, learning sons and daughters of the King**. In verse 13 we are told that *"everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe*. This refers to those whose diet is only milk. Adults do drink milk, but it *is* not their exclusive diet.

What this means is that a maturing Christian will always have and appreciate the basic foundational truths -the milk -of his faith (for instance, *"We are saved by grace through faith"*). But a maturing Christian will grow **spiritual "teeth" (understanding)** in order to absorb and use stronger teaching - the meat of his faith. (For further study look up 1 Corinthians 14:20, Ephesians 4:14-15, Philippians 3:12-15, Colossians 2:6-7, 2 Peter 1:2-11.)

Nothing in life ever remains the same -it is either growing, or it is going backwards, breaking down. This is also true of our spiritual lives: **we are growing or we are going backwards - regressing** instead of **progressing**. The people to whom the epistles were written had stopped growing.

The writer of Hebrews rebukes them, telling them they had become *"dull of hearing"* (vs. 11) and needed to be taught the simplest, most basic things all over again (vs. 12).

Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthian church, makes a similar point *"And I brethren could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you milk and not with solid food; for until now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?"* (1 Cor. 3:1-3). Here we see that the sin of disunity, caused by attitudes of envy, competition and fleshly pride, was inhibiting proper growth.

B. Hearing

The word **"babe"** in both the Hebrews and Corinthian passages is not the Greek word for either "child" or "new convert", but rather means "immature".

You can be 40 years old in the faith, yet still be immature - a "babe" in Christ.

But if God wants us to grow spiritually, why are so many people immature in their spiritual life?

The Greek used in Hebrews 5:12-14 indicates that the Christian this letter was written to had been at one time maturing believers; but now they were in a **settled state of spiritual sluggishness**.

In verse 11 the writer tells them they are "*dull of hearing*". The word for "dull" in Greek means *slow* or *sluggish*. The same word was used to describe the numb limbs of a sick animal. The Holy Spirit is telling us that **spiritual sloth** (or laziness) **in HEARING results in a lack of spiritual GROWTH**. It is important to know, however, that this "dullness" in hearing has nothing to do with how intelligent we are or how educated we are. It **does** have to do with how **yielded** we are to the Holy Spirit and how **willing** we are to **pursue personal spiritual growth** with all of our hearts.

In speaking of how we hear the Word of God, Jesus warns us to "*Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. For to him who has, more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him*" (Mark 4:24-25).

Jesus is pointing out the importance of **spiritual perception**. Those who receive and apply the truth will have their capacity for understanding increased and their knowledge expanded. **Those who disbelieve, or who are indifferent or careless with the truth, will lose whatever ability for understanding they had**. Therefore they will not only continue to be ignorant -they will get worse.

This illustrates what was happening to the recipient.... of the letter to the Hebrews. These Christians were willfully refusing to grow. Their "dullness" was a result of gradual and willful neglect of their walk with God -especially **spending time in God's Word regularly** and daily prayer. But there is another principle of growth in this passage.

C. Application

In Hebrews 5:1-1 we are shown that "*strong meat*" (i.e. solid food} is for those who are truly maturing ("*of full age*")

How have they reached maturity?

There are several factors, but a very important one is given in the same verse. It refers to "*those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil,*

Physical exercise is a necessary part of being healthy in our bodies. This is also an allegory (picture or type) of spiritual principle. As Paul tells Timothy, his young disciple, '*For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and the one to come*' (1 Tim 4:8). This "godliness" Paul speaks of is what the writer of Hebrews refers to when he uses the phrase "*by reason of use*". **It means that our spiritual senses can be trained** ("exercised") by practiced habit

of constant usage, so that they are strong and sharp. The Greek word for "exercise" is the word for "gymnastics," and point to a condition produced by consistent training. The same word is also used for practicing an art or profession.

Let me illustrate this point.

Let's pretend I was a trained engineer who understood all about the physics, geometry and engineering needed to build things. Suppose you came to me and asked me to build a bridge for you, so that your town would prosper and grow. If I did not know how to practically apply my education, what good would my knowledge be?! You, along with your whole town, would be very disappointed.

The same is true in a spiritual dimension.

We must have our "senses" (faculties of perception) sharpened so that we can distinguish between right and wrong doctrine and holy or unholy conduct. The first place we can and should make practical application of the Word of God is to ourselves. It is a sad truth that as leaders we are very perceptive and discerning about others, but are blind to our own shortcomings. Of ten we excuse, justify and rationalize behavior and attitudes in ourselves that we would not tolerate in the people we are shepherding. This kind of behavior leads to the "dullness of hearing" mentioned earlier. When we are quick to apply the Word to *our* own lives and live accordingly, there will be a corresponding release of a greater anointing to minister to others.

BREAD **The Word That Feeds Us**

"...Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." (Matt 4:4).

Jesus is quoting a statement declared by God through Moses in Deuteronomy 8:3. Bread had a central place in the Hebrew culture and the Old Testament. A thorough study of this is beyond the scope of this article. However, one important **image** or **type** as illustrated in the *Old Testament would be* interesting to note.

The stories, events and prophecies of the Old Testament were written as **examples** and a source of **illumination** for us concerning spiritual principles for powerful and practical holy living. We discussed this earlier in this article - see 1 Corinthians 10:1-11. The Old Testament gives us many "foretypes" or symbols of New Testament realities.

In Exodus 25:23-30, God is instructing Moses on the building of furnishings for the tabernacle, specifically the **table of showbread**. This bread, baked fresh every week, was to be placed before the Lord every Sabbath. There were **twelve loaves** representing the **twelve tribes** of Israel.

This showbread is also a **foretype** of Christ Himself as the **Bread of Life** (John 6:48).

It is also a symbol for the **Word of God** that **feeds us** and gives us **nourishment** and **strength**.

This bread was unleavened, and as Leviticus 24:5-9 tells us, it was made of fine (or pure) flour. The bread was **unmixed with anything else**, and was considered "*most holy*" (vs. 9). Pure frankincense was put on this bread, which was to be eaten only by Aaron the High Priest and his sons. The showbread was to be placed every Sabbath "**on the table before Me always**" (Exo 25:30).

Fine, Pure Flour

Here we see a rich symbolism that teaches and instructs us about the place and priority the Word of God should occupy in our lives. The following is just a brief overview of some important lessons we can learn from the showbread.

First, the showbread, as mentioned above, is a type or symbol representing the Word of God. It was made of fine, pure flour, showing us that **the Scriptures are pure and undefiled**: They are **not mixed with the opinions of men**, but are God's holy and righteous words. When we teach or preach from God's holy words - the Bible - we must make sure we are not mixing with them our own opinions and ideas.

We must be certain that we are following the scriptural admonition, "*rightly dividing the word of truth*" (2 Tim 2:15). We must be accurate and clear when we teach God's Word, making it easy for others to understand the truth. "Dividing" the word of truth does not mean separating the Scriptures into parts; but it means rightly discerning its truth and communicating both the actual Word and the spirit of the Word. Let us make sure to study intensely enough to thoroughly understand and then communicate only what God would give to the flock.

Second, mixed with the show bread was a generous portion of pure frankincense. In both the Old Testament and New Testament, incense was a symbol of prayer and worship sacrificially given to God. We should add a generous" portion of conversation with God (prayer) and humble adoration (worship) as we partake of the bread of His Word.

A Life-Changing Experience

We should study God's Word because it does so much for us; but, more importantly, His Word reveals the character and nature of Jesus to our hearts. Those moments when the Holy Spirit reveals something of the nature, life or heart of Christ to us are life-changing moments.

In Luke 24:35, the two disciples who had unknowingly walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus had a life-changing experience. As they reported to the

other disciples, *"He was made known to them in the breaking of the bread"*! Their hearts were changed from discouragement, fear and hopelessness to joy and great hope.

As we "break the bread" of God's Word by reacting and meditating upon it, we must receive it into our spirit, not just our mind. This can happen when we pray and ask the Spirit of God to breathe life in and through the printed word on the pages of our Bibles.

God wants our minds filled with His Word; but He also wants His Word to penetrate the deepest part of our beings. This will lead to us *"being transformed into the same image from glory to glory just as by the Spirit of the Lord."* (2 Cor 3:18).

Sabbath Rest

Third, as Christian we have entered the '*Sabbath rest*' (Hebrews 4) of daily intimate relationship with God through what the Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus Christ, has done for us on the cross.

This salvation is by grace through faith, not by works (Eph 2:8-9). Therefore we need not come to God only once per week through ritual and ceremony. Instead, we can daily approach the Lord, the Bread of Life (John 6:48), by coming simply and humbly to Him through His Word.

To read and meditate on His great promises when we are troubled in our soul, to be assured of His faithfulness by His Word when it seems that our whole life is crumbling -this is what His Word, and only His Word, can supply. The Bible is there to guide us into His Sabbath rest of salvation and freedom from bondage.

A Most Holy Place

Fourth, Aaron and his sons in Leviticus 24 are instructed to eat the showbread "in a holy place :for it is most holy to him from the offerings of the Lord made by fire " (vs. 9).

This means we are to approach our daily times in the Scriptures with deep respect and a true reverence for the Lord and His Word. We are not permitted to add or subtract from His Word, nor to twist it and use it for our selfish purposes (Rev 22:18-19).

But then is another lesson here.

God commands Aaron and his sons in Leviticus 24:9 to "eat it [the showbread] in a most holy place ."

Keeping Nourished

We as leaders can easily become too busy, or so "burned out" and tired that we can forget some simple basics of keeping ourselves fed spiritually.

Although we can read the Word and have fellowship with God anytime or anywhere, a scattered and unplanned kind of "quiet time" with God doesn't usually work for most of us.

May I make some suggestions?

First, find one place you can go most of the time to be alone with God and His Word. Second, go at a time when you are alert, awake and at your mental best. Third, do not let work or the demands of people interfere with your "holy time" with God. There will always be exceptions, times when you cannot have this daily communion; but if they become too frequent, something is

wrong. Either the devil is interfering to keep you from God and His Word, or you are not enforcing proper priorities in your life. Do not miss a single opportunity for being with God in His Word and prayer - for that is usually the time we need it the most.

HONEY

Sweet Message ...

"How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"
(Ps 119:103).

There are several places in Scripture where the Word of God is described as honey. In Ezekiel 3:1-3, the prophet is commanded to eat a scroll. On this scroll is the word of the Lord to the nation of Israel. Before the prophet can deliver the Lord's message, he must first take it into his own heart and fully "digest" it.

This should also be our practice as preachers and teachers of God's Word. His Word must be put into our minds, hearts and lifestyle before God can fully bless and anoint the Word we deliver to others. God's Word was sweet to Ezekiel's taste because he received the Word completely.

We see a similar symbolic action and description of God's Word in Revelation 10:9-10. In this verse John also is commanded to eat the "little book" containing God's Word. Again, the Word is sweet as honey as the message saturates the personality of the proclaimer. But this time there is a difference: the sweet message of God's grace, love and mercy turns bitter in John's stomach (vs. JO). This bitterness is symbolic: though the revelation of God's divine love is sweet, if it is rejected it brings inevitable judgment. John is experiencing the "bitterness" of the divine judgment about to come on the people who have rejected God's offer of salvation through Jesus Christ. But the Word of God is sweet sweeter than anything or any experience we can have.

Honey was a rare and valuable substance in Bible days. It was acceptable as a gift to royalty, and as a tithe or first-fruit offering to God. It was also the sweetest known substance to the Hebrews, sweeter than any fruit. Yet the writer of Psalms declares God's Word to be sweeter still!

...Sweeter Than Honey

So much more could be said, and has been said, regarding the Word of God. The symbols of Scripture used by the Holy Spirit to describe the Bible help us to understand its awesome power, its matchless beauty and its incredible worth.

But one of the best things that can be said about it comes from the holy Scriptures themselves:

"The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and tile honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward."Psalm 19:7-11

Preparing Sermons That Put Principles Into Practice

by Frank R. Parrish and Keith G. Balsler

Sleeping Faces

There are many books on the many ways of preparing sermons, and section D-13 of The Shepherd's Staff gives a complete and detailed study of sermon preparation.

Let me simply show you the **lessons** I have learned, not from books or Bible School, but from twenty years of preparing and preaching sermons. I have watched the faces (sometimes sleeping faces!) of the people I preached to and listened to their comments and complaints about my sermons.

I learned that they did not want long, complicated and often confusing sermons. But they did want **clear** and **easy-to-understand** sermons that answered **their** questions, met **their** spiritual needs, and applied to **their** daily lives.

Preacher = Student

We cannot communicate to others what we ourselves do not understand; we cannot clearly **teach** what we have not thoroughly **studied**.

Therefore, Scripture exhorts us to be master craftsmen as **students** of the Word in order to be master craftsman as **preachers** of the Word (2 Tim 2:15).

The best example we can find of such a master craftsman is the Master Himself -the Lord Jesus.

Here then are **practiced principles** we can learn by studying just some of **what** Jesus said and **how** He said it.

1. Jesus spoke only what God gave Him to speak.

*"For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave me a command ... what I should speak ...therefore whatever I speak, **just as the Father has told me, so I speak**" (John 2:-19-50; see also John 7:17-18;8:26, 28, 38; 17:10;14:10; 17:8).*

Our sermons should say **what God wants us to say to His people**. God knows better than we do what is in each of our listeners' hearts. He knows exactly what will minister to, admonish, correct, encourage and bless those we serve.

God **does** have a word for His people; so before you stand before them to preach, kneel humbly before Him to receive that word.

Spend much of your preparation time in prayer. Ask God to illuminate the Scriptures to you by the power of His Spirit. Ask Him which Bible passages apply to the people you will speak to.

Ask God to place within your heart the desires of His heart for the people. All that God does is because of His great heart of love for mankind.

2. Jesus confronted pain and sin in people's lives with grace, love and acceptance-without compromising the truth.

In the story of the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-12), Jesus reveals more of God's heart than the Law ever could by itself.

He did not condemn her, yet **he clearly told her** to "*go, and ...sin no more*" (v. 11). And while He rejected the sexual sin in **her** heart- He revealed the arrogance and self-righteous religious legalism in her **accusers'** hearts. He did all this in an **uncondemning** way, in words that were easily understood.

3. Jesus told stories (parables) to teach important truths about man, sin, salvation and God.

Our Lord used the simple parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 11:32) to reveal many important truths about repentance, forgiveness, and the deadly deception of self-righteousness.

He also revealed a vivid picture of the loving, longsuffering Father heart of God through the response of the young man's father.

This is an important lesson to us about teaching the truths of Scripture. Simple stories are often the most effective.

4. Jesus told stories people could relate to in their daily lives.

Jesus' listeners were housewives, farmers, merchants, fishermen and shepherds. So He taught them deep truths about the Kingdom of God by telling simple stories about people who did those very same things. (See Matthew 1:3 and Luke 15:4-7.)

5. Jesus' preaching supplied spiritual tools that work.

A tool is meant to be used. But if it is so complicated that no one knows **how to use it**, or **what it is meant to be used for** -it will not be properly used.

A biblical principle in **a spiritual tool** it too is meant to be **used- applied** - in real life. But if a sermon is so complicated that no one knows **how to apply the truth to their life**, it will **not** be used. It will **not** be applied. It will **not** be put into practice.

Jesus, the Master Craftsman, knew that spiritual truths must work. His sermons are easily understood "instruction manuals" that show us how to use the truths in daily life.

6. Jesus kept His preaching simple.

Jesus did **not** use complicated theological terms when He preached. He used simple, everyday words that **all could understand**.

This made the **principles** Jesus taught easy to understand and therefore easy to **remember**.

Biblical truths that are easy to **understand** and **remember** are then easy to **apply** to daily life. They become like tools to repair the spiritual brokenness in people's lives, and to help them live as effective believers in Jesus Christ.

7. Jesus kept His preaching focused.

Each parable Jesus told is a **clear illustration** -a perfectly focused "photograph" -of **ONE spiritual principle**.

Each sermon **you** preach should keep ONE spiritual principle (such as "evangelism") in **clear focus**.

A good guideline for effective sermons is to teach those you serve:

a. **ONE FACT they should KNOW about the subject** (such as, "Jesus commands us to go and preach the gospel");

b. **ONE WAY** they should **FEEL** about the subject (such as, "broken-hearted compassion for those lost and unsaved"); and

c. **most importantly -ONE THING they can DO about the subject** (such as, "tell someone about Jesus Christ", or "help us in a city-wide outreach", etc.).

The goal of all sermons presented to those you serve should be to **instruct** their minds to know and understand God; **inspire** their hearts to live godly and effective lives for Christ's sake; and to **stir them up to be zealous for good works** - so that they will not be **hearers** of the Word only ...but **DOERS!**