

AN OVERVIEW OF THE BIBLE

JUNIOR 1 YEAR 3 BOOK 1

Teacher's Guide and Student Handouts

Introduction to the Bible

Passages: As listed in the lesson.

Memory Verse

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” (2 Timothy 3:16)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The Bible is the living word of God, inspired by Him.2. The Bible shows us the path to salvation; it is the ultimate guide to living a godly life.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God is truth.2. God is eternal.3. God is living.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The word of God teaches, rebukes, corrects, and trains us in righteousness.2. Cherish God’s word and apply it to our lives.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. The Bible Is the Truth
 1. The Language and the Printed Word
 2. How the Bible Maintained Its Accuracy
- B. The Bible Is the Path to Salvation
 1. The Bible Calls Mankind to Repentance
 2. The Bible Leads Us to True Righteousness
 3. The Bible Directs Us to the Path of Salvation
- C. The Bible Is Living and Powerful

Life Application

1. Hunger for God’s Word
2. Seek Time with God

Memory Verse

Conclusion: The Bible is living and powerful, and it teaches us the path to salvation. We need only open ourselves to its instruction.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

Introduction

Many believe the Bible is merely fiction or myth, or simply a collection of insights by a religious people for theological study. Others regard the Bible as a great piece of literature, a book of philosophy, or a historic account of the Israelites. But is the Bible merely a collection of man-made manuscripts? Let's examine the various purposes of the Bible, its development over history, and how God's hand has guided it into what it is today for us: our teacher, and our path to salvation.

A. The Bible Is the Truth

The truth of the Bible is always one of the first matters of debate when it comes to the Bible. We know it to be true because we understand that the authors were guided by God Himself, proven by nature of its very existence: no other book has spanned such a vast number of generations with no contradictions.

According to most scholars, the oldest book in the Bible is either Genesis or Job, both thought to have been completed around 1400 B.C., about 3,400 years ago. The Book of Revelation was written around A.D. 90, about 1,500 years later. Despite being written by about forty different authors over the course of more than 1,000 years, the Bible never contradicts itself, and none of its prophecies have been proven untrue.

Let's examine more closely how the Bible was put together over time.

1. The Language and Printed Word

The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew and Aramaic, and the New Testament in Greek. The Greek version of the Old Testament, called the *Septuagint*, was translated between 250 B.C. and 100 B.C. in Alexandria, Egypt. The Latin version, *Jerome's Vulgate*, was written around A.D. 400. It wasn't until much later, the 1300s, that the Bible began to be translated into the Latin languages, and in 1455, the Bible became the first book ever printed mechanically using Gutenberg's new invention of the printing press.

As of October 2017, the Old Testament has been translated into over 600 languages, the New Testament into over 1,500, and certain excerpts and stories of the Bible have been translated into over 1,000 other languages!¹

2. How the Bible Maintained Its Accuracy

Even today, books that are printed and reprinted over time develop inconsistencies or errors that spread with each reprinting. How did the Bible avoid such errors over its long lifespan of over 3,000 years since its conception? For an idea, let's first look at some of the rules the scribes followed when copying the Scripture. During A.D. 100–500, the group of scribes who copied the Bible were called the Talmudists. Here are some rules they had to follow when writing the synagogue scrolls (Swindoll, 14–15):²

- 1) *A synagogue roll must be written on the skins of clean animals,*
- 2) *prepared for the particular use of the synagogue by a Jew.*
- 3) *These must be fastened together with strings taken from clean animals.*

¹ Wikipedia contributors, "Bible translations," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Bible_translations&oldid=868989381 (accessed December 5, 2018).

² Charles Swindoll, *A Look at the Book* (Insight for Living, 1994), 14–15.

- 4) *Every skin must contain a certain number of columns, equal throughout the entire codex.*
- 5) *The length of each column must not extend over less than 48 or more than 60 lines; and the breadth must consist of 30 letters.*
- 6) *The whole copy must be first-lined; and if three words be written without a line, it is worthless.*
- 7) *The ink should be black, neither red, green, nor any other colour, and be prepared according to a definite recipe.*
- 8) *An authentic copy must be the exemplar, from which the transcriber ought not in the least deviate.*
- 9) *No word or letter, not even a yod, must be written from memory, the scribe not having looked at the codex before him...*
- 10) *Between every consonant the space of a hair or thread must intervene;*
- 11) *between every new parashah, or section, the breadth of nine consonants;*
- 12) *between every book, three lines.*
- 13) *The fifth book of Moses must terminate exactly with a line; but the rest need not do so.*
- 14) *Besides this, the copyist must sit in full Jewish dress,*
- 15) *wash his whole body,*
- 16) *not begin to write the name of God with a pen newly dipped in ink,*
- 17) *and should a king address him while writing that name, he must take no notice of him—*

It is evident that the scribes of the past took their responsibility seriously. They understood that they were recording the very words of God Himself. This dedication to their craft contributed to the accuracy of the Bible today.

Other evidence that we have of its accuracy can be found in what are called the “Dead Sea Scrolls.” The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in a cave by the Dead Sea, in the year 1947. A young shepherd boy, in search of some lost goats, happened to hear a crack of pottery when he threw a rock into one of the many caves in the area. When he and some of his cousins came back to explore, they found the cave floor covered with debris and a number of clay jars with their covers still in place. They found several bundles of ancient manuscripts and sold them, eventually drawing the attention of scholars of the time. When examined, the scrolls were found to be written between 200 B.C. to A.D. 200, making them the oldest manuscripts ever to be found. Over time, more were unearthed, and the Dead Sea Scrolls are now the oldest copies of the Bible discovered to date. They include all the books of the Old Testament except for the book of Esther (Stevenson, 12–13).³ (*Teachers: A more detailed account can be found in the source pdf.*)

The Dead Sea Scrolls are considered the most important discovery of Old Testament manuscripts. When the Old Testament scrolls were compared to the next earliest manuscripts in existence, those from the ninth and tenth centuries, they were found to contain essentially the same text. This shows that in the thousand years between, the scribes remained true to the original text, and the word of God had been passed down accurately to us.

B. The Bible Is the Path to Salvation

³ John Stevenson, *Ancient History: A Framework for the Bible* (Florida: Redeemer Publishing, 2015), 12–13, http://www.angelfire.com/nt/theology/books/Ancient_History.pdf.

In John 5:39, Jesus said, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me." And in John 6:63, "The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life."

Unlike secular books which provide entertainment, academic analysis, and philosophical discussions, the Bible is the living word of God, with many purposes. It declares the great and wondrous works of God and reveals life, spiritual mysteries, and the truth – all matters transcending human wisdom. Without God's revelation, no one would have been able to write the Bible, and certainly not with such authority. But most importantly, the Bible's purpose is for our sake. Let's examine its primary purposes.⁴

1. The Bible Calls Mankind to Repentance

The Bible teaches us that all mankind has sinned, and have fallen short of eternal life (Rom 3:23). But its teachings do not come without hope; it also calls us to repentance, to walk "where the good way is" so that we will "find rest for [our] souls" (Jer 6:16). Proverbs 1:23 urges us to "turn at my rebuke; surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you."

2. The Bible Leads Us to True Righteousness

Jesus says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Mt 5:6). The Bible explains that we can only obtain this righteousness of God "through faith in Jesus Christ" (Rom 3:22). It is impossible to become truly righteous on our own, but when we keep the teachings of the Bible we become skilled in the "word of righteousness" (Heb 5:13), and "thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:17).

3. The Bible Directs Us to the Path of Salvation

Jesus said, "Yet I do not receive testimony from man, but I say these things that you may be saved" (Jn 5:34), and, "[If] anyone keeps My word he shall never see death" (Jn 8:51). The Book of James also describes the Scripture as "the implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (Jas 1:21).

C. The Bible Is Living and Powerful

As the word of God, the Bible is more than words on a page. The Book of Hebrews describes the Bible as "living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb 4:12). The word of God is called a sword because it has the ability to pierce us and cut to the heart of the matter. It reveals who we are in our spirit, our thoughts, and intents – the deepest and innermost parts of ourselves. It can actively chastise us, guide us, and encourage us as we walk our spiritual journey towards salvation.

Why is the word living and powerful?

1 Peter 1:23 says we have been "born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever." Like a plant seed, the word itself has the power to impart life. But unlike anything on earth, the word cannot be changed or altered in any way, because it is Truth. Any word that God gives is an incorruptible seed that will permanently impact and affect the person who hears it.

⁴ Tze-Yuan Kuo, *What is the Purpose of the Bible?* (True Jesus Church: 2018), <http://ia.tjc.org/elibrary/ContentDetail.aspx?ItemID=35382>.

Let's read Isaiah 55:10–11. "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."

Just as rain and snow fall from the sky and water the earth, God's word also causes growth wherever it falls, because it has the power to change someone's life. It will not return to God empty-handed, but has the power to accomplish God's purpose and to produce growth in those who hear it.

Check for Understanding

1. **What is remarkable about the Bible's existence with regards to its age?** Despite being written by about forty different authors over the course of more than 1,000 years, the Bible never contradicts itself, and none of its prophecies have been proven untrue.
2. **What do we have as evidence of the Bible's accuracy?** We know that the scribes of the past followed very strict laws regarding the writing of the Bible. We also have the Dead Sea Scrolls, currently the oldest manuscripts ever to be found, to compare our text to.
3. **What are the three primary purposes of the Bible?** It calls mankind to repentance; leads us to true righteousness; and directs us to the path of salvation.
4. **Where does the Bible record that the word of God is living and powerful?** Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."
5. **Where does the Bible record that believing the word of God has eternal life?** John 5:39, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me."

Life Application

1. Hunger for God's Word

It is easy to forget that the Bible is more than a book. When we read the Bible, we are holding a conversation with God. It is the only way by which we can understand God and draw closer to Him. And when we truly desire to learn more about Him, He will open our hearts and minds so that we can understand what He wants to tell us through the living and powerful word of God. But to have this understanding, we must first nurture within ourselves a hunger for God's word.

God wants us to spend more time with Him. He desires that we draw closer to Him. But to do so, we must read His word, because that is how He speaks to us. When we study the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit teaches us His will, and how to make decisions in our priorities. He teaches us what our values and goals should be, and guides us in every other aspect in our lives. Embracing God's word is a choice that we have to make, but when we do make the choice, our lives will become fruitful and prosperous. Let's read Psalm 1:1–3.

*Blessed is the man
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.*

*He shall be like a tree
Planted by the rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever he does shall prosper.*

To delight in God's word means it is a constant companion to us, like a close friend whom we know to call upon at any time. Meditating on it day and night means that it affects our every decision and action in our lives. But in what way does it affect our decisions and actions? 2 Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." As the path to salvation, the Bible offers:

- a. Doctrine – it tells us what we should believe in
- b. Reproof – it teaches us the errors of our ways
- c. Correction – it guides us back to the correct path
- d. Instruction in righteousness – it teaches us how to live a righteous life

God does not always use dramatic or extreme measures to guide us. When He uses the Bible to speak to us, it is often like the still small voice that Elijah heard on the mountain (1 Kgs 19:12). We need to learn to listen carefully and open ourselves to the instruction of the Spirit by paying attention to sermons and our RE classes, and by studying the Bible at home. When we hunger for God's word in this way, we allow ourselves to be guided by the Scriptures. Let's read the following scenarios and identify which of the four types of guidance the Scriptures offered in each.

Scenario 1:

Susan was faced with many temptations at school. She tried to keep herself away from situations that could lead her to sin, but sometimes it was very difficult. One day during RE class, she read about how Jesus Christ resisted the devil by quoting Scripture. She then realized how important it is to memorize Scripture so that she can resist temptation as Jesus did.

Which aspect of Scripture applies here? (Instruction in righteousness)

Scenario 2:

While he was hanging out at his friend's house, Joshua's friend happened to flip to a channel that was playing X-rated programs. Out of curiosity, Joshua ended up watching with him. Even though he did not plan for it, one instance quickly became two, then three. Joshua soon became hooked to watching what he knew he shouldn't. One Sabbath, the speaker referred to Matthew 5:27–30. When he read it, Joshua realized he had sinned, and he knew he had to stop.

Which aspect of Scripture applies here? (Reproof)

Scenario 3:

Every morning Pam and her classmates would rush into the classroom to find a good seat. One day, Pam found that the only seat left was one beside Jane. There was nothing wrong with Jane, really. She was a quiet kid who didn't speak English well, and she looked kind of shabby. No one usually wanted to sit beside her, so she was by herself most of the time. Pam slipped quietly into the chair next to her, but did not say anything. She did not want her classmates to stop talking to her because she had spoken to Jane. Later, someone accidentally knocked Pam's books onto the ground and ran off without helping her to pick them up. As Pam knelt to gather her books, she found Jane helping her pick them up. She suddenly

recalled Jesus' command to "love your neighbor as yourself." That day, Pam learned an important lesson from Jane: to treat others with love, no matter who they are or what they look like.

Which aspect of Scripture applies here? (Doctrine/Correction)

2. Seek Time with God

During His ministry, Jesus was constantly busy, from the moment He woke up to the moment He slept. Despite this, He never neglected to spend His own quiet time with God, often rising before dawn to pray. Jesus made it a priority to spend as much time with God as He possibly could (Mk 1:35; Lk 5:16; 6:12; 22:39–44).

Have you ever stopped eating or drinking anything for a few days? Without sustenance, our physical bodies weaken. Our spiritual bodies are the same; when we stop reading the Bible or communicating with God through prayer, we grow spiritually weak. Our goal should be to know Him, grow in our relationship with Him, love Him, and eventually be more like Him. So we need to take the initiative to seek out time with God at home, either through personal study of His word, or through family services. Like Jesus, we need to purposefully set aside time for God every day.

Discussion

- How much time do you spend on social media compared to the amount of time you spend studying God's word? Rate yourself in each, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest.
- Discuss with a partner how to purposefully set aside some quiet time to spend with God.
- What are some elements to consider if you want to have a quiet time with God? (*Examples: Choose a specific time and location, have the proper mindset, take notes while reading the Bible, highlight important keywords, praise God through singing hymns, don't rush through Bible study, etc.*)
- Share your "quiet time with God," either how you spend time with Him in the present, or how you plan to set aside time for God in the future.

Memory Verse

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (2 Timothy 3:16)

Meaning

(See *Life Application #1.*)

Conclusion

We know that the path to eternal life is found in the Bible, and that as the word of God, it is "living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb 4:12). It can actively chastise, guide, and encourage us as we walk on our spiritual journey toward salvation. We need only seek to learn more about Him, and open ourselves to the Bible's instruction by spending more time communicating with God through His word.

Lesson 1 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. Briefly explain the different purposes of the Bible mentioned in the memory verse.
Doctrine – it tells us what we should believe in
Reproof – it teaches us the errors of our ways
Correction – it guides us back to the correct path
Instruction in righteousness – it teaches us how to live a righteous life
2. What is the significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls for us?
They are the oldest copies of the Bible discovered to date, and when compared to the next earliest manuscripts in existence, were found to contain essentially the same text. This shows that the word of God has been passed down accurately to us.
3. What are the three primary purposes of the Bible?
The Bible: calls mankind to repentance; leads us to true righteousness; and directs us to the path of salvation.
4. Pick one of the above purposes and briefly explain, with Bible references.
See Events and Spiritual Teachings, Section B.
5. What does it mean to delight in God's word, and to meditate on it day and night?
To delight in it means to treat it as a constant companion to us, like a close friend whom we know to call upon at any time. Meditating on it day and night means to ensure that it affects our every decision and action in our lives.
6. What is one way you plan on seeking out quiet time with God?
Personal answers.

The Israelites' Cultural Life in the Bible

Passages: Genesis–Deuteronomy; Judges

Memory Verse

“So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey.” (Exodus 3:8a)

Knowledge of God's Will [God's Word]	Knowledge of God [God's Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
1. God always gives the best to His chosen people. 2. Receive God's promise by upholding our faith.	1. God is faithful. 2. God is holy.	1. Give time to God every day. 2. Redeem our time by using it wisely for God.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. The Promised Land
 - 1. The Many Names of the Promised Land
 - 2. Civilization and Trade in the Promised Land
- B. Culture, Politics, and Religion of the Israelite Nation
 - 1. Food
 - 2. Marriage
 - 3. Religion
 - 4. Political Institutions
- C. A Chosen People

Life Application

- 1. Give Time to God Every Day
- 2. Redeem Our Time

Memory Verse

Conclusion: As God's chosen, we have been promised the much greater inheritance of the heavenly kingdom. But with this inheritance comes the responsibility to remain separate from the world around us, and to constantly seek to do His will in our lives.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

Introduction

It is difficult to imagine what the Israelites' lives were like in biblical times, so today we are going to study a little bit about the promised land, and learn a brief overview of the way God's people lived at the time.

A. The Promised Land

The promised land has a few prominent features. The center of the land contains a region of mountains, known as the Lebanon Mountains. The River Jordan flows between the western plateau and the eastern plains, and joins the Sea of Galilee in the north to the much larger Salt Sea in the south, also called the Dead Sea. A portion of this area is part of what is called the Fertile Crescent, a stretch of arable land that stretched north-west from the dead sea into Syria, then south-west towards Egypt. The Israelites often referred to the promised land "the land flowing with milk and honey" due to its ideal geographical location, fertile land, and abundant resources. *(Teachers: See Figure 1.)*

1. The Many Names of the Promised Land

The land came to accumulate many names, each reflecting its historical changes. When God first sent Abraham there, the land was called Canaan. It was also known as the land of the Philistines, due to the many Philistines living along the coast, an area known as the Gaza Strip today. Hundreds of generations later, when the land was finally taken by the Israelites, it became the land of Israel. Many years later, after spending time in exile, the majority of Israelites who returned were of the tribe of Judah, so it was also called the land of Judah. The names Jewish Land, or Jewish Province were derived from this fact.

In a religious context, because of God's promise, the Israelites referred to Canaan as the promised land (Deut 19:28). When the land came under Roman authority, it was placed under the judicial authority of the Syrian province, so some referred to the area as the land of Syria at the time (Lk 2:2). Many generations later, due to its close relation to the Jewish faith, and also because it was the birthplace of Jesus Christ, the land came to be known to Jews, Christians, and Muslims as the Holy Land.

2. Civilization and Trade in the Promised Land

In ancient times, most trading was done overland with many merchant caravans traveling from China, passing through the Silk Road to Mesopotamia, and continuing westward as far as Europe. As trade flourished, Phoenician merchant ships increased in number, bringing goods between the many sea ports on the Mediterranean Sea. Due to its location along the coast, Canaan served as an important crossroads for trade, linking China to Europe, Africa, and the Mediterranean Sea.

Many cities were established across the land, including Jerusalem and Bethlehem, although most were located at the southern part of Israel. These cities were key locations in the New Testament, and the numerous trade routes established over many years became key paths in the spreading of the gospel beyond, into Mesopotamia and Europe.

Spiritual Teachings

The promised land was a home of hope for a rootless and enslaved nation. It was a vital place for the Israelites to grow in, both as a nation and as God's chosen people. However, it was still just a physical

place. Today, we are His spiritual children, foreigners in a world that belongs to sin. Like the Israelites traveling through the wilderness, this world is only our temporary home, a tent that we dwell in while we travel to our permanent home. And the home that God has promised for us is greater than any place on earth; it will be a heavenly home in His eternal kingdom.

B. Culture, Politics, and Religion of the Israelite Nation

1. Food

The staple foods of the Israelites consisted of sheep, cattle, barley, and wheat, while the fruits of the region consisted mainly of grapes, olives, figs, and date palms. The milk that their cattle and sheep produced was stored in bags made of sheep or goatskin, and was used either for drinking, or making cheeses and yogurts. Fresh meat was reserved for esteemed guests or special occasions (Gen 18:7–8). Even today, traditional Jews studiously avoid blood and unclean animals in accordance with Mosaic law.

When a Jew returned home, they would customarily wash their hands and feet (Mk 7:1–4). For the rich, this was a duty performed by the servants. When eating as a group, they situated themselves in a circle around the food, which was placed in the center of the room. Back then, common kitchenware was made of porcelain or pottery. Once the elders had given thanks, they used only their right hand, and a knife that was commonly carried for protection, to eat.

Spiritual Teachings

The laws that Moses set were a physical reflection of our spiritual needs; although we are no longer bound by such restrictions, we must still be aware of what we eat. Let's read Acts 15:28–29. When we eat food offered to idols, we are taking part with demons. Our God is a jealous God, and He desires that our hearts belong entirely to Him (1 Cor 10:19–22), so we must ensure that we avoid food that has been polluted by idols.

2. Marriage

When Nehemiah and Ezra revived the law of Moses among the returned exiles, they stressed the importance of cutting off any foreigners from their midst. They understood the significance of marrying within God's chosen nation (Deut 7:1–4), and realized that by straying, they had invited idolatry and a growing lack of faith into their lives.

By New Testament times, certain traditions had become established among the Jews. They discouraged marriage with Gentiles in accordance with God's command, and like in Isaac's time, the future husband gave betrothal presents to his fiancée's family when they became engaged. The wedding ceremony took place in the bride's home, and they traveled to the bridegroom's house to hold the wedding banquet with their friends, relatives, and neighbors (Jn 2:1–11).

Spiritual Teachings

God's command not to intermarry with Gentiles reflects His desire that we, His children, remain separate from the world around us. Paul teaches us, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price" (1 Cor 6:19–20). He also wrote, "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness?" (2 Cor 6:14).

It is easy for us to be influenced by the world, whether it be through our friends, social media, or

even our family. Satan can use many things to sway us from the truth. If we are already easily influenced by our friends and family, how much more can we be swayed by our marriage partner? With this in mind, we must be wary and keep ourselves separate from the sin of the world, so that we may remain the bride of Christ that is “holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:27).

3. Religion

Over time the Jews established a remarkable culture of learning, not just in religion, but in all manner of subjects ranging from mathematics to philosophy, seen especially during the Middle Ages. However, religious studies were still their priority, and as God had commanded, it was the Levites who took charge of all religious tasks related to offerings, teaching and establishing the law, and communicating God’s will. Among the Levites, there were:

- a. **Priests:** Chosen from the descendants of Aaron, priests were separate from the people, in charge of holy tasks within the temple and other worship activities.
- b. **Scribes:** All Israelites had to learn the law (Deut 6:1–9), but most people were illiterate even until New Testament times. So, scribes read the Scriptures to the people and gave them oral instruction in the laws (Neh 8:1–8, 13). They also helped people to write contracts or letters.
- c. **Prophets and Seers:** Although not necessarily of the tribe of Levi, prophets and seers were still very important religious figures who served as the main line of communication between God and men (Lk 2:36–38). Prophets also took on judicial responsibilities, and their roles were large enough that schools of prophets were established (2 Kgs 2:3, 5, 7).

There are many laws regarding the Israelites’ way of life, such as the keeping of Sabbath day. This key commandment was argued many times during Jesus’ ministry, because over time, many additional rules regarding how to keep this day were implemented. In addition they observed the seven festivals established in Moses’ time: Passover, Pentecost, and Sukkot, the three larger festivals, as well as the feast of Unleavened Bread, the feast of Firstfruits, the feast of Trumpets, and Yom Kippur (Lev 23; Ex 12; Num 29). Traditional Jews still observe these festivals today. *(Teachers: See Figure 2 for more a more detailed calendar, or Figure 3 for a simple calendar.)*

Spiritual Teachings

1 Peter 2:9 calls us “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” Like the tribe of Levi, we have been chosen by God to be His priests, scribes, and prophets. We have been tasked with performing His holy tasks within the temple that is His church, and with the responsibility of teaching God’s word to those around us (Acts 26:18). God desires that we as His children become the main line of communication between God and mankind.

4. Political Institutions

The various ruling bodies of the Israelite nation can be divided into three different ages:

a. Age of the Patriarchs

As in Abraham’s time, the elder in a tribe was the patriarch, or chief. They took charge of all political, military, religious, and educational affairs in the tribes.

b. Age of the Judges

After Joshua died, the chosen people still relied on God, but their failure to remove all of the Canaanites eventually led them to stray from God, who in response allowed them to be conquered by their enemies. Whenever the Israelites repented, God chose someone to be a

judge, a military warrior who led the people to defeat their enemies under God's guidance.

c. Age of the Kingdoms

Like any other nation, the Israelites needed a ruling body. Unfortunately, they did not understand that God was to be their ruler, so they demanded a king instead, leading to the selection of Saul. His eventual lack of obedience to God was only the first in a long line of kings who were unable to lead the Israelites in accordance with God's will. However, his successor David was an example of a king who was able to establish a close relationship with God and, in turn, a nation that thrived under God's protection.

It was not until David entered Jerusalem that the Israelite kingdom began to form a relatively complete political institution. A general oversaw military concerns, and a high priest, religious affairs. With the Levites' help, patriarchs managed the affairs of the general population, and stewards took care of the palace. This left the king to oversee national administrative and political affairs, and sometimes to lead troops into battles as David did.

Spiritual Teachings

From studying the history of the Israelites, we can see that their leaders greatly affected the nation's faith – wherever they led, the people followed. Today, we tend to follow the decisions of our friends, family, or even the internet without much thought. But we must learn to do better; we must learn to make God our leader. What does it mean to make Him our leader?

Hebrews 12:28 tells us, "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." When we serve God acceptably with reverence, He is the leader in our lives. Then, He will also be our patriarch as our Father in heaven who cares for our needs; our judge as our protector who defeats our enemies for us; and our king as our ruler on heaven and on earth.

C. A Chosen People

We can see that there are many complexities involved with the Israelites and their lives under God. Their day-to-day matters from food to marriage were all under God's command, and even their very homeland was chosen and given to them by God. These may seem restrictive to us, but when we examine them more closely, we can see that God set these commands for the Israelites' sake. His laws were a direct contrast from the idol-worshipping and often brutal culture of the Gentiles around them, and were based instead on love and humility. When we look at these arrangements, we can see God's greatness, power, and wisdom, as well as His loving-kindness towards His chosen people.

Today, God has taken the same amount of care in arranging a place for us in His heavenly kingdom. He has promised us a new home that is much better and greater than the promised land on earth. Our lives are physically very different from the Israelites', but to enter this new promised land, we must follow the same spirit of worship in keeping ourselves separate from the world.

Let's read 2 Corinthians 6:14–18. Like the Israelites in Canaan, we are also in danger of being influenced by the world around us. We must always remember that we are God's chosen people, His elect from every nation and His royal priesthood. We do not strive for the riches of the world, but for God's everlasting kingdom that He has promised to His children.

Check for Understanding

- 1. What is the difference between the land promised for the Israelites and what God has promised to us?** The land promised for the Israelites was just a physical place. God has promised us a better home, greater than any place on earth; it will be a heavenly home in His eternal kingdom.
- 2. Why did Ezra and Nehemiah stress the importance of cutting off foreigners from their midst?** They understood the significance of marrying within God’s chosen nation (Deut 7:1–4), and realized that by straying, they had invited idolatry and a growing lack of faith into their lives.
- 3. What was the duty of the Levites? Name three roles that they took, and briefly explain each.** Levites took charge of all religious tasks related to offerings, teaching and establishing the law, and communicating God’s will. Among the Levites, there were: priests – in charge of holy tasks within the temple; scribes – those who read the law and instructed people in it; and prophets and seers – not always Levites, but those who served as the main line of communication between God and men.
- 4. What does it mean to make God a ruler in our lives?** With the help of the Holy Spirit, our daily lives can be an acceptable service to God in our actions and decisions.
- 5. As God’s chosen people, what makes us different from the world around us?** We do not strive for riches of the world, but for God’s everlasting kingdom that He has promised to us.

Life Application

God is faithful (Deut 7:9). Despite the Israelites’ constant disobedience, He fulfilled His promise to Abraham that his descendants would inherit this land flowing with milk and honey (Gen 15:18–21). Today, He has promised us the “hope of His calling” and the “riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints” (Eph 1:18). Having received this promise, how can we strive to enter into it?

1. Give Time to God Every Day

When we receive Jesus Christ into our hearts, He should be our Lord and King. This includes Him being King over our calendars and clocks! Any healthy relationship requires time and effort to grow. Just as with any other good friend, we need to spend quality time with God to develop our relationship with Him. This means talking openly, listening patiently, and learning about and understanding each other. How can we do these things with God?

Jesus says in Matthew 6:6, “But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.” James 1:25 also says, “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 work, this one will be blessed in what he does.” These verses teach us that to develop a relationship with God, we need to set aside personal time for Him and actively seek to do His will. Those who do so will be rewarded.

When we spend time quality time with God, we will never leave empty-handed. In fact, we become filled with the Holy Spirit, and His presence goes with us. He will guide us wherever we go, and He will reward and bless us when we do His will and spend time with Him each day.

2. Redeem Our Time

Let’s read Psalm 139:16. “Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them.” The NLT version translates the second part of the verse as, “Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.”

During King David's time, he had advisors who were "the sons of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chr 12:32), and during Queen Esther's time, King Ahasuerus inquired of the "wise men who understood the times" (Est 1:13). They both sought to understand the times that were approaching because they knew that their time on earth was limited, and therefore had to be spent wisely.

As God's chosen people, we know that every moment on this earth is already known by God, including every second of our lives. He already knows of every event, large or small, from the details of our lives to the wars and politics of the world. And if we want to understand what is coming, we do not need to inquire of wise men, but of the Bible.

If you study the Bible thoroughly, you'll be gripped by the knowledge that we are living in the end times. Rumors of wars, earthquakes, and the rise of the antichrist are all signs given to us by the Bible. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph 5:15–16). We do not know exactly when our Lord will return again, so we must be alert and aware of our responsibility to use our time wisely. This means understanding God's purpose for us on earth: to walk with Him, fulfill the mission that He has entrusted to us, and to serve Him. Our time in this world is limited, so we need to ask God to "teach us to number our days" (Ps 90:12), and strive for righteousness at all times (Ps 106:3) so that we may inherit the heavenly kingdom.

Memory Verse

"So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey." (Exodus 3:8a)

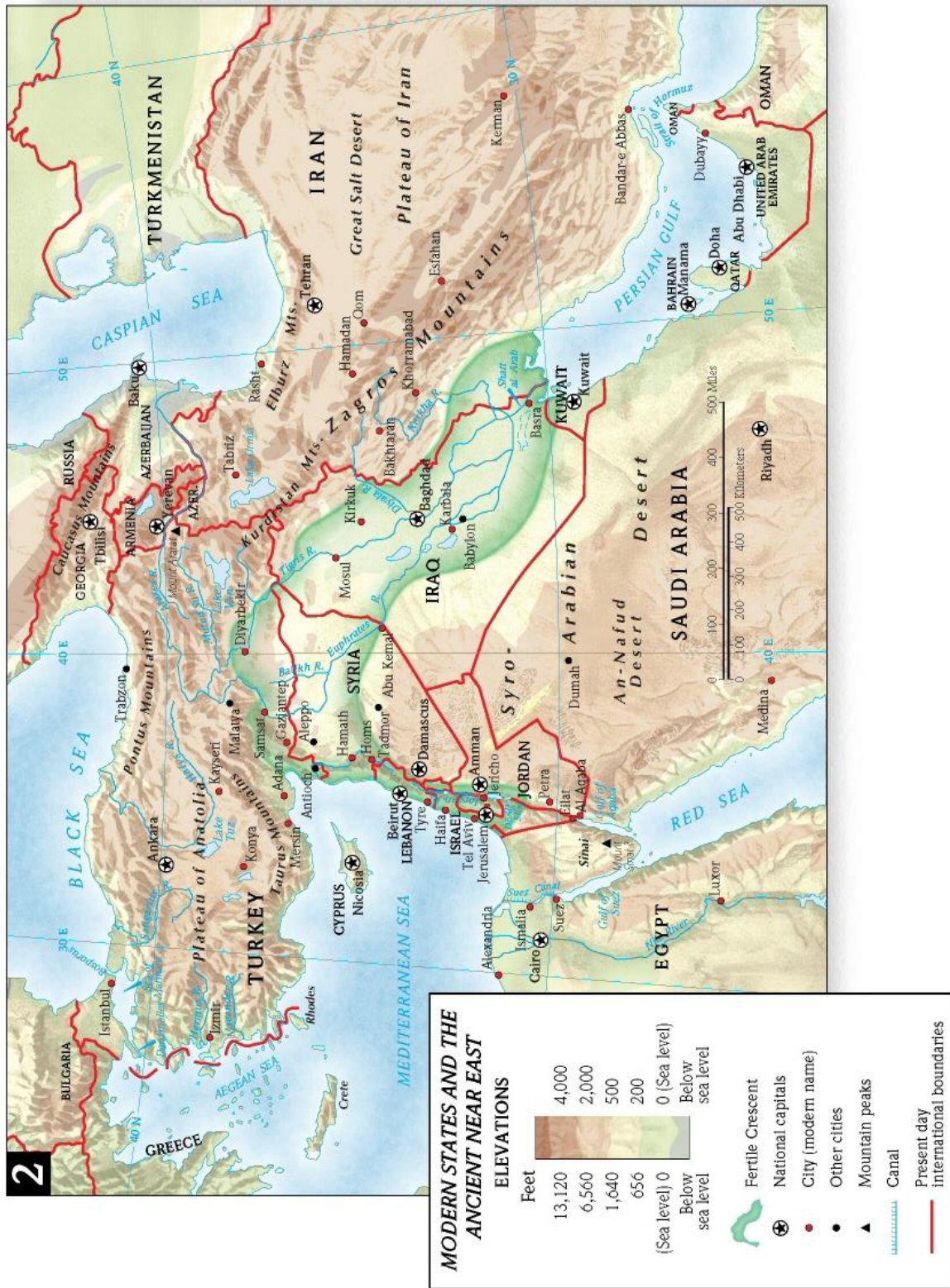
Meaning

1. While the Israelites were physically enslaved by the Egyptians, we have been spiritually enslaved by sin from the moment we were born. God has delivered us from slavery and sin, and has promised us a place in His heavenly kingdom. As His chosen people, He will continue to take care of us and guide us out of our tribulations.
2. God's blessings are beyond human comprehension, so we must inherit His promises with faith and obedience to His commands.

Conclusion

Our lives may be drastically different from that of the Israelites', but we are still nonetheless God's chosen people. But instead of inheriting the promised land that is Canaan, we have been promised a much greater inheritance: that of the heavenly kingdom. However, with this inheritance comes the responsibility to abide by God's word, and to remain separate from the world around us. We are God's children, and as His children, we must strive to keep a close relationship with our Father in heaven, and to constantly seek to make Him the ruler in our lives, so that we may one day enter into the promised heavenly kingdom.

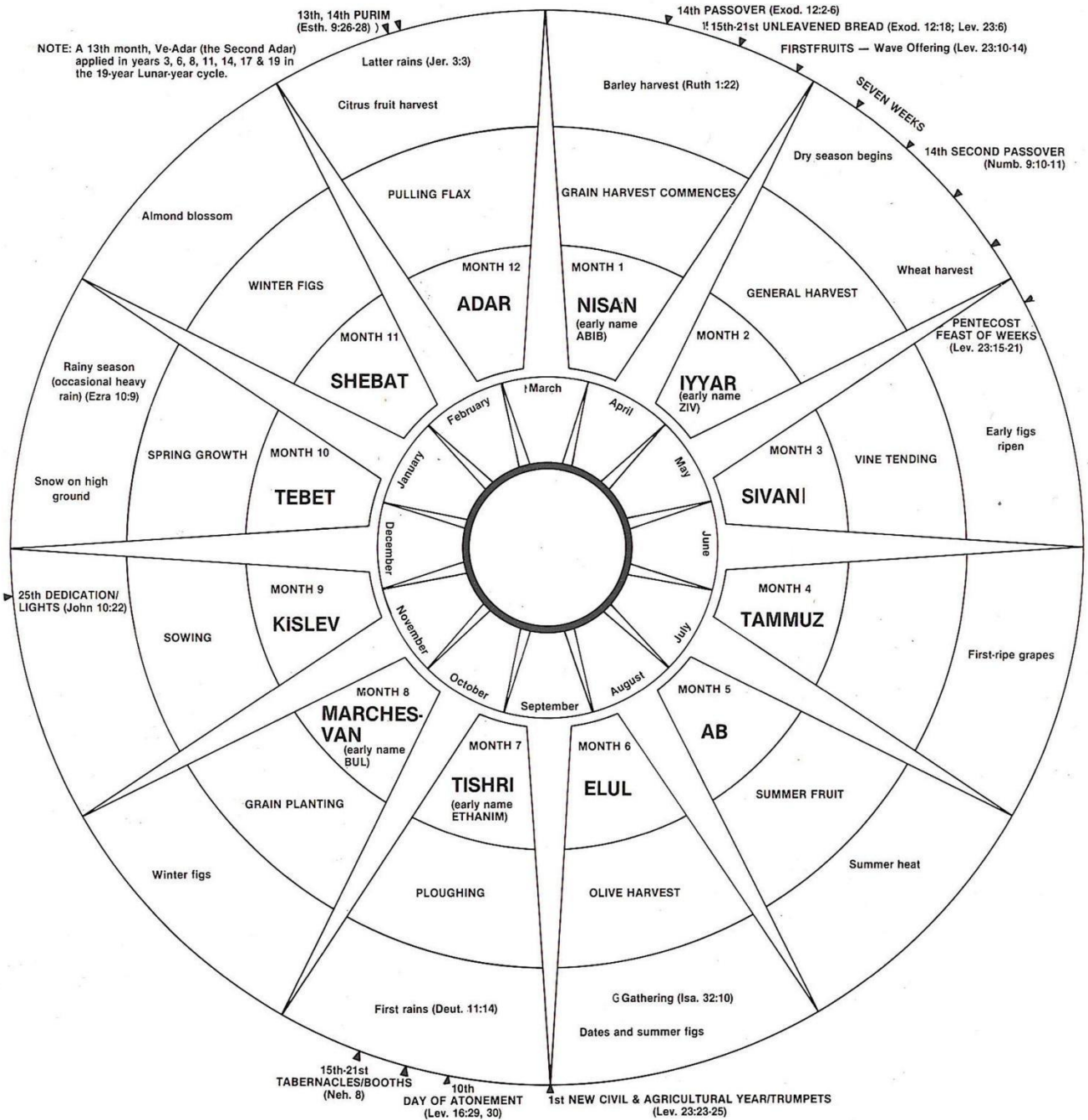
Figure 1. Map of the Ancient Near East¹



¹ Access Foundation, *Bible Atlas*, Chapter 1: "The Ancient Near East", <https://www.holyhome.nl/bible-atlas.pdf>

Figure 2. Detailed calendar of religious festivals observed in Ancient Israel.²

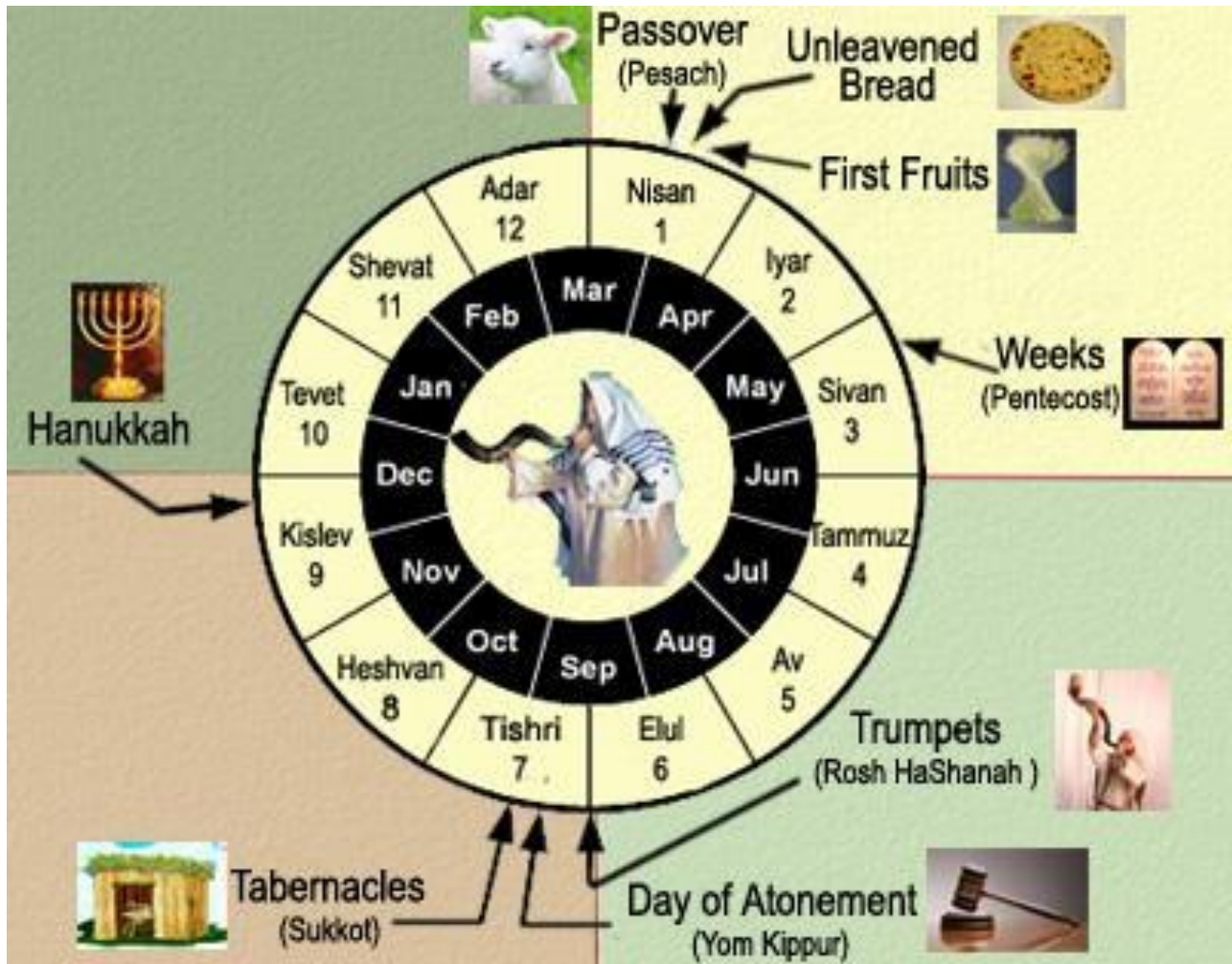
— THE CALENDAR IN ANCIENT ISRAEL —



²Christadelphian Vault, *The Calendar in Ancient Israel* (2010)

<http://www.christadelphianvault.net/index.php?action=view&filename=Calendar%20in%20Ancient%20Israel.jpg&directory=TIMELINES%20AND%20CHRONOLOGIES>.

Figure 3. Simple calendar of religious festivals observed by the Jews, past and present.³



³Alf and Julie Saunders, "The Fall Feasts of the Lord" (September 2013), <http://www.pray4zion.org/thelast3fallfeastsofthelord.html>.

Lesson 2 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. How do we inherit God's promises and blessings?
We must inherit His promises with faith and obedience to His commands.
2. What is the difference between the promised land of the Israelites and God's promise to us?
The land promised for the Israelites was just a physical place. God has promised us a better home, greater than any place on earth; it will be a heavenly home in His eternal kingdom.
3. Pick one of the four aspects about the Israelites' lives that we learned. What can we learn from it?
See Spiritual Teachings, Section B.
4. As God's chosen people, what makes us different from the world around us?
We do not strive for the riches of the world, but for God's everlasting kingdom that He has promised us.
5. What does it mean to "redeem our time" (Eph 5:16)?
It means to be alert and aware of our responsibility to use our time wisely, because we do not know exactly when our Lord will return again.
6. Do you give time to God every day? If yes, how? If not, pick a time of day that you can give to God every day this week.
Personal answers.

The Truth of the Bible as Seen Through Prophecies

Passages: As listed in the lesson.

Memory Verse

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.” (Matthew 24:35)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
1. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. 2. God’s words are absolute.	1. God is omniscient. 2. God is everlasting. 3. God is faithful.	1. Seek spiritual growth. 2. Seek spiritual wisdom to discern. 3. Do not grow weary in love.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. What Is a Prophecy?
- B. The Purpose of Prophecies
 - 1. To explain and declare things of the future
 - 2. To manifest God’s authority
 - 3. To edify and exhort
 - 4. To comfort
- C. Types of Prophecies and Their Fulfillment
 - 1. Prophecies Concerning the Messiah
 - 2. Prophecies Concerning the Holy Spirit
 - 3. Prophecies Concerning Israel
 - 4. Prophecies Concerning the End Days

Life Application: How Can We Live a Godly Life?

Memory Verse

Conclusion: Because God’s word will never fail and His promises will surely be realized, we must diligently seek out His teachings and walk in them.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

Introduction

God is Spirit (Jn 4:24). He is eternal, immortal, and invisible (1 Tim 1:17). Man is limited, but God is without limits. Because of this, unless God makes Himself known to us, we are unable to comprehend the things of God or know whom God is. To better understand Him, He has given us the Bible, within which is God's word, spoken to man. But some people might question: How do we know that the Bible is true and contains the words of God?

Biblical prophecies prove the truth of the perfect word of God. According to the "Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy" by J. Barton Payne (Harper & Row, 1973), approximately thirty percent of the Bible is composed of prophecies, with a total of around 1,817 prophecies, and most of them have been fulfilled historically. In this lesson, we will study different types of prophecies, the function of prophecies, and how prophecies reassure us of our faith in God.

A. What Is a Prophecy?

As stated in Isaiah 46:10, God "[declares] the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done." God is omniscient, and only He knows the future. In order to communicate messages about the future to His people, God called particular individuals to be His prophets. Prophets were God's spokesmen, and their main responsibility was to prophesy to God's people in His name (Amos 7:15).

A prophecy is a verbal or written expression of an event or events that will occur in the future, any time after the prophecy is given. The time period between the prophecy and its fulfillment could be a matter of seconds to hundreds of years. For example, centuries passed before the prophecies regarding the birth of the Messiah were fulfilled. On the other hand, Peter denied Jesus only a few hours after His prophecy.

There are many books in this world that discuss things of the past and of possible future trends. However, many of these books have been long forgotten and forsaken because they are no longer applicable and true. Unlike these books, the Bible has withstood the test of time because it is the word of God, and God's word is truth (Jn 17:17). Furthermore, through the fulfillment of numerous prophecies in the Bible, God's authority and the authenticity of His word has been made clear to us. These prophecies not only serve as a witness to God's omniscient nature, but also declare God's plan and will to all men.

B. The Purpose of Prophecies

And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

(2 Pet 1:19–21)

In biblical times, prophecies were mainly for the consolation and edification of God's people. Today, however, they serve as guidance and light in our spiritual journey. By studying the Bible, we can see how prophecies serve various purposes, especially for God's chosen people.

1. To explain and declare things of the future (Isa 42:9)

1 Samuel, chapter 2, records the story of Eli the priest, who had two wicked sons who did evil in the land of Israel. Due to their wickedness and Eli's lack of responsibility as a father and priest, God sent a prophet to Eli to prophesy to him what would happen to his household and to the land of Israel.

And you will see an enemy in My dwelling place, despite all the good which God does for Israel. And there shall not be an old man in your house forever. [...] And all the descendants of your house shall die in the flower of their age. Now this shall be a sign to you that will come upon your two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas: in one day they shall die, both of them.

(1 Sam 2:32–34)

Sure enough, years later in the battle against the Philistines, Israel was defeated, the ark of God was taken, and Eli's two sons died on the same day (1 Sam 4:10–11). God controls time and space, and there is nothing that He does not know. Through prophecies, God explains what will happen in the future so that His people understand His will.

2. To manifest God's authority

Prophet Isaiah recorded, "Who has declared this from ancient time? Who has told it from that time? Have not I, the LORD?" (Isa 45:21). The Book of Daniel, chapter five, records the story of proud King Belshazzar, who held a great feast for his lords using the gold and silver vessels taken from the temple in Jerusalem. During the feast, a man's hand appeared and wrote on the palace walls with a finger.

None of the king's wise men were able to decipher the writing, so King Belshazzar called Daniel and asked him for an interpretation. The writing on the wall was a prophecy: "God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it"; "You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting"; "Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians" (Dan 5:26–29). That same night, King Belshazzar was killed and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom.

The future is preordained by God; the life and death of every person and nation is under His control. His prophecies are a manifestation of His complete authority over yesterday, today, and forever.

3. To edify and exhort (1 Cor 14:3)

During the years of King Asa, the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded. And he said to King Asa, "The LORD is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you" (2 Chr 15:1–2). After hearing this, King Asa removed idols from the land of Judah, restored the altar of the Lord, and asked the people to obey the commandments of God and enter into a covenant to seek the Lord.

This prophecy edified the people and gave them the strength to increase their faith. As they determined to change, blessings descended among the people, as prophesied (2 Chr 15:15). Thus, prophecies serve to guide our lives, and also as a way for God to reveal how His people need to change in order to restore their relationship with Him.

4. To comfort

Before the destruction of Jerusalem, God called prophets to prophesy that Judah would return

to their homeland after seventy years of captivity. “For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place” (Jer 29:10). These prophecies revealed the future, but more importantly, they brought hope in times of despair, so that God’s chosen people could hold fast to their belief in Him. God uses His prophecies to give His people hope for the future, so that they can have the courage to face the present.

C. Types of Prophecies and Their Fulfillment

There are over 1,800 prophecies written in the Bible, and all of them testify of the truth and authority of God’s word. To help us understand how they are relevant to us, we can categorize them into four major subjects.

1. Prophecies Concerning the Messiah

There are more than forty prophecies in the Bible concerning the Messiah, made over a period of hundreds of years. These prophecies revolve around the coming of the Messiah, our Savior Jesus Christ.

Prophecy	Record	Fulfillment
The Messiah will be born of a virgin.	Isa 7:14	The virgin Mary conceived from the Holy Spirit and gave birth to Jesus Christ, the Savior. (Mt 1:18–25)
The Messiah will be of the lineage of David.	Jer 23:5; Mt 22:41–42	According to recorded genealogy, Jesus is the seed of David. (Mt 1:1, 20)
The Messiah will be born in Bethlehem.	Mic 5:2; Mt 2:4–6	Joseph and Mary returned to Bethlehem, His hometown, for registration in the census. It was there where Jesus Christ was born. (Lk 2:1–7)
The King will ride to Jerusalem on a donkey.	Zech 9:9	Jesus sent two disciples to retrieve a donkey, and then He rode on it while entering Jerusalem. (Mt 21:1–11)
The Messiah will be sold for the price of thirty pieces of silver.	Zech 11:12	Judas Iscariot agreed to betray the Lord Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. (Mt 26:14–15)
The Messiah will endure much suffering; even His hands and feet will be pierced.	Ps 22:1–18; Isa 53:8–9	Jesus Christ was scourged, and endured excruciating pain and humiliation. Then He was crucified on the cross, and both His hands and feet were pierced. (Mt 27:22–23, 26, 32–35)
Christ’s bones will not be broken on the cross.	Ps 34:20	When the soldiers came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs as was customary. Therefore, not one of Jesus’ bones was broken. (Jn 19:33, 36)
The Messiah will be raised up from the grave or Sheol.	Ps 16:10	Jesus Christ resurrected on the third day from His tomb. (Lk 24:1–7; Acts 2:25–32)

2. Prophecies Concerning the Holy Spirit

Before Jesus Christ ascended to heaven, He commanded His chosen apostles not to leave

Jerusalem, but to wait there for the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4–5). After He descended, the Spirit worked mightily in the early church. Many people were baptized, and the gospel spread quickly to areas outside of Jerusalem. However, after a few centuries, the church deviated from the truth, and the doctrine was altered from the original teachings of Jesus Christ and His apostles. Because of this, the Holy Spirit ceased to descend, and attempts to correct the truth without Him resulted in different denominations.

In the early twentieth century, God once again bestowed the Holy Spirit upon mankind. He first descended in China, revealing once again the truth and the power of the apostolic times. In 1917, True Jesus Church, the ark of the end times, was established through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Prophecy	Record	Fulfillment
Promise of the early rain to the Israelites	Isa 44:3; Jer 5:24; Ezek 36:26–27; Mt 3:11	As Jesus promised, on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended. (Acts 2:1–4)
Promise of the latter rain	Joel 2:28–31; Zech 10:1	Present

3. Prophecies Concerning Israel

Would you be able to predict what would happen to your homeland fifty years from now? This is something that only God can do. For that reason, the Bible is the only book that mentions names, nations, and rulers long before they even exist. And the accuracy of these prophecies is confirmed through their fulfillment (Deut 18:22). One particular category of prophecy concerns God’s chosen people, the nation of Israel.

Prophecy	Record	Fulfillment
In Abraham’s old age, he was childless. However, God promised Abraham that he will have an heir of his own and that his descendants would be as many as the stars of heaven.	Gen 15:1–5	Isaac was born to Abraham at the elderly age of 100, and out of Isaac came the nation of Israel. (Gen 21:1–7)
God told Abraham that his descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, will serve the people of that land, and be afflicted by them for 400 years. However, they will leave that land with great possessions and shall return to Canaan.	Gen 15:13–14	In the days of Jacob, he and his household of seventy people moved to Egypt. After the death of Joseph, the Egyptian Pharaoh enslaved the Israelites until Moses led them out of their bondage by God’s mighty hand. Not only did they leave with all of their flocks and herds, but the Egyptians also willingly gave them their riches. (Gen 46:1–7, 26–27; Ex 1:22; 12:35–41)
The Israelites refused to hear God’s words, so it was foretold that a king from Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, would come to destroy Jerusalem, and that Israel would serve the king of Babylon	Jer 25:8–12; 29:10	Because the kings, priests, and people transgressed the law of God and defiled the temple, God allowed the Chaldeans to burn the holy temple and destroy Jerusalem. The Babylonians captured the majority of the

in captivity for seventy years. After seventy years, by the mercy and grace of God, Israelites would return to their homeland.		Israelites and carried them away to Babylon. After seventy years of captivity, King Cyrus of Persia was moved by God to release the Jews. In fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah, the Israelites returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. (2 Chr 36:14–23)
Jerusalem would be destroyed.	Mt 24:1–2; Lk 19:41–44	Jerusalem was besieged and burned down by Roman soldiers around A.D. 70.

4. Prophecies Concerning the End Days

God’s plan will be complete with Jesus Christ’s second coming. There are various prophecies in the Bible that repeatedly remind us of God’s judgment day, and describe what signs to look for as we draw closer to the end days.

From various New Testament verses, we know that Jesus Christ will come again (Acts 1:9–11; 1 Pet 1:13). When the Lord comes again, He will receive those who are saved into the heavenly kingdom and administer judgment on the rest. Jesus Christ said: “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only” (Mt 24:36). However, Jesus prophesied about the signs we will witness before His second coming.

Signs from the world	Signs from the church
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corruption of men’s hearts (2 Tim 3:1–5) • Explosion of knowledge (Dan 12:4) • Wars (Mt 24:6–7) • Natural disasters (Lk 21:11) • Changes in astronomical phenomena (Mt 24:29–30) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temptations from evil spirit (1 Tim 4:1) • Heresy (2 Pet 2:1) • Deception in Jesus’ name (Mt 24:5; Lk 21:8) • Antichrist (1 Jn 2:18–19, 22) • Increase of scoffers (2 Pet 3:3; Jude 18–19)

Check for Understanding

1. **What is a prophecy?** A prophecy is a verbal or written expression of an event or events that will occur in the future, that is, any time after the prophecy is given.
2. **What qualities of God do we learn about through studying the prophecies in the Bible?** God is omniscient; He is faithful; and His words are everlasting.
3. **Name two purposes of prophecies.** To explain and declare things of the future, to manifest God’s authority, to edify and exhort, and to comfort men.
4. **Name the categories of prophecies studied today.** Prophecies concerning the Messiah, the Holy Spirit, Israel, and the end days.
5. **For each of the four purposes of prophecies: name one prophecy, where it was recorded, and when it was fulfilled.** See Section B.
6. **Name one prophecy concerning the Holy Spirit, where it was recorded, and when it was fulfilled.** Please refer to the appropriate chart.
7. **Name one sign of the end times from the world and one sign from the church.** Please refer to the appropriate chart.

Life Application

Whether concerning the Messiah, the Holy Spirit, or the nation of Israel, the Bible's prophecies have all been fulfilled. Thus, we know that God's word is the truth and will not fail. With this understanding in mind, we can be certain that Jesus Christ and the judgment day will come.

Jesus stated in Matthew 24:36 that no one knows the day and hour of His second coming. However, we do know that we will face judgment on the day He comes again, so we must constantly remind ourselves to live a godly life in preparation for meeting the Lord one day.

How Can We Live a Godly Life?

1. Resist temptations

Now that we know the signs of the end times, we must not be easily deceived or follow the trends of this world. We must actively guard against those who entice us with knowledge and speculation of the end. We must determine not to follow or live a life like those who have no hope for eternity, because we know that God will bring everything we do, good or bad, into judgment (Eccl 12:14).

2. Stand firm in hope

Hold fast to the teachings of the Bible as we yearn for the coming of Jesus Christ. We will encounter trials and tribulations in life, but we know that God's words and promises will never fail. With the power of the Holy Spirit, diligently pursue what is right and pure in the sight of the Lord. Remember that God is our hope in our sufferings and weaknesses.

3. Live for Christ

Whether good or bad, God will bring every work into judgment. Therefore, we must keep our eyes focused on God and the path to salvation as we live our lives. We must not become weary in doing good or showing love to those in need. Our conduct should be that of a person who glorifies God and seeks spiritual growth through prayer and spiritual cultivation.

Memory Verse

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away." (Matthew 24:35)

Meaning

This world is constantly changing. All living things undergo the cycle of life: beliefs or theories will change with new discoveries, and material objects will fail the test of time. In contrast to this ever-changing world, God is constant. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. We know that God is the same because He is beyond time and space. He holds the future, and all of creation is subject to Him. In addition to this, the prophecies in the Bible, which are God's word to man, have been fulfilled one by one, further proving to us that His words are true. They will not fail and will surely be realized.

Conclusion

The prophecies of the Bible are truth. Knowing this, we have the assurance that the Lord Jesus Christ will certainly come again. Knowing that God's word will never fail and His promises will be realized, we must diligently seek out His teachings and walk in them. To prepare ourselves for His coming, we must live a life of constant renewal that is a sweet aroma in the presence of God. As the prophecies were revealed to men through the movement of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit will strengthen and guide us in His truth.

Lesson 3 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What characteristics of God can we learn from this verse?
That unlike this ever-changing world, He is constant. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and is always the same because He is beyond time and space.
2. What are the four purposes of the prophecies?
To explain and declare things of the future; to manifest God's authority; and to edify and exhort.
3. Pick one of the purposes and explain it in your own words, with an example from the Bible.
 - a. *God controls time and space, and there is nothing that He does not know. Through prophecies, God explains what will happen in the future so that His people understand His will. An example from the Bible is the prophecy regarding Eli and his two sons, recorded in 1 Samuel, chapter 2.*
 - b. *The future is preordained by God; the life and death of every person and nation is under His control. His prophecies are a manifestation of His complete authority over yesterday, today, and forever. An example is the prophecy regarding King Belshazzar's fall (Dan 5:26–29).*
 - c. *God's prophecies edify His people and give us the strength to grow in faith. They serve to guide our lives, and also serve as a way for God to reveal how His people need to change in order to restore their relationship with Him. An example is the people's obedience to draw closer to God under King Asa (2 Chr 15:1–2).*
 - d. *God's prophecies bring faith in times of despair, so that God's chosen people could hold fast to their belief in Him. He uses prophecies to give His people hope for the future, so that they may have the courage to face the present. An example is the prophecy of Judah's return to the promised land after seventy years of captivity (Jer 29:10).*
4. Under what four subjects can we categorize the Bible's prophecies?
Prophecies concerning: the Messiah; the Holy Spirit; Israel; and the end days.
5. What are three ways to live a godly life?
Resist temptations, stand firm in hope, and live for Christ.
6. Choose one of the above ways to live a godly life. Which do you need to improve on, and how?
Personal answers.

The Books in the Old Testament (I): The Torah

Passages: Genesis—Deuteronomy

Memory Verse

“Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments.” (Deuteronomy 7:9)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Learn an overview of the key teachings in the Torah.2. Understand the importance of the Torah, and how the covenants in the Old Testament form the foundation for the New Testament covenant.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever.2. God is faithful.3. God’s promises are true.	Develop a personal relationship with God by growing in our knowledge, love, and trust in Him.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Overview of the Torah
 1. The Testaments
 2. The Torah
- B. God’s Covenants with Mankind
 1. The Mosaic Laws
 2. God’s Covenants Today
- C. The Lasting Covenants

Life Application: My Relationship with God

Memory Verse

Conclusion: The Torah contains a foundation for the covenant that we have been blessed with today: as long as we obey God, He will bless us. As Abraham’s spiritual descendants, we have been granted the same covenant today.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

A. Overview of the Torah

1. The Testaments

We often separate the Old and the New Testaments when we study the Bible, but it is important to remember that the Bible is comprised of both testaments, not just one of them. They are both connected to the theme of salvation, which is the purpose of God's word. While the Old Testament records the promise and preparation of salvation, the New Testament records the fulfillment and completion of it. In this way, the Old is the foundation of the New, and it serves as a shadow of salvation that comes to fruition in Jesus' time (Jn 1:17).

2. The Torah

The word *Torah* is Hebrew, meaning "law." The Torah consists of the first five books in the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The books are sometimes referred to as the Mosaic Laws, or the Books of Moses, in reference to their author. Later, they were also named the *Pentateuch*, which means "the five scrolls" in Greek.

The Torah is incredibly important because it forms the foundation of all Judaic teachings. The kings of Israel repeatedly referred to the laws contained in these books, and even Jesus Christ quoted from them while teaching His followers. When asked the greatest of commandments, He quoted from Deuteronomy: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Mt 22:37). As Jesus said, He came not to abolish the law, but to fulfill it (Mt 5:17), and these laws are what we strive to follow in our daily lives.

Let's take a brief look at the themes and key events of the Torah.

Genesis (Heb. *Bresheet*)

- Greek: "origin" or "beginning"
- Theme: God is our Creator.

Genesis covers the period from the creation of all things to Joseph's death and burial—mankind's sin, Noah's ark and God's subsequent promise, the Tower of Babel, and the lives of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), including God's covenant with Abraham. The book explains the consequences of sin when we disobey God, but also demonstrates His love in His establishment of these covenants with us. The only way that we can enjoy God's blessings is to obey Him and live a godly life.

Exodus (Heb. *Shemot*)

- Greek: "exit of large group"; Hebrew: "these are the names"
- Theme: God is our deliverer and Savior.

Exodus covers the period of slavery in Egypt until the completion of the tabernacle in the wilderness. It includes the birth of Moses, the plagues, and the Israelites' exodus from Egypt—from the crossing of the Red Sea to God's covenant given to the people at Mount Sinai. Through these events, the Book of Exodus explains how God rescued the Israelites from bondage and death. He also used Moses to lead His people and to illustrate His trustworthiness and faithfulness to His covenants. Through the Ten Commandments, He sought to teach His people how to live a life of holiness.

Leviticus (Heb. *Viyikra*)

- Greek: "relating to the Levites"; Hebrew: "called out," as in "the Lord called out"
- Theme: God is holy.

Leviticus covers the five offerings, the establishment of the priesthood, the seven feasts, and laws regarding food, hygiene, and purity. Through these laws, the book offers guidelines on how to worship God and live a holy life. In particular, through the sacrifices and offerings, we can learn of the purity and holiness of God, showing us that we need to devote every area of our lives to God in full obedience and devotion.

Numbers (Heb. *Bamidbar*)

- A translation of the Greek word *Arithmoi*. The name is derived from the book's many numbers, statistics, and censuses. But its Hebrew name, *Bamidbar*, from the first sentence of the book, means "in the wilderness."
- Theme: God is just and faithful.

Numbers records the Israelites' forty years of wandering in the wilderness. It includes the first census, Korah's rebellion, Miriam and Aaron's criticism of Moses, and the incident of Balaam's curses turned to blessings. In addition, it details the roles of the Levites, the Israelites' war against Midian, and the second numbering of the nations as they approached the promised land. Overall, the book outlines how the Israelites' prepared themselves to enter the promised land, but also includes details on their complaints, rebellion, and sins against God. We can see from this book how God judges sins because He is holy. His punishments are often severe, but He also offers forgiveness and restoration when our lives are sanctified.

Deuteronomy (Heb. *Devarim*)

- Greek: "second law"; Hebrew: "these are the words"
- Theme: God is love.

Deuteronomy is a reiteration of the law towards those who would enter the promised land, as well as a reminder of events that occurred in the wilderness. It includes Moses' death and the transition of leadership from Moses to Joshua. The events that the book details teach us about God's mighty acts and reminds us of His faithfulness. Knowing this, we should return His faith with our own love, and live out His covenant by keeping His commandments. Like the Israelites, these are lessons that we must learn as part of our preparation to enter the promised land.

B. God's Covenants with Mankind

If you closely examine the Torah, you will find that there are many covenants from God, but covenants are a two-way promise and require obedience on the part of mankind. The covenants that we can find in the Torah eventually shape the entire Bible, and are the root of the covenant of salvation that God offers us today.

1. The Mosaic Laws (Deut 6:1–3; 8:19–20)

Along with the Ten Commandments that He wrote on the two stone tablets, the Mosaic laws that God passed to the Israelites through Moses were part of a conditional covenant that He made with His people (Deut 5:2–5, 22, 28–33). If they listened to God, obeyed Him, and followed Him, He would bless them. If they did not, then He would judge them by their deeds (Deut 29:25–28).

While under God-fearing leaders such as Moses, Joshua, and King David, the Israelites were obedient to God's commands and received His blessings as a result. But more often than not, they strayed, unable to fully keep His laws. Their failure to return to God and repent of their ways eventually led to their exile from the promised land and years of captivity, under the rule of a foreign nation. Obeying the laws was difficult to do, but fortunately, God understood

mankind’s weaknesses and sent down His only Son to complete the covenant. As a result, we are now under a better covenant, one where the laws are written on our hearts instead of tablets of stone (2 Cor 3:3).

2. God’s Covenants Today

Let’s read Hebrews 6:17–18. Having nothing greater to swear by, God made this oath upon Himself as an assurance towards us. We are studying these covenants because we know that God cannot lie, and that His words carry both truth and power. Knowing this, we can take comfort in the fact that His covenants have persisted until today. So, if these covenants are still in place today, how do they affect us, we who are not physical descendants of Abraham?

Let’s read Galatians 3:29. “And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Like the Israelites, as long as we obey God, He will bless us, and through Jesus Christ, God’s promises to Abraham have extended to any willing to believe in His name.

C. The Lasting Covenants

Although there are many different elements of the Torah, studying the covenants can help us to understand more of the New Testament. Throughout history, God has consistently sought to rescue His people from sin and death by offering a way for them to be saved. He offered these paths to salvation through various covenants with mankind. When we study them more closely, we can see that God’s plan for our salvation began from the moment mankind was created, from the covenant He made with Adam and Eve, up until the new covenant that was established through the blood of Jesus Christ. But how exactly are these covenants related to each other?

Although the covenants recorded in the Torah seem vastly different from the new covenant that affects us today, it is still important to study the Old Testament, as the covenants recorded within offer a foundation upon which the new covenant was built (Lk 22:20; Heb 9:12–15).

The Old Testament Covenant	The New Testament Covenant
The Covenant’s Purpose	
<p style="text-align: center;">Reveals our sins (Ex 19:3–7)</p> <p>Mankind was born into sin and lived in a world surrounded by sin, making righteousness a seemingly impossible goal. The purpose of the laws was to make the people aware of sin, and to show them the methods necessary to keep themselves holy.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Saves us from sin (Heb 9:14–15)</p> <p>Through Jesus’ death, He has redeemed us from all of our transgressions. The Spirit is now our interceder who helps us to change ourselves.</p>
Conditions and Characteristics of the Covenant	
<p style="text-align: center;">Written on hearts of stone (Ezek 36:26–27)</p> <p>Aside from the physical tablets of stone, the Mosaic laws required strict obedience.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Written on hearts of flesh (Heb 8:10–11)</p> <p>The new covenant requires a change of heart instead of strict obedience to the letter of the law.</p>
Indirect communication through priests	Direct communication through Christ

<p>The Israelites had to rely on priests to mediate between them and God, and only the High Priest was permitted to enter the Holy of Holies. Those outside of the priesthood had no way of communicating directly with God.</p>	<p>Jesus Christ became the Mediator of the new covenant (Heb 12:24), allowing us to approach the throne of grace and communicate directly with God (4:16), who now dwells in our hearts as the Holy Spirit (8:10).</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Offered to Israelites</p> <p>Through circumcision, only the Israelites were considered a part of God’s chosen nation.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Offered to all</p> <p>Now, even Gentiles can approach God directly and become a part of His nation through repentance, belief, and baptism (Eph 3:6).</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Taught through priests</p> <p>The Israelites received instruction in the law from priests and scribes of their time. They had to rely entirely on teachers of the law to learn how to act and what to do. However, if there were no teachers, or if the teachers themselves were incorrect, then the Israelites would have been easily led astray.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Taught by the Holy Spirit</p> <p>We are now taught God’s word by the Holy Spirit, who reveals to us the mysteries of Christ, and helps us to understand how to act in accordance with God’s will (Gal 5:16–18; 1 Jn 2:27)</p>
<p>Fulfillment of the Covenant</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Incomplete covenant</p> <p>The old covenant was incomplete, requiring daily and special sacrifices in order to atone for sins. Ultimately, we could not be justified by the law of Moses (Acts 13:39).</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Complete covenant</p> <p>The new covenant only required one sacrifice. The blood of Christ was greater than bulls or goats (Heb 9:14–15), so He therefore only needed to give Himself up once to cover the sins of all. As a result, “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Rom 10:4). With His life on earth and His sacrifice, Christ thus fulfilled the law of Moses (Mt 5:17).</p>

The Old that Led to the New

The covenants are just one example of why it is important to study the Old Testament. While it seems as if the Old Testament books are irrelevant, the Torah still contains a “shadow of the good things to come” (Heb 10:1) and serves as a “tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor” (Gal 3:24–25). The covenants that we studied today are just a small portion of the Torah, but when we study all of the books, we can find that all of it is just a part of God’s preparation for our salvation.

By studying the history of God’s chosen people—and by extension, our own history as His new chosen people—we can learn more of God’s unchanging nature, His eternal promises, and how we might obtain these same blessings.

Check for Understanding

- 1. Why is it important to study the Torah?** It is incredibly important because it forms the foundation of all Judaic teachings. The kings of Israel repeatedly referred to the laws contained in these books, and even Jesus Christ quoted from them while teaching His followers. As Jesus had said, He came not to abolish the law, but to fulfill it (Mt 5:17).

- 2. What were the conditions for the covenant contained in the Mosaic laws?** If the Israelites listened to God, obeyed Him, and followed Him, He would bless them. If they did not, then He would judge them by their deeds.
- 3. What makes the new covenant a better covenant compared to the Mosaic laws?** God understood mankind's weaknesses and sent down His only Son to complete the covenant. As a result, we are now under a better covenant, one where the laws are written on our hearts instead of tablets of stone (2 Cor 3:3).
- 4. How do the covenants of the Old Testament affect our lives today?** God's covenants have persisted until today, because we are now also heirs of the same promise that He gave to Abraham. Like the Israelites, as long as we obey God, He will bless us, and through Jesus Christ, God's promises, originally made to Abraham, have now extended to any willing to believe in His name.
- 5. Describe two characteristics of the Old Testament covenant and explain how each differs in the New Testament covenant.** See the chart in *Events and Spiritual Teachings, Section C*.

Life Application

My Relationship with God

Through studying the overview of the Torah, we can gain a better understanding about God's relationship with mankind. Though God remained faithful, His chosen people forgot about Him and were unable to remain faithful to the covenants that they made. Today, we are blessed to be in the New Covenant where God is accessible to us, and we are able to be in His presence. However, we do not always treasure this precious relationship that we have with God, and it is often difficult to find ways to draw closer to Him, especially because it is a relationship built upon our faith. So, what are a few ways we can build up our relationship with Him?

1. Grow in our knowledge of God (Col 1:10)

We must grow in our knowledge of the Lord and the best way to do that is to be familiar with what He teaches us through His word. In any relationship, it can only grow when we learn about the likes and dislikes of a person and learn more about their personality. In the same way, what do we know about what God likes and dislikes? What are the key characteristics of our God in heaven? Through growing in our knowledge of God, we can deepen our relationship with God and make sure that we live a life that is pleasing in His eyes.

2. Grow in our love towards God (Deut 6:5)

We can grow in our love towards God every day through seeing the love that we have already received from the Lord. God has provided for our daily necessities, but even more importantly, God demonstrates His love for us through sending Jesus Christ to die for our sins. When we truly see the extent of how much God loves us and have felt the love of God, we will be compelled by His love to want to repay the love that we have received. In addition, when we personally experience the love of God, the things of this world will not be able to compare, and we will find our hearts to be full.

3. Grow in our trust in God (Isa 12:2)

The God that we worship is a faithful God. He is worthy of our trust and with Him by our side, there is nothing that we need to fear. This means that we can go to Him with our worries and fears, and He will be there to give us comfort and peace. The best way for us to see whether we trust the Lord is by seeing who we go to in our time of need. When we encounter a difficulty, do we bring it before God in prayer? Or do we try to solve our problems by our own power?

(Teachers: A worksheet with the following activity has been added to the Student Handout. Please also note that the activity sheet is referred to in question #6 of the homework assignment.)

Activity: My Relationship with God

How would you describe your current relationship with God? Take a moment and consider: do you enjoy spending time with Him? Do you actively seek out His presence, or instinctively turn to Him when you are in trouble?

1. Evaluate your relationship with God and give it a score out of fifty (fifty meaning you have an excellent relationship with God). Write down your score: ____/50
2. Next, consider the following questions and rate yourself from 1 to 5, 1 being “not at all,” and 5 being “all the time.”

1. Do you prioritize God’s work in your life, and do your best to serve Him both inside and outside of church?	
2. When you are in trouble, do you immediately say a silent prayer asking God for help?	
3. When you or a family member is sick or not feeling well, do you set aside time to pray for them or for yourself?	
4. When you struggle to understand anything, whether a Bible verse or something you are learning at school, do you ask God for help?	
5. Do you recognize God’s blessings in your life and remember to thank Him for them?	
6. Does your conscience sting you when you are faced with a decision between God’s will and your own desires?	
7. Do you frequently communicate your situation and feelings to God, as much as you would to your friends or family?	
8. At times when you realize that you have sinned, do you feel regretful towards God and try to change your ways?	
9. Do your prayers feel focused and fulfilling?	
10. Do you look forward to spending time with God on Sabbath days, and pay close attention to His words during sermons or RE classes?	
Total Score:	(/50)

3. Add up your score. How did you rate overall? Was your score better or worse than your initial rating of your relationship with God?

No matter what your score was, there are always ways to improve our relationship with God. What are obstacles that may be hindering your relationship with God?

There may be many things that are stopping us from drawing closer to Him, but there are also a lot of different ways we can grow our relationship with God. It is always easier to take steps when we find specific areas to improve upon. Once we have found an area to focus on, we can break it down into

more manageable goals. *(Teachers: Step #5 can be done individually, in groups, or as a class. Help the students to brainstorm ways to grow their relationship with God.)*

4. Now go back to the chart and do the following:
 - a. Add a **check** next to the statement that you feel most closely describes your relationship with God.
 - b. Add a **star** next to the statement that you need to work on the most.
5. Based on the statement that you added a star to, brainstorm different ways to nurture your relationship with God. For example, think of ways to rearrange your schedule, methods to help you prioritize how you use your time, or where you can find help in dealing with temptations that interfere with your relationship with God.

Even if we are unable to see Him with our physical eyes, God is waiting for us to know Him more. But like any relationship, our relationship with God is two-directional, meaning we cannot simply wait for God to take action in our lives—we need to contribute our own efforts to grow closer to Him. This means constantly evaluating our relationship with Him, taking steps to improve ourselves, and always seeking ways to increase our faith so that we can fulfill our end of the covenant that He has given to us through Jesus Christ.

Memory Verse

“Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments.” (Deuteronomy 7:9)

Meaning

Although we often separate the Old and the New Testaments, it is important to understand that the God who made a lasting covenant with Abraham and the Israelites is the same God today. This means that His promise of blessing and an inheritance apply to us today, as we are Abraham’s spiritual descendants. After studying the Torah, we can find reassurance in God’s faithfulness to His promises and find comfort in the fact that He will always care for those who love Him and keep His commandments.

Conclusion

We continue to study the Old Testament today because, although our lives as New Testament believers look significantly different from the lives of Old Testament believers, God’s nature and promises remain the same. The Torah contains a foundation for the covenant that we have been blessed with today: as long as we obey God, He will bless us, and as Abraham’s spiritual descendants, we have been granted the same covenant today.

Lesson 4 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. Why is it important to understand God's faithfulness to His covenants?
Because when we understand God's faithfulness, we can be assured that the same promise of blessing and an inheritance applies to us today, as we are Abraham's spiritual descendants. We can find comfort in the fact that He will always care for those who love Him and keep His commandments.
2. Pick one book from the Torah. Explain the meaning of its name and summarize its key events.
See Events and Spiritual Teachings, Section A.
3. Explain the conditions of the covenant that God gave to the Israelites through Moses at Mount Sinai.
If they listened to God, obeyed Him, and followed Him, He would bless them. If they did not, then He would judge them by their deeds.
4. "Therefore the _____ was our tutor to bring us to _____, that we might be _____ by _____. But after _____ has come, we are no longer under a tutor."
(Galatians 3:24–25)
law, Christ, justified, faith, faith
5. Describe one characteristic of the Old Testament covenant and compare it to the new covenant.
See the chart in Events and Spiritual Teachings, Section C.
6. If you were unable to finish the activity sheet during class, do so now. What did you decide to do for step #5 on the activity sheet? Write it down and come back next week to see if you did it. If you didn't, try rethinking what you can do and write that down instead.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Lesson 4 Activity: My Relationship with God

How would you describe your current relationship with God? Take a moment and consider: do you enjoy spending time with Him? Do you actively seek out His presence, or instinctively turn to Him when you are in trouble?

1. Evaluate your relationship with God and give it a score out of fifty (fifty meaning you have an excellent relationship with God). Write down your score: ____/50
2. Next, consider the following questions and rate yourself from 1 to 5, 1 being “not at all,” and 5 being “all the time.”

1. Do you prioritize God’s work in your life, and do your best to serve Him both inside and outside of church?	
2. When you are in trouble, do you immediately say a silent prayer asking God for help?	
3. When you or a family member is sick or not feeling well, do you set aside time to pray for them or for yourself?	
4. When you struggle to understand anything, whether a Bible verse or something you are learning at school, do you ask God for help?	
5. Do you recognize God’s blessings in your life and remember to thank Him for them?	
6. Does your conscience sting you when you are faced with a decision between God’s will and your own desires?	
7. Do you frequently communicate your situation and feelings to God, as much as you would your friends or family?	
8. At times when you realize that you have sinned, do you feel regretful towards God and try to change your ways?	
9. Do your prayers feel focused and fulfilling?	
10. Do you look forward to spending time with God on Sabbath days, and pay close attention to His words during sermons or RE classes?	
Total Score:	(/50)

3. Add up your score. How did you rate overall? Was your score better or worse than your initial rating of your relationship with God?

No matter what your score was, there are always ways to improve our relationship with God. What are obstacles that may be hindering your relationship with God?

There may be many things that are stopping us from drawing closer to Him, but there are also a lot of different ways we can grow our relationship with God. It is always easier to take steps when we find specific areas to improve upon. Once we have found an area to focus on, we can break it down into more manageable goals.

4. Now go back to the chart and do the following:
 - a. Add a **check** next to the statement that you feel most closely describes your relationship with God.
 - b. Add a **star** next to the statement that you need to work on the most.

5. Based on the statement that you added a star to, brainstorm different ways to nurture your relationship with God. For example, think of ways to rearrange your schedule, methods to help you prioritize how you use your time, or where you can find help in dealing with temptations that interfere with your relationship with God.

The Books in the Old Testament (II): The Historical Books

Passages: Joshua–Esther

Memory Verse

“I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You.” (Job 42:2)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Learn a brief overview of the historical books.2. Learn how God’s sovereignty is superior to mankind.3. Understand how God’s sovereignty has affected history, nations, and our sins.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God is almighty.2. God has the power to enact His will.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Learn how God’s sovereignty should affect our daily lives.2. Learn the importance of sealing God’s promises in our hearts, and of how trusting God can give us stability in our lives, even in tribulation.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Timeline and Overview of the Historical Books
- B. The Historical Books: A Demonstration of God’s Sovereignty
- C. God’s Sovereignty over Nations
- D. God’s Sovereignty over History
- E. God’s Sovereignty over Sin

Life Application: Finding Stability in God’s Sovereignty

Memory Verse

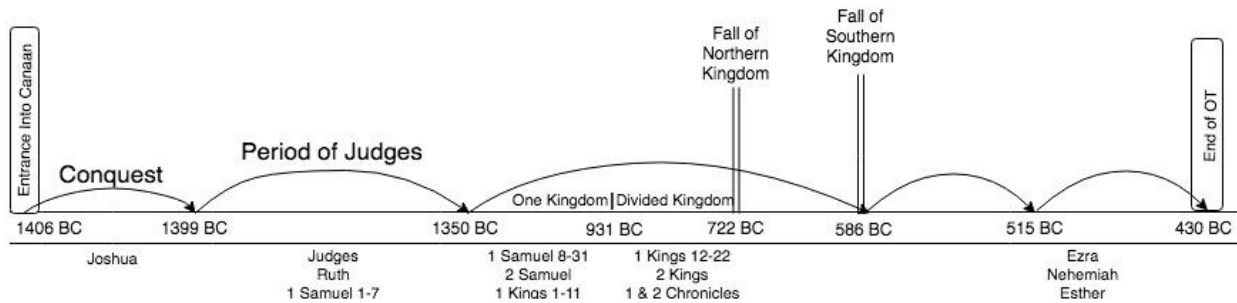
Conclusion: God is in control, from every moment of our lives to the progress of the entire world. He is truly the sovereign Lord who directs all situations, relationships, and events. By holding on to this knowledge, we can find refuge in His sovereignty, no matter what trials we face.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

Introduction

The Old Testament is composed of four main sections: the Torah, the historical books, the wisdom books, and the prophetic books. In today’s lesson, we will focus on the second section: the historical books. These books record the Israelites’ history from after Moses’ death to their exile in a foreign land, which is a period that lasted approximately 1,000 years. This period is important to us because it not only reveals God’s divine nature, but also reminds us of the trials and tribulations that the chosen people of God have faced and will continue to face.

A. Timeline and Overview of the Historical Books



From this chart, we can divide the Israelites’ history after their journey through the wilderness into four major sections: The conquest of the land of Canaan; the period of the judges; the period of the kings; and their exile and return to Canaan.

1. The Conquest of the Land of Canaan (Joshua)

The Book of Joshua covers this portion of Israelite history. It describes the process of how Joshua and the Israelites conquered the promised land under God’s power, as well as details how the land was divided among the twelve tribes.

2. The Period of Judges (Judges; Ruth; 1 Samuel 1–7)

This period was a chaotic time during which the Israelites repeatedly strayed from God’s teachings, only to return to Him when He allowed other nations to attack. Let’s read Judges 21:25. In contrast to the Israelites’ tendency to turn away from God, these books highlight God’s faithfulness to His people, as well as His mercy and justice. This period concluded with Samuel, who was not only a high priest, but also the last judge of Israel.

3. The Period of Kings (1 & 2 Samuel; 1 & 2 Kings; 1 & 2 Chronicles)

Despite the judges’ repeated calls to return to God, the Israelites were unable to steadfastly follow God’s rule. They eventually showed their ignorance of God’s role in their lives by demanding a king like other nations. God granted their desire, leading to several years of prosperity under David and Solomon’s reign. However, the line of kings ultimately led to the division of Israel into the northern and southern kingdoms, which was followed by the Israelites’ exile as a result of their unfaithfulness.

4. Exile and Return (Ezra; Nehemiah; Esther)

The Book of Esther details an account of God’s continual protection of His people even when they were living in exile. Eventually, after seventy years of exile, God showed mercy to His people and permitted their return to the promised land. The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah

contain details of the trials faced by those who returned as they rebuilt the walls and the temple.

B. The Historical Books: A Demonstration of God’s Sovereignty

Although there are many things that the historical books can teach us about God, today, we will focus on a single aspect: His sovereignty. Before we study this more closely, though, what does it mean when we call God “sovereign”?

According to the dictionary, a “sovereign” is one “possessed of supreme power,” who is “an acknowledged leader,” or “one that exercises supreme authority.”¹ We know that God is sovereign in that He has the power to do anything. His omnipotence makes Him the sovereign of all sovereigns, and this is understood well by even King David, one of the greatest leaders in Israelite history. Let’s read 1 Chronicles 29:11–12. “Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and You are exalted as head over all.” Job also acknowledged God’s sovereignty, saying, “I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You” (Job 42:2).

The difference between the sovereignty of a man and the sovereignty of God is that God has the power to do anything. He is all-powerful, and nothing can stop what He intends to do. Ephesians 1:11 says, “In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.” His will is all that is needed for Him to make something happen. God’s sovereignty has affected us directly in some obvious ways—He controls our lives, has given us everything that we have, and has granted us salvation through grace. But there are much larger things that His sovereignty has affected, and as a result, these larger things have changed our lives more subtly as well.

C. God’s Sovereignty over Nations

“O LORD God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You?” (2 Chr 20:6)

King Jehoshaphat was a bold follower of God, leading him to many military victories through God’s guidance. But his successor, his son Jehoram, did evil in the sight of the Lord and caused the nation to worship Baal instead (2 Chr 21:3, 6). Let’s read 2 Chronicles 21:7. “Yet the LORD would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that He had made with David, and since He had promised to give a lamp to him and to his sons forever.

This verse teaches us a deceptively simple truth: the kingship and authority of all nations are entirely in God’s hands. We can see from Israelite history that it is well within God’s abilities to raise up or remove leaders or entire nations, and this verse states clearly that it was God’s choice not to destroy Jehoram because of a covenant that He would uphold for generations after the death of King David.

We know that nothing in the nations occurs without God’s permission. He has the power to prevent anything that He chooses to, and likewise has the power to enact His will regardless of mankind’s choices. Let’s read Psalm 33:10–11. “The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes

¹ Merriam Webster, s.v. “sovereign,” accessed Jan 20, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sovereign>

the plans of the peoples of no effect. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations.”

D. God’s Sovereignty over History

“The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.” (Prov 16:33)

The Book of Esther is a great example of how God is not only sovereign over nations, but also how His sovereignty is such that He can orchestrate history. Although God’s name is not explicitly mentioned in the book, we can easily see His presence in every chapter. Each sequence of events was lined up perfectly to fulfill His plan and preserve His chosen people. But the book also teaches us something important about how God enacts His will. Let’s read Esther 4:13–14.

And Mordecai told them to answer Esther: “Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king’s palace any more than all the other Jews. For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

Esther’s fears were valid. If the king rejected her, she would certainly die. However, Mordecai told her quite clearly that even if she chose not to act, God would still preserve His people. His will would be accomplished with or without her. Everything she had gone through was likely for the purpose of bringing her to this moment in history, but in the end, it was still her choice to be a part of His plan. If she chose to, she would receive His blessings. If not, then her family would be “cast out”—either way, God’s will would be enacted. Mordecai understood this clearly: “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD” (Prov 16:33).

E. God’s Sovereignty over Sin

“[...] You will restore me and make me live. Indeed it was for my own peace that I had great bitterness; but You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, for You have cast all my sins behind Your back.” (Isa 38:16–17)

A key aspect of God’s sovereignty that cannot be imitated by mankind is His sovereignty over sin. He demonstrates this in His judgment of nations throughout the Old Testament, but also displays this sovereignty in the personal lives of the Israelites. There are many examples of this in the historical books, but we’ll take a closer look at just two examples: King Hezekiah and his son Manasseh.

1. Hezekiah’s Sickness, Pride, and Humility

Hezekiah had been a good king who served the Lord (2 Kgs 18:3–5). Despite this, Hezekiah became severely sick in his life. Let’s read 2 Kings 20:1–6. In response to Hezekiah’s plea, God demonstrated His power over the life of mankind by not only healing his sickness, but also promising fifteen more years. Let’s read Isaiah 38:16–17. Not all sickness is due to sin, but we can see that after his recovery, Hezekiah wrote that God had “cast all my sins behind Your back.” Sin and sickness are both things that all the riches in the world cannot fix, yet God transformed Hezekiah’s life entirely because of one prayer.

Unfortunately, King Hezekiah did not repay the Lord’s favor. Rather than showing a God-fearing nation to visiting Babylonian envoys, Hezekiah proudly showed off the riches that he had accumulated because of God’s blessings (2 Kgs 20:13; 2 Chr 32:31). As a result, God told Hezekiah that all the riches that he had shown would one day be taken away (2 Kgs 20:17–18).

However, because Hezekiah humbled himself, “the wrath of the LORD did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah” (2 Chr 32:26).

2. **Manasseh’s Sin, Punishment, and Repentance**

Unfortunately, Hezekiah’s son Manasseh did not follow in his father’s footsteps, as he did evil in the sight of the Lord. He restored the idols and high places that his father had broken down, revived evil practices, and led the nation of Judah into sin through idolatry (2 Kgs 21:3–6). In this manner, “Manasseh seduced [Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem] to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel” (v. 9).

The sins of Manasseh and the people greatly jeopardized their place in the promised land (2 Kgs 21:8). Let’s read 2 Chronicles 33:10–13. We can clearly see God’s sovereignty over the sin and rebellion of mankind from the punishment that Manasseh received. If we read the rest of the passage, we can see that Manasseh truly repented of his past transgressions. He proceeded to take away the idols that he had set up, repaired the altar, and “commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel” (v. 16). Manasseh’s sin led to his capture, and his repentance to his return.

For both Hezekiah and Manasseh, the consequences and results of their actions were entirely dependent on their sin or their repentance. Both may have been kings, but just like any other man, it was their sin, not their wills, that dictated the direction of their lives. God’s sovereignty over sin is shown in His ability to punish our rebellion, or to cast away our sins and grant us blessings.

Check for Understanding

- 1. What is different about God’s sovereignty compared to the sovereignty of mankind?** God’s sovereignty is far greater because He is all-powerful, and nothing can stop what He intends to do. But there are much larger things that His sovereignty has affected, and as a result, these larger things have changed our lives more subtly as well.
- 2. What does 2 Chronicles 21:7 teach us about God’s sovereignty over nations?** It teaches us a deceptively simple truth: the kingship and authority of all nations are entirely in God’s hands. It is well within God’s abilities to raise up or remove leaders or entire nations.
- 3. What was Mordecai trying to convey to Esther with the words, “If you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place”?** Even if Esther chose not to act, God would still preserve His people. His will would be accomplished with or without her.
- 4. From the examples of Hezekiah and Manasseh, in what way does God’s sovereignty over sin affect our personal lives?** He can choose to cast our sin “behind us,” or He can choose to punish us for our sins. For both kings, the consequences and results of their actions were entirely dependent on their sin or their repentance. God’s sovereignty over sin is shown in His ability to punish our rebellion, or to cast away our sins and grant us blessings.

Life Application

Finding Stability in God’s Sovereignty

Today, we learned various aspects of God’s sovereignty, and why His sovereignty is far superior to even the greatest kings in history. He has the power to move entire nations according to His will, change history for the sake of His covenant, and alter the direction of an individual’s life based on their sin and repentance. This knowledge shouldn’t only make us fear God’s power, though. This knowledge should also make us realize that He can be our refuge in times of success, failure, or tribulation. By having a full

understanding of His sovereignty, we will come to understand that although He is invisible, He is our anchor. We simply need to pray and ask God to let us see His invisible works.

At times, though, it will feel as if God is not helping us at all. How do we continue to rely on Him when it feels like things are still going wrong no matter how much we pray? Here is a testimony about a brother who faced a difficult situation, yet still managed to emerge from his panic to find peace in the Lord, despite the difficulties that he faced.

Teachers: The testimony has been added to the end of this document and to the student handout, so that you can print copies for your students if you wish.

Discussion

- If you were in their position, what solutions would you have hoped or expected from God when the problem first started?
- At what point did the young member's outlook towards the situation begin to change?
- What is the difference in attitude when the problem was first discovered and as the problems began to resolve themselves one by one?
- What do you think gave this member so much trust and peace in God?

As we have read in the testimony, we can find God's power and presence in us, working through the lives of His children. He is quiet and hidden from our eyes, but He is never silent, and is always at work. God is sovereign and can accomplish what concerns us today (Ps 138:7–8). However, He doesn't announce His presence with fireworks and trumpets! We need to be still so that we can look for and respond to His quiet promptings. When we pause and look closely, we will be able to see what He is doing in our lives. And as the young member testified, God does not always respond in the ways we expect Him to.

Let's read Job 42:2. "I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You." When we ask for His help, He is able to completely exceed our expectations and go above and beyond anything that we can even imagine (Eph 3:20). Rather than establishing our own expectations for how He ought to respond to our requests, we need to trust that He knows what He is doing and believe in His sovereignty over all things. This knowledge can give us assurance that whatever happens to us, no matter how seemingly impossible the situation, God can help us.

Memory Verse

"I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You." (Job 42:2)

Meaning

See *Life Application* section.

Conclusion

At times, we will experience frustration when facing difficulties, or we may be swayed by temptations. We may even feel like we cannot see God in our lives, or we may find our faith lacking. But when we examine the historical books, we can clearly see that God is in control, from every moment of our lives to the progress of the entire world. He is truly the sovereign Lord who directs all situations, relationships, and events. By holding on to this knowledge, we can find refuge in His sovereignty, no matter what trials we face.

Lesson 5 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. Explain the memory verse in your own words.
When we ask for God's help, He is able to completely exceed our expectations and go above and beyond anything that we can even imagine.
2. What four major sections can the timeline of Israelite history be divided into?
The conquest of the land of Canaan; the period of judges; the period of kings; and their exile and return to Canaan.
3. What is the difference between the sovereignty of man and the sovereignty of God?
While mankind is limited, God has the power to do anything. His omnipotence makes Him the sovereign of all sovereigns, and this is understood well by even King David, one of the greatest leaders in Israelite history. God's sovereignty affects us directly in both obvious and subtle ways.
4. From the examples of Hezekiah and Manasseh, how are we affected by God's sovereignty over sin?
The consequences and results of their actions were entirely dependent on their sin or their repentance. God's sovereignty over sin is shown in His ability to punish our rebellion, or to cast away our sins and grant us blessings.
5. How should our understanding of God's sovereignty affect our daily lives?
This knowledge should make us realize that He can be our refuge in times of success, failure, or tribulation. By having a full understanding of His sovereignty, we will come to understand that although He is invisible, He is our anchor.
6. What kind of attitude should we have when making our requests known to God? Do you think you do this successfully in your prayers?
*Rather than praying with expectations regarding how He should respond, we need to trust that He knows what He is doing and believe in His sovereignty over all things.
Personal answers.*

Testimony: Finding Stability in God's Sovereignty

– Anonymous

(Edited to accommodate length and written format.)

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I testify. I'd like to share my experience of how God was able to give me true peace in a time of trouble, and how I found comfort through prayer.

In July of 2020, I opened my MacBook expecting to work on some projects, only to find that the computer didn't turn on. An icon of a white folder labeled with a question mark appeared on the screen. I was originally really confused, and I thought I could solve this problem with a simple restart, but it would always pop up whenever I tried again. After a few days of attempting to solve this problem by retrieving possible backups, I began worrying about whether or not my files were actually gone.

I started praying about this, and I hoped that God would be able to restore the computer completely. I knew He was all-powerful, and this would not be a task that is too hard for Him. As I prayed, I began to feel more relieved and would expect my computer to work every time I opened it up. However, the problem persisted. My dad decided to bring it to a mechanic, who told him that its hardware was destroyed. There was nothing he could do to find my previous files, and... everything was gone.

At this moment, I began to panic, as there were four major problems that I had to deal with after hearing the news about my old computer.

The first problem was the loss of my digital artwork. I saved everything locally, meaning that everything was wiped. Almost every drawing that I ever did for the past five years was gone. On top of that, the file that I was going to submit to a digital art competition that month was gone. All that I had left was a low-resolution file that I had exported to show my parents.

The second problem was the loss of my video files. I was in charge of recording and editing the video project that our J2 class had begun work on over the summer. But now, all of the files and edits that I had made were gone. The only backup video was a low-resolution export that I had sent to my teachers for feedback. What frustrated me even more was how my R.E. teachers did not understand the gravity of the situation. One of them told me that this wasn't a valid excuse to stop our project, and that it was my responsibility to keep going. But how was I supposed to continue without a computer?

The third problem was the loss of my code. I had been developing a video game as a personal project that I could share with friends and publish on a website, but everything that I had worked on was gone. I could try redoing everything and rewriting the code, but it would just make me way too sad knowing that I had to waste so much time doing something I almost finished. I tried to avoid thinking about the project as this was one of the most valuable things that I lost that week.

The fourth problem was a choir video for Oahu church. One of their members contacted me a few weeks in advance about helping to edit their youth choir video, and I agreed. However, without my computer, I no longer had the editing software to help and couldn't continue. I was extremely stressed because I couldn't find someone to replace me and help with this project. I had already accepted the duty, and I felt really bad telling the church member that I couldn't uphold my end of the project.

After finding out about the amount of data I lost, I almost broke down because I'm the type of person who uses the computer every day. Almost everything I do can be found on my computer. I knew I couldn't handle it myself, so I decided to pray so that God could somehow alleviate my stress and resolve some of these problems that I faced. I didn't know what He would do next, but I knew that He was the only one who could help me during this difficult time.

As the days passed, I felt God slowly answering my prayers. One by one, He helped me with every problem that I faced after losing all my files on my computer.

For our R.E. year-end project, I thank God for helping our class figure out a way to present the video. Although the final presentation was super short and the blurriest video I have ever seen, I felt that we still got our message and story across. I also thank God for resolving the misunderstanding and miscommunication between the students and the teachers, and that we were at least able to export something instead of abandoning the project we worked so hard on altogether.

For the choir video that I had to edit, I thank God for finding a substitute for me. When I was about to respond to the Oahu church member and tell her that I could no longer help, I remembered that I had a close friend from previous spiritual convocations who might be available. I was unsure if he would want to be involved in this project since he had no prior experience editing videos, and I knew he was a very busy person. However, I thank God that he had a very willing heart to serve, understood my situation, and gladly took over for me.

For my code, I remembered that I had decided to back up my project to the cloud a month prior to this incident for no apparent reason. Reflecting upon this, I now feel that it was truly by the grace of God that my game files could actually be restored. It was most likely not just a random backup, but one that God did for me. I really thank God that He made me do it in preparation for this trial.

Finally, for my artwork, I was never actually able to retrieve any of my recent drawings. I ended up submitting a low-resolution file to the art contest and did not win. However, even though I lost so much, God still gave me peace. The peace that He gave me after I prayed was actually a lot more valuable than my art files because He taught me to trust and have faith in Him. When I count the considerable number of things that I had lost, I don't feel miserable about what happened. Being a pessimist, I tend to see things from a negative point of view, but I really do not see this event as a loss. Instead, I see this as an opportunity for me to draw closer to God and find the peace that He promises to us.

John 14:27 says, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." I feel like this verse really sums up this whole experience, as it touches upon the peace that God gives each one of us. For me, God touched my heart so that I no longer feel as sad about this difficulty. When we are facing troubles and don't get the outcome that we expect, we can pray for the peace that only comes from God. If we do so, I believe God will be more than willing to give us the peace that He promises and help us to have the right attitude when encountering different trials in our lives.

This concludes my testimony. May all the glory and honor be unto His holy name. Amen.

The Books in the Old Testament (III): The Wisdom Books

Passages: Job–Song of Solomon

Memory Verse

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”
(Proverbs 9:10)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
1. Understand the importance of studying the wisdom books. 2. Learn the basics of conducting a thematic study of the wisdom books.	God is the source of all wisdom.	When we learn to fear the Lord, He will bless and protect us.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. An Overview of the Wisdom Books
- B. Studying the Wisdom Books: Thematic Studies

Life Application: The Fear of the Lord

Memory Verse

Conclusion: By provoking a visual that lingers in our minds, the wisdom books help us to stand firm in our faith so that we can confidently face any obstacles or decisions that we encounter in our spiritual lives.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

A. An Overview of the Wisdom Books

As the name indicates, the wisdom books are not records of historical events or narratives but are instead books that instruct us how to live wisely. Throughout the centuries, many such books have been written, and even today, bookstores have self-help or philosophy sections that focus on morality, the way we ought to live, and our state of being. The Bible, however, focuses on the wisdom of living in the context of our faith. They teach us of the self-destructive nature of sin and of how living wisely means learning to fear our Creator and adopting His will as our own. However, this is not always an easy thing to do, which is why the wisdom books are so varied in style, themes, and teachings.

Job

- Hebrew: “persecuted one”
- Theme: The purpose of suffering
- Key Verse: “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” (Job 42:5–6)
- Key Teachings: Our human wisdom and knowledge are very limited in scope when compared to God’s wisdom. God allows suffering to happen in our lives so that we are able to grow.

From the Book of Job, we can gain a deeper understanding about God’s sovereign nature. He has ultimate control over the coming and going of our lives. We are under His authority and protection because we are His creation. The Book of Job gives us wisdom in the form of dialogues between Job and his friends, and Job and God Himself. The dialogues follow something similar to a call and response. Questions that we have about suffering and justice are asked on our behalf by Job and his friends, and all of these are answered by Elihu, and eventually, God Himself.

Psalms (Heb. *Tehillim* meaning “praises”)

- From the Greek word *psalmoi*, which refers to instrumental music, a “psalm” is a sacred song or hymn.
- Theme: Praise and prayer
- Key Verse: “This will be written for the generation to come, that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD.” (Psalm 102:18)
- Key Teachings: The Book of Psalms teaches us to praise God in all circumstances.

The Book of Psalms describes God’s mercy and justice. Some psalms praise God for His abundant grace, while others call for God to answer in times of need, or to answer the evil deeds of mankind with His just punishment. But all five subsections, or “books” within Psalms conclude with unreserved praise for God. Through the patriarchs, prophets, and other leaders, God spoke to His people; through these psalms, individuals responded to God with deeply emotional songs.

Proverbs

- A “proverb” is a saying that states a general truth or point.
- Theme: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.
- Key Verse: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” (Proverbs 1:7)
- Key Teachings: True wisdom can only be found in the Lord. It is important for us to be spiritually wise because wisdom is valued in the eyes of God.

God is wise, and He is the source of wisdom. We are able to see His wisdom from His creation and in all that He does, and has done, in the lives of man. As a result, if we feel like we lack direction in our lives, or if we need knowledge or understanding, we can always come before God and ask for it. While the Book of Psalms offers a reflection of our deepest emotions, the Book of Proverbs gives us a series of instructive sayings to help us to keep our hearts, minds, and spirits in order, all in a manner that is still applicable today.

Ecclesiastes

- A Greek rendering of the Hebrew word for “preacher.”
- Theme: Everything under the sun is vanity.
- Key Verse: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13)
- Key Teachings: The things in this world are all temporary. God is the one who gives hope and meaning to our lives.

God is our source of hope. The world that we live in can be chaotic and unfair. However, our hope is not in the world. Rather, our hope comes from God. When we are willing to follow and keep His teachings, then we will be able to look away from the things in this world and instead look towards the things above. In contrast to the Book of Job, the Book of Ecclesiastes is more of a monologue, one man’s journey to find the meaning of his life after having received everything as a rich and powerful king. While Job sought answers after being reduced to nothing, King Solomon sought answers after receiving everything this world had to offer.

Song of Solomon

- Also known as “Song of Songs.”
- Theme: God’s love for the church.
- Key Verse: “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—for your love is better than wine.” (Song 1:2)
- Key Teachings: God loves His people and wants them to have an intimate relationship with Him.

Song of Solomon describes to us the joy and intimacy that can be found in a godly marriage, while also offering a glimpse of what the union between the bride of Christ—the church—and the Lord Jesus should look like. God demonstrates His love for His bride, which is the church. He wants to be with His people, and this beautiful relationship is depicted throughout Song of Solomon.

Overall, the wisdom books vary greatly in style and difficulty, but in the end, the conclusion is always the same: wisdom is found in the fear of the Lord. However, reading them can be difficult, so now we’ll shift our focus and examine one way to study the wisdom books.

B. Studying the Wisdom Books: Thematic Studies

One key way to study the wisdom books is to look at them from a thematic approach. Although there are many themes in the wisdom books, today we will pick out just one theme and study it together. At the end of the study, hopefully we’ll have learned a bit more about how to study the wisdom books, as well as the importance of reading them.

(Teachers: The following example study also serves as the Life Application for this lesson. If your students have strong biblical knowledge, consider having them conduct this study on their own or in small groups,

with some basic teacher guidance. For example, consider referring them to the appropriate verses for each question and having them discuss answers, before directly conveying the below teachings.)

Example Study & Life Application: The Fear of the Lord

To do a thematic study, we first need to figure out the theme in the passage. Let's turn to Ecclesiastes 12:13–14. The theme in these verses is very clear: Fear of the Lord. Because this theme is often addressed in sermons and other lessons, we probably already know a great deal about fearing the Lord. But the Bible is incredibly layered. Seemingly simple themes often have greater depth than we may realize, and there is always something new to learn about God or about ourselves.

Once we've picked a theme, we can move on. To do any kind of study, it is important to ask ourselves a few questions. It is important to focus on the "what," the "why," and the "how," especially in context of our faith. What does the Bible teach us about this theme? Why is this important to us? How does this affect our daily walk of faith? What can I change in my daily life in response to this new understanding? Asking the right questions will lead to more beneficial answers! For now, we'll just focus on a few for our theme of "fearing God."

1. What does it mean to fear God?

"Fearing God" is a common theme in the Bible. Let's do a quick review of what it means to fear God. There are two types of fear. The first is the one we all encounter during our lifetime. Loneliness, rejection, and loss are just a few of many fears that we experience. It can also be the kind of fear that keeps us awake at night, or startles us in a frightening moment. But unlike the fear of the unknown, the fear of God is a healthy and holy fear that brings us life and blessings (Prov 19:23; Ps 112:1). It is a continual awareness of God's presence next to us, and the fact that He sees, knows, and is with our every move (Ps 33:18).

2. Why must we fear God?

Answering this question means that we need to have a thorough understanding of who God is. Let's read Psalm 146:5–10. What characteristics of God can be found in this passage? (*Creator, Savior, judge, righteous, healer, eternal.*) God is the Creator, Savior, and judge of all mankind (Ps 5:4–7). He is all-powerful and has control over everything, from our sicknesses to the nations across the world. Psalm 33:8 says, "Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him."

From these passages, we can see that there are several reasons we ought to fear God. Not only is He the one who gave us life, both physical and spiritual, but He is also the one who executes judgment upon us for our sins, and who also gives us blessings when we worship Him. His omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and holiness can never be matched. This sovereignty that He holds is the reason we need to fear Him. In much the same way we would show respect towards an authority figure or someone whom we admire, we ought to show even greater respect to the one who made us, judges us, and blesses us according to His will.

3. What do we gain from fearing God?

Similar to knowing why we should fear God, it is important to consider what happens to our lives when we do. What kinds of changes occur? If someone were to look at your life from the outside, what would they see? What would make them think, "This must be a person who fears God"? Proverbs 22:4 says, "By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches and honor and life." The fear of the Lord is the source of every blessing imaginable! Let's take a closer look at just a

few of them.

a. Strong confidence

“In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge.” (Prov 14:26)

What is the meaning of this promise? When you face the unknown or encounter any danger, because you fear God, you will find assurance in Him and find that He will help you get through it. You are not facing these things by yourself but facing them together with God because He is dwelling within you, giving you His confidence and boldness. These feelings are not from you, but from God. You and I can face any frightening thing in life with the presence of the Holy God at our side because we fear Him. Can you think of a situation where you were or would be afraid or anxious? How would fearing God affect or change the situation, either physically or mentally?

b. Wisdom

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” (Prov 9:10)

Wisdom is different from knowledge, and worldly knowledge is different from knowledge of God. So, what is wisdom? It is not the same as being smart. We can accumulate knowledge, but we can be unwise. And we can accumulate knowledge of the world, but this knowledge will not help us in spiritual matters. Wisdom helps us to live according to God’s word. It helps us to know what to do, when to do it, and how to act. It helps us to discern when to believe our friends, or when to make our own judgment. Ultimately though, wisdom is what leads us to salvation, because a wise person is someone who lives out the life that God intended for them.

In the parable of the rich fool, God said to him, “Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?” (Lk 12:20). The farmer had planned his future without God in mind. But a person who fears God and has a relationship with Him becomes wiser because he makes decisions based on God’s will. In much the same way, you may graduate with several degrees, or become successful in the workplace, but as with the rich farmer, these are meaningless if you do not have the wisdom that comes from fearing God (Prov 3:5–6).

Have you ever been in a position where you did not know what to do or say? Have you ever felt tricked, or heard about others who were deceived into difficult situations?

c. Deliverance

“The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them.” (Ps 34:7)

In the Bible, angels are messengers from God that protect God’s people. This means that God has promised to take care of us; He will never leave or forsake us. Proverbs states that “The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to turn one away from the snares of death” (Prov 14:27). When we fear God, He will even protect us from death.

Have you heard a testimony or been in a position where you experienced God’s

deliverance? While there are more obvious incidents of deliverance from accident or injury, sometimes we may realize that God has delivered us from harm even without our knowledge, perhaps by guiding us out of an unsafe area, or by protecting us from natural disasters.

It is clear that when we fear God, He will provide, protect, and even fight for us (Ps 34:9–10)! The fear of the Lord is a very peaceful and secure feeling. So, to fear God is the wisest way to live, as fearing God is an awesome blessing and promise. The pathway to a full life that is characterized by deep joy and intimacy with God starts from fearing Him.

4. How do we fear God?

Any study of the Bible should conclude with something that affects our own lives. In this case, it would be good to continue the topic of “how to fear God in our daily lives.” To answer this question, we first need to go back the original passage of study. King Solomon wrote: “Fear God and keep His commandments” (Eccl 12:13). Let’s also read Proverbs 8:13. “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate.” Fearing God, therefore, is obedience to God and the rejection of sin.

Let’s read Proverbs 28:14. “Happy is the man who is always reverent, but he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.” This verse demonstrates a form of parallelism where two things are compared and contrasted. What is being contrasted here, though? One is a heart that is reverent, and the other, a heart that is hardened. One leads to joy, the other to calamity. Like most spiritual matters, reverence and fear are things that start from the heart, are echoed in our actions, and result in blessings from God.

If fearing God means having a softened heart, we need to first diagnose ourselves. Do you have constant conversations with God? Do you remember Him when you go to school, or when you’re with friends who are non-believers? Do you honor Him with your words and deeds? These are all actions of a person who follows God’s commandments and fears Him in their lives.

From the many verses that we referred to throughout this thematic study, we can see that while the historical books describe the physical journey of the people of God, the wisdom books reveal their hearts. Instead of a simple retelling of events, they capture feelings, evoke imagery that reflects our inner selves, and offer empathy and understanding for whatever we may be experiencing in life. They employ vivid and expressive imagery to communicate a teaching that would otherwise be difficult to convey. By provoking a visual that lingers in our minds, they help us to stand firm in our faith so that we can confidently face any obstacles or decisions that we encounter in our spiritual lives.

Through these books, we will find guidance whenever we feel confused, and comfort when we encounter suffering. In accordance with the name, the wisdom books offer so many teachings for us, as long as we take the time to seek and dive deeply into God’s word.

Check for Understanding

- 1. What kinds of teachings do the wisdom books focus on?** They focus on the wisdom of living, in the context of our faith. They teach us of man’s self-destructive nature, and how living wisely means learning to fear our Creator and adopting His will as our own.

2. The wisdom books vary greatly in style and difficulty, but in the end, what is their conclusion?

Wisdom is found in the fear of the Lord.

3. What are some questions that we can ask ourselves while studying the Bible thematically? What does the Bible teach us about this theme? Why is this important to us? How does this affect our daily walk of faith? What can I change in my daily life in response to this new understanding?

4. Why must we fear God? Not only is He the one who gave us life, both physical and spiritual, but He is also the one who executes judgment upon us for our sins, and who also gives us blessings when we worship Him. His omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and holiness can never be matched.

5. What is the purpose of the expressive and vivid imagery used in the wisdom books? To communicate a teaching that would otherwise be difficult to convey. Also, by provoking a visual that lingers in our minds, they help us to stand firm in our faith.

Memory Verse

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”
(Proverbs 9:10)

Meaning

See *Spiritual Teachings, Section B, Life Application*.

Conclusion

The wisdom books contain a lot of evocative and expressive imagery, and use words to form clear paintings of God’s love and promises. However, they also contain many stark images of mankind’s behavior and the results that follow should they choose to do evil and rebel against God’s commands. By provoking a visual that lingers in our minds, they help us to stand firm in our faith so that we can confidently face any obstacles or decisions that we encounter in our spiritual lives.

Lesson 6 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. Explain in your own words why fearing the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.
Not only is He the one who gave us life, both physical and spiritual, but He is also the one who executes judgment upon us for our sins. Wisdom is also what leads us to salvation, which is from God.
2. What kinds of teachings do the wisdom books focus on?
They focus on the wisdom of living, in the context of our faith. They teach us of man's self-destructive nature, and how living wisely means learning to fear our Creator and adopting His will as our own.
3. After today's lesson, how would you explain the purpose of the wisdom books in your own words?
Personal answers. E.g.: They are books that teach us how to live wisely in the context of our faith. They use strong visuals and different literary forms to teach us the destructive nature of sin, and how living wisely leads us to salvation. They provoke visuals that linger in our minds, so that we can stand firm in our faith.
4. If you were to do a thematic study, after picking a theme, where would you start?
Pick a theme, then ask questions. Focus on the "what," the "why," and the "how," especially in the context of our faith.
5. How would you describe someone who fears God?
Personal answers. E.g.: Someone who demonstrates wisdom in their choices; a person who doesn't become overly anxious or upset when faced with tribulation; someone trustworthy, whom you can turn to for advice; someone who is humble and willingly admits to their mistakes; etc.
6. Do you think you demonstrate the fear of God in your daily life? Why or why not?
Personal answers.

The Books in the Old Testament (IV): The Prophetic Books

Passages: Isaiah–Malachi

Memory Verse

“And He said to me, ‘Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak to you.’ Then the Spirit entered me when He spoke to me, and set me on my feet; and I heard Him who spoke to me.” (Ezekiel 2:1–2)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Learn a brief overview of the timeline of prophets and the overarching messages that they preached.2. Understand the duties and qualifications of God’s workers.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God is truth.2. God desires for His people to return to Him.	Understand the qualities needed to become God’s worker.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. An Overview of the Prophetic Books
- B. The Duties and Qualifications of God’s Prophets
 1. Chosen by God
 2. Purposed in Their Hearts
 3. Faithful to God’s Message
- C. The Messages of God’s Prophets
 1. Messages to God’s People
 2. Messages to the Gentiles
 3. Messages to Future Generations

Life Application: Qualities of God’s Workers

Memory Verse

Conclusion: The prophets existed in different eras, and their works differ greatly in style, oratory form, and message. However, all of their messages share common themes: calls to repentance and reminders of God’s faithfulness and righteousness. Ultimately, they all serve a similar purpose: to call people back to God.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

A. An Overview of the Prophetic Books

The prophetic books cover a large span of time in Israelite history, from the end of Solomon’s reign to the Israelites’ return from exile. The prophets can be roughly divided into major and minor prophets, and pre-exile and post-exile prophets. The terms “major” or “minor” simply refer to the length of the books. The events contained in the books of the major prophets took place over a long period, whereas the minor prophet books often focused on shorter time periods throughout the history of God’s people. (See Figure 01: Timeline Overview of the Prophets)

As a whole, the prophets’ messages vary greatly with different purposes and audiences, but we can briefly summarize their messages into a few categories (some prophets cover multiple categories).

God’s Judgment on Israel/Judah	God’s Judgment on the Nations	The Restoration of Israel and Messages of Hope
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joel • Amos • Hosea • Isaiah • Micah • Zephaniah • Habakkuk • Jeremiah • Ezekiel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jonah • Nahum • Daniel • Obadiah • Ezekiel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isaiah • Ezekiel • Haggai • Jeremiah • Zechariah • Malachi

The prophets existed in different eras, and their works differ greatly in style, oratory form, and message. However, all of their messages share common themes: calls to repentance and reminders of God’s faithfulness and righteousness. Ultimately, they all serve a similar purpose: to call people back to God.

B. The Duties and Qualifications of God’s Prophets

God used a variety of different workers to speak His message to the people. Among the prophets in the Old Testament, there were farmers and shepherds. Apart from holding different jobs, each prophet also had unique characteristics. Jeremiah is known as the weeping prophet because of how he often wept in sorrow over the prophecies that God revealed to him. Jonah was a prophet who purposefully rebelled against God and went in the opposite direction of where God instructed him. Though these prophets of God were vastly different, they were all called by the Lord to speak His message to the people.

1. Chosen by God

“Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.’ ” (Jer 1:4–5)

First and foremost, the prophets were those men and women chosen by God to serve Him. Their duty was an important one. Let’s read Ezekiel 3:17. “Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me.” These workers were chosen by God to serve in a capacity much greater than their own lives. Through their words and deeds, God warned individuals and nations of what was to come and gave all who listened a chance to return to Him.

2. Purposed in Their Hearts

“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.” (Dan 1:8)

The prophets’ goals were different from the goals of those around them; instead of focusing on work, family, or on feeding themselves, their lives were focused entirely on God’s will. Sometimes His commands were straightforward and uncomplicated, such as His command for Jonah to travel to Nineveh to prophesy. Other times, they were more unusual, such as when He commanded His prophet to lie on one side for 365 days. But whatever His commands, the prophets made the determination to follow God’s will.

3. Faithful to God’s Message

“But you, son of man, hear what I say to you. Do not be rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you.” (Ezek 2:8)

No matter what the message was, the prophets had to faithfully speak the words of God. This was not an easy task. Often, the prophets were not only ignored, but sometimes punished or even killed for the messages that they spoke (2 Chr 24:20–21; cf. Mt 23:35; Ezek 2:6; Jer 2:30). Yet despite the Israelites’ often violent response to God’s message, He strengthened His workers and helped them to withstand persecution and oppression, allowing them to remain faithful to His will (Ezek 3:8–9). With strength from God, they conveyed His words to the people, “whether they hear, or whether they refuse” (v. 11).

The prophecies from God are also translated as “burden” (Mal 1:1), as His messages were difficult to accept because they were often messages rebuking the people for their wrongdoing. Yet, these workers persevered in the burden that they were given, and boldly declared God’s words according to His will.

C. The Messages of God’s Prophets

God’s messages weren’t limited to His chosen people alone. His prophets also conveyed messages to foreign nations, the most well-known example being Jonah and Nahum’s message to Nineveh. But whether the listeners were Israelites or Gentiles, the purpose of the messages remained the same: to point all people towards God through messages of condemnation and punishment, filled with hope and deliverance.

1. Messages to God’s People

a. Pre-Exilic Message

The Israelites had fallen away from God’s laws regarding justice and righteousness, so God frequently warned them of the punishment to come should they fail to repent and return.

“O Ephraim, what shall I do to you? O Judah, what shall I do to you? For your faithfulness is like a morning cloud, and like the early dew it goes away.” (Hos 6:4)

The prophets sent a very clear message to the people: unless they repented of their sins and returned to God, they would experience a punishment unlike any that they had received before—exile from the promised land. While Amos prophesied to the kingdom of Israel of the coming day of the Lord, Hosea’s message was a warning of the adultery that they had committed against God. Instead of remaining faithful, they had chosen to worship idols and

follow the traditions of men. To illustrate this point, God commanded Hosea to marry a harlot. Each time she was unfaithful, Hosea took her back, a clear parallel between God and the unfaithful Israelites.

The Israelites had also fallen away from God's laws regarding justice and righteousness. Hosea proclaimed, "Hear the word of the LORD, You children of Israel, for the LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: 'There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land' " (Hos 4:1). The kingdom of Judah was no different from Israel. Joel, Micah, and Zephaniah all preached messages of God's judgment that they would experience through foreign powers. Micah emphasized the social sins of the people, the greed of the nobles, and the mistreatment of the poor (Mic 2:1–2; 3:11), giving us a clear illustration of the immorality that was rampant among the two nations at the time.

Although the prophets gave frequent messages of warning and admonition, they also gave hope. Hosea's words gave a clear illustration of what their relationship with God should be, and would be, in the future: "Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth, and I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; then I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they shall say, 'You are my God!' " (Hos 2:23). Zephaniah also conveyed hopeful messages of their return after captivity (Zeph 3:16–20).

b. Post-Exilic Message

After returning from exile, due to their short-lived zeal, God reminded the Israelites of His blessing and provision as long as they did not neglect their faith, and also told them of the Messiah to come.

"Therefore thus says the LORD: 'I am returning to Jerusalem with mercy; My house shall be built in it,' says the LORD of hosts, 'And a surveyor's line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem.' Again proclaim, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: "My cities shall again spread out through prosperity; the LORD will again comfort Zion, and will again choose Jerusalem." ' " (Zech 1:16–17)

After the Israelites' return from exile, God persistently reminded them of His presence and His care. However, those who returned faced the same struggles as the previous generations. While eager at first to rebuild the temple and the city walls, upon returning to Jerusalem, they neglected God's work and pursued their own needs. Haggai reminded them that it was God who allowed them to return, and who would provide for them—on the condition that they put Him first in their lives.

Zechariah also offered messages regarding the rebuilding of God's kingdom and the coming Messiah. He told them, "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'If you will walk in My ways, and if you will keep My command, then you shall also judge My house, and likewise have charge of My courts; I will give you places to walk among these who stand here' " (Zech 3:7). His messages gave hope to the people that God would help them, so, encouraged, they resumed work on the temple.

Unfortunately, their zeal was once again relatively short-lived. During Malachi's time, the temple had been rebuilt and offerings reinstated, but the faith of the people declined. Priests had grown tired of their duties, corruption crept into the system, and the people

offered blemished animals as rote sacrifices rather than offer out of any love or genuine repentance towards God.

2. Messages to the Gentiles¹

God's calls to repentance were not limited to His chosen people but were also for Gentiles of all nations so that they too might have a chance to be saved.

"Your injury has no healing, your wound is severe. All who hear news of you will clap their hands over you, for upon whom has not your wickedness passed continually?" (Nah 3:19)

God's messages were not limited to the Israelites. Daniel had visions which famously foretold the rise and fall of Gentile nations, while Jonah and Nahum were both sent to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, to declare God's words. While the Ninevites listened to Jonah, the generation of Nahum's time ignored his warnings and, as a result, experienced the downfall of the city. God also spoke warnings to foreign rulers through Daniel, and each witnessed His words clearly come to pass. The Lord's power does not stop at the Israelites; it extends to all nations, and His righteous judgment is something that all will experience, not just those who believe in Him. But God is merciful—although they were not His chosen people, He still gave these nations a chance to return to Him, through the messages of His prophets.

3. Messages to Future Generations

God also desires our repentance and return, and He has promised His blessing, protection, and salvation to His followers today.

"Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it." (Mic 4:1)

Prophecies in the Bible at times took place immediately, or days later, while other prophecies did not come to pass until many years later. However, no matter how much time they took to fulfill, we know all of them to be true. God's will carried over from generation to generation, and our own is no different. Through the prophets, we can see the shadow of the Savior and the new kingdom that God promised to His people.

Jeremiah wrote of God, "Great is Your faithfulness" (Lam 3:23). He continued by writing, "It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD" (v. 26). The prophets' messages give us insight into God's will, assurance of His power and faithfulness, and hope for His blessings. In this way, the messages conveyed so long ago for the Israelites and Gentiles in the Old Testament are also messages for us. This includes not only the prophecies of the apostolic church and the church today, but also of our future salvation and the blessings that God promised to those who return to Him. As Joshua told the Israelites, "And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one word of them has failed" (Josh 23:14).

¹ Brereton, Gareth. "Introducing the Assyrians." The British Museum, June 19, 2018. <https://www.britishmuseum.org/blog/introducing-assyrians>.

Check for Understanding

1. **Although the prophets’ messages vary greatly, what ultimate purpose did they all serve?** To call people back to God.
2. **What are the duties and qualifications of God’s prophets? Briefly explain each.**
 - a. Chosen by God: First and foremost, the prophets were those men and women chosen by God to serve Him.
 - b. Purposed in their hearts: His commands varied greatly, but regardless of how difficult they were, the prophets made the determination to follow God’s will.
 - c. Faithful to God’s message: No matter what the message was, the prophets had to faithfully speak the words of God.
3. **What was the prophets’ pre-exilic message?** The Israelites had fallen away from God’s laws regarding justice and righteousness, so God frequently warned them of the punishment to come should they fail to repent and return. Although the prophets gave frequent messages of warning and admonition, they also gave hopeful messages of their return after captivity.
4. **Why did God also send His prophets to foreign nations?** God’s calls to repentance were not limited to His chosen people but were also for Gentiles of all nations so that they too might have a chance to be saved. His power does not stop at the Israelites; it extends to all nations. Moreover, His righteous judgment is something that all will experience, not just those who believe in Him.
5. **What teachings do the prophets’ messages have for us today?** God also desires our repentance and return, and He has promised His blessing, protection, and salvation to His followers today. The prophets’ messages give us insight into God’s will, assurance of His power and faithfulness, and hope for His blessings.

Life Application

Qualities of God’s Workers

Have you ever thought about what it would be like to be a prophet for God in the Old Testament? While God certainly empowered His prophets to do His will, it is still not easy to be a worker for God. What qualities do you think were necessary for each prophet to face the situations that they faced? Let’s take some time to focus on what it must have been like to be a prophet in the Old Testament.

Activity: Putting Ourselves in a Prophet’s Shoes

(Teachers: Depending on your class size and preference, you can choose one of the activities below or split the class into groups and allow them to choose one. The overall objective is to help the students to imagine what it would have been like to be a prophet in the Old Testament, and to help them understand the purpose and resolution that are needed to serve God.)

Below is a list of events that different prophets experienced while working for God. Pick one that interests you, and then proceed to your chosen activity.

Prophet	Event	Verse Reference
Daniel	Is thrown into a den of lions	Daniel 6:1–23
Daniel	Chooses not to eat the king’s food	Daniel 1:3–21
Jonah	Runs from God and is swallowed by a great fish	Jonah 1:1–17
Isaiah	Is called to be a prophet, lips are cleansed with a live coal	Isaiah 6:1–8
Jeremiah	Is thrown into a well for speaking God’s words	Jeremiah 38:1–13

Haggai	Calls the people to build the house of the Lord	Haggai 1:12–15
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Option A: Letter

What was it like to be a prophet during the Old Testament times? If you were to write a letter to the prophet involved, what would you say? Would you ask them for advice, or give them encouragement? Write a letter to your chosen prophet about the event that interested you. If you're not sure what to write, try thinking about the following:

- How did the prophet feel while enduring the situation?
- What kind of physical hardship did the prophet have to endure?
- What qualities or characteristics do you think helped the prophet?
- How did the prophet develop the level of faith needed to face this situation?
- How would you have reacted if you were in the same situation?

Option B: Interview

If you were to interview one of the prophets, what questions would you ask them? What would you like to know about the situation that they faced? What kinds of answers do you think they would give in response? Working in groups or as a class, put together an interview. Imagine you are doing a live interview on your local news channel!

1. Pick out the event you would like to “interview” your chosen prophet about (see previous chart).
2. Put together a series of questions that you would like to ask them regarding this event. Consider questions that you would see in a regular interview, such as: how the prophet felt about the situation; what they were thinking at the time; how they endured; what kind of qualities they think were necessary to overcome the situation; what advice they would give to others facing similar situations; etc.
3. Once you've compiled your questions, use your imagination! How would the prophet answer these questions? Write down what you think they would say in response.
4. Share your “interview” with the class. If you're in a group, you can try roleplaying it! Designate one or two people as the interviewer, and one person as the interviewee.

If we were to imagine it, being a prophet during the Old Testament times was not an easy task at all. Prophets not only had to give up their personal lives for God's work, but they also faced great persecution and suffering. How did they serve God in such difficult times? After today's activity, how would you summarize the key qualities of God's prophets?

God's workers were very different people with varied backgrounds, but all of them persevered in the face of hardship and continued serving God throughout their lives because of their determination. They resolved to serve God by setting aside their own desires, humbly listening to God's word, and faithfully repeating His message. This same purpose and resolution are needed of His workers today.

Memory Verse

“And He said to me, ‘Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak to you.’ Then the Spirit entered me when He spoke to me, and set me on my feet; and I heard Him who spoke to me.” (Ezekiel 2:1–2)

Meaning

God gave different commands to His prophets, but all of them had similar duties: to “stand” and to “hear” God's words. However, God did not leave His workers unassisted. Ezekiel had to take the

responsibility to stand on his feet, but God also helped him to perform his responsibilities with the power of the Spirit. In much the same way, today, God expects us to rise to the occasion and perform our duties as His children—by standing up for Him, and by listening to His word—but He will not leave us to do this on our own power. When we rely on Him, He will assist us with His Spirit, just as He did for the prophets of the Old Testament. We simply need to resolve to heed His commands.

Conclusion

The prophets existed in different eras, and their works differ greatly in style, oratory form, and message. However, all of their messages share common themes: calls to repentance and reminders of God's faithfulness and righteousness. Ultimately, they all serve a similar purpose: to call people back to God.

Lesson 7 Homework Assignment Answer Key

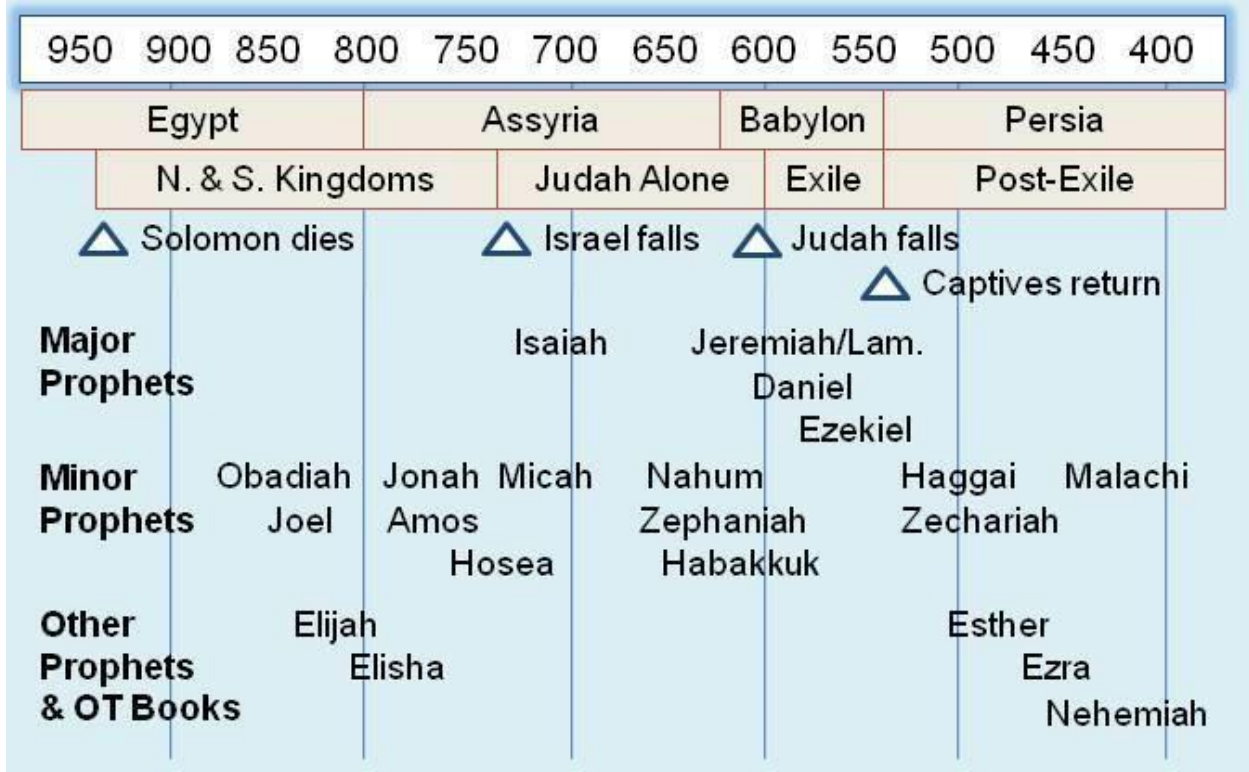
1. What important actions did the prophets have to do according to the memory verse?
They were to take the responsibility to “stand” and to “hear” God’s word.

2. What are the duties and qualifications of God’s prophets? Briefly explain each.
 - a. *Chosen by God: First and foremost, the prophets were those men and women chosen by God to serve Him.*
 - b. *Purposed in their hearts: His commands varied greatly, but regardless of how difficult they were, the prophets made the determination to follow God’s will.*
 - c. *Faithful to God’s message: No matter what the message was, the prophets had to faithfully speak the words of God.*

3. What teachings do the prophets’ messages have for us today?
God also desires our repentance and return, and He has promised His blessing, protection, and salvation to His followers today. The prophets’ messages give us insight into God’s will, assurance of His power and faithfulness, and hope for His blessings.

4. Pick one quality or characteristic of the prophets that you would like to emulate. Explain why you picked this particular one.
Personal answers.

Figure 01: Timeline Overview of the Prophets²



² Bible Questions, *A Survey of the Prophets - Introduction*, 2021, <https://www.biblequestions.org/bqar410.html>.

The Books in the New Testament (I): The Four Gospels & Acts of the Apostles

Passages: As listed in the lesson.

Memory Verse

“Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your dominion endures throughout all generations.”
(Psalm 145:13)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Jesus is the King, the tireless servant, the Son of man and the Son of God.2. Understand the kingdom of heaven in the gospel books.3. Understand that the kingdom of heaven is in the church.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God is our King.2. His kingdom is everlasting.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The kingdom of God is in our hearts.2. Make God our King.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. The Gospels
 1. The Themes of the Gospels
 2. The Kingdom of Heaven Revealed by the Gospels
- B. Historical Book: Acts of the Apostles
 1. The Works of the Holy Spirit: Leading Us to the Kingdom
 2. The Growth of the Church: Establishing the Kingdom
 3. Witnessing: Leading Others into the Kingdom

Life Application: The Kingdom of Heaven Is In Our Hearts

1. Is God the King of My Heart?
2. Placing God as King of Our Lives Each Day

Memory Verse

Conclusion: The Gospels present Jesus from different aspects of His servitude, and together, they show us a clear picture of His true identity: He is the Son of God and the Son of Man, our sovereign who served us by giving His life so that we might enter into a place in His kingdom.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

Introduction

The New Testament, like the Old Testament, can be categorized into four different sections:

1. **GOSPEL** (*Matthew, Mark, Luke, John*): The life and teachings of Christ.
2. **HISTORICAL** (*Acts*): A historical account of the early church.
3. **LETTERS** (*Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2, & 3 John, Jude*): Twenty-one letters written by various apostles.
4. **PROPHECY** (*Revelation*): Prophetic revelations and visions concerning the end times.

Today, we will study the Gospels and the historical book of Acts of the Apostles.

A. The Gospels

We call the first four books of the New Testament the “Gospels,” but what is the gospel? The word, “gospel” can be translated into “good news.” Jesus came to preach the good news of God’s kingdom: He has given His life to save us all from sin, Jews and Gentiles alike (1 Cor 15:3–4).

The Gospels detail the life and teachings of the Lord Jesus. The teachings covered in Matthew, Mark, and Luke are very similar. These three are known as the “synoptic Gospels,” as they often use similar wording and describe the same events. The Gospel of John has content that differs from the three, but its recording of Jesus’ life is complemented by the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. By studying them together, we can gain a deeper understanding of Jesus Christ, His mission on earth, and His identity.

When Jesus Christ asked His disciples, “But who do you say that I am?”, Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” To this, Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, [...] for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven” (Mt 16:13–17). In the same way, “by inspiration of God” (2 Tim 3:16), the gospel books’ writers revealed who Jesus was in terms of His work and His person. Let’s look at the themes of the four Gospels.

1. The Themes of the Gospels

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Theme:	Jesus is the Messiah; He is the King	Jesus is the tireless Servant of the Lord	Jesus is the Son of man	Jesus is the Son of God
Date Written:	From A.D. 70–100.	From A.D. 60–70.	From A.D. 50–70.	Likely A.D. 60s.

a. Matthew

This gospel begins with Christ’s genealogy from Abraham through King David, the announcement of the kingdom of heaven, and a call to repentance. Jesus came down as the long-awaited Messiah, born according to God’s promise. He is the King of the Jews, but His reign is a heavenly one. His power and authority are clear: with His death and resurrection, He has opened the gates to this kingdom so that everyone can become God’s children.

b. Mark

In Mark, Jesus descended as one who came to serve, to “give His life a ransom for many” (Mk 10:45). He taught us the ways we can serve God: by preaching (Mk 1:4, 14, 38) and helping the needy (Mk 6:41; 8:2). He also teaches us the rewards of serving Christ (Mk 9:41).

c. Luke

In the Gospel of Luke, He came down as the Son of Man. The gospel begins with His humble birth and boyhood – He was born fully human, to understand and share in our humanity. He also came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Lk 19:10), and to care for our physical and spiritual needs. Luke paid special attention to the compassion Jesus showed towards the weak, the suffering, and the outcast.

d. John

The Gospel of John records Jesus’ seven “I am” statements. He tells us that He is: “the bread of life” (6:35); “the light of the world” (8:12); “the door” (10:7, 9); “the good shepherd” (10:11); “the resurrection and the life” (11:25); “the way, the truth, and the life” (14:6); and “the true vine” (15:1). These statements describe His identity and show how important it is for us to know that He is the Son of God. By believing, we may then have life in Jesus’ name (20:31).

Each gospel book answers the question Jesus asked His disciples: “Who do you say that I am?” They contain four distinct descriptions that portray exactly who Jesus is. Despite their distinct portrayals of the Lord, however, they collectively point to a significant teaching: the mystery of the kingdom of heaven.

2. The Kingdom of Heaven Revealed by the Gospels

A key teaching that runs throughout the gospels is the “kingdom of heaven,” or *basileia* in Greek. The term occurs 162 times in the New Testament, and the term does not refer to a location, but a ruler’s exercise of sovereign power,¹ or “the right or authority to rule over a kingdom.”² While the Old Testament workers prophesied of a kingdom to come, governed by a descendent of David (Jer 23:5), the gospels reveal the truth of it: the kingdom of heaven is a spiritual kingdom that is ruled by Christ, full of righteousness, peace, and joy (Ps 103:19; Jn 18:36; Mt 12:28; Rom 14:17). It is a new heaven and new earth, a city that is full of splendor, filled with God’s glory (Rev 21:15–27). It is a place beyond our ability to understand, imagine, or describe (1 Cor 2:9). The gospels revealed the mystery of the kingdom of heaven, but we can see its importance more clearly in Acts of the Apostles, after the Holy Spirit’s descent.

B. Historical Book: Acts of the Apostles

Following the four Gospels, we find another book written by Luke, this time beginning with the resurrected Jesus, and His instructions regarding the Holy Spirit. We know that Acts of the Apostles was completed after the end of Paul’s two-year imprisonment in Rome (A.D. 61–63), as Luke ended his account with Paul awaiting his trial there. While there are many teachings, we can find three

¹ *Britannica*, s.v. “kingdom of God,” accessed June 21, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Kingdom-of-God>

² *Blue Letter Bible*, s.v. “βασιλεία”, accessed June 21, 2022, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=G932&t=KJV>

overarching themes in the book: The works of the Holy Spirit and the power of God; the growth of the church; and witnessing for Christ.

1. The Works of the Holy Spirit: Leading Us to the Kingdom

This book is referred to as "The Acts of the Holy Spirit," as it outlines the Spirit's work in establishing the church. Immediately after His descent, the church grew from a mere 120 members to over 3,000, and it continued to grow, eventually reaching the Gentiles. The book also clearly shows the work of the Spirit within the disciples. While Jesus was on earth, they were spiritually weak and had a poor understanding of God's word. With the power of the Holy Spirit, they transformed into spirit-filled, faithful, and profitable workers for the kingdom of heaven. The mystery of the kingdom that was revealed in the gospels was put into practice in Acts. Through it, we can see more clearly the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again of water and the Spirit in order to enter the kingdom of God (Jn 3:5). We are born into sin, meaning we are spiritually dead from birth. But when we receive water baptism for the remission of sins, we are spiritually reborn (Jn 1:13). Receiving the Holy Spirit is a part of this process of rebirth. Like the disciples' transformation on the Day of Pentecost, only with the Holy Spirit will we be able to "walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory" (1 Thess 2:12). From Acts, we can see that to enter into this calling, we must submit to the works of the Holy Spirit.

2. The Growth of the Church: Establishing the Kingdom

Acts of the Apostles tells us in detail how the church in apostolic times grew by the power and work of the Holy Spirit. These details teach us all the factors involved in the church's growth – the teachings of the apostles, fellowship, prayers, and the practice of godly love (Acts 2:40–47). The apostles' dedication and submission to the Holy Spirit serve as an excellent example for workers today, while records of opposition educate us about the schemes of the devil and how he disrupts the work of God. The apostles' response to these oppositions shows us the importance of being filled and led by the Holy Spirit, and how to guard our hearts from falling into Satan's schemes.

Through all of these details remains one central purpose: the establishment of Christ in the hearts of His followers, and the growth of the church that leads believers to the kingdom of God. In the Old Testament, one had to be circumcised to become a part of God's nation (Gen 17:9–14). In the New Testament, we need to believe, repent, and be baptized in Jesus' name to become part of the kingdom (Jn 3:5; Gal 3:27; Col 1:12–14). But from the numerous examples in Acts, we can see that we also need to work to establish God's kingdom on this earth by teaching each other, praying for each other, and standing strong against any opposition.

3. Witnessing: Leading Others into the Kingdom

Acts of the Apostles teaches us how to witness for Christ effectively with the power of the Holy Spirit. There are many examples that illustrate how to preach the baptism of Christ, the remission of sins, and prayer for the Holy Spirit. As Jesus Christ commanded, His apostles became witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8). They served as an important example of how we can also bring others to Christ, and of how God has given us the authority to lead mankind into the kingdom of heaven.

The Holy Spirit established the church on earth, and today, the same church is the path through which we can enter the kingdom of heaven. The church is a sanctified group of people who have been given the authority to judge (1 Cor 6:1–3) and to forgive or retain the sins of any (Jn 20:23). We would still be living in darkness if the church were never established on earth, and without the church, we are unable to enter the path to salvation.

While the Gospels revealed to us the mystery of the kingdom of God, Acts taught us about the kingdom's relationship to the Holy Spirit. By submitting to the works of the Holy Spirit, we can walk worthy of God's calling, establishing His kingdom in our hearts and in His church, of which Christ is the head. Through this establishment, as Acts has taught us, we can then lead others onto the path to salvation. It is important for us to always remember that God has given us the responsibility to preach the gospel, while also devoting ourselves to the building and perfecting of its members in order to fulfill our mission of bringing others into the kingdom of heaven.

Check for Understanding

- 1. What are the themes of the Gospels?** Jesus is the Messiah, the King, the tireless servant, the Son of man, and the Son of God.
- 2. In addition to portraying Jesus' identity, what significant teaching do the Gospels reveal?** The mystery of the kingdom of heaven.
- 3. What is the kingdom of heaven as revealed by the Gospels?** It is a spiritual kingdom that is ruled by Christ, full of righteousness, peace, and joy.
- 4. What are the main, overarching themes of Acts?** The power and the works of the Holy Spirit; the establishment and the growth of the church; witnessing for Christ.
- 5. What is the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the kingdom of heaven?** By submitting to the works of the Holy Spirit, we can walk worthy of God's calling, establishing His kingdom in our hearts and in His church, of which Christ is the head. Through this, we can then lead others to the path to salvation.

Life Application

The Kingdom of Heaven Is In Our Hearts

When the Pharisees asked the Lord Jesus when the kingdom of God would arrive, He answered, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed the kingdom of God is within you" (Lk 17:20–21). The kingdom of God is already here – it begins when we regard God as the King of our heart. When we conform to His will by obeying His commands and live a life that is pleasing to Him, His kingdom lives within us.

1. Is God the King of My Heart?

We need to understand the importance of having God as King in our lives. Ask yourself daily: "Is God the King of my heart? Is He the King I long for? How can I place God as the King of my heart in my daily life? Let's read the following testimony from a church member and see if you can relate to the writer's struggles to put God as King.

When I was in high school, I craved recognition. I ended up living for admiration from my school and church friends. I performed for the sake of validation. This was a mask that I wore most of the time. My heart felt hard at church, and instead of looking to serve, I wanted others to praise me for what I did. I served out of routine, and ran on empty, spiritually. Outwardly, I was A+, but

inwardly, I was dry, and only served because I wanted people to praise and affirm me. I had forgotten to tap into God's presence and make God the King of my life.

God knew my pain and confusion as a teenager. During a spring spiritual convocation, after listening to a sermon, I began to ache for the knowledge of who I really was. I poured my heart out to God and confessed to Him that all I did was a performance, acted out for the sake of my looks. I was worried and upset about many things, but really, "few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better" (Lk 10:42 NIV).

I realized I had made myself the king, I had been looking for approval, gratification, and security from others, but I never once asked God to be my King. I was consumed by the display I was showing to others. But a divided kingdom cannot stand (Mt 12:25). So, at the end of that spiritual convocation, I pledged my allegiance to my King Jesus Christ. First, I repented of making myself king. The moment I did that, I felt a supernatural warmth, an invitation from God. I immediately knew that He alone can satisfy the longing of the heart, and He alone is the only source of true joy (Ps 16:11). Thank God for turning my heart and affection back to Him. I have now committed myself to drawing close to Him and hearing His word! As a result, I now have security, intimacy, and closeness with the King of my heart.

– Anonymous

Discussion

- What was the writer struggling with?
- How did he/she overcome the struggle and realize God is King?
- Is God the King of your heart?
- What other things could take God's place as king of our hearts?

2. Placing God as King of Our Lives Each Day

God is sovereign over all things. He is a loving, perfect, and righteous King who longs to instruct and guide our lives to be effective witnesses. He wants to teach us how to produce lasting fruit. But despite all that He gives us, we often forget who our King is. Therefore, our priority is to put Him first. If we learn who He is and how to listen to Him, He will shape our identity and direct our lives in every way possible. When we give ourselves to Him fully and follow His commands, we will experience life to the fullest. He is the only one who can give us a future and a purpose that glorifies His name!

The following are some practical life applications that will help you to place God on the throne in your life:

- First things first! Pray in the morning.**
"Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed." (Mk 1:35)
- Meditate on God's word day and night. Read it, and deepen your understanding!**
"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success." (Josh 1:8)
- Apply God's commands! Learn to stop and choose obedience to God in both word and deed.**
"You shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you shall possess." (Deut 5:33)

Memory Verse

“Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your dominion endures throughout all generations.”
(Psalm 145:13)

Meaning

1. Everything on this earth around us will pass away, but as citizens of God’s kingdom, we have a precious hope for our future: to dwell in His everlasting kingdom.
2. While on earth, Jesus Christ was considered by many to be a prophet. But God gave His disciples an understanding of who He truly is: Christ, the Son of the living God. He rules and reigns with absolute authority and sovereignty, and His dominion abides by His principles and values.
3. God’s kingdom is an everlasting one that begins within us. When we accept and believe in Him, our hearts are under His authority, and we are able to walk worthy of God who has called us into His glory.

Conclusion

The Gospels present Jesus from different aspects of His servitude, and together, they show us a clear picture of His true identity: He is the Son of God and the Son of man, our sovereign who served us by giving His life so that we might enter into a place in His kingdom. The importance of this kingdom is made clear in the numerous times it is mentioned throughout the New Testament. But this “kingdom” is not simply some far-off place. It refers to God’s authority over our own hearts, and the kingdom that He has established in us when we are obedient to His will and accept Him as our sovereign.

Lesson 8 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What makes the kingdom of heaven different from earth?
It is an everlasting kingdom that begins within us. It is also under the rule of Jesus Christ, who has absolute authority and sovereignty, and whose dominion abides by His principles and values.
2. What is the kingdom of heaven as revealed by the Gospels?
It is a spiritual kingdom that is ruled by Christ, full of righteousness, peace, and joy.
3. What is the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the kingdom of heaven?
Receiving the Holy Spirit is part of the process of our spiritual rebirth. Like the disciples' transformation on the Day of Pentecost, only with the Holy Spirit will we be able to "walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory."
4. What can we learn from the details of the church's growth in Acts?
These details teach us all of the factors involved in the church's growth. The apostles' dedication and submission to the Holy Spirit serve as an excellent example for workers today, while records of opposition educated us about the schemes of the devil, and how he disrupts the work of God.
5. In what way is the kingdom of God in our hearts?
It begins when we regard God as the King of our heart. When we conform to His will by obeying His commands and live a life that is pleasing to Him, His kingdom lives within us.
6. What can you change in your life to make God the King of your life each day?
Personal answers.

The Books in the New Testament (II): The Prison & Pastoral Epistles

Passages: As listed in the lesson.

Memory Verse

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” (Ephesians 6:10)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Paul’s calling greatly affected his life: he was to be an apostle to the Gentiles, and proclaim the mystery of the gospel.2. Paul’s imprisonment was for the “furtherance of the gospel.”3. Know the major themes of the prison and pastoral epistles.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The wisdom of God is a hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory (1 Cor 2:7).2. God has revealed His wisdom to us through His Spirit (1 Cor 2:10a).	Put on the whole armor of God.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. God’s Calling and Its Effect on Paul’s Life
- B. The Prison Epistles
- C. The Pastoral Epistles

Life Application: The Armor of God

Memory Verse

Conclusion: As a result of his calling, Paul suffered many tribulations including imprisonment, despite having committed no crime. Yet, he was willing to face these for the sake of the gospel. When we actively don the armor of God, we become more prepared for sharing and spreading the gospel and, like Paul, can view life and suffering from a heavenly perspective.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

A. God's Calling and Its Effect on Paul's Life

Imagine this with me for a moment: You've been arrested and thrown into prison, all because you believe in God and keep the Sabbath. Your comfort and freedoms have been taken away from you, and your life is now at stake. You could be executed the next day. What are your thoughts while sitting in jail, staring at the bars?

Would you grumble and protest? What are your feelings? If the prison guard gave you a pen and a sheet of paper, what you would write? And who would you write to? What you choose to write in that moment will reveal something about you.

Today, we'll be talking about Paul, who was called by God to serve as a steward of the gospel, especially towards the Gentiles. In acting out this role, Paul experienced imprisonment and many tribulations. However, his letters never express any complaint towards his situation. Before we go over his letters, let's study his calling in a bit more detail first.

1. Paul's calling

God had chosen Paul for a special mission: to be an apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 26:17; Rom 1:5; 11:13; Gal 2:8–9). He was called to proclaim the mystery, "which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ" (Eph 3:9; cf. 1:9). He explained this mystery: that God's plan was to save the Gentiles and bring them together into one body with the Jewish people.

Although he suffered many tribulations while proclaiming the gospel to the Gentiles, Paul understood that he had been called to act as a steward of God's grace (Eph 3:2). Under this stewardship, Jews and Gentiles might be sanctified and reconciled both to God and with each other.

2. Paul's willingness to be imprisoned

Paul was imprisoned three times despite having committed no crime (Acts 16:17; 21:11; 23:11). Unbelieving Jews plotted his death to stop him from preaching (22:21–22), resulting in Paul's trial and imprisonment under Felix. After two years, Felix's successor, Porcius Festus, held a trial for Paul again. None could prove that Paul had committed any evil, but when standing before King Agrippa, Paul appealed to Caesar to avoid being sent to Jerusalem. As a result, he was sent to Rome around A.D. 60. There, Paul lived under house arrest for two years, chained daily to a Roman soldier (28:16, 30) until his release in A.D. 62.

3. A cause worthy of imprisonment

No one likes to suffer, and no one would want to be stripped of their freedoms and imprisoned. Yet Paul understood that this was part of God's plan – through his imprisonment, the Gentiles could come to know the "unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph 3:8). Knowing this, Paul considered himself a prisoner for the sake of Christ Jesus, so he was willing to suffer for the sake of preaching the gospel. While in chains, he wrote, "Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory" (3:13).

Paul's writings make it clear that to him, the gospel is far more precious than freedom, and Christ more valuable than his own comfort. He welcomed any who came to see him, and he

continued “preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him” (Acts 28:31).

During his imprisonment, he also wrote the letters of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon (Eph 3:1; 4:1; 6:20; Phil 1:7, 13; Col 4:10, 18; Phm 1:1, 9–10). These letters, of course, became a part of the New Testament that we study today. As a group, the four are often referred to as the “prison Epistles.”

B. The Prison Epistles

1. Themes of the Prison Epistles

Earlier, we thought about what we might write if given a pen and a sheet of paper while in prison. What would your letters look like if you were imprisoned? Let’s take a look at the themes of each prison epistle, and then try to further our understanding of each epistle.

	Ephesians	Philippians	Colossians	Philemon
Theme:	Christ and the church	Joy in Christ	Christ is the center of our faith	We are all equal in Christ
Date Written:	From A.D. 59–64	Likely A.D. 61–62	From A.D. 62	From A.D. 58–61

a. Ephesians

The Epistle to the Ephesians was written to address the topics on heavenly places, spiritual knowledge, unity in the church, and the armor of God. It focuses on how our faith needs to mature to one that is God-centered.

b. Philippians

The Epistle to the Philippians is a letter of joy. “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” is the resounding theme of Philippians (Phil 4:4). Philippi was the first church God established in Europe during Paul’s second missionary journey (A.D. 49–52). The first converts in this city were a seller of purple cloth named Lydia, the keeper of the prison, and their families (Acts 16:13–40). In the letter, Paul informs the believers of his situation and encourages them to endure persecution and rejoice in all circumstances.

c. Colossians

The Epistle to the Colossians is a letter about Christ being the center of our faith. Paul knew that the members at Colosse were facing the threat of heresies and that they needed to reaffirm that Christ is the only Savior, and God Himself. Paul wrote this letter to counter false teachings and remind believers to remain steadfast in Christ. He also urged them to forsake the sinful living of pagans and lead a Christ-centered life.

d. Philemon

The Epistle to Philemon is a personal letter written to Paul’s friend and fellow laborer, Philemon (Phm 1:1). Onesimus was Philemon’s slave who had run away because he had wronged or owed Philemon in some way (vv. 11, 15–16, 18–19). But Onesimus became a believer during his stay with Paul (v. 10). This letter teaches us about the spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness, and about how to act as peacemakers and intercessors if two members of Christ’s body are at odds with each other.

2. A Sacrificial Love

Let’s look at a few famous passages that Paul wrote while imprisoned.

Ephesians	Philippians	Colossians	Philemon
<p>“Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.” (Eph 3:13)</p>	<p>“Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.” (Phil 3:8)</p>	<p>“I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church.” (Col 1:24)</p>	<p>“[Yet] for love’s sake I rather appeal to you— being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.” (Phm 1:9)</p>

From these verses, we can see that Paul did not bother complaining or wallowing in self-pity, but instead expressed great joy in his letters (Phil 4:4), even in the worst situations. He always had each church in his heart, and greatly longed for the members “with the affection of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:7–8). Keep in mind that Paul founded the three churches during his second missionary trip (Acts 20:1–3) and referred to Philemon as a “beloved friend and fellow laborer” (Phm 1:1).

Paul understood that his imprisonment was for the “furtherance of the gospel,” and rejoiced at being able to fulfill God’s will. Even the palace guard clearly saw that Paul’s chains were “in Christ” (Phil 1:12–13). His devotion to the gospel was such that even those who imprisoned him saw Christ in his actions! He exemplified what it means to offer a sacrificial love and taught us how to view life and suffering from a heavenly perspective.

C. The Pastoral Epistles

After his release from his first imprisonment around A.D. 60–62, Paul wrote 1 Timothy and Titus. Shortly after, he was imprisoned again, during which time he wrote 2 Timothy. After this letter, he was martyred. These three letters are referred to as the “pastoral Epistles,” because they contain instructions regarding the pastoral care of the church.

Themes of the Pastoral Epistles

The content of these letters differs greatly from the prison epistles. They are centered on the qualifications of church workers, such as pastors and deacons, and focus on church organization and discipline among its members. The phrase “this is a faithful saying,” is not used anywhere else in the Bible, but appears five times in the pastoral Epistles (1 Tim 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim 2:11; Tit 3:8). Paul used this phrase to highlight key teachings in these three letters.

	1 Timothy	2 Timothy	Titus
Theme:	Defend the gospel	Preach the word	Set the church in order
Date Written:	From A.D. 62–66	Likely A.D. 66–67	From A.D. 63

1. 1 Timothy

Paul charges Timothy with the responsibility to defend sound doctrine and combat false teachings in the church. He also urges Timothy not to let anyone despise his youth, but to “be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim 4:12). He writes about sound doctrine and worship, and instructs Timothy on how to recognize and respond to false teachers.

2. 2 Timothy

This was the last of Paul’s epistles before he was put to death under the Roman Emperor Nero. A very personal letter to Timothy, it contains Paul’s last words of exhortation. He reminds Timothy to stand strong and not to be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, but to hold fast to the pattern of sound doctrine. As a worker of Christ, he must preach the word at all times, as well as convince, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and teaching (2 Tim 4:2).

3. Titus

This letter focuses on: teaching believers how to ordain qualified elders to take care of the church; behavior in accordance with sound doctrine; engaging in good works; the importance of standing against false teachers who lead them away from the truth. Paul uses this letter to advise Titus on how to manage and organize the church in Crete, reminding Titus that leaders must be sound in doctrine in order to guard the church against false teachings and evil practices. Workers must also have sound speech and conduct. By setting an example, the believers will imitate them, hold fast to the correct teachings, and exhibit Christ-like behavior.

From these letters, we can see that Paul understood that his time in the ministry was coming to an end. He was passing the torch to a new generation of church workers. Today, that same torch has been passed to each of us.

Check for Understanding

- 1. What is the special mission that God chose Paul for?** He was called to be an apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 26:17; Rom 1:5; 11:13; Gal 2:8–9), and to proclaim the mystery (Eph 1:9).
- 2. What is the worthy cause of Paul’s imprisonment?** That through his imprisonment, the Gentiles will come to know the “unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph 3:8).
- 3. What are the themes of the prison Epistles?** Ephesians: Christ and the church; Philippians: Joy in Christ; Colossians: Christ is the center of our faith; Philemon: We are all equal in Christ.
- 4. What do the prison Epistles teach us about Paul’s attitude while imprisoned?** He understood that his imprisonment was for the “furtherance of the gospel,” and rejoiced at being able to fulfill God’s will.
- 5. What are Paul’s three letters to Timothy and Titus also called? Why?** The *pastoral Epistles*, because they contain instructions regarding the pastoral care of the church.

Life Application

The Armor of God

Did you know that we are constantly in a state of warfare? Paul states that the “rulers of the darkness of this age” are “hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:12). Therefore, “we do not wrestle against flesh and blood,” but against demonic powers of which we need to be fully aware. These include temptations of the flesh, cultural norms that are against God’s word, and other subtle tools that Satan uses to wage war against God’s children.

1 Peter 5:8 tells us, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” Paul describes Christians as soldiers of Christ in Ephesians, chapter 6, and offers an important teaching to apply to our lives, so that we will not be defeated.

Activity

Teachers: For additional visuals, you can print and hand out the image provided on the last page.

1. Write down the name of each piece of armor, then add a brief description explaining its purpose.
2. Why is this piece necessary for spreading the gospel? Write down your answer for each piece.
3. Which piece do you personally think you need the most? Explain your answer and share with the class.

*Teachers: **The following portion is only necessary if your students are unfamiliar with the armor of God.** In which case, you can briefly go over each piece using the chart below.*

Armor	Girded waist	Representation	The Truth
Meaning			
The stability of the human body depends on its center of gravity, which is at the waist. A thick and heavy leather belt in battle ensured that a Roman soldier’s waist was protected and supported, and in addition, was used to carry their sword and other weapons. The Truth, which is the collective teachings of Jesus, the apostles, and the prophets, form the foundation of stability for the church (Eph 2:20–22). Jesus said He is “the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6). Without the truth, we are lost, rendering the rest of our armor useless, and the schemes of the devil will surely overpower us.			
How can I apply this to my life?			
We need to equip ourselves with the word of God, the only truth. Without it, we will be “carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by the craftiness in deceitful plotting” (Eph 4:14)			
Armor	Breastplate	Representation	Righteousness
Meaning			
A soldier’s breastplate protects his heart. Jesus said, “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Mt 12:34). Our heart influences our words and actions, and it can often lead us to sin, but when we cover our heart with righteousness, we can avoid sin and remain holy.			
How can I apply this to my life?			
We need to allow God into our heart and allow the Holy Spirit to give us the power to live above sin. Ephesians 4:22–24 reminds us to “put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, <u>in true righteousness</u> and holiness.”			
Armor	Shoes	Representation	Gospel of peace
Meaning			
Roman soldiers wore hard, studded shoes into battle to protect their feet. Our feet can be particularly vulnerable, because any sharp object on the ground can easily cripple us. When we protect our feet with the gospel of peace, they can carry us away from sin, to the path that leads to light. Moreover, because our life now belongs to Christ (Gal 2:20), it is important that our feet travel to defend and to			

bring the gospel to others. Paul quotes Isaiah, who wrote, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news” (Isa 52:7, cf. Rom 10:15).

How can I apply this to my life?

A soldier defends his kingdom under the command of his king, and we, as God’s soldiers, have been commanded by Jesus to spread the gospel (Acts 1:8). We have the responsibility to tell the good news to the world, to bring the truth to our friends and family so that they too may be saved.

Armor	Shield	Representation	Faith
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Meaning

A shield serves as the first line of defense, and it provides all-encompassing protection. John wrote, “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our **faith**” (1 Jn 5:4) It is our faith that overcomes the world, not our personal strength or knowledge, because those who believe in God know that they have His protection.

How can I apply this to my life?

Faith is our shield, because when we have faith in God, we will never be afraid when faced with trials and suffering. Satan loses his power when we believe in God and all of His promises. No matter how many fiery darts are thrown at us, this shield acts as a protective barrier between us and the schemes of Satan. If we lack faith, we must ask God to help our unbelief.

Armor	Helmet	Representation	Salvation
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Meaning

Like our heart, our mind guides our decisions, and our thoughts are a spiritual battlefield every day. But when we fully accept salvation, we undergo a fundamental shift in our thinking. We are no longer deceived by the riches and the sins of the world around us but understand that we are here to pursue something far greater than anything on earth: our salvation (Mt 6:20, 33). As long as our minds are always on our salvation, we will be protected from the lies, deceits, and traps of Satan.

How can I apply this to my life?

Our mental battles are won when we fully accept the salvation of Christ. When we remember our salvation, we can recall that we have been saved and delivered from the power of sin (Eph 4:22–24; Jn 8:34–36). By recalling the salvation that awaits us, we can put off our former conduct, and instead make decisions based on God’s will, not our own or Satan’s.

Armor	Sword	Representation	The word of God
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Meaning

A sword can be used both to parry attacks and to strike at the enemy, making it the only piece of armor that can also be used to attack. Hebrews refers to God’s word as a sword (Heb 4:12). It can pierce and penetrate the heart, revealing the innermost thoughts and intentions of those it touches. Jesus also used words from the Scriptures to defend Himself against Satan’s temptations, teaching us the value of studying and memorizing God’s word.

How can I apply this to my life?

By hiding His word in our heart (Ps 119:11), we can avoid sin by “bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor 10:5). We can also use His word to defend ourselves against false teachings and persecution. But to do so, we must constantly meditate on His teachings and memorize God’s word to make ourselves spiritually stronger.

Armor	Prayer	Representation	Communication with God
<p>Meaning Without a line of communication with his superiors, a soldier cannot receive instructions or send for help. We know that God is always right there next to us. But unless we open our heart to Him, we cannot communicate with Him. Paul teaches us to pray without ceasing (1 Thess 5:17), with supplication and perseverance (Eph 6:18). To have an open line of communication with Him means having a prayerful attitude every moment of every day, and integrating Him into every thought, word, and deed of our lives. Whether it is a quick thought in our minds, a silent prayer in our hearts, or a prayer in tongues with supplication, God is always listening.</p>			
<p>How can I apply this to my life? Anything from praising or thanking God, to humbly asking for His help, is a form of prayer. When we turn to God instinctively in any situation in our lives, we implicitly understand that He is always with us, and open our hearts to Him. God wants us to turn to Him for all of our needs, so we need to make prayer a constant habit in our lives and learn to persevere in our prayers even when it seems like He is not answering us immediately. When we pray in the Spirit according to God’s will, we receive instruction, guidance, comfort, strength, and wisdom.</p>			

Memory Verse

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” (Ephesians 6:10)

Meaning

The power we use to fight spiritual battles is not ours, but God’s. Paul tells us that the exceeding greatness of God’s power has been given to those who believe, and that is the power of the Holy Spirit. But the only way we become even stronger in the Lord is through prayer. So, to prepare ourselves for battle, we must increase our spiritual discipline through constant prayer and rely on the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

As a result of his calling, Paul suffered many tribulations, including imprisonment, despite having committed no crime. Yet, he was willing to face these for the sake of the gospel. His letters show to us an attitude of joy, and a greater concern for the welfare of the churches than of himself. He exhorted the brethren to live for Christ, to defend against false teachings, and to diligently watch for Jesus’ return by keeping Christ at the center of our faith. When we actively don the armor of God, we become more prepared for sharing and spreading the gospel and, like Paul, can view life and suffering from a heavenly perspective.

Lesson 9 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What power do we use to fight spiritual battles? Where does it come from?
The Holy Spirit, which comes from God.
2. What purpose did God want to accomplish through Paul's calling?
God had chosen Paul for a special mission: to be an apostle to the Gentiles. He was called to proclaim the mystery, "which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ" (Eph 3:9).
3. Which four books are the *prison Epistles*? Why are they called this?
The four prison Epistles are Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. They are called this because Paul wrote them while he was imprisoned in Rome.
4. Why is it so important that the leaders of the church be sound in doctrine, speech, and conduct?
They must have sound doctrine to guard against false teachings and evil practices. By setting an example in speech and conduct, the believers will imitate them, hold fast to the correct teachings, and exhibit Christ-like behavior.
5. Why is faith in God our shield against Satan?
When we have faith in God, we will never be afraid when faced with trials and sufferings. Satan loses his power when we believe in God and all of His promises.
6. Which two pieces of armor do you lack the most? How can you work on improving them?
Personal answers.



The Books in the New Testament (III): Hebrews to Revelation

Passages: As listed in the lesson.

Memory Verse

“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” (James 1:12)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Trials test our faith.2. Know the progression of temptation.3. Understand the purpose of fiery trials.4. Understand the final hour of trial.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God uses trials to test our faith.2. When going through trials, “the Spirit of glory and of God” rests upon us.3. Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Run with endurance by looking unto Jesus.2. Press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.3. Lay aside every weight so that we can endure the race of faith.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Trials of Life
- B. James: Trials to Test Our Faith
- C. 1 Peter: Fiery Trials to Purify
- D. Revelation: The Final Trial

Life Application: Running the Race to the Finish

Activity: Lay Aside Every Weight

Memory Verse

Conclusion: Although temptations and trials come with suffering and hardships that are often life-changing, we need to remember not only that these trials have a purpose, but also that there is a reward set for those who endure.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

Introduction

- What makes you feel stressed, exhausted, or pressured on a daily or weekly basis?
- What are some big or small problems your parents face?
- What conflicts or issues have you witnessed your friends or brethren face?

We all face different problems, and they make us experience pain, roadblocks, hardship, disappointment, or misfortune. All of these issues that we face, whether simple or complex, are what the Bible calls trials of our lives. Sometimes, we suffer as a result of our own poor choices or because we have sinned against God. Other times, the trials are not a result of anything we have done but a result of circumstances far beyond our control, things in life that we cannot change.

Some people still hold the misconception that Christians should live carefree lives under God’s protection. But Peter tells us, “[Do] not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you” (1 Pet 4:12). In truth, bad things happen to Christians, too, including death, which no one is exempt from. What makes us different from others, however, is how we face and handle the trials that come our way.

A. Trials of Life

Today, we’ll be focusing on the last portion of the New Testament, which consists of books like Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2, & 3 John, Jude, and Revelation. Although we can’t cover all of them, several of the books contain a common theme of facing trials in our lives and offer teachings on how to face them. Let’s look at their themes.

Book	Hebrews	James	1 Peter	Revelation
Theme:	A great hope	A living faith	Joy in suffering	The revelation of Jesus Christ
Date Written:	Between A.D. 60–95	Between A.D. 45–50	Likely A.D. 62–64	From A.D. 64–68

1. Hebrews

It appears that these Christians had undergone great sufferings in the early days of their conversion (Heb 10:32–34). This letter is the only book in the New Testament that discusses at length doctrine regarding Jesus Christ as our High Priest. The book expands upon the supremacy of our Lord Jesus Christ in His priestly role, as well as His suffering and submission. It emphasizes the need to hold fast to the Lord and to be strong in faith.

2. James

Christians were facing various trials, possibly including persecution. The central theme of James is that faith needs to be put into action (Jas 2:17–20). Only faith that is accompanied by works can justify a person and save them (2:14, 21–26). Faith is seen through patience, prayer, impartiality, love, humility, refraining from indulgence, and doing good deeds.

3. 1 Peter

Peter was writing to the “pilgrims” (1 Pet 1:1), Christians who were going through sufferings as strangers scattered in various places. Peter exhorts them to endure sufferings through the grace

of God and to lead blameless lives in the midst of unbelievers. Even though we may not be suffering, we are still all spiritual pilgrims, strangers on this earth. We often face different pressures when we try to maintain our faith in Christ, but Peter exhorts us to rejoice in our trials when we suffer for our faith. We need to conduct ourselves with a clear conscience so that God's name may be glorified among unbelievers.

4. Revelation

The church was facing severe persecution and threats to her faith. This book is a book of warning, and a call to repentance in an adulterous generation. This book is very different from other New Testament writings. It is a book of prophecy (Rev 1:2; 22:7, 10, 18–19), rich in symbols and imagery. John describes four key visions in the book:

- a. The Son of Man among the seven churches (Rev 1–3)
- b. The seven-sealed scroll, seven trumpets, seven signs, and seven bowls (Rev 4:1–19:10)
- c. The vision of the return of Christ and the consummation of this age (Rev 19:11–20:15)
- d. The vision of the new heaven and new earth (Rev 21–22)

Peirasmos

The Greek word *peirasmos* translates into “temptation” or “test,” and can also be defined as “a trial.”¹ Our temptations are also trials that test if our faith is genuine and enduring. The Bible warns us that as God's children, we will face trials, and teaches us to be ready for them (Mt 16:24; Acts 14:22; 1 Thess 3:3; 1 Pet 5:9). They are God's way of developing us so that we can learn and grow into maturity in our faith. When we respond to them in the way that God has taught us, we are able to experience His amazing guidance. But what kind of trials are we likely to face?

- **Infirmities:** Physical illnesses (2 Cor 12:10)
- **Distresses:** Sadness, despair, suffering, agony (2 Cor 12:10)
- **Temptations:** Inner desires that appeal to our sinful nature and contradict God's teachings (Mk 7:20–23; Mt 26:41)
- **Reproach, persecution:** Ridicule or oppression due to convictions about God (2 Cor 12:10)
- **Fiery trials:** Loss of health, material, wealth (Jas 1:2; 1 Pet 4:12)
- **Calamities** (Rev 2:10; 3:10)

Ultimately, God wants us to be molded into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ (Rom 8:29). Facing and overcoming these trials will guide us towards that goal, but this can only occur if we rely on God's help. So, it is important to ask ourselves, when such trials come, will I...

- Respond with faith or collapse under such pressure?
- Still pray to God with unwavering faith?
- Continue serving God wholeheartedly, without being distracted?

To answer these correctly, it is important for us to understand the meaning behind our trials, and learn how God wants us to face them. The Book of James teaches us both of these.

B. James: Trials to Test Our Faith

Earlier we learned that the word *peirasmos* can be translated into either “temptation” or “test.” James used the same word to refer to trials that challenge our faith. Let's read James 1:12. “Blessed is the man

¹ *Blue Letter Bible*, s.v. “πειρασμός”, accessed June 21, 2022, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G3986&t=KJV>
Biblehub, s.v, “peirasmos”, accessed June 21, 2022, <https://biblehub.com/greek/3986.htm>

who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” For this reason, James urged his readers to “count it all joy when you fall into various trials” (Jas 1:2).

Notice that James didn’t use the word “if,” but “when.” Trials are an inevitable part of our lives, and challenges and problems *will* occur. It is simply a matter of when, not if. We can also expect them to take “various” forms. Short or long, they will show up at our door when we least expect them, and at times they will change our lives.

This may feel disheartening, but trials have purposes. James encouraged his readers by reminding them that “the testing of your faith produces patience” (Jas 1:3), and when patience reaches perfection, we mature spiritually (v. 4). So instead of giving up or feeling disheartened by the trials that we face, we should instead come to grips with them, knowing that God is using them to build the quality of our patience and test our faith. We may feel fragile, and storms in life are often difficult to face. But when we cooperate with our heavenly Father, He will always help us through our times of trouble.

C. 1 Peter: Fiery Trials to Purify

Peter wrote 1 Peter to Christians who faced severe suffering and persecution, to the point that they were losing hope. He exhorts them to endure sufferings, referring to them as a “fiery trial.” He compares trials to a fire that refines and purifies gold. Just as gold must go through an incredibly hot fire to burn away any impurities, we are purified spiritually by trials that are especially difficult to endure. Peter encourages suffering Christians with two important teachings.

1. “Do not think it strange.” (1 Pet 4:12)

As followers of Christ, we must expect fiery trials. These are a test of our faith, and a natural part of our lives as God’s children. Just as Christ was persecuted, the world will also persecute those who follow Him.

2. “But rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings.” (1 Pet 4:13)

It may seem disheartening to know that we must expect fiery trials, but Peter further encourages us by adding that when we partake of fiery trials, we are partakers of the suffering of Christ (Jn 15:18; Acts 9:1–4). Suffering for His name is an honor (Acts 5:41), and we can also take hope in the fact that when Christ returns, He will reward those who suffered for His name’s sake.

As further encouragement, Peter added that even if we have to endure suffering, “the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon [us]” (1 Pet 4:14). We have God’s divine power when faced with excruciating trials! In His omnipotence, He can easily sustain us even in the midst of the fire. Moreover, we also know that if we endure, blessings and rewards will come because God is our “faithful Creator” (v. 19). He cares for us deeply, and because He is a faithful God, He will never leave or forsake us (Heb 13:5). All we need to do is learn to rely upon His power and place ourselves fully into His care.

D. Revelation: The Final Trial

We know that Jesus Christ will return, and when He does, a trial will come. Revelation 3:10 says, “Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.” Jesus refers to this “hour of trial” as a time of “great tribulation” at the end of the age (Mt 24:21, 29). Revelation 3:10 refers to the wrath that God will pour out on unbelievers, whom apostle John calls “inhabitants of the earth” (Rev 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 12:12; 13:8, 12, 14). During this trial, Christ will judge lawlessness (2 Thess 2:7–8).

However, in this hour of tribulation, God has also promised that He will keep us. He will not allow us to be harmed by the calamities to come, but will guard and protect us. “Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thess 4:17).

To remain in God’s protection during the final trial of the future, we need to remain true to Christ today. Let’s read Jude 20–21. “But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” As long as we grow strong in our faith in the face of any trials that we face, we can look forward to seeing the appearing of the Lord (1 Jn 3:1–3).

Check for Understanding

1. **What is the meaning of the Greek word, *peirasmos*? How is this related to our faith?** It translates into “temptation” or “test,” and can also be defined as “a trial.” Our temptations are also trials that test if our faith is genuine and enduring.
2. **What does the testing of our faith produce?** The testing of our faith produces patience (Jas 1:3), and when patience reaches perfection, we mature spiritually (v. 4).
3. **Why did Peter refer to suffering and persecution as “fiery trials”?** He was comparing trials to a fire that refines and purifies gold. Just as gold must go through an incredibly hot fire to burn away any impurities, we are purified spiritually by trials that are especially difficult to endure.
4. **What will happen when Jesus Christ returns? How does Jesus refer to this time?** We will experience the “hour of trial,” which He calls a time of “great tribulation” at the end of the age (Rev 3:10; Mt 24:21, 29).
5. **How do we remain under God’s protection during this final trial of the future?** We need to remain true to Christ today (Jude 20–21).

Life Application

Running the Race to the Finish

1. The Crown of Life

In order to stand firm during trials, we need to arm ourselves and be ready. Revelation 2:10 teaches us that if we are “faithful until death,” God will give us the “crown of life.” When we reach the finish line, we will be rewarded with an imperishable crown when we enter the kingdom of heaven (1 Cor 9:25; cf. Jas 1:12). With this in mind, we must be careful not to disqualify ourselves from the race while living on this earth.

2. Run with Endurance

The author of Hebrews encourages us to run the race that is set before us “with endurance.” Why did they use the term “endurance?”

First, it is important to remember that even if we are “saved,” we are not saved for certain until Jesus Christ comes again. Distractions of the world can ensnare us and thwart us from completing the race. Satan is very cunning and may use snares such as immorality or idolatry to make us fall short of God’s grace (Heb 12:15–17). And if we continue to live in sin, we will not be able to inherit the kingdom of God (Eph 5:5).

Esau, for example, should have received the birthright of the firstborn, but he sold it for a bowl of

stew to satisfy his physical hunger. Anything can prevent us from completing the race, so we must be very careful that we don't break any rules. How we live our lives will determine the eternal consequences that we will face. Therefore, we must run in order to "lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim 6:12).

3. Look Unto Jesus

When we receive the correct mode of water baptism, our original sins are forgiven, and we are like a "new man" when we emerge from the water. From that point onward, our "race" has begun. But how do we win it? Hebrews teaches us to "[look] unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb 12:1–2). There will be times when we feel physically, emotionally, or spiritually exhausted, and we will be tempted to give up during such moments. The only way to overcome these times is by redirecting our focus to Jesus Christ so that we do not lose hope, and instead gain strength.

4. Press Toward the Goal

The easiest way to fall behind in a race is by looking backwards. In much the same way, winning the crown of life requires us to stay focused on the goal. This is the attitude Paul encourages us to follow (Phil 3:12–14). He had already finished three missionary journeys, written many epistles, and helped to establish a multitude of churches. Yet he still urges us to forget what is behind, and "press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Despite his accomplishments, Paul ran the race until the end. In his last letter he wrote, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim 4:7). He never looked back, but endured to the end in order to secure his crown of righteousness.

Activity: Lay Aside Every Weight

To win a race, we need to unburden ourselves of any weight. The lighter we are, the swifter we can run, but there are many things that can slow us down. What hindrances do I need to lay aside (Heb 12:1)? What do I need to work at to strengthen my faith to endure the race of faith? Let's take a look at the chart. As you do, consider the following:

- What will allow us to give a "maximum performance" in our race? The goal is to "finish strong"!
- Take a look at the physical training we undergo, and then consider what we might do to train ourselves spiritually. Think of hindrances that we need to lay aside, habits that can help us run faster without distraction, or perhaps any impulses we need to fight off.
- Once you have finished filling in your chart, share what you have written with the class.

To prepare for physical races, we need to...	To prepare for a spiritual race, we need to...
1. Train and build up our endurance! We may lift weights, do stretches, push ourselves through any physical pain, and complete various workouts.	
2. Practice good sleeping habits. When our body lacks sleep, we behave poorly, react more slowly, and suffer physically, mentally, and emotionally.	
3. Practice healthy eating. To run a race, it is important that we are properly nourished by avoiding excessive desserts, and balancing our protein intake with fruits and vegetables.	

4. Prepare ourselves mentally. It doesn't make any sense to hold a late-night sleepover the night before, or place ourselves in a stressful situation just before we run. We perform better when we focus on the race.	
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Paul said he disciplined his body to keep it under control (1 Cor 9:27). In the same way, we need to adjust our lifestyle and habits so that we are able to run the race with zeal and fervency. With God's help and power, we can run with all our might, and focus on the crown of life that awaits us.

Memory Verse

"Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." (James 1:12)

Meaning

No one is exempt from temptation. But those who endure will be blessed in this life. This is a promise that has great value! Moreover, if we rely on God's Spirit to endure, we will be rewarded with the crown of life, which our Lord has promised to those who love Him.

Our lifelong goal should be to focus on this crown, and not only on the reward itself. The more we love God, the more we are filled with His presence—and the more we are filled, the greater strength He grants us to endure temptation. So, while running this race set before you, you must ask yourself, "Do I love my Lord Jesus Christ?" If the answer is "yes," you will endure every temptation for His sake. And when He returns again, He will give you the "crown of life."

Conclusion

Although temptations and trials come with suffering and hardships that are often life-changing, we need to remember not only that these trials have a purpose, but also that there is a reward set for those who endure. As long as we rely on God throughout these tribulations, He will help us to overcome them and to endure the race until the very end – then, as He has promised, we will receive the crown of life and experience eternity in heaven.

Lesson 10 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What does the memory verse teach us about temptation and the result of enduring temptation?
No one is exempt from temptation. But those who endure will be blessed in this life. Moreover, if we rely on God's Spirit to endure, we will be rewarded with the crown of life, which our Lord has promised to those who love Him.
2. What is another meaning of *peirasmos*, and how is this related to the purpose of temptations?
It can be defined as "a trial." Our temptations are also trials that test if our faith is genuine and enduring.
3. According to the Book of James, what do trials produce in us?
The testing of faith produces patience, and when patience reaches perfection, we mature spiritually. God uses trials to build the quality of our patience and test our faith.
4. What is the final trial described in Revelation? How do we survive this trial?
When Jesus Christ returns, a trial will come. Jesus refers to it as a time of "great tribulation" at the end of the age. During this trial, Christ will judge lawlessness. To remain in God's protection during the final trial of the future, we need to remain true to Christ today.
5. Why did the author of Hebrews encourage us to run the race with "endurance"?
Even if we are "saved," we are not saved for certain until Jesus Christ comes again. Distractions of the world can ensnare us and thwart us from completing the race.
6. What hindrances prevent you from enduring the race of faith? How will you set them aside?
Personal answers.

Junior 1 Year 3 Book 1 Lesson 11
The Benefits of Reading the Bible
Passages: As listed in the lesson.

Memory Verse

“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.” (John 15:2)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
Understand the benefits of reading the Bible.	1. God is truth. 2. God is strength. 3. God is hope.	1. Have a habit of reading the Bible daily. 2. Meditate on God’s word. 3. Memorize God’s word.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. The Origin of the Scriptures
- B. The Purposes of the Scriptures

Life Application

- 1. Develop a Habit of Daily Bible Reading
- 2. Meditate On and Memorize the Scriptures

Memory Verse

Conclusion: In these perilous times, when sin continues to increase and false teachings abound, it is necessary for every believer to remain true to the teachings of the Scriptures.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

A. The Origin of the Scriptures

“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)

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, as the Scriptures were written under God’s direction and guidance, not under the writer’s own will (2 Pet 1:20–21). Just as Adam became a living being when God breathed into him (Gen 2:7), God breathed life into the Scriptures and made the Bible His living word.

Many believers know the Bible is important to them, but few actually know how to read, study, and memorize the Bible. There are so many benefits of reading the Bible that it is not possible to cover them all in one class. So today, we’ll just look at ten benefits of why we should read and study the Bible.

B. The Purposes of the Scriptures

The Scriptures testify about Christ (Jn 5:39), and make us wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Through the Scriptures, we can come to the knowledge of our Savior and put our faith in Him for salvation. Let us examine ten different ways the Bible helps us.

1. Gives the Wisdom of Salvation

The primary purpose of the Scriptures is to show us the way to salvation. 2 Timothy 3:15 says that the Scriptures “are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” But not all people know or believe that they need salvation. The Bible shows us that we, separated from God because of sin, now require salvation.

2. Gives Us Assurance of Salvation

The Bible teaches us that God keeps His promises. John wrote, “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God” (1 Jn 5:13). As God has promised, we have already received salvation; we need only believe in Jesus’ name.

3. Provides Warnings

The Scriptures contain many warnings. Sins such as blaspheming against the Holy Spirit (Mk 3:28–30), sexual immorality (1 Thess 4:3), and not keeping the Sabbath (Heb 4:9) will have consequences. Paul wrote, “Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Cor 10:11). The Bible serves as a caution sign against sin, and those who refuse to listen will be condemned (2 Pet 2:6).

The Bible also offers a warning regarding the approaching end times (Mt 24:30–31). We do not know when it will come, but the Bible assures us that it is indeed approaching, and when it does arrive, we will face the consequences of our actions (Heb 3:12–14).

4. Gives Us Spiritual Effectiveness

2 Timothy 3:16–17 tells us that Scripture is useful for “doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for

every good work.”

The Scriptures reveal to us God’s will, rebuke us when we have sinned, show us where we have gone wrong, and guide us onto the right path. Through learning and applying the Scriptures, we can be transformed into clean and useful vessels of God, equipped for every good work.

5. Leads Us to Spiritual Growth and Maturity

Just as our physical bodies need food to grow, our spiritual bodies also require nourishment. The Bible is food for our spiritual bodies. Peter teaches us that “as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Pet 2:2–3). We need the food that the Bible offers in order to grow in spirit. Let’s read Hebrews 5:12–14:

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 not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

- a. “For though by this time you ought to be teachers” refers to the spiritual immaturity of the letter’s audience. They have clearly been believers for some time, but the author of Hebrews chastises them for their lack of spiritual growth.
- b. “First principles of the oracles of God” refers to the very basics of God’s will. We cannot grow if we do not understand the basic principles of our beliefs.
- c. “Milk” refers to elementary teachings, whereas “solid food” refers to teachings that only the spiritually perceptive can understand and learn from. We cannot thrive on milk forever, but must learn to take solid food.
- d. “Word of righteousness” means the word of God, which shows us what is right before God, and how to discern good from evil.

While the spiritually immature must rely on others to maintain their faith, those who grow in their faith are able to understand the Bible on a deeper level. A sure sign of spiritual growth is when we can discern what is good, reject evil, and learn to please God with our lives (Ps 119:104).

6. Cleanses and Sanctifies Us

To be cleansed means to be freed from sin, and to be sanctified means to be set apart for God. How does the Bible cleanse and sanctify us? Jesus said, “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you” (Jn 15:3), and, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (Jn 17:17).

Jesus came into the world to proclaim the truth. The Holy Spirit uses the Scriptures, showing us the truth to make us aware of our sin, and to teach us to confess and repent. The truth of the Scriptures sanctifies us when we accept it, because we have chosen to leave darkness, and now belong to God. But that is just the beginning of our spiritual journey. It continues to sanctify us daily when we read, study, meditate, memorize, and apply its truths to our daily life. These actions continually set us apart from the world, sanctifying us and marking us as God’s children.

Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:25–26, “[As] Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word.” He also wrote, “For this is the will of God, your sanctification” (1 Thess 4:3). God’s will for us is to be holy (1 Thess 3:13). But to become holy, we must first be cleansed by the washing of water by the word. This refers to when His precious blood washes away our sins during baptism. But both water and words are involved, meaning that a spiritual cleansing takes effect only when the baptism is performed according to God’s word (Acts 2:38; 22:16).

7. Makes Us Examine Ourselves

Let’s read Hebrews 4:12. God’s word has a penetrating effect. It discerns our thoughts and intentions, cuts to our hearts, and leads us to repentance. Like a mirror, the word of God compels us to come face-to-face with our sins and inadequacies, to examine our motives and actions, and to bare our hearts before God’s presence. When we examine the Bible, it points out the things we need to change in our life, and shows us how to correct our ways. Without it, we would never know how to abide by God’s standards, or see where we have gone wrong.

8. Gives Us Spiritual Hope and Strength

With the knowledge of sin comes a heavy burden. How can we possibly live up to God’s standards? But the Bible offers more than knowledge of our inadequacy. It also offers us hope. Paul wrote in the Epistle to the Romans, “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Rom 15:4).

God understands that we are weak, and He knows that we need His help to obtain the eternal life that He offers us. We cannot live up to His standards on our own. So He has given us the Bible to offer us the hope that there is a way to receive salvation, and the strength to overcome the obstacles in our way. One psalmist wrote, “The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy” (Ps 147:11). We must learn to rely on God, for “He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength” (Isa 40:29). When we study the Scriptures and draw closer to Him, He will help us overcome our weaknesses.

9. Equips Us for Spiritual Warfare

Jesus showed the importance of the Scriptures in spiritual battles when He used its words to resist temptation (Mt 4:1–11). Paul also wrote in Ephesians 6:13, “Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” When we don the whole armor of God, we can stand against the wiles of the devil and withstand evil (vv. 11–14). The Bible teaches us how to put on this armor so that we can remain firm in our journey to the end.

10. Produces Victory and Success in Our Lives

How does the Bible produce victory in our lives? 1 John 2:14 says, “I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him *who is* from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.” With the help of the Scriptures, we can emerge victorious over sin and temptation, and thus over death and the wicked one.

Joshua told the Israelites to meditate on God’s words day and night and to observe His teachings, so that their way will be prosperous and they will have good success (Josh 1:8). In the

New Testament, Jesus urges us to pursue God and His righteousness above all else (Mt 6:33), something that we must do by studying and following the Scriptures. When we do so, He has promised to guide us and take care of all our needs.

Satan's goal is to make us feel weak and useless, and to ultimately destroy us. But the Bible offers many promises, gives us hope in hard times, and encourages our faith when we feel despair. If you're struggling in your walk with God, read the words of the Bible, and you will find that they provide strength, comfort, and hope. As Christians, it should be our goal to memorize God's word so that we can draw from them in times of need.

Check for Understanding

- 1. Name at least five benefits that come from reading the Bible.** Gives us the wisdom of salvation; gives us the assurance of salvation; provides warnings; gives us spiritual effectiveness; leads us to spiritual growth and maturity; cleanses and sanctifies us; makes us examine ourselves; gives us spiritual hope and strength; equips us for spiritual warfare; or produces victory and success in our lives.
- 2. How is the Bible food for us? What do "milk" and "solid food" refer to in Hebrews 5:10–14?** It is food for our spiritual bodies. "Milk" refers to elementary teachings, and "solid food" to teachings that only the spiritual perceptive can understand and learn from.
- 3. How does the Bible make us examine ourselves?** It points out the things we need to change in our life, and shows us how to correct our ways. Without it, we would never know how to abide by God's standards, or see where we have gone wrong.
- 4. What hope does the Bible offer?** Although we cannot live up to God's standards, the Bible offers the hope that there is a way to receive salvation. We need only rely on God.
- 5. How do we pursue God's righteousness? What has He promised to those who do?** By studying and following the Scriptures. He has promised to guide us and take care of all our needs.

Life Application

1. Develop a Habit of Daily Bible Reading

Reading the Scriptures is different from reading other books. It is an exercise in godliness that must be worked into our daily routine. We need to shift into a frame of mind that is open to God's voice, and be determined to heed what we read (1 Tim 4:6; cf. 2 Tim 3:10). Having a daily Bible reading habit is a helpful start. When we get into the habit of regular Bible reading, it should not be spur of the moment, rushing through several chapters in one sitting and neglecting it altogether on another day. Making time for personal Bible study is vital in the process of continual learning. How do we do it? (*Manna 67, 3*)¹

- a. Make a schedule:** Rather than thinking "sometime today," it is always best to decide on what time is best for you each day, and even setting an alarm as a reminder. Try waking up fifteen minutes earlier or going to bed fifteen minutes later to read God's word. If need be, try asking a family member to wake you up earlier, or to remind you before you go to bed.
- b. Start small:** Start by reading small portions of the Scriptures. It is important to understand what we are reading. Otherwise, we will lose interest very quickly.

¹ FF Chong, "Be Equipped with God's Word", *Manna Magazine Issue #67*, September 2012, <http://ia.tjc.org/elibrary/ContentDetail.aspx?ItemID=25893&langid=1>

- c. **Keep working your way up:** Work on gradually increasing your Bible-reading time. Don't be content with inspirational reading only, but progress to more in-depth studies of the Bible. Aim to equip yourself with the word as a spiritual weapon.
- d. **Find a buddy:** Find a spiritual companion, such as your parents, a sibling, or a friend, who can read on the same schedule, or who shares common interests in which topics they would like to study. Knowing that someone is reading the Bible at the same time can be a huge boost to our persistence and confidence, and brings us closer together. As the Bible states, "Two are better than one" (Eccl 4:9). When one begins to fall, the other can give them a lift. Studying the word together also provides the opportunity to talk about our readings in greater depth, to build on each other's insights, and to develop our understanding of the Scriptures. This is much more rewarding than studying alone.

Discussion: What does your Bible reading schedule look like? When was the last time you hungered for the word of God and grew as a result of studying God's word?

2. Meditate On and Memorize the Scriptures

In these perilous times, when sin continues to increase and false teachings abound, it is necessary for God's children to remain true to His teachings. But in order to do this, each believer cannot rely on the understanding of others, but should take the time to learn to meditate on and memorize the Scriptures themselves. When we do this, we will not fall prey to the increasing wickedness of the world, but instead be equipped for every good work. Let's examine how we can begin this process.

Meditating on God's word

Like any other skill, meditating on God's word is something that requires practice. It is a form of worship, so it is important that we first learn to quiet our hearts and focus on God. Once we begin reading, break down the verse into different sections, and then pay close attention to each word. It also helps to read it aloud several times.

For example, let's turn to Joshua 1:8: "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success." One way to break this verse down would be the following:

- *This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth.*
- *but you shall meditate in it day and night*
- *that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it*
- *For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.*

As you meditate on the verse, ask questions about it, and consider how it applies to your own life. Ask, "How does this affect my life?" Reflect upon each word and "chew" on it, which means thinking, reflecting, and internalizing the verse. Meditating on God's word should bring meaning to it. Over time, it will influence our attitude, whether consciously or subconsciously. This is because God's word is living and powerful. When we take the time to study it, it will respond in kind.

Memorization

It is important to remember that a verse should not be considered memorized at the point when we can simply quote it. We can consider a verse truly memorized only when we have reviewed it frequently enough for it to become ingrained in our memory. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom" (Col 3:16a). Letting the word of Christ dwell in us in all wisdom is a continuous process that

cannot be finished in a hurry.

With this in mind, the most critical element in memorizing the Scriptures is *review*. The most important time to review a verse is after you can quote the whole verse without making a mistake. Review the verse a minimum of once daily after that, but preferably several times a day. The more you review, the greater your retention. There are several methods for reviewing and memorization, but a common and effective way is to use index cards. However, it is most important to first ask the Holy Spirit to help us memorize God's word.

Using Index Cards to Memorize God's Word

- 1) Once you have grasped the meaning of the text, write out the verse on a card.
- 2) Be sure to write one idea per line, as this is how it is stored in your memory (see above example).
- 3) Read it slowly and listen carefully to each word a few times.
- 4) Write out the text from memory on a new card, beginning with the book and verse.
- 5) Check to see if you've written the verse accurately.
- 6) Throughout the day, recite the verse frequently, using your card if you have difficulty. Sharing the verse with your family members can reinforce it in your memory!
- 7) At the beginning of each week, review the memory verse from the previous week.
- 8) Every month, have your family members hold you accountable and review all that you've learned.

Exercise: Pick a verse that you like, and start meditating and memorizing!

Memory Verse

"Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit." (John 15:2)

Meaning

1. Jesus is our vine and we, His branches, making Him our source of life. He wants us to bear fruit, by which He is glorified, but the only way we can is by abiding in Jesus. Separated from Him, we can do nothing (Jn 15:5). If we don't connect with Him, we will be cast out from our Father's presence like withered branches severed from the vine.
2. Pruning the branches refers to God cleansing us, His children. He often prunes us through the word of God, letting it penetrate our soul and spirit to expose the thoughts and intents of our hearts, and enabling us to see any impurities within us (Heb 4:12–13).
3. Although it is painful, such pruning shapes our character and trains us to bear the fruit of righteousness (Heb 12:5–11).

Conclusion

In these perilous times, when sin continues to increase and false teachings abound, it is necessary for God's children to remain true to His teachings. But in order to do this, each believer cannot rely on the understanding of others. We need to take the time to learn to meditate on and memorize the Scriptures so that we do not fall prey to the increasing wickedness of the world, but instead be equipped for every good work.

Lesson 11 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. Who or what is the branch that bears fruit? Why does it need to be pruned?
We are the branches, making Jesus our vine and source of life. Pruning may be painful, but it shapes our character and trains us to bear the fruit of righteousness (Heb 12:5–11).
2. Pick three of the Scriptures' purposes that we learned, and explain each in your own words.
See Events and Spiritual Teachings, Section B. Try to ensure that the students know not to simply copy the student handout.
3. How do you plan to make a habit of reading the Bible daily? If you already have, what are some suggestions you can make to someone who has trouble keeping up the habit?
Personal answers.
4. Pick a verse, meditate on it, and memorize it. Record the verse and write what you have learned.
Personal answers. (Perhaps have the students share their verse during class the following week.)

How to Study the Bible

Passages: As listed in the lesson.

Memory Verse

“And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment.”
(Philippians 1:9)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Understand the benefits of studying the Bible.2. Understand the attitude required to study the Bible, as well as the various methods used.	God is the way, the truth, and the life.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Learn how to study the Bible using the inductive method.2. Apply and act on God’s word in our lives.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Studying the Bible
- B. How to Study the Bible: The Inductive Method
- C. What to Study: Types of Bible Studies

Life Application

- 1. Passage Study Example
- 2. Character Study Example

Memory Verse

Conclusion: Studying the Bible is necessary for us to better understand God’s character and how to please Him. We must practice studying the Bible in our own time until it becomes part of our daily lives, able to transform us from within.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

A. Studying the Bible

The Bible is a marvelous book; while its language is so simple that even a child could read it, its message is also so profound that a scholar may spend his entire life trying to unravel its meaning. When the gospel reached the city of Berea, the Jews “received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11). It is with the same diligence that we ought to receive and learn the word of God, because the blessings of God’s word begin only when we study the Bible.

Reading and studying the Bible are two very different things. In study, one searches the Bible in depth. Studying requires notes, analysis, comparisons, and research in order to understand it better. But why do we need to study the Bible so deeply? Isn’t it enough to simply read it? As God’s children, our primary goals should be drawing closer to God, and growing in our faith. To better understand God’s character and learn how to please Him, studying the Bible is a necessity.

Solomon wrote that if we apply our hearts to understanding God’s words, “Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding” (Prov 2:5–6). God freely gives wisdom and knowledge to anyone who is willing to search for them (Jas 1:5). We need only take the first step and learn to study His word.

1. How to Approach Bible Study

a. Study with prayer and faith

Like any difficult subject, we require a teacher when studying the Bible (Acts 8:30–31). “Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God” (1 Cor 2:11). The guidance of the Holy Spirit is key to understanding and being inspired by God’s word. We will never be able to understand the Bible on our own, so we must learn to rely on the Spirit for help by praying every day and asking for wisdom (Lk 24:45; Jn 16:13). As long as we ask for this wisdom in faith, then God will grant it to us (Heb 4:2; 11:6).

b. Let the word speak to you

A Bible study is not an exercise in intellect. Its final goal is to apply God’s word to our lives by adjusting our thoughts, behavior, and lifestyle to conform to His will. As such, it is important that we adopt an attitude of one willing to be taught and corrected, for God reveals His will to the humble (Mt 5:3). Your study will be more fruitful when you are willing to examine your faults and shortcomings in the mirror that is God’s word (Josh 1:8). We need to approach our Bible study with a pure heart and a receptive mind (Mt 5:8; Jas 1:21).

c. Read carefully and take notes

Misinterpretation is often the result of careless reading, making observation the most basic step in Bible study. We can only interpret what the passage means when we know what it says. Write down your thoughts and observations in a notebook as you read to help focus your mind on the text and leave a deeper impression. Mark key words and phrases, and take note of relationships between different sections. By taking the time to read the passage closely and notating its structure, phrasing, or anything striking, we will discover things we would never have noticed in a casual reading.

d. Never alter the word of God

It is human nature to twist things to suit our own needs. But the word of God must never be changed. Never add anything to God's word or take anything away from it. Do not let personal interpretation, pride, or any other self-serving motivations compel you to distort or alter God's message of truth and salvation (Deut 12:32).

2. How to Benefit from Bible Study

a. Keep the word

Studying the Bible is an act of futility if we do not strive to also meditate upon it and keep it in our heart (2 Tim 3:14–17). If we do so, we will be able to call upon it with greater ease when faced with temptations or trials. When it becomes a part of our hearts, it will truly become spiritual armor, able to help us defend against sin and death (Ps 119:11).

b. Apply the word

In addition to keeping the word, it is equally important to apply God's word to your heart, "that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col 1:10). As James writes, faith without deeds is useless. If we are truly faithful, we will act out His word in everything we say and do.

c. Spread the word

Jesus Christ urged His disciples to spread the gospel, and we must also determine to do the same. We have been freely blessed with the goodness of God's word, so it is only right that we freely pass it on to others with diligence and courage (Mt 10:8, 27; Tit 1:3).

B. How to Study the Bible: The Inductive Method

In our walk with God, we must not depend on our RE teachers or ministers, but learn to delve into the Scriptures on our own. One of the best ways to study the Bible is through an "inductive" Bible study. This is a type of study that has three basic steps: observation, interpretation, and application.

- 1. Observation ("What does the passage say?"):** Very often we may read a passage, but have no idea what we just read. This step means discovering what the passage is saying. Some questions you may ask yourself are, "What did God say?" and "How did He say it?" These types of questions help you unravel the passage and equip you for a more accurate interpretation.
- 2. Interpretation ("What does the passage mean?"):** We should let the Bible interpret itself whenever possible, without coloring its meaning with our own perceptions. Context is important for understanding the Bible's intent. Look at the immediate context by reading the surrounding verses, and at the broader context by reading the surrounding chapters. Most importantly, ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten you and show you what God wants to convey.
- 3. Application ("How does the passage apply to me?"):** Think about what God is teaching you personally through your study. What are His commands? Which of your shortcomings is He pointing out? How is He trying to encourage you? How does this particular truth affect my relationship with God and with others? How can I grow in my walk with God?

It is important to remember that the Bible can only truly come to life when we examine our relationship with God and act out His word. "Application" is not simply answering the question; it is a determination to actively put into practice what you have learned in your Bible study. When we apply His truth to our lives, God will bless our efforts because we become more like Christ.

C. What to Study: Types of Bible Studies

1. Survey the Old and New Testaments

This method involves reading the entire Bible chapter by chapter, from Genesis to Revelation, in order to develop a general overview of its content. You may choose to read the Old and New Testaments concurrently (i.e.: one chapter each from the Old and New Testaments every day).

2. Book Study

To study any book in the Bible, it is important to read it thoroughly several times until you know the contents in detail and can outline its structure. It is also important to study the book's background and purpose, and examine the main focus of its teachings.

3. Chapter Study

Analyze the main theme of the chapter and grasp the main concepts within the context of the preceding and following chapters. Look for important words to search for the meaning of each verse. Additionally, you can use tools such as references and concordances to find related verses and words in other parts of the Bible.

4. Passage or Subject Study

Some people prefer to study the Bible by their topic of interest, which can range from a specific passage to a story in the Bible. It can also be a more general topic, such as the study of Christ and His works (also called Christology), the end times (eschatology), or salvation (soteriology). There are many other subjects, but regardless of your choice, topical studies often involve a large amount of research and cross-referencing, both within the Bible and with other books or encyclopedias that are related to your topic of interest. Topical studies can be difficult, so it is important to humbly pray for wisdom, and also to consult spiritually mature members if you have any questions or problems in your studies.

5. Character Study

Studying a character in the Bible involves examining their upbringing, actions, and mentality. It is also important to note their reactions to events both good and bad. Just as we learn from those around us today, gaining insight into the personal characteristics of different biblical figures can teach us how to approach our own lives. We can learn from their flaws and mistakes as much as from their virtues and success.

6. Historical Study

Many enjoy learning about the Bible itself – its chronology, history, events, customs, and geography. This is a study of the Bible's historical and cultural context – how the people lived at the time, and the customs and technology at the time of its writing. To learn such things, it is often necessary to consult knowledgeable members or references outside of the Bible. This type of study is helpful for understanding how God has shaped the events of the past and, ultimately, His plans for His chosen people.

Tools for Studying the Bible

Some studies can rely solely on Bible text. But others require external sources and knowledge from those more learned than us. Unlike scholars of the past, we have many legitimate tools available to us that can help us with our study of the Bible. Concordances, dictionaries, linear translations, atlases, and

encyclopedias are all useful references that can help bring the Bible into a different light and offer new understanding. Two examples of acceptable references are:

- Thomas Nelson Publishers. *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts: Old and New Testaments*. Revised and updated edition, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1996.
- Arnold, Clinton E. *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.

Whatever references we choose to use, it is important that we continue to rely on the Holy Spirit. It is easy to fall into deception and away from the truth if we rely too much on the interpretations of the world around us. Use biblical tools with care, and always look first to the Holy Spirit for divine guidance and wisdom.

Check for Understanding

1. **What is the difference between reading and studying the Bible?** In study, one searches the Bible in depth, takes notes, analyzes, compares, and researches in order to understand it better.
2. **Why is it so important that we study the Bible?** As God's children, our primary goals should be drawing closer to God and growing in our faith. Studying the Bible is necessary for us to better understand God's character and how to please Him.
3. **What are the four approaches to Bible study?** Study with prayer and faith; let the word speak to you; read carefully and take notes; and never alter the word of God.
4. **Name three types of Bible studies.** Survey of the Old/New Testaments; book study; chapter study; passage or subject study; character study; or historical study.
5. **What dangers might we face if we rely too much on interpretations of the world around us?** We may easily fall into deception and away from the truth. We must use biblical tools with care, and always look first to the Holy Spirit for divine guidance and wisdom.

Life Application

(Teachers: Below are two examples, one of a passage study, and one of a character study. If your time is limited, choose one that you feel is more appropriate for your particular students, or consider preparing your own example. If you have a large class, you may want to split them into groups and have them attempt a brief study and present their findings to the rest of the class.)

Effective studies are all about asking the right questions, so encourage them to come up with meaningful and thoughtful questions, even if they can't answer them. If you feel they might have trouble with this exercise, consider preparing a handout ahead of time with some guidance and a few sample questions. If you have resources available to you such as biblical encyclopedias or atlases, or access to the internet for reliable sites such as <https://www.blueletterbible.org/>, consider showing them to your students.)

1. Passage Study

Let's try doing a passage study of Philippians 1:1–8.

Observation

The first step to observation is understanding the context. That means knowing the basic background of the book that contains the passage you are studying. Philippians, for example, has the following background:

<i>Audience</i>	Believers in Philippi
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<i>Date written</i>	Likely A.D. 61–62
<i>Theme</i>	Joy in Christ
<i>Purpose</i>	Paul wrote this letter as thanks for the love of the Philippian believers, who had sent a gift to him with Epaphroditus (Phil 4:18).
<i>Central Verse</i>	“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” (Phil 4:4)

- *Additional Notes: Philippi was the first church God established in Europe (A.D. 49–52). It was established through Paul, who was also the first worker sent to spread the gospel there.*

Once we know its background and contextual purpose, we can now examine the passage in detail. To help with this, read it several times, then try picking out keywords and writing a brief outline. What keywords would you pick out for this passage? How would you outline it?

- *Keywords: Bondservants, saints, grace, peace, good work, gospel, affection of Jesus Christ*
- *Outline:*
 - (1) *Greetings (vv. 1–2)*
 - (2) *Thanksgiving for the church’s good works (vv. 3–6)*
 - (3) *Paul’s affection for the church (vv. 6–8)*

Interpretation

Once you clearly understand the passage, it is time to ask questions about it. Try to answer these questions to the best of your ability, taking the time to consider the passage and its background. Try looking up references to the same keywords within the passage, and use a dictionary if you are uncertain about specific words. What questions can you come up for this passage? For example:

- *What does it mean to be a bondservant of Christ?*
A bondservant must obey and follow their master without question. Their lives are dedicated to their master’s will, not their own.
- *What was Paul’s purpose in greeting the members with “grace and peace”?*
Grace is the free gift of redemption through Christ (Rom 3:25). Peace is the inner tranquility and assurance as a result of God’s grace (Jn 16:33).
- *What are Paul’s feelings for this church?*
From the gift the church sent and Paul’s own words, they clearly had a close bond, perhaps because Paul was the one who first brought the gospel to Europe, and consequently helped to establish the church.

Application

The most important part of studying the Bible is understanding what aspect of our lives we must change in order to apply the teachings that we have learned. To be obedient to God and become more like Him is our ultimate goal as Christians. To seek out the application of the passage, ask questions about how the passage pertains to your own life. For example:

- *What in my life prevents me from being a bondservant of Christ? How can I fix this?*
- *Do I feel peace as a result of God’s grace? Do I pray that others receive grace and peace?*
- *How can I better my relationship with my family and show better care for my fellow members?*

2. Character Study

We’ll now practice a character study, using Noah as our example.

Observation

Once you have selected your character, choose and list the passages and references you will need for your study. A concordance or biblical encyclopedia will help make this process faster. Once you have done so, read through your list, jotting down notes as you go. Try to write down facts about their life, such as where they lived, their family, and major events. It would be good to note any unusual influences or factors that shaped their life, too. With Noah as an example, our points may look something like the following:

- *Noah lived in a generation which was “wicked” and “every intent of the thoughts of [man’s] heart was only evil” (Gen 6:5)*
- *Noah was a farmer (Gen 9:20). He was already 500 years old when he fathered three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.*
- *Noah pleased God and found favor in His eyes (Gen 6:8–9; 2 Pet 2:5)*
- *God instructed Noah to take seven pairs of every kind of clean animal, and two of every kind of unclean animal. (Bible scholars calculated that 45,000 animals may have fit on the ark.)*
- *Noah was the “heir of the righteousness which is according to faith” (Heb 11:6–7)*
- *After the flood, Noah built an altar and offered sacrifices to God (Gen 8:20).*
- *God promised to Noah that He would never destroy the earth again with a flood. He made the rainbow as a sign of this everlasting covenant.*
- *Noah’s drunkenness was recorded in Gen 9:20–27. He lay in his tent naked (9:21).*
- *He lived 350 years after the flood (Gen 9:29).*
- *Noah was listed along with Daniel and Job’s names twice in the Bible (Ezek 14:14, 20).*

Interpretation

Using our notes, we can now try and understand a bit about the character. Why did they make such decisions? What were the reasons behind their actions? What about their environment shaped them to be the way they were? What can we infer about their faith from their lives? Keep these questions in mind. With all that we have gathered about Noah, what can you conclude about his character?

- *Being surrounded by a generation of sinners, Noah’s faith must have been very strong.*
- *His decision to build the ark without question demonstrates a complete obedience to God.*
- *The fact that he immediately built an altar to God shows that worship was part of Noah’s life.*
- *Being listed along with Daniel and Job shows that he was, like them, a model of faithfulness and righteousness.*
- *From his drunkenness, recorded in Gen 9:20–27, we can see that Noah may have been considered righteous, but he was not sinless.*
- *In his entire 950-year life, he held on to his beliefs and walked with God his whole life.*

Application

As God’s children, it is not only our duty to learn His word, but also to strive to become more like Him by acting out His word. What lessons from the character’s life can we apply to our own lives? How did they follow God? What caused them to stray? Their decisions, both right and wrong, can hold nuggets of wisdom that will help us reflect on our own choices. By examining their mistakes, we can learn what mistakes to avoid, and by studying their righteous acts, we can learn ways to follow their example. After studying Noah’s life, what are some self-reflective questions to consider?

- *Have I ever been influenced to sin by those around me? How can I avoid this in the future? What did Noah do that helped him avoid becoming a part of the perverse generation around him?*
- *Faith and obedience were what allowed Noah to be a righteous man. What is the state of my faith? Have I been obedient to God?*

- *It was natural for Noah to offer sacrifices to God. What kind of sacrifices have I made for Him? Is worship a natural part of my lifestyle? If not, how can I integrate worship into my daily life?*

We can also learn lessons about God Himself, not just about how we should act in our own lives. God's presence in the lives of biblical characters can help us understand His character, and in turn, help us understand what we can expect from Him in our own lives. For example:

- *God protects the righteous. As long as I obey Him, He will watch over me like He did Noah.*
- *God has great power over nature; He made all the animals enter the ark, and created the first rainbow as a sign of His promise. Knowing this, it is well within His power to help me with any problems that I might have. I need only rely on Him.*

Memory Verse

"And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment."
(Philippians 1:9)

Meaning

1. The more we understand God, the more we will be able to express His love in our actions. When we understand Him and draw closer to Him, our inner heart will naturally change and our love will become more like God's.
2. Love must be in truth (1 Jn 3:18; 2 Jn 1:1). In other words, our actions of love need to conform to the principles of God's word. Attempts to help brethren or truth-seekers with a misguided or blinded love may harm them rather than build them up. Therefore, we need to grow in our spiritual knowledge and discernment as much as we need to grow in love.

Conclusion

"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up." (Deut 6:6–7)

As God's children, our primary goals should be drawing closer to God and growing in our faith. Studying the Bible is necessary for us to better understand God's character and how to please Him. But we cannot rely on our teachers and ministers within the church; we must learn to do it on our own and practice studying the Bible in our own time until it becomes part of our daily lives, able to transform us from within.

Lesson 12 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What is the importance of knowledge and discernment in relation to our love for others?
Love must be in truth. Our actions of love need to conform to the principles of God's word. If we try to help others with a misguided or blinded love, we may harm more than help, so we must grow in our spiritual knowledge and discernment as much as we need to grow in love.
2. What is the importance of studying the Bible?
It is necessary for us to better understand God's character and how to please Him.
3. What does it mean to "let the word speak to you" when studying the Bible?
It means adopting an attitude of one willing to be taught and corrected, for God reveals His will to the humble. Your study will be more fruitful when you are willing to examine your faults and shortcomings in the mirror that is God's word.
4. What questions summarize the meaning of each step in the inductive method of Bible study?
Observation: "What does the passage say?"
Interpretation: "What does the passage mean?"
Application: "How does the passage apply to me?"
5. The "application" step is not simply answering a question. What more should it be?
It should be a determination to actively put into practice what you have learned in your Bible study. When we apply His truth to our lives, God will bless our efforts because we become more like Christ.
6. Do you keep God's word in your heart? How do you plan to improve your knowledge of the Bible?
Personal answers.

Junior 1 Year 3 Book 1 Review

Memory Verses

Instructions: Fill in the blanks correctly using the provided words.

withheld	kingdom	deliver	faithful
approved	wisdom	doctrine	fear
endures	heard	bring	earth
covenant	everlasting	purpose	Spirit
dominion	discernment	knowledge	words
stand	heaven	everything	love
Me	prunes	life	commandments
milk	might	brethren	Lord
righteousness	pray	away	correction

Ezekiel 2:1-2	Exodus 3:8a	John 15:2	Matthew 24:35
Proverbs 9:10	Ephesians 6:10	James 1:12	Psalms 145:13
Deuteronomy 7:9	Philippians 1:9	2 Timothy 3:16	Job 42:2

1. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for _____, for reproof, for _____, for instruction in _____."
(_____)
2. "So I have come down to _____ them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to _____ them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with _____ and honey." (_____)
3. "_____ and _____ will pass away, but My _____ will by no means pass away." (_____)
4. "Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the _____ God who keeps _____ and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His _____." (_____)
5. "I know that You can do _____, and that no _____ of Yours can be _____ from You." (_____)
6. "The _____ of the LORD is the beginning of _____, and the _____ of the Holy One is understanding." (_____)

7. "And He said to me, 'Son of man, _____ on your feet, and I will speak to you.' Then the _____ entered me when He spoke to me, and set me on my feet; and I _____ Him who spoke to me." (_____)
8. "Your _____ is an _____ kingdom, and Your _____ endures throughout all generations." (_____)
9. "Finally, my _____, be strong in the _____ and in the power of His _____." (_____)
10. "Blessed is the man who _____ temptation; for when he has been _____, he will receive the crown of _____ which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." (_____)
11. "Every branch in _____ that does not bear fruit He takes _____; and every branch that bears fruit He _____, that it may bear more fruit." (_____)
12. "And this I _____, that your _____ may abound still more and more in knowledge and all _____." (_____)

Multiple Choice

1. ____ : The Old Testament was originally written in _____, and the New Testament in _____.
 - a. Hebrew and Aramaic; Greek
 - b. Hebrew and Greek; Latin
 - c. Hebrew and Arabic; Greek
 - d. Hebrew and Aramaic; Latin
2. ____ : Which was not a qualification for being a prophet of God?
 - a. The prophet must be chosen by God.
 - b. The prophet must be of the tribe of Levi.
 - c. The prophet must be purposed in their heart.
 - d. The prophet must be faithful to God's message.
3. ____ : Which is not one of the "ages" of the Israelite nation that we studied?
 - a. Age of the Patriarchs
 - b. Age of the Judges
 - c. Age of the Prophets
 - d. Age of the Kingdoms
4. ____ : What is the definition of "sovereign"?
 - a. One possessed of supreme power
 - b. An acknowledged leader
 - c. One that exercises supreme authority

Junior 1 Year 3 Book 1 Review

- d. All of the above
5. ____ : Which of these gospels is not considered part of the synoptic Gospels?
- a. Matthew
 - b. Mark
 - c. Luke
 - d. John
6. ____ : What is the original meaning of “gospel”?
- a. God’s word
 - b. Good news
 - c. Doctrine
 - d. Truth
7. ____ : What is the meaning of the Greek word, *peirasmos*?
- a. Temptation
 - b. Law
 - c. Called out
 - d. Preacher

The Bible

Instructions: Fill in the blanks for the section names and the book names, in biblical order. Then, fill in the themes using the provided terms.

- God is just and faithful
- (Prison Epistle) We are all equal in Christ
- Praise and prayer
- Everything under the sun is vanity
- The purpose of suffering
- Jesus is the Messiah; He is the King
- (Prison Epistle) Christ and the church
- A great hope
- God’s judgment on Israel/Judah
- Witnessing for Christ
- Jesus is the Son of God
- The revelation of Jesus Christ
- Jesus is the tireless Servant of the Lord
- (Prison Epistle) Joy in Christ
- God’s love for the church
- God’s judgment on the nations
- A living faith
- Jesus is the Son of man
- God is holy
- (Prison Epistle) Christ is the center of our faith
- (Pastoral Epistle) Set the church in order
- God is our deliverer and Savior
- The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom
- Joy in suffering
- The restoration of Israel and message of hope
- God is love
- God is our Creator

	Section Name	Name (in biblical order)	Theme	
OLD TESTAMENT		Genesis		
		Exodus		
		Leviticus		
		Numbers		
		Deuteronomy		
	The Historical Books			X
		Job		
		Psalms		
		Proverbs		
		Ecclesiastes		

		Song of Solomon	
	Major		The restoration of Israel and message of hope; God's judgment on Israel/Judah
			The restoration of Israel and message of hope; God's judgment on Israel/Judah
			The restoration of Israel and message of hope; God's judgment on Israel/Judah
			The restoration of Israel and message of hope; God's judgment on the nations; God's judgment on Israel/Judah
	Minor	Hosea	God's judgment on Israel/Judah
		Joel	God's judgment on Israel/Judah
		Amos	God's judgment on Israel/Judah
		Obadiah	God's judgment on the nations
		Micah	God's judgment on Israel/Judah
		Nahum	God's judgment on the nations
		Zephaniah	God's judgment on Israel/Judah
		Haggai	The restoration of Israel and message of hope
Zechariah		The restoration of Israel and message of hope	

NEW TESTAMENT		Matthew		
		Mark		
		Luke		
		John		
	Historical	Acts	The works of the Holy Spirit and the power of God	
			The growth of the church	

Junior 1 Year 3 Book 1 Review

		Ephesians	
		Philippians	
		Colossians	
			
			(Pastoral Epistle) Defend the gospel; Preach the word
		Titus	
		Philemon	
		Hebrews	
		James	
		1 & 2 Peter	
			
			
		Prophecy	

The Armor of God

Instructions: Label the pieces of the armor of God and what they represent. Then, briefly describe the meaning of each piece.

Piece
[]

Representation
[]

Meaning
[]

Piece
[]

Representation
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Meaning
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Piece
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Representation
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Meaning
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Piece
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Representation
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Meaning
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Piece
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Representation
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Meaning
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Piece
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Representation
[]

Meaning
[]

Short Answer

1. **(Lesson 1)** As taught in 2 Timothy 3:16, explain the four different ways the Bible aids us as our path to salvation. Share a time when the Bible helped you in one of the four ways.

2. **(Lesson 3)** Prophecies provide evidence that God’s word will never fail. Knowing this, how can we live a godly life?

3. **(Lesson 4)** Name at least two of the characteristics of the Old Testament and New Testament covenants with God and how they differ. How does the New Testament covenant apply to us today?

4. **(Lesson 6)** What does it mean to fear God? Why must we fear God? What do we gain from fearing God?

5. **(Lesson 8) What is the kingdom of heaven as revealed by the Gospels? How can we enter the kingdom?**

6. **(Lesson 11) Name at least four of the purposes of the Scriptures that we studied. What is the purpose of meditating on and memorizing the Scriptures?**

7. **(Lesson 12) Name the three steps in the inductive method of studying the Bible. Why is it important that we not only read, but also study the Bible?**

Junior 1 Year 3 Book 1 Review Answer Key

Memory Verses

1. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (2 Timothy 3:16)
2. "So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey." (Exodus 3:8a)
3. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away." (Matthew 24:35)
4. "Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments." (Deuteronomy 7:9)
5. "I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You." (Job 42:2)
6. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." (Proverbs 9:10)
7. "And He said to me, 'Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak to you.' Then the Spirit entered me when He spoke to me, and set me on my feet; and I heard Him who spoke to me." (Ezekiel 2:1-2)
8. "Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your dominion endures throughout all generations." (Psalm 145:13)
9. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." (Ephesians 6:10)
10. "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." (James 1:12)
11. "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit." (John 15:2)
12. "And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment." (Philippians 1:9)

Multiple Choice

1. ____ : The Old Testament was originally written in _____, and the New Testament in _____.
a. **Hebrew and Aramaic; Greek**
b. Hebrew and Greek; Latin
c. Hebrew and Arabic; Greek
d. Hebrew and Aramaic; Latin
2. ____ : Which was not a qualification for being a prophet of God?
a. The prophet must be chosen by God.
b. **The prophet must be of the tribe of Levi.**
c. The prophet must be purposed in their heart.
d. The prophet must be faithful to God's message.
3. ____ : Which is not one of the "ages" of the Israelite nation that we studied?
a. Age of the Patriarchs
b. Age of the Judges
c. **Age of the Prophets**
d. Age of the Kingdoms

4. ____ : What is the definition of “sovereign”?
 - a. One possessed of supreme power
 - b. An acknowledged leader
 - c. One that exercises supreme authority
 - d. All of the above**

5. ____ : Which of these gospels is not considered part of the synoptic Gospels?
 - a. Matthew
 - b. Mark
 - c. Luke
 - d. John**

6. ____ : What is the original meaning of “gospel”?
 - a. God’s word
 - b. Good news**
 - c. Doctrine
 - d. Truth

7. ____ : What is the meaning of the Greek word, *peirasmos*?
 - a. Temptation**
 - b. Law
 - c. Called out
 - d. Preacher

The Bible

	Section Name	Name (in biblical order)	Theme
OLD TESTAMENT	<i>The Torah</i>	Genesis	<i>God is our Creator</i>
		Exodus	<i>God is our deliverer and Savior</i>
		Leviticus	<i>God is holy</i>
		Numbers	<i>God is just and faithful</i>
		Deuteronomy	<i>God is love</i>
	<i>The Historical Books</i>	<i>Joshua</i>	X
		<i>Judges</i>	
		<i>Ruth</i>	
		<i>1 & 2 Samuel</i>	
		<i>1 & 2 Kings</i>	
		<i>1 & 2 Chronicles</i>	
		<i>Ezra</i>	
		<i>Nehemiah</i>	
	<i>The Wisdom Books</i>	<i>Job</i>	<i>The purpose of suffering</i>
		<i>Psalms</i>	<i>Praise and prayer</i>
		<i>Proverbs</i>	<i>The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom</i>
		<i>Ecclesiastes</i>	<i>Everything under the sun is vanity</i>
		<i>Song of Solomon</i>	<i>God’s love for the church</i>

	<i>The Prophetic Books</i>	Major	<i>Isaiah</i>	The restoration of Israel and message of hope; God's judgment on Israel/Judah
			<i>Jeremiah</i>	The restoration of Israel and message of hope; God's judgment on Israel/Judah
			<i>Lamentations</i>	
			<i>Ezekiel</i>	The restoration of Israel and message of hope; God's judgment on the nations; God's judgment on Israel/Judah
			<i>Daniel</i>	<i>God's judgment on the nations</i>
		Minor	<i>Hosea</i>	God's judgment on Israel/Judah
			<i>Joel</i>	God's judgment on Israel/Judah
			<i>Amos</i>	God's judgment on Israel/Judah
			<i>Obadiah</i>	God's judgment on the nations
			<i>Jonah</i>	<i>God's judgment on the nations</i>
			<i>Micah</i>	God's judgment on Israel/Judah
			<i>Nahum</i>	God's judgment on the nations
			<i>Habakkuk</i>	<i>God's judgment on Israel/Judah</i>
			<i>Zephaniah</i>	God's judgment on Israel/Judah
			<i>Haggai</i>	The restoration of Israel and message of hope
<i>Zechariah</i>	The restoration of Israel and message of hope			
<i>Malachi</i>	<i>The restoration of Israel and message of hope</i>			
NEW TESTAMENT	<i>The Gospels</i>	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Jesus is the Messiah; He is the King</i>	
		<i>Mark</i>	<i>Jesus is the tireless Servant of the Lord</i>	
		<i>Luke</i>	<i>Jesus is the Son of man</i>	
		<i>John</i>	<i>Jesus is the Son of God</i>	
	Historical	<i>Acts</i>	The works of the Holy Spirit and the power of God	
			The growth of the church	
			<i>Witnessing for Christ</i>	
	<i>Letters</i>	<i>Romans</i>		
		<i>1 & 2 Corinthians</i>		
		<i>Galatians</i>		
		<i>Ephesians</i>	<i>(Prison Epistle) Christ and the church</i>	
		<i>Philippians</i>	<i>(Prison Epistle) Joy in Christ</i>	
		<i>Colossians</i>	<i>(Prison Epistle) Christ is the center of our faith</i>	
		<i>1 & 2 Thessalonians</i>		
		<i>1 & 2 Timothy</i>	<i>(Pastoral Epistle) Defend the gospel; Preach the word</i>	
		<i>Titus</i>	<i>(Pastoral Epistle) Set the church in order</i>	
		<i>Philemon</i>	<i>(Prison Epistle) We are all equal in Christ</i>	
		<i>Hebrews</i>	<i>A great hope</i>	
		<i>James</i>	<i>A living faith</i>	
		<i>1 & 2 Peter</i>	<i>Joy in suffering</i>	
<i>1, 2, 3 John</i>				
<i>Jude</i>				
Prophecy	<i>Revelation</i>	<i>The revelation of Jesus Christ</i>		

The Armor of God

Piece

Breastplate

Representation

Righteousness

Meaning

A breastplate protects the heart. When we cover our heart with righteousness, we can avoid sin and remain holy.

Piece

Girded waist

Representation

The Truth

Meaning

A heavy belt protects the waist and carries weapons. The truth forms the foundation of stability for the church.

Piece

Sword

Representation

The word of God

Meaning

God's word is a sword that can penetrate the heart and reveal the innermost thoughts of those it touches. Jesus also used the Scriptures to defend Himself.

Piece

Helmet

Representation

Salvation

Meaning

Our thoughts are a spiritual battlefield every day, but when we accept salvation, we are no longer deceived by the riches and sins of the world.

Piece

Shield

Representation

Faith

Meaning

A shield is the first line of defense that provides all-encompassing protection. Our faith overcomes the world, not our personal strength.

Piece

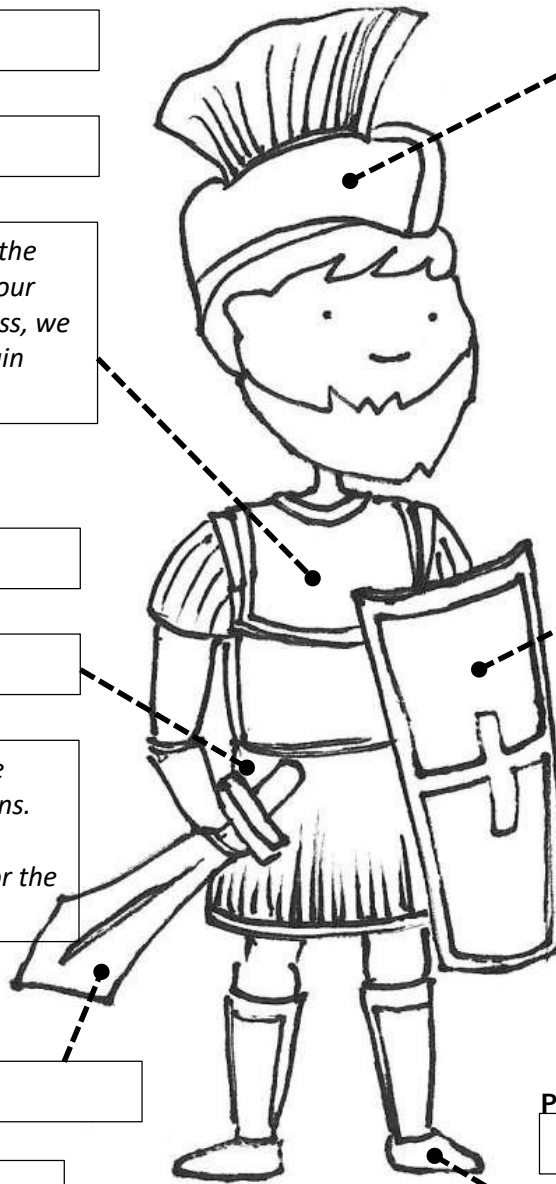
Shoes

Representation

Gospel of peace

Meaning

When we protect our feet with the gospel of peace, they can carry us away from sin. Our feet travel to defend and to bring the gospel to others.



Short Answer

- 1. (Lesson 1) As taught in 2 Timothy 3:16, explain the four different ways the Bible aids us as our path to salvation. Share a time when the Bible helped you in one of the four ways.**

The Bible is profitable for doctrine by telling us what we should believe in, for reproof by teaching us the error of our ways, for correction by guiding us back to the correct path, and for instruction in righteousness by teaching us how to live a righteous life.

Personal answers.

- 2. (Lesson 3) Prophecies provide evidence that God's word will never fail. Knowing this, how can we live a godly life?**

We must resist temptation by determining not to follow the lives of those with no hope for eternity. We need to stand firm in hope through the trials and tribulations in life because we know that God's words and promises will never fail. Lastly, we should live for Christ and not weary in doing good or showing love to those in need.

- 3. (Lesson 4) Name at least two of the characteristics of the Old Testament and New Testament covenants with God and how they differ. How does the New Testament covenant apply to us today?**

The Old Testament covenant was written on tablets of stone and required strict obedience, but the new covenant is written on hearts of flesh and requires us to have a change of heart to follow God. The Old Testament covenant required priests to mediate for the Israelites, but in the new covenant, Jesus Christ is the Mediator, so we can approach Him and communicate directly. He also dwells in our hearts as the Holy Spirit. The old covenant was only offered to Israelites, but the new covenant is offered to all. The Old Testament covenant was taught by priests and scribes, but the Holy Spirit teaches us how to act now. Though we are not the descendants of Abraham, as long as we obey God, He will bless us, as the promises made to Abraham now extend to all through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

- 4. (Lesson 6) What does it mean to fear God? Why must we fear God? What do we gain from fearing God?**

To fear God is to have a continual awareness of God's presence next to us, and to understand that He sees, knows, and is with our every move. It is a healthy and holy fear that brings us life and blessings. We must fear God because we must show the greatest respect to the Creator who made us, who judges us, and who blesses us according to His will. When we fear God, we will have strong confidence by finding assurance in Him when we face the unknown or encounter danger. We will also have wisdom to know how to live according to God's word and how to be discerning when making decisions. Lastly, the fear of God will provide deliverance, as God has promised to take care of us and never to leave or forsake us.

- 5. (Lesson 8) What is the kingdom of heaven as revealed by the Gospels? How can we enter the kingdom?**

The kingdom of heaven does not refer to a location, but a ruler's exercise of sovereign power or their authority to rule over a kingdom. So, the kingdom of heaven is a spiritual kingdom that is ruled by Christ, full of righteousness, peace, and joy. It is a new heaven and a new earth, a city that is full of splendor, filled with God's glory, beyond our ability to understand, imagine, or describe. We must be born again of water and the Spirit, which descended on the Day of Pentecost, to enter the kingdom of God.

- 6. (Lesson 11) Name at least four of the purposes of the Scriptures that we studied. What is the purpose of meditating on and memorizing the Scriptures?**

The purposes of the Scriptures are: gives the wisdom of salvation; give us the assurance of salvation; provides warnings; gives us spiritual effectiveness; leads us to spiritual growth and maturity; cleanses and sanctifies us; makes us examine ourselves; gives us spiritual hope and strength; equips us for spiritual warfare; and produces victory and success in our lives. Meditating on and memorizing the Scriptures prevents us from falling prey to the increasing wickedness of the world.

- 7. (Lesson 12) Name the three steps in the inductive method of studying the Bible. Why is it important that we not only read, but also study the Bible?**

The first step to the inductive method is to observe what the passage says. The second step is to interpret what the passage means by examining the immediate and broader context. The last step is to apply the passage to our own lives and think about what God is teaching us personally. While reading the Bible is important, studying it is even more important, as it is necessary for us to better understand God's character and how to please Him.