

SYLLABUS

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IN THE BEGINNING

The Bible begins by saying only that God created in the beginning. Never does the Word attempt to explain or defend the existence of God. He simply is. His name for Himself is "I AM."

Read Exodus 3:14, 15 _____

Now, beginning with Genesis 1, list what God Created on each day:

Day 1 _____ Day 2 _____

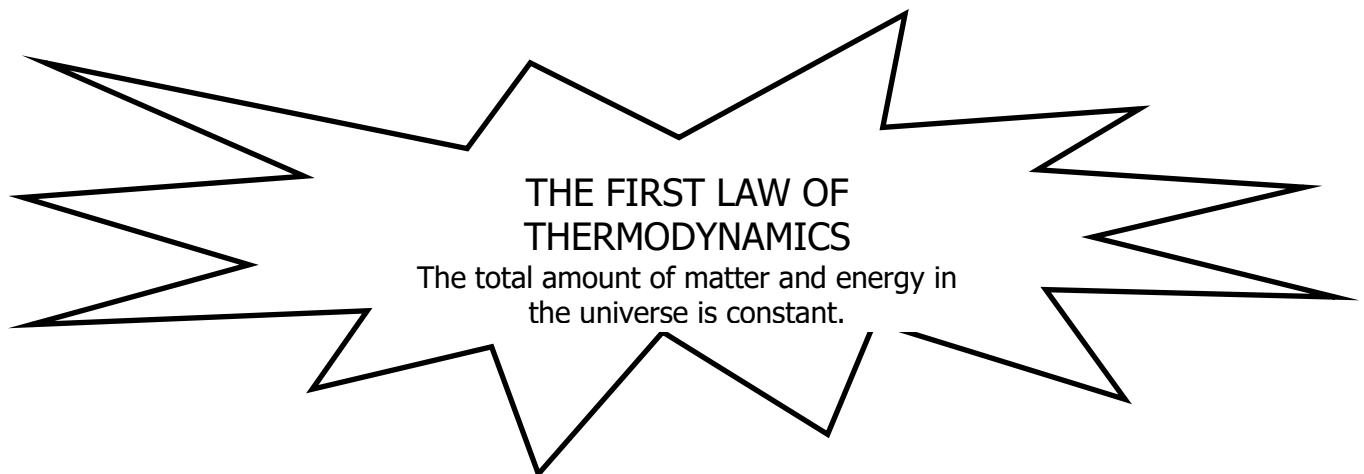
Day 3 _____ Day 4 _____

Day 5 _____ Day 6 _____

Now read what God did on Day 7 in Genesis 2:1 _____

Do a word study on "rested" and record the results here: _____

The Word tells us that when God quit creating, nothing further could be made. Man could use what was created; man could change the form of what had been created. But man could not make what had been created be more or less. This fact completely agrees with observed scientific laws.



As you read Genesis 2:4-14, locate the Garden of Eden where God placed Adam and Eve. Pay particular attention to what country that location would be in today.



As you read, notice what Adam and Eve were supposed to be doing in the garden in Genesis 2:15 _____

Read Genesis 2:16, 17 and describe any further instructions from God: _____

We are soon to see that Adam and Eve weren't alone in the garden. Satan was there also. Here, he is described as a serpent.

Begin in Genesis 3:1-6. After reading this section, answer these questions:

1. What did the serpent say that Eve could become if she ate the fruit? _____

2. What if Adam hadn't eaten the fruit? _____

3. At what point did sin enter the world? _____

Read Romans 5:12-14 and see if your answer agrees with scripture: _____

How does the Word define sin? Look up these references and write the definitions:

1 John 3:4 _____

Romans 14:23 _____

Romans 3:23 _____

James 4:17 _____

Now, read Isaiah 53:6. When all of these references are combined, what would you say is the root of sin? _____

Some people believe that God was unfair to Adam and Eve. But He had clearly told them what the rules were. Read Genesis 2:8, 9 and Genesis 2:16, 17. Who did God give this information to? _____

What were the consequences of disobedience? _____

Since the instructions were given to Adam, did Eve know about them? This is a valid question, but Genesis 3:1-3 answers this question for us. Adam and Eve had crossed over the line and entered into sin. Notice the immediate effects: they hid from God and they knew they were naked.

Read Romans 8:18-23 and record what you learn about the current state of things:

Adam and Eve immediately felt the consequence of their sin: this was spiritual death. And physical death was to come, not only for them, but for their descendants after them.

Mankind was dead in sin. (Ephesians 2:1)

Adam became the father of those who were "in his likeness, according to his image" (Genesis 5:1, 3) and that was ***SINNER***. We know this situation as "original sin."

Adam had been created in God's image. The word describing image is *tselem*. Which is a Hebrew word for shadow, or shade. It is an image made when light shines on an

object. This sort of image is inferior to the object that made it, but is clearly recognizable as the shadow of the original.

From this time forward, every person ever born had a built-in default mode: **SINNER-LOST**. Satan must have been rejoicing. Man had fallen into sin just as Satan desired. But God promised a way to change the default mode! Because of God's grace, Jesus became a way to change the default mode to: **BELIEVER-SAVED**.

God moved in grace, even though He held His standard of righteousness. He promised a Redeemer who would deliver a deathblow to Satan. Genesis 3:14-16 is the first time Satan may actually know that he hadn't won, that there was hope for men. Read those verses: _____

Crucifixion involves pushing up with the feet in order to breathe. The heel is bruised. In case you think Satan wasn't listening to the rest of God's promise, read Revelation 13:1-3 where Satan's attempt to set up a false trinity is described. Why do you think that Satan's false messiah has a healed head wound? _____

Chapter 13 of Revelation deals with a "false trinity" that Satan sets up in the end times. This has not yet happened, but is a prophecy for the future. Notice that Satan has taken the place of the Father (the dragon who gives his authority to the beast). The beast (also called the antichrist or false Christ) is given power by the dragon—he has a head wound, but it doesn't end his rule. There is also a "false Holy Spirit" called the false prophet. Read Revelation 13:11-18 to learn more about the false trinity:

So, Satan is seen setting up a false trinity and trying to minimize God's prediction that Satan would receive a mortal head blow.

From this time forward, sin proliferated on Earth. As you read Genesis 6:1-6, note especially what was happening: _____

Some scholars believe that fallen angels were cohabitating with human women in direct rebellion against the domain that God had given them. Angels are frequently called "sons of God" in scripture.

Job 1:6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them.

Job 2:1 Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the Lord.

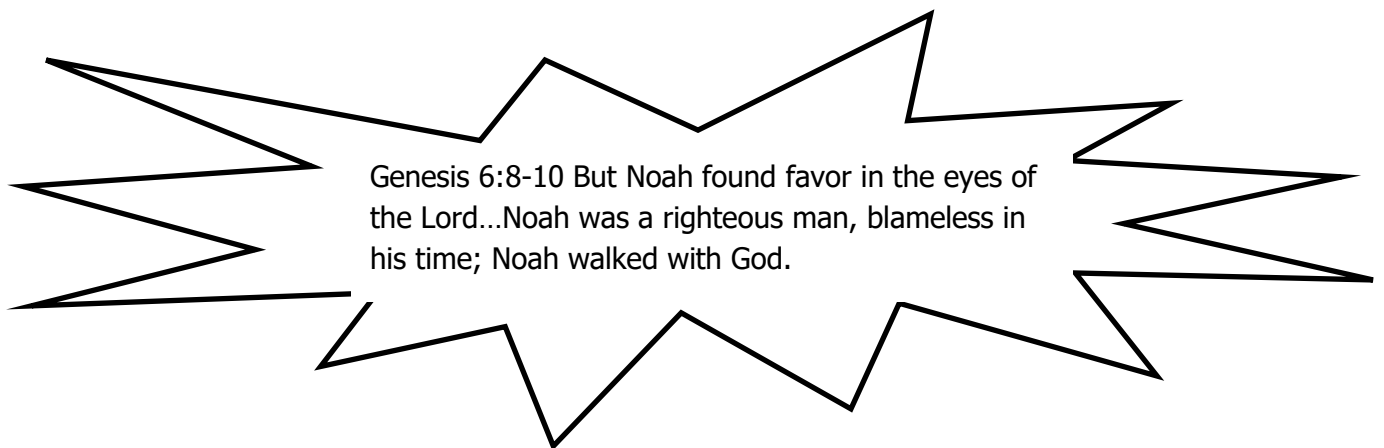
Job 38:7 When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

- ❖ The argument against the position is that Genesis 6:2 in some translations says "wives" and scripture indicates that angels do not marry. (Luke 20:36-37)

However, the word translated "wives" in Genesis 6:2 is *ishshah* which is also translated "woman" or "women." The word stands in contrast with *ish* which means "man" or "men."

Archaeologists and historians have discovered the custom during this time of building ziggurats (towers) with a room on top to provide sustenance to the gods which were invited to come down to visit. Some believe that demonic beings (fallen angels) actually came down by invitation and cohabitated with women who believed that they were gods. This made men of renown (Genesis 6:4). This literally means that they "made a name for themselves."

Read Genesis 6:6, 11, 12 concerning God's attitude after these events: _____



As we read on in Genesis 6, we learn that Noah has three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And God told Noah to build a boat (ark—literally "box") to preserve his family

from a coming flood. Noah was 600 years old when the flood happened. Read Genesis 7:16 and notice who closed the door of the ark: _____

As you read on in Genesis 7, answer these questions:

How long did it rain? 7:17 _____

How long was it before Noah could see land again? 8:5 _____

It seems to have been about 377 days from the time Noah and his family entered the ark until they left it.

Because of the state of humankind, God seeks us out and begins the revelation of His restoration plan. In the process, God commits Himself in some major ways!

Read Genesis 6:11-21. Record what you learn about covenant, specifically noting:

- a. The reason for the covenant
- b. Who initiated the covenant
- c. God's part and man's part

Continue your reading in Genesis 9:9-17. Discuss God's covenant after the flood. Record specifically what you learn paying special attention to the following:

- a. The reason and sign of the covenant
- b. Who initiated the covenant
- c. The length of the covenant
- d. God's part and man's part

Noah's sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth began repopulating the earth. The Semitic peoples are descendants of Shem. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are descendants of Shem.

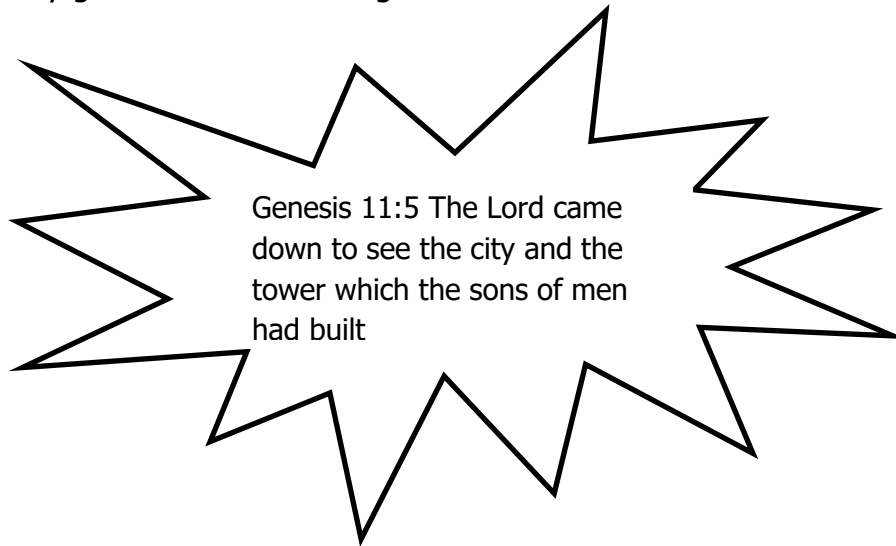
The descendants of Shem settled in areas of current Iraq and this is where Abraham was from. The descendants of Ham settled in areas today known as Israel and farther south into Africa. However, Ham's grandson, Nimrod, moved back to the area where the Garden of Eden was originally located and where the towers had been built previously.

Genesis 11 records what happened as Nimrod traveled eastward back to this area. In Genesis 11:4, discuss what Nimrod wanted to do: _____

Notice also the reason they wanted to do it: _____

Remember that earlier towers had also been built so that people could be of "renown" or could "make a name for themselves."

Nimrod probably got more than he bargained for when the real God came to check it out.



God was clearly unhappy with what had happened. Read Genesis 11:6-9 and complete the story. _____

THE CONCEPT OF COVENANT

As we begin to think about covenants, it will be helpful to first define the concept that we will be studying.

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word for covenant is **beriyth** (ber-eeth) which is defined as:

1. A compact made by passing between pieces of flesh
2. Between nations: a treaty, alliance of friendship
3. Between individuals: a pledge or agreement
4. Between God and man: accompanied by sacrifices, signs and oaths that sealed the relationship

In the Old Testament, the terminology translated "make a covenant" usually includes two Hebrew words, "karath" and "beriyth." The verb "karath" means to cut something. So, the Old Testament really speaks of "cutting a covenant."

In the New Testament, the Greek word for covenant is **diatheke** (dee-ath-ay-kay) which is defined as:

1. A covenant
2. A testament (or last will and testament)
3. A contract
4. A disposition (after death)

"Diatheke" was usually used much as we use terminology regarding the making of a will. "Syntheke" was a word which spoke of agreements between partners; but "diatheke" allowed one person to make any terms that he wanted; no others could change the terms; and the "diatheke" became workable only after death.

THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT is a prime example of a beriyth. Abram was originally from Ur of the Chaldeans (present day southern Iraq.)

We know that he journeyed with his father, Terah, his wife, Sarai, and his nephew, Lot, to Haran in northern Iraq. Read Genesis 11:31 to get the entire picture.

After Terah's death in Haran, Abram continued on to Canaan as planned. Read Joshua 24:2 and determine whether Abram's family followed God: _____

Genesis 15:7-21 describes the promise that God made to Abram: _____

What did God tell Abram to do with the animals he was to bring? _____

Where did the idea to cut them in half come from? From archaeological records, we know that this was the way covenants were made in Ur where Abram was from. This was called the walk of death; the one making the covenant walked between the animal halves. This signified that the covenant maker would keep covenant as long as he lived.

Carefully read Genesis 15:17, 18 and discover who made the covenant. Who was it? _____ How long does God live? _____ So, how long do you think the Abraham covenant is in effect? _____ Is it still in effect now? _____

God made a promise to give Abram's descendants the described land. What did the people have to do in return? _____

What impact do you think this has on the current state of Israel? Be biblical and specific in your response. _____

To understand more about this covenant, read Galatians 3:16 and record what you learn: _____

According to this verse, who was the seed? _____

When Abraham acted on faith, he was declared righteous. Was he declared righteous because of his faith, or because of his works? In other words, was it by grace or by law?

In order to understand our lesson today, we need to do a review of Abraham's life. Abraham was originally named Abram. He lived in Ur of the Chaldeans, which was an area of strong idol worship. God called Abram to leave, and promised to make him a great nation; however, Abram and Sarai, his wife, were unable to have children. The promise of a "seed" just didn't seem to be fulfilled. By the time Abram was seventy-five and Sarai was sixty-five, they had given up hope. (even though the promise had been given twice! Read Genesis 12 and Genesis 15 to see this.)

In Genesis 16:2, 4, 16 we see that Abram decided to have a child with Sarai's maid, Hagar. This child was Ishmael. The religion of Islam looks to Ishmael as its spiritual father.

In Genesis 17:1-5, 15-19 we see God reminding Abram of his promise. He renamed Sarai to be Sarah, which means mother of nations. Abram's name was changed to Abraham, because God intended him to be the father of nations.

Genesis 21:5 and 8-12 describe the birth of Isaac, the child of Sarah. But verses 8-12 give us some valuable insight in allegorical terms. Read Genesis 21:8-12 and record what you learn: _____

Reading Paul's writings to the Galatian church regarding covenants helps us understand. Read Galatians 4:21-31, and answer the following questions:

What covenants are being spoken of by Paul? _____

What covenant does Hagar represent? Where was the covenant inaugurated?

What covenant does Sarah represent? _____

What do you need to remember when you succumb to sin? You are not to consider what you feel or see. You are to look instead at the promises of God. Read Romans 8:1. What is the promise?

If you feel condemned, if you feel that you have to work to pay for your sin, remember that feelings have nothing to do with faith. Faith takes God at his Word. Cast out the bondwoman who represents the law. You cannot live under law and grace at the same time. Do you understand the allegory that Paul is speaking of in Galatians 4:24?

Summarize this position by reading Galatians 5:1 and record what you learn:

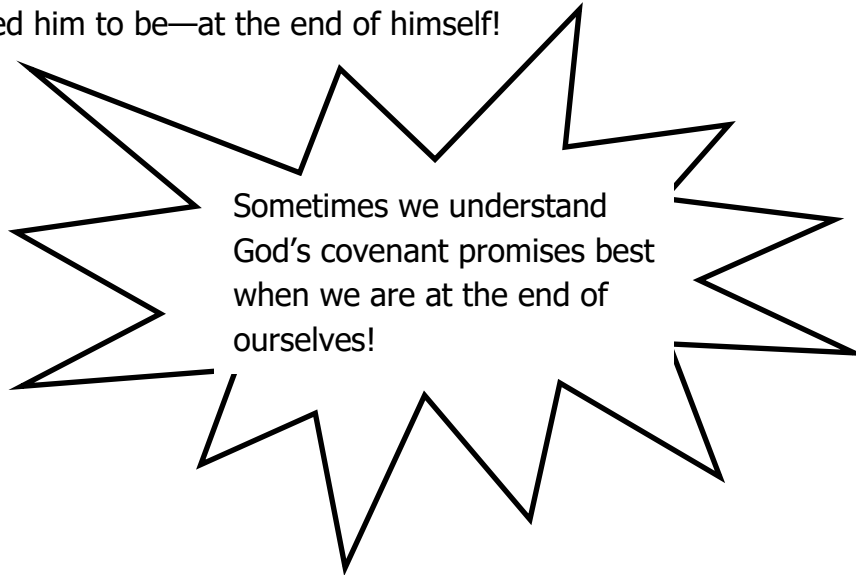
What we are reading and studying is in opposition to the world's views. But looking at the relationship between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant can assist our understanding greatly.

Abraham's child of the promise was Isaac. His son was Jacob, but Jacob was renamed Israel. The people groups of families that descended from Jacob's twelve sons are known as the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Jacob favored one of his sons, Joseph. This caused so much family strife that eventually some of the other sons sold Joseph into slavery in Egypt. Due to famine, the family was reunited in Egypt where Joseph had risen to prominence because God was with him.

In Genesis 15:13, God had predicted what would happen after that. Read the prediction. Was God right? _____

One of the most interesting characters in the Old Testament is Moses. Raised as a privileged Egyptian, Moses had felt God's call on his life. Tragically, he took matters into his own hands and tried to defend the Israelites, his birth people, by physical means. The result is that he was hunted by Egypt for murder and spent forty years in the wilderness, working as a shepherd for his father-in-law.

Certainly, he must have felt that the training and education that he received in Egypt were useless. But forty years later, when Moses was eighty years old, God appeared to him in a burning bush and called him into ministry. By now, Moses was in no mood to try to be a servant of God in the way requested. But, Moses was really exactly where God wanted him to be—at the end of himself!



Read Psalm 25:14 and record what you learn about covenant: _____

Genesis describes the days of Jacob, renamed Israel. The account is given of a famine and the subsequent journey of Israel into Egypt where Joseph provided food for them. More than four hundred years later, the people of Israel are seen as slaves in Egypt. They are crying out for deliverance and this is where the call on Moses' life comes in.

Read Exodus 2:23-25. What do you learn about God's response to Israel's cry for deliverance? _____

God is always concerned about what He promises. Read Exodus 6:1-8 and record the circumstances and what you learn relative to covenant: _____

After a series of plagues executed by God through Moses and Aaron, there followed one final plague that caused the Pharaoh to finally let the Israelites go free. Read Exodus 12:1-14 and discuss this: _____

This was the beginning of the Passover celebration still observed by the Jews.

After the people of Israel were delivered from Egypt, there followed a time in the wilderness of Sinai. Read Exodus 19:10-25 and record what you learn about preparing to receive the covenant: _____

Read Exodus 19:3-6 and record what God promised Israel if they would obey the covenant: _____

In Exodus 34:28 another term is used to describe the Ten Commandments. What is it?

What term is referred to in Exodus 24:7? _____

Hebrews 9:18-21 tells us more about the ceremony described in Exodus 24. From the Hebrews passage describe where Moses applied the blood. According to Hebrews 9:22, what is the importance of covenant blood? _____

We will be able to understand more fully by reading Hebrews 12:18-24 as our point of reference. It is important to understand what mountains Paul is contrasting in this passage.

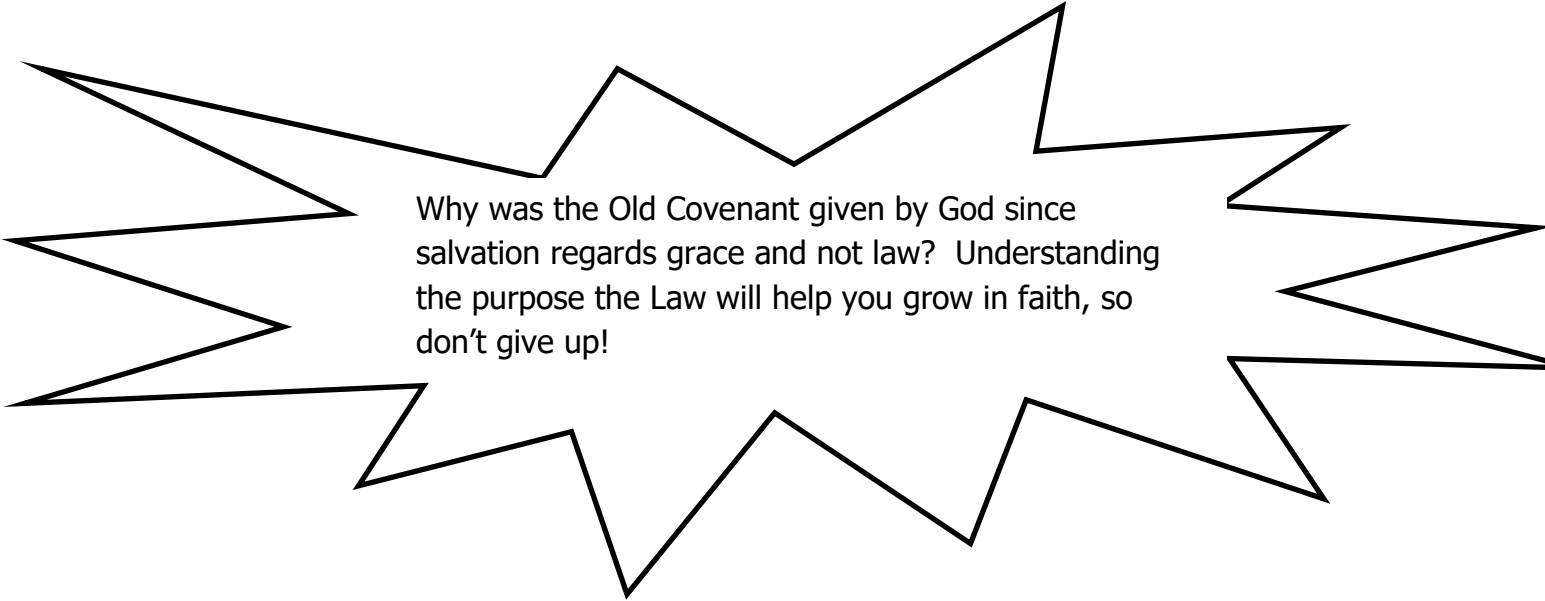
Read Hebrews 12:18-24 and name the two mountains: _____

To discover more about Sinai, read Exodus 19:1-2 and 10-25. Who could scale Sinai?

Contrast this with Mt. Zion. Who can go there? _____

The writer of Hebrews was contrasting the Old Covenant, given at Sinai to the New Covenant completed at Calvary. The Pharisees of Jesus' time were among the first to fail to understand the relationship between these covenants. They certainly are not the last.

Read Exodus 20:1-18. We know these verses as the Ten Commandments. They are followed by many other laws including laws concerning slaves, personal injury, theft, dishonesty, immorality, etc. Laws also followed regarding religious festivals. In Exodus 24, we read that God's laws were adopted by the leaders of the Israelites. The people agreed to what God had spoken. Read Exodus 24:3-8 for more details.



Why was the Old Covenant given by God since salvation regards grace and not law? Understanding the purpose the Law will help you grow in faith, so don't give up!

Between the Abrahamic covenant and the giving of the Law to Moses, there were four hundred thirty years. Paul devotes considerable time to explaining why the Law was given and how it supplemented the Abrahamic Covenant.

Read Galatians 3:15-29. In the space below, list your findings:

PURPOSE OF THE LAW TO DO	THINGS THE LAW WAS NOT INTENDED

When the Israelites agreed to the commandments, they obviously intended to honor them. However, it is abundantly clear that they did not! Have you always kept them yourself?

THE LAW WAS NEVER INTENDED TO
MAKE PEOPLE RIGHTEOUS.

Galatians 3 clearly tells us that if the Law could sanctify us, we would not need Jesus! The Law was added to the promise already given to Abraham – the promise of the coming of Jesus—for one reason! It was because of sin. Reread Galatians 3:19. The Law was given to show Israel its sin! It does the same for us!

But, after the Northern Kingdom had fallen and the Southern Kingdom was on the brink of defeat by Babylonians, God raised up a prophet to give further information. Read the words of this Godly man and record what you learn:

Jeremiah 31:31-34 _____

What covenant had the people broken? _____

How was the New Covenant different from the Old Covenant with regard to God's law?

List the benefits that the New Covenant would bring: _____

According to Jeremiah, who would institute the New Covenant? _____

Paul had some specific things to say about the Old Covenant in light of the New. Read the following verses and record what you learn:

2 Corinthians 3:9 _____

2 Corinthians 3:7 _____

Sandwiched between these verses is the ministry of the Spirit. A lack of understanding prevents many people from fully realizing life under grace and leaves them with the feeling of living under condemnation.

Today, we will continue in our study by looking at what the Old Testament has to say about the coming New Covenant.

Read Jeremiah 32:38-40. Answer these questions:

- 1. According to this passage, could you (or would you) ever turn away from God's promise? _____

- 2. Who is making the promises in these verses? _____

- 3. Make a list of the things that God promises: _____

Compare these verses with the verses from Jeremiah 31. Taking the two passages together, how long do you think the New Covenant is in effect?

There is another Old Testament passage that discusses the New Covenant. Read Ezekiel 36:26-27.

Who is the active party in these verses? _____

What specifically makes a person different? _____

How does this passage parallel Jeremiah 31 and 32? _____

According to these verses in Ezekiel, what are the recipients of this covenant able to do? _____

The Law cannot change a person. It only presents to men the requirements that God has for pleasing Him. Even hearts that want to please God cannot be transformed by the Law. Why? Because of the sin of Adam and Eve way back in the Garden of Eden. From that time forward, men's hearts have been desperately wicked.

We were without the Spirit of God because we were descendants of Adam. Now, through the New Covenant, mankind has new hope. Read Titus 3:5-6 and record what you learn: _____

The indwelling Holy Spirit enables us to keep God's requirements. Read Galatians 5:16 and record your findings: _____

Whereas the law was "a ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones" (2 Corinthians 3:7), we have new hope. There is a way out! Read Romans 7:14-25. Listen to Paul's words very closely.

According to this passage, who can set you free from the ministry of death?

We are going to look at one final passage regarding the law. In Romans, Paul also shows us the purpose of the Law. He concludes by showing us that God saved us as a gift of grace, quite apart from the Law.

Read Romans 3:19-24. Compare Romans 3:20 to Galatians 3:19 and record what you learn: _____

THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW

So far in our study, we have learned that God gave the Law as a way of revealing his righteousness and our sinfulness. The Law cannot save anyone, but its restraints help point out our sin. It is good to know and remember the purpose of the Law.

1. **THE LAW SETS FORTH THE RIGHTEOUS STANDARDS OF GOD.** Read Romans 7:12 and record what you learn: _____

Mankind is lost in sin—people are ungodly and unrighteous. The Law shows God’s expectations.

2. **THE LAW GIVES US KNOWLEDGE OF SIN.** When we realize what God expects, we can then see our failure to live up to His expectations: our sin is revealed. It is for sinners that Jesus came.
3. **THE LAW IS A TUTOR THAT POINTS US TO CHRIST.** Read Galatians 3:23-25 again. Summarize what you learn: _____

The law is a teacher that shows our need for God’s grace. If we pay attention to the Law, it will guard us against a life of blatant sin.

It is precisely this last area where our culture is going so far afield. It is extremely important that we understand the difference between right and wrong. The Law shows us these differences.

In the space below, write the Ten Commandments. Don’t cheat! Write them from memory.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Exodus 20 lists these commandments. Now read Matthew 22:36-40. What does the Law and the Prophets depend on? _____

Read Romans 13:8-10. According to this passage, what fulfills the law? _____

Looking at the Ten Commandments, how does this one action fulfill the law? _____

There are tremendous ramifications for evangelism inherent in the law. Sometimes we become so eager for people to receive Christ that we fail to allow the Law the time necessary to convict sinners of their sinfulness!

There are some important things to remember about salvation:

1. When someone is saved, they are not only saved from a fate in hell; they are also saved from the power of sin.

We sometimes tell people that they need to be saved so that they won't spend eternity in hell. Hell is merely the eternal consequence of sin. Salvation also takes away the strangle-hold of sin in lives now.

2. When someone is saved, they are saved from sin's consequence, from sin's presence, and from sin's power.

Does this mean that someone who is saved will never sin? No, but it does mean that they are delivered from a perpetual lifestyle of sinning.

Consequently, when we share the good news of salvation, we need to understand some truths and communicate them well:

- A. **ALL PEOPLE ARE SINNERS.** Read Romans 3:9-18 and record what you learn:

- B. **THE PENALTY FOR SIN IS ETERNAL SEPARATION FROM GOD.** Read Revelation 20:11-15. Record what you learn: _____

C. **JESUS CAME TO SAVE SINNERS.** Read Hebrews 2:9 and record what you learn: _____

Read also Matthew 1:21 _____

Read also 1 Timothy 1:15 _____

In addition to these three things, we also need to be certain that people understand these truths:

1. **GOD TOOK OUR SIN AND PLACED IT ON JESUS.** Jesus literally took our sin on Himself. Read 2 Corinthians 5:21 and record what you learn: _____

2. **REPENTANCE IS NECESSARY.** Repentance requires a change of mindset, which is evidenced, by a change of direction. Read the following verses and record what you learn:

Luke 24:46-48 _____

Luke 13:2-5 _____

Acts 26:15-20 _____

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, sin entered the world. Their sin was wanting to be like God. Salvation acknowledges that a person is unable to be like God. A person coming into a salvation relationship with Christ must be willing to submit to God and God's law.

3. **PEOPLE ARE UNABLE TO MAKE THEMSELVES RIGHTEOUS.** Only God can change people. He does it by His grace, through faith. Read Ephesians 2:8-10 and record what you learn: _____

When we share the gospel, it isn't our place to worry about whether the person actually accepts Christ right that moment. Our job is to share—God's job is to lead the person to faith. Some people are sowers, some people reap. Read the following verses and record what you learn:

John 4:35-36 _____

1 Corinthians 3:6-8 _____

People do not appreciate the grace of God until they come to the realization that they are sinners. Many people in our culture simply do not see their sin, so they feel no need to be free from it.

In Romans 7:7-10, Paul uses one of the commandments as an illustration. Read these verses and record what you learn: _____

Use the holy Law of God to help men see their sin. Allow conviction to settle in. Don't seek to bypass this crucial work of God. Don't be premature in seeking to relieve people of their misery. Wait and pray. Kay Arthur

God is "not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

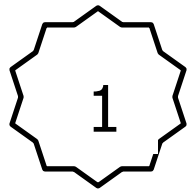
THE TABERNACLE MODEL

There is another area of God's instructions that we need to look at very carefully. In addition to giving the Law, that showed men their sin, and their need for a Redeemer, God also instructed the people to build a tabernacle.

The word "tabernacle" means "a dwelling place." This was the place that God met with the people during the times after the Exodus from Egypt. Eventually, when God's people moved into the Promised Land, the tabernacle was given a permanent form as the temple, which was envisioned by David and built during the reign of David's son, Solomon. The basic components were the same, but the temple was built of stone on Mt. Zion in Jerusalem. The tabernacle that the people had in the wilderness was made of materials that were portable. As they moved about, they could take the tabernacle with them.

God gave very specific instructions regarding the building of the tabernacle, and the items inside it, including dimensions, methods of construction, materials, etc. A complete study of the tabernacle and its implications would take an entire semester! Today, we will only be seeing the very basics.

The tabernacle consisted of three parts:



The Outer Court, which was enclosed, was open to the sky. It was entered by a side gate on the end. The gate was simply known as the way inside. It was sufficiently large to allow several people to enter at once.

The Outer Court had two items in it:

- a. The altar of sacrifice
- b. The laver



The second area, called the Holy Place, was entered by a door, known as the door of truth. This area was enclosed and roofed.

The Holy Place had the following items:

- a. The table of the presence (showbread)
- b. The altar of incense
- c. The lampstand



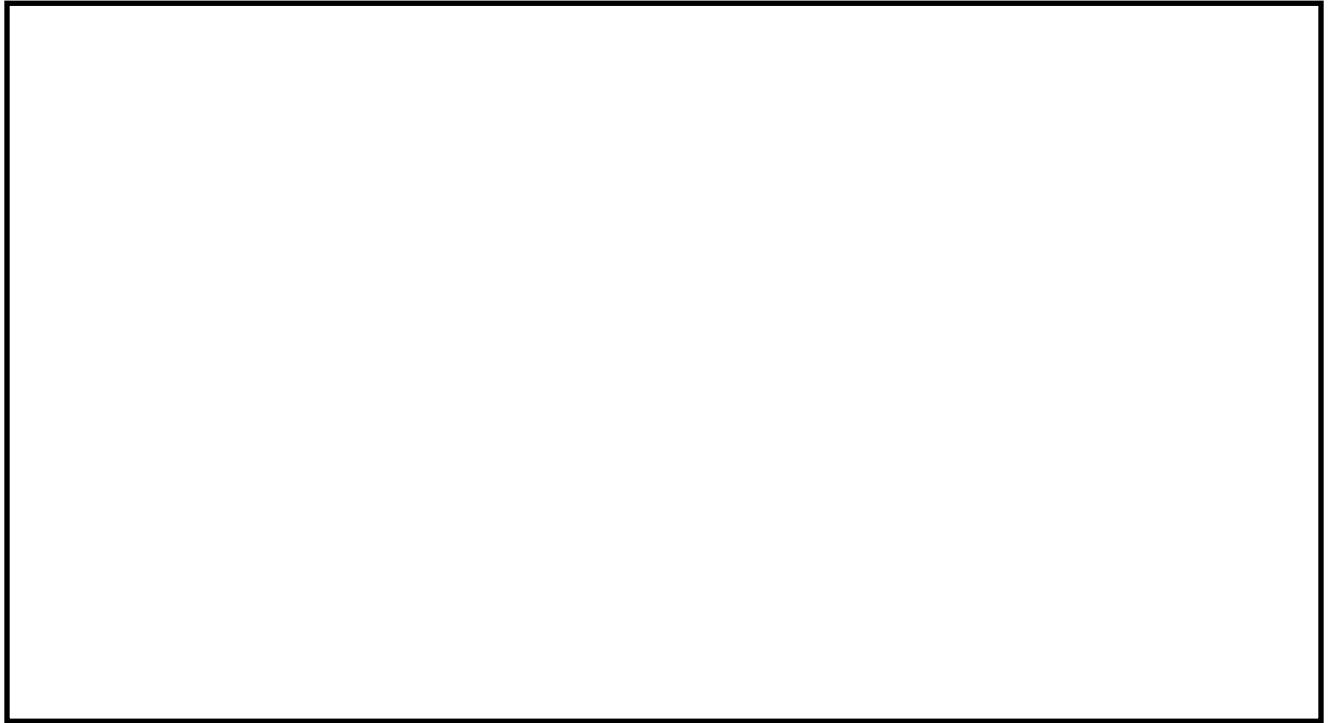
The third area, called the Holy of Holies, or most holy place, was entered through a veil. The veil was known as the veil of life. God's Shekinah presence indwelt the Holy of Holies. Although the tabernacle veil was smaller, the veil in the temple was 30' x 30' and 4" thick! Inside the Holy of Holies were the following:

- a. The Ark of the Covenant
- b. The mercy seat and its covering cherubim

There are some very important insights that we need to understand with regard to the tabernacle.

1. The people could go in through the gate to the outer courtyard. It was here that they brought their animals to be sacrificed. The blood sacrifice was made here by the priests. The laver was for ceremonial washing.
2. Only the priests could go into the Holy Place. They did ministry on behalf of the people here. The table of the presence represented God's presence with His people. The showbread on the table represented feeding on His word. The altar of incense represented the prayers of the people. Coals from the sacrificial altar fueled the altar of incense. The lampstand (the only item in the inner tabernacle that didn't have dimensions set by God) represented the church—the light shining to the world. The potential size of the church was limited by man and not by God. The priests entering this area wore the full priestly regalia including a robe with bells on the bottom.
3. Only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies, the presence of God. This priest could come only one time each year, on the Day of Atonement. There were specific instructions for how the high priest came into God's presence. He had to take off his outer robe, with the bells on the bottom, before entering in his undergarment of white. He entered to make atonement at the mercy seat for the unintentional sins of the people during the prior year.

Begin reading Exodus 25 and draw the tabernacle as described in scripture:



Jesus said a lot of things that caused an uproar with the religious leaders of His time. Among them was the following statement:

I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE. NO MAN COMES TO THE FATHER EXCEPT THROUGH ME. John 14:6

With this statement, Jesus closely identified His ministry with the model that God had given His people in the Tabernacle that carried over into the Temple. So closely, in fact, that He could also say:

DESTROY THIS TEMPLE, AND IN THREE DAYS I WILL RAISE IT UP. John 2:19

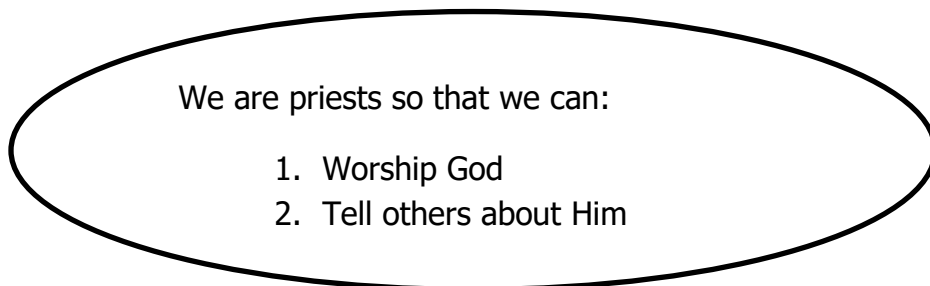
Jesus, of course, was comparing Himself to the tabernacle/temple model established by God. He had become the way, the truth, and the life. He was the one who would make atonement for sins. It was His body that would be destroyed and raised up in three days. And, it was precisely this statement that the Sanhedrin eventually used against Jesus at His "trial" to show Him a heretic.

Jesus, our high priest, made the ultimate atonement for sin. The sacrifice wasn't good for just a year! He didn't have to come back in a year and make another atonement. Jesus sacrifice was acceptable to the Father, and it was good forever! There was no longer reason for men who accepted Christ to be separated from God because of sin. To symbolize this, when Jesus died the veil of the temple was torn by God Himself! (we know this because it was torn from the top to the bottom—remember it was 30 feet high and 4" thick!) The Jewish historian, Josephus, had written of the veil that four teams of horses attached to opposing sides couldn't "rend it."

After Jesus death, those that believed in Christ—those who appropriated His sacrifice into their lives through faith--could enter God's presence where only the priest could stand before. Because of Jesus' sacrifice, all who believe in Him become a priesthood of believers.

Read 1 Peter 2:9 and record what you learn: _____

Peter tells us that we have been made a royal priesthood for a reason: so that we can proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of the darkness and into His marvelous light.



Like the priests of old, there are some things that we should do:

1. The priests presented the sacrifice to God. Do we bring a sacrifice? Read Romans 12:1, and record what you learn: _____
-
-

What, then, would you say is your sacrifice? How might it be offered?

2. The priests had to prepare themselves extensively to come into God's presence. As the priest purified himself, so we need to purify ourselves. It is possible for

the things of the world to come between us and God. We need to get rid of those things! How can we do this? Read the following verses and record what you learn:

Philippians 4:8 _____

1 Corinthians 6:13-20 _____

As we begin to look at the tabernacle model carefully, some truths begin to emerge. Many people enter the outer court. This court represents salvation. It is here that the blood sacrifice of Jesus avails for us personally, and here we are washed clean by the Blood of the Lamb. To enter the outer court is totally **FREE**. Read Romans 6:23 and record what you learn: _____

People, who accept the free gift of God's grace, enter through the **way** by accepting the sacrifice (altar of sacrifice) and have been washed clean by the Blood of the Lamb (laver).

The early church was called the **Way**. Read the following verses carefully:

Acts 9:2

...and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the **Way**, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Acts 19:9

But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the **Way** before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.

Acts 19:23

About that time there occurred no small disturbance concerning the **Way**.

Acts 22:4

"I persecuted this **Way** to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons,

Acts 24:14

"But this I admit to you, that according to the **Way** which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets;

Acts 24:22

But Felix, having a more exact knowledge about the **Way**, put them off, saying, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will decide your case."

Fewer people, however, pass from the Outer Court into the Holy Place or the Holy of Holies.

In the Holy Place, we begin to feed on the bread of life, God's word. This represents the setting forth of God's purpose. Read Romans 8:28 and do a word study on purpose: _____

We begin to sacrificially offer prayer from a sanctified heart (altar of incense).

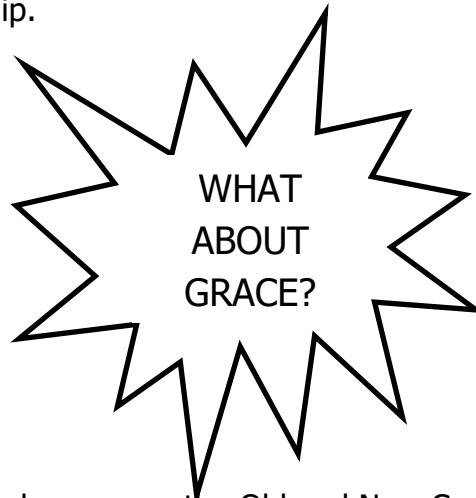
We begin to become a light to the world (lampstand). The entrance was called the **door of truth** because inside the truths of God are being revealed to those who enter.

When we enter into the Holy of Holies, experiencing intimacy with God, we understand that offering ourselves as a living sacrifice is a "spiritual service of worship." The Holy Place was closed off by the **veil of life**. Man suffered spiritual death as a result of original sin. However, when we accept Christ, we are reborn of the Spirit. We are given new life. It is because of our spiritual rebirth that we can communicate with God intimately.

As we begin to understand these concepts, we begin to see why some are content to stay in the outer court. Salvation is free, but there is no sense in which the lifestyle of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies is free. This sort of discipleship is very costly.

Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well that true worshippers would move beyond the outer court. Read John 4:23 and record what you learn: _____

Can you begin to see why Jesus said that true worshippers worship in "spirit and truth?" This is real lifestyle worship.



In 2 Corinthians 3:5-9, Paul compares the Old and New Covenants. Read these passages carefully. Now, read 2 Corinthians 4:7-12. What is the treasure mentioned here? _____

Why are believers delivered over to death? _____

What sort of death is referred to in this passage? Include the death and the outcome on this chart:

THE "DEATH" MENTIONED	THE RESULT

We must absolutely understand that grace is more than just the phrase, "unmerited favor."

1. **GRACE FREES US FROM RELIGION AND BRINGS US INTO RELATIONSHIP.**
2. **GRACE GIVES LIFE, AND ALSO THE MEANS TO LIVE LIFE AND PLEASE GOD.**

Once you fully understand grace, you will never deny yourself the blessing of being God's child because of feelings of unworthiness. No one comes to God on the basis of what is deserved. We do not come on the basis of what we have earned. We come into the covenant of grace on faith alone. Kay Arthur

Read Hebrews 10:29 and record what you learn: _____

Read Titus 2:11-14 and record what you learn: _____

Read Romans 10:3. Why did these people miss the righteousness of God? _____

Now, read Romans 4:5. Who is justified? _____

Why? _____

The Jews tried to find righteousness through the Law. They further defined the law, adding 248 positive rules and 365 negative rules. They believed that God had an obligation to admit them to heaven if they kept these Laws. Because of their mindset, the Jews did not see their sin and their need for forgiveness.

Paul's letter to the Galatians confronted these believers about a "different gospel." Read Galatians 1:6-7. What were they teaching that was wrong? _____

Now read Galatians 2:16 and record what this verse says about the Law: _____

Now, we will contrast the Old and New Covenants. Read 2 Corinthians 3:5-16. Record what you learn about the Law and Grace:

THE LAW (OLD COVENANT)	GRACE (NEW COVENANT)

Why had Moses been veiled? What was fading away and why? What has happened to the veil? Go back to the veil in the tabernacle for more insight. Is the veil removed from your eyes? Do you go behind the veil and enter God's presence? _____

Finally, today we are going to look at Galatians 5:2-4. Think through the following questions:

1. If a person tries to be holy in God's eyes by doing right things, what is his relationship to grace? _____
 2. If a person viewed circumcision as valuable, why was Christ of no usefulness?
-
-

Paul's point is that the law and grace are not compatible; you are justified by one, not both

If you want to be justified by the law, then you must keep the whole law—that is, you must live up to God's perfection. Men cannot do this. Why? _____

Has there ever been anyone who was able to keep the whole law? _____

THE REDEMPTION MODEL

During the past weeks, we have been looking at the enemy of our souls. We have looked at his origin and his methodology. We have looked at the way sin entered the world, and we have looked at the results of sin. Everything would be looking very bleak, except **GOD HAS A PLAN!**

HE MADE KNOWN TO US THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL, ACCORDING TO HIS KIND INTENTION WHICH HE PURPOSED IN HIM WITH A VIEW TO AN ADMINISTRATION SUITABLE TO THE FULLNESS OF THE TIMES, THAT IS, THE SUMMING UP OF ALL THINGS IN CHRIST, THINGS IN THE HEAVENS AND THINGS UPON THE EARTH.
EPHESIANS 1:9-10

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An administration is a long-range plan to accomplish goals established by someone in a position of power or authority. In the above verses, Paul is telling us that God had a plan that would solve man's dilemma. But, the plan would be a mystery until God was ready to reveal it. When that time came, God would use the church as a vehicle to reveal the plan to angelic beings (good and bad). God was showing us that He is in control!

Because of Adam's sin, all of Adam's offspring came under Satan's power and authority, and mankind moved into the domain of darkness. It looked like Satan had won, but God had a long-range plan that would be revealed in the fullness of time. Even though God didn't bring His mystery to light until the birth of Christ, His plan was being developed throughout the Old Testament through the teaching of the kinsman redeemer.

A kinsman redeemer or "ga'al" was a person who had the right to buy back a relative or a relative's property which had been lost through death or debt.

There are three words that are interpreted "redeem" in the Old Testament.

padah means a transfer of ownership through a payment of some sort

koper means ransom—atonement by making a substitutional payment

ga'al (or go'el) was a third party redeemer when the one sold could not redeem himself. In other words, it took a third party to work out the release. A strong emphasis is put on the relationship of the redeemed and the redeemer. We are primarily interested in this sort of redemption.

Leviticus 25:47-55 records God's law regarding the kinsman redeemer. Read these verses and record your insights on the following themes:

1. Why would a person need to be redeemed? _____

2. Who could redeem such a person? _____

Now, read John 8:34-36. Record your thoughts on how these verses reflect the teaching of the kinsman redeemer. _____

From the verses we have studied above, we can see three qualifications of a kinsman redeemer.

1. **THE REDEEMER HAD TO BE A BLOOD RELATIVE.** We have learned in our study so far, that all men are born with a sin nature. **All** descendants of Adam are sinful. Read the following verses and record what you learn:

Hebrews 2:14-16 _____

Matthew 1:18 _____

Luke 1:35 _____

From these verses, we see that God provided our kinsman redeemer by the incarnation of His Son. Jesus was a blood relative of mankind, born of a flesh and blood woman. But He was the seed of God. Therefore, He was a blood relative, but

without the sin nature inherent in the seed of Adam’s offspring. But, only being a blood relative was only one part of the qualification for kinsman redeemer.

2. THE KINSMAN REDEEMER HAD TO BE ABLE TO PAY THE PRICE. The Greek word exagorazo means “to purchase a slave with the idea of turning him loose.” What would be required to turn man loose from his slavery to sin? Read the following verses and record what you learn:

Hebrews 10:4-10 _____

1 Peter 1:18-19 _____

Colossians 1:13-14 _____

Leviticus 17:11 _____

3. THE KINSMAN REDEEMER HAD TO BE WILLING TO PAY THE PRICE.

Luke 19:10 tells us that Jesus came to seek and save what was lost—us! In the story of Ruth, the nearest relative didn’t want to risk the redemption for fear of jeopardizing his own inheritance. But Jesus left everything—a throne in glory—to redeem people who were without hope. Although Jesus came for the purpose of our redemption, He struggled with His flesh. Read the following passages and record what you learn:

Hebrews 5:7-9 _____

Matthew 26:36-44 _____

Even though other verses tell us that Jesus knew that He would die, be buried, and rise on the third day, we still see Him in His humanity in these verses. In His humanity, Jesus three times asked the Father if there was another way, but there was not, so Jesus “became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:8)

These verses reveal that God loved us so much that He Himself took on the role of kinsman redeemer. At His own expense, He paid the price needed to free us from slavery to sin. These works are accomplished. Our eternal spirits are no longer separated from God by sin once we have accepted the grace extended to us by Jesus on the cross.

Read the following verses and record what you learn:

Ephesians 1:7-8 _____

Hebrews 2:14 _____

So far, we have established three things about the kinsman redeemer:

1. The redeemer had to be a blood relative.
2. The redeemer had to be able to pay the price.
3. The redeemer had to be willing to pay the price.

When mankind fell into sin in the Garden of Eden, we not only lost our land (earth) but we were also separated by God by sin and subject to death. Our Kinsman Redeemer is capable of recovering all that we lost because He does away with Satan’s control over us—sin. Read Hebrews 10:8-12 and record what you learn about Jesus’ sacrifice for us: _____

Colossians 2:13-14 tells us that God forgave “all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” Since our sin was paid for in full at Calvary, when we accept this gift of God’s grace, Satan’s power over us has been taken away. Satan no longer has a legitimate authority over us. We have been redeemed—we have been purchased from slavery.

Jesus' ability is key in understanding why the Law, although it provided a method for sin, could not provide the means! Although Jesus was a man, He never sinned. Previous to Jesus, there was no man outside the grip of sin. All traced their lineage to Adam and were thus born into sin. But Jesus was not born of the seed of man— He was born of the Holy Spirit and therefore not enslaved in sin. Satan tempted Jesus just as he did Adam, but Jesus remained sinless. Therefore, Jesus was not in slavery and was eligible (able) to pay the price. The virgin birth is critical in the long-term plan of God. Jesus was a blood relative who was willing and able to make our redemption.

As we look at verses carefully, four major duties of the ga'al begin to emerge from scripture.

1. The Ga'al redeemed his relative who was enslaved.
2. The Ga'al redeemed his relative's lost land.
3. The Ga'al served as the judicial executioner of a family member's murderer.
4. The Ga'al married the one who had no heirs

1. THE KINSMAN REDEEMER REDEEMED HIS ENSLAVED RELATIVE.

Because we are all born of the seed of man, every person living on the earth is born in a state of slavery to sin. Jesus emphasized this when He was on earth.

Read John 8:34 and view Jesus' position on slavery to sin: _____

When we accept the redemption of Jesus, when we accept Him as our redeemer, or savior, we are spiritually restored into relationship with God. We have been purchased away from sin. Read the following verses carefully:

- 1 Corinthians 6:20
For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.
- 1 Corinthians 7:23
You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.

When a ga'al made a purchase, it was customary to put a seal of ownership and authenticity on the purchased object. The object would then be put into a clay jar so that it would last. Only the rightful owner could break the seal and transact business with what he has purchased.

Read information about the ownership seal of Jesus:

Ephesians 1:13 _____

Ephesians 4:30 _____

The imagery is carried to completion when we are described as having a sealed and redeemed spirit in a clay jar.

2 Corinthians 4:7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves;

This means that we have a redeemed spirit in a body of flesh that is not yet redeemed. But our bodies will be redeemed. Our Ga'al has already paid the price and our bodily redemption is coming!

Study these verses to learn more:

Romans 8:23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

This redeemed body will be like Christ's.

1 John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

This will happen at a time we call the "rapture" of the church. This word does not appear in the English Bible; however, it is translated as "caught up." Remember that the early church often spoke of death as "sleep." This meant that they believed the body would "get up" or "rise" again.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we, who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be **caught up** together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

These verses tell us that Jesus will return for the church. He will issue a "shout," a *keleuma*, which is a shouted command. The bodies of the dead in Christ will rise and be changed. People alive on earth at His coming will be glorified from a living state.

THE KINSMAN REDEEMER REDEEMED HIS RELATIVE’S LOST LAND

We see implications of what is to come in the book of Jeremiah, where Jeremiah serves as a ga’al for his family. Read Jeremiah 32:6-15. Discuss what you learn about the kinsman redeemer from these passages. _____

In these passages, Jeremiah was serving as the kinsman redeemer of land that had been lost by one of his relatives. None of his other relatives wanted to redeem the land. Babylon was approaching Judah to conquer it. Jeremiah’s own prophecies said that Judah would be 70 years in exile in Babylon and he knew that the land would be useless to him. This meant, in effect, that Jeremiah was never going to get to enjoy the land, but he redeemed it anyway because God had told him to do so. Write down all that you see Jeremiah doing as kinsman redeemer: _____

Discuss the significance of the seal, when it could be opened, and what was contained in the scroll that Jeremiah sealed. _____

As a result of sin, people lost authority over the earth that had been given by God. Read John 12:31 and record who is currently the ruler of this world: _____

Read Revelation 5:1-7 and 9-10. Record what you learn about Jesus in these verses:

Why could Jesus break the seal on the scroll? _____

Now read Ephesians 1:13-14. Record what you learn about Jesus in these verses:

Continue reading in Romans 8:12-17: _____

Explore Galatians 4:4-8 _____

Jesus was worthy to open the title deed to the earth because He met the qualifications of kinsman redeemer. He was a blood relative, He was willing, and He was able.

Read Matthew 4:1-11 and record what you learn about the temptation of Jesus:

How many times is "it is written" used? _____

Were any of the things Satan offered to Jesus not legitimately Satan's to offer?

Jesus had to come to redeem the earth and its kingdoms. Satan offered them forthright. This reinforces the fact that the end doesn't justify the means. Satan offered Jesus a shortcut. But it wouldn't have resulted in our redemption.

How did Jesus finally get the devil to leave? _____

Jesus refuted Satan by using scripture and speaking to the devil. Now read Ephesians 6:10-17. What is the only offensive weaponry mentioned? This sort of "word" is "rhema" which is a portion of scripture that is brought to bear on the situation at hand.

If Jesus would have yielded to any of the temptations, how would it have affected His relationship to God? _____

How would it have affected us? _____

Jesus had the authority to tell Satan to go away. We walk in the authority of Christ.

THE KINSMAN REDEEMER MARRIED A FEMALE RELATIVE WITHOUT HEIRS.

Deuteronomy 25:5-10 records God's law regarding a widow when a man died and left his wife without an heir. From these passages, what can we learn? _____

We can see these laws reflected in the story of Ruth and Boaz. Read Ruth 4:1-10, 13-14. Record what you learn from these verses. _____

We see that 4:14 was carried out and Jesus, our kinsman redeemer, was from the line of Boaz. It is exciting to see God begin to reveal His plan in the lineage of Christ. Boaz and Ruth became the parents of Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David. Jesus was a descendant of David. (Romans 1:3)

Jesus could have removed His sandal: He could have refused to come and make the redemption, but He didn't.

Knowing about these stories begins to explain to us why the church is pictured as the "bride" of Christ. Before the coming of Jesus, there were no heirs for the Kingdom of Heaven because no one could be saved. The future marriage supper of the Lamb is described in Revelation. Read the following verses and discuss their importance:

Revelation 19:7-9 "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God."

Revelation 21:1-2 _____

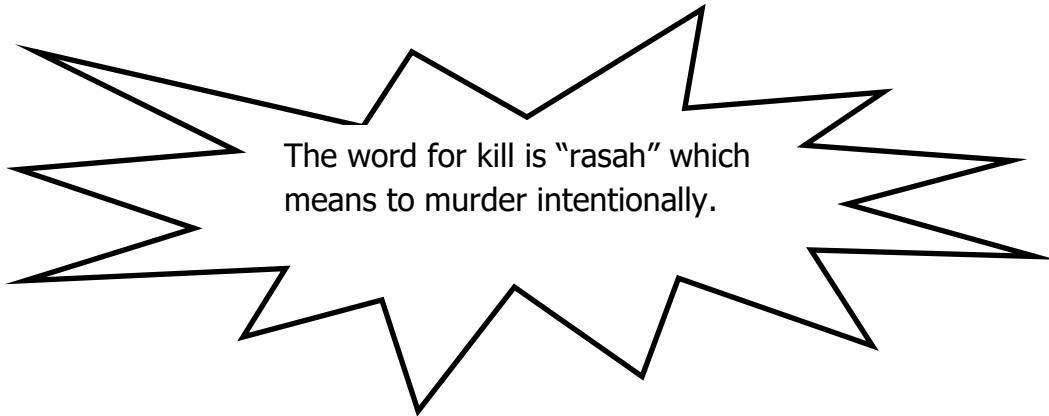
THE KINSMAN REDEEMER SERVED AS JUDICIAL EXECUTIONER OF THE MURDERER OF HIS FAMILY MEMBER(S).

When it seems as if our enemy has hopelessly harmed us, we have hope in the sure knowledge that our Kinsman Redeemer will ultimately triumph over the enemy and hold him accountable for all that he has done.

Because we are made in the image of God, human life is sacred. Discuss what it means to be made in the image of God: _____

Read Genesis 9:5-6 and record what you learn from these verses: _____

Read Exodus 20:13. Does this contradict the Genesis passage? _____



Read also Exodus 21:12-15 and write what you learn: _____

As we look at these passages, it becomes evident that intentional murder is never acceptable to God. God places great value on human life.

In this passage from Deuteronomy 19:10-13, underline the word "avenger." The word ga'al is translated "avenger of blood" when kinsman redeemer is serving in this capacity. From what you know about the kinsman redeemer, who would become this avenger? _____

Deuteronomy 19:10

SO INNOCENT BLOOD WILL NOT BE SHED IN THE MIDST OF YOUR LAND WHICH THE LORD YOUR GOD GIVES YOU AS AN INHERITANCE, AND BLOOD GUILTINESS BE ON YOU.

Deuteronomy 19:11

BUT THERE IS A MAN WHO HATES HIS NEIGHBOR AND LIES IN WAIT FOR HIM AND RISES UP AGAINST HIM AND STRIKES HIM SO THAT HE DIES, AND HE FLEES TO ONE OF THESE CITIES.

Deuteronomy 19:12

THEN THE ELDERS OF HIS CITY SHALL SEND AND TAKE HIM FROM THERE AND DELIVER HIM INTO THE HAND OF THE AVENGER OF BLOOD THAT HE MAY DIE.

Deuteronomy 19:13

YOU SHALL NOT PITY HIM; BUT YOU SHALL PURGE THE BLOOD OF THE INNOCENT FROM ISRAEL, THAT IT MAY GO WELL WITH YOU.

From these passages, we begin to see the importance of this role of the ga'al in God's eyes.

The primary scripture section that discusses this duty is found in Numbers 35:15-33. Read this section and discuss the following questions:

1. What does murder do to the land? _____

2. What makes payment when someone is murdered? _____

3. What did God specifically forbid with regard to the murderer? _____

4. When is the kinsman redeemer supposed to conduct the execution? _____

The ga'al was a guiltless executioner—in other words; he could not be murdered in turn. He was outside the realm of either accidental or intentional murder. He represented justice and could not be punished for the execution of a murderer.

Discuss the ways in which Jesus has or will fulfill this responsibility as our blood avenger. _____

Who instigated Adam's death? _____

Read John 8:44. What does Jesus say Satan is? _____

We have already read Genesis 3:14-15, where we saw the judgment pronounced against Satan.

Now, read the following verses and comment on the fate of Satan at the hands of our judicial executioner:

John 12:31 _____

Revelation 12:13 _____

Revelation 20:2 _____

Revelation 20:10 _____

Clearly, we have seen that Jesus is our avenger. What vengeance are we to take for ourselves?

Read Romans 12:17-21 _____

Does this mean that those who are murderers should go without punishment here on earth? No! Read 1 Timothy 1:9-11 and read who the law is for. _____

It is clear that the scripture finds laws in a land to be acceptable—laws that restrain ungodly behavior. Many times, however, men fail to appropriately enforce the law. What do you think will happen to people who “get away with murder” in this life? Find scriptures to support your position. Particularly read Jude 15 and Romans 2:8-11.

Do you have a family member living in a state of death because of the work of Satan? What is your responsibility now that Jesus, the ultimate kinsman redeemer, has come?

Use the following space to record your insights on Jesus, our Kinsman Redeemer, and what His redemptive work means to you as you stand against the evil one:

BUILDING A NATION

It is clear from scripture that God intended that He alone would be the king of Israel. God established a system of judges for the nation who were charged with interpreting His Law. Read the following verses concerning the judges and record what you learn:

Judges 2:16-23 _____

Israel's first king was Saul. God's prophet during this time was named Samuel. Read the following verses and write what you learn about Saul's selection as king.

1 Samuel 8:4-6 _____

Why do you think that Samuel objected? _____

Now, write what you learn about God's directions to Samuel from the following verses:

1 Samuel 8:7-22 _____

Although Saul started out as a strong king, he didn't finish strong. Read about the end of Saul's reign:

1 Samuel 28:7 _____

God instructed Samuel to next anoint David as Israel's king. David was privileged to enter into a covenant relationship with God.

After David became king, we see a covenant being made. Read 2 Samuel 5:1-3 and record what the "beriyth" was. Specifically note who was involved in the covenant and what action followed its cutting: _____

The Ark of the Covenant had been captured and taken from Israel. But David was instrumental in returning it to his capital city of Jerusalem. Read 1 Chronicles 16:7, 15-18 and record what you learn about David's response: _____

David was honored by being a party to a personal covenant with God. We know this as the Davidic Covenant. Read 1 Chronicles 17:7-14 and list God's promises: _____

Explore this further in Psalm 89:3-4, 28-29, 33-36: _____

Now we will look at David's last words. Read 2 Samuel 23:5 and record what you learn:

David had been told by God that his son, Solomon, would build the permanent tabernacle (temple) in Jerusalem. Read 1 Kings 8:23 and 2 Chronicles 6:14 and record what you learn about Solomon: _____

Now, read 1 Kings 11:4-9 and record what happened to Solomon: _____

Continue reading in 1 Kings 11:10-13. Solomon's kingdom ended because a **COVENANT WAS BROKEN**. The kingdom was split because of broken covenant. And the Israelites were only beginning their rebellion against God.

Read the following verses about the northern kingdom (Israel) and record what you learn:

1 Kings 19:14 _____

2 Kings 13:23 _____

2 Kings 17:1-6 _____

The northern kingdom wasn't the only group of Israelites breaking covenant! Read the following verses and record what you learn about the southern kingdom (Judah):

2 Chronicles 15:1-15: _____

2 Kings 23 records one of the most incredible stories in all of Scripture. God's Law, His covenant with His people had been lost—and it had been lost in the Temple—in God's own house! It was obvious that the Law hadn't been getting much reading. However, when Josiah became king of Judah, he made some changes. Read 2 Kings 23:2-3 and note what occurred: _____

The repentance under Josiah was short lived. Judah fell to Babylon less than 45 years after Josiah's death at Megiddo. Judah was punished precisely according to prophecy. Read the following verses and record what you learn:

2 Chronicles 36:15-21 _____

2 Kings 25:1-20 _____

God was very specific about the sin of Judah. Read the following verses and ask yourself if any of these issues are prevalent in your own life:

Hosea 8:1, 6:7 _____

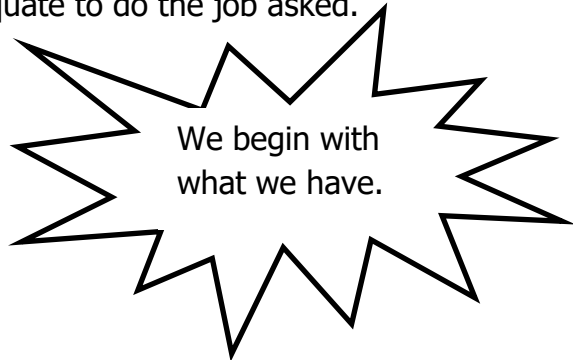
Jeremiah 22:6-10, 8-11 _____

Sometimes when we know we are "caught," that is, we have broken covenant and we know it, we try to cut another agreement with people who have no business being in our lives. This is what Judah tried to do. Read Isaiah 28:13-20 and record what you learn: _____

Sometimes, like Solomon, we break covenant. Sometimes, like Moses, we fail to realize that God can best work out His desires when we are weakest. Exodus 4:2 tells us of God's question to Moses at a very weak point. In Section 2, we discussed Moses' life history in brief. In Exodus 3, we find God speaking to Moses from a burning bush. Moses has a lot of objections to his calling. First, he tells God that he just isn't the man for the job. (3-11). Then he decides that he can't possibly go if he doesn't know God's name. (3:14) Finally, he tells God that the people won't believe that God has really spoken to him.

It is here that God asks a key question: "WHAT IS THAT IN YOUR HAND?" It is a very interesting question. Discuss what you think God's purpose may have been in asking this question: _____

Our response to God's call may take the same directions that Moses' did. We may feel that we don't have the right credentials, education, etc. We may feel that we don't have the financial resources. We may feel that we are just in the wrong place. We may feel insignificant in the overall scope of things. But God's question was asked to help us discover that, when placed under God's control, even our meager resources will become more than adequate to do the job asked.



The Old Covenant gave God's people a great point of departure for understanding what God would reveal in the New Testament. It is true that people who lived before Christ didn't have an opportunity to hear the gospel of Christ before they died. But it is also true that the New Covenant was predicted by the writings in the Old Testament. Acting on what they already had in hand would have been enough to strategically place them along with others in the count of those who believed God and whom righteousness was accounted.

God provides a graphic picture of Israel breaking covenant. Read Ezekiel 16 and record what you learn about "Jerusalem" (represented as a girl) in the following areas:

Condition (16:4-6) _____

God's response (16:6-7) _____

God's further response after further growth by Israel (16:8) _____

God's actions in 16:9-13 _____

Condition and actions in 16:13-21 _____

God's charges and punishments in 16:30-41 _____

Now, especially note God's promises 16:60-63. Discuss the ways that God might fulfill these promises: _____

Hebrews 8:8-12 quotes Jeremiah 31:31-34. We can know that a passage is very important when it is quoted in the New Testament. Read the following excerpt from Jeremiah 31. Circle every reference to the word "covenant" or "beriyth" in the passage.

31 "behold, days are coming", declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them declares the LORD." 33 "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD. "I will put my law within them, and on

their heart I will write it, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'know the LORD,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

List factors that cause this covenant to be considered "new." _____

Do a word study on "new" and record what you learn: _____

Continue your thinking by reading Jeremiah 32:40. What new ideas can you add?

Finally, read Jeremiah 50:4-5, and answer these questions:

1. What is the effect of the covenant on people? _____

2. How is the covenant described? _____

3. How is the response of the people different than human tendency? _____

Today, we will end by looking at God's promises in Ezekiel 34:22-31. Make a list of all the promises that you can find: _____

Now, discuss the ways in which these promises differ from the covenant promises made with Moses and David: _____

SPIRITUAL POVERTY

One of the most beautiful passages in all of scripture is recorded in Isaiah 6:1-8. Upon getting a small glimpse of the nature of God, Isaiah was struck with his own spiritual poverty. At that point, God cleanses him and asks, "WHOM SHALL I SEND, AND WHO WILL GO FOR US?" Isaiah's response is well known, "Here am I. Send me!"

It was when Isaiah realized his own state of spiritual poverty that God was able to issue the call. Read Isaiah 6:5 and record what Isaiah learned about himself: _____

Now, read Isaiah 55:1-3. Who are the "thirsty" and those "without money?" _____

Compare with Matthew 5:3 and Matthew 5:6. What parallels do you see? _____

In the space provided, give your definition of "spiritual poverty."

SPIRITUAL POVERTY:

Why do you think that Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven belongs to the poor in spirit? _____

Discuss the following passages and God's promises in the New Covenant:

Isaiah 59:21 _____

Isaiah 54:10 _____

Isaiah 61:7-8 _____

Read Matthew 11:10 along with Malachi 3:1. What people are mentioned in these verses? _____

Using Isaiah 42:1-7 and 49:8, discuss the promises God made to the chosen One in these verses: _____

Discuss any ways that this reflects on covenant: _____

Now compare the following noting what you learn:

Luke 1:67-75 _____

Luke 22:19-20 _____

Hebrews 7:22 _____

Hebrews 9:15 _____

“All these names point to the one truth: that in the New Covenant, Christ is all in all.”

Andrew Murray, The Two Covenants

When two people enter into a covenant, neither belongs to himself any more. The two become one. In this session, we will look at the covenant relationship between David and Jonathan. To begin this session, research who Saul was, who Jonathan was, and where David entered the picture. Readings from 1 Samuel 15, 16, 18, 19 will help.

Record your findings here: _____

1 Samuel 18:1-2 records the foundation of the covenant between Jonathan and David. What was it? _____

Continue reading in verses 3 & 4. What did Jonathan give David? _____

Because of his unique status, David became a man hunted by Saul. Read 1 Samuel 20:1. Who did David depend upon for help? Why? _____

Read 1 Samuel 20:2-13, put yourself in David's place as you read through the first time. Put yourself in Jonathan's place and reread the section.

What were David's two requests of Jonathan in 1 Samuel 20:8? _____

Who was a party to the covenant besides David and Jonathan? _____

What were Jonathan's two requests from David in 1 Samuel 20:14, 15? _____

When you read through these verses in Jonathan's place, what thoughts of the future were on your mind? How are these thoughts reflected in the requests that Jonathan made of David? _____

Why do you think that Jonathan made the covenant in 1 Samuel 20:6? What is the significance of Jonathan's statement in verses 16 and 17? _____

Continue reading to the end of the chapter. Answer these questions:

1. What further clarification did Jonathan make in 18-23? What would the men have understood from this statement? _____

2. What did Saul say about David to Jonathan? (verse 31) _____

3. How did Jonathan keep his covenant with David? (verse 32) _____

4. What respect did David show Jonathan in 1 Samuel 20:41? _____

The intensity of the situation and the bond between David and Jonathan is evident in verses 41 and 42. Saul's demeanor had pushed the covenant bonds and put them to the test. David became a hunted man, with a growing group of men who traveled with him. Saul followed in hot pursuit.

Continue the story in 1 Samuel 22:6-8. Discuss Saul's attitude: _____

The final meeting between Jonathan and David is probably recorded in 1 Samuel 23:13-17. Review these verses very carefully. Discuss the choice of words by each man? What do these words say about their hearts? Their covenant commitment? _____

Who witnessed the action of verse 18: _____

Now, read the words of Christ from Mark 8:34-38. The words "deny" and "take up" are in the aorist tense, punctiliar verbs. They have the sense of, "Do it! Do it now!" But the phrase "follow me" is in the present tense, which denotes continuous or ongoing action. These verses from Mark clearly call for a death to any sort of independent living by a Christian!

Continue this thought in Luke 24:26-33. Record what you learn: _____

A covenant relationship supersedes all other relationships. Such covenant requires that you make a total commitment of all that you are. In Galatians 2:20, Paul describes this as being crucified with Christ!

This week, read the question that Jesus asked in Matthew 12:48. Record the question here: _____

As we finish this section, we will look at David's response to the death of his covenant partner. Saul and Jonathan had been killed on Mount Gilboa and their bodies hung on the city walls of Beit Shean.

Read 2 Samuel 1:17-27 and record everything that you note about David's reaction to: News of the death of King Saul _____

News of the death of his covenant brother, Jonathan _____

Reread verses 25, 26, and 27. Specifically note David's attitude regarding his friend:

Did death end David's covenant responsibilities to Jonathan? Reread 1 Samuel 20:15 and note Jonathan's specific request: _____

These sorts of commitments can bring accompanying hardships. Think through what some of the difficulties might have been for David. Record your thoughts here:

Now, reading in 2 Samuel 4:4, describe the situation David faced with regard to Jonathan's son: _____

Although David did not know of remaining people from Jonathan's household, he honored his covenant commitment by searching for them. Read 2 Samuel 9:1-5 and record what you learn: _____

It is clear from David's actions that he knew exactly what his commitment had been, and he had every intention of honoring it. That is the kind of person that David was. This is why he is called a "man after God's own heart." Of course, David sinned, and God dealt with him as a result. He was a human, just as we are humans. But David understood some basic things about God's nature because he had a relationship with God. One of the things that David understood was that a covenant is a covenant. David knew he was in covenant relationship, and he knew how people like him acted!

In our jargon, we might say that David didn't have an identity crisis! He knew who he was, and he knew how he should act. One of the more interesting questions that Jesus asked of anyone is recorded in Mark 5:9 and Luke 8:30. Read these verses, and record the question here: _____

This is an account of a man who had such demonic possession, so many conflicting identities, that he didn't define his identity. He simply responded to Jesus' question, "my name is Legion, for we are many." Earlier in this account, we saw this man running to meet Jesus, but with words that contradicted his actions. He essentially ran to Jesus and then told Him to leave him alone! The dialogue that is recorded is brief, but we know that the result of the encounter was that Jesus sent the demons into a herd of swine and the man was delivered from his state of conflicting identities and demonic turmoil.

When Jesus asks "what is your name?" this was another way of asking, "who are you?" Just as David knew who he was and how people like him acted, a positive sense of our identity is essential to well-being physically, spiritually, and emotionally.

Read Matthew 5:48 and record what Jesus asks us to be: _____

The word rendered "perfect" in many translations is "teleios" which means "to be complete" or "all you were meant to be." To be complete in this sense means to have an identity established with God's will and direction for your life. "What is your name,"

essentially ask who we are, to what extent we have discovered God's purpose for our creation.

Ask yourself the question that Jesus asked: WHAT IS YOUR NAME? WHO ARE YOU?

Record your responses here: _____

How does a person like you ad with regard to covenant relationships with God?

How do your actions in this covenant relationship reflect on your actions toward:

Your friends _____

The church _____

Unsaved people _____

Only as we enter into a relationship with God can we begin to have an understanding of who we are.

Israel failed to keep covenant with God. As a result, the nation split into two different nations. The southern kingdom was called Judah and included the tribes of Benjamin and Judah. The northern kingdom was called Israel and included the other tribes. The Levites were scattered among both nations. As a result of sin, the northern kingdom fell to Assyria in 722 B.C. The southern kingdom fell to Babylon in 586 B.C. after several raids had carried away many people. In the next section, we will look at the time of captivity and the return.

CAPTIVITY AND RETURN OF JUDAH

God did not ignore His wayward people. He sent prophets to them time and again to tell them to repent. One of the most notable was Jeremiah.

It takes some serious study to really get to know Jeremiah. The book is not always an upper. It is important to stay with him long enough to get to know him because at some time in life you are bound to find yourself in some Jeremiah-like spot. What sort of spot is this?

You may be a go-between and find yourself misunderstood.

You may be given a job you don't want to do.

You may be frustrated in doing God's will—nothing of eternal value seems to be happening.

Like Jeremiah, you may find yourself questioning a God who seems like He called you sometime in the distant past. Now you feel like you're pounding your head against a brick wall; the future seems no better. Sound familiar? Why would we want to study someone who has problems just like us? Because in Jeremiah we can find some answers. As we look at Jeremiah's problems, we can learn how to more effectively deal with the problems in our own lives.

Jeremiah didn't interpret any dreams; we never see him rewarded with honor or prestige. Instead, we see him under house arrest, dictating a manuscript to a disenchanted secretary. Then, we see the manuscript being shredded and burned by the king. If you have ever felt like you were under house arrest and couldn't get your message out, you will identify with Jeremiah.

A lot of Jeremiah's prayers weren't answered; he wrestled with doubts; he received no promotions or commendations and wasn't invited to royal festivities. Jeremiah was a poet, but God called him to be a prophet. He could have been a sensitive worship leader, writing folksongs for all of Judah to sing. But God called him to a ministry of thunderstorms instead of gentle spring rains. Do you know how this feels? Have you ever felt miscast?

Jeremiah was born about 646 B.C. and raised in Anathoth, about three miles (an hours walk) northeast of Jerusalem. Priests and Levites had been commuting between the Jerusalem temple and Anathoth since Joshua's time.

Read Joshua 21:18 and record your findings: _____

Anathoth was a gossip mecca. Abiathar, the priest who counseled King David lived there. Also read 1 Samuel 22:20-23 to learn more: _____

In Jeremiah's time, there were more priests than jobs at the temple. Phoenician and Assyrian deities were worshipped in the temple at least as often as Jehovah God and the king had appointed special priests to be certain that foreign deities got equal time. Some of the priests had set up shrines in Anathoth to bring religion closer to the people. Jehovah was worshipped at these shrines as were other gods.

Jeremiah's father was Hilkiah, a priest. We don't know whether he served in Jerusalem or Anathoth. Theoretically, Hilkiah and his family should have been supported by the tithes of Jewish temple worshipers, but times were so bad that we don't know if this happened.

Anathoth was only about four miles south of Judah's northern frontier and in that time, trouble usually came from the north. Egypt to the south, Edom to the east and Phoenicia to the west weren't exactly friendly either. Times were bad for Judah.

There was crime in the streets of Jerusalem—homosexuals in the temple; corruption in the palace; babies offered on pagan altars. Priests were disgruntled and unemployed; some were so discouraged that they openly compromised with idolatry. Many were sympathetic to the local shrines. This is the time in which Jeremiah lived. Does it sound familiar?

Manasseh was king when Jeremiah was born. He was a horrendous king, bloody and pagan. Hitler and Attila the Hun had nothing on Manasseh. Jeremiah would have been a small boy when Manasseh died and Amon, Manasseh's son, took over the throne. He would probably have been a carbon copy of his father, but he was assassinated two years after his inauguration. Amon's 8-year-old son, Josiah, became king in 639 B.C. Jeremiah would have been only a year or two younger than Josiah.

Read 2 Chronicles 34:3 and record your findings: _____

Here we learn that when Josiah was 16, he "began to seek after the God of David" and things started to change. Assyria's powerful king died and paved the way for Josiah to

assert political and religious clout. When Josiah was about 20, he decided that if Jehovah was good enough for him, He was good enough for everyone. He began to throw out the pagan altars. He didn't do it overnight, but he got started. This was probably enough to make Jeremiah want to write some worship songs, but while he was still composing melodies in his head, God intervened with some other plans!

This was the start of Mission Impossible. The confrontation was one-to-one. Just God and Jeremiah. Jeremiah was at a decided disadvantage! Like Saul/Paul and Zaccheus, God singled him out. And God got Jeremiah's attention. Because Jeremiah was already on good speaking terms with God, no visions or angels accompanied the call. God told Jeremiah that he had guaranteed employment—before Jeremiah was even born, God had prepared a job for life. God knew that Jeremiah would be born and He knew that when Jeremiah was born, he would want to play on God's team. So what's the problem? Jeremiah didn't care for the position God asked him to play.

We like to know that we're chosen—its' even better to be prechosen. But we have our own ideas about what position we are best suited to play. We thank God for choosing us, but complain about our specific jobs.

Read Proverbs 16:4 and record what you learn about God: _____

To put it another way, "God has a wonderful plan for your life." Jeremiah wasn't crazy about God's plan.

A prophet? In Judah? For the nations? I'd rather be a peace ambassador in Iraq! So what did Jeremiah do?

Read Jeremiah 1:1-6 and record Jeremiah's response: _____

Jeremiah has made the fatal mistake! He has admitted God's sovereignty!

Jeremiah's response wasn't all that original. Moses had already tried it out years earlier. Read Exodus 4:1, 10 _____

Gideon thought he was too insignificant to be used—and he wasn't sure whether he really saw an angel or his cousin was playing a trick on him. Read Judges 6:15, 17

Isaiah thought he was too sinful to serve a Holy God. Read Isaiah 6:5 _____

Jeremiah thought he was too young. At about 20, he would have been a child by Hebrew customs. But God often chooses the young and the unlikely. (so that no one may boast before Him. 1 Corinthians 1:29). God didn't deny that Jeremiah was young. He didn't deny that Moses couldn't speak, that Gideon was insignificant, or that Isaiah was sinful.

Jeremiah had hardly finished with his excuses when God touched his mouth.

Read Jeremiah 1:6-9 _____

Now, read Hebrews 4:12 _____

The Word of God is alive and powerful. The Word of God is not simply a sound—it makes things happen. God said "Let there be light" and "there WAS light." "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made...He spoke and IT WAS DONE." (Psalm 33:6, 9) "He sent His Word and healed them" (Psalm 107:20). God's Word will accomplish what God wants. (Isaiah 55:11).

Therefore, it is significant that "the Word of the Lord" occurs so frequently in Jeremiah's prophecy. Out of 97 times that the phrase appears in the Old Testament, 49 times are in Jeremiah.

When Jeremiah says "The Word of the Lord came to me" we might translate "The Word of the Lord became an active reality with me." Jeremiah himself had a hard time expressing what was taking place. It was almost indescribable.

He says the Word burned inside him like fire in his bones. (Jeremiah 20:9). He couldn't contain it.

He speaks of eating God's Word (15:16).

Sometimes it caused him pain (38:6, 9).

Sometimes God spoke to him after prayer but it wasn't something that Jeremiah controlled—rather it was something that controlled him. And once the Word was spoken, it almost had a life of its own. God commissioned Jeremiah by saying:

"I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" Jeremiah 1:10.

During the mid 1960's, the "**God is Dead**" movement received a lot of publicity. In Jeremiah's time, the campaign would have probably been "**God is asleep.**" Morality was declining, the kings were wicked, and there had been few miracles in reigns of Manasseh and Amon.

But, God called Jeremiah's attention to the almond branch (1:11). It was called "saged" which means "the waker" because it was the first tree to bloom in the spring. God called Jeremiah's attention to the fact that He was awake and soon a spiritual spring would come. (1:12) God was guaranteeing Jeremiah that His words would be fulfilled because He would make it happen. As we go through our day-to-day routines, it is sometimes easy to forget that God is awake and in control of His Word and His children. The first thing we can learn from Jeremiah is that God is awake—we are the ones who sleep.

Read the story of the wide-mouthed cooking pot in 1:13. Notice how God made the application.

What is the promise in 1:17-19 _____

How does it compare to the promise to Joshua, "Be strong and of good courage" and to the Ephesians, "Put on the whole armor of God?" _____

Jeremiah was obviously in for a battle. The whole world would erupt against him. But God told Jeremiah that he would stand because, "I am with you to deliver you."

Apparently, many people thought that God's word could be stopped if the prophet could be killed. Jezebel thought so with Elijah (1 Kings 19:2). The prophets created an uproar because they were possessed by the Word of God. Years later, Martin Luther stood before the Diet of Worms and was asked to retract his heretical writings. He answered, "I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not retract anything." Jeremiah was also captive to the Word—he could and would not retract anything.

About five years after Jeremiah's call—when he was about 25—something remarkable happened in Judah. Josiah was in his mid-twenties and his reform had been going on for five years or so. Pagan worship had infiltrated the temple in Jerusalem and Josiah

started housecleaning. In the process, the workmen found the ancient scroll of the law—possibly the Book of Deuteronomy.

From Jeremiah, we can learn that it is easy to lose God's Word in the clutter of living. When the scroll was brought to Josiah and he read the Word, he realized how far short his reforms fell from meeting God's requirements. He tore his robes and sought God's forgiveness.

FROM JEREMIAH, WE CAN LEARN THAT THE WORD IS POWERFUL. The king was bowing before it. The problem is that we keep it too much a secret! Have you lost the Word in the clutter of living? Here are suggestions for getting into the Word and letting the Word get into you:

1. **READ THE BIBLE itself.** Commentaries are good, but no book substitutes for the Bible.
2. **READ IT WITH PRAYER.**
3. **READ EVERY DAY** – try reading different parts.
4. **READ WITH YOUR FULL CONCENTRATION.** Choose your best time of day.
5. **BELIEVE WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS AND ADMIT ITS TRUTH.**
6. **READ WITHOUT PREJUDICE.** Don't force your preconceived ideas onto God's Word.
7. **TAKE WHAT YOU READ INTO YOUR HEART.** James talks about the man who saw himself in the mirror, knew something was wrong, but walked away. (James 1:23, 24) Don't be like that.
8. **MEMORIZE WHAT YOU READ**—at least a verse or two, and assimilate it into your lifestyle.
9. **LET THE WORD CONTROL YOUR LIFE,** your thinking and acting.
10. **BE PREPARED TO MAKE SACRIFICES.** If you are serious about letting God's Word control you, you must be willing to live on God's terms and not your own.

We can't let down or we won't finish strong. Consider this paraphrase of Jeremiah 2:1-13:

I remember when you said, "I do." I remember how you said your loved Me at our wedding; I remember our honeymoon, how you went with Me to a place you did not know. I brought you out of a wilderness into a garden, out of a desert into a paradise, out of a hovel of poverty into a mansion of plenty...but you have polluted My land; you have defiled everything I have lovingly given you. I even provided you with a fountain of sparkling pure water, but you walked away from it. Instead you dug for yourself a cistern in the sand. (broken cistern)

In this section, the marriage analogy sharply contrasts God's love for His people with their love for other gods and reveals Judah's faithlessness. Jeremiah condemned Judah (he sometimes called Judah "Jerusalem," the name of its capital city) for seeking security in worthless, changeable things rather than the unchangeable God. We may be tempted to seek security from possessions, people, or our own abilities, but these will fail us. There is no lasting security apart from the eternal God.

We appreciate a friend who remains true to his or her commitment, and we are disappointed with someone who fails to keep a promise. God was pleased when His people obeyed initially, but He became angry with them when they refused to keep their commitment. Temptations distract us from God. Think about your original commitment to obey God, and ask yourself if you are remaining truly devoted.

Read Deuteronomy 26:1-11 and compare with Jeremiah 2:3. _____

The first fruits, or the first part, of the harvest were set aside for God. That's how Israel was dedicated to Him in years gone by. Israel had been as eager to please God as if she were His young bride, a holy, devoted people. This contrasted greatly with the situation in Jeremiah's time.

The united nation of Israel included both the "house of Israel" and the "house of Jacob" (Judah). Jeremiah knew Israel's history well. The prophets recited history to people for several reasons:

- (1) To remind them of God's faithfulness;**
- (2) To make sure the people wouldn't forget (they didn't have Bibles to read);**
- (3) To emphasize God's love for them;**
- (4) To remind the people that there was a time when they were close to God. We should learn from history so we can build on the successes and avoid repeating the failures of others.**

Baal was the chief male god of the Canaanite religion. "Baals" (Jeremiah 2:23) refers to the fact that Baal was worshipped in many centers in Canaanite practice. Baal was the god of fertility. Worship of Baal included animal sacrifice and sacred prostitution (male and female) in the high places. Jezebel, the wife of King Ahab, introduced Baal worship into the northern kingdom, and eventually it spread to Judah. The sexual orientation of this worship was a constant temptation to the Israelites, who were called to be holy.

God was saying that even pagan nations like Kittim (Cyprus, in the west) and Kedar (the home of Arab tribes living in the desert east of Palestine) remained loyal to their national gods. But Israel had abandoned the one and only God for a completely worthless object of worship.

Read Jeremiah 13: _____

Who would set aside a sparkling spring of water for a cistern, a pit that collected rainwater? God told the Israelites they were doing that very thing when they turned from Him, the spring of living water, to the worship of idols. Not only that, but the cisterns they chose were broken and empty. The people had built religious systems in which to store truth, but those systems were worthless. Why should we cling to the broken promises of unstable "cisterns" (money, power, religious systems, or whatever transitory thing we are putting in place of God) when God promises to constantly refresh us with Himself, the living water?

In Jeremiah 2:22, we learn that the stain of sin is more than skin-deep. Israel had stains that could not be washed out, even with the strongest cleansers. Spiritual cleansing must reach deep into the heart—and it is a job that God alone can do. We cannot ignore the effects of sin and hope they will go away. Your sin has caused a deep stain that God can and will remove if you are willing to let him cleanse you.

Read the following verses and record what you learn:

Isaiah 1:18 _____

Ezekiel 36:25 _____

Being a prophet in Jeremiah's day was risky business. Prophets had to criticize the policies of evil kings, and this made them appear to be traitors. The kings hated the prophets for standing against their policies, and the people often hated the prophets for preaching against their idolatrous life-styles. (See Acts 7:52).

Forgetting can be dangerous, whether it is intentional or an oversight. Israel forgot God by focusing its affections on the allurements of the world. The more we focus on the pleasures of the world, the easier it becomes to forget God's care, His love, His

dependability, His guidance, and most of all, God Himself. What pleases you most? Have you been forgetting God lately?

God is not against alliances or working partnerships, but He is against people trusting others for the help that should come from Him. This was the problem in Jeremiah's time. After the days of David and Solomon, Israel fell apart because the leaders turned to other nations and gods instead of the true God. They played power politics, thinking that their strong neighbors could protect them. But Judah would soon learn that its alliance with Egypt would be just as disappointing as its former alliance with Assyria. Read the following verses and record what you learn:

2 Kings 16:8-9 _____

Isaiah 7:13-25 _____

In spite of their great sin, the people of Israel continued to talk like they were God's children. The only way they could do this was to minimize their sin. When we know we've done something wrong, we want to downplay the error and relieve some of the guilt we feel. As we minimize our sinfulness, we naturally shy away from making changes, and so we keep on sinning. But if we view every wrong attitude and action as a serious offense against God, we will begin to understand what living for God is all about. Is there any sin in your life that you've written off as too small to worry about? God says that we must confess and turn away from every sin.

As a result, God allowed His wayward people to go into captivity. Daniel, among others, was taken captive in 605 B.C. His prophecies were written during his time in captivity.

Read the following verses and record what you learn:

Jeremiah 25: _____

Daniel 9:2 _____

In one of the most amazing prophecies in scripture, Isaiah predicted that a king named Cyrus would allow the people to return to Israel. Isaiah lived during the time the

northern kingdom was taken into captivity. So Isaiah made this prediction more than one hundred years before it happened—even before Cyrus’ birth!

Read Isaiah 44:28-45:1 and record what you learn: _____

Cyrus, the king of the extensive Persian realm, wrote a proclamation allowing the Israelites to return to their land and rebuild their temple. Cyrus made the proclamation in his first year (538 B.C.). This was the first year of his reign over Babylon, but he had been king over other territories for more than 20 years. He had been in power since 559 when he became the king of Anshan. Then he became king of Medo-Persia about 550 B.C. He conquered Babylon in October 539, and became the king of Babylon, a title of honor denoting the highest position in the civilized world.

As is evidenced from Cyrus’ attitude concerning the God of Israel, he was not a true believer in Yahweh. Cyrus’ concern was to establish strong buffer states around his empire which would be loyal to him. Also by having his subject peoples resettled in their own countries he hoped to have the gods in various parts of his empire praying for him to his gods Bel and Nebo. The famous Cyrus Cylinder (538 B.C.), which records his capture of Babylon and his program of repatriating his subject peoples in their homelands, includes this statement: “May all the gods whom I have resettled in their sacred cities daily ask Bel and Nebo for a long life for me.”

The fulfilling of Jeremiah’s words was totally God’s doing. Seventy years of Jewish captivity in Babylon were about to end. The first deportation of Jews to Babylon was 605 B.C. Cyrus’ decree in 538 was 67 years later. By the time the people returned and built the altar in 536, 70 years were almost up.

The edict came about because the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus. This shows the sovereign hand of God behind the events of history.

God allowed His people to return from captivity to rebuild the temple. Read the following verses and record what you learn:

Read Ezra 3:2-8 and record what you learn about the Temple being rebuilt: _____

The new temple was nowhere near as elegant and wonderful as the one Solomon had built; however, it was a place for people to begin sacrificing to God again.

Years later, God called Nehemiah to rebuild the city walls. Read the following verses and record what you learn about the reconstruction effort:

Nehemiah 1:1-11 _____

Nehemiah 2:4-8 _____

Nehemiah 4:9-23 _____

The Jewish people were back in their homeland, but all was not well. There would follow some times that were hard.

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE MESSIAH

Isaiah made it very clear that the messiah would come not as an adult, but as a child.
Read Isaiah 9:6 for more information: _____

Genesis 3:15 is known as the "proto evangelium." This passage predicts one who will
destroy the rule of Satan. Write everything you learn from this passage: _____

The following passages also have a bearing on our understanding of the Messiah.
Record everything you learn from these various passages as they pertain to Jesus:

Psalm 2 _____

Psalm 16 _____

Psalm 22 _____

Psalm 40 _____

Psalm 110 _____

Isaiah 2, 7, 9, 11, 40, 42, 49, 53 _____

Jeremiah 23:5-6 _____

Daniel 7:27 _____

Zechariah 12:10-14 _____

Haggai 2:9 _____

Malachi 3:1 _____

Malachi 4:5-6 _____

The ministry of John the Baptist might be called the last ministry by "Old Testament" prophets.

Matthew 3:3 For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said,

**"The VOICE OF ONE crying in the wilderness,
'Make ready the way OF THE Lord,
Make His paths straight!"**

John was a contemporary of Jesus, his mother being a relative to Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Luke 1:35-45 _____

Read John 1:19-34 and list everything that you learn about the ministry of John the Baptist: _____

Particularly notice John 1:27. What does it mean to “untie the sandal?” Read Ruth 4:7-8. In these verses we learn that to remove the sandal meant that you did not plan on serving as the kinsman redeemer. John indicated that he was in no position to remove Jesus’ sandal—that is, he was not one to take the place of Jesus, who came to make the redemption.

It was while John was baptizing in Bethany beyond Jordan that Jesus came to him to be baptized. It was here that some of his disciples first met Jesus. They had been John’s disciples first! John 1:35-37 will give you more information: _____

John the Baptist could have held a grudge when some of his disciples began to follow Jesus. But John didn’t feel that way because he knew his role. What did John say about the situation? John 3:28-30 gives his answer: _____

Finish your reading in John 1:40-42: _____

Immediately following His baptism, we read of the temptation of Christ. After reading Matthew 4:1, answer these questions:

Who led Jesus into the wilderness? _____

Who tempted Him? _____

After reading Matthew 4:2-11, write the three specific areas where Jesus was tempted:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Interestingly, these three areas exactly correspond to the temptation that the devil made to Eve. 1 John 2:16 puts them into categories. List the categories here:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

The devil appealed to Jesus flesh by temptation regarding food when He was hungry.

The devil appealed to Jesus eyes by offering Him all the kingdoms He could see. Ironically, Jesus had come to regain all those kingdoms. Satan offered Jesus a shortcut that didn't include a cross. It also didn't include our salvation! Aren't you glad that Jesus didn't succumb?

The devil appealed to the boastful pride of life by reminding Jesus that He could cause a great commotion by throwing Himself off of the temple and having angels catch Him. That certainly would have made people think He was important.

The problem with all of the devil's temptations is that they often contain elements of truth that are used outside of God's will.

It is very important to realize the ways in which Jesus refuted the devil. First, He spoke to him.

Matthew 4:4: Jesus answered and said...

Matthew 4:7: Jesus said to him...

Matthew 4:10: Jesus said to him...

Second, it is important to notice what He said: in each instance, Jesus said "It is written" and quoted the Word. Jesus was using part of the armor of God when He refuted the devil. Read Ephesians 6:11-17 and list the armor that your covenant relationship with Christ provides:

Armor is protection. Is there any offensive weaponry listed? Our offensive weaponry is the sword of the Spirit which is defined as the "word of God." Do a word study on "word" in Ephesians 6:17. How does this "rhema" word differ from the "logos" word? Given how Jesus refuted Satan, and what weaponry He has given us, how do you now think we should refute the devil? _____

Scholars differ on the amount of time that elapsed between Jesus baptism and temptation and the time that He called His disciples.

Mark 3:14 records the reason Jesus called them. What is the reason? _____

The names of the disciples are listed in Matthew 10:2-4. After reading these names, which disciple do you think was not from Galilee? Why? _____

Read Mark 1:17 and note how Jesus called them to become His disciples.

What was the invitation? _____

What was the disciple's part? _____

What was Jesus' part? _____

A disciple of Christ is one who

- (1) Believes the doctrine Jesus taught
- (2) Depends on His completed work for salvation
- (3) Is sealed and empowered by His Spirit
- (4) Imitates His example

Read the following verses and record what you learn about disciples:

Matthew 10:24 _____

Luke 14:26-27, 33 _____

John 6:69 _____

THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF JESUS

Some of the most widely quoted words in all scripture are found in John 14:1: "Let not your heart be troubled." Do a word study on "troubled" and record what you learn:

Jesus in essence told His disciples to chill! This would only be cruel if it were not for the fact that Jesus taught the basis on which His people could accomplish such a feat. It is precisely because God can be trusted that the disciples can be untroubled. The sovereignty and goodness of God are assumed. Read Paul's similar counsel in Philippians 4:6, 7 and make the comparison: _____

Not understanding the situation caused the disciples to fear. Even when the disciples couldn't fully understand what Jesus described, His words still provided comfort. Ultimately, these words became the framework that caused the most important event in human history to make sense. We call this teaching **THE FAREWELL DISCOURSE**.

This discourse cannot be treated simplistically as only a consolation. It is the most elemental of Christian theological explanations. For believers with troubled hearts, there is no comfort apart from the significance of the events that took place more than 2000 years ago. It was true for the disciples then; it is true for us now.

We discover renewed faith and fortitude by returning to a full understanding of the historical redemptive structure of our faith.

It is from this setting that Jesus provides some information for His followers to believe; He gives basic truths that they must learn if they are to have triumphant faith and tranquil spirits. There are three truths that the disciples must internalize if their faith is to be triumphant. We will consider them in this lesson.

1. JESUS IS NOT JUST GOING AWAY; HE IS GOING TO THE FATHER TO PREPARE A PLACE FOR HIS FOLLOWERS.

Do a word study on "mansions" (or "rooms") and record what you learn:

This word can mean the act or the place and is used only one other time in the entire New Testament. Read John 14:23 and record the other time:

Now read John 2:16 and Luke 2:49. Record what you learn about "my Father's house." _____

Jesus is essentially telling His disciples that the act of His returning is the redemptive journey that is the means of preparation of the place.

Jesus' "going" itself was designed to prepare a place for His followers, not least by preparing His followers for the place. Augustine

Read 1 Corinthians 15:24 and Hebrews 7:24-25 and record what you learn:

2. JESUS IS COMING BACK FOR THOSE WHO BELONG TO HIM.

Not only is Jesus going, but He is coming back. John treats this theme in four other places. Read them and record what you learn:

John 21:22 _____

John 11:24 _____

John 6:54 _____

1 John 4:17 _____

The supreme hope of the church has always been the return of Christ. His coming will end history as we know it and stop moral chaos. But that is not the source of the greatest comfort. Our comfort is to be with Jesus eternally. Our faith will be stable and strong when we trust Jesus, fix our attention on His return, and look forward to enjoying His presence forever!

3. THE FOLLOWERS KNOW THE WAY TO THE PLACE WHERE HE IS GOING.

Thomas poses a legitimate question in verse 5. The others were probably thinking it as well! Thomas didn't pretend to understand—he just forthrightly asked the question. As a result, Jesus began to explain the way to the Father. Record what Jesus taught here: _____

Jesus' way was the cross; our way is Jesus. Jesus said that He was the "way, the truth, and the life." The one who was betrayed by Judas, disowned by Peter, and condemned by lying witnesses was Himself the truth! Jesus doesn't just speak the truth; He **IS** the truth. Notice that Jesus said "the" way, "the" truth, and "the" life. The use of the specific tells us that there aren't other alternatives. When it comes to salvation, it is Jesus or nothing! In our times, it isn't popular to be exclusive, but the concept is taught repeatedly in the New Testament. Read the following verses and record what you learn:

Acts 4:12 _____

Galatians 1:8 _____

Jesus seems to almost rebuke the disciples for their slowness in coming to perceive who He is. Unlike the Pharisees, the disciples have come a long way in knowing Jesus—but there is farther to go! Their Jewish heritage would make it difficult to accept a trinitarian monotheism that we now understand to be true. They weren't expecting a Messiah who was God.

The disciples must learn that their knowledge of Jesus is nothing less than knowledge of God. For them to see this truth is the equivalent of truly knowing Jesus.

When the disciples have grasped these three truths and integrated them into their lives, their hearts will no longer be troubled. Their faith will be triumphant!

But these issues, that defy our human and finite ability to understand, become clear only with the ministry of the Holy Spirit. That is what Jesus teaches next.

In the first fourteen verses of John 14, Jesus encourages His disciples to exercise triumphant faith. Such faith:

1. Understands who Jesus really is
2. Understands the revelation of the Father
3. Overcomes fear and a troubled heart
4. Knows that Jesus is coming back for those who belong to Him

5. Knows that Jesus is the only way to the Father

Jesus continues by addressing the time between His departure and His return for His own. The promise is to send the Spirit of Truth. Do a word study on Holy Spirit and record what you learn here: _____

The truth of the coming of the Spirit is made clear in three ways:

1. **Jesus promises to send "another" helper.** In English, there is only one meaning for "another." In Greek, there are two common words that can be distinguishable in meaning. To help us understand, look up Galatians 1:6 and record what you learn: _____

Here Paul speaks of "another" gospel, which is not "another." Confusing? The first "another" means different. The second "another" means of the same kind. Therefore, the NIV translates Galatians 1:6 as "turning to a different gospel which is really no gospel at all."

In John 14:16, Jesus is not promising a different helper, but is promising a helper of the same kind as He Himself is.

Another: alios 243: one besides; another of the same kind

2. **The Holy Spirit will "come alongside."** The Holy Spirit is the "paraclete," the one who works alongside us. The word is used in legal contexts: a paraclete may be a legal advisor or counselor; on occasion, a paraclete can be a prosecuting attorney. The legal usage is found in much extra-biblical literature. The Holy Spirit is engaged in a wide range of activities on our behalf:

- ❖ As prosecuting attorney, the Holy Spirit exposes the sin of the world
- ❖ The Holy Spirit helps believers in their witness
- ❖ The Holy Spirit strengthens and comforts believers
- ❖ The Holy Spirit explains the significance of Jesus' person and Ministry
- ❖ The Holy Spirit functions as an agent of revelation
- ❖ The Holy Spirit also is "another" in the sense that He does many things that Jesus Himself did:

1. Teach
2. Bear witness
3. Convict the world of sin

This doesn't mean that the functions of the Holy Spirit and the Son are precisely identical; however, it does mean that the Holy Spirit will never contradict Jesus or cause anything about Him to appear in a negative light.

3. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. This must mean something more than "the Spirit of Jesus who is the Truth." We must pause to ask ourselves at this point if we worship God the Holy Spirit and accord Him the reverence and love that we offer to the Father and the Son. The scripture clearly states that the triune Godhead operates coequally, coeternally, coexistently, and as one unit.

Today we will consider attributes and functions of the Holy Spirit that Jesus sent for us:

OLD TESTAMENT AUTHOR

2 Samuel 23:2 _____

Isaiah 59:21 _____

Jeremiah 1:9 _____

2 Timothy 3:15-17 _____

2 Peter 1:2 _____

NEW TESTAMENT AUTHOR

John 14:25, 26 _____

1 Corinthians 2:13 _____

1 Thessalonians 4:15 _____

Revelation 1:20 _____

Revelation 2:7 _____

OLD TESTAMENT ANOINTER

No fewer than sixteen Old Testament leaders of Israel received this anointing:

Joseph (Genesis 41:38)
Moses (Numbers 11:170)
Joshua (Numbers 27:18)
Othniel (Judges 3:10)
Gideon (Judges 6:34)
Jephthah (Judges 11:29)
Samson (Judges 14:6, 19)
Saul (1 Samuel 10:10, 11:6)

David (1 Samuel 16:13)
Elijah (1 Kings 8:12)
Elisha (2 Kings 2:15)
Azariah (2 Chronicles 15:1)
Zechariah (2 Chronicles 24:20)
Ezekiel (Ezekiel 2:2)
Daniel (Daniel 4:9)
Micah (Micah 3:8)

In fact, we learn that the Holy Spirit anointed the Old Testament prophets Isaiah and Joel to prophesy of the day when He would be outpoured on all in the body of Christ.

In all of these respects, we see the Holy Spirit as one who operates in the church as a definite personality that assures that the continued ministry of the resurrected Christ is expressed and verified. The Holy Spirit has all of the characteristics of a person:

1. HE POSSES THE ATTRIBUTES OF MIND, WILL, AND FEELINGS

Romans 8:27 _____

1 Corinthians 12:11 _____

Ephesians 4:30 _____

2. HE ENGAGES IN ACTIVITIES

Revealing (2 Peter 1:21) _____

Teaching (John 14:26) _____

Witnessing (Hebrews 10:15) _____

Interceding (Romans 8:26) _____

Speaking (Revelation 2:7) _____

Commanding (Acts 16:6, 7) _____

Testifying (John 15:26) _____

3. HE HAS A RELATIONSHIP WITH HUMANS

Greif (Ephesians 4:30) _____

Lied to (Acts 5:3) _____

Blasphemed (Matthew 12:31, 32) _____

4. HE HAS DIVINE ATTRIBUTES

Eternal (Hebrews 9:14) _____

Omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-10) _____

Omnipotent (Luke 1:35) _____

Omniscient (1 Corinthians 2:10, 11) _____

Because Jesus is a good teacher, He knows when to continue with a lesson and when to pause for review, clarification, and expansion. In John 14:25-31, He takes time out to review for the disciples.

- Jesus has been trying to calm fears, anxieties, and confusion.
- He has explained that His departure is temporary and for their good.
- His “going away” accomplishes the purpose of His mission and prepares a place in the presence of God for His followers.
- Understanding these things presupposes that they understand who Jesus really is. When He sees that they don’t understand, He stops and briefly repeats His claims. He promises to send another Counselor, the Holy Spirit, to stand in for Him. This Counselor will be the means by which God will make His purpose clear to Jesus’ followers.

Jesus’ words reveal little of what to expect until He returns. The disciples are clearly expected to continue in love and obedience toward Jesus and to exercise faith in Him. They will learn to pray and to enjoy the presence of the Spirit. But they need to have their horizons expanded! These disciples are poised to begin a worldwide mission empowered by the Spirit. Jesus will introduce this vision shortly and explain something on the intimacy His disciples will continue to enjoy with Him.

However, Jesus will also explain that not everything will be wonderful. The disciples can expect opposition from the world. There will be fruit, but there will be hatred, persecution, torture and martyrdom also. Even in the midst, the Counselor will continue with them. But before moving on, Jesus takes up some of the themes He has

already introduced. He does this by more fully developing the themes that He has started so far and clarifying points that the disciples have obviously missed.

JESUS LEAVES TWO LARGE BEQUESTS:

1. THE HOLY SPIRIT Read John 14:26 and record what the Holy Spirit will do:

Compare with the wording of Mark 13:6 and record what you learn: _____

As Jesus is reviewing, He gives us more information about the Spirit. For the first time, the Spirit is described as the HOLY Spirit. Only here and in John 20:22 is this the case. The terminology indicates that the Spirit is the Spirit of God as well as reflecting the Spirit's character. Besides being the Spirit of truth or the Spirit of power, the Spirit is Holy.

The Holy Spirit teaches Jesus' disciples all things that they need to know about the troubling events taking place, all things that are concerned with the revelation of Christ that may still be misunderstood.

There are four important implications in this section:

1. The promise of the Spirit alleviates fear. When a pastor leaves a church or a professor leaves a class, the replacement may not completely agree with every detail of the predecessor's opinion. This isn't true of the Holy Spirit. Continuity is assured!
2. The Spirit will explain what needs to be known. The entire Farewell Discourse that we are studying is a testimony to the disciples misunderstanding! They couldn't anticipate the resurrection or grasp the concept of a worldwide Christian community. What they were able to understand provided comfort—but Jesus' words would become doubly precious when the Spirit explained and revealed after the crucial events that were coming. The disciples would understand the true significance.

3. The Spirit will teach the implications of Jesus' words. The Spirit would begin to pull together the significant events in Jesus' life and put them together with Old Testament teachings. The Spirit would answer questions about new believers and the direction of the church.
 4. The disciples would be around long enough to need the Spirit to remind them. This presupposes that the New Testament canon would be developed. This is important for all of us. The Holy Spirit helps us call to mind scriptures as we need them. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't learn or memorize scripture but it can relieve the pressure of using scripture in our witnessing when we know we will have help! Compare with Matthew 10:19 and record what you learn:
-

2. PEACE The second of Jesus major bequests is peace. This sort of peace is not a kind of placid tranquility which avoids all conflict. This is particularly obvious when Jesus says that a time will come when they will be scattered, but that they will have His peace.

This peace should be confused with aloofness that is indifferent to injustice, corruption, idolatry, or some other sin. The world makes peace in these ways. This peace also is not simply "feeling good" in some worldly way. It isn't a mystical sense of well-being detached from physical and spiritual realities. Although peace is much loved and promoted by Eastern religions and modern cults, their "peace" is too unrealistic and fragile to even begin to compare with the healthy versatility that Jesus is introducing with His concept of peace. This peace can be considered in three dimensions:

- **VERTICAL – PEACE WITH GOD** This concept is fundamental to Old Testament teachings where the Messiah is the Prince of Peace. For God to give His people peace is synonymous with turning His face toward them.

Read the following verses and record what you learn:

Numbers 6:26 _____

Ezekiel 37:26 _____

Romans 5:1 _____

No peace is more fundamental than this and no other peace is of ultimate value if we remain in a state of unrest with God!

- **HORIZONTAL – PEACE WITH MEN** Just as our sin makes God our enemy, requiring that peace with God be established, so also our sin makes other people our enemies. We can learn a lot about how this is accomplished by reading through Ephesians. Read Ephesians 2:14-16 and record what mutual hostility is put to death:

- **PERSONAL PEACE** This is the peace primarily thought of in John 14. This is a personal serenity that isn't based on the ability to avoid troubles, but on a faith which transcends troubles.

Paul appeals to the same principles of faith. Read the following verses and record what you learn:

Philippians 4:6 _____

2 Thessalonians 3:16 _____

Theologically, there is good reason to pursue all three parts of peace. Shortages of peace in any area are bound together with a common cord, **SIN**. Sin makes us enemies of God, of others, and of ourselves. Even in external troubles that rob us of peace, we can feel the curse on mankind which is the result of the sin of the fall. Read through John's gospel and find the other time that Jesus addresses peace in this gospel: _____

The way Jesus bequeaths peace is distinctive. The world wishes for peace. Christ leaves the gift of peace.

1. The cross wins peace with God.
2. The forgiveness, restoration and healing which flow from Jesus primary peace are the only adequate means for peace with others and with ourselves.

Notice that Jesus says "my peace." This is stunning when fully considered. This peace is distinctly Jesus:

1. It is the peace He is providing by His actions.
2. It is the peace He experienced during His mortal life.

Much of our restlessness and bitterness springs from our possessiveness and desire for preeminence, and our lust for recognition.

Our love for self is so strong that it becomes hatred for others who don't give us what we think we are due. There is no peace where such sins flourish. Jesus modeled no possessiveness. He desired His Father's glory and will, not personal preeminence and popular recognition. Far from loving His own life, He gave it up for others. So, Jesus could speak of "His" peace.

As we end the study for today, we must realize that such peace is not something everyone wants! For people who love excitement, this peace may seem like dull old people rocking on the porch. To a revolutionary, peace is just a self-righteous enjoyment of an evil status quo. Sometimes people intentionally turn their backs on Jesus' peace because they realize that this peace presupposes a living relationship with Christ including:

- 1. A living relationship with Him**
- 2. A walk of joyful submission to Him**
- 3. No escapes from reality or confrontations**
- 4. Courageous serenity in the middle of trouble**
- 5. Dying daily to overgrown self-interest**

The gift of peace is ours. If you receive it, your heart will not be troubled and you will not be afraid!

Few scriptures are better known (at least superficially) than the first few verses of John 15. Jesus claims to be the true vine and His Father is the gardener. His followers are the branches. Fruitful branches are pruned to make them more fruitful. Branches that don't bear fruit are lopped off and burned. The follower of Jesus must learn that he can be fruitful only as he "remains" in Jesus.

Do a word study on "remains" and record your results: _____

Our verses in John 15 are profound because they deal with deep realities of the Christian faith. Jesus claims to be the TRUE vine. Read the following verses and record what you learn:

Psalm 80:8-16 _____

Isaiah 5:1-7 _____

Jeremiah 2:21 _____

Ezekiel 15:1-8 _____

In these passages, who is called the vine? These verses stress how privileged but also how corrupt the vine of Israel is. Far from being a corrupt vine, Jesus is the TRUE vine.

John 15 tells us that, just as Jesus is the "TRUE" vine, the "TRUE" people of God are those who are branches of the true vine. We are also taught that apart from Jesus, His people will bear no fruit. It is obvious that the branches are pruned to make them more fruitful so bearing fruit must be important! This leads us to ask some important questions:

- Why would a branch be fruitless in the first place?
- How might the pruning process take place?
- What might happen when a branch is lopped off?

As we read on through John 15:8-16, we find that the nature of the intimacy between Jesus and the believer is paramount.

1. The intimacy between Jesus and the believer is an intimacy paralleled in some respects by the intimacy between Jesus and the Father. The love of the Father for the Son is not restricted to His preincarnate state. Read the following verses and record what you learn of the Father's love for the Son:

Romans 8:32 _____

John 17:24 _____

Mark 1:11 _____

Mark 9:7 _____

There is a touch of eternity in such love and in being chosen by Jesus. As Jesus remains in the Father's love by obedience, the believer must remain in Jesus' love by means of obedience. Reread John 14:15 and record what you learn: _____

We must look carefully at what the text DOES NOT say. Jesus never suggests that obedience earns His love or that His love is so miserly that it must be wrenched from Him with moral bribery. If this were the case, God's love would not come first—and we know that it does! Read the following verses and record the implications:

1 Corinthians 11:25 _____

Jude 21 _____

Jesus' joy is in the relationship of obedience with the Father; the Christian's joy lies in His relationship of obedience to Jesus.

2. The intimacy between the believer and Jesus is shared within the warmth of the love for other believers. This imitates Christ's love for us.

Read Jesus' command in John 13:34, 35 _____

This commandment set a new standard for love, "as I have loved you." Unlovely people bring out the worst in us. Whiners get on our nerves. Gossips, the arrogant, the immature, and the silly drain our reserves. But the branch can do nothing apart from the vine—and guess who loved the unlovely, whiners, gossips, arrogant, immature, and silly!

3. The intimacy between the believer and Jesus is an intimacy honored by the noun "friend." The disciples are said to be Jesus' friends. Is Jesus said to be their friend? Find somewhere in scripture where Jesus or the Father is called a friend of anyone. Record them here: _____
-

4. Intimacy with Jesus is an intimacy whose fruit is the result of prayer under Christ's lordship. This is a clarification of John 15:16.

What does it mean to pray "in Jesus name?" Most believers are pretty sure of what it doesn't mean! It isn't a magic formula to satisfy our every whim. So, then, what is it?

- a. Pray in accordance with what the name stands for
- b. Pray seeking God's glory
- c. Pray with the conscious sense of Christ's lordship

As we close for today, try to define the fruit that is being discussed in this section. Is it the result of evangelism? Is it the fruit of the Spirit as defined in Galatians 5? Can the way we pray be fruit? Can the way we love be fruit?

LOVING ONE ANOTHER BECAUSE OF JESUS IS CHRISTIAN FRUIT.

PRAYING IN JESUS' NAME AND ACCORDING TO HIS WILL IS CHRISTIAN FRUIT.

EVERYTHING IN OUR LIVES THAT BRINGS GLORY TO GOD IS CHRISTIAN FRUIT.

The intimacy we enjoy with Jesus, like the union of the branch and the vine, results in fruitfulness.

IS THERE A PAINFUL ASPECT TO BEING A CHRISTIAN?

Certainly, if Jesus Himself is described as a man of sorrows, can it be possible that we participate only in His joy and not His sorrow? Do we expect that Jesus will bear the cross alone?

So often, it has been taught that accepting Christ leads to a pain free life, physical and material blessings, and ready solutions to all of life's problems. In view of the teachings in John 15:17-27, this is clearly an inaccurate interpretation of the scripture. Christians do not always exude joy; they can face discouraging defeat; they can be the result of self-denial and daily death. There is a crown, but there is also a cross. It is not possible to have the fruitfulness of a well-kept branch without undergoing the pruning discipline from the Father.

Read Luke 9:57-62. What is Jesus saying in these verses: _____

Something similar is being said in the verses from John that we are studying today. Having recounted some of the glories of being a disciple, Jesus now explains some of the cost as well. Besides the problems faced by all men on this earth, Christians will face special difficulties that are uniquely the result of following Christ. Today, we are turning our attention to what these situations may be. We can divide them into three separate categories.

1. CHRISTIANS SHOULD EXPECT THE HATRED OF THE WORLD.

- A. The hatred of the world should stand in contrast to the love shown among God’s people. The expression “if the world hates you” does not mean that there is doubt about this fact. The verb tense renders this, “if the world hates you (and it does).” Jesus commanded that His followers love one another. Therefore, we must be on the alert against bitterness, resentment, hatred and similar emotions within the body of Christ, and get rid of them as quickly as possible. Christian groups that are not reflecting love and concern do not have Christianity at their roots.

Again, look at what this passage **DOES NOT** say. It does not deny that the world can show any love at all. Certainly unbelieving parents can love their children; unbelieving spouses can love each other. But the world hates naturally because it is made up of people who have never known the love of God. It is impossible for them to love God or to love people unless and until they set aside their false values, come to terms with the truth, and see their own position and role in the light of God’s grace. Read Romans 8:6-8. What does it say to you about people like these? _____

- B. The world hates Christians because the world and the church are mutually exclusive; the world resents any lack of conformity to its standards.

Read James 4:4. A Christian, by definition, is under the lordship of Jesus; the world, by definition, is not. _____

Therefore, the world and the church are holding different allegiances, and marching under different orders. John reemphasizes this point in 1 John 4:4-6. Read those verses and record what you learn: _____

John does not mean to imply that it is OK for Christians to be haughty, holding themselves against other people, and refusing correction from the world when appropriate. He does mean that God has revealed Himself in Jesus and anything that cannot be reconciled to the truth that Jesus represents is necessarily in error. It would be a simple point in a logic class, and it represents the polarity between the believer and the worldly man that leads to all of the unique struggles of the Christian.

The scriptures **DO NOT** say that there is only one kind of worldly perspective. It does say that there is only one truth. There are many kinds of error!

Consider Nazism and Communism. Each hates the other, but both hate the believer and try to make believers conform to something apart from God's truth. Alternative lifestyles, materialism, secular humanism, and any other lifestyles also are in error and contrast to the one truth. There are many so-called biblical teachers who will say that success and wealth are inevitably the result of victorious Christian living. This heresy can lead to a Christian pursuing things rather than pursuing God. The same can be said for the sexual purity before marriage, heterosexual marriage, and fidelity.

The world hates Christians because it hated Jesus. This is more than a chronological priority; the real source of hatred is our identity with Jesus' teaching and submission to His lordship. Similarly, if the master has suffered persecution, it follows that any servant following the same path will also suffer persecution.

When we invite Christ into our lives, some of the hatred directed towards Christ will be directed at us. Christians are not love or hated on their own account, but on account of Christ. The question that we must struggle to answer is, "why does the world hate Jesus?" Wasn't He known for healing, speaking the truth, being loving and acting with integrity?

- C. The world hates Jesus (and Christians) because He exposes sin. In 15:22, 24, Jesus is not saying that men would have been totally innocent if He had come and spoken to them; rather, the world lost its excuse for sin when Jesus came and exposed it. Ever since the fall of man, the world has been

sinning against God; however, after Jesus came, the world was sinning in a much brighter light. This is why 3:19, 20 reads,

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come to the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

In our own right, we cannot arouse the world's hatred because we cannot adequately challenge the world's evil; however, when the world confronts Christ in us, it either turns from sin (and quits being the "world"), or it hates us. The world does not want to have its sins exposed.

D. Strangely enough, John 15:25 says that the world sometimes hates for no good reason. We can understand, to a certain extent, how the world hates to have its sin exposed. But it is difficult to present some good reason for hating Jesus Himself. Stalin or Hitler might be seen in a different perspective. But, Jesus went around doing good. The sort of persecution Jesus underwent fulfilled God's word. This should be a source of encouragement to us. Without seeing any good reason, Christians should expect the hatred of the world because God Himself said that it would come.

The painful aspects to being a Christian stand in contrast to the blessings spoken of by Jesus in John 15:1-16.

2. CHRISTIANS MUST EXPECT TO SERVE AS WITNESSES IN THIS HATING WORLD, JOINING THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THIS WORK.

Read John 15:17, 19 and record your findings: _____

3. CHRISTIANS MUST EXPECT SOME BOUTS OF SEVERE PERSECUTION.

After insisting that His followers must bear witness in a world characterized by hatred, Jesus gives a still darker message: sometimes cruel violence will be directed at His followers. True believers bear witness. Often that witness faces

outbreaks of violent repression. Such persecution is inevitable. Read John 16:2 and reflect on what it means: _____

Anyone who wants to understand more about the documented stories of believers who have died for their faith should read Foxes Book of Martyrs. To suppose that the age of martyrdom has just about come to an end is ill-informed.

In the not too distant past, we remember the story of Jim Elliott and others martyred by the Aucas in Ecuador and men like Dietrich Bonhoeffer who died at the hands of the Nazis. Millions died in the purges during Mao's regime (12 million or more) and at least some of them died simply because they were Christians. In Ethiopia, an average of three pastors are being put to death each week. In fact, it is estimated that there have been more Christian martyrs in the twentieth century than in all previous centuries of the Christian era combined.

In His last moments with His disciples, Jesus:

**...warned them about further persecution,
.....told them where, when, and why He was going, and
.....assured them that they weren't left alone, the Spirit would come.**

Jesus knew what lay ahead, and He did not want the disciples' faith shaken or destroyed. Unless Jesus did what He came to do, there would be no gospel. If He did not die, He could not remove our sins; He could not rise again and defeat death. If He did not go back to the Father, the Holy Spirit would not come. Christ's presence on earth was limited to one place at a time. His leaving meant He could be present to the whole world through the Holy Spirit.

Three important tasks of the Holy Spirit are:

- (1) convicting the world of its sin and calling it to repentance,**
- (2) revealing the standard of God's righteousness to anyone who believes, because Christ would no longer be physically present on earth, and**
- (3) demonstrating Christ's judgment over Satan.**

According to Jesus, not believing in Him is *sin*.

We read in scripture of the last days of Jesus' life on earth. He began by making a triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Read about this in Matthew 21:6-10 _____

This occurred on the day that the Jewish people would have identified the lamb that would be slaughtered in their Passover meal. Jesus was identified as God's sacrificial lamb on that day.

Read on in Matthew 26:17-30. Here we find Jesus celebrating the Passover with His disciples. During the supper, He gave new meaning to the afikomen and salvation cup. These were traditionally part of the seder meal. At the beginning of the meal, three pieces of unleavened bread were on a plate. The middle piece was broken into two pieces and half was hidden away until the end of the meal. This hidden piece was called the afikomen and was the last thing eaten at the meal.

Read Matthew 26:26 for the account: _____

Read also Mark 14:22 and Luke 22:19 _____

Read Luke 22:20 for information on the "cup after supper." It was this cup that completed the institution of our service of communion.

Jesus died at the hour that the sacrificial lambs were beginning to be sacrificed. And He rose from the dead on the day celebrated as "First Fruits" during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Read 1 Corinthians 15:20 and, in light of what you have learned, reflect on why Jesus was called "first fruits." _____

Following Jesus' resurrection, He made ten appearances to His followers prior to His ascension:

- (1.) To Mary Magdalene at the sepulcher alone. (John 20:11-18 and Mark 16:9-11).
- (2.) To certain women, "the other Mary," Salome, Joanna, and others, as they returned from the sepulcher. (Matthew 28:1-10)
- (3.) To Simon Peter alone on the day of the resurrection. (Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5).

- (4.) To the two disciples on the way to Emmaus on the day of the resurrection (Luke 24:13-35).
- (5.) To the ten disciples (Thomas being absent) and others "with them," at Jerusalem on the evening of the resurrection day. (John 20:19-24).
- (6.) To the disciples again (Thomas being present) at Jerusalem (Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:33-40; John 20:26-28, 1 Corinthians 15:5).
- (7.) To the disciples when fishing at the Sea of Galilee. (John 21:1-23)
- (8.) To the eleven, and about 500 brethren at once, at an appointed place in Galilee (1 Corinthians 15:6).
- (9.) To James, but under what circumstances we are not informed (1 Corinthians 15:7).
- (10.) To the apostles immediately before the ascension. They accompanied Him from Jerusalem to Mount Olivet, and there they saw Him ascend "till a cloud received Him out of their sight" (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50-52; Acts 1:4-10).

THE GREAT COMMISSION

One of the fundamental teachings of Jesus happened after His resurrection and before His ascension. We know these instructions as "The Great Commission." It is printed here:

Matthew 28:18-20 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Authority is a particular word with connotations that are clearly definable. The Greek word, *exousia*, is translated "authority" in English. Some things we know about authority are these:

1. Authority has specified parameters; for example, the parameters of the authority of the Champaign County Sheriff are Champaign County. His authority does not extend to other counties.
2. Authority always acts within specified rules of operation. The sheriff, for example, works within the rules established by the law.
3. Authority is always given to someone by someone. The sheriff, for example, receives his authority from the people who elect him.

In Matthew 28, Jesus claims to have "all authority." He did not make this claim prior to His death and resurrection, but He clearly makes it here.

1. The authority of Christ has parameters: heaven and earth.
2. He says that this authority "has been given to me." This was given by the Father as a result of the completed work of the Son.
3. The rules of operation are clearly set forth by God in the Word.

The disciples of Jesus are to use His authority for a two-fold mission:

Make converts by baptizing them (represents salvation)

Make disciples by teaching them to obey His teachings

Jesus warned His disciples, however, not to move forward on the commission until after the Holy Spirit had come.

Read Acts 1:4, 5 and record where they were to wait for the power: _____

Jesus goes on to tell them this:

Acts 1:8...but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Authority and power, when used together, would provide all that the disciples needed to complete the Great Commission.

- ❖ We might say that authority is given, and is the **right to act** within certain parameters according to certain rules.
- ❖ We could also say that power is the **ability to act** in those circumstances.

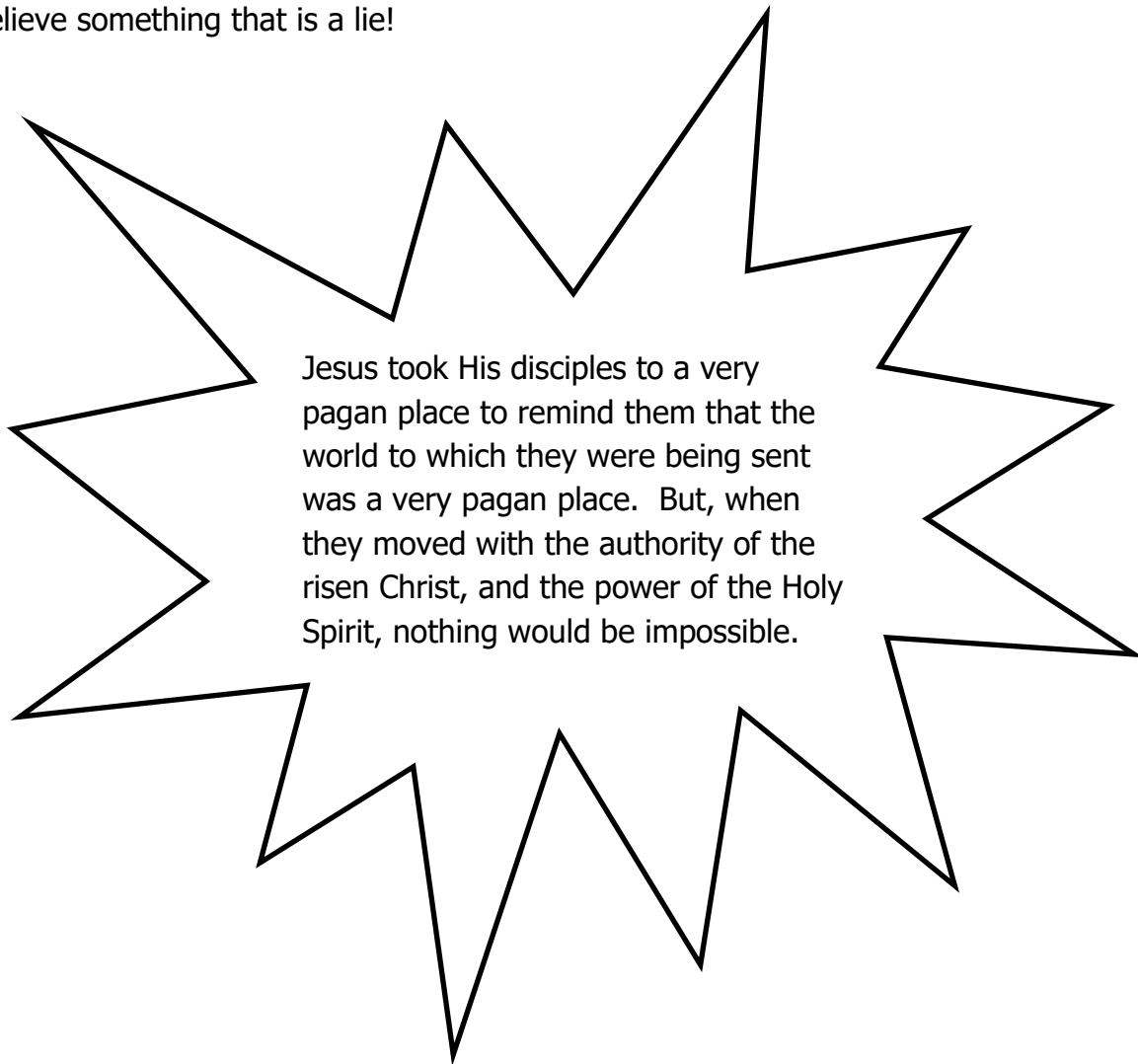
This is easier to grasp if we look back at the example of the sheriff. He has authority given by the people of Champaign County and acts according to certain predetermined laws and within predetermined parameters. But, what would happen to him if, within his area of authority, he accosts a robber who has a gun while the sheriff does not? The sheriff would be "out powered." We wouldn't dream of sending someone into a situation like this. Neither would God! That is why He gives us both the authority and power that we need to accomplish what He has for us to do.

Jesus knew that it wouldn't always be easy for His disciples (then or now) to move forward in this way. So, before His death, He took His disciples to a completely "out-of-the-way" place: Caesarea Philippi. It might be called the most pagan place in all Israel during this time. If you visited the place today, it would be called "Baneas." It certainly wasn't on the road to anywhere that Jesus or His disciples would usually go. It was a place of pagan worship, in part because of a cave hidden behind a water fall. The pagans believed that this cave was one of the entrances to Hades, and the cave was known as the "Gates of Hell." While they were looking at this place, Jesus asked the question: who do men say that I am?

Read Matthew 16:13-20 and record your thoughts on the location and the disciples' response to Jesus' question: _____

Here Jesus tells His disciples that the "Gates of Hell" will be proven to be unable to overpower His church. This is wonderful news. There is no god anywhere who can overpower a believer moving under the influence of the Holy Spirit. This is a fact that

the devil knows very well. For this reason, most encounters with the devil are truth encounters rather than power encounters. In other words, the devil tries to get us to believe something that is a lie!



It is also important to realize that the "Gates of Hell" cannot overpower the church. Gates are intended to be points of entry and exit. Some things can go through; others cannot. The devil loves to keep people captive behind those gates where they cannot know or understand the saving grace of Jesus. The good news is that neither those gates, nor their gatekeeper, are more powerful than the church moving on the authority of the risen Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus made a prediction regarding the Holy Spirit. Read it here: Acts 1:4-5 _____

Read Acts 2:1-4. Record what the people saw and what they heard here: _____

Was anything consumed by the fire? _____

Compare with Exodus 3:2 and record your thoughts: _____

Was anything blown over by the wind? _____

Pentecost was the second religious festival during which Jewish males were required to be at the Temple in Jerusalem. It occurred fifty days (or seven weeks) after the Passover feast. Sometimes it is called the "Feast of Weeks."

The wheat was harvested, and the general character of the festival was that of a harvest-home celebration. The day was observed as a Sabbath day, all labor was suspended, and the people appeared before God to express their gratitude. The central feature of the day was the presentation of two loaves of leavened, salted bread unto the Lord. This offering was also considered to be First Fruits, but with a difference. Whereas the First Fruits offered during the festival of Unleavened Bread (when Christ arose) were the freshly cut grain in sheaves, the sacrifice at Pentecost was a completed loaf—they were the First Fruits in a format that was usable for people.

Pentecost was a festival of good cheer and a day of joy. Free-will offerings were to be made to the Lord, it was to be marked by a liberal spirit toward the Levite, the stranger, and orphans and widows. The command against gleaning harvest-fields has a bearing on this custom.

Pentecost was to be a day of overflowing generosity, happiness, and celebration of the First Fruits in a format useful to people. What a wonderful description of what happened on the first Pentecost celebration of the church age.

THE EARLY CHURCH

According to Matthew 16:18 the name *ekklesia* was first applied to gathered believers by Jesus Himself, the occasion being at Peter's declaration at Caesarea Philippi.

Before this time, Jesus had described the group He came to found as the "kingdom of God" or the "kingdom of heaven," a designation which had its roots in Old Testament teaching and which the Messianic expectations of Israel had already made familiar. But now when it was clear that He was rejected by the Jewish people and that believers must compose an independent group of worshippers, it is natural that He should employ a new name for this new body which He was about to create, and thus should say to Peter, on the ground of the apostle's believing confession, "Upon this rock I will build my **church**."

The adoption of this name, however, did not imply any abandonment of the ideas suggested by the conception of the kingdom. In Matthew 16:19, "the kingdom of heaven" is employed in a manner which, if it does not make the two expressions church and kingdom perfectly synonymous, at least compels us to regard them as closely correlative and as capable of translation into each other's terms. And the comparative disuse by the apostolic writers of the name "kingdom," together with their emphasis on the church, shows that they had followed their Master's guidance in substituting for a name and a conception that were peculiarly Jewish, another name whose associations would enable them to commend their message more readily to the world at large.

It is in Acts that we see the word "*ekklesia*" as the regular designation for the society of Christian believers, but is employed in two distinct senses.

- ❖ First in a local sense, to denote the body of Christians in a particular place or district, as in Jerusalem (Acts 5:11; Acts 8:1), in Antioch (Acts 13:1; Acts 15:22), in Caesarea (Acts 18:22)—a usage which reappears in the Apocalypse in the letters to the Seven Churches.
- ❖ Then in a wider and what may be called a universal sense, to denote the sum total of existing local churches.

In the Pauline Epistles both of these usages are frequent. Thus the apostle writes of "the church of the Thessalonians" (1 Thessalonians 1:1), "the church of God which is at Corinth" (1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1). Paul localizes and particularizes the word further by applying it to a single Christian household or to little groups of believers who were accustomed to assemble in private houses for worship and fellowship.

Read the following verses and write your summaries of what composes a church:

Romans 16:5 _____

1 Corinthians 16:19 _____

Colossians 4:15 _____

But Paul in his later epistles has another use of *ekklesia* peculiar to himself, which may be described as the ideal use.

- ❖ The church, now, is the body of which Christ is the head.

Ephesians 1:22 _____

Colossians 1:18, 24 _____

- ❖ It is the medium through which God's manifold wisdom and eternal purpose are to be made known not only to all men, but also to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 3:9-11 _____

- ❖ It is the bride for whom He is the Bridegroom, the bride for whom in His love He gave Himself up, that He might cleanse and sanctify her and might present her to Himself a glorious church, a church without blemish, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

Ephesians 5:25 _____

This church clearly is not only the church as we know it on earth, with its divisions, its blemishes, its shortcomings in faith and love and obedience. It is also the holy church that will exist when the Bridegroom has completed the process of redemption.

As Jesus predicted, the church first began in Jerusalem, where the Holy Spirit had first fallen on the day of Pentecost. The early church in Jerusalem was not headed by one of Jesus' twelve disciples. Rather, its leader was the half-brother of Jesus, James.

Read the following verses and indicate James' relationship with Jesus:

John 7:5 _____

1 Corinthians 15:3-8 _____

In Jerusalem, there was constant friction between the church and Jewish leadership. There resulted a beginning persecution of the church there. One of the earliest recorded confrontations occurred surrounding the Synagogue of the Freedmen and Stephen. Read these verses and record your findings:

Acts 6:5-8 _____

Acts 7:58-59 _____

According to Philo, there were, in Jerusalem, descendants of men who had been enslaved for a short time under Pompey, but soon released. They had been given Roman citizenship and were known as "freedmen." As a result, their descendants would also have had citizenship. Paul is known to have been a Roman citizen "from birth." And he is clearly associated with the "Synagogue of the Freedmen."

Acts 22:28 _____

How a person who was a Hebrew of Hebrews could have had Roman citizenship might be accounted for in this manner. Pompey was known to have enslaved some Jewish noble persons in 63 B.C.

After the persecution began in Jerusalem, the church began to expand away from Jerusalem. Read Acts 11:19-20 for more insight: _____

The church in Antioch was the sending church for the apostle Paul. So, we can begin to see the importance of the persecution in Jerusalem, and understand how Christ's words would be fulfilled.

Read Acts 9:1-25 and list everything you learn about the conversion of Saul here:

Those in the church in Jerusalem were understandably reluctant to welcome Paul, not knowing with certainty if his conversion was real, or a trick aimed at exposing Christians so that they could be persecuted. Barnabas, however, welcomed Paul and later took Paul with him to teach in Antioch.

THE END OF THE AGE

Prophecies from the Old Testament

Basic to Christian and Jewish apocalyptic literature is the view that history is divided into two parts: one before Messiah comes, and one after. Apocalyptic literature deals with the details of the return of Christ and the end of this age. It discusses how Christ returns, who is saved, and who is destroyed. It discusses how His kingdom will be set up and the eternal life of believers.

The writers of Daniel, Zechariah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Revelation have seen into the future. Their books are the products of supernatural visions and dreams; they have seen world events that have not yet happened. God has chosen to reveal to them, and to us, some of what the future holds. These include images of death, supernatural places and creatures, destruction, and events in the world being carried out by future weapons of warfare that they do not recognize.

Many times apocalyptic literature refers to "the Day of the Lord." This day is seen as a time of judgment that ushers in a new age of peace and prosperity. The basic outline is as follows:

- A. The Messiah will be the central figure in the Day of the Lord.
- B. The coming new age is preceded by a time of terrible war, famine, and calamity. The very elements that we know will disintegrate. Hatred and anger will be prevalent.
- C. The Day of the Lord will be a time when judgment is rendered to people

Included in the apocalyptic world view is a time of great peace and joy when Christ will reign on earth. Also included are the end of the millennial reign and the resurrection of the unsaved dead.

The following verses will introduce you to the concept of "the Day of the Lord." Read them and record what you learn here:

Isaiah 13:6, 9 _____

Isaiah 58:13 _____

Ezekiel 13:5 _____

Ezekiel 30:3 _____

Joel 1:15 _____

Joel 2:1, 11 _____

Amos 5:18, 20 _____

Obadiah 1:15 _____

Zephaniah 1:7, 14 _____

Malachi 4:5 _____

Acts 2:20 _____

1 Corinthians 5:5 _____

1 Thessalonians 5:2 _____

2 Thessalonians 2:2 _____

2 Peter 3:10 _____

This study of apocalyptic literature will focus on three books: Daniel, Zechariah, and Revelation. Key passages from Isaiah and Ezekiel will also be examined in detail along with other pertinent passages. The goal is a fuller comprehension of the information contained in scripture.

Daniel: taken into captivity 605 B.C. by Babylon; continued in captivity until after Jerusalem fell in 586 B.C.

Zechariah: dates to about 515 B.C.

Revelation: dates to about 90 A.D.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION CONQUERORS OF ISRAEL

Knowing the conquerors of Israel in the past is key to understanding prophecy concerning the future.

EGYPT 1500 B.C.- 1250 B.C. (Exodus)

ASSYRIA 722 B.C. Northern Kingdom taken into captivity

BABYLON 605 B.C. Daniel taken captive from Judah to Babylon
586 B.C. Jerusalem falls; last captives taken by Babylon

Babylon is Beast #1

Daniel's vision during Babylon era:

4 beasts (Daniel chapter 7)

Ram/goat (Daniel chapter 8)

Rulers during this era:

Nebuchadnezzar (fiery furnace)

Belshazzar (ruler during the 2 visions above)

MEDO-PERSIA 559 B.C. **Medo-Persia is Beast #2** (Daniel 7:5)
Medo-Persia is the Horned Ran of Daniel 8:3

Daniel's visions during Medo-Persian era:

70 weeks of years

Rise of Greece

Rulers during this era:

Darius (Lion's Den)

Cyrus (Exiles return)

GREECE 332 B.C. **Greece is Beast #3** (Daniel 7:6)
Greece is Shaggy Goat (Daniel 8:5)
Rulers during this era:

Alexander the Great

4-way division under Alexander's generals

<u>Kings of the North</u> (Seleucids/Syria and Babylon)	<u>Kings of the South</u> (Ptolemies of Egypt)	<u>Kings of the East</u> (Antignus/part of Persia, Asia Minor)	<u>Kings of the West</u> (Antipater/Greece Macedonia)
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The Kings of the North eventually produced Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a type of Antichrist, who defiled the temple by sacrificing pigs to Zeus on the Altar from 167-164 B.C.

ROME 50 B.C. **Rome is Beast #4** (Also future fulfillment)

7 heads described as 7 hills (Revelation 17:9)

10 horns are ten future kingdoms (nations)

FUTURE CONQUEROR: RESTORED ROMAN EMPIRE (10 horns/crowns)

10 king federation—7 heads (7 kingdoms) described by John

5 were (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece)

1 is (Rome was in power when John saw Revelation)

1 is to come (future restored roman Empire with an 8th king who is part of the 7th arising from it)

Daniel had many dreams and visions he did not understand. He dreamed of four beasts, which represented four kingdoms of the world, and of a ram and goat, which depicted two of those kingdoms in greater detail. Daniel's visions reveal that the Messiah will be the ruler of a spiritual kingdom that will overpower and overshadow all other earthly kingdoms. These visions help us see that we should interpret all of history in light of God's eternal kingdom.

Read Daniel 7:4-7 and record the four beasts from Daniel's dream: _____

Chronologically, chapter seven takes place before chapter five. At this time, Belshazzar had just been given a position of authority (553 B.C.) and Daniel was probably in his late sixties. The first six chapters of Daniel present history; the last six chapters are visions relating mainly to the future.

Daniel had a vision of four great beasts, each representing a world empire. This was similar to Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter two. Read that dream and record what you learn: _____

Nebuchadnezzar's dream covered the political aspects of the empires; Daniel's dream depicted their moral characteristics. These nations, which would reign over Israel, were evil and cruel; but Daniel also saw God's everlasting, indestructible kingdom arrive and conquer them all.

The lion with an eagle's wings represents Babylon with her swift conquests (statues of winged lions have been recovered from Babylon's ruins). The bear that ravaged the lion is Medo-Persia. The three ribs in its mouth represent the conquests of three major enemies. The leopard is Greece. Its wings show the swiftness of Alexander the Great's campaign as he conquered much of the civilized world in four years (334-330 B.C.). The leopard's four heads are the four divisions of the Greek empire after Alexander's death.

The fourth beast points to both Rome and the end times. Many Bible scholars believe that the horns correspond to ten kings who will reign shortly before God sets up His everlasting kingdom. These ten kings had still not come to power at the time of John's

vision recorded in the book of Revelation (Rev. 17:12). The little horn is a future human ruler or the antichrist.

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4 and record what you learn _____

God is illustrating the final end of all worldly kingdoms in contrast to His eternal kingdom.

In Daniel 7:9, the prophecy shifts to the end times. This judgment scene is similar to one that was seen by the apostle John. Read Revelation 1:14, 15 and record what you learn: _____

The Ancient of Days is almighty God, who assigns power to kingdoms and who will Himself judge those kingdoms in the end. Daniel saw God judging millions of people as they stood before Him. We all must stand before almighty God and give an account of our lives.

If your life were judged by God today, what would He say about it? How would He measure it against His will for us? We should live each day with the full awareness that we must appear before God to give account for how we used our lives. How will your life measure up?

The slaying of the beast in 7:12 represents the fall of Rome. While this beast was destroyed, the other beasts were allowed to live for a period of time. The kingdoms (or their cultures) continued to be recognizable in some form; history did not end when God intervened with His judgment. Read 7:13, 14 and compare with Matthew 26:64; Luke 21:27; John 1:51. Who is "one like a son of man?" _____

In Daniel 7:24, we begin to see some very important future prophecy concerning ten horns, or ten kings. Read Revelation 17:12 and compare: _____

There were also ten toes in Nebuchadnezzar's vision (Daniel 2:41, 42). While all do not agree concerning the identity of these ten kings, we are reminded in Revelation 17:12-14 that these kings will make war against Christ, but, as the King of kings, He will

conquer them. The other king mentioned here in verse 24 is the future antichrist of 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4.

While the exact meaning of this “time, times and a half a time” is debated, we do know that God told Daniel that persecution would continue for a specific amount of time. In fact, “time, times and a half a time” is generally interpreted as 1 and 2 and ½. This corresponds to the 3½ years that is a recurring time allocation in prophetic literature.

Daniel 7 probably was written when Daniel was in his late 60’s. Chapter 8 follows the events of chapter 7, dating to about 551 B.C. when Daniel was about 70 years old. It gives additional information about two of the empires from chapter 7: the Medo-Persian and Greek empires.

The Ram with two horns is the Medo-Persian empire—the combination of two powerful nations. The Shaggy goat represents Greece. The large horn is Alexander the Great. The breaking of this horn symbolizes Alexander’s death and the four horns represent the division of his kingdom into four parts. See the timeline for details. These four kings were known historically as the kings of the south, north, east and west. The kings of the north eventually produced Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the second century B.C. Daniel’s prophecy probably refers to both this man and similar events that occur on a broader scale just before the second coming of Christ.

The 2300 days in 8:14 were literally fulfilled—it was 2300 days from the time Antiochus IV Epiphanes desecrated the temple until the restoration of the temple worship under the Maccabees in 165 B.C. Daniel’s vision was specifically said to refer to the end times and was interpreted to him by the angel, Gabriel. Find other references to Gabriel and record what you learn: _____

Perhaps the most difficult of all of Daniel’s prophecies occurs after the Medo-Persians had conquered Babylon. Darius, of Median descent, became ruler in the area of the former Babylonian empire where Daniel was located. Historically, it is known that Darius became ruler in 538 B.C. This is the same Darius who is spoken of in Daniel 6 and is the man who threw Daniel into the den of lions. How old would Daniel have been when he was thrown to the lions? _____

The Ahasuerus in Daniel 9 is NOT Esther’s husband. The events described in Esther happen 50 years later.

It is speculated that Darius did away with the fiery furnace for destruction of enemies because he was a fire-worshipper who did not want to honor his enemies by allowing their death to occur by fire.

Chapter 9 opens with Darius recognition of Jeremiah's prophecy concerning the length of time the captives from Judah would be held in Babylon. Read Jeremiah 29:10 and record what you learn: _____

Read Daniel 9:3-19 and record the elements contained in Daniel's prayer: _____

Now, read Daniel 9:20-27. This is one of the most far-reaching prophecies of the Old Testament. The seven years of future tribulation, as recorded in Revelation also, are seen here. Other very important information is also given. Record the elements of this prophecy here: _____

History is able to help us in interpreting this vision because some of the events mentioned have already happened and their dates are known. In working with prophecy, it is important to remember that Jewish years are 360 days long. In interpreting this vision, we can begin with the decree from Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple.

THE END OF THE AGE PART TWO

Prophecies from the New Testament

Revelation holds a promise that no other Bible book holds. Read Revelation 1:1-3 and record the promise: _____

Now read Revelation 1:4-7. Cross reference to Daniel 7:13 and 1 Thessalonians 4:17 and record what you learn: _____

This "catching up" of believers is known as the "rapture" of the church.

Revelation has "beatitudes," sentences containing "blessed" just as Matthew has. Read the beatitudes of Revelation and record them here:

Revelation 1:3 _____

Revelation 14:13 _____

Revelation 16:15 _____

Revelation 19:9 _____

Revelation 20:6 _____

Revelation 22:7 _____

Revelation 22:14 _____

It will also be important to look for the number "7" in Revelation. It is associated with God—with completion, fulfillment and perfection. In Revelation we will see:

- | | | |
|--------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| ❖ 7 churches | ❖ 7 spirits | ❖ 7 lampstands |
| ❖ 7 stars | ❖ 7 horns | ❖ 7 seals on a scroll |
| ❖ 7 angels | ❖ 7 trumpets | ❖ 7 eyes of the Lamb |
| ❖ 7 thunders | ❖ 7 gold bowls | ❖ 7 heads of the dragon |
| ❖ 7 kings | ❖ 7 spirits | ❖ 7 heads of the beast |

Read the description of Jesus in Revelation 1:12-16 and compare it to the description of an angel in Daniel 10:4-6. Describe the similarities and difference: _____

In Revelation 1:16, note the symbolism of a double-bladed sword in Jesus' mouth. Read the following verses and record what you learn:

Hebrews 4:12 _____

Ephesians 6:10-17 _____

Isaiah 49:2 _____

In Revelation 1-3 we read of seven churches. These were actual churches that were in existence at the time John wrote Revelation. In fact, John is historically believed to have been the bishop of the church of Ephesus. The letters to the churches basically follow a pattern:

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. salutation2. evaluation3. exhortation4. declaration of Christ's return and rewards |
|--|

Some believe that these letters were only for these churches at the time written. Some believe that these letters represent the progression of the church of Jesus Christ universal over time. Some believe that they represent the various problems in churches at many times and many places.

THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS (The loveless church)

Ephesus was the capital of Asia Minor, a center of trade. Along with Antioch in Syria, Alexandria, Corinth and Rome, it was one of the five greatest cities in the Roman Empire. The temple to Diana (Artemis) which was one of the wonders of the ancient world was located in Ephesus. Production of idols used in the worship of this goddess was a major industry. (Acts 19:21-41). Paul visited Ephesus on his second missionary journey and founded the church there; he stayed there three years on his third missionary journey. Timothy took up the leadership later. False teachers caused problems in the Ephesian church (Ephesians 4:14; 1 Timothy 1:3, 4) but the church was able to resist them. The apostle John arrived in Ephesus, probably after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Jewish tradition teaches that he brought with him Jesus' mother, Mary, and that she died there. The protest in Acts 19 (57 A.D.) took place in an Ephesian theater that seated 25,000 people! The church at Ephesus had been

commended for its love for God and others (Ephesians 3:17-20) but the early church leaders had died, and the second generation of believers had lost their zeal for God. Over a long period of time, the church in Ephesus had refused to tolerate sin among its members. This was not easy in a city famed for immoral sexual practices associated with the worship of the goddess Diana.

We are also living in times of widespread sin and sexual immorality. It is popular to be open-minded toward many types of sin, calling them "alternative lifestyles," or "personal choices." But when the body of believers begins to tolerate sin in the church, the standards are lowered and the witness is compromised.

The church at Ephesus is commended for:

- 1. working hard**
- 2. being patient**
- 3. resisting sin**
- 4. critically examining the claims of false apostles**
- 5. suffering patiently without quitting**

Every church should have these characteristics, but these good things should spring from our love for Jesus. The Ephesians had lost their first love, and they may have been in danger of falling into legalism. The spiritual life of the Ephesian church had become sterile. Jesus describes this "first love" in His summary of the law in Matthew 22:37-40. Read these verses and record what you learn: _____

Because the Ephesian church had failed to love God above all else, they were under condemnation. Discuss the significance of having its candlestick possibly removed from its place among the churches. _____

The Nicolaitans were a religious sect claiming Christ, but also permitting the permissive sins of the society as part of their everyday life. They are compared to Balaam, the prophet who induced the Israelites to carry out their lustful desires (Numbers 31:15, 16). Notice that Jesus commends the church at Ephesus for hating the wicked deeds of the Nicolaitans (the deeds, not the people).

Accept and love all people, but refuse to tolerate all evil. The world needs Christians who will stand for God's truth and point people toward right living.

Discuss the significance of the fruit from the Tree of Life in the Paradise of God.

Jesus' message to the church at Ephesus to REPENT.

THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA (The Persecuted Church)

The city of Smyrna was twenty-five miles north of Ephesus. It was a port city with a good harbor on the Aegean Sea. The church of Smyrna struggled against a Jewish population which had fled Jerusalem and which was strongly opposed to Christianity, and a non-Jewish population that was loyal to the Romans and supported the emperor-worship cult. They were opposed on every side and persecution and suffering was rampant in the church. It is not easy to suffer, no matter what the cause. Jesus commended the church at Smyrna for their faith in the middle of suffering. He also told them that there was no need to fear the future if they stayed faithful.

If you are experiencing difficult times, don't let them turn you away from God. Instead, let them draw you toward greater faithfulness. The church at Smyrna received a completely positive message. Trust God and remember your heavenly reward. God is especially near to those who suffer for Him.

Jesus tells the church in Smyrna of more trials to come, but tells them that the "second death" will not touch them. Believers and unbelievers experience physical death and resurrection; believers are resurrected to eternal life with God, while unbelievers are resurrected to be punished with a "second death" and eternal separation from God. This is discussed in future Revelation chapters.

The message to the church of Smyrna is to remain faithful throughout suffering because God is in control and His promises are reliable. Jesus never said that by being faithful troubles would be avoided and we would not experience suffering and persecution. Rather, He told the church to be faithful to Him **IN** their sufferings. Only

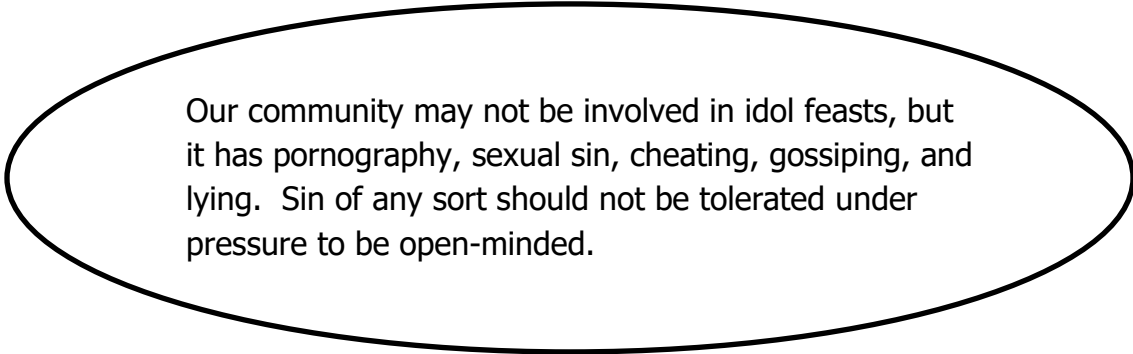
then does faith prove itself genuine. We must remain faithful by keeping our eyes on Jesus and on what He promises for us now and in the future. Read the following verses and record what you learn:

Philippians 3:13, 14:1; 2 Timothy 4:8 _____

THE CHURCH AT PERGAMUM (The lenient church)

The city of Pergamum was built on a hill a thousand feet above the surrounding countryside, creating a natural fortress. It was a sophisticated city, a center for Greek education and culture, and had a 200,000 volume library. It was the center of four cults including emperor worship and the worship of Diana. (Artemis) It rivaled Ephesus in worshipping idols. It was in Pergamum that parchment was first used for writing. The city had earlier been the capital of the Roman province of Asia.

Jesus calls the city "the place where Satan's throne is." This is probably referring to the fact that the Babylonian cult religions had moved from Babylon to Pergamum during the time of Zoroastrian rule in Babylon. The Roman and Greek religions all had close ties to this cult. There was also an altar to Zeus which was the focal point of the community and Pergamum was also a center for Satan worship. The chief god was a serpent, considered the god of healing. People came to Pergamum seeking healing by this god. Jesus commends them for remaining faithful even when Antipas was martyred. The church at Pergamum obviously refused to deny Christ even when Satan's worshippers martyred one of their members. There is room for differences of opinion among believers in some areas, but there is no room for heresy and moral impurity!



Our community may not be involved in idol feasts, but it has pornography, sexual sin, cheating, gossiping, and lying. Sin of any sort should not be tolerated under pressure to be open-minded.

It was not easy to be a Christian in Pergamum. Believers experienced great pressure to compromise or leave the faith. Nothing is known about Antipas except that he did not

compromise. He was faithful and died for his faith. Apparently, however, some in the church were tolerating those who taught or practiced what Jesus opposed. Compromise can be defined as a concession of principles. When evil is mixed with good, good is no longer pure.

DON'T ALLOW COMPROMISE TO INVADE YOUR FAITH

Jesus condemns the Pergamum church for tolerating people who are urging others to compromise. Jesus commands them to REPENT. Discuss the significance of the hidden manna and the white stone with a new name on it. _____

THE CHURCH AT THYATIRA (The compromising church)

Thyatira was an industrial town, with many trade guilds for cloth weaving, dyeing, and pottery. Lydia, Paul's first convert in Philippi, was a merchant from Thyatira (Acts 16:14). The city was secular, with no focus on a particular religion.

The believers in Thyatira were commended by Jesus for their good deeds and their improvement in love, faith, and patience. However, they were compromising by permitting a woman (Jezebel may have been her real name, or she may have been like Jezebel (1 Kings 19) who threatened the prophet Elijah and led others into sin).

This woman was apparently teaching immorality and indicating that it was not a serious matter for believers. Specifically, Jezebel was "teaching and leading astray" in two areas: sex sin and eating meat offered to idols.

Read Paul's discourse on eating meat offered to idols in 1 Corinthians 8. Discuss what this woman was doing. _____

Why is sex sin serious? Sex outside of marriage always hurts someone. It hurts God because it shows that we prefer to follow our own desires instead of God's Word. It hurts others because it violates the commitment so necessary to a relationship. It hurts us because it adversely affects our personalities.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 and record what you learn: _____

Sex sin has tremendous power to destroy families, communities, and even nations because it destroys the relationships upon which these institutions are built. God wants

to protect us from hurting ourselves and others, so we are to have no part in sex sin, ever if our culture accepts it.

In heathen temples, meat was offered to idols. The meat that wasn't burned was sold to shoppers in the temple marketplace. Paul discusses this in Corinthians. Taking meat offered to idols wasn't wrong in itself, but it could violate the principle of sensitivity toward weaker brothers and sisters who would be bothered by it. Jezebel was obviously more concerned about her selfish pleasure and freedom than the needs and concerns of others.

Jesus indicates that Jezebel was given an opportunity to change her attitude, but she refused. Obedience to Christ always involves a change of attitudes. When we are converted, a battle begins inside us as Satan tries to keep us from changing.

John records this example from Jezebel's life to show the importance of changes in attitude. Our attitudes powerfully influence our behavior. Which of your attitudes would Jesus highlight as needing change? The very things that we try to hide from God are sins that need to be confessed to Him instead. We cannot hide from Christ because He knows what is in our hearts, and He judges both motives and actions.

Christ told the believers in Thyatira to hold on to their faith and let God's Word be their guide.

We should hold tightly to the Bible to avoid many errors set forth as "deeper truths." We can do this by listening carefully to teaching and preaching in church and by reading the Bible daily.

Jesus does not ask the church in Thyatira to repent. He merely says that He asks nothing more from those who have remained faithful and promises the victorious ones that they will rule with Him and give them the Morning Star.

THE CHURCH AT SARDIS (The lifeless church)

The wealthy city of Sardis had an older section of the city on a mountain and the newer "suburbs" in the valley below. The city had a problem, not with heresy, but with spiritual death. In spite of its reputation for being alive, Sardis was called dead by Jesus. How can a church appear busy and active, but really be dead on the inside?

The church at Sardis was urged to hold on to the Christian truth they had heard when they first believed in Christ, and to get back to the basics of the faith. It is important to grow in our knowledge of the Lord, to deepen our understanding through careful study. But no matter how much we learn, we must never abandon the basic truths about Jesus. Jesus will always be God's Son, and His sacrifice for our sins is permanent. No new truth from God will ever contradict these biblical teachings.

Discuss what it means to have one's name erased from the Book of Life. What does it mean for Jesus to announce before His Father and His angels that we belong to Him? (Revelation 20:12) _____

THE CHURCH AT PHILADELPHIA (The obedient church)

Philadelphia was founded by the citizens of Pergamum. The town was a frontier area used as a gateway to the central plateau of Asia Minor. Philadelphia kept barbarians out of the region and brought in Greek culture and language.

The city was destroyed by an earthquake in 17 A.D. and aftershocks kept people so worried that most of them lived outside the city limits. The church was small, with little status or influence; however, it was faithful to God and He was pleased with them.

When we feel small or insignificant, we should remember that God wants faithfulness more than worldly success. It isn't what we accomplish so much as what we are that really counts with God.

Christians have differing gifts, abilities, experience, and maturity. God doesn't expect us all to be the same, but He does expect us to persevere in using our assets for Him. The Philadelphians are commended for their effort to obey and are encouraged to hold tightly to whatever strength they have.

You may be a new believer and feel that your faith and spiritual strength are small. Use what you have to live for Christ and God will commend you.

The faithful Philadelphians are told that Jesus will make them a pillar in the temple of His God, He will write God's Name on them, and they will be citizens in the New Jerusalem, the city of God.

It was the custom in Philadelphia to honor magistrates by placing a pillar, in his name, in one of the temples in Philadelphia. Most of those had been destroyed by the earthquake. Jesus promises the faithful in a city where buildings had been destroyed that they will be pillars in a temple that will NEVER be destroyed and in a city that is ETERNAL. This must have been a great comfort and reward for the faithful church.

THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA (The Lukewarm Church)

Laodicea was the wealthiest of the seven cities addressed in Revelation. Jesus describes the church as being "lukewarm" and said He would "spit you out of my mouth." This symbolism would have been clear to the church. The city had a problem with sufficient water supply and wells that would not accommodate the entire city's needs with ease. The Romans built an aqueduct from a hot spring about five miles away into the city. By the time the water reached the city, it was no longer hot. Instead it was lukewarm, and had dissolved minerals in it which made it additionally unpleasant to drink at lukewarm temperatures. Jesus points out to the church that they are materially rich but spiritually poor.

- ❖ **Laodicea was a famous banking center, but Jesus tells them to buy gold from Him, gold purified by fire, so that they can be truly rich.**
- ❖ **Laodicea was the "Paris" of Asia Minor, involved in the design and manufacture of clothing and renowned for dyeing processes that resulted in brilliant colors. Jesus told them to purchase white garments from Him, clean and pure, so that they wouldn't have to be naked and ashamed.**
- ❖ **Laodicea had a famous medical school that produced a powder, compressed into a tablet form, which was marketed throughout the world. When mixed with water, it became an eye salve that was especially effective in healing eye infections. Jesus told them to get medicine from Him to heal their eyes and give back their sight.**

God would discipline this lukewarm church unless they turned from their indifference toward Him. His purpose in discipline is not to punish, but to bring people back to Him.

Are you lukewarm in your devotion to God? God may discipline you to help you out of your indifference, but He uses only loving discipline. You can avoid discipline by drawing near to Him again through confession, prayer, worship, and studying His Word. The Holy Spirit can re-ignite our zeal for God when we allow Him to work in our hearts.

The Laodicean church was complacent and rich. They felt fulfilled, but didn't have Christ's presence among them. He knocked at the door of their hearts, but they were so busy enjoying worldly pleasures (money, security, material possessions) that they didn't notice He was trying to enter. The pleasures of this world can be dangerous because their temporary satisfaction makes us indifferent to God's offer of lasting satisfaction.

If you find yourself feeling indifferent to church, to God, or to the Bible, you have begun to shut God out of your life. Leave the door of your heart constantly open to God and you won't need to worry about missing His knock.

Moving from the conditions within the churches in Asia to the future of the universal church, John sees the course of coming events in a way similar to Daniel and Ezekiel. From this point on, future events and heavenly realities are in the forefront in most of the book. John begins with the vision of God and His throne in heaven.

Compare Revelation 4:1-11 with Isaiah 6:1-7 and record what you learn:

John uses the word "throne" of God in almost every chapter, for a total of 47 times out of a total of 62 times it is mentioned in the entire New Testament. Read Ezekiel 1:26-28. Compare his account of the throne of God to John's account. _____

John describes God on the throne as "jasper" and "carnelian." Unfortunately, scientific terminology in this time makes identification of precious and semi-precious stones difficult. Jasper may be the same stone as modern jasper, but it may have been green jade or green quartz, or even diamond since it was described as "clear as crystal." (21:11) Carnelian was a red stone, and is probably ruby. Sardius is also translated as Carnelian. This could be important since the first and last of the twelve precious stones in the breastplate of the High Priest (each engraved with the name of a tribe of Israel) were Sardius and Jasper.

There is a rainbow over the throne. (Compare with Ezekiel 1:28). Some believe this is meant to conceal God. Others think that the rainbow signifies the covenant that God made eternally.

Revelation 4:4 speaks of 24 elders who might be representative of the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles signifying the Old and New Testament followers of God. The names of the twelve tribes are on the gates of the New Jerusalem, and the names of the apostles are on its foundations (see Revelation 21:12, 14). Compare the song they are singing (4:11) to that of the priests in David's organization for worship and the Levites who were responsible for the music at the Temple. (1 Chronicles 24:4; 25:9-31).

The elders would represent the worship of heaven, of which that on earth is at best a copy. The thrones point to the royal state and white is the color of triumph throughout the book of Revelation.

Crowns of gold emphasize the high estate of these beings. (Greek "stephanos" meaning a wreath of victory rather than a royal crown.)

Thunder is the voice of God in several Old Testament passages and we should understand the "flashes of lightening, rumblings and peals of thunder" in that way here. (see Revelation 8:5; 11:19; 16:18).

Besides hearing the voice from the throne, there are seven lamps blazing before it. The lamps represent the sevenfold spirit of God, which may derive from Isaiah 11:2-4. Read that passage and record the seven virtues of the spirit listed there: _____

(wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, fear of the Lord, and righteousness)

It is not clear what the "sea of glass like crystal" refers to in 4:6. Some feel that it is an ocean in heaven above the firmament; others think it is a reference to the laver in Solomon's Temple which was called a "sea." (1 Kings 7:23). John is not giving an exact description, but is speaking symbolically.

Modern ideas about glass did not apply in the first century when glass was usually dark and opaque. Clear glass would have been enormously expensive if it was even available. The Koran relates that when the Queen of Sheba visited Solomon, she thought that a pavement of clear glass before his throne was water and lifted up her skirt to pass through it. This legend shows that clear glass was thought of as splendidly magnificent and suitable paving for a royal court.

The “four living creatures” are described in the middle of the throne only here, but the Lamb is so described in 5:6 and 7:17. This indicates special closeness to God; they are also attendant on God as described by “around the throne.” Many scholars think that these are the cherubim from Ezekiel 10:2, 20; however, there are differences:

- ★ **Cherubim have 4 wings; these have 6**
- ★ **Cherubim cover the throne of God; these are around it**
- ★ **Cherubim have 4 faces; these have one although each one has one face like a cherub.**

We can surmise that these are very important created beings; they constantly praise God (4:8; 5:8, 14; 7:11; 19:4). They are associated with the outpouring of the wrath of God. (6:17; 15:7).

The living creatures are described as having one face each; one like a lion, one like a calf, one like an eagle, one like a man. There is a rabbinic saying dating from 300 A.D., but possibly earlier: “the mightiest among the birds is the eagle; the mightiest among domestic animals is the bull; the mightiest among the wild beasts is the lion; the mightiest among all is man.” These forms suggest whatever is mightiest in nature.

The living beings had six wings (see Isaiah 6:2 for a description of Seraphim). Their song is also similar to that of the Seraphim in Isaiah 6:3. Read the verse and record what you learn of the song: _____

Are you lukewarm in your devotion to God? God may discipline you to help you out of your indifference, but He uses only loving discipline. You can avoid discipline by drawing near to Him again through confession, prayer, worship, and studying His Word. The Holy Spirit can re-ignite our zeal for God when we allow Him to work in our hearts.

“Whenever the living creatures give glory” seems to mean that the song is intermittent; the worship offered by the created being is invariably accompanied by that of the representatives of the people of God. God is referred to in terms of majesty (throne) and eternity (living forever and ever). The elders prostrate themselves before God, throwing their crowns before Him, expressing that God alone reigns and all other sovereignty must yield to His.

Worship (ascribe worthship) occurs literally as they intone “you are worthy.” In Revelation 4:9 the song was “glory and honor and thanks” but is now “glory, and

honor, and power.” The reason is that this is referring to creation, which is a work of power. Because of God’s will, they were created.

God is Holy. The word means primarily “separate” and this separateness includes complete purity. God is good; real power is not with evil, but with God, who is Holy. This is not a passing occurrence; God is He who was, and is, and is to come. God’s power and eternal being ensure that His holiness will triumph over all evil.

While Revelation 4 deals with John’s vision of God, the Creator. Chapter 5 deals with God, the Redeemer and the Lamb who has conquered by His death. These two chapters are key to understanding of Revelation. There are things that we don’t understand, and circumstances where we feel caught up in the evil of the world and unable to break away. The world’s inability to break free from the consequences of sin by its own power is evident around us. This chapter, with its seals that no one can break, shows us human inability. Through Jesus, the seals are opened and God’s purpose is worked out.

CHAPTER FIVE SHOWS US THE WORK OF OUR KINSMAN REDEEMER IN CARRYING OUT THE PLAN OF GOD FOR MANKIND.

Chapter five is the first of a series of seven symbolic representations plagues. In chapter five, the plague springs from the opening of seven seals; later, there are seven trumpets and seven bowls. Some Bible scholars believe that these events are successive; others believe they are simultaneous. Compare the events in this chapter to Jesus’ apocalyptic discourse (Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21). _____

John saw a scroll on (not in; the Greek is “epi”) the right hand of the one on the throne. This indicates that the scroll was on the palm and not held in the hand. A scroll was sheets of papyrus joined edge to edge until the length required for the book was reached. The papyrus sheet was thin strips of papyrus in two layers, at right angles to each other, joined with glue. The side with horizontal stripes was a better writing surface than the vertical side; usually writing was only on the horizontal side, but if space was important, writing would be on both sides. John has a scroll written on both sides—it was as full as it could be! This scroll contains the destiny of the world that we know—the deed to earth, as it were—and is sealed with seven seals. Each part of the scroll was kept in place with an individual seal and was opened one section at a time until all seven seals were opened.

Read Jeremiah 32:10-14 and discuss how a deed was sealed after redemption of land:

Revelation 5:2 announces the first of several “mighty” or “strong” angels-especially strong and apparently especially loud, since his voice penetrated heaven, earth, and under the earth! Discuss the significance of these three locations: _____

The angel was seeking someone worthy to break the seals on the book and set into motion the end of the world. Is the angel looking for someone with goodness or with legal rights? Who would have been qualified under the Law to break the seal?

No one was good enough to open the seals on the scroll—area after area is found wanting. No angel or other created being in heaven could open the scroll; no saintly man on earth was good enough; no saints in the realm of the dead were good enough; certainly no one under the earth was good enough. Even the strong angels of God were unable to open the sealed scroll.

The word used for “wept” (5:4) means noisy grief and wailing. John had been promised a look at things that would happen (4:1) but now no one was worthy to open the book.

We see elders speaking to John in this verse and again in 7:13. Other times, an angel speaks with him (17:7; 21:9; 22:6). The elder tells John to stop wailing for the Lion of the Tribe of Judah is worthy. This expression occurs only here in the Bible.

Compare to Genesis 49:9; Hebrews 7:14, 25; Revelation 22:16: _____

The “root of David” is also an expression not found in the Old Testament although the root of Jesse is mentioned. John is saying that Jesus was born of David’s line (a shoot) but that David was from Jesus’ line (a root). He also tells us that Jesus has triumphed (the word and tense used indicate that this is a final and complete victory).

When John looked to see the Lion, he saw a Lamb instead.

The word for lamb (arnion) is found twenty-nine times in Revelation and only once in the rest of the New Testament (John 21:15). When Christ is called a lamb elsewhere the word is "amnos." (John 1:29, 36; Acts 8:32; 1 Peter 1:19).

When we associated animals with nations, we think of Russia and the bear, Britain and the lion, the USA and the eagle, France and the tiger, etc. All of these animals are predators. The Kingdom of Heaven is symbolized by a lamb, and a lamb "as though slain" at that. The tense used is Greek perfect and shows that the Lamb was slain at some point in time, but that the result of His slaying continues on.

The Lamb has seven horns. In scripture, the horn symbolizes might or strength. Seven is God's number of perfection. The significance is the perfect might or strength of the lamb. The lamb also had seven eyes which represented the seven spirits of God sent into the earth. This could indicate that Jesus had the perfect fullness of the spirit (which He did, Acts 16:7) or it could mean that He is all-seeing—nothing escapes His notice.

The symbolism means the following: Jesus is from the Tribe of Judah, the line of David, is supremely powerful, all-seeing, and He has won a victory by His sacrificial death.

The Lamb took the scroll from the hand of the one on the throne. **This symbolizes both the worthiness of the Lamb and the assent of the one on the throne to His worthiness.**

Revelation 5:8-10 makes it clear that the Lamb is worthy to break the seal because He is the rightful owner of what is represented in the scroll—He has the right to break the seal because He has made the purchase—**He is the rightful owner!**

Discuss the praise in heaven that follows the acknowledgement of the worthiness of the Lamb. Discuss the utensils of this praise. For another reference of incense being the prayers of the saints, see Psalm 141:2. In heaven, the prayers of the saints are precious and are brought into the very presence of God Himself, and the bowls in which they are offered are golden. (precious)

Discuss the meaning of the new song. The Greek word is "kainos" and signifies "fresh" as opposed to "neos" which means "recent." The song extols the fact that Jesus has already died and paid the penalty for sin. He is now gathering us into His Kingdom and making us priests to reign in the future with Him. When we realize the glorious future that awaits us, we will find the strength to face present trials.

Revelation 5:11 portrays angels that encircle the throne, the living ones and the elders. They are in an important place, but not in the middle or center. The expression for their numbers is probably not intended to pinpoint a specific number, but rather intended to mean that they are very many in number.

Almost all of the qualities ascribed to Christ in 5:12 are also in other places in the New Testament:

- ❖ **power (1 Corinthians 1:24)**
- ❖ **wealth (2 Corinthians 8:9; Ephesians 3:8)**
- ❖ **wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:24)**
- ❖ **strength (Ephesians 6:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:9)**
- ❖ **honor (Hebrews 2:9; Philippians 2:11)**
- ❖ **glory (John 1:14; Hebrews 2:9)**
- ❖ **blessing or praise (Mark 11:9-10; Romans 15:29)**

Read 5:13 and record everything (everyone) who does not recognize the superior worth of the Lamb: _____

The words used in the song of 5:13 are not the same as in the preceding verse and the ones that are, appear in different order. The word for power in this verse is "kratos," but in verse 12 is "dynamos."

In the prior verse, all seven are grouped under a single article in the Greek, where in this verse, each of the four has its own article to give separate emphasis. Here, there is no mention of "worthy." These songs are the fervent outpouring of hearts full of adoration and praise for what God has done through the Lamb. God and the Lamb are linked throughout this book (6:16; 7:9, 10, 17; 14:1, 5; 21:22, 23; 22:1, 3). There is not the slightest doubt that the Lamb is with God and is God.

The four living creatures began the chorus of praise (4:8) and end it with their Amen. John does not say whether they are worshipping God or the Lamb, and there is no need to. In this passage, the two are not differentiated.

Chapters four and five proclaim in confident terms that the world's destiny is not under the control of some blind fate. We are in the hands of a loving Father and Savior who died for all of us. Christ has paid the price for the redemption of Earth and its people. He can break the seals on the scroll because He is the rightful owner of everything contained therein. He became the owner by purchasing it with His blood.

Revelation chapters four and five show in confident, vivid terms that the world's destiny is not under the control of blind fate, but in the hands of a loving Father and a Savior who died for us. In the chapters that follow, we begin to understand that Jesus died not only for salvation from sin, but for condemnation of sin. We cannot fully understand Christ's saving work apart from an element of judgment.

There is a new angle to apocalyptic writing in Revelation. Here, we are seeing the church. Specifically, in chapter six, the martyrs are singled out and chapter seven describes a great multitude of the redeemed. God is in control of the whole process being described, and God is concerned for His people. So, even though apocalyptic judgments will be loosed against all mankind, believers included, God's people do not need to be fearful.

Beginning in chapter six, we see a pattern of four, two, and one in terms of the groupings of the judgments of the seals. This same pattern will repeat with the trumpet and bowl judgments. In chapter six, the first four seals take place on earth; the next two seals take place in heaven, and the seventh seal ushers in a new segment of revelation.

The first four seals show the self-defeating character of sin. When the spirit of conquest is abroad, events take their course and sinners will inevitably be punished. This is not the whole story, and other aspects show that God is active in sending His judgment on sinful people. Chapter six shows that war, famine, and pestilence come in the wake of conquest.

WHEN JESUS OPENS THE FIRST SEAL, this is the likely point where the final week of Daniel's vision begins—the seven years of tribulation begin here. They are set into motion by the seven year treaty made with Israel that we discussed earlier.

Review the four living creatures who are calling forward the four horsemen of the apocalypse. When the scroll begins to be opened, we might have expected John to read it, or for it to be read to him. Instead, he sees visions of what is contained inside.

The first vision is of four horses with colors like those in Zechariah 6:1-3. The Zechariah horses were drawing chariots, but here they are ridden by horsemen.

The **first horse** is WHITE and his rider carries a BOW. Later, John sees another rider on a white horse who is called "the Word of God" (19:11-13), but the horse of 6:2 is a different white horse, and it is not Christ who is riding it. The rider is a victorious warrior carrying a bow and given a crown. The word for "crown" is "stephanos" (see 2:10) and is not the same as "diadema."

Stephanos means a victor's wreath, as awarded in Olympic Games. Diadema means a crown signifying royalty or kingship. White is the color of victory. The first rider went out not lonely conquering, but determined for more conquering. The expression probably indicates extreme purpose. Conquest was his entire aim. We should note that the crown **WAS GIVEN** to him. He probably thinks that his own might produced his victory, but we see here the sovereignty of God.

The conqueror has only what God allows him to have. Throughout the Bible, the bow is symbolic of military power (Isaiah 41:2; Jeremiah 49:35; 52:3, 56; Psalm 46:9; Ezekiel 39:3; Hosea 1:5; Zechariah 9:10).

A bow is even associated with God Himself when He is depicted as a triumphant warrior (Lamentations 2:4; 3:12; Habakkuk 3:9). It should be noted that the bow was not a typical Roman weapon, so it does not come from the time in which John lived. The first rider embarks on a career of conquest that unleashes bloodshed, famine, and destruction.

In 6:3, 4 the second living creature summons the second horseman. The **second rider is astride a fiery red horse**. He is given power to take peace from the earth. Again, notice the use of the wording "was given." This rider is given a large sword, but notice that the verse clearly says that the men kill one another. Some Bible scholars think that the first rider is concerned with conquest, but the second with civil war. Others believe that the second rider is a natural progression from the first: conquest breeds war. In any event, the second rider takes peace away and men do the damage to each other. The word translated "slay" in the NIV and NAS is more appropriately translated "slaughter" or "butcher."

In verses 5 and 6, the third living creature calls forth the **third horseman**. This time, the rider carries a pair of scales, which is certainly unusual for a horseman. Ezekiel speaks of eating food "by weight" (Ezekiel 4:9-10) and Leviticus 26:26 refers to doling out bread by weight. Based on the value of a denarius at the time John was writing, the shortage of food also represents about an 800% inflation rate. The word translated

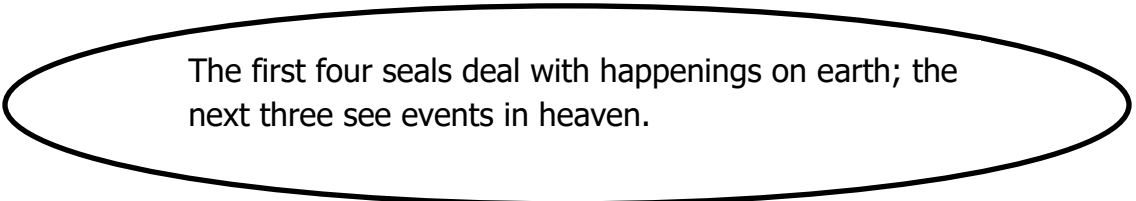
"quart" is "choenix" which was about a liter and was considered to be a daily ration of wheat. More barley could be purchased, so a man with a family might buy barley so there would be enough for dependents. About one day's wage would be spent on this ration for a working man based on the money system of John's time.

The word translated "hurt" the oil and wine is a strange word that means "cut off." It seems to indicate that there will be plenty of oil and wine, but a scarcity of bread. Some speculate that the roots of the olive trees and grapevines are deeper than the roots of annual grain crops and would not be so easily damaged by a difficult agricultural year. Others think that it means that the necessities of life for the poor will be in short supply while the luxuries of the rich will not cease. The Old Testament always links grain, oil and wine as basic needs. When one of these is harmed and the others are not, there is only a partial provision of needs. This seems to indicate that there is some sort of famine, but not yet a total disaster. Things are certainly difficult, but the end has not arrived yet.

In verses 7 and 8, the fourth living creature summons the **fourth horseman**. The horse is described as "pale." The Greek word is "chloros" (from which we get our word chlorine) and means a yellowish green. This is a very strange color for a horse! Each of the preceding riders had an emblem (bow, sword, scales). Death needed no such sign. Death and Hades are commonly linked. Again, we see that power is "given." God is supreme and we are again reminded that even death can exercise only the power God allows. The power given here is awesome. One fourth of the earth's population slain. The agents of death are similar to those in Ezekiel 14:21.

THE FIRST FOUR SEALS CHARACTERIZE EVENTS ON EARTH. THERE IS A WORLD POWER, OUTWARDLY VICTORIOUS AND EAGER FOR FRESH CONQUESTS, YET FULL OF ELEMENTS OF UNREST, DANGER, AND MISERY.

War, scarcity, pestilence, mortality, etc. are evident. These forces are set loose by the hand of Jesus to prepare the way for His coming.



The first four seals deal with happenings on earth; the next three see events in heaven.

In verse 9, John sees the souls of martyrs "under the altar." The altar of incense typifies the offering of prayer. The association with the souls of the martyrs is thought by some to indicate that the martyrs have offered up their lives as a sacrifice to God. It

is unusual to have a reference to SOULS under the altar. There are Jewish references to people buried in Israel under altars, and there are churches where saints are buried under the altar. This is a reference to "souls" and it is thought by some to indicate that the bodies of the martyrs have not yet been raptured and given a new heavenly body. Based on history, under the altar seems to be a place of privilege and safety.

Some scholars think this means that when the martyrs sacrificed themselves, the most significant part of what happened took place in heaven. The indication that they were slain for the "word of God" and the "testimony" indicates that they were committed, dedicated people who considered their testimony more important than life itself.

The martyrs address God in a loud voice calling Him "ho despotes," which translates as "Sovereign Lord." This is used of God the Father in Luke 2:29, Acts 4:24 and of Jesus in 2 Peter 2:1, Jude 4 and as either in 2 Timothy 2:21. It is the word used for a master of slaves. But, it also conveys the thought of "holy and true." The expression stresses God's goodness and reliability and acknowledges Him as sovereign. They ask God to judge and avenge them. The events of Revelation 19:2 are almost a direct answer to this prayer for justice. While the martyrs are asking for judgment, they are not seeking indiscriminate revenge; the implication is that they are requesting justice.

Many Bible scholars feel that the martyrs under the altar are the martyrs of all time. Others feel that they are martyred during the tribulation period only. People from the first school think that asking justice on the "inhabitants of the earth" is just a way of asking for justice on unregenerate mankind as a whole (3:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8; 14; 17:8). Those from the second school feel that they have recently died and are requesting revenge against specific people still living on earth. In either scenario, there is the recognition that the Christian should not pursue personal vengeance. Retribution is God's prerogative. Most scholars agree that this plea is not against individuals but a call for the reversal of the world's judgment on God's people.

In verse 11, we see white (the color of victory and purity) robes given to them. This seems to indicate that, while they appeared to have been defeated by their enemies in the world's eyes, actually they had been given the victory by God.

Some scholars believe that the white robe represents justification; the robe is given because people do not justify themselves, but are justified by God. As in verse six, there is a speech without the speaker being named, but the words are authoritative when they are told to "wait a little longer." The end will not come until the full number of martyrs is complete. This does not mean that God is counting down a specific number of dead believers; it means that He is working out His plan and that the plan will include other martyrs. The plan cannot be speeded up.

The early Christians had questions about why God doesn't punish sin immediately. Part of the answer was at the cross; however, the cross does not mean the abolition of judgment. Part of the message of the cross is that we are judged based on our attitude toward the sacrificial love of Jesus on the cross; but Jesus' death also signifies judgment of sin. Sin will be totally overthrown and there will be more martyrs during the process. However, the final destruction of evil is assured. The only question for the martyrs is how much longer until this occurs.

In verses 12-17 we find that the opening of the sixth seal brings about a variety of cosmic activities. Compare to Joel 2:31 and record what you learn here:

Apocalyptic literature typically mentions the regularity of the heavenly bodies. The end of the world is accompanied by irregularities of various kinds.

In the first century, people appear to have thought of heaven as a solid vault. Here, heaven was rolled up like a scroll and taken out of the way. On earth, mountains and islands were moved. Yet, John tells us that men are seeking a hiding place so the break-up of the cosmic system as we know it must not be totally complete.

There are seven classes of inhabitants seeking to hide themselves; kings, great men, commanders, rich, strong, slave, free. This number may indicate completeness of mankind. The emphasis is on the fact that not even the greatest will be immune. The normally secure will be without resource. They all hide themselves in caves and rocks. These people are calling to the rocks and hills and asking the mountains to fall on them, indicating that the calamity is so great that almost anything is preferable to facing it. The phrase "the wrath of the Lamb" is found only in verse 16. Whoever heard of a meek, gentle creature being angry? It is the anger of love which has been sacrificed for us and our salvation, and which says with certainty that evil awaits its doom at the hand of God.

"Orge" used in 5:16 and in 6:17; 11:18; 14:10; 16:19; 19:15 and "thymos" used in other places are translated as wrath and vengeance. There is no doubt that divine wrath is a reality in the end times.

The last day is described as the "great day of their wrath." The end times are described in terms of divine wrath! It is the day of reckoning for all evil. As in Joel

2:11, 31 and Zephaniah 1:14, 18; 2:2, "who can stand?" All of mankind will be impotent in that day.

Revelation chapter six tells us with certainty that God is over all. God is working His purposes and will do so even though it means that this world order and the whole mighty universe passes away.

"Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed, says the Lord who has compassion on you." Isaiah 54:10

After the sixth seal was opened, but before the seventh, there is an interlude. John will refer to interludes in other portions of the book. In this interlude, we find special servants of God being sealed, or placed under His special care.

This portion of the book is difficult to understand. Bible scholars differ as to whether the 144,000 persons sealed are the same as the great multitude mentioned later in the chapter. There is disagreement about whether the 144,000 are really literally Jews, or whether they represent "spiritual Jews" (Christians). There is disagreement about whether the 144,000 and the group later mentioned are the martyrs who are to be brought to completion. There is no translation of these problems for us in the book, so we must study and draw our own conclusions.

In 7:1, John saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth. This is probably a way of saying that they overshadow the whole world and none of it is beyond their control. Their function is to hold back the "four winds of the earth."

Read Zechariah 6:5 and record what you learn: _____

Some think that the four winds may be another way of referring to the four horsemen of the first four seals. Zechariah's four horses are interpreted as the "four winds of heaven." Zechariah speaks of winds of heaven stressing their subjection to God in heaven, but John refers to winds of the earth for their destructive activity in connection with the earth.

John sees another angel coming up from the east. The east is generally considered to be a source of blessing (where light originates).

- ❖ **It is from this direction that the glory come to the temple (Ezekiel 43:2);**
- ❖ **Jesus is to appear in the eastern sky; Islamic people pray facing to the east.**

The angel from the east has the "seal of the living God." A seal is a mark of ownership. It was very important in a time when people could not read. Here it indicates who belongs to God and preserves them from the destruction that will fall on others. We see God's people bearing His mark elsewhere in Revelation. Read 13:16-17; 14:9; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4 and discuss the sealing of the good and the wicked. _____

The angel who belongs to God shouts to the other four who have the ability to hurt the earth and sea.

The sealed Angel commands the other not to hurt the earth, seas, or trees until God's servants are sealed on their foreheads. The word translated servants is the Greek "doulos" and expresses freed slaves who have stayed with the master out of devotion. It is important to note the restraint of the forces of destruction until God is ready.

In 7:4, John then hears the number of those sealed (Greek "ephragismenon"). The word means "sealed permanently." It indicates that God will not go back on His choice. Twelve is regarded as the number of Israel, and many scholars believe that this is meant to represent Israel.

Some take this to mean the literal, physical Israel; some think it means those in Israel who are Christians; some think that Israel (Jewish by faith) means the church. The church is referred to as "the twelve tribes." (James 1:1; Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30)

However, these verses may be taken to mean the Jewish Christians only. The Christian appears to be the true Jew (Romans 2:29) and the church "the Israel of God."

Descriptions of old Israel began to be applied to the church and it is the church which is:

- ❖ **God's "very own" people (Titus 2:14) and**
- ❖ **"the circumcision." (Philippians 3:3)**

❖ **Abraham is the father of all who believe (Romans 4:11) and these are Abraham's children (Galatians 3:7).**

Many believe that "**Israel after the flesh**" implies there is an "**Israel after the Spirit.**" (1 Corinthians 10:18)

No wonder the view is so widespread that nobody can interpret with total certainty what John meant here. Later we will read that the New Jerusalem is the spiritual home of Christians (21:2) and that the gates of the new city have the names of the twelve tribes. There is good reason to see the reference in this verse to the church as the true Israel; but there is also good reason to see this as a literal sealing of Jews. Some think that this is a reference to martyrs who will be preserved from the four horses because they have a part to play later on.

In 7:5-8, the tribes of Israel are listed here. There are 12,000 from every tribe mentioned; except this is not really the case! The **tribe of Dan is excluded** for some reason. The tribe of Joseph has two allotments here: Joseph and Manasseh. When we see the double allotment to Joseph, we usually see it mentioned as "Ephraim and Manasseh."

Many Bible scholars believe Dan was left out because of the frequent association with idolatry. Some scholars also believe that the antichrist will be a Jew from the tribe of Dan. Read Jeremiah 8:16 and record what you learn: _____

There is no other place in scripture where the tribes of Israel are listed in this order. Note that Judah comes first.

Next, John sees a great multitude that was too large to count. This may speak against the idea that this is the 144,000 sealed earlier because those were clearly counted. This multitude comes from every nation, tribe, people, and language. The phraseology here indicates that the crowd is universal and seems to indicate that they are not from just Israel. The crowd is standing before the throne of God and in front of the Lamb (so Christ is still at the Father's side).

These redeemed are dressed in white robes. ("stolas" meaning long robes). White is the color of victory, justification and purity and these robes are the same color as those given to the martyrs under the altar. Palm branches were also emblems of triumph. This suggests to many that this great multitude are the rest of the martyrs that are mentioned in the preceding chapter that must be brought to completion. This is further supported by the indication that the Father spread His tabernacle over them. What is

really significant about these redeemed is that they are "coming out of the great tribulation."

Verse 10 clearly indicates a great multitude ascribing salvation to God and to the Lamb. They know that their salvation has come through a sovereign act of God through Christ.

As we read through 7:11, 12 it seems that when the redeemed cry out, the angels fall to their faces and worship. First they said "amen" which shows their agreement with the cry of the multitude. The angels' act of worship was called into existence by their joy at God's saving act. They then ascribe seven qualities to God. The list is the same as that in 5:12, except that "thanks" replaces "wealth."

7:13-14 reveal John and the elder conversing and discussing where the multitude is coming from. The elder explains that the multitudes are those "coming out of the great tribulation." In the Greek, the tense is present. It seems to indicate people coming out of the last seven year tribulation and not just tribulation in general. The elder further informs John that these have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Here the tense is aorist, meaning "once for all" action). The completeness of Christ's atoning death is being strongly asserted. It is on the ground of His death that people are able to stand before the throne properly clothed. The strongest indication seems to be that the multitude is composed of those Christians who are dying in the great tribulation and coming before the throne of God and not just those who are being martyred.

In verse 15, note the use of the phrase, "He who sits on the throne shall spread" which indicates something to occur in the future. The verb "skenosel" used in connection with the Tabernacle in the wilderness. (skene) It might be translated, "He will make His Shekinah to dwell with them." Shekinah is the glory of God; it means God's immediate presence; the Shekinah Glory of God filled the early tabernacle. We might have expected a present tense, but the future points to still more things to come in heaven.

7:17 pictures Jesus at the center of the throne as one who will be the shepherd of the redeemed. "Center" is the word "mesos" and is the root from which "mesites" or mediator comes. The point is that Christ, by His sacrifice, makes provision for the needs of His people. He will "lead them to springs of living water." Their state is the result of warm fellowship with Jesus and His tender concern makes complete provision for their needs.

Using your concordance, find other places where "mesites" is used of Christ: _____

After the interlude of chapter 7, the final seal is opened. It is generally agreed by Bible scholars that the first part of chapter 7 occurs before chapter 6 and the last part of chapter 7 occurs during chapters 8 and 9.

The sixth seal was opened in 6:12, so there has been quite an interval before the opening of the seventh seal.

Clearly the opening of the seventh seal is a solemn and impressive moment. It is possible that the silence is connected with the offering of the prayers of the saints just as in 7:3 certain plagues were held back until the servants of God were sealed. The saints may appear insignificant to the world, but it is clear that they matter immensely to God!

Even cataclysms are held back while saints pray. Angels who had been praising God at the end of chapter 7 are now silent while the prayers of the saints are presented to God. Silence may also indicate awe at the judgments that God is unleashing on the world.

The vision introduced by the opening of the seventh seal is one of "the seven angels who stand before God." The definite article shows that a specific seven are indicated. Jewish writings speak of the seven who "present the prayers of the saints and enter into the presence of the glory of the Holy One." (Tobit 12:15) The apocryphal book of Enoch, (1 Enoch 21:1 lists the names of the seven angels: Uriel, Raphael, Raquel, Michael, Saraquael, Gabriel, and Remiel). The "el" ending implies their close connection with God.

John refers to seven angels in other places, but after this chapter they refer to angels who had the seven bowls introducing the last seven plagues and it is unclear whether they are the same seven. Standing before God and serving God mean about the same thing. The angels are given seven trumpets. **Read Matthew 24:31; 1 Corinthians 15:52; and 1 Thessalonians 4:16 and record what you learn:** _____

Before the angels blow their trumpets, the prayers of the saints are offered. This is not an unrelated parenthesis. John means for us to see that the prayers of God's people are supremely important. Even the cataclysmic judgments which follow are held up until these prayers have been offered to God. In a way, it is these prayers that set the judgments into motion. (8:5)

Frequently, John introduces a new angel by saying "another angel." We have no way to identify this new angel, nor do we know who gave him "much incense." The incense is closely connected with the prayers of all the saints, but it is not identical with them (as it was in 5:8). It is offered "with" them which may symbolize the unity of the value of these prayers. In 8:4, we see the incense and the prayers go up before God. Note that they went from the angel's hand. Prayer is not the lonely venture it often feels like. There is heavenly assistance and our prayers reach God. It may be significant that there is an altar connected with this, for it implies that there is something sacrificial in true prayer. We should not view the angel as a mediator because angels are fellow servants (19:10; 22:9). We are Christians only because of Christ's sacrifice and all of our service and praying is to be sacrificial.

Earlier the angel had a censer for purposes of intercession; now in 8:5, he has it for purposes of judgment. After filling the censer with fire from the altar and hurling it on the earth, the result on earth was peals of thunder, flashes of lightning and an earthquake. The fire came from the very altar on which the prayers of the saints were offered. This must mean that the prayers of God's people play a necessary part in bringing in the judgments of God. What is the real master-power behind the world?

More potent than all the dark and mighty powers let loose in the world is the power of prayer set ablaze by the fire of God and cast upon the earth.

As with the seven seals, there is a distinction between the first four trumpets and the last three. The first four are concerned with forces of nature and the last three are concerned with people. The division between the four and the three is underlined by an eagle flying in mid-heaven and uttering three "woes" because of the plagues to be unleashed by the next trumpets.

The trumpet judgments are not about the church per se. They are God's judgments on a sinful world. Revelation is an account of judgment. Human wickedness does not go unnoticed in heaven. God will deal with it in His time and His way.

The seals seemed to show that judgment follows more or less inevitably on the heels of sin. These are not the final judgments; only a third is affected and this is a strong warning. The trumpet was used by the nation of Israel as a warning.

Although 8:6 does not tell us exactly how the angels prepared to blow the trumpets, but there was preparation involved.

The **first trumpet** (8:7) was a signal for widespread destruction by hail and fire. This could be a massive electrical thunderstorm or it could be something more dramatic.

Mixed with blood may give us the color (Joel 2:30) or it may indicate the kind of destruction brought about by the lightning: though the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea.”

The **second trumpet** (8:8) was something that John could not exactly describe. It is not a burning mountain, but “what I can only call a great mountain.”

8:9 tells us that the salt waters and their ships saw a destruction of one third of all marine life and all vessels on the seas. This is probably not pollution of water alone because a third of the ships were also destroyed.

8:10 tells us that the inland (fresh) waters were contaminated by the **third trumpet**. A great star, blazing like a torch, fell from heaven. Again, a third affected, but this time the rivers and springs (inland lakes).

The name of the star is revealed as “wormwood” which was a bitter, but not poisonous tree. A third of the waters became bitter, but many people died. We don’t know what this is implying but it may be something like wormwood but that is poisonous.

Interesting aside: Chernobyl is the Russian word for wormwood.

The sounding of the **fourth trumpet** was followed by effects in the heavens with the sun, moon, and stars. Read Amos 8 concerning prophecy of earthquake and eclipse. Record what you learn: _____

The proportion of one third is retained although exactly what happened is not clear. The first part seems to mean that one third of all three failed so that there was a third less light all the time. The last part seems to mean that one third of the time there was no light at all by day and by night. Regardless, the point is that one third of all light is gone.

8:13 is an interlude between the first four trumpets and the last three. John saw and heard one eagle. The eagle was in full flight in midair and proclaimed a threefold woe to the inhabitants of the earth. The **first woe** is said to be past in 9:12; the **second woe** is said to be past in 11:14. The **third woe** is not specifically mentioned. It might be the descent of Satan in 12:12. The solemn words of the eagle show that the plagues to come are worse than those already experienced. There is a deepening of intensity at this point.

THE END OF THE AGE PART 3

Prophecies from the New Testament

As with the last three seals, the last trumpets move into the spirit realm. The seal judgments were about heaven and spirituality in heaven. The trumpets are about the abyss and demons. The last trumpets are described in more detail than the first. The locust judgment is difficult to understand. The basic understanding beyond specific interpretation is that people who fail to respond to God's invitation for salvation, and who thereby oppose God and His purpose, become prey to horribly demonic forces. God is Sovereign. Even demonic forces work out His purpose. We now see people reaping the results of earlier choices—and so it is with us.

There are possibilities of evil always latent in us and we too often see them realized. However, there is more to what John is seeing than this.

“Whenever men go beyond their own humanity in committing their crimes, whenever they become so debased that they let themselves be obsessed by a force of evil greater than human nature itself could conjure up, then human sin becomes inhuman, men are the offspring of beasts, and judgment lashes the soul with its most unspeakable terrors.”

There is another thought—repentance. God uses the evil results of our sins to call us to repentance. The release of the demonic forces in one sense results from sin; but another sense, it is God's chastening. God's chastening is never aimless. When properly received, it should lead to a change in behavior. John sees God and not the demons as being in control.

Unlike the star in 8:10, in 9:1 this one has, in some sense, personality. Angels are sometimes called stars, and it seems likely that this star is a **fallen angel**. The angel was “**given**” a key. This star-angel had no independent authority to open up the abyss. The abyss (also translated bottomless pit) is a great pit that may have a narrow opening at the top but widens out farther down. The shaft is locked, but the key was given to the star. The abyss was the place where demons were bound, but the fact that God gave the key indicates that He had it under control. It is not the place of eternal punishment, for that is described as a lake of fire (20:10, 14-15). The abyss is inhabited by those hostile to God, but they are subject to His control.

Read 2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6, and Luke 8:31 and record what you learn: _____

When the shaft was opened, smoke rose up and the sun and sky (more accurately "air") was darkened. In 8:12, a third of the light was gone. There is no estimate of the effects here in 9:2. The point seems to be that there was a lot of smoke; air seems to be used as the abode of demons.

Read Ephesians 2:2 and record what you learn: _____

Compare Revelation 9:3 to Exodus 10:12-20, Joel 1:4, Joel 2:25 and Amos 7:1. Record what you learn: _____

In Revelation 9:3, we see the locusts "**were given**" power like scorpions of earth.

A command was given to the locusts, but the speaker isn't identified. Ultimately, the command must have come from God, but it is unclear who actually spoke the words. The content of the command was for the locusts not to harm vegetation. The world of demons has no power against those who have been sealed by God as belonging to Him.

Demons can exercise only the power given to them. Here, they can torment but not kill. The torture they inflicted was like that of a scorpion, which is painful, but rarely fatal. The five months may be due to the fact that a natural locust has a life span of this period.

People will be in so much pain that they will want to die. There is an interesting contrast with Paul, whose personal preference was for death, which he regarded as gain, but who accepted life. (see Philippians 1:23-26)

Revelation 9:7 tells us that the locusts were of a fearsome appearance. It is unclear whether they are a natural phenomenon of the end times under demonic control, or whether they are actual, visible demons. Note the description and discuss what natural occurrences of warfare might be described.

Discuss the armor of the locusts, their noise, and their appearance. Are they actual, visible demons or other beings under demonic control? Other options?

In Revelation 9:10, we note that John strongly switches to the present tense. Again the five month period is mentioned. The locusts are not leaderless. Unlike natural locusts, they have a king, first called the **angel of the Abyss**, but later named Abaddon and Apollyon (destroyer).

Some believe that these are other names for Satan; others believe that there is a specific angel in control of the abyss.

The eagle had announced that there would be woes; now the first is past, but more are coming. Revelation 9:12 shows that the forces of destruction loosed by the sixth trumpet are much more deadly. Whereas locusts tortured, the angel hosts kill. A third indicates a great number, but not a majority. It is a call to repentance, but John records that **NO ONE REPENTED**.

Throughout Revelation, there is an emphasis on the **refusal to repent**.

God is sending judgments, but there is a purpose of love behind them. They are to make the seriousness of sin apparent and to lead people to repentance and salvation. When people do not accept this, they should not think that they have triumphed over God; they may resist His will, but to their own damnation.

John was writing to the Christian churches. The message is that believers must live in the world, not an imaginary place where everything is perfect. We must not expect to live in a world that understands us and welcomes our witness. No matter how great the judgments of God, the world in general continues with its idolatries and sin. We must understand this world, where sinful people resist God to the maximum degree, even when they are hurt in the process.

We live in a world under judgment.

When the sixth angel blew his trumpet, (Revelation 9:13, 14) John simply heard a voice. The four angels who were bound seem to be specific angels; the fact that they have been bound indicates that they are not good angels going forward voluntarily to do God's will. They are evil and have been restrained until now. This ties in with the

general demonic orientation of this chapter. The Euphrates River is just beyond the Promised Land near the site of Babylon.

These four angels had been prepared for this very month, day, and hour.

The Old Testament frequently refers to month and year, but never hour. John is speaking of a **specific** divine plan. Again, a third of mankind dies. This is a very stern warning, but not the destruction of mankind entirely. We hear of a mighty army of horsemen, but it seems to be the horses who actually kill people.

The number of the horsemen is two hundred million. John hears this number; it is not simply a large number as in 5:11; the mighty horde was beyond counting. It is difficult to say where the troops came from—some say beyond the Euphrates; some say from the abyss.

In Revelation 9:17, John reminds us that this is all being seen in a vision. He describes breastplates of fiery red and dark blue and yellow. It is not clear whether all were tri-color or if there were some of each color. The ferocity of the horses is brought out in the comparison of their heads to heads of lions; their fearsome nature in the fact that their mouths issued fire, smoke, and sulfur.

In 9:18, notice what kills a third of mankind. _____

The fire, smoke and sulfur was killing. Discuss the appearance of these horses and what they might be. _____

In the final verses of Revelation 9, John turns his attention from the plagues to the rest of mankind.

Those not killed still did not repent!

They continued to worship false gods. From their gods, John turns to their sins. These people still did not repent of their murdering, magic acts, sexual immorality, or of stealing.

In Revelation 10, we see the second interlude. As in the case of the seals, there is an interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets. The interlude centers on a book. John is told to eat it after which he will prophesy.

John saw another angel coming down from heaven. Other perspectives have been from heaven, but now John sees them **coming down**, so he must have moved back to

earth. Until now, not much has been said about the appearance of the angels that John saw; this one is described in some detail.

Describe the appearance of the angel: _____

The angel was associated with a book (biblion). The book lay open (the perfect participle, meaning that the book is open and will remain open).

The angel put one foot on the land and one on the sea. Some see this meaning that the message in the book concerns all whether on land or sea, and is a universal message. This posture also indicates gigantic size. While Christians may feel insignificant, their faith is based on the Word of God, held in the hands of a colossal figure spanning both land and sea.

**God's Word is supremely significant. It towers
above the affairs of men.**

In Revelation 10:3-6, we see an angel, like the previous angel, crying out with a loud voice. His shout is followed by speaking of the seven thunders. John was about to write what the thunders said, but it was **forbidden**.

There are parts of God's plan that were not to be revealed.

The angel now hears a solemn oath which singles out God's eternity and His activities in creation.

The oath points out that what follows is not some panic device to which a surprised deity must resort in reaction to unexpected machinations of evil men and evil spirits. The God who created time fulfills what He planned. This angel is solemnly promising that the events of which he speaks will take place certainly and speedily.

Revelation 10:7-8 are very important verses. Read verse 7 in context with 11:15-19. The mystery being revealed is being further described in chapter 11.

Those who believe in a mid-tribulation rapture of the church combine the above verses with 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 to support their position that the rapture occurs at the 7th (last) trumpet.

TWO PROPHETS AND THE LAST TRUMPET

Revelation 11

In Chapter 11, John gives account of two witnesses who testify during the last days. He also mentions the antichrist who is not able to ultimately overcome God's plan.

The chapter is very difficult to interpret and the most diverse solutions are suggested by various commentators. It is important to read the chapters carefully and cross reference as much as possible. Some expositors feel that the witnesses and the temple referred to are literal. Some believe they are symbolic.

Symbolic approach: The spiritual temple, the church, will be preserved though it will be subjected to physical oppression as the Gentiles trample it. John already used the lampstand and explained it as referring to the churches. Thus, they take the witnesses as symbolizing the witnessing church (or part of it). The two witnesses in this scenario stand for that part of the church that is faithful. Perhaps the martyrs are in mind.

It is possible that part of the significance of the number two is that the Jewish law required the testimony of two witnesses. God provided all the witness that is required by law. The symbolic approach believes that the two witnesses testify for 3½ years because the church is present only during the first 3½ years of the tribulation period. The great city (11:8) is identified with Sodom and Egypt and Jerusalem. The symbolic approach thinks of the city as an earthly city in opposition to the heavenly city of chapters 21 and 22. It represents man in organized community and opposed to God. It is another name for the world as a worldly system.

Literal approach: This approach believes that the two witnesses are two literal men who testify with special God-given powers for a 3½ year period. Exactly where this 3½ year period fits into the 7 year tribulation period varies with commentators. **Some believe the two witnesses are Moses and Elijah** because of the qualities that describe them and because they are the two who appeared with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. Some argue that they are **Elijah and Enoch** because of the scripture indicating that "it is allotted to man once to die" and Elijah and Enoch are the only men mentioned in the Bible who did not die—their lives may have been preserved so that they could testify during this critical period before their deaths. It should be noted here that God is capable of making exceptions and the scripture quoted was probably meant to refute reincarnation. Certainly, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, but he is not still living today.

As we go through the verses, we will try to call out key words and summarize from both points of view.

Revelation 11:1-3:

They **symbolic point of view** believes that the temple (here “naos”) is the church; the outer court is symbolic of those who did not accept Christ (verse 2) and trampled by the world.

The **literal point of view** believes that the temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem prior to the tribulation period and this is a literal temple.

There are some combination points of view that believe various other things—the words are literal, but the temple is in heaven and the court is on earth—the temple is redefined as the body of believers, etc. Cross reference to Zechariah 6:12 regarding Jesus rebuilding the temple during the millennium. Record what you learn: _____

Cross reference also to Ezekiel 40, where he has a vision of the millennial temple (the dimensions do not match Solomon’s temple, the temple of Zerubbabel in Nehemiah’s time, nor the Herodian additions to it. Note that he is also ascribing measurements being taken). Record what you learn: _____

Cross reference to Daniel 9:27. It is hard to justify this verse if the temple is not literally rebuilt. One possibility is that the sacrifice being offered is literally Christians offering themselves (Romans 12:1). Read Isaiah 66:20 regarding the gathering of the brethren from all nations to Israel as a “grain offering to the Lord.” In this way, the verse from Daniel can also be taken symbolically.

There is a lot of disagreement among Christians as to whether an actual temple will be built and stand during the tribulation period or whether it will be built during the millennium or whether references are symbolic. Cross reference to Revelation 11:19 and record what you learn: _____

Revelation 11:4-7:

The **symbolic translation** believes that the two witnesses are the “two lampstands” representing churches from Revelation 1:20. These are the two faithful churches and they are witnessing for 3½ years of the tribulation, then falling under severe persecution at the 5th and 6th trumpets, and then being raptured at the 7th trumpet.

The **literal translation** believes that the two witnesses are two literal men. Cross reference to Zechariah 4:3 regarding two witnesses. These men are described as having the same powers earlier given by God to Moses and Elijah (1 Kings 17:1; Exodus 7:20).

Revelation 11:8-10:

The **symbolic translation** believes that the dead of the church will be in the wicked world (Sodom, Egypt, Jerusalem—representing wicked world systems).

The **literal translation** believes that the witnesses will literally be killed in Jerusalem which is symbolically also called Sodom and Egypt because it has become a dwelling place for many apostate religions in the later days.

The **literal translation** believes in the literal resurrection of the two human witnesses.

The **symbolic translation** believes that this resurrection is of the dead as described in the verse on the rapture that we looked at last week. This is happening simultaneously with the seventh trumpet being blown and the rapture of the church.

Those who believe that there are two literal witnesses are generally divided into two camps:

- 1. Those who believe that the witnesses are restored to life at this time and raptured, but the rapture of the church has either already occurred or will occur at the end of the 7 years.**
- 2. Those who believe that the witnesses are restored to life and raptured, and the church is raptured immediately thereafter (or simultaneously) at the 7th (last) trumpet.**

Therefore, these witnesses are seen by various points of view as testifying during the first 3½ years of the tribulation, the second 3½ years of the tribulation, or during some overlapping of the two periods.

Read Revelation 10:7 and 11:15. Notice that the two are separated by the interlude describing the two witnesses.

Revelation 12, 13

Chapter twelve begins a series of visions shown to John that start with Israel before Christ and conclude with the harvesting of the earth during the tribulation period. The visions are as follows:

- 1. Woman clothed with the Sun (12:1-6)**
- 2. Satan cast out (12:7-12)**
- 3. War between Satan, the Woman, and her Son (12:13-17)**
- 4. The Beast from the sea (13:1-10)**
- 5. The Beast from the earth (13:11-18)**
- 6. The Lamb on the Mount of Zion (14:1-5)**
- 7. The harvest of the earth**

These events do not necessarily fall into line chronologically at this point in the text. Some of them happened many, many years ago, and some have not yet happened. These seven visions are an overview of the drama that has been played out over the years, that is finally concluding during the tribulation period at the second coming of Jesus.

REVELATION 12:1-6 THE WOMAN CLOTHED WITH THE SUN

The word for "sign" here is "semeion" which is used often in the gospel of Mark when referring to Jesus' miracles. The action John is describing seems to take place on earth but he sees the actors in the sky. There is a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. The symbolism likely refers to Israel, with the twelve stars representing the twelve tribes.

Compare to Joseph's dream in Genesis 37:9. Record what you learn: _____

Many scholars believe that the moon as reflected light represents Israel before Christ and then the sun, or direct light, represents Israel and/or the church after Christ.

The idea of Israel as the travailing woman is used in other places in scripture. (Isaiah 66:7-8; Micah 4:1-10 and 5:3). Most important is the symbolism in Isaiah 26:17-18. The old Israel could not bring salvation to the earth. This was accomplished by Jesus. John used the Greek present tense for "cries" and the participles of "travailing" and being in pain. (the latter phrase is usually used not of childbirth, but of torture). For early Christians, there was an important continuity between Israel and the church.

Here the woman is probably Israel, giving birth to the Messiah; but later, she may be the church, persecuted for her faith.

The second sign in the sky is an **enormous red dragon**. Most scholars believe that this is Satan. Pharaoh is called a dragon (Ezekiel 29:3; 32:2) and there is a lot of symbolism associated with Egypt in Revelation. The language about the plagues is behind many of the trouble introduced by the seven trumpets. The great city is Sodom and "Egypt" (11:8). By contrast, the song of deliverance is the song of Moses, who delivered the people from Egypt and the song of the Lamb (15:3). Egypt stands for what is evil, especially the bondage and persecution of God's people.

There are other Old Testament passages where referral is made to the dragon in connection with evil beings such as Leviathan or Rahab (Job 26:12-13; Psalm 74:13-14; Isaiah 27:1; 51:9). Those versed in Old Testament scriptures will understand that the term "dragon" is associated with an evil being.

The dragon is red, as is the beast on whom the great whore sits (17:3-4). The red dragon is a fearsome being with seven heads and ten horns. The horn is a symbol of strength (see Daniel) and the ten horns point to the power of the dragon. Reread Daniel 7:7, 24. Record your thoughts: _____

We cannot overlook the fact that the beast, Satan's henchman, has seven heads and ten horns (13:1; 17:3), and is red (17:3). The evil we see on earth seems to be made in the image of Satan.

The crowns on the dragon's head are crowns of royalty, "diademata" and not laurels of victory, "stephanos." John pictures Satan as immensely powerful and exercising sovereignty—or at least claiming it.

The dragon's tail dragged a third of the stars out of the sky and threw them to the earth. As with the trumpet judgments, a third denotes significance, but not majority. We are probably seeing a third of the angels fall with Satan. However, the primary interest is in devouring the child about to be born. Satan was hostile to Jesus from birth. Read Matthew 2:13-18 and record what you learn: _____

The woman gave birth to a "male" son, the adjective putting emphasis on the sex.

Do a word study on the word "rule" in 12:5. Record your results here: _____

The verb translated to "rule" is literally "to shepherd." Who snatched up the child to heaven John does not say; also he does not say how it was done without the dragon being able to prevent it. John merely points out that the **Son was protected from Satan's destruction.** The sovereignty is further indicated by the reference to the throne.

No details are given between the birth and resurrection of Christ. The purpose is to show the hope for believers, and not the entire life history of Jesus. Satan tried to destroy Christ, but did not succeed.

The woman fled into the desert which is more appropriately translated "wilderness." She was thus protected from the dragon just as was her Son. The woman's place was prepared for her by God. Jesus Himself predicts the flight. Read Matthew 24:20 and record what you learn: _____

In the wilderness the woman stays for 3½ years and the manner of statement is exactly like that in 11:2 where the time is given for the two witnesses.

REVELATION 12:7-12 SATAN CAST OUT

This little vision shows that we are caught up in a wider conflict than the one we see. The thought is not quite the same as wrestling "against spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms." Rather, John is speaking of spiritual battles between angelic beings. Michael is the leader of the heavenly hosts; he is described as an archangel in Jude 9. He is apparently a fighting angel (Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1 and Jude 9). His enemies, the dragon's helpers, are also angels, but fallen angels/demons.

The result of the battle is the defeat of the dragon and his angels so that they lost their place in heaven. He had been the accuser of God's people (Job 1:6-9; 2:1-6; Zechariah 3:1). Satan is fully described in Revelation 12:9 as "the devil" which means slanderer, and Satan, which means "destroyer."

The name would have made a strong impact in the first century when there were paid informers called "celators" who accused Christians before authorities. Specifically, this passage tells us that Satan was cast "to the earth."

John hears yet another loud voice and the speaker is not named, but the plural “our” shows that it comes from a group. “Our brothers” leads some to conclude that they are not angels speaking. The reason for the song of triumph is that Satan has been overthrown; the picture is of hostility on the part of Satan and triumph on the part of God.

Satan had argued the sins of the brothers in the highest court, but he was overthrown and became powerless to ultimately harm Christians. It can be said that the brothers overcame him, but not alone. They overcame “by the blood of the Lamb.”

What the Lamb has done avails for His believers; the redeemed bear witness to the Redeemer. To give way in the face of persecution is to fall away from Christ and lose everything, but to stand firm means final victory over Satan. The terminology clearly implies that John has the martyrs in mind.

While the rejoicing is called for from the inhabitants of heaven, it is plain that we can rejoice too. **Our**, citizenship is in heaven. Although we suffer trouble on earth, we are assured that triumph is ultimately ours. Satan is doing all the harm he can while he can because he will not be able to do so for much longer.

REVELATION 12:15-17 WAR BETWEEN SATAN AND THE WOMAN

This vision develops the theme of the persistent hostility Satan shows to the people of God. Since Jesus is safe from his hostility, Satan turns his attention to Israel and the church. The war in heaven seems to be an attempt to destroy Jesus. Unable to do this, the dragon turns his attention to Israel. The persecution of the church is not primarily of human origin; it is Satan’s reaction to his defeat in heaven. Since his activity must now be confined to earth, he lashes out at those associated with his conqueror.

The woman is given the wings of the great eagle to flee to the wilderness to a place prepared for her. This same terminology is used of Israel’s flight from Egypt. (Exodus 19:4; Deuteronomy 32:11; Isaiah 40:31).

God provides for the woman for 42 months (note the 42 stages of wilderness wanderings Numbers 33:5). During this period, the woman is secure in hiding and inaccessible to Satan in some way.

The woman found an unexpected ally in the earth, which swallowed up the river emitted by the dragon. God uses His creation to help His people. Since the woman’s son was not vulnerable to attack, the dragon vents his rage on the remainder of her

offspring—the Christians. He is not able to accomplish his purpose against God and therefore, he does what he can in opposing God's people.

As Revelation chapter 13 opens, we see the dragon standing on the shore of the sea. The sea is usually symbolic of peoples (Daniel 7:2, 3; Revelation 17:1, 15).

The beast in Revelation refers to an antichrist, the earthly head of an evil kingdom as well as a supernatural spirit out of the abyss.

Beasts as symbols mean either a kingdom or a king, as well as supernatural powers which control the kingdom.

Who is the beast? We don't know and won't until he is revealed by making a covenant with Israel for seven years (Daniel 9:27).

Where does he come from? Daniel helps answer this question. See Daniel 2:31-44; Daniel 7:23-25; Daniel 7:7, 8. It seems that the beast comes from part of a revived Roman Empire of some sort, but comes on the scene after the empire is already in place.

Sensational writings that try to predict the antichrist cause confusion and guessing is better left out. The purpose of Daniel 8 compared to Daniel 7 seems to be to narrow down the geographic origins of the antichrist from the ten kingdoms of the revived Roman Empire to four of them. Many interpret the passages from Daniel to mean that the antichrist will come from Syria, Greece, Turkey, or Egypt.

How long will he reign? He will reign over one of the ten kingdoms from the beginning of the last 7 years, but over all ten kingdoms only the last three and a half years. (Revelation 13:5; Daniel 7:25; 12:7).

In the last 3½ years he will exalt himself above all gods (Revelation 13:4-18; Daniel 8:25; 11:36-45; 2 Thessalonians 2:4).

Where will he reign? The last 3½ years will be in Jerusalem (2 Thessalonians 2:4). Only when the antichrist becomes head of the ten kingdoms by the middle of the week will he set up a central throne.

Where does he get his power? From Satan and by consent of the other kings; but God must permit Satan and his agents to give their power to the beast (Daniel 8:24; 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12; Revelation 13:1, 2).

As we read Revelation 13, we are struck by the fact that Satan has set up a fake trinity. He has always wanted to have the place of the Father. Now, he has set up a fake

(anti) christ and a fake holy spirit. (Revelation 13:11-18). As you read through Revelation 13, write the roles of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and compare them to the roles of the false trinity that Satan will establish in the end times: _____

THE 144,000 AND THE FINAL PLAGUES Revelation 14, 15

While chapter 13 deals with forces of evil, chapter 14 turns to the triumph of the Lamb.

In verse 1, John sees 144,000 (12,000 from each tribe) with names written on their foreheads. These contrast with the followers of the beast who have his name on their foreheads or right hand. Mount Zion is sometimes associated with deliverance. Read Joel 2:32 and record what you learn: _____

God's people are finally triumphant.

Some believe earthly Zion is referred to, in which case the reference is to the millennial reign. It is interesting to notice that the Lamb stands on a mountain, whereas the beast stood only on the sands of the shore. Notice that the 144,000 were sealed and now 144,000 are with the Lamb; not one that Jesus sealed was lost.

In Revelation 14:2, John hears an unidentified voice from heaven. The voice was impressive, described with a threefold simile:

roar of rushing waters
peal of loud thunder
harpists playing

The voice was loud, melodious, and pleasing.

In verse 3, the new song is identified, as sung before the throne, so presumably before God and the Father. We do not understand why only the 144,000 could learn the song, but since they are redeemed from the earth, there seems to be some connection. Without the experience of redemption, perhaps the song could not be learned.

Revelation 13:4 refers to the fact that the 144,000 did not defile themselves with women.

This is surprising if the 144,000 is taken to mean the whole church, both men and women; it is also surprising because the New Testament does not regard proper sexual relations as defiling. The most the New Testament writers imply is that there are some areas of service that may be better carried out by the unmarried. Some suggest that the 144,000 had no improper sexual relations, some that they were virgins. Perhaps the reference to virginity is used as symbolism. Virginity is ascribed to the people of God in the Old Testament. Read 2 Kings 19:21; Jeremiah 18:13; Lamentations 2:13 and record what you learn: _____

Unfaithfulness to God is like improper sexual relations (Ezekiel 16; Hosea 5:4).

Paul also described the church as the bride of Christ saying, **"I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him."** (2 Corinthians 11:2).

Later the bride, the wife of the Lamb, is presented. The marriage is at a future time, so the bride must be kept chaste. The symbolism probably means that the 144,000 were not unfaithful to the Lord; they glorified God in their bodies. (1 Corinthians 6:20).

The second point about the redeemed is that they follow the Lamb wherever He goes. They cannot and do not lay down the place of service; the Lamb leads and they follow.

The third point is that they were purchased from among men as first fruits.

(The correct translation is not offered). From among men means that they no longer belong to the world. First fruits were the first part of the harvest and were holy in a special sense; they could not be used in ordinary secular use because they belonged to

God. Read Exodus 23:19; Nehemiah 10:35; and Proverbs 3:9 and record what you learn: _____

Obviously, the point of belonging to God is primary. James sees the church as a "kind of first fruits of all He created," (James 1:18) and it must be something like that John has in mind.

The church belongs to God; her calling is consecrated to Him.

Revelation 14:5 indicates that truthfulness is a characteristic of the church: "no lie" is found with them. These are summed up as blameless, even rejecting the lie of the antichrist.

REVELATION 14 THE HARVEST OF THE EARTH

This is the final of the seven signs. In itself, it is sevenfold. Seven angels either proclaim judgment or take part in bringing it to pass. The final scene ends in a terrible picture of the earth covered in blood. We can consider the messages from the three angels and the voice from heaven as an interlude between the sixth and seventh signs, just as the interludes between the sixth and seventh seals and trumpets.

As three angels in succession proclaim judgment, the saints are assured once more that the triumph of evil will be short-lived. God is bringing judgment on evil in His time.

Revelation 14:6 refers to "another angel" and it is hard to determine where a first angel occurred in this sequence. This angel proclaims the eternal gospel. This is the only reference to the gospel in the book of Revelation.

Compare this with Mark 13:10 and record what you learn: _____

This is the last appeal for repentance for those who are about to be judged. "Eternal" points to a message that is permanently valid; the phrases "those who live on the earth" and "every nation" show the universality of the gospel.

The angel in a loud voice speaking to all mankind, calling on them to fear God. The angel's message is not negative; he calls on people to give glory to God.

In verse 8, a second angel announces that Babylon has fallen. The aorist tense marks completed action. There is the feeling of imminence and certainty. There is absolutely no doubt.

This is the first of several mentions of Babylon (16:19; 17:5; 18:2; 10, 21). In every case, Babylon is referred to as "great." The first time the Bible mentions Babylon (Genesis 11:9) we find that after the flood, people tried to reach to heaven by building a tower; thus Babylon stands for the pride of mankind and for the heathen city-empire.

Babylon is a great city and the symbol of mankind together opposed to the things of God. John is looking forward to the overthrow of all evil that Babylon stands for, especially the perverted religious activities. The reason for her fall is that she has been a bad influence, corrupting them with her evil ways, and this has brought down the wrath of God on the nations.

In verses 9 and 10, a third angel speaks, also with a loud voice. He is addressing those who worship the beast and his image and bear his mark. These will face divine wrath. John uses both "thymos" meaning fury, and "orge" meaning anger. Besides here, "thymos" is used of divine anger only once. It is the more vivid of the two words and occurs often in Revelation.

The wine of God's wrath is poured out full strength. The word for poured really means "mixed" and was used for preparing wine for drinking by mixing with spices, water, or other additives. It is John's way of saying the wrath is mixed, but not diluted; there is no mitigation; the effect is torment with burning sulfur.

Here on earth, sinners may rejoice over evil deeds; in hell they suffer for them.

This takes place in the "presence of the holy angels and the Lamb." Christians who suffered for their faith did so in the presence of onlookers; ultimately these tormentors are punished in the presence of more impressive spectators.

Revelation 14:11 further pictures the torment from verse 10 as eternal. These have no rest "day or night." They contrast with the four living ones who worship unceasingly (4:8). John spells out the identity of the sufferers, "those who worship the beast and his image and anyone who receives the mark of his name." John is not gloating over the suffering of the wicked. He has a serious purpose. People must deal with ultimate reality.

It is these realities that sustain the people of God (verse 12). They must pass through trouble, but these are temporary where those of the wicked are eternal. Such values lead to peace.

A SHORT INTERLUDE: THE DEAD WHO DIE IN THE LORD (14:13)

This is a little interlude that details the blessedness of those who die in Christ. Our natural tendency is to think of Revelation 8:3-5. This may be in mind here. John sees the judgment as God's final answer to the prayers of the saints. This angel has "charge of the fire," an unusual expression. This is also associated with judgment, but also with the altar of incense. The angel is commanded to gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine, adding that they are ripe. The word for sickle is "drepanon" which also means "pruning knife."

Cross reference to Joel 3:13 and record what you learn: _____

In 14:19, the angel obeys and reaps the earth, hurling what he gathers into the "great winepress of God's wrath" in a vivid description of the judgment of the wicked.

Verse 20 does not specify who treads the winepress nor the city where it takes place.

Cross reference to Isaiah 63:3 and Hebrews 13:12 and record what you learn: _____

The concern is to show that mankind is destroyed.

Chapter 15 of Revelation deals with the introduction of the final seven plagues, known as the "bowl judgments."

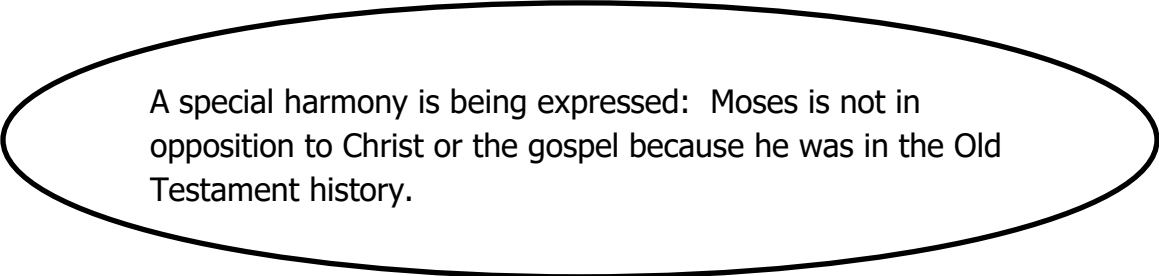
The book of Revelation takes us through God's judgments. There have been seven seals and seven trumpets. Now we begin with imagery of seven angels pouring out contents of seven bowls. This time there is clear knowledge of finality. Chapter 5 was an introduction to the seals; chapter 8:1-5 was an introduction to the trumpets Chapter 15 is an introduction to the bowl judgments.

Revelation 15:1 opens with a sign described as "great and marvelous." No other sign is described in this way. The word for plague is general, from a root meaning "blow" or "stroke," it has come to mean misfortune. There is an air of finality. In verse 2, John's understatement again begins as he sees what is "like" a sea of glass, mixed with fire.

The fire may be meaning that the context deals with wrath or judgment. The red glow on the sea spoke of the fire through which the martyrs passed and more about the wrath that was coming on all of the world. **This is a heavenly red sea!**

Those who had obtained victory triumphed over the beast. Real victory is not to live in safety, carefully preserving life. Real victory is to face the worst that evil can do, and triumph over it, even if such faithfulness leads to death.

These triumphant ones stand on or by (Greek "epi" can mean either) the glassy sea and are given harps (by God); these victors enjoy their triumph because of what God has done for them. In verse 3, they sing the song of Moses and the Lamb.



A special harmony is being expressed: Moses is not in opposition to Christ or the gospel because he was in the Old Testament history.

Paul spoke of the law as bringing us to Christ (Galatians 3:24). Moses is a "servant of God"—a theme prevalent in prophecy, particularly Isaiah. Exodus imagery comes to mind because of the deliverance under Moses and its relationship to that completed by the Lamb. The words "the song of" are repeated and some exegetes understand this to mean two songs; one the song of Moses (see Exodus 15) and the other the song of the Lamb. Most commentators think there is one song with both names.

The song is made up of almost all Old Testament expressions, showing parallelism characteristic of Hebrew poetry. It calls God's words "great and marvelous." (Psalm 92:5; 139:14). The inhabitants of the world have wondered at the beast and his powers. In reality, God is wonderful and powerful, and is thus hailed as Lord God Almighty. His power is incomparable.

From power, the description moves to justice, showing God's ways as "just and true." (1 John 1:6). God is called King of the ages (or nations). The number of times God's sovereignty is mentioned implies its exceeding importance in these days. In verse 4, the view of God's greatness leads to the question. The name represents all of God. There are three statements ending with "for."

❖ **The first declares God to be "holy." The word is "hosios" used only here and in 16:5 in all Revelation. It means perfect purity.**

- ❖ **The second statement predicts that all nations will worship before God.**
- ❖ **The third concerns God's "dikaiomata." Many translate this as righteous acts but better might be "righteous judgments." The word implies legal acts and here it relates to judicial sentences of God on the nations by way of mercy or condemnation.**

In the end, God's judicial sentences will be known by everyone.

The song is sung by the victors; there is no word about themselves or how they overcame. All of their attention is fixed on Christ. Heaven is heaven because all self and self-importance are lost in the presence of the greatness and glory of God.

In Revelation 15:5, the "temple of the tent of witness" is an expression found only here, but the Greek is a translation of the Old Testament "tent of meeting," or tabernacle.

In verse 6, the sanctuary is opened and there come out the seven angels with seven plagues. These must be seen as having the full knowledge and authority of God because they come from the Holy of Holies.

It is unusual for the appearance of angels to be described in Revelation, so we must note this: they are clothed in "clean, shining linen."

The word for linen (linon) is not for a garment, and some believe it is a variant of "lithon" which means stone. This is possible in the sense in which the king of Tyre is described "every precious stone adorned you." (Ezekiel 28:13). Since the variation of "linon" is sometimes used for clothing this seems a better translation. The angels have gold sashes around their chests. A gold sash around the chest was worn by the high priests (who could go into the Holy of Holies) and by Jesus (our high priest). The sash is probably meant to mean that they can be in the presence of God. They appear spotless.

Those pouring out the wrath of God on the world are concerned with the rightness of their judgment. The judgments are not poured out with evil passion, but by messengers who are pure and from the very presence of God.

In verse 7, the bowls are given to the angels by one of the four living beings by the throne of God. This also shows that the plagues have divine sanctions. God, who lives forever and ever, contrasts with those receiving the plagues, who are "in time." The Greek for bowls is "phialas," the same word used of the container holding the prayers

of the saints (5:8) and it is not impossible that they are connected. Revelation points out the fact that the prayers of God's people are important and may initiate divine judgments.

The last verse of chapter 15 indicates that the temple was filled with the smoke of the glory of God (see Exodus 40:34; 1 Kings 8:20; Isaiah 6:4; Ezekiel 10:4; 44:4).

At this solemn moment, God's glory is especially manifested. With glory there is linked His power, which is obvious in this book filled with the might of the Lord.

John tells us that nobody "could enter the temple" (i.e. the sanctuary) until the seven plagues were completed.

He does not say that the smoke brought this about, though this may be the case. The main point is the inevitability of the plagues. When God's good time has come, nothing can stop His final judgment.

THE PROSTITUTE; THE SCARLET ANIMAL Revelation 16, 17

In chapter sixteen, the angels proceed to pour out their bowls on the earth, thus releasing the seven last plagues. These are described more succinctly than the other judgments; the first four relate to nature; an interlude between the sixth and seventh bowls is also similar.

There are some resemblances to the plagues of Egypt, just as there was with the trumpet judgments. There are also differences: the fourth is new; the rest are a new presentation. No suffering occurs in men as a result of the first five Egyptian plagues or by the first four trumpet visitations. Man is involved at the very beginning of this cycle. These judgments are not partial or tentative; they are punitive and decisive.

In Revelation 16:1, John hears a voice which he does not identify except to call it **LOUD**. The adjective precedes the noun in the Greek (usually it follows the noun) so there is emphasis on LOUD! The voice is from the temple, and so associated with God, whose voice it may be since no one could go into the sanctuary until these judgments were completed (15:8). This seems to exclude angels and others. If so, this must mean that the last plagues are released by God Himself.

The first angel went (Greek "apelthen" which means "went away") which seems to mean that they poured out their bowls and then disappeared from the scene. The first plague caused ugly and painful sores on those who had the mark of the beast or

worshipped his image. There are some evils that afflict those who give themselves over to wickedness but do not affect other people.

The second angel poured his bowl on the sea which turned to blood "like that of a dead man." Compare with Exodus 7:17-21: _____

In the Greek, "like" precedes dead man, not blood; the word order is unusual. When the second trumpet was blown, something "like a mountain" was hurled into the sea and a third of the water became blood. Here there is no partial involvement; everything in the sea dies—expressed very unusually: "every living soul in the sea."

When the third trumpet was blown, the fresh waters were affected; this is the case with the third bowl. Here is an intensification. With the trumpet, one third were affected; now all are involved. Without water to drink, there is no future for the human race.

In Revelation 16:5, the term "angel of the waters" appears nowhere else. Jews believed angels to be responsible for specific areas of the universe. Jews would probably not be surprised by the expression. 1 Enoch 66:2, an apocryphal book, mentions "angels in charge of the waters."

This angel speaks of God as just and judging. The bowls are not arbitrary actions, but solemn judgment. God is described eternally; there is no "who is to come" for the consummation has arrived.

The "punishment fits the crime" theme is explicit in 16:6. These sinners shed the blood of the saints and prophets, and are given blood to drink. Those who shed the blood of Christians find themselves fighting one another and consequently shedding their own blood. The forces of evil are not a united front (17:16). There are hatreds and divisions among its members. "As they deserve" puts emphasis on justice.

Revelation 16:7 is the only place in Revelation where the altar is said to speak, although there was a voice from its horns. (9:13). The altar is connected with the prayers of the saints (8:3) which introduce the judgments of God (8:5). The angel who commanded that the earth be reaped came from the altar (14:18). Now the altar interjects its agreement with the angel.

The fourth angel poured his bowl on the sun. There is no independent power in the sun; God gives it the power to scorch people. Previously, there have been signs in the sun restricting it in some way. This time, the sun becomes so fierce that people are scorched with fire. (contrast 7:16).

“Seared by the intense heat” emphasizes the effect. But, sinners cursed God’s name and **did not repent**.

THERE IS NOW A CHANGE. The first four bowls relate to nature: land, sea, rivers, springs, and the sun. The last three are political and take us to the powers of evil.

The fifth angel attacked the beast’s citadel—his throne—with curious results: the beast’s kingdom was “plunged into darkness.” Compare with Exodus 10:21-23:

The beast’s followers “gnawed their tongues in agony.” This is similar to the fifth trumpet where smoke came from the abyss and darkened the sun and locusts tortured people.

Read Revelation 16:11 and record the response of the people: _____

Sinners again react wrongly, blaspheming God. People did not recognize the majesty of heaven when they saw it, but were preoccupied with pain. Ulcers are singled out.

Again, people do not repent.

**More is said about the sixth bowl than any of
the first five; it prepares the way for the end.**

The sixth angel pours his bowl on the Euphrates River, mentioned in the sixth trumpet with regard to four angels bound there. The Euphrates dried to make way for the kings from the East. A mighty act of God is frequently associated with drying up of waters (Red Sea, Exodus 14:21; the Jordan, Joshua 3:16-17; Isaiah 11:15; Jeremiah 51:36; Zechariah 10:11). When Cyrus captured Babylon, he marched into the city across the drained bed of the Euphrates. A new Babylon is soon to be destroyed, and the drying of the river marks the removal of the last obstacle.

The Euphrates was the boundary of the Roman Empire; for Christians of John’s time, the area beyond was unknown. John is suggesting that in the end, all the fears of what was “beyond” will be realized. After indicating that the way is cleared, John does not actually say that the kings used them.

In Revelation 16:13-16, John now sees three evil spirits come from the mouth of the dragon, the beast and false prophet. The dirty spirits are like frogs. Compare with Exodus 8:3: _____

Frogs have evil as well as magical associations. Their spirits are like the "lying spirit" who was to entice Ahab into battle (1 Kings 22:21). Instead of enticing one man, they enticed the world.

These demonic spirits work miraculous signs, with meaning. They go to the kings of the world and their influence is exerted on rulers. This doesn't bring about the day of "rulers of this world" or "evil spirits," but the **GREAT DAY OF GOD ALMIGHTY!** Read 2 Peter 3:12: _____

The story of the bowls is interrupted by the warning that a ready man would "have his clothes with him." This seems to imply that the fate from which he is kept is of walking naked and his shame being seen. Elsewhere garments stand for God's sentence of justification. We would not be God's people without them. Believers caught unprepared will be ashamed at a critical time.

The dirty spirits gather the kings of earth to Armageddon. This is a Hebrew word, most believed to be from "harmigiddo" or the "city of Megiddo."

Many biblical events happened on the plain of Esraelon. Mountain of Megiddo might be a closer translation, and Old Testament verses look for an ultimate battle near mountains (Ezekiel 39:1, Daniel 11:45) but there are no mountains near Megiddo although it is situated on a great mound.

The climax comes with the seventh bowl. This speaks of utter destruction. It does not say all people will be killed, but this bowl completes the fragmentation of life.

In Revelation 16:17-21, the seventh angel poured his bowl on the air, which was held to be the abode of demons (9:2). The evil spirits are being attacked in their own element. John heard another loud voice coming from the temple and throne, saying, **"it is done."**

This announcement caused excitement as after the seventh trumpet (11:19). There is an earthquake greater than any other.

The great city may stand for civilized man, ordering affairs apart from God, symbolizing the pride of human achievement and the vanity of putting trust in man. The city is shattered into thirds and God visits wrath on the city. There is no doubt that Babylon will receive the worst possible judgment from God.

John describes what happened as a result of the splitting of the city. The mountains disappeared and islands fled away.

Compare with Zechariah 14:10 and record what you learn: _____

A great hailstorm (45-100 pounds) occurs next.

Again, the people blasphemed God.

As chapter 17 opens, the focus shifts to the triumph of God over His enemies. Until now, the emphasis has been on God's sovereignty. Here the focus is the end time, the overthrow of evil. God casts down each stronghold, and the wicked are judged.

God is completely triumphant.

The Judgment of the great whore: The chapter opens with a description of this prostitute, identified with Babylon; she is translated in many ways: organized man apart from God polluted religion men separated from God by unholy practices. The woman is clearly of earthly splendor, but evil and opposed to God's people. The chapter introduces the judgment of the prostitute that is seen in the next chapter. Sexual promiscuity in the Old Testament is used in more than one way. People of God are seen as His bride so unfaithfulness is likened to adultery (Jeremiah 3:9; Ezekiel 16:32). The prophets sometimes think of this as habitual and mercenary. Isaiah said, "see how the faithful city has become a harlot." (Isaiah 1:21). This is a way of describing sin that is first and foremost sin against God's love.

Another way the symbolism is used is describing idolatrous world powers as harlots (Tyre in Isaiah 23:16-17) and Nineveh (Nahum 3:4). They are not called adulteresses because they are not God's people—they are prostitute. This would imply that John is not speaking of people of God, but a secular power.

The prostitute "sits on many waters." If the woman symbolizes a city, this might refer to water or seagoing commerce. Babylon is addressed as "you who live by many waters." (Jeremiah 51:13), which immediately calls to mind the Euphrates flowing through Babylon. But the Old Testament uses streams or rivers to refer to people (Isaiah 8:7-8, 23:10; Jeremiah 46:7, 47:2; Ezekiel 29:10). This is the apparent meaning here, though there are many interpretations.

The kings of the earth obviously value the city for trade and commerce, which John describes as "fornication" with the prostitute. The inhabitants of earth are intoxicated

by the prostitute and sin spreads throughout the people, although they seem happy with this system.

Until now, the angel had talked about the prostitute, but now she is described. John is in the wilderness (opposite of the city). In detachment, God's people can see the prostitute for what she is; in proximity they are blinded to her essential nature. (the frog in the kettle syndrome).

John sees the prostitute riding a "scarlet" beast. (13:1). The woman is closely associated with evil and supported by the beast. Red is the color of the dragon, but this beast is "scarlet" from "knokkinon," a dye made from insects. It was a worldly color of splendor, but a biblical color of sin. Blasphemy is characteristic of the beast (13:1, 5, 6), but here the beast is said to be "covered" with it. This is blasphemy to the "nth degree."

The woman was royally robed—purple was extracted from murex, a shell fish and the process was expensive. She was lavishly adorned (gilded points to gold). The woman also has a gold cup, but it is filled with abominable things. The cup entices people to join the evil ways of the harlot—seducing them from God. There is regal standing, but moral corruption.

The harlot has her name on her forehead—"mystery" indicates that the meaning of her name is not obvious to everyone. The angel reveals it.

The first part is Babylon, the mother of prostitutes—she spawns evil like her own. She is linked with "abominations of the earth" and "drunk with the blood of the saints." She had not slain a couple of saints, but many and the implication is that she enjoyed the process. Drunk is the present participle in Greek; this is a continuing state.

Having shown John the harlot and the beast, the angel proceeds to explain their meaning. It evolves that the beast is more important than the woman, but their mystery is together.

- ❖ **First the beast is explained: some symbolism may have dual meaning—the beast is ruler and/or kingdom; a henchman of Satan. The beast once was, now is not, and is to come. This demonic spirit thus previously existed in some other kingdom or ruler. At the time John wrote, the beast was not in existence, but would return. He will come up from the abyss (9:1) and "go to destruction."**

Unregenerate man does not see that evil will not triumph and will be astonished. John is not speaking of truth that everyone will understand. The seven heads are seven hills.

This may identify her with Rome (or seven empires). Some believe this to be the Catholic Church, but more likely it refers to the center of religious sin. The harlot always opposes the bride, the New Jerusalem. The seven heads are seven kings. These are undoubtedly the seven empires discussed earlier as conquerors of Israel.

Five of these empires have fallen; they are past. (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece). One is (Rome was in power at the time John wrote). The seventh had not yet come and would reign in the future. The eighth is "one of the seven." This means that the antichrist may arise from one of the ancient seats of government and is certainly one of the seven renewed in some way.

The eighth is equated with the seven—heads of the beast. We can make no firm identification, but we know that he is going to destruction.

Refer to page 106: "Historical Information"

The beast's horns are ten kings who haven't received a kingdom. These ten "hate the prostitute." They are antichrist's helpers but oppose the prostitute's worldly system. Some scholars thus believe that the prostitute represents the worldly church and its complex legalism and the antichrist hates the Christianity she supposedly represents. True Christians hate her hypocrisy.

These ten, who receive authority for one hour (short time), are associated with the antichrist; receive authority with the beast and do not reign in their own might. They are not independent thinkers—they work for the beast. John sees them warring against the Lamb, against whose troops they are powerless. The Lamb has chosen faithful people who work for Him.

- ❖ **The final section shows the disunity of evil forces—there is no cohesion in evil; it self-destructs. There is hatred between the horns and the prostitute—they bring her to ruin and strip her resources. This shows the beast's treachery in destroying the prostitute he was sustaining.**

THE FALL OF BABYLON AND THE WEDDING FEAST OF THE LAMB Revelation 18, 19

In vivid language, John outlines the judgment of the great city. There are many coincidences of language with the description of the fall of Tyre (Ezekiel 26-28) and that of Babylon (Isaiah 13:14, 21; Jeremiah 50:51). But we are missing the point if we conclude that John is only denouncing contemporary Rome or Babylon.

As Byron could say, when falls the Coliseum,
Rome shall fall; when Rome falls—the world.

It is something of this character that John has in mind. He is summarizing all that the prophets have said announcing the doom of Tyre or Babylon or Nineveh; but he is really describing the collapse of civilization. Final judgment will ultimately mean the overthrow of everything that is in opposition to God.

Events of Chapter 18 are set in motion by an angel with authority—one of the few places where angels are thus described, although elsewhere authority is “given.” This angel is particularly important because he has splendor that shines like light over the earth (Ezekiel 43:2). The angel tells us that John’s vantage point is earth.

“Ischyros” is used to describe the angel’s mighty voice, although in 19:6 it refers to the voice of mighty thunderings. In 5:2, 10:1, 18:21 angels speak with “great” (megale) voices. The city’s doom is future but is spoken of as if accomplished. There are three areas of desolation:

- ❖ **HOME FOR DEMONS.**
- ❖ **HAUNT FOR EVIL SPIRITS.**
- ❖ **HAUNT FOR UNCLEAN AND DETESTABLE BIRDS.**

Birds such as this usually choose deserted places. We should note that the Old Testament says Babylon became the habitation of strange creatures (Isaiah 13:21-22; Jeremiah 51:37).

The city is desolate because of her sin in corrupting others. These kings may have become wealthy by trade with the harlot, as had the various merchants.

Because they will be persecuted, God’s people may be tempted to come to terms with the city. However, compromise with worldliness is fatal. God’s people must hold themselves apart from what is in mind here.

The next voice seems to belong to God, but the following verse doesn’t seem to come from God, although the speaker seems to be the same. An angel could be quoting God. The call to God’s people is important because John wants people to understand the

urgency of the situation. John is not gloating over the city's downfall; he is appealing to believers to see reality and act accordingly.

In 18:5, John sees the sins of the city as a pile that reaches to heaven (the word translated "piled up" really means "glued together"). From the standpoint of the church, it may seem that evil men are prevailing; from God's standpoint, this is not so. See Genesis regarding a tower that reaches to heaven and note its location.

Verse 6 addresses those carrying out judgment. They are commanded to do to the city what she has done to others. **"Give" is "apodote" and means recompense.** It is not sufficient to simply repay; but it must be double. She has mixed a cup for others and must drink it double strength.

The voice describes torment in proportion to the way the city gave itself glory and luxury. There had been a deep-seated attitude—maybe one which the city was unaware of—as being supreme over all. She is no "widow" (see Isaiah 47:78).

However, 18:8 tells us that the punishment is taking place in "one day." There is no warning or delay. Four plagues are singled out. Death should end everything. This may mean that some die in the city, but the city may continue for a while. Death could be translated "pestilence." There is mourning, famine, and fire. The power of God must not be overlooked. This is not an arbitrary happening. God inflicts on the city earned judgment.

Earth's rulers are distressed by the city's fate, because they have been associates in the city. They watch the city burn.

However, verse 10 tells us that earth's rulers are afraid and keep their distance. **Note that no one can stand against the judgment of the Lord—the kings apparently recognize the justice of the situation. The merchants join in, wailing (not silent weeping). The verbs are present tense—no one buys their cargo anymore. Their distress seems to be caused by financial loss, not care for the city.**

**John gives a list of cargo which cannot be sold:
gold, silver, precious stones, pearls, fine clothes,
special woods, ivory and expensive wood products.**

The list continues with spices, food and drink, animals, and people. Many great world empires have had traffic in the souls of men.

The city is addressed and informed that her luxuries are things of the past. The fruit and riches and splendor are gone forever.

Those with a vested interest in the city mourn—but no one approaches to help. They speak of a double “woe.”

Like the kings, the merchants see destruction in one hour. The wealth was quickly brought to ruin.

The seafarers mourn—but again from a distance. Their city seems to have brought profit to many, but was loved by none.

The kings mourn in the future tense; the merchants in both present and future; the seafarers in the imperfect.

Revelation 18:19 tells us that the sailors carry their mourning farther—they throw dust on their heads and express the double “woe” on the city and the suddenness of destruction. They, like the merchants, are distressed by loss of profit. From the forces of evil, the focus changes to good. First, the righteous make a call for rejoicing and a vow to overthrow the city. This is not a vindictive outcry. It is a longing for justice.

The hearers have staked their lives on the truth of Christianity. These are passionate cries from the conviction that right will triumph.

The throwing of a great stone into the sea is symbolic and recalls Jeremiah’s action in having a stone attached to a book thrown into the Euphrates.

Revelation 18:22-24 lists things that will no longer be heard or done in the city follows: The city had fostered arts, but they will cease. Likewise, craftsmanship and routine daily activities like grinding will cease. There is a finality about “will never be heard in you again.” John is picturing the cessation of all life in the great city. Lamps will no longer shine; marriage will cease. Deception apparently occurred in connection with magic.

In verse 21, Babylon was spoken of in the third person. Now the third person appears again. The blood of God’s people was found here—“all who have been killed on the earth.” This is an argument for taking “the great city” symbolically. There is no real city of which this could be said.

Chapter 19 opens with thanksgiving in Heaven at the conclusion of God’s judgments.

The singers of 19:1 are not named. They sing a song that begins "hallelujah!" which means "praise God." The word is found four times here (1, 3, 4, and 6) and not again in the New Testament. This is the only passage in the English Bible where Hallelujah occurs.

The overthrow of Babylon is not described in terms of power, but judgment—justice. We need to examine our lives and see where we have committed adultery with alien ideologies, pagan doctrines, false principles and deceitful practices.

Have we bent the will of God to serve man or altered the gospel to conform to the fashion of the day?

Again, the throng praised God—it is not clear whether the smoke of the city portion is part of the song or a description. This song closes one age and opens another.

In 19:4, we see the inhabitants of heaven join the praise. The 24 elders and 4 living beings prostrate themselves and worship. They say two words "amen," indicating their assent, and "hallelujah," the word of praise.

The speaker of 19:5 is not named, but comes from the throne and is probably speaking on behalf of God. The voice calls on God's people to join in the praise. All are encouraged to participate. The triumph of the servants of God is portrayed in the scene of the heavenly marriage—the church is seen as the bride of Christ.

Note the use of "like" in 19:6-8. The voice is powerful and musical and begins with praise. God reigns, and all should rejoice and be glad. The marriage of the Lamb is about to take place.

The imagery is used elsewhere—Isaiah 54:6; Ezekiel 16:8; Hosea 2:14 and marriage symbolism is in the gospels (Matthew 22:2; 25:1). Read these verses and record what you learn: _____

The song affirms that the bride is given fine linen, bright and clean in contrast to the harlot (17:4, 18:16)—the linen represents righteousness. This may mean "righteous acts;" however, "dikaioma" never is used elsewhere to mean this. The plural indicates that many individuals are involved. The white robes are the result of being washed in the blood of the Lamb.

In Revelation 19:9-10, those invited to the wedding supper are described in terms of their call. John began to worship but is stopped because only God should be worshipped. The angel belongs to those who "hold to the testimony of Jesus." It is unclear if this means that "the testimony which Jesus bore" or the "testimony borne to Jesus" is the intent.

The victory is won and the power of evil is broken. Now John introduces a vision of a fighter. The vision of the "Word of God" leaves no doubt as to the final reign of the risen Lord.

John saw heaven standing open and a white horse (symbolizing victory). John gives a detailed description.

- ❖ **First, the name expresses the character of the person, "faithful and true."** His deeds are in righteousness--the present tense points to the continuing action.
- ❖ **The fact that He makes war is comforting when we need a strong helper.**
- ❖ **His eyes are "like blazing fire," searching out all things.**
- ❖ **He has many crowns** (diademata—crowns of royalty)-widespread dominion.
- ❖ He has a name that only He knows—there are hidden depths that we cannot understand. In John's day, those who practiced black magic believed that knowing one's name gave you power over the one named.

In 19:13, "is dressed" and "dipped" are both perfect tense and indicate permanency. This is a reference to the cross where Christ overcame by shedding His blood.

For the third time, a reference is made to His name—"the Word of God." This is the only place in scripture where the full expression "the word of God" is applied to Christ (John 1:1; 1 John 1:1).

Heaven's armies follow, on white horses. Their clothing resembles the bride's but "leukon" means "white" rather than "lampron" which means "bright." These are probably angels. Although called armies, there is no mention of weapons, and they are not said to fight.

A "sharp sword" comes from His mouth (**note it is not called double-edged**). He will rule with an iron scepter, showing His absolute authority. He will both "rule" and "tread." There is now a fourth reference to His name, on His robe and thigh. Everyone can see this. (Psalm 45:3 says a sword girded on the thigh;) this may be a way of

saying the sword is the Word. "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" refers to Jesus as supreme ruler.

The beast and his helpers are now overthrown.

One angel stands in the sun from which to control the birds to whom he speaks. This meal contrasts with the marriage supper. No one is excluded from this defeat.

In Revelation 19:19-21, we see the forces of evil array themselves for a last struggle with good. The beast heads the army, along with earth's kings. Nothing is said about the battle. The beast and false prophet were captured and thrown into the lake of fire. All that they stood for was destroyed, and their followers were killed by the sword from Christ's mouth.

The "Word" destroyed them.

THE MILLENNIUM; NEW HEAVENS AND EARTH Revelation 20, 21, 22

From the beast of chapter 19, John turns his attention to Satan, who is being seized by an angel and cast into the abyss for 1000 years. This chapter has been disputed by interpreters for years, and evangelicals have split over it as well. Therefore, it is important to approach it with humility and respect.

There are three positions with regard to Christ's return:

PRE-MILLENNIALISM: Christ's return is before the 1000 year reign of Christ on earth. After this, Satan will be released for a time.

POST-MILLENNIALISM: Christ's return occurs at the end of the millennium, which is sometimes seen as representing the triumph of the gospel in this present age and sometimes regarded as a literal 1000 year reign at the end of time.

A-MILLENNIALISM: There is no literal millennium; the 1000 year period is symbolical and stands for the time between the life of Jesus on earth and His second coming.

As we begin chapter 20, John says nothing about a time sequence. The final unimportance of Satan is shown by the fact that not Father or Christ deals with him, but only an unnamed angel. The angel had the key to the abyss and a chain. This must be symbolic since a spirit cannot be confined by chains. Satan is called all four names given him in Revelation: dragon, ancient serpent, devil and Satan. Satan is restrained

for 1000 years in an abyss which is locked and sealed. This was not for punishment because that comes later; however it was so he would be removed from the earth.

FIRST RESURRECTION: Attention is turned to those who suffered for the sake of the gospel of Jesus, who reign through the millennium.

John sees thrones, although he doesn't say where. John uses the word throne forty-seven times and except for Satan's throne (2:13) and the beast's throne (13:2) all seem to be in heaven. John doesn't indicate how many sufferers there are or whether they are sitting on the thrones. These are given authority to judge (the Greek may mean they "serve justice.") The word "beheaded" literally means "killed with an axe." The word is probably a general term for execution.

These came to life "ezesan," which isn't a word usually used for resurrection. It seems to mean that the martyrs, though slain, live on in heaven with Christ; not only living but reigning for a thousand years.

The martyrs are differentiated from the others who are dealt with separately. The pre-millennial view assumes that a first resurrection implies a second—others believe the two are different sorts. It is a blessing to have part in the first resurrection because the second death has no power over such people—they are priests of God and of Christ and reign for 1000 years.

At the end of the millennium, Satan will be released. John does not say if an angel also sets him free, but he will resume his prior activities, and on a grander scale.

He will gather the nations for a final battle (Gog and Magog probably mean "all people.") Gog is mentioned in 1 Chronicles 5:4, Ezekiel 38-39, and here. Magog is found in Genesis 10:2; 1 Chronicles 1:5; Ezekiel 8-39, and here. Gog seems to have come from Magog, and in Judaism are sometimes thought of as two leaders. In apocalyptic writing they symbolize the forces of evil. John is referring to hosts of wicked. He has in mind the last great attack of evil on God's people.

John strangely turns to the past tense in 20:9. The "breadth of earth" may mean the armies are large. They encircled the camp of saints, which may also be the beloved city. John is picturing evil hosts taking up threatening positions over the servants of God. A great battle is expected, but isn't recorded. John goes to the destruction of the wicked with fire from heaven.

Satan is here referred to as he who deceived, and is thrown into the lake of burning sulfur to join the beast and false prophet, to suffer day and night for eternity—there seems to be no end to this phase of Satan's existence.

WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

Here we see the dead judged, and death and Hades being overthrown. There is a great white throne—Paul refers to the judgment seat of Christ. Read 2 Corinthians 5:10 and record what you learn: _____

Read also John 5:22 _____

The dead must all stand before the throne; no one is excepted. Books are opened and the deeds of people are recorded therein. There is another book, the book of life containing the names of those given eternal life. The dead were judged according to what was written according to what they had done. But salvation was not theirs if their name was not in the book of life.

Separate mention is given the sea, death, and Hades as giving up the dead. All dead, wherever or however they died, are included. Some believe this judgment is only for the wicked; some believe it is for all people and believers are given rewards according to their deeds in this judgment.

Death and Hades are now also thrown into the lake of fire. This means that they are ultimately powerless against God.

Being cast into the lake is the “second death.”

Chapter twenty ends with the affirmation that anyone whose name wasn't in the book of life was thrown into the lake.

Chapters 21 and 22 deal with the new heaven and earth, the result of the renovation by fire. From here onward, John sees only those things from the new order. Here is some of what is seen:

- ❖ **People are called upon to rejoice.**
- ❖ **Jerusalem is created for rejoicing.**
- ❖ **God rejoices in His people in the New Jerusalem.**
- ❖ **Righteousness dwells here forever.**
- ❖ **There is no more death, sorrow, crying or pain.**

Compare with 2 Peter 3:10-13: _____

Compare also with Isaiah 25:8 _____

The voice from the throne saying “behold, I make all things new” proves that all things are not done away with but some merely renewed—they cannot cease to exist and also be renewed.

The New Jerusalem is fresh and new in character—applying to eternal things that need no renovation. Everything in the presence of God is fresh by His very presence. The actual age of the city is not known, but it could have been created with the heavens and earth in the beginning because it is the location of the throne of God, which has been established since the heavens were created. (Psalm 11:4; 93:2; 103:19; Isaiah 6:1; 66:1; Revelation 4:2-10; 5:1-13; 7:9-17; 8:3; 22:1-5) Its hope existed in Abraham’s day because God promised him and the Old Testament saints the city (Hebrews 11:9-11, 14-16). The New Jerusalem was prepared by God and comes from heaven to earth to be the eternal city and dwelling place for God and His people.

The light of the city radiates the glory of God. The wall of the city has three gates on each of the four sides (see Ezekiel 48:30-35).

The twelve gates have the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.

The walls have twelve foundations with the names of the twelve apostles. (Matthias was numbered with the eleven apostles).

The various dimensions are interpreted by some to mean that the city is a cube; by others that it is a “mountain-like” peak. The streets are “plateia” which means “broad.” There are mansions and other buildings as well. The streets are paved with gold that seems to be transparent and are the same material of the buildings of the city.

God and the Lamb are the sanctuary for all peoples in the eternal state. However, there seems to be a literal temple as well. The light of the city will surpass the light of the sun, moon, and stars.

See Isaiah 30:26 for information on the sun and moon during the millennium.

It seems that others can do business with the New Jerusalem, but cannot enter it. There is an abundance of water (rivers and living fountains). There seem to be wide roads that lead from the twelve gates and there is a river and tree of life is either associated with each or all lead to the one tree of life.

The book concludes with a confirmation of the revelation (22:8, 9). These writings are said to be "faithful and true."

John also reveals the mistake of worshipping an angel again (Revelation 22:8, 9).

John was told not to seal the prophecy of the book, and is given a warning against adding or taking away from what the book says (Revelation 22:10-19).

Lastly, Jesus confirms to John that **He will come again.** (Revelation 22:20, 21).

SPRING FEASTS: PASSOVER, UNLEAVENED BREAD, PENTECOST

The Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread as a unit constituted the most important of the three great annual festivals of Israel.

It was called both the feast of Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread, but where the object was to mark the distinction between the Passover as a sacrifice and as a feast following the sacrifice, the latter was designated the feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:5-6)

Read Exodus 12:21-27, 48 and do a word study of "Passover." _____

The paschal lamb sacrifice, by virtue of which the passing over was effected, was followed by the paschal meal was on the evening of the 14th of Nisan, and the seven days following are called the feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:5-6). The whole feast, including the paschal eve, is called the festival of Unleavened Bread. The simple name "Passover" (Hebrew *Pesah*) is the one commonly used by the Jews to the present day for the festival of Unleavened Bread.

Read the following verses and record what you learn:

Exodus 23:15 _____

Leviticus 23:6 _____

Luke 22:1, 7 _____

Acts 12:3; 20:6 _____

Mark 14:1 _____

Institution. The Passover was instituted in memory of Israel's preservation from the last plague visited upon Egypt (the death of the firstborn) and their deliverance from bondage.

Exodus 12:1-28 _____

“The deliverance of Israel from Egypt was accompanied by their adoption as the nation of Jehovah. For this a divine consecration was necessary that their outward severance from Egypt might be accompanied by an inward severance from everything of an Egyptian or heathen nature.

This consecration was imparted by the Passover, a festival which was to lay the foundation of Israel’s birth into the new life of grace and fellowship with God and to perpetuate it in time to come.”

Observance. Observances connected with the Passover are in two categories, those established at the keeping of the first Passover and those enacted after the Exodus.

Before the Exodus. At its first institution, just before the Exodus, the keeping of the Passover was as follows: Every head of family chose a male of the first year without blemish from the small cattle—sheep or goats—on the 10th of Nisan (Exodus 12:3). Later it became the fixed practice to take a lamb.

On the 14th Nisan the animal was slain “at twilight” (Exodus 12:6); according to the Karaite Jews between actual sunset and complete darkness but understood by the Pharisees and rabbis as the time when the sun begins to descend to its real setting (from 3:00 to 6:00 P.M.). A bunch of hyssop was dipped in the blood of the animal and applied to the two posts and the lintel of the house where the meal was to be eaten. Then the whole animal, without a broken bone, was roasted and eaten by each family, including slaves and strangers, if circumcised.

If the number of the family was too small, the neighboring family might join in the eating. It was eaten that same night with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, probably endives, wild lettuce, which are eaten by Jews of the present day in Egypt and Arabia with the paschal lamb. The meal was eaten the same evening, all who partook having their loins girded, shoes on their feet, and a staff in hand, ready to march out of Egypt. What of the lamb could not be eaten was to be burned the next morning, and nothing of it was to be carried out of the house. Exodus 12:1-13, 21-23, 43-51 _____

According to Jewish authorities this was called the “Egyptian” Passover in distinction from the “Permanent” Passover. The paschal lamb was a sacrifice, combining in itself

the significance of the sin offerings and holy offerings. It shadowed reconciliation as well as glad fellowship with God; the lamb suffered instead of the partakers.

Because there was no fixed sanctuary, the houses were converted into such places of grace or altars, and the blood put on the posts and lintel of the door was the sign that the house was to be spared. This sparing and reconciliation accomplished through forgiveness of sins was immediately associated with the meal. The unleavened bread symbolized the spiritual purity after which Israel in covenant with the Lord is to strive, and the bitter herbs were intended to call to mind the bitter experiences that the Israelites had suffered in Egypt.

After the Exodus. The following supplementary enactments were introduced after the Exodus:

1. All male members of the congregation were to appear before the Lord with "the choice first fruits." (Exodus 23:14-19)
2. The first sheaf of the harvest to be offered on "the day after the Sabbath." (Leviticus 23:10-14)
3. Those prevented from keeping the Passover on the 14th of Nisan were to observe it on the fourteenth of the following month. (Numbers 9:6-14).

Special sacrifices were to be offered each day of the festival. The paschal animals were to be slain in the national sanctuary and the blood sprinkled on the altar instead of the doorposts and lintels of the homes.

Feast of Unleavened Bread. The feast of Unleavened Bread immediately followed the Passover and lasted seven days, from the 15th to the 21st of Nisan. On each of those days, after the morning sacrifice, a sacrifice in connection with the feast was presented; unleavened bread alone was eaten.

Sacrifices. (1) The usual morning and evening sacrifices, with their grain and drink offerings. (2) Two young bulls, one ram, seven lambs of the first year, with their grain and drink offerings. These were presented after the morning sacrifice (Numbers 28:19-24).

Convocations. The first and seventh day of the feast were celebrated by a holy convocation and resting from work, with the exception of preparing food. On the intervening days work might be carried on unless the weekly Sabbath fell on one of them, in which case the full strictness of Sabbath-keeping was observed, and the special feast sacrifice was not presented until after the Sabbath offering.

Barley Sheaf. On the second feast day (16th of Nisan) the first sheaf of the new harvest (barley) was symbolically offered to the Lord by waving—not burning on the altar—accompanied with a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, with its grain and drink offerings.

Previous to this offering neither bread nor roasted grain of the new harvest was allowed to be eaten. (Leviticus 23:9-14).

Those attending presented freewill, burnt, and holy offerings of sheep and oxen (Exodus 23:15, 19; Deuteronomy 16:2), and sacrificial meals were eaten. The feast closed on the 21st, with rest from work and a holy convocation.

History. Scripture records that the Passover was kept on the evening before the Israelites left Egypt (Exodus 12:28), the second year after the Exodus (Numbers 9:1-5), and then not again until they entered Canaan (Exodus 13:5; Joshua 5:10).

Only three instances are recorded in which the Passover was celebrated between the entrance into the Promised Land and the Babylonian captivity.

1. Under Solomon: 2 Chronicles 8:13 _____

2. Under Hezekiah when he restored the national worship: 2 Chronicles 30:15 _____

3. Under Josiah: 2 Kings 23:21; 2 Chronicles 35:1-19 _____

But since the Passover was timely celebrated on later occasions, we cannot assume that it wasn't celebrated timely at other times than the three above.

Postexilic Observance. After the return of the Jews from captivity the celebration of the Passover, like that of other institutions, became more regular and systematic; and its laws, rites, manners, and customs have been faithfully transmitted to us. These were the same as those in the time of Christ and His apostles and are, therefore, of the utmost importance and interest to us in understanding the NT. We give the various practices in connection with the days of the festival on which they were respectively observed.

1. **The Great Sabbath (10th of Nisan).** The Sabbath immediately preceding the Passover, it is so called because, according to tradition, the 10th of Nisan, when

the paschal lamb was to be selected, originally fell on the Sabbath. In later legislation the animal was not required to be set aside four days beforehand, yet the Sabbath was used for the instruction of the people in the duties of this great festival. In addition to the regular ritual, special prayers bearing on the redemption from Egypt, the love of God to Israel, and Israel's obligation to keep the Passover, were prescribed for that Sabbath. Malachi 3:1-4:6 was read as the lesson of the day, and discourses were delivered explaining the laws and domestic duties connected with the festival. This is likely the Sabbath referred to in John 19:31.

2. **The 13th of Nisan.** On the evening of the 13th of Nisan, which, until that of the 14th, was called the "preparation for the Passover" (John 19:14), every head of a family searched for and collected by the light of a candle all the leaven. Before beginning the search, he pronounced the following benediction: "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with the commandments, and has enjoined us to remove the leaven." After the search he said, "Whatever leaven remains in my possession which I cannot see, behold, it is null, and accounted as the dust of the earth."
3. **The 14th of Nisan.** This day, called until the evening the preparation for the Passover was also known as the "first day" of Passover (Leviticus 23:5-7). Handicraftsmen, with the exception of tailors, barbers, and laundresses, were obliged to cease from work, either from morning or from noon, according to the custom of the different places in Palestine. No leaven was allowed to be eaten after noon, when all that had been found either on this day or the preceding one was to be burned.

On the 14th of Nisan every Israelite who was physically able, not in a state of Levitical uncleanness, or further distant from Jerusalem than fifteen miles, was to appear before the Lord with an offering proportionate to his means. Exodus 23:15 and; Deuteronomy 16:16-17 _____

Women, though not legally bound to appear in the sanctuary, were not excluded. 1 Samuel 1:7; Luke 2:41-42 _____

4. **Offering of the Paschal Lamb.** The lamb was to be free from all blemish and neither less than eight days nor more than exactly one year old. Each paschal

lamb was to serve a "company" of not less than ten nor more than twenty, the representatives of each company going to the Temple. The daily evening sacrifice (Exodus 29:38-39), usually killed at the eighth and a half hour (i.e., 2:30 P.M.), and offered up at the ninth and a half hour (i.e., 3:30 P.M.), was on this day killed at 1:30 and offered at 2:30 P.M., an hour earlier. And if the 14th of Nisan happened on a Friday, it was killed at 12:30 and offered at 1:30 P.M., two hours earlier than usual, so as to avoid any needless breach of the Sabbath.

Before the incense was burned or the lamps were trimmed, the paschal sacrifice had to be offered. It was done in this way: The first of the three festive divisions, with their paschal lambs, was admitted within the court of the priests. Each division was to consist of not less than thirty persons. Immediately, the massive gates were closed behind them, and the priests blew a threefold blast from their silver trumpets when the Passover was slain; altogether, the scene was most impressive. All along the court up to the altar of burnt offering priests stood in two rows, the one holding golden, the other silver, bowls. In these the blood of the paschal lambs, which each Israelite slew for himself (as representative of his company at the paschal supper), was caught up by a priest, who handed it to his colleague, receiving back an empty bowl, and so the bowls with the blood were passed up to the priest at the altar, who jerked it in one jet at the base of the altar.

While this was going on, a most solemn "hymn" of praise was sung, the Levites leading in the song and the officers either repeating after them or merely responding. The *Hallel* was recited the whole time, and if it was finished before all the paschal animals were slain it might be repeated a second and even a third time.

Next the sacrifices were hung up on hooks along the court, or laid on staves which rested on the shoulders of two men (on Sabbaths they were not laid on staves), then flayed, the entrails taken out and cleansed, and the inside fat separated, put in a dish, salted, and placed on the fire of the altar of burnt offering. This completed the sacrifice.

The first division of priests left and the second entered, and finally the third, the service in each case being conducted in precisely the same manner. Then the whole service concluded by burning the incense and trimming the lamps for the night. If it was the Sabbath, the first division waited in the court of the Gentiles, the second in the open space between the walls of the court of the women and

the trellis work in the Temple, whereas the third remained in its place. At dark all paschal lamb was roasted on a spit of pomegranate wood, the spit passing through from mouth to vent. If it touched the oven the part so touched was to be cut away, thus carrying out the idea that the lamb must not be defiled by any contact with foreign matter. It was not to be "sodden," because the flesh must remain pure, without the addition even of water, and no bone of it was to be broken.

5. **The Paschal Supper.** As the guests gathered around the paschal table they were arrayed in the best festive garments, joyous and at rest, as became the children of the king. To express this idea the rabbis insisted that at least a part of the feast should be partaken in recumbent position. The left elbow was placed on the table, the head resting on the hand, with sufficient room between each guest for the free movement of the right hand. This explains in what sense John "was reclining on Jesus' breast," and afterward "leaning back thus on Jesus' breast," when he leaned back to speak to Him.

John 13:23, 25; Luke 22:14 _____

The father, or other person presiding, took the place of honor at the table, probably somewhat raised above the rest.

The paschal supper commenced by the head of the "company" pronouncing a benediction over the first cup of wine, which had been filled for each person. It was then drunk, and a basin of water and a towel were handed around or the guests got up to wash their hands, after which the appropriate blessing was pronounced.

These preliminaries ended, a table was brought in, upon which was the paschal meal. The leader of the feast first took some of the herbs, dipped them in the sauce (charoseath), ate some, and gave to the others.

Immediately after this all the dishes were removed from the table (to excite curiosity), and the second cup of wine was filled. Then the son asked his father as follows: "Wherefore is this night distinguished from all other nights? For on all other nights we eat leavened or unleavened bread, but on this night only unleavened bread? On all other nights we eat any kind of herbs, but on this night only bitter herbs? On all other nights we eat meat roasted, stewed, or boiled but on this night only roasted? On all other nights we dip [the herbs] only

once, but on this night twice?" In reply the head of the house related the whole national history, commencing with Terah, Abraham's father, Israel's deliverance from Egypt, and the giving of the law.

The paschal dishes were now placed back upon the table. The leader took up in succession the dish with the Passover lamb, that with the bitter herbs, and that with the unleavened bread, briefly explaining the importance of each; the first part of the Hallel was sung (Psalm 113-114), with this brief thanksgiving at the close: "Blessed art thou, Jehovah our God, King of the universe, who hast redeemed us and redeemed our father from Egypt."

The second cup of wine was then drunk, and hands were washed a second time, with the same prayer as before, and one of the two unleavened cakes broken and "thanks given."

Pieces of the broken cake, with "bitter herbs" between them and "dipped" in the *charoseath*, were next handed to each of the company. This, in all probability, was the "dipped morsel" which, in answer to John's inquiry about the betrayer, the Lord "gave" to Judas.

John 13:25-30; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:21 _____

The paschal supper itself consisted of the unleavened bread, with bitter herbs, and the paschal lamb itself. After that nothing more was to be eaten, so that the flesh of the paschal sacrifice might be the last meat partaken of. But since the cessation of the paschal sacrifice, the Jews conclude the supper with a piece of unleavened cake called the *Aphikomen*, or after dish. Hands were again washed, the third cup was filled, and grace after meat said. The service concluded with the fourth cups over which the second portion of the Hallel was sung (Psalm 115-118), the whole ending with the so-called "blessing of the song."

6. **The 15th of Nisan**, Unleavened Bread. On this day there was a holy convocation, and it was one of the six days on which, as on the Sabbath, no manner of work was allowed, with this exception: whereas on the Sabbath the preparation of necessary food was not allowed (Exodus 16:5, 23, 29; Exodus 35:2-3), on holy convocation it was permitted (Exodus 12:16; Leviticus 23:7; Numbers 28:18). The other five days on which the Bible prohibits servile work

are the seventh of this festival, the day of Pentecost, New Year's Day, and the first and last of the feast of Booths.

In addition to the ordinary sacrifices there were offered on this and the following six days two bulls, a ram, and seven lambs of the first year (with grain offerings) for a burnt offering, and a goat for a sin offering. Besides these public sacrifices voluntary offerings were made by each individual appearing before the Lord in Jerusalem. The Jewish canon prescribed that this freewill offering should be a burnt offering, worth not less than sixteen grains of corn; a festive offering of not less value than thirty-two grains; and a peace, or joyful offering, the value to be determined by the offerer.

7. **The 16th of Nisan**, Cutting the Barley Sheaf. This day was also called "the day after the Sabbath"; and on it the omer of the first produce of the harvest was waved before the Lord (Leviticus 23:10-14).

Though for obvious reasons it was customary to choose barley grown in the sheltered Ashes valley across the Kidron, there were no restrictions, except that the barley was to be grown in Palestine and without being forced by manuring and artificial watering. On the 14th of Nisan, delegates from the Sanhedrin had marked out the spot where the first sheaf was to be cut by tying together in bundles, while still standing, the barley to be reaped. When the time came for cutting the sheaf, the evening of the 15th of Nisan, even if it was a Sabbath, just as the sun went down, three men, each with a sickle and basket, began the work.

In order to bring out all that was distinctive in the ceremony, they first asked the bystanders the following questions three times each: "Has the sun gone down?" "With this sickle?" "Into this basket?" "On this Sabbath?" and, last, "Shall I cut?" Having each time been answered in the affirmative, they cut down the barley to the amount of one ephah (nearly three and a half pecks). The ears were brought into the court of the Temple and threshed out with canes or stalks, so that the grains might not be crushed. The grain was then "parched" on a perforated pan, so that each grain might be touched by the fire, and finally exposed to the wind. It was then ground and sifted to the required fineness, which was ascertained by one of the "Gizbarim" (treasurers) plunging his hand into it. The sifting process was continued as long as any of the flour adhered to the hand. In this manner the prescribed omer of flour was secured and offered in the Temple on the 16th of Nisan. Whatever was in excess of an omer was

redeemed and could be used for any purpose. The omer of flour was mixed with a "log" of oil, and a handful of frankincense put upon it. It was then waved before the Lord, and a handful taken out and burned on the altar (Leviticus 2:15-16). This was what is popularly, though not correctly, called "the presentation of the first, or wave sheaf." This offering was designated as the offering of First Fruits.

8. **The 17th to the 20th of Nisan.** These days constituted a half holy day and were "the lesser festival." As regards work during this period, all that was necessary for the public interest or to prevent private loss was allowed, but no new work of any kind for public or private purposes might be begun. The following work was allowed: irrigating dry land; digging watercourses; repairing conduits, reservoirs, roads, marketplaces, and baths; and whitewashing tombs, etc. Dealers in fruit, garments, or utensils were allowed to sell privately what was required for immediate use. In the Temple the additional sacrifices appointed for the festival were offered up, and the lesser Hallel was sung instead of the greater.
9. **The 21st of Nisan,** or the Last Day of the Passover. The last day of the Passover was observed by a holy convocation and was celebrated in all respects like the first day, except that it did not commence with the paschal meal.
10. **The second, or Little Passover.** Anyone prevented by Levitical defilement, disability, or distance from keeping the regular Passover might observe the "second," or the "little Passover," exactly a month later.

Numbers 9:9-12 _____

In this "second" Passover both leaved and unleavened bread might be kept in the house; the Hallel was not to be sung as the paschal supper. The supper could not be eaten by any defiled person.

11. **Release of Prisoners.** It is not certain whether the release of a prisoner at the Passover was a custom of Roman origin, or whether it was an old Jewish custom that Pilate allowed them to retain.

Matthew 27:15; Mark 15:6; Luke 23:17; John 18:39 _____

12. Preparations for the Passover. A month previous (the 15th of Adar) bridges and roads had been repaired for the use of pilgrims. This was also the time for administering the testing women suspected of *adultery*, for burning the red heifer, and for boring the ears of those wishing to remain in bondage.

One of these preliminary arrangements is especially interesting when recalling the words of the Savior. Any dead body found in the field was buried where found, and, as the pilgrims coming to the feast might have contracted "uncleanness" by unwittingly touching such graves, it was ordered that all tombs should be whitened a month before the Passover. Evidently it was in reference to what our Lord was going on around Him at the time He spoke that He compared the Pharisees to "whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness" (Matthew 23:27).

Two weeks before the Passover, and at the corresponding time before the other two great festivals, the flocks and herds were to be tithed and the treasure chests publicly opened and emptied. Last, "many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover, to purify themselves." Cross reference to John 11:55 and 1 Corinthians 11:27-28. _____

Pentecost The second of the three great annual festivals, the others being the Passover and Tabernacles. The most important Bible passages relating to it are the following:

Exodus 23:16 _____

Leviticus 23:15-22 _____

Numbers 28:26-31 _____

Deuteronomy 16:9-12 _____

This festival is called

- (1) The feast of Weeks because it was celebrated seven complete weeks, or fifty days, after the Passover.
- (2) The fest of the Harvest, because it concluded the harvest of the later grains.
- (3) The day of the first fruits (Numbers 28:26), because the first loaves made from the new grain were then offered on the altar.

The Scriptures do not clearly attach any historical significance to this festival but seem to teach that Pentecost owes its origin to the harvest that terminated at this time. It is to be expected that, in common with other nations of antiquity who celebrated the ingathering of grain by offering to a deity among other firstling offerings of fine flour of wheat, the Jews would recognize Jehovah's bounty with the first fruits of their harvest. The Jews, at least as early as the days of Christ, connected with the Passover and commemorated on the 6th of Sivan the giving of the Ten Commandments. It was made out from Exodus 19 that the law was delivered of the fiftieth day after the Exodus. It has been conjectured that a connection between the event and the festival may possibly be hinted at in the reference to the observance of the law in Deuteronomy 16:12.

Pentecost was essentially lined to the Passover—the festival that above all others expressed the fact of a race chosen and separated from other nations—and was the solemn termination of the consecrated period.

The time fixed for celebrating Pentecost is the fiftieth day from "the day after the Sabbath" of the Passover or, seven full weeks after the sickle was put to the corn. The precise meaning of the word *Sabbath* in this connection, which determines the date for celebrating this festival, has been from time immemorial a matter of dispute. The Boethusians and the Sadducees in the time of the second Temple, and the Karaites since the eighth century of the Christian era, have taken "Sabbath" in the sense of the

"seventh day of the week" and have maintained that the omer was offered on the day following the weekly Sabbath that might happen to fall within the seven days of the Passover. This would make Pentecost always come on the first day of the week.

Many arguments are presented against this, showing that such an opinion involves many arbitrary and improbable arrangements. Most scholars agree that 'the morrow after the seventh Sabbath' is the day after the seventh week, not after the seventh Sabbath. It is therefore evident that the Jews, who during the second Temple kept Pentecost fifty days after the 16th of Nisan, rightly interpreted the injunction in Leviticus 23:15-22. The fiftieth day, according to the Jewish canons, may fall on 5th, 6th, or 7th of Sivan.

The Mosaic ordinances provided that on the Day of Pentecost there was to be a holy convocation, on which no manner of work was to be done; all the able-bodied men of the congregation were to be present (unless legally precluded) at the sanctuary; and a special sacrifice was to be offered.

Leviticus 23:15-22 and Numbers 28:26-31 _____

The sacrifices offered were

- (1) The morning and evening sacrifices, with their grain and drink offerings.**
- (2) A burnt offering, consisting of seven lambs, one young bull, two rams, with their grain and drink offering.**
- (3) The two wave loaves, the new grain offering, of two-tenths of an ephah of new flour.**
- (4) With the loaves, a kid of the goats for a sin offering and two lambs for a peace offering.** The firstling loaves, with the two lambs (peace offering), were devoted to the Lord by waving, as a thank offering for the harvest that had been gathered in during the seven previous weeks. The words "You shall bring in from your dwelling places two loaves of bread for a wave offerings" (Leviticus 23:17) are not to be understood as if every head of a house was to bring two such loaves, but that the two loaves were presented for all the people. "From your dwelling places" appears to mean that they were to be loaves prepared for the daily nourishment of the house and not specially for a holy purpose or paid for out of the treasury. They

were freewill offerings, presented by each person in proportion to the blessings received from God.

This festival was to be a season of rejoicing, in which were to share the children, men and women servants, the Levites, the stranger, the orphan, and the widow.

Deuteronomy 16:11 _____

Israel was also to recall her bondage in Egypt and was admonished to keep the divine law.

From Acts 2:9-11, we infer that, perhaps more than to any other great festival, the Jews came from distant countries to Jerusalem. On the day before Pentecost the pilgrims entered Jerusalem, and the approach of the holy convocation was proclaimed in the evening by blasts of the trumpets. The great altar was cleansed in the first watch, and immediately after midnight the Temple gates were thrown open. Before the morning sacrifice all burnt and peace offerings brought by the people were examined by the priests.

The following order was observed for the various sacrifices:

- (1) The regular morning sacrifice.**
- (2) The festive offerings, as prescribed (Numbers 28:26-31); the Levites chanting the Hallel, in which the people joined.**
- (3) The firstling loaves, with their accompanying offerings. These loaves were prepared as follows: new wheat was brought to the temple, threshed like other grain offerings, ground and passed through twelve sieves, and the remainder was redeemed and eaten by anyone. Care was taken that the flour for each loaf should be taken of equal size, that it should be separately kneaded with luke-warm water (like all thank offerings), and separately baked in the temple itself.**

The loaves were made the evening preceding the festival; or, if that fell of the Sabbath, two evenings before. These loaves, with the two lambs, formed part of the same wave offering.

- (4) The freewill offerings of the people, which formed the cheerful and hospitable meal of the family and to which the Levite, the widow, the orphan, the poor, and the stranger were invited.**

This festival is annually and sacredly kept by Jews of the 6th and 7th of Sivan, between the second half of May and the first half of June, thus prolonging it to two days. In

accordance with the injunction in Leviticus 23:15-16, the Jews regularly count every evening the fifty days from the second day of Passover until Pentecost and recite a prayer over it. The three days preceding the festival, on which the Jews commemorate the giving of the law, are called "the three days of separation and sanctification," because the Lord commanded Moses to set bounds about the mount and that the people should sanctify themselves three days prior to the giving of the law.

Exodus 19:12, 14, 23

On the preparation day the synagogues and private houses are adorned with flowers and fragrant herbs; the males purify themselves by immersion and confession of sins, put on festive garments, and go to the synagogue, where, after evening prayer, the hallowed nature of the festival is proclaimed by the cantor in the blessing pronounced over a cup of wine. The same is also done by every head of a family before the evening meal. After supper, either in the synagogue or in private houses, the reading of Scripture continues all night, the reason given being that, when God was about to reveal His law to Israel, He had to awaken them from sleep; to remove that sin they now keep awake during the night.

In the general festival service of the morning special prayers are inserted for the day, which set forth the glory of the Lawgiver and of Israel; the Great Hallel is recited; the lesson from the law (Exodus 19:1-28; Ezekiel 3:12) are read, the evening prayer is offered, and the benediction is received by the congregation, their heads covered by the fringed wrapper.

On the second evening they again go to the synagogue, using there the ritual for the festivals, in which are again inserted special prayers for the occasion, chiefly those on the greatness of God and on the giving of the law and the Ten Commandments. The sanctification of the festival is again pronounced, both by the head of the synagogue and by the heads of the families at home. Prayers different from those of the first day, also celebrating the giving of the law, are mingled with the ordinary prayers; the Hallel is recited, as well as the book of Ruth; the lesson read from the law is Deuteronomy 15:19-16:17, and the lesson from the prophets is Habakkuk 2:20-3:19, or Habakkuk 3:1-19; prayer is offered for departed relatives; the *Musaph Ritual* is recited; the priests pronounce the benediction; and the festival concludes after the afternoon service, as soon as the stars appear or darkness sets in.

FALL FEASTS: TRUMPETS; DAY OF ATONEMENT; TABERNACLES

The Seventh New Moon, or Feast of Trumpets. This day in Hebrew is called "day of blowing." It is also the feast of the New Moon, which fell on the seventh month, or Tishri. This differed from the ordinary festivals of the new moon because of the symbolic meaning of the seventh or sabbatical month and partly, perhaps, because it marked the beginning of the civil year. This month was distinguished above all the other months of the year by the multitude of ordinances connected with it, the first day being consecrated to sacred rest and spiritual employment, the tenth being the Day of Atonement, whereas the fifteenth began the feast of Booths, or Tabernacles.

- (1) The usual morning and evening sacrifices, with their grain and drink offerings.**
- (2) The ordinary sacrifice for the New Moon, except the sin offering, namely, two young bulls, one ram, seven yearling lambs, with their grain and drink offerings (Numbers 28:11-14).**
- (3) Another festive offering of one young bull, one ram, seven lambs, with their grain and drink offerings, together with "one male goat for a sin offering, to make atonement for you" (Numbers 29:1-6).**

This day was observed as a feast day, in the strict sense, by resting from all work, and as a holy convocation, by the blowing of horns. In later times, while the drink offering of the sacrifice was being poured out, the priests and Levites changed Psalm 81, whereas in the evening sacrifice they sang Psalm 29.

Throughout the day trumpets were blown at Jerusalem from morning to evening. In the Temple it was done even on a Sabbath, but not outside its walls. The Day of Atonement, which falls on this month, provides expiation of sins and the removal of all uncleanness; and the Feast of Tabernacles, beginning five days thereafter, provides a foretaste of the blessedness of life in fellowship with the Lord. This significance of the seventh month is indicated by the sounding of trumpets, whereby the congregation present a memorial of themselves loudly and strongly before Jehovah, calling on Him to remember the promised blessings of grace in fulfillment of His covenant.

The fact that Tishri was the great month for sowing might easily have suggested the thought of commemorating on this day the finished work of creation, and thus the feast of Trumpets came to be regarded as the anniversary of the beginning of the world. The rabbis believed that on this day God judges all men, and that they pass before Him as a flock of sheep passes before a shepherd.

Day of Atonement. The day appointed for a yearly, general, and perfect expiation for sins and uncleanness that might remain, despite the regular sacrifices.

Cross reference to Hebrews 9:7 and record the exact sins forgiven here: _____

The Levitical ritual was a constant reminder that “the Law...can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near” (Hebrews 10:1). Even with the most scrupulous observance of the prescribed ordinances many sins and defilements would still remain unacknowledged and therefore without expiation. This want was met by the appointment of a yearly, general expiation of all the unintentional or unknown sins and uncleanness that had remained unatoned for and uncleansed in the course of the year (Leviticus 16:33).

Thus on the Day of Atonement Israel reconciled to Jehovah, which was necessary before the feast of Booths, the feast that prefigured the ingathering of all nations. In connection with this point it may also be well to remember that the Jubilee year was always proclaimed on the Day of Atonement. We will be looking at the Jubilee year later in this study.

Atonement occurred on the tenth day of the seventh month, or Tishri (October). The day was a high Sabbath, on which no work was done. All the people were to afflict their souls, to fast (from the evening of the ninth to the evening of the tenth), under penalty of being cut off from Israel. The chronological link connecting the Day of Atonement with the death of Aaron’s sons (Leviticus 10:1-5) was intended to point out that event as leading to it and also to show the importance and holiness attached to an entrance into the inmost sanctuary of God. Read Leviticus 16:1-2 _____

From Leviticus 16:5-28 and Numbers 29:7-11, it would appear that the sacrifices for the day were as follows:

- (1) The ordinary morning sacrifice.**
- (2) The expiatory sacrifices for the priesthood, namely, a young bull.**
- (3) The sin offering for the people, a kid from the goats for Jehovah and another for Azazel.**
- (4) The festive burnt offerings of the priests and people and, with them, another sin offering.**

(5) The ordinary evening sacrifice.

If the Day of Atonement fell on a Sabbath, the ordinary Sabbath sacrifices were offered besides all these.

Ceremonies of the Day of Atonement were connected with the preparations for the high priests, the expiatory rites, and the festive offerings. The center point of this feast was the expiation offered by the high priest after the morning sacrifice. In later times, at least, the high priest underwent a special preparation for this service. Seven days before, he had left his own home and taken up his residence in the Temple chambers. A substitute was provided, lest the high priest should die or become Levitically unclean. During this week he practiced the various priestly duties, such as sprinkling the blood, burning incense, lighting the lamps, offering the daily sacrifices, etc.; for every part of the service on Atonement Day depended upon the high priest, and he could make no mistake. Further, he was to abstain from all that could render him unclean or disturb his devotions. On the morning of the Day of Atonement the high priest bathed his entire person, not in the place ordinarily used by the priests but one specially set apart for him. He then put on the holy garments—the coat, drawers, girdle, and headdress of white cloth—thus signifying that he was entirely cleansed from the defilement of sin and was arrayed in holiness.

After everything was ready, the high priest slew the bull (the sin offering for himself and his house), then filled a censer with burning coals from the altar of burnt offering, and, putting two handfuls of incense into a vase, bore them into the Holy of Holies. He poured the incense upon the coals, "that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat." As the burning incense was a symbol of prayer, this covering of the Mercy Seat with the cloud of incense was a symbolic covering of the glory of the Holy One with prayer to God, and thus served as to protect the worshiper. The high priest now returned to the altar of burnt offering to fetch some of the blood of the bull, which he sprinkled upon the Mercy Seat ("on the east side," Leviticus 16:14) and seven times upon the ground before it.

After this he slew the goat selected for a sin offering and did the same as with the blood of the bull, namely, sprinkled it upon and before the Mercy Seat. He thus made atonement for the Holy of Holies because of the uncleanness of both priests and people (Leviticus 16:16).

He was then required to atone for the "tent of meeting," which he did by sprinkling the blood of both the bull and the goat, first on the horns of the golden altar once, and then seven times toward the altar, on the ground. Atonement having been made for the building, the high priest was to expiate the altar of burnt offering, which he did by

first putting some of the blood of the bull and the goat upon the horns of the altar and sprinkling it seven times. Thus the dwelling, the court, and the holy things were expiated and cleansed. The question as to how often the high priest went into the Holy of Holies on this day is not of great importance. The biblical account seems to indicate that he entered four times:

- (1) With the incense, while a priest continued to agitate the blood of the bull lest it should coagulate.**
- (2) With the blood of the bull.**
- (3) With the blood of the goat.**
- (4) To bring the censer, which, according to the Talmud, was done after the evening sacrifice. The high priest then, going out into the court of the Tabernacle, laid his hands on the head of the scapegoat, confessing over it all the sins and transgressions of the people. It was led away into the wilderness by a man standing ready and there let go free to signify the carrying away of Israel's sins that God had forgiven.**

Festive Offerings. The high priest then went into the Tabernacle, took off his white garments, laid them down there (because they were to be worn only in the expiatory ritual of this day), washed himself in the Holy Place (in the laver of the court), put on his usual official robes, and completed his own and the people's burnt offering in the court, at the same time burning the fat of the sin offerings on the altar. But both of the sin offerings were carried outside of the camp and burned with skin, flesh, and dung. The persons who had taken the live goat into the wilderness and burned the sin offerings outside the camp were, before they returned to it, to wash their clothes and bathe their bodies.

This act of expiation for the people and the holy places being finished, there was presented immediately before the evening sacrifice, according to Jewish tradition, the offering prescribed for the feast of the day:

- A goat as sin offering.
- A bullock, a ram, and several lambs as burnt offerings, with the corresponding meat and drink offerings (Numbers 29:7-11).

According to the rabbis, the high priest on this day performed all the duties of the regular daily service; sprinkled the blood eight times, once toward the ceiling and seven times on the floor; and after returning the third time from the Holy of Holies to the Holy Place sprinkled the blood of bull and goat toward the veil, mixed the blood of the two animals together, and sprinkled the altar of incense with the mixture, pouring out what

remained at the foot of the altar of burnt offerings. The two goats were similar in appearance (size and value); the lots with which they were chosen were originally of boxwood, later of gold. The high priest, as soon as he received the signal that the goat had reached the wilderness, read some lessons from the law and offered prayer. Very strict rules are given by the Mishnah for the fasting of the people.

Modern Observance. The strict Jews, on the day previous to the Day of Atonement, provide a cock slain by a lower-ranking rabbi; the person whose property it is then takes the fowl by the legs, swings it over the heads of himself and company, and at the same time prays to God that the sins committed by them during the year may enter the fowl. This fowl seems to be a substitute for the scapegoat of old. In the evening, after a sumptuous meal, they go to the synagogue dressed in their best. After a blessing by the clerk, each contributes toward the free gift offering, and which begins the evening prayer.

The reader, the chief rabbi, and many of the congregation are clad with the shrouds in which they are to be buried, continuing in prayer and supplication for upward of three hours. Some remain, all night, and those who go to their homes come again in the morning at five o'clock and remain until dark. The following is the order of the day:

- Morning prayers.
- The usual prayers and supplications peculiar to the day.
- Reading the portion from Leviticus 16.
- Reading Numbers 19:7-11.
- Reading the portion from the prophets (Isaiah 57:14-58:14).
- Prayer of supplication asking Jehovah to be favorable.
- The offering of the day from Numbers 29:7-28.

They abstain from food altogether during the day.

Feast of Booths (or Tabernacles). The third of the great annual feasts, the other two being the Passover and Pentecost.

This festival is alternately called:

- (1) The festival of Tents.
- (2) "Feast of Booths."
- (3) The feast of Ingathering because it was held after the ingathering of the harvest and fruits.
- (4) The festival of Jehovah, "feast of the Lord," or simply *the festival*.

Read the principle passages referring to this feast:

Exodus 23:16 _____

Leviticus 23:34-36 _____

Leviticus 39:43 _____

Deuteronomy 16:13-15; 31:10-13 _____

Nehemiah 8 _____

The origin of this feast is connected by some with Succoth, the first halting place of the Israelites on their march out of Egypt, and the booths are taken to commemorate those in which they lodged for the last time before they entered the desert. It was ordered by Moses in the regulations he gave to the Israelites respecting their festivals, and it unites two elements: the ingathering of the labor of the field, the fruits of the earth—or the ingathering of the threshing floor and the wine press—and the dwelling in booths, which were to be matters of joy to Israel.

The dwelling in booths was to be a reminder to them of the fatherly care and protection of Jehovah while Israel was journeying from Egypt to Canaan. In comparison with the 'house of bondage' the dwelling in booths on the march through the wilderness was in itself an image of freedom. Such a reminder of God's loving care and Israel's dependence would, naturally, keep the Israelites from pride and conceit.

The festival began on the 15th of Tishri (the seventh month), five days before the Day of Atonement, and although, strictly speaking, it lasted only seven days another day was added. This day was observed with a sabbatic rest.

Read Nehemiah 8:18 _____

To distinguish between the pentateuchal enactments and the rites, and ceremonies, that gradually developed, scholars generally divide the description of its observance into three sections: Mosaic, postexilic, and post-Dispersion.

Mosaic. On the first day of the feast, booths were constructed of fresh branches of fruit and palm trees, "boughs of leafy trees and willows." These were located in courts, streets, public squares, and on house roofs. In these all home-born Israelites were to dwell during the festival, in memory of their fathers' dwelling in booths after their

exodus from Egypt. The day was also to be observed as a Sabbath and a holy convocation, in which no secular work was to be done, and all able-bodied male members of the congregation not legally precluded were to appear before the Lord. The booth in Scripture is not an image of privation and misery but of protection, preservation, and shelter from heat, storm, and tempest. Every sabbatical year the law was to be read publicly in the sanctuary on the first day of the festival.

Read Deuteronomy 31:10-13 _____

The six following days were half festivals, probably devoted to social enjoyments and friendly gatherings, when every family head was to extend hospitality, especially to the poor and the stranger. To these seven days there was added an eighth, the twenty-second of the month, as the close of the feast. This day was observed with the sabbatic rest and holy convocation but had only a simple sacrifice, similar to the first and tenth days of the seventh month.

Postexilic. After the Babylonian captivity the feast of Booths began to be strictly and generally kept, and more minute definitions and more expanded applications of the concise pentateuchal injunction were imperatively demanded, in order to secure uniformity of practice, as well as to infuse devotion and joy into the celebration.

It was ordained that the booth must be a detached and temporary habitation, constructed for the festival and not for permanent residence; the interior must neither be higher than twenty cubits nor lower than ten palms; it must have not less than three walls and must be so thatched as to admit the view of the sky and the stars. The part open to the rays of the sun was not to exceed the part shaded by the cover; it must not be under a tree, or covered with a cloth or with anything that contracts defilement or does not derive its growth from the ground. The furniture of the booths must be of the plainest, and only such as was fairly necessary. Every Israelite was to dwell in the booth during the whole of the seven days of the festival, while his house was to be only his occasional abode; and he was only to quit the booth when it rained heavily. Even a child, as soon as it ceased to be dependent upon its mother, must dwell in the booth. The only persons exempt were those deputed on pious missions, invalids, nurses, women, and infants.

There was a controversy between the Pharisees and Sadducees respecting the use of the branches of trees mentioned in Leviticus 23:40; the latter, from Nehemiah 8:15-16, understanding them to be for the erection of the booths, whereas the Pharisees applied them to what the worshipers were to carry in their hands. The rabbis ruled that the *aethrog*, or citron, was the fruit of the "beautiful trees," and "the boughs of leafy trees" meant the myrtle, provided it did not have more berries than leaves. Every worshiper

carried the *aethrog* in his left hand, and in his right the *lulab*, or palm, with myrtle and willow branch on either side of it tied together on the outside with its own kind, though on the inside it might be fastened with a gold thread. The *lulab* was used in the Temple on each of the seven festive days; even children, if able to shake it, were required to carry one.

1. The day before the feast, 14th of Tishri, was the *Preparation Day*. On this day the pilgrims came to Jerusalem and prepared all that was necessary for the solemn observance of the festival. When evening set in, the blasts of the priests' trumpets on the Temple mount announced the advent of the feast. As at the Passover and at Pentecost, the altar of burnt offering was cleansed during the first night watch, and the Temple gates were thrown open immediately after midnight. The time until the beginning of the ordinary morning sacrifice was occupied in examining the various sacrifices and offerings that were to be brought during the day. If this day was the Sabbath all *lulabs* had to be deposited somewhere in the Temple, as it was contrary to law to carry the palms from the booths of the pilgrims to the Temple on the Sabbath.
2. On the first day of the feast, 15th of Tishri, while the morning sacrifice was being prepared, a priest, accompanied by a joyous procession and with music, went down to the Pool of Siloam, where he drew water into a golden pitcher. On the Sabbaths the water was brought from a golden vessel in the Temple itself, to which it had been carried from Siloam the preceding day. At the same time that the procession started for Siloam, another went to a place in the Kidron Valley, to which they brought willow branches. These they stuck on either side of the great altar, bending them over so as to form a canopy. The priest who had gone to Siloam timed his return so as to join his brother priests as they carried the sacrifice to the altar. On reaching the water gate he was welcomed by three blasts of the trumpet. He ascended the steps of the altar with another priest, who carried a pitcher of wine for a drink offering. They turned to the left, where there were two silver basins with holes in the bottom; the basin for the water at the W with a narrower hole, that for the wine at the E with wider hole, so that both might empty at the same time. Into these respective basins the water and wine were poured; the people shouting to the priest, "Raise thy hand," to show that he really poured the water into the basin. The reason for this was that Alexander Jannaeus, a Sadducee (about 95 B.C.), had shown his contempt for the Pharisees by pouring the water upon the ground. He was pelted by the people with their *aethrogs*, and the soldiers, being called in, killed nearly six thousand Jews in the Temple.

As soon as the altar was decorated with the willow branches the morning sacrifice was offered, followed by the special festive sacrifices. While these sacrifices were being offered, the Levites chanted the Great Hallel, as at the Passover and Pentecost. When the choir came to the words "Give thanks to the Lord" (Psalm 118:1), again when they sang, "O Lord, do save, we beseech Thee" (Psalm 118:29), all the worshipers shook their *lulabs* toward the altar. The chant finished, the priests marched around the altar, exclaiming, "Hosanna, O Jehovah: give us help, O Jehovah, give prosperity" (cf. Psalm 118:25). The benediction was then pronounced, and the people dispersed, amid the repeated exclamation "How beautiful art thou, O altar!" or "To Jehovah and thee, O altar, we give thanks!"

Each pilgrim went to his booth, there to enjoy his social repast with the Levite, the stranger, etc. On the first day of the festival every Israelite carried about his *lulab*, or palm, all day—to the synagogue, on his visits to the sick and mourners.

3. The second through the sixth days of the feast, 16th-20th of Tishri, were called also the middle days of the feast (John 7:14), or *the lesser festival*. These days were half holy days, on which necessary food or raiment might be privately purchased, and work required for the observance of the festival might be performed. During these days the sacrifices were offered, the palm and the citron were used, and the priests marched around the altar as on the first day of the festival, with the exception that the number of animals offered diminished daily.
4. The seventh or the last day of the feast fell on the 21st of Tishri (but according to some authorities this title was given to the 22nd of Tishri). This seventh day of the festival was distinguished from the other days as follows: after the *Musaph*, or special festival sacrifices of the day, the priests marched seven times around the altar instead of once, as on other days; the willows that surrounded the altar were then so thoroughly shaken by the people that the leaves lay thickly on the ground; the people also brought palm branches and beat them to pieces at the side of the altar, from which the day was called *the day of willows* and *the branch-threshing day*. This over, the children who were present threw away their palms and ate their *aethrogs*, or citrons; on the afternoon of this day the pilgrims began to move the furniture from the booths, the obligation to dwell in them ceasing at that time. This, the great Hosanna day, was regarded as one of the four days whereon God judges the world. It seems that it was on this day

that Jesus uttered those memorable words, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink" (John 7:37).

5. The eighth day of the feast, 22nd of Tishri, was added as the close of the festival and was observed with sabbatic rest and holy convocation. It had only a simple sacrifice (similar to the first and tenth day of the seventh month. The people no longer dwelt in booths, the joyful procession for the drawing of water was discontinued, the illumination of the court of the women ceased, and the palms and willows were not used.

The ceremony of drawing the water was repeated every morning during the seven days of the festival but was discontinued on the eighth.

When the feast of Booths fell on a sabbatic year, the reading of portions of the law was afterward confined to one book of the Pentateuch, the number of synagogues in which the law was read every week rendering it less needful to read extensive portions in the Temple. A peculiarity of this festival was that on the first seven days all twenty-four divisions of the priests officiated, whereas at all the other festivals only those upon whom the lot fell served. On the eighth day the twenty-four divisions were not all present; only those upon whom the lot fell. As the close of the first day of the feast was celebrated, the "joy of the pouring out of the water," the worshipers descended to the court of the women, where great preparations had been made.

Four giant candelabra were there, each with four golden bowls, a ladder resting against each candelabra and upon them standing four sons of the priests holding pitchers of oil with which they fed the lamps, while the cast-off breeches and girdles of the priests served for wicks. The light from these lamps illuminated the whole city, and around them danced men with lighted torches in their hands, singing hymns and songs of praise. The Levites, stationed on the fifteen steps that led into the court, corresponding to the fifteen psalms of degrees, accompanied the songs with harps, lyres, cymbals, and other musical instruments. The dancing, as well as the music, continued until daybreak. It is probably that Jesus referred to this custom when He spoke those well-known words "I am the light of the world." John 8:12 _____

Since the Dispersion. Except for the adaptation of the rites to the altered condition of the nation, the Jews of present day continue to celebrate the feast of Booths as in the days of the second Temple.

As soon as the Day of Atonement is over, every orthodox Jew begins to erect the booth in which he and his family are to take up their abode during the festival, and he also provides himself with a *lulab* (palm) and *aethrog* (citron). The festival begins on the eve of 14th of Tishri (Preparation Day). All the Jews, attire in the festive garments, resort to the synagogues, where, after the evening prayer, the hallowed nature of the festival is proclaimed by the cantor in the blessing pronounced over the wine. After the evening service every family goes to its booth, which is illuminated and adorned with leaves and fruit and in which the first festive meal is taken. Before this is eaten, the head of the family pronounces the sanctity of the festival over a cup of wine. Each member of the family washes his hands, pronouncing the prescribed benediction while drying them, and all begin to eat. Orthodox Jews sleep in the booths all night.

The following morning, the first day of the feast, they go to the synagogue holding the palms and citrons in their hands, laying them down during the former part of the prayer, but taking them up after the eighteen benedictions, when about to recite the Hallel. Holding the palm in the right hand and the citron in the left, they recite the following prayer: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with Thy commandments, and has enjoined us to take the palm branch."

Then each turns his citron upside down and waves his palm branch three times toward each point of the compass, and the legate of the congregation pronounces the benediction; the Hallel is chanted; the lesson are read from the law and from the prophets. After this the *Musaph* prayer is recited; when the reader comes to the passage where the word *priests* occurs, the Aaronites and the Levites rise, and, after the latter have washed the hands of the former, the priests, with uplifted hands, pronounce the priestly benediction. The morning service concluded, the people again go to their booths to partake of the festive meal with the poor and the stranger. About five or six o'clock they recite, in the synagogue, the *Minchah* prayer, answering to the daily evening sacrifice in the Temple.

The ritual and rites of the second evening and morning are similar to those of the first; the lesson from the prophets, however, is from 1 Kings 8:2-21. After the afternoon service of this day the middle days of the festival begin, which last

four days, when the ritual is like that of ordinary days, a few prayers being inserted in the regular formula; lessons are read on each day, and the procession goes around the ark.

The seventh day, the Great Hosanna, is celebrated with peculiar solemnity, because it is believed that on this day God decrees the rain for the future harvest. On the evening previous every Israelite supplies himself with a small bunch of willows tied with palm bark. Some pious Jews read all night from Deuteronomy, the Psalms, the Mishnah, etc., and are immersed before the morning prayer. Candles are lighted at the time of morning service, and after the morning prayer.

On the evening of the seventh day the festival commences, which concludes the whole cycle of the feast. Being a day of holy convocation, the *Kiddush* (i.e., proclamation) of its sanctity is offered. On the following morning, in the synagogue, the prayers of the first two days are offered; the special lesson of the day is read; the *Musaph*, or additional prayer, is offered, and the priests pronounce the benediction. The people no longer take their meals in the booths on this day. On the evening of this day begins the festival called the *Rejoicing of the Law*. The eighteen benedictions are recited.

On the following morning the Jews resort again to the synagogue, recite the Hallel after the eighteen benedictions, empty the ark of all its scrolls, put a lighted candle on it, and with the scrolls go around the reading desk amid jubilant songs. The scrolls are returned to the ark, with the exception of two, from one of which is read Deuteronomy 33. Four persons are at first called, then all the little children, and then again several adults.

The design of this festival is to celebrate the annual completion of the perusal of the Pentateuch, inasmuch as on this day the last section of the law is read. Hence the name of the festival, *The Rejoicing of Finishing the Law*.

SABBATH YEARS; JUBILEE

We find the first introduction of this institution in the so-called Covenant Book (Exodus 21-23). Its connection with the day of rest (Sabbath) is obvious, although it seems unusual that in Exodus 23:10-12 the regulation regarding the 7th year should precede the statute respecting the 7th day.

Read that scripture and record your thoughts: _____

In this early period of the history of Israel the regulation regarding the 7th year was primarily intended for the relief of the poor and the awakening of a sense of responsibility in the hearts of those better provided with the means of subsistence. It would be wrong, however, to deny its Sabbatic character, for the text says expressly that the land was entitled to a rest because it needed it; it must be released for a time in order to gain fresh strength and insure its future fertility. Two motives, then, present themselves most clearly, one of a social, the other of an economic character, and both are rooted in God's dealings with Israel.

Another evidence of the humane spirit in the Mosaic Law may be found in Exodus 21:2-6 where, in the case of a Hebrew slave, the length of his servitude is limited to six years. The connection with the idea of the Sabbath is clear. However it is also clear that the 7th year in which a slave might be set free need not align with the Sabbatical year, though it might.

Read Deuteronomy 15:1-18 and record what you learn: _____

Many scholars believe that the scope had been enlarged in later years so as to include the release from pecuniary obligation such as the remission of debts or, at least, their temporary suspension. This seems to have happened as the children of Israel were developing from a purely agricultural people to a commercial nation.

Still the same spirit of compassion for the poor and those struggling for a living asserts itself as in the earlier period, and it goes without saying that the old regulation concerning the release of the land in the 7th year was still in force.

According to Deuteronomy 15:1, this proclamation occurred at the end of every 7 years, or, as 15:9 seems to indicate, during "the year of release."

The Sabbatical year was a solemn and general proclamation, the date of which was very likely the Day of Atonement in the 7th month (the Sabbatical month). The celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles (booths) began five days later and it last from the 15th day to the 21st day of the 7th month. In the Sabbatical year, at that time, the Law was read "before all Israel in their hearing," a fact which tends to prove that the Sabbatical year had become a matter of general observance. Another lesson may be deduced from this passage: it gives us a hint respecting the use to which the people may have put their leisure time during the 12 months of Sabbatical rest; it may have been a period of religious and probably other instruction.

In Leviticus 25:1-7 the central idea of the Sabbatical year is unfolded. We should not lose sight of the religious and educational character even of their ancient legislation.

One central thought is brought home: God is the owner of the soil, and through His grace only the chosen people have come into its possession. Their time, and they themselves, belong to Him. It was Yahweh's pleasure to call the children of Israel into life, and if they live and work and prosper, they are indebted to His unmerited loving-kindness. They should, therefore, put their absolute trust in Him, never doubt His word or His power, always obey Him and so always receive His unbounded blessings.

If we thus put all the emphasis on the religious character of the Sabbatical year, we are in keeping with the idea permeating the Old Testament, namely that the children of Israel are the chosen people of Yahweh. All their agricultural, social, commercial and political relations were to be built upon their divine calling and shaped according to God's sovereign will.

But did they really observe the Sabbatical year? There are those who hold that the law regarding the Sabbatical year was not observed before the captivity.

Read Leviticus 26:34-43 and 2 Chronicles 36:21 and record your opinion here:

But all we can gather from these passages is the palpable conclusion that the law regarding the Sabbatical year had not been strictly obeyed, a deficiency which may mar the effect of any law. The possibility of observing the precept of the Sabbatical year is demonstrated by the post-exilic history of the Jewish people. Nehemiah registers the solemn fact that the reestablished nation entered into a covenant to keep the law and to maintain the temple worship.

Read Nehemiah 9:38-10:32 _____

In Nehemiah 10:31, he alludes to the 7th year, "that we would forego the 7th year, and the exaction of every debt." We are not sure the exact meaning of this short allusion; it may refer to the Sabbatical rest of the land and the suspension of debts.

For a certainty we know that the Sabbatical year was observed by the Jews at the time of Alexander the Great. When he was petitioned by the Samaritans "that he would remit the tribute of the 7th year to them, because they did not sow therein, he asked who they were that made such a petition": he was told they were Hebrews. (Josephus, Antiquities XI, viii, 6).

During Maccabean and Hasmonean times, the law regarding the Sabbatical year was strictly observed, although it frequently weakened the cause of the Jews. Josephus also mentions the observance of the Sabbatical year in the Herodian era. The words of Tacitus show the proud Romans' estimate of the Jewish character and customs: "For the 7th day they are said to have prescribed rest because this day ended their labors; then, in addition, being allured by their lack of energy, they also spend the 7th year in laziness."

YEAR OF JUBILEE

Read Leviticus 25:13-28 and Numbers 36:4 _____

The Hebrew word yobel, translated roughly as jubilee, stands for the horn of a ram. Such a horn can be made into a trumpet, and thus the word yobel came to be used as a synonym of trumpet. According to Leviticus 25:9 a loud trumpet should proclaim liberty throughout the country on the 10th day of the 7th month (the Day of Atonement), after the lapse of 7 Sabbaths of years – 49 years.

In this manner, every 50th year was to be announced as a jubilee year. All real property should automatically revert to its original owner, and those who, compelled by poverty, had sold themselves as slaves to their brothers, should regain their liberty.

In addition to this, the Jubilee Year was to be observed after the manner of the sabbatic year. There should be neither sowing nor reaping nor pruning of vines, and everybody was expected to live on what the fields and the vineyards produced "of themselves," and no attempt should be made at storing up the products of the land. Thus there are three distinct factors constituting the essential features of the Jubilee Year: personal liberty, restitution of property, and what we might call the simple life.

1. Personal Liberty.

The 50th year was to be a time in which liberty should be proclaimed to all the inhabitants of the country. We should, indeed, diminish the import of this institution if we should apply it only to those who were to be freed from the bonds of physical servitude. Undoubtedly, they must have been the foremost in realizing its beneficial effects. But the law was intended to benefit all, the masters as well as the servants. They should never lose sight of their being brothers and citizens of theocratic kingdom. They owned their life to God and were subject to His sovereign will. Only through loyalty to Him were they free and could ever hope to be free and independent of all other masters.

2. Restitution of Property.

The institution of the Jubilee Year should become the means of fixing the price of real property. It should exclude the possibility of selling any piece of land permanently because the land belongs to God.

The same rule was to be applied to dwelling-houses outside of the walled cities and also to the houses owned by Levites, although they were built within walled cities.

In the same manner the price of Hebrew slaves was to vary according to the proximity of the Jubilee Year.

Read Leviticus 25:47-54 _____

This passage deals with the enslaving of a Hebrew by a foreigner living among the Jews; it goes without saying that the same rule would hold good in the case of a Hebrew selling himself to one of his own people.

In Leviticus 27:17-25 we find a similar arrangement respecting such lands that were "sanctified to Yahweh." In all these cases the original owner was at liberty to redeem his property at any time, or have it redeemed by some of his nearest relatives.

The crowning feature, though, was the full restitution of all real property in the Jubilee year. The primary object of this regulation was, of course, the reversion of all hereditary property to the family which originally possessed it, and the reestablishment of the original arrangement regarding the division of the land. But that was not all; for this legal disposition and regulation of external matters was closely connected with the high calling of the Jewish people. It was a part of the Divine plan looking forward to the salvation of mankind. In the Year of Jubilee a great future era of Yahweh's favor is foreshadowed, that period which, according to Isaiah, shall be ushered in to all those that labor and are heavy laden, by Him who was anointed by the spirit of the Lord Yahweh.

Read Isaiah 61:1-3 _____

3. The Simple Life.

The Jubilee Year, being the crowning point of all sabbatical institutions, gave the finishing touch as it were to the whole cycle of sabbatic days, months and years. It is, therefore, quite appropriate that it should be a year of rest for the land like the preceding sabbatic year. It follows, of course, that in this instance there were two years, one after the other, in which there should be no sowing or systematic ingathering.

This seems to be clear from Leviticus 25:18-22: "And you shall sow the eighth year, and eat of the fruits, the old store; until the ninth year, until its fruits come in, you shall eat the old store." Thus in the 7th and 8th years the people were to live on what the fields produced in the 6th year and whatever grew spontaneously.

This shows the reason why we may say that one of the factors constituting the Jubilee Year was the "simple life." They could not help but live simply for two consecutive years. Nobody can deny that this afforded ample opportunity to develop the habit of living within very limited means.

Read Leviticus 25:18-22, and record the answer to the question: "What shall we eat the seventh year?" _____

Nothing was expected of the people but faith in Yahweh and confidence in His power, which was not to be shaken by any doubtful reflection. And right here we have found the root of the simple life: no life without God, and no simplicity of life without true faith in Him.

Compare Matthew 4:4 and Deuteronomy 8:3 _____

Did the Jewish people ever observe the Jubilee Year? There is no reason why they should not have observed it in pre-exilic but they may have failed in it, and if so, we should not be surprised at all. Not that the institution in itself was cumbered with any obstacles that could not have been overcome; but what is more common than unbelief and unwillingness to trust God absolutely. There is a tradition according to which the Jubilee Year has never been observed—neither in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah nor at any later period. The truth of this seems to be corroborated by the silence of Josephus, who, while referring quite frequently to the sabbatic year, never once mentions the Year of Jubilee.

JEWISH MARRIAGE CUSTOMS

It was the night of destiny. Jesus had gathered with His disciples in the Upper Room. In a few more hours He would be crucified on a cross. Jesus had been warning His disciples concerning His coming death, resurrection and ascension to heaven. The prospect of these vents caused the disciples to be greatly disturbed. In order to ease their fears, Jesus made the following comforting promise: Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, Believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also. (John 14:1-3). Dr. Renald Showers

Those who live in the modern western world do not catch the full significance of Jesus' promise. This is due to the fact that in His promise Jesus was drawing an analogy from Jewish marriage customs in biblical times. Since this is so, those marriage customs must be examined if one is to grasp the significance of the promise.

The first major step in a Jewish marriage was betrothal.

1. Betrothal involved the establishment of a marriage covenant. By Jesus' time it was usual for such a covenant to be established as the result of the prospective bridegroom taking the initiative.
2. The prospective bridegroom would travel from his father's house to the home of the prospective bride. There he would negotiate with the father of the young woman to determine the price (mohar) that he must pay to purchase his bride.
3. Once the bridegroom paid the purchase price, the marriage covenant was thereby established, and the young man and woman regarded to be husband and wife.
4. From that moment on the bride was declared to be consecrated or sanctified, set apart exclusively for her bridegroom.
5. As a symbol of the covenant relationship that had been established, the groom and bride would drink from a cup of wine over which a betrothal benediction had been pronounced.

6. After the marriage covenant had been established, the groom would leave the home of the bride and return to his father's house. There he would remain separate from his bride for a period of twelve months.
7. This period of separation afforded the bride time to gather her trousseau and to prepare for married life.
8. The groom occupied himself with the preparation of living accommodations in his father's house to which he could bring his bride.

At the end of the period of separation the groom would come to take his bride to live with him. The taking of the bride usually took place at night. The groom, best man and other male escorts would leave the groom's father's house and conduct a torch light procession to the home of the bride.

9. Although the bride was expecting her groom to come for her, she did not know the exact time of his coming.
10. As a result the groom's arrival would be preceded by a shout.
11. This shout would forewarn the bride to be prepared for the coming of the groom.

After the groom received his bride together with her female attendants, the enlarged wedding party would return from the bride's home to the groom's father's house.

12. Upon arrival there the wedding party would find that the wedding guests had assembled already.

Shortly after arrival the bride and groom would be escorted by the other members of the wedding party to the bridal chamber (huppah). Prior to entering the chamber the bride remained veiled so that one could see her face.

13. While the groomsmen and bridesmaids would wait outside, the bride and groom would enter the bridal chamber alone. There in the privacy of that place they would enter into physical union for the first time, thereby consummating the marriage that had been covenanted earlier.
14. After the marriage was consummated, the groom would announce the consummation to the other members of the wedding party waiting outside the

chamber (John 3:29). These people would pass on the news of the marital union to the wedding guests.

15. Upon receiving this good news the wedding guests would feast and make merry for the next seven days.

16. During the seven days of the wedding festivities, which were sometimes called "the seven days of the huppah," the bride remained hidden in the bridal chamber.

17. At the conclusion of these seven days the groom would bring his bride out of the bridal chamber, now with her veil removed, so that all could see who his bride was.

The Examination of the Analogy. In His promise in John 14 Jesus drew an analogy from Jewish marriage customs in biblical times. Now that the marriage customs have been considered, it is essential that the analogy be examined. In what ways was Jesus' promise analogous with Jewish marriage customs? In the examination of the analogy the first thing that should be noted is the fact that the Scriptures regard the Church to be the Bride of Christ.

Ephesians 5:22-23 _____

In addition, just as the Jewish bridegroom took the initiative in marriage by leaving his father's house and traveling to the home of the prospective bride, so Jesus left His Father's house in heaven and travelled to earth, the home of His prospective Church, over 1900 years ago.

In the same manner as the Jewish bridegroom came to the bride's home for the purpose of obtaining her through the establishment of a marriage covenant, so Jesus came to earth for the purpose of obtaining the Church through the establishment of a covenant. On the same night in which Jesus made His promise in John 14 He instituted communion. As He passed the cup of wine to His disciples, He said: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood."

1 Corinthians 11:25 _____

This was His way of saying that He would establish a new covenant through the shedding of His blood on the cross. Parallel to the custom of the Jewish groom paying a price to purchase his bride, Jesus paid a price to purchase His bride, the Church. The

price that He paid was His own blood. It was because of this purchase price that Paul wrote the following to members of the Church:

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 _____

Analogous with the Jewish bride being declared to be sanctified or set apart exclusively for her groom once the marriage covenant was established, the Church has been declared to be sanctified or set apart exclusively for Christ.

Ephesians 5:25-27 _____

1 Corinthians 1:2; 6:11 _____

Hebrews 10:10; 13:12 _____

In the same way that a cup of wine served as a symbol of the marriage covenant through which the Jewish groom obtained his bride, so the cup of communion serves as the symbol of the covenant through which Christ has obtained the Church. (1 Corinthians 11:25).

Just as the Jewish groom left the home of his bride and returned to his father's house after the marriage covenant had been established, so Jesus left the earth, the home of the Church, and returned to His Father's house in heaven after he had established the new covenant and risen from the dead.

Corresponding with the period of separation between the Jewish groom and bride, Christ has remained separate from the Church for over 1900 years. The Church is now living in that period of separation.

Parallel to the custom of the Jewish groom preparing living accommodations for his bride in his father's house during the time of separation, Christ has been preparing living accommodations for the Church in His Father's house in heaven during His separation from His Bride (John 14:2).

In the same manner as the Jewish groom came to take his bride to live with him at the end of the period of separation, so Christ will come to take His Church to live with Him at the end of His period of separation from the Church (John 14:3).

Just as the taking of the Jewish bride was accomplished by a procession of the groom and male escorts from the groom's father's house to the home of the bride, so the

taking of the Church will be accomplished by a procession of Christ and an angelic escort from Christ's Father's house in heaven to the home of the Church.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 _____

Analogous with the Jewish bride not knowing the exact time of the groom's coming for her, the Church does not know the exact time of Christ's coming for her.

In the same way that the Jewish groom's arrival was preceded by a shout, so Christ's arrival to take the Church will be preceded by a shout:

1 Thessalonians 4:16 _____

Similar to the Jewish bride's return with the groom to his father's house after her departure from her home, the Church will return with Christ to His Father's house in heaven after she is snatched from the earth to meet Him in the air.

1 Thessalonians 4:17 _____

John 14:2-3 _____

Parallel to the custom of the Jewish groom and bride entering into physical union after their arrival at the groom's father's house, thereby consummating the marriage that had been covenanted earlier, Christ and the Church will experience spiritual union after their arrival at His Father's house in heaven, thereby consummating their relationship that had been covenanted earlier.

Some believe that corresponding with the Jewish bride remaining hidden in the bridal chamber for a period of seven days after arrival at the groom's father's house, the Church will remain hidden for a period of seven after arrival at Christ's Father's house in heaven. While the seven year Tribulation Period is taking place on the earth, the Church will be in heaven totally hidden from the sight of those living on the earth.

Just as the Jewish groom brought his bride out of the bridal chamber at the conclusion of the seven days with her veil removed, so that all could see who his bride was, so Christ will bring His Church out of heaven in His Second Coming at the conclusion of the seven year Tribulation Period in full view of all who are alive, so that all can see who the true church is.

Just as the proposal that the Jewish bridegroom made could be accepted or rejected, so Christ's proposal to you can be accepted or rejected. If you reject it throughout this lifetime, then you never will be rightly related to Jesus Christ. The tragic result will be that you will spend eternity separated from God and Christ in the eternal lake of fire.

Revelation 20:11-15 _____
