

Progressing Together



BIBL 211

New Testament Survey

Student Version



Fragment of one of the Qumran Cave 'Dead Sea Scrolls'

www.ProgressingTogether.com

info@progressingtogether.com

August 2022

New Testament Survey

Table of Contents

Lesson 1: The Story Continues	6
A. The Messianic Hope in the Old Testament	7
B. The Coming of the Messiah in the New Testament	10
Lesson 2: The Unfolding of God’s Plan for His People	16
A. Geographical Setting	16
B. Political Context of 1 st Century Palestine	18
C. Social Climate of 1 st Century Palestine	20
D. Religious Context of 1 st Century Palestine	22
Lesson 3: The Life of Jesus, Part A.....	31
A. The Birth of Jesus.....	31
B. Jesus’ Temptation.....	34
C. The Call of the Disciples.....	35
D. Jesus’ First Miracle.....	36
Lesson 4: The Life of Jesus, Part B.....	40
A. Sermon on the Mount	40
B. Selected Miracles of Jesus	43
C. Selected Teachings of Jesus.....	45
D. The Jews’ Rejection of Jesus as the Messiah.....	49
Lesson 5: The Life of Jesus, Part C	54
A. Plan of Old	54
B. The Importance of the Crucifixion.....	55
C. The Burial and Resurrection of Jesus	58
Lesson 6: The Development of the Church, Part A	66
A. The Birth of the Church at Pentecost	66
B. The Early Church.....	68
C. First Persecutions	69
D. First Church Officers	71
E. The Church Continues to Expand	72

F. God’s Intention to Bless the Nations 73
G. God’s Plan to use the Church to Reach the Nations..... 74

Lesson 7: The Development of the Church, Part B..... 80

A. The First Great Missionary on His First Missionary Journey 80
B. First Challenges to the Gospel from within the Church 82
C. First Epistles Written to the Church 84
D. Paul’s Second Missionary Journey..... 88
E. More Letters to the Churches..... 90

Lesson 8: The Development of the Church, Part C..... 93

A. Paul’s Third Missionary Journey 93
B. Paul on Trial and Imprisoned..... 98
C. Paul’s Final Voyage 99
D. Final Words..... 101
E. Last Letters..... 102

Lesson 9: The Writings of John..... 109

A. The Gospel of John 109
B. The Epistles of John 113
C. Revelation 115

Lesson 10: Revision and Exam Questions..... 123

Syllabus for BIBL211

New Testament Survey

Certificate Level

Course objective

To lead people to embrace the gospel, to learn to read and study the New Testament, and to gain an appreciation for its historical and theological context so that they will be better teachers, preachers, and leaders in fellowships among new converts.

Course description

This course begins with God's plan to redeem the world by sending his Messiah at the right time in history, and goes on the show, through study of the gospels, how this Messiah, Jesus Christ, not only demonstrated his identity, but fulfilled all of God's purposes in his birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection. It then traces the rapid expansion of the early church, the expression of God's growing kingdom on earth, through the message of the apostles, including the apostle Paul, and examines the foundations of faith and salvation in Christ as expressed in the apostolic writings.

Learning Outcomes

Content: By the end of the course, the student will be able:

- To describe the centrality of the Messiah's mission and appearance in the NT and show how it relates directly to God's plan of redemption as it appears in the Old Testament
- To chart key people and events of the New Testament on a historical timeline
- To identify and briefly describe key New Testament figures
- To summarize the teaching of key New Testament books
- To identify key elements contributing to the early church's growth and solidification as expressed in the book of Acts and the NT epistles

Character: By the end of this course, the student should:

- Embrace the gospel call to share the message of salvation in Christ, beginning in a local context, and in ever widening circles of influence
- Accept and embrace the radical transformation of life which acceptance of the gospel of the kingdom of God produces in a person's life and surroundings
- Internalize key principles which guide church life and growth in the New Testament

Competency: By the end of this course the student will be able

- To explain the message of salvation in Christ, as presented in the NT, to an inquirer
- To recite from memory and explain key verses found in the NT

- To transfer the knowledge acquired about major themes of the NT to a disciple, study group, or local congregation
- To demonstrate the effects of a core principle learned in the class, and to communicate that change or activity to the rest of the class

Course requirements

Certificate Level

- Demonstrate knowledge of course material through
 - answering questions at the end of each section
 - completion of the final exam, which will specifically focus on character outcomes
- Attend 18 of 20 instructor-led sessions (27 contact hours minimum)
- Participate in discussions by listening, contributing as appropriate, and responding when asked a specific question
- Draft a time-line of 40 key events and people in the New Testament
- Memorize at least 25 verses from the NT and their meaning
- Make a rough outline of at least 14 NT books, including the gospels, Acts, Romans, and Revelation, and 7 epistles of the student's choosing
- Write out a personal testimony following Paul's model in Acts 26: life before Christ, process of conversion, changes produced by knowing Christ, an appeal to the listener to surrender to Christ

Credits earnable

2 hours of credit towards a Certificate in Christian Studies

Prerequisites

Progressing Together BIBL201, BIBL202, BIBL203, and BIBL204, or equivalent

Textbook and related materials

- Required: Progressing Together Manual for BIBL211
 - Additional readings may be required at the instructor's discretion
- Recommended: At least one complete reading of the entire New Testament

Course methodology

The student will work inductively, reading texts, answering questions concerning knowledge, application and analysis, and drawing conclusions which will be applicable to local context. After answering the questions in each lesson, students will gather to discuss answers and practical application. When possible, the course leader will give additional talks to reinforce what the students are learning through the lessons.

Course schedule

To be announced.

Evaluation methodology and scale

- Student performance and mastery will be assessed according to the following scale:
 - 40% for completion of reading and assignments, (10% each for timeline, memory work, book outlines and testimony)
 - 10% on student participation and attitude in discussions
 - 10% on attendance (percentage equals number of classes attended, divided by number of classes held, times ten)
 - 40% on the final written, or oral, exam.
- The evaluation scale is as follows
 - passing grade – above 70%
 - good grade – 80-89%
 - excellent grade – 90% or above

Policies

- Cheating (copying another student's exam answers) and plagiarism (quoting another individual's material without acknowledging that person's work) will not be tolerated, because it is deemed contrary to Christian teaching and academic integrity.
- Absences in excess of 3 class hours will lead to a reduced grade; no student missing more than 6 class hours will receive credit for the course. Students who show little or no interest in completing course work will first be warned, then asked to leave the course if they do not change their conduct.

Bibliography

Guthrie, Donald. *New Testament Introduction*. InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL. 1990.

Lebanese Bible Society. *Guide to the Bible* (المرشد إلى الكتاب المقدس). Beirut. 1996.

Wright, N.T. *Paul*. Fortress Press: Minneapolis, MN. 2005.

Wright, N.T. *The Challenge of Jesus*. InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, MI. 1999.

Lesson 1: The Story Continues

Preparations for the Coming Messiah

Overview

The New Testament is the second volume in the Christian Bible. It is comprised of 27 books written in the first century after the death of Jesus Christ by several of Jesus' disciples (e.g. Matthew, James, Peter, and John) or close followers (Luke, Mark, Paul, Jude). Unlike the Old Testament which was written over several generations and covers more than 2000 years of history, the New Testament was written essentially concurrently with the events that took place over several decades of the first century AD. *(See Approximate Dates of New Testament Books in the Appendix)*

The New Testament is made up of several distinct types of literature: Gospels, History, Epistles (letters) and Prophetic. Each one contributes uniquely to the message of the New Testament by elaborating one or both major themes: the nature, person and work of Jesus Christ; and the birth, development and mission of the Church.

Abbreviations Exercise

Opposite the names of the books of the New Testament are the common abbreviations of these books in jumbled order. Match the abbreviations for each book mentioned below by crossing out the abbreviation in the abbreviation column and writing in the correct abbreviation next to the book to which it corresponds. We recommend that you learn the abbreviations of the books as well as the titles of the books of the New Testament in order as an aid to this and future Bible study. You may consult your Bible if you need help. *(The first one has been done for you.)*

Matthew: <i>Mt</i>	1 Tim	1 Timothy:	Jam
Mark:	Ac	2 Timothy:	2 Jn
Luke:	Titus	Titus:	Mt
John:	1 Co	Philemon:	2 Thes
Acts:	2 Tim	Hebrews:	2 Co
Romans:	Gal	James:	3 Jn
1 Corinthians:	Rev	1 Peter:	Eph
2 Corinthians:	Mk	2 Peter:	Lk
Galatians:	1 Thes	1 John:	2 Pet
Ephesians:	1 Jn	2 John:	Jude
Philippians:	Jn	3 John:	Rom
Colossians:	1 Pet	Jude:	Phil
1 Thessalonians:	Col	Revelation:	Heb
2 Thessalonians:	Philem		

The Old Testament tells the story of Creation, the Fall and God’s plan to redeem humanity and all of Creation. At the centre of this plan is the nation of Israel which is founded and formed as the result of God’s calling of Abraham and subsequent promises and covenants. Despite man’s rebellion and God’s discipline of His people which sent them off into Exile, removed and far away from the blessing promised in return for their obedience, the close of the Old Testament rings with prophetic encouragement that God has not forgotten his promises nor broken His covenants, but the time is coming when He will pour out His blessing and make for Himself a people from all nations. The key to the realization of this great hope is the promised coming of the Messiah whom the prophets describe as a prophet, priest, king, deliverer and saviour.

What is important to understand when reading and studying the New Testament is that it is not a completely ‘new’ story, but rather the completion of the story of redemption that God began in the Old Testament. The two volumes go together and must be understood in light of each other. This idea of ‘completion’ is made evident by the fact that the first thing described by the first book of the New Testament (Matthew) are the events surrounding the birth of a child. Is this the One promised by the prophets of old? Could it be that after all these years, God has been pleased to send to us His Saviour?

Introduction

The events that the New Testament records come after a period of nearly 400 years of prophetic silence. Malachi, the last prophet of the Old Testament period brought his call to repentance between 432 and 425 BC. Though the people of Israel had, by the grace of God, survived the captivity and exile under the Assyrians and Babylonians, and had returned to the Promised Land and rebuilt the temple and the walls surrounding Jerusalem, they were plagued with sin marked in particular by corrupt priests, neglected offerings and practices, and idolatry (Malachi 1:6-8; 2:6-9; 2:10-13; 3:6-9)

After the Babylonians, the Persians ruled Asia Minor and the Land of Palestine. The Persians were succeeded by the Greeks under the direction of Alexander the Great. The Greeks in turn were succeeded by the Romans. It is the Romans who ruled during the time of the events of the New Testament, and after 400 years, the hope of the people of Israel (known by then as the ‘Jews’) continued to be strong. Most remembered the prophecies of the coming Messiah, although many had grown complacent. Many, such as the Pharisees, still held out a living hope that He would come in their lifetime. What is the basis of this stubborn hope?

A. The Messianic Hope in the Old Testament

1. Read Genesis 3:14-16.

a. Who is speaking?

.....

b. What is the context (what has just happened)?

.....

.....

c. What does this passage say is going to happen?

.....
.....
.....

2. Read Genesis 12:1-3.

a. Name the three promises that God gave to Abraham in verses 1-3.

—
—
—

b. What does the author say is the key to receiving a blessing as a result of these promises?

.....

3. Read Deuteronomy 18:15-17. According to Deuteronomy 1:1, much of what is recorded in this book is Moses' explanation of God's law for the people of Israel. Based upon this information, answer the following questions.

a. In verse 15, when the writer says, "God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you," who does the 'me' refer to? (Compare Acts 3:22.)

.....
.....

b. What does the writer mean when says, "...from among you, from your countrymen"? (Compare Acts 3:25-26.)

.....

c. How do we know from this verse that this prophet cannot be Mohammad?

.....

4. Read 2 Samuel 7:8-9, 16 and Psalm 89:20-21, 27-29

a. What does God promise to David?

.....
.....

b. How can David experience this if he later dies?

.....

5. Based upon the passages you looked at in questions 1-4 above, what can you say so far about the person that God intended to send to His people?

.....
.....

6. Read Psalm 2:1-2.

a. What name is given to God’s representative described here in verse 2?

.....

b. How do the nations respond to God’s representative?

.....

7. Read Psalm 23.

a. How is the Lord described?

.....

.....

b. What are three things the Psalmist says that the Lord does for His people in this Psalm?

—

—

—

8. Read Isaiah 53:1-12.

a. Who is Isaiah talking about?

.....

b. How is this person described?

.....

.....

.....

c. What does this person accomplish in his suffering?

.....

.....

9. Read Isaiah 9:6-7

a. When Isaiah says in verse 6, “a child will be born to us,” who is the ‘us’ he is talking about?

.....

.....

b. What does Isaiah say will be the child’s primary role?

.....

.....

c. What titles are used to describe this child?

.....

.....

d. According to Isaiah, how long will this person exercise his authority?

.....

10. Based upon the passages you looked at in questions 6-10 above, what else can you say about the person that God intended to send to His people?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....



Take Note!

The influence of the Old Testament is seen throughout the New Testament. The New Testament writers included approximately 250 express Old Testament quotations, and if one includes indirect or partial quotations, the number jumps to more than 1,000. It is clear that the writers of the New Testament were concerned with demonstrating the continuity between the Old Testament Scriptures and the faith they proclaimed. They were convinced that in Jesus the Old Testament promises had been fulfilled.

B. The Coming of the Messiah in the New Testament

1. Read Matthew 1:18-23.

a. Summarize the angel's message to Joseph.

.....
.....

b. Read Isaiah 7:14. How do the words of Isaiah compare to the angel's message to Joseph?

.....
.....

c. If you were Joseph, what might you be thinking?

.....
.....
.....
.....



Take Note!

The expectation that the Messiah would come in 1st Century Palestine was so intense, that many men claimed that they were the 'One' and lead many people astray! (See Acts 5:33-39)

2. Read Matthew 2:1-6

a. Who were the Magi looking for?

.....

b. Why would this alarm King Herod?

.....

c. The title 'messiah' is the Hebrew word for 'anointed one'. The Greek translation of 'Messiah' is 'Christ'. Therefore, the name 'Jesus Christ' means literally 'Jesus the anointed one'. What details do the Chief Priests give to Herod to describe this coming Messiah? List three:

—

—

—



Take Note!

Scholars have identified more than 300 prophecies from the Old Testament that Jesus fulfilled in his birth, life and ministry, and death and resurrection. In addition to these prophecies he performed many miracles and taught extensively about the things of God, adding weight to His claims to be the Prophet, Priest and King spoken of in the OT.

3. Read Luke 2:8-14.

a. Summarize the angels' message to the shepherds.

.....

.....

b. Several Old Testament prophecies that you have already looked at in section A talk about the coming Messiah. Which of these prophecies do the angels refer to? (Give the book, chapter and verse as well as a one sentence summary of the prophecy.)

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

c. If you had been one of those shepherds that night on the hills in Palestine, what would you have been feeling?

.....

.....

.....

4. Read the following passages and summarize what they say about Jesus. *The first one is given as an example.*

Passage	What it says about Jesus
John 8:25-29	<i>Jesus speaks for God. He is therefore a prophet.</i>
John 5:17-18
John 18:33-37
John 10:11-14
John 12:44-47
John 3:16-17
John 4:25-26
Luke 9:21-23

5. In your own words and using the passages above, explain how Jesus Christ showed Himself to be the One that the prophets of the Old Testament said was coming.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

As a tool for evangelism and teaching with regard to the person of Jesus, complete the following chart summarizing some of the major Old Testament prophecies fulfilled by Jesus. Select the appropriate New Testament passage from the list below, and write it in the appropriate space across from its Old Testament prophecy. (Note: Some OT prophecies have more than one NT reference that will 'fit'!) This chart can be carried in your Bible and used to help explain the unique person of Jesus. *The first one has been done as an example.*

Major Old Testament Prophecies Fulfilled by Jesus Christ

OT Passage	Subject	NT Passage
Micah 5:2, "As for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah... from you one will go forth from Me to be ruler in Israel..."	Born in Bethlehem	<i>Luke 2:4, "And Joseph also went up... to the City of David, which is called Bethlehem...and she gave birth to her first-born son."</i>
Isaiah 7:14, "Behold a virgin shall conceive..."	Born of a virgin	.....
Deuteronomy 18:15, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you from your countrymen."	Declared to be a prophet	.....
Isaiah 53:3, "He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief...He was despised, and we did not esteem Him."	Rejected by His own people, the Jews	.....
Psalm 2:7, "... the decree of the Lord: He said to Me, 'Thou art my Son, today have I begotten Thee.'"	Declared to be the Son of God	.....
Isaiah 50:6, "I gave My back to those who strike Me... I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting."	Spit on and struck	.....
Psalm 22:18, "They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots."	They gambled over His clothing	.....
Zechariah 12:10, "They will look on Me whom they have pierced."	His side pierced	.....
Psalm 16:10, "Because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay."	To be resurrected	.....
Psalm 68:18, "When you ascended on high, you took many captives; you received gifts from people, even from the rebellious-- that you, LORD God, might dwell there.."	Ascended to Heaven	.....

List of New Testament passages to be inserted into the chart above:

- Ephesians 4:8, “He ascended on High, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men.”
- Mark 16:19, “When the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into Heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.”
- Mark 16:6, “Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here.”
- John 19:34, “One of the soldiers pierced His side... and immediately there came out blood and water.”
- Matthew 27:35, “And they divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots.”
- Matthew 26:67, “Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him.”
- Matthew 3:17, “... a voice out of the heavens, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.’”
- Luke 23:18, 21, “But they all cried out together, ‘Away with this man... crucify, crucify Him!’”
- John 1:11, “He came to His own (people) and His own (people) did not receive Him.”
- Acts 3:20, 22 “...He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you... (for) Moses said, The Lord your God shall raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren.”
- Luke 1:26, 27, 31, “The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a virgin... Behold, you will conceive... and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus.”
- Luke 2:4, “And Joseph also went up... to the City of David, which is called Bethlehem... and she (Mary) gave birth to her first-born son.”

Conclusion

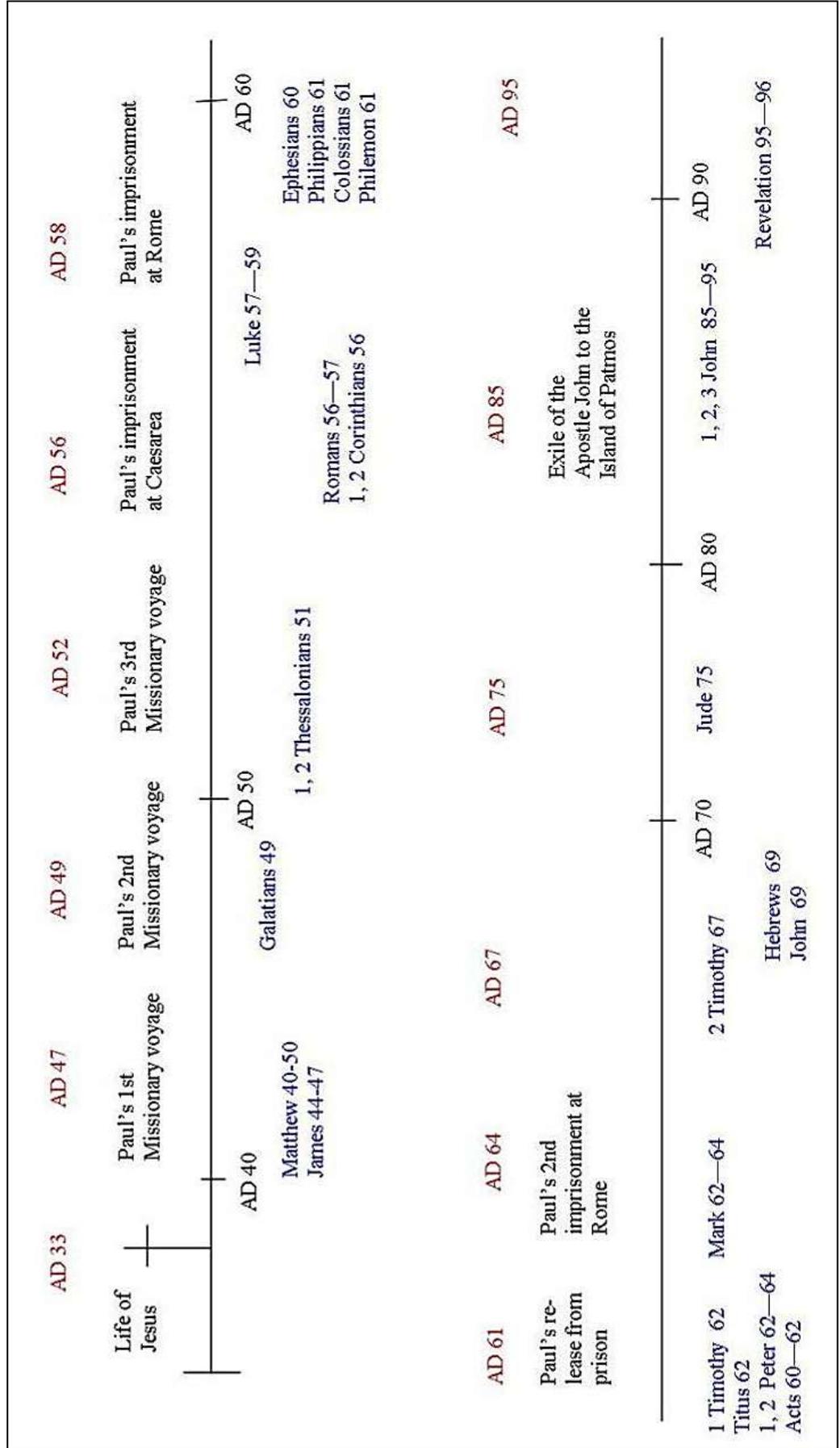
The New Testament continues God’s story of redemption by presenting the life and ministry of Jesus, the promised Messiah.

1. Choose one of the following passages to memorize:

- a. Genesis 12:1-3
- b. Isaiah 9:6-7
- c. Luke 2:10-11

2. Numbers 23:19 says, “God is not a man that He should lie; nor a son of man that He should repent; has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken and will He not make it good?” Take time now to pray and thank God for the fact that – just as He showed by fulfilling the prophecies of the Messiah in Jesus Christ –He is trustworthy and does what He says He will do.

Appendix 1: Approximate Dates of the Books of the New Testament



Lesson 2: The Unfolding of God's Plan for His People

The Social, Political, Religious and Geographical Context of the New Testament

Introduction

As we saw in Lesson 1, the events of the New Testament are directly and inseparably linked to the story of the Old Testament. This lesson is designed to help the student understand the setting in which the events and people of the New Testament are described. Two essential elements of the Bible that every Bible student must not overlook and which cannot be overemphasized are first, that the people mentioned and the events described actually happened in real places at a real time in history. Secondly, all that happened in the political, social, religious, historical and personal realms was superintended by God.

A. Geographical Setting

The events of the New Testament take place in the Mediterranean region of Asia Minor and the Arab Peninsula, though most of what happens is concentrated in the area known commonly as 'Palestine', which stretched from the Jordan River and the Dead Sea on the East, to the Mediterranean Sea on the West, and comprised (in the first century), Galilee, Judea, and Samaria. (See Map 2)

1. On the map below, find and circle the following important cities: Rome, Jerusalem, Corinth, Philippi and Antioch.

Map 1: The Mediterranean Region



a. Which of these cities were accessible to the Mediterranean Sea?

.....

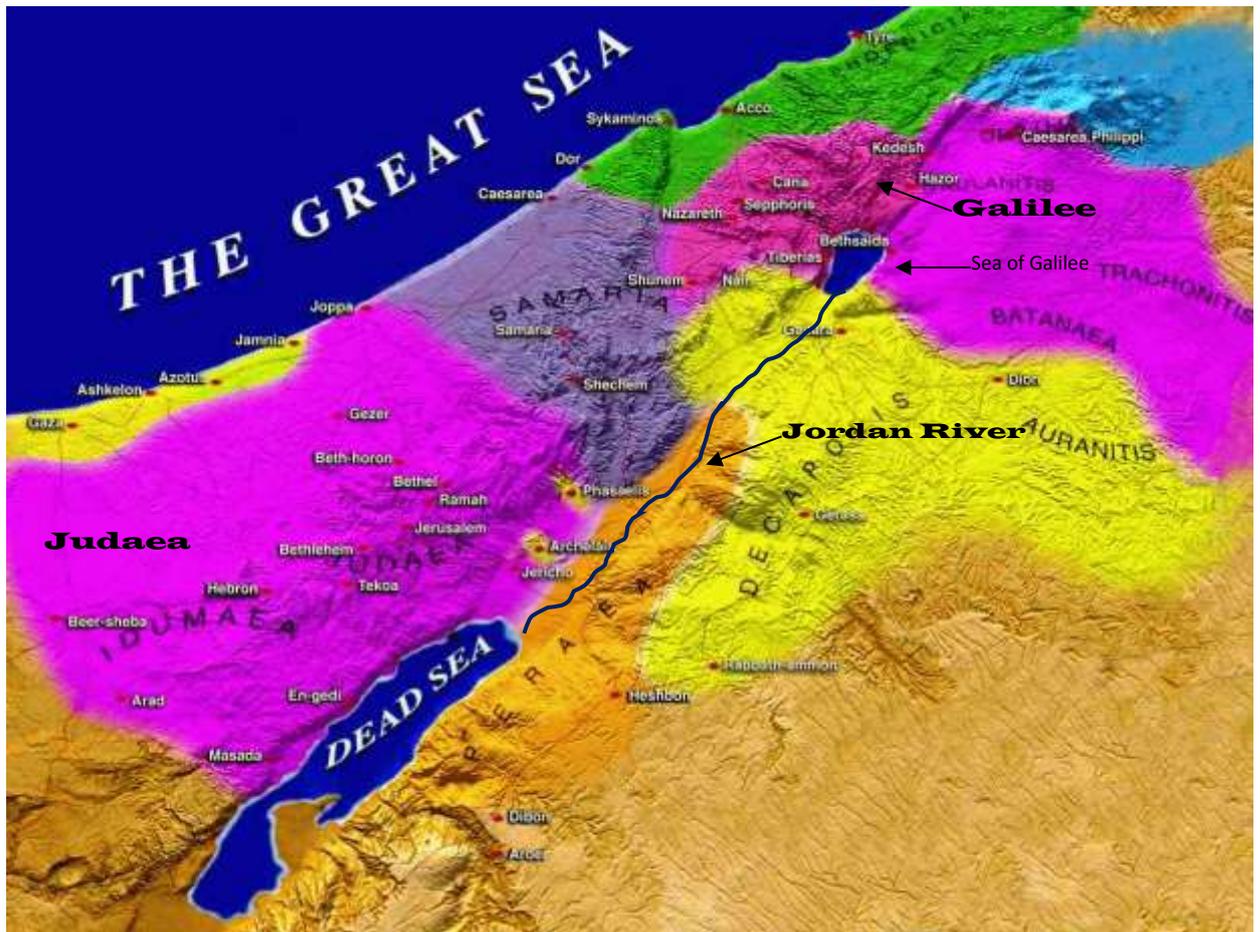
b. Why would this be important for the advance of the Gospel?

.....

.....

2. On the following map, find and circle the following important cities: Nazareth, Bethlehem, Cana, Jericho, and Bethsaida.

Map 2: Palestine in the Time of the Early Church



Copyright GospelThunder.com. All Rights Reserved.

As you can see, the continuing story of the New Testament makes use of many of the same cities and surrounding areas that were important in the Old Testament. One city of particular importance was the city of Jerusalem.

a. From your knowledge of the Old Testament, name two important things (people, events or objects) which identify Jerusalem as an important city.

.....

.....

.....

b. Read the following passages and note what each one says about Jerusalem’s future. *The first one is given as an example.*

Passage	Jerusalem’s Future
Isaiah 62:1-5	<i>Jerusalem will be renewed and all the nations will see her righteousness</i>
Zechariah 8:3-8	..........
Revelation 21:1-4	..........

c. What common theme do these texts share with regard to the future of Jerusalem?

.....
.....

B. Political Context of 1st Century Palestine

1. Read the following passages and identify the political authority mentioned. See if you can gather from the context (a few verses before or after) the extent of the person’s authority or rule (i.e., was he the Emperor of Rome, a local official, or a regional governor?). *The first one is given as an example.*

Passage	Authority figure	Extent of Authority or Rule
Luke 1:5	<i>Herod the Great</i>	<i>King of Judea</i>
Luke 2:1
Matthew 14:1-5
Matthew 27:1-2
Acts 23:25-35
Acts 26:13-16, 21
Luke 3:1

During the time of the New Testament, the Roman Empire ruled the largest kingdom in the Western World. Due to the wisdom and might of the Roman authorities the Western World knew a certain amount of economic prosperity. One key to the success of the Roman Empire was the willingness on the part of Roman Emperors to allow local provinces the privilege of self-government and the right to keep their own language, customs, and religion as long as the people stayed on peaceful terms with Rome: meaning, as long as they paid their taxes and didn’t cause any trouble.

The birth of Jesus takes place during the reign of Herod the Great. In an effort to maintain peace between Rome and the Jews, he undertook a number of large-scale building projects, including the restoration of the Jerusalem temple.

2. Despite Roman efforts to accommodate the Jews, over time, a considerable amount of animosity developed between them. Read the following passages and note the arena of conflict (i.e. political, religious, personal, etc..) between the Romans and the Jews.

a. Matthew 22:15-21:

.....

b. Matthew 14:3-12:

.....

c. Luke 13:1:

.....

d. Given the vast religious differences between the Jews who worshipped the God of Creation and the Romans, who were obliged to worship the Emperor, what could the Romans or the Jews have done to avoid cultural and religious conflict?

.....

e. Since the ways of the Gospel are frequently different from the laws and customs of any given culture or country, what are the likely points of conflict for those who wish to follow Christ in your country?

.....

3. Read John 18:35-37 and Acts 1:6-7.

a. What were the Jews (including the disciples) expecting Jesus to do as the Messiah?

.....

b. Why were the Jews so convinced that the Messiah would be a military champion and overthrow the Romans in order to set up an Earthly Kingdom? (See Isaiah 60:10-14 and Psalms 2:1-9 if you need help understanding the Jews' view of the Messiah.)

.....

C. Social Climate of 1st Century Palestine

1) Men, women and children.

1. Select one of the following passages: John 8:1-11; Matthew 19:13-15; Matthew 19:3-8. Read the passage and answer the following questions.

a. What does this passage indicate about the place of this person or persons in society in Jesus' day?

.....
.....
.....
.....

b. How does what Jesus says challenge the cultural norm of the day?

.....
.....
.....

c. How does the place of this person or persons in society in Jesus' day compare to the place of similar people in your own culture today?

i. John 8:1-9: The woman caught in adultery

.....
.....

ii. Matthew 19:13-15: Children gather around Jesus

.....
.....

iii. Matthew 19:3-8: Jesus' instructing the disciples with regard to divorce (the 'person' in view here is the wife).

.....
.....
.....

2) Rich and Poor

The Gospels provide many glimpses into the life of ordinary people in the first century. Men and women, rich and poor, slave and free, Jew, Greek, Roman and others are all confronted with Jesus and an invitation to the Gospel.

Read the following passages and note what is happening, as well as Jesus' view of things. (In other words, what does Jesus see as most important in what is happening? What is the lesson He wants to teach?) *The first is given as an example.*

Passage	What is happening?	What is Jesus' teaching?
Mark 12:41-44	<i>A poor, old woman puts two pennies into the temple treasury.</i>	<i>Two pennies given in faith are worth far more than riches given to please men.</i>
Luke 17:11-16	...............	...............
Luke 18:9-14	...............	...............

3) Jews, Romans and Greeks

Palestine, in the first century, was home to a number of cultures. With the expansion of Roman rule and the improvements made to peace and welfare, transportation and commerce, people from many lands crisscrossed the kingdom bringing with them their customs, traditions, values and beliefs which often gave rise to misunderstanding and conflict.

1. Read Acts 17:16-21.

a. Who does Paul meet in the city of Athens?

.....

b. How would you describe their attitude towards religion?

.....

.....

c. How do their beliefs compare to those of Paul?

.....

.....

2. Read Acts 21:27-39

a. What was Paul accused of?

.....

.....

.....

b. Why did this accusation result in a near riot?

.....

.....

.....

.....

c. How and why did the Romans get involved?

.....

d. This incident continues through chapter 23 where Paul is eventually taken to Caesarea to appear before the Roman Governor, Felix. Read Acts 22:24-29. How does Paul defend himself before the Roman military authorities?

.....

3. In light of what you have read and studied above, choose one of the following responses (by marking an 'X' in the box) and explain why you think so.

a. Christianity was planted in a social setting that completely agreed with and accepted it.

.....

b. Christianity was planted in a social setting that completely ignored its ideas, values and beliefs.

.....

c. Christianity was planted in a social setting that needed to be transformed

.....

D. Religious Context of 1st Century Palestine

First century Palestine was alive with religious sentiment. On the one hand, the people of Palestine were under the watchful eye of the Roman authorities who, for the most part, allowed their constituents to practice their religious faith as long as it did not conflict with, nor keep them from obeying, Roman law. The Jews were even exempted from Emperor worship, military conscription and appearing in court on the Sabbath. On the other hand, obligations and freedoms changed depending upon who ruled Rome which resulted at times in conflict.

Within the Jewish population itself, several expressions of the faith were evident: those who embodied the public and 'official' religious practice of the Jews, namely the Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees; the every-day Jew who was often pre-occupied with eking out a living and staying out of trouble from either the Romans or the Jewish religious leaders, and the 'others' who

practiced unapproved ‘versions’ of the Jewish faith, such as the Samaritans. To this mix, one must also add the various animists and idolaters of Greek or African origins, as well as those who practiced sorcery and other ‘black’ arts.

1) Roman Religious/Political Influence

1. Read Mark 12:13-17.

a. What is the issue that the Pharisees ask Jesus to respond to?

.....

b. Why is this issue troublesome to the Jews?

.....

.....

c. How does Jesus’ response silence the Pharisees?

.....

.....

d. How does “give to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things of God” apply in your own life?

.....

.....

.....

2) Pharisees, Sadducees and Scribes

1. Read the following passages and note the prevailing attitudes of the religious leaders. *The first one is given as an example.*

Passage	Prevailing attitude
Matthew 9:10-11	<i>Accusing/judging Jesus for ‘inappropriate’ behaviour</i>
Matthew 12:9-14
Matthew 26:3-5
Matthew 27:15-20
Mark 12:38-40

Luke 11:39-44	..........

2. Based upon the passages you have read in completing the table, how would you describe the religious leaders in terms of what they considered to be the most important things in the practice of their religion?

.....
.....

3. Why do you think Jesus was a particular target of the religious leaders?

.....
.....



Take Note!

The Pharisees believed that the Babylonian exile was the result of a failure of Israel to keep the Torah (or ‘Law’). As a result, they codified the contents of the Torah into 613 commandments: 248 positive and 365 negative; including 39 prohibited acts on the Sabbath.

3) Samaritans

The Samaritans were considered half-breeds by the majority of the Jews because they traced their ancestry to Jews that married outside of Judaism during the time of the Exile. By the time of the 1st Century the Samaritans, who for the most part inhabited a region called ‘Samaria’ (see map 2 above), found themselves somewhat isolated from the rest of their fellow Jews. So intense was the dislike of the Samaritans that many Jews would avoid business and social relationships with them and many would avoid traveling through Samaria – choosing to take a long detour around the region – when traveling between Galilee and Judea.

1. With this in mind, read Luke 10:29-37

a. How do the priest and Levite (the ‘good’ Jews) respond to the injured man?

.....
.....
.....

b. How does the Samaritan (the ‘bad’ Jew) respond to him?

.....
.....

c. What is Jesus’ point in telling this story?

1)
.....

- 2)
-
- 3)
-
- 4)
-

2. Read John 4:1-10

a. What is significant about where Jesus takes his disciples on this trip?

.....

.....

b. How do you explain the surprise of the woman when Jesus speaks with her?

.....

.....

c. In verse 27, the disciples come back to find Jesus speaking with a Samaritan woman. What do you think is going through their minds?

.....

.....

d. What is Jesus' purpose in bringing His disciples to Samaria?

.....

.....

e. What people in your culture/village are like the Samaritans?

.....

.....

f. What does Jesus show us about how we should treat them?

.....

.....

4) Other Religious Influences in the New Testament

1. Read Acts 13:5-11

a. How would you describe the religious world of Elymas?

.....

.....

b. How did Paul respond to him?

.....
.....

2. Read Acts 19:23-35

a. How would you describe the religious world of (many of) the inhabitants of Ephesus?

.....
.....

b. Why does the preaching of the Gospel and the conversion of many Ephesians cause a problem that ends in a near riot?

.....
.....
.....

c. Consider the religious world of your own hometown. How would the preaching of the Gospel and the conversion of many of your friends and neighbours affect it?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Conclusion:

The people and events of the New Testament are real and historical. God made use of cities and cultures and politics and religion to finish that part of His story that would be written down as the Bible. The key to understanding the message of the New Testament in light of the message of the Old Testament is to recognize that nothing was accidental, no detail random, nothing overlooked, and that God used the things of culture, history, politics and religion to accomplish exactly what He said He would do.

In Luke 2:10-11, the angels announce Good News to the shepherds. That good news has two parts:

- a) A Saviour has been born, who is Christ the Lord
- b) He has come for all people.

Take time now to pray for your family, friends, neighbours, colleagues at work or school as well as for your country's leaders that they might meet Jesus as their Saviour and receive the promised joy.

Appendix 2: Definitions

Pharisee: “Pharisees were drawn from all classes and professions of Jewish society; many would not have been involved in politics at all. On the other hand, since Pharisaism was based on a view of what Israel’s responsibilities under the covenant entailed, those Pharisees who occupied positions of influence and power naturally did what they could to promote the acceptance of Pharisaic norms... Whereas they might at times succeed in influencing the proceedings of particular religious and political institutions, they controlled none... Both the rabbinic and Gospel materials appear to support the view that Pharisaic influence with the masses exceeded that of their rivals... Popular support was undoubtedly the main base of what influence the Pharisees possessed. The Pharisees emerge then as an organized party of members committed to a particular understanding of Israel’s Law, maintaining its practice themselves and advocating its adoption by others. Where rulers could be influenced, Pharisees lobbied for their views... In this respect, they functioned as a ‘political interest group.’”

The Pharisees were mostly middle-class businessmen, and therefore were in contact with the common man. Though they were a minority in the Sanhedrin (the Jewish judicial and administrative council – see below), and held a minority number of positions as priests, they seemed to control the decision making of the Sanhedrin far more than the Sadducees did, because they had the support of the people.

Religiously, they accepted the Old Testament Scriptures as inspired by God. But, they also gave equal authority to oral tradition, and attempted to defend this position by saying it went all the way back to Moses. This was nothing less than legalism. These traditions had evolved over centuries. These traditions were added to God's Word, which is forbidden (Deuteronomy 4:2; Revelation 22:18-19), and the Pharisees sought to strictly obey these traditions equally along with the Old Testament (Matthew 9:14, 15:1-9, 23:5, 23:16, 23; Mark 7:1-23; Luke 11:42). “Particular attention was clearly given to matters of ritual purity and tithing... violation of Sabbath laws... open association (even at meal times) with notorious sinners.” (Green et al., *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 1992, pages 610-611)

In contrast to the Sadducees, they held the following beliefs:

1. They believed that God controlled all things, and yet decisions made by individuals also contributed to the course of a person's life.
2. They believed in the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:6).
3. They believed in an afterlife, with appropriate reward and punishment on an individual basis.
4. They believed in the existence of angels and demons (Acts 23:8). Although several things Jesus did and taught contradicted the Pharisees’ teachings, many of them were friendly toward him, inviting him to eat with them and warning him when threatened by Herod (e.g. Luke 7:36, 13:31). Some even became his followers (John 3:1-21, 19:38-42; Acts 15:5).

Sadducee: During the time of Christ and the New Testament era, those who were Sadducees were generally aristocrats. They tended to be wealthy and held powerful positions, including

those of chief priests and high priest, and they held the majority of the 70 seats of the ruling council called the Sanhedrin. They worked very hard to keep the peace by going along with the decisions of Rome (Israel at the time of Jesus was under Roman control), and in fact they seemed to be more concerned with politics than religion. Because they were accommodating to Rome, and they were the wealthy upper class, they did not relate well to the common man nor did the common man hold them in high opinion. The common man related better to those who belonged to the party of the Pharisees. Despite holding a majority in the Sanhedrin, they frequently conformed to the desires of the Pharisees because they were popular among the masses.

Religiously, the Sadducees were more conservative in one main area of doctrine than the Pharisees. The Pharisees gave oral tradition equal authority to the Old Testament scriptures, while the Sadducees considered only the written Word to be from God. However, they were extremely self-sufficient, to the point of denying God's involvement in everyday life.

Because the Sadducees were more concerned with politics than religion, they were unconcerned with Jesus until they became afraid He might bring unwanted Roman attention. It was at this point that the Sadducees and Pharisees united and conspired to put Christ to death (John 11:48-50; Mark 14:53; Mark 15:1). Other mentions of the Sadducees are found in Acts 4:1, Acts 5:17. The historian Josephus also implicates the Sadducees in the death of James (Acts 12:1-2).

Scribe: The word 'scribe' is the English translation of the Greek word 'Grammateus', which means literally 'accurate writer' This term came to mean a 'scholar of the scriptures.' Scribes were men whose primary occupation was writing out copies of the Jewish Scriptures and teaching the people what the law said. Because they copied the Old Testament books, they were familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures and were respected in society for their literacy and knowledge. The scribes provided teaching that was the religious and moral backbone for the Jewish people during the time of Jesus. Because of their role, they were often addressed as, 'Teacher.' At least some scribes were members of the Sanhedrin (Mt. 16:21, 26:3).

They were trusted as professional interpreters and as ones who could judge individual cases as they related to Jewish law. Scribes were, therefore, also trusted as lawyers within Jewish society. As the scribes were the most learned individuals on the fine details of following Jewish law, their duties also consisted of deciding on specific questions of the law in individual cases.

Scribes had no authority in themselves, but rather they continually deferred to the authority of other scribes and traditions to support their positions. Although some of the scribes agreed with Jesus' teachings (e.g. Mt. 8:19), other scribes were some of Jesus' most adamant opponents. In their minds, the Messiah who the Old Testament Scriptures spoke about did not seem to match up with who Jesus was. Particularly, they disputed with Jesus on such issues as ritual washing before a meal, eating with sinners, and forgiving people's sins (Mt. 15:1-2, Mk. 2:1-16). On the other hand, Jesus complained that the scribes cheated widows and orphans, sought the praise of people, were spiritually blind, etc.

Sanhedrin: The Sanhedrin is mentioned frequently in the New Testament in reference to the highest Jewish judicial and administrative council in the first century. Jewish tradition holds that the Sanhedrin was established with the 70 elders that were appointed by God through Moses (Numbers 11:16), while the Israelites were on their Wilderness Journey between Egypt and the Promised Land, about two years after the Exodus (Numbers 10:11). There is no record that the

council operated then as it did in apostolic times, however. For this reason, some believe that the Sanhedrin actually began some time during the three or four centuries between the testaments (after the last OT prophet and before the NT story begins), when the land of Israel was under the Syrian kings in the time of the Maccabees.

By the time of Jesus Christ, the Sanhedrin had great authority, while still under Roman rule. The council consisted of 71 members, including both Pharisees and Sadducees, presided over by the chief priest. The Sanhedrin members were bitter opponents of Jesus Christ and as such, were responsible for His arrest, 'trial,' and death sentence (e.g. Mt 26:1-27:56).

The council's opposition to the early Christian church was no less intense -

- Peter and John were brought before the Sanhedrin and ordered to stop teaching the Gospel (Acts 4:5-21). When the apostles continued, the council had them arrested (Acts 5:21-27). They were later released with a beating and yet another warning (Acts 5:34-42).
- Stephen was also brought before the Sanhedrin and stoned (Acts 6:12-15).
- Paul was brought before the council (Acts 22:30), and they later devised a plot to assassinate him (Acts 23:12-20).

Appendix 3: Selected Political Leaders of Jesus' Day:

Tiberius Caesar was the emperor of Rome (AD 14-37). Tiberius had distinguished himself as a citizen for his oratory skills, as a soldier and a public official. As emperor of Rome he was slothful, self-indulgent, licentious, vindictive and cruel. He was a master at lying and he was very cunning.

Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea for 10 years (AD 26-35). He had entered public life not for pure of lofty reasons but to advance his own career and serve his own selfish purposes. He was ruthless and murderous, with a reputation among the Jews he ruled as being tyrannical and tempestuous. He had a very low and corrupt character.

Herod the Great was appointed king by the Romans (37-4 BC). He was only half Jewish, of Idumean background. He treated his enemies, real or suspected, ruthlessly. He completed many building projects during his reign, including the renovation of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. Around AD 29, Jesus predicted the destruction of this temple, which was razed to the ground by the Romans in AD 70.

Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, ruled Galilee as tetrarch (4 BC-AD 39). Herod was first married to a daughter of King Aretas of Arabia; then he took Herodias, his brother's wife, as his own wife. This sinful act resulted in the death of John the Baptist and the overthrow and banishment of Herod and his unlawful wife.

Philip, the half-brother of Herod Antipas, ruled the region of Ituraea as tetrarch (4 BC-AD 34). He was the only decent ruler from the line of Herod the Great. He was known for his moderation and his justice.

The High Priesthood of **Annas** and **Caiaphas**. Annas was the father in law of Caiaphas, and although Caiaphas was the official high priest of Israel (AD 18-36), Annas, who had been the former high priest (AD 6-15), still held power and authority. Caiaphas is the high priest that tore his clothes and declared Jesus worthy of death.

Lesson 3: The Life of Jesus, Part A

His Birth and Temptation, the Calling of the Disciples and His First Miracle

Introduction

Now that you have taken time to look at how the events of the New Testament continue the story of the Old Testament, it is time to focus on two of the major themes that make up the majority of the New Testament: the life and ministry of Jesus and the birth and expansion of the church.

This lesson will look at the beginnings of Jesus’ life and ministry on the Earth. The purpose is to help the student understand the events surrounding Jesus’ birth, His temptation, the calling of the disciples and His first miracle.

A. The Birth of Jesus

Prior to Jesus’ birth, God sent another prophet – John the Baptist. Study the following section to discover who he was, why he was sent and how his ministry was significant.

3. Read Luke 1:5-17

a. What blessing is God planning to give to Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth?

.....

.....

b. Why was this so important to them?

.....

.....

c. How does the angel describe who their son would be and what he would do?

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Read Matthew 3:1-6

a. How is the ministry of John described?

.....

.....

.....

b. Why do you think he is later known as John ‘the Baptist’?

.....

3. Read John 1:29-34

a. How does John describe Jesus?

.....

.....

.....

b. From what you know of the Old Testament, why does John connect Jesus, ‘the Lamb of God’, with the forgiveness of sins?

.....

.....

4. From all that you have read of John the Baptist, describe how he prepares the way for Jesus.

.....

.....

.....

5. Read the following passages and match them by writing the reference next to the event that they describe. *The first one is given as an example.*

~~Luke 1:26-38~~, Luke 2:1-7, Matthew 2:13-15, Luke 2:15-18, Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 2:8-14, Matthew 2:1-12

Passage	Event Described
Luke 1:26-38	<i>Announcement of the birth of Jesus to Mary</i>
Matt 1.18-25
Luke 2.8-14
Matt 2.1-12
Luke 2.1-7
Matt 2.13-15
Luke 2.15-18

6. What do you notice about the events surrounding the birth of Jesus that makes his birth special? List 12 things (exercise your powers of observation!):

1)

2)

- 3)
- 4)
- 5)
- 6)
- 7)
- 8)
- 9)
- 10)
- 11)
- 12)

In telling the life of Jesus, God chose four men to record events, describe people, and discuss selected teachings from His life. Each Gospel writer was led by the Holy Spirit to select and compile information in such a way as to present a picture of Jesus that would appeal to a certain group of readers. For example, Matthew, in his Gospel, is writing to a primarily Jewish group of readers. Because of this, Matthew makes many references to Old Testament practices and traditions and he quotes often from Old Testament books, making use of knowledge that his Jewish audience would have.

Luke, on the other hand, is writing to communicate to a largely Gentile (non-Jewish) audience that would have little interest in and knowledge of Old Testament Jewish practices and Scriptures. He in turn, spends more time showing how Jesus interacts with nature, women and the poor – all things that concerned the Gentiles.

Similarly, for the Gospels of Mark and John, the writers of these Gospels, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, selected information and compiled it in such a way so that their readers would understand the person, ministry and invitation of Jesus to His kingdom.

7. In contrast to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, which spend several chapters recounting various details surrounding the events prior to, during, and following the birth of Jesus, the Gospel of John describes Jesus' coming to earth from a theological point of view and the Gospel of Mark skips over Jesus' birth entirely. Why do you think these writers spend so little time discussing Jesus' birth?

.....

.....

.....

8. Because each of the Gospel writers, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, sometimes selected different events and teachings in order to explain the life and ministry of Jesus to their particular audience, what do you think is the best way to get a full picture of who Jesus is and what He came to do?

.....

.....

9. Some people look at slight differences in between one Gospel and another and accuse the Christians of corrupting the original text. How would you explain these minor differences to such a person?

.....

.....

.....

10. What is the advantage of having four separate testimonies about Jesus’ life (the four Gospel accounts) as opposed to only one witness, such as in the sect of the Mormons and in the Islamic religion?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

B. Jesus’ Temptation

One thing to notice is that, despite all the detail surrounding the birth of Jesus, very little information is recorded which describes his growing up years. Apart from a few verses talking about being left behind at the temple during one Passover festival (Luke 2:41-50), the next events discussed by the Gospel are Jesus’ baptism by John the Baptist and His move into public ministry.

1. Read Matthew 4:1-2. What happens to Jesus immediately following His baptism by John the Baptist?

.....

2. Read Matthew 4:3-10. Complete the table by describing the temptations and how Jesus responded to each. *The first one is given as an example.*

Verses	Temptation	Jesus’ Response
vv 3-4	<i>Feed yourself (ignore God’s provision)</i>	<i>Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word of God</i>
vv. 5-7	..........	..........
vv. 8-10	..........	..........

a. What was Satan trying to get Jesus to do through this series of temptations?

.....

b. What was Jesus' strategy to withstand temptation?

.....

c. Each one of these temptations can at one time or another be part of our own personal struggle. Choose one of these three temptations with which you have the most trouble and memorize the passage that Jesus used to defeat Satan. Copy the verse that you are memorizing below.

.....

C. The Call of the Disciples

1. From the early days of Jesus' ministry, it was evident that He was not going to do everything on His own. For example, He invited 12 men to follow Him and serve with Him.

a. Without using any Bible helps, list the names of the 12 disciples.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

b. Read Mark 3:13-19 to fill in the names of the disciples that you missed.

.....

2. Read Mark 1:16-20 and Mark 2:13-14. Though not much is written about the lives of the disciples prior to their joining the ministry team of Jesus, what can you say about their character by the way that they respond to Jesus' invitation to be His disciples?

.....

3. How does their response compare to your own?

.....

4. From what we learn of the disciples, they included a few fishermen, a tax-collector, a political radical (known as a zealot), some unknown, and one man who Jesus knew would later betray Him. If you were going to pick 12 men who you would train to take over your ministry when you were gone, what kind of people would you pick?

.....
.....

D. Jesus' First Miracle

Though Jesus' ministry begins with His baptism which is immediately followed by His temptation and the selection of His disciples, Jesus' ministry is characterized by two things: teaching and miracles. His teaching has as its purpose to explain to the people the message of the Kingdom that Jesus has come to announce. His miracles have as their purpose to demonstrate that He is God's representative – the Messiah, the Son of God, and the King.

1. The setting for Jesus' first miracle is the region of Galilee (see Map 2 from Lesson 2). Read John 2:1-10.

a. Describe the scene. What is the event and what need prompts Jesus to intervene?

.....
.....

b. Why does Jesus respond to His mother as He does in verse 4?

.....
.....

c. What miracle does Jesus perform?

.....
.....

d. What does this miracle demonstrate about Jesus?

.....
.....
.....

2. Read John 2:11. What was the result of the miracle for the disciples?

.....
.....

3. Have you heard of or seen the power of Jesus at work today? If so, write about it briefly here:

.....
.....
.....

Conclusion

The New Testament, in continuing the unfolding of God’s plan for His people, reveals the Messiah – Jesus – the Saviour of the World. As a result of your study of the beginnings of Jesus’ life and ministry, note three key elements that demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

Appendix 4: The Death of Jesus' Witnesses

The Fate of the Apostles of Jesus

The Church historian Schumacher researched the lives of the apostles and recounted the history of their martyrdoms. Although we cannot be 100% certain of the truth of these accounts, he had reasons to believe that each died as described below.

Matthew suffered martyrdom in Ethiopia, killed by a sword wound.

John faced martyrdom when he was boiled in a huge basin of boiling oil during a wave of persecution in Rome. However, he was miraculously delivered from death. John was then sentenced to the mines on the prison island of Patmos. He wrote his prophetic Book of Revelation on Patmos. The apostle John was later freed and returned to serve as Bishop of Edessa in modern Turkey. He died as an old man, the only apostle to die peacefully.

Peter was crucified upside down on an x-shaped cross, according to church tradition because he told his tormentors that he felt unworthy to die in the same way that Jesus Christ had died.

James the Greater, a son of Zebedee, was a fisherman by trade when Jesus called him to a lifetime of ministry. As a strong leader of the church, James was ultimately beheaded at Jerusalem. The Roman officer who guarded James watched amazed as James defended his faith at his trial. Later, the officer walked beside James to the place of execution. Overcome by conviction, he declared his new faith to the judge and knelt beside James to accept beheading as a Christian.

Bartholomew, who is identified as **Nathanael**, was a missionary to Asia. He witnessed to our Lord in present day Turkey. Bartholomew was martyred for his preaching in Armenia when he was flayed to death by a whip.

Andrew was crucified on an x-shaped cross in Patras, Greece. After being whipped severely by seven soldiers they tied his body to the cross with cords to prolong his agony. His followers reported that, when he was led toward the cross, Andrew saluted it in these words: "I have long desired and expected this happy hour. The cross has been consecrated by the body of Christ hanging on it." He continued to preach to his tormentors for two days until he expired.

The apostle **Thomas** was stabbed with a spear in India during one of his missionary trips to establish the church in the subcontinent.

Matthias, the apostle chosen to replace the traitor Judas Iscariot, was stoned and then beheaded.

Others not among the 12 disciples:

James the Just, Jesus' brother and a leader of the church in Jerusalem, was thrown over a hundred feet down from the southeast pinnacle of the Temple when he refused to deny his faith in Christ. When they discovered that he survived the fall, his enemies beat James to death. This was the same pinnacle where Satan had taken Jesus during the Temptation.

Jude, the brother of Jesus, was killed with arrows when he refused to deny his faith in Christ.

Barnabas, said to be one of the group of seventy disciples, preached throughout Italy and Cyprus. Finally, Barnabas was stoned to death at Salonica.

The apostle **Paul** was tortured and then beheaded by the evil Emperor Nero at Rome in A.D. 67. Paul endured a lengthy imprisonment which allowed him to write his many epistles to the churches he had formed throughout the Roman Empire. These letters, which taught many of the foundational doctrines of Christianity, form a large portion of the New Testament.

Mark died in Alexandria, Egypt, after being dragged by horses through the streets until he was dead.

Luke was hanged in Greece as a result of his tremendous preaching to the lost.

Lesson 4: The Life of Jesus, Part B

The Sermon on the Mount, Selected Miracles and Teachings, and the Jews' Rejection of Jesus as the Messiah

Introduction

As was introduced in Lesson 3, Jesus' ministry was marked by two major elements: teaching and miracles. This lesson is designed to help the student understand the nature and purpose of several key teachings of Jesus and to evaluate the significance and impact of a select number of miracles. Finally, the student will explore the reasons and the result of the Jews' rejection of Jesus as the Messiah.

A. Sermon on the Mount

The Gospels record a number of significant teachings of Jesus. One of the most important and well known is the 'Sermon on the Mount' found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.

1. The Sermon on the Mount can be divided into three sections as noted in the table below. (All verses are taken from the Gospel of Matthew.)

Passage	Summary
5:1-16	Jesus describes the character of the people of the Kingdom of God.
5:17-20	Jesus explains the purpose of His coming and the nature of His teaching.
5:21 – 7:27	Jesus teaches how the people of the Kingdom are supposed to behave.

Note: the 'people of the Kingdom' are those that have entered into relationship with the King, Jesus: i.e. Christians

a. Read Matthew 5:1-12. How would you describe the kinds of people that are described as the ones who are or will be blessed?

.....

.....

.....

b. How is Jesus' view of those that receive blessing different from the World's view of those that are considered to be 'blessed'? (Who are the heroes in your culture – what are they like?)

.....

.....

.....

c. Read vs. 13-16. How does Jesus describe the role of the people of the Kingdom with regard to the World?

.....

.....

.....

d. Read Matthew 5:17-20. What does Jesus say is the purpose of His coming and the nature of His teaching?

.....

.....

.....

2. The following table summarizes the subject matter found in the Sermon on the Mount.

a. Read the passages indicated and complete the table as noted. (All verses are taken from the Gospel of Matthew.)

Passage	Subject	Message
5:21-26	Reconciliation	..........
5:27-30	Adultery, an example of sin	Sin is actually deeper than the act of disobedience itself
5:31-32		Divorce, in most cases, only multiplies sin.
5:33-37	Vows	..........
5:38-42		Do not repay evil with evil, repay evil with kindness.
5:43-48	Love	..........
6:1-4		Give without drawing attention to yourself.
6:5-15	Prayer	..........
6:16-18	Fasting	..........
6:19-34	Money	..........
7:1-5		Do not judge others for you are not blameless.

7:6-12	Requesting things from God	..........
7:13-14	Two paths in life	..........
7:15-23		You can tell true teaching/teachers from false teaching/teachers by the fruit born in people’s lives.
7:24-27	The wise and the foolish builder	..........

b. Jesus introduces a number of subjects in this Sermon with the words “*you have heard that it was said...but I say to you*” (v. 5:27, 31, 33, 38, and 43). In these cases, Jesus is quoting from an Old Testament law and bringing a new understanding of it. Read the verses noted and summarize what Jesus ‘added’ to the OT law with his ‘new’ interpretation.

.....

Verse	Law and the Old Testament	New Interpretation
5.21	“You shall not kill.” Ex 20.13	..........
5.27	“You shall not commit adultery.” Ex 20.14	..........
5.31	“He who sends away his wife must write her a certificate of divorce.” Deut 24.1	..........
5.33	“You must not swear falsely in the name of God.” Lv 19.12	..........
5.28	“An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.” Ex 21.24	..........
5.43	“You shall love your neighbour and you will hate your enemy.” Lv 19.18	..........

c. Did obeying this ‘new’ interpretation of the law, make obedience more difficult or simpler? Explain how.

.....

d. What is Jesus trying to communicate by pushing obedience to this new level?

.....

.....

.....

e. In chapter 6, Jesus treats the subjects of almsgiving, prayer and fasting. In each case, He seems to communicate the same message. Reread 6:1-18 and in your own words, note what you think Jesus' message is for these three subjects.

.....

.....

f. What can you do to apply this message to your life this month?

.....

.....

g. In chapter 7, Jesus closes His sermon by talking about two paths (v. 13-14), two types of teaching/teachers (v. 15-16), two kinds of trees (v. 17-19) and two types of builders/houses (v. 24-27).

i. List the characteristics of all that pertains to the 'bad' path, teaching/teacher, tree and builder/house

.....

.....

ii. List the characteristics of all that pertains to the 'good' path, teaching/teacher, tree and builder/house.

.....

.....

iii. How does your life demonstrate the characteristics of the 'good' path, teaching/teacher, tree and builder/house?

.....

.....

.....

.....

B. Selected Miracles of Jesus

In order to demonstrate His authority to teach, Jesus performed many miracles. In fact, John 21:25 says that Jesus did so many things that they could not all be recorded. In general, Jesus' miracles can be grouped into three categories; those that deal with nature, those that deal with human health and welfare and those that deal with spiritual forces (mainly demonic).

1. Read the passages noted and complete the table.

Passage	Describe the situation	Miracle Performed	This proves that Jesus...	Reaction of the people
Matthew 8:23-27	Storm threatens to drown disciples	Jesus calmed the storm.	... has power over nature	Amazement, wonder
Mark 6:35-44	A crowd of 5000 men + women and children need food	....................	....................	....................
John 11:38-45	..... ..... ..... .....	Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead	..... ..... ..... .....	Faith
Luke 8:26-37	Jesus is confronted by a demon possessed man.	..... ..... ..... .....	... has power over the demonic forces	....................
Luke 6:6-11	Jesus meets a man with a withered hand in the synagogue on the Sabbath	Jesus healed the withered hand	....................	....................

2. Why do you think that the religious leaders responded so negatively to Jesus' healing of the man with the withered hand?

.....

3. In John 10:37, 38, Jesus says, "If I do not do the works of my Father, do not believe Me. But if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." How do the miracles of Jesus show that the Father is in Him and He is in the Father?

.....

C. Selected Teachings of Jesus

In addition to long messages, like the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus dealt with several subjects at once, the Gospels record numerous incidents in which Jesus seized upon a question, a situation or even an everyday object to instruct those around him. One common tool that Jesus used to teach was the parable – a simple story told to convey a moral teaching.

1) Teaching through Parables

Read the following two texts, choose one and answer all the questions for this text alone. Then prepare a 5-6-minute message to share with the class. Remember to introduce the story, tell or read it, prepare questions to ask and/or comments, and apply its teaching.

1. Read Luke 8.4-15.

a. In your own words, retell the parable. (Mention the farmer who sows; the four types of ground and the results of each one.)

.....

.....

.....

.....

b. From verses 11-15, describe how Jesus explains the parable.

.....

.....

.....

.....

c. Who is present to hear Jesus give this parable?

.....

d. Why do you think that Jesus wanted them to hear this message?

.....

.....

.....

2. Read Mark 12:1-12.

a. In your own words, retell the parable. (Mention what the owner did to prepare his vineyard, his trip, the sending of successive servants and the treatment they received, the death of the son and the ensuing judgement.)

.....

.....

.....

.....

b. What do you think is Jesus' intended message of this parable?

.....
.....
.....

c. What is the reaction of the religious leaders to this parable?

.....
.....

d. Why would they respond like that?

.....
.....



Take Note!

The Gospel writers record 39 different parables of Jesus! However, only 10 of them are cited by more than one of the Gospel writers.

2) Direct teaching

In addition to parables that Jesus told to his disciples as well as to the crowds, Jesus taught directly on everything from death to taxes and from marriage to work. Select one of the following passages below and answer the questions that accompany it. (You may complete the other work during the group discussion or at another time.)

1. Jesus teaches on faith, Matthew 6:25-34

a. What emotion is contrary to faith (v. 25)?

.....

b. What three reasons does Jesus give for not being anxious?

1)

.....

2)

.....

3)

.....

c. How does Jesus' example of God's provision for the birds help respond to the emotion of anxiety with regard to having enough to eat and clothing to wear (v. 26)?

.....
.....
.....

d. How does Jesus' comparing flowers to Solomon help respond to the emotion of anxiety (v. 28-29)?

.....
.....
.....

e. What is Jesus' point in verse 32, when He says that the Gentiles seek after all these things (food, drink, and clothing)?

.....
.....
.....

f. What can you do today to grow in faith and reduce anxiety with regard to having enough?

.....
.....
.....

2. Jesus teaches on forgiveness, Matthew 18:21-35

a. What is Peter's question?

.....
.....
.....

b. Why did Peter ask such a question?

.....
.....
.....

c. In Jesus' answer, he tells the story of a King and a man who owed him a large sum of money. How badly was the man in debt to the King?

.....
.....
.....

d. What was the King's response to the man's pleas?

.....
.....
.....

e. From verse 27, what does forgiveness mean?

.....
.....
.....

f. What did the man do once he was set free by the King?

.....
.....
.....

g. How was the man not like the King when it came to being able to forgive?

.....
.....
.....

h. Think about your own life. How much has God forgiven you?

.....
.....
.....

i. Think of someone that you know that you need to forgive. How much are they in debt to you? How can you do for them what the King did for the man with the huge debt?

.....
.....



Take Note!

Jesus has more to say about money than about Heaven and Hell combined! Why does Jesus put so much emphasis on money?

3. Jesus teaches on honesty. Mark 10:19; John 8:31-45

a. What is the difference between lying and telling the truth?

.....
.....
.....

b. From Mark 10.19 how important is telling the truth?

.....

c. Read John 8:31-38. Why does Jesus say the Jews do not believe Him?

.....
.....

d. Read vs. 39-44. Who does Jesus say is the 'father' of these Jews?

.....

e. Read vs. 43-45. Name the two characteristics that Jesus says describes Satan's character.

.....

f. What can you conclude from this passage as to the origins of lying?

.....

g. What do you think Jesus expects of His children with regard to telling the truth?

.....

h. What is Jesus' relationship to the truth?

.....

i. What practical application can you make to your life with regard to telling the truth?

.....
.....
.....
.....

D. The Jews' Rejection of Jesus as the Messiah.

As you have seen in this brief survey of Jesus' miracles and teachings, the people who heard what He said, and saw what He did, did not always respond positively. In fact, in many instances the Gospel writers record that some people after hearing one of His teachings or observing one of His miracles were enraged, perplexed or simply lost interest in following Him.

As was noted at the outset of this course, the New Testament is the continuation of God's plan for His people, Israel, through whom He intended to reach the whole world with salvation. As part of His plan, and in keeping with His prophetic promises and covenant obligations, God sent the Messiah who was born of a virgin, in Bethlehem - the city of David, who performed miracles, and preached the Good News of the Kingdom, just as God had promised.

And yet, Jesus' life was ended by execution. He died on a cross, condemned by the Jews – His own people. What happened? How did the Jews miss their Messiah? There are at least three main reasons why the Jews of Jesus' day rejected Him as the Messiah.

1) The question of the Law and the Sabbath.

During the last few centuries described in the Old Testament, the Jews suffered the consequences of their disobedience. God had warned them of what their disobedience would cost them when He gave His Law to Moses before the People entered the Promised Land (see Deuteronomy 28:15-68). Though they had finally returned to the land, their captivity and exile at the hands of the Assyrians and Babylonians had depleted and humbled them. It also, however, cured them of idolatry and contributed to the rise of a class of people (the Pharisees – see appendix) who were zealous to keep the Sabbath and guard the Law so as to prevent the nation from undergoing another round of suffering due to disobedience.

1. Read Matthew 12:9-14.

a. What does Jesus do to the man with the withered hand?

.....

b. Where does the healing take place and on what day of the week?

.....

c. How does Jesus explain the reason for His healing this man from verses 11-12?

.....

.....

2. Read Deuteronomy 5:13-14.

a. What does God say about the Sabbath day?

.....

.....

b. How did the Pharisees interpret what Jesus did in light of the command in Deuteronomy?

.....

.....

.....

.....

As a result, some saw Jesus as a law-breaking rebel.

Jesus spoke with authority that came from God himself. He spoke of an intimate relationship and a knowledge of God as a Son equal to a Father. (Jn 5:8-18; Jn 10:29-33; Matt 26:57-65)

The Jews accused him of blasphemy, a crime punishable by death by stoning. (Lv 24:16)

2) The question of maintaining peace with Rome.

One of the strengths of the Roman Empire was its commitment to allowing its sovereign peoples to keep their traditions and religious practices as long as they didn't interfere with allegiance to Rome. In an effort to guarantee this sense of peace and cooperation, a number of Jewish leaders made concessions to Roman law in exchange for Imperial favours. Many prospered under this arrangement and sought to maintain every privilege.

1. Read John 11:45-48.

a. What was reported to the Jewish leaders that Jesus had done?

.....

b. What was the fear of the Jewish leaders?

.....

.....

2. Read John 11:49-53.

a. What was the solution offered by Caiaphas, the High Priest?

.....

.....

.....

b. To what extent was this 'solution' what Jesus deserved?

.....

.....

.....

As a result, as verse 54 says, "So from that day on they planned together to kill Him."

3. Read John 19:1-4, 12-16.

a. What does Pilate conclude about Jesus' guilt?

.....

b. What does Pilate think should happen to Jesus?

.....

c. How do the Jews respond to Pilate when he offers to release Jesus (v.6)?

.....

d. What do the Jews add to their argument ‘forcing’ Pilate’s hand against Jesus (v. 12, 13)?

.....

.....

3) The question of a Conquering Messiah.

Despite the peace and favour that the Jews enjoyed under Roman rule, Roman local officials often abused their powers and took advantage of Jews. Taxation, always a delicate subject, was doubly loathsome and burdensome to a Jew who was also expected to pay ‘taxes’ to the temple. Furthermore, many religious Jews simply couldn’t reconcile sharing their land – the land God had given to them as Abraham’s descendants – with pagan idolaters. For them, their hope was in the coming of the Messiah who would, obviously, overthrow Rome and restore God’s rule and Israel’s prominence.

1. Read Acts 1:6.

a. What are the disciples hoping for by asking Jesus this question?

.....

.....

b. How does Jesus respond (verses 7-8)?

.....

.....

c. If you had been one of the disciples, what would you have understood Jesus to mean by his answer to your question?

.....

.....

.....

In the events leading up to the crucifixion, Jesus stands trial before Annas and Caiaphas, the Jewish High-Priests, before appearing before Pontus Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judea.

2. Read John 18:33-37.

a. What does Pilate expect as an answer from Jesus to his question in verses 33 and 37?

.....

b. How does Jesus’ response in verses 36 and 37 differ from what Pilate was expecting?

.....

.....

.....

3. Read Matthew 27:37-44.

a. What did the inscription say that was placed over Jesus' head on the cross?

.....

b. What did the onlookers say in mocking Jesus?

.....

.....

c. How did Jesus' death on the cross result in the 'end of a dream' for those who were expecting a Conquering Messiah?

.....

.....

As a result of His death on the cross, those who were hoping that Jesus was the Messiah who would overthrow Rome and usher in the Kingdom of God on Earth saw the ultimate end to their dream and thus concluded that Jesus was not the Messiah.

Summary and application

1. We have discussed four major reasons that prompted the Jews to refuse Jesus and put him to death. Quote them:

1)

2)

3)

4)

2. Which people in your society will identify with this immediately, without the need for explanation?

.....

.....

3. How can you help them in their turn, to understand the reason for the putting of Jesus to death and the fulfilment of God's extraordinary plan?

.....

.....

.....

Conclusion

The purpose of this lesson was to expose the student to several key teachings and miracles of Jesus in addition to exploring the reasons that led the Jews to reject Jesus as their Messiah. But what we have so far seen in this brief overview of Jesus' life is that he was a man born according to the words of the prophets, who worked miracles of every sort and taught with divine authority.

Was He just an ordinary man? Is it possible that those who rejected Him failed to see something bigger?

Take a moment to describe at least two things that you have learned about Jesus (what He did or what he said) that impress you and demonstrate to you that he was no ordinary man.

1)

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2)

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Lesson 5: The Life of Jesus, Part C

The Judgment, Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus in Light of Prophecy

Introduction

Much has been written about the miraculous beginnings to Jesus’ life - born of a virgin in the town of Bethlehem – his miracles, and His teachings, many of which are still discussed today. However, no event in History is more important than the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The purpose of this lesson is to help the student understand the events leading up to the crucifixion as well as Jesus’ subsequent resurrection in light of prophecy.

A. Plan of Old

The death of Jesus on the cross was not a surprise, a failure or a plan ‘B’ that God had to come up with at the last moment. Both Old and New Testaments make clear that Jesus’ death on the cross was not only necessary, but planned by God Himself.

1. Read Revelation 13:8. What does this verse suggest about the death of Christ?

.....

.....

2. Read John 1:29.

a. In this verse, how does John the Baptist refer to Jesus?

.....

b. Given the Old Testament practice of sacrifice (See Leviticus 1-7), what did John the Baptist mean by referring to Jesus in this way?

.....

.....

3. Complete the following table by selecting and matching the New Testament reference with the prophetic statement taken from Isaiah 53. *Two answers are given.* Mathew 26:47-57; Mark 15:15; John 19:32-34; ~~Luke 23:32-33, 39-41, 53~~; Matthew 27:11-14; ~~Luke 22:39-45~~

Passage	New Testament Reference
v. 4 “...surely our griefs He himself bore and our sorrows He carried...”	<i>Luke 22:39-45</i>
v. 5 “He was pierced through for our transgressions...”	.....
v. 5 “...by His scourging we are healed...”	.....
v. 7 “He was oppressed and He was afflicted yet He did not open His mouth...”	.....

v. 8 "...by oppression and judgment He was taken away..."	.....
v. 9 "His grave was assigned with wicked men(yet) He had done no violence nor was there any deceit in His mouth..."	<i>Lk 23.32-33, 39-41, 53</i>

4. Read Mark 10:32-34. What does Jesus say will happen to Him?

.....

.....

5. Based upon the testimony of the prophets (both Isaiah and John the Baptist), the disciple John and Jesus Himself, what can you conclude about the crucifixion of Jesus?

.....

.....

.....

B. The Importance of the Crucifixion

The judgment and crucifixion of Christ take up a significant part of the Gospel narratives. In fact, nowhere else in the Bible are so many detailed accounts provided of events that span only a few days. Clearly these details are important to our knowledge of Christ and the Christian faith. Despite the claim that Jesus' death was a tragic mistake, the Gospel writers show Jesus was aware of what was going to happen and took time to prepare Himself and the disciples.

1. Jesus prepares His disciples.

a. Read Luke 22:14-20. What was Jesus trying to tell His disciples by identifying Himself with the bread and the wine as part of the Passover meal? (If you need to be reminded of the Passover, read Exodus 12:1-3, 5-7, 12-13)

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

b. Read John 13:1-5.

i. What did Jesus do for His disciples?

.....

.....

ii. According to verses 13-15, why did Jesus do this?

.....

.....

iii. According to verses 21-27, what happened next?

.....

2. Jesus prays and is arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane.

a. Immediately after the final supper with the disciples, Jesus leads them to the Garden of Gethsemane where he spends time in prayer. Read Matthew 26:36-46.

i. What did Jesus pray about?

.....

ii. What did the disciples do while Jesus prayed?

.....

b. Read Matthew 26:47-56.

i. What happened to Jesus after he prayed?

.....

ii. How did Jesus respond?

.....

iii. How did the disciples respond (see verses 51 and 56)?

.....

3. Following Jesus' arrest, He was brought before a series of Jewish and Roman officials to be tried.

a. Read the following passages and complete the table. *Some answers are given as an example.*

Passage	Authority	Political Orientation	Charges against Jesus	Verdict
John 18:12-14, 19-23	<i>Annas</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Nothing noted</i>	<i>Nothing noted</i>
John 18:23-24	.....	<i>Jewish</i>	..... ..... .....	<i>Nothing noted</i>
Luke 22:66-71	.....	<i>Jewish</i>	..... ..... .....	<i>Guilty</i>

Luke 23:1-6	<i>Pontius Pilate</i>	.....	<i>Inciting the people, does not pay taxes, calls Himself a king</i>	.....
Luke 23:7-11	.....	<i>Jewish</i>	..... ..... .....	<i>Nothing noted</i>
Luke 23:13-15	.....	<i>Roman</i>	..... ..... .....	<i>Not Guilty</i>

b. What do you observe about the differences in attitudes and emotions between the Jewish authorities and the Roman authorities throughout this series of trials?

.....

c. Why do you think the Jews were so angry and intent on having Jesus executed?

.....

d. Pontius Pilate declared Jesus not guilty both times he interrogated him. Why then did he not release Him?

.....

Scholars have compiled a list of at least 12 reasons why the arrest, trial and crucifixion of Jesus was illegal under both Jewish and Roman standards. And yet, he was crucified! (See Appendix at the end of this lesson.)



Take Note!

In Roman-style crucifixion, the condemned sometimes took days to die slowly from asphyxiation, caused by blood loss and exhaustion. The dead body was left hanging for vultures and other birds to consume.

The goal of Roman crucifixion was not just to kill the criminal, but also to mutilate and dishonour the body of the condemned. In ancient tradition, an honourable death required burial. Leaving a body on the cross, so as to mutilate it and prevent its burial, was a grave dishonour.

Under ancient Roman penal practice, crucifixion was also a means of exhibiting the criminal's low social status. It was the most dishonourable and painful death imaginable, originally reserved only for slaves.

C. The Burial and Resurrection of Jesus

The closing chapters of the Gospels recount the events of Jesus' burial, resurrection and post-resurrection appearances. Despite the fact that the resurrection of Jesus is often overlooked except for during Easter weekend, this event, probably more than any other in the life of Jesus, separates those who believe from those who do not. The resurrection is the ultimate mark of divinity, of credibility and of integrity of Jesus and the Gospel. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then our faith is worthless, we are still in our sins, those who have died in Christ have perished forever and we who have hoped in Him, are of all people those who should be the most pitied.

In an effort to deny the divinity, credibility and integrity of Jesus and the Gospel, many objections have been proposed to the resurrection – each attempting to offer a denial of the biblical facts. See the appendix of this lesson for a discussion and response to four of the prominent objections to the resurrection.

What does the Bible say happened to Jesus after he died and was placed in a tomb?

1. Read John 20:1-2.

a. What caused Mary to come running for the disciples?

.....

b. What was she convinced had happened? Why?

.....

.....

2. Read John 20:3-8.

a. What did Peter and John find at the tomb?

.....

.....

b. Verse 8 says that John "entered the tomb, and he saw and believed." What did he see and what did he believe?

.....

.....

3. Read Luke 24:1-9.

a. Who do the women meet at the tomb?

.....

b. What was their message to them?

.....

4. Read Luke 24:10-12.

a. What is the response of the rest of the disciples to the news of those who had been at the tomb?

.....

b. Why did they respond in this way?

.....

.....

5. Read the passages in the table below.

a. Complete the table. The first responses are given as an example.

Passage	To whom does Jesus appear?	Jesus' message
Luke 24:13-15, 27	<i>Two on the road to Emmaus</i>	<i>I am who the Scriptures predicted would come, the Messiah</i>
Luke 24:36-43	..........	..........
John 20:26-29	..........	..........
John 21:1-2, 15-17	..........	..........

b. Why did Jesus appear to these different people after His resurrection?

.....

.....

c. In the closing chapters of the Gospels, we often find the disciples behind closed doors, incredulous and unsure as to what to do next. In the early chapters of Acts, which record events which take place just a few days later, the disciples are publicly preaching the death and resurrection of Jesus and then boldly facing trial and arrest for doing so. In your opinion what happened to transform the disciples from those who were hiding to those who were boldly preaching in the streets?

.....

.....

.....

.....



Take Note!

Jesus predicted His own death and resurrection several times (see Matthew 16:21, Mark 8:31, Luke 9:22, etc.). Islamic teaching claims however that Jesus didn't die but was taken up to Heaven leaving someone else (Judas, the traitor) to be crucified in His place.

If this were true, what would this say about Jesus?

6. If the purpose of Jesus' death on the cross was to serve as the payment for sin and make the forgiveness of sins possible, what was the purpose of the resurrection? In other words, why did Jesus have to rise from the dead? Read the following passages and note what each one says about the purpose of Jesus' resurrection.

a. Acts 2:29-32

"Jesus rose from the dead
.....

b. 1 Corinthians 15:20-23

"Jesus rose from the dead
.....

c. 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

"Jesus rose from the dead ...
1)
2)
3)

d. Acts 2:22, 24-28

"Jesus rose from the dead
.....
.....

e. Summarize the purpose of the resurrection.

.....
.....
.....

Conclusion

This lesson concludes the survey of the life of Jesus, one of the principal themes of the New Testament. An unknown writer had this to say about Him:

"Nearly two thousand years ago in an obscure village, a child was born of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village where He worked as a carpenter until He was thirty. Then for three

years He became an itinerant preacher. This man never went to college or seminary. He never wrote a book. He never held a public office. He never had a family nor owned a home. He never put His foot inside a big city nor travelled even 200 miles from His birthplace. And though He never did any of the things that usually accompany greatness, throngs of people followed Him. He had no credentials but Himself.

“While He was still young, the tide of public opinion turned against Him. His followers ran away. He was turned over to His enemies and sentenced to death on a cross between two thieves. While He was dying, His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth – the simple coat He had worn. His body was laid in a borrowed grave provided by a compassionate friend. But three days later this Man arose from the dead – living proof that He was, as He had claimed, the Saviour whom God had sent, the Incarnate Son of God.

“Nineteen centuries have come and gone and today the risen Lord Jesus Christ is the central figure of the human race. On our calendars His birth divides history into two eras. One day of every week is set aside in remembrance of Him. And our two most important holidays celebrate His birth and resurrection. On church steeples around the world, His cross has become the symbol of victory over sin and death.

“This one Man’s life has furnished the theme for more songs, books, poems and paintings than any other person or event in history. Thousands of colleges, hospitals, orphanages and other institutions have been founded in honour of this One who gave His life for us. All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the governments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned have not changed the course of history as much as this One Solitary Life.”

1. Looking back over the first 5 lessons, name at least 5 things that indicate to you that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God.

-
-
-
-
-
-
-

2. How does the fact of the resurrection of Jesus give you hope and change the way you live?

-
-
-
-
-
-

Appendix 6: Twelve reasons why the Arrest, Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus was Illegal under Jewish Law.

1. There was no legal basis for Jesus' arrest because no one had presented a formal charge of any crime; He was simply taken. Moreover, those who went with Judas to have Jesus arrested included the priests and elders – the Judges (Luke 22:52) – among whom were the ones who had bribed Judas.
2. Jesus was subjected to a secret preliminary examination at night - John 18:12-14, 19-23). Jewish law permitted only daylight proceedings.
3. The indictment against Jesus was illegal because the judges themselves brought up the charges without any prior testimony by witnesses. The Jewish court (the Sanhedrin) by law was not allowed to originate charges.
4. The court illegally proceeded to hold its trial of Jesus before sunrise so no one would be available to testify on His behalf.
5. The trial began on a day before a Sabbath (John 18:28), even though Jewish law did not permit the trial of a capital offense to begin on Friday or the day before a Sabbath. Jesus was arrested and tried on the 14th of Abib, the day before the first Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
6. Jesus' trial was concluded in one day. Jewish law says, "If a sentence of death is to be pronounced, it (a criminal case) cannot conclude before the following day." (Mishna, 'Sanhedrin' IV.1) This was to allow sufficient opportunity for any witnesses in support of the accused to present themselves. Jesus' trial was conducted in private and completed in less than nine hours.
7. Two false witnesses charged Jesus with saying He would destroy the temple made with hands (Mark 14:58); yet He was condemned by the court on another false charge – that of blasphemy. He was condemned on His own testimony (Luke 22:67-71). But according to Jewish law, a person could not be condemned on his own testimony.
8. The merits of Jesus' defence were not considered. Despite Deuteronomy 13:14, the high priest did not "inquire, and make search, and ask 'diligently'" to see whether Jesus' statement was blasphemous. The law in the Mishna says, "The judges shall weigh the matter in the sincerity of their conscience." ('Sanhedrin' IV, 5). Instead, the court pronounced sentence instantly and unanimously.
9. Those who would have voted against condemnation were not at Jesus' trial. Joseph of Arimathea was a member of the court, yet he was not there (Luke 23:50-51). Jesus' opponents had made sure that only those who hated Him would be there.
10. The sentence was pronounced in a place forbidden by law. The trial took place at the high priest's house (Luke 22:54). According to the law, a death sentence could be pronounced only in the court's appointed place.

11. Most of the judges were legally disqualified to try Jesus. Some had bought their way into office, according to Josephus. Also, since they were known enemies of Jesus, Jewish law required that they disqualify themselves so He could be tried by impartial judges.
12. The court illegally switched the charges from blasphemy to treason before Pilate. Jesus' opponents wanted Him killed, but they did not want to do it themselves. So, they charged Him with treason.

Appendix 7: Responses to the Basic Objections to Jesus' Resurrection

Objection 1: Someone else died in Jesus' place

Response: This common objection is based upon the unfounded belief that it would somehow be detrimental to Jesus' identity if He were to die on the cross; the humiliation and powerlessness of that would somehow negate all that He claimed to be. This is the popular view in Islam of Jesus' death – that a truly guilty person, Judas – died in Jesus' place.

There are several problems with this view. First, how is it possible that after interrogating, beating, and parading Jesus around the city for half a day that at the moment of the crucifixion the guards and officials would somehow pick the wrong person? Or, if they had chosen someone else to suffer the beating, etc., how is it that that person would not have either admitted to the lie or been found out? Why didn't he tell them they had the wrong person?

Secondly, if indeed someone else was taken in Jesus' place either by accident or as part of a ploy to save Jesus' life, then this makes Jesus out to be a false prophet and hence a liar because He said numerous times before that He would die in this way.

Thirdly, there is no record in any Jewish, Muslim or Christian tradition that validates this possibility that someone else died in Jesus' place. Certainly, if this had been the case, someone somewhere would have recorded it. The idea was invented long after the beginning of Islam.

Fourthly, Jesus' own mother and several people who know him quite well were standing at the foot of the cross when he died. Can anyone believe that his own mother did not recognize her son?

Lastly, if Jesus didn't die at this point, then what happened to Him? His popularity was at its highest, His teachings were circulating far and wide. How is it that all of a sudden, He would simply disappear and leave His disciples to endure subsequent persecution and martyrdom (all but John) for believing and preaching that Jesus had died and was resurrected, if in fact the whole thing was a lie?

Objection 2: The Jewish leaders took Jesus' body

Response: This objection is based upon the idea that the Jewish leaders were so afraid of what would happen to the crowds if Jesus did indeed rise from the dead, as He had predicted, that in order to prevent any such thing from happening, they conspired with the Roman officials to arrange to take the body of Jesus. The problem with this objection is that, if the Jewish leaders had taken the body of Jesus, why did they not produce it later so as to silence the preaching of the disciples who were declaring the resurrection of Jesus throughout the Roman Empire? All that would have been necessary to stop the whole thing was evidence that Jesus' body had not been resurrected.

Objection 3: The Disciples took Jesus' body

Response: This objection is based on the idea that the disciples wanted the truth of Jesus' words to be realized so badly that they somehow overwhelmed the Roman guards and took the body making it look as if Jesus was resurrected. The problem with this scenario is that all of the disciples except John were subsequently martyred for preaching that Jesus had been resurrected. How is this possible if the whole thing was a lie? And how does one account for the multiple post-resurrection appearances and interactions with Jesus that many had afterwards? On one occasion he appeared to about 500 people at the same time (1 Cor. 15:6).

Furthermore, this 'solution' also does not absolve Jesus' from being deceitful and hence a false prophet.

Objection 4: Jesus didn't die; he simply fainted, came to, and escaped.

Response: This objection is based on the idea that resurrections and miracles do not really happen. So, the biblical accounts of such are actually exaggerations by the church in order to make Jesus out to be divine. The problem with this objection is that it fails to explain how Jesus, who had suffered scourging and crucifixion (with the subsequent dislocation of the shoulders, asphyxiation and punctured heart and lungs), could have thrown off the 100-pounds of burial wrappings, removed the several-ton stone entrance, and overtaken 12-16 Roman guards in order to escape.

For further research into this subject, read Josh McDowell's book *More Than a Carpenter*.

Lesson 6: The Development of the Church, Part A

The Birth of the Church at Pentecost, its Early Challenges and an Explanation of its Missionary Vocation

Introduction

With the crucifixion of Jesus marking the high point of the rebellion of His people Israel, the time had come for God to reveal the mystery of the Church – a body of redeemed individuals from every nation, tribe and tongue. This lesson together with lessons 7 and 8 is intended to give the student an introduction to the origins, development, and mission of the Church in the first century. In the appendix, a chronological listing of events and the suggested dates of writing of the New Testament books is provided.

A. The Birth of the Church at Pentecost

1. Read Acts 2:1-13.

a. What happened to the disciples that provoked the reaction of the crowd?

.....
.....
.....

b. From verses 9-11, list the nations who were represented in the crowd on that day.

.....
.....
.....

c. Why were the people so amazed?

.....
.....

d. What does this suggest to you that God had in mind with regards to the composition of the church?

.....

e. What does the crowd accuse the disciples of (v. 13)?

.....

2. In response to these accusations, Peter (the one who had just a few days earlier denied Christ three times—See John 18:12-27) stands in the midst of the crowd and gives a lengthy explanation of what has happened. Read verses 14-40 and complete the table below by summarizing Peter’s message from each section. *The first answer is given as an example.*

Passage	Summary
v. 14-15	<i>These men are not drunk</i>
v. 16-21
v. 22-24
v. 25-28
v. 29-36
v. 37
v. 38-40

a. How does Peter support the points he makes in his sermon (i.e. personal examples, illustrations, Old Testament quotes, etc.)? Why does he use these supports?

.....

b. How do the people respond? (v. 37, 41)

.....

2. Bible scholars consider Pentecost, on this date in the first century, to be the origins of the Church. And what a start! After the first sermon, 3000 people are converted! Imagine if you were one of the disciples in Jerusalem and in one afternoon 3000 people turned to Christ. What would you do next?

.....

B. The Early Church

On the day of Pentecost, the Church was born with over 3000 new believers. As you can imagine, there were not yet any church buildings and the Jewish synagogues would not have been available for use as places of worship by the Christians. What to do...

1. Read Acts 2:42-47. This passage, which is one of the best descriptions of early Church practice, is clearly a summary of the principle elements of local church life.

a. List four elements that constituted the basic activities of the early Church. (v. 42)

.....

b. Name two attitudes that marked the spirit of the Christians. (v. 43-45)

1)

2)

c. Verses 44 and 45 describe the manner in which the Church members shared their possessions with others in the community. It even says that they were selling their things and sharing the proceeds with others who did not have enough.

i. What do you think motivated the Christians to behave in such a way?

.....
.....
.....

ii. Do you think that such behaviour is necessary in the Church today? Why or why not?

.....
.....
.....

d. Where did the Christians meet? (v. 46)

.....

e. What was the result of this early Church behaviour? (v. 47)

.....
.....

2. How does your church compare to the Church described here in Acts 2? What is different and what is similar?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....



Take Note!

Scholars have documented that by the 3rd century after Jesus' death and resurrection, hundreds of churches were scattered across North Africa. Furthermore, several prominent theologians and church leaders called North Africa their home, including; Tertullian, Cyprian, Origen and Augustine.

C. First Persecutions

As you can imagine, the lifestyle, preaching and values of the Christians soon came into conflict with those around them. Just as Jesus had said (John 15:20), the disciples soon began to experience objections and opposition from the religious and political authorities.

1. Read Acts 4:1-4. Around 5000 people believed in Christ on this occasion.

a. Who are the first ones to react negatively to the preaching of the disciples?

.....

b. Why do you think they are so upset and eager to try to stop the preaching of the disciples?

.....

.....

.....

2. Read Acts 4:5-22.

a. What do the Jewish leaders ask of the disciples?

.....

b. In your own words, summarize Peter's response.

.....

c. From verses 13-17, the Jewish leaders try to decide what to do with the disciples. What is the biggest problem that they acknowledge? (v. 16)

.....

.....

d. What do they decide to do?

.....

e. How does Peter respond to the discipline that the Jewish leaders inflict upon him?

.....

.....

f. What did Peter know or believe that enabled him to respond to this persecution as he did?

.....

.....
g. How is his response different than the world's response of vengeance?
.....
.....

h. Does God ever sanction vengeance? When? (Rom. 12:17-21)
.....
.....

i. From what you learn in this passage, define 'persecution'.
.....
.....

j. Based upon Peter's example from this passage how should you respond to persecution?
.....
.....
.....

3. Read the following passages and note what they say about our attitude towards persecution.

a. Matthew 5:10-12
.....
.....

b. John 15:20
.....
.....

c. 2 Timothy 3:12
.....
.....

d. 1 Peter 4:12-14
.....
.....

4. Do you think that persecution is inevitable? Why or why not?
.....
.....

5. Have you ever been the subject of persecution? Describe briefly what happened. How did God help you endure it?
.....
.....
.....

6. Take a moment now to pray for Christians in your country and around the world who are being persecuted.

D. First Church Officers

Obviously, with more than 8000 young believers, many from differing backgrounds and ethnic groups, the need would soon be evident that some sort of organization and authority structure be developed. Before the disciples even had time to think about such things, a situation arose which provided a great opportunity to display how the Church should be organized and function.

1. Read Acts 6:1-8

a. Describe the problem.

.....

.....

.....

.....

b. What do the disciples propose as a solution?

.....

.....

c. Why is favouritism opposed to the Gospel?

.....

.....

d. What were the characteristics of the men selected as deacons?

.....

.....

e. What do you notice that is missing from the list of criteria?

.....

.....

f. From this passage, what do you understand to be the best way to select people to lead in the Church?

.....

.....

.....

2. If you had been there that day, do you think you would have been selected as one of the deacons?

a. If yes, how does “a good reputation, wisdom, and fullness of God’s Spirit” show in your life?

.....

.....
.....
b. If not, which of these characteristics are you lacking? What can you do to develop this in your life in the weeks and months to come?

.....
.....
.....
.....

E. The Church Continues to Expand

As you learned in earlier lessons, the Samaritans were despised by the Jews, so much so, that it was common for Jews travelling from Judea to Galilee, to take a much longer route to ensure that they would not have to travel through Samaria. The advent of the Church at Pentecost, demonstrated that ethnic, religious and political distinctions were to be dissolved. But for religious Jews, newly converted to Christianity, what did this mean in reality?

1. Read Acts 10:1-8

a. Who is Cornelius?

.....

b. What does the angel say about Cornelius' faith?

.....

c. What is Cornelius instructed to do?

.....

d. Why?

.....

2. Read Acts 10:9-16

a. What happened to Peter?

.....

.....

b. What was the message that God was trying to send to Peter?

.....

.....

c. Why does Peter struggle with this idea?

.....

.....

3. Read Acts 10:17-48

a. From verses 28 and 29 (and 34-35), summarize the lesson that Peter has learned from the episode of the sheet and the unclean animals.

.....

.....

.....

b. What happened to convince Peter that “God is not one to show partiality”?

.....

.....

c. How does the family of Cornelius respond to Peter’s message?

.....

.....

d. In the light of this lesson, how should the Church today treat those who are ethnically or religiously different?

.....

.....

F. God’s Intention to Bless the Nations

As you learned from your study of Acts 2 and the events on the day of Pentecost, the nations were represented in Jerusalem and the disciples were given the ability to proclaim the things of God in the languages of those nations present. The intent here was clearly that God wanted the nations to hear and respond to the Good News of the Gospel, and though the Bible does not say explicitly who responded to the message that day, one can imagine that of the 3000 that were saved, many were from the nations other than Israel (Acts 2:41).

But God’s interest in the nations did not begin at Pentecost. The Old Testament is full of indications that He had intended this from the beginning. It was always God’s intention to bring hope, healing and salvation to people from every tongue, tribe and nation.

1. Read the following passages and complete the table. *The first answer is given as an example.*

Passage	What happens to the Nations?
Genesis 12:1-3	<i>They will be blessed.</i>
Psalm 22:27-28	<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>

Psalm 86:9	..........
Isaiah 25:6-7	..........
Isaiah 49:6	..........
Revelation 7:9-10	..........

2. From what you have read in the above passages, how would you summarize what God intends to do for the Nations?

.....
.....

G. God’s Plan to use the Church to Reach the Nations

As we have noted, when the Jews failed to represent God’s plan on the Earth by crucifying their Messiah, God allowed a “partial hardening” of Israel for a time (Romans 11:25) and in their place, He called on the Church to take the Good News to the nations.

1. Read Matthew 28:18-20

a. What is the objective that God sends the Church out to accomplish?

.....

b. Who is sent out? Just those with special gifts, diplomas or authority, or everyone? Explain your answer.

.....
.....

c. To which nations is the Church sent?

.....

d. On the basis of whose authority is this effort to be carried out?

.....

e. What two things does “making disciples” include?

.....

2. Describe briefly how you came to be a disciple of Christ.

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. What do you understand your specific role in the task of “making disciples” of the nations to be? How do you accomplish this in your day-to-day activity?

.....

.....

.....

4. Read Acts 1:8.

In this verse, Jesus again ‘commissions’ the disciples to take the Gospel to the Nations. He identifies four places where the disciples need to take the Gospel:

‘Jerusalem’ – this refers to their local context, their neighbours, family and friends

‘Judea’ – this refers to their countrymen, their ethnic group

‘Samaria’ – this refers to people from another ethnic group; the ones they looked down upon

‘Uttermost parts of the Earth’ – this represents the rest of the world

a. List the names of at least three people that you know who fit the ‘Jerusalem’ label and who have not yet responded to the Gospel.

b. List the names of at least three people you know who fit the ‘Judea’ label and who have not yet responded to the Gospel.

c. Identify someone that you know who fits the ‘Samaria’ label who has not yet responded to the Gospel.

d. Identify a person or group that you know who fits the ‘uttermost parts of the Earth’ label who has not yet responded to the Gospel.



Take Note! (<http://www.joshuaproject.net/unreached.php>)

The world’s population is more than 6.2 billion and is comprised of some 16,307 people groups (defined by a distinct language and culture).

Of these 16, 307 people groups, 6651 of these groups are considered ‘unreached’ that is, they have no viable church or witness of the Gospel in their language or culture.

Of the top 100 unreached people groups by population size:

- 46 are Muslim
- 39 are Hindu
- 7 are Buddhist
- 4 are non-religious
- 4 are ethnic religions

Take some time right now to pray for each one of these people that God would reveal Himself to them. Ask God to give you an opportunity to explain the Gospel to them so that they can become disciples.

Conclusion

Following the resurrection of Jesus, the next significant event in New Testament history is Pentecost and the birth of the Church. Despite the fact that the Church demonstrated itself to be a haven for men and women of all ethnic, religious and political affiliations, it wasn't long before opposition to the Christian message surfaced and the church found itself facing persecution. Based on what you have studied in this lesson, answer the following questions.

1. In what ways has your church experienced what the early church experienced? (See Acts 2:42-47, Acts 6:1-7, Acts 15:1-29)

.....
.....
.....

2. Based upon Scripture, who did God intend the Church to be made up of?

.....

3. What can you do personally to encourage your church to welcome those of a different culture, race or political affiliation?

.....
.....
.....

4. How does your faith help you face persecution?

.....
.....
.....

5. What is the missionary task of the Church?

.....
.....
.....

6. How can you participate in this missionary task this week?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Appendix 8: Chronological Order of the New Testament Books

Book name	Attributed authorship	Approx. date	Important NT event
		30	Death and resurrection of Christ
		35	Paul converted
		44	the apostle James martyred
		46-48	Paul's 1st journey
Galatians	Paul	49	Paul in Syrian Antioch
		50	Jerusalem council
James	James, Jesus' brother	50	
Matthew	Matthew	early date 50	
Mark	Mark	early date 50	
		50-52	Paul's 2nd journey
1 Thessalonians	Paul	51	Paul in Corinth
2 Thessalonians	Paul	51	Paul in Corinth
		53-57	Paul's 3rd journey
1 Corinthians	Paul	55	Paul in Ephesus
2 Corinthians	Paul	55	Paul in Macedonia
Romans	Paul	57	Paul in Corinth
		57-59	Paul imprisoned in Caesarea
		59-61	Paul imprisoned in Rome
Ephesians	Paul	60	Paul in Rome- house arrest
Colossians	Paul	60	Paul in Rome- house arrest
Philemon	Paul	60	Paul in Rome- house arrest
Luke	Luke	around 60	
Philippians	Paul	61	Paul in Rome- house arrest
1 Peter	Peter	63	persecution by Nero 62-65
Acts	Luke	63	
Matthew	Matthew	before 64	
1 Timothy	Paul	64	Paul in Philippi
Titus	Paul	64	Paul in Philippi
Jude	Jude, Jesus' brother	65	
2 Timothy	Paul	66	Paul in Roman prison

2 Peter	Peter	67	Peter martyred by Nero?
		68	Paul martyred, Nero's suicide
1 John	John	early date 69	
2 John	John	early date 69	
3 John	John	early date 69	
John	John	early date 69	
Hebrews	Apollos? Aquila? Silas?	possibly 69	
Mark	Mark	before 69	
Revelation	John	possibly 69	John exiled on Patmos?
		70	destruction of Jerusalem
1 John	John	traditionally 90	persecution by Domitian 88-95
2 John	John	traditionally 90	
3 John	John	traditionally 90	
John	John	traditionally 95	
Revelation	John	traditionally 95	John exiled on Patmos?

Essential dates in red, Gospels in green, Paul's writings in blue, Acts in brown, Revelation in purple, Remainder in black

Lesson 7: The Development of the Church, Part B

The Expansion of the Church via the First Two Missionary Voyages of Paul and the Message of the First Epistles

Introduction

As was noted in Lesson 6, God had always intended for all the nations to enjoy His blessings. In the Old Testament Israel was charged with representing God in their faith and behaviour so that the nations would be drawn to God. In the New Testament, the Church takes centre stage and is sent out to the nations to make worshipping disciples.

This lesson will give the student an overview of how God’s plan to bless the nations through the Church was initiated through the missionary activity of the Church and its first great missionary, the Apostle Paul.

A. The First Great Missionary on His First Missionary Journey

In Acts 8, Saul is involved in the stoning of Stephen (7:58), the first martyr. In verse 3, it says that Saul was “ravaging the church, entering house after house; and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.” In chapter 9, Saul is converted and God says this about him, “*He (Saul) is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel*” (v. 15).

Soon after his conversion, Saul’s name is changed to Paul. He is welcomed into the Church (thanks to a couple of courageous believers, Ananias and Barnabas) and begins to teach and preach. Once Paul, the former persecutor of the Church, had demonstrated the sincerity of his conversion, he was eventually sent out from Antioch on his first missionary journey.

1. Read Acts 13:1-4, which introduces Paul’s first missionary journey.

a. What is the setting of this event?

.....
.....

b. How does the Church know who to send out?

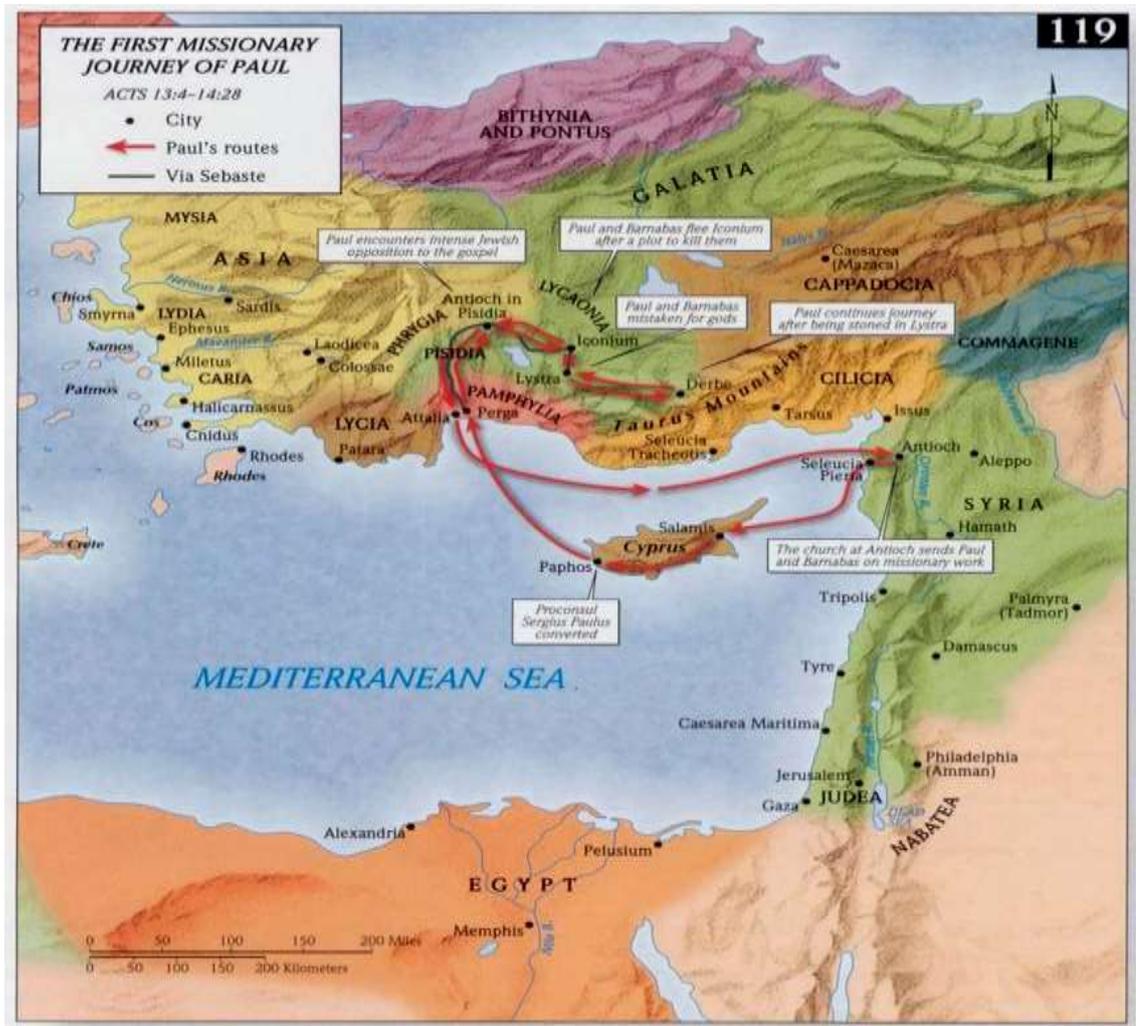
.....
.....

c. What does this indicate to you about how missionaries should be identified and sent out?

.....
.....
.....
.....

2. Acts chapters 13 and 14 recount the events of Paul’s First Missionary Journey (see map below for an indication of where he went).

Map 3: Paul’s First Missionary Journey



Copyright GospelThunder.com. All Rights Reserved.

a. Read Acts 13:4-5. What did Paul (and his companion, Barnabas) do when he (they) arrived in Cyprus?

.....

.....

b. Read verses 6-12. Describe the two different types of responses to Paul’s preaching.

- 1)
- 2)

3. In Acts 13:14-43, Paul preaches in the synagogue located in the town of Pisidian-Antioch.

a. Why do you think Paul would go to a synagogue to preach?

.....

.....

b. Without reading Paul’s sermon, what do you think Paul would include in a sermon (i.e. what types of examples, references, support material) to those in the synagogue in order to help them understand the Gospel?

.....
.....
.....
.....

c. Read verses 42-44. How did the people respond?

.....
.....

d. Read verses 45. What happened next?

.....
.....

e. Read verses 46-47. How did Paul (and his companion) respond?

.....

f. Read verses 48-50. Then what happened?

.....
.....

4. From these first experiences of Paul, what can you conclude about the response that missionaries should expect to the preaching of the Gospel?

.....
.....

5. Read Acts 13:52. Despite all that happened, what is the attitude of the disciples? How is this possible?

.....

6. Look again at the map of Paul’s first missionary journey. Name the regions in which the Gospel was preached.

.....

B. First Challenges to the Gospel from within the Church

Following Paul’s first missionary journey, it is reported in Acts 15:1-5, that a conflict broke out regarding the role of the Mosaic Law in the lives of new believing Christians – both Gentiles and Jews. For Paul, the conflict was not something to take lightly for it affected the very core of the Gospel message. It wasn’t long before a number of leading men of the church, led by James, Jesus’ brother, convened a Church council to discuss the matter.

1. Read Acts 15:1-5.

a. Describe the nature of the problem that resulted in Paul and Barnabas' appearance before the Church Council?

.....
.....

b. Verse 2 says that Paul and Barnabas had "great dissension and debate with them." Why were Paul and Barnabas so stirred up over this issue?

.....
.....

2. Read Acts 15:6-11. How does Peter describe the heart of the issue?

.....
.....
.....

3. Read Ephesians 2:11-22.

a. How does Paul describe the effect of the Gospel on the Gentiles?

.....
.....

b. Because of the Gospel, what is the new relationship between Jews and Gentiles?

.....
.....

4. Read Acts 15:13-21. What is the decision that James hands down as a 'solution' to the problem?

.....
.....

5. Why is the decision made in Jerusalem in the first century important for the Church today?

.....
.....
.....

C. First Epistles Written to the Church

Probably sometime after the Jerusalem Church council, the apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians. The point of his letter was to clarify the Gospel of grace by opposing the elements of legalism that had begun to creep back into the speech and practice of some in the churches that Paul had visited.

1. Read Galatians 1:6-9; 3:1-5

a. What has happened to the faith of the Galatians that concerns Paul?

.....

b. What does he want them to understand about living the Christian life?

.....

2. Read Galatians 2:11-21.

a. Describe what Peter was doing that upset Paul.

.....

b. Why was Paul so angered by what Peter had done?

.....

c. Summarize Paul’s message to Peter, explaining why Peter was wrong in doing what he had done.

.....

3. Read Galatians 3:6-14 and complete the table below. (Some answers are provided as examples.)

Identity	Relationship to God	Spiritual End
<i>Those of faith</i>	<i>Blessed</i>
.....

Clearly, Paul intends to make a clear distinction between the Law and those who follow it and faith and those who live by it.

4. In Galatians 4:21-31, Paul again makes use of the life of Abraham to drive home the distinction between Law and faith. In this passage Paul discusses the difference between the son of Hagar, Ishmael, and the son of Sarah, Isaac.

a. In verse 22-24, how does Paul describe Hagar and her son?

.....

b. In those same verses, how does Paul describe the son of Sarah?

.....

c. In verse 28 and 31, who does Paul say that we are?

.....

d. Therefore, why is it wrong for us to live under the Law?

.....

5. One of the ‘dangers’ for those of us who are no longer under the Law, is that of thinking and acting as if we are ‘free’ to do whatever we like. Of course, this is not at all what freedom means. Throughout his letters, Paul makes repeated efforts to call people to right living. Read the following passages and summarize how they instruct us in right living.

Galatians 5:13-15	..... ..... .....
Galatians 5:19-26	..... ..... .....
Galatians 6:1-5	..... ..... .....

6. James, Jesus’ brother, played a significant role in the first century church. Not only did he serve for some period of time as the head of the Jerusalem council – which served to settle matters of doctrine and practice for the churches of the 1st century – but he also wrote an epistle which bears his name.

A simple outline of the book of James yields two major themes: trials of faith (1:1-18) and characteristics of faith (1:19-5:6).

a. From what you have learned about the political, cultural and religious climate of the 1st century, what are some causes of trials that Christians of the first century had to endure because of their faith?

.....
.....

b. Read James 1:1-5

i. How does James say that believers should respond to trials?

.....

ii. What does James offer as the reason why this is possible?

.....
.....

c. Read James 1:19-25

i. What does James say is a mark of true faith (or of a faithful believer)?

.....
.....

ii. Describe how you have obeyed the Word of God this week.

.....
.....

d. Read James 2:1-9. In this passage, James explains that faith in Christ is not compatible with the attitude of discrimination. Give two reasons why discrimination is not compatible with the Gospel.

1) (See James 2:5.)

.....

2) (See Galatians 3:27-28.)

.....

e. In James 3:1-12, James says that one of the most difficult challenges for the believer is to learn the control of his tongue. In order to describe the power of the tongue, James makes use of several images to describe it: a bit in the horse's mouth, a rudder which steers a great ship, a small flame which burns and consumes, a fountain that sends up fresh or poisoned water, and a fig tree and grape vine which cannot produce the wrong fruit.

i. How does controlling the tongue show faith?

.....
.....

ii. How can your faith help you control your tongue?

.....
.....
iii. Is controlling your tongue a struggle for you? What can you do this week to control your tongue?

.....
.....

f. Read James 4:1-10

i. What is the problem in the Church that James is addressing here?

.....
.....

ii. What does James say is the solution?

.....
.....

iii. How does humility show faith?

.....
.....

g. James returns in the last chapter of his letter to the opening theme from chapter 1, trials and the need to endure. Read James 5:7-11.

i. What does James say is the key to successfully enduring sufferings and trials?

.....
.....

ii. How does patience in suffering show faith?

.....
.....

D. Paul’s Second Missionary Journey.

Map 4: Paul’s Second Missionary Journey



After resolving the Jewish-Gentile controversy (Acts 15:1-29) which established the Gentile as a full believer in Christ and freed the Gospel from the Law and its Old Testament requirements, Paul leaves on his second missionary journey (see map above).

1. Read Acts 15:40-16:5.

a. Describe Paul’s initial work on this journey to the cities he had originally visited on his first missionary journey.

.....

.....

b. Why was it important for them to hear from Paul again?

.....

.....

.....

2. Read Acts 16:16-26.

a. What happened to Paul and his companions in Philippi?

.....

.....

b. According to verse 25, how did Paul and Silas respond to their imprisonment?

.....

.....

c. How and why did they react to their horrible situation in this surprising way?

.....

.....

.....

3. Once freed from jail and having left Philippi, Paul and his companions made their way to Thessalonica. Read Acts 17:1-3.

a. How would you describe Paul's missionary strategy?

.....

b. Do you think this was an appropriate strategy? Explain.

.....

.....

.....

c. Read verses 4-6. How did the people respond to Paul's preaching?

.....

d. Why do you think that some were so upset?

.....

.....

5. Following the excitement in Thessalonica, Paul was led under cover of night to Berea by local believers where he applied his typical strategy and preached in the local synagogue (Acts 17:10-11). However, pursued by some from Thessalonica who heard that he had come to Berea, Paul was obliged to leave the area and he went to Athens where he waited for some of his companions to catch up. While in Athens, Paul was troubled by the idolatry and was moved to preach once again. Read Acts 17:22-31.

a. How are the people that Paul is now preaching to different from those in the synagogues?

.....

.....

b. How does Paul adjust his message so that these people can understand what he is talking about?

.....

.....

.....

c. What do you learn from Paul with regards to missionary strategy for preaching the Gospel?

.....

.....

.....

.....

6. Imagine a conversation you could have with a close friend of yours about the Gospel. What kind of examples and resources should you use to help him or her understand the Gospel?

.....
.....
.....
.....

7. Look again at the map of Paul’s second missionary journey. List the regions in which the Gospel was preached.

.....
.....

E. More Letters to the Churches

While in Corinth, Paul took time to write to the new believing community that grew out of his visit on his 2nd missionary journey. The first letter to the Thessalonians is largely in response to Paul’s apprentice Timothy’s good report of the faith and faithfulness of these new believers. Encouraged by this report, Paul wants to seize the moment to encourage the faith of these men and women as well as challenge them to continue to grow in faith.

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5. What kinds of things does Paul give thanks for?

.....
.....

2. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10.

a. What does Paul note as characteristics of the faith of these men and women in Thessalonica? (list at least 4 things)

—
—
—
—

b. Which of these elements are evident in your Christian life?

.....
.....

3. In chapter 3, Paul explains that he had sent Timothy to them to find out how they were doing because he was anxious to know how their faith was enduring since his departure.

a. What did Timothy report about the Thessalonians that encouraged him?

.....
.....

b. Who was it that first brought you the Good News of the Gospel? As an encouragement to them, make a commitment to tell him/her this week about your on-going faith in the Gospel (if possible). (Note: if it is not possible to visit face-to-face with the person, call or write them)

.....

Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians was written from Corinth, shortly after the first letter in an effort to respond primarily to false teaching and ideas that were circulating in the church regarding the Day of the Lord.

4. Read 2 Thessalonians 1:1-3. What does Paul note as characteristics worthy of praise in the lives of the Thessalonian believers?

.....

.....

5. Read verses 11-12. What things does Paul pray for the Thessalonian believers?

.....

.....

6. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3

a. Describe the misunderstanding that has begun to shake the faith of the believers?

.....

.....

.....

b. How does Paul respond to this false teaching?

.....

.....

.....

7. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17. In this passage Paul again lays down multiple layers of salvation truths that are designed to encourage his believing friends. Identify one of the truths that Paul mentions and explain how this truth serves as an encouragement to your faith.

.....

.....

.....

Conclusion

With the refusal to assume their role as God's representatives, the Jews were displaced by the Church in the Plan of God to redeem the nations. In contrast to the Jews who were to draw the attention of the nations by their holy life, thus bringing them into contact with God, the Church is sent to the nations to live and preach the Gospel.

1. Read Luke 2:8-14 and 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. Summarize the message of the Gospel that the Church has been commissioned to preach to all the nations.

.....
.....

2. Name two things that you can do this week to contribute to the task of “taking the Gospel to the nations” that God has called the Church to.

- a.
- b.

3. The Apostle Paul (and other apostles) provided on-going teaching and encouragement through their letters sent to the early churches. One of the recurring themes in these letters is that of giving thanks to God for the believers. Take some time now to pray, giving thanks to God for the believers in your church, your family, and others that God has used in your life.

Lesson 8: The Development of the Church, Part C

Paul's Third Missionary Journey, Final Voyage to Rome and Additional Letters to the Churches

Introduction

As the New Testament era progressed, more and more people turned to faith in Christ and more and more Churches were established. As noted in lessons 6 and 7, much of what we know about the Church from this era comes to us through the life and writings of the Apostle Paul. This lesson will give the student an overview of Paul's third missionary journey and his final trip to Rome to stand trial as well as introduce a number of epistles (letters) Paul and other apostles wrote in their final years.

A. Paul's Third Missionary Journey

Following the events of his 2nd missionary journey and after returning to Antioch, his home-base, Paul set out once again on what would be his third missionary journey. The most significant events of this journey took place in Ephesus. (See map below.)

Map 5: Paul's Third Missionary Journey



1. Read Acts 19:8-20.

a. What was Paul doing to proclaim the Gospel in Ephesus?

.....
.....

b. How did the people who believed in Jesus respond?

.....
.....

c. Is there anything from your pre-Christian days that you need to get rid of? Explain.

.....
.....

2. Read Acts 19:23-29.

a. Why did the people of Ephesus respond as they did to Paul's teaching and preaching?

.....
.....
.....

b. The Gospel message in Ephesus confronted the making, selling and worshipping of idols. What things does the Gospel oppose in your culture today?

.....
.....
.....

c. How has your behaviour changed in these areas of your life since you have believed the Gospel?

.....
.....
.....

3. At some point during Paul's stay in Ephesus, a delegation from the church in Corinth found their way to him with a report of problems and a request for his help in understanding certain biblical principles with regards to marriage. In response to this request, Paul wrote the letter of 1 Corinthians. Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-11.¹

a. Describe the problem that they report.

.....

¹ In 1 Corinthians 5:9, Paul refers to a letter that he had written to the Corinthians before that which we call 1 Corinthians - 1 Corinthians is therefore in fact the second letter that he wrote to them. However, this first letter was not considered as essential by the Holy Spirit and is not therefore included in the New Testament.

b. How does Paul respond? (vv. 10-17)

.....

.....

4. After delivering the letter of 1 Corinthians to the Corinthian believers (1 Corinthians 16:10, 11), Timothy returned to Paul to report a growing opposition to Paul’s apostolic authority among some in the Corinthian church. Subsequently, Paul made a brief and what is described as a “painful” visit (2 Corinthians 2:1, 12:14, 13:1, 2) in an effort to respond to the opposition in person. Upon returning to Ephesus, Paul wrote what he describes as a “sorrowful” letter in which he urges the church to discipline whoever is leading the opposition against him (2:1-11; 7:8). This letter was carried by Titus to the Corinthians while Paul travelled to Troas and Macedonia. Shortly afterwards, Paul met up with Titus in Macedonia (perhaps in Philippi) to hear his good report that many had repented of their rebellion, though not all. Paul’s letter that we know as 2 Corinthians was written from Macedonia (Philippi?) and was intended to encourage the believers in their faith (in particular with regards to forgiveness, perseverance in ministry, and giving) and to re-establish his legitimate authority as an apostle.

a. Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-18. Paul has by this point in his ministry faced opposition from inside and outside the church. He has been threatened, arrested, beaten, accused of wrongdoing, etc... and yet he keeps on going. This passage gives a great summary of the things that helps Paul stay focused in ministry.

i. Explain what Paul considers to be the source of his ministry.

.....

.....

.....

.....

ii. What truths about the future does Paul meditate on so that he has confidence in the midst of persecution and hardships?

.....

.....

.....

iii. What truths from this passage do you need to meditate on in order to gain confidence when faced with the hardships of your own situation?

.....

.....

.....

b. In chapters 10 to 12, Paul systematically defends his apostolic authority before the Corinthians. In so doing he describes his love for them (11:11, 12:15), his gentle appeal for repentance during his personal visits (10:1), his sufferings on behalf of the Gospel (11:23-33) and the miracles that he performed (12:12). Above all, Paul pleads with the Corinthians to listen to his heart for them and to accept and treat him as they do the other apostles.

i. From what you have learned about the nature and structure of the local church, why did God design the church so that certain people had authority over others?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

ii. When is it appropriate to oppose the authority of a church leader?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

iii. In light of the example of Paul, how should a church leader exercise his authority?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

5. Shortly before his 3rd missionary journey comes to an end, while Paul is again in Corinth, he writes and sends a letter (Romans) to the Church in Rome – a church he did not found, but which was significant not only because of the large number of disciples associated with the church, but also because of its presence in Rome – the most important Roman city in the Roman Empire in the first century. From chapter 15:22-29, we learn that Paul has been wanting to visit the believers in Rome but has not had the opportunity. He has however made plans to try to see them on his way to Spain. But first, he must deliver the offering that the churches in Macedonia and Achaia have taken for the believers in Jerusalem.

a. Read Romans 1:8-15. Compare with Romans 15:14-24. Why did Paul write Romans?

.....

.....

.....

.....

b. Read Romans, 1:1-7. It is commonly recognized that Paul often builds the introduction to his letters with the elements that he intends to treat later in the letter. Based upon this idea, what elements does Paul seem to emphasize in his introduction?

.....

.....

.....

Romans is considered to be one of the most theologically dense books of the New Testament. In this book, Paul systematically makes a case for the universality of sin and judgment (chapters 1 to 3), defines and defends the Gospel as the grace-enabled invitation to repentance and forgiveness (chapters 4 to 7), paints a glorious picture of the spiritual possession of the saints (chapter 8), pleads for Israel’s repentance (chapters 9 to 11), and closes with practical application of the Christian life with regards to authorities, neighbours, and other believers (chapters 12 to 15). Finally, in chapter 16, he closes his letter with a round of affectionate greetings.

c. One of the keys to understanding the message of Romans is in understanding what Paul says about the Gospel. Read Romans 1:18-20. How does Paul describe man’s standing before God?

.....

.....

d. In Romans 3:9-11, Paul makes this even more explicit. Who does Paul say is guilty before God?

.....

.....

e. In Romans 5:6-8, what does Paul mention here as a solution for the sins of mankind?

.....

.....

f. In 5:9-11, what does Paul go on to say about the effects of forgiveness that comes through the blood of Christ?

.....

.....

g. Romans chapter 8 is considered to be one of the most encouraging of all passages in Scripture. In this chapter, Paul lays out a number of the benefits of the Gospel in the life of a believer. Read 8:28-39.

i. In verses 28-30, what does Paul say that God does with the things that happen to us?

.....

.....

.....

.....
ii. In verses 31-36, what does Paul say about God’s spiritual care and protection of our faith?
.....
.....
.....

iii. Finally, in verses 37-39, what assurance does Paul offer to the believers in Rome with regard to their relationship to God?
.....

iv. Remember that not many years after this letter was sent to the church in Rome, Nero unleashed a horrendous wave of persecution against the church. How do you think the words of Paul from chapter 8 would have served as a comfort to those believers facing persecution from Nero?
.....
.....
.....

v. Which of Paul’s words here are a comfort and encouragement to you today? Why?
.....
.....
.....

B. Paul on Trial and Imprisoned

In the final chapters of the book of Acts Paul is on trial for his faith before several Jewish and Roman leaders. It all begins with an accusation that Paul has polluted the Jewish temple with some of his Gentile colleagues. This accusation swells into a scene in which Paul appears before an angry crowd wishing to kill him (Acts 21:40-22:23). His life is spared by a Roman Centurion (Acts 22:24-29) who, after hearing his case, sends him to the Jewish Sanhedrin (Acts 22:30-23:10) to deal with the matter. Following his appearance before the Jews, Paul is sent to stand before Felix, the Governor of Judea (Acts 23:23-35). Ananias, the High Priest, comes to Caesarea to bring charges against Paul before Felix (Acts 24:1-23). Despite the intensity of these various trials, no verdict was handed down and Paul was left in prison for nearly two years in Caesarea. During this two-year period, Paul was often summoned by Felix, governor of Judea (Acts 24:26-27).

1. Imagine that you are alive at the time of the Apostle Paul and know him as a friend. Use the space below to write a brief letter to encourage him during his imprisonment in Caesarea.
.....
.....
.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. What can you do now so that you are prepared spiritually to endure opposition, even imprisonment, for your faith?

.....

.....

.....

C. Paul's Final Voyage

When Felix was replaced by Festus, Paul was again put on trial by him (Acts 25:1-12) and then appeared before King Agrippa and his wife, Bernice (Acts 25:23-26:32).

When Paul realized that he might be sent back to Jerusalem only to be murdered by the Jews, he appealed to Caesar (Acts 25:8-12). Acts 27 and 28 recount Paul's final days under Roman guard. As a result, Paul's final recorded voyage is not that of a missionary, but that of a captive on his way to stand trial before the Roman authorities. (See map below.) Along the way he is shipwrecked on the island of Malta.

Map 6: Paul's Journey to Rome



Most of what we know about the life of the Apostle Paul comes to an end in Acts 28 with him in his own rented quarters where he lived for over two years under house arrest waiting for his chance to make his defence before Caesar. Though it is not 100% certain, many scholars believe that Paul was tried and executed in Rome sometime around AD 64. Others suggest that he was released, made a missionary trip to Spain (Rom. 15:23-28), and was executed during the reign of the demented emperor Nero in AD 68.

It was during this period of house-arrest (AD 59 – 61) that Paul wrote a number of epistles to local churches: including his letters to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians as well as a letter to Philemon concerning a newly converted slave. Together, these four letters are known as the ‘prison epistles of Paul’.

1. Read Ephesians 3:1, 4:1 and 6:18-20. In these passages, Paul refers to his imprisonment - commonly believed to be that described at the end of Acts 28. Despite the fact that this imprisonment lasted for two years, how does Paul ask the Ephesians to pray for him (6:18-20)?

.....
.....

2. Why do you think Paul does not ask that they pray for his release from prison?

.....
.....

3. Read Philippians 1:12 -18. Here again Paul mentions the fact of his imprisonment.

a. What does Paul rejoice over in these verses?

.....
.....
.....

b. Why is Paul joyful about this?

.....
.....

4. Colossians 4:2-6. Here again Paul refers to his imprisonment in Rome.

a. What does he instruct the Colossians to pray for?

.....
.....

b. What word of instruction does he give to the Colossian believers with regards to the unbelievers around them?

.....
.....

c. A popular question, which has its roots in the instructions and encouragements of Paul’s prison epistles goes like this, “If it were suddenly against the law to be a Christian, would there

be enough evidence against you to convict you?" What evidence can you show from your own life which would make you 'guilty' of being a Christian? Rather than write your answer, discuss this question with the other members of your study group.

5. Read Philemon. Note that Paul refers to his imprisonment in verses 9, 10, 13 and 23.

a. Describe the problem that prompts Paul to write this letter.

.....

.....

.....

b. What does Paul tell Philemon to do?

.....

.....

c. Once again Paul opens his letter with a word of encouragement to Philemon. What does this tell you about Paul's priorities when writing to the believers?

.....

.....

.....

d. What do you do intentionally to encourage the believers around you?

.....

.....

D. Final Words

1. Paul's final recorded sermon is found in Acts 28:23. Summarize Paul's message.

.....

.....

.....

2. Read Acts 28:25-28. In light of the Jew's response to his message, what does Paul say God has done instead?

.....

.....

.....

E. Last Letters

If Paul wrote his Prison Epistles (discussed above) during his imprisonment described in Acts 28, then his remaining letters (1, 2 Timothy and Titus: known as the ‘Pastoral Epistles’ of Paul) were written following the close of the book of Acts. These final letters from Paul were written to two men that had been important to him and who would inevitably carry on much of the work of the care for the churches in Ephesus and Crete after Paul’s (expected) death. Scholars agree that it was at this same period of time that Peter wrote his epistles, 1 and 2 Peter. (Note: For a complete study of 1 Peter, see BIBL 201, Bible Study Methods).

1. In Paul’s **first letter to Timothy**, Paul provides instructions for how to care for the church. Complete the table below by reading the indicated passages and providing answers in the empty spaces. The first answer is given as an example.

Passage	Paul’s Instructions
1 Timothy 1:18-20	<i>Fight the good fight to keep the faith</i>
1 Timothy 3:14-16
1 Timothy 4:11-16
1 Timothy 5:21
1 Timothy 6:20-21

2. Obviously, Paul wrote these things to Timothy because they were necessary to preserve the health of the Church and protect the integrity of the Christian Faith in that day. If Paul were writing this letter to your Pastor today, what would he say to him? If Paul had written this letter to church leaders today, what do you think he would have said to them?

.....
.....

3. In his **second letter to Timothy**, Paul is once again, apparently, a Roman prisoner. This time he is not under house arrest with access to his friends, but in a Roman prison, and nearly alone. Throughout this letter, Paul leaves hints that he realizes that his time on earth is short. Complete the table below by reading the passages noted and summarizing the truth behind Paul’s confidence in the face of suffering and anticipated death.

Passage	The truth behind Paul's confidence in the face of suffering
2 Timothy 1:12	He (God) is able to preserve my soul until the day of His appearing
2 Timothy 2:11-13	..... .....
2 Timothy 4:7-8	..... .....
2 Timothy 4:18	..... .....

a. How does a believer gain this type of confidence that Paul displays in these passages?

.....

b. Imagine that you are at the bedside of a new believer who is in the process of dying. Using the things that Paul notes in 2 Timothy, what could you say to encourage this person?

.....

The Apostle Peter, like Paul, was no stranger to the suffering of persecution. His first letter (1 Peter) was probably written to believing Gentiles scattered throughout the Roman Empire just prior to or just after the outbreak of Nero's persecution of Christians around AD 62, following the fire in Rome (which Nero blamed on the Christians).

4. **The letter of 1 Peter** divides into three sections:

1. Salvation – its reality and benefits for the believer (1:1 to 2:12)
2. Submission – the obligation of the believer (2:13 to 3:12)
3. Suffering – the privilege of the believer (3:13 to 5:14)

a. How does a correct understanding of our salvation (1 Peter 1:3-5) help us to submit with hope, as Peter says, to authorities (government), in our work, and in marriage? (Read 1 Peter 2:20-21)

.....

b. How does a correct understanding of our salvation help us suffer with joy, as Peter says, in 1 Peter 4:12-14?

.....
.....
.....
.....

5. In **Peter's second letter**, his concern is not the suffering brought on by persecution, but damage done to the faith of the believers as a result of false teaching.

a. Read 1 Peter 2:1-3 and describe the things that Peter says that false teachers will try to do.

.....
.....
.....

b. Read the following passages and note how Peter says the believers should combat false teaching. *The first answer is given as an example.*

2 Peter 1:5-7 – *By being diligent to add moral and spiritual qualities to their faith.*

2 Peter 1:10-11 –

.....

2 Peter 3:1-2 –

.....

2 Peter 3:11 –

.....

2 Peter 3:14-15 –

.....

2 Peter 3:17-18 –

.....

 **Take Note!**

According to tradition, the Apostle Peter was arrested, imprisoned and eventually executed by Nero around AD 67.

Knowing that crucifixion was a common mode of execution by the Romans, Peter asked to be crucified up-side down, as he felt unworthy to endure the same physical sufferings of his Lord Jesus!

6. **The book of Hebrews** was written to respond to Jewish believers who, having stepped out of Judaism into Christianity, were seeking to return to Judaism in order to escape persecution from their countrymen.

Though the writer of Hebrews is uncertain, as is the exact date of its writing and circulation, several references in the text of Hebrews suggest that it must have been written sometime in the first century (while Timothy was still alive – Hebrews 13:23-24).

A final clue to the dating of Hebrews is significant also for the dating of the rest of the New Testament. As a result of unresolved religious and political tensions between the Jews and Romans, a local conflict grew into a full-scale rebellion in AD 66. This unrest provoked the Roman Emperor, Nero and, after his death in AD 68, Vespasian, to mount a full-scale effort to crush Jewish opposition once and for all. As the article in the appendix describes, the crushing blow in this first Jewish-Roman war was the siege and subsequent destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in AD 70. Tens of thousands of Jews were killed in the conflict and the treasures of the temple were carried off by the Romans.

Interestingly, no New Testament book makes mention of this momentous event in Jewish life and history of the 1st century. Because of the scale and significance of this event, it is hard to imagine that any New Testament writer writing after the fact could have failed to mention it. The fact that none do is certainly strong evidence for concluding that the New Testament books must have been written before this event took place. ²

A brief outline of the book of Hebrews is shown below:

- 1) The Superiority of Christ’s person (1:1 to 4:13)
- 2) The Superiority of Christ’s work (4:14 to 10:18)
- 3) The Superiority of the Christian’s walk of faith (10:19 to 13:25)

a. How would the themes of this book, help Jewish believers not return to Judaism?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

b. How do these same themes help you not return to your old way of life?

.....

.....

.....

.....

²Some scholars, despite this interpretation of the evidence, suggest that John wrote his letters (1, 2 and 3 John) as well as Revelation between AD 85 – AD 95, fifteen to twenty-five years after the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. John’s silence on the matter in his letters is attributed to the fact that he was dealing with subject matter that did not call for a reference to a historical event. And in the case of the Book of Revelation, John made no reference to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple because the revelation of the material for the book, did not include it as a reference.

7. Hebrews 11 is one of the most important passages on the nature of faith in the life of the believer. Read Hebrews 11:1-5 and using the skills you acquired in BIBL 210, Bible Study Methods, complete the following exercises.

a. Identify at least 4 things that you observe about 'faith' in these verses.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

b. Based upon your observations, how would you define 'faith'?

.....

.....

c. As verses 2, 4, 5 and 7 suggest, faith and action go together. In other words, because of faith, a believer is able to accomplish something for God.

i. What have you accomplished for God by faith?

.....

.....

ii. What do you think God wants you to accomplish for Him by faith?

.....

.....

Conclusion

With the preaching of the disciples and the missionary work of Paul and his colleagues, more and more people turned to faith in Christ and more and more churches were planted. In an effort to continue to encourage the believers in these churches and respond to personal and doctrinal issues that came up, Paul and other apostles, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote and sent letters (epistles) to them. Many of these letters that God deemed important for the church throughout history were included in the Bible and serve to instruct and encourage men and women in the faith today.

Appendix 9: Roman Persecutions of the Church

Beginning with the Roman Emperor Nero, the Church experienced waves of persecution during the next 300 years (until the fall of Rome).

These persecutions include:

1. Persecution under **Nero** (c. 64-68). Traditional martyrdoms of Peter and Paul.
2. Persecution under **Domitian** (c. 81-96).
3. Persecution under **Trajan** (112-117). Christianity is outlawed, but Christians are not sought out.
4. Persecution under **Marcus Aurelius** (c. 161-180). Martyrdom of Polycarp.
5. Persecution under **Septimius Severus** (202-210). Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas.
6. Persecution under **Decius** (250-251). Christians are actively sought out by requiring public sacrifice. Could buy certificates (*libelli*) instead of sacrificing. Martyrdoms of bishops of Rome, Jerusalem and Antioch.
7. Persecution under **Valerian** (257-59). Martyrdoms of Cyprian of Carthage and Sixtus II of Rome.
8. Persecution under **Maximin the Thracian** (235-38).
9. Persecution under **Aurelian** (r. 270-275).
10. Severe persecution under **Diocletian and Galerius** (303-311).

Appendix 10: The Fall of Jerusalem and the Destruction of the Temple in AD 70

The **first Jewish-Roman War** (66-73), sometimes called **The Great Revolt** (Hebrew: המרד הגדול, *ha-Mered Ha-Gadol*), was the first of three major rebellions by the Jews of Judaea Province against the Roman Empire (the second was the Kitos War in 115-117; the third was Bar Kokhba's revolt, 132-135).

It began in the year 66, due to Greek and Jewish religious tension. It ended when legions under Titus besieged and destroyed Jerusalem, looted and burned Herod's Temple (in the year 70) and Jewish strongholds (notably Gamla in 67 and Masada in 73), and enslaved or massacred a large part of the Jewish population.

The defeat of the Jewish revolts by the Roman Empire substantially altered the Jewish diaspora, as many Jews were scattered or sold into slavery after losing their state.

First Jewish successes

According to Josephus, the revolt, which began at Caesarea in 66, was provoked by Greeks sacrificing birds in front of a local synagogue. The Greek-speaking Roman garrison did not intercede. In an act of defiance, the son of Kohen Gadol (High priest) Eliezar ben Hanania ceased prayers and sacrifices for the Roman Emperor at the Temple and subsequently led a successful attack on the Roman garrison stationed in Jerusalem. The pro-Roman king Agrippa II and his sister Berenice fled Jerusalem to Galilee, where later they gave themselves up to the Romans. Cestius

Gallus, the legate of Syria, brought reinforcements to restore order, but was soundly defeated at the Battle of Beth Horon. While retreating, Legio XII Fulminata even lost its aquila.

Fall

Emperor Nero appointed General Vespasian instead of Gallus to crush the rebellion. Vespasian made Caesarea Maritima his headquarters and with his legions, among them some 60,000 professional soldiers, methodically cleared the coast and the North. Some towns gave up without a fight. By the year 68, Jewish resistance in the North had been crushed. The leaders of the collapsed Northern revolt, John of Giscala and Simon Bar Giora, managed to escape to Jerusalem. Brutal civil war erupted: the Zealots and Sicarii executed anyone advocating surrender, and by 68 the entire leadership of the southern revolt was dead, all killed by the Jews, none by the Romans. After the death of Nero and with the backing of the army, Vespasian was proclaimed emperor in 69 and left for Rome to take the throne from Vitellius in a brief Roman civil war, the so-called Year of the four emperors.

Fall of Jerusalem

The siege of Jerusalem, the capital city, had begun early in the war, but had turned into a stalemate. Unable to breach the city's defences, the Roman armies established a permanent camp just outside the city, digging a trench around the circumference of its walls and building a wall as high as the city walls themselves around Jerusalem. Anyone caught in the trench attempting to flee the city would be captured, crucified, and placed in lines on top of the dirt wall facing into Jerusalem. The two Zealot leaders, John of Gischala and Simon Bar Giora only ceased hostilities and joined forces to defend the city when the Romans began to construct ramparts for the siege. Tens of thousands of crucified bodies encircled Jerusalem by the end of the siege.

Titus Flavius, Vespasian's son, led the final assault and siege of Jerusalem. During the infighting inside the city walls, a stockpiled supply of dry food was intentionally burned by Jewish leaders to induce the defenders to fight against the siege instead of negotiating peace; as a result, many city dwellers and soldiers died of starvation during the siege. Zealots under Eleazar ben Simon held the Temple, Sicarii led by Simon Bar Giora held the upper city. Titus eventually wiped out the last remnants of Jewish resistance.

By the summer of 70, the Romans had breached the walls of Jerusalem, ransacking and burning nearly the entire city. The Romans began by attacking the weakest spot which was the third wall. It was built shortly before the siege so it did not have as much time invested in its protection. They succeeded towards the end of May and shortly afterwards broke through the more important second wall. The Second Temple was destroyed on Tisha B'Av (July 29 or July 30), 70. Tacitus, a historian of the time, notes that those who were besieged in Jerusalem amounted to no fewer than six hundred thousand, that men and women alike and every age engaged in armed resistance, everyone who could pick up a weapon did, both sexes showed equal determination, preferring death to a life that involved expulsion from their country. All three walls were destroyed and in turn so was the Temple, some of whose overturned stones and their place of impact can still be seen. John of Giscala surrendered at Agrippa II's fortress of Jotaphta and was sentenced to life imprisonment. The famous Arch of Titus still stands in Rome: it depicts Roman legionaries carrying off the Temple of Jerusalem's treasures, including the menorah.

Lesson 9: The Writings of John

Introduction

As you have seen through your study of lessons 1-8, the two major themes of the New Testament are the life of Jesus and the birth of the Church. Throughout these lessons an effort has been made to demonstrate that the New Testament is the continuation of God’s story that was begun in the Old Testament and that the two volumes need to be taken together to understand God and His plan for creation.

The New Testament historical record in Acts ends with the imprisonment of Paul, sometime around AD 60, although some of the books of the NT were most probably written after this event. By this time several other prominent Christians had been put to death by Roman or Jewish authorities; namely, John the Baptist and James (the brother of the apostle John). In AD 54, Nero became the Roman Emperor. Ten years later he launched a vicious persecution of Christians, accusing them of starting the famous fire which destroyed much of Rome.

Historians record that Roman persecution of the Church continued off and on for nearly 300 years. As a consequence of such violence, all of the 12 apostles were apparently martyred except for Judas (who took his own life) and John, whose death is described briefly below.

To conclude this introduction to the New Testament, this lesson will focus on the writings of the Apostle John (who, together with his brother, James, were known as the ‘sons of thunder’ cf. Mark 3:17). As noted above, near the end of his life, the Apostle John was exiled to the Isle of Patmos from where he wrote the book of Revelation – a book that provides the most dramatic look at prophetic material in the New Testament. In addition, he also wrote the Gospel of John and three epistles bearing his name; 1, 2 and 3 John.

A. The Gospel of John

1. The writer of this Gospel, John the Apostle, has his first encounter with Jesus in an unusual setting. Read Luke 5:1-11 and describe the scene.

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. In Luke 6:12-16, Luke summarizes the selection of the 12 disciples of Jesus of whom John is one. John is not singled out by name in most of the rest of the Gospel accounts however we do find him again mentioned in Galatians together with Peter.

a. Read Galatians 2:7-9 and describe the scene.

.....

.....

b. What do you think it means that John (together with Peter and James) is described as a ‘pillar (of the Church)’?

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. Sprinkled throughout John’s Gospel are a few references to a “disciple whom Jesus loved”. Most scholars believe that this is John’s way to refer to himself in his own Gospel. Read John 13:23, John 19:26 and John 20:2. What sort of privileges and responsibilities did this ‘disciple whom Jesus loved’ have?

.....

.....

.....

.....

It is clear that the Apostle John had a privileged position from which to observe and learn from Jesus. As a result of this intimate vantage point, John is able (by the leading of the Holy Spirit) to provide a highly developed theological picture of Jesus. In so doing, however, John develops his Gospel account in a way that significantly differs from the Gospel accounts written by Matthew, Mark and Luke (known together as the synoptic gospels). In some cases, John does not include events or teachings that are common to the synoptics and in some cases, John includes things that are found nowhere else.

4. Briefly skim over the first 3 chapters of the Gospel of John. Note in the table below the verses which recount the major events listed. If John does not discuss the event, write ‘not discussed’ in the space provided.

Gospel	Event		
	Birth of Jesus	Jesus baptised	Jesus tempted in wilderness
Matthew	1:24, 25	3:13-17	4:1-11
Mark	not discussed	1:9-11	1:12-13
Luke	2:1-7	3:21-23	4:1-13
John	.....	.....	.....

5. Instead of describing the historical events surrounding the birth and early ministry of Jesus, how does John begin his Gospel account?

.....

.....

.....

6. How does John’s introduction help you understand who Jesus is?

.....

.....

.....

The key theme in the Gospel of John is that of faith (or belief). In verses 20:30-31, commonly understood to be the key passage in the Gospel, John writes, “Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book, but these have been written (so) that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that (by) believing you might have life in His name.”

7. Read John 3:1-7.

a. Who has come to question Jesus?

.....

b. What does Jesus tell him he must do?

.....

.....

.....

8. Read John 3:16. What here is the key to eternal life?

.....

.....

9. What does John say happens to those who do not believe (John 3:17-18)?

.....

.....

10. Throughout his gospel, John records a number of incidents in which Jesus reveals more of who He is and what He has come to do. Complete the table below by reading the indicated passage and answering the question, “who does Jesus say that He is?”. *The first answer is provided as an example.*

Passage	Truth about Jesus
John 6:35, 48	<i>I am the bread of life</i>
John 8:12, 9.5
John 10:7, 9
John 10:11, 13
John 11:25

John 14:6	.....
John 15:1, 5	.....

11. Much of the material that John includes in chapters 15 to 17 is unique to his Gospel and includes some very important theological teaching. In chapter 15, John describes the relationship of God the Father to the Son and individual believers through an illustration of a vineyard and its vines. In chapter 16, John discusses the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. In chapter 17, John records Jesus’ prayer for Himself, for His disciples and for all (future) believers.

a. Read John 17:1-5.

i. How does Jesus describe the work He came to do?

.....

ii. What does Jesus ask God the Father to do?

.....

b. Read John 17:6-19.

i. What does Jesus say that believers have understood and believed? (vv. 7, 8)

.....

ii. What does Jesus ask God the Father to do for these believers? (vv. 11, 13, 15, 17,)

.....

c. Read John 17:20-26.

i. Who does Jesus pray for in these verses?

.....

ii. What does Jesus pray will be true for them? (vv. 21, 22, 23, 24, 26)

.....

12. From what you have read and studied from the Gospel of John, describe in your own words what it means to believe in Jesus.

.....

B. The Epistles of John

In addition to his Gospel, the apostle John also wrote three epistles or letters to believers he knew and with whom he must have had some pastoral relationship. There is little to indicate when and from where John wrote these letters and it is equally unclear exactly to whom they were written. Regardless, the themes and obvious pastoral tone of each serve to make these letters important to the life of faith of believers down through the centuries.

1. Read 1 John 1:1-4. What does John say is the purpose of his letter?

.....

.....

.....

2. According to 1 John 1:6-10, how would you describe the ‘problem’ that John is writing to address?

.....

.....

3. Read 1 John 2:1, 7, 12, 18 and 28.

a. What words does John use to indicate that his readers are believers?

.....

b. How would you describe his tone? (Is he angry, disappointed, frustrated, anxious, pleading, etc...)

.....

.....

4. As is common to the epistles of the New Testament, John encourages his readers by reminding them of who they are (in Christ) because of what God has done for them and challenges them to appropriate behaviour; warning against wrong behaviour (do not do or think this) and encouraging right behaviour (do, believe, think this). One major theme that he develops is most fully discussed in chapter 4.

a. Read 1 John 4:7 to 5:3

i. What is the theme that John develops here?

.....

ii. What is the reason why believers should demonstrate this type of behaviour?

.....

.....

.....

.....

b. In verses 20-21, John argues that the real proof of our love for God is shown in our love for others.

i. Describe how you have been the recent recipient of this kind of love.

.....
.....

ii. Describe how you can show this kind of love this week to someone in your neighbourhood, family, workplace, school.

.....
.....

5. Read 2 John 1-13. In this letter, the Apostle John shows his concern for the wellbeing of “the chosen lady” and her children. Bible scholars are divided over whether John is writing to an individual woman and her family or if “the chosen lady” refers to the Church in general and its young disciples. Regardless, what he has to say has application for all of us.

a. What two things does John encourage the chosen lady and her children to do? (vv. 5 and 7-10)

1)

2)

b. In verses 5-6, John says, “and this is love, that we walk according to His commandments”. This is nearly identical to his directive from Gospel, chapter 15, verses 9-10.

i. Why do you think love and obedience are linked together in John’s view of the Christian life?

.....
.....

ii. How does this idea contradict those who say that you became a Christian so that you could do whatever you wanted?

.....
.....
.....

6. Read 3 John 1-14. In this epistle, John addresses a friend, Gaius, and encourages him to continue to walk faithfully.

a. Describe the problem that John is writing to Gaius about. (vv 8-10)

.....
.....
.....

b. Summarize John’s advice.

.....

.....

.....

c. What does this epistle of John add to our understanding of the Church and how to live appropriately as representatives of it?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

C. Revelation

The final written work of the Apostle John was the book of Revelation. Tradition has it that John wrote this book while in exile because of his faith on the Island of Patmos off the coast of Greece near the end of the 1st Century.

The book of Revelation, due to its theme and future orientation, is different from all other New Testament literature. Its use of symbols, numbers, and images tied to apocalyptic themes strongly resembles similar Old Testament prophetic material found in Daniel and Ezekiel. Though scholars differ as to the meanings of the various elements that John portrays and describes, there are many things in the book that are clear and which contribute to our knowledge of God and His plan, and serve to increase our faith.

1. Read Revelation 1:1-20.

a. Why did John write this book?

.....

.....

b. To whom is the book primarily addressed?

.....

c. How did John get the information for this book?

.....

.....

d. How does John describe Jesus?

.....

.....

.....

e. What does this description of Jesus tell you about His person, His role and His authority?

.....

f. How is this image of Jesus different from the picture that the Gospel writers portray?

.....

g. Why is Jesus portrayed differently in the book of Revelation?

.....

2. After this striking introduction to this book, John addresses each of the seven churches specifically.

a. Read Revelation chapters 2 and 3 and complete the table of information below. *The filled-in data is given as an example.*

Name of Church	Passage	Praise	Condemnation
<i>Ephesus</i>	<i>2:1-7</i>	<i>Good deeds, perseverance, do not put up with evil men, suffering for the Name of Christ</i>	<i>Left your first love</i>
.....	<i>2:8-11</i>	..... ..... .....	<i>None</i>
<i>Pergamum</i>	<i>2:12-17</i>	...............	...............
.....	<i>2:18-29</i>	<i>Good deeds, love, faith, service and perseverance, increased good deeds</i>	...............
<i>Sardis</i>	<i>3:1-6</i>	..... ..... .....	<i>Spiritually dead</i>
.....	<i>3:7-13</i>	<i>Good deeds, kept His word and not denied His name</i>	...............

<i>Laodicea</i>	<i>3:14-22</i>	<i>Neither cold nor hot, unaware that they are wretched, miserable, blind, poor and naked</i>
-----------------	----------------	-------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Scholars are divided over whether the instructions to these churches are intended solely (or primarily) for these local churches that were scattered across Asia Minor in the first couple of centuries AD or if the references are symbolic, speaking to types of churches, or even of various eras in church history. Nevertheless, what John records is instructive for all.

b. In each of the mini-messages addressed to each of the churches listed, what do you understand to be Jesus’ overriding desire?

.....
.....
.....

3. Take a look at the chart of the book of Revelation in the appendix. (Note: Instructions on making a chart of a book can be found in BIBL 210, Bible Study Methods). Notice that the book of Revelation is divided into 3 main sections (See Revelation 1:19):

- “the things which you have seen” chapter 1,
- “the things which are” chapters 2 and 3, and
- “the things which shall take place”, chapters 4 to 21.

Following instructions to the churches, the book of Revelation begins a lengthy section describing “the things which shall take place”. The bulk of this section (chapters 6 to 19) describes the ‘tribulation period’ during which time God is actively pouring out retribution on the Earth in response to its wickedness. Scholars take differing views on the meaning to be derived from these chapters. Several different views are summarized in the appendix. One common approach understands that the events in chapters 4-21 are future events, which tell of a literal return of Christ to the earth to judge and to rule for 1000 years before a final re-creation of a New Heavens and New Earth.

a. Read the passages noted and complete the table on the next page. *The information given is provided as an example.*

Passage	Type of Judgment	Effect of Judgment
6:1-2	<i>Seal</i>	<i>One of the 4 horsemen sent to conquer Kingdoms of men resulting in death</i>
6:3-4	<i>Seal</i>	..........
6:5-6	.....	<i>Another of the 4 horsemen sent to cause the supply of food to decrease and prices increase resulting in poverty</i>

6:7-8	.....	..........
6:9-11	<i>Seal</i>	<i>Persecution of the saints</i>
6:12-17	.....	..........
8:1-5	<i>Seal</i>	<i>Storms and earthquakes</i>
8:6-7	<i>Trumpet</i>	..........
8:8-9	.....	<i>Poisoning of the oceans and seas resulting in diminished food supply, 1/3 of ships destroyed</i>
8:10-11	<i>Trumpet</i>	..........
8:12-13	.....	<i>Darkening of the skies by 1/3, much woe on the earth</i>
9:1-12	.....	..........
9:13-21	<i>Trumpet</i>	<i>Armies provoked to go to war, 1/3 of mankind killed</i>
11:15-18	.....	..........
16:1-2	<i>Bowl</i>	<i>Sores and infections upon those who worshipped the anti-Christ</i>
16:3	<i>Bowl</i>	..........
16:4-7	.....	<i>The rivers and springs of waters become blood</i>
16:8-9	.....	..........
16:10-11	<i>Bowl</i>	<i>Sores, pain and darkness upon those who did not repent and turn to Christ</i>
16:12-16	.....	..........
16:17-21	<i>Bowl</i>	<i>Severe hailstorms and a massive earthquake flattening all mountains and destroying all islands</i>

b. What do you learn about God from these accounts of judgment that He has prepared for the inhabitants of the Earth?

.....

.....

.....

c. According to Revelation 11:15-18, 14:6-12 and 16:8-11 on whom is judgment sent? Why?

.....

.....

d. What happens to believers during this period of time? Are they protected from the effects of judgment? (see Revelation 6:9-11 and 7:9-14)

.....

.....

.....

e. Throughout chapters 6 to 19, John gives a terrifying account of the judgments that God brings on the Earth. However, interspersed among these descriptions, John also records several other scenes that describe what else is going on in Heaven. Read Revelation 7:9-17

i. Who are the people in this scene?

.....

ii. From where do they come?

.....

iii. What are they doing while the judgments of God are being poured out?

.....

.....

4. Finally, the book of Revelation provides very striking images of the final 'chapter' in God's plan for His creation.

a. Read Revelation 20:11-15.

i. Describe the scene.

.....

.....

.....

ii. On what basis are people judged?

.....

iii. Are believers included in this judgment? How do you know?

.....

.....

iv. Verse 12 says that the dead are judged from the things which were written in the books according to their deeds. If according to the Gospel we are saved by grace apart from works (Ephesians 2:8-9), why are people here being judged for their deeds?

.....
.....
.....
.....

b. Read 2 Peter 3:7-13 and Revelation 21:1.

i. What do Peter and John say happens to the present heavens and earth?

.....

ii. According to Isaiah 65:17-25 and Revelation 22:1 - 5, what kinds of things can we expect to experience in the New Heavens and New Earth?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Conclusion

The apostle John, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, contributed significantly to the contents of the New Testament through his Gospel, his epistles and the book of Revelation. His dual emphases of belief and love mark his writings and have served as gauges of Christian faith in the lives of believers down through the centuries. The book of Revelation is the only New Testament book given over to prophetic material. Here John describes Jesus as the glorified judge, gives instructions with regards to faith and obedience to churches, describes the coming judgment and portrays the final chapter of God’s plan for His creation.

5. Explain briefly two things that you have learned about God from your study of John’s writings.

1)
.....
2)
.....

2. How does knowing the ‘end of the story’ help you live out your faith more confidently today?

.....
.....
.....

Appendix 12: A Summary of Differing Views of Revelation 4 to 21

Appendix 11: A Chart of Revelation

Focus	“Things which you have seen” 1:19	“Things which are” 1:19	“...things which shall take place after these things” 1:19				
References	1:20-2:1	3:22-4:1	5:14-6:1	16:6-19:7	19:21-20:1	20:15-21:1	22:21
Topic	The Lord Jesus	The 7 churches	The Judge	The Tribulation Period	The 2 nd Coming of Jesus	Millennium	Eternal State
Theme	A Vision of Jesus Christ	Evaluation of the churches, exhortation to persevere	A Vision of Final Judgment and the Beginnings of the Eternal State				
	Theophany	Instructions	Trials and Tribulations - Return and Reign - Glory				

Chart adapted from introduction to the book of Revelation, The Open Bible, Expanded Edition, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Taken from: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Introduction to Revelation, John A Walvoord

a. The “allegorical or non-literal” view

This view was popular in the Alexandrian school of theology in the 3rd and 4th centuries. It considers the entire Bible to be an extensive allegory to be interpreted in a non-literal sense...A liberal variation of this view in modern times considers Revelation simply as a symbolic presentation of the concept of God’s ultimate victory.

b. The “preterist” view

This view considers Revelation to be a symbolic picture of early church conflicts which have been fulfilled (“preterist”, from Latin “preter” meaning “past”). This view denies the future predictive quality of most of the book of Revelation. In varying degrees this view combines the allegorical and symbolic interpretation with the concept that Revelation does not deal with specific future events.

c. The “futurist” view

This view considers that chapters 4-22 of Revelation present events that are yet future today. According to this view, the content of chapters 4-18, describes the last seven years preceding the second coming of Christ and emphasizes the Great Tribulation occurring in the last three and one-half years before his return.

d. The “prophetical” view

Revelation is a complete historical survey of the story of humanity and the Church. It is the story of the conflict between good and evil until the end of time. According to this point of view, the 1st century readers of John had to interpret the visions as being a reference to the Roman Empire and to the anti-Christian authorities in power, but the book also has “futuristic” value as it speaks of that which will come to pass when God’s final judgment on humanity will be imminent.

Lesson 10 : Revision and Exam Questions

BIBL 211 New Testament Survey

1. Describe the political, social and religious context in Palestine during Jesus' time. What was his message to his contemporaries? What would his message be for our contemporaries today?
2. What was the expected Messiah to be like as the Jews long awaited his coming? What prophecies concerning the Messiah were cited as accomplished during the events of Jesus Christ's birth?
3. Tell a parable of Jesus and ask 3 or 4 questions that bring out the teaching of this parable. Then explain the problem you want to address and the message you want to bring out of this parable.
4. Jesus Christ is the model human being for every Christian. What do observe in his life on earth that we should imitate?
5. A major portion of the gospel narratives are consecrated to the last events of Jesus' life. What happened and what is the message that the gospel authors wanted to communicate?
6. Your friend insists that Jesus did not die but that God called him to heaven to spare him the suffering and shame of the cross. What can you answer based on the biblical texts?
7. In Acts 1:8 Jesus revealed his future plan to his disciples after his resurrection. What is this plan? What could the first disciples understand of this plan when they first heard it? How did the Holy Spirit teach and accompany the apostles in their understanding of this plan step by step?
8. What message did the author of the Acts of the Apostles try to communicate? How do the outline and contents of the book develop this message? What traps must we avoid in the interpretation of these historical accounts?
9. What happened on the first day of Pentecost after the resurrection? How does this day mark the beginning of the Church?
10. What was Paul's missionary strategy? What applications can we make in our own ministry ?
11. What is the importance of the first Council of Jerusalem 1) in the New Testament and 2) for the faith of every Christian?

- 12.** The two first epistles were addressed to very different recipients. Identify these epistles. Who were the recipients of each letter? What circumstances and what challenges did they face? What is the principal message of each?
- 13.** Describe the importance of Paul's 2nd missionary voyage. What epistles did he write during this voyage? Under what circumstances and for what purpose did he write each one? What message should we apply to our own lives today?
- 14.** Describe the itinerary and priorities of Paul's 3^e missionary voyage. What epistles did he write during this trip? For each one, provide the circumstances and purposes for which he wrote.
- 15.** Identify the prison epistles. What was the particular message of each one? What do these letters tell us about Paul's attitude towards his own imprisonment?
- 16.** Identify the pastoral epistles. For each epistle, give the author, the recipients, the times and circumstances of their writing and the principal message the author sought to communicate.
- 17.** What traits distinguish the writings of John in the New Testament? Cite six (6) key texts you can use 1) to evangelize non-believers (3 texts) and 2) to encourage believers (3 texts). Explain the importance of each text.
- 18.** To whom did John address his book of Revelation? What was his message to them? How can we benefit from this book today?