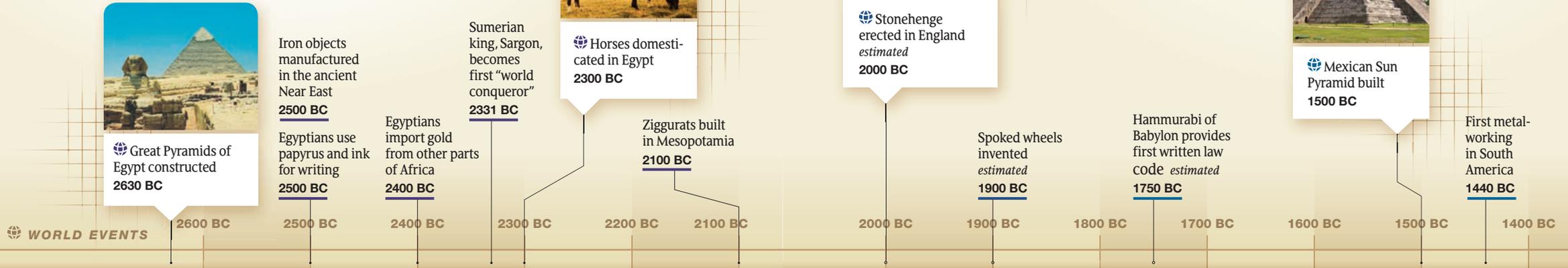


COMPLETE BIBLICAL TIMELINE

Catch a glimpse of the whole sweep of biblical history. The ten historical eras outlined in the *Chronological Life Application Study Bible*, along with the books of the Bible you will find in each, are in the center bar. Significant world events are above the bar, and biblical events are below it.



Beginnings

undated–2100 BC

GENESIS, undated–1805 BC

God's Chosen Family

2100 BC–1800 BC

• JOB, around 1900 BC

The Birth of Israel

1800 BC–1406 BC

EXODUS, 1500–1445 BC

LEVITICUS, 1445–1444 BC

NUMBERS, 1445–1406 BC

DEUTERONOMY, 1406 BC

BIBLICAL EVENTS

undated
Creation

undated
Noah builds the ark



Early Accounts of Creation and the Flood

Several ancient civilizations wrote down their own stories about origins. These tablets from Babylon record a creation myth and a story about an ancient flood.

2166 BC
Abraham is born

2091 BC
Abraham travels to Canaan

2066 BC
Isaac is born

2006 BC
Jacob and Esau are born

1915 BC
Joseph is born

1929 BC
Jacob flees to Haran

1898 BC
Joseph sold into slavery

1885 BC
Joseph rules Egypt

1876 BC
Jacob moves to Egypt

1805 BC
Joseph dies

around 1800–1446 BC
Slavery in Egypt



1526 BC
Moses is born

1446 BC
The Exodus



1406 BC
Moses dies

1443 BC
Israel refuses to enter Canaan

1445 BC
Ten Commandments given

1445 BC
The second Passover



Saddles first used in Europe
AD 1

Judea becomes a Roman province
AD 6

Zealots in Judea rebel against Rome
AD 7

Tiberius succeeds Caesar Augustus as Roman emperor
AD 14



London is founded
AD 43

Caligula becomes the Roman emperor
AD 37

Herod Agrippa appointed king of Judea
AD 40

Claudius becomes the Roman emperor
AD 41

Emperor Claudius poisoned by order of his wife
AD 54

Romans begin using soap
AD 50

Nero becomes the Roman emperor
AD 54

Fire burns Rome, Nero blames Christians
AD 64

Painting on canvas
AD 66

Romans destroy a religious commune at Qumran
AD 68

China opens silk trade with the West
AD 74

Rome begins construction on the Colosseum
AD 75

Mount Vesuvius erupts
AD 79

Domitian becomes the Roman emperor
AD 81

AD 1

AD 10

AD 20
WORLD EVENTS

AD 30

AD 40

AD 50

AD 60

AD 70

AD 80

AD 90

AD 100

Jesus Christ

6 BC–AD 30

MATTHEW, 6 BC–AD 30

LUKE, 6 BC–AD 30

MARK, AD 26–30

JOHN, AD 26–30

The Church

AD 30–present

ACTS, AD 30–60

JAMES, AD 48

GAL, AD 49

1 & 2 THES, AD 50

1 COR, AD 53
2 COR & ROMANS, AD 54

PHIL, AD 61

1 TIM & TITUS, AD 62

2 TIM & 1 PETER, AD 64

2 PETER, AD 65

HEBREWS & JUDE, around AD 66

1 JOHN, between AD 80–90

2 & 3 JOHN, around AD 90

REVELATION, AD 95

BIBLICAL EVENTS

4 BC
Herod the Great dies

AD 5?
Paul is born

6 BC
Jesus is born

AD 6
Jesus visits Temple as a boy

AD 26
John the Baptist begins his ministry

AD 27
Jesus begins his ministry

AD 29
John the Baptist is beheaded

AD 30
Jesus is crucified

AD 30
The Holy Spirit descends on Pentecost

AD 35
Saul's conversion on the Damascus road

AD 40
The conversion of Cornelius

AD 46
Paul begins his first missionary journey

AD 51
Paul begins his third missionary journey

AD 49
The Jerusalem Council

AD 57
Paul in prison in Caesarea

AD 59
Paul's voyage to Rome

AD 62
Paul is released from prison in Rome

AD 64
Paul martyred

AD 70
Rome destroys Jerusalem

AD 73
Jews commit mass suicide at Masada while under Roman attack

Masada
After Rome destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD, a small group of Jewish nationalists dug in at the rugged fortress of Masada, where they remained for three years until the Romans' siege finally broke through the stronghold.



Jesus Christ

BOOKS

- MATTHEW
- MARK
- LUKE
- JOHN
- ACTS

DATES

FROM:
6 BC
TO:
AD 30

THEMES

- Incarnation
- Jesus' Teaching
- Jesus' Miracles
- Resurrection

JESUS WAS BORN into a world that had changed drastically from the time his people, the people of Israel, had returned from exile some five hundred years earlier. Politics, culture, language, and the religious practices in Israel had all undergone great shifts. The time was ripe for God to send his Son into the world to be the Messiah, Savior, and King. But he wouldn't come in the way that everyone expected.

Israel had been waiting for their Messiah, and there were many expectations about what he would do for them and how it would look. He was supposed to be a mighty leader who would reestablish Israel's hold on the land God had given to their ancestor Abraham, expelling the Romans and recalling the glory of the age of David and Solomon. The Messiah was expected to be the climax of Israel's story, the ultimate fulfillment of all God's

promises to his people. Nobody expected the Messiah to come as the baby of a humble peasant girl from a small, unimportant town in Galilee. Nobody expected him to gather a small group of disciples and walk around the country telling stories and challenging the religious authorities.

But Jesus is the climax of God's story! He is the ultimate fulfillment of all God's promises to his people! The four Gospels tell the story of how

this man from the margins of Israel's society displayed God's power through mighty miracles and through teaching with authority. They tell the story of how this unlikely Messiah gave the world far more than any military or political or religious leader ever could have. They tell the story of God with us, the eternal Son of God made flesh to live among his people and offer them salvation

and eternal life—far more than the meager earthly kingdom they were hoping for. In order to understand the story of Jesus the Messiah, we need to get the lay of the land. Who were the key people and social structures in Israel at this time? Where and with whom did Jesus spend his time? Who were the people who flocked to see him? Who were the ones threatened by his popularity?

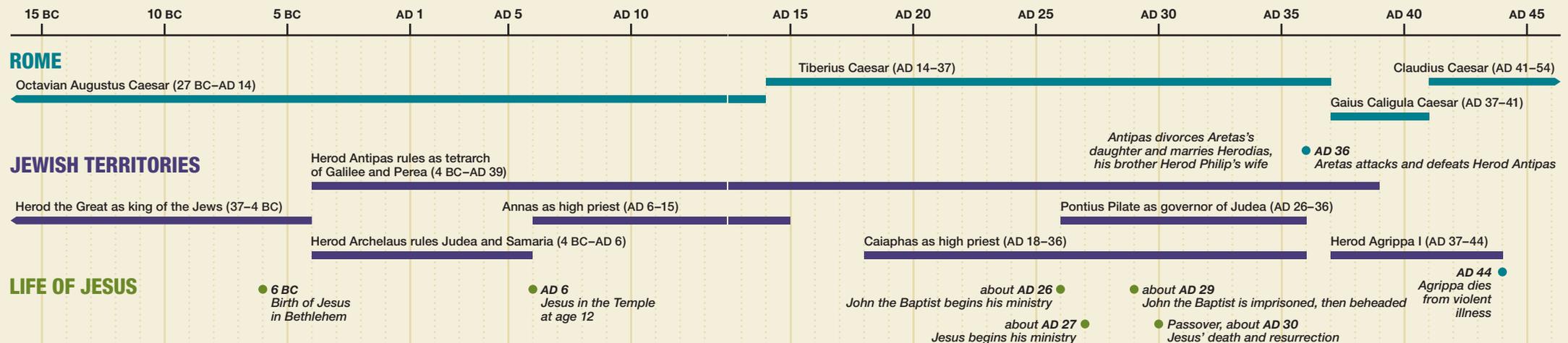
PEOPLE & CULTURE

■ **Greek Influence.** A few centuries earlier, the Greek Empire had conquered most of the known world, and along with their rule they brought their culture and language to the Jewish people. Jesus was born into a world that was still heavily influenced by Greek thought, and virtually everyone would have known the Greek language in addition to their local language (in Jesus' case, likely Aramaic).

■ **Roman Rule.** The Roman Empire was in control of the entire world of the Gospels, and had been for nearly a century. There were several levels of Roman government, as can be seen in the Herod family, Pontius



TIMELINE



Pilate, and the Roman soldiers who make appearances throughout the Gospels. Rome collected taxes, enforced peace (sometimes with brutal violence), and allowed many religious freedoms that were not always permitted under Greek rule.

■ **Jewish Groups.** There were several prominent Jewish groups during this period in history. The Pharisees and Sadducees bridged political and religious leadership, the teachers of religious law and priests were primarily responsible for the religious life of the people, and other groups such as the Zealots and the Essenes were radicals—though in very different ways. Zealots wanted to take political power by force, while Essenes separated themselves from the world in an effort to live pure lives marked by ritual holiness. Ordinary Jewish people were able to worship regularly in local synagogues, led by the mainstream religious leaders in their community. They would journey to Jerusalem

only to worship in the Temple for special life events and religious festivals.

■ **John the Baptist.** John didn't really fit into any of the major Jewish groups of his day. He was a herald of the coming Kingdom of God, calling everyone to repentance and preparing the way for Jesus and his ministry. Many people traveled into the wilderness to hear his message and be baptized, including a number of people who would eventually follow Jesus.

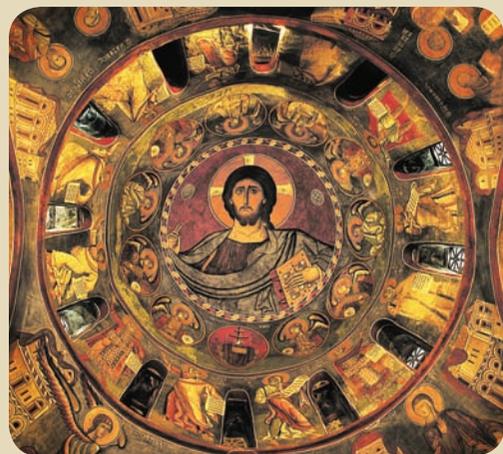
■ **Jesus and the Disciples.** Jesus was born into an ordinary family and grew up in an ordinary town, but his life was far from ordinary. He chose a very diverse group of disciples—some followers of John the Baptist, at least one Zealot, a man who collected taxes for Rome, and a handful of uneducated fishermen. Jesus taught these disciples what it meant to follow him and prepared them to be his ambassadors on earth after his resurrection and ascension.

“Life of Jesus” versus “Gospels”

We need to remember that the story of Jesus' life is given to us in four canonical Gospels—literally accounts of the “Good News.” As important as it is to understand the events of Jesus' life and see them in chronological order, ultimately God gave us the Gospels so that we would be able to hear his Good News with clarity. Rearranging the Gospels into chronological order can sometimes highlight places where individual Gospel writers have placed a particular story out of chronological order to highlight

a theological truth about Jesus and his purposes. So pay attention to parts that seem to be located differently in one Gospel compared to another. It may indicate something about the different Gospel writers' goals.

You also might notice some differences in the way a particular story from Jesus' life is told, especially when the accounts from different Gospels are placed together as they are in the *Chronological Life Application Study Bible*. Several things should be kept in mind as you notice the differences: (1) Different people often notice different details when witnessing the same event; that doesn't mean either account is wrong. (2) Jesus' ministry covered over 1,000 days, and he probably repeated his teachings at multiple times in various locations. It is possible that what has been identified as a parallel between two Gospels is actually a case where two Gospels actually record only similar events or teachings. (3) The order of events (and the identification of their parallels) reflects the decisions of our editors and is not inspired, unlike the text of the Gospels. Feel free to question our decisions and compare them with other options and possibilities.



BOOKS IN THIS SECTION



MATTHEW

AUTHOR: Matthew (Levi), a former tax collector who became one of Jesus' 12 disciples

AUDIENCE: Jews

PURPOSE: To prove that Jesus is the Messiah, the eternal King

DATE WRITTEN: Approximately A.D. 60–65

SPECIAL FEATURES: Matthew is filled with messianic language (“Son of David” is used throughout) and Old Testament references (53 quotes and 76 other references). This Gospel's purpose was to present the clear evidence that Jesus is the predicted Messiah, the Savior.



LUKE

AUTHOR: Luke, a doctor (Col 4:14), a Greek (Gentile) Christian. He is the only known Gentile (non-Jewish) author in the New Testament. Luke was a close friend and companion of Paul. He also wrote Acts, and the two books go together.

AUDIENCE: Theophilus and other Gentiles

PURPOSE: To present an accurate account of the life of Christ, and to present Christ as the perfect human and Savior

DATE WRITTEN: About A.D. 60

SPECIAL FEATURES: This is the most comprehensive of the Gospels. The general vocabulary and writing style show that the author was educated. He makes frequent references to illnesses and diagnoses. Luke stresses Jesus' relationship with people; emphasizes prayer, miracles, and angels; records inspired hymns of praise; gives a prominent place to women.



MARK

AUTHOR: John Mark. He was not one of the 12 disciples, but he accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:13) and is traditionally associated with Peter.

AUDIENCE: Christians in Rome, where the Gospel was written

PURPOSE: To present the person, work, and teachings of Jesus

DATE WRITTEN: Approximately A.D. 55–60

SPECIAL FEATURES: Mark was probably the first Gospel written. The other Gospels quote all but 31 verses of Mark. Mark records more miracles than any other Gospel.



JOHN

AUTHOR: John the apostle, son of Zebedee, brother of James, called a “Son of Thunder”

AUDIENCE: New Christians and searching non-Christians

PURPOSE: To prove conclusively that Jesus is the Son of God and that all who believe in him will have eternal life

DATE WRITTEN: Probably A.D. 85–90

SPECIAL FEATURES: Of the eight miracles recorded, six are unique (among the Gospels) to John, as is the “Upper Room Discourse” (John 14–17). Over 90 percent of John is unique to his Gospel—John does not contain a genealogy or any record of Jesus' birth, childhood, temptation, transfiguration, appointment of the disciples, nor any account of Jesus' parables, ascension, or great commission.

For book information on **ACTS**, see the introduction to The Church, p. 1505.

MEGATHEMES

■ **Jesus Christ: King, Messiah, Servant, Savior, Son of God.** In each of the four Gospels, Jesus Christ is the central focus, but each Gospel highlights a slightly different aspect of his significance. Matthew presents Jesus as the King of kings and the long-awaited Jewish Messiah. Mark presents Jesus as the Servant of God. Luke presents Jesus as the Savior of the entire world, and John presents Jesus as the unique Son of God who reveals the Father to us. All of these portraits of Jesus are important (and true), and the differences between the Gospel accounts can be attributed to the different elements of Jesus' character and ministry that they are highlighting.

■ **Jesus' Teachings.** In addition to learning about who Jesus is, the four Gospels give us direct access to what Jesus taught throughout his ministry. Jesus spoke often about the Kingdom of God (or Kingdom of Heaven), and how it differs from the kingdom of this world. He often taught using parables, giving profound truths through ordinary stories. He taught his disciples about the Holy Spirit, who would come to indwell and empower them after his death and resurrection. His teachings form an important foundation for the things his followers would write in the rest of the New Testament. The teachings of Jesus are alternatively challenging and comforting; make sure that you allow all of what he taught to penetrate your heart and life.

■ **Jesus' Miracles.** Jesus demonstrated power over sickness, nature, demons, and even death many times

in his ministry. But this wasn't just a way to show everyone how powerful he was, or a flashy way to gain more followers—Jesus' miracles show his profound love and compassion for people. Certainly his miracles are proof that he is the Son of God, but they also prove that he sees the needs of his people and has both the power and the will to help them. This is no less true today—become a person of prayer and watch God transform you and the world around you through his power.

■ **Spreading the Gospel.** Jesus went all over the land of Israel spreading the message of the Kingdom of God, but even that wasn't enough. Several times, Jesus went beyond the borders of his nation to share the Good News with Gentiles and even the hated Samaritans. And his message was given to all sorts of people—blind beggars, wealthy merchants, social outcasts, powerful religious leaders, fishermen, Roman soldiers, widows, children, immoral people, and scrupulous Pharisees. The Good News is for all people, and eternal life is offered to all who will believe in the Son and the Father who sent him. What part can you play in spreading this Good News to all people?

■ **Resurrection.** The story of Jesus' life doesn't end with his death—in many ways it only begins there. His resurrection shouts loudly about the power of God and the Good News that our sins have been forgiven, and death has been defeated. Allow the truth of the Resurrection to penetrate your life, and see what God will do in and through you as you follow Jesus.

MAP ►

1 Bethlehem Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a village just a few miles south of Jerusalem in Judea (Luke 2:1-38; Matt 2:1-22).

2 Nazareth Jesus grew up in Nazareth (Matt 2:23; Luke 2:39-40), a small village in the southern part of Galilee, 65 miles north of Jerusalem. When he began his ministry, he preached here but was rejected in his hometown (Matt 13:53-58; Mark 6:1-6; Luke 4:16-30).

3 Jordan River Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River (Matt 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 4:1-13).

4 Cana Jesus' first recorded miracle was at a wedding in this Galilean village (John 2:1-12).

5 Jerusalem Jesus traveled to Jerusalem right at the beginning of his ministry (John 2:13-4:3), and he concluded his ministry here as well. Jerusalem was the center of religious and political power in the region, as it was home to the Jewish Temple and the Roman governor. Many of the most important events in Jesus' life happened in and around Jerusalem, including his crucifixion and resurrection. His last week was all spent in this area,

with some time spent in Bethany, Bethphage, and the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives.

6 Samaria Instead of shunning this region, as most Jews at this time did, Jesus chose to travel through Samaria and minister to the people he met there (John 4:4-42). Many people in Sychar believed in him as a result of his ministry. The people of Samaria were half Jewish, the result of intentional mixing of peoples when they were exiled centuries earlier, and their worship practices were different from the Jews even though they were also based on the Pentateuch (Genesis—Deuteronomy).

7 Galilee Jesus spent most of his time during his ministry traveling throughout the region of Galilee. He spent a lot of time preaching in towns around the Sea of Galilee, including Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Korazin. He performed many miracles in Galilee, including the calming of the storm (Matt 8:23-27; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16) and raising a widow's son from the dead (Luke 7:11-17). He also delivered the Sermon on the Mount in Galilee (Matt 5:1-7:29). While there were synagogues in every town and a large Jewish population, there were

also many Gentiles and Roman military personnel in this region, which was at Israel's northern border.

8 Beyond Israel Jesus didn't limit his ministry to the borders of Israel. He ventured out into Phoenicia, visiting Tyre (Matt 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30) and Sidon (Matt

15:29-31; Mark 8:1-10). He also went to the Decapolis region west of Galilee, where he fed 4,000 people (Matt 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-10).



250 EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST

A Harmony of the Gospels

All four books in the Bible that tell the story of Jesus Christ—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—stand alone, emphasizing a unique aspect of Jesus' life. When these are blended into one complete account, as we have done in the *Chronological Life Application Study Bible*, we can see how these different accounts relate to one another and notice similarities and differences between how the four Gospel writers have told Jesus' story.

The *Chronological Life Application Study Bible* combines the four Gospels into a single chronological account of Christ's life on earth. It includes every chapter and verse of each Gospel, leaving nothing out.

The Gospel accounts are divided into 250 events. The title of each event is identical to the title found in the Bible text. You can use this chart to quickly see which accounts appear in all four Gospels, and which might only be told through only one of the Gospels. Look for patterns, such as the kind of stories John tells that other Gospels don't, and you can gain fresh insight into the special emphasis of the individual Gospels—and learn more about Jesus in the process.

You can also get a feel for which stories take up a lot of space, and which are shorter, by glancing at the dots next to the references. These dots can give you a quick handle on when one Gospel is spending more space on a particular story than others. There are three sizes of dots, representing sections that are one to five verses, those between six and twelve verses, and the largest dots for sections that cover thirteen or more verses.

This harmony will help you to get a quick, at-a-glance overview of the story of Jesus' life. It will help you to better visualize the travels of Jesus, study the four Gospels comparatively, and appreciate the unity of their message.

A. THE BIRTH AND PREPARATION OF JESUS CHRIST

	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
1. The nature of a Gospel		● 1:1a	● 1:1-4	
2. God became a human				● 1:1-18
3. An angel promises the birth of John to Zechariah			● 1:5-25	
4. An angel promises the Birth of Jesus to Mary			● 1:26-38	
5. Mary visits Elizabeth			● 1:39-45	
6. The Magnificat: Mary's Song of Praise			● 1:46-56	
7. John the Baptist is born			● 1:57-66	
8. Zechariah's prophecy			● 1:67-80	
9. An angel appears to Joseph	● 1:18-25			
10. The record of Jesus' ancestors	● 1:1-17		● 3:23-38	
11. Jesus is born in Bethlehem			● 2:1-7	
12. Shepherds visit Jesus			● 2:8-20	
13. Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to the Temple			● 2:21-24	
14. The prophecy of Simeon			● 2:25-35	
15. The prophecy of Anna			● 2:36-38	

● 1-5 verses ● 6-12 verses ● 13+ verses

	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
16. Visitors arrive from Eastern lands	● 2:1-12			
17. The escape to Egypt	● 2:13-18			
18. The Return from Egypt	● 2:19-22			
19. Jesus' Childhood in Nazareth	● 2:23		● 2:39-40	
20. Jesus speaks with the religious teachers			● 2:41-52	
21. John the Baptist prepares the way for Jesus	● 3:1-12	● 1:1b-8	● 3:1-18	● 1:19-28
22. The baptism of Jesus	● 3:13-17	● 1:9-11	● 3:21-22	
23. Satan tempts Jesus in the wilderness	● 4:1-11	● 1:12-13	● 4:1-13	
24. John the Baptist proclaims Jesus as the Messiah				● 1:29-34
25. The first disciples follow Jesus				● 1:35-51
26. Jesus turns water into wine				● 2:1-12

B. MESSAGE AND MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Begins His Ministry in Jerusalem

27. Jesus clears the Temple				● 2:13-22
28. Nicodemus visits Jesus at night				● 2:23-3:21
29. John the Baptist tells more about Jesus				● 3:22-36
30. Herod puts John in prison			● 3:19-20	
31. Jesus leaves Judea	● 4:12	● 1:14		● 4:1-3

Jesus Ministers in Samaria

32. Jesus talks to a woman at the well				● 4:4-26
33. Jesus tells about the spiritual harvest				● 4:27-38
34. Many Samaritans believe in Jesus				● 4:39-42

Jesus Ministers in Galilee

35. Jesus preaches in Galilee	● 4:13-17	● 1:15	● 4:14-15	● 4:43-45
36. Jesus heals a government official's son				● 4:46-54
37. Four fishermen follow Jesus	● 4:18-22	● 1:16-20	● 5:1-11	
38. Jesus teaches with authority		● 1:21-28	● 4:31-37	
39. Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law and many others	● 8:14-17	● 1:29-34	● 4:38-41	
40. Jesus preaches throughout Galilee	● 4:23-25	● 1:35-39	● 4:42-44	
41. Jesus heals a man with leprosy	● 8:1-4	● 1:40-45	● 5:12-16	
42. Jesus heals a paralyzed man	● 9:1-8	● 2:1-12	● 5:17-26	

► **MATTHEW 2:19-22** (cont.)

Israel with Jesus and his mother. ²²But when he learned that the new ruler of Judea was Herod's son Archelaus, he was afraid to go there. Then, after being warned in a dream, he left for the region of Galilee.

Jesus' Childhood in Nazareth **PARALLEL** ●●

MATTHEW 2:23 ●●

So the family went and lived in a town called Nazareth. This fulfilled what the prophets had said: "He will be called a Nazarene."

LUKE 2:39-40 ●●

When Jesus' parents had fulfilled all the requirements of the law of the Lord, they returned home to Nazareth in Galilee. ⁴⁰There the child grew up healthy and strong. He was filled with wisdom, and God's favor was on him.

Jesus Speaks with the Religious Teachers

LUKE 2:41-52

Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Passover festival. ⁴²When Jesus was twelve years old, they attended the festival as usual. ⁴³After the celebration was over, they started home to Nazareth, but Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents didn't miss him at first, ⁴⁴because they assumed he was among the other travelers. But when he didn't show up that evening, they started looking for him among their relatives and friends.

⁴⁵When they couldn't find him, they went back to Jerusalem to search for him there. ⁴⁶Three days later they finally discovered him in the Temple, sitting among the religious teachers, listening to them and asking questions. ⁴⁷All who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

⁴⁸His parents didn't know what to think. "Son," his

mother said to him, "why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been frantic, searching for you everywhere."

⁴⁹"But why did you need to search?" he asked. "Didn't you know that I must be in my Father's house?"* ⁵⁰But they didn't understand what he meant.

⁵¹Then he returned to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. And his mother stored all these things in her heart.

⁵²Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and all the people.

Lk 2:49 Or "Didn't you realize that I should be involved with my Father's affairs?" **Mt 3:2** Or has come, or is coming soon. **Mt 3:3** Isa 40:3 (Greek version).

John the Baptist Prepares the Way for Jesus **PARALLEL** ●●●●

MATTHEW 3:1-12 ●●●●

In those days John the Baptist came to the Judean wilderness and began preaching. His message was, ²"Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.*" ³The prophet Isaiah was speaking about John when he said,

"He is a voice shouting in the wilderness,
Prepare the way for the LORD's coming!
Clear the road for him!"**

Matt 2:23 Nazareth sat in the hilly area of southern Galilee near the crossroads of great caravan trade routes. The town itself was rather small. The Roman garrison in charge of Galilee was housed there. The people of Nazareth had constant contact with people from all over the world, so world news reached them quickly. The people of Nazareth had an attitude of independence that many of the Jews despised. This may have been why Nathanael commented "Nazareth! . . . Can anything good come from Nazareth?" (John 1:46).

Matt 2:23 The Old Testament does not record this specific statement, "He will be called a Nazarene." Many scholars believe, however, that Matthew is referring to Isaiah 11:1, where the Hebrew word for "branch" is similar to the word for "Nazarene." Or he may be referring to a prophecy unrecorded in the Bible. In any case, Matthew paints the picture of Jesus as the true Messiah announced by God through the prophets; and he makes the point that Jesus, the Messiah, had unexpectedly humble beginnings, just as the Old Testament had predicted (see Mic 5:2).

Luke 2:39 Did Mary and Joseph return immediately to Nazareth, or did they remain in Bethlehem for a time (as implied in Matt 2)? Apparently there is a gap of several years between verses 38 and 39—ample time for them to find a place to live in Bethlehem, flee to Egypt to escape Herod's wrath, and return to Nazareth when it was safe to do so.

Luke 2:41-42 According to God's law, every male was required to go to Jerusalem three times a year for the great festivals (Deut 16:16). In the spring, the Passover was celebrated, followed immediately by the weeklong Festival of Unleavened Bread. Passover commemorated the night of the Jews' escape from Egypt when God had killed the Egyptian firstborn but had passed over Israelite homes (see Exod 12:21-36). Passover was the most important of the three annual festivals.

GOSPEL ACCOUNTS FOUND ONLY IN MATTHEW

Matthew records nine events that are not mentioned in any of the other Gospels. In each case, Matthew's choice seems to relate to his purpose in communicating the gospel to Jewish people. Five cases are fulfillments of prophecies (marked with asterisks). The other four would have been of particular interest to the Jews of Matthew's day.

Passage	Subject
1:20-24	Joseph's dream*
2:1-12	The visit of the wise men
2:13-15	Escape to Egypt*
2:16-18	Slaughter of the male children*
27:3-10	The death of Judas*
27:19	The dream of Pilate's wife
27:52	The other resurrections
28:11-15	The bribery of the guards
28:19-20	The baptism emphasis in the great commission*

Luke 2:43-45 At age 12, Jesus was considered almost an adult, so he probably didn't spend a lot of time with his parents during the festival. Those who attended these festivals often traveled in caravans for protection from robbers along the Palestine roads. The women and children usually would travel at the front of the caravan, with the men bringing up the rear. A 12-year-old boy conceivably could have been in either group, so both Mary and Joseph probably assumed that Jesus was with the other one. But when the caravan left Jerusalem, Jesus stayed behind, absorbed in his discussion with the religious leaders.

Luke 2:46-47 The Temple courts were famous throughout Judea as a place of learning. At the time of the Passover, the greatest rabbis of the land would assemble to teach and to discuss great truths among themselves. The coming Messiah might have been a popular discussion topic, for many people

were expecting him soon. Jesus would have been eager to listen and to ask probing questions. It was not his youth but the depth of his wisdom that astounded these teachers.

Luke 2:48 Mary had to let go of her child and let him become a man, God's Son, the Messiah. Fearful that she hadn't been careful enough with this God-given child, she searched frantically for him. But she was looking for a boy, not the young man who was in the Temple astounding the religious leaders with his questions. Letting go of people or projects we have nurtured can be very difficult. It is both sweet and painful to see our children growing into adults, our students into teachers, our subordinates into managers, our inspirations into institutions. But when the time comes we must step back and let go—in spite of the hurt. Then our protégés can exercise their wings, take flight, and soar to the heights God intended for them.

Luke 2:49-50 This is the first mention of Jesus' awareness that he was God's Son. But even though he knew his real Father, Jesus did not reject his earthly parents. He went back to Nazareth with them and lived under their authority for another 18 years. God's people do not despise human relationships or family responsibilities. If the Son of God obeyed his human parents, how much more should we honor our family members! Don't use commitment to God's work to justify neglecting your family.

Luke 2:50 Jesus' parents didn't understand what he meant about his Father's house. They didn't realize he was making a distinction between his earthly father and his heavenly Father. Jesus knew that he had a unique relationship with God. Although Mary and Joseph knew he was God's Son, they didn't understand what his mission would involve. Besides, they had to raise him, along with his brothers and sisters (Matt 13:55-56), as a normal child. They knew he was unique, but they did not know what was going on in his mind.

Luke 2:52 The Bible does not record any events of the next 18 years of Jesus' life, but Jesus undoubtedly was learning and maturing. As the oldest in a large family, he would have assisted Joseph in his carpentry work. Since there is no mention of Joseph after this time, he may have died, leaving Jesus to provide for the family. The normal routines of daily life gave Jesus a solid understanding of the Judean people.

Luke 2:52 The second chapter of Luke shows us that although Jesus was unique, he had a normal childhood and adolescence. In terms of development, he went through the same progression we do. He grew physically and mentally, he related to other people, and he was loved by God. A full human life is balanced. Thus it was important to Jesus—and it should be important to all believers—to develop fully and harmoniously in each of these key areas: physical, mental, social, and spiritual.

Matt 3:1-2 John the Baptist bursts onto the scene thirty years after the birth of Jesus. His theme was "Repent of your sins." The people needed to repent—make a 180-degree turn—from the kind of self-centeredness

that leads to wrong actions, such as lying, cheating, stealing, gossiping, taking revenge, abusing, and indulging in sexual immorality. A person who turns from sin stops rebelling and begins following God's way of living prescribed in his Word. The first step in turning to God is to admit your sin, as John urged. Then God will receive you and help you live the way he wants. Remember that only God can get rid of sin. He doesn't expect us to clean up our life before we come to him.

Matt 3:2 The Kingdom of Heaven began when God himself entered human history as a man. Today Jesus Christ reigns in the hearts of believers, but the Kingdom of Heaven will not be fully realized until all evil in the world is judged and removed. Christ came to earth first as a suffering servant; he will come again as king and judge to rule victoriously over all the earth.

Matt 3:3 The prophecy quoted is Isaiah 40:3. Isaiah was one of the greatest prophets

of the Old Testament and one of the most quoted in the New. Like Isaiah, John was a prophet who urged the people to confess their sins and live for God. Both prophets taught that the message of repentance is good news to those who listen and seek the healing forgiveness of God's love, but terrible news to those who refuse to listen and thus cut off their only hope.

Matt 3:3 John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus by preparing others to welcome him. People who do not know Jesus need to get ready to meet him. We can prepare them by explaining their need for forgiveness, demonstrating Christ's teachings by our conduct, and telling them how Christ can give their lives meaning. We can "clear the road for him" by correcting misconceptions that might be hindering people from coming to Christ. Someone you know may be open to a relationship with Christ. How are you helping those around you to welcome Jesus?



Egypt in Jesus' Day The Sphinx and the great pyramids dominated the landscape when Jesus was there as an infant, but they were just as much cultural artifacts then as they are today. It had been centuries since the classical Egyptian culture had been conquered, and Greco-Roman customs and culture dominated the area at this time. The people there spoke Greek and were under Roman rule, just like Judea and Galilee.

► **LUKE 10:25-37** (cont.)

²⁶Jesus replied, “What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?”

²⁷The man answered, “‘You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.’ And, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

²⁸“Right!” Jesus told him. “Do this and you will live!”

²⁹The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

³⁰Jesus replied with a story: “A Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road.

³¹“By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. ³²A Temple assistant* walked

over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side.

³³“Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him.

³⁴Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. ³⁵The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins,* telling him, “Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I’ll pay you the next time I’m here.”

³⁶“Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?” Jesus asked.

³⁷The man replied, “The one who showed him mercy.”

Then Jesus said, “Yes, now go and do the same.”

Lk 10:27 Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18. Lk 10:32 Greek *A Levite*. Lk 10:35 Greek *two denarii*. A denarius was equivalent to a laborer’s full day’s wage.

A COLLECTION OF ATTITUDES ABOUT OTHERS’ NEEDS

Confronting the needs of others brings out various attitudes in us. Jesus used the story of the good but despised Samaritan to make clear what attitude was acceptable to him. If we are honest, we often will find ourselves in the place of the expert in religious law, needing to learn again who our neighbor is. Note these different attitudes toward the wounded man.

To the expert in religious law	the wounded man was a subject to discuss.
To the bandits	the wounded man was someone to use and exploit.
To the religious men	the wounded man was a problem to be avoided.
To the innkeeper	the wounded man was a customer to serve for a fee.
To the Samaritan	the wounded man was a human being worth being cared for and loved.
To Jesus	all of them and all of us were worth dying for.

Luke 10:27 This expert in religious law was quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. He correctly understood that the law demanded total devotion to God and love for one’s neighbor. Jesus talked more about these laws elsewhere (see Matt 19:16-22 and Mark 10:17-22).

Luke 10:27-37 The legal expert viewed the wounded man as a topic for discussion. To the bandits, he was an object to exploit; to the priest, a problem to avoid; and to the Temple assistant, an object of curiosity. Only the Samaritan treated him as a person to love. From the illustration we learn three principles about loving our neighbor: (1) Lack of love is often easy to justify, even though it is never right; (2) our neighbor is anyone of any race, creed, or social background who is in need; (3) love means acting to meet the person’s need. Wherever you live, needy people are close by. There is no good reason for refusing to help.

Luke 10:29 We all have neighbors, but we live in a time when we can go weeks or months without ever crossing paths with

them. At the same time, we communicate almost every day with people who live miles away, sometimes hundreds or even thousands of miles. We can begin to wonder the same thing—“who’s my neighbor?” Is it everyone? Is it no one?

The story of the Good Samaritan happens on a road between two cities. People are coming and going. The beaten man isn’t close to anyone’s home; he’s nobody’s neighbor. Everyone has somewhere else to be. Yet, it’s out there in the middle of nowhere that the man finds his neighbor. Jesus’ story shows us that being neighbors is not a matter of proximity or familiarity. The neighborhood is anywhere mercy is shown. Neighbors don’t have to live nearby or be people we know. Strangers can be our neighbors.

Luke 10:33 A deep hatred existed between Jews and Samaritans. The Jews saw themselves as pure descendants of Abraham, while the Samaritans were a mixed race produced when Jews from the northern kingdom intermarried with other peoples

after Israel’s exile (see also the note on Luke 9:53, p. 1386). To this legal expert, the person least likely to act correctly would be the Samaritan. In fact, he did not even say the word *Samaritan* in answer to Jesus’ question. This expert’s attitude betrayed his lack of the very thing that he had earlier said the law commanded—love.

Luke 10:37 For the people listening to Jesus, a neighbor would have been identified as a fellow Israelite. But for Jesus, the neighbor in this story was a Samaritan, a hated enemy of the Israelites.

It’s easy to put up fences around our neighborhoods. This can make for a lot of outsiders. People who don’t go to our church.



JESUS VISITS MARY AND MARTHA
Jesus had been in Jerusalem for the Festival of Shelters (John 7:2ff). He then visited his friends Mary and Martha in Bethany, a tiny village on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives.

Jesus Visits Martha and Mary

LUKE 10:38-42

As Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem, they came to a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. ³⁹Her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord’s feet, listening to what he taught. ⁴⁰But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, “Lord, doesn’t it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me.”

⁴¹But the Lord said to her, “My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details!⁴² There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her.”

Lk 11:2 Some manuscripts add additional phrases from the Lord’s Prayer as it reads in Matt 6:9-13. Lk 11:3 Or *Give us each day our food for the day; or Give us each day our food for tomorrow.* Lk 11:4 Or *And keep us from being tested.*

People who make choices we disagree with. People who don’t look or act like we do. But Jesus tears down those fences and points to an “outsider” who shows mercy. Jesus says mercy driven by love is the centerpiece of the neighborhood. Sometimes the edges get blurry, but Jesus gave us a clear focal point to center our lives on.

Luke 10:38-42 Mary and Martha both loved Jesus. On this occasion they were both serving him. But Martha thought Mary’s style of serving was inferior to hers. She didn’t realize that in her desire to serve, she was actually neglecting her guest. Are you so busy doing things for Jesus that you’re not spending any time with him? Don’t let your service become self-serving. Jesus did not blame Martha for being concerned about household chores. He was only asking her to set priorities. Service to Christ can degenerate into mere busywork that is totally devoid of devotion to God.

Luke 11:2-13 Notice the order in this prayer. First, Jesus praised God; then he made his requests. Praising God first puts us in the right frame of mind to tell him about our needs. Too often our prayers are more like shopping lists than conversations. These verses focus on three aspects of prayer: its content (Luke 11:2-4), our persistence (Luke 11:5-10), and God’s faithfulness (Luke 11:11-13).

Luke 11:3 God’s provision is daily, not all at once. We cannot store it up and then cut off communication with God. And we dare not be self-satisfied. If you are running low on strength, ask yourself, How long have I been away from the Source?

Luke 11:4 When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he made forgiveness the cornerstone of their relationship with God. God has forgiven our sins; we must now forgive those who have wronged us. To remain unforgiving shows we have not understood that we ourselves deeply need to be forgiven. Think of some people who have wronged you. Have you forgiven them? How will God deal with you if he treats you as you treat others?

Jesus Teaches His Disciples about Prayer

LUKE 11:1-13

Once Jesus was in a certain place praying. As he finished, one of his disciples came to him and said, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”

²Jesus said, “This is how you should pray:*

“Father, may your name be kept holy.

May your Kingdom come soon.

³ Give us each day the food we need,*

⁴ and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And don’t let us yield to temptation.*”

⁵Then, teaching them more about prayer, he used this story: “Suppose you went to a friend’s house at

MARTHA Many older brothers and sisters have an irritating tendency to take charge, a habit developed while growing up. We can easily see this pattern in Martha, the older sister of Mary and Lazarus. She was used to being in control. • The fact that Martha, Mary, and Lazarus are remembered for their hospitality takes on added significance when we note that hospitality was a social requirement in their culture. It was considered shameful to turn anyone away from your door. Apparently Martha’s family met this requirement very well. • Martha worried about details. She wished to please, to serve, to do the right thing. Perhaps as the oldest she feared shame if her home did not measure up to expectations. She tried to do everything she could to make sure that wouldn’t happen. As a result, she found it hard to relax and enjoy her guests and even harder to accept Mary’s lack of cooperation in all the preparations. But Jesus provided a gentle corrective to Martha’s priorities as a hostess. The personal attention she gave her guests should be more important than the comforts she tried to provide for them. • Later, following her brother Lazarus’s death, Martha rushed out to meet Jesus and expressed her inner conflict of disappointment and hope at his late arrival. Jesus pointed out that her hope was too limited. He was not only Lord over death; he was the resurrection and the life! Moments later, Martha again spoke without thinking, pointing out that four-day-old corpses are well on their way to decomposition. Her awareness of details sometimes kept her from seeing the whole picture, but Jesus was consistently patient with her. • In our last picture of Martha, she is once again serving a meal to Jesus and his disciples. She has not stopped serving. But the Bible records her silence this time. She has begun to learn what her younger sister already knew—that worship begins with silence and listening.

Strengths and accomplishments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Known as a hospitable homemaker Believed in Jesus with growing faith Had a strong desire to do everything exactly right
Weaknesses and mistakes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expected others to agree with her priorities Was overly concerned with details Limited Jesus’ power to this life
Lessons from her life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting caught up in details can make us forget the main reasons for our actions There is a proper time to listen to Jesus and a proper time to work for him
Vital statistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where: Bethany Relatives: Sister: Mary. Brother: Lazarus.
Key verse	“But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, ‘Lord, doesn’t it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me!’” (Luke 10:40).

Martha’s story is told in Luke 10:38-42 and John 11:17-45.

► **MATTHEW 21:12-17** (cont.)

knocked over the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves. ¹³He said to them, "The Scriptures declare, 'My Temple will be called a house of prayer,' but you have turned it into a den of thieves!"*

¹⁴The blind and the lame came to him in the Temple, and he healed them. ¹⁵The leading priests and the teachers of religious law saw these wonderful miracles and heard even the children in the Temple shouting, "Praise God for the Son of David."

But the leaders were indignant. ¹⁶They asked Jesus, "Do you hear what these children are saying?"

"Yes," Jesus replied. "Haven't you ever read the Scriptures? For they say, 'You have taught children and infants to give you praise.'*" ¹⁷Then he returned to Bethany, where he stayed overnight.

MARK 11:15-19 [] [] []

When they arrived back in Jerusalem, Jesus entered the Temple and began to drive out the people buying and selling animals for sacrifices. He knocked over the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves, ¹⁶and he stopped everyone from using the Temple as a marketplace. * ¹⁷He said to them, "The Scriptures declare, 'My Temple will be called a house of prayer for all nations,' but you have turned it into a den of thieves."*

¹⁸When the leading priests and teachers of religious

Mt 21:13 Isa 56:7; Jer 7:11. **Mt 21:16** Ps 8:2. **Mk 11:16** Or from carrying merchandise through the Temple. **Mk 11:17** Isa 56:7; Jer 7:11. **Mk 11:19** Greek they left; other manuscripts read he left. **Lk 19:46** Isa 56:7; Jer 7:11. **Jn 12:23** "Son of Man" is a title Jesus used for himself.

Mark 11:15-17 Jesus became angry, but he did not sin. There is a place for righteous indignation. Christians are right to be upset about sin and injustice and should take a stand against them. Unfortunately, believers are often passive about these important issues and instead get angry over personal insults and petty irritations. Make sure your anger is directed toward the right issues.

Mark 11:15-17 Money changers and merchants did big business during Passover. Their stalls were set up in the Temple's Court of the Gentiles, making it all but impossible for non-Jews to spend any time in worship (Isa 56:6-7). Jesus became angry because God's house had become a place of extortion and a barrier to Gentiles who wanted to worship.

Luke 19:47 Who were the "other leaders of the people"? This group probably included

wealthy leaders in politics, commerce, and law. They had several reasons for wanting to get rid of Jesus. He had damaged business in the Temple by driving the merchants out. In addition, he was preaching against injustice, and his teachings often favored the poor over the rich. Furthermore, his great popularity was in danger of attracting Rome's attention, and the leaders of Israel wanted as little as possible to do with Rome.

John 12:20-21 These Greeks probably were converts to the Jewish faith. They may have gone to Philip because, though he was a Jew, he had a Greek name.

John 12:23-25 This is a beautiful picture of the necessary sacrifice of Jesus. Unless a kernel of wheat is planted in the soil, it will not become a blade of wheat producing many more seeds. Jesus had to die to pay

the penalty for our sin, but also to show his power over death. His resurrection proves he has eternal life. Because Jesus is God, Jesus can give this same eternal life to all who believe in him.

John 12:25 We must be so committed to living for Christ that we should "care nothing" for our lives by comparison. This does not mean that we long to die or that we are careless or destructive with the life God has given, but that we are willing to die if doing so will glorify Christ. We must disown the tyrannical rule of our own self-centeredness. By laying aside our striving for advantage, security, and pleasure, we can serve God lovingly and freely. Releasing control of our lives and transferring control to Christ bring eternal life and genuine joy.

law heard what Jesus had done, they began planning how to kill him. But they were afraid of him because the people were so amazed at his teaching.

¹⁹That evening Jesus and the disciples left* the city.

LUKE 19:45-48 [] [] []

Then Jesus entered the Temple and began to drive out the people selling animals for sacrifices. ⁴⁶He said to them, "The Scriptures declare, 'My Temple will be a house of prayer,' but you have turned it into a den of thieves."*

⁴⁷After that, he taught daily in the Temple, but the leading priests, the teachers of religious law, and the other leaders of the people began planning how to kill him. ⁴⁸But they could think of nothing, because all the people hung on every word he said.

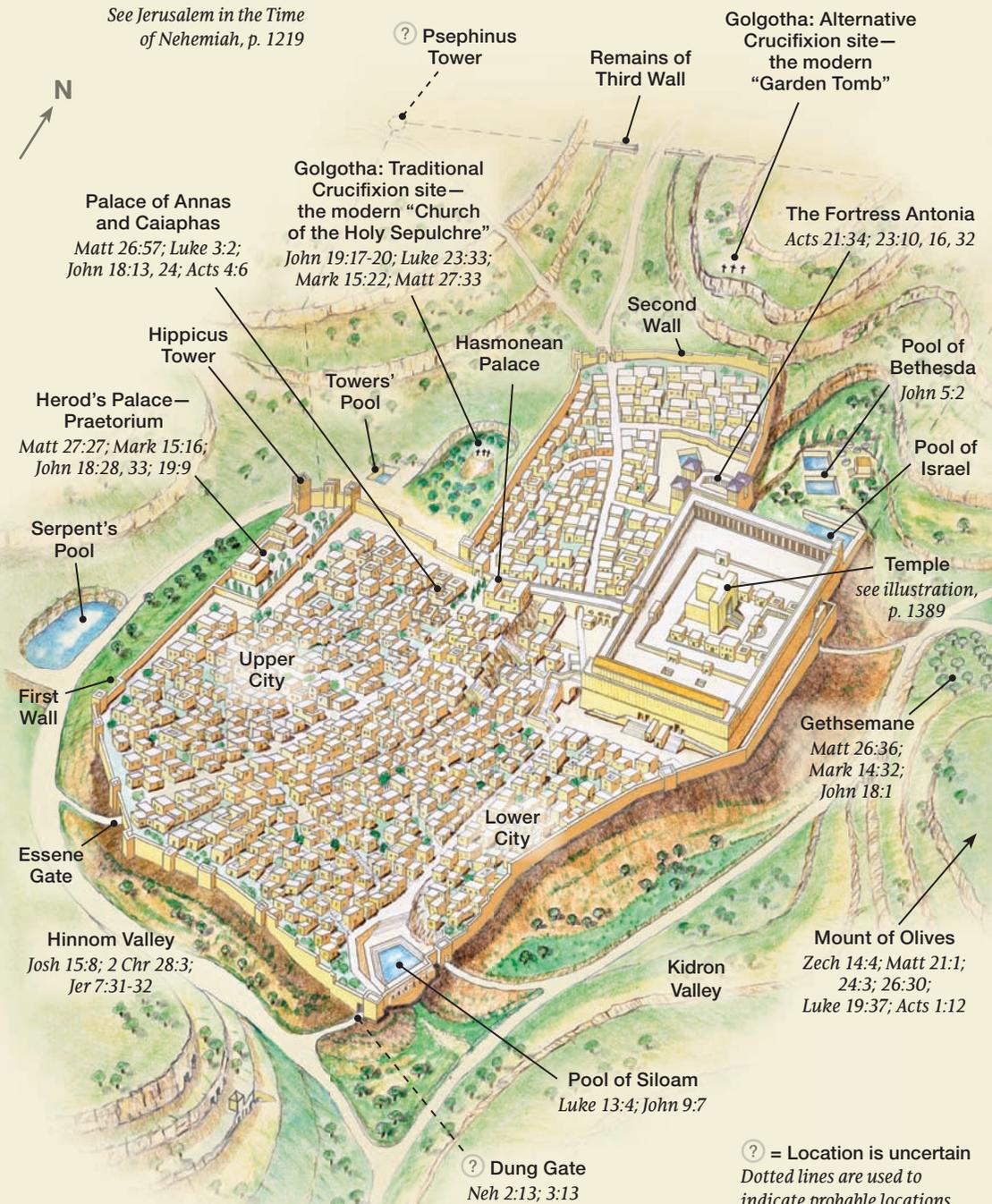
Jesus Explains Why He Must Die

JOHN 12:20-36

Some Greeks who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration ²¹paid a visit to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee. They said, "Sir, we want to meet Jesus." ²²Philip told Andrew about it, and they went together to ask Jesus.

²³Jesus replied, "Now the time has come for the Son of Man* to enter into his glory. ²⁴I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat is planted in the soil and dies, it remains alone. But its death will produce many new kernels—a plentiful harvest of new lives. ²⁵Those

Jerusalem in the First Century A.D.



History of the Temple in Jerusalem ►

The Temple in Jerusalem has a significant history. The first Temple was erected in the time of Solomon (959 B.C.). The Babylonian army laid final siege to Jerusalem in 588 B.C., completely decimating the city. The Temple and Solomon's palace were burnt down, the Temple treasures were completely plundered, the city walls were demolished, and the citizens were deported in large numbers. Jeremiah had predicted Jerusalem's doom and 70-year captivity (Jer 25:11; 29:10). The second Temple in Jerusalem was built in the time of Zerubbabel (515 B.C.). In 40 B.C., with the aid of the Parthians, Antigonos attacked and seized Jerusalem, forcing Herod to escape. He journeyed to Rome, where the Senate appointed him "king of the Jews." Armed with this new authority and two Roman legions, Herod recaptured Jerusalem in 37 B.C. and reigned there for 33 years (until 4 B.C.). During this time he beautified the city and enlarged the Temple. Herod's reconstruction of the Temple began in 20 B.C., and it was not completed until around A.D. 64. Six years later, the Roman general Titus laid siege to Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple. Jesus had predicted this 40 years earlier (in A.D. 30).

1. PAUL VISITS ATHENS AND CORINTH

After writing the difficult letter to Corinth, Paul traveled down through Greece, stopping in Athens, and then stayed in Corinth to be with the believers there in person for a while.

ACTS 20:2b-3a

Then he traveled down to Greece, ³where he stayed for three months.

L. Paul's Letter to the Romans

Paul had heard of the church at Rome, but he had not yet been there, nor had any of the other apostles. Evidently the church had been started by Jews who had come to faith during Pentecost. They had spread the gospel when they returned to Rome, and the church had grown. Paul deeply wanted to visit this church, and to go from Rome to minister in Spain and beyond, pushing the Good News to the ends of the earth. The book of Romans is somewhat of a letter of introduction. Paul was intelligent, articulate, and committed to his calling. He presented the case for the gospel clearly and forthrightly in his letter to the believers in Rome, hoping that they would be his partners in sending the Good News to Spain and beyond.

1. WHAT TO BELIEVE

Paul begins his message to the Romans by vividly portraying the sinfulness of all people, explaining how forgiveness is available through faith in Christ, and showing what believers experience in life through their new faith. In this section, we learn of the centrality of faith to becoming a Christian and to living the Christian life. Apart from faith, we have no hope in life.

Greetings from Paul

ROMANS 1:1-7

This letter is from Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, chosen by God to be an apostle and sent out to preach his

Good News. ²God promised this Good News long ago through his prophets in the holy Scriptures. ³The Good News is about his Son. In his earthly life he was born into King David's family line, ⁴and he was

Father (God), Son (Lord Jesus Christ), and Holy Spirit. Although the term Trinity is not explicitly used in Scripture, verses such as this one show that it was believed and experienced through knowing God's grace, love, and fellowship. See Luke 1:35—the angel Gabriel's announcement of Jesus' birth to Mary; Matthew 3:17—the Father's voice and the Holy Spirit's presence at the baptism of Jesus; and Matthew 28:19—Jesus' commission to the disciples.

2 Cor 13:14 Paul was dealing with an ongoing problem in the Corinthian church. He could have refused to communicate until they cleared up their situation, but he loved them and reached out to them again with the love of Christ. Love means that sometimes we must confront those we care about. Both authority and personal concern are needed in dealing with people who are ruining their lives with sin. But there are several wrong approaches in confronting others, and these can further break relationships rather than heal them. We can be legalistic and blast people away with the laws they should be obeying. We can turn away from them because we don't want to face the situation. We can isolate them by gossiping about their problem and turning others against them as well. Or, like Paul, we can seek to build relationships by taking a better approach—sharing, communicating, and caring. This is a

difficult approach that can drain us emotionally, but it is the best way for other people, and it is the only Christlike way to deal with others' sin.

Acts 20:2-3 While in Greece, Paul spent much of his time in Corinth. From there he wrote the letter to the Romans. Although Paul had not yet been to Rome, believers had already started a church there (Acts 2:10; 18:2). Paul wrote to tell the church that he planned to visit the Roman believers. The letter to the Romans is a theological essay on the meaning of faith and salvation, an explanation of the relation between Jews and Gentiles in Christ, and a list of practical guidelines for the church.

Rom 1:1 Paul wrote this letter to the church in Rome. Neither he nor the other church leaders, James and Peter, had yet been to Rome. Most likely, the Roman church had been established by believers who had been at Jerusalem for Pentecost (Acts 2:10) and by travelers who had heard the Good News in other places and had brought it back to Rome (for example, Priscilla and Aquila; Acts 18:2; Rom 16:3-5). Paul wrote the letter to the Romans during his ministry in Corinth (at the end of his third missionary journey just before returning to Jerusalem; Acts 20:3; Rom 15:25) to encourage the believers and to express his desire to visit them someday (within three years he would). This letter may

well have been the first piece of Christian literature the Roman believers had seen. Written to both Jewish and Gentile Christians, the letter to the Romans is a systematic presentation of the Christian faith.

Rom 1:1 When Paul, a devout Jew who had at first persecuted the Christians, became a believer, God used him to spread the Good News throughout the world. Although he was a prisoner, Paul did eventually preach in Rome (Acts 28), perhaps even to Caesar himself. Paul's Profile is on p. 1571.

Rom 1:1 Paul humbly calls himself a slave of Christ Jesus and an apostle ("one who is sent"). For a Roman citizen—which Paul was—to choose to be a slave was unthinkable. But Paul chose to be completely dependent on and obedient to his beloved Master. What is your attitude toward Christ, your Master? Our willingness to serve and obey Jesus Christ enables us to be useful and usable servants to do work for him—work that really matters. Obedience begins as we renounce other masters, identify ourselves with Jesus, discover his will and live according to it, and consciously turn away from conflicting interests, even if these interests have been important to us in the past.

Rom 1:2 Some of the prophecies predicting the Good News regarding Jesus Christ are found in Genesis 12:3; Psalms 16:10; 40:6-10; 118:22; Isaiah 11:1ff; Zechariah 9:9-11; 12:10; Malachi 4:1-6.

shown to be* the Son of God when he was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit.* He is Jesus Christ our Lord. ⁵Through Christ, God has given us the privilege* and authority as apostles to tell Gentiles everywhere what God has done for them, so that they will believe and obey him, bringing glory to his name.

⁶And you are included among those Gentiles who have been called to belong to Jesus Christ. ⁷I am writing to all of you in Rome who are loved by God and are called to be his own holy people.

Rom 1:4a Or and was designated. **Rom 1:4b** Or by the Spirit of holiness; or in the new realm of the Spirit. **Rom 1:5** Or the grace. **Rom 1:9** Or in my spirit.

May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

God's Good News

ROMANS 1:8-17

Let me say first that I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith in him is being talked about all over the world. ⁹God knows how often I pray for you. Day and night I bring you and your needs in prayer to God, whom I serve with all my heart* by spreading the Good News about his Son.

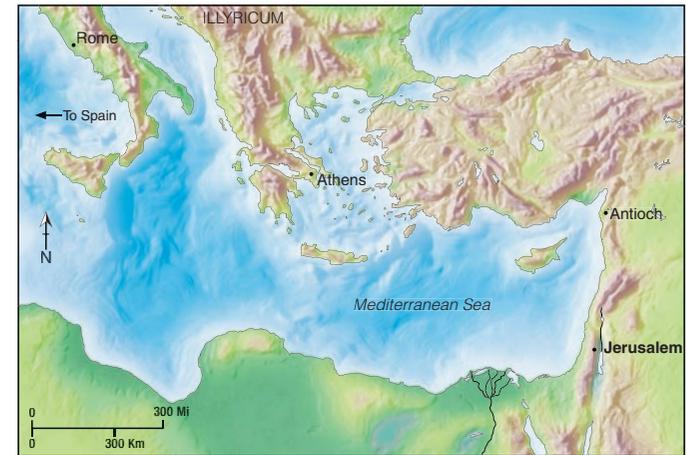
Rom 1:3-4 Paul states that Jesus is the Son of God, the promised Messiah, and the resurrected Lord. Paul calls Jesus a descendant of King David to emphasize that Jesus truly had fulfilled the Old Testament Scriptures predicting that the Messiah would come from David's line. With this statement of faith, Paul declares his agreement with the teaching of all Scripture and of the apostles.

Rom 1:3-5 Here Paul summarizes the Good News about Jesus Christ, who (1) came as a human by natural descent, (2) was part of the Jewish royal line through David, (3) died and was raised from the dead, and (4) opened the door for God's grace and kindness to be poured out on us. The book of Romans is an expansion of these themes.

Rom 1:5 Christians have both a privilege and a great responsibility. Paul and the apostles received the privilege of being called, but they also received the authority and the responsibility to share with others what God has done. God also graciously forgives our sins when we believe in him as Lord. In doing this, we are committing ourselves to begin a new life. Paul's new life also involved a God-given responsibility: to witness about God's Good News to the world as a missionary. God may or may not call you to be a foreign missionary, but he does call you (and all believers) to be Christ's ambassador and to witness to the changed life that Jesus Christ has begun in you.

Rom 1:6 Jews and Christians alike stood against the idolatrous Roman religions, and Roman officials often confused the two groups. This was especially easy to do since the Christian church in Rome could have been originally composed of Jewish converts who had attended Pentecost in Jerusalem (see Acts 2:1ff). By the time Paul wrote this letter to the Romans, however, many Gentiles had joined the church. The Jews and the Gentiles needed to know the relationship between Judaism and Christianity.

Rom 1:6-7 Paul says that those who become Christians are invited by Jesus Christ to (1) belong to God's family, and (2) be his very own people. What a wonderful expression of what it means to be a Christian! In being reborn into God's family we have the greatest experience of love and the greatest inheritance. Because of all that God has done for us, we strive to be his holy people.



THE GOSPEL GOES TO ROME When Paul wrote his letter to the church in Rome, he had not yet been there, but he had taken the gospel "from Jerusalem all the way to Illyricum" (Rom 15:19). He planned to visit and preach in Rome one day and hoped to continue to take the gospel farther west—even to Spain.

Rom 1:7 Rome was the capital of the Roman Empire that had spread over most of Europe, North Africa, and the Near East. In New Testament times, Rome was experiencing a golden age. The city was wealthy, literary, and artistic. It was a cultural center, but it was also morally decadent. The Romans worshiped many pagan gods, and even some of the emperors were worshiped. In stark contrast to the Romans, the followers of Christ believed in only one God and lived by his high moral standards.

Christianity was also at odds with the Romans' dependence on military strength. Many Romans were naively pragmatic, believing that any means to accomplish the intended task was good. And for them, nothing worked better than physical might. The Romans trusted in their strong military power to protect them against all enemies. Christians in every age need to be reminded that God is the only permanent source of our security and salvation, and at the same time he is "our Father"!

Rom 1:8 Paul uses the phrase "I thank my God through Jesus Christ" to emphasize the point that Christ is the one and only mediator between us and God. Through Christ,

God sends his love and forgiveness to us; through Christ, we send our thanks to God (see 1 Tim 2:5).

Rom 1:8 The Roman Christians, at the Western world's political power center, were highly visible. Fortunately, their reputation was excellent; their strong faith was making itself known around the world. When people talk about your congregation or your denomination, what do they say? Are their comments accurate? Would you rather they noticed other features? What is the best way to get the public to recognize your faith?

Rom 1:9-10 When you pray continually about a concern, don't be surprised at how God answers. Paul prayed to visit Rome so he could teach the Christians there. When he finally arrived in Rome, it was as a prisoner (see Acts 28:16). Paul prayed for a safe trip, and he did arrive safely—after getting arrested, slapped in the face, shipwrecked, and bitten by a poisonous snake. When we sincerely pray, God will answer—although in his timing and sometimes in ways we do not expect.

► **REVELATION 21:1–22:6** (cont.)

22:1 Then the angel showed me a river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. **2** It flowed down the center of the main street. On each side of the river grew a tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit,* with a fresh crop each month. The leaves were used for medicine to heal the nations.

3 No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him. **4** And they will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads. **5** And there will be no night there—no need for lamps or sun—for the Lord God will shine on them. And they will reign forever and ever.

6 Then the angel said to me, “Everything you have heard and seen is trustworthy and true. The Lord God, who inspires his prophets,* has sent his angel to tell his servants what will happen soon.*”

Jesus Is Coming

REVELATION 22:7-21

“Look, I am coming soon! Blessed are those who obey the words of prophecy written in this book.*”

Rv 22:2 Or twelve kinds of fruit. **Rv 22:6a** Or The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets. **Rv 22:6b** Or suddenly, or quickly; also in 22:7, 12, 20. **Rv 22:7** Or scroll; also in 22:9, 10, 18, 19.

Rev 22:1 The water of life is a symbol of eternal life. Jesus used this same image with the Samaritan woman (John 4:7-14). It pictures the fullness of life with God and the eternal blessings that come when we believe in him and allow him to satisfy our spiritual thirst (see Rev 22:17).

Rev 22:2 This tree of life is like the tree of life in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:9). After Adam and Eve sinned, they were forbidden to eat from the tree of life because they could not have eternal life as long as they were under sin’s control. But because of the forgiveness of sin through the blood of Jesus, there will be no evil or sin in this city. We will be able to eat freely from the tree of life when sin’s control over us is destroyed and our eternity with God is secure.

Rev 22:2 Why would the nations need to be healed if all evil is gone? John is quoting from Ezekiel 47:12, where water flowing from the Temple produces trees with healing leaves. He is not implying that there will be illness in the new earth; he is emphasizing that the water of life produces health and strength wherever it goes.

Rev 22:3 “No longer will there be a curse upon anything” means that nothing accursed will be in God’s presence. This fulfills Zechariah’s prophecy (see Zech 14:11).

Rev 22:8-9 The first of the Ten Commandments is “You must not have any other god but me” (Exod 20:3). Jesus said that the greatest command of Moses’ laws was “You must love the LORD your God with all

8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw all these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me. **9** But he said, “No, don’t worship me. I am a servant of God, just like you and your brothers the prophets, as well as all who obey what is written in this book. Worship only God!”

10 Then he instructed me, “Do not seal up the prophetic words in this book, for the time is near. **11** Let the one who is doing harm continue to do harm; let the one who is vile continue to be vile; let the one who is righteous continue to live righteously; let the one who is holy continue to be holy.”

12 “Look, I am coming soon, bringing my reward with me to repay all people according to their deeds. **13** I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.”

14 Blessed are those who wash their robes. They will be permitted to enter through the gates of the city and eat the fruit from the tree of life. **15** Outside the city are the dogs—the sorcerers, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idol worshippers, and all who love to live a lie.

your heart, all your soul, and all your mind” (Matt 22:37). Here, at the end of the Bible, this truth is reiterated. The angel instructs John to worship God, and worship is a major emphasis in Revelation. The first step toward meaningful worship is a desire to know God. If we thirst for him, the Bible promises that he will provide for us and satisfy our needs. Would you like your worship to be completely transformed? Confess any sins that might be hindering your fellowship with God. Then ask God to stir your heart, to instill within you an unquenchable thirst to know him. Meditate upon how God has revealed himself in the Bible, and ask him to reveal himself to you again. When you see God in a new way, worship will be your only fitting response.

Rev 22:10-11 The angel tells John what to do after his vision is over. Instead of sealing up what he has written, as Daniel was commanded to do (Dan 12:4-12), the book is to be left open so that all can read and understand. Daniel’s message was sealed because it was not a message for Daniel’s time. But the book of Revelation was a message for John’s time, and it is relevant today. As Christ’s return gets closer, there is a greater polarization between God’s followers and Satan’s followers. We must read the book of Revelation, hear its message, and be prepared for Christ’s imminent return.

Rev 22:12-14 Those who wash their robes are those who seek to purify themselves from a sinful way of life. They strive daily to remain faithful and ready for Christ’s return. (This concept is also explained in the second note on Rev 7:14, p. 1813.)

Rev 22:14 In Eden, Adam and Eve were barred from any access to the tree of life because of their sin (Gen 3:22-24). In the new earth, God’s people will eat from the tree of life because their sins have been removed by Christ’s death and resurrection. Those who eat the fruit of this tree will live forever. If Jesus has forgiven your sins, you will have the right to eat from this tree. (For more on this concept, see the first note on Rev 22:2, above.)

Rev 22:15 Jesus will exclude from the holy city those “who love to live a lie.” These are people whose lives have gone so wrong that they resemble Satan, who deceived the whole world (Rev 12:9; 13:13-15; 16:14). They are hypocrites, trying to live one way while pretending to believe another. They are like the Nicolaitans (mentioned in Rev 2:15), who were among the believers but compromised their faith in order to also include worship of the Roman emperor. John records Jesus’ statement that Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44).

Today we see leaders who twist the truth to serve their purposes. Many people have lost the ability to distinguish what’s true from what they wish was true. Dishonest people soon begin to believe the lies they construct around themselves. Then they lose the ability to tell the difference between truth and lies. By believing your own lies, you deceive yourself, you alienate yourself from God, and you lose credibility in all your relationships. In the long run, honesty wins out.

16 “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this message for the churches. I am both the source of David and the heir to his throne.* I am the bright morning star.”

17 The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” Let anyone who hears this say, “Come.” Let anyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who desires drink freely from the water of life. **18** And I solemnly declare to everyone who hears the words of prophecy written in this book: If anyone adds anything to what is written here, God

Rv 22:16 Greek I am the root and offspring of David. **Rv 22:21** Other manuscripts read be with all; still others read be with all of God’s holy people. Some manuscripts add Amen.

Rev 22:16 Jesus is both David’s “source” and “heir.” As the Creator of all, Jesus existed long before David. As a human, he was one of David’s direct descendants (see Isa 11:1-5; Matt 1:1-17). As the Messiah, he is the “bright morning star,” the light of salvation to all.

Rev 22:17 Both the Holy Spirit and the bride, the church, extend the invitation to all the world to come to Jesus and experience the joys of salvation in Christ.

Rev 22:17 When Jesus met the Samaritan woman at the well, he told her of the living water that he could supply (John 4:10-15). This image is used again as Christ invites anyone to come and drink of the water of life. The Good News is unlimited in scope—all people everywhere may come. Salvation cannot be earned, but God gives it freely. We live in a world desperately thirsty for living water, and many are dying of thirst. But it’s still not too late. Let us invite everyone to come and drink.

Rev 22:18-19 This warning is given to those who might purposefully distort the message in this book. Moses gave a similar warning in Deuteronomy 4:1-4. We, too, must handle the Bible with care and great respect so that we do not distort its message, even unintentionally. We should be quick to put its principles into practice in our life. No human explanation or interpretation of God’s Word should be elevated to the same authority as the text itself.

Rev 22:20 We don’t know the day or the hour, but Jesus is coming soon and unexpectedly. This is good news to those who trust him, but a terrible message for those who have rejected him and stand under judgment. Soon means “at any moment,” and we must be ready for him, always prepared for his return. Would Jesus’ sudden appearance catch you off guard?

Rev 22:21 Revelation closes human history as Genesis opened it—in paradise. But there is one distinct difference in Revelation—evil

will add to that person the plagues described in this book. **19** And if anyone removes any of the words from this book of prophecy, God will remove that person’s share in the tree of life and in the holy city that are described in this book.

20 He who is the faithful witness to all these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon!”

Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!

21 May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s holy people.*

is gone forever. Genesis describes Adam and Eve walking and talking with God; Revelation describes people worshipping God face to face. Genesis describes a garden with an evil serpent; Revelation describes a perfect city with no evil. The Garden of Eden was destroyed by sin; but paradise is re-created in the new Jerusalem.

The book of Revelation ends with an urgent plea: “Come, Lord Jesus!” In a world of problems, persecution, evil, and immorality, Christ calls us to endure in our faith. Our efforts to better our world are important, but their results cannot compare with the transformation that Jesus will bring about when he returns. He alone controls human history, forgives sin, and will re-create the earth and bring lasting peace.

Revelation is, above all, a book of hope. It shows that no matter what happens on earth, God is in control. It promises that evil will not last forever. And it depicts the wonderful reward that is waiting for all those who believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

*On each side of the river grew a tree of life,
bearing twelve crops of fruit, with a fresh crop each month.
The leaves were used for medicine to heal the nations.*

Revelation 22:2

