

**Discovering God's
Glorious Treasure
By How the Bible is Organized**

by Deborah J. Johnson
Brian D. Johnson
November, 2018

This book is dedicated to our two children.

Josiah and Bri-Anna

Follow after all God desires for you and grow in His Word,

A special mention of appreciation to
Cynda Jerger and Ellen Chantel

for their cheerful perseverance, encouragement,
assistance and patience in the completion
of this endeavor.

Thanks also to my husband Brian for being kind
and longsuffering, and for the many
Bible discussions and support.

To God be the Glory!

**Available on Amazon
Kindle Direct Publishing 12/15/18**

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Introduction

"Discovering God's Glorious Treasure" will help students find a true understanding of how to read, study, and apply the Scripture. God's approach to man changes over time; this provides a glimpse of how He set up the Bible. Students will also learn how our Father is dealing with man today, contrasting it with the past and future times. The last chapter delineates specifics about God's appointed apostle, Paul, and a few aspects of the message of Grace to us.

God has organized the Bible in such a way that there is specific Scripture, a form of doctrine, designed particularly for the Body of Christ to learn about their new identity in Christ, build maturity, live unto God, and equip us to be His effective representatives on earth. Realizing how to rightly divide the Word (*II Tim. 2:15*) is key to understanding the Bible and to knowing what God is and is not doing.

If you have not done so yet, believe God's Word so you can have peace with Him and live forever!

Trust the Scripture, as it is God's own Word to you! Christ's shed blood on the cross paid for sin. His great love sacrifice gave you the opportunity to believe and live forever. Read Romans 1-5. It teaches how to be just before God.

1) *"All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God..." (Romans 3:23)*

2) *"Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And was buried, and that he rose again the third day..." (I Corinthians 15:3-4)*

3) *"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God set forth to be a propitiation [fully satisfying sacrifice] through faith in his blood..." (Romans 3:25)*

Note: Some Scriptural quotes have been made bold for emphasis or given context in parenthesis. In addition, to increase visibility of concepts, numbers were added to some verses, especially when explaining a process contained within Scripture. Please feel free to copy and utilize this resource freely, to assist others and to edify the saints. Questions or requests for additional copies can be directed to this writer.

To God Be the Glory!

Chapter 1

The Basic Organization of the Bible

God has a perfect method to train and empower believers to live a godly life. There is a God-given method to be instructed by the Word, through the Spirit. He developed a clear, systematic, perfectly thought out structure to the Bible, one which is able to provide personal growth (spiritual maturity). So, this is where we will begin.

A. Designated Time Periods

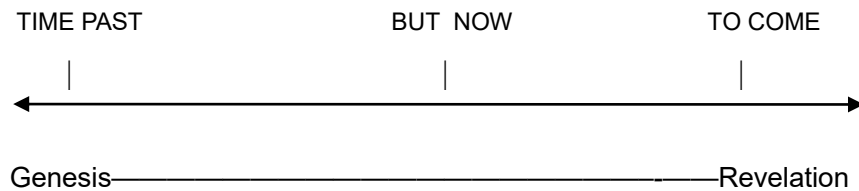
It can be overwhelming to come to the Bible without direction and understanding. After a short time, a student can become confused, even discouraged, and give up entirely on the Bible. He may never find the wondrous teaching, answers, and direction God provides. Some individuals have a disregard for certain sections of the Bible, because they lack understanding and the proper view of Scripture. God is a loving and patient God, who has provided man with a book that is tailor-made to perfectly meet our needs. He is a God of organization, everything He does is perfectly thought out and planned. This is true of His Creation and also Scripture.

God wrote His Book through holy men, moved by the Holy Ghost: *"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed...Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they moved by the Holy Ghost."* (II Peter 1:19-21) He further declares all Scripture to be relevant and beneficial: *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."* (II Timothy 3:16) We have glorious, free access to God's own words written specifically to man.

The key to unlock the truth about the Bible is to know how it has been set up and by what method God is dealing with mankind within various time periods. Knowing His design, enables us to have insight into the context of the books of the Bible. Let us reflect for a moment, thinking about eternity in the form of a time line. *Ephesians 2* succinctly teaches the terminology for this task: “*Wherein in **time past** ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience...That in the **ages to come** he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus...**But now** in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.*” (*Ephesians 2:2,7,13*)

As we think about the specific point, where we stand in time, the term for this present time, is 'Now' or 'But Now.' We can see there was time before our 'Now', which Ephesians calls, 'Time Past.' And finally, things after the 'But Now' time period is future. This can obviously be called, 'To Come' or 'Ages to Come.' This is the simple way God has set up His Word.

Basic Time Line of Eternity



B. How the Bible Is Set Up

The Bible is set up in a way that would be most profitable. It is not by the will of men, “...*but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*” (*II Peter 1:21*) It was precisely what God

intended for man to understand. The Scriptures contain two main parts: Old Testament and New Testament, 66 books in all. The Old Testament includes 39 books, organized into three sections: Law, Psalms, and the Prophets (Luke 24:44):

I. Law	<i>Genesis - Deut..</i>	The Law/Pentateuch
	<i>Joshua - Esther</i>	Twelve Historical Books
II. Psalms	<i>Job - Song of Sol.</i>	Five Poetic Books
III. Prophets	<i>Isaiah - Daniel</i>	Five Major Prophets
	<i>Hosea - Malachi</i>	Twelve Minor Prophets

The New Testament begins with the four Gospels, (Christ's earthly ministry unto Israel), books written to the Nation Israel, and then the book of *Acts*. The letters, *Romans through Philemon* are next and were written to the Body of Christ (Gentiles) by the Apostle Paul. *Hebrews* through *Revelation* are to Israel (Hebrews). There are 27 books in all, organized as listed below.

<i>Matthew - John:</i>	Jewish & Historical: Christ's Ministry
<i>Acts:</i>	Historical, Transitional Book
<i>Romans - Philemon:</i>	Paul's Letters to The Gentiles
<i>Hebrews - Revelation:</i>	Epistles to The Jews, Hebrews

A priority question to be understood after trusting Christ's blood for salvation is, "How is the Bible set up?" Knowing this will provide clarity in how and where to study. God has written unto man different instructions, at various times in his existence. For example, God told Israel to do animal sacrifice and adhere to holy days (*Exodus 20:24-26, 31:15-17*). Yet, the Church, the Body of Christ, is not 'under the law, but under grace.' We don't sacrifice nor have special days or diets (*Romans 6:14; 14:5-6,14-18*).

Organization to the Bible is an important topic to understand, because it enables students to see how God's plan with man unfolds, over time. To be able to discern this, a student needs to realize the context of a passage: who, what, when, where, why,

and how. It is also called, rightly dividing the Word of Truth: “*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*” (II Timothy 2:15) This is an important key to understand the Bible, since it empowers a saint to know what has been written directly to you as a member of the Body of Christ. This is critical in order to apply the Scripture in life.

God's simplicity in design reflects His desire for us all to be able to see it! Plainly, God has arranged the Bible according to how He has dealt with man over time. We will take some time to address this in more depth as we progress. First, let us address the two most common concerns about how the Bible is organized. First, God's design has been accused of being “just too simple”. Over the years, there have been a few dear friends who had the opportunity to hear this truth clearly explained. However, they responded in unbelief, saying “If it only was that simple”, or “that is just too easy.” Well, my dear brothers and sisters, there is only one response to this first objection, “It is just that simple!” God determined a simplistic design so that the common man would be able to see it! To prove this, simply read and think about the verses given in this book for yourself.

The second objection centers on a Scripture reference, commonly quoted in *Hebrews 13:8*: “*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.*” This concern seems rooted in a person's need to reaffirm that, God will never change. Let us consider this issue. Many times since Creation, the Bible documents how God has changed His approach to mankind. Doubtless, God Himself will never change His character, but we can acknowledge that He does change ‘how’ He deals with man, over time. We can observe some of these adjustments, even by just observing the book of *Genesis*.

First, we can recognize God's intimate relationship with Adam, walking with him in the Garden. After Adam and Eve sinned in *Genesis 3*, the relationship clearly changes and God puts them out

of the Garden. Recall how God altered His dealings with man at the Flood (*Genesis 6*) and the Tower of Babel (*Genesis 11*). In each situation, God executed judgment against His Creation.

We can also notice another major adjustment, when God makes His own nation using Abraham, while setting aside all the other nations of the world. (*Genesis 12*) With this change, God uses Israel as a vessel, through which He would show His manifold power and character to the world. As one reads through the book of *Acts* and *Romans 9-11*, it would be obvious that God makes another major shift in how he deals with man. He set aside His Nation and their promises, for a time, and turned unto the Gentiles, raising up Paul as a unique Apostle to all the nations of the world. Actually, God altered his dealings with man many times through the Bible.

****Assignment:** Study ideas: 1) Historical survey: Look up the references given above and study this issue for yourself, proving it to be true by Scripture. Survey the book of Genesis for the details of God's interactions with man during this time period. 2) Topical study: Study additional references in the New Testament that show how the Lord Jesus Christ responded differently or changed even his form, yet maintained His character and all of who He was, such as: *Mark 3:1-5*, *Matthew 21:12-13*, *Philippians 2:6-8*. It is important for each saint to see this, because the Bible is organized by how God changed his dealings with man over time and it will be your key to understand the Bible. Plan to do one of these assignments.

Two-fold Purpose

Let us switch gears to take a look at God's plan for His Creation, since its beginning. He has always had two main purposes, along with two realms in mind: "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*" (*Genesis 1:1*) This is also expressed in *Ephesians 1:10*: "*That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he*

might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.” God states that in the future, fullness of times, He will bring together all things in one. His earthly Kingdom and His heavenly Kingdom will be united in one, in Christ Jesus our Lord. While God's plan and purpose remained consistent over time, the methods and instruments He used to meet His purpose or plan have changed. Of course, God knew what He was going to do and how He was going to do it, before it even happened.

To explain further, there are two main programs or instruments God uses over time: 1) The Nation Israel: God's plan for the earth was to developed His own nation, by raising up Abram to be His vessel to manifest His glory and power to the world. *“Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”* (Genesis 12:1-3) He used Israel in this way through the Old Testament, the four Gospels, and into the beginning of the book of Acts. The world was to see God manifesting His power and glory in Israel, that all might come to Him in faith. *“For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.”* (Deuteronomy 7:6) This specifically relates to God's plan and purpose for the earth.

As Israel rejected their Messiah, calling for him to be crucified in *Matthew 27:11-25*, and finally blasphemed the Holy Ghost by stoning of Stephen (*Matthew 12:31-32, Acts 7:51-60*), we see a new vessel of God, the Body of Christ. The risen Christ appeared to Saul (later called Paul) on the road to Damascus in the very next chapter: *“And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there*

shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.” (Acts 9:3-6)

The Lord Jesus appointed Paul as the Apostle of the Gentiles, according to a great Mystery: *“Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.” (Rom. 16:25-26)* The mystery of the cross and using the Gentiles as a new vessel was kept a secret since before the world: *“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” (I Cor. 2: 7-8)*

It is here that God began to unveil a new purpose, using the Body of Christ. Believers saved at this time are called Christians, and they form the Church, the Body of Christ. He will use this vessel to function as His new instrument to minister 'Grace' unto the world, forming His Body. Once God concludes His work with the Gentiles, He will catch away the Church (Rapture) up to heaven. Here they will function in God's heavenly realm. *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught*

up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” (I Thessalonians 4:16-17) Israel was set aside for a time, but after the Rapture, God will resume His program with the Nation Israel and fulfill all their promises.

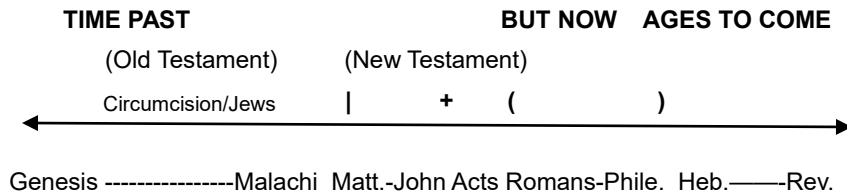
As we have seen, there are key events within the Bible that reveal changes in the way God has dealt with man over time. The Bible has been set up in the order that God has determined would be most edifying for believers and in accordance with His plan and purpose. When the student understands this issue, study becomes easier and more applicable. Deciding where to study will be done with wisdom, rather than being uninformed, using an arbitrary approach.

****Assignment: Read and Meditate.** As the student proceeds in this section, be a Berean, (*Acts 17:10-12*) and study things out for yourself, especially when there is a new concept. It is important to remember that just because an idea or concept is different or has not been heard before, does not mean that it is untrue, nor does it mean it is true. At times, new ideas can 'shake us up' a little or cause a 'fear response'. However, don't push away opportunities to learn something new. Study things out for yourself and find the various ways God dealt with man over time. If it is not clear, set it to prayer. Remember that sometimes we learn things quickly, other times we do not. If something does not become clear right away, 'put it on the back burner' so to speak, but keep moving forward, learning and maturing, developing convictions as you are convinced by the Word.

C. Time-line: Basic Time Periods

Now, let us go further in understanding and briefly go through an overview of how the Bible has been simply laid out in the time-line, with the time demarcations of 'Time Past', 'But Now' and 'Ages to Come,' but now, adding the books of the Bible. As we think about Scripture, notice the logic and simplicity in God's time-line below.

Set Up of The Bible – A Time Line



1. Time Past

Genesis reveals how God pulled out one man from all the nations of the world, Abram, and created His own nation, Israel. His plan was to use Israel as a vessel (instrument) to show His power and wisdom unto all the nations of the world. The Time Past period includes: events and teaching in Genesis through the book of Malachi, the Gospels, and into the beginning of Acts, through the stoning of Stephen. Take time to think on how this affects studying.

The main focus in this first section is the Jews (the circumcision). Those individuals who are not part of Israel are considered Gentiles, (the uncircumcision) members of world nations. *“Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands.” (Eph. 2:11)* God's desire was always to reach all nations of the Earth, using His vessel, Israel.

****Assignment:** Question: Do you know to whom the books of the Bible are written, in the Time Past section? Look at the context of at least some Old Testament books to determine to whom it is written. Search it out by looking in the first chapter to notice who is being addressed. To study in more depth, skim through the first few chapters of one of the gospels or the book of Acts to target who is being addressed and what is being taught: i.e. Gospels: *Matthew 1:21, 2:1-2, 10:1-10; Mark 1:21-22, 6:1-4; Luke 1:67-77, 2:25-41; John 1:45-49, 11:49-52. Book of Acts: 2:14,22, 3:12-13, 25-26.*

2. But Now

This time period refers to the present. On the time line shown earlier, 'But Now' is represented by the books of Romans through Philemon and is an unprophesied, mystery time period. (*Romans 16:25*) All of Paul's epistles were written to Gentiles saints (all nations), believers who make up the Body of Christ. God deals directly with all peoples of the world through the instructions given to Paul.

God's special nation, Israel, is now viewed as just one of the nations (Gentiles). This issue is specifically explained in Romans, Chapters 9-11, and clarifies the fall and diminishing of Israel. *"I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness? For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office" (Romans 11:11-13)* The Gentiles who were 'far off' from God and His blessings in Time Past, are now made nigh by the blood of Christ. *"But now in Christ Jesus ye (Gentiles) who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." (Ephesians 2: 13)*

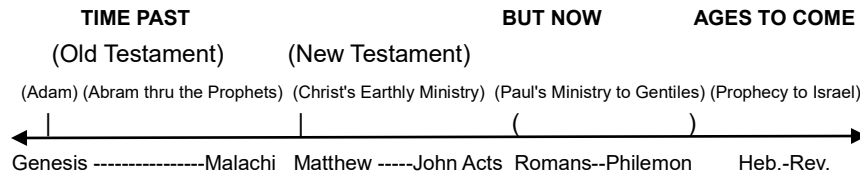
****Assignment:** 1) Word studies: There are many things that verify Paul's unique apostleship. Use a concordance to look up verses containing these key words on this topic in Paul's epistles: apostle, mystery, but now, dispensation of grace. 2) Finding the theme of a chapter: Read through *Romans 9-11* and assign a topic or theme to each of these chapters. This can be a quite helpful process in understanding the setting aside of Israel.

3. Ages to Come

This last section, *Hebrews to Revelation*, teaches what is 'to come' in the future, after this current Gentile grace time has ended.

The Nation of Israel is again the focus, as their program resumes to fulfill all that God has planned for them before their fall. God is always faithful and He has been waiting to fulfill the rest of His promises and prophecies. Note the time demarcations given in Romans 11, such as 'until' and 'shall,' these refer to the future: *“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all of Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Romans 11:25-26)*. Look at the timeline below to assess the history of events that coincide with the books of the Bible.

Bible Events Time-Line



Chapter 2

Time Past: The Nations and Israel

This section will build upon what has already been presented, providing additional detail and specific passages directing students to various topics and Scripture to study. Saints who begin their examination in this section might come to a quick conclusion and judgment: God was unfair working with just one nation of the world. However, recall *John 3:16*, and how He loves the whole world. God always desires the best for us. Always! He has a perfect design and set purpose for whatever He does. Consistently, God makes a way for anyone who desires to come in faith. Note how God desires for all families to be blessed through Abraham's seed, Israel: *"And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."* (*Genesis 12:3*) His desire is that 'all men' are saved: *"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."* (*Is. 45:22*) He truly loves all mankind.

Insight into How We Learn New Things

Let us pause to consider an issue regarding how we learn new things. At one time or another we all have had to learn by taking some things by faith. Yet, we do not really understand everything. A youth may get on an airplane having faith that it can fly because he has seen it with his own eyes. He may still feel a little uncomfortable since he does not understand how such a massive object can travel through the air. This type of faith is also true as students approach the Word. Something may be learned, but all the details to support the thought are not yet visible in the Word. He may read something in Scripture, but he does not yet 'connect all the dots,' so to speak. If this describes you at this point in the

study of how the Bible is organized, it is perfectly understandable and to be expected. It is fine to have questions and to feel a little uncomfortable when new things are being presented. Students are encouraged to avoid the impulse of shying away from new things or discarding the opportunity to learn. Move forward and keep questions on the side, while ever searching for the Truth in God's Word.

A believer matures as he thinks about and examines the verses. This describes meditation and study. Many concepts contained in the Word are revealed to us in layers. This is how God has written the Bible. As more detail is fleshed out, a student can progress in understanding. Skepticism can be a good thing, as the Word is kept as the authority. Compare what is believed against the Truth of sound doctrine written to us. The student may want to jot down questions or topics to study later in a journal or develop a note-taking system so that unclear issues are not lost or forgotten.

At times, experiencing discomfort or questions can be an indicator that more verification is needed, before you can fully trust something and move forward. God desires us to become fully persuaded: *"...Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."* (Romans 14:5) Determine to continue study, with prayer. This is how faith develops. *Romans 10:17* says, *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."* Remember, God does not have us on a time schedule to finish the material by a specific time. It is more important to gain understanding for application, rather than build head knowledge of many bits of Bible facts.

One of the reasons we have been given the Holy Spirit is to be taught the mind of Christ. Sometimes we are not ready to fully comprehend all of what God is teaching us in His Word; maturity is a slow process. He has given us the Spirit to grow, this takes time and thought: *"Now we have received, not the spirit of this world, but the spirit which is of God; that we may know the things that are freely*

given to us of God...For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.” (I Corinthians 2:12,16) We can then proceed in faith, trusting God and His method of maturing us as saints. “For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.” (Hebrews 4:2) We can put some things on the side that we do not fully understand yet, and continue to read and learn, believing God and what He says.

A. Old Testament: Individuals - All the Nations of The World

Initially, God dealt directly, face to face with man in the Garden. He continued direct contact from Adam to Noah, teaching and admonishing them as we see in the early part of *Genesis*:

Genesis 2:16: “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

Genesis 4:6: “And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wrath? and why is thy countenance fallen?”

Genesis 6:13: “And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.”

God saved Noah and his family, and caused a great flood over all the earth in judgment against all mankind for their wickedness and violence. In their continued rebellion, they did not replenish the earth as instructed. Instead, they stayed together to build a city in Babel and tower to reach the heavens, worshiping the heavenlies and making a name for themselves. In response, God confounded their language in a second judgment. Though God is longsuffering, His desire is that he would respond properly when corrected:

Genesis 6:5-7: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them."

Genesis 11: 6-8: "And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city."

After man's language was confounded, nations formed, yet mankind continued in rebellion and wickedness. Though mankind's response grieved God, He knew what man would do. The all-knowing God had a perfect plan.

B. Old Testament: The Nation of Israel - The Kingdom

God finally set aside the Gentile nations of the Earth, because of their sinful ways. Since He could not find a godly nation upon the earth to fulfill His plan, He selected one man, Abram, to create His own nation. "*Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?*" (Genesis 18:18) His purpose was to set up Israel as a particular vessel through which, He would show all the nations of the world His power and glory and to bring all mankind to Himself. In great love and mercy, God used Israel, though they too became rebellious.

From Abram (*Genesis 12*) through the prophet Malachi, which covers the Old Testament, God blessed, multiplied, and used the Nation Israel to manifest Himself to the world. “Keep *therefore and do them (Law); for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for?*” (*Deuteronomy 4:6-7*) Initially, God continued to communicate directly with man, but then at times, He used an angel or dreams to relay his messages or to explain or warn of events to come.

Over this time period, God made covenants with Israel, which include: a promised land (*Genesis 12:1*), a Kingdom (*II Samuel 7:12*), and the New Covenant (*Jer. 31:31*). During this period, God spoke and prophesied through designated spokesmen in Israel: often a patriarch, judge, prophet or king. Note examples below:

Jacob (a Patriarch of Israel)

Genesis 28:13: “And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed.”

Genesis 35:9-12: “And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him. And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel. And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land.”

Moses (Levite/Priest/Prophet)

Exodus 3:4: "And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I."

Exodus 24:12: "And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them."

Samuel (Prophet/Priest/Judge of Israel)

I Samuel 3:10, 7:15: "And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth."

Nathan (Prophet of Israel)

II Samuel 7:4-5: "And it came to pass that night, that the word of the LORD came unto Nathan, saying, Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the LORD, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in?"

Solomon (King of Israel)

I Kings 3:11-12: "And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee."

Isaiah (Prophet of Israel)

Isaiah 7:3: "Then said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shearjashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field;"

Ezekiel (Priest/Prophet)

Ezekiel 1:3: "The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him."

Zechariah (Prophet)

Zechariah 7:1: "And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, that the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu;"

****Assignment:** Options: Prophecies during Israel's Kingdom dispensation are all directed to and about the Nation Israel. None of these prophecies are made to us today, Christians and members of the Body of Christ. Prove this by your own study of prophecy from the Old Testament. 1) Look through one or two books where God speaks to His prophets i.e. evaluate Isaiah through Malachi to determine to whom the focus of these prophecies were written. 2) Or, choose a book in the gospels, from Matthew through John, and read the context of any of the parables or prophecies. Determine to whom the Lord is speaking and for what purpose.

Let us see how God brought His Nation out of the land of Egypt, showing them and the nations of the world that He was Israel's mighty God and able to provide for all their needs. God wanted Israel to learn to trust Him and count on Him for everything. He wanted to deal with them in grace, being their God, teacher, provider, their everything and for the Gentiles to see it. He reviewed this in Exodus 6. Observe when God uses the phrase: "I will..."

*Exodus 6:1-8: "Then the LORD said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what **I will** do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land. And God spake unto Moses,*

*and said unto him, I am the LORD: And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them. And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers. And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant. Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and **I will** bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and **I will** rid you out of their bondage, and **I will** redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: And **I will** take you to me for a people, and **I will** be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And **I will** bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and **I will** give it you for an heritage: I am the LORD.”*

At times, Israel recognized the wondrous things God did for them and believed God, as we see in *Exodus 14:31*, but eventually they showed themselves to be forgetful, proud, and stiff-necked. God desired Israel to see their need for Him and to rely on Him, but they thought too highly of themselves and decided to rely on their own abilities and works of righteousness, instead. This became a pattern and stronghold within individual Jews and the Nation. God wanted Israel to recognize that ‘they could not do’ all that He desired for them. Instead, they should have feared and fallen on their faces before the Lord for His mercy and grace, as did their father, Abraham: “*And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying...*” (*Gen. 17:3*) God simply wanted them to be humble and walk by faith in

what He said. God knew they couldn't be perfect in their fallen state, which was inherited from Adam.

Instead, we can see in Israel's history that they continued in their murmurings, rebellion, and disobedient attitude; even when God explained what He has done for them. In Exodus 19:4-6, God reminded Israel how He protected them, bringing them out of Egypt's slavery with mighty signs, even through the Red Sea. *"Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, **if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.**"*

Yet, Israel forgot how they needed to depend on the Lord, and responded in arrogance, being high minded, stating that they could perform all the perfect righteousness God requested. In Verses 7-8 the student can see this attitude: *"And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, **All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.** And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord."* This exposed that they were still children in understanding the Scripture.

God always wanted a close relationship with His Nation, however, Israel did not come unto God with a humble heart. They were high-minded and self-righteous. They didn't see their need to rely upon God and His grace to enable them to serve Him. Some individual Jews did manifest this faith, but the Nation as a whole rejected God and His ways. They believed that through their own efforts they could keep His Law. On this very topic, Paul writes about his sincere desire for his brethren (the Nation Israel) according to the flesh: *"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is,*

that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteous, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.” (Romans 10:1-3)

Therefore, God allowed 'the children of Israel' to be under the dominion of the Law for many years, showing their inability. This was to teach them, the long and hard way, that they could not be righteous or holy, in and of themselves: *“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” (Romans 3:20)* All their righteousness was unacceptable to God: *“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” (Isaiah 64:6)*

God desired for Israel to follow the example of David, a man after His own heart, and bow down, asking for God's mercy and help for everything. It should be noted that we too, in today's Church, are no different. We cannot please God by ourselves; we need God and His Word and to learn, hopefully from Israel's example, that we need to humbly depend on God and His righteousness.

****Assignment:** Biographical Study: Take a closer look at the lives of King Saul and David, beginning in I Samuel 18. Evaluate the hearts of these two men, and observe their interactions. In particular, notice David's wise behavior toward King Saul and how Saul followed his flesh, allowing it to control him to the point of pre-meditated murder of a righteous man. Determine to continue the journey of studying David's life, including his shortcomings and how he responds, when he is confronted with his own sin. Use a concordance to find additional accounts of Saul and David's lives. Study the Scripture to determine if there is anyone else in the Bible who had a 'perfect heart.'

Each time God provided for Israel, it was an expression of one of the qualities associated with God's compound names, to produce faith and reliance on their God to supply their needs. Over the course of the Scripture, God reveals Himself to man. The primary meaning of the name God (Elohim) suggests certain attributes of Deity. When the name, LORD (Jehovah) is used it refers to the self-existent One who reveals Himself.

****Assignment: Word Study:** The seven compound names of the Lord, found in an Old Scofield Bible, are included below. Look up each reference and see if you can find additional places where they are used. Many Bibles have their own reference system that may provide additional cross references. A concordance may be helpful.

1. Jehovah-jireh, 'the Lord will provide' (*Genesis 22:12-14*)
2. Jehovah-rapha, 'the Lord that healeth' (*Exodus 15:26*)
3. Jehovah-nissi, "the Lord our banner" that is, victory through divine help, (*Exodus 17:8-16*)
4. Jehovah-shalom, 'the Lord our peace' (*Judges 6:23-24*)
5. Jehovah-ra-ah, 'the Lord my shepherd' (*Psalms 22/23*)
6. Jehovah-tsidkenu, 'the Lord our righteousness' (*Jeremiah 23:6*)
7. Jehovah-shammah, 'the Lord is present,' His abiding presence with His people (*Ezekiel 48:35*)

C. New Testament: Christ's Ministry & the Twelve: (*Matt. - Acts 8*)

The 'Time Past' time period carries on into the New Testament, as God continues to deal with His Nation in the four Gospels and the beginning of *Acts*. Note several examples in the first few chapters of *Matthew*, clearly revealing that God sent Christ to be Israel's Messiah and to save 'His people,' fulfilling many of the Old Testament prophecies. "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shall call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins" (*Matthew 1: 21*) Students can read how Christ was born in

Bethlehem, in the land of Judaea, just as the Jewish prophet foretold in *Micah 5:2*. Even the Gentile wise men knew when and where to look for the star. They specifically went to Jerusalem, *“Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.” (Matthew 2:2)*

As students read through the gospel accounts of Jesus' earthly ministry, they will observe that the focus is clearly on Israel and her people. From the very beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry, He sent forth his disciples with specific instructions. They were only to preach the kingdom of Heaven unto the 'house of Israel: *“These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.” (Matthew 10:5-8)* Jesus' ministry, while living on Earth, proceeded exactly as God purposed. He went to the people of His Jewish nation, Israel.

1. God's Purpose:

Once the Nation as a whole recognized their Messiah in faith, in His time, God would use Israel to bless all the nations of the earth. This was the promise God made to Abraham in Genesis. The Lord Jesus, was Israel's Messiah and King in direct fulfillment of prophecy and according to His plan and purpose. *“Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?” (Gen. 18:18)* Israel had indeed become a great nation in the Old Testament. (1 Kings 4:20)

****Assignment:** Compare the specific prophecy of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, foretold in the Old Testament. As you read through the Gospels, study the prophetic references to Old Testament Scripture as you come across them, especially when it states

that it is fulfillment of something spoken by a prophet. Here are a few verses to get started on this project:

Isaiah 7:14/Matthew 1: 18-25

Micah 5:2/Matthew 2:1

Hosea 11:1/Matthew 2:15

Jeremiah 31:15/Matthew 2:17-18

2. Israel's Rebellion

The Gospels: While Christ's earthly ministry focused on the Nation Israel, observe in the Gospels that only a small remnant of Israel responded properly. The Chief Priests and Scribes should have taken the central role as Israel's faithful leaders and teachers. Instead, they were lifted up in pride, functioning as enemies, and unknowingly followed their father, the Devil. (John 8:44) Christ had to find men from Galilee, outside of His own priesthood, separate from Jerusalem, to become his disciples and faithful followers through His ministry: *"The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up."* (Matt. 4:15-16)

Even after three years of the earthly ministry of Christ, Israel's religious leaders still had not accepted Jesus Christ, and instead, had their Messiah crucified. When reading the Gospels, the student will observe that there were a few strategic times when God dealt directly with Samaritans and Gentiles in the Gospels and *Acts*. For example, Jesus spoke to the woman at the well in *Matthew 15:22-28*, and to the Centurion in *Luke 7:1-11*. The purpose of this was a rebuke to Israel, as it revealed the great faith of the Gentiles in contrast to the Nation's rebellion and lack of faith.

3. Fall and Diminishing of the Nation

Acts lays forth how Israel not only continued to reject their risen Messiah, but additionally, blasphemed the Holy Ghost with the

stoning of Stephen: *"Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."* (Matthew 12: 31-32)

Even though the Jewish council clearly knew Stephen was a man of God, and in Acts 6:15, *"...saw his face as it had been the face of an angel..."* they continued their rebellion. They were hardened in their response and Stephen is stoned by the Priests and Council after he preaches unto them: *"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye...But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God... And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul."* (Acts 7: 51,55,58)

God is all-knowing, and His plan and purpose continued precisely as He has planned, working with the remnant of believers in His Nation through Acts 7. It is here, at the stoning of Stephen, that Israel's special position with God took an unprophesied turn and they fell from their status as God's Nation. He now turns to the Gentiles and begins to set in place a new, and unexpected plan in Acts 9. This was a Mystery, kept secret by God and revealed through the Apostle Paul. *"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."* (I Corinthians 2:7-8)

Saul, whose name is later changed to Paul, is God's new key player as His approach changes with man. As this transition takes

place, God's specific outreach through Paul unto Israel, encouraging them to come to faith in Christ, diminishes. Peter's role also changes from the central figure of *Acts 1-8*, to a supportive role. Paul is raised up to become the lead character for the remainder of Acts. Peter's message was the gospel of the circumcision (to the Jews), while Paul's ministry is a gospel of the uncircumcised (to the Gentiles).

Galatians 2 elaborates on the *Acts 15* meeting: "But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) And when James, Cephas (Peter), and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen (Gentiles), and they unto the circumcision." (*Gal. 2:7-9*)

**Assignment: Look up and study for yourself the corresponding passage in *Acts 15* and study out how Peter, the leader of the Little Flock (Jews) stood up and spoke on behalf of the apostle Paul and the message he was teaching. Then, reread *Galatians 2*, thinking about what was happening at this time in the transition period.

As Israel was diminishing, God began something entirely new with mankind. In *Romans 11:25*, the Apostle Paul distinctly explains God's full intention to fulfill His promises and all prophecy concerning His beloved Nation, but only after the fullness of the Gentiles has been completed. Note below, that this passage refers to two clear and different time periods. Here, God changed how He dealt with man. When He is finished with the Gentiles, God will resume His plan and purpose with Israel. Paul relays this in a picture, using a good olive tree (Israel) and a wild olive tree (Gentiles). "I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather

*through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness?... Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them (Israel) which fell, severity; but toward thee (Gentiles), goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou (Gentiles) also shalt be cut off. And they (Israel) also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again. For if thou (Gentiles) wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree (Israel); how much more shall these, which be the natural branches (Israel), be grafted into their own olive tree? For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, **until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.**" (Rom.11: 11-12, 22-25)*

The Jewish leadership rejected the Holy Ghost in Acts 7, yet, in great love for his people, Stephen makes a final request before his death, *"And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep."* (Acts 7:60) At first, this may not seem significant, nor even a possibility. It seemed that they sealed their own fate by rejecting the Holy Ghost. However, God makes a way for the individual Jew to be saved under Paul's ministry. At their fall, the Jewish nation became just one of the many nations of the Gentiles. And, as a Gentile, a Jew also has the opportunity by faith to trust in the blood of Christ to be saved. What a marvelous answer to Stephen's prayer. Israel was set aside, but when all believers are taken up into Heaven at the Rapture, Israel's program will resume where it left off, Acts 7.

Israel's 'If-Then Relationship

While it is not the intent of the section below to give a thorough review of the Cycles of Judgment, a brief review may prove

beneficial. We see how God had a conditional relationship with Israel, an 'if-then' relationship. Recall in Exodus 19 that Israel contracted with God for this agreement. *Leviticus 26* relays detail about this arrangement, and what Israel could expect from God. If the Nation had functioned in obedience, they would have received all the blessings God desired to give them. However, they did not keep the covenant they made with God, therefore they received the curses, or chastisement. (Gloriously, the Body of Christ today is under grace.)

What the Nation didn't understand was they could not keep the Law in the energy of their flesh. They needed to humble themselves to God. He was to be their Redeemer, Blessor, Avenger, Deliverer, and King. In *Leviticus 26*, there were Five Courses of Judgment pronounced against Israel, if they chose to disobey the Covenant. In this Fifth Course, God temporarily set Israel aside (*Acts 7*). At this time, God began the Dispensation of Grace, through Paul.

First Course:	<i>Lev.26:14-17</i>
Second Course:	<i>Lev. 26: 18-20</i>
Third Course:	<i>Lev. 26: 21-22</i>
Fourth Course:	<i>Lev. 26: 23-26</i>
Fifth Course:	<i>Lev 26: 27-39</i>

****Assignment: Comparison Study:** Do a more in-depth study of these Courses of Judgment, and in particular, the Fifth Cycle revealed in *Leviticus 26:27-39* and *II Chronicles 36:14-23*.

As we conclude the 'Time Past' period, observe that the focus in *Acts* transitions from Israel, Peter, and the Little Flock, to Paul and his ministry to the Gentiles. God's plan all along was to reach all the world to also bring the Gentiles to Himself. *"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."* (*Ephesians 1:4-5*)

Chapter 3

But Now: All Nations

(The Present Time)

At the very moment, when God was ready to pour out his wrath against unbelieving Israel, He temporarily set them aside, showing them His great mercy. God put a hold on Israel's program to begin something that was kept a secret: The Gentile grace time period. Now, His attention is turned to the Gentiles. God is bestowing His unmerited, undeserved favor to the world.

Observe in *Ephesians 3*, this mystery time period that we live in today is called, 'The Dispensation of the Grace of God.' The designated apostle appointed by God is Paul. *"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."* (*Ephesians 3:1-5*)

A. The Reconciliation of the World

Let us pause to consider what God has done and freely given to us as a result of the cross and His ushering in of the Dispensation of Grace. *Romans 1-5* teaches us about justification: how we can be righteous before God. Today, God is reconciling the world unto Himself, even offering the Lord Jesus Christ's death on the cross as our sacrifice. *"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."* (*Romans 3:21-23*)

In this way, anyone can become 'saved from the penalty of sin' or 'justified' by faith, simply trusting in what was accomplished through His Blood, which paid for all sin. *"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."* (Romans 3:24)

He took upon himself all sin, being made sin for us. The reason was that we might be made the righteousness of God, and saved from His wrath. *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."* (II Corinthians 5:21) Christ Jesus is the perfect sacrifice, He is God, never sinned and is our propitiation: a fully satisfying sacrifice. And, what is also important to remember, is that He did all this because of His great love for each one of us! As a result, we have the great privilege to come to Him by faith and be forgiven.

Now, being justified saints, *Romans 5* states that we possess peace with God, have access into this grace, and we're given a perfect standing with God! *"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God"* (Romans 5:1-2) God sees us in Christ.

As a result, we have received the 'atonement', that is, we are at one with God. There is no sin barrier or any other obstruction between us and God. We have His righteousness (Romans 4). *"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."* (Romans 5:8-11)

As a matter of fact, He desires us to grow up to be His adult children (sons) in the faith. If or when we feel God is far from us, we

need to do a self-evaluation, because we will find that we are the ones who have pulled away from this Father-son/daughter relationship. *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” (Romans 8:14)* God sees us in our new inner man, in Christ, perfect and complete. God will never pull away from us. He is in us!

God is not imputing trespasses against the world today. He is not sending fire from heaven to squash ungodliness or sin. Instead, He is holding forth His free gift of grace to all, unconditionally and without any works at all. Anyone can simply believe and be instantly saved from God’s righteous judgment. *“And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” (II Corinthians 5:18-21)*

B. The Dispensation of Grace

In the early chapters of Acts, the central focus continued to be centered upon a remnant of the Nation Israel, with Peter and the eleven disciples as her leadership. However, as students proceed through to Acts 9, they can observe a major shift in the emphasis, as Paul’s conversion takes place and the doors are opened unto the Gentiles. *“...he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel...” (Acts 9:15-16)* Saints merely need to skim through the book of Acts to observe the obvious change in main characters, from Peter to Paul.

Acts is known to be an historical book, documenting events of the time. Often, the two primary events recorded are missed: 1) Israel fell and, with it, the Earthly Kingdom Program is set aside, for a

time (*Romans 9-11*). 2) Then, simultaneously there is a new program that is established, the Dispensation of Gentile Grace. God also gave Peter a vision, preparing the Little Flock for this dramatic change, regarding the Gentiles. He teaches the other disciples and in *Acts 11:1 & 18*, the Little Flock leaders realize there is a change: *“And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the Word of God...When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”* With the rise of this new Apostle Paul and Gentile dispensation of grace, there were a number of things that occurred. This section will touch upon a few of these key events to orient the reader to Paul's distinctive ministry. Be sure to read the verses in their context to prove things for yourself.

1. The Designated Spokesperson of God: The Apostle Paul

As in other times, God raised up a man to be His spokesperson, the Gentile apostle for today, and gave to him a ministry that would impact the world. Paul, a Jewish leader persecuting believers, even consenting unto Stephen's death in *Acts 7*, was stopped in his tracks when the Lord appeared unto him on the road to Damascus in *Acts 9*. Paul was spiritually blind, but immediately responded positively to the risen Christ and was saved. Over time, he was given a new body of doctrine to learn and teach: the 'dispensation of Grace' to all nations of the world. God used him to write the books of *Romans* through *Philemon*, God's specific curriculum or form of doctrine to the Body of Christ.

Saul's conversion is shown to be of such importance that it is recorded three times, *Acts 9*, *Acts 22*, and *Acts 26*. This repetition is like a flag, indicating an important event: *“And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutes thou me? And he said, Who art*

thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do..." (Acts 9:3-6)

****Assignment:** 1) Read context: Study the three accounts of Saul's salvation in context, to extract all the specific details: Acts 9, 22, and 26. 2) Word study: Note the various terminology used in Paul's epistles below, which refers to his distinctive ministry. Use a concordance to find other places they are used in Paul's Epistles, noting the context in which they are found and the details of his teaching.

My (Paul's) Gospel (*Romans 2:16/16:25*)

The Mystery (*Romans 16:25*)

The Preaching of the Cross (*I Corinthians 1:18*)

The Grace of Christ (*Galatians 1:6*)

The Gospel of Christ (*Romans 1:16/Galatians 1:7*)

The Gospel of the Uncircumcision (*Galatians 2:7*)

The Dispensation of Grace (*Ephesians 3:2*)

2. Main Characteristics of The Dispensation of Grace

In order to obtain a general understanding of the Dispensation of Grace, note a few main features below:

a. Mystery Message Revealed: God raised up the Apostle Paul for a unique purpose that was not prophesied in the Scriptures. He was given a precise ministry and gospel message, called the Mystery, which was a secret plan of God's to use the Gentiles as His vessel and offer them grace through the cross of Christ. (*Romans 11:25,16:25*) He also taught about the mystery of the cross: "*But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*" (*I Corinthians 2:7-8*)

b. No longer Under a Works Program: While justification, as in any time period, is by simple faith, under this Grace program saints are no longer under Israel's Law. God views us through the Lord Jesus Christ's work on the cross, in grace. *(Romans 3:19-20, 4:5, 5:1, 6:14) "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Romans 3:20)*

c. Having Peace with God: An 'at peace' relationship now exists between God and each person who has trusted in the blood of Christ. The sin barrier is now gone, and therefore saints have total peace with God. We have received 'the atonement', which is being at-one with God. *(Romans 5:1-2,8-11,20-21) "And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." (Romans 5:11)*

d. Our New Identity: In *Romans 1-5*, a believer is quickened in their spirit and made alive unto God. (Ephesians 2:5) His Spirit teaches our spirit: *"But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God...that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." (1 Corinthians 2:10,12)*

Our new identity in *Romans 6-8*: God considers our 'old man' crucified with its affections and lusts and we are now free to live godly. (Rom. 6) God can work His purpose in us, since the law no longer controls us. *(Rom. 7)* We can yield to allow Christ to be magnified within, and grow in the Word to develop the mind of Christ. God desires the Spirit to dwell in our mind so we can live unto Him. *(Romans 8)*

e. The Ability to Choose: Believers have been given a new ability. It is important to note that the believer's flesh has

not changed. Sin still resides in the flesh, even when we become a believer. As a result, each saint has a choice to make each moment of every day. There are two paths, one road serves sin, the flesh, and unrighteousness. The other serves God and righteousness, which is Christ living in them. When a mistake is made, know that sin and guilt have already been dealt with by the cross. We can use it an opportunity to grow and just yield unto God. He puts us on the godly path to serve. We can prepare ahead to avoid temptations and ungodly situations. So then, we're fully able to make the choice to yield unto God to bring forth fruit unto holiness. *(Romans 6) "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."* *(Romans 6:22)*

f. The Spirit Lives in Us: Immediately upon believing, we are given the Holy Ghost. *"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."* *(Romans 8:16)* Another reason it is given is to teach saints that they have eternal life and what He has prepared for them: *"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."* *(1 Cor. 2:12)* We are His temple and He resides in us. *(1 Cor. 6:19)* If a saint feels faraway from God, he may need to spend more time with God in the Scripture, prayer, and meditation. When a saint neglects communication with Him, the relationship naturally 'feels' distant. When things in a believer's life are not glorifying to the Lord, it can often produces a 'sense' of guilt and separation. However, we have already been forgiven, the debt is paid in full, and have the at-one-ment. *(Romans 5:11)*

Sometimes it takes a while for this aspect of grace to sink in and for a saint to really comprehend what it means to have the Godhead reside within, having a fixed status of forgiveness with Him. Feelings of guilt do have purpose, they alert us to ungodly behavior in need of change. It is the conscience placed within us (*Romans 2:15*) and the natural sowing and reaping process God set in motion at the Creation of the World. *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”* (*Galatians 5:7*)

g. Being Taught by the Father, Himself: God sees us as His spiritual adult sons and daughters. *“And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”* (*1 Corinthians 6:18*) He desires us to be led by the Spirit so we can be conformed to Christ's image, manifesting His life, living by Christ's mind and functioning as a spiritual adult. (*1 Corinthians 2:16*) As we yield our members to God, we can be educated by Him through the form of doctrine He has provided for us, building a storehouse, even a processing plant of sound teaching in our soul, Paul's epistles, Romans-Philemon. (*Romans 6:17*)

h. Our Walk Is by Faith: *Romans 1-5* teaches that we are saved by faith alone. However, as students study Paul's unique message in his epistles, they will observe that attaining a godly walk is also accomplished by faith alone. It is not us trying hard to have good behavior through our own works of the flesh. Instead, we are to grow up and purpose to learn. The moment someone trusts in Christ's finished work, he is identified with all Christ accomplished. (*Romans 6: 1-5*) Saints are responsible to read and study,

maturing to become aware of how God has changed them once they believed, and learn about the blessings they've been given and how to use them i.e. The Spirit, God's righteousness, eternal life, an 'at peace' relationship with God, a member of the Body, purpose, all things can work for us, a system to be edified, rewards, inheritance, etc.

When a man believes the gospel by faith, he does not need to 'do anything' to prove he is saved, nor 'do anything' to stay saved. This would be a works system, such as Israel had in 'Time Past'. We are not under the Law! Our walk is to be motivated or constrained by the love of Christ (*II Corinthians 5:14*). Service being done in us, is actually Christ being magnified in this earthen vessel. (*II Corinthians 4:7*) We are here in Christ's stead, His ambassadors and to be His light unto the world today. (*Romans 6-8*)

i. A Member of the Body of Christ: Once we are justified by faith, we are connected together by the Spirit and become a part of the Body of Christ. Christ is the head and we become one of the many members of His Church, the Body of Christ. "*For the body is not one member, but many.*" (*I Corinthians 12:14*) We are actually connected one to another by the Spirit. Each saint has a particular purpose and place in the Church, the Body of Christ. Just as every member of our own physical body is important, each member of the Body of Christ is also special, unique, and necessary for the body to function properly. (*Romans 12/I Corinthians 12*)

In summary, in this brief section students ought to at least be able to acknowledge that there are significant characteristics to the Dispensation of Grace. As saints study through the form of doctrine Christ gave to Paul, they can also observe how God lays it forth

In a simple, progressive manner. To understand this wonderful Gentile grace message further, take time to look over this section and ponder its components.

****Assignment: Topical/Word study:** One idea to gain a clearer understanding of the 'But Now' time period, is to read through Paul's epistles slowly and think about the similarities and differences between Israel's program and this present time of grace.

C. The Grace Message Differs from Israel's Kingdom Message

The 'Gospel Message of Grace' given to Paul was different than the 'Kingdom Message' being preached by the twelve to the Nation Israel. Paul's ministry was unique and not a continuation, combination, or morphing of the Twelve's message, nor the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus who taught, the 'Kingdom of Heaven' is at hand. This term was used by the Lord and His disciples throughout His earthly ministry. In fact, the thrust of Christ's ministry to the Nation was to prepare them to go through the Tribulation (Day of Wrath) and then, into His Kingdom on earth. This was promised to Israel since Abraham, in *Genesis 12*.

****Assignment: Read with purpose:** 1) Read the gospels to notice what the core of the teaching was at this time, such as *Matthew 4:17*: "*From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" 2) Israel did not understand that Christ would be crucified, what was to be accomplished by the cross, nor about the interruption of Israel's program and the formation of the Body. Christ told them many times that He would be crucified and rise the third day, but they were still in confusion. Look for verses like: "*For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.*" (*Mark 9:31-32*)

Observe that there are different names given to the two messages taught; the 'Gospel of the Circumcision' taught by Peter to the Nation of Israel, and the 'Gospel of the Uncircumcision' given to Paul for the Gentiles. Read in Galatians that nothing that Peter and the Little Flock knew or said, added anything to the revelations given to Paul by the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

Further, the leaders of the Little Flock, James, Peter, and John, gave Paul the right hand of fellowship acknowledging the new, unique message of Paul's Apostleship and grace message to the Gentiles. *“But of these who seem to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me: But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.”* (Galatians 2: 6-9)

1. Contrasts Between the Two Programs

****Assignment:** The listing below provides highlights of God's two main approaches with man. Each is a package of doctrine. Study these two doctrines; they are placed side-by-side to make it easy to contrast and compare. Notice that each line deals with the same issue, showing the contrasts between the two programs. It is evident that they are not the same. They are two, distinct approaches God has had with man. Today, is the Mystery of Gentile grace. Prayerfully, look at the passages for yourself within their context and compare the two programs. Take the time necessary to do this assignment as it can alter your perspective of the Bible and how you study.

Prophecy: Israel: Kingdom

Gospel of the Circumcision (*Galatians 2:7-8*)
Israel's spokesmen: (*Gen 12/Matt 16:16-19*)
Spoken Since World Began (*Acts 3:21*)
Promise: Earthly Kingdom (*Matt 3:2/6:10*)
Future promise of Spirit (*Ez. 36:26-27/Acts 2*)
Motivated by Fear, if...then (*Ex. 15:26, 19:5*)
Works Focus (*Exodus 18:20, Deut. 6:25-26*)
Nation of Israel God's Vehicle (*Deut. 4:6-8*)
Dispensation of Law (*Deut. 5, Romans 9:4*)
-Under Law (*Ex. 19:5-8, 24:3-8, Deut. 5-6*)
-To Be Circumcised (*Genesis 17:10-14*)
-Observe Holy Days (*Leviticus 23*)
-Dietary Laws (*Leviticus 11*)
Message of Prophecy (*Romans 9, 10, 11*)
Gentiles: Strangers & A Far Off (*Eph. 2:12*)

Mystery: Gentile - Grace

Gospel of the Uncircumcision (*Gal. 2:7-8*)
Gentile's spokesmen: (*Rom 11:13/Eph 3:1-9*)
Ordained Before the World Began (*I Cor. 2:7*)
Promise: Heaven (*Phil 3:20-21, I Thess. 4:17*)
Spirit Now in Us (*Rom 8:16, I Cor. 2:12*)
Motivated by Love (*I Cor. 13, II Cor 5:14*)
Faith: No Works (*Rom 3:27-28, Eph 2:8-9*)
Body, God's Vehicle (*I Cor. 3:16-17, 6:19-20*)
Dispensation of Grace of God (*Eph. 3:1-3*)
-Under Grace (*Rom. 6:14, Gal 5:1*)
-No Circumcision (*Gal. 5:6*)
-No Holy Days (*Gal 4:8-11*)
-All Good to Eat (*Rom. 14:14, I Tim. 4:1-5*)
Message of the Mystery (*Rom. 16:25-26*)
Gentiles nigh, not strangers (*Eph. 2:13-19*)

2. The Book of Acts

Understanding the transitional nature of the book of *Acts* is critical for the saint to obtain a clear picture of what God is doing. It becomes evident that He is making a change and beginning something new with mankind. However, the purpose of this book is often misunderstood. *Acts* is a history of Israel's fall and their slow diminishing. Thus, it is the transition from God's use of Israel as His vessel, to His new purpose, using the Body of Christ (Gentile believers) as His new vessel. Knowing this, enables students to understand the distinctive ministry of the Apostle Paul. Without this clarity, one will merge Peter and Paul's messages together; which can profoundly confuse, and often shipwreck the faith of some believers, especially as application is made to the details of life.

It is quite interesting how the leader of the twelve disciples to Israel, Peter himself, had learned about Paul's unique apostleship and explained what would happen to the student who did not understand what Paul taught. "And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to

the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.” (II Peter 3:15-16)

****Assignment:** Read in context: Examine carefully Scripture in context, from Acts 9-28. Determine for yourself the response of the Jewish leadership to the message being preached by the new Apostle. Paul continues to preach to the Jews through the end of Acts, however, their continued rebellion against God and His message brings the final indictment against them in Acts 28:28. Then, as we turn the page, we find Paul's epistles, the first book being Romans. Amazing! The Bible is set up exactly as God desires for our edification.

As students come to the end of the book of Acts, they will find Paul's last exhortation and rebuke to the religious leaders of Israel. They continued to reject the teachings about Christ, therefore Paul made a final proclamation that his testimony to them was ended. From that time forward his focus was on the Gentiles. The Nation Israel was fully set aside in Acts 28:28. Below are three pronouncements made in Acts against the Nation for their rebellion to the Truth:

1) Acts 13:46: *“Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.”*

2) Acts 18:6: *“And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.”*

3) *Acts 28:28: "Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it."*

Any Jew, then or now, would still be able to be saved, if they took their place as one of the Gentile nations and trusted Paul's message of grace. As soon as Paul gives his pronouncement against Israel, the next book, strategically placed, is the letter to the *Romans*; the 'Gentile' church located at Rome. This first epistle is specifically designed to establish the new believer in their faith. *"For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established."* (*Romans 1:11*)

Review of Acts

In order to provide a clear picture to the student, included below is an outline of the book of Acts. Only a few key issues are addressed to whet the appetite for further study.

Acts 1-7: This period extended mercy unto Israel's leaders to accept Christ as Messiah. It ended with rebellion, stoning Stephen. Peter is the main character through Chapter 7.

Acts 8: This chapter provides an example of how the Gentiles were ready and open to receive Christ.

Acts 9: A key chapter unveiling Saul's (Paul) salvation and introduces a new ministry to the Gentiles.

Acts 10-11: Provides clarity in recognizing a change is taking place. Peter's dream signifies that God determines what is clean and unclean. It is at this point in time that He determines that the Gentiles were no longer to be seen as unclean. Now, the Gentiles also could be saved and receive the Holy Ghost.

Acts 12-28: The focus switches to the Apostle Paul as the main character. His new grace message went out, first to

the Jews, documenting their continued rebellion and slow diminishing of Israel (*Rom 11:7-15*), then to the Gentiles. The Nation was no longer God's special vessel, as they were now set aside. *"Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?" (Romans 11:12)*

****Assignment:** Prove all things: Take the time to evaluate what the verses say in *Acts*. A student who objectively looks at these things will see that this book functions as a bridge to understanding how God changed His focus, from dealing with His Nation in the earthly Kingdom Program, to dealing with all of the nations in the Mystery, the Dispensation of Grace.

3. The Rapture of the Church

The end of this time period is characterized by the catching away, or 'Rapture' of the Church. This will signify the end of this current time, the 'But Now' period. All believers will be caught up and taken to Heaven to be with Christ forever. *"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."* (*1 Thessalonians 4: 16-17*) It is at this point in man's history that there will be no saved individuals left on Earth, as they all will have been taken up to Heaven. What a sad place to be, destitute of the Truth and without God. Yet, we will see that, of course, God continues His plan with Israel in the 'Ages to Come.'

God is consistent in how He organizes the books of the Bible. At this point, when the dispensation of Grace ends, all believers are taken up or raptured to Heaven, a student can literally turn the page from Paul's epistles and behold, the book of *Hebrews*. It is

their first epistle, which will establish them in the fundamentals needed to go through this Tribulation period. Acknowledging the name of this next book, *Hebrews*, teaches that this book was written 'to the Nation Israel.' Here, God turns His focus back to the Nation Israel to fulfill all promises and prophecies made unto them. Anyone in this last period of time who desires to live by faith will need to become a Jew or bless Israel, as was the case in 'Time Past.'

This chapter covered a lot of territory, as it gave further definition to this 'But Now' time period. We reviewed how God reconciled the world unto Himself through the faithfulness of Christ. In this new approach to man, God designated a spokesperson, the Apostle Paul and there was a brief description of the major components of the Dispensation of the Grace message. Another section compared and contrasted how living under the Law and earthly Kingdom time period, differs from living under the Grace program. Finally, it gave clarity to the book of Acts as the transition book from the Prophetic program unto our current Dispensation of Grace and ended with a brief description of the Rapture.

Chapter 4

Ages to Come: Earthly Kingdom

(Hebrews to Revelation)

This time period is the future when all the present-day believers have been caught up to Heaven in the Rapture (*I Corinthians 15:51-52, I Thessalonians 4:13-18*). It is here, that the Kingdom Program dealing with the Nation Israel will resume. God's vessel to the world will once more be Israel. The focus of this program is the earth and an earthly Kingdom. God planned for the Lord Jesus Christ to execute His perfect judgment against Satan and the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. However, God also will fulfill all the blessings and promises He made to His Nation during this time period. He will cause His heavenly Kingdom to reside upon the earth, where the Lord Jesus Christ will reign forever. *"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son...And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one."* (Zechariah 12:10, 14:9)

A. The Resumption of Israel's Program

'Ages to Come' is the last time period and teaches about end times. It is referred to by many names, describing various aspects: That day (Zephaniah 1:15), the great tribulation (Matthew 24:21), the day of the LORD (Isaiah 13:9), time of the end (Daniel 12:9), the day of wrath (Romans 2:5, Revelation 6:17), or that great and notable day of the LORD (Acts 2:20) It is future from where we are living today. Believers in the Body of Christ will NOT go through this day of wrath, because all saints will already be raptured up to heaven. Read the context of *I Thessalonians 5:9*: *"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Many saints believe that the 'To Come' wrath will focus on the Church the Body of Christ. They do not understand the dispensation of grace, and that the Rapture will occur BEFORE this event. They also do not recognize that this wrath is part of Israel's prophecy (Daniel's vision of end times), the resumption of God's dealing with Israel, which fulfills His will, prophecies, and promises to them. This causes much confusion, improper application of doctrine, and the misunderstanding of God's purpose. Saints under the dispensation of grace can be thankful for this, *"And to wait for his Son from Heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."* (1 Thess. 1:10)

In this 'Ages to Come' time, God's approach with Israel picks up from where it left off at the end of Acts 7. This is where God set them aside in the Time Past period (Romans 9-11). Recall that Jesus prepared Israel for this time: *"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."* (Matt. 24:21) Those who become believers during this time, will need to realize that *Hebrews to Revelation* has been strategically placed where it is in the Bible, at the end, for end times saints. This section will be crucial guidance for the believing remnant of Israel, as God begins this very grievous Tribulation Period.

****Assignment: Survey:** Read Matthew 24 and Mark 13, along with the books *Hebrews* through *Revelation*. This will help clarify what God will be doing at this time and how these earthly, Kingdom saints will function after the Rapture. Review the Bible time-line to see how this fits into God's overall plan and purpose.

Recall that Peter warns those in this time period to take heed to what Paul taught earlier or they would become confused: *"And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of*

these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.” (II Peter 3:15-17) This reinforces the need to understand the distinctive dispensations, or time periods in which God dealt with man, otherwise the doctrine will be misapplied, as saints wrestle with Truth. When we read a book or verse in the Bible, we need to understand who, what, when, where, why, and how. Basically, this is noticing context. It is also called, Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth (*II Tim. 2:15*). The basic context of who is writing and to whom is often in the first chapter of a book:

*Hebrews 1:1: “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past **unto the fathers by the prophets.**”*

*James 1:1 “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, **to the twelve tribes** which are scattered abroad, greeting.”*

God fully planned to resume dealing with Israel, once the fulness of the Gentiles was accomplished. In *Romans 11*, the student will be able to see this merciful plan of God in *Romans 11:22-25*: *“Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them (Israel) which fell, severity; but toward thee (Gentiles), goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they (Israel) also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. For If thou (Gentiles) wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these (Israel), which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, **until** the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.”*

****Assignment:** Find the context: *Hebrews* through *Revelation* is written to Israel. Search it for yourself in the first chapter of each book

i.e. Hebrews 1:1, James 1:1, I Peter 1:1, and II Peter 3:1-4. Note that oftentimes the context is in the first verse, however, other times it becomes clear later in the book.

Throughout the books of the Bible, written ‘to the Nation Israel,’ God made many wonderful promises that will come to pass after the great tribulation and His time of judgment. There will be a new heaven and new earth; then God will exalt Israel again above all nations, choosing them to be His vessel, a holy people and light to teach the world. God causes Israel to walk in His ways and they will function in His glorious Kingdom on earth. God Himself will dwell with them and be their God and they will be his people:

Deuteronomy 14:2: “For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.”

I Peter 2:9: But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

Micah 4:2: “And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”

Revelation 21:1-3: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall

be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.”

B. Prophecies to The Nation of Israel

Some examples of the prophecies to the Nation of Israel are included below. Note that their time of fulfillment is ALWAYS in Israel's program, most often in the 'Ages to Come' time segment.

****Assignment:** Determine the context and purpose in the chart below: Look up references and study the prophecies. Ask yourself questions, such as which dispensation is it referring to, or to whom did God make these promises? Notice who is writing and the purpose.

Event	Prophecy	Fulfillment
New Covenant:	<i>Jeremiah 31</i>	<i>Hebrews 8:6-13</i>
No More Tears, Death or Sorrow:	<i>Isaiah 51:11, 65:19</i>	<i>Revelation 21:4</i>
New Heart:	<i>Jeremiah 31:33</i>	<i>Hebrews 8: 10</i>
God's Kingdom on Earth:	<i>Daniel 2:44</i>	<i>Matt. 6:10, II Peter 1:11</i>
New Heaven and New Earth:	<i>Isaiah 65:17</i>	<i>Revelation 21:1-3</i>
New Jerusalem From Heaven:	<i>Joel 3:17-20, Zech. 8:3,8</i>	<i>Revelation 21:2, 10-27</i>
God Dwelling with Them:	<i>Ezekiel 43:7</i>	<i>Revelation 7:15-17,21:3</i>
God's Everlasting Light:	<i>Isaiah 60:19</i>	<i>Revelation 21: 23</i>
Christ's Coming in Vengeance:	<i>Isaiah 34: 1-6</i>	<i>Revelation 19:11-16</i>
Great White Throne Judgment:	<i>Daniel 7:10</i>	<i>Revelation 20:11-15</i>

As students complete their own study of the chart, they will observe that all prophecies began in 'Time Past', the Kingdom time period, when God's Nation was the focus. Additionally, it can be seen that none of these prophecies will be fulfilled in the 'But Now' period. God began to fulfill Old Testament prophecies to Israel in Matthew through John and in the book of Acts, but He is not finished, yet.

During this time, God will use the instruction in Hebrews to Revelation as the core form of doctrine to teach those individuals who are left on earth after the 'catching away' of the Church. These books will provide the critical teaching needed to understand and function, during this challenging time period, 'the wrath to come'.

This specific doctrine will instruct God's people about the identity of their Messiah, what was accomplished by the cross, and how it relates to their prophecies. In addition, He will teach about the information needed during the Tribulation and wrath to come, how to deal with false prophets and false brethren, how it fits in with what God is doing in this new time, 'Ages to Come,' and much more.

Anyone who becomes a believer after the Rapture will be saved through the ministry of this holy Nation, Israel's program. God always makes a way for any person to be just before Him; a believing Gentile would need to come to the Nation and either become a Jew (Proselyte), or bless the Nation.

C. A Brief Outline of The Books: Hebrew To Revelation

Included in this section will be a general description of some of the main issues addressed in each book to stir up students to read and study more from this section.

****Assignment:** Options for study: 1) Survey: Before reading through the very brief outline of Hebrews to Revelation, skim through the books yourself and notice some of the main issues in each. 2) Determine a topic: Look further to assign a topic for each chapter, of at least one of the books in this section. This will prove helpful in understanding what God has provided for in His Word to prepare and empower saints who will live through this time of judgment.

As we glance at the subjects of the books in this section, it can be clearly seen that they are written to the Nation of Israel during the Tribulation period:

Hebrews: This book reorients Israel to where they were before they were set aside in *Acts 7* and to God's purpose through them as His vessel unto the world. Hebrews teaches Christ as their Messiah, Mediator of the New Covenant, Apostle, and High Priest.

James: The second book is written to the 'brethren' of the twelve tribes scattered abroad and provides exhortation, comfort, and instruction to live godly, being patient in the midst of trials during the Tribulation, living out their faith.

I-II Peter: The remnant of believers is to be purified through obedience and suffering. Believers are privileged to be a part of what God is doing, partakers of this chosen generation, royal priesthood, and holy nation. Saints need to be able to identify false teachers, false prophets, and scoffers.

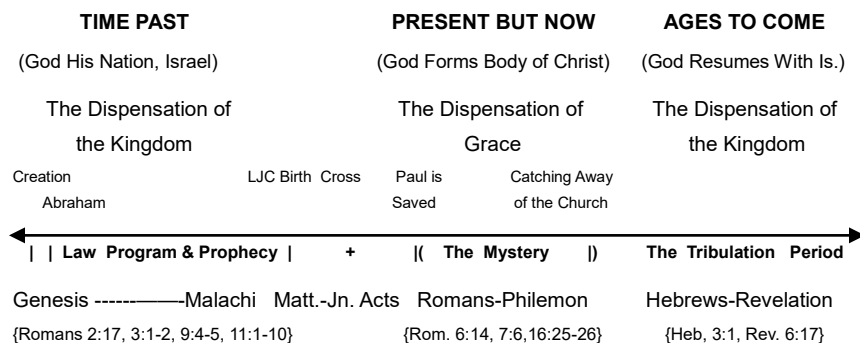
I-III John: These books provide a series of tests to identify true believers in this challenging time, identify those who bring in false doctrine, and recognize those who teach the Truth. If saints don't learn these things, they'll be deceived.

Jude: This letter shows that believers need to maintain the faith, be faultless in trials, and realize the certainty of judgment against the ungodly. It cannot be done by their flesh.

Revelation: Finally, this book reveals the end times, sequence of judgments poured out in the day of wrath and then the great promises and fulfillment of all the blessings.

This time-line provides a picture of the laid out of the Bible and how God is dealing with man dispensationally. God has packages of doctrine to certain people at certain times, for a purpose.

D. Bible Time Line



Chapter 5

The Dispensational Approach Affects Our Study

Once a believer realizes that there is a God-given method to study and understands that God has dealt with man differently over the course of time, then he is ready to move forward to learn a few more details about this dispensation in which we live. This can assist in the process of studying the Scriptures, teaching us that there is a place where we fit into God's simple, but highly structured Bible timeline. That is, in the present 'But Now' time. Knowing this is critical in evaluating where to focus our attention for study. God raised up Paul in *Acts 9* for the particular purpose of being His spokesperson to us, Gentiles. This is something students ought to pay close attention to when studying or thinking about Scripture and its application.

A. Paul Our Apostle: A God Given Office

God has raised up and used Paul to minister to the Gentiles, teaching them the doctrine of the Mystery, the dispensation of grace. As a result, viewing the Bible dispensationally will influence how students will study in many ways. First, let's consider what Paul writes about his God given office:

Romans 11:13: "For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office"

I Corinthians 4:15-16: "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me."

Ephesians 3:1-9: "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.

I Timothy 1:11-16: "According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first, Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."

II Timothy 2:7: "Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things."

****Assignment:** As you study these verses in context regarding Paul's apostleship, consider a few additional passages that may prove fruitful: *Colossians 1:21-29, II Timothy 1:8-14*. Prayerfully, think on these things, giving time for the Spirit to take these verses and bring clarity and motivation to desire further understanding.

Knowing that Paul is our God-appointed apostle can help us think about his writings in a different way. Students are encouraged to realize that what Paul has written in his epistles is specifically written 'to us' the Body of Christ to apply in the details of life. The doctrine is applicable for anyone, no matter where one lives in the world. It transcends the various times, cultures, and customs.

At this point in our study, Paul's distinctive apostleship to us today is something each student ought to begin to understand and think about as they approach Paul's teachings. If it is not clear, take the time to go back and study the issue more thoroughly before going on, prayerfully desiring to understand, as this is a critical issue. As you approach Scripture, ask yourself questions to help you think out these dispensational things for yourself: Where am I reading? Is it one of Paul's epistles, which is written directly to me today, or is this Scripture written to Israel? Do I understand the context? Can I apply the passage to my own personal life?

B. Specific Instructions Through the Apostle Paul

The question that comes to mind here is how does knowing that we have specific instructions impact our study? Learning can take place in any section of Scripture. While of course all the Bible is written 'for us' and is for our learning, it is not all written 'to us:' *"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."* (*Romans 15:4*) It is necessary to look at the context to realize 'to whom' the Lord is speaking, and know which time period

or dispensation that is being addressed. This is why there is a need to understand where we are, regarding God's time line. It seems obvious that since believers today are in the present time, saints should begin reading in Paul's Epistles, *Romans* through the book of *Philemon*. This section of Scripture is specifically designed for the edification of the Church today. Romans is the first book of instruction.

Additionally, when reading elsewhere, the student ought to recognize who is writing and to whom he is addressing, being careful when applying it to the details of life. For example, during the earthly ministry of Christ, He instructed his followers to sell all they had and follow Him. Should you sell all you have? Why or why not? The answer is, "No!" These were instructions for that time, not today. In this way, one needs to be observant to this type of detail when studying and applying Scripture. The context of a passage is very important.

Students who perceive the various programs or methods in which God deals with man, is called a dispensationalist. In general, they study passages of Scripture literally, in their proper context, recognizing the various ways in which God has dealt with man over the course of time. The study of the whole Bible is critical. Indeed, the study of things in the Old Testament and the Gospels provide the deep, rich, full understanding of Creation, what God has been doing, His character, man's character, God's will, His plan and purpose for the Heavens and the Earth, and so much more. If saints feel that it is not necessary to become aware of all of what the Bible has to offer, their understanding will be significantly limited. As believers begin to examine the book of Romans, they will not be able to even navigate through the first chapter, without being referred to the Old Testament many times to obtain clarity, a history, and a full appreciation of what is being taught.

The books written specifically to the Jews provide the fullness of what God was teaching the Jews in 'Time Past' and are

necessary for our awareness, in order to have a complete understanding of the many issues addressed in the 'But Now' epistles to the Gentiles. There are many topics in Paul's epistles that relate closely with things dealt with in the past. Some are 'inter-dispensational' issues, that is, topics that are enduring and change not through the dispensations of the Bible; like love, God's righteousness, faith, God's character, man's character, etc.

A few specific examples are listed below, regarding how topics in the Old Testament work in unison and give depth in understanding of many issues addressed in Paul's letters. These are meant to provide the student with insight into how prior Scripture sets the foundation for things dealt with later in Paul's writings. This illustration will be limited to the examination of the early part of *Genesis* and the first few chapters of *Romans*, for brevity sake.

Topic of Study	Roman's References	O.T. References
God Righteously Dealt with Man	<i>Romans 1:18-32</i>	<i>Genesis 3, 6, 11</i>
True Circumcision	<i>Romans 2:25-29</i>	<i>Genesis 17:10-14</i>
Abraham our Father	<i>Romans 4:9-25</i>	<i>Genesis 12-24</i>
Faith in God & His Word	<i>Romans 4:17-25</i>	<i>Genesis 15, 18, 22</i>

Even from these few comparisons, it is clear how the first few chapters of Paul's epistle to the Romans rely heavily on having a grasp of the Old Testament Scripture to attain a complete understanding. God desires students to go back and study out the issues He refers to as He teaches us. Whenever a reference is made or a concept is known to have begun in an earlier part of Scripture, like circumcision, we have the privilege to go back and study this out to gain the fullness of what God intends.

We can determine where to start in Paul's letters when it is understood that God inspired a wonderful organization in His epistles. Pauline teaching is laid out with structure; building one concept

upon another, growing and maturing the believer in an orderly way. As a new believer and a babe in Christ, there is a need to be fed the sincere 'milk of the Word. This refers to the basic, foundational teaching. Then later, as the saint progress, more advanced doctrine, 'the meat' can be fully digested to grow up unto maturity. Scripture from all three time periods, 'Time Past,' 'But Now,' and 'Ages to Come,' provides consistent instruction through the Bible on growing, as this is an 'interdispensational' issue. Notice that there are passages taken from each time period below, regarding growth.

Past: *Isaiah 28:9-10: "Whom shall he teach knowledge? And whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little."*

But Now: *I Corinthians 3:1-2: "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able."*

To Come: *Hebrews 5:13-14: "For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belonged to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."*

God had very specific reasons for the contents and order of the passages and books in the Scriptures. He is organized and had a thought out plan (*Is. 55:8-11*). Each book is precisely where God desired for our edification. Therefore, we can know that Paul's epistles also contain a specified design. One way of outlining the books has been provided below, which can help when reading and studying.

Outline of Paul's Epistles

I. Foundational Doctrine and Application

- A. Romans: Basic doctrine to establish
- B. Corinthians: Application to a carnal Church
- C. Galatians: Application to a Church in legalism

II. Advanced Doctrine and Application

- A. Ephesians: The Mystery of God's will
- B. Philippians: Approve excellent things
- C. Colossians: Filled with knowledge of His will
- D. Thessalonians: Patient endurance/service

III. Church Leadership with Instruction/Application

- A. Timothy: Good warfare/Holding the faith
- B. Titus: Setting things in order in the Church
- C. Philemon: Application of grace in assembly

****Assignment:** Locate the key verse(s) in each first chapter to find the purpose: Paul clearly expresses his goal for each epistle. Usually, it can be found in the first chapter, and more specifically, it may be contained in his opening prayer. In at least some of his epistles, he also concludes the letter by summarizing what he has just taught. Note the examples below and study each of the epistles to find the purpose or key verses for the epistles by studying them for yourself.

Book	Key Verse: Goal/Summary	Purpose/Summary
<i>Romans</i>	<i>Romans 1:11/16:25-26</i>	To establish/stablish the believer
<i>I Corinthians</i>	<i>I Corinthians 1:10</i>	Have the same mind and judgment
<i>Philippians</i>	<i>Philippians 1:9-10</i>	Sincere love abounds thru serving

Begin study with the proper sequence, in the order that the books were laid out, organized to teach the milk or foundational issues of what God has for us to learn as a member of the Body of

Christ. Then, proceed in succession to the next epistle. *Romans* is the first book and its goal is to teach how to be established. Clearly this is where to initially focus one's attention. *"For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established...Now to him that is of power to **stablish** you according to my gospel, and preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith."* (*Romans 1:11,16:25-26*)

In the early part of *Romans*, students will become aware of and be grounded in the elementary components of the form of doctrine, such as: man's helpless, sin condition before God, righteous judgment against sin, how one is saved, works of the flesh, faith, grace, a new identity in Christ, how to access God's power to live, a believer's spiritual adult position with God, etc. Start your journey of reading and studying at the beginning, *Romans*, the first chapter, and the first verse. Below is a breakdown of the book of *Romans*.

Romans 1-5: How to be justified: God is the Creator and perfect judge, while man is an ungodly sinner. These chapters clarify how someone becomes 'just' (righteous), can live forever in heaven with God, and allow grace to reign.

Romans 6-8: A believer's new identity: This section is critical, teaching: how saints have a close identity with Christ's death, burial and resurrection, realize they are changed once saved, deal with sin, walk by faith, know they have access to God's power, be led by the Spirit, and conformed to Christ.

Romans 9-11: God has separate 'plans' to deal with Israel and the Gentiles: He relays His great love and mercy, while explaining that He has temporarily set Israel aside to deal with the Gentiles (all nations) in a mystery. God fully plans to fulfill Israel's promises, when He completes His purpose with the Church, the Body of Christ after the Rapture, 'the catching away of believers.' (*1 Thessalonians 4*)

Romans 12-16: Worship and service: God teaches how to minister to others, serving in selfless love, while understanding a new 'love law' that fulfills the Mosaic law. (Rom. 13:8-10) As the Word is formed in the believer, he is able to live sacrificially, yielding to God. The power and ability is Christ living within the believer, as he yields unto God.

As we mentally review the material presented, the student can observe that it is imperative to understand there is a basic structure to the Scriptures. This fact is important as it holds the key to avoid confusion, enabling believers to know where to go for instruction that is directly 'to them' to profit from and apply, within all God has written unto man. God empowered Paul, by the Holy Ghost, to write a complete form of doctrine in curriculum format, simply organized, so even the common man is able to understand and use it.

The progressive nature of this doctrine makes it important for saints to also know where to start in the process, in order to be equipped properly and allow God to construct one concept upon the next in their inner man. Paul's epistles start with foundational information first, building up to advanced doctrine. And so, each book has been placed strategically and precisely where the Creator intended, exactly what we each need for efficient, effective edification (maturity).

While it is important to begin by reading and learning foundational things in the book of Romans, at the same time, read all of Paul's epistles. God will be using it in your inner man to teach your spirit and lay groundwork for what is to come. Continue on to study the next epistle, through to Philemon and then, repeat this pattern. Thank you for taking the time to read this book, it is hoped it will encourage a seeking and searching of God's glorious Scriptures!

To God be the Glory!

Note: In Appendix I there are Study Tools that can help students in their examination of the Scriptures. Also, Appendix II and III can help saints select the best Bible Version among the many options. Rejoice in grace.

Appendix I: Study Tools

Note: This list of tools contains a few ways to approach or examine the Word and is meant to be a resource.

1. **Application of Scripture:** Read/think about verses through the day. Look for ways to yield and apply it in your life. Ask yourself questions to determine if you understand what it is saying and how to apply it in day to day living.

2. **Change in subject/topic:** Sometimes Paul changes the subject within a chapter. (Ex. *Romans 14*, Paul focuses on two groups: spiritually weak and the stronger in the faith.) Questions or helping words/phrases assist readers to see a change/new topic i.e. 'But, 'contrariwise,' 'rather,' 'now.'

3. **Comparisons and contrasts:** Paul uses these to teach various concepts, so take time to notice and meditate upon them for understanding. For example, there are distinct differences between Israel and the Body of Christ, but there are also many similarities. Words and phrases used might be: 'not as,' 'so as,' 'like as,' 'so also,' or 'but now.'

4. **Connections:** One verse, chapter, or book connects with the next in many ways. One way is a continuation of a topic or 'key' words or phrases.' Paul builds onto concepts already presented. Two examples may help: a) *Romans 4* builds clarity about 'faith,' which was just addressed in Chapter 3. This also builds onto previous teaching: the Gospels/Old Testament. b) *Romans* lays out basic establishing concepts. *Corinthian* and *Galatians* build, using *Romans* doctrine, but focusing more on practical application.

5. **Context:** Read all the Bible, however, when you study notice the context before applying it. Glean what you can from the surrounding verses, realizing who is being written to and the topic at hand. Rightly Divide the Word! (*II Timothy 2:15*) Whatever book of the Bible you are about to read, look at the first chapter to find 'to whom' it was written.

6. **Goal of a book:** God places the goal for each epistle in the first chapter and often within the opening prayer i.e. *Romans 1:11* seems to be the goal of the book of *Romans*.

7. **Grace words/phrases:** Paul repetitively uses gracious words to express a grace approach as he writes: 'I beseech you,' 'might,' 'let.' This is in contrast to repeated 'law words'

in the Old Testament i.e. 'Do,' 'Obey,' 'Ye shalt-shalt not,' 'Beware,' 'If-then,' etc.

8. **Helping words/phrases:** These are used to assist in understanding Scripture. Examples: 'Therefore' or 'So then' summarize or conclude. Phrases like, 'Time past,' 'Now' or 'But now,' 'To come' indicate time demarcations. 'As it is written,' refers to a prior passage. 'For' often provides the purpose or further explanation to what is being addressed.

9. **Illustrations:** Concrete learning opportunities and examples are given in Scripture to help the reader to understand and apply doctrine, such as the Romans 11 grafting of the olive tree. As our Apostle and pattern, especially notice when Paul clarifies his role, uses himself as an example, or indicates what he thinks, as in *Romans 7,11:13, & 15:16-17*.

10. **Individualize:** Taylor your study time to your own needs and interests by asking questions. This gives you something to look for as you read. For example, in *Romans 7*, why did Paul use the marriage example, does it apply to me? Do I still put myself under the law? How would I know if I was? Am I burdened, heavy, or under condemnation?

11. **Instruction:** When Paul gives a direction, he also provides how to fulfill the instruction. Example: *Romans 12:1* instructs, and the verses that follow often give the 'how to.'

12. **Key words and phrases:** These are words repeatedly used and are a flag to the student. It indicates an important topic or concept. Make time to define these words.

13. **Long passages:** When there is a seemingly long, run-on sentence, pause to notice the punctuation. It provides clarity in how to logically separate ideas of the teaching.

14. **Looking back and looking ahead:** When a verse is quoted in a passage or if you have a question, purpose to 'go back' to look at the verse being referred to and the context, gleaning the details and the fullness of what has been taught. To obtain advanced teaching on the topic, look ahead. Realize to whom the verses are speaking before applying it to your life. Even in Paul's epistles, students need to be aware of where they are in the 'form of doctrine.' Is it foundational teaching or more advanced? Think on this.

15. **Personal Questions:** When something continues to be confusing, jot it down to study later or ask a wise mentor.

16. **Prayer:** Clear your mind, then talk to God as a real person, He is! He is your Father. God can use the Holy Spirit to stir up doctrine within to help resolve questions or provide direction. Read, then meditate on sound teaching; it is God speaking to you. Paul's prayers are our pattern. Find them throughout his epistles and study how he prays for insight.

17. **Process:** Contained within Scripture are lists of 'how to' or 'steps.' They help students understand and apply what is being taught. (i.e. *Prov. 2:1-5, Rom. 1:18-23, James 1:14-15*) *Romans 5:3-5* is a 'circular process.' It repetitiously builds character and trust over the course of a lifetime.

18. **Progressive teaching:** Paul builds one concept onto the next to complete his intended teaching goal. Verse, chapters, and books build from simple to complex, or 'milk to meat' (*I Corinthians 3*).

19. **Publishers:** Sometimes Bible publishers reference a passage and provide notes or cross references. They are one perspective and may contain error. Prove all things.

20. **Qualifiers:** Paul qualifies a statement made by indicating something is true, as long as certain conditions are met. Examples: a) *Romans 7:2*: "For a woman which hath an husband is bound by the law..." is qualified by, "...as long as her husband liveth..." b) *Romans 8:17*: "And if children..." qualifies those that are "...then heirs..."

21. **Questions:** Paul often uses a question to help the reader progress to the next step or issue in order to move forward i.e. numerous questions found in *Romans 1-11*, providing the next logical inquiry, with the perfect answer.

22. **Quotations:** When Scripture quotes an Old Testament verse, 'look back' and find where it's located. A Bible publisher may include the reference for the quoted passage next to the verse. Read the context to gain clarity.

23. **Read:** Plan ahead to read the Scripture each day with an open mind and heart to see what God, by the Spirit, can teach you. The first time reading a chapter, take the time to define unfamiliar or confusing words. This can assist you in understanding the passage. Read each chapter slowly with prayer. Over time, reading can transition into studying.

24. **Reading/Studying/Meditation:** Reading provides general insight into what was written. Study takes many forms, but examines finer detail for clarity, application, and underlying Truth. Often, meditation joins with reading and studying in order to consider and turn ideas over in one's mind. Together they bring faith and conviction. (*Romans 10:17*)

25. **Reflection Points:** God has laid out reflection points (or checkpoints) in Scripture to summarize teaching and provide opportunities for students to evaluate understanding. Paul often uses a helping word like, 'therefore' (*Romans 5:1-2*) or 'so then' (*Romans 8:8*), which summarizes what has just been taught. It functions as a flag to the unsure student, sending him back to restudy the section or topic.

26. **Resources: Bible:** Use a King James Bible, as it is God's Word to us. **Dictionary:** A good dictionary and concordance can be helpful. A dictionary can be one's most effective tool to gain clarity in words to understand Scriptural passages. **Concordance:** This is a resource to help locate verses when you only have one or two words from a verse. This resource also helps in finding references or doing word or topical studies. **Commentary:** This resource provides one view on how to interpret Bible passages and can be helpful when studying difficult passages. However, read and study verses yourself, before reviewing a commentary. This will enable you to learn what the Spirit can teach, before being influenced by someone else's opinion.

27. **Respecting the Word:** This refers to exalting Scripture in your mind, above all other sources, wisdom, or any other viewpoint. God's view: "...for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." (*Ps. 138:2*) Also, "She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her." (*Prov. 3:15*) Throughout the Bible, God provides insight, describing the Word, but also how to approach unto it. (A few of many verses to study: *Isaiah 55:11, Prov. 2:1-5, Rom. 10:17* or *Hebrews 4:12*.)

28. **Sections:** Chapters in the Bible can often be broken up into topical sections, building on the prior section, increasing understanding.

29. **Standing verses State:** Look for some terms that indicate our standing (position) in Christ and the same term can

also be used to refer to our state or walk. Examples: sanctification, adoption, put on Christ, etc. Consider the context to determine which definition is being used.

30. Series/lists: At times, there is a list given to explain a topic. One example is Romans 1:15-18, which provides four reasons why Paul is ready to preach the gospel. These all start with the word 'for.' Look for these as you read.

31. Study: Make your time with the Lord interactive: reading, studying, comparing-contrasting, and asking questions to be renewed and to bring heart conviction. Use resources, meditate on what was learned, and give yourself time to turn over ideas in your mind. God brings understanding.

32. Subtopics: Sometimes a topic will be broken down into categories on the subject. For example, the issue of tongues: Some verses define or describe tongues, while others provide the how to in using them.

33. Theme/key verse: A main topic and key verse can often be found for each book and chapter.

34. Transitional verse: This verse often summarizes the current chapter or book, while preparing the reader for what's coming next. Many times it is at the end of a chapter.

35. Underlying teachings: There is much more to be learned in Scripture than what is concretely read on the surface of a passage. Many underlying layers of critical teachings are taught in the Word as you progress in understanding. A few examples from *Romans 1-16*: a) God and man's character b) How to access God's power c) Learn to trust the Word d) The Spirit is the provision to walk by faith.

36. Words: Since every word is important, make it a priority to define words and ask yourself, "Why did God use that word?" Think about each word. How can it help you understand the verse? (*Philippians 4:8*) Consider each word, thinking how it relates to the whole passage. Do you really understand how a word is being used? Punctuation is also important, breaking a sentence into understandable parts.

Appendix II: Consider the Preservation of the Scripture

Reflection Assignment: Consider the King James Bible. God preserved every word of Scripture as it is His Truth. It was given to man as perfect, complete instruction to be used throughout time. Some doubt this, being confused with so many versions available today. A few questions may help you to think this out logically, realizing this distrust and uncertainty is NOT of God: (Study the verses.)

1. Is the God and Creator 'able' to maintain the integrity of the Scripture and preserve it? (*Rom. 4:21*) Would God take the time to use the Holy Spirit to speak through holy men to personally write His Word, then not preserve it for man? (*II Peter 1:21*)
2. *Psalm 12:6-7* states, "...O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever." So, is there one Bible that is perfect, and always true? If not, did God lie about preserving it? (*Romans 3:4*) Could it contain some words that are 'untruth,' with 'unclear passages?' Or, is it the perfect, 'living Word of God,' given to us to read and 'take in' Christ? (*John 1:1&14, II Tim. 2:15, II Timothy 3:16*)
3. Who is it historically, that adds, subtracts, questions, changes, and twists God's Word? (*Genesis 3*) Scripture teaches many things about him: He is more subtle than any beast of the field (*Genesis 3:1*), has devices to deceive (*II Corinthians 2:11*), is an angel of light (*II Corinthians 11:14*), and battles believers spiritually (*Ephesians 6:10-18*).
4. To prove this perfect Word of God, ask: Which version clearly glorifies God the most? Compare the King James Bible with any and all of the others to see this for yourself.

If you are going to TRUST the Scripture to teach you and be the focus of your life, you would be wise to be sure. Determine for yourself: Is your Bible the perfect and living Word of God?

Appendix III: Compare the King James Version to Other Bible Versions

This brief list is just a sampling of the changes and omissions found in these versions. The goal set before each believer is to determine which version of the Bible glorifies the Lord the most. As comparisons are made, especially notice those Bibles that omit or change key words/verses affecting the deity, blood, continuity and power of the Scripture. Using a comparison study Bible makes this study easier. Note: only the King James Version (KJV), Amplified (AMP), New American Standard (NAS), and New International Version (NIV) were used in this study, but the student is encouraged to branch out to evaluate any/all Bible versions.

- *Matthew 23:14*: Changed “...*damnation*...” to ‘condemnation’ (Amp/NAS) or Omitted (NIV)
- *Luke 2:43*: Changes “...*Joseph and his mother*...” to ‘father and mother’ (Joseph is not the father of Jesus.)
- *Luke 24:51*: “...*carried up to heaven*...” omitted (NAS)
- *John 1:27*: Omits “...*is preferred before me*...” (NAS/NIV)
- *John 6:47*: Changes “...*believeth on me*...” to ‘believes in me’ (Amp) or it is omitted it altogether (NAS/NIV)
- *John 14:12*: Changes “...*my Father*...” to ‘the Father’ (Amp-only in 14:12/NAS/NIV)
- *John 16:16*: Omits “...*Because I go to the Father*...” (Amp/NAS/NIV)
- *Acts 8:37*: Verse omitted: “...*I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God*...” (NIV)
- *Romans 2:16*: Changes “...*according to my gospel*...” to ‘as my Gospel proclaims,’ (Amp) or ‘as my gospel declares’ (NIV)
- *Romans 3:22*: Changes “...*by faith of Jesus Christ*...” to ‘confident reliance on Jesus Christ’ (Amp) or ‘faith in Jesus Christ’ (NAS/NIV), but also...*Romans 3:22*: Changes “...*unto all and upon all that believe*...” to ‘all that believe’ (Amp/NAS/NIV)

- *Romans 5:15,16*: Omits “...free...” gift (NIV)
- *Romans 14:10*: Changes “...judgment seat of Christ...” to ‘judgment seat of God’ (Amp/NAS/NIV)
- *I Corinthians 5:7*: The phrase that He is sacrificed “...for us...” omitted (Amp/NAS/NIV)
- *I Corinthians 15:47*: Omits: the second man “...is the Lord...” from heaven (NAS/NIV)
- *I Corinthians 16:22*: Omits “...Jesus Christ...” (Amp/NSA/NIV)
- *Colossians 1:2*: Changes “...the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ...” and also they all leave out ‘Father’ (Amp/NAS/NIV)
- *Colossians 1:14*: Verse in italics or omitted “...through His blood...” (Amp/NAS/NIV)
- *II Timothy 4:22*: Omits “...Jesus Christ...” (NAS/NIV)
- *Hebrews 1:3*: The phrase that Christ had “...by himself purged our sins...” omitted in (Amp/NAS/NIV)
- *II John 5:7-15*: Changed significantly (Amp/NAS) or omits (NIV) this clear verse entirely on the Trinity
- *Revelation 1:11*: Omits “...I am the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last...” (NAS/NIV)

Appendix IV: Resource Contact Information

1. Bible Resources

The resources below were instrumental in the spiritual growth and maturation of this writer. They direct students into the Word itself, rather than man's wisdom and assist individuals in the understanding of Paul's distinctive ministry to us, the Gentiles. These are the most reliable, Bible centered Christian organizations personally known for over 25 years to this writer and are recommended to anyone interested in seeking sound teaching and resources.

1. Berean Bible Ministries, John Versteegen's ministry:
www.helpersyourjoy.com
2. Enjoy the Bible Ministries, Keith Blade's ministry:
www.enjoythebible.com
3. Grace School of the Bible, Richard Jordan's ministry:
www.graceimpact.org

B. Author Contact Information

Deborah J. Johnson, (804) 519 -1210 lifecoachesdjbj@yahoo.com
Website: Christianlifecoachsupport.squarespace.com

*NOTE: It seems prudent to acknowledge that no one organization or individual has the corner on the Truth. This writer would not state total agreement with any one group or individual, nor would any of these resources necessarily agree with everything written in this document. We are all called to think independently and develop our own convictions. The Word is always to be the Absolute Authority.

