

*Genesis to Revelation
in 30 minutes*

*A concise overview of the
Bible storyline*

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Introduction

So often Christians question if it is necessary to read all the Bible when the New Testament clearly teaches us how to lead our lives and what is expected of us as Christians.

Augustine of Hippo is credited with saying "In the Old Testament the New is concealed, in the New the Old is revealed." Theologians, or Bible students, would recognise this, but even a little understanding of some of the Old Testament helps in a deeper appreciation of some of the New.

However, just to read the Bible from cover to cover without study takes around 72 hours. Bible reading plans tend to aim at reading the Bible in a year, but it is questionable just how much would be remembered.

If you are impatient to get to know the Bible, then this little booklet will hopefully go some way to helping you.

The subtitle "A concise overview of the Bible storyline" tells how this is achieved in just 30 minutes. The text is derived from the Bible's 'history' books (Genesis to Esther, Daniel 1-6, the Gospels and

Revelation) and simply records some of the Bible content as a series of events. In doing so, the reader will acquire a knowledge of the broad context of any period, providing a backcloth for further reading.

The text in this booklet is reproduced from www.easybible.net where you will find four levels of Bible overview, from the very simplest to a full Bible precis.

In the following pages a few lines of text are in italics; these are quotes from the King James Bible.

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Dates are approximate since opinions vary, and are rounded with the intention of just giving a feel for the timeline of biblical history.

The Beginnings

When God created the heavens and the earth, His climax was the creation of mankind on the sixth day in the form of Adam, then Eve from one of Adam's ribs, with all their needs provided for.

God had instructed Adam not to eat of the *tree of knowledge of good and evil*, but a problem soon arose when Eve succumbed to Satan's persuasion to disobey God's instruction, and her subsequent encouragement to Adam to do the same. They were consequently expelled from the Garden of Eden, with penalties.

Later, Adam's sons Cane and Abel brought their offerings to God, of which Abel's was acceptable and Cain's was not. This rejection had an adverse impact on Cain, which eventually led him to kill his brother.

In time, aided and abetted by Nephilim, mankind became so wicked that God chose to flood the earth and start again with righteous Noah and his family as the new ancestral origin of mankind.

As the earth was replenished problems still arose, witnessed by the Tower of Babel episode and the need for God to confound their language to force their dispersion across the earth.

The Patriarchal Period

Abraham

It would seem that mankind's corruption and belief in false gods would need to be countered by the example of a godly people, whose existence and protection would demonstrate there is only one true God. This was the practical beginning of God's plan of redemption, played out throughout the rest of the Bible. And so we had the call of Abram (later, Abraham), originally from Ur of the Chaldees, to be the head of a great nation. God entered an unconditional covenant with Abram, ensuring the future of his people and a land of their own in which to live, forever, and at peace; a covenant repeated to Isaac and Jacob.

However, before the birth of Isaac, grazing had become insufficient for both Abram's and his nephew Lot's herds. Given the choice by Abram, Lot chose to move to the area of Sodom and Gomorrah, eventually making his home in Sodom.

Sarai (later, Sarah), thinking she was unable to conceive, offered her handmaiden Hagar as a concubine to Abram. Hagar later gave birth to Ishmael.

Four years later, God confirmed His covenant with

Abram, stating it will be an everlasting covenant, and introduced circumcision as the sign of the covenant. It was at this time that God changed Abram's name to Abraham and Sarai's name to Sarah.

God later punished Sodom and Gomorrah for their wickedness, but not before Lot, his wife and two daughters were compelled by angels to leave the city. Despite being warned not to do so, Lot's wife looked back at Sodom and became a pillar of salt. Later, to preserve the family name, Lot was made drunk by his two daughters who then committed incest with him and bore sons, Moab and Benammi. These two became the fathers of the Moabites and Ammonites who, in time, would become adversaries to the Israelites.

Isaac

Abraham was a hundred years old before Sarah gave birth to Isaac, the 'son of the promise'.

While Isaac was still a young man, Abraham's faith was tested with a command from God to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, but the sacrifice was prevented at the last moment and Abraham's faith proven.

Sarah died soon after, age 127. She was buried in a cave in land purchased by Abraham at Mamre (that is, Hebron).

Jacob

Isaac later married Rebekah (his uncle Nahor's granddaughter) who gave birth to twins Esau, the eldest, and Jacob.

Esau had no regard for his birthright, demonstrated by him rashly selling a portion of red pottage to Jacob in exchange for it.

When Isaac was approaching death and the time came for him to bless his sons, the blessing of the firstborn was stolen by Jacob through deception and with the help of his mother Rebekah.

Esau became the father of the Edomites, later to be an adversary to the Israelites.

Jacob became the father of the tribes of Israel.

Joseph

Joseph, Jacob's eleventh son, was hated by his brothers as their father's favourite, and for the interpretation of his dreams which implied that they, and their parents, would all bow down to him. They sold him to passing Ishmaelites who then sold him on to Potipher, an officer of Pharaoh.

In Potipher's service, God blessed Joseph and all he did was successful, as it was in the king's prison where he was an inmate as a result of false accusations by

Potipher's wife. In prison, he interpreted dreams of a baker and butler which were remembered by the butler when Pharaoh had a dream that no one could interpret. Joseph was able to interpret Pharaoh's dream, and Pharaoh realised that Joseph had the Spirit of God in him. Consequently, Pharaoh made him ruler of all Egypt, second only to himself.

From this position, Joseph became God's instrument to rescue his people from a great famine, and provide for them all in Goshen.

The Exodus

and the Invasion of the Promised Land

Generations later, a new Pharaoh, who knew nothing of Joseph, feared the Israelites' increase in numbers and began to persecute them, putting them into slavery and contriving to eliminate the survival of newborn males. Moses' mother ensured his survival by placing him in an ark and hiding him by the riverside where he was then discovered by Pharaoh's daughter, rescued, and brought up as her own.

When an adult, aware of his roots, Moses intervened and protected a fellow Hebrew from an Egyptian, killing the Egyptian in the process and consequently having to flee Egypt. He took refuge in Midian where he met the priest Jethro, tended his sheep, married one of his daughters and had a son by her. Years later, whilst tending sheep near Horeb, Moses saw a burning bush that wasn't consumed by the fire. From this bush, God instructed Moses to return to Egypt taking his brother Aaron with him to deliver the Israelites out of bondage.

It took ten plagues inflicted on the Egyptians before Pharaoh gave in and let the Israelites leave. The last was the death of all the firstborn, Israel's own being saved

by the sacrifice of a lamb and the daubing on the households' door posts and lintel with the lamb's blood; a sign for the angel of death to pass over the house. This event was later to be celebrated as Passover.

They were then able to travel towards Mount Sinai, miraculously passing through the divided waters of the Sea of Reeds on the way.

At Mount Sinai, Moses received the Ten Commandments and some laws from God. The Mosaic covenant was introduced and instructions given for constructing the temple.

At one point, Moses was on the mountain for so long that the people lost hope in him and persuaded Aaron to make a golden calf and altar, which they then used for worship followed by partying. When Moses came down from the mountain and saw their behaviour, he broke the stone tablets in anger, then administered punishment to them before returning to the mountain to make atonement for their sin and receive new tablets.

The component parts of the tabernacle having been successfully constructed according to God's instructions, the tabernacle was then erected. With all the work completed, a cloud covered the now permanent 'tent of the congregation', that is, the tabernacle, and

God's glory filled it.

It's now a year since the Israelites left Egypt, the last nine months of which were in Sinai. With the erection of the Tabernacle now having been completed, the Israelites are given all the laws that are to govern their lives.

A month later, a census was taken of all the men of twenty years or older who were able to serve in an army, the numbers being recorded by tribe.

The Israelites now started their journey from Sinai to Kadesh, but within days complained about the manna, kindled God's wrath and were plagued.

At Kadesh, twelve spies were sent out to explore the land, but ten of them gave account of the dangers they saw, specifically mentioning the Nephilim. This prompted the people to rebel and to want to return to Egypt. For lack of faith in God, they were destined to wander around the desert for forty years before being permitted to enter the Promised Land.

Moses sent messengers to Edom (Esau's descendants) to request passage through their land, but this request was denied.

Following an incident with, and subsequent victory over, some Canaanites, the camp headed south to avoid

Edom, in the opposite direction to the promised land and passing near the Red Sea.

When they finally reached the Promised Land, Joshua succeeded Moses as their leader and the invasion began. However, it didn't all go according to plan with remnants of the inhabitants remaining who, in time, had a bad influence on the Israelites.

The Period of the Judges

A generation or so later, there followed a lengthy period of time throughout which the Israelites disobeyed God's commandments, mixed with the Canaanites and turned to their gods. Each time, God raised a judge to rescue them from their plight, but the cycle of disobedience and rescue repeated itself numerous times.

This period ended with the raising of the prophet Samuel who led the Israelites, ministered to them and ran a school for prophets.

The Monarchy

Saul

In his old age, Samuel made his sons judges over Israel, but they were corrupt and the people asked for a king to judge over them. Saul was chosen and anointed by Samuel. Although successful at first, in time, Saul displeased God when he twice acted contrary to God's laws, then against His instruction to destroy Amalek. Consequently, David was anointed by Samuel in preparation to succeed him.

Following a battle in which David defeated Goliath the giant Philistine, he was appointed Saul's harp player and armour bearer.

David was given Saul's daughter Michal as his wife, and was successful in yet another battle. It became obvious to Saul that David was favoured by God and so treated David as an enemy.

Not for the first time, Saul tried to kill David with a javelin while he was playing the harp for him, but David avoided the javelin and ran off. Saul sent his servants after David to kill him, but he escaped with Michal's help when she let him down from her window, then pretended he was sick in bed while he fled to Samuel

in Ramah.

David now spent much time in exile hiding from Saul. This is despite two occasions on which David could have killed Saul, but didn't.

A potentially dangerous situation arose when David sent ten of his young men to request provisions from Nabal, a man rich in sheep. There was an ill-natured refusal from Nabal which provoked David into taking arms against him. However, Nabal's wife Abigail, a beautiful and intelligent woman, was able to take action to appease the situation. Nabal then became ill and died ten days later. David then took Abigail as his wife.

Meanwhile, Saul had given David's wife Michal to another.

Saul's kingship came to an end when he was defeated in a battle with the Philistines and took his own life.

David

David then became king, but for the first seven years his kingship was limited to Judah, with Saul's son Ishbosheth made king over the rest of Israel.

Ishbosheth's reign ended when he was assassinated by two of his captains, after which all the tribes of Israel accepted David as their king.

After conquering Israel and twice defeating the

Philistines, David retrieved the ark, previously lost in battle, and returned it to Jerusalem.

When David suggested he should build a temple for God, he was turned down as a man of the sword and the privilege was to be given to his son Solomon.

A promise was given from God that the establishment of David's throne and kingdom will last forever. This is the Davidic Covenant.

From his rooftop one evening, David saw Bathsheba washing, had her brought to his house, committed adultery with her then conspired to have her husband Uriah killed in battle. He was reproved by the prophet Nathan and bitterly repented.

Bathsheba was to become Solomon's mother.

Some time later, David's son Ammon fell in love with his brother Absalom's sister with the tragic result that Ammon was murdered and Absalom estranged from his father.

Absalom later rebelled against his father, and over an extended period gained the support of the people and conspired to become king.

David retreated for a time, but when Absalom later pursued him he was defeated and killed by Joab,

David's Commander in Chief.

There were further conflicts for David including a failed attempt by his eldest son Adonijah to usurp the throne in Solomon's place. This attempt was defeated and David ordered the prophet Nathan and the priest Zadok to anoint Solomon as David's successor.

David declared the site of the threshing floor of Ornan as being the place where the temple was to be built. He then told Solomon that it will be his responsibility to build the temple and that God will be with him in his task.

David assigned the Levites their various temple duties and organised Israel's civil government.

The government was formally passed to Solomon and he was given the design and instructions for building the temple.

Solomon was then anointed by David and made king for the second time, then all Israel submitted themselves to Solomon.

David passed away after reigning over Israel for forty years.

Solomon

When Solomon succeeded his father, God granted him his request for wisdom to judge his people, but also granted him riches and honour.

Solomon built the temple, undertook many other building projects, became famous throughout the known world and very wealthy through trading.

He had a considerable income and made extravagant use of it to increase the magnificence of his court. His riches exceeded that of all other kings of the earth.

His extravagance included his many women who were now taken from other nations, which wasn't lawful for an Israelite. He had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, as well as princesses.

Solomon's eventual downfall was that in his old age, many of his women began to turn his heart away from God. He worshiped other gods and built places for his wives to worship their gods. For these sins, God told Solomon his kingdom would be lost, but not until his son became king.

A Divided Kingdom

When Solomon's son Rehoboam succeeded him, the people asked for their taxes to be reduced. When this request was denied, the people rebelled and returned to their homes and, with the exception of Judah and Benjamin, made Jeroboam their king.

Jeroboam created a system of idolatrous worship, forbidding Levites and priests from carrying out their duties. Rehoboam's position was strengthened when Levites and priests, followed by others from all tribes seeking to worship God, came to Jerusalem. It's by this migration of peoples that the northern ten tribes of Israel has been preserved.

The Northern Kingdom (Israel)

In the northern kingdom most kings were sinful and succession by murder was not uncommon. Nineteen kings reigned in turn from seven families for over 200 years.

It was during the reign of the sixth king, Ahab, that Elijah the prophet arrived on the scene. He performed eight major miracles, including proving Jehovah, not Baal, was the true God by having a sacrifice first soaked in water then consumed by fire from Heaven.

Elijah was taken to heaven and succeeded by Elisha who performed sixteen major miracles, with most of his acts being those of healing. He mixed more with the people and became known as the prophet of Israel, an office he held for around sixty years.

With all the wickedness going on in the land, prophets began to reprove Israel and foretold their approaching judgments. Despite the warnings, and after many years of idolatry, God allowed Israel to be taken into captivity by Assyria, a captivity from which they never recovered because of the practice of the Assyrians in transplanting some of their captives to other parts of the empire, causing them to lose their identity. Those remaining in the old northern territories would become known as Samaritans and considered to be half-Jews.

The Southern Kingdom (Judah)

In the southern kingdom, twenty kings reigned in turn, but unlike the northern kingdom they were all of one dynasty: the line of David. However, they were not much better than the northern kings, except there were some good kings who from time to time brought about a reformation. They were Asa, Jehoshaphat, Azariah, Jotham, Hezekiah and Josiah, Josiah being the last and greatest reformer.

The southern kingdom lasted some 100 years longer than the north, but the warnings from the prophets were again of no avail. Consequently, God allowed the Babylonians to take them into captivity, a captivity that was prophesied by Jeremiah to last seventy years.

Israel's Exile

Jeremiah, Daniel and Ezekiel continued prophesying into the period of Israel's exile (sometimes referred to as 'captivity') following the final fall of Jerusalem.

Daniel had been taken captive in 605 B.C., before the siege of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. He and three of his companions were among those selected for training in preparation to serve king Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel, wanting to abstain from the king's provisions, gained approval for him and his companions to live on water and pulse for ten days. When the ten days were up, the four young men appeared in better health than those eating the king's meat and their abstinence was accepted. Following three years training, the king judged them to be ten times more knowledgeable than all the magicians and astrologers in his realm.

Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that troubled him, but he forgot what it was about. Only Daniel was able to interpret this unspecified dream which was of a great image representing future kingdoms. It was this interpretation that got Daniel promoted to rule over the whole province of Babylon, and to be chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon.

Later, there were the episodes of the fiery furnace from which Daniel's companions miraculously escaped, Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation for seven years, the handwriting on the wall that announced Belshazzar's defeat, and the Lion's den from which Daniel was preserved.

Daniel's prophecies included the rise and fall of empires, the inter-testament period surrounding the Maccabean revolt, Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, His death, and events relating to the end-times.

Israel's Return

After seventy years of exile, Cyrus made a proclamation permitting the Jews to return to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel (the appointed Governor over Judah) and rebuild the temple. Ezra was among a total of nearly 50,000 people who returned on this occasion.

Ezra later went back to Babylon to encourage more Jews to go with him to Jerusalem, this time under the decree of Artaxerxes and with his financial support.

Some eleven years after Ezra, Artaxerxes gave Nehemiah, his cup bearer, also to become Governor of Jerusalem, permission to go to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and complete the walls and gates. It was from the date of this decree that Daniel's prophecy concerning Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem was based; the first 69 of the seventy week prophecy given to Daniel by the angel Gabriel.

It was during these post-exile years that the prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Micah were active.

Looking back to the time when the first wave of people returned to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel, and before the second wave with Ezra, Ahasuerus, king of Persia, had held a great feast for all the dignitaries of

his kingdom. Queen Vashti refused his request to appear unveiled and was consequently deposed. A new queen was sought and twelve months later Esther was chosen. From her position as queen, she was able to foil a plot by Haman, King Ahasuerus' chief officer, to exterminate the Israelites, resulting in Haman's execution.

Because their law did not allow a decree to be cancelled, a new decree was made giving the Israelites authority to defend themselves and even to slay those that rose against them, enabling them to survive the plot.

This is celebrated today by the Jews as the festival of Purim.

Between the Testaments

Although it is generally said that the 400 year period between the Old and New Testaments are the silent years in which God didn't communicate with his people, we do get some history from Daniel in the form of a prophecy. The focus was on the period after the death of Alexandra the Great in 323 B.C. when, having no issue, his empire was divided between his four generals. Israel effectively became a buffer state between the regions to its north and south and was caught up in the 150 years of incessant wars between the two.

The purpose of this prophecy would seem to be identification of the event when Antiochus Epiphanes invaded the temple, placed an image of Jupiter Olympus on the Altar of God and sacrificed a pig on it. This was the nature of the 'abomination of desolation' referred to by Jesus during his Olivet Discourse, and the key event in Revelation's tribulation week.

Jesus' Ministry

We now come to the New Testament and the arrival of our Lord Jesus; the promised Messiah.

Following his baptism by John the Baptist, a forty day fast and subsequent temptations by the Devil, Jesus began his ministry and message to *Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*. Along with this message was the promise from Jesus that anyone who believes on him will be saved and have eternal life. The authority of this message and promise was demonstrated in actions in the form of healings (as promised in Isaiah), exorcisms and miracles, all of which demonstrated God's sovereignty had come. These messages and supporting actions Jesus took throughout Galilee, then later in Judea and in and around Perea before going to Jerusalem for the last time.

Along with some chosen disciples, Jesus travelled to Galilee where his ministry commenced. It was at Cana where Jesus had been invited to a wedding, that he performed his first miracle by turning water into wine.

A little later, he travelled to Jerusalem for Passover where he confronted and expelled the merchants from the temple.

Whilst in Jerusalem, Jesus performed some miracles resulting in many people beginning to believe in him.

When back in Galilee, where he used Capernaum as his base, Jesus healed a demon-possessed man in the synagogue, after which his fame spread throughout Galilee.

Multitudes came from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and beyond the Jordan to hear Jesus speak and to be healed.

According to Matthew, it was early in Jesus' ministry when he taught his disciples, with a great crowd listening, how they should live their lives and, in so doing, be a witness to all around them. This teaching we know as the Sermon on the Mount; a challenge to all believers in that we are taught what it means to be a true follower of Christ, and the high standard that we are all expected to live by.

Jesus continued performing miracles and healing many people until, in time, there were a great number of people in need of his ministering. Jesus gathered, what is by now, his chosen twelve disciples (in reality, now apostles), and commissioned them to go and preach *the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, but only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. They were given authority

to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead and to cast out demons.

Initially, the Pharisees challenged Jesus when he healed on the Sabbath, claiming this to be work, which was unlawful on the Sabbath. In time, they became more and more troubled by Jesus' teachings and what seemed to be a challenge to their authority and status. After twice accusing him of exorcising evil spirits in the name of the devil, Jesus chose to continue his teaching through parables so that only the discerning would understand. The subsequent parables are referred to as the Kingdom Parables.

When Jesus later returned to Nazareth to teach in the synagogue, the people questioned how the son of a carpenter could possibly attain such abilities. Because of their unbelief, Jesus no longer ministered in Nazareth.

Hearing of his cousin John's death, Jesus crossed the sea by ship to a quiet place, but the crowds caught up with him. Filled with compassion for them, he healed their sick. When evening came, 5000 men plus women and children were miraculously fed from just five loaves and two fishes.

Later, on a mountainside by the Sea of Gaililee, great multitudes of people came and many sick people were

healed over a period of three days. Jesus then fed four thousand men, besides women and children, again by the multiplication of food as with the five thousand.

At the region of Caesarea Philippi, Peter acknowledged Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. From this point on, Jesus began to explain that he must go to Jerusalem where he will be killed and will rise again on the third day.

Six days later, Peter, James and John witnessed Jesus' transfiguration and meeting with Moses and Elijah. The three were told by Jesus not to mention what they had seen to anyone until after his resurrection.

Jesus sent seventy of his disciples out to preach the gospel. They later returned with joy reporting the success they had experienced, including being able to exorcise spirits.

Jesus' ministry continued with healing and teaching, including confrontations with the Pharisees, later to move on in and around Perea.

As the final days of Jesus' ministry approached, he made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, as prophesied to the day by Daniel.

Whilst in Jerusalem, having cleansed the temple of the money changers and dumbfounded the rulers with

his responses to their questioning, Jesus berated the scribes and Pharisees with seven woes spoken against them.

On leaving the temple with his disciples, he prophesied its destruction and, in response to questioning by his disciples, foretold the period we call the End Times in what we know as the Olivet Discourse.

The rulers planned to have Jesus killed and enlisted the help of Judas who, after Jesus' last supper with his disciples, betrayed him with a kiss. Jesus' trial and crucifixion quickly followed.

His resurrection on the third day, the subsequent appearances to his followers, then ascension to heaven, preceded the birth of the church when his followers received the Holy Spirit.

The Early Church

Having received the Spirit, the apostles were able to preach daily, healing the sick, casting out demons and converting many. This angered the Jewish rulers - primarily Sadducees - who unsuccessfully attempted to silence them with imprisonment and threats.

With the growth of the church, it became necessary to appoint seven deacons to assist the apostles. One of those was Stephen who preached in the synagogue with such authority that the rulers were angered and he was martyred by stoning.

A great persecution of the church followed in which Saul of Tarsus played a major roll. With the exception of the apostles, this persecution scattered the church abroad.

Philip, another of the chosen seven, preached in Samaria for a time, then travelled towards Gaza where he preached Jesus from Scripture to an Ethiopian eunuch, then baptised him in nearby water.

During his zealous persecution of the church, Saul, the notable witness at Stephen's stoning, was challenged by Jesus on the way to Damascus. He lost his sight and spent three days without food or drink before his sight

was restored by Ananias, who was sent by God to lay hands on him. Saul was then filled with the Holy Spirit.

Saul now preached Christ, but his life was threatened by the Jews and he escaped and went to Jerusalem. After initial concerns because of Saul's reputation, the disciples' minds were put to rest when Barnabas confirmed his conversion. However, the Hellenistic Jews were unconvinced and planned to kill him, so he fled and returned to his home at Tarsus.

The churches, now being free from persecution, were edified, walked in fear of the Lord and multiplied.

Peter took the gospel to Lydda where he healed a man of the palsy, an act which brought about the conversion of all at Lydda and the district of Saron.

Farther on at Joppa, he raised Tabitha from death, bringing about the conversion of many at Joppa.

Whilst at Joppa, Peter learned through a dream, and consequent conversion of a centurion and his household at Caesarea, that the gospel was also to be preached to the Gentiles.

Paul's Ministry

Hearing that the gospel was now being preached to the Gentiles at Antioch, the Jerusalem church sent

Barnabas to investigate. Confirming their faith, he decided to fetch Saul from Tarsus. The two spent a year together in Antioch teaching people about Christ. It was here that converts were first called Christians.

Through prayer and fasting, the Holy Spirit appointed Saul and Barnabas from among the teachers at Antioch to go and preach to the Gentiles.

This was the first of three missionary journeys Saul undertook. This first journey took Saul, Barnabas and Barnabas' nephew Mark through Cyprus, where we read Saul was now to be known as Paul.

From Cyprus they sailed north to Perga, where Mark decided to leave them and return home. From there they travelled north to Antioch of Pisidia, then east to Iconium and on to Lystra, and Derbe, all the while meeting with opposition from the Jews, including inciting the stoning of Paul at Lystra. They then retraced their steps back through Lystra, Iconium and Antioch of Pisidia, confirming the disciples and ordaining elders in every church before returning to Antioch in Syria, where they then remained for a long time.

For his second missionary journey, Paul chose to revisit the churches planted during his first journey, this time taking Silas with him instead of Barnabas. He first

travelled to the churches at Derbe and Lystra, and then Iconium where Timothy, respected among the churches, was invited to join them.

After twice wanting to divert to other areas of Asia Minor, each time being prevented by the Holy Spirit, Paul arrived at Troas where he was directed by a vision to cross the sea to Macedonia. It was at Troas that Paul was joined by Luke before making the crossing.

Churches were planted at Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea, though not without an overnight stay in prison at Philippi and opposition from the Jews who incited a mob at both Thessalonica and Berea. Paul was compelled to leave Berea and travelled to Athens having left Luke at Philippi and Silas and Timothy at Berea.

Paul opposed idolatry at Athens and gained some converts before moving on to Corinth. After Silas and Timothy joined him, he taught the Jews that Jesus is the Christ, but was opposed and so turned his attention to the Gentiles. Encouraged by God, Paul remained in Corinth for eighteen months.

From Corinth, Paul made his way, via Ephesus, to Jerusalem for Passover before returning to Antioch.

After spending some time back at Antioch, Paul then left for his third journey, travelling through Galatia and

Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

He arrived at Ephesus where he preached in the synagogues for three months, but many opposed him and he left the synagogue then spent the next two years preaching daily in the school of one Tyrannus. From there, the news of the gospel spread to both Jews and Gentiles throughout Asia.

Paul then travelled through Macedonia, preaching along the way, and on to Greece where he spent three months before intending to sail to Syria.

Hearing that Jews would be laying in wait for him, he changed his route and returned back through Macedonia before heading for Jerusalem.

Paul's imprisonment

In Jerusalem, Paul was encouraged to go with four men in a purification process to show he was compliant with Moses' law, but was later accused of taking Gentiles into the temple. In the tumult that followed, Paul escaped a scourging ordered by the chief captain when he announced he was a Roman citizen.

To avoid a conspiracy to have Paul killed, the chief captain sent him to Caesarea where he was imprisoned by Felix, the governor of Judea, although allowed access to his companions.

After two years, Festus replaced Felix who asked Paul if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem to be tried. He refused and appealed to Caesar, as was his right as a Roman citizen. Following later hearings before Agrippa, Festus and Agrippa agreed that Paul could have been set free, but having appealed to Caesar, then to Caesar he must go.

Following a perilous voyage, Paul and his company were shipwrecked on the Isle of Melita (now Malta) where Paul, having healed the governor's sick father, stayed for three months.

They then set off again and Paul finally arrived at Rome where he was delivered to the captain of the guard.

Paul was placed under house arrest where he remained for two years. During this time he was able to preach the Gospel unhindered to all who came to him.

From his pastoral letters to Timothy and Titus, we learn that Paul was released from prison. He was later imprisoned in far worse conditions as, by that time, Christians were subject to severe persecution. From this prison, he wrote his second letter to Timothy, which was also to be his last letter.

Revelation

Having heard the last from the Bible concerning the early church, we are now in what is known as the church period. The history of mankind, as told in the Bible, from the Fall to the present day, can perhaps be described in a single phrase: God's plan of redemption. It would not be unreasonable then to want to know when and how this plan would come to fruition. The 'when' we are not told; the 'how' we are. This is what Revelation is about.

At some time in the future, there will be a period when Jesus will unleash events, announced by undoing the seals of a seven-seal scroll, that will precede judgements and the implementation of God's wrath on mankind, including the battle of Armageddon. This will be a seven-year period of tribulation, the last half of which was referred to by Jesus during his first coming as the 'great tribulation'.

At some point Jesus will gather his saints, the church, in order that they do not have to face God's wrath.

After the seven years of tribulation, Jesus will reign and bring peace to the Earth for a thousand years, during which time Satan will be bound and his influence made ineffective. After the thousand years, Satan will be

released to deceive the nations, recruiting supporters before the final battle between good and evil in which the loser will be Satan, his demons and human followers. There will then be a judgement of all of mankind with those whose name is written in the 'book of life' receiving the gift of eternal life in a new heaven and a new earth.

The importance of Revelation is that it tells us what to expect in these end times and, consequently, how we should prepare for them in our present lives, and educate the next generation in these respects.

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