

The Bible In an Evening

*The Bible Story from Genesis to Revelation
in 90 minutes*

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Introduction

‘The Bible in an Evening’, so called because it can be read in around 90 minutes, is offered to those who prefer to start with a briefer overview of the Bible than that previously offered at EasyBible.net as ‘The Bible in a Day’.

EasyBible.net was produced to enable readers to become familiar with the Bible’s content in a relatively short period of time. The complete text of EasyBible can be read in around 7½ hours (the Bible takes approximately 72 hours to read), hence the title ‘The Bible in a Day’. The primary method used to achieve this is a précis of the books containing history narrative: Genesis to Esther plus Daniel, and Matthew to Acts plus Revelation. Coverage of the other books varies between a précis and the briefest summary - as with Psalms and Proverbs - dependant on their content.

The shorter read time of ‘The Bible in an Evening’ is made possible by further reducing the detail from the history narrative and only making a passing reference to the other books. Nevertheless, the reader is still able to gain a good understanding of the Bible story from Genesis to Revelation.

It is worth noting that since the chapter 'The Story of Jesus' had to be compiled from the four gospels, it is susceptible to differing opinions in both the order of events and what should be included or excluded. Also, in an attempt to include as much detail as can be reasonably expected in what is a cut-down version of a précis, some events have been recorded with a simple one sentence statement. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the reader will accept this as an inevitable result of including the events in preference to excluding them.

As with ‘The Bible in a Day’, this is not a theological overview,

rather a précis of events in the Bible to help you become familiar with its content.

In the text, I've occasionally chosen to use a few words direct from the Bible. These are in italics and from the King James Version.

The Beginnings

As told in Genesis 1 to 11

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

It is on the sixth day that mankind is created in the form of Adam first, then Eve. God announces the seventh day to be a day of rest and declares it holy.

God puts Adam in the garden of Eden, instructing him *to dress it and to keep it*. Adam is permitted to eat from any tree in the garden, but is commanded not to eat *of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*. Some time later, after Eve has been formed and presented to Adam, Satan persuades Eve that she could eat from the forbidden tree after all, which she does, then encourages Adam to do the same. For this sin - disobedience of God's word - they are banned from the Garden of Eden. God pronounces three curses, one each for Satan, Eve and Adam. The curse on Satan initiates the spiritual warfare that continues to exist between him and God, but at the same time foretells its outcome. The woman is to endure pain in childbirth and is reduced to being subordinate to her husband, and man is henceforth to toil for his food.

Two of Adam and Eve's sons, Cain and Abel, offer differing sacrifices to God, of which Abel's is accepted but Cain's is rejected. In time, the affect of this rejection leads Cain to murder his brother Abel, a crime for which God punishes him by sending him away to the land of Nod, east of Eden.

Aided by the infiltration of Nephilim (the offspring of the *sons of God* and the *daughters of men*), mankind becomes so wicked that God decides to destroy the earth's inhabitants with a flood. Only righteous Noah, his wife, their three sons and their wives are to be saved, along with many animals, in an ark designed by

God and built by Noah.

The flood having come and abated, there is now a new beginning, with all the inhabitants of the earth to be descended from Noah's sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth.

As the population grows, men resist spreading throughout the earth and begin to build the tower of Babel, thinking it will establish them in one place. But God confounds their language, causing them to divide and scatter abroad as He had originally intended.

The Patriarchal Period

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,
as recorded in the remainder of Genesis

Abraham

God now decides to raise His own people and chooses Abram (later to be named Abraham) to be the father of this new nation. Directed by God, Abram takes his wife Sarai (later to be named Sarah), his nephew Lot and all they possess and move to Canaan.

Whilst there, a great famine forces them to travel to Egypt where Abram, in fear of his life, pretends Sarai is his sister (she is in fact his half-sister). His fears seem justified when Sarai is taken into Pharaoh's house. Because of Sarai, Abram receives many gifts of livestock and servants, which he is permitted to keep even when the deceit has been revealed by divine intervention. He is then able to safely return to Canaan.

In time, grazing becomes insufficient for both Abram's and Lot's herds. Given the choice by Abram, Lot chooses to move to the area of Sodom.

There had been a history of conflict between kings in the plains that eventually leads to a war in which Sodom and Gomorrah are defeated, with the people and their goods, including Lot and his family, being taken captive and carried off to Dan. When Abram comes to hear of this, he takes 318 of his own armed and trained men and rescues all those taken and their possessions. On his return, Abram is met by Melchizedek, *king of Salem* and *priest of the most high God*, who brings bread and wine, blesses Abram and receives a tithe from him.

God makes an unconditional covenant with Abram by putting him into a deep sleep while the covenant ritual is performed by God alone. This covenant promises Abram's seed will inherit the land of Canaan from the Sichor [*the river of Egypt*] to the Euphrates.

Sarai, lacking faith in the promised seed in herself, gives her Egyptian handmaiden Hagar to Abram for a concubine. Hagar conceives and has a son who she names Ishmael.

Four years later, God confirms His covenant with Abram, introduces circumcision as the sign of the covenant, and changes Abram's name to Abraham and Sarai's name to Sarah.

Soon after, when Sodom and Gomorrah are about to be punished for their wickedness, the Lord and two angels visit Abraham and Sarah. During this visit, the promise of a child by Sarah is renewed. When the two angels leave for Sodom, Abraham barter with the Lord concerning its fate, eventually getting agreement that Sodom and Gomorrah would not be destroyed for their sin, even if only ten righteous men are found there.

The two angels arrive at Sodom where they are met by Lot and accept his hospitality. They then have to thwart a demand by men and boys from all parts of the city for them to be handed over for their sexual gratification by striking them with blindness. The next

morning, with Lot's sons-in-law having ignored warnings of Sodom's fate, Lot, his wife and two daughters are compelled to leave the city and head for Zoar. Despite being warned not to do so, Lot's wife looks back at Sodom and becomes a pillar of salt. Fearing to stay in Zoar, Lot goes to live on a nearby mountain in a cave. Later, he is made drunk by his two daughters who then commit incest with him and bear sons, Moab and Benammi. These two sons become the fathers of the Moabites and Ammonites, who in time will become adversaries of the Israelites.

Abraham journeys south to Gerar where he again says that Sarah is his sister. Abimelech, king of Gerar, takes Sarah into his house, but having been warned by God in a dream not to touch her, rebukes Abraham, presents him with much silver, livestock and servants, and returns Sarah to him.

Isaac

Abraham is a hundred years old when Sarah finally gives birth to Isaac.

When Isaac is a young man, Abraham's faith is tested with a command from God to offer him as a sacrifice at Moriah. Abraham readily obeys, fully trusting in God who had promised him a son. At the last moment, *the angel of the Lord* prevents Abraham from going through with the sacrifice. Abraham is then told that through his seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed because of his obedience.

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

Abraham sends his chief servant to his relations in Haran to find a wife for Isaac. By divine intervention he finds Rebekah, Abraham's brother Nahor's granddaughter. With her family's

approval he returns with her and presents her to Isaac. Isaac accepts Rebekah and she becomes his wife.

Abraham dies at the age of 165 and is buried with Sarah in the cave at Mamre.

Jacob

Rebekah gives birth to twins, Esau, the eldest, and Jacob. Esau grows to be a hunter and is favoured by Abraham, whereas Jacob is a plain man and is favoured by Rebekah.

Esau has no regard for his birthright, demonstrated by rashly selling it to Jacob one day when he is particularly hungry.

The Abrahamic covenant is now renewed with Isaac. God then instructs him to sojourn in Gerar while there is a famine in the land. Like his father before him, Isaac lies about Rebekah, pretending she is his sister. After some time, the deceit concerning Rebekah is realised, but Isaac and Rebekah are protected by Abimelech and Isaac grows in prosperity.

Following disputes concerning wells, Isaac eventually moves and settles at Beersheba.

As he approaches his final days, Isaac calls Esau to give him the blessing due to the firstborn. Instigated by his mother, and with her help, Jacob fraudulently obtains his father's blessing. To avoid Esau's anger, also encouraged by Isaac for the purpose of finding a wife, Jacob leaves for his uncle Laban's. On the way he rests for the night and has a vision of a ladder between earth and heaven with angels ascending and descending it. The Lord stood above the ladder and promised Jacob he and his seed would inherit this land, and through his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed. The same promise made to Abraham and Isaac.

Nearing his uncle Laban's, Jacob meets Rachel and falls in love

with her, but has to work seven years for her hand in marriage. On the wedding night, following much celebration, Jacob is tricked into sleeping with Rachel's older sister Leah. As a consequence, he has to accept her as his wife. It cost another seven years of service before he is able to marry Rachel.

Through divine intervention, Rachel is unable to conceive and Jacob's first eleven children - ten boys and a daughter - are conceived by Leah, her handmaiden and Rachel's handmaiden. Finally, Rachel is able to conceive and gives birth to Joseph.

Jacob now wants to leave Laban, but is persuaded to stay longer. After six years, Jacob has become rich in livestock and decides it is now time to leave, To avoid confrontation, he seizes on the opportunity to leave whilst Laban is away sheep shearing. When Laban returns he pursues Jacob, but when he catches up with him there is reconciliation and Laban returns home peacefully.

One night, Jacob wrestles with God through the night, then in the morning God renames him Israel.

Later in their journey, Jacob learns Esau is some way off with 400 men. He contrives a way to win Esau over by sending gifts of livestock ahead, then arranging his company to meet Esau a part at a time for safety. However, there was no need, as his meeting with Esau is as brothers reuniting and all is well. After the reunion, Jacob is able to continue on his way in peace.

Dinah, Jacob's only daughter, is raped by Shechem, a Hivite. Following an attempt at appeasement by Shechem and his father, Simeon and Levi deceive the Hivites by imposing a condition that they are all to be circumcised. On the third day, whilst they are still sore, they slaughter all the men and take their families and possessions. Now in danger from surrounding tribes, God tells Jacob to move to Bethel.

Soon after, Rachel dies whilst giving birth to Benjamin, Jacob's twelfth son. After burying Rachel, Jacob settles near Edah, close to Bethlehem. It is while they are there that Reuben has intercourse with Billhah, one of his father's concubines.

Isaac dies aged 180, and is buried by his sons Jacob and Esau.

Joseph

Joseph, now seventeen years old, is hated by his brothers because he is his father's favourite and for his dreams. One day, when the brothers are out feeding their father's flocks, they conspire against Joseph, strip him of his coat and throw him into a pit. They then sell him to some passing Ishmaelites, who sell him to Potipher, an officer of Pharaoh, letting his father believe he has been killed by wild animals.

Joseph's half-brother Judah fails to honour a commitment to his widowed daughter-in-law, Tamar, to give her one of his sons to raise a child in his brother's name. When Judah's wife had died, and he is away sheep-shearing, Tamar disguises herself as a harlot and sells herself to Judah. She conceives and bears Judah twins, Pheraz and Zarah. (King David is to be descended from Pheraz.)

Joseph, blessed by God in all he does, serves Potipher well and is promoted to be in charge of all Potipher's affairs. After some time, Potipher's wife falsely accuses Joseph of trying to seduce her and he is thrown in prison.

Having previously interpreted dreams for a baker and a butler whilst in prison, Joseph is remembered by the butler and released to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. This he does by not only foretelling seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine, but advises how the situation should be managed. As a consequence of this wisdom he is made ruler of all Egypt, second only to

Pharaoh. Joseph is given Asenath, the daughter of a priest, as his wife and is to have two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, before the famine comes.

As foretold by Joseph, after seven years of plenty a severe famine hits Egypt and the lands around. Jacob's sons have to go twice to Egypt to buy corn, each time tried by Joseph, but do not recognise him. On the second occasion, Joseph reveals himself to them and an emotional reunion follows. All Jacob's family are now able to go to Egypt and live freely in the land of Goshen, nourished by Joseph.

After blessing Joseph's sons and his own, Jacob dies and is carried with great pomp and ceremony to be buried in Canaan with Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah and Leah.

Having given orders concerning his own burial, Joseph later dies aged 110.

The Story of the Israelites Exodus From Egypt and their journey to the Promised Land as recorded in Exodus to Deuteronomy

When a new pharaoh rules who had not known Joseph, the persecution of the Israelites begins, including preventing survival of male babies. After some years Moses is born, hidden in a basket and placed on the river to preserve his life. After being discovered and brought up by Pharaoh's daughter, at the age of forty Moses kills an Egyptian in defence of a Hebrew, then has to flee Egypt. He goes to Midian where, in time, he marries the priest Jethro's daughter.

It's possibly about this time that Job suffers terribly at the hands

of the devil. He disputes with his friends, who say his condition is the result of some sin he must have committed. Job holds fast to his innocence, but questions God's actions. He is eventually reproved by God and graciously restored to his former state, with interest.

At Sinai, *the angel of the Lord* appears to Moses in a burning bush and directs him to return to Egypt, taking his brother Aaron with him, to lead the Hebrews out of captivity.

When Moses approaches Pharaoh, he naturally refuses to let the Israelites go. It takes ten plagues imposed on the Egyptians to persuade him, the last being the death of all the firstborn. Israel's own firstborn are saved by the sacrifice of a lamb and the daubing of 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.

The Israelites are now able to leave with great riches given by the Egyptians. Pharaoh soon has a change of heart and pursues them, catching up with them at the sea of reeds. Here the Israelites are able to cross the river by the miracle of the parting of the waters, but as the Egyptians try to follow them, the waters are released and they are all drowned.

Directed by a pillar of smoke, they travel on towards Mount Sinai. Suffering from hunger and thirst on the way, they are relieved by divine intervention with the provision of manna for food, and water when Moses is instructed by God to strike a rock to bring forth the water. Along the way they are attacked by the Amalekites, but defeat them in battle whilst Moses, looking over the battle scene, holds his staff up high.

They arrive at Mount Sinai and camp there. Here Moses is summoned by God three times to go up the mountain where he

receives the ten commandments, then the law by which the Israelites are to live. On the third occasion, the law is provided on stone tablets, and instructions for the building of the tabernacle are given.

Because he has been on the mountain for so long, the people lose hope in Moses and persuade Aaron to make a golden calf and altar, which they then used for worship followed by partying. When Moses comes down from the mountain and sees their behaviour, he breaks the stone tablets in anger, then administers punishment to them before returning to the mountain to make atonement for their sin and receive new tablets.

The tabernacle is now constructed.

The Israelites are given all the laws that are to govern their lives. They are told that if they obey all God's commandments they will be blessed in all things, but if they do not, then the consequences would be terrible and increased all the time they did not repent, until they would eventually be taken captive by their enemies.

It has now been thirteen months since the Israelites left Egypt. A Census is taken of all the men of twenty years or older who are able to serve in an army, the numbers being recorded by tribe. The Levites are excluded from the census as they are to be responsible for the tabernacle and its furnishings, for the erection and disassembly of it, and for carrying it from camp to camp. The order of which the tribes are to camp around the tabernacle, and the order for marching is given, with the twelve tribes assembled in four groups of three headed by Judah, Reuben, Ephraim and Dan.

Before leaving Sinai, offerings from each tribe are given for the dedication of the tabernacle.

The Israelites now start their journey from Sinai to Kadesh, but

within days complain about the manna, kindle God's wrath and are plagued. After this they travel on to Hazeroth where they camp for a while before travelling on to the Desert of Paran, in the region of Kadesh.

When at Kadesh, twelve men are sent to explore Canaan. On their return, ten of them report that the people are very powerful and their cities large and fortified. Moses, Aaron, Joshua and Caleb try to persuade the people that God will deliver the land and its people into their hands, but they become fearful and rebel. Consequently, God condemns them to wander and die in the wilderness; only their children will enter the Promised Land.

Korah and his companions rebel against Moses and Aaron and are executed by God. The priesthood is then confirmed to Aaron and his family by the budding of his rod in favour of others. They are then given instructions for priests' duties, for the support they are to receive from the Levites, and some laws relating to oblations and purifications.

After the people again complain to Moses about lack of water, Moses offends God by striking a rock to produce the water instead of speaking to it as instructed.

Having been refused passage through Edom, they travel on to Mount Hor where Aaron dies and is succeeded by his son Eleazar.

Following an incident with some Canaanites, then subsequent victory over them, the camp heads south to avoid Edom, in the opposite direction to the Promised Land. The people are discouraged and again complain about the lack of water and food. As a consequence they are plagued by serpents, but healed by looking upon a fiery serpent on a pole held up by Moses.

They continue on their way but are then refused passage through the Amorites' land. The Amorite king goes to war with the

Israelites, but is defeated. Consequently, they are able to stay in their land for a time.

Balaam, at Balak's request, three times attempts to curse the Israelites. But God, using the voice of his donkey and an angel, instructs him to bless them and announce destruction upon their enemies.

Many of the Israelites have now been seduced by Moabite women and enticed into worshipping their gods. God's wrath is kindled and a plague brought upon the people until a priest, a grandson of Aaron, deals with two of the offenders.

A second census is now taken in preparation for invading the Promised Land.

A law concerning inheritance when a man dies without sons is given.

From Mount Abarim, God shows Moses the Promised Land, but he will not be permitted to enter it and Joshua is formally proclaimed his successor.

Required offerings and feasts are restated and the law concerning vows given. Vengeance is taken on the Midianites as Moses' last act before his death.

The tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh request to have the land east of the Jordan as their inheritance. The boundaries of inheritance west of Jordan, the towns and pastures for the Levites, and the six cities of refuge for those who caused death by accident, are all now allotted.

Moses recalls the wilderness wanderings and calls the Israelites to obedience, warning them that if they are not faithful, they would be scattered amongst other peoples with only a remnant surviving to return in later days. He tells them they are to possess the land, not because of their righteousness, but because of God's covenant

with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, for they are a stiff-necked people who have continually provoked God.

Another covenant is entered with a promise from God that if they are dispersed from the land for their disobedience, they will later be restored with circumcised hearts.

At the age of 120 years, Moses announces Joshua as his successor. He blesses all the tribes, then climbs Mount Nebo where God shows him the land for the last time before he dies. Moses is buried by God in a place not known by any man.

The Conquest of the Promised Land

As told in the book of Joshua

Now Moses successor, Joshua, sends spies to Jericho. Having been aided by Rahab, a harlot, they are successful in their mission and return with a favourable report. The Israelites cross the Jordan in a miraculous manner, the men are then circumcised and Passover observed. Jericho is then conquered with a strategy given by God. Following their success, Achan is punished for stealing things from Jericho meant for the Lord's treasury.

Ai is taken next, again with a strategy given by God.

Following a deceitful approach from the Gibeonites, a treaty is made with them.

After spending six years conquering Canaan, Joshua divides the land by lot to the tribes. The tabernacle is set up at Shiloh and cities of refuge appointed. However, in numerous cases, there are still some Canaanites living there, some of whom, but not all, become slaves to the Israelites.

Forty-eight cities with their surrounding pasture land are

assigned to the Levites.

The Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh now return home, east of Jordan, where they erect a memorial altar to God.

Joshua convenes the tribes of Israel and reminds them of God's favour to them, and their responsibilities to God. If they do not follow His commandments and are unfaithful to Him, they will quickly be driven from the land He has given them.

Joshua dies at the age of 110, and is buried at Mount Ephraim.

The Times of the Judges

Because not all the Canaanites were driven from the land, a later generation of Israelites are enticed by them and start turning to their gods. Each time the Israelites distance themselves further from God, He raises a judge to deliver them. The Israelites seem incapable of learning from this, and following each deliverance they just get into deeper trouble, invoking God's wrath more each time.

For intermarrying with the Canaanites and serving their gods, God allows the Mesopotamians to subdue them for eight years before raising Othniel, a nephew of Caleb, to deliver them. Peace follows for forty years.

The Israelites again lapse into idolatry and are delivered into the hands of the Moabites for eighteen years. Ehud, a left-handed man of the tribe of Benjamin, delivers them, bringing peace that is to last for eighty years.

Shamgar, son of Anath, is next to rescue Israel, and does so by killing six hundred Philistines with an ox goad.

After the Israelites had been oppressed for twenty years by Jabin,

king of the Canaanites, Deborah and Barak deliver them then sing a victory song. Peace follows for forty years.

Having had their lands invaded each season for six years by Midianites, destroying crops and livestock, Gideon delivers them, but not without much encouragement from God as he doubted it was God who called him for the task.

Abimelech, the son of Gideon's concubine in Shechem, persuades the people of Shechem that he should rule over them rather than the other seventy sons of Gideon, as he is also of Shechem. He slays Gideon's sons at Ophrah, except for the youngest, Jotham, who belittles Shechem's choice of Abimelech as king and foretells their destruction with a curse. After three years, tensions arise and Abimelech goes into battle against Shechem, killing all in the city. He then attacks the city Thebez where he is killed by a woman who throws down a piece of millstone from a tower, striking him on the head.

After Abimelech there follows twenty three years of peace under Tola, and twenty two years of peace under Jair.

The Israelites again fall into idolatry, so God permits the Philistines and Ammonites to overrun them. After eighteen years, and God initially refusing to help them, they put away their foreign Gods and Jephthah, a bastard of Gilead, is raised to deliver them. Because of a rash vow made to God, Jephthah forfeits his daughter's life. A dispute arises between the Gileadites and Ephraimites resulting in the death of some forty-two thousand Ephraimites. After this, Jephthah leads Israel in peace for six years.

After Jephthah, Ibzan leads Israel for seven years before his death and is buried in Bethlehem.

After Ibzan, Elon leads Israel for ten years, then Abdon for a further eight years.

Samson is born and appointed a Nazarite to begin the work of freeing the Israelites from the Philistines. He harasses the Philistines for twenty years before his wife, Delilah, is persuaded to discover and reveal the secret of his strength; his long hair. His hair is cut while he is sleeping enabling him to be captured and taken prisoner. In prison his hair naturally grows again. During the Philistine's celebration of their god Dafron, Samson is stood between two columns of the building to be mocked. He cries out to God for strength and is able to displace the columns bringing the building down, killing all those in the building and on the roof. It is said that the number he slew at his death was more than he slew in his life.

Micah, a man of mount Ephraim, makes some images from his mother's silver, then later has a young Levite stay as a family priest in exchange for his keep. When the Danites are migrating to Laish, they stop at Micah's home on the way and forcibly take Micah's silver image and the Levite priest to be theirs. The Danites go on to take Laish and rename it Dan. The Levite and his sons after him are priests in Dan until the captivity, using the idols for worship all the time God's house is in Shiloh.

At a much earlier time, a Levite is passing through Ephraim when he takes a concubine who is later unfaithful to him. She leaves him and goes to her father's house where he follows to bring her back. Here he is entertained by her father for five days before leaving. On their return, they lodge the first night at Gibeah, in the tribe of Benjamin. The men of Gibeah attack the house with the intent to abuse the Levite's body. To save himself he gives them his concubine, who then dies after being abused all night. The Levite divides her dead body into twelve pieces and sends one to each of the twelve tribes. They consequently call a council

to discuss the atrocity and call upon the Benjamites to deliver up the murderers. They refuse and battles ensue with the Benjamites with great losses until eventually the city of Gibeah is destroyed, followed by all the Benjamite cities.

The Israelites mourn because of the desolation of Benjamin and consult God. A plan is concocted that will provide 600 virgins for Benjamin, saving the tribe from extinction.

The Story of Ruth

Sometime during the period of the Judges, a woman by the name of Naomi is forced to leave Bethlehem because of a famine. She goes to live in Moab with her husband and two sons. Her husband dies before her two sons marry Moabite women, then later, her two sons die. On hearing that the famine is over, Naomi decides to return home. She tells her two daughters-in-law to stay in Moab and find new husbands there, but Ruth insists on returning with her. They arrive in Bethlehem when the barley harvest is about to begin.

Now Naomi and Ruth are destitute, so Ruth is sent to glean in the fields after the reapers. She happens to glean in Boaz's field and receives favourable treatment from him. Naomi, realising Ruth had chanced upon the field of a near kinsman, instructs her on how to behave until the end of the harvest, and then at winnowing time.

That evening, Ruth follows Naomi's instructions and Boaz responds favourably, but has to tell her there is a nearer kinsman than he. The night's events are kept secret and Ruth is sent home to Naomi with six measures of barley. This Naomi recognises as

a sign that Boaz intends to fulfil his role as kinsman redeemer, seven being the number of completeness.

When the time is appropriate, Boaz tells the nearer kinsman of the situation. In front of witnesses, he offers him the opportunity to be Ruth's kinsman redeemer. The offer is declined and Boaz is free to marry Ruth.

They have a son who is named Obed by Naomi's neighbours. Obed is to be the father of Jesse, who is to be the father of King David.

The Monarchy

Saul, David and Solomon

Following an earnest prayer to God and intercession by the priest Eli, Hannah, who had been barren, conceives and gives birth to Samuel. Her son is dedicated to God and sent to serve with Eli. In time, Eli's sons abuse their positions as priests. Eli's failure to do anything about this will eventually bring about his and their downfall. Meanwhile, God is with Samuel and as Samuel grows, all Israel come to know he is established as a prophet to the Lord.

After a failed battle with the Philistines, the ark is taken to the Israeli camp in support of their campaign. However, the ark is captured by the Philistines, and Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are killed in the process. The news of their death causes Eli, by now an elderly and heavy man, to fall from his seat and break his neck.

The captured ark is taken to Ashdod and placed beside their idol Dagon. The next two mornings, Dagon is found on its face before the ark, putting fear into the people of Ashdod, so they move the

ark to another town. The same happens at Gaza, Askelon, Gath and Ekron. The ark is consequently returned by delivering it to the borders of Bethshemesh from where it is taken to Abinidab's house. There it remains for twenty years in the care of his son Eleazar.

Samuel gets agreement from the people to turn away from idolatry. Meanwhile, the Philistines set out to attack the Israelites, but are hampered by God with a great storm and are defeated. Now subdued, the Philistines do not move against Israel during the rest of Samuel's life, and cities taken by the Philistines are restored to them.

Samuel now judges Israel whilst doing a circuit of Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpeth, then returning to his home at Ramah.

Saul

In his old age, Samuel makes his sons Joel and Abiah judges over Israel, but they are corrupt. Consequently, the people insist on having a king to judge over them and to fight their battles. With God's approval, Saul is chosen and anointed by Samuel in preparation. Saul is then given another heart by God. Samuel gathers the people at Mizpeth and announces Saul as their king, after which Saul returns to his home at Gibeah.

There is a battle with the Ammonites in which the Israelites, led by Saul, are victors. This seals Saul's position as king, enabling Samuel to pass authority to him.

Two years later, Saul takes it upon himself to carry out some priestly duties prior to a battle with the Philistines, which is unlawful. He then later fails to utterly destroy the Amalekites and their property as instructed by God. As a result of these acts of disobedience, God, now repenting of having made Saul king,

instructs Samuel to go to Bethlehem and anoint Jesse's youngest son David to later succeed Saul as king over Israel. From this point, the Spirit of God is with David, but has departed from Saul. David becomes Saul's harp player to help him deal with this from time to time. He is also now his armour bearer.

When Philistine and Israel are again at war, David steps up to the challenge from Goliath, a giant of a Philistine, to settle the battle by a one-to-one combat. David defeats Goliath with a single sling shot and cuts off his head with Goliath's own sword. The Philistines flee, are pursued then defeated by Saul's army. David is now put in charge of an army, is successful in battle and wins the admiration of the people. This provokes Saul's anger which results in a failed attempt to kill him with a javelin. David is given greater army responsibilities and enjoys more success and greater admiration. He is given Saul's daughter Michal as his wife, and is successful in yet another battle. Saul realises God is with David and becomes David's enemy.

From this point, David spends much time effectively in exile whilst Saul pursues him with the intent to kill him.

David flees to see Samuel, has an emotional meeting with Saul's son Jonathan, is later joined by his relations, then by four hundred men and becomes their captain. He travels on to Mizpeth where he obtains permission from the king for his parents to stay there.

Later, when Saul is pursuing David, he spends a night sleeping in a cave. This gives David the opportunity to kill him, but he chooses to simply cut off the skirt of his robe, enabling him to later prove to Saul he is not his enemy.

Soon after, Samuel dies and is buried in his house at Ramah. David then goes to the wilderness of Paran.

On a later occasion, when Saul is again pursuing David, David

has another opportunity to kill Saul at night. This time he takes Saul's spear and a cruse lying near his head to again prove his innocence. Convinced, Saul returns home.

Still in fear of Saul, David takes his two wives and, now, six hundred men to the land of the Philistines. Here he is able to find favour with Achish, king of Gath, and is permitted to live in Ziklag. After about fourteen months David invades the Geshurites, Gezrites and Amalekites, not sparing any least Achish should hear of it. When Achish enquires, David's response leads him to believe he had invaded some parts of Israel, effectively making David Achish's servant.

Prior to another battle with the Philistines, Saul seeks guidance from God, but none is forthcoming. He then resorts to the help of the witch of Endor who calls upon Samuel, only to learn that he and his sons will die the next day at the hand of the Philistines, and Israel will be defeated.

When the Philistines are gathered at Aphek to do battle with the Israelites, the captains question why David and his men should be with them. Consequently, Achish tells David and his men to return to Ziklag. There he finds the city burnt and all their wives, sons and daughters carried off by the Amalekites. They come across a young man, left behind because he was sick, who agrees to lead them to the Amalekites. They find them celebrating their victories and attack and kill them all, with the exception of four hundred young men who escape on camels. Everyone of their brethren are recovered, including David's two wives.

In the battle against the Philistines many are slain, including Saul's sons Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchishua. Saul is wounded by an archer and asks his armour bearer to put a sword to him, but he refuses and Saul takes his own life rather than die at the hands

of a Philistine.

With their king dead, his army flees and several cities are taken and inhabited by the Philistines.

David

David is now able to go to live in Hebron, taking all his men, and is anointed king of Judah. Nevertheless, wars continue between the house of Saul and the house of David, but with David growing ever stronger and the house of Saul growing ever weaker.

During this time, David has six sons by six wives, the third of whom is Absalom.

Abner, once commander-in-chief of Saul's army, makes a treaty with David in which he would be actively involved in bringing all Israel under David's reign. Eventually, all the tribes of Israel come to Hebron, accept David as their leader and anoint him king over all Israel. David is thirty years old when he first becomes king. He had reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and is to reign over all Israel and Judah for a further thirty three years.

David goes to Jerusalem and first takes the stronghold of Zion, then Jerusalem is later taken by Joab, a nephew of David and his commander in chief. Here David builds his house, takes more wives and concubines and increases his offspring.

The Philistines, hearing David is now king over all Israel and all the more of a threat to them, come to fight him on two occasions, but are defeated.

David takes thirty thousand men and fetches the ark from Baal of Judah, but an incident along the way discourages him and the ark is left at Obededom's house. There it remains for three months before it is finally taken to Jerusalem with great joy.

David now wants to build a temple for God, a desire initially

supported by the prophet Nathan. However, the honour is denied him by God and allotted to his successor. God promises David that the establishment of David's throne and kingdom will be for ever.

After having had some rest from his enemies, David again has to deal with them. He is victorious over the Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, Edomites and others. During these victories much spoil is taken, including brass and gold that will later be used in the construction of the temple. Also, many gifts are brought to David.

With all his enemies subdued, and having established his principal officers under him, David now reigns peacefully over all Israel and administers judgement and justice to all his people.

For the sake of his covenant with Jonathan, David sends for Jonathan's lame son Mephibosheth and restores all his grandfather's land due to him that was lost during Ishbosheth's rebellion. From that time on, Mephibosheth is always to eat at David's table as one of his own sons.

One evening, David commits adultery with Bathsheba and conspires to have her husband Uriah killed in battle. He is reproved by Nathan and bitterly repents. Bathsheba has conceived, but the child becomes sick and dies.

David's son Amnon falls in love with his brother Absalom's sister, Tamar, and contrives to have sex with her. His advances cause Tamar much grief. David gets to know about it but does not punish Amnon.

Two years later, Absalom is able to set up a situation that enables him to murder Amnon, after which he flees to Geshur where he remains for three years.

With Joab's help, Absalom is able to return to Jerusalem, but is not reconciled to his father for two years. Absalom rebels against

his father, and over an extended period gains the support of the people and conspires to become king. Fearing for the safety of his household and the city, David flees over the Jordan river. Absalom pursues David but is defeated by David's army and killed by Joab. After he expresses considerable grief over Absalom, David is encouraged to return to Jerusalem. There is a further revolt from Israel against Judah under Sheba the Benjamite, but this is quelled by Joab. Sheba is executed and Israel's allegiance returns to Judah.

David makes atonement for Saul's slaughter of the Gibeonites, with whom the Israelites had made a treaty when conquering the Promised Land.

On four occasions the Philistines go to war with the Israelites, each time having a son of a giant (of the nephilim) challenging David. On each occasion, because of his age, another goes to David's aid and kills the giant.

David's eldest son Adonijah attempts to usurp the throne with Joab's help. This is prevented by Nathan getting Bathsheba to bring the matter to David's attention. David announces Solomon as his successor and orders Nathan and Zadock to anoint him. Adonijah is then pardoned by Solomon on the promise of good behaviour.

David orders a census of all Israel which takes nine months, but it transpires that his motive for doing so was sinful, an act for which he is punished by God.

David declares the site of the threshing floor of Ornan as being the place where the temple is to be built. He makes abundant preparations for craftsmen and materials, then tells Solomon that it will be his responsibility to build the temple and that God will be with him in his task.

David assigns the Levites their various temple duties and organises Israel's civil government. The government is formally passed to Solomon and he is given the design and instructions for building the temple. Solomon is then anointed by David and made king for the second time, then all Israel submit themselves to Solomon. David now charges Solomon to walk in the ways of God and gives him instructions concerning particular persons he should show favour to, or execute justice on.

David passes away after reigning over Israel for forty years.

Solomon

Solomon soon establishes his authority as king by dealing with certain individuals as instructed by his father. He then makes an alliance with Egypt by marrying the Pharaoh's daughter

God appears to Solomon in a dream and offers him anything he desires. Because of his young age, Solomon asks for an understanding heart to judge his people. This is granted along with the addition of riches and honour. Wisdom is quickly demonstrated when he judges a case between two harlots arguing over who is the mother of a baby. All Israel hears of this judgement and respect Solomon, for they can see the wisdom of God is in him.

God's promise of riches and honour is soon realised and the extent of Solomon's wisdom and fame becomes recognised by all nations around him. Solomon is to speak three thousand proverbs and composes one thousand and five songs. People are sent by kings from all nations to hear his wisdom and knowledge first hand.

After securing the assistance of King Hiram, work on building the temple begins. It takes seven years for the work to be

completed. The ark is then brought into the temple and placed in the most holy place, which is then filled with the glory of God.

Solomon had imposed taxes on the people to help fund the temple and his other building works, but with the temple completed, this levy now only pays for places that Solomon chooses to build or repair.

Solomon maintains a standing army and builds a navy. With this navy he is able to trade and bring great riches to his kingdom.

Hearing of Solomon's greatness and wisdom, and intending to test his wisdom with questions, the Queen of Sheba visits Solomon. During this visit, all her questions are answered and there is an exchange of extravagant gifts.

Year after year, people come to hear Solomon's wisdom, known to be from God, and bring him presents. His riches continue to grow and he amasses an army of chariots and horsemen.

Solomon has seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, as well as princesses. In his old age, some of these women begin to turn his heart away from God, leading him to worship other gods and build places for his wives to worship them. For this evil, God tells Solomon his kingdom will be taken from him, not in his time for the sake of his father David, but in his son's time. So God raises adversaries against Solomon in Hadad, Rezon, and in the person of Jeroboam, who receives a prophecy that he will rule ten tribes of Israel. Solomon gets to know of this and seeks to kill Jeroboam, but Jeroboam goes into exile until Solomon's death.

Solomon had reigned for forty years in Israel when he dies, and is buried in Zion.

It is probably towards the end of his life that he wrote Ecclesiastes and 'Song of Solomon'

Solomon is succeeded by his son Rehoboam.

A Divided Kingdom

Now Rehoboam refuses to reduce the burden of taxes on the people. As a consequence, the northern tribes rebel and make Jeroboam their king. Rehoboam takes refuge in Jerusalem and fortifies several cities in the southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin for his defence. Jeroboam creates a system of idolatrous worship which causes Levites, priests, and others from all tribes seeking to worship God to go to Jerusalem. It is by this migration of peoples that the northern tribes are preserved.

The northern tribes are referred to collectively as Israel, and the southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin as Judah.

The history of the northern kings of Israel

In the northern kingdom, most kings are sinful and succession by murder is not uncommon.

After twenty two years, Jeroboam is succeeded by his son Nadab who is sinful like his father. Nadab is killed by Baasha who reigns in his place and destroys the house of Jeroboam. He is then succeeded by his son Elah who reigns for two years before being killed by Zimri, one of his captains, who then reigns for only seven days. Another of his captains is Omri, whose supporters prevail and make him king, but Omri is worse than all the kings that preceded him. Omri is then succeeded by his son Ahab who reigns for twenty two years, but is more evil in God's sight than all the Israeli kings before him.

It is during Ahab's reign that Elijah arrives on the scene and prophesies to Ahab that it will not rain for three years. After

surviving miraculously with little sustenance, first at the brook Cherith then at Zarephat with a widow and her son, and later restoring her son to life, Elijah returns to Ahab. He then demonstrates by a sacrifice burnt by fire from heaven, that Jehovah, not Baal, is the true God. In response to Elijah's prayer, rain follows a few days later. Elijah is instructed by God to later anoint Hazael king over Syria, Jehu king over Israel and Elisha to be a prophet in his place.

For his ungodly acts, judgement is pronounced on Ahab, but after he humbles himself before God, judgement is deferred to his son's days.

Ahaziah succeeds his father Ahab, is no better than him and dies from sickness after reigning for just two years. Joram, also a son of Ahab, succeeds Ahaziah.

After Elijah is taken to heaven by God, his authority passes to Elisha, who had previously requested a double portion of Elijah's spirit. Elisha prophesies from the reign of Joram. He performs significantly more miracles than Elijah (the 'double portion') but is different to him in that he mixes more with people, with most of his acts being those of healing. Elisha becomes known as the prophet in Israel, an office he holds for around sixty years.

Jehu is anointed king of Israel. He kills and destroys the whole house of Ahab and reigns over Israel from Samaria for twenty eight years.

Jehu is succeeded by his son Jehoahaz. He is a wicked king, bringing the wrath of God upon Israel through the oppression of the Syrians. Jehoahaz dies after reigning seventeen years.

Jehoahaz's son Jehoash now reigns in Israel. He is another wicked king. During his reign he fights with Amaziah, king of Judah.

Jehoash visits Elisha on his deathbed and later defeats the Syrians three times as Elisha had prophesied to him. Jehoash reigns for sixteen years.

It's possibly around this time that the prophet Jonah foretells the relief of the Israelites. Unwilling to follow God's instruction to warn Nineveh of coming judgment, Jonah flees by ship to Tarshish. Being blamed for a tempest, Jonah is thrown overboard and swallowed by *a great fish*. After three days, the fish casts him out upon dry land. Jonah then concedes and goes to warn the Ninevites. They repent, and are spared.

Jehoash is succeeded by his son Jeroboam, the second king to have that name. He is yet another evil king in God's eyes. Nevertheless, God uses him to restore lands bordering Syria that had previously been taken by Israel's enemies.

It is during Jeroboam II's reign that Amos prophesies. Amos is contemporary with Hosea, but Hosea prophesies for around forty years. They both reprove the Israelites for their sins and foretell their approaching judgements.

Zechariah succeeds his father Jeroboam as king of Israel. He too is an ungodly king and only reigns for six months before Shallum, son of Jabesh, conspires against him, kills him and reigns in his place. Shallum only lasts a single month as king in Samaria as Menahem, the son of Gadi, comes to Samaria and kills him, then reigns in his place. There are people from his own city, and those nearby, who do not accept Menahem as king, so he deals harshly with them, including the barbaric slaughter of all pregnant women. Menahem reigns for ten years in Samaria before his death. His son Pekahiah succeeds him but he is another godless king and reigns just two years before one of his captains, Pekah, conspires against him, assassinates him and takes over the kingship. Pekah

reigns over Israel for twenty years as another godless king. During his reign, the Assyrians invade much of Israel and take captive around half of the Israelites. Hoshea then conspires against Pekah, kills him, and reigns in his place.

Hoshea is the last king of Israel, not a God fearing man, but said to be not as bad as his predecessors. The king of Assyria rises against Hoshea, prevails and makes Hoshea his tributary. When Hoshea stops paying him taxes, the king of Assyria invades Israel and lays siege to Samaria for three years, imprisoning Hoshea. After three years, all the Israelites are taken captive and are resettled in various cities in Assyria and Medes, ending Hoshea's nine year reign.

And so it is, after many years of idolatry from the first Jerobaom's reign, God allows Israel to be taken away captive.

The southern kings of Judah

The southern kingdom had 20 kings covering around 370 years, but unlike the northern kingdom, there was only one dynasty: the Davidic line. The southern kings were not much better than the northern kings, however, 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.

It is during Azariah's reign that Isaiah begins to prophesy and continues through to Hezekiah's reign; Micah is contemporary with Jotham; and Jeremiah prophesies from Josiah to Zedekiah.

Josiah's son Jehoahaz is not the eldest, but is anointed by the people as king. After just three months, he is deposed by the king of Egypt who makes Jehoiakim king and takes tribute from Judea. In the third year of Jehoiakim's reign, Nebuchadnezzar lays siege

to Jerusalem and Jehoiakim serves him for three years before rebelling. Troops are later sent to Judah and Jehoiakim is taken to Babylon along with other captives, including Daniel and his companions.

Jehoiachin, Jehoiakim's son, now reigns in his place, but after just three months and ten days Nebuchadnezzar again lays siege to Jerusalem and he is carried off to Babylon, along with all his household and its treasures, as well as treasures from the temple.

The king of Babylon now makes Mattaniah king and renames him Zedekiah. He rebels against Babylon resulting in another siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, which lasts for eighteen months and causes a great famine in the city. The city is overcome and Zedekiah and his household are captured and taken prisoner. Zedekiah is put in chains and thrown in prison where he stays for the rest of his life. The city is later burned, including the temple. All the temple furniture is taken, and the people taken captive in a total of three waves over a period of several years.

And so Jerusalem falls and the exile of the Jews begins.

Israel in Exile

Events recorded by Daniel

Daniel was amongst those taken captive when Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem. Along with three of his companions, Daniel is trained for service to the king. Electing not to defile himself with the king's food and wine, Daniel gets agreement that he and his three companions should take a vegetarian diet and be tested after ten days. They are then found to have grown in wisdom and understanding to such an extent that the king judges them to be

ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers in his realm.

After three years, Nebuchadnezzar has a dream that only Daniel is able to interpret. It is a prophesy of four kingdoms, or empires, followed by God's everlasting kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar rewards him with gifts and promotes him to rule over the whole province of Babylon, and to be chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon.

For refusing to worship a giant golden image of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel's three companions, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, are cast into a furnace, but they miraculously survive and Nebuchadnezzar gives praise to God. The three are then restored to the positions held before they were accused and given more responsibilities.

Nebuchadnezzar has another dream, also interpreted by Daniel. He tells Nebuchadnezzar he will lose his mind for seven years in order that he will come to know that God is all powerful. He will then be restored to his position as king of Babylon. After a year, the king is struck down just as the dream foretold, and seven years later his mind is healed and he gives praise to God.

Belshazzar has succeeded Nebuchadnezzar as king of Babylon. During the first year of Belshazzar's reign, Daniel has a vision of four beasts that represent four empires succeeding one another, followed by the annihilation of the dominion of the fourth beast which is then replaced by the kingdom of God.

Two years later Daniel has another vision, this time concerning a ram and a goat. The angel Gabriel is sent to Daniel to give him an understanding of this vision and awakes him from a sleep to interpret it. The vision and its interpretation so affects Daniel that he is ill for a few days. When he recovers and relates the vision to some of his own people, none can understand it.

Many years later Belshazzar holds a great feast for a thousand of his lords, during which a hand is seen writing a message on the wall. Daniel then interprets the writing, which is a short condemnation of Belshazzar and an announcement that he is to lose his kingdom. Daniel is rewarded for the interpretation and is made third ruler in the kingdom. That night the city is invaded and Darius the Mede takes the kingdom.

During the first year of Darius' reign, Daniel reads Jeremiah and realises the seventy years of Israel's exile are nearly complete. Whilst praying about it, the angel Gabriel comes and gives Daniel a prophecy involving seventy weeks (which are seventy weeks of 360-day-years) representing Israel's destiny. The first 69 weeks are the period between Artaxerxes' decree to rebuild Jerusalem and Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. There follows a period of unknown length between the 69th and 70th weeks during which the Messiah is executed, Jerusalem is destroyed and the Diaspora follows. During the 70th week there will be a covenant enforced, interrupted half way through when an abomination will desolate the Holy Place. Then the great tribulation will begin which precedes the Messiah's second coming at the end of the 70th week.

In recognition of the excellent spirit that is in Daniel, Darius promotes him to be over all the presidents and princes in his kingdom, to the envy of Darius' officials who seek to be rid of him. A plan is contrived that results in Daniel being thrown in the lions' den. But in the morning Daniel is found safe. Darius then orders Daniel's accusers and their families to be cast into the den, then makes a decree that all are to fear the God of Daniel.

Daniel continues to prosper throughout the reigns of Darius and Cyrus, and sees some of his people return to Jerusalem by the decree of Cyrus.

Israel's Return

The temple is rebuilt [Ezra]

In Cyrus' first year of reign in Babylon, he makes a proclamation to permit the Israelites to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. Among the thousands who return is Ezra, a priest and descendant of Aaron.

The Samaritans, having been refused their offer to help, make trouble for the Israelites with the result that Artaxerxes commands the Israelites to stop their building work. Encouraged by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, the Israelites resume building the temple and Darius issues a fresh decree enabling the works to be completed over the next four years.

Having returned to Babylon at some point, Ezra, supported by a decree from Artaxerxes, along with the provision of finances, prepares to go to Jerusalem for a second time to teach and re-establish the priestly system of judges and God's laws. Israel is now able to return to her full way of spiritual life.

Many of the Israelites had married foreign wives, expressly forbidden by their law. Ezra is grieved and confesses their sins to God with shame and embarrassment. A proposal is made that those who have married foreign wives should divorce them and separate themselves from them and their children. Those who separate from their foreign wives and children are recorded in the book of Ezra.

The walls and gates are rebuilt [Nehemiah]

About eleven years after Ezra had gone to Jerusalem, its walls and gates are still in the same condition as when Nebuchadnezzar had left them. Artaxerxes gives Nehemiah, his cup bearer, permission to return to Jerusalem to rebuild them.

The walls and gates now being completed, Ezra reads the book of the law from a pulpit along with thirteen Levites.

Nehemiah governs Jerusalem for about twelve years before returning to the court of Artaxerxes in Babylon. Some time later he comes back to Jerusalem and has to adopt strong measures to deal with abuses that have arisen.

Extermination of the Jews prevented [Esther]

Looking back to the time during the exile, Ahasuerus, king of Persia, holds a great feast for all the dignitaries of his kingdom. Queen Vashti refuses his request to appear unveiled and is consequently deposed. A new queen is sought and twelve months later Esther is chosen. From her position as queen, she is able to foil a plot by Haman to exterminate the Israelites, resulting in Haman's execution.

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

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

The 'Silent' Years

foretold in Daniel chapter 11

The 400 year period between the old and new testaments is generally referred to as the 'silent years', the time during which God did not communicate with His people.

Following the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C., the Greek Empire is divided between four of his generals: Cassander, who

takes Macedonia and Greece; Lysimachus, who takes Asia Minor and Thrace; Seleucus, who takes the largest portion of Syria and Babylon; and Ptolemy, who takes Egypt, Arabia and Israel. Israel, being the northern extremity of Ptolemy's region, effectively becomes a buffer state between the south and the north and is caught up in the 150 years of incessant warfare between the two regions. These events are foretold in Daniel chapter 11.

In time, Antiochus Epiphanes, leader of the Seleucids, invades the Temple, defiling it by entering it and preventing sacrifices and offerings. The "abomination of desolation" is committed by Antiochus Epiphanes himself by placing an image of Jupiter Olympus on the altar of God and sacrificing a pig on it.

Over time, Antiochus had persuaded many Jews toward a more Hellenistic life, encouraged by apostate high priests. But there are those who held strong to the laws of God and resisted all the threats, tortures and death inflicted by Antiochus. Such a person is Mattathias Hasmoneas, whose deeds are to lead to an uprising known as the Maccabean revolt. The revolt of Mattathias and his sons gains much support and lasts from 167 to 160 B.C. It has its setbacks, but eventually brings about a period of peace and independence for the Jews. Nevertheless, there are to be deep divisions within the Hasmonean dynasty which will lead to its downfall, with the Jewish nation left to await a time appointed by God for their restoration.

The Story of Jesus

As told in the gospels.

Jesus' birth and early years

The angel Gabriel announces to Mary that she is to be the mother of Jesus, and that her cousin, Elizabeth, is pregnant with a boy whose name will be John (he will be John the Baptist). The angel of the Lord explains the circumstance of Mary's pregnancy to Joseph, alleviating any suspicions he has, enabling him to marry her.

A census requires Joseph and Mary to travel to Joseph's home town Bethlehem where Mary, because of lack of accommodation, has to give birth to Jesus in a stable. The birth is announced by an angel to some local shepherds who visit the child, then tell everyone they see what has happened.

Some time later a group of Magi arrives in Jerusalem. Following an audience with Herod, they are led by a star to where Joseph, Mary and Jesus are now staying. They worship the child and present him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the Magi head back east by a different route.

Joseph is told in a dream to go to Egypt to escape Herod as he is intending to have the child killed. Because the magi didn't return to him and tell him where Jesus is to be found, Herod has all the boys in Bethlehem of two years or younger killed, their age being according to the time when the Magi first saw the star appear.

When Herod dies, and because his son Archelaus is now on the throne, Joseph heads for the area of Galilee and settles in Nazareth. Here Jesus grows up, *and the Grace of God is upon Him.*

When Jesus is twelve years old he is taken by his parents to Jerusalem for Passover, but on their way back home they realise he is missing. Returning to Jerusalem, they find Jesus in the temple with the teachers, astonishing everyone with his understanding.

Jesus' baptism

Some eighteen years later, John is baptising people in the Jordan river when Jesus approaches and is baptised by him. The Spirit of God descends upon Jesus and God declares, *This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

Jesus then goes into the desert and fasts for forty days and nights, after which he is tempted by the Devil three times. In response to each temptation, Jesus declines and quotes from Deuteronomy. The Devil then leaves and angels come to minister to Jesus.

Jesus' ministry in Galilee

Having chosen Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathaneal to be amongst his disciples, Jesus returns to Galilee. At a marriage in Cana, he performs his first miracle when he turns water into wine.

After a short visit to Capernaum, Jesus goes to the Passover at Jerusalem where he confronts and expels the merchants from the temple, then covertly foretells his death and resurrection.

While Jesus is in Jerusalem, he performs some miracles resulting in many people beginning to believe in him. Here Jesus teaches Nicodemus that people must be born again to enter the kingdom of God.

Jesus now begins his journey back to Galilee and passes through Samaria. Outside the city he meets a woman at Jacob's well and converts her, followed by many from the city. Jesus then goes to his home town of Nazareth and afterwards to Cana where he

restores the health of a nobleman's son, leading to the conversion of all his household.

From there Jesus goes to Capernaum, which is to become his base whilst ministering in Galilee. He selects Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John to be included in his disciples. In the synagogue he heals a demon-possessed man, after which his fame spreads throughout Galilee. Multitudes come from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and beyond the Jordan to hear Jesus speak and to be healed.

Jesus goes up a mountain with the crowds following him. His disciples gather around then Jesus, specifically addressing his disciples, preaches the 'Sermon on the Mount', teaching them what it means to be a true follower of Christ.

As they are coming down from the mountainside, Jesus heals a man with leprosy, then in Capernaum he heals a Roman centurion's servant. At Peter and Andrew's house he cures their mother-in-law of a fever, then in the evening Jesus heals many, casting out demons.

Later, crossing a lake, a furious storm frightens the disciples, but is calmed by Jesus rebuking the winds and waves.

On the other side they are met by two demon-possessed men. Jesus rids the men of demons and permits the demons to enter some pigs, but the pigs then rush into the water and drown.

Back across the sea at Capernaum, Jesus tells a paralytic man his sins are forgiven before telling him to get up and walk, demonstrating to the scribes his Messianic authority.

It is after this that Matthew leaves his job as a tax collector to become one of Jesus' disciples.

When Jesus is on his way to a ruler's house where he raises his daughter back to life, a woman, who had been suffering from

bleeding for twelve years, touches Jesus' cloak and is immediately healed. After leaving the ruler's house, he is followed by two blind men whose sight he restores, and later, a demon-possessed mute is healed and is able to speak again.

It is at this point the Pharisees claim that Jesus is driving out demons with the authority of the Devil.

Because there are now a great number of people in need of his ministering, Jesus gathers his chosen twelve disciples and commissions them to go and preach, *the kingdom of heaven is at hand, but only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*. They are given authority to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead and to cast out demons.

Back in Galilee, Jesus confirms to two of John the Baptist's disciples that he is the Messiah. As they leave, he turns to the crowd and praises John the Baptist, then speaks against the cities where most of his good works had been done for not repenting, mentioning Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum by name.

Some time later, Jesus justifies to the Pharisees why his disciples should have plucked and eaten ears of corn on the Sabbath when hungry, then heals a man with a withered hand and again justifies his action.

Later, a blind and dumb man, possessed with a demon, is brought to Jesus and is completely healed by him. The people begin to recognise that this man might be the son of David. The Pharisees again accuse Jesus of casting out demons in the name of the Devil and ask Jesus for a sign. He again rebukes them and, referring to Jonah, covertly foretells his death and resurrection.

From a boat a little way offshore, Jesus speaks to the crowd in parables, referred to as the kingdom parables. They are the parables of the sower, the tares, the mustard seed, the leaven,

treasure hidden in a field, a pearl of great price and the dragnet.

Jesus then returns to Nazareth to teach in the synagogue, but the people question how the son of a carpenter could possibly attain such abilities. Because of their unbelief, Jesus no longer ministers in Nazareth.

Jesus withdraws from Galilee

Because of a rash promise during his birthday celebration, Herod the tetrarch had John the Baptist beheaded. He now fears that Jesus might be the Baptist risen from the dead.

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

Jesus tells his disciples to return across the sea then goes to pray alone. During the night, Jesus walks on the water to catch up with the disciples. Peter attempts to emulate Jesus, but lacks faith and has to be saved from sinking. The disciples then worship Jesus, acknowledging he is the Son of God.

Later, the Pharisees ask Jesus why his disciples do not go through the ritual required of washing their hands before they eat. Jesus rebukes them and later explains to his disciples that it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth, which is from the heart.

To Phoenicia

In the region of Tyre and Sidon, Jesus reluctantly heals a Gentile woman's daughter after first establishing her great faith.

On a mountainside by the Sea of Gaililee, great multitudes of

people come and many sick people are healed over a period of three days. Jesus then feeds four thousand men, besides women and children, again by the multiplication of food as with the five thousand.

At the coast of Magdala, Jesus warns his disciples to beware the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees, by which he means their doctrine.

To Caesarea Philippi

At the region of Caesarea Philippi, Peter acknowledges Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. From this point on, Jesus begins 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 witness Jesus' transfiguration and meeting with Moses and Elijah. The three are told by Jesus not to mention what they have seen to anyone until after his resurrection.

Soon after, Jesus heals a man's son who is possessed, but who the disciples were not previously able to heal. Jesus tells them that this kind of exorcism would have required prayer and fasting.

Jesus' last ministry in Galilee

Jesus again tells his disciples how he will be betrayed and killed, but will rise again on the third day.

At Capernaum, Jesus avoids causing offence concerning payment of taxes by miraculously providing tribute money from the mouth of a fish caught by Peter.

Jesus encourages humility amongst his disciples, then gives instruction on how to deal with unrepentant sinners.

He then emphasises the extent to which forgiveness should be

exercised by the parable of the unforgiving servant.

In Judea

Now in the area of Judea, when the Pharisees question Jesus concerning divorce he quotes Genesis (2:24), upholding God's institute of marriage.

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

The parable of The Good Samaritan is given as an example of what is meant by loving your neighbour.

On an occasion when Jesus is at Martha's house, Martha complains that her sister is spending time sitting at his feet leaving her to do the work. He tells Martha that Mary is right to take the opportunity to care for her soul rather than the things of this world.

Asked by one of his disciples, Jesus teaches them to pray, encouraging them to always 'ask, seek and knock' through prayer.

Jesus later casts out a demon and warns it is possible for a person to be repossessed to a greater degree if precautions are not taken once cleansed. In response to a woman saying how blessed his mother is, Jesus tells the crowd that people are most blessed when they hear the word of God and keep it.

Jesus again condemns the Pharisees for their hypocrisy, pronouncing woes against the Pharisees and the lawyers in his condemnation.

When a large crowd has gathered, Jesus turns to his disciples and again warns them against *the leaven of the Pharisees*. He also warns them against reticence in professing the gospel, in blaspheming against the Holy Spirit and covertness, teaching his disciples to first seek the kingdom of God and live in dependence

on him. Another parable warns them they will not know the hour when he will return, but meanwhile they are to expect trouble and persecution because of their faith.

Jesus then speaks to all the people warning them to be prepared in time for the judgement to come, emphasises the necessity of repentance, then using the parable of the fig tree he teaches the importance of bearing fruit in one's life.

Later, in a synagogue on the Sabbath, Jesus heals a woman who has been afflicted for eighteen years, then puts to shame the ruler of the Synagogue for his indignation that this healing work was done on the Sabbath. He then repeats the parables of the mustard seed and the yeast to warn against false teaching in the church.

In and around Perea

Continuing his journey towards Jerusalem, passing through Perea, Jesus emphasises the importance of really knowing him, is defiant toward Herod's murderous intentions towards him, then foretells his death at Jerusalem and pronounces judgements on that city.

In response to the Pharisees continuing criticism when Jesus heals on the Sabbath, he places emphasis on the need for humility and charity, and not the things of the world.

Later, when a great number of people are with him, Jesus warns of the need to give serious consideration to the personal consequences of discipleship.

The parables of the lost sheep, the lost silver, the prodigal son and the shrewd manager cause offence to the Pharisees who Jesus then rebukes, relating a parable about the fate of the rich man and Lazarus, warning against covetousness and lack of compassion.

Jesus teaches his disciples to take care not to give offence, to readily forgive offences against them, to keep increasing their

faith, and exercise humility in their service to God.

Passing through Samaria and Galilee, ten lepers are cleansed, but only one, notably a Samaritan, gives thanks and glorifies God.

Jesus tells his disciples about the coming of the kingdom of God and how it will be at an unexpected time. Meanwhile, fervency in prayer and an attitude of humility are essential.

Some little children are brought to Jesus for a blessing. Then a rich young man is disappointed by Jesus' suggestion he should give up his wealth to follow him, indicating how much more difficult it might be for a rich man to enter the kingdom. Peter is told by Jesus that, having given up everything to follow him, the disciples will be sitting on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Anyone who surrenders family or possessions for Jesus' sake will receive much more and inherit eternal life, which is available even to those who come to him very late in life.

Jesus again tells his disciples he will be betrayed, is to suffer and be killed, but will be resurrected on the third day. He then reminds his disciples that they, like him, should not expect to be served but should serve others.

When leaving Jericho, two blind men's sight is restored and they join the others and follow Jesus.

The triumphal entry

Jesus finally arrives at Jerusalem and makes his triumphal entry on a colt with many crying out *Hosanna to the Son of David*. He then goes to the temple Court of the Gentiles creating havoc with those selling animals for sacrifice, and overturns the moneychangers' tables. The blind and lame are brought to the temple and are all healed by Jesus, to the considerable displeasure of the chief priests and scribes. Jesus then stays the night at Bethany.

The next morning, Jesus curses a fig tree causing it to wither. He tells his disciples that they will be able to do much more than this if they ask in prayer and believe.

At the temple, Jesus has exchanges with the chief priests, elders, theirs and the Herodian's disciples, the Sadducees and the Pharisees. He confounds them all with his responses to their attempts at entrapment to the extent they dare not challenge him again. Jesus then berates the scribes and Pharisees' hypocrisy as religious leaders, prophesies the destruction of the temple, then tells the Jews they will not see him again until they acknowledge him as the Messiah.

On the Mount of Olives, Jesus warns his disciples they will be persecuted, predicts the fall of Jerusalem, and teaches about his second coming when there will be a judgement of mankind, but tells that the hour of his coming will not not be known. In the meantime, they must bear fruit for the kingdom and always be prepared for his coming.

Meanwhile, the chief priests, scribes and elders have assembled before the high priest Caiaphas to discuss how they might kill Jesus, but avoiding doing so on the feast day.

At Simon the leper's house, Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus (who Jesus had earlier raised from death) anoints Jesus' feet. Judas then goes to make an arrangement with the chief priests to deliver Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.

In the evening, Jesus tells them one of them will betray him. He breaks bread and shares a cup of wine, initiating communion in remembrance of him. Later, on the Mount of Olives, Peter is told he will deny Jesus three times before the cock crows.

At Gethsemane, Jesus prays three times whilst Peter, James and John fall asleep waiting for him. Each time he asks his Father if

there is another way remission of sins can be accomplished, but there is not. Then Judas arrives, betrays Jesus with a kiss and the disciples scatter whilst Jesus is taken to Caiaphas to be tried. Peter follows and sits amongst the servants.

Jesus' trial, death and resurrection

At his trial, no testimony is given sufficient to condemn Jesus. He doesn't answer any accusations, but when asked under oath has to admit he is the Christ, the Son of God, enabling those assembled to claim he has blasphemed and can be condemned to death. He is spat on and abused. Peter denies knowing him three times before the cock crows, then leaves and weeps bitterly. Judas, having betrayed innocent blood, unsuccessfully attempts to return the thirty pieces of silver.

The Jews, having had no authority to execute anyone for some years now, take Jesus before Pilate, but Pilate is unable to find anything against Jesus according to Roman law. Fearing the mood of the people, he allows them to choose Barabbas to be released and Jesus to be crucified. Pilate publicly washes his hands of the matter before handing him over to be scourged and mocked, then led away to be crucified at Golgotha between two thieves. When Jesus gives up his spirit, the temple veil is torn from top to bottom and the earth quakes.

In the evening, Pilate allows Joseph of Arimathaea to take Jesus' body. Joseph wraps Jesus in a clean linen cloth, lays him in his own sepulchre and rolls a great stone in front of it.

On the Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother of James) and Salome go to the sepulchre where they are greeted by an angel and told that Jesus has risen. They run and tell the disciples what they have seen, then Peter and John run to the

sepulchre to see for themselves.

That same day, Jesus appears to two disciples on their way to Emmaus and explains how the scriptures had foretold all that had happened, but they don't realise it is Jesus until they are all eating together. He then vanishes from their sight.

Jesus then appears to his disciples, but Thomas isn't there and doesn't believe he has risen until eight days later when he appears to them all.

Later, the eleven disciples go to Galilee where Jesus meets them for the last time. Here he commissions them to go and *teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit* before ascending to heaven.

The Early Church

as told in the Acts of the Apostles

The beginnings of the church

When all the disciples are gathered together, about one hundred and twenty in all, Peter recalls the fate of Judas and the need to replace him to restore the number of apostles to twelve. Through prayerful casting of lots, Matthias is chosen and becomes the twelfth apostle.

On the day of Pentecost all the disciples are gathered together, are filled with the Holy Spirit and begin to speak in tongues. Peter addresses the crowd, telling them how Joel prophesied the event they are witnessing, then preaches Jesus as the true Messiah, after which about three thousand souls become believers.

The apostles go on to preach daily, healing the sick, casting out demons and converting many. The fellowship of believers begins

to grow and many of them sell their possessions, sharing what they have with the needy amongst them.

One day, when Peter and John go to the temple to pray, they are confronted by a man who has been lame from birth and heal him. Peter explains to onlookers how the man was healed through the power of Jesus, and calls them to repentance. Many are converted, making the number of believers now around five thousand. Because they are preaching the resurrection, which the Sadducees do not believe in, Peter and John are arrested. Next day they appear before the Sanhedrin to whom they answer defiantly and are threatened by them. Returning to the brethren, they give thanks to God and are again filled with the Holy Spirit, enabling them all to continue to witness with boldness.

Among those selling their possessions for the needy are Ananias and his wife Sapphira, but they are deceitful in their giving, which is considered to be an offence against God. They are separately rebuked by Peter then struck dead by the Holy Spirit, bringing fear to the whole church.

The apostles' working of many miracles angers the Jewish rulers - primarily Sadducees - who imprison them, only to be later freed by an angel. After being rearrested the next morning, they are then released on the advice of Gamaliel, but are first beaten and warned against further preaching. They leave, rejoicing in their persecution and continue to preach in defiance.

Stephen and his martyrdom

The church has now grown so much that it becomes necessary to appoint seven deacons to assist the apostles. One of these is Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit. Stephen preaches in the synagogue where none are able to overcome his wisdom

and teaching. He is falsely accused of blaspheming and is brought before the Sanhedrin. During his lengthy defence he is interrupted, taken outside and stoned while a young man named Saul looks on.

A great persecution of the church follows in which Saul plays a major roll. With the exception of the apostles, the church is scattered abroad.

Philip's ministry

Philip, another of the chosen seven, preaches in Samaria, healing the sick and casting out demons. Among those baptised is Simon, a sorcerer.

Peter and John are sent to Samaria by the apostles at Jerusalem to investigate. They confirm the converted with prayer and the laying on of hands, and the Holy Spirit comes upon them. Simon the sorcerer offers money for the ability to confer the Holy Spirit, but is rebuked by Peter and repents.

Peter and John continue to preach in the villages of Samaria a while before returning to Jerusalem.

Instructed by an angel, Philip then travels towards Gaza where he preaches the Gospel to an Ethiopian eunuch, then baptises him in nearby water.

The Spirit of God then carries Philip to Azotus where he preaches there and in all the cities until he comes to Caesarea.

Saul's conversion

During his zealous persecution of the church, Saul, the notable witness at Stephen's stoning, is challenged by Jesus on the way to Damascus and converted. He loses his sight and spends three days without food or drink before his sight is restored by Ananias,

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

Saul now preaches Christ, but his life is threatened by the Jews and he escapes and goes to Jerusalem. After initial concerns because of Saul's reputation, the disciples' minds are put to rest when Barnabas confirms his conversion. However, the Hellenistic Jews are unconvinced and plan to kill him, so he flees and returns to his home at Tarsus.

Peter's ministry

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

Peter goes to Lydda where he heals 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, Peter raises Tabitha from death, bringing about the conversion of many at Joppa.

Peter stays at Joppa for many days, during which time an angel tells a centurion at Ceasarea, called Cornelius, to send men to Joppa to fetch Peter. The next morning, while they are travelling, Peter has a dream of a sheet being lowered with all kinds of animals in it, both clean and unclean, which he is instructed to kill and eat. This happens three times before the men sent by Cornelius arrive to deliver their message. Next morning they return to Ceasarea, accompanied by Peter who takes six men with him as witnesses. There, inspired by his dream, Peter preaches Christ to Cornelius and his friends. The Holy Spirit descends on them all, after which they speak in tongues and praise God to the astonishment of the witnessing Jews. Peter has them baptised and agrees to stay with them for a few days.

When Peter returns to Jerusalem, he gives an account to the brethren of all that happened. They then glorify God for having granted repentance and eternal life to the Gentiles.

Paul's Ministry

The church at Antioch

Hearing that the Gospel is preached to the Gentiles at Antioch, the Jerusalem church send Barnabas who, confirming their faith, decides to fetch Saul from Tarsus. The two spend a year together in Antioch teaching people about Christ. It is here that converts are first called Christians.

A prophet from Jerusalem foretells a great famine in Judea. In response, a collection is made for the brethren there and delivered by Barnabas and Saul.

Herod Agrippa begins to persecute the church and kills John's brother, James. He then imprisons Peter, but he is later freed by an angel. Herod makes a speech to the people in his royal apparel and receives praise as if he is a god. He is consequently smitten by the angel of the Lord and dies a miserable death.

Having delivered the offerings raised by the church at Antioch, Barnabas and Saul return from Jerusalem, bringing with them John Mark, Barnabas' nephew.

Paul's first missionary journey

Through prayer and fasting, the Holy Spirit appoints Saul and Barnabas from among the teachers at Antioch to go and preach to the Gentiles. They leave Antioch, taking John Mark with them, and travel to Cyprus. Elymas, a Jewish sorcerer, opposes them and is struck blind by Saul, now called Paul, bringing about the conversion of Sergius the deputy.

Paul and his company leave Paphos and sail north to Perga in

Pamphylia. At this point, John Mark decides to leave them and Paul and Barnabas continue north to Antioch in Pisidia without him. Here Paul preaches that Jesus is the Christ, as he does in Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, all the while meeting with opposition from the Jews, including inciting the stoning of Paul at Lystra. They then retrace their steps through Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, confirming the disciples and ordaining elders in every church. They also preach the word in Perga, returning to Antioch where they now remain for a long time.

A dispute arises because some Jewish preachers are insisting that converts should be circumcised and follow Moses' law. Paul and Barnabas refer the problem to the elders at Jerusalem with James, Jesus' brother, now a leader at Jerusalem, responding with a requirement that the only burden to be placed on the Gentiles is that they *abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication*. A letter is written to be dispersed among the churches informing them of the decision.

Paul's second missionary journey

Paul now chooses to revisit the churches planted during his first missionary journey. However, he refuses to take Mark with him, taking Silas in his place and leaving Barnabas and Mark to go their own way. He first travels to the churches at Derbe and Lystra, and then Iconium where Timothy, respected amongst the churches, is invited to join them. After travelling on through Asia Minor to Troas, Paul is directed by a vision to cross the sea to Macedonia. It's at Troas that Paul is joined by Luke before making the crossing. Paul preaches at Philippi where Lydia is converted and offers them her hospitality. A sorceress, who had been bringing her masters much gain by soothsaying, is cleansed of an evil spirit

by Paul. Her masters' loss results in Paul and Silas being beaten and thrown in prison, only to be liberated by divine intervention. Their release leads to the conversion and baptism of the prison keeper and his household. Having declared he is a Roman citizen, and unlawfully treated, the magistrates are forced to personally oversee their release, but they then have to leave the area, taking Timothy with them but leaving Luke in Philippi.

Churches are planted at Thessalonica and Berea, although not without opposition from the Jews who incite a mob at both locations. Paul has to leave and travels to Athens accompanied by some brethren, but without Silas and Timothy who stay at Berea. The brethren return to Berea with a message for Silas and Timothy to join Paul as soon as possible.

Paul opposes idolatry at Athens and gains some converts before moving on to Corinth. Here he meets Aquila and Priscilla who invite him to stay with them. Encouraged by Silas and Timothy now joining him, he teaches to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ, but is opposed and so turns his attention to the Gentiles. Paul has a dream one night in which he is greatly encouraged by God, and consequently remains in Corinth for eighteen months. It is during his time at Corinth that Paul writes his epistles to the Thessalonians, and perhaps the Galatians.

The Jews rise against Paul and take him before the deputy Gallio, accusing him of persuading *men to worship God contrary to the law*. This attempt to have him convicted fails when Gallio dismisses it as solely a Jewish concern.

Some time after this, Paul takes his leave of the brethren at Corinth and sails to Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila as far as Ephesus. From Ephesus he goes to Jerusalem for Passover before returning to Antioch.

Paul's third missionary journey

After spending some time back at Antioch, Paul again leaves and travels through Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

Meantime, Apollos goes to the church at Corinth where they receive letters of commendation concerning him from Ephesus. Here at Corinth, Apollos teaches in the synagogue, converting many Jews to Christ.

While Apollos is at Corinth, Paul arrives at Ephesus where he preaches in the synagogues for three months, but many oppose him and he leaves the synagogue, spending the next two years preaching *daily in the school of one Tyrannus*. From here, the news of the gospel spreads to both Jews and Gentiles throughout Asia.

Demetrius, a silversmith and maker of silver shrines for the goddess Diana, his livelihood now under threat, incites a demonstration against Paul, but the town clerk intervenes and the crowd is appeased.

It is at Ephesus that Paul writes his epistles to the Corinthians.

Paul then travels through Macedonia, preaching along the way, and on to Greece where he spends three months before intending to sail to Syria. It is probably during this time in Greece that Paul writes to the Romans. Hearing that Jews would be laying in wait for him, he returns back through Macedonia accompanied by several companions. They then go ahead of him to Troas while Paul waits until he is joined by Luke. Paul and Luke then sail from Philippi and catch up with the brethren at Troas where they stay for seven days.

Paul then leaves for Athos by land while Luke and his companions go by sea, meeting with Paul at Athos from where they all travel together to Mitylene, eventually arriving at Miletus.

Here Paul sends for the Ephesian church elders to say his last farewell to them before a sorrowful departure by ship to Caesarea. Travelling with his companions, and heading for Jerusalem, they stay at Tyre, Ptolemais and Caesarea along the way. Paul is warned twice not to travel on to Jerusalem where trouble lays ahead for him, but he insists he must go, saying he is prepared to die there for the name of the Lord Jesus.

They eventually arrive at Jerusalem where they lodge with a disciple Mnason.

Paul's arrest and trial in Jerusalem & Caesarea

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

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

After two years, Festus replaces Felix who asks Paul if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem to be tried. He refuses and appeals to Caesar as is his right as a Roman citizen. Following later hearings before Agrippa, Festus and Agrippa agree that Paul could have been set free, but having appealed to Caesar, then to Caesar he must go.

To Rome and house arrest

Following a perilous voyage, Paul and his company are shipwrecked on the Isle of Melita (Malta) where Paul, having healed the governor's sick father, stays for three months. They then set off again and Paul finally arrives at Rome where he is

delivered to the captain of the guard.

Paul is placed under house arrest where he remains for two years. During this time he is able to preach the Gospel unhindered to all who come to him. He also writes his epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians and Philippians, and possibly his letter to Philemon.

From his pastoral letters to Timothy and Titus, we learn that Paul was released from prison. He was later imprisoned again and wrote his second, and final letter, to Timothy.

Revelation

Whilst exiled on the isle of Patmos, John, the disciple Jesus loved, writes a revelation of Jesus Christ, given to Jesus by God, and given to John by an angel. The revelation is to show things that are to come to pass. We are told that anyone who reads this revelation, or hears it read, will be blessed.

John first sees a vision of Christ and is instructed to write to seven churches.

Letters to the seven churches

The seven churches are: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. Each letter is introduced as being from Christ, and each letter is a critique of that church's spiritual condition. It is considered by some that these churches are also representative of churches through the ages to the present day.

Two of these churches, Smyrna and Philadelphia, have nothing bad said against them; two of them, Sardis and Laodicea, have nothing good said about them. All churches are given a promise to overcomers.

John is called to be shown the things that will happen in the future. He sees the throne of God, but is not able to see God, only the glory emanating from it. He also sees 24 elders and four 'beasts', all worshipping and praising God, who created all things for His pleasure.

The Seven Seals

John sees a scroll in God's right hand, written on both sides and having seven seals that only Jesus is qualified to open.

Jesus begins to open the seals. From the first four seals come four horses with riders, generally known as the 'four horsemen of the apocalypse'. These represent the antichrist, wars, famine and death.

With the opening of the fifth seal the souls of martyrs cry out for vengeance, but they are told they must be patient.

With the sixth seal there follows earthly and cosmic devastation announcing the great day of the wrath of the lamb.

After the first six seals have been opened, there is a pause until God's servants have been sealed. Those to be sealed number 144,000, consisting of 12,000 from each tribe of Israel. John then sees a great multitude from all nations, having overcome the great tribulation to be with Christ.

The seventh seal is now opened followed by a period of silence. The seventh seal releases seven angels with their trumpets that will announce judgements on man. But before the trumpets are sounded, another angel offers the prayers of all the saints with incense, then fills his censer with the fire of the altar and casts it to earth.

The seven trumpets

These are the judgements announced with the first four trumpets: a burning up of a third of the trees and all the grass; the killing of a third of life in the sea and destroying a third of all ships; a third part of the rivers become wormwood and many die from its bitterness; a third part of the sun, moon and stars are hidden.

Then an angel proclaims three woes, warning that, although the first four trumpets heralded severe events, worse is to come from the remaining three.

Following the fifth trumpet, the first woe is the release of smoke from a bottomless pit which darkens the sky, and the release of locusts which are to torment those who do not have the seal of God on their forehead. This torment is to last for a period of five months with no relief.

When the sixth angel blows his trumpet, four of Satan's angels command a vast army that will slay a third part of all men during a specified period of time. Despite this judgement, the survivors do not repent of their sins.

A mighty angel gives John a little book to digest and makes a solemn oath that the mystery of God, as declared by His prophets, would be finished at the beginning of the seventh trumpet.

Two witnesses will prophesy for three and a half years during which time no rain will fall on the earth. The witnesses have the power to smite the earth with plagues as they see fit, all the while being protected from any who try to kill them.

When the three and a half years is over they will be killed, only to be resurrected after a short period of time and to ascend to heaven. At the same time there will be a great earthquake destroying a tenth of the city and killing seven thousand men, bringing fear on the remnant who will then give glory to God.

This is the second woe, the third is to quickly follow.

The seventh trumpet is sounded heralding the coming of the third woe. Voices in heaven announce the kingdoms of the world are now Christ's, and he is to reign for ever. Thanks are given for the victory that has come, for the judgement that will follow and rewards given to his prophets and saints that feared him, and for the pending destruction of the Antichrist and his followers.

The temple of God in heaven is opened, the ark of the covenant is seen in the temple and there are *lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.*

The woman and the dragon

John now sees a vision of a woman [Israel] and a dragon [Satan]. The woman is pregnant and the dragon stands before her ready to devour her child. She bares a son [Jesus], who is taken up to God and to His throne, then flees to the wilderness where she is to remain and be fed for three and a half years. Then a war is fought in heaven between Michael and his angels and Satan and his angels, with Michael prevailing and Satan and his angels being cast out of heaven. A warning is given to the inhabitants of the earth that the wrath of Satan is to come because he only has a short time left. Satan persecutes the woman and makes war with the remnant of her seed who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

The two beasts

A beast arises out of the sea, given authority and power by Satan. This beast has a deadly wound, yet survives it, causing the world to worship Satan and the beast. For three and a half years this beast will blaspheme against God, make war with the saints and be

victorious over them. Yet the saints are encouraged to be faithful and patient.

Then a beast arises out of the earth, being like a lamb, but speaking as a dragon, exercising all the power of the first beast and deceiving the world with miracles. He instructs an image of the first beast to be made that everyone must worship or be killed. Everyone is to receive a mark of the beast on their right hand or forehead, without which they will not be able to buy or sell anything. The number of the beast, the number of a man, is given as 666.

The joy of the redeemed and the harvest

John now sees Jesus with the 144,000, the first-fruits through Jesus, having his Father's name written on their foreheads. They sing a song that only they are able to sing, having been redeemed from the earth and having no blemish. Then he sees an angel preaching to everyone on earth, calling them to fear God and worship Him, for the hour of judgement has come. This angel is followed by another announcing Babylon has fallen because of her fornication. Then a third angel is seen, warning that anyone who receives the mark of the beast would receive the full wrath of God.

The patience of the saints will be tried and the overcomers rewarded.

John now sees a vision of Jesus reaping the earth and gathering the redeemed. Another angel is called to gather the wicked who are then to face divine wrath.

The seven bowls

The seven bowls of God's wrath are now to be poured on the earth.

The first is poured upon the land, punishing those who have the mark of the beast and have worshipped his image.

The second is poured upon the sea, turning it to blood and killing every living creature in it.

The third is poured upon the rivers and fountains of water, which also becomes blood so that those who killed the prophets and saints should have to drink it.

The fourth is poured upon the sun, causing men to be scorched with fire, for which they blaspheme God and do not repent.

The fifth is poured upon the seat of the beast, and his kingdom becomes full of darkness, causing great anguish, but no repentance.

The sixth is poured on the river Euphrates, causing it to dry up to prepare the way for the kings of the east.

Between the pouring of the sixth and seventh bowl is the battle of Armageddon.

The seventh bowl is poured into the air and a great voice from the throne in the temple of heaven announces *It is done*. There are voices, thunders and lightnings, and the greatest earthquake ever seen, dividing Babylon into three. Then there is a great hail with stones as heavy as a talent, causing men to blaspheme God because of it, and still they do not repent.

God's final triumph

The Woman and the Beast

An angel comes to invite John to see the judgement of the great whore, Babylon, who is the source and epitome of fornication. She is riding a beast, who is the devil risen from the bottomless pit and who will make war with the Lamb, but will be defeated. Many will turn against her and come to hate her, according to God's will to fulfil prophecy.

The Fall of Babylon

Another angel comes and announces that Babylon the great has fallen, having become the habitation of everything evil, where nations and kings had committed fornication with her.

Another voice is heard calling His people to come out of Babylon and not be partaker of her sins, but to take full vengeance on her because she has glorified herself and felt secure. Plagues will come on her in one day and she will suffer death, mourning and famine, and will be utterly burned by fire. All had benefited from her greatness and riches, but they have all now come to nought within the space of one hour.

God's people are called to rejoice, for God has now taken vengeance on her.

The hallelujah and the wedding feast

There follows a great rejoicing in heaven for the triumph over Babylon. The voice of a great multitude is then heard calling one another to be glad and rejoice, for the time of the Lamb's marriage with his bride, the church, has come. His wife, having made herself ready, is dressed in white linen, the linen depicting the righteousness of the saints.

Christ victorious

John sees heaven open and Jesus riding on a white horse to judge and make war, followed by his armies in heaven, also on white horses.

The beast, kings of the earth and their armies, then gather to make war against Jesus and his army. They are defeated and the beast and his prophet are both cast into the lake of fire, and the kings and their armies are slain to the rejoicing of the righteous.

The Thousand Years and the last judgement

Satan is bound for a thousand years so that he is unable to deceive the nations. During this time the church sits on thrones to judge with Jesus, as do the saints who had been martyred and had not received the mark of the beast or worshipped him. This is described as the first resurrection. The rest of the dead will not be raised until the thousand years are complete.

When the thousand years are up, Satan is released to deceive the nations. The number deceived is great and are gathered to do battle, but are defeated. Satan is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet are, and will be tormented day and night forever.

All the dead, small and great, now stand before God to be judged according to their works.

Death and hell are cast into the lake of fire, as are those whose name is not found written in the book of life. This is the second death.

God's new world

John now sees the new heaven and the new earth in which there is no more sea, and in which there is no tabernacle, as God will now dwell amongst His people.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

Jesus then declares the work is done.

John is shown the new Jerusalem and observes there is no temple within, as God and the Lamb are its temple. There is no sun or moon as the glory of God and the lamb are its light, and the gates are not shut as there is no night. Everything within it is pure and

nothing can enter that might defile it.

John sees a pure river of water of life coming from the throne of God and the Lamb, with the tree of life that bears twelve fruits, yielding a fruit every month, and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

The angel tells John that all the visions he has seen are faithful and true, and that the Lord God had sent His angel to reveal these things to him.

John is told to reveal all that he has seen. Jesus tells John he will come quickly, with his reward to be given to every man according to his works, and confirms John has been given these visions to testify to the churches.

Epilogue

My hope is that this book has served as encouragement to look further into God's Word, either through personal reading and study or in a Bible study group. Please use Bible commentaries to help with your understanding, and do use more than one version of the Bible. Your choice will be personal, but there may be people who disagree with you as there is much debate in this area. If you are in a Bible study group, be guided by them initially, but not necessarily limited by them.

If you would prefer to first go a little deeper using a Bible précis, then you are encouraged to explore 'The Bible in a Day' available at easybible.net

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