The Books of Scripture at a Glance

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I created these notes while I taught through each book of the Bible, each book in a session of about 30 minutes. I am accustomed to long serial expositions of a book that take months or even a year to two years. During 2025-2026, I wanted to review each Bible book with our church but only take a single message doing so. This would help us to grasp the big picture of the book and introduce us to the entire Bible without taking years to do so. Following are the notes that I used to do this. Each book has three to four pages and each follows the same outline, with a summary of the book and its message, a list of key verses, some doctrines contained in the book, literary features, date of writing, related Bible verses, the outline, and then some practical applications from the book.

Genesis

Summary and Message

Genesis is the book of the beginning of all things. It records that God created the world and all things in it. Genesis records a summation of the early history of humanity including its initial failure to follow God, and its large-scale sinful behavior that led to the catastrophic judgment of the global flood. Genesis explains the origin of the nations, languages, and the Hebrew people. Minor focus is placed upon the early history of the Ishmaelites and Edomites. It sets the stage for Exodus by explaining how Israel came to be living in Egypt.

Key Verses

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.[1]

Genesis 1:28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Genesis 6:5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.

Genesis 8:22 “While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease.”

Genesis 9:6 “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed; or in the image of God e made man.”

Genesis 11:9 Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

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[1] All Scripture is quoted from the New King James Version.

Genesis 12:1-3 Now the LORD had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. 2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Genesis 15:6 And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

Genesis 50:20 “But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive.”

Doctrine

As the book of beginnings, Genesis introduces us to the doctrines of God, man, sin, angels, Satan, creation, the Holy Spirit, Israel, and salvation.

Literary Features

Most of the book is in narrative form, with some reported speech in poetic form. There is a debate amongst theologians as to the form of Genesis 1-2. Some claim it is “elevated narrative” or “exalted prose” or even poetic. It is clearly a narration of events. The “elevation” has to do with the events described in the text. Assigning the text a genre other than narrative makes it easier to dismiss the text as myth or legend or as some other non-literal expression of the events.

The text is carefully arranged and organized according to the major sections shown in the outline below. It is clearly aiming for an understanding of the birth of the nation of Israel, which will lay the foundation for the remainder of the Old Testament and really for the entire Bible.

Date Written and Timeline

Conservative theologians understand that Moses was the author of the first five books of the Bible, called the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). As such, Genesis was probably written between 1445 to 1405 B.C.

The remainder of the Bible affirms Mosaic authorship: 2 Kings 14:6, Daniel 9:11, Mark 12:26, Matthew 19:8, among many other passages. This makes sense because Moses was highly educated (Acts 7:22).

Before the events of Genesis, there was no history. There is no such thing as “pre-historic” in the sense that Genesis covers the earliest period of history in broad strokes. Although there are no contemporaneous human written records, Moses had access to not only oral traditions but to God’s special revelation to ensure his record was accurate.

Technically, historians classify pre-history as that period of human existence before written records exist. That would take us back before the development of writing “technology” around 3300 B.C. Keep in mind that verified artifacts may be later than the actual development of the writing system, assuming that earlier artifacts have been destroyed by the ravages of time.

Related Scriptures

A very interesting connection to the remainder of Scripture is the one that concerns Melchizedek. He appears very briefly in Genesis 14:18-20, and then in Psalm 110:4 and Hebrews 5-7. Those are the only mentions of this enigmatic character.

The remainder of the Bible references, quotes, alludes to, or is based on Genesis. The connections are too numerous to list.

Outline

The key term for outlining the book is “history” or “generations.” It occurs 13 times in the book and divides Genesis into 10 major sections. The outline below reflects these sections by using the word “History” in each outline point. The three “extra” references to the word “generations” are found in the middle of their respective sections at 10:32, 25:13, and 36:9. The first 11 chapters concern ancient history. The remaining chapters concern the history of the patriarchs of Israel.

1. Creation, 1:1-2:3
2. History of Creation through the Fall and Cain and Abel, 2:4-4:26
3. History of Adam’s family through the spread of evil, 5:1-6:8
4. History of Noah through the flood, 6:9-9:29
5. History of Noah’s Sons, Table of Nations, Tower of Babel, 10:1-11:9
6. History of Shem’s family to Terah, 11:10-11:26
7. History of Terah’s family through Abraham, 11:27-25:11
8. History of Ishmael’s family, 25:12-18
9. History of Isaac’s family, account of Jacob, 25:19-35:29
10. History of Esau’s family, the Edomites, 36:1-36:43
11. History of Jacob’s family, Joseph, and travel to Egypt, 37:1-50:26

Lessons

We learn from Genesis:

1. The deep impact of sin on our world. Man was intended to share a relationship with God, as Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden. But sin separated Adam and Eve from God, and continues to separate humanity from Him. It resulted in death and all kinds of other disasters.

2. The foreshadowing of a coming salvation in the first gospel (Gen. 3:15), God’s provision of a substitutionary sacrifice for Isaac.

3. The wrath of God against sin in the Flood and at Sodom and Gomorrah.

4. The people of God worshipped Him. We see this in Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and Melchizedek.

5. The effect of worldly influences. For example, Lot choose Sodom while Abraham graciously took the leftover region. Some of Lot's family was destroyed with the others in the city; his wife was drawn back to that place as well and she was destroyed.

6. The providential care of God in the life of Joseph, and how God uses trials to shape a man for His service.

7. The power of trusting God's sovereignty and of forgiveness toward those who meant evil.

Exodus

Summary and Message

The book of Exodus is a narration of events from roughly Moses's birth until around his 80th year when he led the people of Israel out of Egypt. The book describes Israel's circumstances in Egypt, their departure from Egypt, and the beginning of their time at Mount Sinai where they received various instructions from God including how to build the tabernacle as their place of worship.

Key Verses

Exodus 3:14 And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.' "

Exodus 4:11 So the Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? *Have* not I, the Lord? 12 Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say."

Exodus 5:1 Afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.' "

Exodus 14:13-14 And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."

Exodus 19:5-6 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth *is* Mine. 6 And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These *are* the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

Exodus 20:3-17 records the 10 Commandments, which I will not replicate here for space.

Exodus 31:16-17 Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations *as* a perpetual covenant. 17 It *is* a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for *in* six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.' "

Doctrine

A key doctrine in Exodus is the sovereignty of God, which is "The biblical teaching that God is king, supreme ruler, and lawgiver of the entire universe" (Elwell, p. 1131). Sovereignty is an attribute of God, inherent in God's being. It is connected to His decree and its accomplishment (Eph. 1:11) as well as to His omnipotence because nothing is too hard for Him to do or, thus, to rule over (Jer. 32:17). In short, God rules over everything. He made it, He has power over it, He can destroy it, He can prosper it, guide it, etc.

God exercised His power over the world's superpower at the time, Egypt, when He destroyed that nation with the plagues in order to free His people from bondage.

Another key doctrine in Exodus is the holiness of God. This means that God is completely sinless and separate from sin. From Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:5) to the holy garments on Aaron suitable for priestly ministry (Exodus 40:13), the word *holy* is used over four dozen times in the book. The idea permeates the book.

Another key Bible teaching we find in Exodus is that God is faithful to His promises. In Genesis He told Abraham that his descendants would be oppressed for four centuries in a foreign land and then God would deliver them (Genesis 15:13-14, Acts 7:6). This indeed occurred just as God had said.

We see once again the perversity of human nature throughout the book of Exodus as we read of the people's many complaints against God, and particularly when Moses was absent for a while and the people began to worship a gold calf (Exodus 32).

The doctrine of election is controversial. But the text shows that God chosen Israel to be a special people for Himself (Exodus 4:22, 19:5-6). This does not mean there are not other "people of God" or that Israel are better or more human than others, but there is this particular nation for which God has special plans. Through them God has given the Law, and promises, and the temple service, and from them comes the Messiah (Romans 9:4-5).

Literary Features

Exodus is narrative in form. Chapter 15 records the Son of Moses which is written in poetic form. In later chapters, there are very detailed building plans for the Tabernacle with dimensions and many other specifics.

Date Written and Timeline

Like Genesis, Exodus was penned by Moses with God's superintendence. He wrote after the events occurred in 1445 B.C. but before he died around 1405 B.C. The many references to the "Law of Moses" in the New Testament as well as the Old Testament attest to the fact that Moses was the author (Luke 2:22, 24:44, John 1:45, 7:19, 7:23, Acts 13:39, 15:5…). Exodus portrays the writing to be roughly contemporaneous with the events themselves, not as if the book were written centuries later.

I take the early date of the Exodus as a better fit for the Biblical timeline. This is because 1 Kings 6:1, which we can tie to around 966 B.C., states that the Exodus occurred 480 years

earlier. The chronology of Exodus is that around 1445 B.C. God called out the people from Egypt after the 10 plagues. Because of the initiation of the Passover holiday in Exodus 12, we can know that the Exodus finally did occur in the springtime of the year, with the plagues occurring in the preceding months.

Related Scriptures

The New Testament quotes or cites Exodus directly nearly 30 times, and alludes to or echoes Exodus nearly 200 times. For examples: Exodus 3:6 and Matthew 22:32, Exodus 20:12 and Ephesians 6:2-3, Exodus 20:13-14 with James 2:11, and Exodus 32:1 with Acts 7:40.

The Lord Jesus taught on "watered down" versions of some of the commands in the Law. The Pharisaical approach was that you could love your neighbor but hate your enemy. But the Lord teaches us to love our enemies as well. He also taught that the commands against murder and adultery were more far-reaching than just the actual act of doing those things (Matt. 5:21-22, 27-28, 43-45).

Outline

I. Israel in Egypt, 1:1-12:36
II. Exodus from Egypt to Sinai, 12:37-18:27
III. Israel at Sinai, 19:1-40:38

Lessons

Exodus teaches us that even in the worst of times, God watches out for His people and hears their cry when oppressed. Sometimes He will provide deliverance.

There is the matter of hardening of Pharaoh's heart. The theology of this is debated, but I believe that God made use of the sin already in Pharaoh's heart and let him go down a self-destructive pathway.

Although the direct rule of the Law of Moses does not extend down to us today, it does reveal to us the holiness of God and provides not only principles that are applicable today but also a direct check-up on the human conscience. This is particularly true of the 10 Commandments.

God gives us examples of living by faith in the midst of persecution. Moses's parents did what they could to preserve the life of their little boy. The midwives did what they could to save babies because they feared God.

Moses was tempted by Pharaoh to compromise—just some of you go out, or go just a little way into to the desert to worship your God. But God called for a total freedom for the people. Moses could have taken the compromise to get some of what he had demanded, but instead God kept him on the path to achieve total victory.

What we learn in Exodus can be applied to ourselves, even if only to warn us away from things we should *not* do (1 Cor. 10:6-11).

We must remember that Exodus is not just about the Exodus. It is about the God of the Exodus, who was faithful to His promises, who cared for His people, who led them through a human mediator, who provided the very basic necessities for them, who gave them spiritual guidance through the Law, and who received their worship. This is the God that Christians worship today.

Leviticus

Leviticus is generally considered one of the most difficult books of the Bible to read and understand. It contains specific regulations and instructions from a time so different from our own that it can be hard to process.

Summary and Message

Leviticus continues the account of how God created the nation of Israel for its significant role in redemption and world history. Leviticus delineates the regulations for the people of God in Israel to interact properly with Him now that they have a basic constitution and the central worship site has been constructed and is operational. He required them to follow precise instructions as to various offerings at the tabernacle, the annual feast calendar, the life of the priests, and ceremonial cleanliness (for example, with childbirth, leprosy, and sexual purity). If they followed these instructions, they could be forgiven for their offenses against the theocracy and live in a way that pleased God. God would bless them, but if they disobey, God will punish them (chapter 26).

Key Verses

Leviticus 4:20 So the priest shall **make atonement** for them, and **it shall be forgiven** them.

Leviticus 11:45 For I *am* the Lord who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. **You shall therefore be holy, for I *am* holy**.

Leviticus 17:11 For **the life of the flesh *is* in the blood**, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it *is* the blood *that* makes atonement for the soul.

Leviticus 19:2 “Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘**You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God *am* holy**.’

Leviticus 19:16 **You shall not go about *as* a talebearer among your people**; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I *am* the Lord.

Leviticus 19:18 You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but **you shall love your neighbor as yourself**: I *am* the Lord.

Leviticus 19:37 Therefore **you shall observe all My statutes and all My judgments**, and perform them: I *am* the Lord.’ ”

Doctrine

By sheer count of word occurrences, it is evident that God emphasizes his holiness throughout the book (78 verses). Holiness refers to God's moral perfection and his transcendent distinctness from all of creation. He is light, and in Him is no darkness whatsoever. He has no sin. This is the same God worshipped by Christians.

The reader cannot miss that God is holy and He demands that His people also be holy in all their conduct. This holiness extends to interpersonal relationships, but especially to interactions with God in terms of the cleanliness laws and the sacrificial system. The laws were not primarily enacted for health reasons. They concerned separate of the people from the surrounding nations and pagan idolatry to the true God.

Blood, life, and sacrifice are important themes in Leviticus. As we saw in Lev. 17:11, the life of the flesh is in the blood. Heb. 9:22 summarizes the Old Testament pattern: without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.

The different types of offerings enacted in Leviticus (guilt, burnt, grain, sin, trespass, peace) cover various aspects of a worshippers relationship to God. The work of Christ handles all of these aspects in one great sacrifice. How it does so is a topic which merits further exploration.

Literary Features

A portion of the book narrates the actions of Moses, Aaron, and others like Nadab, Abihu (chapters 8 to 10) and the man who blasphemed God (chapter 24). The majority of the text, about 85 to 90%, is direct speech by God. This is called "divine discourse" and makes Leviticus the Bible book with the most such revelation from God. You will find "the LORD spoke to Moses" or some variation of that nearly 40 times in the book.

This fact bears on the question of the doctrine of inspiration. Sometimes people will think that the way God delivered the Bible to humanity was through dictation. That is true in some portions like Leviticus, but God did not use that method for much of Scripture. The miracle of inspiration was in many cases more "organic" in terms of how the Spirit of God superintended the thoughts and writings of the prophets and apostles to ensure that what they wrote was exactly the word of God.

The large portions of the book which are law can be considered under two types. The first is command law (or apodictic law). This consists of "do's and don'ts". Then there is case law (casuistic law). These laws are if-then laws that specify *if* something happens*, then* this other thing must be done in response.

Often, interpreters have suggested that the laws in the Pentateuch can be divided into three categories: civil, moral, and ceremonial. The people of Israel did not seem to follow this three-fold schema. Instead, they took the law as a whole as God's will.

The curses pronounced for disobedience in Leviticus 26 sound prophetic of the future Assyrian and Babylonian captivities.

The English title of the book derives from the title given to it by Greek translators in the time shortly before Christ came to earth. It is something like “Pertaining to the Levites” or “Matters Concerning the Levites.”

Date Written and Timeline

Moses wrote the book of Leviticus after the Exodus in 1445 B.C. but before he died around 1405 B.C. More precisely, Israel finished the tabernacle in the first month of the second year, so one year after they exited Egypt (Exodus 40:17). Leviticus probably was revealed to Moses in that month. Numbers follows, starting in the first day of the second month. The many references to the “Law of Moses” in the New Testament as well as the Old Testament attest to the fact that Moses was the author (see the section on Exodus above). See also Lev. 27:34. Leviticus portrays the writing to be roughly contemporaneous with the events themselves, not centuries later.

Related Scriptures

See Genesis 9:4 about the life of the flesh being in the blood. It is interesting that in John 6:53-54 Jesus refers to flesh, blood, and life as well.

1 Peter 1:16 repeats the instruction to be holy, because God is holy.

The book of Hebrews (7:27, 9:7) contrasts the Old Covenant instructions for sacrifices and cleanliness with the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ which obsoletes all of the old ritual. That is why we do not worship in the way specified in Leviticus. But we are profited by understanding the ideas of sin and atonement by means of sacrifice.

Jesus’s parents offered two birds at the temple (Luke 2:24), showing their obedience to the ancient law in Lev. 1:14, 5:7, 12:8, 14:22, 15:14, 15:29.

A number of times in Leviticus is the truth that the remnants of a sacrificial offering are taken outside the camp and burned (Lev. 4:12, 4:21, 6:11, etc.). Hebrews 13:11 reminds us that Jesus was similarly crucified “outside the gate” and that as we come to him for salvation, we are bearing His reproach and exiting our “city” here.

Outline

I. Law of Offerings and Instructions for the Priests, 1:1-7:38
II. The Priestly Ministry, 8:1-10:20
II. Various Regulations, 11:1-20:27
IV. Regulations for the Priests, 21:1-22:33
V. Weekly and Annual Feasts, 23:1-44
VI. Various Laws, 24:1-25:55
VII. Blessings and Curses, 26:1-46
VIII. Redemption of property and persons dedicated to God, 27:1-34

Lessons

It seems hard to apply Leviticus to the modern day because much of it has been rendered obsolete by the work of Jesus Christ, *and* that it was given specifically to a Jewish nation as opposed to the Gentile nations of the world. But there are lessons that we can learn.

One lesson is that God is particular about how we worship. Coming to Him with "strange fire" (Leviticus 10:1-7) is unacceptable. This should cause us to be cautious with worship and other facets of their church services. Some Christians strictly follow the *regulative principle* of worship, which states that if something is not explicitly commanded in Scripture, then it is forbidden. The *normative principle* is more relaxed in that it states that anything not explicitly forbidden in Scripture is permissible. Whichever view one takes, it is clear that mixing worldly or self-invented elements into worship is not pleasing to the Lord.

The way to the Lord is specific. In the Law of Moses, there were exacting requirements to be rightly related to God. In the church age, there is also a specific way to God—namely Jesus Christ is the *only* way to the Father.

Numbers

Summary and Message

The fourth book of Moses, Numbers, recounts the preparation for entry into the promised land and the failure of the people to obey God and actually enter it. It then summarizes key events in the 40 years of wilderness wandering.

Key Verses

Numbers 6:24-26, the Aaronic Blessing: "The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace."

Numbers 12:3 (Now the man Moses *was* very humble, more than all men who *were* on the face of the earth.)

Numbers 14:18 The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation.

Numbers 14:30-32 Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in. [31] But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised. [32] But *as for* you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness.

Numbers 21:8-9 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery *serpent,* and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live." So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

Numbers 23:19 “God *is* not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?

Doctrine

Numbers is frequently referenced in theology. For example:

In Numbers 20:16 the Angel of Yahweh is distinguished from God. This supports the doctrine of the Trinity.

Numbers 25:2-3 records the people of Israel falling into idolatry with the gods of Moab, particularly Baal of Peor. God’s wrath was aroused at this violation of the Law.

Numbers 35:29-34 teaches the principle of two or three witnesses being required to establish a matter, particularly if an alleged murderer is to be put to death.

Numbers contains several sections of law. For example, in chapters 28-29, God gives Moses the details of the offerings for each day, for the Sabbath, for each month, for Passover, for the feast of weeks, trumpets, the day of atonement, and feast of tabernacles.

An interesting matter of jurisprudence is outlined in chapter 35, where cities of refuge are set aside for someone who accidentally kills another person. These are **places of mercy** to spare the life of someone who has been involved in the death of another, say through an accident. They are also **places of judgment**, because those cities would have to adjudicate the matter and decide if the person was worthy of staying in the city or was guilty and should be given the death penalty. They are also **places of penalty** because if a person was involved in the death of another but was not worthy of death, they still had to reside in that city until the death of the present high priest. There was a significant consequence, a limitation of their freedom. Human life is precious and this penalty would help to deter carelessness that could lead to death.

Literary Features

The book of Numbers is a lengthy narrative starting in the second year of their travels from Egypt after the Exodus continuing to just before Israel does enter the land nearly 40 years later. Besides a few sections in chapters 23-24 that contain prophetic utterances of Balaam in poetic verse, the rest of the book is prose.

Date Written and Timeline

Like the other books of Moses, Numbers seems to have been written during and immediately after the events that it records. The references to dates in the book place the events it records between 1445 B.C. and 1405 B.C. near the death of Moses. Early in the book are several references to the second year after Israel left Egypt (Num. 1:1, 9:1, 10:11). Then in 33:38, Aaron died in the 40th year after Israel had come out of Egypt. The book contains frequent mentions of the word of the Lord coming to Moses and 33:2 and 36:13 specifically mention that he wrote text for the book.

Related Scriptures

A good understanding of the events in Numbers helps us to understand things said in the gospels and Acts. For example, Paul preaches in Acts 13:18 that God put up with the people in wilderness. This is covered in Numbers 14:34 and surrounding text.

John 3:14-15 refers to Numbers 21:8-9. “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”

John 19:36 says that none of the Lord’s bones were broken when or after He was crucified. The OT passage often connected to this is Psalm 22:17 or perhaps 34:20. But probably more on point is Exodus 12:46 and Numbers 9:12 about the proper treatment of the Passover lamb.

Numbers 30:2 about keeping your vows is referenced by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount at Matthew 5:33.

Paul teaches us that the Old Testament accounts are in the Bible so we can learn to avoid the sins they committed (1 Cor. 10:6, compare to Numbers 11:4, 34).

See also Numbers 16:5 with 2 Tim. 2:19; Numbers 14:21-23 with Hebrews 3:11.

Deuteronomy 21:23 teaches that a body was not to hang on a tree overnight lest the land be defiled. Thus Jesus was not permitted to remain on the cross overnight.

Outline

I. The First Generation, 1:1-25:18

- A. Census of able-bodied men >= 20 years old (603,550) without Levites, 1:1-54
- B. Configuration of the camp, 2:1-34
- C. Census of Levites (>= one month old, 22,000), Duties, and 30-50 year olds, 3:1-4:49
- D. Various Laws, 5:1-6:21
- E. Tabernacle Dedication and operation, 7:1-8:26
- F. Passover kept, 9:1-14
- G. The cloud over the tabernacle and its guidance, 9:15-23
- H. Journey from Sinai to wilderness of Paran, 10:1-36
- I. The burden of caring for the people, 11:1-34
- J. Aaron and Miriam Complain, 11:35-12:16
- K. Israel's rebellion and failure to enter the promised land, 13:1-14:45
- L. Additional Laws, 15:1-31
- M. Rebellion of Korah, 16:1-50
- N. More Laws, 18:1-19:22
- O. Moses fails to honor God, 20:1-12
- P. Continued Journeys, 20:14-21:35
- Q. King Balak of Moab and False Prophet Baalam, 22:1-25:18

II. The Second Generation, 26:1-36:13

A. Census, 26:1-65
B. Law of Inheritance (Daughters of Zelophehad, Part 1), 27:1-11
C. Moses to view the promised land and anoint Joshua, 27:12-23
D. Laws of offerings, 28:1-30:16
E. Battle with the Midianites, 31:1-54
F. Inheritance of Reuben and Gad and half of Manasseh east of Jordan, 32:1-42
G. Summary of Journeys from Egypt through the wilderness, 33:1-49
H. Directions for conquest of Canaan, 33:50-36:13
I. Law of Inheritance (Daughters of Zelophehad, Part 2), 36:1-13

Lessons

In Numbers 20:7-12, God directed Moses and Aaron to speak to a rock and He would bring forth water. Instead, Moses, struck the rock twice with his staff. God graciously provided water for the people, but Moses had disobeyed God's clear instruction and thus he did not honor God before the people of Israel. He experienced a serious consequence in that God did not permit him to enter the promised land with the people. Otherwise, he could have done so because he was not diminished in strength and vitality despite being 120 years old. We learn from this incident that disobedience to God not only impacts yourself, but it affects how others revere God. That is a very good reason to be obedient to Him.

In Numbers 14, the people and many of their representatives who spied out the land did not trust God. They were fearful and carried on with weeping that they would die in the attempt to conquer the promised land. But it was *promised*—by God. Only Caleb and Joshua believed the Lord. Then when they learned that God was going to punish them for their unbelief, they turned around and tried to enter the land, but it was too late. God had already given the sentence and there was no going back into the promised land until a total of 40 years had passed. Let us trust God's promises instead of doubting them and disobeying God.

In addition, note how the people worried that they would become victims, and particularly their wives and children (14:3). What they should have "worried" about was that they would not *victimize* their wives and children by their disobedience. It turns out that trusting and obeying God is the *safest* thing you can do for your kids, even if it seems hard or "unsafe" at the time. Not doing so ended up putting those kids into the wilderness for 40 years. Then later, the children that they worried about enjoyed the promised land, which they did not.

Some within Israel rebelled against Moses, including Korah (ch. 16) and Aaron and Miriam (ch. 12). God was displeased with this rejection of His appointed authority. We must be aware of an anti-authority bent in our own hearts.

God gave the Levites ongoing support as their inheritance in exchange for the spiritual work that they performed (see Num. 18). This principle applies today to those who are serving the Lord, particularly those full time in vocational ministry, but to some extent those part time as well (1 Cor. 9:11, 13-14).

Numbers 22 and following recount Balaam's prophecies against Israel. It can sometimes be confusing as to whether he was a real prophet or not: he listens to God, he disobeys God, he blesses God's people, then advises Israel's enemies how to get Israel to fall with foreign women (31:16). The overall storyline makes it clear that he was a false prophet (2 Peter 2:15) but it can seem somewhat subtle.

Deuteronomy

Summary and Message

The title of the book in English comes from the Greek translation of the Old Testament. It is from *deut* which means two or second, and *nomos* which is the Greek word for Law, so Christians often think of Deuteronomy as a record of the second giving of the law. This makes some sense because Moses rehearses the Law that was given to them years earlier in Exodus and Leviticus for the purposes of teaching the next generation. But we must be careful to note that Deuteronomy is not a "second law." If anything, it is a review or second giving of the *original* law.

The Hebrew title of the book reflects the opening text: "These are the words." The words record Moses leading the people up to the end of his life, reminding them of the law of God, and calling them to faithfulness to the covenant. Some interpreters therefore call Deuteronomy a "covenant renewal document."

Key Verses

Deut. 6:4-5 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord *is* one! [5] You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

Deut. 7:7-8 The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; [8] but because the Lord loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Deut. 8:3 So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every *word* that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.

Deut. 10:16 Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer.

Deut. 18:15 The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.

Deut. 30:6 And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

Deut. 28:1-2 Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the

Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. [2] And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God:

Deut. 28:15 But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:

Doctrine

In the key verses above, I cited Deut. 10:16 and 30:6. The doctrine of heart circumcision refers to what we call today *regeneration*. It reflects that a person's heart has been changed, that they have become a new creature in Christ (Deut. 5:29). This truth is also reflected in Ezekiel 36:26 when it speaks of a heart of stone being replaced by a heart of flesh.

The promises in Deut. 28 about blessing and cursing are not directly transferrable to Christians. These were for Israel living under the regime of the Law, what we call the Mosaic covenant. Since we are not under the regime of Law, we draw *principles* from it about general blessing for obedience and trials if we walk out of line with God, but the specifics are not necessarily the case for us today. They *were* the case for the Israelites living back then, and they found that out throughout their history when they disobeyed God. We read of this in the remainder of the Old Testament of our Bibles. Another good passage to ponder along this line is Deut. 30:15-20. There God says that He Himself is their life and length of days.

The doctrine of God's presence with the nation (Deut. 31:6, 8) and its new leader Joshua (Deut. 31:23) is a precious reminder for us that God will not leave His people today (Heb. 13:5).

God demanded holiness from His people (Deut. 7:6, 14:2, 28:9).

God does exhibit the emotion of anger, particularly against idolatry or other evil (Deut. 4:25).

Deut. 19:15 reiterates the principle from earlier in the law about the requirement of two or three witnesses to confirm a matter, especially a capital offense.

God is righteous and there is no unrighteousness or injustice in Him (Deut. 32:4).

Deut. 33:2 indicates that there is a huge number of angelic beings ("holy ones", not "saints" in the sense of Christian people).

God is jealous in a completely holy sense, that He does not wish for His people to go after other gods (32:16-17).

There is an interesting doctrine in Deut. 1:39 about children who have "no knowledge of good and evil." This does not mean that they do not have the *capacity* to understand right and wrong, but likely they do not have the life experience of doing terrible sins. Jonah 4:11, Isaiah 7:15, and Rom. 9:11 point in a similar direction.

An important doctrine is in Deut. 24:16 where God explains that the father must not be punished for the sins of the son, nor the son for the sins of the father. Each is responsible for his own sin.

Literary Features

The book is mostly narrative with long segments of case law and command law. See the section on the literary features of Leviticus for a bit more about those two types of law. Chapter 32 is a song which is appropriately formatted as poetry. Large portions of the book are speeches of Moses which some consider to be sermonic in nature with their review of the law and reminders.

Date Written and Timeline

Like the other books of the five-book group called the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy was written by Moses, except probably the account of his death in chapter 34. It was written about 1405 B.C. at the end of the wilderness wandering when Israel was about to enter the promised land under the leadership of Joshua.

Related Scriptures

Deuteronomy is foundational to the rest of the Bible. It is quoted by a number of New Testament books and cited or alluded to dozens of times. Here are some examples.

Jesus used “man shall not live by bread alone” during His temptation in the wilderness (Matt. 4:4, Deut. 8:3). He also cited “you shall not tempt the LORD your God” (Matt. 4:7, Deut. 6:16). Again, in His third rebuttal of Satan, Jesus reflected the teaching of Deut. 6:13 in Matt. 4:10 about worshipping and serving God only and no other god.

When Jesus gave the sermon on the mount, he referenced laws given in Deuteronomy about murder, adultery, and divorce (Matt. 5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 48 which refer to Deut. 5:17, 18, and 24:1, 23:21, 19:21 and 18:13, respectively).

James similarly cited adultery and murder (2:11) which is right out of Deut. 5:17-18.

Regarding wages for gospel ministers, Paul uses the principle of not muzzling the ox (1 Tim. 5:18, Deut. 25:4).

Paul reminds us that the principle of the law to obey our parents is still true today (Eph. 6:2-3, Deut. 5:16).

Jeremiah 4:4 speaks of heart circumcision, as Deut. 10:16 and 30:6 do.

It is just as important today to love God with our whole hearts as it was in the Old Testament times (Matt. 22:37, Deut. 6:5).

The ultimate prophet which was the target of Deut. 18:15 is Jesus Christ. Stephen mentions that passage in Acts 7:37 in his convicting message to the San Hedrin. It is part of the Pharisees questioning of John the Baptist, who is not that prophet. But Jesus is, as God wanted His people to “hear Him” (Matt. 17:5).

Outline

I. Introduction to Moses' speeches to Israel, 1:1-4
II. Moses Reviews Israel's History After the Exodus, 1:5-3:29
III. Teaching the Law Again, 4:1-26:19
IV. Instructions for when Israel enters the land, 27:1-34:12

Lessons

The simple fact that Moses was reviewing the law reminds us that it is critical to teach God's word constantly and to review our God-given responsibilities regularly. Parents need to be teaching these things to our children at home, in the church, etc.

Although we do not have the exact promises of blessing and cursing that Israel did, their choice remains before us today as relevant as ever: "choose life" (30:19-20). This is not the pro-life bumper sticker slogan; it is to choose to live for God instead of for self.

There are some things that God has disclosed to humanity, and there are other things which will remain a mystery (Deut. 29:29). This serves to keep us in our place. We must be humble because we are finite and sinful creatures.

Deut. 18:10-22 reminds us that witchcraft, sorcery, child sacrifice, etc. are capital offenses in God's eyes. This should keep us far from such material in books and media today. It is not as if the passing of the Mosaic Law has lessened God's hatred of these things. Similarly, Deut. 22:5 teaches that dressing as the opposite sex is an abomination to God, and so similar to the previous point, we should stay as far away from that sort of behavior as possible, not even joking about it.

Deut 6:13 teaches that God is the only one who is to receive worship. Yet Jesus Christ accepted worship which is evidence of His deity (Matt. 14:33, 15:25).

There is an interesting law of debt cancellation every seven years (Deut. 15:1). This would serve to help those who were financially in over their heads, but it was also a brake on the extension of excessive credit.

Jeremiah

Jeremiah is the longest book in the Bible by word count—about 33,000 words. Genesis falls just behind it, and Psalms ranks third in terms of length by word count. Jeremiah prophesied when the exile of the southern kingdom began, through all three phases of the exile and beyond.

Summary and Message

The book of Jeremiah is the record of Jeremiah's prophecies about the southern kingdom and surrounding nations, as well as some narrative about what happened during those days with Jeremiah himself, with the Rechabites (ch. 35) for example, and Jeremiah's interactions with King Zedekiah and other officials in the royal court. The book is focused on judgment as well as future restoration. It is a big call to repentance, like many of the

other prophets. Like them, Jeremiah was largely rejected (Jer. 20:7-10) and suffered because of His work for God. Jeremiah was able to see many of his judgment prophecies come to pass, but not the restoration ones. Jeremiah had no wife nor children (Jer. 16:2).

Key Verses

Jeremiah 1:5 “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.”

Jeremiah 9:23-24 Thus says the Lord: “Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty *man* glory in his might, Nor let the rich *man* glory in his riches; [24] But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I *am* the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,” says the Lord.

Jeremiah 13:23 Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil.

Jeremiah 17:7-8 “Blessed *is* the man who trusts in the Lord, And whose hope is the Lord. [8] For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.

Jeremiah 17:9-10 The heart *is* deceitful above all *things,* and desperately wicked; Who can know it? [10] I, the Lord, search the heart, *I* test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.

Jeremiah 18:4 And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make. [God is the potter, and the house of Israel is the clay; if they repent, God will restore them.]

Jeremiah 20:9 Then I said, “I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name.” But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not.

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. [This verse is often taken out of its context. It is in a letter from Jeremiah to the exiles, instructing them how to live in Babylon and promising that God will bring them out after the 70 years captivity. It is not a general promise to all of God’s people in all ages. It does show us the kind of God that our God is, but His plan may not be so wonderful for each individual person.]

Jeremiah 30:15 Why do you cry about your affliction? Your sorrow is incurable. Because of the multitude of your iniquities, because your sins have increased, I have done these things to you.

Jeremiah 31:29-30 In those days they shall say no more: ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’ [30] But every one shall die for his own iniquity; every man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.

Jeremiah 33:3 Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know. [God is inviting Jeremiah to pray to him.]

Doctrine

The new covenant introduced in Jeremiah 31:31-40 is a prominent theme throughout the Old and New Testaments. The extent and timing of this covenant are subject of much discussion.

The holiness of God underpins the entire book. God had promised a curse if the people of Israel disobeyed His word, and they managed to do that very frequently and on an increasing basis over the years.

God is omnipresent and infinite (Jer. 23:24).

The evil of mankind is presented as well, including cruel punishments to Jeremiah in the stocks (Jer. 20:2-3) and the miry pit (38:4-6).

Literary Features

Jeremiah used the services of Baruch as his scribe to write down the prophecy and narratives (Jer. 36). He also read it aloud in the temple and became a fugitive from the king because of the words in the book. The king burned the scroll piece by piece, but then God commanded Jeremiah to take another scroll and write the book again, only this time a revised and expanded version (Jer. 36:32).

As far as form, the book contains a lot of prose narration but even more poetry.

Date Written and Timeline

Jeremiah ministered from approximately 627 B.C. until 570 or even a bit later. He was in Judah and Jerusalem until the third phase of the exile. He then was forced to go to Egypt with those who remained in the land after the destruction of Jerusalem. This makes him a prophet through all phases of the exile and a little bit into the 70 years of captivity. He was contemporary with Daniel (605–536 B.C.) and Ezekiel (593–572 B.C.). He ministered about 80 or more years after Micah, who is mentioned in Jer. 26:18. Like Ezekiel, he was a priest (1:1).

The kings mentioned or alluded to in the opening verses are:

King	**Dates of reign**
Josiah son of Amon	640–609 (Jeremiah starts in year 13, about 627)
Jehoahaz (not mentioned by name in Jeremiah 1)	Reign of 3 months in 609 (2 Chronicles 36:1-2)
Jehoiakim son of Josiah, also called Eliakim	609–597

Jehoiachin (not mentioned by name in Jeremiah 1)	Reign of 3 months and 10 days in 597 at age 18.
Zedekiah son of Josiah, originally named Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle	597–586 (until 11th year, exile in 5th month)

Jeremiah records very specific time markers for many of his prophecies and for events mentioned in the book. Because the chapters are not laid out in time order, a chronological Bible reading plan has you read Jeremiah out of chapter order. Here are the prophecies and events in approximately chronological order:

Passage	**Calendar Date**	**Text**
1:2	627 B.C.	13th year of Josiah, son of Amon
25:3	627 B.C. to 604 B.C., though Jeremiah's ministry was much longer than this.	For 23 years, from the 13th year of Josiah son of Amon
26:1, 27:1	609 B.C.	Beginning of Jehoiakim's reign
25:1	About 605/4 B.C. Note this is chronologically *before* 24:1. This was when Nebuchadnezzar took the throne of Babylon.	Fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah
25:11, 29:10	605–535 B.C., although there were three deportations and at least three large groups who returned at various times, making the length of captivity somewhat variable.	Seventy years of captivity are promised by God
45:1, 46:2	605 B.C. Early in Baruch's scribal career, about 605 B.C.	4th year of Jehoiakim
36:1	605 B.C., around the time of the first deportation to Babylon	4th year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah
49:34	597 B.C. at 21 years of age, reigned 11 years	Beginning of the reign of Zedekiah

24:1	Sometime after 597 B.C.	After Nebuchadnezzar carried away Jeconiah, son of Jehoiakim
29:2	596? B.C.	Shortly after Jeconiah, et al. were taken to Babylon
28:1	593 B.C.	4th year of Zedekiah's reign
51:59	593 B.C. but it wasn't until the 11th year of Zedekiah that Jerusalem was taken.	4th year of Zedekiah's reign (?)
39:1, 52:4	585 B.C. Siege of Jerusalem begins	9th year of Zedekiah king of Judah, 10th month, 10th day of the month
32:1	587 B.C., counting from 597 B.C. and 605 B.C. respectively.	10th year of Zedekiah, 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar
1:3	587/6 B.C.	11th year of Zedekiah, son of Josiah
39:2, 52:6	587/6 B.C. Siege successful, city overrun; famine had been so bad that there was no food left.	11th year of Zedekiah, 4th month, 9th day
52:12	587/6 B.C. 19th year of King Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuzaradan burned the temple and the king's house, walls of Jerusalem broken down.	11th year of Zedekiah, 5th month, 10th day of the month
41:1	586 B.C. About 3 months after the Babylonian takeover	7th month
52:31	561 B.C., Evil-Merodach, King of Babylon, released Jehoiachin from prison.	37th year of Jehoiachin's captivity, 12th month, 25th day of the month

Related Scriptures

The Last Supper narratives mention the New Covenant (Matt. 26:28, Mark 14:24, Luke 22:20). Paul refers to the same in 1 Cor. 11:25 when he instructs the Corinthian church about the proper practice at the Lord's Table service.

Paul speaks of his ministry as a new covenant sort of ministry in 2 Cor. 3:6.

Hebrews 8-9 and 12 speak of the New Covenant replacing the old covenant, and Jesus being the mediator of that covenant.

Daniel 9:2 explains that Daniel read Jeremiah and grasped the meaning of his prophecy about the 70 years of desolation for Jerusalem during the captivity. Ezra 1:1 and 2 Chronicles 36:21-22 refers to the same thing.

2 Chronicles 35:25 and 36:12 mention Jeremiah as well. The former concerns his lament for King Josiah who died after foolishly going out to battle against Pharaoh Necho. 36:12 says that King Zedekiah did not humble himself before Jeremiah.

Matthew 2:17 records how the people in Ramah wept because their children were no more. He drew an analogy from Jeremiah 31:15 where the mothers of Israel wept over their deceased sons who were lost in battle against Babylon. The babies in Matthew's time did not suffer in the same situation, but they nonetheless died and the parents' mourning was substantially similar to that which happened centuries before.

The populace of Israel was well aware of Jeremiah, because some of them thought that Jesus was Jeremiah returned from the dead (Matt. 16:14).

Jeremiah also receives mention in Matt. 27:9 where Judas had some remorse and returned the betrayal money to the temple because he recognized that Jesus had been innocent. 30 pieces of silver was the price of a slave—that is all that the nation's leaders thought of Jesus. He was worth no more than a slave.

Outline

I. Preparation of Jeremiah, 1:1-19
II. Judgment Against Judah, 2:1-45:5
III. Judgment Against the Nations, 46:1-51:64
IV. Summary of the Fall of Jerusalem, 586 B.C., 52:1-34

Lessons

What are some important lessons or applications to the Christian from the book of Jeremiah?

Jeremiah 38:4-6 record that Jeremiah was confined to a dungeon where he sank into the mire. Unfortunately, sometimes God's messengers are severely mistreated for telling the truth. This has happened time after time throughout world history. People disregarded Noah, did not listen to Joseph's dreams, rebelled against Moses, etc.

As with other prophets, God employs Jeremiah to write about the impending and ongoing judgements against His chosen people Israel. But He also promises future restoration. Our own lives may be in a place of chastisement or judgment at the present, but if we trust in Christ, we can be assured that there will come a time of rest and blessing. Jeremiah offers hope.

Haggai

Haggai is the second shortest book in the Old Testament. Only Obadiah is shorter. Haggai and Zechariah prophesied about the same time.

Summary and Message

The short book of Haggai consists of four prophetic messages from God to the leaders and people of Israel who had returned from the exile. These messages center around the call to rebuild the temple (despite the prevailing opposition) and the blessings and curses that are associated with either rebuilding or not doing so. The people of Israel obeyed the prophetic message to rebuild. The final message has to do with the defeat of the Gentile kingdoms and the elevation of Zerubbabel as God's servant. The promises of future glory served to encourage the people who were only able to construct a far less glorious temple.

Key Verses

Haggai 1:5, 7 Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways!"

Haggai 1:12 Then Zerubbabel…and Joshua…the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet…

Haggai 1:14 "So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel…, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua…the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God.

Haggai 2:5 According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!

Haggai 2:9 'The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the LORD of hosts. 'And in this place I will give peace,' says the LORD of hosts.

Doctrine

- The doctrine of God's faithfulness, particularly to His covenant 900 years earlier.
- The priority of loving God above our own comforts, like dwelling in our paneled houses while the house of the Lord lies in ruins.
- What is missing from Haggai is mention of the idolatry that plagued Israel before the exile. It is often said that the people were cured of that idolatry. But what took its place was a more subtle form, that of comfort and self-focus that is not as easy to recognize as idolatry, but it still puts God in second place.
- Haggai alludes to the second coming of Messiah in 2:6 and 2:21 and possibly with the "Desire of All Nations" phrase in 2:7.
- God's power and glory will be manifest openly.

Literary Features

The book is arranged chronologically in four prophetic announcements as they come to Haggai from the Lord.

Four times the Lord calls the people to consider, to think deeply about what he is saying. See 1:5, 1:7, 2:15, and 2:18.

Haggai uses the phrase "the LORD of hosts" in 12 of his 38 verses.

Date Written and Timeline

Haggai received the prophecies from God in August through December of 520 B.C. It was probably written shortly after that.

- Around 539 B.C. the Babylonian empire was defeated and the Persians took over. Their policy was to return exiles to their original homelands, the reverse of the Babylonian and Assyrian policies.
- 538 B.C. – Ezra 1:1-4 – Cyrus makes a proclamation that the temple is to be rebuilt. People return to the land.
- 537/536 B.C. – Ezra 3:8 – Zerubbabel and Joshua begin to rebuild the temple.
- 535-521 B.C. – Ezra 4:1-5, 23 – Through the reign of Cyrus until the reign of Darius, the efforts of the people are opposed.
- 520 B.C. – Haggai ministers and exhorts the people to finish the temple. The building of the temple began anew, but the temple was not dedicated until four years later.
- 520-464 B.C. – Ezra 4:6-23 – Opposition to the work on the city continues throughout the reigns of Darius (521-486 B.C., 35 years) and of Ahasuerus (485-465 B.C., 20 years).
- 516 B.C. – the temple is dedicated. It had been destroyed in 586 B.C., so the length of time was 70 years as prophesied by Jeremiah.
- 464-423 B.C. – Artaxerxes I reigns over Persia.
- 458 B.C. – Ezra returns to Jerusalem.
- 444 B.C. – Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem. Opposition continues through the building of the walls of the city. The work of God is opposed constantly throughout the period from 535 to 444, about 90 years.
- 433 B.C. – Nehemiah makes another trip to Jerusalem.
- 433-424 B.C. – Malachi writes his prophecy. He and Nehemiah may have overlapped.

Related Scriptures

The coming Messiah is a descendant of Zerubbabel (Matthew 1:12).

The cursing/blessing theme from Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 is relevant in Haggai.

Ezra 4 describes opposition to the rebuilding projects. Ezra 5 mentions Haggai and Zechariah who encouraged the temple project and helped them to complete it. Ezra 6:14 records that Haggai and Zechariah observed the completion of the temple construction.

Hebrews 12:26-27 quotes Haggai 2:6 and 2:21.

Outline

I. First Message: Rebuild the Temple for the Glory of God, 1:1-15
II. Second Message: Encouragement with a Promise of God's Future Glory, 2:1-9
III. Third Message: Defilement Removed and Blessing Comes, 2:10-19
IV. Fourth Message: Destruction of the Nations and Elevation of Zerubbabel as God's ruler, 2:20-23

Lessons

For those under the rule of the Mosaic covenant who were rebellious against God, He withheld his blessing of rain, fruit, grain, and livestock. Though we do not live under the rule of the Law today, we live under the same God and can expect difficulties if we live wickedly (Prov 13:15). (We can also expect difficulties if we live godly lives.)

Haggai reminds us that when God asks for something to be done, it needs to be done faithfully, not half-heartedly or lazily or after much delay. Obedience is important for the children of God. This is true alongside the doctrine of God's grace. That is, grace does not make a call for obedience to be "legalistic."

Malachi

Summary and Message

God critically evaluates the spiritual condition of Israel and finds the people living far from Him. They were giving defiled sacrifices, the priests were not following God's way, they were offering fake worship, dissolving marriages, not supplying the required offerings, speaking harshly against God among other evil things. God promises a great blessing for repentant obedience and also promises the coming of the Messiah to judge and cleanse Israel. The glorious kingdom age seemed to the people to be slow in coming and this was disheartening, yet they were slow to recognize their own sinfulness was the cause of their poor conditions.

Key Verses

Malachi 1:11 "For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, my name *shall be* great among the Gentiles."

Malachi 2:7 "For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and *people* should seek the law from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts."

Malachi 3:1 "And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant."

Malachi 4:5 "I will send to you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD."

Doctrine

- God's sovereign free choice of Jacob over Esau (1:2-3).
- God is loving (1:2).
- God's greatness (1:11).
- The coming of the Messiah (3:1).
- God's immutability (3:6).
- The Mosaic covenant and its Levitical subset was the standard of Israelite behavior even in this late stage of Jewish history (*covenant* is found a half-dozen times in the book). God was once again calling them back to Exodus 19.

Literary Features

Malachi records how the people pushed back against God by asking Him questions. You can read their questions in 1:2, 1:6, 1:7, 2:14, 2:17, 3:7, 3:8, 3:13, 3:14.

God asked them several questions of His own. For example, see 1:6, 1:8, 1:13, 3:2. At least one seems to come from Malachi himself (2:10).

The book is characterized by disputation and prophecy.

Malachi uses the phrase "the LORD of hosts" in 24 times.

Date Written and Timeline

Malachi wrote at the end of the Old Testament era, about 433-424 B.C. but we cannot be certain about these dates. The events of Nehemiah may have come shortly after Malachi or shortly before. Malachi and Nehemiah describe some of the same sins in Israel which supports the supposition that they overlapped in time.

One hundred years before Malachi's prophecy, the nation had begun to return from exile. They delayed in rebuilding the temple, instead focusing on themselves (see Haggai about this). But by the time of Malachi, the temple was built, the city was built, and the wall was recently or soon to be rebuilt.

About 450 years later, John the Baptist announced the coming of the kingdom and the need for repentance (Matthew 3).

Related Scriptures

Was the messenger promised in Malachi 3:1 the same as John the Baptist, or does this prophecy await fulfillment in the end times?

Outline

I. Introduction, 1:1
II. God Rebukes Israel, 1:2-2:17
    A. God's love for Israel and opposition to Edom, 1:2-5
    B. God's rebuke for priestly failure, 1:6-2:9
    C. God's rebuke for various covenant offenses, 2:10-17

III. God Promises Judgment and Restoration, 3:1-4:6
   A. The second coming of Christ for judgment, 3:1-5
   B. God calls for repentance and promises covenant blessing, 3:6-18
   C. The second coming of Christ for restoration, 4:1-6

Lessons

We are reminded again in Malachi of God's faithfulness to His covenant and His mercy toward people who fail. That He would even have a prophet write this book to alert His people to their problems is itself a mercy from God. We have the Bible, a sign of God's mercy to us!

Like in Haggai, we see in Malachi's prophecy the corruption and apathy of God's people. We too often fall into the same pattern of thinking and behavior about the church and the Word of God.

Matthew

Summary and Message

The gospel of Matthew is an account of the birth, life, and death of Jesus of Nazareth. Matthew, also known as Levi and a tax collector, wrote about the birth of Israel's Messianic king, described the early announcement of the kingdom and the teaching of its king and his followers, recorded authenticating signs done by the king, explained how he was rejected by the leaders and many of the people of the nation, his further teaching to his followers, the persecution he experienced, and his death at the hands of the Romans and Jews, after which he arose from the dead and left important instructions for his followers to carry out in his long-but-temporary absence from the earth.

Matthew's message to the church is that we need to become followers of this king and obey his teaching, and then persuade our neighbors to do the same.

Key Verses

Matthew 1:1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.

Matthew 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 3:2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (The message of John the Baptist, as well as Jesus, Matt. 4:17).

Matthew 5:3… Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven…

Matthew 5:17 Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.

Matthew 6:9-13 In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven…

Matthew 6:19-20 Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; [20] but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Matthew 6:33-34 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day *is* its own trouble.

Matthew 7:7-8 Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

Matthew 7:13 Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.

Matthew 11:28 Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Matthew 16:18 Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Matthew 22:37-40 Jesus said to him, " '*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.*' This is *the* first and great commandment. And *the* second *is* like it: '*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

Matthew 28:19-20 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen.

Doctrine

The book of Matthew is very Jewish. Chapter 10 discusses on a mission for the disciples that is only for the nation of Israel (10:6). The opening verses are a genealogy, very reminiscent of the Old Testament genealogies. The genealogy ties Jesus back to David and Abraham to show that He has the right to the Davidic throne. The kingdom is mentioned in 55 verses and is the subject of many more.

Speaking of the kingdom, Matthew writes how John the Baptist and Jesus offer the kingdom to the Jewish people, but it is clear by chapter 12 that they reject it (see 12:24). Matthew 21:43 records Jesus saying that the kingdom would be taken from that nation and given to a nation that bears kingdom fruit, by which I understand Jesus to mean a future edition of the nation of Israel, one that exhibits repentance over their sin.

A key feature in the book is the Lord's teaching in parables, which starts in chapter 13. The gospels altogether record 43 of our Lord's parables. Parables are meant to reveal truth to those who are desirous to learn it, and at the same time to conceal truth from those who

are not serious about following Jesus. They are at one and the same time both a blessing and a judgment.

Matthew writes about the Lord's ministry which sits at the intersection of the historical eras of the Law and the beginning of the Church, with the added complexity that He is preaching about the kingdom which was offered but then postponed and awaits a future day, *and* that there are elements of the future especially focused on Israel. Because of this, it can be somewhat confusing as to what applies to us in the church and how. Here are some guidelines:

1. The Sermon on the Mount contains teaching that is broadly applicable to us in the church, but some parts await the establishment of the kingdom of Christ to be fully operational. Some of the teaching at that time will be a little obsoleted. A part of it instructs us to pray for the kingdom to come (6:9-13) which will be unnecessary when Jesus returns and has established His kingdom. Matthew 5:39 tells us to turn the other cheek, which is a good teaching for individuals to follow in general, but without guardrails could be taken by an abusive person to an extreme against God's people. The righteous government of the kingdom will prevent such teachings from being exploited, and our governments today should do the same. But a vast majority of the teaching is directly applicable to us because it outlines conduct of citizens who are fit for Christ's kingdom, and Christians today *are* future kingdom citizens and should live as such.

2. The Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 and 25 often confuses modern readers. These chapters are Jewish centric, speaking mostly of a time to come in which there will be great tribulation on the earth, just before the return of Jesus. The Jewish people are called to be wise and faithful during that time, which applies similarly to us in our own time. The judgment recorded in Matthew 25 has to do with the *nations* of the world (25:32) which will be judged based on their treatment of "the least of these My brethren" which we understand to be the Jewish people. The people of the nations will give evidence of their faith and love for the Lord by their conduct toward the Jewish nation during its time of trial.

3. The whole idea of the kingdom has confused Christians for most of the history of the church, leading to fuzzy thinking on the matter. For clarity, consider the following. The kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven are the exact same thing (Matt. 19:23-24). The kingdom is different than the church—Matthew 16:18 says that Jesus will build His church, *and* He will give the keys of the kingdom to him. The authority of the kingdom conveyed here has to do with loosing/binding and the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 18:18 and John 20:23). This text need not be read to equate the church and the kingdom; in fact they are separate entities, though with an overlapping relationship because the church people will be members of the kingdom, and the head of the church is also the king of the kingdom.

Matthew records Jesus calling Himself the "Son of Man" about 30 times. This phrase does not merely refer to His humanity, but to His deity, as the preeminent man, the perfect man, and the one who will come on the clouds of heaven to receive the kingdom from the Ancient of Days (Daniel 7:13-14).

Literary Features

Matthew's book is a "gospel" which is a unique genre. It can be classed under the heading of narrative, but it is a theological narrative and a biography of Jesus's teaching including parables, His miracles, and the response of people. It is also unique in that it is written about events that occurred before the beginning of the church, but the book is written *for* the church. It is not a typical biography, however, in that it omits most of 30 years of the person's life and does not give specific dates. It is composed for the specific purpose of introducing the audience to Jesus and the most significant points about Him.

Matthew contains Jesus's five major teaching sections called "discourses." They are:

1. Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7)
2. Commissioning of the 12 for Jewish ministry (Matthew 10)
3. Kingdom Parables (Matthew 13)
4. Discourse on Humility and Sin (Matthew 18)
5. The Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24–25)

Author, Date Written, and Timeline

Church tradition from the earliest times ascribes this gospel to Matthew's authorship. His name means "gift of the Lord" from is Hebrew roots. Origen states that the first of the gospels was written by Matthew the tax collector and that its intended audience consisted of converts from Judaism.

It appears that the book was written before the temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD. It is thought to have been written quite soon after the Lord's ascension, perhaps as early as 50 AD. It covers events from the birth of Christ (around 4 BC?), four major appearances at Passover (27-30 AD), up to His death and resurrection in the spring of 30 AD.

Related Scriptures

Matthew shows a mastery of the Old Testament. Besides more distant echoes, he quotes or cites from at least 33 chapters in the Old Testament: Exodus 3, 20, 21, Numbers 30, Deut. 5, 6, 8, 19, 24, Leviticus 18, 19, 20, Psalm 6, 8, 22, 78, 91, 110, 118, Isaiah 6, 7, 9, 13, 29, 40, 42, 53, 56, Jer. 31, Hosea 6, 11, Micah 5, Zechariah 9, Malachi 3. And this is a major feature of the book: Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophetic Scriptures about the Messiah and God's kingdom.

Outline

I. Messiah's Royal Credentials and Birth Narrative, 1:1-2:23
II. Early Ministry of the Messiah, 3:1-10:42
III. Rejection of Messiah, 11:1-12:50
IV. Messiah's Post-Rejection Ministry, 13:1-20:34
V. The Last Week of Messiah's Pre-Cross Ministry, 21:1-25:46
VI. Passover, Betrayal, Death, 26:1-27:66

VII. Resurrection and the Great Commission, 28:1-20

Some suggest outlining the book around the phrase “from that time” (NKJV translation) so that the book is divided into three segments: introduction to the Messiah (1:1-4:16), Messiah’s ministry (4:17-16:20) and the completion of the Messiah’s ministry (16:21-28:20). But this seems to miss the key hinge point of the nation’s rejection of the Messiah.

Lessons

We cannot miss the most important message having to do with Jesus as the Messiah who died for the sins of the world. He gave himself as a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28). He gave His body and blood for the remission of sins (Matt. 26:28). He invites and urges and commands us to repent of our sin and believe in Him.

The Gospel of Matthew takes us through a comprehensive account of Jesus’s life, ministry, miracles, teaches, death, burial, and resurrection. This is enough information to believe in Him, perhaps without any other information at all.

The book of Matthew presents a radically different way of living than the world lives. Being a bright moral light, not craving the things the world desires, forgiving people for their sin, looking for God’s kingdom, sacrificing for others, not allowing lust or anger to find a home in our hearts…all these and many more are big changes from a life lived for self and the world.

Several parables teach about the need for readiness in light of the Lord’s imminent return. During His absence, He calls us to be good stewards of all the resources He has left in our care (Matt. 25:14-30).

Jesus did not leave any doubt about his view of religious hypocrisy. Pretending to be righteous but not actually being so in your heart is very displeasing to God the Father.

The last words of our Lord, known as the Great Commission, are our marching orders today. If He thought it was important, so should we!

1 John

Summary and Message

John’s first epistle or general letter offers many tests of eternal life by which God’s people can be assured that they are truly born again. These tests are not “works” that we do to obtain or prove that we have eternal life, but rather they are evidences that flow naturally out of the life of a saved person. The tests are both doctrinal and practical. They have to do with what we believe and how we live.

Key Verses

1 John 1:5 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 2:1-2 My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. [2] And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

1 John 2:3 Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

1 John 2:15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

1 John 2:28 And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

1 John 3:16 By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.

1 John 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

1 John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

1 John 5:13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

Doctrine

We learn some great truths about God:

God is LIFE 1 John 1:1

God is LIGHT 1 John 1:5

God is TRUTH 1 John 4:6

God is LOVE 1 John 4:8

A good portion of the book concerns the doctrine of perseverance in the faith, and more specifically how we know that we have true salvation. In my studies, I have distilled the tests down to these:

1. Has our attitude toward and practice of sin changed (1:5-2:2)?
2. Do we keep God's commands (2:3-6, 5:2-3)?
3. Do we love God first and love others as ourselves (2:7-17)? Or do we love the world?
4. Do we believe the doctrine of Christ (2:18-28)?
5. Do we practice righteousness (2:29-3:10a)?
6. Do we love our brother (3:11a-24, 4:7-10, 5:1-2)?
7. Do we have the Spirit of God (3:24, 4:13)?

8. Do we agree that Christ came in the flesh (4:1-6)?
9. Do we believe the gospel testimony about Jesus that He is Christ, Son of God, and is incarnate (5:1-13)?

I have often heard the teaching of 1 John 5:13 taken out of context: "These things I have written…" It is true that John wishes for us to know that we have eternal life, but the first part of the verse is *key*. There are specific things he has written that condition that assurance. It is not an empty "you can know" statement. It is "you can know IF these evidences are present"—not just that you *say* you are a Christian.

Another key doctrine in the book concerns *fellowship*. Some teach that a believer can be in and out of fellowship. But the language that John uses of the people who do not share in the fellowship with other believers indicates that these people are not believers at all. They are liars, have not seen God, of the devil, in darkness, blind, does not know God (2:4, 3:6, 3:10, 2:9, 2:11, 4:8). In other words, all true believers are in John's *fellowship*, and if you are not in fellowship, you are not a Christian. Of course, there are many believers at any given time who are share in the fellowship of divine life, but they are walking out of accord with God's will. God is displeased with that, and that is a situation that must be remedied promptly.

Another important doctrine in 1 John is the humanity of Jesus, 1 John 4:3.

Literary Features

One little word is very prominent in the book: "If." John uses is 21 times (NKJV), with 5 of those in chapter 1, and 6 in chapter 2. These "if's" invite us to consider our viewpoint on the matters of which John speaks. For example 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins." Do we? Or 1 John 4:20, "If someone says, 'I love God," and hates his brother." Do we love God? Do we hate our brother? These are really incisive statements to get us to evaluate if we are truly real in our faith or if we are just pretending. 1 John 3:13 says, "do not marvel…if the world hates you." Do you sense that antipathy from the world toward yourself *because* you are a Christian?

Author, Date Written and Timeline

The signature of John the apostle might as well be on the letter because of the "from the beginning" phrase. The style matches well with John's gospel, which also starts with "in the beginning."

External evidence supports this conclusion. Irenaeus was a disciple of Polycarp, who was a direct disciple of John, and Irenaeus writes that Polycarp testified that John wrote his gospel from Ephesus. It seems that he wrote the letters at a similar time, but later, in his older years. It was probably written around 90 AD. A more precise date is not available because of the general nature of the epistle.

Related Scriptures

Isaiah 2:5 sounds very similar to 1 John 1:7.

Psalm 32:5 and Proverbs 28:13 are echoed in 1 John 1:9.

Deut. 15:7-8 is reflected in 1 John 3:17.

Outline

I. Introduction, 1:1-4

II. Evidences of Eternal Life, 1:5-5:13
- A. Walking in the light: a new relationship to sin, 1:5-2:2
- B. Keeping God's commands, 2:3-6
- C. Loving God and loving others, not the world, 2:7-17
- D. Believing the doctrine of Christ, 2:18-28
- E. Practicing righteousness, 2:29-3:10a
- F. Loving our brothers, 3:10b-24
- G. Discerning false doctrine, 4:1-6
- H. Loving God and loving others, 4:7-21
- I. Believing that Jesus is the Christ, Son of God, 5:1-12

III. Epilogue, 5:13-21
- A. Purpose statement of John's letter, 5:13
- B. Assurance in prayer, 5:14-15
- C. Praying about a sinning brother, 5:16-17
- D. The believer is preserved from sin and the Devil, 5:18-20
- E. Exhortation to stay away from idols, 5:21

Lessons

God takes sin seriously, and so should we. We need to confess our sin.

Not everyone who says they are a Christian is a true Christian. At some points in the letter, John seems to be saying "talk is cheap." See Matt. 7:21.

Examining yourself to make sure you are in the faith is important; it does not run counter to the doctrine of assurance. Whether you are truly saved is the most important question you can ponder.

There are a lot of false teachers and teachings out there. We must be discerning about teaching to make sure that it matches Scriptural truth.

John urges us to love one another. 46 times in 26 verses he uses the word *love* in this book.

2 John

Summary and Message

John writes to commend the lady and her children for walking in truth and love and also to warn her that there are many antichrists propagating false teaching about Jesus. They were

spreading their teaching and John was trying to protect his friends and their churches from falling into error. They had to take care to maintain their full reward by *not* receiving the false doctrine or offering it aid and comfort by means of hospitality.

Key Verses

2 John 6 This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.

2 John 7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

2 John 9 Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.

Doctrine

Love and truth are major emphases in this short letter. John loved his friend in the sphere of truth; they had fellowship with all those who know the truth, and the truth lives in the people of God. Truth and love were the "fences" around the grace, mercy, and peace of his greeting in verse 3. Truth *and* love. Not truth *or* love, or truth without love, or love without truth.

John emphasizes the Christian teaching concerning Jesus. False doctrine can be seductive. In this case, the false doctrine was that Christ was "made into a god" or was a man who became the adopted Son of God at a later point, or that he was merely a man, a good teacher. It has a ring of "sensibility" to it because the orthodox teaching seems too hard to grasp, unclear to the unredeemed mind, against logic, or requiring too much "miracle." Thus John says in verse 8 that we must watch out so that we are not drawn away into error. The fact is that Christ is fully God and fully man, and without this, there is *no Christianity*. Teaching Christ is not God is *a very serious error*—heresy, in fact. If believed, it shows that one does not have God (v. 9), that is, is not regenerate.

Literary Features

2 John follows the typical style of a letter, with from, to, greetings, body of letter, and closing.

This is a very short letter written to an "elect lady" and her children. I understand this to be a particular individual known to the author who has children, and John is happy to hear that some of her children are walking with Christ. Some interpreters suggest the lady is a code name for a church with its members (children), but this metaphor is not clear and it is a non-literal way to interpret the text.

It is a blessing to see the tender care of the author and recipient's relationship in the final verses where he says he has a lot to write, but hopes instead to see her soon. This face-to-face fellowship in the Lord would enhance their joyful relationship. I do not think there is a romantic element here.

Author, Date Written, and Timeline

"The Elder" is a title that is used only in 2 John 1 and 3 John 1. Elder probably conveys multiple ideas—advanced age, office in the church, and spiritual maturity. Only the second and third of these is part of being a pastor in a local church.

The age aspect of "elder" is interesting because John was a very young man when he met Jesus and started out with the 12 disciples. He was not much older when Jesus turned over the care of his mother to the disciple whom he loved (John 19:26-27). By now, however, he is an old man, and has quite possibly been an elder in one or more churches in Asia Minor from around 66 to 95 AD. This would put him to around 80 years old, which was very old for that time. (The average lifespan was 25-30, but that is skewed because so many died during childhood. Many did reach their 50s to 60s and some even into their 70s.)

There are no clues in the letter that give away a specific date, but typically theologians understand John to have written 1, 2, and 3 John around the same time, around 90 AD, likely during his Ephesus ministry.

It is sad to observe that only 50-60 years after Jesus lived, false doctrine had exploded. There were people who rejected Jesus as coming in the flesh. This was absolutely ridiculous to John, who was an *eyewitness* of Jesus. He heard, saw, observed, and touched this Word of Life (1 John 1:1). This makes it clear how he could be so stringent that the lady and children would not be deceived by these false teachers, or even offer them hospitality. If they are going to continue in their wrong teaching, then they can be on their own and do their own thing. If they want Christian hospitality, they will need to become Christians!

Related Scriptures

In relation to 2 John 5 about the "new commandment," we find several linked verses in the New Testament.

John 13:34 A **new commandment** I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

1 John 2:7 Brethren, I write no **new commandment** to you, but an **old commandment** which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning.

1 John 2:8 Again, a **new commandment** I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.

This old/new commandment language is initially confusing. But I believe John is speaking about the fact that the command to love one another is not really new at all. It is as old as the Law of Moses and really as old as humanity. It represents a very basic part of the character of God that we should reflect in our relationships with others. But with the coming of Christ, we see the commandment to love in a new light, in bold colors. One came from so high to a place so low, to die a death so terrible in order to rescue us from a place so low to bring us to a place so high! No one has a greater love than that!

So, we are called to love one another with a pure heart—and fervently so (1 Tim. 1:5, 2 Tim. 2:22, 1 Peter 1:22). We are called to love our wives as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:25). We are called to love our enemies (Luke 6:27).

Verse 7 speaks of an antichrist, which is not *the* Antichrist. But there are many antichrists out and about (1 John 2:18).

Outline

I. Introduction, 1:1-3
- A. Author and recipients, 1:1-2
- B. Greeting, 1:3

II. Body of the Letter, 1:4-11
- A. John rejoices that the lady's children are walking in truth, 1:4
- B. John pleads that we love one another and obey God's commands, 1:5-6
- C. John warns about deceivers who deny the doctrine of Christ, 1:7-11

III. Closing, 1:12-13
- A. John hopes to see her face to face, 1:12
- B. Greetings sent from the lady's believing sister, 1:13

Lessons

John teaches us that sometimes hospitality is not permissible! Usually hospitality is commanded, so it sounds mean to reject hospitality, but if you offer aid to someone who *rejects* the doctrine of Christ taught in Scripture, that He is the Son of God, that He is worthy of worship, that He in fact is the second person of the Triune God (see the introduction to John's gospel), then you are sharing in his evil. Christians do not want to share in evil. You do not help the enemy, in physical war, nor in the very real spiritual war. Such comfort not only aids their evil work but confuses others as to your views. Your hospitality is far better invested in someone who is a true Christian minister. There is so little help for true Christians that they need our focused attention. It is easy if you are a nice or generous person to be taken advantage of, so we must exercise discernment. (The same goes for financial support—be discerning. Ask if there is a better or more needful way to support God's work, and if your donation is really all that necessary to a secular organization when there is a far larger audience that will donate to such a cause whereas there is a far smaller audience to donate to a conservative Christian cause.)

All of this warns us against ecumenism, which is an ever-present threat to the church today (and all the more common with recent events in the fall of 2025).

In the first section of the letter we read about commandments and love. These are not contrary to each other, and in fact, Christian teaching is not adverse to commandments at all. It is not like the Old Testament (with its 10 commandments and 600+ laws) is a law-based religion, and the New Testament is a grace religion with no commandments. The OT

was full of grace, as is the New, and the NT has a lot of imperatives just like the Old. There is a continuity…of God…of grace…of expectations…of holiness.

John is concerned with truth, the truth of the gospel and of the Scripture. We too must be eminently concerned for the truth. The boundaries of Christian love are therefore circumscribed by truth. We can love enemies and the lost, to be sure, but we do not share with them the same kind of love we share with fellow Christians because real love walks in God's commandments.

Verse 8 shows that we lose reward for unfaithful conduct, such as messing around with heretical teachers.

Revelation

For a summary of the Apocalypse, see the sermon notes at https://www.fbcaa.org/Docs/bulletins/MeaningOfRevelation.pdf.

Perhaps revisit at the very end of the series, and take the above and summarize it using the outline I have done for every other section. Maybe give it a little more oomph.

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