

Riverlakes Community Church

“Big Screen” Bible Survey, Old Testament

Dr. Bert Downs

Session 1: The Bible’s Box Top Lid (jigsaw puzzle illustration . . . need the big picture)

- Intro comments
 - How I got here: Early journeys into teaching Scripture alerted me to the reality that individuals often know a lot of pieces of the Bible, but don’t know how those pieces fit into the larger picture which is crucial to understanding their meaning and purpose.
 - This seminar and its materials make up a big picture journey through the Bible. The aim is perspective . . . A big picture perspective of the book that introduces us to God, His plan, our place, purpose, opportunities and boundaries. It’s the story in which we followers of Jesus live our lives.
 - **Pattern book: learning tool, not a dictator of practice tool;** the Pentateuch which we will look at next is presented like a spiritual journey which portrays the participants traveling from spiritual failure to fully entering God’s promises. It’s a big picture that covers generations guided by God’s assigned leaders, His “rules,” and His affirmation and correction as the journey proceeds, a journey that finally closes with a generation set to enter His promised land. Viewed closely, those spiritual travelers of old clearly face the same opportunity and challenges of those traveling that route today. And today, as then, God’s promises, fulfilled by God’s Son, is the key.
 - And the journey introduces us to folks who God called to steward his creation and lead his people. Today we call them kings, queens, prophets, sages, apostles, elders, pastors, teachers, deacons, moms, dads . . . You get the idea. They are influencers of people . . . They are leaders.
 - While this survey will involve biblical knowledge, **the aim is not so much to give that knowledge as it is to provide you a big picture and a tool to help you forming biblical knowledge for yourselves.**
 - **The big perspective relationship to sound leadership:** living our lives in a story bigger than our own; to lead that big story, it must be our own, lived out very personally and shared from the richest personal understanding and experience possible. Godly influencers need as comprehensive a perspective as their times and circumstances allow.
 - **Emphasis on function . . .** and particularly focused on the process of **maturity** which leads to **influence** which leads to **leadership**. In this instance, we’re reflecting on leadership as that influence that, in Jesus, is developed and offered through the influence our relationship with Him renders (the presence and use of spiritual gifts would be an example).

- Difference from online editions of the survey: the survey experienced at Riverlakes parallels the online versions, but due to some characteristics of live presentations, the online versions offer additional details not considered in the “live” presentation. I heartily recommend viewing an online version as time allows.
- One of the characteristics of our journey will be following big picture truths that span the Bible. For instance, the 3-point summary below outlines one of those truths . . . restoration:
 - They were driven from his presence (G.3:24;)
 - P. 515 in WTB NT . . . chart, “they shall see His face” R. 22:4
 - What was lost in Eden is regained in a new heaven and new earth . . . restoration.

- **The BP outline (big diagram; broadest view)**

The big picture chart of how the sections of the Bible fit together is really the foundation of the entire seminar. Understand it, and that understanding will help you begin to see how individual pieces of the picture fit together to provide a life-changing understanding of the meaning and application of specific events and instructions. Keep in mind that, as the New Testament passages below indicate, Jesus saw the Old Testament Scriptures (Jewish Bible) teaching about Him. So, as we read and study in the OT, we must keep that in mind as picking up on that truth will expand our understanding of the depth and breadth of the Father’s restoration plan accomplished in and through Savior Jesus, His Son.

Luke 24:27 and 44-48: After his resurrection, Jesus explained to his disciples that "beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" and that "everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled".

John 5:39 and 46: Jesus tells the religious leaders of his day, "You search the Scriptures [the Old Testament] because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me". He then explicitly states, "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me".

Eden Principle (2 Peter 3:9) *(a life-restoration path) The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*

Pattern: opportunities; boundaries; voices; and choices.

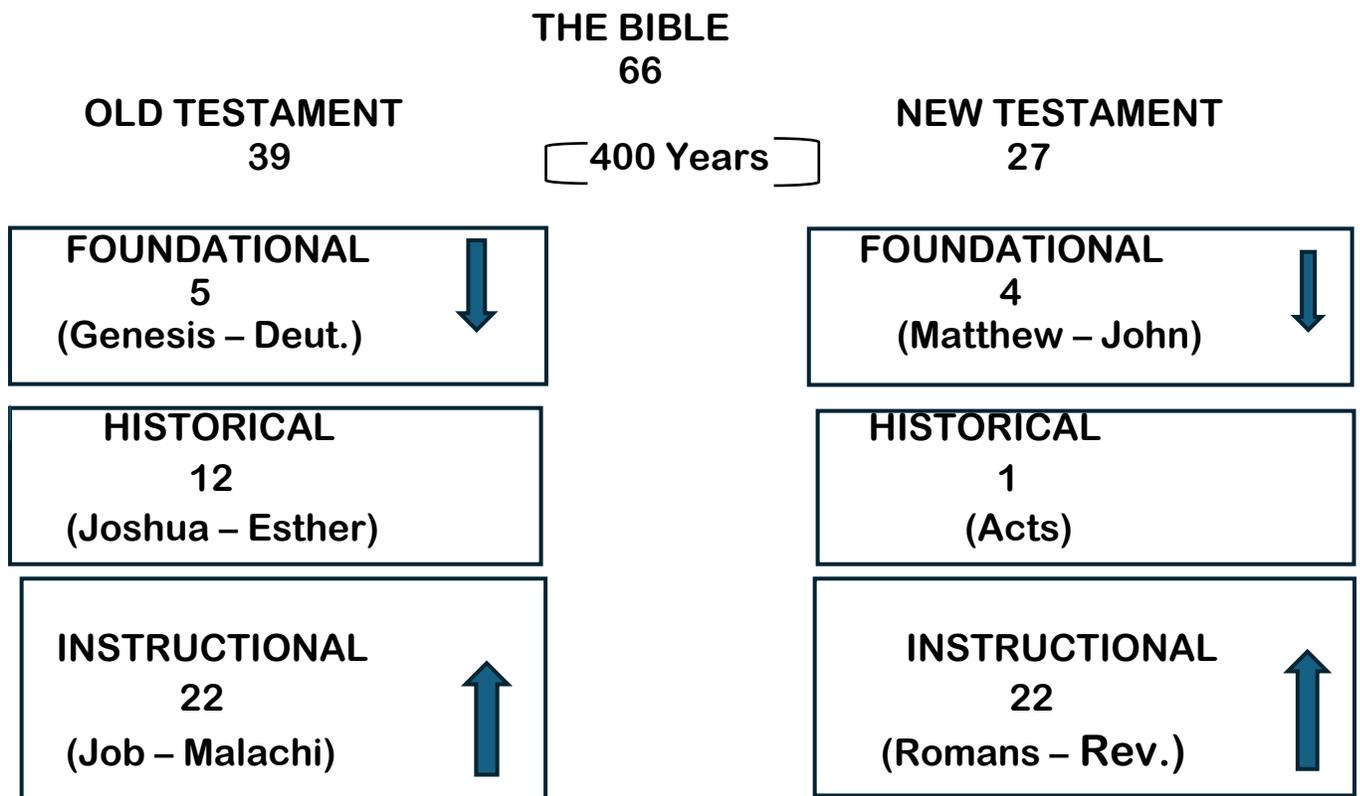
Like Adam and Eve, we have many life-impacting decisions to make, some big and some pretty routine, but all important in terms of life direction. All of them have the above pattern embedded in them, and it’s important to ask the “pattern questions”: what are the details of the opportunity? What boundaries exist that may affirm, warn about or deny the opportunity? How dependable are the voices (other people or our own thoughts and

desires) promoting the opportunity, and what is the process-affirmed choice when **rightly** considered?

Remember, even with a bad, relationship-breaking choice, God provides a way toward restitution of relationship for you and me, just as, I believe, he did for Adam and Eve. (Gen.3:21).

Session Summary

1. The Foundational section is like a bow that sends **arrows that carry biblical truths** through the pages of the Bible, Jesus being the central one of them.
2. The Historical section depicts the living out (or not) of **foundational** truths.
3. The Historical section helps us understand the **outcomes** from practicing or ignoring foundation things.
4. The Instructional section provides **direction and correction** for those living out foundational things in context.
5. The instructional books do not extend the story line; they **enhance/explain** it.



Session 2: Releasing the Arrows (principles, truths, commands)

“New eyes are especially needed in looking at this portion of Scripture. Here the story begins: foundations are laid and trajectories initiated which will move through the rest of Scripture and beyond. New eyes are especially needed in looking at this portion of Scripture. Here fundamentals of life in relationship with God and one’s fellow people are established in a manner especially needful in societies currently questioning absolutes and concrete underpinnings for behavior.” Quote from DICTIONARY OF THE OT, PENTATEUCH (TORAH)

Review:

- Session 1 . . . review the Big Picture DIAGRAM
- The Flow of Moses’ 5 Books (known as the Pentateuch; Law; Books of Moses; or Torah)
 - Creation story and opportunities offered/opportunities missed.
 - Jesus’ references these books as “Law and the Prophets.”
 - **Meaning of Torah** . . . arrows released hitting their targets; the releasing of truths (envision the archer releasing arrows of truth), many of which carry clear through the Bible.
 - **And these are some of the arrows:** choice, judgment, opportunity, sin, redemption, testing, leadership, worship, behavior, salvation, hope, restoration, etc., and Creator/creation relationship truths such as provision, hope, judgment, patience, testing, appointing, direction, assignments, leaders (shepherds), second chances, sacrificial substitutes, etc.
 - **Flow of Historical Section: how the generations got it Israel – Egypt – how they got out (IT’S A SPIRITUAL ODDESY) If you have time, reflect on your journey.**
- Characteristics of this stage:
 - **Creator:** a being responsible for creating and overseeing the universe.
 - **Cultures** – a pre-sin, sin, post-sin cultures (sin still exists but is countered with forgiveness and restoration), and in the future, a new No Sin culture . . . welcome to a new heaven and new earth!
 - **Character** – God’s (perfect) and Man’s (flawed) but awaiting judgement with perfection or rejection as the options. (God’s arrows are aimed at restoration of both culture and people through the conquering of sin; something we can’t conquer but Jesus did for us)
- Key words for each of Torah’s books (**makes this feel like a spiritual journey**)
 - Genesis – **beginnings and generations**
 - Exodus – **slavery and deliverance** (physical/emotional/intellectual/spiritual)

- Leviticus – **worship and ritual** (including practices that keep the God/man relationship healthy)
- Numbers – **failure and fulfillment** (a promise lost and renewed)
- Deuteronomy – **law and land** (retaught and retested)

- Eight Foundational People (Arrows)
 - Adam/Eve – family of firsts
 - Noah – walked with God
 - Abraham – made a blessing
 - Isaac – a lamb provided (a Jesus pointer)
 - Jacob – rebel redeemed (name change to *Israel*, “one who struggles with God)
 - Joseph – sovereignty in action
 - Moses – a shepherd sent (Some shepherd qualities below)
 - Devotion to God and his people
 - Personal sacrifice
 - Defends
 - Comforts
 - Corrects
 - Directs
 - Provides for
 - Works hard
 - Personal development
 - Deeply responsible for his own development and sin
 - Forgiven (at a price)

Note: The Foundational Books offer you a picture of Spiritual Life from beginning to end including our waiting for entrance into the ultimate promised land.

- Where do you think you may be in this picture? If you know the Lord, then you’re an arrow and you do have a place in this picture!
- **Where am I, you ask?**
 - I’ve experienced Genesis.
 - I’ve been delivered and taught like Exodus.
 - I’m still learning about worship and will never get out of Leviticus.
 - I’ve been evaluated and retested as in Numbers (and it’s not over yet!).
 - I’ve crossed the river of salvation and am still working at conquering the land (and won’t finish that in my lifetime).

So, where are you?

WHITE BOARD, Session 2

FOUNDATIONS, 5 BOOKS

Genesis; beginnings/generations

Exodus; slavery/redemption

Leviticus; ritual/relationship

Numbers; failure/fulfillment

Deuteronomy; law/land

(Joshua: promise fulfilled)

Seven Foundation Themes

Creation – beginnings explained

Judgement – expectations meant

Redemption – failures reconciled

People – called agents

Leaders – called shepherds

Covenant – agreements established

Promise – outcomes revealed

Creator . . . Culture . . . Character

Flow of the Foundational Books

- How/why how and why Israel got into Egypt/slavery
- Why/How they got out of Egypt/slavery ...
- Prep for new life and home
- Failure to occupy new home
- followed by re-learning and re-testing,
- and then 2nd opportunity and success

Key People:

- Adam/Eve
- Noah
- Abraham
- Isaac
- Jacob
- Joseph
- Moses

Session 3: Living the Law (Historical)

- Intro and Review
 - Review - a key thought or two for each book (Torah)
 - Practice being able to say the Bible books names in order through OT and NT; it's crucial to managing Bible knowledge!
 - What are the most important concepts and/or details you've learned so far?

A Christian writer observed about the historical books, “. . . among new Christians – and many older Christians as well – a relationship with God today is framed exclusively around beliefs that make little difference in the way we live.”

Not so with the Foundational books speaking into the lives found within the historical books!! With the arrows of Torah released, the people of the historical books begin to live taking hold of those arrows . . . or not! In the 1000 years of history contained in this lesson, you will see that when belief and real life connect, the result is a culture of life, health and power. Yet, when belief and everyday life disconnect, the result is selfishness, sickness and chaotic weakness. The key in these 12 books is how the leaders and the people do in living out the foundational things.

- **The Historical Books (12) in Summary**
 - 12 books: Joshua – Esther that we'll separate into 5 smaller units for which we'll do a quick topical summary and evaluate the way the leaders and the people respond to the lessons of Torah.
 - While there are many principles in play in these books, we'll focus on a prominent one in our coverage here: THE WAY LEADERSHIP GOES, SO GO THE PEOPLE. Question: **who are they all about?** About **you** or **us** or **me**? Their answers (patterns of life) will tell us a lot about where they are with the Lord and the people they lead.
 - **Unit 1: Joshua - Ruth** (a period in which there are leaders, but no kings in the land) Joshua (military leader leading Israel to conquer and occupy the land); Judges (various individual “judges” who lead Israel after Joshua); Prophets (such as Samuel), and Ruth who set a standard for faithfulness . . . along with unnamed others who do not bow to idols.
 - **Joshua** is all about _____ (US)
 - Conquest and settling
 - Obedient and leads people to obedient living
 - **Judges** is all about _____ (ME)
 - Chaotic and lawless; everyone does what's right in their own eyes.
 - **Ruth** is all about _____ (YOU)

- Historically connected to Judges but the opposite of the period
- Note: Even in tough times, God has His faithful followers (Elijah; I Kings 19 - 7000 that don't bow to Baal)

- **Unit 2: 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 Kings and 1 Chronicles:** (United Kingdom:120 years; 3 kings rule over Israel; Saul, David and Solomon with Samuel the prophet fulfilling influence role, particularly in Saul's reign)
 - **Samuel** the prophet, all about **YOU**
 - **Saul**, the first king, all about **ME**
 - **David**, the second king, **mostly all about US** (explain mostly)
 - **Solomon**, the third king, **mostly all about ME** (explain me)
 - Under which king do you think the people functioned with more Godly integrity? Why?

- **Unit 3: 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles:** DIVIDED KINGDOM
 - Israel, 19 Kings; all about ME; How did the nation do with this leadership?
 - Judah, 20 Kings; 12 mostly all about ME; the other 8 with seasons of US and YOU. How did the nation do under this leadership?

- **Unit 4: latter portions of 2nd Kings and 2nd Chronicles**, a period in God's JUDGEMENT on Israel and Judah finds Israel's people SCATTERED throughout the Assyrian empire, and later Judah's key people CONQUERED by Babylonia and taken into exile there (70 years)
 - **Assyria**, Israel removed from the land and scattered, most never to return.
 - **Babylonia**, Judah conquered and taken into exile for 70 years.
 - **Persia**, Judah allowed it to return.

- Unit 5: Ezra – Esther, which recount the experiences of the people of Judah as the RETURN TO THE LAND
 - **Zerubbabel**, US (leads temple rebuilding)
 - **Ezra**, all about YOU (reteaching people Torah)
 - **Nehemiah**, all about US (rebuilding Jerusalem)
 - **Esther**, all about YOU (saves Jews from deadly plot)

- **Life-change Path . . .**
 - **Arrow of OBEDIENCE**, 1 Samuel 15:22
 - *Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the LORD?*

*To obey is better than sacrifice,
and to heed is better than the fat of rams.*

²³*For rebellion is like the sin of divination, *
and arrogance like the evil of idolatry.*

*Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,
he has rejected you as king.*

- **OBEDIENCE** is a strategic life-quality in the spiritual life arena. Salvation is based on God’s grace and not obedience. However, obedience is a key factor in our maturation process, our growth in the Lord, and in receiving reward for this life we’re living (I Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:10)
- **Remember:** 12 Books; **10 key people**; Two key themes: as the leaders go, so go the people; And God’s covenants are not fulfilled without opposition

WHITE BOARD: SESSION 3, LIVING THE LAW

FOUNDATIONAL 5

Key Words:

Genesis; beginnings/generations

Exodus; slavery/redemption

Leviticus; ritual/relationship

Numbers; failure/fulfillment

Deuteronomy; law/land

(**Joshua:** promise fulfilled)

INSTRUCTIONAL

22 Books:

Poetical 5

Prophetical 17

HISTORICAL

David (1000 BC)

Ezra (500 BC)

Joshua

J

R

1S

2s

1k

2k

1C

2C

E

N

Esther

Pre-Kings, 1400 – 1050 BC

United Kingdom, 1050 – 931 BC

Divided Kingdom, 931 BC

Israel, 19/0, scattered

Judah, 20/8, exile, 600 BC.

Return, 530 - 420

Session 4: Poets and Prophets: Sharpening the Heart, Mind and Soul

REVIEW THE BIG PICTURE UP TO THIS POINT . . .

Introduction

Poetical books: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs focus on human wisdom, reflection, and worship, exploring the meaning of life and the relationship with God through personal meditation, songs, and proverbs. Emphasis: **COMPLETION**

Prophetic books: Isaiah to Malachi are characterized by God's messages delivered by prophets, often through visions and symbolic language, to guide Israel toward God's righteousness, justice, and future promises, particularly the coming of the Messiah and often warn of judgement. Emphasis: **CORRECTION**

Poetic Books

- **Purpose:** To provide wisdom for daily living, express profound emotional and spiritual experiences, and offer guidance for worship and prayer.
- **Content:** Contains philosophical reflections, meditations on life's meaning, and practical wisdom for living virtuously.
- **Literary Style:** Uses poetic devices like parallel thought, imagery, and analogy, but without the rhyme and meter of modern poetry.
- **Examples:** (see how these key verses advance major themes)
 - **Job:** Explores suffering and faith. 13:15; 23:10 (**enduring faithfulness**)
 - **Psalms:** Songs and prayers of worship and personal expressions of life 19:14 (**personal growth and security**)
 - **Proverbs:** Wise sayings and proverbs. Skill for living 1:7; mention 3:1-12 (**transition from fruitless to fruitful living**)
 - **Ecclesiastes:** Meditations on the meaning of life. EXAMPLE 8:17 (**finding life's ultimate fulfillment**)
 - **Song of Solomon:** A love poem with spiritual significance. 8:7 (**True love for one's spouse and for God**)
 - Some authors and number of writings: David (75+), Sons of Korah (11), Solomon (2 psalms, 3 books), Ethan (1), Heman (1), Nathan (1) and Moses (1psalm, 5 books). A substantial number are anonymous. Ezra recovered and compiled many if not most after the exile and may have titled most of them.

Prophetic Books (Major/Minor) Didactic Literature

- **Purpose:** To relay God's direct messages primarily to His people, often calling them to repent from sin and highlighting God's justice, righteousness and steps to a Godly life.

- **Content:** Contains prophecies about future events, divine warnings, and announcements of God's plan, including the coming of the Messiah.
- **Literary Style:** While often poetic, it uses vivid and sometimes strange imagery, visions, and symbolic language to convey its messages.
- **Examples:**
 - **Major Prophets:** Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel.
 - **Minor Prophets:** Hosea, Joel, Jonah, etc.
- Where do they fit in history? Their position in history will tell you much about their message: Pre-exile/exile/post exile (exile goes for 70 years starting about 600 BCE)
- Old Testament ends with Nehemiah, 440 – 430 BCE

Pre-Exile Prophets (all pre 600 BCE):

To Judah: Habakkuk, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Micah, Zephaniah, and Lamentations.

To Israel: Hosea and Amos

To Edom: Obadiah

To Assyria: Jonah and Nahum

Exile Prophets to Judah: Ezekiel and Daniel (600 – 530 BCE)

Post-Exile Prophets to Judah: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi (520 BC – 420 BC)

Note: Prophetic Books are placed based on time and point of need. They are need-centered writings with both warning and promise (current and future) as elements.

- Key Differences Between These Two Sections Summarized
 - **Source of Message:** Poetic books are often a reflection of humankind's spiritual journey (person centered) and search for meaning, while prophetic books are primarily God's direct messages to man (more God-centered).
 - **Focus:** Poetic books focus on internal life, worship, and wisdom, while prophetic books focus on external actions, divine judgments, and future predictions. Both point toward the development of a well-lived, God-centered life.
 - Poetical/Prophetic Comparison (Next Page)

Poetic	Prophetic
experiential	behavioral
Present tense	Future tense
Common language	Symbolic language
Human relationships	Spiritual relationships
Expressed Beauty	Reserved Beauty
Participation emphasis	Prohibition emphasis
Questions of Life now	Projections of life future
Laws of life lived	Laws of life celebrated
External (do)	Internal (feel/think)
Pleasure	Discipline
Live for Now	Live for the Future
Maximizing present potential	Averting future judgment
Invitation: how to live	Warning: how not to live
Forthtelling	Foretelling
Now relationship w/God	Then relationship w/God

Three general character types featured (particularly in the wisdom literature):

The Wise: embraces God's covenant and learns the skill of living out the covenant in everyday life. **The Fool:** steadily resists the covenant even though he may be among God's people; resists the offer of forgiveness in the covenant, is a danger to others through his influence, causes grief to his parents, but is not beyond hope. **The Simple:** Not firmly committed to wisdom or foolishness and easily misled. Doesn't have the discipline needed to gain and grow in wisdom.

Session 5: 400 Silent Years

(420 – 4 BC, ending w/Malachi and launching with John the Baptist)

Review:

Poetical: Name books and a key word for each

Prophetical: List prophetical books for each period (pre-exile, exile, post-exile) and to whom they prophesied

Poets/Prophets Comparison Diagram (see S4 notes): choose 3 – 5 comparisons and explore their implications for believers.

Include application from previous session if there is time: *(RL friends – we didn't have time to do this one. However, you can see how it builds on our first 4 sessions.)*

FAITH

- 1 Builds on Foundational Truths
- 2 Matures on applying applicational truths to life.
- 3 Thrives on outcomes of foundational applications.
- 4 Grows in the renewal of foundational truths.

400 Silent Years (Intertestamental Period)

The period from the end of the Old Testament to the beginning of the New Testament, 400 years (420 BCE to 5 BCE), is anything but silent. It is a crucial time during which God is preparing His people, and the region in which they live, for the arrival of His Son, the promised Messiah. Sadly, “He came to His own and His own received Him not.” (John 1:11). However, the events of this period and those that would follow during Jesus’ life will give them every opportunity. It is by those opportunities God the Father was filling up the time (Gal. 4:4) making ready for the introduction of His son that we who believe could receive adoption as sons (and daughters) of the Father. Let’s see what made these years so amazing. There are three key areas of historical develops that raised anticipation for Messiah’s coming at the time of Christ’s birth.

POWERS

Each of the following powers contributed to the time of readiness reflected in the New Testament.

Persia conquered Babylonia and practiced letting conquered people return to their homelands. Many, but not all from Judah returned as did some who were scattered when Assyria conquered Israel. Persia’s policy of freedom for Judah lasted from about 539 to 531 BCE.)

Greece, rapidly becoming a major power in the region during the end of Persian rule, conquered Persia and took possession of its lands including Judah. Their reign over the area lasted from 331 to 167 BC. They were active in ruling and introduced a common language through their conquered peoples, taught them to be future-minded, built education systems, influenced culture and its sophistication, and changed the character of many that they ruled. These changes would last beyond the lifetime of Jesus.

Israel, filled with hope based on religion, past realities, emotion, commandments and tradition, conducted a revolt in 167 BCE and removed the Grecian rulers. Known as the Maccabean Revolt, it was a response to persecution, forced Grecian customs, desecration of the temple, the urging of key Israeli leaders to overthrow Greece, and Grecian decline. A priest Mattathias and his son, Judas Maccabeus (the hammer) led a resistance group known as Maccabees. They were able to overthrow Greece, and Israel ruled itself until 63 BCE.

Rome: (63 BC – 135 AD) During the end of Israel's independent rule, their leaders faced heavy pressure from Greece and others that would like to control the region. Under pressure, a decision was made to seek Rome's help, and Rome helped by conquering them and ruling the region for well more than a century. Israel had to face the idiosyncrasies of Herodian Kings, Roman law, an enforced peace, a military enabled stability, local government controlled by Rome, roads and governing systems development and pervasive slavery (estimates suggest that at least 30%, and more, were slaves. Much of Roman progress was built on the backs of slaves.

Good News from the Bad News: While times for Judah and Israel were often difficult, the various powers made some significant contributions. Persia's policies introduced a renewed taste for freedom and allowed for the rebuilding of important structures and practices in the region. Greece's contributions included an establishment of education and a common language throughout its conquered peoples. Greek would become the language of commerce wherever Greece ruled and would remain after Greece was no longer in power. And Greek would become the language of the Hebrew Bible, facilitating the broad advance of the Gospel as the early church expanded. Israel would gain a taste for independence, a sense of identity, and a deeply held hope that would empower its future. And finally, Rome would establish systems, cities, immigrant populations and roads that would all facilitate the expansion of churches and the Gospel during early church development. These were truly dynamic times.

PUBLICATIONS

Publications of several types also contributed to the energy of the New Testament times. Here's a summary of those publication types:

Apocrypha – (meaning hidden, secret, and profound) a collection of ancient religious texts, primarily biblical writings, that are not considered part of the accepted canonical scriptures by most Christian denominations (Tobit, Maccabees, Psalm 151, Baruch, Judith, Book of Wisdom, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, and 1 & 2 Maccabees, along with some additions to the books of Daniel and Esther. You can find good summaries online. Like many pseudo-Christian publications, they were widely discredited, but nevertheless, led many in unfruitful and at times, ruinous spiritual directions.

Pseudepigrapha – Spurious or pseudonymous writings and especially Jewish writings ascribed to various biblical patriarchs and prophets but composed within approximately 200 years of the birth of Jesus Christ. Again, many of these reflect questionable authorship and content, and are readily discredited and yet, had influence over many. Their positive side is that they reveal significant cultural characteristics of their times.

Dead Sea Scrolls - The Dead Sea Scrolls are a collection of ancient manuscripts, primarily religious texts, discovered in caves near the Dead Sea between 1947 and 1956, with most dating from the 3rd century BCE to the 1st century CE. Oldest surviving fragments of the Hebrew Bible, along with Jewish sectarian writings, hymns, prayers, and documents about daily life, provide invaluable insights into the Second Temple period and the emergence of Judaism and Christianity.

Septuagint (LXX), a Greek version of the Hebrew Bible (or Old Testament), including the Apocrypha, made for Greek-speaking Jews in Egypt in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC and adopted by the early Christian Churches became the Bible of the early church development. This was a major tool along with the broad use of Greek as a stimulus for successful Christian missionary endeavor and the expansion of the early church.

POLITICS

Politics of the day was commonly mixed with Jewish religion during the time of Christ. Many temple priests and other Jews of influence sided with Rome, and Rome used them to govern and control the people of this conquered region. (It's a practice Rome preferred in all the regions they controlled; recruiting influential locals who would sell out to Rome, reward them well, and put them in charge.) What follows are summaries of groups that found themselves in significant disagreement and sometimes conflict over this Roman policy.

Sanhedrin/Scribes

The Sanhedrin was a Jewish tribunal (71 people) which exercised criminal and civil authority over Israel; It was Roman controlled and supported. The Scribes were

professional students of Scripture who taught and wrote interpretation of the Law of God, and who historically questioned and opposed the influence of the Sanhedrin.

Temple / Synagogue

The temple was the central, formal place of Jewish religion and worship. The Synagogue was the local place of religious affiliation, instruction and practice. In modern day terms, the Temple leadership consisted mostly of liberals who espoused Hebrew tradition but supported Roman control. The synagogues were local both in place and character, much more conservative, and untrusting of urban leadership and its Roman connection.

Sadducees / Pharisees

The Sadducees were an aristocratic group which was controlled by the High Priest and oversaw the Jerusalem temple. The Pharisees were a lay movement of middle-class religious Judaism known for its strict adherence to Jewish law and tradition. The Jewish populace in general revered the temple but respected the Pharisees so there were many tensions attached to these groups.

Herodians/Essenes

Herodians were primarily political supporters and household members of the Herodian dynasty. They often had royal favor within the Jerusalem/Judea upper class cultures. The Essenes were a distinct Jewish sect known for their ascetic lifestyle, strict adherence to Jewish law and communal living (separatists). They eliminated as much contact as possible from those more connected to Rome, often living in remote areas with little or no contact with others. The Essenes kept records of their life and practices that have proven invaluable for cultural studies today.

Publicans/Zealots

The Publicans were wealthy Jews who paid Rome for the privilege of collecting taxes. They got rich by collecting the required taxes plus more. Of course, they were not popular within the broader Jewish society. The Gospel writer Matthew was a Publican. Zealots were an informal political party with religious underpinnings which refused to pay taxes, and used violence, force and deception trying to free Israel from its enemies and their injustices. The disciple Simon was a zealot. I'll be Matthew and Simon had "interesting" discussions!

Philosophies:

There were many pre-Christian philosophies that had influence during this time as well. They largely fall under the umbrella of Ancient Greek philosophy, including Early (Pre-Socratic) Greek philosophy, Classical Greek philosophy (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle), and the later Hellenistic philosophies like Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Cynicism. Other pre-Christian philosophies include Neoplatonism, Gnosticism, and various Pagan traditions from the Greco-Roman, Celtic, and other cultures.

Silent Years Summary

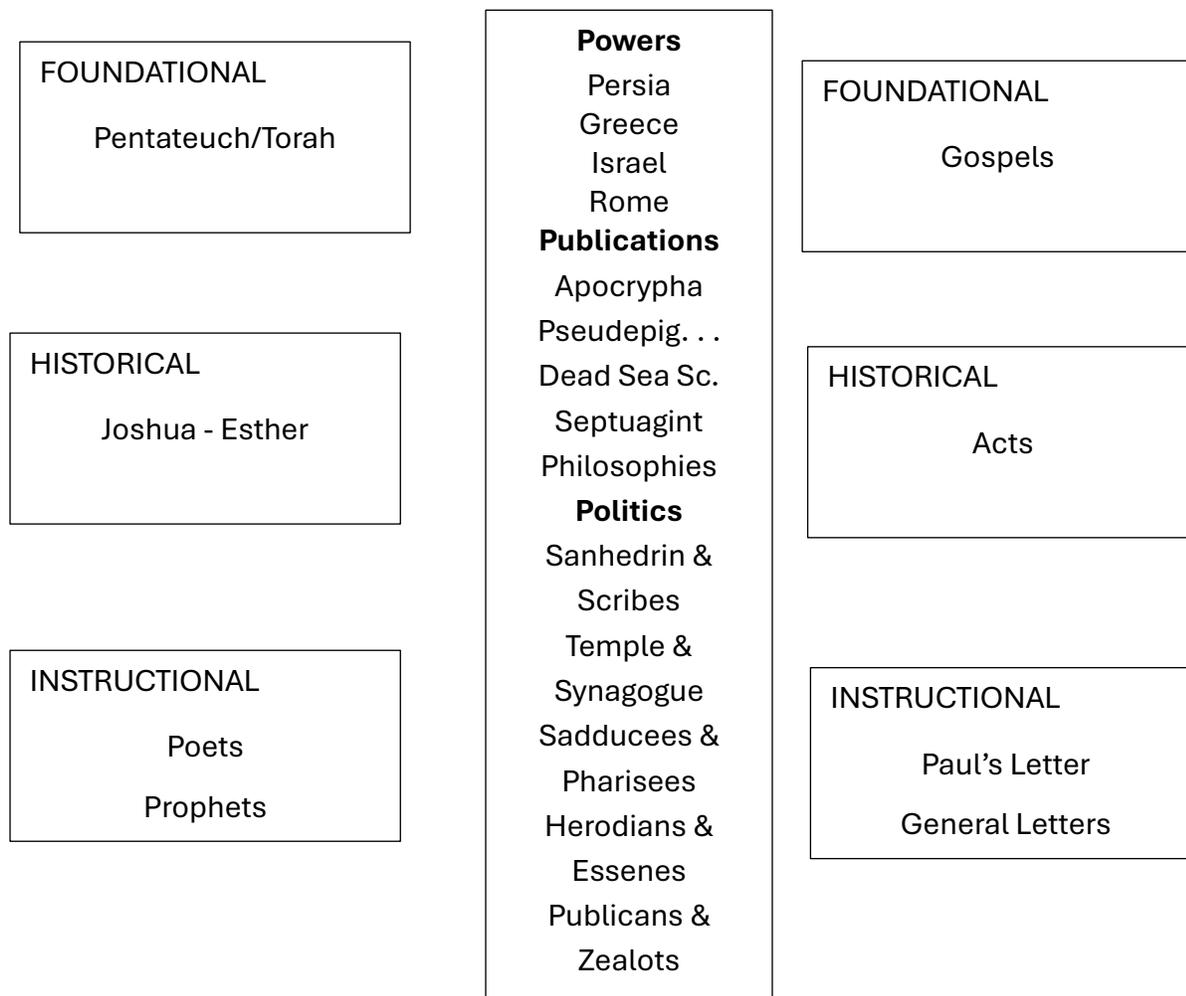
The silent years are marked by the following:

- A fight for Hebrew IDENTITY in the midst of many religions, dangerous politics, competition for power and position, and ever-changing rulers and conditions
- Conflicts between those who want to COMPROMISE to fit the prevailing culture and those who want to SEPARATE to preserve the traditional culture.
- A time of INTENSITY over values, relationships, beliefs, hope, religions, competition, wealth, rule and future.

The times were clearly “full” and waiting the coming of a voice they hadn’t heard in over 400 years . . . the voice of a prophet

WHITE BOARD

SESSION 5



Session 6: King, Servant, Man and God

- Review the journey so far with emphasis on 400 Silent Years
- Four pictures of the Life of Jesus
 - **Matthew: The King** (1:1 and 21:5)
 - King (document: King's resume; sermon on the mount, His ruling policies and expectations)
 - Jewish emphasis
 - Author was a tax collector (Publican)
 - Emphasis: making disciples
 - Genealogy: heritage qualifies him as the king
 - Themes: Jesus as Messiah and King; introducing a new community of faith; great commission – making disciples; kingdom citizenship and character.
 - Keys: OT fulfillment; kingdom citizenship; discipleship; future experiences and events.
 - Emphasizes the will.
 - **Mark: The Servant** (10:45 – give his life to serve)
 - Jesus as the Servant (His personal ministry work exemplifying service)
 - Audience: Roman
 - Mark was a missionary.
 - Be a servant (emphasis on “immediately”- do it now, don't delay)
 - Themes: power and authority; suffering; humility; imitation and self-denial (*passages?*)
 - Emphasizes strength.
 - **Luke: The Perfect Man** (v. 19:10)
 - Jesus as the Son of Man
 - Audience: Greek
 - Author: physician; student/historian; pattern person; knows people
 - Point: seek and save the lost
 - Emphasis: Humanity of Christ
 - Themes: God's rule over history; affirmation of teaching; coming of HS; godly practices in life; growing up paradox (weak become strong; poor become wealthy; last become first, etc.)
 - God's beauty in humanity, love for all humanity; seeking to save; assurance of the Jesus story; God is in the details.
 - Emphasis on the Head/Mind

- **John: Son of God** (John 1:1)
 - Audience: Global
 - Author: a fisherman
 - Focal Point: believe and have life.
 - Feature: Miracles (7 plus 1, His resurrection)
 - Jesus is God; source of eternal life; unity of the Godhead in redemption; believers experience salvation now; called to a faithful, fruitful mission; indwelling of Godhead.
 - Eternal life; grace and truth; executive summary Ch. 13-17; evangelistic
 - Emphasis on the Heart

Application: John 13:1, “Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.”

“... He loved them to the end” John. A Gospel Agent’s Journey of Belief, Ju. 13 - 17

- What did John want us to make of this last phrase of 13:1?
 - Explain the meaning of “end” in this passage: cessation vs. completion
 - Some supporting scripture: Col. 2:9-10; Eph. 3:19; Phil. 1:6; II Cor. 3:18; James 1:2-4; I Peter 5:10; Phil. 3:12
- Reporting or reflecting?
 - He’s reflecting years of seeing Christ’s work, post resurrection
 - John’s Gospel written some 30 or so years after the crucifixion.
 - Why is that important? John had time to see that what Jesus predicted and put in motion regarding His ongoing ministry through His disciples was real and reflected their completion and Jesus’ commitment to His mission’s completion.
 - The purpose of John’s Gospel? That, in seeing the complete nature of Christ’s mission, we will embrace His commitment to make us complete.
 - John 20:30-31 – the Gospel of Completion
- A disciple’s role . . .
 - John 17:18 – (Jesus to the Father) “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.”
 - A disciple in character and training; an AGENT in action: A person or organization providing a particular service on behalf of another person or group.

Session 7: The Gospel Hits the Road (Acts)

- **Introduction**

- Review the Gospels (note that faith grows in and is transmitted by works.)
Note: Ephesians 2:8-10, saved by grace through faith and developed through works planned for us by God. In Acts we're going to see that faith works and grows through God's chosen agents.
- The Mandate:
 - Acts 1:8, But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.
 - Matthew 28:18-20, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

- **Some Big Picture realities regarding Acts****

- A pattern book (pattern repeated in each section: birth, growth, opposition, continued growth, expansion)
- It's an adventure (life of adventure for Christ's followers; 2 Cor. 11, read of Paul's "adventures." Ready for some?)
- Expansive in its organization: expansion is what the book is about.
- It's a summary of early church life (not the whole picture; similar developments are happening elsewhere)
- Sermons make up one-third of the book (Peter, Steven, Paul. Topics: the person and work of Christ and the resurrection (if Christ be not risen . . .))
- Ministries of key people: Peter, Phillip and Paul dominate.
- Important places: shifting of the center of church/Christian development; Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, etc.
- The book represents a larger picture of Gospel outreach, but not the entire story. The cycle of expansion of the church continues today as it has since Jesus' time.
- NT history is very compact compared to the OT (OT history covers thousands of years, NT barely 100 years).

- **Understanding Acts (faith and foundations fulfilled)**
 - James 2:17 . . . faith without works is dead.
 - Faith is best transmitted through works (Eph. 2 to support this: works prepared beforehand so that you should walk in them)
 - 2 Peter 1:5 forward: supplement faith by virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection and brotherly affection with love. These keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful.

WHITE BOARD, AN OUTLINE OF ACTS HISTORY . . .

Sections and Emphases of Acts

	Jerusalem	Judea/Samaria	Beyond
Chapters	1 – 7	8-12	13 - 28
○ Person	Peter	Phillip	Paul
○ Audience	Jewish	Samaritans	Gentiles
○ Pattern	Birth	Growth	Expansion
○ Keys	Spirit	Persecution	Preaching
○ Keys cont.	Power	People	Paths
○ Cities	Jerusalem	Antioch	Rome

Dates c. 30 AD: Ascension of Christ coming of HS; 30-31, Stephen; 31, Paul’s conversion; 34 – 37, Peter’s ministry to Gentiles; 48 – Jerusalem Council; 49-52, 2nd Missionary journey; 53-55, 3rd Missionary journey; 57, Paul’s arrest in Jerusalem; 59, Paul’s shipwreck on Malta; 61-63, imprisonment in Rome. **(33 years total)**

Arrows: empowerment; witness; cost; integrity, unity, cornerstone of resurrection, response, continuation of Jesus’ work; preservation; persecution

Session 8: NT Instructional Letters to Leaders and Churches

- Review: Acts (see relationship between works and maturity)
- Overview
 - Letters as a divine medium (tool for the Lord's expression)
 - Guiding the church in its birth and growth – 9 letters
 - Guiding the church in teaching and leadership – 4 letters
 - Countering opposition and fostering disciple maturation (overcoming immaturity and its result, decline) – 9 letters
 - Emphasis on very personal qualities of Christ's Church

The NT Instructional House (see inserted page at end of this session)

- The NT letters connect to the unfolding of the church in Acts and are instructional in nature addressing the needs of both young and still-growing churches and of mature and beginning-to-age and decline churches and believers.
- Romans and Hebrews form the cornerstone letters for their respective emphases.
- The letter authors include Paul (13), John (4), James (1), Jude (1), and one unknown author.
- They were written between 40 – 90 CE and have a very personal tone appropriate for the very personal qualities that should be embodied within a church family.

ROMANS – REVELATION

- Paul's Letters to Churches, Romans – II Thessalonians
 - Community oriented: emphasize character, connections and corrections needed to keep community united and mission effective.
 - Emphasis on birth and maturing growth of young churches
 - Teaching, doctrine, and correction folded into practical examples of both healthy and unhealthy church situations with continued, healthy growth.
- Paul's Letters to Leaders, I Timothy -Philemon
 - I Timothy: growth of a spiritual leader and the things he needs to know and practice.
 - II Timothy: the spirit of a mentor/mentee relationship, and the qualities that go into the relationship.
 - Titus: church growth and spiritual influence through management

- Philemon: the power of influence through example
- General Letters to Churches, Hebrews - Revelation
 - Addressed to aging churches and individual believers about the challenges facing those groups.
 - Offers warning and correction to age-related church and individual believer challenges.
 - Emphasizes effective church practices and practical approaches to reversing decline.
 - Points toward believer sanctification (spiritual growth) as a key to reversing downward trends for individuals and church communities.

MESSAGES FROM THE CORNERSTONE BOOKS

- Romans: the emphasis of the cornerstone of Paul's letters
 - Sin: that no one escapes the reality of sin with its present and future implications
 - Salvation: God offers, through His Son and by faith, the solution to the sin dilemma and its eternal implications
 - Sanctification: those who put their trust in Jesus are saved from sin's grasp and are being set apart by the Spirit of God for a life of redeemed excellence
 - Sovereignty: God is sovereignly in control of the "salvation process"
 - Service: the outcome of the process in the fitness for and availability of believers for the work of Christ in the world

- Hebrews: the emphasis of this general letter for the health of church communities and believers is built on five warnings.
 - Warning 1: beware of "drift" from that which you know and should practice in your relationship with Christ and His work (Chapter 2)
 - Warning 2: avoid "delayed obedience" which can lead to an "evil, unbelieving heart." (Chapter 3)
 - Warning 3: don't fall into the trap of "failing to practice what you know" with respect to the Christian life for that failure leads to extended spiritual immaturity and ineffectiveness (Chapters 5-6)
 - Warning 4: after tasting salvation don't go on sinning for the result has deep personal and community implications (Chapter 10)
 - Warning 5: don't regard lightly the discipline of the Lord for it is crucial in growing in your sonship under God's watchful instruction. (Chapter 11)

SEE "INSTRUCTIONAL HOUSE" ILLUSTRATION ON PAGE 25

Session 9: Connecting the Pieces

- Final Review (Find a piece of blank paper and create the structure diagram for the major sections of the Bible.)
 - OT
 - Foundational: Pentateuch/Torah
 - Historical: Joshua - Esther
 - Instructional: Poetical/Prophetical
 - 400 Silent Years
 - Rulers (Persia, Greece, Self-rule, Rome)
 - Readings (Septuagint; Apocryphal; Pseudepigrapha.)
 - Rivals? (Pharisees/Sadducees; Temple/Synagogue; Publicans/Zelots)
 - NT
 - Foundational: Gospels
 - Historical: Acts, the expansion of the Church
 - Instructional: Letters of instruction for church and believer birth, growth, renewal and impact
- Jude: On Maturity and Ministry (rooted; reaching; real)
 - Audience (v. 1-2) – believers who are loved and kept in Jesus.
 - Purpose (v. 3) return to effectively contending for the faith.
 - Keys to contending (vv. 20 – 23): be rooted, be reaching, be real . .
 - All based on our relationship with the ever-faithful, always assuring Savior Jesus, our Lord who, “. . . *is able to keep you from stumbling and present you blameless before the presence of his glory with get joy.*”
 - **Final word:** we can have an effective ministry without being grown up, but we can't if we're not growing up. Put it in terms of a journey, we never arrive, but we're always arriving. **Travel well!**

Instructional House.pdf

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The Bible: "A Big Picture Perspective" Dr. Bert Downs

The "Instructional House," ... distinctive themes and relationships among the NT letters

PAUL'S TO CHURCHES (9)

GENERAL TO BELIEVERS (9)

PAUL'S LEADERS (4)

I TIM. PHIL.

II THESS. REVELATION

Differences

COMMUNITY BIRTH TEACHING PRINCIPAL DOCTRINAL JUSTIFICATION

INDIVIDUALS GROWTH APPLYING PRACTICE PRACTICAL SANCTIFICATION

LIFE CYCLE

ROMANS HEBREWS

SUB-FLOOR: ACTS

FOUNDATION: 4 GOSPELS

the application

New-warnings
JS - faith
Pk - suffering
Rom - Fellowship
Pk - command
Pk - 7 churches

- General notes on The House ...

AUTHORS: PAUL (13), JOHN (4), PETER (2), JAMES (1) JUDE (1) UNKNOWN (1)
DATES: 40 - 90 AD, JAMES THE OLDEST AND JOHN'S THE NEWEST
ORGANIZATION: OPENING (AUTHOR, RECIPIENT, SALUTATION, PRAYER); BODY (NO PATTERN); CLOSING (PLANS, REQUESTS, GREETINGS, AFTER THOUGHTS, BLESSING)
REMEMBER THESE ARE LETTERS ... THEY'RE PERSONAL
READ THEM FOR BIG PICTURE ELEMENTS AND FEELINGS

The Cornerstone Books (notes) ...

- **Romans:** FAITH - FINDING OF NEW/ETERNAL LIFE & growing on it
 - OUTLINE: SIN, SALVATION, SET APART, SOVEREIGNTY, SERVICE
 - FIND ALL OF THESE ELEMENTS SCATTERED THROUGH THE OTHER PAULINE LETTERS
- **Hebrews:** FAITH - GROWING IN THE NEW/ETERNAL LIFE RESTORING THE NEW LIFE and WARNING!
 - OUTLINE: WORD, OBEDIENCE, PRACTICE, SIN, CORRECTION
 - FIND ALL OF THESE ELEMENTS SCATTERED THROUGH FOLLOWING LETTERS