travel guide
TO THE BIBLE

TOM CASTOR

www.clearandsimplemedia.org

linguistically simple, theologically clear,
biblically faithful

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Scripture passages in this book are based on four Bible translations that are designed with an ESL reader in mind.

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PREFACE

We wrote this book with two kinds of people in mind.

We wrote it to help new English readers. We also wrote it to help people who are just starting to read the Bible.

To help the new English readers, we wrote the book in simple English. We chose our words from a list of only 1600 Basic English words. When we needed to use a word that was not in that list, we put a mark like this * beside it. Then we made a WORD LIST in the back of the book. All of the words with the mark * are there. Then we wrote a short note about what each word means. You will find all of the PEOPLE and all of the PLACES mentioned in the book in that WORD LIST as well.

Today, about 750 million people speak English as a first language. Another 750 million people, who do not speak English as a first language, can also speak and read English. Even more people are learning the English language. The British Council says that by the year 2020, almost 2 billion people will be studying English. We wrote this book with those people in mind.

We also wrote this book to help those who are new to the Bible. We believe that the Bible is the most important book that has ever been written. So we want as many people as possible to read and understand it. This book will help. It will not answer every question that someone may have about the Bible. But it will help the reader get a good start. It will help them get an idea of how the Bible fits together. It will introduce the people in each book. And it will tell the reader what they can expect to find as they read the Bible book-by-book.

Our hope is that this book will help you read the Bible and help you understand what you read. We also hope that, as you read, you will find the God that the Bible speaks about. We love the God of the Bible. We hope that our little book will help you love him too.

DEDICATION

I write this book with a hope that it will honour God and bring honour to the people who have helped me write it.

My grandfather, Leland Webber, loved the Bible. His passion for it helped me love it too. My wife, Lee June (Parks) Castor, has shown me what it means to live what the Bible teaches in everyday life for more than 40 years. Professor John Sailhamer has helped me understand the Bible. His books and his outlook on the Old Testament were a great help to me as I wrote this book.

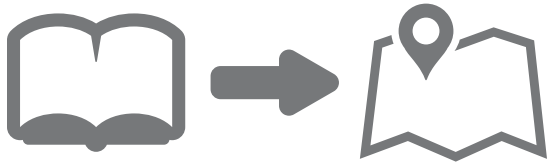
A special thank you to Allison Sprague of Allison Sprague Editorial Services. Her expertise and care were deeply appreciated as we worked through the multiple rewrites of this book. Thank you to Jason Chittum of Jason Chittum Graphic Design (www.jasonchittum.com). Jason did both the layout and cover design for this Travel Guide to the Bible. Thank you, as well, to Catherine Strode Parks whose keen eye for detail helped get the book ready for press.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever visited a far-away place? Have you gone to a place where you had never been before? A trip like that can be fun. But it can also be frightening. You could get lost because you do not know your way. This is especially true if there is no one to ask for help. The best way to visit a new place is to have a guide. It is even better if the guide is a friend. A friend can help you find your way.

Sometimes, if you do not have a guide, the next best thing to have is a map. There are many different kinds of maps. Some maps show every detail. They show how tall the mountains are and show each turn and bridge along the way. But there are other kinds of maps as well. Sometimes a friend may draw a map for you on a small piece of paper. This map will not show every detail. But it will give you enough information to help you find your way. It can help you get back on the right road if you are lost.



This book is like a map. It is like the map that a friend might draw on a small piece of paper. It is a 'map' to help you understand the Bible. It will not tell you everything about the Bible. But it will help you find your way as you read the Bible book by book.

The Bible is a large book made up of many smaller books. You may want to look at this map before you start reading a new book of the Bible. The map will help you look for the important people and places in each book. It will help you get all the way through a section of reading. When you finish one bit of the book, then you can go through the next part. Soon, you will have read the entire Bible – the story of how God acted to save us through his son, Jesus.

This book is a place to begin. After you read the entire Bible, it will be time to read it again. You will learn even more the next time you read it. In fact, you will understand the Bible more every time you read it.

Sometimes, this book will use words that come right out of the Bible. Those sayings will be inside marks **'like this'.**[1] At the end of the chapter, you will find notes. These notes will show you where you can find these words in your Bible. Each note will have the name of the Bible book that the words come from. Numbers will follow each book name. They may look like this – 2:3. Those numbers tell you where to find these words in that book of the Bible. The first number tells you the chapter. The second number tells you the verse in that chapter.

For example, Genesis 2:3 means that you will find the passage in the book of Genesis, chapter 2 and verse 3. Most Bibles in print use this method to show you where to find any section in the Bible.

SO? ARE YOU READY TO READ THE BIBLE?

Before you begin, let us learn a few things about what kind of book the Bible is.

THREE SECTIONS TO THE TRAVEL GUIDE

1 INTRODUCTION

First, a few pages will introduce you to the Bible. These parts tell you what the Bible is about. They tell you where it came from. They tell you why it is so important.

2 THE BIBLE

The second part is the longest part. This part will tell you about each book in the Bible, one book at a time. Each book will be listed in the order that it appears in the Bible.

3 THE WORD LIST

The third part is a Word List. This list contains words that are used in the book that you may not know. This Word List is important. That is why you will find a mark that looks like this (*) next to some of the words that you read. That mark means that the word is in the Word List at the back of the book. You will see this mark * on words from the Word List the first time that word is used in each chapter. The Word List gives the meaning of each word so that you can understand it better. The Word List will help you understand many important ideas in the Bible. You will also find that all of the PEOPLE and the PLACES mentioned in the book are in that WORD LIST as well.

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

INTRODUCTION | CHAPTER ONE

What is the Bible? The Bible is a book. In many ways, it is like any other book. However, in some ways, it is like no other book. There are many ways that the Bible is a different kind of a book.

1 First, the Bible is one book made up of many parts. When we talk about these parts, we call them the books of the Bible. So the Bible is one book, made up of many books.

2 Second, more than one person wrote the books in the Bible. Many different people wrote them. The writers of the Bible came from many different places. They wrote over many centuries. Some wrote only one book. Some wrote more than one book. We know some of the writers well. They were men like Moses,* David,* Solomon,* Ezra* and Paul.* These five men wrote much of the Bible. Many of the stories in the Bible are about these men as well. We do not know who wrote some of the books. We can make a good guess, but we cannot be certain.

3 Third, the books of the Bible are not all the same. Some of the books are long. Some of the books are as short as a personal letter. Some books tell the history of the world and of God's people in particular. Some are books of laws. Some are books of poems and songs. Some of the books are letters that one of the men who followed Jesus wrote to a group of people. This is what makes the Bible so interesting. It contains many different types of writing.

When you start to read the Bible, you will discover something. The Bible is not a simple book. The writers did not explain everything that they wrote. So we need to find out all we can about each writer. We need to find out when they wrote. We need to know who they wrote to. But remember this. The writers of the Bible wanted us to understand their words. They wanted to be clear. They knew that what they were writing was very important. So they wanted everyone to understand what they were saying. They wanted people to remember these words for a long time to come.

We can also be sure that God wants us to understand what they wrote. That is why God helped the writers as they were writing. That is why he helps us as we read these words today. That brings us to the biggest difference between the Bible and all other books. The Bible is not just words from men. The Bible is the word of God.

THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD

INTRODUCTION | CHAPTER TWO

The Bible* is like other books in many ways. But there is one way that the Bible is like no other book. In fact, it is the only book of its kind. The Bible is the word of God.

What does it mean to say that the Bible is God's word? We mean that the Bible is a revelation* from God. We are saying that the words of the Bible come to us as a message from God himself. The words are God's way of showing us things that we could not know unless he showed us.

God has many ways to show us things about himself. For example, God made all things. When he did, he left many signs in his creation* that tell us things about him. When we look at what he made, we can see that he has great power. We can know that he is very wise. We can see that God likes order and beauty. We can know these things about God by looking at all that he has made.

But there are many things that we cannot know about God just by looking about us. That is why God gave us the Bible. God tells us things in the Bible that we could not know without it. The Bible tells who God is. It tells us why God made us. It tells us what is wrong with the world. It tells us how God will make everything better some day. We could not know these things unless God chose to tell us. God has chosen to tell us in the Bible. If God had not given us the Bible, we would know almost nothing about him. And we would know almost nothing about his son, Jesus.*

How does the Bible tell us these things? The Bible uses words. It is a book with words and sentences just like other books. But there is one very important difference. The words that are in the Bible come to us from God. That is why we sometimes call the Bible the scripture.* They are God's words in writing. So, when we read the Bible, we are reading God's words. When we listen to the words from the Bible, we are hearing from God. The Bible is not just some men's ideas and thoughts about God. They are the thoughts and words of God himself.

So men wrote the words in the Bible and the words are the words of God. But how can that be? How can human words be God's words too? The Bible tells us. Sometimes, God told men just what to say. But, sometimes, men wrote just what they wanted to say. And, as they wrote, God helped them. The Bible does not tell us just how God did this. The Bible only tells us that these men were **'carried along'** by God's Spirit.*[1] The writers did not just write the

words as they heard them from God. Nor did God just give them ideas about what to write. The Bible says that the written words are **'God breathed.'**[2] What the human writers wrote is what God wanted to say to us. The words that they wrote tell us what God wanted us to know.

We should read the Bible because there is no other book like it. The Bible comes to us from God.

1. 2 Peter 1:21 2. 2 Timothy 3:16

HOW THE BIBLE FITS TOGETHER

INTRODUCTION | CHAPTER THREE

Before you read the Bible,* it is good to know how the Bible fits together. The Bible has two main parts. We call the first part of the Bible the Old Testament.* We call the second part the New Testament.* Both parts of the Bible are a collection of other books. The books are not in the Bible in the order of when they were written. The books are in order by the kind of stories in the book. That is true of the books in both parts.

THE OLD TESTAMENT*

The Old Testament is the story of the promise or covenant* God made with Abraham* and his family. We sometimes call the first five books of the Old Testament the books of Moses.* That is because Moses is the man who gave them to us. These books tell the story of the beginning. They tell about the beginning of the heavens and the earth. And they tell about the beginning of the nation of Israel.* These books also include the laws that God gave to Moses to guide the people. That is why we also sometimes call these books 'the law.' These first five books are the first part of the Old Testament. Sometimes, people call these books 'the five scrolls'.*

THE BOOKS OF MOSES

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

The next books are books of history. There are 12 books in this group. Each book tells a part of Israel's story. The first book of history is the book of Joshua.* His story begins just after the death of Moses. The last book of history is the book of Esther.* Her story takes place almost 900 years after the stories in Joshua. These books of history show how God kept his promises to Israel. He blessed* them when they obeyed him. He punished them when they did not obey him. He kept his promise to keep them as his own people.

THE BOOKS OF HISTORY

Joshua
Judges
Ruth
1 Samuel
2 Samuel
1 Kings

2 Kings	2 Chronicles	Nehemiah
1 Chronicles	Ezra	Esther

We call the next part of the Old Testament the 'wisdom' books. Sometimes, we call these the books of poetry. Some of the writers told stories of people who lived during the time of Abraham. The book of Job is one of these. Other writers lived through the time of the kings of Israel. Some of the parts are songs by people who lived during the last part of the Old Testament story. The books are filled with wise words, as well as psalms* and poems to help the people worship* God.

THE BOOKS OF WISDOM

Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Songs

The last section is the largest section. These are the books of the prophets.* These books make up the last 17 books of the Old Testament. Because some of the books are larger, we call them the 'Major Prophets'. We call the smaller books the 'Minor Prophets'. These books are the prophets' messages. The prophet Jeremiah* wrote the book called Lamentations. That book is also part of the books of the Major Prophets.

In the times of the prophets, the people were not following God. Almost all of the prophets warned the people to return to God. They warned the people that God would punish them. But the people did not listen. So God sent nations to fight against them. Some of those nations defeated Israel and seized them. They took them away from their land. Some of the prophets spoke during that time of the exile.* They told the people that God remembered them. God would bring them back to the land some day. And God did bring them back. Some of the prophets spoke to the people who returned to the land.

THE BOOKS OF MAJOR PROPHETS*

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Ezekiel
Daniel

THE BOOKS OF MINOR PROPHETS*

Hosea	Jonah	Zephaniah
Joel	Micah	Haggai
Amos	Nahum	Zechariah
Obadiah	Habakkuk	Malachi

The prophets spoke messages from God. Sometimes, they spoke words of hope.* Sometimes, they told people that God would punish them. But the best message of the prophets was about a person. They told of a saviour,* the Messiah.* The prophets said that he would come to rescue the people and rule the world. They said that when the promised saviour came, all of the nations would worship the true God. They said that when the Messiah came, God's people would find rest.

THE NEW TESTAMENT*

What is the New Testament? The New Testament is also a collection of books. These books are in groups by the kinds of writing in the books. These books tell us that the promises of the prophets have now come true. God did send a saviour, the Messiah. He is Jesus. The promise of a **'new covenant'***[1] is now here. This new 'testament' began when Jesus died and rose again.[2] The books of the Old Testament are God's words. Now, the words of the New Testament are also from God.

Each of the first four books is a 'gospel'.* The word gospel means 'good news.' Each gospel tells about events in the life of Jesus. They record his words and many of the surprising things he did. The books do not tell everything that Jesus said or did. But they tell us who Jesus is. They show how Jesus' life and death answered the promises of the Old Testament. And they tell how God raised Jesus from death.

THE BOOKS OF GOSPELS*

Matthew
Mark
Luke
John

We call the next book 'the Acts'. Acts is a book of history. This book tells the story of how the people who believed* in Jesus spread the good news. They told the entire ancient world the good news about Jesus. Many of the Jews* in that day did not accept this message. But the Gentiles* welcomed the good news. Acts tells the stories of how that happened.

THE BOOK OF HISTORY

Acts

The next part of the New Testament is 'the epistles'.* The word epistles means 'letters'. This section has 21 letters in it. The leaders of the new church* wrote these letters. A man named Paul wrote most of them. Peter, James, and John wrote most of the other letters. These letters tell the readers how to live as God's people. The letters remind them that God will keep his promises. They warn people about false teachers. They tell them that they might suffer because of what they believe. Many of the letters tell them that Jesus is coming back. He will judge the world and he will make everything right again. The letters tell people how to live as they wait for him.

THE LETTERS OF PAUL

Romans
1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians
1 Timothy
2 Timothy
Titus
Philemon

THE GENERAL LETTERS

Hebrews
James
1 Peter
2 Peter
1 John
2 John
3 John
Jude

The last book of the New Testament is a book of prophecy.* Like the Old Testament books of the prophets, this book talks about the future. It tells the story about a man named John. He had a dream, or a revelation,* from God. God showed John many strange things. So John wrote them down. His book tells about the time that Jesus will return to the earth. It shows us that Jesus will win over evil.* It tells of a new heaven* and a new earth. In that place, there will be no tears. No one will be sad and there will be no pain. God will be there and Jesus will be king.

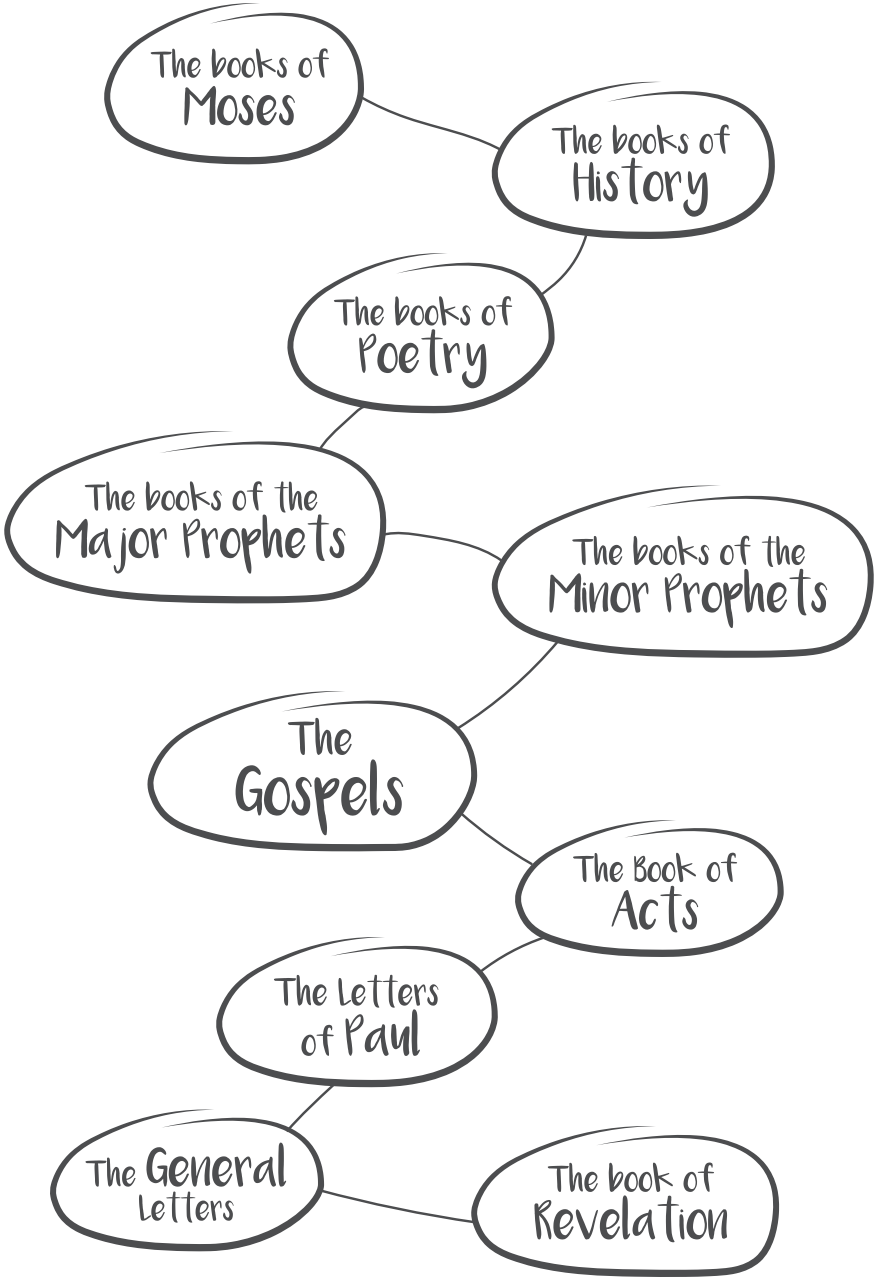
THE BOOK OF PROPHECY

Revelation

1. Jeremiah 31:31

2. 2 Corinthians 3:16, Luke 22:20

How the Bible Fits Together



CHRISTIANS CAN UNDERSTAND THE WORD OF GOD

INTRODUCTION | CHAPTER FOUR

'Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart.' ***Psalm 119:34***

When you become a Christian,* you must do your best to learn more about God. You can learn many things from other Christians. God's people have learned many things about God. They can help you understand many things about God and his ways. But you must also learn to read the scriptures* for yourself.

Some Christians do not try to read the scriptures for themselves. They do not believe* that they can understand the scriptures. They are afraid that they will make mistakes or misunderstand. Yes, some people have made mistakes from time to time. But, if you learn how to read the Bible,* you will be able to read and understand it clearly. Here is a list of rules that will help you. When you read the Bible with these rules in mind, you will be able to understand what you read.

ASK GOD TO HELP YOU UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURES.

The first thing to remember is this. You will not be able to understand all that God is saying in the scriptures without God's help.[1] The Bible tells us many things about what God is like and how we can be close to him. It tells us about what God wants of us. It tells us what God thinks about the world. The Bible shows us how we can be close to God and how we can learn to love him now and always. But we can only know these things when God opens our eyes so that we can see and understand them. We need God to help us want to know him and to please and honour him. God helps us to have these desires through his Spirit.* As we read the scriptures, we must always pray. We must pray that God's Spirit will show us what God wants us to see. We must ask God to help us want to do what we come to understand. We must pray that God will help us know his words better so that we can love him more.[2]

THINK ABOUT WHO WROTE EACH BOOK.

Every book of Scripture is written by a human being. Remember this. A person wrote these words to say something to the people he was writing to.

When you read the Bible, ask yourself what the writer was saying. Who was he writing to and what did he want them to know? What did he mean to say? Thinking about the scripture this way will help you see what the scripture is saying. It will also keep you from seeing things that are not there. The Bible is the word of God. But God used people to write it. What was the writer thinking as he wrote? This is a good way to begin to understand the scriptures.

God gave us the Bible to tell us about who he is and what he wants us to do. He helped men write the Bible in plain words. They wanted us to understand what they said. This is true even of the books of the prophets.* These men used symbols and word pictures when they wrote. So did John* when he wrote the book of Revelation.* These books tell picture stories. Some of the stories are strange. Yes, parts of the Bible are hard to understand. We may not understand every part of a story. But we can understand the main story from the first time we read it.

THINK ABOUT THE TIME AND PLACE WHERE EACH BOOK WAS WRITTEN.

If we know what people were like when the words were written, that also helps us understand the Bible. What were the people's customs? What was the world like when this part of Scripture was written? Were the people at peace* or at war? Were they living in good times or bad times? When we think about these questions, the answers will help us know what the writer was saying. The answers will also help us know what the first readers may have thought when they read the words.

THINK ABOUT WHERE THE BOOK FITS INTO THE BIBLE STORY.

Remember that God did not give us all of the scripture at one time. Each part of the Bible tells only a part of the story. The story began in Eden*. The story goes all the way to the coming of Jesus and beyond. It tells about when Jesus returned to the Father. It tells how God sent his Spirit to help his church.* The story tells about the work of the apostles* and how they wrote the New Testament.* All of the Bible is one great story of God's love and grace.* When we read parts of scripture, we must remember the bigger story. And we must remember where each part fits into the big story.

When we read a section of the Bible, we should ask this question. *Where does this part fit in the rest of the Bible?* For example, the Psalms* show us a picture of what worship looks like. But the way people pray and praise* God in the

Psalms is not exactly the same way people speak today. They used different words than we use today. They spoke about kings and a kingdom* and of a land that God gave them. But the Psalms do talk about the same things that we want and need today. They talk about our desire for God's blessings.* They speak about how to honour God and live a good life. And they show us how to depend on God to show us his ways and to provide what we need. These are the things that we should pray about too. We may not use the same words that the Psalms use. But the Psalms can teach us to pray and praise God just like the people who wrote them.

REMEMBER, THE CLEAR PARTS WILL HELP YOU UNDERSTAND THE PARTS THAT ARE NOT SO CLEAR.

Remember also that each part of scripture came from the mind of God. Different people wrote the scriptures at different times. But all of the thoughts are God's thoughts. The words are all God's words. That is why scripture agrees with scripture. That means that the best way to understand the Bible is to read the Bible.

The best way to understand one part of the Bible is to find another part that speaks about the same subject. One scripture* explains another. Some parts of the scripture are very clear. Other parts are not as clear. The parts of the Bible that are clear help us understand the parts that are not as clear.

REMEMBER, THE SCRIPTURES* ARE GOD'S WORDS TO YOU AS WELL.

Each book of the Bible tells us the truth about God. Each book tells us the truth about all people and ourselves. Each book tells us the truth about how to live in a way that pleases God. Each book tells us how to avoid the ways that do not please him. But these truths are not only for the people who lived during the times when the scriptures were written. The scriptures are not just nice stories about other people at other times in other places. The Bible is God's word to us at this moment. That is why the person who reads the scripture must apply the truths they find to their own life.

The Bible was written to other people at other times and in other places. But God and his truth are also true for us. These words from God are words for us. God in scripture is speaking to us today. Here are some examples.

King Josiah* knew God was angry with Judah.* That was because they had not obeyed God's laws that were written by Moses* 700 years earlier.[3] Jesus spoke to people with words from the very first part of scripture.[4] When he

was tempted by Satan,* he turned him away by using the words that God gave Moses. When Paul* wanted to tell people how to be right with God, he used the scriptures. He used the book of Genesis[5] and the book of Psalms[6] to help them know what God wanted them to do. Like Josiah, Jesus, and Paul, God speaks to us today through the words written in the Bible.

Remember that we must read the scriptures* with care and respect. We must pay attention to the words we read there. Even if the words of scripture surprise us or offend us, we must respect what they say. The Bible comes to us from God. If we want to show respect to God, we must show respect to what he says.

So those are a few rules to get you started. Think about these rules when you read the scriptures. Pray that God will help you. And when you pray, God will help you. Then, you will become the kind of person whom the apostles* praised. You will become a person who **'correctly handles the word of truth'.**[7]

1. 2 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 2:14
2. See Psalm 119:18-19, 26-27, 33-34, 73, 125, 144, 169; Ephesians 1:17-19; 3:16-19.
3. 2 Kings 22:8-13
4. in Genesis 2:24 (Matt. 19:4-6)
5. Genesis 15:6
6. Psalm 32:1-2
7. 2 Timothy 2:15

THE BIBLE STORY

INTRODUCTION | CHAPTER FIVE

This book will help you understand each book of the Bible.* But, first, you need to know where each book fits. What is the big story of the Bible? The Bible is the story of God's plan to rescue the world through his son, Jesus. Here is a short outline.

FROM ADAM TO ABRAHAM

The Bible begins with God. God has always been. And God decided to make the world. He made the heavens.* He made the earth. And he filled them with good things. Then God made a man named Adam.* He made a woman named Eve.* He put them in a beautiful garden. He gave them all that they needed. He told them that they could enjoy the fruit from all of the trees in the garden. God told them that there was only one thing that they could not do. They could not eat from one of the trees in the middle of the garden.

One day, a snake came into the garden. Satan* used the snake to tell Eve a lie. He told them to eat the fruit that God told them not to eat. He told them that nothing bad would happen to them. So they chose to believe* that lie. They decided not to obey God. They ate the fruit. When they did, God sent them out of the garden that he had made for them. But he did not leave them. He watched over them. He gave them clothes to cover them. He gave them children. And he gave them a promise. God said that he would give them a son. He said that, someday, that son would crush the snake.

After Adam and Eve left the garden, many things happened. One of their sons killed his brother. Their children and their children's children grew more in number. They built cities. As more and more people began to live on the earth, they became more and more evil.

So God decided to send a flood to the earth. God would use the flood to destroy all of the people and animals from the earth. But God chose one man to remain alive. His name was Noah.* He would build a boat. He would bring some of the animals into the boat with him. After the flood, Noah and his family would start over again. They would fill the earth with children and teach them to follow God. And God did send the flood, just as he had promised. The waters from that flood covered the earth for many days.

After the flood, Noah and his family came out of the boat. They built houses. They had children. Soon the earth began to be filled with people again. But not all of the people followed God. Instead, some of them built a tall building

to honour themselves. God was not pleased. So God confused the people. He changed the languages they spoke. They could not understand each other. So they moved away from each other. They moved to many places on the earth. They became different nations.

FROM ABRAHAM TO MOSES

Many years went by. But God was not finished with the people on the earth. He had a plan to rescue them. So God came to a man named Abram.* He made him a promise. He told Abram that he would bless* him. He would give him a land of his own. He would give him a son. God changed Abram's name to Abraham. God told Abraham that he would bless all of the nations because of him. Abraham did have a son. His name was Isaac.* Isaac became a man and he also had a son. His name was Jacob.* Jacob grew to be a man and he had 12 sons. God changed Jacob's name too. He called him Israel.* And the sons of Jacob became known as the children of Israel.

After many years, there was a time when there was no food in the land that God gave to Abraham. So Jacob and his family moved to Egypt.* Not many years after they moved to Egypt, the king of Egypt made them slaves. They lived in Egypt for 400 years.

FROM MOSES TO DAVID

One day, God came to a man named Moses.* God told Moses that he was going to take the children of Israel back to the land that God gave Abraham. This was a very difficult job. But God helped Moses. And, after the children of Israel came out of Egypt, God made another promise. He told them that he would bless them. He would give them the land that he promised Abraham. And they would become a great nation.

God also gave Israel rules to help them live for God. When they obeyed God's ways, God would bless them. If they did not obey, God would not bless them. After many years and after many tests, the people did go into the land that God gave them. They lived there for many years. God was with them. He sent men and women to lead them. They were called judges.*

FROM DAVID TO EXILE

Then, God gave the people of Israel a king. The first king did not follow God. So God gave them a second king. His name was David.* Just like he had with Abraham and Moses, God made a special promise to David. He promised to make a great nation from his family. He promised that one of David's sons

would not only rule Israel. This son would be the king of all of the nations in all of the world. His kingdom* would last for ever.

While David was king, God blessed Israel. David built a great kingdom. The people were strong. The land was safe. David was not a perfect man, but he was good. In those days, God spoke to the people through some special men. These men were called prophets.

David had a son named Solomon.* After David died, Solomon became king. God made him great too. Solomon built a special house for God called the temple.* The temple was a place where the people came to honour God. When they came there, they did the things that God told them to do through his words to Moses.

But, after Solomon died, there was trouble in the land of Israel. The people did not want Solomon's son to be the next king. So Israel was no longer one nation. It broke apart. The people in the north part of the country chose a different king. They took the name Israel. The people in the south chose their own king. They took the name Judah.* For many years, the two nations fought each other. Sometimes, Judah had a good king who told them to follow the ways of God. But Israel did not have kings who pleased God.

God sent prophets to Israel and Judah for many years. The prophets told the people to come back to God. The prophets warned the people. They said that God would punish them if they did not return to him. God would let their enemies come into the land. Their enemies would take them away from the land. Then, Israel and Judah would be in exile* in a land that was not their own.

God warned them. But they did not listen. So God sent an army to fight against Israel. The army was from Assyria.* They overcame Israel. They took the people from the land. Many years later, God sent another army. That army was from Babylon.* They fought against Judah. They destroyed the temple. They took the people from the land. It was a very sad time for God's people. But God again sent prophets to the people. The prophets said that God would not forget them. He would remember the promises that he had made to them. God would bring them back to the land that he promised to Abraham.

FROM EXILE TO RETURN

For many years, the people of God lived in exile. But, one day, God brought many of the people back to the land. The first thing they did was put the temple back together. Then, they built the walls of the city again. And soon, God sent leaders to remind them of the ways Moses had taught them to live. The people were back in the land.

But they were not a great nation any more. They had no king. But the prophets told them to have hope.* God would still keep his promises to Abraham, Moses, and David. God would send the son he promised Abraham. God would live among his people like he had promised Moses. God would give a son from David's family who would rule all of the nations.

FROM RETURN TO JESUS

So the people waited. For almost 400 years, there was no new word from God. No prophets spoke. No kings came to rule.

Then, one day, God came to a young virgin* named Mary. He told her that she would have a son. He said that this son would sit on the throne* of David. This son would be called the Son of God.* He was to be given the name, Jesus.

Soon, Mary did give birth to a son. They named him Jesus. God had become a man. And each day, Jesus grew in stature and wisdom. When he grew to be an adult, he chose some men to be his followers. They went from place to place with him. They heard him say many wonderful things. They saw him do many wonderful things. He made blind people see again. He made sick people well again. He even went to people who had died and gave them life again. They saw that he was a holy man. He did nothing evil.* He always obeyed the laws of Moses. He did not sin.*

Many people were happy to hear what Jesus said. But many of the people did not believe him. Some of the leaders became angry with him. They said that Jesus spoke in a way that made people think that Jesus was God. They were right. That made them so angry that they decided to kill him.

So Jesus met with his followers and told them what was going to happen. Soldiers were going to take Jesus and hold him. They were going to kill him. But his followers did not have to be afraid. God would bring Jesus back to life again. And that is just what happened.

After Jesus rose from the dead, he spent some time teaching the men and women who believed him. He told them that he would go to be with God soon. But, someday, he would return. When he returns he will do all of the things that God had promised to Abraham, Moses, and David. But, until then, Jesus told all of his followers to go everywhere and tell everyone the good news about him. They were to say that, Jesus is the Son of God. He died and is alive again. And anyone who believes in Jesus, anyone who trusts* his words, will have life that lasts for ever. God will forgive * them for the evil things that they have done. And, some day, they will live with God. They will go to a place where everything is good and they will never die. But, until that time, they

would not be alone. Jesus would send the Holy Spirit* to help them.

After Jesus finished saying these things, God took him up through the clouds. And so the followers did what Jesus told them to do. They went everywhere they could go. They told everyone they could tell about Jesus.

FROM JESUS TO NOW

After many years, God came to one of the first men to follow Jesus named John.* He gave him a dream. He showed him many things about what will happen in the future. He told him that life will be hard for the Christians. He told him that Satan will fight against God and lie to many people. But he told John not to be afraid. Jesus will return to earth. He will defeat Satan. He will judge everyone that ever lived. He will punish Satan and all of those who followed him. And he will gather his people to be with him for ever. He will make a new heaven* and a new earth. And he will rule all of the nations. They will be his people. He will be their God for ever.

But that is not the end of the story. In some ways, a new story will just be beginning.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament is a collection of books. These books tell the story of the beginning of all things. They also tell the stories of Moses, of Israel, and of Israel's kings and prophets. But most of all, they tell us about God.

SECTIONS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Books of Moses
The Books of History
The Books of Poetry
The Books of the Major Prophets*
The Books of the Minor Prophets*

THE BOOKS OF MOSES

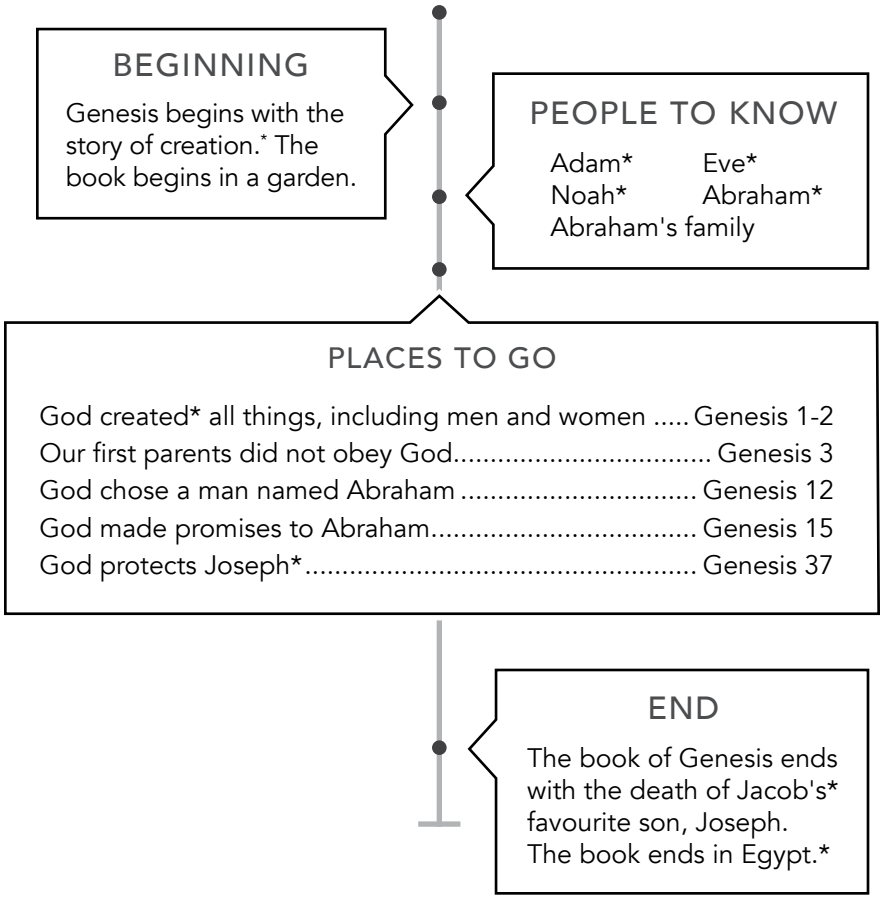
These books tell the story of the beginning. They tell about the beginning of the heavens and the earth. And they tell about the beginning of the nation of Israel. These books also include the laws that God gave to Moses to guide the people.

THE BOOKS OF MOSES

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

GENESIS

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF MOSES



CHAPTER SIX

THE STORY OF GENESIS

The Bible begins in Genesis. We meet God. We meet the first people that God made. We meet a man named Abraham and his family too.

Genesis gives us answers to some very important questions. Where do we come from? Why are we here? What is the problem with the world? How can the problem be solved? The rest of the Bible gives a more complete answer to these questions. But the answers begin in Genesis.

Genesis begins with the story of how God made the world.

'In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth…'[1]

Genesis explains that God created the world. God made all things in the heavens and earth. He made the things that we can see and things we cannot see. Of all of the things that God made, one part of his creation was special. He made people. He made a man named Adam. He made a woman named Eve. He made a special garden where they could live. It was the perfect place for them. God wanted them to enjoy the world that he had made.

God wanted his people to know him, to worship* him,[2] and to obey him. But the first man and woman did not obey God. They chose to go a different way than God's way. They thought that their way was better. So, they listened to Satan* who used a snake to speak to them. But the way they chose was not a good way. Because they did not obey God, God spoke a curse* upon the earth. He told them that their lives would be painful. He told them that they would die.

God also showed grace* to Adam and Eve. God promised to rescue people from the bad way that they had chosen. He promised to send someone who would destroy the snake that had lied to them.[3] God gave them hope.*

Because the first man and woman did not obey God, God made them leave the garden. Their lives became difficult and sad. As Adam's family grew, so did the problems. Their first child killed his own brother. Soon, many people were doing evil* things that did not please God.

So God chose to destroy the first people with a flood. But God also chose to rescue one man and his family from this flood. And God did send a flood. Everyone but Noah and his family died. After that flood, Noah's family grew and grew. But even they did not follow God's way. They tried to build a city with a building so tall that it could reach God's home. But God judged them for this. He confused their languages so that the people could not understand each other. Soon, the people left the city and went about the entire world to find a home.[5]

Many years later, God came to a man named Abraham. God made Abraham a promise. The promise God made to Abraham is one of the most important promises in the Bible.

'I will make you into a great nation and I will bless* you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.'[6]

The promise was to Abraham and his family line. Abraham had a son named Isaac.* Isaac had a son named Jacob.* Jacob had a son named Judah.* Jacob

made a promise to his son Judah before he died. Jacob said that a strong king would come from the house of Judah.[7] This king would be God's ruler. He would rule over the entire world.

At the end of Genesis, Jacob and his family had moved to Egypt.* Jacob's son, Joseph, became a great leader there.

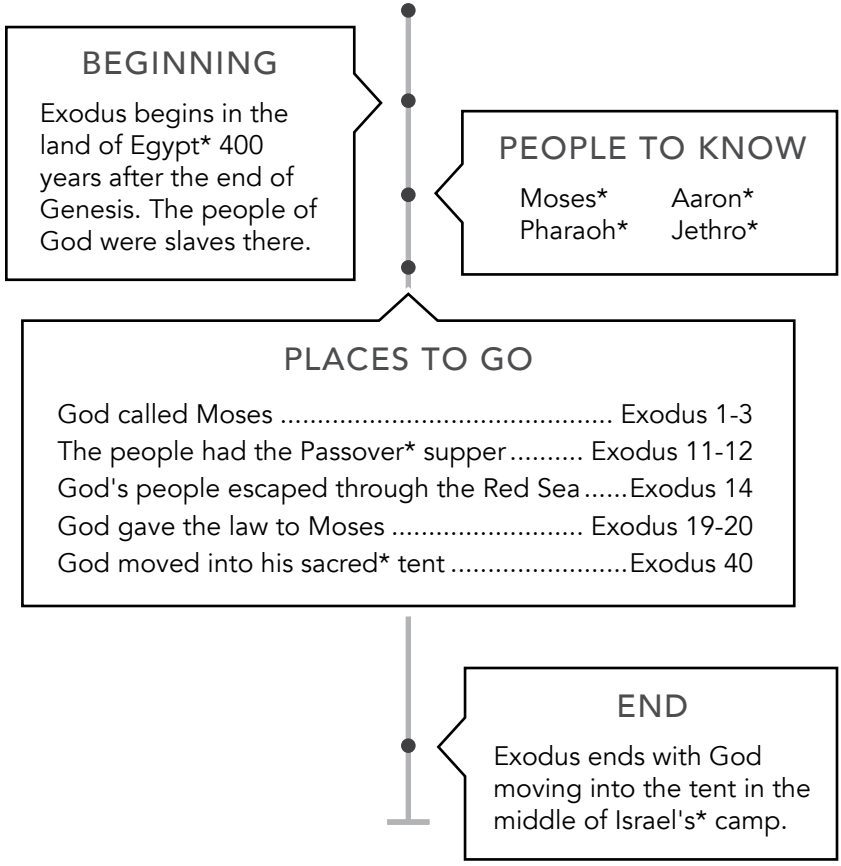
The children of Abraham did not always obey God. But God kept his promises to Abraham. God watched over them. God cared for them. And God kept them safe. God did not forget them. And he did not forget the promise he made.

Abraham's family had to wait for God to keep his promise. But God would keep his word. The rest of the Old Testament* shows us how.

1. Genesis 1:1
2. Genesis 2
3. Genesis 3:15
4. Genesis 6-9
5. Genesis 11
6. Genesis 12:2-3
7. Genesis 49:8-12

EXODUS

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF MOSES



CHAPTER SEVEN

THE STORY OF EXODUS

The book of Exodus begins four hundred years after the end of Genesis.[1] God's people were still in Egypt. But they were not guests of the king of Egypt. Abraham's* family were slaves. When they cried out to God, God listened. He heard the cry of his people. He remembered the promises that he made to them. Exodus is the story of how God rescued them.

How did God do this? First, God chose a man named Moses. He saved his life as a baby. And God prepared him for this task.[2] One day, God spoke to

Moses from a burning bush. He told Moses what he was going to do. But Moses was afraid at first. The job seemed too big for him. God was not only going to deliver his people from Egypt. God would do it in a way that would show the nations how great and powerful he is.

After God spoke to him, Moses did go to the people in Egypt. When he told them that God sent him, they believed* him. In a few days, Moses went to Pharaoh. Pharaoh was the name for a king of Egypt. He told Pharaoh what God told him.

'Pharaoh,' he said, **'You must let God's people go free.'**

But Pharaoh said, **'No.'**

So God decided to bother Egypt with many troubles. He sent ten 'signs' of his power to cause Pharaoh to change his mind. The rivers in Egypt turned to blood. Insects filled the land. The cows became sick. Insects ate the crops. Each time, Pharaoh refused to obey God. He would not let the people go. Each time Pharaoh refused, God showed his great power again. He showed that he was more powerful than all of the gods in Egypt.

Moses gave the king a last warning. If he did not let the people go, every first-born son in the land would die. But God gave his people a special command. That night, every family from Israel must kill a young sheep. They must take the blood and put the blood on the doors of their houses. God promised that if they did this, their sons would not die. People would always remember that night as **'the Passover.'**[3]

God saved his people that night. They started their journey to the land that God gave to Abraham. But, to get to that land, they had to travel through a desert. God did many wonderful things to help the people through the desert. God led them. God sent food for them to eat[4] and water to drink.[5] One day, God told Moses to meet him on a mountain. On that mountain, God gave him the laws he wanted Israel to obey. God wanted them to worship* him alone. God wanted them to keep away from false gods. He wanted them to be different from all of the other nations. God's directions to the people were clear. These laws would protect them. And God would bless* them if they obeyed. He did not want his people to live any part of their lives without him. He wanted them to remember that they were his people. He was their God.

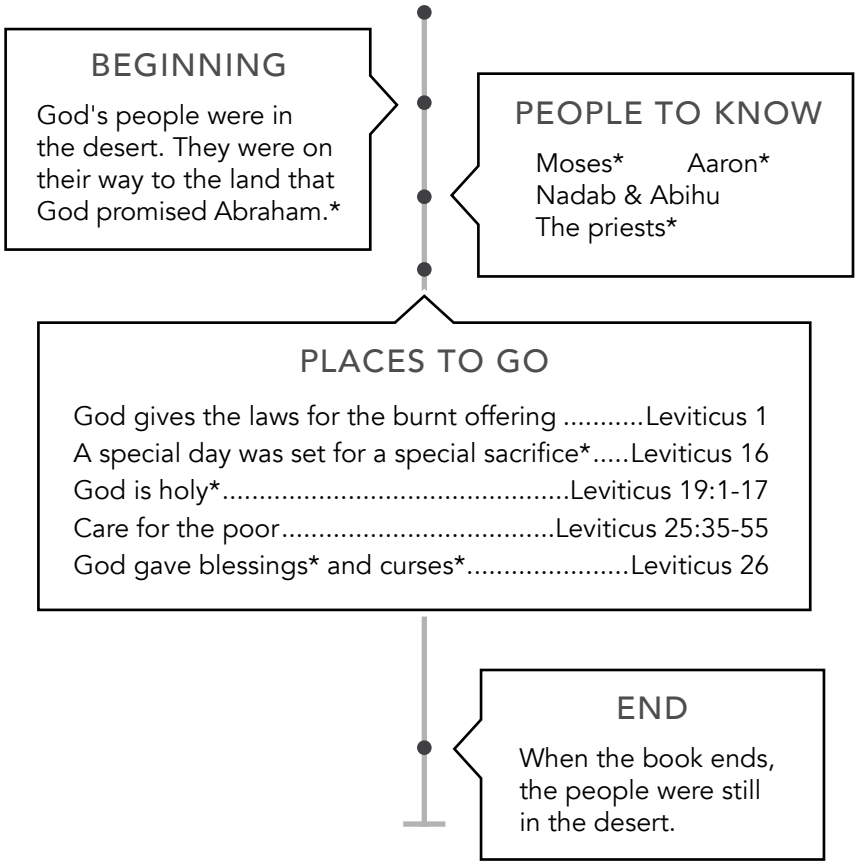
These new laws were part of God's covenant* with the family of Abraham. The people all agreed. They promised to obey God and follow him always. But, even before Moses had finished writing the commands, the people made an idol.* God did punish the people for their sin.* But he did not forget his promise to them. He told them to make a tent where they could come to worship. He told them how to build it. He told them what kind of furniture

to put inside. He gave them priests* to pray for them. The priests would help them know how to follow God. He even promised to come and live in their camp with them. And when Moses finished all that God had told him to do, God moved in.

1. Genesis 15:13
2. Exodus 2-4
3. Exodus 12-13
4. Exodus 16
5. Exodus 17

LEVITICUS

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF MOSES



CHAPTER EIGHT

THE STORY OF LEVITICUS

The book of Leviticus is a most unusual book. It is almost like another section of Exodus. The people set up God's Tent* in the middle of their camp. And God spoke to Moses from that tent. Moses wrote down the things that God told him. And he put those words in this book.

The word Leviticus means 'about the Levites'. Levi* was one of the sons of Jacob.* 'Levites' were the sons of Levi. God chose this family to be priests. God gave them many things to do. The priests were to help the people know the

laws that God gave Moses. They also were to care for God's Tent and all of the things that happened there. Moses and Aaron were both Levites.

God told Moses the way that the people should worship* him. Then, Moses told the priests. The priests were to worship God just the way Moses told them. Then, they would help the people do the same. Moses gave them many rules about how to worship God. The first part of Leviticus tells how to make a sacrifice to God. The second part of Leviticus tells the priests about their duties. God told them what to wear. He told them how to wash themselves. When God finished teaching the priests, he gave directions to all of the people.

God gave these laws to the people to remind them that they belonged to him. God is holy. He expected his people to be holy too. The word holy means 'set apart.' God wanted them to worship only him. God wanted them to obey him in every way.

God gave these rules to tell the people how to live a holy life. The rules and laws in Leviticus told the people how they could please God. It told them how to keep God in their camp. But to have God living in your camp can be a dangerous thing. God is holy. He cannot sin.* He cannot close his eyes to sin in his people. The people of God had not obeyed God well in the past. How could God live among these people who could be so wicked so often?

Leviticus tells us the answer. Moses said that sin always leads to death. But God is merciful.* God would forgive* the people when they sinned. But he would only forgive them if they did what he told them to do. The people could come to God's Tent. They could give an animal to the priest. The priest would kill it. Then he would offer a sacrifice to God. This offering would pay for the sin of the people. God would accept the offering. God would forgive the sin of the people. He would not hold their sin against them any more.

The book also tells about a special sacrifice. The priest made this sacrifice for all of the people at once. One time a year, a special day came when the people made a special sacrifice. All of the people were to gather together near God's Tent. No one was to do any work. The leader of the priests would kill a special animal. He would take the blood from this sacrifice and go into God's Tent. There, he would go into the most holy place. He would confess* the sin of the people. He would make this offering to God. He would ask God to forgive the people. Only the leader of the priests could go. He could only do this one time each year. On that day, God reminded the people that he is a holy God. He reminded them that they must be a holy people.

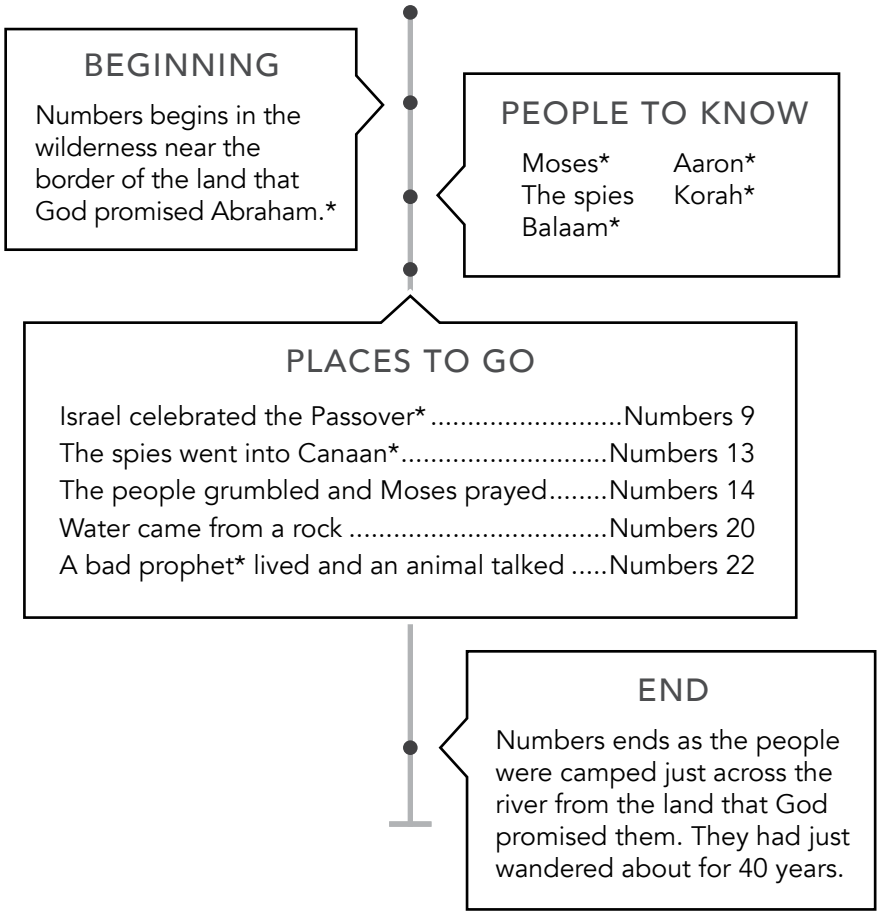
Moses told the people many other things in this book. He told them about special days when they should gather to eat and to worship together. He told them how to act toward each other and how to care for the poor. He gave

them special rules about many different things. He told them about foods that God did not want them to eat. He told them about the kind of clothes that they could and could not wear. But all of Leviticus is really about one thing. It showed the people the way to please a holy God. It showed the way to live as God's holy people.

God made a way for his people to stay close to him. When they did a wrong thing, they could make a sacrifice. When they did, God forgave them. But the sacrifice only lasted until the next time a person did not obey God. Then, they had to make another sacrifice. They had to do this again and again. But, one day, when Jesus came, God would provide a better sacrifice. That sacrifice would be made only once and never need to be made again.

NUMBERS

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF MOSES



CHAPTER NINE

THE STORY OF NUMBERS

The book of Numbers begins with a list of names. And it ends with a list. These two lists are the record of the times Moses counted the people. The first time he counted them to prepare for the trip into the Promised Land.*[1] Forty years later, he numbered them again. That is how the book of Numbers got its name. Numbers tells about what happened in those forty years.

Moses put the people into groups of families. God had promised to go with them. God's Tent* would travel with them too. Everything was ready. God

was going to lead them into the special land that he chose for them. This was a happy time for the people. If they obeyed God, the land would soon be theirs. But would the people continue to obey God?

At first, the people were happy to go to the special land that God had made for them. Moses told the people that they must continue to obey God. They must not be like the people who did not know God.[2] But the people began to complain. They said bad things about Moses and about God. They did not trust* God to help them. They were afraid. So the people did not obey God. They acted just like they had before.[3]

God was angry with the people. So God sent fire down on them from heaven.*[4] When Moses heard about the fire, he prayed. When Moses prayed, God took away the fire.

Soon, the people came to the border of the land that God promised them. Moses decided to send 12 men to go into the land and take a look. He told them to look about and report on what they saw. When the men came back, two of them gave a good report. They brought back good fruit to show the people. But 10 of the men gave a bad report. They said that the cities had high walls and they saw giants there. The people did not listen to the men with the good report. They listened to the men who were afraid and who did not trust God.[5] They were so afraid that they wanted to go back to Egypt.*

When God saw that the people would not obey him, he was angry with them. He told Moses that he was going to punish them. But Moses prayed to God and God forgave* them. But God did decide that all of the people who turned against Moses would never go into the land. All of the adults would die in the desert country. They would never see the land that God promised to give Abraham. And that is what happened. The people walked in the desert for 40 years. All of the adults died. But God did not forget his promises to Abraham and Moses. God still took care of the people. They would not go to the special land, but their children would go. The children would have a new leader named Joshua.* He was one of the men who gave a good report about the land. He would lead them into the special land. The other man who gave a good report was named Caleb.* He got to go into the land too.

As they travelled in the desert country, God gave them more rules to follow.[6] God did many wonderful things to help them. God gave them food. God showed them the way so they did not get lost. But they complained again and again. Because they complained, Moses became angry with the people. Moses had obeyed and listened to God many times. But, this time, he did not do what God asked him to do. He did not listen carefully to God. So God did not let him go to the special land.[7]

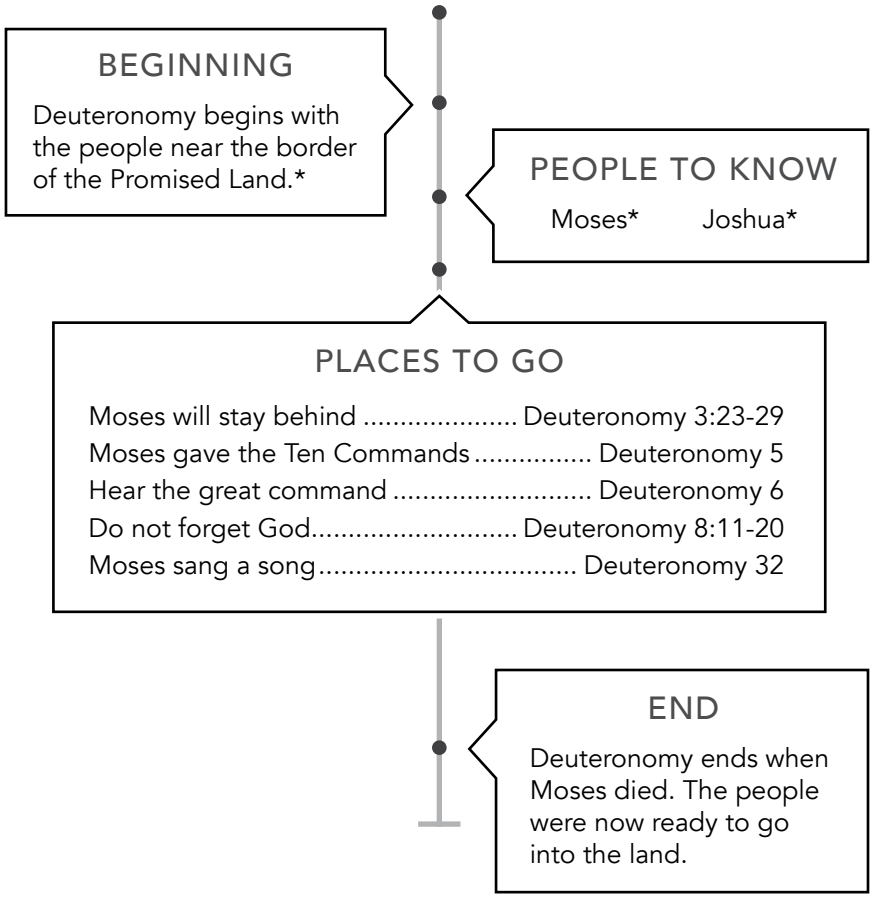
There are many other stories in the book of Numbers. The people opposed Moses. Nations made war against them. God rescued them when some water made them sick. A bad prophet* met an angel.* An animal talked. A dead stick grew leaves. Water came from a rock.

But many of the stories are about the same thing. Again and again, the people did not keep their promises to God. They turned away from him. They did not listen to him. But God took care of them anyway. He always kept his promises to them. And, soon, they would enter the land that God had promised them.

1. Numbers 1-10
2. Numbers 5
3. Exodus 32; Genesis 3
4. Numbers 11:1b
5. Numbers 14:11-12
6. Numbers 15-19
7. Numbers 20:12

DEUTERONOMY

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF MOSES



CHAPTER TEN

THE STORY OF DEUTERONOMY

This book is the last of the books of Moses. The name 'Deuteronomy' means the 'second law'.

The people had been wandering in the desert for 40 years. Almost all of the adults that came out of Egypt* had died there. But many people were still alive. The children of Abraham* were still a large nation. Soon, they would go into the land that God promised them. So Moses wanted to talk to the people before they went. This book is a record of what he said.

As this book opens, Moses was standing on the edge of the Promised Land. He knew that he could not go into the land. So he called the people together to speak to them one last time. Moses reminded them of what God had said to them in the past.[1] He talked about how God cared for them when they were in the desert.[2] He wanted them to remember everything that happened on the journey. He told them not to forget God's laws. These were the same laws that they needed to obey when they went into the land.[3]

Moses started with the Ten Commands.[4] Have no other gods but God. Do not worship* an idol.* Do not use God's name in a wrong way. Remember the Sabbath.* Honour your father and mother. Do not murder. Do not have sex with another person's husband or wife. Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not desire things that belong to someone else. He told them to keep the laws and teach them to their families.

But Moses did not want the people to obey these laws only because they were afraid of God. He wanted them to love God with all of their hearts.[5] Moses knew that if they did this, it would go well with them when they went into the land.

Then, Moses repeated many of the other laws God had given Israel.* He did not want the people to forget them when they went to live in the Promised Land. He talked to them about worship. He gave wise words to the leaders. He reminded all of the people how to please God in all parts of life. He warned them about God's punishments for those who failed to obey.

In the last part of the book, Moses brought the people together one last time. He spoke the words of the agreement that they made with God almost 40 years before. He reminded them that God would do what he promised. God would bless* them when they obeyed. He would remove his blessing when they did not. Then, Moses called on the people to do what they promised.

Near the end of the book, Moses wrote a song. This song would remind them who God is and why they should obey him. So Moses told them to remember every word of it.

'The Lord* is the Rock,
And His work is perfect!
Yes all His ways are right!
God is true and faithful.
He is good and honest.'[6]

Moses was not sure this group of people would obey God any better than their parents did.[7] What was missing and what they needed was a new heart.[8] When they had a new heart, they would love God, obey his laws and follow his ways.[9]

Moses chose Joshua to be the next leader. After he blessed the people once more, Moses died. Soon, the people would enter the land that God promised them. But, first, they wept for Moses' death for many days and added words to honour him to the end of the book.

'Since then, Israel has never had a prophet* like Moses. The Lord knew him face to face. Moses did many signs and astonishing things. No one has ever had the great power Moses had. No one has ever done the wonderful acts he did in the sight of all the people.'[10]

1. Deuteronomy 1:5
2. Deuteronomy 1-3
3. Deuteronomy 4
4. Deuteronomy 5
5. Deuteronomy 6:4-9
6. Deuteronomy 32:4
7. Deuteronomy 31:27-29
8. Deuteronomy 30:6
9. Deuteronomy 30:6-14
10. Deuteronomy 34:10-12

THE BOOKS OF HISTORY

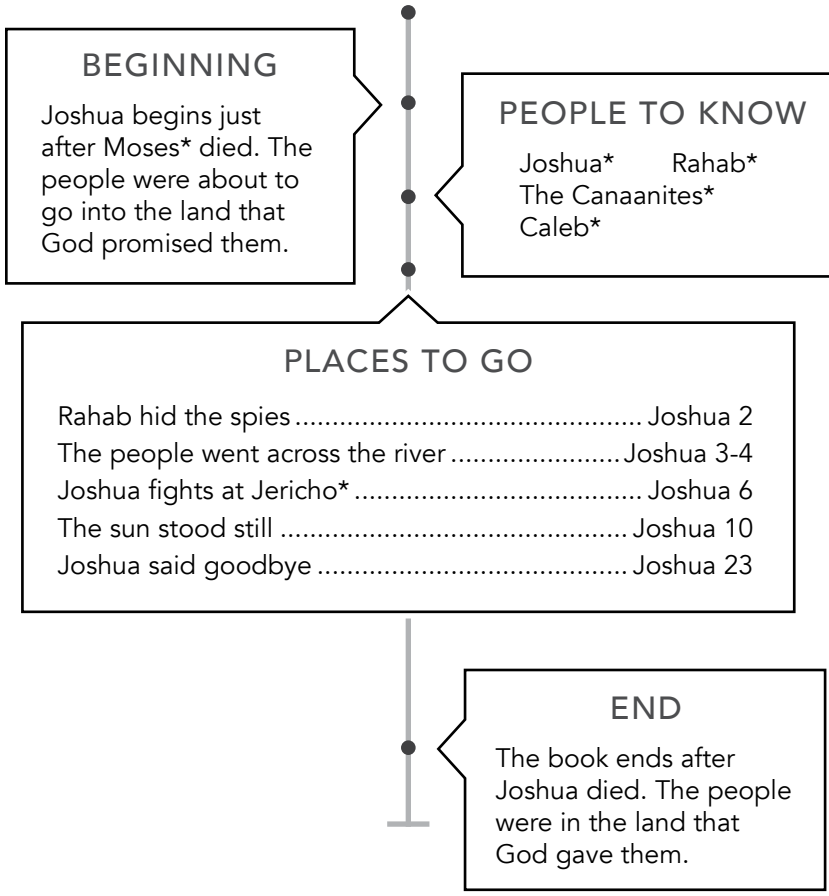
The next books are books of history. Each book tells a part of Israel's* story. The first book of history is the book of Joshua.* His story begins just after the death of Moses.* The last book of history is the book of Esther.* Her story takes place almost 900 years after the stories in Joshua. These books of history show how God kept his promises to Israel.*

THE BOOKS OF HISTORY

Joshua
Judges
Ruth
1 Samuel
2 Samuel
1 Kings
2 Kings
1 Chronicles
2 Chronicles
Ezra
Nehemiah
Esther

JOSHUA

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF HISTORY



CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE STORY OF JOSHUA

God's words to Abraham*[1] and Moses[2] were true. God did promise to give a land to Abraham. He sent Moses to take them there. But Israel* did not believe* God. They did not keep the agreements that they made with God.[3] So the people did not enter the land that God gave them. Moses wrote about these things in the first five books of the Bible.

In Genesis, we learn that God promised to give a land to Abraham. In Exo-

dus, the people failed to enter that land. In Deuteronomy, God cared for the people for the next 40 years. But these were all in the past. In Joshua, God gave them a second chance. Joshua tells how God helped the people take the land from their enemies. Joshua led the armies. And when he had finished, the people lived in the land. Each family settled in a part of it.

The book also teaches us many things about God as well. God does what he says. He keeps his promises.[4] He cares about his people.

The book of Joshua is also the story of Joshua himself. Joshua was successful because he followed God's laws. God told Joshua to think on his Word every day. Joshua did this and he began to have success in the land. He won his first fight at Jericho. But not everyone in Joshua's army did what was right. One of Joshua's men took some things from Jericho that he should not have taken. So God did not help them when they fought the next fight. And they could not win. They had to run from their enemy. When Joshua found out why God had not helped them, he punished the man for what he had done. He punished the man's wife and his sons and daughters too. After that, God helped Joshua's army again.[5] Their enemies were great. But God was greater. He helped them take the land that he promised them.

This book tells many details about the new land. It tells how God gave the land to the different families. It tells about the land east and west of the Jordan River.* It also tells about cities of shelter and about the towns where the priests* could live.[6]

So the Lord* gave them all the land that he had promised to give their fathers. And they took possession of it and settled there.[7] By the end of the book, all that God had promised to the people had happened. They saw that they could trust* God.

But Joshua knew that the people were weak. If they trusted God, God would bless* them. But sometimes they did not do what was right. So Joshua warned them.

> **'God did all of the good things He promised. But God will also bring bad things to you if you do not obey Him. If you do evil* things, He will take this land away from you.'[8]**

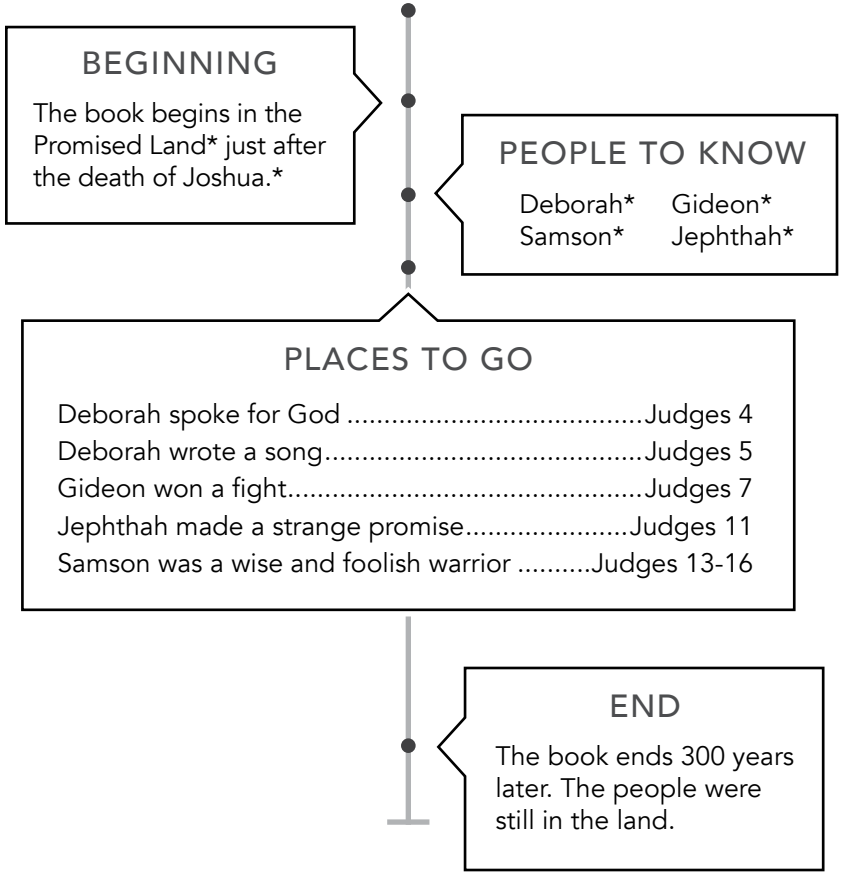
Joshua was a good man. He showed us how to follow God. God's Spirit* helped Joshua rescue the people and give them the land. He was a great soldier for God. His name means 'the one who delivers.' And, one day, another man would come to rescue God's people. God's Spirit would be with him too. But

he would not only rescue people from their enemies. He would rescue people from their guilt, shame, and fear. He would rescue people from the anger of God. But that is a story we will read much later.[9]

1. Genesis 13:15
2. Exodus 3:8
3. See Joshua 23:15-16
4. See Joshua 21:43-45; 23:14
5. Joshua 7-8
6. Joshua 21
7. Joshua 21:43-45
8. Joshua 23:15
9. Matthew 1:21

JUDGES

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF HISTORY



CHAPTER TWELVE

THE STORY OF JUDGES

The book of Judges is a history book. The book tells the story of the 300 years when Israel* did not have a king.

At the end of the book of Joshua, the people were living in the land that God promised them. But there was still much work to do. God told them to drive all of their enemies out of the land. He told them to tear down the altars* that their enemies used to worship* idols.* He told them not to make any agreements with these enemies. God promised to help the people do this, but they

had to make their enemies leave.

When Joshua died, the people had no leader. They knew what God had told them to do. But, soon, the people started to forget God. They did many evil* things. They even started to worship the false gods of the people around them.

Many years before, Moses* warned them not to forget God. He told them to remember that God gave them the land and all of the good things in it. He told them not to worship idols. He told them not to worship the gods of the people who lived in the land. He said that if they did this, God would be angry with them. But the people did not remember what Moses said. The people forgot God.

The first part of this book tells us that the people did not do what God told them to do. They allowed their enemies to stay in the land.[1] When they did, their enemies began to cause many problems. And, because they did this, God became angry with them. He said that he would punish them because they did not obey him.[2] This made them very sad. But they did not change their ways.

These were hard and unhappy days for Israel. Many people forgot God. They forgot the promises that they made to him. But God did not forget his people. When the people began to suffer, they called on God to help them. And God did help them. When they were in trouble, God sent men and women to lead them.

These men and women were called judges.*[3] Judges is also the name of this book because it tells their stories. When there was a judge in the land, the people obeyed God. And God helped the people to defeat their enemies. But, when there was not a judge, the people forgot God. They did not keep their promises to him. So their enemies became strong again. Soon, the enemies defeated God's people. So the people felt sorry for what they had done. They would cry to God and ask him to help them. And, then, God would give another judge.

We know many things about some of the judges.[4] They obeyed God and helped the people. But we know almost nothing about other judges. The judges were not perfect men and women. Some, like Samson, did not always do what was right. But Samson knew he was a tool in the hands of God. Some judges helped the people fight their enemies. Some of the judges helped the people remember God's promises. Some of the judges taught the people the law and called them back to God. But God used them all to help his people.

We learn many things from the stories in this book. Here are three of them. God always keeps his promises. It is best to keep our promises to him. It does not go well for people who turn away from God and worship an idol.[5]

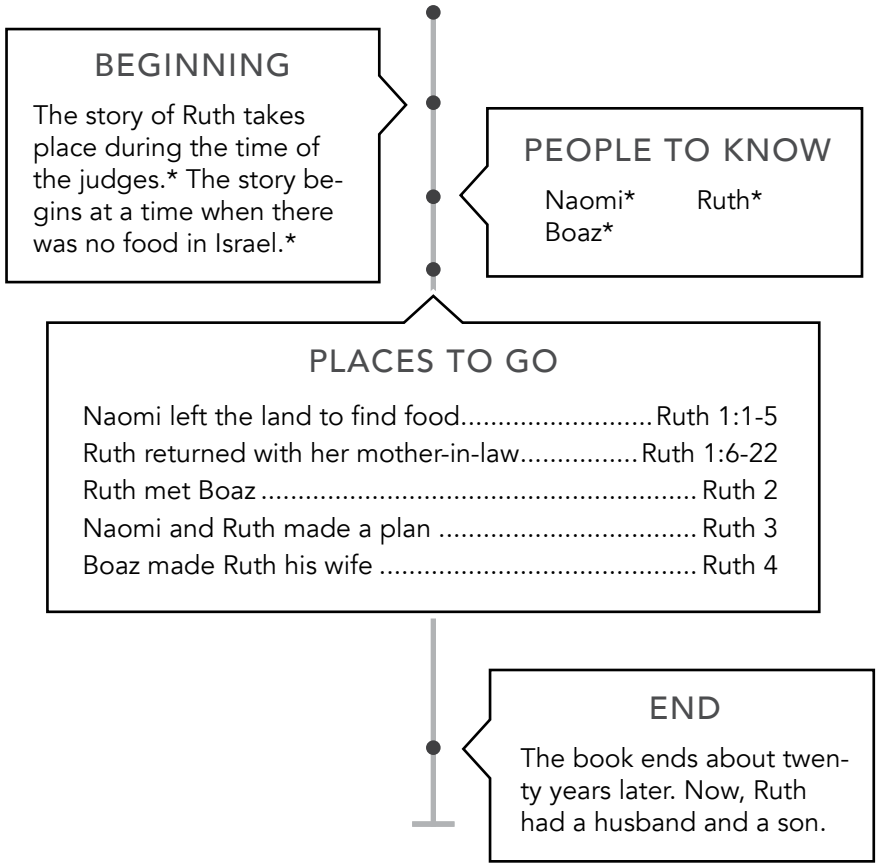
The book ends with these sad sentences.

'In those days the people did not have a king. Everyone did whatever they thought was right.'[6]

1. Judges 1:27-36
2. Judges 2:1-3
3. Judges 2:16-19
4. like Deborah and Gideon
5. Judges 2:10-15
6. Judges 21:25

RUTH

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF HISTORY



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE STORY OF RUTH

The book of Ruth takes place during the days of the judges. There was a time when the people of Israel had no food. This made many of the people leave the land to find food. A woman named Naomi and her family left the land too. They went to the land of Moab.* While she was there, one of her sons married a woman named Ruth.[1] Ruth was not a member of the family of Abraham.* She was not a part of the people of Israel. She was a foreigner. Ruth was from the land of Moab. When she married Naomi's son, Ruth married into the

house of Judah.* But, soon, Ruth's husband became sick and died. Naomi's husband and other son died too.

A few years later, the food started to grow again in the land. Naomi decided to leave Moab and go back to the land of Israel. Her daughter-in-law Ruth went with her. When Ruth left her own land, she made a choice. She left her own gods to serve the God of Naomi.[2]

Naomi and Ruth were very poor. So Ruth went to the fields at night after the harvest. She picked up the grain that was left on the ground. She went to the fields of a man named Boaz.[3] When Boaz saw Ruth in his field, he decided to take care of her.[4] Ruth told Naomi about Boaz, and Naomi was very happy. She said that it was a sign that God was showing them kindness. She knew that God was taking care of them.[5]

Naomi told Ruth to make a night visit to Boaz. Ruth did this so Boaz would make a decision. Boaz must decide if he would marry Ruth. This was important for Naomi and Ruth. And this was also an important part in God's plan. This was the way God would keep his promise to Abraham. God was using these plans for his own purpose. They were part of his eternal* plan. God was preparing the way for a great king that would rule his people.

In those days, there was a law that said that a man could marry the widow of his close relative. This law made a way so that a man's family line could continue. This law also made a way so that a widow would have someone to care for her.[6] Boaz was related to Naomi. Because of this law, he could marry Ruth. The rest of the book tells the story of how Boaz married Ruth.[7]

God is faithful.* When the people read the story of Ruth, they remembered this. God had been in control all along. God was in control even when there was no food. God was in control even when Naomi's husband and sons died. God was in control even when Ruth had to gather grain from the fields. God was using all of these things as part of his plan.

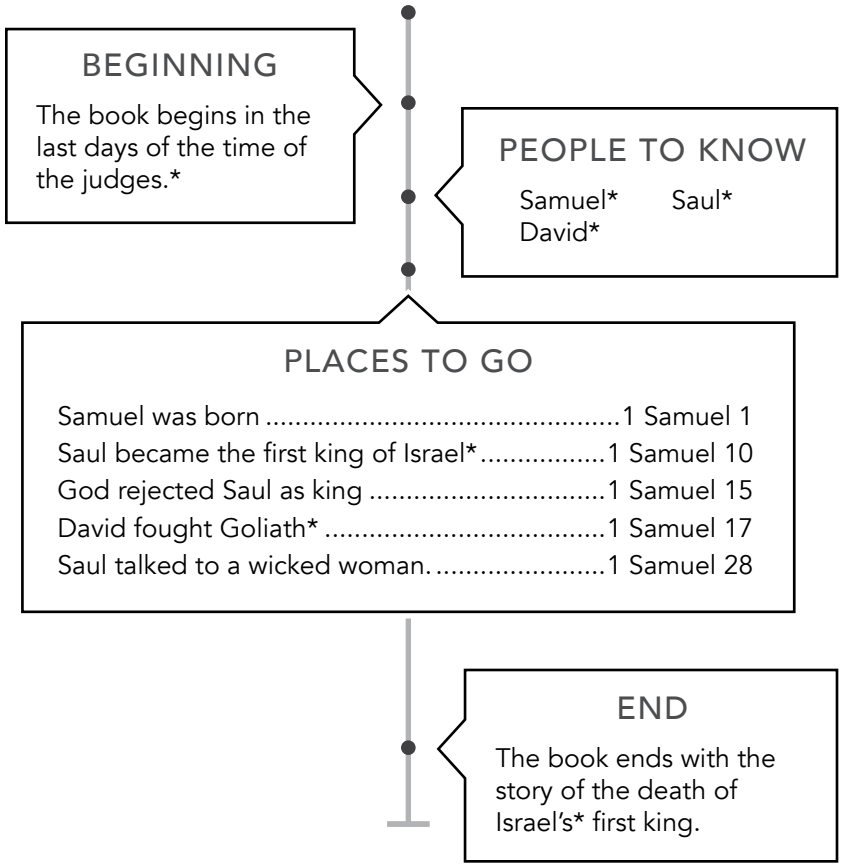
We can see this when we look at the list of names at the end of the book. Boaz and Ruth would have a family. One day, the future king would be born into that family. His name would be David.*[8] One day, many years later, another king would be born into that family. That king would be a son of David. His name would be Jesus.* He would be God's eternal king.

In Ruth, we see that God does not only love people who are in Israel. God also loves people who are not children of Abraham. God welcomes them when they trust* him.

1. Ruth 1:3-4
2. Ruth 1:16-17
3. Ruth 2:2-3
4. Ruth 2:11-12
5. Ruth 2:20
6. See Deuteronomy 25:5-10
7. Ruth 4:1-12
8. Ruth 4:13-22

1 SAMUEL

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF HISTORY



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE STORY OF 1 SAMUEL

1 Samuel tells the story of the first king of Israel. For many years, Israel did not have a king. God chose special judges to lead the people.

This book is the story of how Israel came to have a king. Samuel told the story. He was the last of the judges that led the people in Israel. God chose Samuel to serve him even before he was born.[1] Samuel's mother prayed for a child and God answered her prayer. Samuel grew up serving God and helping the priests who cared for God's Tent.* The people soon saw that God had chosen him to

be a prophet.*[2] It was not easy for Samuel in his early years as a judge. The army of Israel lost many fights. Their land was filled with their enemies.[3] But Samuel led the people well. He helped them to remember God again.

But, when Samuel grew old, he made his sons the new leaders. But his sons did not follow God. So the elders* said to Samuel, **'You are old, and your sons do not live right. They are not like you. Now, give us a king to rule us like all the other nations.'**[4] The people did not want to trust* God to bring another judge. They wanted a king. Samuel was very unhappy with the people. He warned them that a king would not always be easy to follow. But God told Samuel to listen to the people and give them a king. Soon, God helped Samuel choose the first king for Israel. His name was Saul.

Saul did many good things when he first became king. But it was not long until he did not listen to Samuel. It was not long until he did not obey God.[5] Saul was the kind of king that Israel had wanted. He built an army and helped defeat their enemies. But he was not the kind of king that the Lord* wanted. He did not obey the words of God.[6] So God decided that Saul would no longer be the king. But God did not remove Saul right away. God told Samuel to choose another king while Saul was still in power. Samuel soon chose David to be the new king. But God wanted David to serve Saul before he took over for him.

David was the youngest son of Jesse.* They were part of the family of Judah.* He was a great soldier even when he was only a young man. He killed Goliath with only a stone. This made the people very happy. But this made Saul very angry. Saul began to hate David. For many years, David had to run from Saul. Saul tried to kill David many times. But God watched over David.

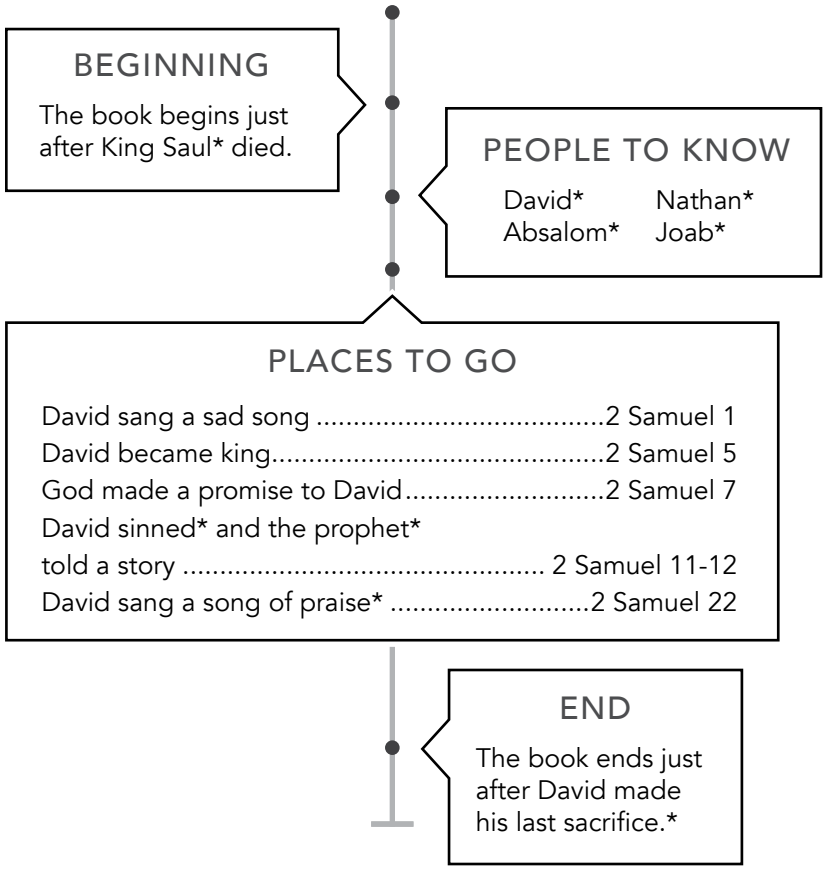
This book tells many great stories about David. He was a brave man. He loved God. He trusted God, even when he was in danger.

The sad story of Saul ends at the end of the book. His enemies defeated him and he took his own life. He died and the people buried him.[7] Soon, David would be the new king. 1 Samuel tells us stories that show that David was a good man. When we read 2 Samuel, we see how David became a great king.

1. 1 Samuel 1:11
2. 1 Samuel 3:19-21
3. 1 Samuel 4:1-11; 7:14
4. 1 Samuel 8:4-5
5. 1 Samuel 13:9-14
6. Deuteronomy 18:15
7. 1 Samuel 31:4

2 SAMUEL

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF HISTORY



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE STORY OF 2 SAMUEL

The second book of Samuel is a book of stories. The stories tell us about the life of David. It is a record of his life. That means that all of these stories are true.

After king Saul died, Israel* broke into two parts. People called the north part Israel. They called the south part Judah.* Judah and Israel fought to see who would be the next king. The first stories in the book tell how David became king of all parts of the land.

When David became the king, the people were happy. They saw that David

would be a good king. He took back the city of Jerusalem* from their enemies. He made it a great city. He brought the ark* of God there. David even wanted to build a temple* for God in Jerusalem. But God sent the prophet Nathan to say that David would not build a temple. Instead, one of David's sons would build a house for God in Jerusalem. And God would give one of David's sons a kingdom* that would last for ever.[1]

David did many great things as king. He built a strong army. He made the nation strong. In many ways, he set an example of how people should follow God. He was kind to Saul's family. He gave thanks to God for helping him defeat his enemies. He wrote beautiful songs of praise to God. He spoke prayers that showed how he put his trust* in God.

David was a great king. But David was not a perfect king. He was not the king that Moses or the prophets had hoped for.[2] You can see this when you read the last parts of the book. There, you read many sad stories about David. David took another man's wife. David then murdered this man. David told some lies. And David made some decisions about his family that were not wise.

David did many things that did not please God. But there was a good part to these stories. When David saw what he had done wrong, he returned to God. He confessed his evil* actions to God. He accepted God's punishment. And he kept on trusting God. God said some very hard things to David.[3] But David did not turn away from God. He believed* that God is good. David believed that God would keep his promises.

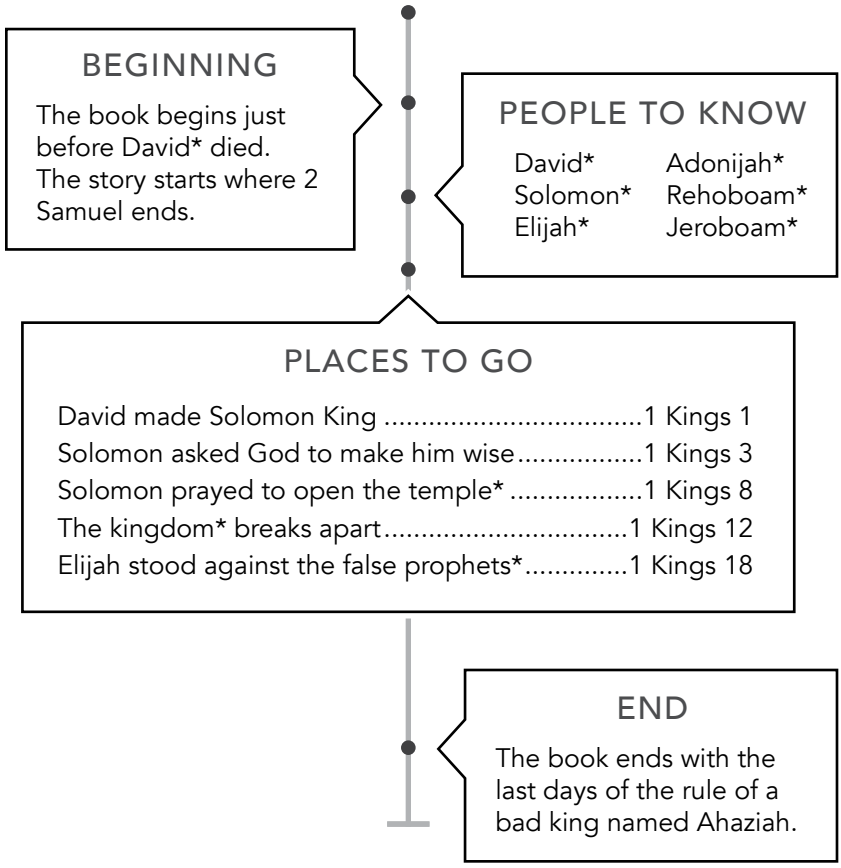
In the last part of this book, we read about David's last days. We see his last act of worship.* We read his last words. David had many problems in his life. He still had many enemies. He had made many mistakes. But David never lost his hope* in God. He sang praises to God because of the promises that God had made. One of those psalms* is included near the end of 2 Samuel.[4] David wrote his 'last words' at the end of that song. In those words, he told how he hoped in God's **'everlasting* covenant.'**[5]

David spent his last years building a great army. He surrounded himself with great soldiers. But the last thing David did was one of the most important. He purchased some land so he could make a sacrifice* to God. That land became the place where his son would build God's temple.

1. 2 Samuel 7:15,16
2. See Genesis 49:10
3. 2 Samuel 12:11-12
4. 2 Samuel 22; see Psalm 18
5. 2 Samuel 23:5

1 KINGS

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF HISTORY



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE STORY OF 1 KINGS

The book of 1 Kings picks up where 2 Samuel stops. The book begins with the story about the last days of David. David was very old. He had many sons. And two of them wanted to be the next king. One of his sons was named Adonijah. He decided he would make himself king. He did not tell David. Many people followed Adonijah at first. But God and David had a different plan. David chose his son Solomon to be the next king instead.[1] The first part of the book tells the story of how that happened. The book of 1 Kings is the

story of what happened in Israel* after David died.

When Solomon first became king, he followed the ways of his father. He asked God for wisdom. He made the nation strong. He built the temple. It seemed that he could be the kind of king that God promised to David. And Solomon did well at the start. The stories in the first part of the book are good. The way the writer tells the story makes us think that Solomon was the son God promised. Solomon even saw himself in that way.[2] But, soon, we learn that Solomon was not the king that God promised.

God told Solomon to build a temple. And God told Solomon how he must live.

> **'You are now building this temple. Follow my orders. Keep my rules. Obey all of my commands. Then I will make the promise I gave your father David come true. I will do it through you.'[3]**

But we soon see that Solomon did not do these things. Many times in the story, Solomon did not follow the way that God gave him. He did not make people follow God's commands. He let the people break God's commands.

In many ways, Solomon was a skillful king. He was wise. He had a strong army. He was generous. But he did not follow the ways of God. Soon, the people became unhappy. So, when Solomon died, his kingdom* was divided. His son was not so wise as Solomon. He made foolish choices. Because of this, the people in the north broke away. They started their own kingdom. They chose their own king. They turned away and did not follow a king from David's family. The kingdom in the north kept the name Israel. They chose Jeroboam to be their king. The kingdom in the south took the name Judah.* They chose Rehoboam to be their king.[4] There were many other kings after these kings. But none of the kings of the north were from David's family.

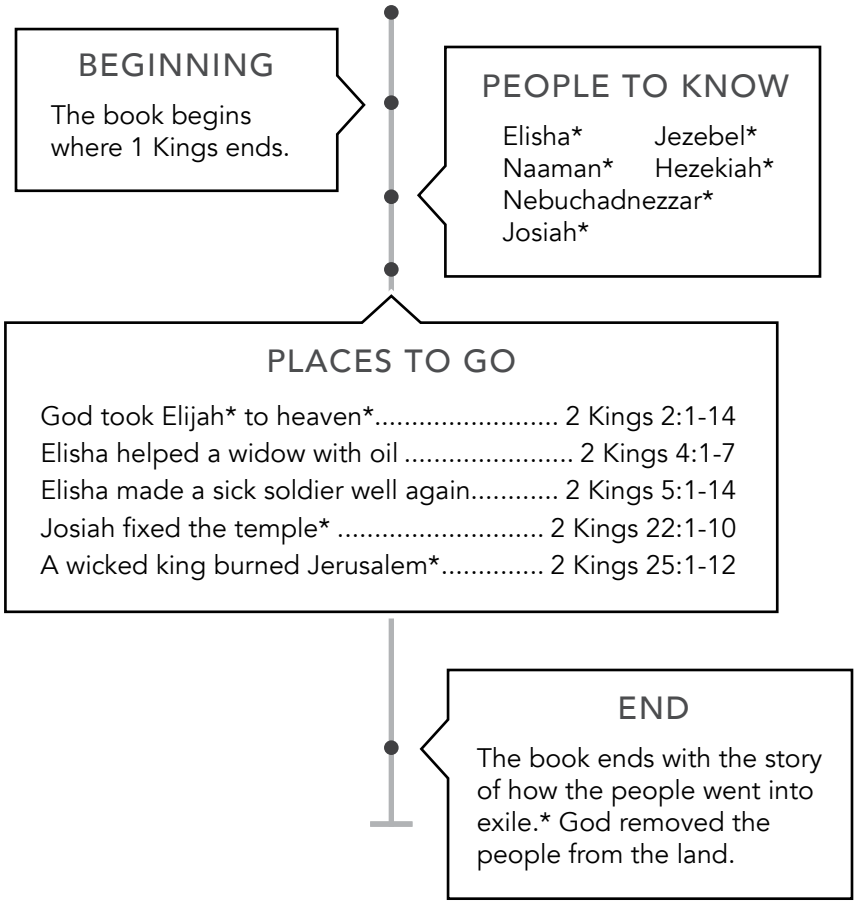
The rest of the book tells the stories of the kings of Israel and Judah. None of the kings of Israel followed God. They led the people to follow false gods and do many evil* things. God was not pleased with them. But God wanted the people to return to him. So God sent men called prophets to speak to the wicked kings. Elijah was the main prophet in these stories. He was very brave. He spoke for God with authority. God even gave Elijah power to do miracles.*[5] But the people did not come back to God. Many of the stories in 1 Kings tell how Elijah spoke for God.

When the book ends, we know that none of the kings we read about were the king that God promised to David.[6]

1. 1 Kings 1:29-30
2. 1 Kings 5:4-5
3. 1 Kings 6:12-13
4. 1 Kings 12:19-20
5. 1 Kings 18:20-40
6. 1 Kings 18:20-40

2 KINGS

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF HISTORY



CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE STORY OF 2 KINGS

The books of 1 and 2 Kings were once one book. That is why the book of 2 Kings starts where 1 Kings ends. The book tells the story of God and his people through some very dark days. There would be new kings and new prophets* in Israel* and Judah.* But the big story is always about God. God is at work in the story of his people.

Many times, the people of Israel and Judah did not obey God. Sometimes, they would remember God and turn from their bad ways. But most of 2 Kings

tells stories of the many ways that the people forgot about God. God was patient with his people. He sent them prophets to warn them. They told the people to turn back to God. But the people did not listen.

Elisha was one of the prophets. He helped the prophet Elijah for many years. When Elijah was about to go away, Elisha asked him for a blessing.* He wanted to do the kinds of things that Elijah had done. He wanted to do even more. So God answered Elisha's prayer. Elisha made sick people better. He made an axe float on water. He even made a dead child become alive again. He did many other miracles* too. Now, Elisha spoke for God. He told the kings to follow God. He warned them not to do evil* things. He called the people back from their evil ways. He told them to obey God again.

But they still did not listen.

The kings of Israel built many altars* to false gods. They did not worship* the true God. They refused to worship at the temple in Jerusalem. They did not do what God had told them.[1] They did not listen to the words of the prophets.

So God sent an army from Assyria* to punish them. They surrounded the city of Samaria.* Their army marched into the land. They attacked the cities and took the people of God away. This began a time that the Bible calls 'the exile'.* When people are in exile, they are taken away from their land. They are made to live far away from their home land.

The rest of 2 Kings tells stories about the kings of Judah. These kings were all from the family of David.* Some of them did good things. Hezekiah[2] helped the people follow God again. Josiah[3] helped the people too. But this did not last long. Most of the kings were not good. So, after many years, God sent another army. This time, the army from Babylon* came and made war against Judah. The army[4] burned Jerusalem. Then they took the people far away from home. They carried the people away from the land.

All of these things happened to Judah because they did not obey God's word. The prophets told them that this would happen. God keeps his promises. That is one of the most important lessons in the book.

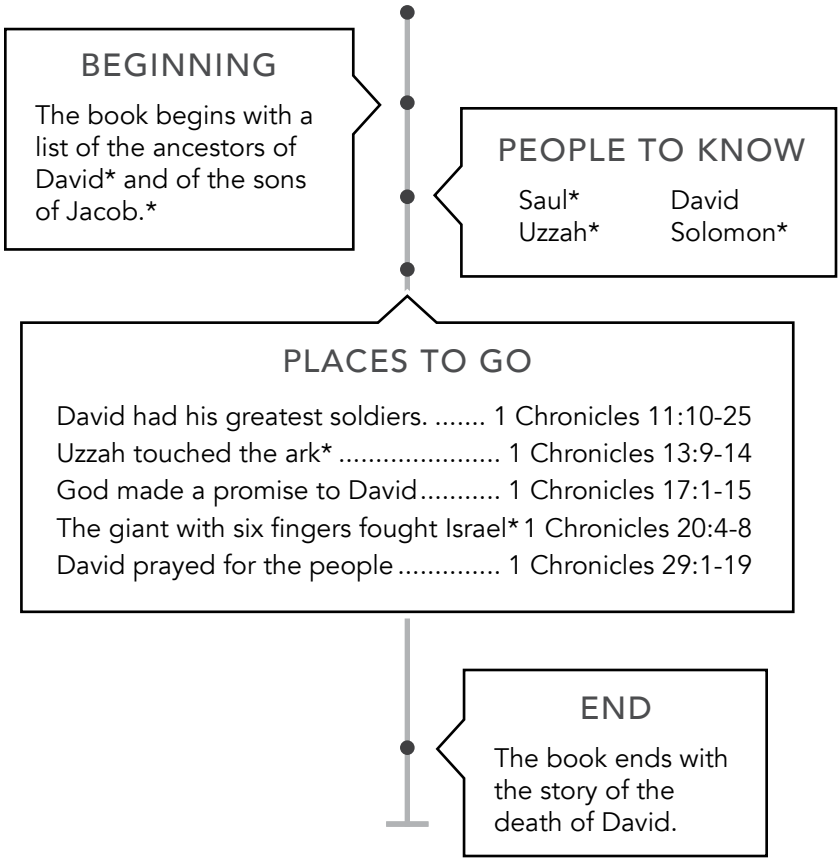
But, even after so many bad stories, the book ends with a word of hope.*[5] One of the kings from David's family was still alive. The king of Babylon was kind to him.[6] God could still keep his promise to David. As long as that was true, there was still hope.

There are many sad stories in this book. There are stories about bad kings and wicked people. But God did not forget his promises. He would not desert his people.[7]

1. Deuteronomy 12
2. 2 Kings 18-20
3. 2 Kings 22-23
4. 2 Kings 24:1
5. 2 Samuel 7:16
6. 2 Kings 25:28
7. See Exodus 34:6

1 CHRONICLES

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF HISTORY



CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE STORY OF 1 CHRONICLES

You will see many stories in this book that you have seen before. That is because Chronicles is very much like the books of the Kings. This book talks about the people of Israel,* just like Samuel and Kings. But it tells the stories in a different way. The books of the Kings told about what happened to the people. The books of Chronicles tell why those things happened.

The book teaches the people the lessons that are in the stories. It explains the stories. It teaches people things about God. That is why some people think the

book sounds more like a prophet* wrote it. He reminded people how God is in all of Israel's story.

One of the first things you will see in the book is names. Lots and lots of names. There are many lists in the book. They are important records. The people needed to remember who they were. They needed to remember where they came from. That is why there are so many names in the book. These stories are about real people.

The rest of the book of 1 Chronicles is about David. Some of the stories are the same as the ones in Kings and Samuel. But not all of the stories about David are told again. Some of the stories are new. The stories tell about David and the promises that God made to him. The stories in 1 Chronicles talk about how David was a part of God's bigger plan. That is why the book begins with the first man, Adam.* Remember the promise that God made to Adam and Eve?* God promised that one of their sons would overcome the snake.[1] David was one of the sons of Adam. David would become a part of God's plan to keep that promise.

David's story begins with the story of Saul. He was the king before David. Saul was not a good king. He did not listen to God. But God was very important to David. David wanted everyone in Israel to honour God. So one of the first things he did was to go to get the ark back from Israel's enemies.

Years before, Israel's enemies stole the ark of God's promise. So the book tells how he got it back. David wanted the people to remember God. That is why the ark was important to him. This ark was a sign that God was with them. David wanted the people to remember who they were. They were God's people. But David knew that the people would not be loyal to God if the king was not loyal to God. So he did many things to show the people how to follow God. There are many stories about the ark in this book. There are many stories about the priests* and the temple.* All of those stories help us see David as a man who loved God. That lesson is very important in the book of Chronicles.

Do you remember the promise that God made to David? He promised to make one of David's sons a king. That king would rule all people some day. That king would rule over God's house and God's kingdom* for ever. Samuel* included that promise in his book. We find it again in Chronicles.

When God said, 'my house', that was another way of saying, 'my temple'. This promised king would care about the kingdom. And he would care for the temple too. Maybe that is why Chronicles tells so many stories about the temple and the priests. David was a king with the heart of a priest. David cared about the ark and the temple. He showed by his example what the promised king might be like.

David did not build the temple. God did not allow him to build it. But David made all of the plans. He gathered the money to build it. He collected the wood and stones. He chose the priests. He chose the singers. He chose the people to watch the gates. He chose the artists and builders. All that his son had to do was put it together.

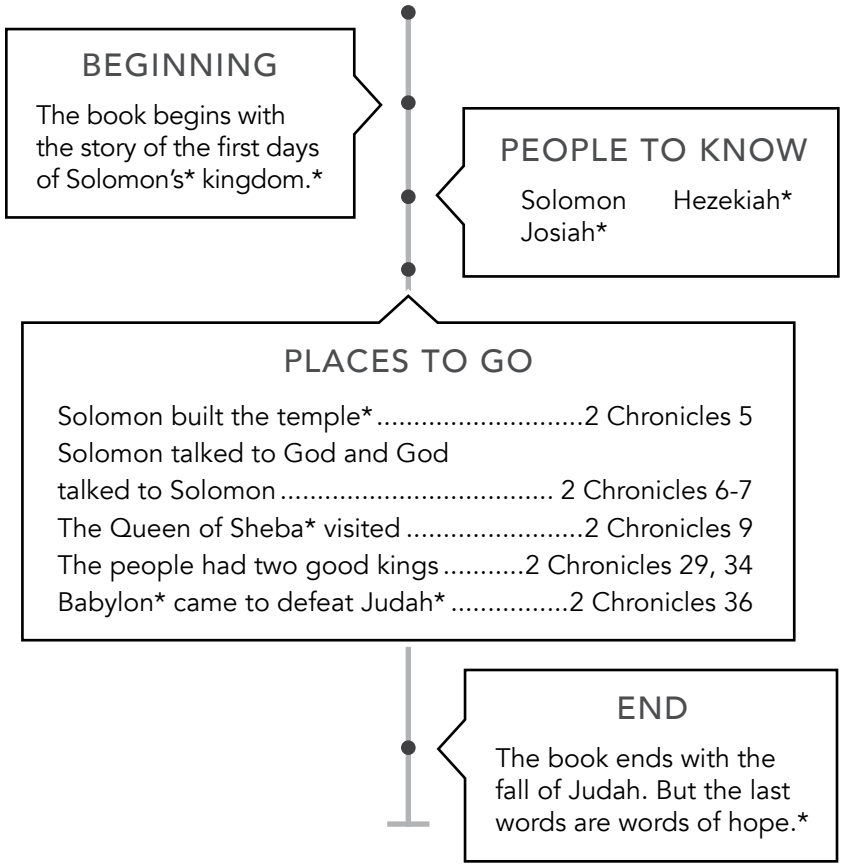
This book teaches many things. The people of Israel were God's people. David was a good king. He followed God. He honoured God. So, God made Israel great. He defeated their enemies. God gave them peace* when they followed him. As long as they remembered these things, God would be with them.

The next book shows what happened when they forgot.

1. Genesis 3:15

2 CHRONICLES

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF HISTORY



CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE STORY OF 2 CHRONICLES

The second part of Chronicles tells the rest of the story.

The book begins when Solomon was still the king of Israel.* He cared about the temple of God just like his father did. This book tells how he built it. He wanted the temple to be beautiful.

When the temple was finished, Solomon called the people together. He wanted to give thanks to God. So he called them to a special time of worship.*

The people made many sacrifices.* They gave praise* to God. And God blessed* Solomon in many ways. God made Solomon wise. God promised that he would bless the kingdom of Israel.

The people followed God. God gave the people many good things. God blessed the people.

Remember the promise that God made to David?* Was Solomon the son God promised? He was a great king. He was wise. He made the nation strong. The nations knew about Solomon. People from far away came to listen to him.[1] God gave Israel a great king. And God was with him.

But, soon, Solomon forgot about God. He forgot about God's promises. So he began to do many bad things. He made the people pay heavy taxes. He made friends with the enemies of God. He married foreign wives. He let his wives follow false gods. He kept more wealth than he needed.

God was not happy with Solomon. He did the very things that God told him not to do.

When Solomon died, Solomon's son Rehoboam* was the next king. But he soon faced a big problem. Another strong ruler named Jeroboam* did not want him to be king. So Jeroboam fought against the son of Solomon and took the tribes* in the north away from him. The ten tribes in the north took the name Israel. The tribes in the south took the name Judah. We can read many stories about the ten tribes in the north in the book of 2 Kings. But 2 Chronicles does not tell many of those stories. It only tells the stories that happened in Judah. The book tells the stories about the kingdom where David's sons ruled.

There were many kings that followed Rehoboam. Some of these kings were good kings. They followed God. But these times did not last very long. Most of these kings were evil.* They did not obey God's laws. Some of them even followed false gods. And many of these kings were cruel to the people. God was not pleased with the people. So God let the enemies of Judah attack them. One of those enemies was Babylon.*

Babylon's army came and fought against Judah. The battles lasted over many years. But Judah still did not turn back to God. They did not follow God.

So Babylon destroyed the city of Jerusalem.* They burned the temple. They took all of the valuable things. And they took many people out of Judah. They took them back to Babylon and made them live there. The book tells us these things happened because God was punishing Judah.

God sent his prophets* to warn the people to worship him again. The prophets said that if the people turned back to God, God would bless them again. That is what God had promised to Solomon.

> **'Suppose I close up the sky and there is not any rain. Suppose I command insects to eat up the crops. And I send a disease among my people. But they make themselves low in my sight. They pray and look to me. And they turn from their evil ways. Then I will listen to them from heaven.* I will forgive* their sin.* And I will heal their land. After all, they are my people.'[2]**

But the people did not listen. So God sent an enemy to punish them. The Chronicles say it this way:

> **'But God's people made fun of his prophets. They hated his words. They laughed at his prophets. So then, the Lord's* burning anger was stirred up against his people. Nothing could save them.'[3]**

But what about God's promise to Abraham? When would they become a great nation again? What about God's promise to David? When would one of his sons rule all of the nations?

Near the end of Chronicles, a new enemy entered the story. This new army was from Persia.* They fought against Babylon and won. So, now, Persia ruled Judah. But this was not a bad thing. In fact, it gave the people of Judah some hope.*

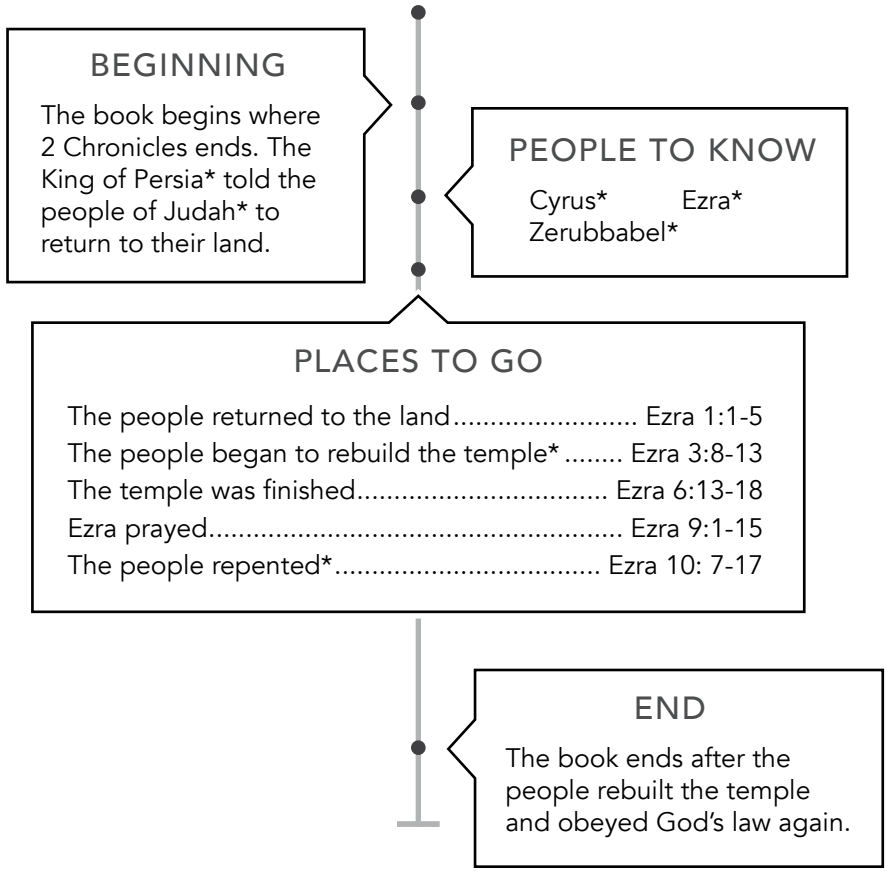
The new ruler of Persia knew about the God of Judah. So he told the people that they could go back to Jerusalem. They could build their temple again. The end of this book helps us to understand the next book. That book is Ezra.

The books of 1 and 2 Chronicles were written long after the house of David fell. But the ones who read the story would learn how God punished Judah. They would also know that God did not give up on them. He brought them back to the land. He is a God who keeps his promises. He is faithful* and true. God did not give up on his people.

1. 2 Chronicles 9:5-8
2. 2 Chronicles 7:13-14
3. 2 Chronicles 36:16

EZRA

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF HISTORY



CHAPTER TWENTY

THE STORY OF EZRA

The book of Ezra begins with the words of the king of Persia. He told the people from Judah that they could go home to their land. This was just what the prophet* Jeremiah* had said would happen.[1] He said that Babylon* would take Judah* from the land. They would have to live there for 70 years. Then, they would return to the land. Ezra tells the story of how they returned.

Cyrus told the people that they could go back to the land. So a man named Zerubbabel and a priest* named Joshua led them. The first group was from the

family of Judah and Benjamin.* But the book reminds us that it was not only Cyrus or the people who were doing this. God was the one who was doing this. God **'stirred up the heart'** of Cyrus to allow the Jews* to return. God **'stirred up the heart'** of the people to want to leave Babylon and return to the land.[2] Ezra told the story this way so that the people would remember that God is the one who is powerful. God is the one who is in control.

When they got to the land, their first job was to fix the temple. Remember that the temple was the centre of worship* for the people of Judah. So, when the people put down the bottom stones for that building, they were very happy. They stopped to give thanks to God for his help to them.[3] But not everyone was happy. Some people cried. They were sad that this temple was not as good as the one that Solomon* built. The people were glad that God was helping them, but they still wanted something more.

But building a temple was not easy. Some people tried to stop them from building. Other people tried to make them afraid. So they stopped building for a short while. Then, a new king began to rule Persia. He heard about the trouble in Jerusalem.* He decided that the work should start again. So he sent money and supplies to Jerusalem to help them. After that, the people finished the temple.*[4]

Soon, new priests* started working there. They took care of the altar.* They helped the people worship God. The people remembered how God had brought them out of Egypt* long ago. So they ate the Passover* meal together. This was a time of great joy for the people. But the people still did not follow all the ways that Moses* had taught them.

The last part of the book tells the story of a priest named Ezra. He was from the family of Aaron.* He knew the laws of Moses and taught them to the people. When he came back to Judah, he called them to turn from their bad ways and to turn back to God. But this would not be easy. The people built the temple with their hands. But their hearts were still very far from God.

When the people went back to the temple, they remembered what Moses had told them. They knew they were not following the laws Moses gave them. The leaders came to Ezra to confess* what they were doing. They knew that God hated the bad ways of the nations near them. But they were doing the same things. They had married wives from those nations. And those wives did not follow God. They followed false gods.

The leaders were very sad about this. They knew that they were doing wrong. And the priest had done these wrong things, too.

When Ezra heard this, he tore his clothes. He fell down on his knees. He raised up his hands to God. And he prayed.

Here is part of Ezra's prayer.[5]

'I am filled with shame, my God. I can hardly look to you and pray. That's because our sins are piled up above our heads. Our guilt* reaches all the way to the heavens.* We are filled with it. It has been like that ever since the days of our people who lived long ago. Kings of other countries have killed many of us and our kings and priests with their swords. All these things have happened to us because we have done so many sins. And that's how things still are to this day.

But you are the Lord* our God. Now you have shown us your kindness for a short time. That's because you have allowed a few of us to remain here. Your temple has given us new hope.* You have not turned away from us. You have been kind to us. The kings of Persia have seen it. You have given us new life to repair your temple. You have given us a place of safety in Judah and Jerusalem.

You are our God. What can we say after the way you have blessed* us? We have turned away from your commands. You gave us your commands through your servants the prophets. You said, 'You are entering the land to take it as your own. The sinful* practices of its people have ruined the land. The Lord hates all their practices. So do not let your daughters marry their sons. And do not let their daughters marry your sons. Then you will be strong. You will eat the good things the land produces. And you will leave all of it to your children as their share.

Lord, you are the God of Israel. You are holy.* You always do what is right. Today you have left many of your people alive. Here we are with all our guilt.* You see the guilt of our sin. Because we have sinned, not one of us can stand in front of you.'[6]

When the leaders heard Ezra's prayer, they were very sad. But they knew what they had to do. They agreed with Ezra.[7] So they began to change their ways. They turned back to God. And they turned away from the evil* practices of the nations near them.

1. Jeremiah 25:8-10
2. Ezra 1:1-5
3. Ezra 3:10-13
4. Ezra 6:15-18
5. Ezra 9:6-15
6. Ezra 9:6-15
7. Ezra 10:12

NEHEMIAH

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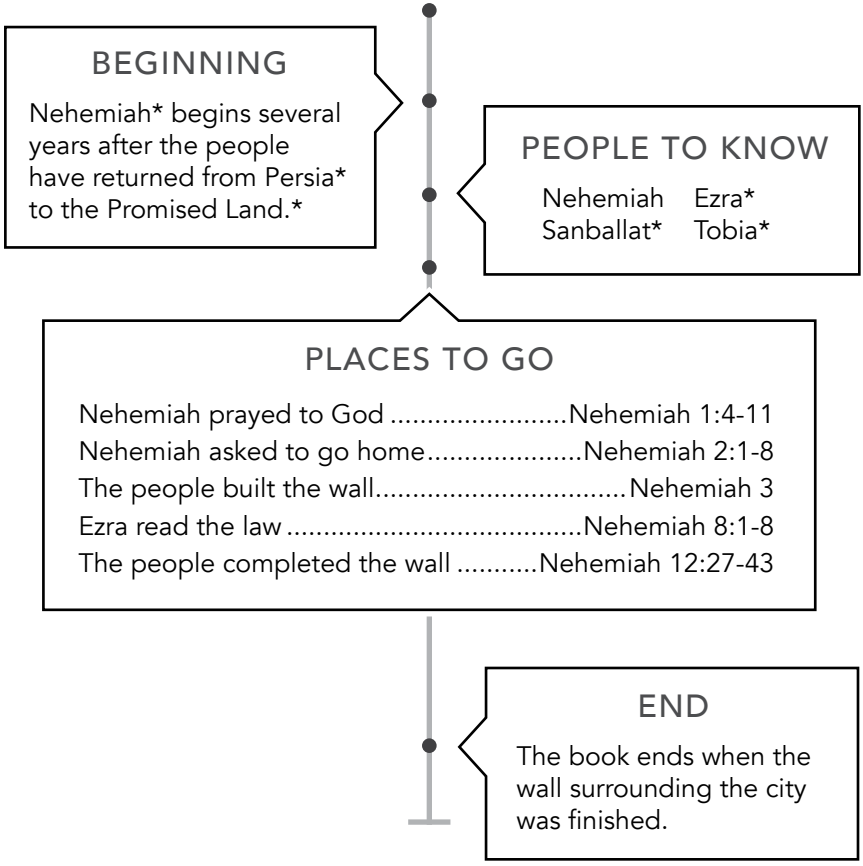


CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

THE STORY OF NEHEMIAH

Nehemiah is the story of a man named Nehemiah. He lived during the time of Ezra. The book begins as he got news from his home.[1] It was sad news. The wall in Jerusalem* was broken. The gates were torn down. The people there could not defend the city. This was bad news for Nehemiah. He was a Jew.* Jerusalem was his city. It was the city where the temple* was. The temple was the place where the Jews went to worship* God. So he decided to pray and ask God for help.

Nehemiah lived in Persia. He loved God and he cared about his people. God had blessed* Nehemiah with a very important job. He was a helper of the King of Persia. This important job allowed him to talk to the king. One day, the king noticed that Nehemiah was sad. So he asked him why he was sad. He told the king about the wall in Jerusalem. He told him about how poor and sad the people were. He asked the king to allow him to return to the land. Nehemiah wanted to help build the wall again. The king said yes. The king even gave him men to protect him. He also gave him supplies to help him build.

When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, he saw the broken wall. So he gathered the people and they started to build. But this was hard work. The people who were not Jews did not help. They laughed at the builders and tried to stop them. But the builders did not stop. Sometimes, they had to carry a sword with their tools. Each time Nehemiah had a problem, he trusted* God. He obeyed God's words. The book tells how God blessed Nehemiah and the people. They finished building the wall in 52 days.

The people had not listened to God for many years. They were doing things that did not please God. They needed to change the way they lived. They needed to remember the Sabbath.* They needed to stop marrying wives that were not from Judah.*

When the wall was finished, the people came together again. They asked Ezra the priest* to read the book of Moses* to them. So Ezra stood on a high wooden platform. He read aloud from the 'Book of the Law'.[2] He wanted all the people to hear him. After they heard the law, the leaders set aside a holy* day for the people. And, later, they came together for a special meal. It was just like the meal that their fathers ate long ago.

Then, Nehemiah called the people together again. This time, the priests told them what to do. Honour God. Confess* the wrong things that they had done. Then, return to follow the promised covenant* that God had made with their fathers. And so they did. They made the promise. The leaders signed the promise. Then the people agreed. They promised to do all of the things that God commanded them to do.

God used Nehemiah to do many good things. He was a strong leader and a man who pleased God. But some of the people still did not listen to God. Nehemiah knew this. But he still had hope.* He believed* that God would be faithful* to his people. He believed that God would remember the promises that he had made.

The book tells us many things about God. It also tells us many things about prayer. There are two important prayers in the book. One is in chapter one. The other is in chapter 9. Both prayers tell us many things about God. The

first teaches us how God's leaders ought to pray. Nehemiah confessed his sin.* He confessed the sin of the people. He asked God to have mercy* on them. God judged* the people when they did not obey. Then, Nehemiah asked God to keep his promise to bless* them. And he believed that God would keep the promises that he had made.

Why did he pray this way? He prayed this way because he remembered the words of Moses.

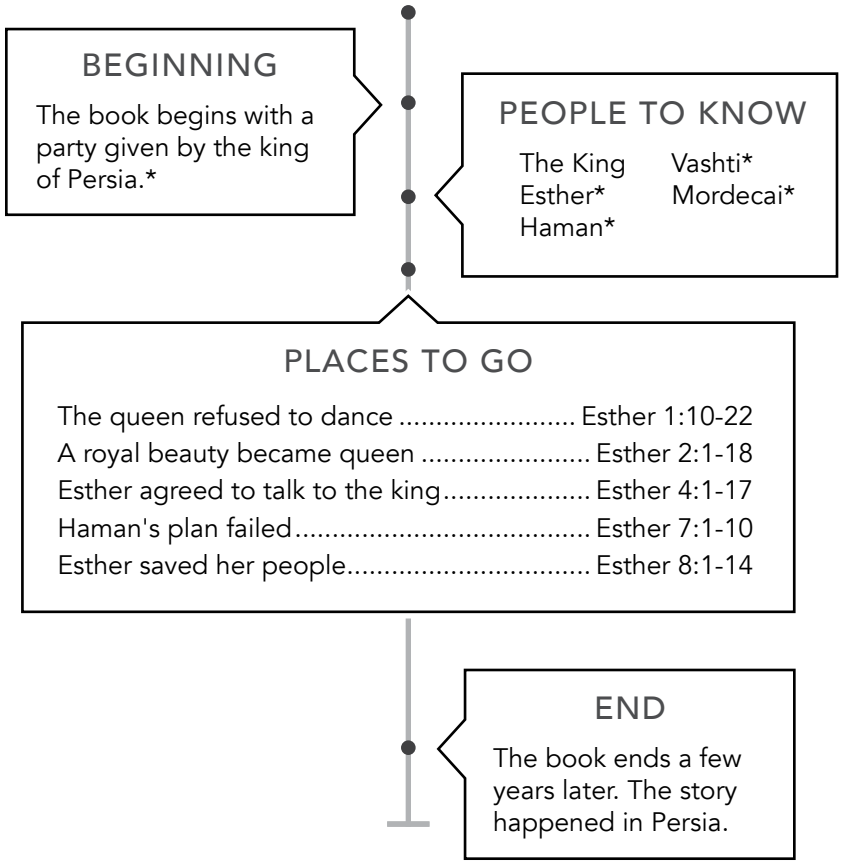
> **'You and your children will return to the Lord* your God. You will obey him with all your heart and with all your soul.* You will do everything I am commanding you today. When all that happens, the Lord your God will bless you with great success again. He will be very kind to you. He will bring you back from all the nations where he scattered you.'[3]**

Nehemiah knew God's words. He believed those words. So, he believed that God would answer his prayer.

1. Nehemiah 1:1-3
2. Nehemiah 8:1-8
3. Deuteronomy 30:1-3

ESTHER

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF HISTORY



CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE STORY OF ESTHER

Esther is the story of a woman. She was a Jew.* Her name was Esther. A foreign king took her into his palace. God gave Esther an opportunity. She had the chance to save the lives of her people. In this way, the story is similar to other stories in the Bible.*[1] All of those stories show how God cares about his people. This book tells how God is always at work. He can always protect his people.

There is one very unusual thing about this book. It makes this story one of a kind. The book of Esther never mentions God. We do not read God's name

anywhere in the story. But we can see God at work in the story. The writer tells the story in a way that shows that things happened the way they did because God planned them that way. We read about the unusual things that happen and know that God was at work. When Mordecai told Esther that she became queen for an important reason, we know that it was God's reason.

'Who knows but that you have come to a royal position for such a time as this?'[2]

The story begins with a royal dinner given by the Persian King Xerxes.* His queen was named Vashti. When the king told her to come to his dinner and dance for him, Vashti refused. This made the king very angry. So he decided to search for a new queen. He had a competition to find the most beautiful woman in the land. When the competition was finished, Esther won. Esther became the new queen. But the king did not know that Esther was a Jew.

Esther had an uncle. His name was Mordecai. One day, this uncle got into trouble. He did not bow to one of the king's men named Haman. This man became very angry. He was so angry that he decided to hurt Mordecai. He found out that Mordecai was a Jew. Haman was so mad that he wanted to kill every Jew in Persia.

Haman was a friend of the king, so he asked the king to help him. He got the king to write a law. The new law said that all of the Jews could be killed. It seemed that God's people were in real trouble. But that is what the book of Esther is about. The rest of the book is about how God stopped Haman's plan. God would be at work. But God would work through people who were brave enough to do the right thing. And, sometimes, doing the right thing can be dangerous. God would use Mordecai. Mordecai asked Esther to speak to the king. God would use the new queen. But what Mordecai asked her to do would be a risk. If she made the king angry, she could lose her life. But if she did nothing, she would be in danger as well. So Esther agreed.

The story shows that God watches over his people. In the end, things did not work out very well for Haman. The king discovered that he was bad. He punished him. Then, the king listened to Esther and helped rescue the Jews from death.

After the Jews were saved, they decided to hold a special meal. This was like a party to show that they were happy that they did not die.[3] This was the first time for an event like this one. And the Jewish people still remember this meal today.

There are many lessons in the book of Esther. One of the most important ones is in what Mordecai said to Esther.

'If you keep quiet now, help and freedom for the Jews will come from another place. And who knows, maybe you have been chosen to be the queen for such a time as this.'[4]

God has a plan. He uses human decisions as a part of his plan. When we decide to obey God, he will use us as part of his plan.

1. Joseph, Moses, Daniel & Nehemiah
2. Esther 4:14
3. Esther 9:20-28
4. Esther 4:14

THE BOOKS OF POETRY

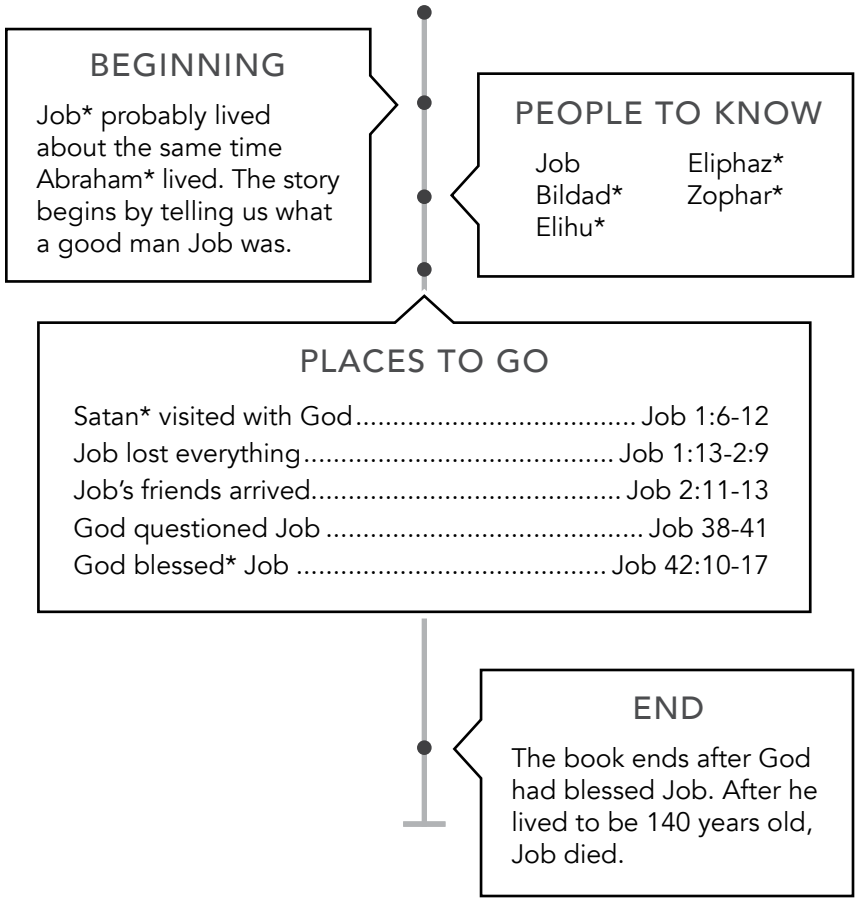
We call the next part of the Old Testament* the 'wisdom' books. Sometimes, we call these the books of poetry. The books are filled with wise words, as well as psalms* and poems to help the people worship* God.

THE BOOKS OF POETRY

Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecciesiastes
Song of Songs

JOB

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF POETRY



CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

THE STORY OF JOB

This book tells the story of Job, a good and wise man. God himself said that Job was **'a good, faithful* man. He respected God and refused to do evil.'*** Because God was so fond of Job, Satan did not like Job. Satan told God that Job only loved God because God had made him rich. So God let Satan take things away from Job. Job lost his family and his riches. But Job still loved God after all. So Satan spoke to God again. He told God that Job would not worship* God if Satan made him sick. So God allowed Satan to

make Job sick. But Job still worshiped God.

When we read the story of Job, we should remember that Job did not suffer because he was a bad man. All of this happened because Job was a good man. Satan made these bad things happen to Job to try to make Job curse* God. But Job would not curse God.

When Job's friends heard about his suffering, they came to visit him. At the beginning, they sat by him and comforted him. They were quiet. But, soon, they decided to give Job advice. One of the friends told Job that he must not be such a good man after all. He told Job that no one is free from sin.* He told Job that God punishes sin. So he told Job that the reason he suffered was because he had sinned. He told Job,

> **'If you return to God All-Powerful, you will be healed. But first you must remove the evil from your house.'**[1]

Another friend named Elihu told Job that God was trying to teach Job something.[2] He should be careful and not accuse God of being unfair. God may be using Job's suffering to teach him not to be proud. Job should fear God and trust* Him.

Job was not happy with the answers from his friends. They were right about many things. All people sin. God does judge sin. People should fear and trust God. But they were wrong about one thing. When people suffer, it is not always because God is punishing them. Sometimes people suffer because God is doing something else. But he does not always explain what he is doing.

There were many things that Job and his friends did not know. They did not know that Satan was making Job suffer. They did not understand that God was not punishing Job. God was testing Job. God had bigger purposes for Job's suffering. That was hard for them to understand.

Many times in the book, Job asked to talk with God. At the end of the book, God came to talk to Job. But God did not answer Job's questions. Instead, he asked Job many questions.

> **'Get ready to stand up for yourself.**
> **I will ask you some questions.**
> **Then I want you to answer me.**
> **'Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?**
> **Tell me, if you know.'**[3]

By asking Job these questions, he taught Job about the kind of God he is. He is powerful and wise. He is caring and strong. He is just and always does what is right. He showed Job that he is a God who can be trusted. When Job

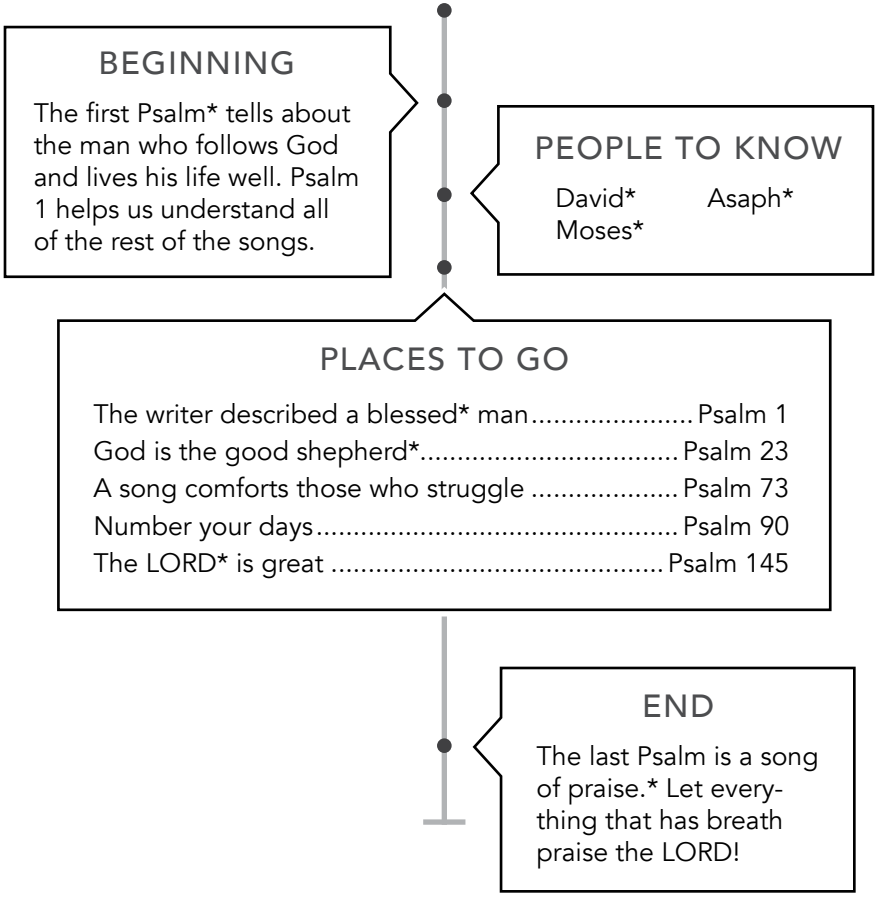
heard from God at the end of the story, he did not know what to say. There were still many things that he did not understand. God did not answer all of Job's questions.[4] But Job decided to trust God anyway.

After God spoke to Job, he gave Job great riches again. He made him healthy again. He even gave Job 10 more children. The book of Job teaches us that wise people trust God. They trust God even when they may not understand what God is doing.

1. Job 22:23 See Job 5:8-17; 8:20; 11:13-15; 22:21-30; 36:8-11
2. Job 33:29-33
3. Job 38:3-4
4. Job 40:1-2

PSALMS

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF POETRY



CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE STORY OF PSALMS

The Psalms are songs. The people read and sang them to help them worship God. That makes the Psalms different from any other book in the Bible.*

There are many different kinds of Psalms. Some are songs that praise God for the good things that he has done. Some praise God because he is good and great. But sometimes the Psalms are sad songs. They talk about the pain that we feel or the problems that we have. But they almost always remind us that God is greater than our problems. We can trust* him because he knows about

our troubles. He is with us as we go through them. He will not always take away our pain. But he will always use our problems to do what he wants to do in us and what he wants to do for us.

Many different people wrote songs for this book. King David wrote some Psalms. Some of the workers that helped people worship in the temple* wrote Psalms. Sometimes, we know what was happening in the writer's life when he wrote. Sometimes, we do not know. But the reason so many people like the Psalms is that the people who wrote the Psalms were just like we are. Sometimes, they were very happy and wanted to praise God. Sometimes, they had problems and needed God's help. Sometimes, they were hurting and sad. They wanted to know that God was close and he was listening. The words of the Psalms talk about all of those things. They give us the words we need to talk to God, just like the writers in the Psalms did.

The first psalm is a song that introduces the whole book. It tells us that a blessed man thinks about God's words. When he does this, he will know God's ways. He (and we) will find blessing when we know and respect God's written words. But, if we refuse to obey his words, we show that we are wicked. The wicked lose everything in the day when God will judge all people.

The second psalm is also a kind of introduction. Many people who read this psalm say that it reminds them of the promise that God made to David.[1] The second song talks about a king. This great king is sent by God. He will rule over Israel* and the nations. He will judge all people. Those who trust him are blessed.[2]

These two psalms tell us that the blessed man is one who remembers the word of God. And he waits for God's promised king.

When we read the Psalms and 2 Samuel together, we can understand the Psalms better. Both books show how David believed* God's promises. 2 Samuel tells the stories in David's life that show he trusted God. Psalms tells us David's thoughts and words.[3] David believed God would send a great king. One day, God did send the king David was waiting for. His name was Jesus.*[4]

We do not know who collected these Psalms and put them in a book. Many people think it was Ezra* and his helpers. They did this after they returned to the land. When they put the book together, they divided the Psalms into five parts or books.

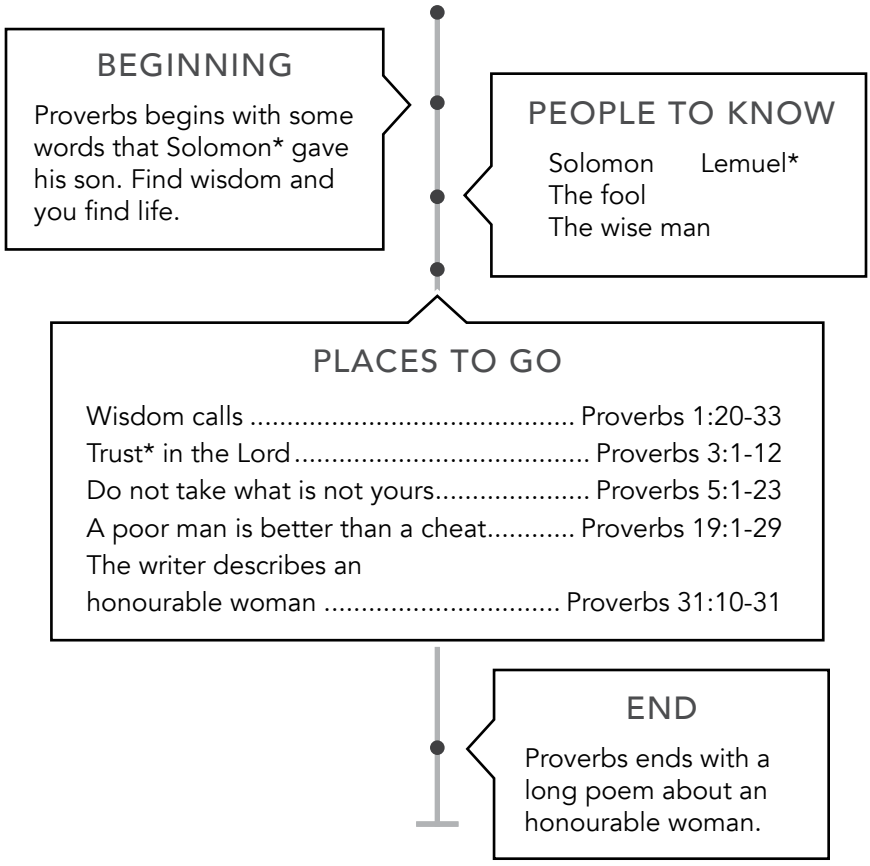
Psalm 1 to Psalm 41 are in Book 1.
Psalm 42 to Psalm 72 are in Book 2.
Psalm 72 to Psalm 89 are in Book 3.
Psalm 90 to Psalm 106 are in Book 4.
Psalm 107 to Psalm 150 are in Book 5.

The Psalms teach us many things about God and what it means to follow God. The Psalms tell us that we can be honest with God. We can tell him how we feel. We can tell him when we are hurt or afraid. We can tell him when we are happy and grateful. But the Psalms teach us that, no matter how we feel, we should always trust God and praise him. He deserves our praise because he is great, he is wise, and he is good.

1. 2 Samuel 7:16
2. Psalm 2:12
3. Samuel 15 and Psalm 3
4. John 5:46

PROVERBS

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF POETRY



CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

THE STORY OF PROVERBS

The book of Proverbs is a collection like Psalms. But this book is not a group of songs. It is a group of many wise sayings. David's* son Solomon wrote or gathered most of these wise words. He wrote them during his life. Later, other people added more wise words. But all of them are like the good advice of a wise father to his son. That is how the book begins. A father told his son to listen to his words and to remember **'your mother's teaching.'** The father told his son these things so that he would become wise.

In the first part, Solomon told his son that wisdom is important. The reason that we should want to be wise is because God is wise. His wisdom is so great that all true wisdom comes from God. God will always give wisdom to the man or woman who looks for it. We can learn how to be wise by listening to God's words. That is what the book of Proverbs is – wise words that help us find wisdom.

Solomon wanted his son to know that he had a choice to make. He must choose between wise ways and foolish ways. People who choose wisdom show that they respect God. But evil* people are fools. They do not respect God and their path will be difficult. God will punish evil people. So Solomon advised his son to study wisdom.

Then, he warned his son about the dangers of evil. Evil people can hurt a young man. Evil advice will lead to trouble. If you follow the ways of evil people, you will not find good things. You will only find shame.

The first nine chapters are filled with this good advice. The next chapters are filled with the wise words of Solomon. They talk about almost every part of life.

There are words about being honest in business.

'The Lord* hates it when people use scales to cheat other people. But he is pleased when people use honest weights.'[1]

There are words about how to behave towards the poor.

'Anyone who hurts poor people makes fun of their Maker. But anyone who is kind to those in need honours God.'[2]

There are words on how to be a good friend.

'A friend loves at all times. They are there to help when trouble comes.'[3]

There are words that tell how to care for your enemies.

'If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat. If he has no water, give him water to drink.'[4]

But these words are not just good advice for this life. They give us advice that prepares us for the life to come. Proverbs reminds us that God is a wise judge.* He remembers what we do and we will answer to him for what we do. There are no stories in Proverbs. But God shows us many things about himself in the book.

The last parts of the book are wise words from three different people. One records the words of man named Agur.* One is a story from the mother of

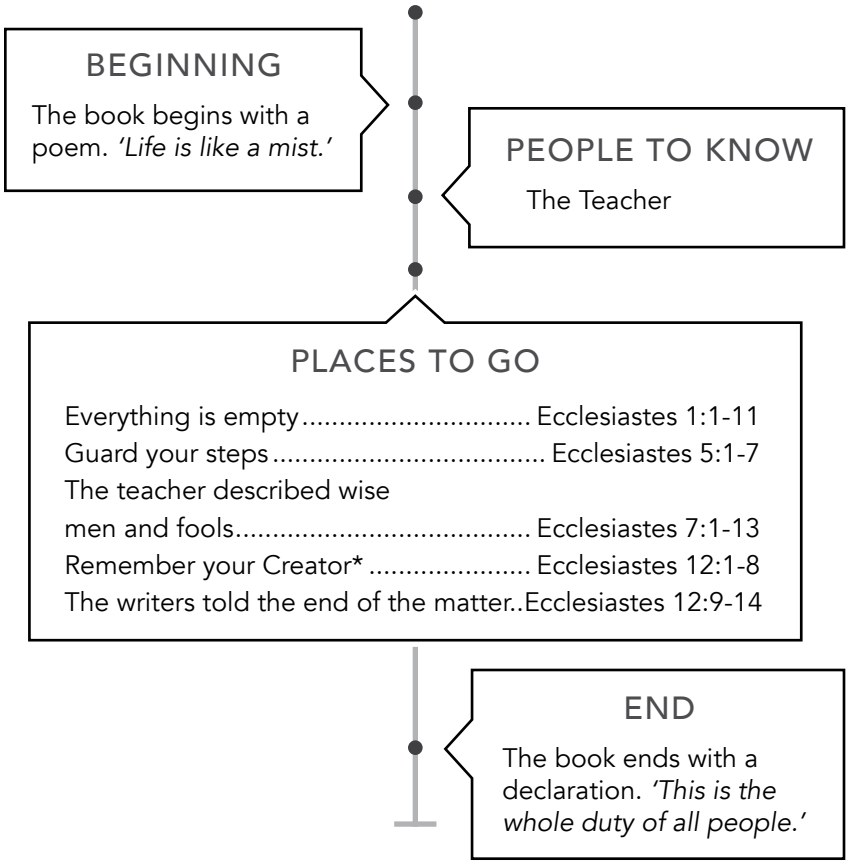
King Lemuel. She gave him wise advice about finding a good wife. Lemuel remembered those words and wrote them down. The book ends with this poem about the noble woman Lemuel's mother told him about.[5]

Solomon had many wise things to say. But he did not follow his own advice. 2 Chronicles tells us that he did many things that were not wise. True wisdom is not simply knowing what is good and right. True wisdom is living that way.

1. Proverbs 11:1
2. Proverbs 14:31
3. Proverbs 17:17
4. Proverbs 25:21
5. Proverbs 31:1-9

ECCLESIASTES

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF POETRY



CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

THE STORY OF ECCLESIASTES

The book of Ecclesiastes is one of the wisdom books in the Old Testament.* Ecclesiastes is a word that means teacher. We do not know for sure who wrote the book. Many people believe* that Solomon* wrote the book. Solomon was the son of King David.* He was also a great king. Solomon knew many things about life. He went through many of the experiences that this book talks about. He was very rich. He was very wise. He filled his life with pleasures. He worked very hard. He was a ruler. The writer of Ecclesiastes knew about these

things too. He talked about these things all through the book. But the writer only called himself the teacher.

The book is like a story in some ways. It tells about what one man did and what he learned about life. The book tells those stories and gives those lessons.

We call this book one of the wisdom books in the Old Testament. But most of the book tells us about things that will not make us wise. Human wisdom has its limits. But God's commands show us the way to true wisdom. This is like what Moses* said in Deuteronomy.[1]

We need to remember this as we read the book. Not everything that the teacher says is correct. He was speaking as if this world is all there is. He was thinking about this life as if there were no life beyond this life. That is why his words sometimes seem sad. That is why he said that hard work is a waste of time. He even said that we are foolish if we try to enjoy life. If there is no life beyond this one, life can seem empty and lonely. Life can seem like it has no meaning.

Parts of the book include poems. This teacher used them to help us learn. He used poems to help us remember those lessons.

Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 is an example of one of these poems.

1 There is a time for everything.
There's a time for everything that is done on earth.

2 There is a time to be born.
And there's a time to die.
There is a time to plant.
And there's a time to pull up what is planted.

3 There is a time to kill.
And there's a time to heal.
There is a time to tear down.
And there's a time to build up.

4 There is a time to cry.
And there's a time to laugh.
There is a time to be sad.
And there's a time to dance.

5 There is a time to scatter stones.
And there's a time to gather them.
There is a time to hug.
And there's a time not to hug.

6 There is a time to search.
And there's a time to stop searching.
There is a time to keep.
And there's a time to throw away.

7 There is a time to tear.
And there's a time to mend.
There is a time to be silent.
And there's a time to speak.

8 There is a time to love.
And there's a time to hate.
There is a time for war.
And there's a time for peace.*

At the end of the book, someone else added his own words. He added some notes[2] about the lessons in the book. The writer said that the words of the book are 'good and true'. But they are not the whole truth. We can learn many things about life from wise men. We should listen to their words. But we can only find true wisdom when we listen to God. We must always remember to do what God says.

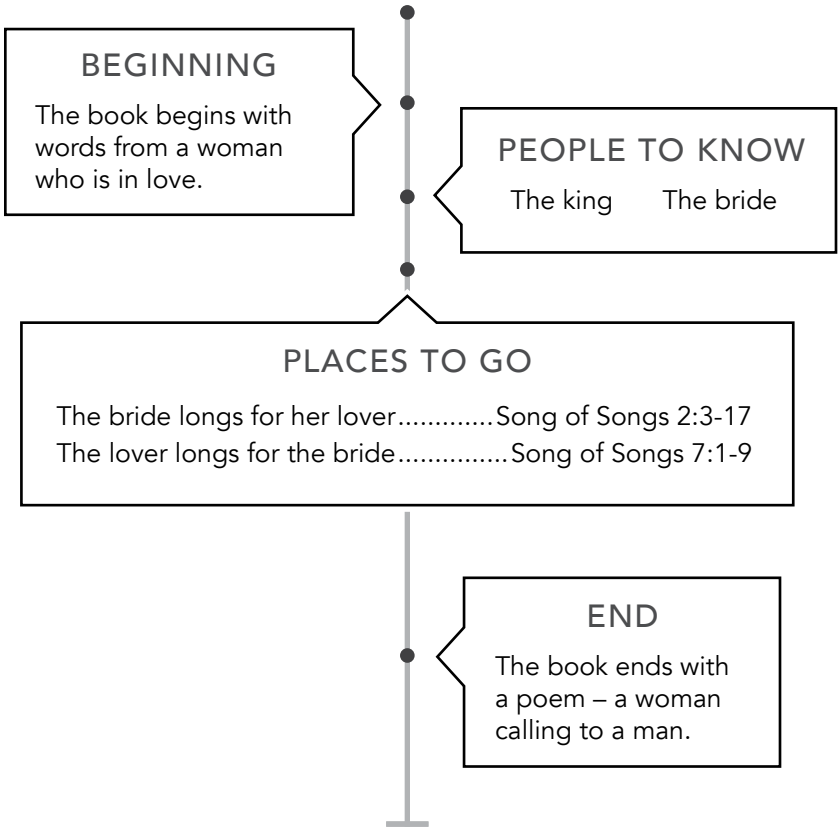
Respect God. Obey God's commands. Because he knows about everything people do. He knows about all of the good things that we do. He knows about all of the bad things that we do. He even knows our secrets. And some day he will judge* people.[3] We can not hide from him.

That final message is important. Life does not end when our body dies. There is another life beyond this one. In that life, God will reward what is right and destroy what is wicked. This life only has meaning when we understand that. This life only makes sense if we live to prepare for the next one. If we live as if this life is all that there is, we will begin to sound like the man who wrote this book. **"It is of no use. All is for nothing."**

1. Deuteronomy 4:5-7 2. Ecclesiastes 12:9-14 3. Ecclesiastes 3:17

SONG OF SONGS

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF POETRY



CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

THE STORY OF SONG OF SONGS

'Listen! I hear my love!
Look! Here he comes!
He jumps across the mountains.
He's coming over the hills.
He said to me, 'Rise up, my love.
Come with me, my beautiful one.
Look! The winter is past.

The rains are over and gone.
Flowers are appearing on the earth.
The season for singing has come.
Rise up and come, my love.
Come with me, my beautiful one.'[1]

The Song of Songs is also called the Song of Solomon.* This book is a love poem.

Song of Songs is the last of the wisdom books. But it is not a book of songs or wise words. This book is a poem. It is a poem that was written like a play. First, one person speaks, and then another. There are three key characters in the book. There is a young man and a young woman. The last character is a group of friends. Sometimes the young woman speaks. She is sometimes called 'the Shulamite'.* Sometimes the young man speaks. And sometimes their friends speak. Try to think about this as you read the book.

Some people think that Solomon did not write the book. They think that someone wrote the book as a gift to praise* Solomon. That is why they made him the central player in the story. This book is about the love of one man for one woman. The story is about two people who love each other and marry each other. The book shows that they are kind to one another. They respect one another. They are not cruel. They do not speak in ways that hurt each other. They are faithful* to each other. So some people wonder how Solomon could write about these things. Solomon had many wives.

But most people think that Solomon did write the book. He wrote the book to tell what he knew about love. He wrote a poem about what love can be like. He wrote about a man who speaks and acts when he loves someone. He wrote about how a woman acts toward a man who loves her well. The best way to know love is to be faithful to one person. Solomon knew this even if he chose something less.

Many people who read Song of Songs think that the book can teach us something about God's love for Israel.* They think that the book can teach us something about Jesus'* love for his people (the church*). Some think that the love of the young woman is a picture of Israel's* love for the Messiah.* Only when he comes can she find what she longs for.

We can learn many things from the book. We can learn something about God's love for us. We can learn things about how to love God better. But always remember this. The Song of Songs is a story about a man and a woman. The book can tell us how a man and a woman should love each other well. That is a lesson of great value.

1. Song of Songs 2:8-13 (NIrV)

THE BOOKS OF THE MAJOR PROPHETS*

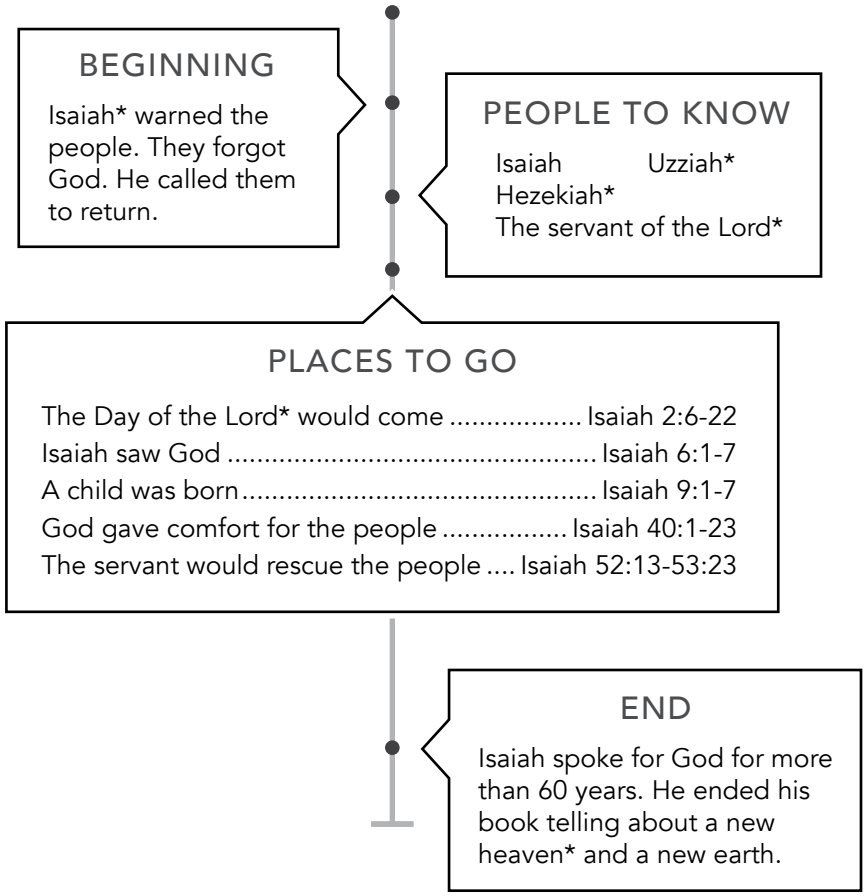
In the times of the last kings of Israel,* the people were not following God. So God sent prophets to call the people to return to God. They warned them that if they did not return to God, he would punish them. But the prophets also reminded them that God would not forget them. And they reminded them that God always keeps his promises. One day, he would bring them back to the land. One day, God would send them a saviour.*

THE MAJOR PROPHETS*

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Ezekiel
Daniel

ISAIAH

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF THE MAJOR PROPHETS*



CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

THE STORY OF ISAIAH

Isaiah is the first of the books that we call Major Prophets. A prophet* is a person who speaks for God. In the Old Testament,* God spoke his words to the prophet. The prophet then spoke those words to the people. We call the first five books of the prophets in the Old Testament the Major Prophets. That is because they wrote large books. We call the prophets that wrote smaller books the Minor Prophets.

Isaiah spoke to the people who lived in Judah.* He spoke to the people and

to their kings. Like all true prophets, he spoke the words that God gave him.

Isaiah filled his book with the things that God showed him. He called the people to stop trusting in an idol.* He called people to return to the true God. Isaiah warned them that they would be judged* if they did not return to God. But he also spoke of a time when God would bless* the people again. He told of a time when God would make all things right again. All of the nations would know him. And he would fix everything that was wrong.

Isaiah talked about judgment* in the first part of the book. But there is also some good news. There are words of comfort in the second part of the book.

Isaiah began by telling the people to return to God. The people forgot that God had chosen them. They had stopped being serious about obeying God. They still kept doing some of the things that God told them to do. But they did not love and fear God any more. Isaiah told them that God would punish them. But he also said that God would not forget them or forget his promises to them. He would make sure that a small number of the people remained alive. He would bring those people back to the land and start over again. Isaiah also told them of a day that would come in the future. In that day, the nations would come to Jerusalem.* They would listen to God's words and forget the ways of war.

The nation of Assyria* was the enemy of Israel* in those days. They took the people in the northern kingdom* out of their home land in Israel. And they kept them away for many years. So Isaiah told Judah to turn back to God. If they did not turn back, they would lose their land too. An army would take them away. But Isaiah told them something very important. Assyria and Babylon* were only great because God made them great. God was using them. God was angry with Judah. They had done many evil* things. So God sent these armies to punish them. But Isaiah also said that God would bring them back. They would return to the land some day. And, some day, he would put everything back to the way it was supposed to be. He would do this and no one could stand in his way.

Many of Isaiah's words reminded the people that God is not an idol.[1] His image can not be made by a worker of wood. His power can not be measured. The nations are like **'a drop in a bucket'**[2] to him. He is the living God. He created* all things. He is the judge of all peoples. His words will stand for ever. He gives hope* to all who trust* in him. God would send someone to rescue them.

In the last part of his book, Isaiah mentioned a new character. He was the Servant of the Lord.* He was the one who would bring hope to Israel. He was the one who would rescue them. Isaiah was talking about someone that the Jews* called the Messiah.* The Messiah was the son that God promised to

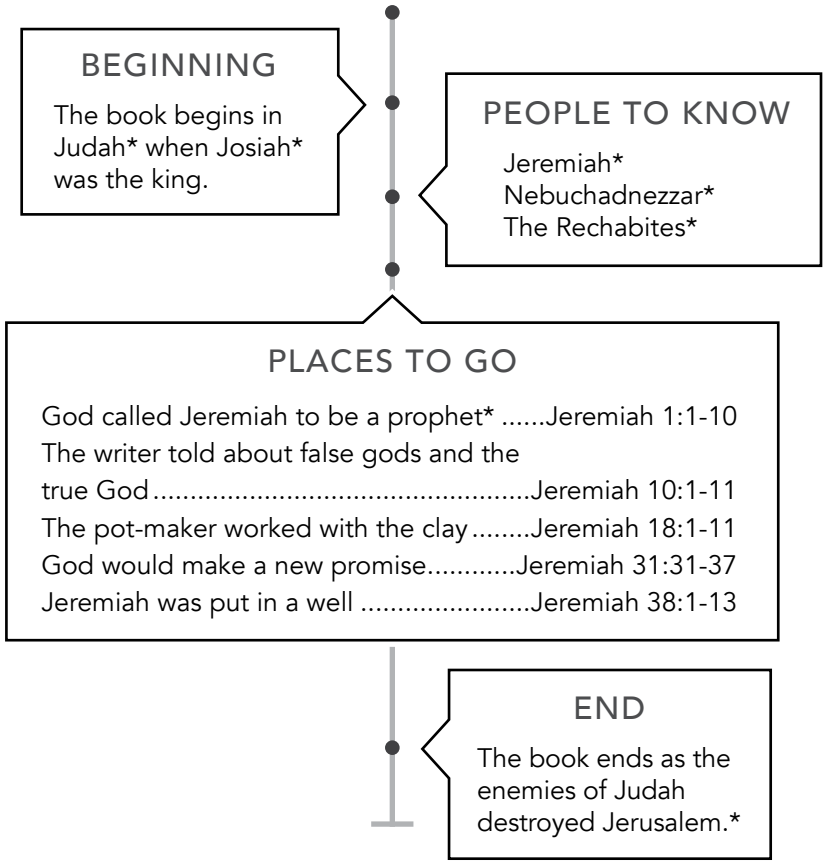
Abraham.* He was the king who would be born of the family of David.* He would be a greater prophet than Moses.*

Who was this servant? Who was this man Isaiah talked about? Who was this child without a human father?[3] Who was this prince that would bring peace?*[4] Who was this man who would comfort the people?[5] Who was this servant that would die and live again? Who was this man who would rescue the people? Who was this Messiah? Isaiah did not know. When we read the rest of the Bible,* we discover that Isaiah was speaking about Jesus.*

1. Isaiah 40:18-26
2. Isaiah 40:12-17
3. Isaiah 7:14
4. Isaiah 9:6
5. Isaiah 40:1-8

JEREMIAH

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF THE MAJOR PROPHETS*



CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

THE STORY OF JEREMIAH

This book tells the story of one of God's great prophets. His name was Jeremiah. You will read many of his words in this book. You will also learn many things about him. Like other prophets, God told him what to say. And he spoke those words to the people. He was loyal to God and did everything that God asked him to do.

He started his work when Josiah was King.[1] Judah had three more kings after Josiah. But Josiah was the last good king.

Babylon* was the enemy of Judah in those days. They had a strong army. They were very cruel people. Jeremiah told the people that they should be afraid of Babylon. Babylon's army was coming because God was angry. God was angry with Judah because they did not obey God's law. They did not listen to God's words. They did not keep their promises to God. They were acting in sinful* ways. They did not care for the poor. They were not acting like God's people. Some of them even followed false gods. They bowed down to other gods. So God was going to send Babylon to punish Judah.

Many times, Jeremiah told the people to turn back to God. He reminded them of what God said. God promised to bless* them if they obeyed him. He promised to punish them if they did not obey him.[2] But they did not obey God's commands. They followed other gods. So Jeremiah told them that Babylon would come. They would take many people from the land. And in a short time, Babylon came. They fought against Judah. They took many people out of the land.

Jeremiah was a true prophet of God. But he was not the only prophet in Judah. There were other prophets there too. They were false prophets.[3] They lied to the people. They said that Jeremiah was wrong. God was not going to judge* them. God would not allow the temple* to be broken down. God would never let the throne be empty. God would chase away the army of Babylon. God would bless Israel* again.

But Babylon did attack Judah. They did break down the temple. They did kill many people. They did take the kings away from the land.

Jeremiah had some very hard things to say to the people. Some of the people were very angry with him. Some people were so angry that they tried to kill Jeremiah. He had a hard job. He also had a sad job. He had to watch as God punished the people. People called Jeremiah the weeping prophet. He saw many sad things. And he had many sad words to give to the people.

But Jeremiah also gave them a word of hope.* A time was coming when God would bless his people again. That time would be after the people's return from Babylon. They would be in exile* for 70 years.[4] But God would not desert them. Some day, he would make a new covenant* with them.[5] When he did, they would want to obey and follow him. And when they did, God would bless them. He would bless all the other nations too.

Jeremiah did not tell his story in order. He collected his stories, but not in the order they happened. Some parts of the book are letters that he wrote. Some parts are prayers. Some parts are songs. Some parts are like pages from his diary.

When you read the book, you will learn that Jeremiah was a good man. He was loyal to God. He obeyed God even when it was complicated. He did not

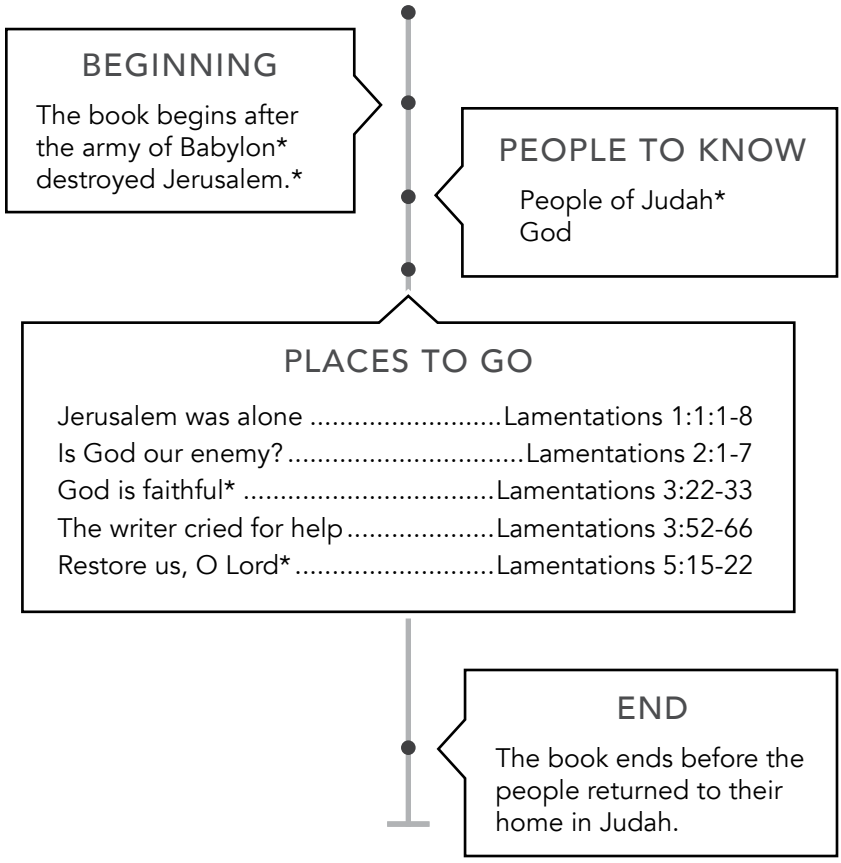
run away when he was afraid. He did not stop speaking for God when people did not listen.

Jeremiah talked about his own times. But some of his words were about another time in the future. This is the time when God will make everything right.[6] Some of his words even spoke of Jesus.*[7] The men who wrote the New Testament* understood this.[8] That is why they used some of his words in the books they wrote.

1. Jeremiah 1:2
2. Deuteronomy 28
3. Jeremiah 28:1-4
4. See Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10; Daniel 9:1-2
5. Jeremiah 31:31-37
6. Jeremiah 33
7. Jeremiah 23:5-6
8. Hebrews 10:16-17

LAMENTATIONS

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF THE MAJOR PROPHETS*



CHAPTER THIRTY

THE STORY OF LAMENTATIONS

Lamentations may be the saddest book in the Bible. It is a group of songs. They are the kind of songs people sang when someone died. There are five songs like this in the book. Most people think Jeremiah* wrote them. If he did, he wrote these songs to show how sad he was when Judah was destroyed. He also wrote to give words so other people who were sad could use them too. He did not want anyone to forget what happened in Judah. These songs would become a part of the way people would remember.

Jeremiah saw many terrible events. And he knew why these things happened. Jerusalem had not obeyed God's law. The people prayed to evil* gods. And the people acted in bad ways. God sent his servants to warn the people. But the people did not listen. They did not change. So, God punished them.[1]

The book begins by telling about Jerusalem as it lay in ruins. The army of Babylon destroyed it. Like a neglected widow, the city wept in the night. There was no one to comfort her. There was nothing to eat. All her gates were broken. Her priests* cried. The kings had been taken away. And she had become the slave of her enemies.

Things were so bad that it seemed God was their enemy. He had destroyed Judah. When the writer thought about this, he seemed to lose all hope.*

But even as he sang the sad songs, all hope was not lost. He remembered that there was still one last source of comfort. God is a God of loyal love. He is faithful. He keeps his promises. He never runs out of kindness. So Judah could sing even when she felt despair. Even when she was far away from the land, she could have hope. **'Great is your faithfulness.'**[2] With this hope came a new call to put faith* in the Lord.* There was also a call to repent.* God would some day bring them home. He would some day give them a new king from the family of David.*

Some of these songs asked God to pay back the enemies of Judah for the evil they had done. Because Babylon destroyed Judah, the song asked God to destroy them.

> **'You have seen, O LORD, the wrong done to me. Uphold my cause!; Pay them back what they deserve, O LORD for what their hands have done; Pursue them in anger and destroy them from under the heavens of the LORD.'**[3]

But parts of the songs are about hope. Even if the songs are sad, the people who sang them knew that they would return to the land that God promised them.[4]

God would not desert them. The Lord would keep his promises to Abraham* and David.* That was why they had hope. They were not faithful.* But God is faithful.[5] God would not leave them in Babylon. Judah would not be punished for ever. If they waited with patience, the Lord would save them. That is how the book ends. Judah would not sing sad songs for ever. Some day, God would bless* them again.

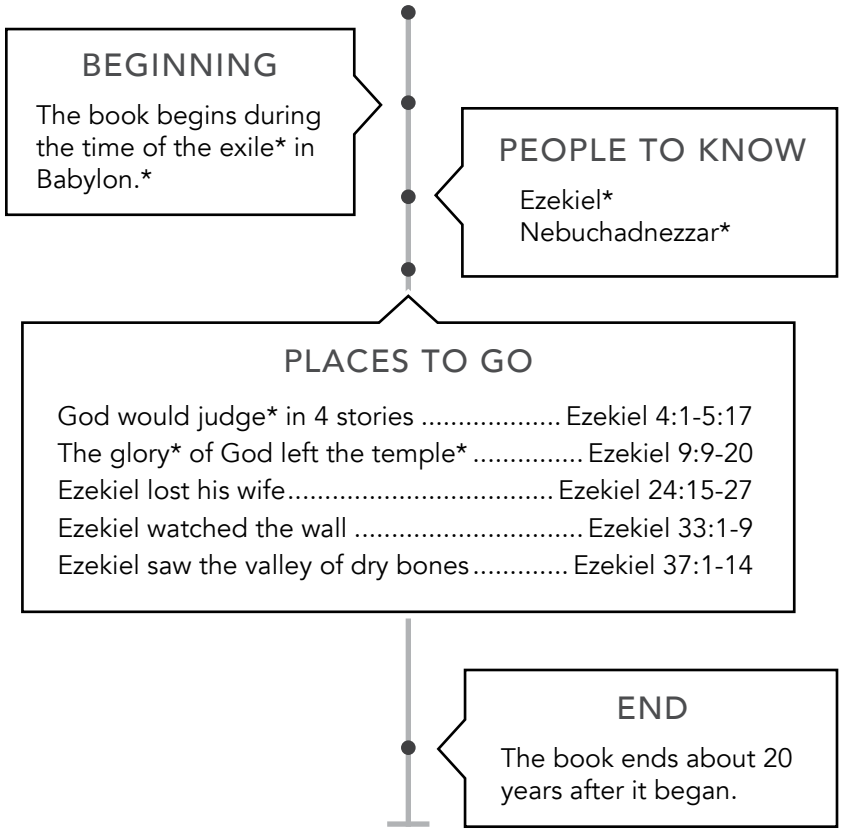
> **'Lord, please bring us back to you.**
> **Then we can return.**
> **Make our lives like new again.'**[6]

Jeremiah's name is not in the book. But he said many of these same things in his other book. God is angry when people sin.* He will be like an enemy to those who do not obey. But he is also a God of mercy.* He would not let Judah's enemies get away. God would punish them for what they did.

1. 2 Chronicles 36:14-17
2. Lamentations 3:23
3. Lamentations 3:64-66
4. Lamentations 4:22
5. Lamentations 3:21-24
6. Lamentations 5:21

EZEKIEL

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF THE MAJOR PROPHETS*



CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

THE STORY OF EZEKIEL

The book of Ezekiel is the story of a prophet.* He was the son of a priest.* His name means 'God will give you strength.' When he was 30 years old, God called him to be a prophet.[1] He spoke for God when some of the people of Judah* lived in Babylon. When the army took people away into Babylon, they took him too. He spoke to the people of Judah who lived in Babylon. He also spoke to the people who stayed in Judah.

Ezekiel was a priest before God made him a prophet. Most of his book shows

that God would judge people. He was like Jeremiah in that way. But Ezekiel put his book together in order. He put his first message at the beginning. He put his last message at the end.

Ezekiel had been away from the land for 5 years when he started speaking. His book ends more than 20 years later. That was after Babylon broke down God's house – the temple. God was punishing Judah. They broke God's laws. They followed false gods. So God sent their enemies to punish them.

When Ezekiel lived, there were many false prophets. Some of them were the same prophets that lived during Jeremiah's* time. Ezekiel warned people not to listen to the false prophets. These prophets told the people that God would not punish them. They promised peace.* They said that God would not let the army of Babel* take them. But Ezekiel knew that there would not be peace. God would judge the people who were still in Judah.

The people were not obeying God. Even the priests were acting in bad ways. They broke God's laws. They followed false gods. They did not listen to God. So God sent Ezekiel to speak to them.

But the people did not listen to him. He warned them many times. And many times they did not listen to him. One day, the army of Babylon marched into Jerusalem* and broke down the city.[2] When that happened, Ezekiel began to give the people a new message. He told the people that some day God would bring them back to their land. Some day, God would build his house again. Some day, God would make things right again. Ezekiel told them these things to give them hope.*

This book is much like other books that were given by the prophets. But some parts of the book show what was most important to Ezekiel. One of those things was the glory* of God. He talks about God's glory many times. God was punishing the people so that people would honour his name again. People had not listened to God. They had forgotten who he was. He was doing these things so that the people would remember. He made these things happen so that they would know that he is the LORD.*

The book uses many ways to tell a story. Sometimes, Ezekiel told about strange visions.* Sometimes, he told about his dreams. Sometimes, God asked him to do some very strange things. And he did what God asked him to do. He did these things to show the people what he meant.

Like Jeremiah, Ezekiel had a message for Judah. But he also had messages for other nations too. God would punish the people that had hurt Judah. And God would bring his people back to their land some day.[3] They would build a new temple. They would worship* God again. And God would make them great again.

Ezekiel sent the nations a warning. If you hurt Judah, God would hurt you. If you were happy when Judah was destroyed, God would make you sad some day. God would destroy all of Judah's enemies. That was what he promised Abraham* he would do.

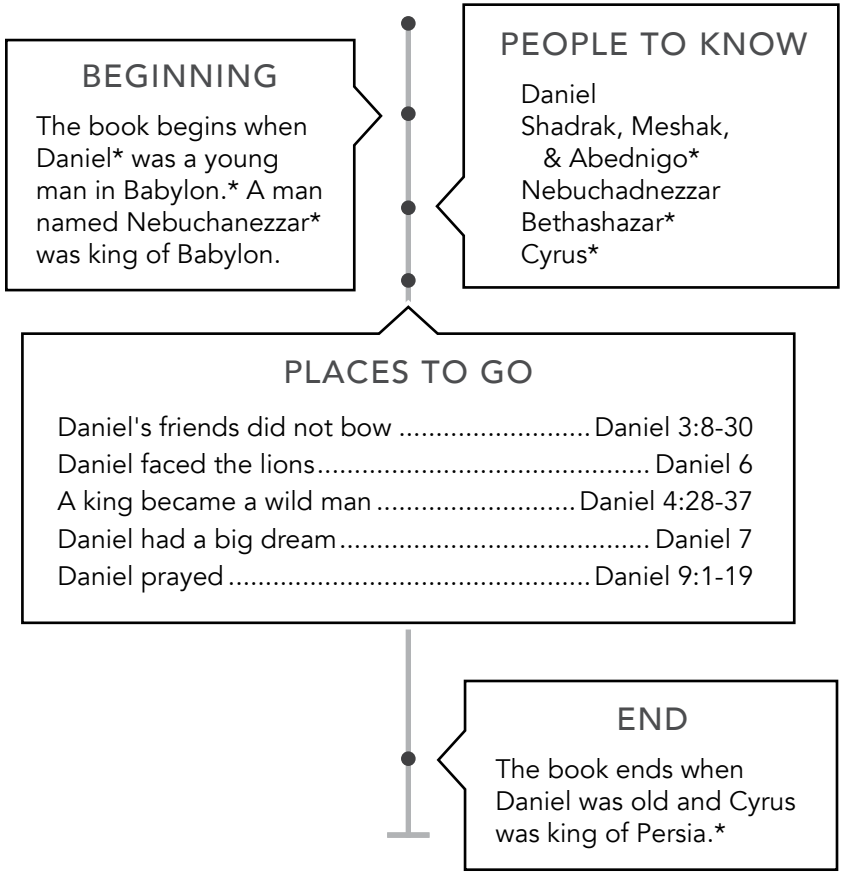
'Whoever blesses you, I will bless.* Whoever curses you I will curse.'*[4]

The last part of the book talks about how God would bring the people back. He would remember the promises he made to David.* He would send someone from David's family to be the king.[5] He would build the kingdom* again. But God would not only give the people a new temple.[6] God would give the people a new heart.[7] When this happened, they would love and worship God for ever. God would do this to keep the promise that he made to Moses.*[8] He would keep the promise he made to Abraham. And he would keep the promise he made to David.[9]

1. Ezekiel 1:1
2. Ezekiel 24:1-5
3. Ezekiel 28:24-26
4. Genesis 12:3
5. Ezekiel 37:24-28
6. Ezekiel 40:1-48:35
7. Ezekiel 33:26-29
8. Deuteronomy 30:4-6
9. 2 Samuel 7:15-16

DANIEL

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF THE MAJOR PROPHETS*



CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

THE STORY OF DANIEL

Daniel was a prophet.* But Daniel did not speak to the same people that Jeremiah* or Ezekiel* did. He spoke for God to the leaders he served.

You will learn many things from the words Daniel said. But you will learn just as much from the way Daniel lived. He lived in a way that gave honour to God. He followed God and obeyed God even when it was difficult. Daniel showed the people that they should follow God too. That is what all true prophets do.

Many years before, soldiers from Babylon marched into Jerusalem.* They broke down the walls. They burned the temple.* They carried many people away. They forced most of the people in Jerusalem to leave their land. Daniel was there when that happened. He had to leave his land. He was forced to live very far away from home.

But Daniel did not forget God. And God did not forget Daniel. Daniel lived in a way that gave honour to God. And God gave honour to Daniel too. He made Daniel a prophet.

Daniel wrote this book. Many of the things he said are here. And many of the things that he did are here too.

This first part of the book tells some stories from the lives of Daniel and his friends. Many times, the people of Babylon tried to make them forget the real God and serve false gods. They even tried to kill Daniel and his friends. They did not like them because they would not serve false gods. But Daniel and his friends were loyal to the true God. Daniel became a very important man in the government of Babylon.

In Daniel's first story, you meet Daniel and some of his friends. They were Hebrew* young men that lived in Babylon. The king wanted them to eat foods that God did not want his people to eat. This was a problem. So Daniel and his friends trusted* God and made a plan. They obeyed God in a difficult time. The story tells how God blessed* them. From the beginning, we can see that Daniel was a good man who decided to obey God even when it was hard.

One of the important ideas in Daniel's book is that God is great. Two of the great kings in Daniel understood that. Both kings agreed that God's kingdom* would last for ever. It could never be destroyed.[1]

The second part of the book tells about Daniel's dreams. These were strange dreams. Sometimes Daniel was awake when he had his dreams. These were special dreams that God sent to Daniel to tell him what would happen in the future. Some things that Daniel saw in his dreams have now happened. Other things that God told Daniel in his dreams have not happened yet. But God is in control of the future. God will do what he has promised.

Daniel was like the other prophets. But he was also different. He told what would happen to the nations of his day. He also told about his visions* of what would happen long after he was gone. Daniel saw that God had a great plan. Some day, every part of God's plan would work out just like he wanted it to work out.

Daniel's visions are very important to this book. They are also important to the rest of the Bible* Daniel told about his vision of the great king who would come one day. He was the Son of Man.*[2] He would come in the clouds

to become the king for all people for ever. The words Daniel used are like the words from the promise God made to David.*[3] God promised David that a king from his family would be the eternal* king who would rule the nations. This dream gave Daniel hope.* And the story of that dream has been a story of hope for God's people ever since.

Jeremiah said that the people would return to their land. We know from the books of Ezra* and Nehemiah* that the people did go back to the land. Daniel said that the people would be back in the land too. Is that what Daniel was talking about? Or was he talking about something else? Would this kingdom come soon to the people of Daniel's day? Or would it come at a much later time?

The book of Daniel answers this question. One day, an angel* came to Daniel. The angel told Daniel that the kingdom he saw would come many years in the future.[4] At that time, God would put an end to sin.* And God's king would rule the kingdom. He would put all things back to the way God wanted them to be. Remember what Daniel said about this king. It will help you understand some things that Jesus* said when you read the New Testament.* It will also help you understand that Jesus was the king that Daniel was talking about.

Daniel ended his book by talking about another king. This king would also come in the distant future. He would be different from all other kings. This king would try to make himself great. He would try to take the land that God gave to his people. This king was not good. He would even try to fight God. Daniel promised that God would not allow this king to win. God would break his kingdom into pieces.

When you first read this book, there may be some things that seem strange to you. But the more you read the book, the better you will see what Daniel was saying. The more you read the other books of the Bible, the better you will understand Daniel. And Daniel will help you understand the other books of the Bible better too.

1. Daniel 4:3; 6:26-28
2. Daniel 7:12-14; 8:17
3. 2 Samuel 7
4. Daniel 9:20-27

THE BOOKS OF THE MINOR PROPHETS*

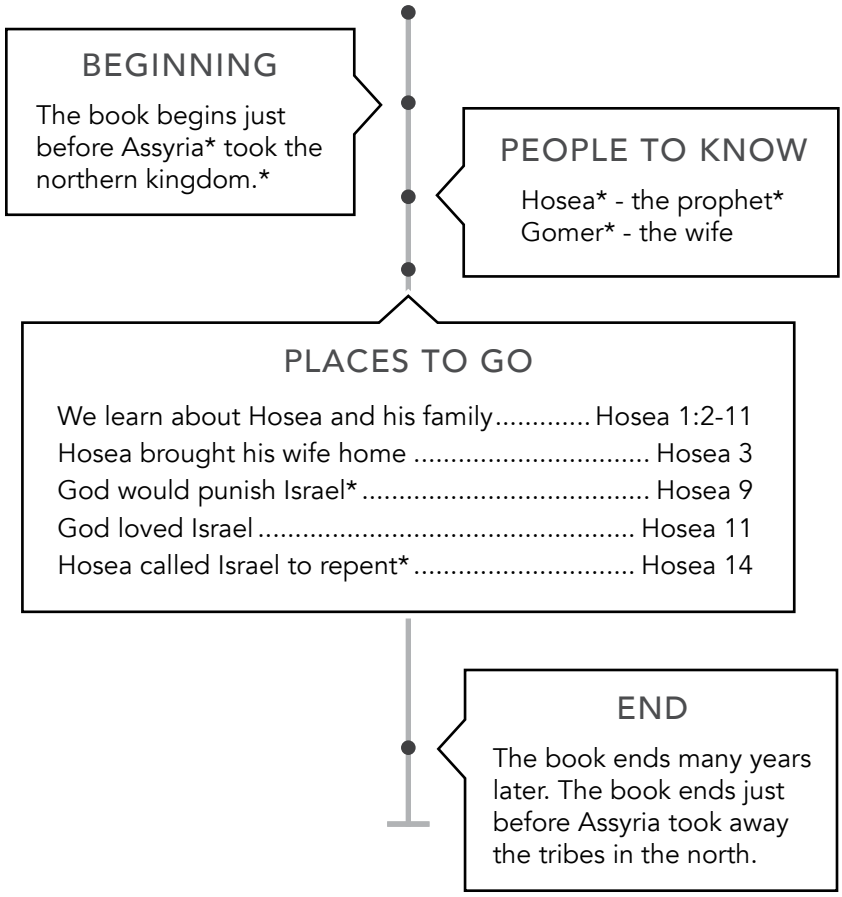
In the times of the prophets, the people were not following God. So God sent prophets to warn the people that God was not pleased with them. If they did not return to follow God, he would remove them from the land he had given them. But the prophets also told them that God would not forget them. One day, he would bring them back to the land. One day, God would send them a saviour.*

THE MINOR PROPHETS*

Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

HOSEA

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF THE MINOR PROPHETS*



CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

THE STORY OF HOSEA

Hosea was a prophet who spoke for God to Israel. He wrote this book to tell the people how much God loved them. But he wrote the book in an unusual way. He told a story about his own life. Then he showed people how his story is like another story. That story is about God and his people.

The story Hosea tells is about his own life and his own marriage. Hosea found a wife. He was loyal to his wife, but she was not loyal to him. Other men gave her money so she would give her body to them. Hosea told Israel

that they were like his wife. God was like him. Israel had not been true to her promise to God. But God had been loyal in his love for them.

Hosea wanted Israel to know this message. God kept his promises. God would keep his promise to them, even if they broke their promises to him. God would be loyal to the covenant.* He showed this loyal love to thousands who obeyed and loved him. In spite of all that happened to Israel, God would not stop loving them.

But Israel had not obeyed God.

'When Israel was a young nation, I loved them.
I chose to bring my son out of Egypt.*
But the more I called out to Israel,
the more they went away from me.'[1]

So Hosea said that God would remove them from their land. This would happen because they did not obey the laws God gave to them from Moses.* The Lord* was a jealous God and Israel was to have no other gods before him. But Israel had been looking to other nations for help rather than to the Lord. Because they did this, God would send them away to Assyria. They would be kept there for many years. To help them understand, Hosea compared this to the time they were slaves in Egypt.

But God would not make Israel stay in Assyria. In the future, he would bring them out of Assyria like he brought them out of Egypt. God would punish Israel. But God would not refuse them for ever. He would bring them back to the land that he promised them. He would take care of them again.

Hosea's wife ran away from Hosea. But Hosea decided to go and find her. When he found her, she was a slave. So Hosea bought her from the people who owned her. He brought her back to his home. He hoped that this would stop her from selling her body to men for sex. He hoped that the pain she suffered had changed her.

In part of Hosea's story, he talked about David.* He reminded the people about God's promise to David.[2] God promised that, in the future, a Messiah* would come. He would be the king from the house of David. And, when he came, he would rule like David. Hosea lived long after the time of David. But Hosea could still look forward to a time when Israel **'will return and seek the LORD* their God and David their king.'**[3]

The story that Hosea told is a real story. Hosea did these things. These things happened to Hosea. But the story also teaches a lesson. The lesson is about how much God loved his people. His people did not obey him. Then God kept his promise to punish them for those sins.* But God's love for them did

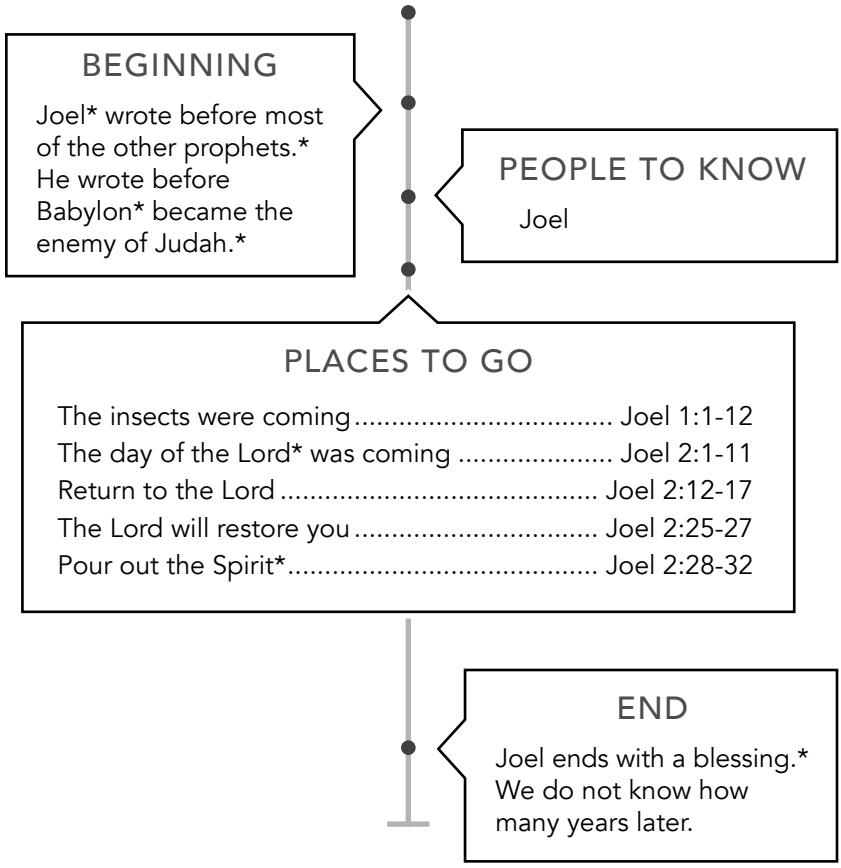
not go away. He was patient. He may send them away. But he would not forget them or leave them for ever.

One day, Israel would return to God. They would confess* their evil* works. They would love God again. And God would forgive* them.

1. Hosea 11:1-2 2. 2 Samuel 7:16 3. Hosea 3:5

JOEL

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF THE MINOR PROPHETS*



CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

THE STORY OF JOEL

Joel is the second book of the Minor Prophets. We know very little about the prophet Joel. Hosea* and Amos* told us things about their lives. But Joel did not. Because of the things he talked about, we think that he was one of the first prophets to write a book.

Joel wrote his book to tell the people of Judah to turn back to God. A cloud of insects had come to Judah. The insects ate the food growing in the fields so the people could not eat it. At that time, it did not rain in Judah. The land was

empty. People were hungry and had no water to drink.

Joel told the people that they should be sad. Then he called them to pray. He wanted the people to ask God for mercy* so the insects would leave and food would grow again. Joel called the hard days the people were living in a **'day of the Lord.'** That small set of words **(day of the Lord)** is the idea Joel would talk about for the rest of his book.

Joel talked about the **'day of the Lord'** in two ways. Sometimes God judged* the bad people by making bad things happen to them. Joel said that God sent the insects to do that. He called this time a **'day of the Lord.'** But Joel also said that, in the future, there would be another **'day of the Lord.'** That would be a more serious day than any other day so far. That would be the last time God judged the wicked. Joel said that the final **'day of the Lord'** would be a time of God's wrath.* But he also said that it would be a time when God blessed his people again. After God judged, God would bless the people he chose for himself.

Joel told the people to prepare for this day. He told them to listen to God and do what God told them to do. This day would come when people did not think it was coming. Things would happen so fast that no one would be ready for it. It would come as fast as an army to attack and as fast as a fire can burn. Many hard things would happen to the people in that day. God was the one who would make those things happen.

On that day, God would judge his enemies. No one would be able to run away from him. That day would be dark and many people would be afraid. God would send a great army to do his work.

So Joel told the people to pray and change their ways. When they did, God would stop and show them mercy. In that day, God would pity his people. He would forgive* them and take away the shame they felt. He would make the rain fall and the fields grow. He would make Jerusalem* his city again and the people would be holy.*

Joel said that God would use the armies of the nations to punish Israel. Then God would punish the nations for the wicked things they were doing. God would use both of these things to cause Israel* to remember their promises. They would remember the promises they made to God and the promises God made to them. In that day of the Lord, God would **'pour out his spirit'**[1] and that would change everything. Then, God would make all things right again. This time, he would make it last for ever, like Daniel* and Ezekiel* said he would.

Joel did something many of the other prophets did. He told people what God wanted them to know and to do. His message was for the people who heard him that day. But his message was also for people in the future. Long

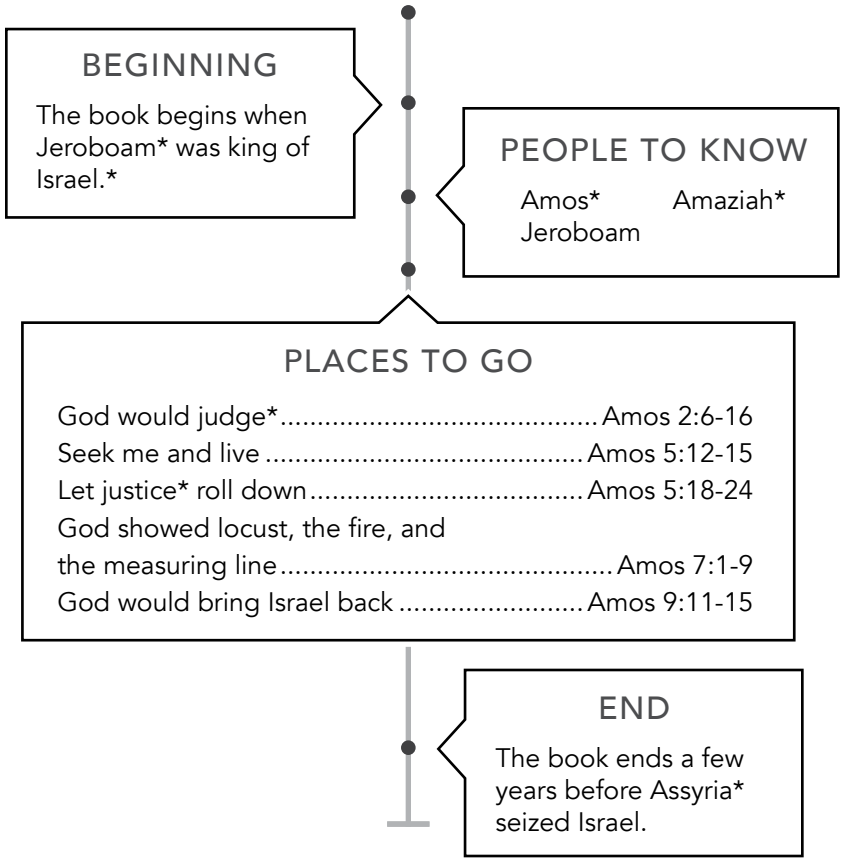
after Joel was dead, Joel's words would speak to people. That is true for us as we read those words. But it will be true in a very special way for the people at the end of history who will be a part of the last **'day of the Lord.'**[2]

1. Joel 2:28

2. Joel 2:1; 2:11; 2:31

AMOS

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF THE MINOR PROPHETS*



CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

THE STORY OF AMOS

The book of Amos is about the prophet* Amos. Amos was a shepherd.* But God called him to speak his words to Israel.[1] In the days when Amos lived, the prophets* did not do their job. They did not speak out against the sin* of the people. So God called a farmer to deliver his words.

Amos gave most of his words to Israel from the town of Bethel.* There was a place to worship* God there. There was also a house for the king in Bethel.

Amos said many strong words to Israel. He told them to turn back to God

and to turn away from idols.* He warned them that their enemies would kill their kings and the people would be taken away.

Amos wrote about why this would happen to the people. The people had not listened to God. They were giving offerings* to God. They were doing the ceremonies that Moses* taught. They were doing many things to look like they were following God. But Amos knew that they were only pretending. In their hearts, they were turning from God. They were not obeying God. They were doing some of the things God told them to do. But they were not kind to the poor. They were not fair in business. They were not honest. They cared about money more than they cared about people. But they believed* nothing bad would happen. They thought that God would not judge them.

The book starts with the same idea that Joel* used at the end of his book. God would judge the nations. But Amos said that Israel and Judah* would be judged too. Israel and Judah had gone far from the promises that they made to God. God would discipline the people for their wicked acts. They should have known better because God had chosen them as his special people. But they acted like the wicked nations about them. So God would punish Israel and Judah!

Amos had many visions* from God and he wrote about them in his book. He also told some of the story of his own life. This helps us know when he wrote his book. He talked about the sins of King Jeroboam and his false worship centre at Bethel. It also helps us to understand some of the things he spoke about. Amos said that the time when Assyria would seize Israel was very near. That means that many of the things he said about a future hope* would come, but not soon. They would come far into the future. The enemy would take them away very soon. But, some day, God would make everything right again.

The last part of the book tells how God would punish the people. But it also gives a word of hope. God would not always punish the people of Israel. God would allow some of the people to return to their own land after the punishment was finished.

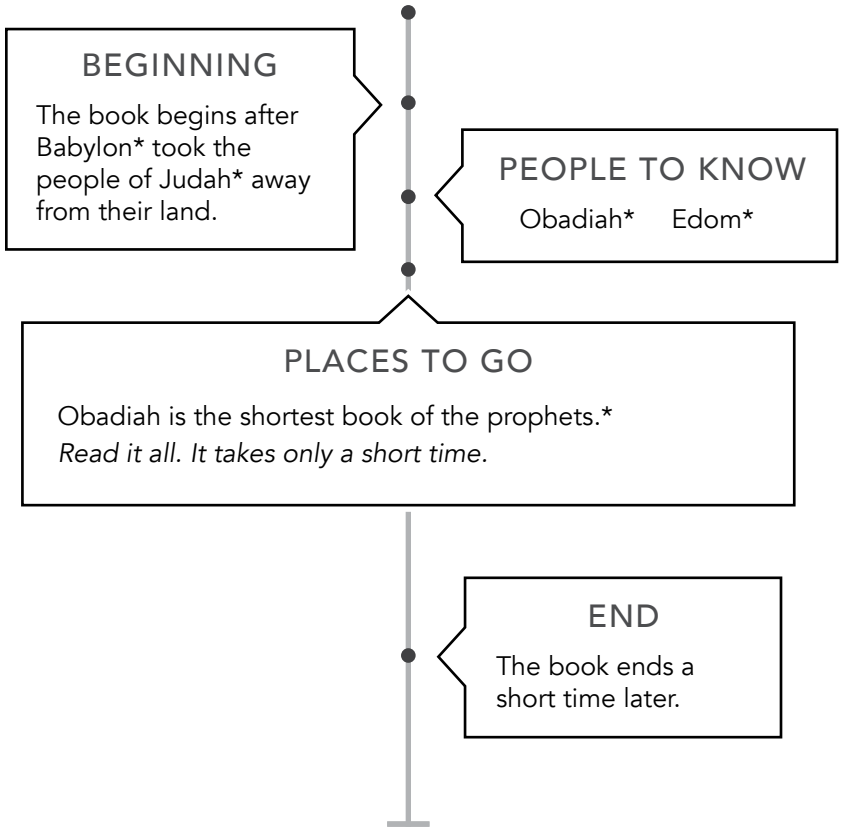
Amos talked about David* just like Joel did. **'David's fallen tent'**[2] would rise up again. At a future time, there would be blessing* again. In that day, the king that God promised to David would rule. Even when the people would be taken away from the land, there was hope.

That hope came from knowing that God would keep his promise to David.

1. Amos 7:15 2. Amos 9:11

OBADIAH

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF THE MINOR PROPHETS*



CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

THE STORY OF OBADIAH

This book is one of the shortest books in the Bible.* Obadiah wrote his book about the people of Edom. He told how God would punish them. He wrote this book after Babylon destroyed Judah.

The people of Edom were from the family of Esau.*[1] Esau was the brother of Jacob.* Edom did not worship* the true God. They followed false gods. They soon became the enemy of God's people.

The word Edom is like the word for 'nations' in Obadiah's language. That is

why many people think the book is not just talking about Edom. It is talking about any nation that is the enemy of God's people. God will judge all of the nations. He will punish them if they refuse to help his people.

Part one of the book says that God would punish Edom. They had not been kind to Judah. They were happy when Babylon came.[2] They did not help Judah. They watched the army do many bad things.[3] They even helped them carry away the things that belonged to Judah. They waited to catch the people who got away. Then they took them to the army.[4] Because they did this, they were now God's enemy. Now God would judge* them.

Part two of the book tells how God would rescue his people. They would be saved. Someone would come from Zion* to save them. God would bring them back to the land he promised them. They would have everything God promised them. They would defeat Edom on that day. On that day, the one who ruled on God's mountain would also rule the mountains of Edom. God's people would defeat all of the enemies. And **'the kingdom* will be the Lord's.'***[5]

When God's king defeated a nation, it became a part of God's kingdom. Some day, in the future, all of the nations will be under the rule of God.

God would judge Edom. And he would rule all of the nations. Obadiah was not the only prophet who said this. Others said this as well.

> Joel* said, **'Edom will be an empty place, because they were cruel to the people of Judah.'**[6]
>
> Amos* said, **'This is what the Lord says: I will punish Edom for their many crimes.'**[7]
>
> Ezekiel* said, **'The people of Edom are like the nations. They are the enemies of God's people.'**[8]

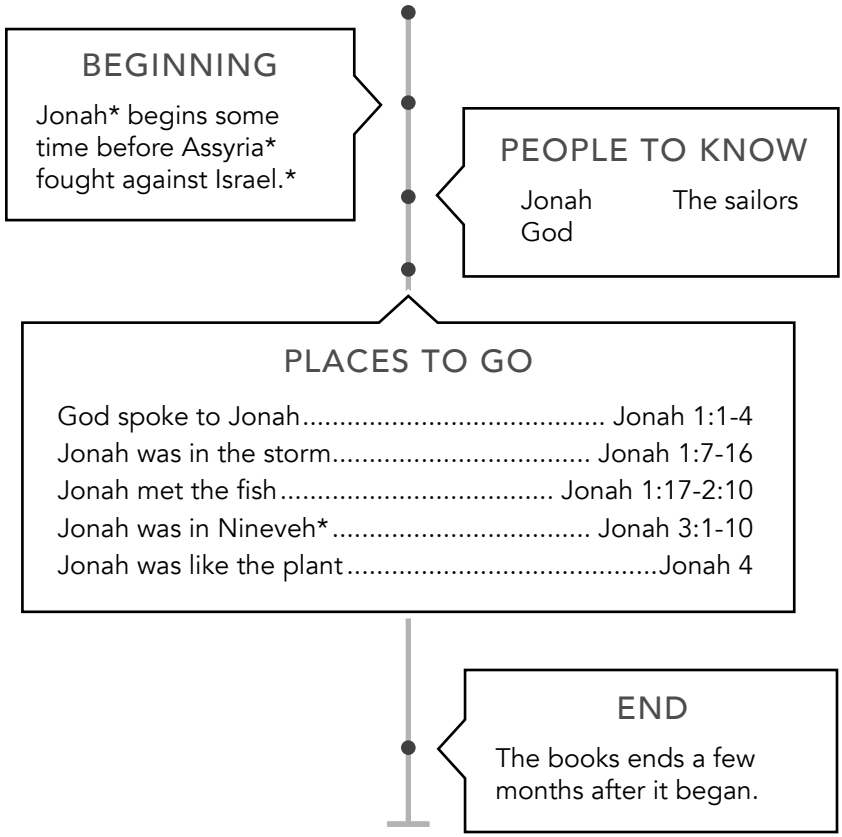
When you read the Bible, remember this. One book in the Bible will help you understand the other books. You will understand one book better when you know what the other books say. You will also understand God in a more complete way.

Here is an example. How would God act toward the nations? If you read Obadiah, you learn that God would judge the nations who turned against his people. When you read Jonah,* you learn that God would bless* the nations who listened to his prophets.*

1. Genesis 25:30
2. Obadiah 12
3. Obadiah 11
4. Obadiah 14
5. Obadiah 21
6. Joel 3:19
7. Amos 1:11
8. Ezekiel 35:5

JONAH

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF THE MINOR PROPHETS*



CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

THE STORY OF JONAH

The book of Jonah is a story. It tells how God gave one prophet* a message. Then it tells what that prophet did with the message. It also tells a story of how God showed mercy* to a place called Nineveh.

The book tells us the story of Jonah, but it also teaches us about God. We get to see that God was kind. He cared about the nations, not just Israel.* Jonah was a prophet of God, but he did not act like it. He did not want God to show mercy to the other nations. He only wanted God to show mercy to his own people.

The book begins when God told Jonah to go to Nineveh. It was a big city. The people who lived there were the enemies of God's people. The people there were very wicked. Nineveh stood against God's people. They did not listen to God's words. So God wanted Jonah to give them a message.

But Jonah decided that he would not go. He would not do what God told him to do. So he tried to run away instead. But Jonah found out that you cannot run away from God. You cannot hide from him.

Jonah went to find a boat that would take him away from Ninevah. But God would not let him go. First, God sent a storm that almost sank the boat he was in. Then the men in the boat threw Jonah into the sea. Soon, a great fish swallowed him.

We see in the very first part of the story that God was in control of his world. Jonah could not hide from him. Jonah did not obey God. But even when Jonah did not obey, God still showed that he was in control. Jonah was trying to run away, but God was using his trip to show grace* to the sailors on the boat. When the sailors saw how God calmed the sea on Jonah's behalf, they **'greatly feared the LORD*… and they offered a sacrifice* to the LORD and made vows to him.'**[1] Jonah ran from God, but the journey led to the salvation* of the Gentiles.*

When Jonah was in the stomach of the fish, he prayed to God for help. The second part of the book is about Jonah's prayer. Jonah thanked God that God used the fish to rescue him. He gave praise* to God because God saves. Jonah had learned a lesson about trying to run from God. And the fish spat out Jonah onto the shore.

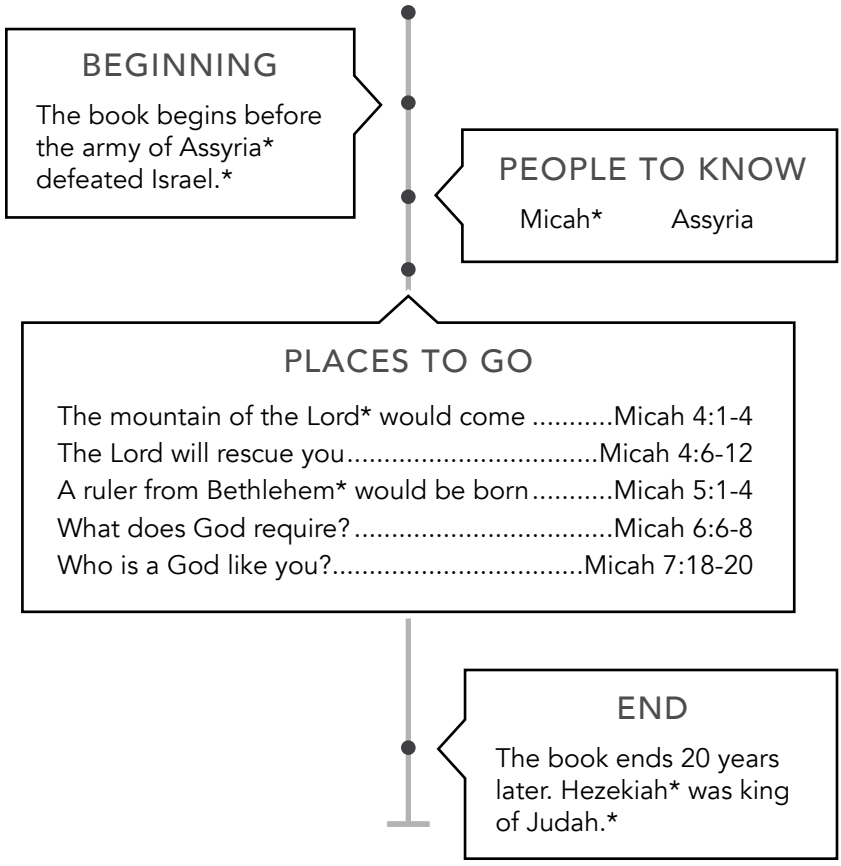
Jonah went to Nineveh and gave God's words to them. He did not preach* long before the people of Nineveh turned from their idols* and put their trust* in God. God had mercy on them when they repented* and believed* his words. But Jonah was not happy. He did not want God to bless* Nineveh. He wanted God to curse* them. Jonah cared more about himself than he did about Nineveh. Jonah was a selfish man, but the God he served was generous. God had sympathy on all of the living things he made. God asked Jonah a question at the end of the book. **'Should I not care about that great city?'**[2] Jonah knew that the answer was yes. He also knew that a prophet who spoke for God should care about people just like God does.

We do not know if Jonah ever changed his mind. But he did decide to tell us the story.

1. Jonah 1:16 2. Jonah 4:11

MICAH

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF THE MINOR PROPHETS*



CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

THE STORY OF MICAH

The prophet Micah spoke for God at the same time Isaiah* did. Micah wanted people to know that the Lord was the judge* of all the earth. He was a God who brought justice.* And he was coming to punish his own people, Israel. Micah called to the people to stop following false gods. He told them to stop doing evil.* But this same God was also the one who will save the people. He was a God who gives grace.*

Micah is a record of the many messages God gave Micah to speak. Most of

these messages are about two ideas. Judah must turn back to God or he would punish them. God would bring Judah home and he would make the nation great. The book goes between these two ideas very quickly.

The book begins as Micah told the people that God would use Assyria to punish them. If they did not listen to his words, God would punish them by taking them away from the land he promised them. Then Micah stopped talking about punishment and began to talk about salvation.* Assyria would take them away. But they would return. God would bring the people back from exile.* Micah told of a time when the people of Israel would return. They would come back to the land and their king would lead them. That king was the Lord their God.[1]

God would use the nation of Assyria to discipline Israel. But he would also punish Assyria. Micah said that God would punish all of **'the nations that have not obeyed'** God.[2] Any nation that did not obey God would be judged. That was true of Assyria. And that was also true of Israel. But the people who pleased God would receive mercy.* Who pleases God? Micah told them.

'The Lord has shown you what is good.
He has told you what he requires of you.
You must act with justice.
You must love to show mercy.
And you must be humble as you live in the sight of your God.'[3]

The book of Micah is like many of the other prophets. It speaks to the people who first read the book. But it also speaks to people who would read the book in the future. Some of the things Micah said would happen soon after he said them. But some of them will happen at some time in the future. When that day comes, the enemy will be destroyed.[4] When that day comes, all the nations will enjoy God's salvation.[5] That future salvation is as sure as Israel's salvation in the past. God is faithful* to his promise.[6]

Micah also reminded the people of something else. They were still waiting for someone. They waited for a ruler. He was the king that God promised David.* This king would come from Bethlehem.*[7] He would lead his people. He would defeat their enemies. When he came, the small would overcome the great **'in the strength of the LORD'.**[8] These promises are some of the most important in the Bible.* The one God has chosen would come. The prophets called him the Messiah.* Isaiah said that his kingdom* would grow and never end.[9]

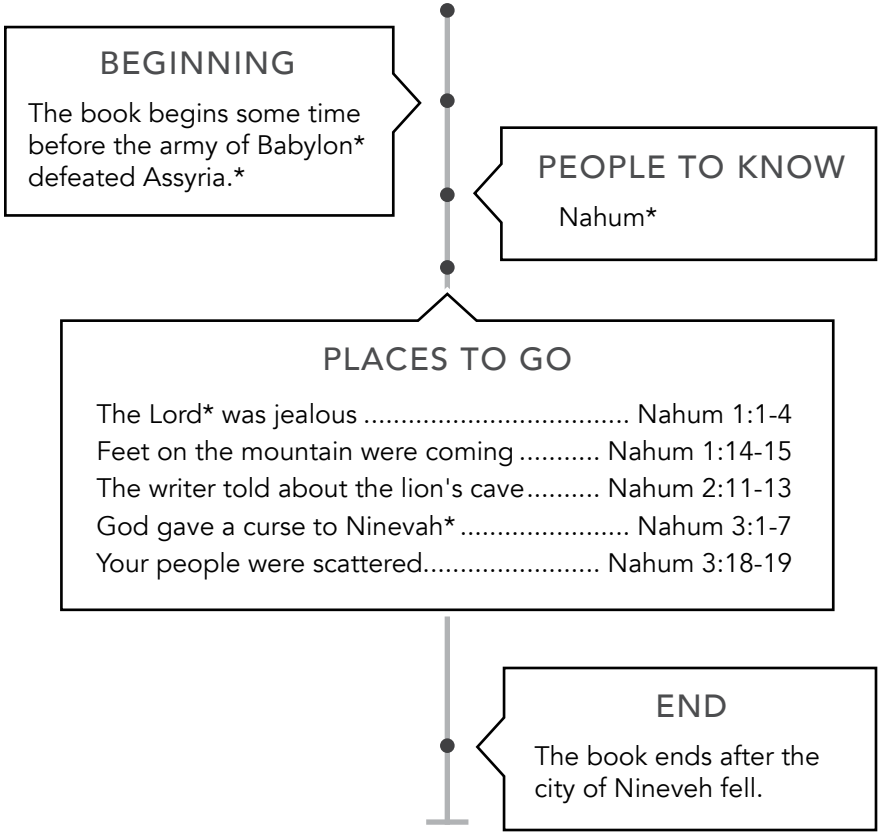
Micah gave them another reason for hope.* He reminded them of yet another promise. Long ago, God told Abraham* that he would bless* him.[10] God said that his family would become a great nation. God would do what

he promised **'in the days long ago.'**[11] He would keep his promises. Micah pointed them to God in their time of trouble. They were God's people. For God's people, there is always hope.

1. See Isaiah 40:3ff.
2. Micah 5:15b
3. Micah 6:8
4. Micah 7:10
5. Micah 7:12
6. Micah 7:14-20
7. Micah 5:1-5
8. Micah 5:4
9. Isaiah 7 & 9
10. Genesis 12:1-9
11. Micah 7:20

NAHUM

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF THE MINOR PROPHETS*



CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

THE STORY OF NAHUM

Nahum was a prophet. He lived in Judah.* But he spoke about the city of Ninevah. Ninevah was a city in Assyria. It was filled with wicked people. A few years before, their army fought against Israel.* Now the army was coming to Judah.

The people of Judah were afraid. But Nahum told them not to worry.[1] God would help them. He would send another army. That army would stop Ninevah.[2] God would rescue his people.

Nahum wrote his book like someone who writes a song. There are many

parts to the song. But here are a few of the things Nahum wanted the people to sing about. God was in control. God would defeat Assyria. He would deliver his people. God would stop their enemy. Assyria would become as nothing. They would never be a great nation again.

Nahum wrote by using word pictures. But the message was clear. God's power is great. No enemy can defeat him. He will keep the promise he made to Abraham.*

'Whoever curses you, I will curse.'*[3]

Sometimes, the enemies of Judah were strong. They seemed to be winning. But God was doing his work. He was at work, even when his people could not see him. His power was greater than the power of the nations.

God spoke through all true prophets. But not all of them spoke as directly as Nahum did. God himself spoke directly to Ninevah through Nahum.

'Nineveh, I am against you,
announces the Lord* who rules over all.
I will burn up your wagons with fire.
Your young lions will be killed by swords.
I will leave you nothing on earth to catch.
The voices of those who bring your messages
will no longer be heard.'[4]

Nahum told the story of Nineveh again. He wanted to make sure that Judah heard what he said. If God could judge* Nineveh, he could judge anyone. No nation could escape the hand of God. If God could punish this wicked people, he could do the same to any nation.

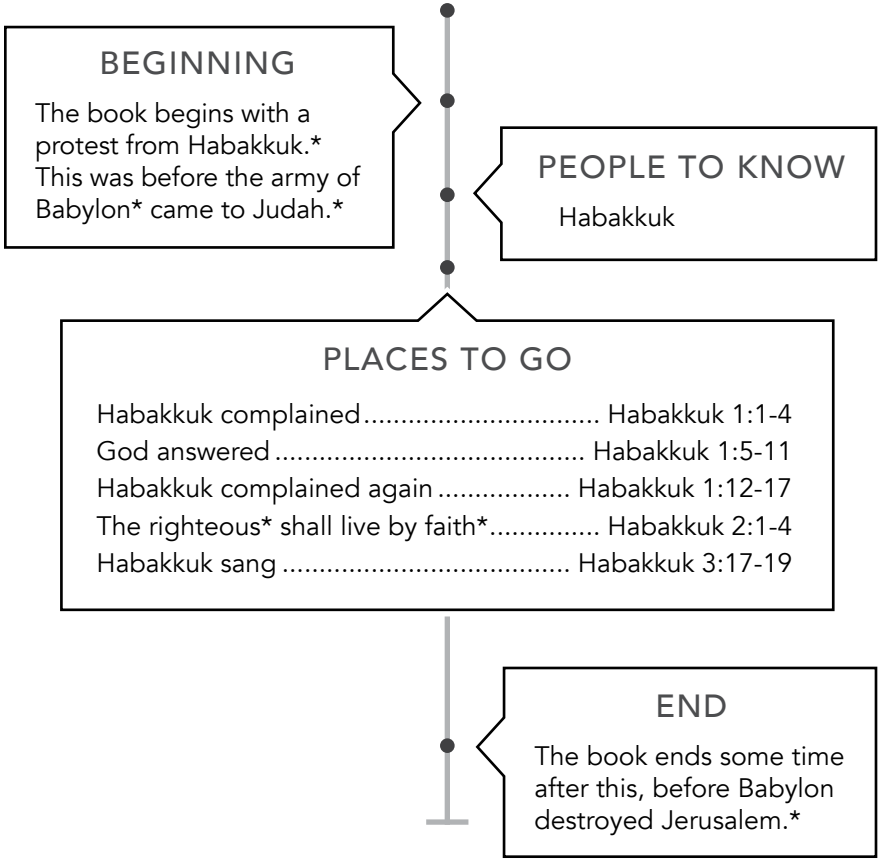
Nahum was more than a story about the fall of Nineveh. Nahum was telling Judah about their God. God ruled the nations. He was patient.[5] He was powerful. He would destroy those who would not listen to his words. But, for Judah, he was a safe place. They could come to him in times of trouble.

There are many sections in the book. But Nathan spoke about three things most clearly. One, God is jealous,[6] but he is also patient. Two, it is a very bad idea to make God angry. Three, God is just and has great power. Because God was angry with Nineveh, he would send an army against them. That army would defeat them. He would put an end to all of the evil* things that they were doing. All who saw Nineveh fall would be glad when he brought them down. God would protect his people. And they would remember that God controls all that he has made. He controls the mountains and the clouds, the storms and the seas. He controls the nations. And **'he will not let guilty people go without punishing them.'[7]**

1. Nahum 1:15
2. Nahum 2:3-4
3. Genesis 12:3
4. Nahum 2:13
5. Nahum 1:3
6. Nahum 1:2
7. Nahum 1:3

HABAKKUK

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF THE MINOR PROPHETS*



CHAPTER FORTY

THE STORY OF HABAKKUK

This book opens with the words of the prophet* Habakkuk. He looked at the people in Judah. And what he saw made him unhappy. He looked about and saw that his own people were not following God. They did not listen to God's words from the prophets. They did not obey God's law. Many people were acting in evil* ways. So, Habakkuk called out to God. He asked God why he allowed this. He wanted to know when God would do something about it.

We do not know just what Habakkuk saw. Was it the sin* of his own people?

Or was it the awful cruelty of an outside enemy? But we know that the people that wanted to follow God were not well cared for. So he complained to God. How long would you let your people suffer? How long would you let these wicked people do wicked things before you stop them?

God interrupted Habakkuk's cry and answered him. God said, in effect, **'A work is being done that many will not believe* when they hear of it.'**[1] God wanted Habakkuk to look more closely at what he saw. God was already at work. God was doing something then and he would do something in the future. God was at work even when Habakkuk could not see him.

Then God told what his 'work' would be. God would not allow the sin of the people to continue. He was going to send a great and terrible army against Habakkuk's own people. This was the way he would judge them for the evil they had done.[2] But Habakkuk was not happy to hear this news. The nations around them were more evil than the people of Judah. How could God use a nation that was more evil than Judah to punish them?

God told him the answer. Evil men and powerful nations would come and go. But the Lord* would see to it that they received the wages of their wicked actions.[3] God had set a time when he would come in great glory* and bring salvation* to those who trusted* him. When he heard this, Habakkuk did not want to wait for God's time. He called on God to do it in his own day.

> **'I stand in wonder of your work, O LORD. Lift them up in our day, in our time make them known.'**[4]

Habakkuk wanted God to act then. But after God spoke to him, he was willing to **'wait patiently'**[5] because the Lord was his strength. God was his joy.[6]

The final lesson of the book is for God's people. They must wait patiently on the Lord. God is already at work. The faithful* can see his hand in the events about them. Their task is to wait for God's appointed time and to delight in his salvation.

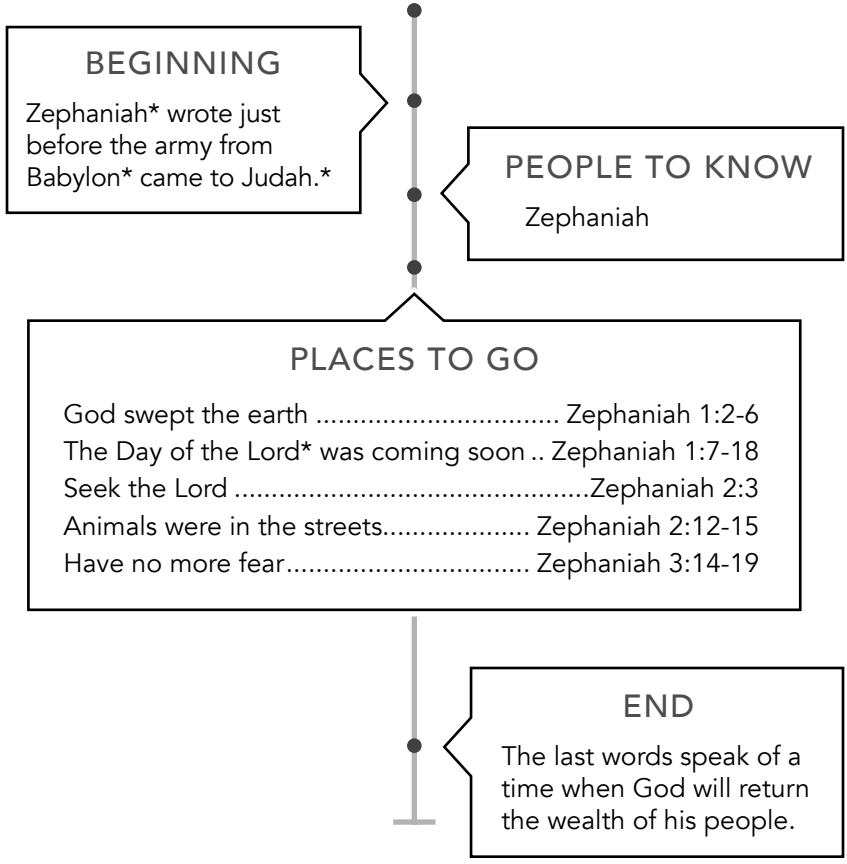
Like many of the words of the prophets, this was a message to the people in Habakkuk's day. But this was also a message to people in the future. Luke used God's words to Habakkuk. He said that this 'work' God was doing also spoke of the coming of the Messiah* and his death on the cross.*[7]

One of the most important parts of the book are found in these words. **'The righteous shall live by faith.'**[8] The people who live for God must trust him. The writers of the New Testament* understood this well. That is why they used this verse so often in their letters.[9]

1. Habakkuk 1:5
2. Habakkuk 1:6-12
3. Habakkuk 2:5-19
4. Habakkuk 3:3-15
5. Habakkuk 3:16b
6. Habakkuk 3:18
7. Acts 13:41
8. Habakkuk 2:4
9. See Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:8

ZEPHANIAH

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF THE MINOR PROPHETS*



CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

THE STORY OF ZEPHANIAH

We do not know much about the prophet Zephaniah. Many people think he lived during the time of King Josiah.* He was a good king.[1] He made many changes in Judah. He called the people back from their evil* ways. He told them to serve God again. So the things Zephaniah said helped the king turn the people back to God.

He began his book by talking about the day of the Lord. Obadiah* ended his

book that way. He said that this day would be a 'day' when God would judge* **'all who live in the earth.'**[2] Like the other prophets, he spoke to the people in his own day. But his message also spoke about a future day. He said that both Israel* and Jerusalem* stood under God's wrath* now.[3] But, in God's plan, there was hope* and a future for all the children of Abraham.*[4]

Now, God would punish all of those who turned away from him. Zephaniah said that God would judge the whole earth. Even the birds and the fish would suffer. God would judge everything he made. He would wipe out all of these living things, including people.[5] God would even judge the land.[6] Judah stood under God's wrath because they had turned away from him. God made them in his own image, but they did not worship* him. They did not honour him. They followed after the gods that they made.[7]

Zephaniah used most of the book to warn the people about the **'day of the LORD.'** But he ended with a call to the people who still followed him to pursue the Lord. If they did this, they would find shelter in God from the wrath to come.[8] He called those who still listened to God, **'righteous.'*** The righteous are those who put their trust* in God during those days of trouble. They waited for the **'appointed time'**[9] to come. They were the ones that did right and were humble.[10] God would show his wrath. But he would not forget the promises he had made.

Zephaniah then began to talk about the nations. God would judge his own people and he would judge all other people too. He warned the nations that were cruel to Israel. He warned them of the coming day when God would show his wrath.* He named Philistia,* Moab* and Ammon;* Cush,* and Assyria.* The prophet then turned to Jerusalem, **'who does not trust in the LORD.'** God's people had not learned from the other nations. So God would punish them too. God was a righteous God. He lived among them. They should have been loyal to God. But because they were not, Judah would feel his wrath just like the other nations.[11]

Why would God bring this judgement?* God wanted to make the nations clean from evil so **'that all of them may call on the name of the LORD.'**[12] In that day, all of those who were proud would be swept away. Only the ones who were humble would remain along with the people of Israel.[13] God was punishing them now. But some day, he would rescue them.

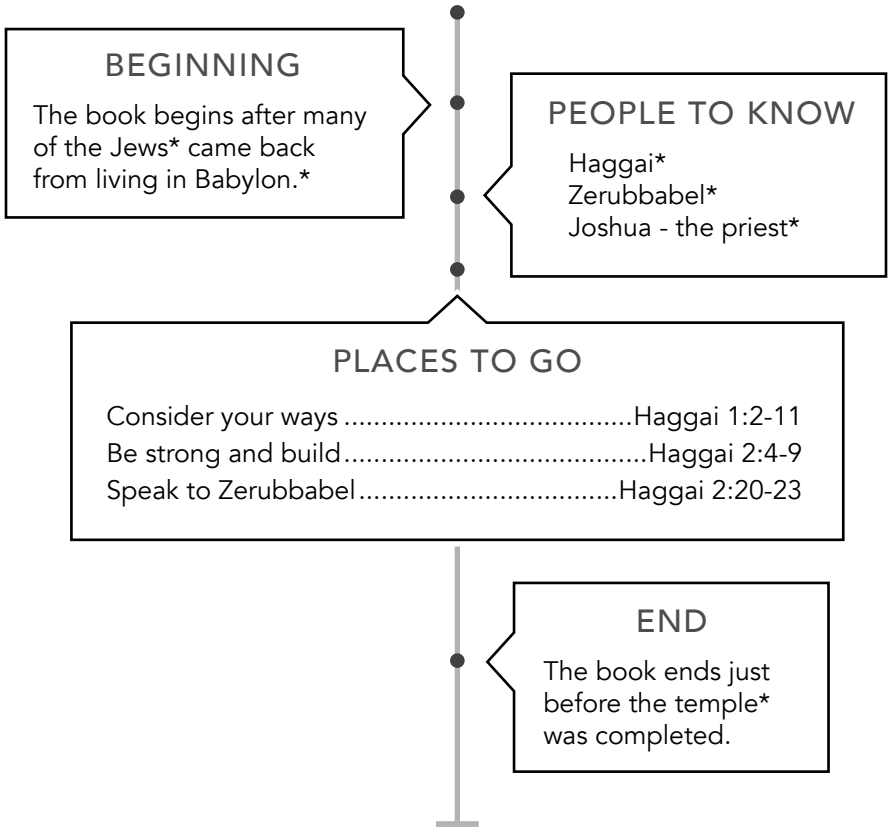
Many years after this, Judah would go into exile.* But God would bring Judah back to Jerusalem. God would bring his people home. He would bring them out of Babylon. He would put them back in their land. But his words also described another day. It was a day that would take place in the distant

future. This was the day when God's Messiah* would rule the whole earth. It was the same day the prophet Joel* spoke about in his book. After a time of judgement, God would bring his people home. He would make everything completely right.

1. 2 Kings 22:1
2. Zephaniah 1:18
3. Zephaniah 1:10-12
4. See Genesis 12:2-3
5. Zephaniah 1:2-3
6. Zephaniah 1:4-13
7. Zephaniah 1:5, 9b
8. Zephaniah 2:3
9. See Daniel 12:4; Habakkuk 2:3
10. Zephaniah 2:3b
11. Zephaniah 3:5b-7
12. Zephaniah 3:9
13. Zephaniah 3:12-13

HAGGAI

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF THE MINOR PROPHETS*



CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

THE STORY OF HAGGAI

Haggai was a prophet to the people who were living in Jerusalem.* Most of them had come back from the exile.* He gave the people a number of messages from God. He told them how they should live now that they were home.

His first message was very simple. God's people had returned to Jerusalem. But the temple was still broken down.[1] Until that work was done, God would not be pleased with them.[2] Haggai then told us what happened. The people obeyed God.[3] That is what all people should do when they hear God's word.

And God blessed* them because they obeyed.

In the second message,[4] Haggai talked about hope.* He said that, in the future, God would build a new temple. It would be even greater than the one Solomon* built. God would build it using the possessions of the other nations.[5] Haggai gave this message to encourage them. God had plans for them in the days ahead. If they knew this, it would help them trust* God now.

This second message was to the leader of the city. His name was Zerubbabel. He was from the house of David.* When the people heard this, they must have thought about the promise God made to David.[6] God did not forget his promise.

Haggai told Zerubbabel that his words were from the Lord* Almighty.* God would shake the heavens once more. He would shake the sea and the dry lands. When he did this, the desire of all nations would come. God would fill the new temple with his glory.* The event the prophet had in view was clearly the future kingdom* of the Messiah.* He would be the one who would rule Israel* and all people. But who or what was the 'desire of all nations'? Most people think that the desire of all nations was the Messiah himself. He was the one who all nations desired. When God built this new temple, that would be a sign that he was coming.

Was the temple that Haggai was talking about the temple that the people were supposed to fix? Haggai gave a third message that helps to answer the question.[7] He said that the people were not clean. Because they were not clean, the temple that they built would not be clean either.[8] So God wanted them to build the temple again. But the temple they built is only a sign. When they looked at the temple they built, it would help them remember. Some day, God would build them a better temple.[9]

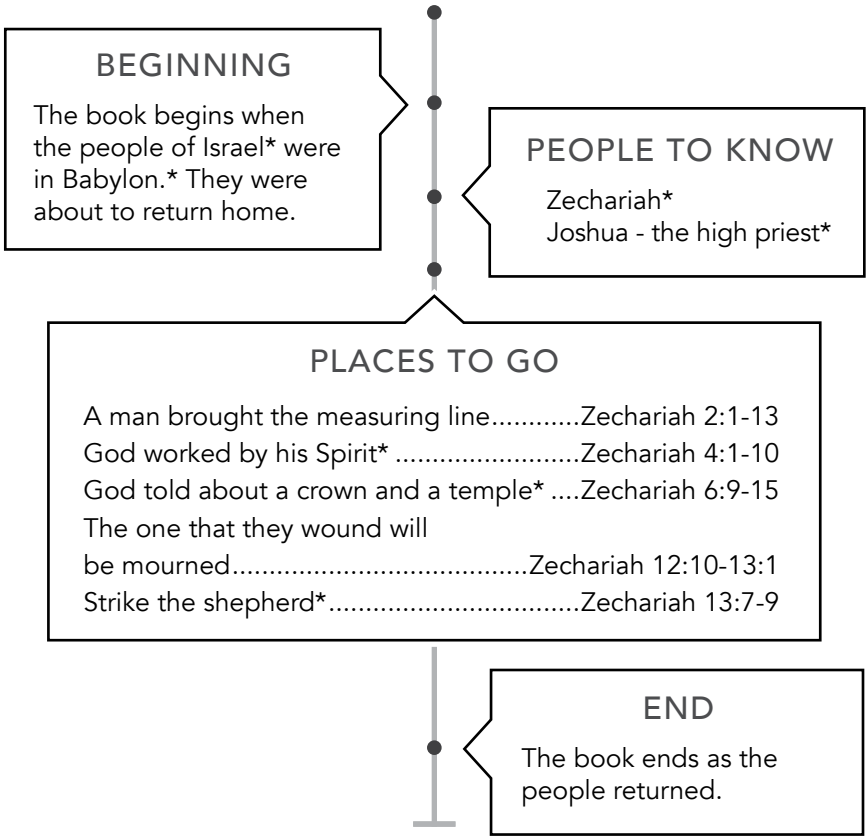
Haggai ended his book with one last message. The people were building a temple. What they were doing was important. But it should help them look forward to a future temple. They had a leader now. But this leader should help them look forward to their future leader. That leader was the Messiah.[10]

The hope of the prophets was more than the return of a small group of people to their land. One day, the Messiah would rule. All of the nations would come to Jerusalem to serve him. That is what the prophets were talking about. When Zerubbabel and the people obeyed God, it was a small example of what would happen in the future. One day all people would follow the Messiah. When that happened, God would keep all the promises that he made through the prophets.

1. Haggai 1:9
2. Haggai 1:10-11
3. Haggai 1:12-15
4. Haggai 2:1-9
5. Haggai 2:6-9
6. 2 Samuel 7:14-16
7. Haggai 2:10-19
8. Haggai 2:14
9. Haggai 2:19; Haggai 2:15,18
10. Haggai 2:20-23

ZECHARIAH

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF THE MINOR PROPHETS*



CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

THE STORY OF ZECHARIAH

Zechariah was a prophet during the time of the exile.* He fills his book with many of the same promises that the other prophets gave. God was going to save his people. He would keep the promises he made to David. He would make Israel great and their king would rule the world. But these things would not happen right away. They would happen at a time in the future.

The book talks about some things that would happen while Zechariah was alive. But some of the things that he said would only happen in the future.

He told the people these things to make them think about that future day. It would remind them of the promises that God made in the past. God had always kept his promises. Zechariah wanted to give them hope.*

God spoke these words to Zechariah by giving him dreams. These dreams told Zechariah what God would do. So he told the people about his dreams.

Zechariah talked about a promise in this book. It was the promise that God made to David.* If you want to understand this book, you will want to keep this promise in mind.[1]

Zechariah had many dreams that he told about in this book. One of them was about the return from exile. He told the people that they would soon go home. They would return to the land God promised them. When they did, they would build the temple again. God would destroy their enemies. God would help them build up Jerusalem* again.

Zechariah said that God would keep this promise when all of the people obeyed him. **'All these things will happen if you do what the Lord* your God says.'**[2] 'These things' were the things that would happen when the Messiah* came. The Messiah would come and rule the people in the future. He would be the king.

When that day came, God would build the temple again. God would destroy Israel's enemies.[3] He would build Jerusalem again. The city would be the place where all nations lived. Israel would obey God. They would enjoy his blessing.*[4] God would build his kingdom* by the power of his Spirit.[5] Justice* would govern the entire land.[6] God would remove all of the wicked people. God's wrath* would be sent out against the land of the north.[7]

Zechariah said that the new king would be a priest like Joshua, the high priest.* The Messiah would be both priest* and king.[8]

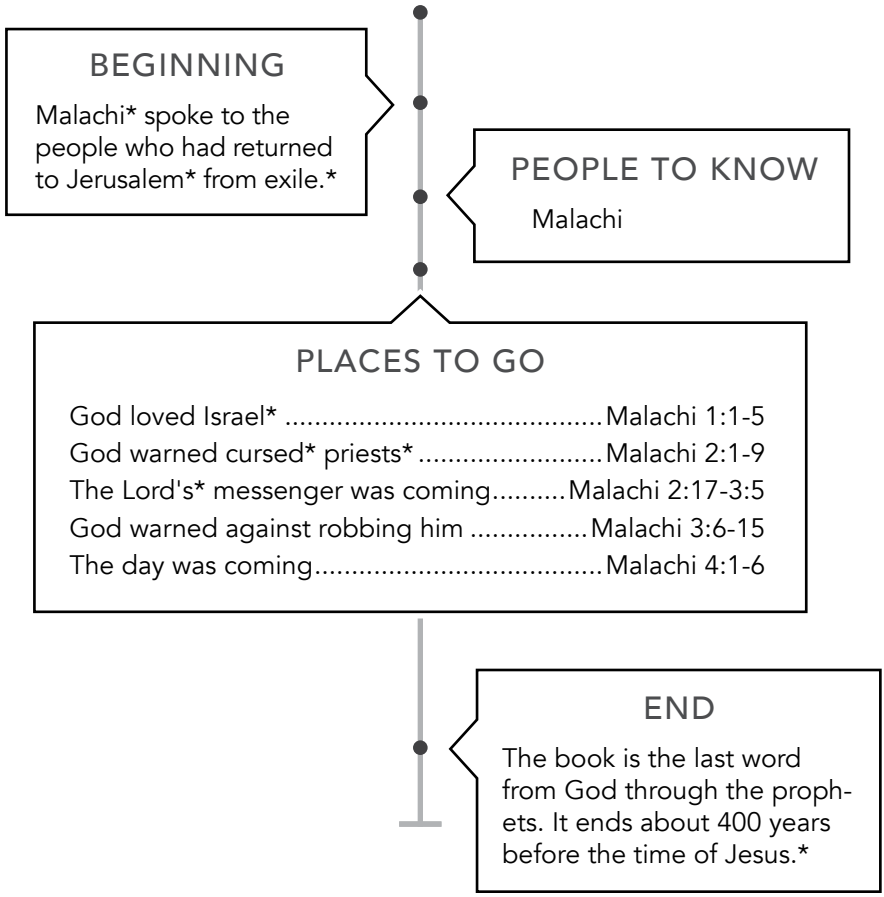
When the Messiah was king, God would again settle in Jerusalem. It would again be called **'the City of Truth'.** It would be a place of joy. It would be a place of peace* and riches. Jerusalem would be a city of blessing.[9] People would worship* God again in all of the land of promise. People from all nations would come to worship God there.[10] But just before the Messiah came, God would judge* the nations.

Read this book with care. Many things that you see here, you will see again in the last book of the Bible.*

1. 2 Samuel 7
2. Zechariah 6:15; see 3:7; 7:9-14; 8:14-17; also Ezekiel 36:24-28
3. Zechariah 1:7-21
4. Zechariah 3:1-10
5. Zechariah 4:1-14
6. Zechariah 5:1-4
7. Zechariah 6:1-8
8. See Psalms 110
9. Zechariah 8:3-13
10. Zechariah 8:20-23

MALACHI

THE OLD TESTAMENT | THE BOOKS OF THE MINOR PROPHETS*



CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

THE STORY OF MALACHI

The name Malachi means 'my messenger' or 'the one that speaks for me.' That is a good name for a prophet. And it is a very good name for this book by the prophet. This is the last book in the Old Testament.* It was the last word from God for a very long time.

Malachi lived and spoke during the time of Ezra* and Nehemiah.* The people were back in their home land. They had rebuilt the temple. They had heard the messages that Haggai* and Zechariah* had spoken. But the people did not

follow God the way that Moses told them to. So God used Malachi to tell them to change their ways.

The prophets of the past said that God would bless his people. God would make the nation grow and have peace. God himself would come to dwell with them. All of the other nations would honour them.

But they did not see any of these things. The people were poor. Another nation ruled over them. They had no king from David's* family. So they began to doubt God. They believed that God did not love them. They doubted that God would keep his promises. He was not going to judge the evil nations. He did not treat them as his chosen people.

So the people stopped doing what Moses had told them to do. They did not keep the promises that they made. They did not follow the covenant.* They did not bring their best animals as offerings* to God. They brought animals that were blind and sick. They married women that were not of the family of Abraham.* These women followed idols* and did not honour the true God. The people also did not give God a part of their possessions. They took for themselves things that belonged to God. And the priests* did not correct them for these things. The priests were not honest and good. They did not lead the people to honour God.

God told Malachi to tell the people to turn from evil. They must return to God. Malachi also spoke about the Messiah. He told the people that the Messiah would come. But he told them that they were not ready for him. To be ready, they must stop doing wrong and follow the covenant. He said this six times in the book. Each time he spoke to them about a problem, he used a question.[1]

Malachi called God, **'the Lord of hosts'** more than any other name.[2] 'Lord of hosts' means Lord of armies. No other book in the Bible uses this name more than Malachi. Malachi wanted to remind the people that God could protect them. The people of Israel* had feared the 'hosts' of the Assyrians.* The people of Judah* had feared the hosts of Babylon.* Now, Israel had no army at all. But they did not need to fear. God has an army. His army can not fail. He is the one who watches over his people. Malachi trusted in the Lord of hosts. He wanted Israel to do the same.

Malachi was the last prophet of the Old Testament. Many years passed before another prophet spoke. But Malachi talked about another prophet. This prophet would come in the future. He would speak for God like Malachi did. This messenger would be like Elijah.* He would help people be ready for the day that God would come to save his people.[3]

More than 400 years would pass. Jesus would be born and live in the land. But, before Jesus would begin his work, another prophet would speak. He would stand near the Jordan River.* He would tell people to turn from their evil* ways.

He would tell them to prepare themselves. He would tell them to repent,* for the kingdom of heaven* was near. That prophet was John the Baptist.* We read about this in the first book of the New Testament.*[4]

Malachi told the people to wait on the Lord. God would do all that he promised, but he would do it in his own time. They must trust him. They must do right and follow the covenant as they wait. Some day, all that God has promised will come to pass. Then the Messiah would come. He would rule his kingdom. He would judge all of the people.

This was good news for the people who had been loyal to God. But this was not such good news for the people who refused to obey him.[5]

1. Malachi 1:2-5; Malachi 1:6-2:9; Malachi 2:10-16; Malachi 2:17-3:5; Malachi 3:6-12; Malachi 3:13-18; Malachi 1:2-5
2. Malachi calls God *'the Lord of hosts'* 24 times in this small book.
3. Zechariah 12:8
4. Matthew 11:7-15
5. Malachi 3:18

Map of the Bible Story

God made all things

God made Adam and Eve

Adam and Eve did not listen to God

God put Adam and Eve out of the garden

God sends a flood

God scatters the nations

God calls Abraham

Abraham's children go to Egypt

God takes Israel out of Egypt

God gives Moses the Law

Israel enters the Promise Land

David becomes King

The nation is divided

Israel goes into exile

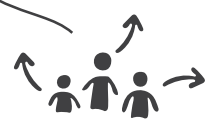
Israel returns to the Promise Land

Jesus is born

Jesus says and does wonderful things

Jesus dies on a cross

Jesus rises from the grave



Jesus sends his disciples into the world

Jesus goes up into the Heavens

Jesus sends the Holy Spirit

Jesus' disciples go into all the world

The disciples work for Jesus and wait for his return

Jesus returns to rule as King in a New Heaven and New Earth

THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament* is also a collection of books. These books are in groups by the kinds of writing in the books. These books tell us that the promises of the prophets* have now come true. They also tell us how those who followed God spread his word. And they tell how we should live for him.

SECTIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Gospels
The Book of History
The Letters of Paul
The General Letters
The Book of Prophecy

THE GOSPELS

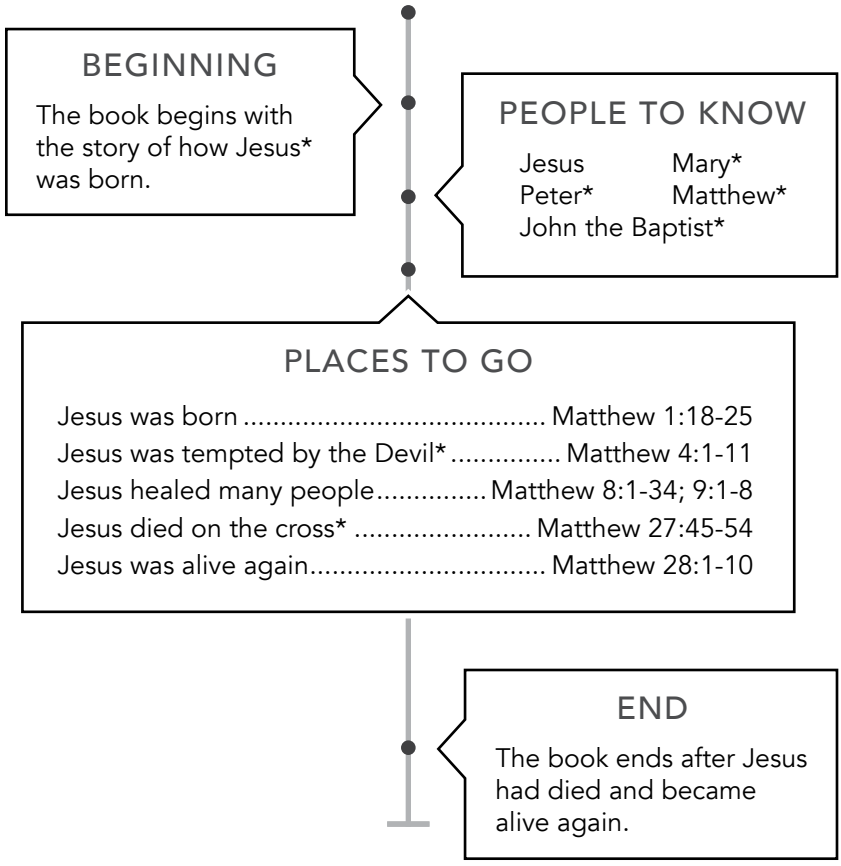
These books tell us that the promises of the prophets* have now come true. God did send a saviour,* the Messiah.* The Gospels tell us the story of Jesus.* They give us a record of what he did and what he said. Each Gospel tells us about Jesus' life, his death, and the fact that he rose from the dead. But they are not all the same. Each of the Gospels tells that story in a different way.

THE GOSPELS

Matthew
Mark
Luke
John

MATTHEW

THE NEW TESTAMENT | THE GOSPELS*



CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

THE STORY OF MATTHEW

There are many ways to start a book. Matthew started his book with a list. On that list are the names of the family of Jesus. Matthew was a Jew.* He was one of the earliest followers* of Jesus. He wanted us to know that Jesus could name his family all the way back to Abraham* and David.* Jesus was a son of Abraham, so he could be part of God's promise to Abraham. Jesus was a son of David, so he could be part of the promise God made to David too. This was important to Matthew because Matthew wrote his book to tell us that Jesus

was God's promised Saviour.* He was the one who would keep the promise God made to Abraham. He was the king that God promised to David. Matthew wrote his book to help people see that Jesus was the Messiah.* He was the one that the people of God had been waiting for for so long.

After he made his list, Matthew told about how Jesus was born. Jesus came to earth just like the prophets* said he would. Then Matthew told three stories. He told the story of John the Baptist.[1] He told the story of how John baptised*[2] Jesus. Then he told the story of how Satan* tempted Jesus.[3] Matthew told these stories to show people who Jesus was. Matthew said that Jesus was the Son of God.* He was the one that the prophets had talked about.

Matthew told about what Jesus said and did in the rest of the book. Jesus healed people who could not walk. He made blind people see. He set people free from evil* spirits. But before he did these things, he spoke to a large group of people. He sat on the mount and spoke about the kingdom* of heaven.*

Matthew did not tell us all that Jesus did. He did not tell us all that Jesus said. But each story tells us things about Jesus. Jesus did many wonderful acts. He spoke with authority. The prophets said that the Messiah would do these kinds of things. Matthew was telling us these stories to show us something. Jesus was the one that the prophets talked about. He was the one that God promised to send. He was the Messiah.

Matthew then told how Jesus sent his friends all through the land of Israel.* He told his friends to tell people about the kingdom.[4] Matthew said that Jesus was like the servant of the Lord* that Isaiah* talked about. He was the one who would give all of the people hope.*[5]

But many people did not believe* what Jesus said. Many of the priests* did not believe him. The teachers in the city did not believe him. They were not happy that so many people followed him. They soon became angry and they made plans to kill him.

But Jesus kept teaching. Jesus told many stories about the kingdom. He said that this kingdom was what the prophets had talked about. These stories are 'parables'.* In these parables, he said that this kingdom would be great. Jesus would rule over all people on the earth. But this kingdom would begin in a small way. It would grow like a seed. These stories tell us that Jesus is the King. His kingdom began when he came. But the people who follow him must wait with patience for the end of the age. That is when the kingdom will be everything Jesus and the prophets promised.

The last parts of Matthew say what Jesus did and said before he died. That was when Jesus talked about the church* for the first time. He promised to form his 'church'. He said nothing could stop him from doing that. This

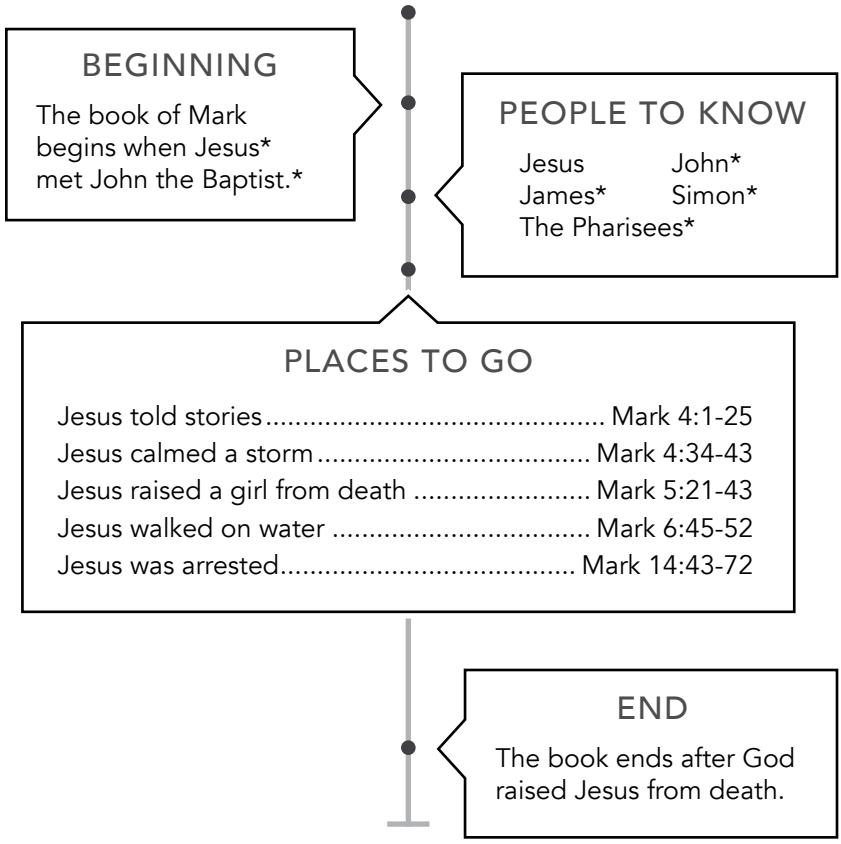
church was not a building like the temple.* This church was made of people. But he would not begin to gather these people until he would **'suffer many things…[and] be killed and on the third day be raised to life.'**[6]

When Jesus came into Jerusalem,* the crowds welcomed him as their Messiah. But this did not last for long. Jesus gave his final messages to the crowds and to his followers on the Mount of Olives. After that, the leaders turned the people against Jesus. Soon, Jesus gave up his life when he let the Jews put him on a cross. But Matthew ended on a note of hope. He told us that Jesus rose from the dead. After that, Jesus met with the men and women who followed him. And he sent them out to tell people about the kingdom. He told them to go into all of the world and tell people the good news. And he promised to be with them to the very end of the age.[7]

1. Matthew 3:1-12
2. Matthew 3:13-17
3. Matthew 4:1-11
4. Matthew 10
5. Matthew 12:21
6. Matthew 16:2
7. Matthew 28:19

MARK

THE NEW TESTAMENT | THE GOSPELS*



CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

THE STORY OF MARK

The book of Mark is the shortest of the four gospels.* Mark* was a young man who followed Jesus. Mark had also spent time with Peter* the Apostle.* He tells many of the same stories that the other gospels tell. But he tells them in a different way. He may have told the story of Jesus from Peter's point of view. Mark told many stories from the other gospels. But he left out many of the things that the other gospels say. He did not say much about Jesus' birth. He did not talk about his family or his early life. He began with the story of

John the Baptist, who told people that the Messiah* was coming. He told many of the things that Jesus said about 'the last days.'[1] He included many things that Jesus said about the hope* of Israel.*

Mark talked about Jesus in many different ways in his book. He spoke of Jesus as God's most loved son.[2] He saw him as the Son of Man.*[3] He saw him as David's* promised son[4] – the Messiah. And he saw him as the suffering servant,[5] just as Isaiah* described him.

Many of Mark's stories are also found in both Luke and Matthew. But there is one story that Jesus told that is only found in Mark. Jesus said,

> **'Here is what God's kingdom* is like. A farmer scatters seed on the ground. Night and day the seed comes up and grows. It happens whether the farmer sleeps or gets up. He does not know how it happens. All by itself the soil produces grain. First the stem comes up. Then the head appears. Then, the full grain appears in the head. Before long the grain becomes fully grown. So the farmer cuts it down, because the harvest is ready.'[6]**

Mark talked most about the last week in the life of Jesus. He told the stories of how Jesus died and rose from the dead. Those days began with some words that Peter said. **'You are the Christ.'*[7]**

After that, Jesus told his friends what was going to happen to him. He would be killed. But he would not stay in the grave. He would become alive again.

> **'He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be refused. And he must be killed and after three days rise again.'[8]**

Mark wrote his book to tell people who Jesus was. Jesus was the son that God promised to Abraham.* Jesus was the king that God promised to David. Jesus was the Messiah that the prophets* said would come.

Matthew wrote his book to help the Jews* know about Jesus. Mark wrote his book for everyone. He wanted all people from all parts of the world to believe* in Jesus.

Mark told the story in a way that reminded people of the promises of the prophets. Jesus was the one who came to deliver his people. But these people did not want him. Mark wanted to help people remember what Isaiah said.

> **'Men looked down on him. They did not accept him. He knew all about suffering. He was like someone people turn their faces away from. We looked down on him. We did not have any respect for him.'[9]**

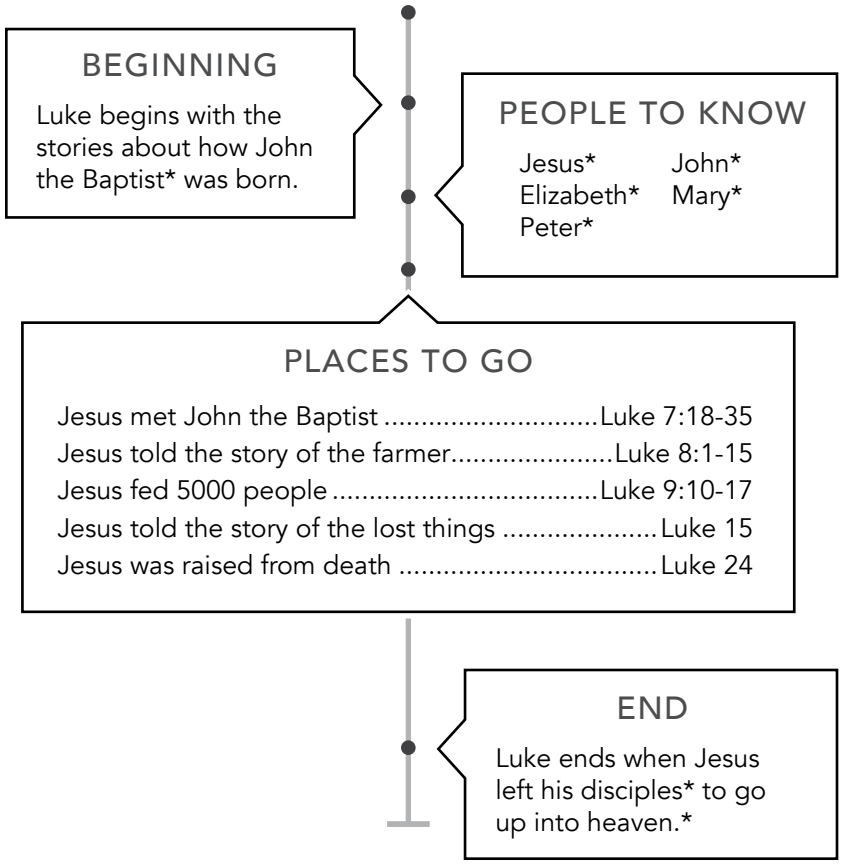
In the last part of his book, Mark showed how the priests* wanted Jesus to be killed. So the soldiers put Jesus on a cross.* They put nails in his hands and feet. His death was an awful death. When Jesus was dying, his friends were very afraid. Even Peter, a close disciple* of Jesus, said that he did not know him.

But, a few days later, an angel* told Jesus' friends that he was alive again. Later that day, Jesus himself came to see his friends. They saw that he was alive. And he told them to take God's message to all people. The book of Acts tells the story of how they did that.

1. Mark 1:2-8
2. Mark 1:1; 9:7
3. Mark 2:10,28; 14:62
4. Mark 1:1; 10:47
5. Mark 8:31; 10:45
6. Mark 4:26-29
7. Mark 8:29
8. Mark 8:31
9. Isaiah 53:3

LUKE

THE NEW TESTAMENT | THE GOSPELS*



CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

THE STORY OF LUKE

Luke* was a disciple of Jesus. But he was not one of Jesus' apostles.* Luke was a friend of Paul.* He was also a friend of many of the men and women who followed Jesus. He was probably not a Jew.* He listened when they told stories about Jesus. He wrote many of their stories in this book.

He wrote his book to tell a friend about Jesus. He put many of the things that Jesus said into his book. He wrote about some of the things that Jesus did. He went step-by-step through Jesus' life. He wanted his friend to know the

truth about Jesus. He wanted him to follow Jesus too.

The book of Luke is a Gospel.* You will find many stories about Jesus here. Luke put many of the parables* that Jesus told in his book. He put more of those parables in his book than Matthew* or Mark* did.

Luke was a doctor. He travelled with Paul on many of Paul's trips. Luke also wrote the book of Acts. He told about many of his trips with Paul in that book.

The key words in Luke are 'son of man.*' He put those words in his book almost 80 times.

Luke began with the story of John the Baptist. John was very important to Jesus. So Luke talked about John the Baptist many times in his book. John was the prophet* who came just before Jesus. He told people that God was going to send a saviour* to rescue them. He told them to remember God and turn away from the bad things that they did.

Then Luke told the story of the birth of Jesus. This was a very important story to Luke. He put many details of this story in his book.

Luke included a list of names in his book just like Matthew did. But this list follows the family of Mary. She was from the family of King David* too. Luke included this list so that we know two things. First, Jesus had no human father. He was 'the son of God.*'[1] Second, Jesus was a son from the family of David.

Then he moved to stories about John. God sent John to prepare the way for Jesus. One day, John baptised* Jesus in the river. After that, Jesus began to speak in public. That is what Luke talked about in the next part of his book.

Jesus did not stay in one place in those days. He went from place to place and spoke with many different people. He spoke to some people that no one else cared about.

As Jesus travelled, he told stories. He healed the sick. He helped people that no one else would help. Luke included many of Jesus' stories in this book. You can read more of these stories in Luke than in any of the other gospels.

Jesus met many people. Some of them believed* what he said. One soldier asked him to make his sick servant well again. He knew that Jesus could do this. He said,

'Just say the word, and my servant will be healed'.[2]

Luke wanted people to see that Jesus was the Son of God. He was the son that God promised to David. Only God's promised saviour could do what Jesus was doing.

After this, Jesus started his trip to Jerusalem.*[3] He did not go there right away. But he was making ready for that trip. He told his friends why he needed to go there.

'The Son of Man is going to be turned over into the hands of men,'[4] and he 'must suffer many things and be killed and…raised to life.'[5]

Luke included many stories about what Jesus did along the way. He said what Jesus said to his friends. One of the things that Jesus talked about was the kingdom* of God.[6] He told people to be prepared. Being a member of God's kingdom could be dangerous sometimes.[7] Members of the kingdom should not try to get things for themselves. They should depend on God to help them. Sometimes, God used other people to help those who serve him.[8]

Many people were following Jesus. He told his disciples to be true and honest before God. Trust* in God, not wealth. The kingdom was not for the proud but the humble. The kingdom was not for the rich but for the poor.

The last part of Luke's book tells about the last days that Jesus was on earth. He went into Jerusalem. Many people were happy to see him. But only a few people knew who Jesus really was. He was **'the king who comes in the name of the Lord.'*[9]** But most people did not understand that.[10] That made Jesus weep. He was sad that the people did not know who he really was. He was also sad because God would judge* them because they did not follow him.

Jesus went to the temple* and told the people many things. But the more Jesus said, the more they hated him.

A few days before Jesus died, he ate a special meal with his friends. He told them that he was going to be arrested and killed. He also said that he was starting a new covenant* for everyone who would follow him. When he shed his blood, the covenant would begin.[11] He would die so that people would know that what the prophets said was true.[12]

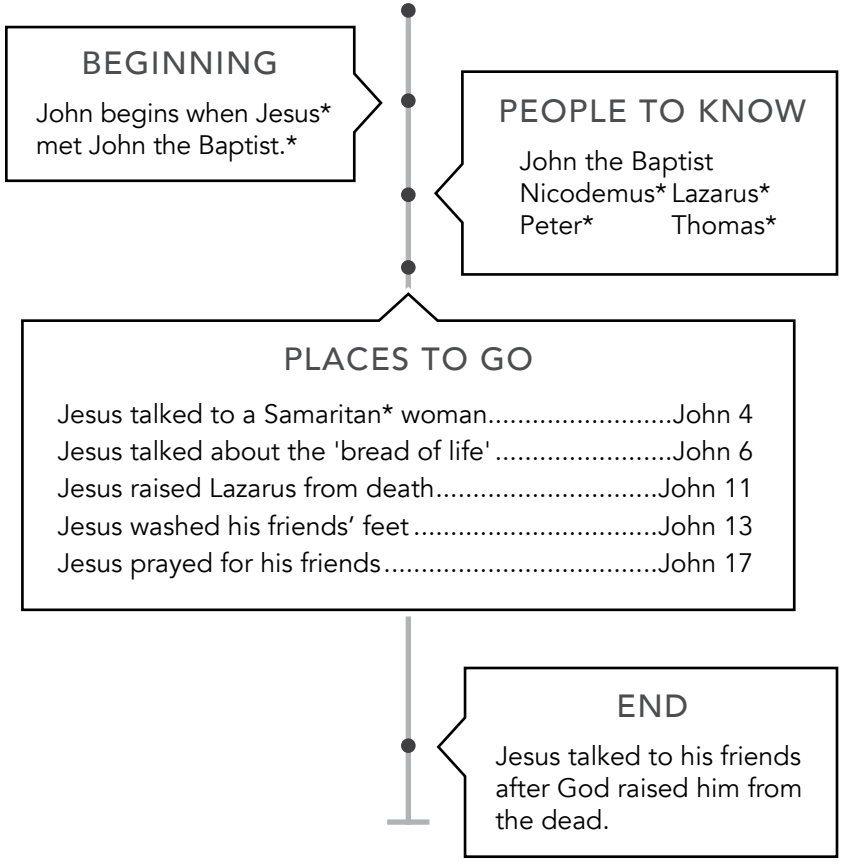
One night, one of his friends decided to turn away from him. Soldiers arrested Jesus. Some people told lies about him. So the soldiers beat Jesus with a whip. Then they put him on a cross.* After a few hours, Jesus died.

But that was not the end of Luke's story. In some ways, it was only the beginning. After three days, Jesus came back to life again. He went back to see his friends. He told them not to be afraid. He would always be with them. And he had a job for them to do. They were to go everywhere and tell people the good news.

1. Luke 3:38; see 1:35
2. Luke 7:1-10
3. Luke 9:51
4. Luke 9:44
5. Luke 9:22
6. Luke 10:9
7. Luke 10:3
8. Luke 10:4-16
9. Luke 19:38
10. Luke 19:42
11. Luke 22:20
12. Luke 22:37

JOHN

THE NEW TESTAMENT | THE GOSPELS*



CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

THE STORY OF JOHN

The last of the books called 'gospels'* is John. John* was one of the men that Jesus chose and a close friend of Jesus. He wrote the words and stories about Jesus, just as Matthew* and Mark* did. But John wrote the way that he did for a special reason. He wrote so that people would **'believe* that Jesus is the Christ,* the Son of God.'***[1]** He wanted them to have the life that Jesus wanted them to have. John wanted people to 'believe' so that they could have eternal* life.[2]

John said many things about Jesus. John told the things that Jesus did and the words that he said. But John also told us who Jesus was. He called Jesus the 'Word'. He said that Jesus was with God before he created* the world. In fact, Jesus made all things. Nothing was created that Jesus did not create. Jesus was God coming to us in a body. He showed people God's grace* and truth by living among them. When people saw Jesus, they got to see God's glory.*

John's book begins with another man named John. He was John the Baptist. When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he said, **'Look! There is the lamb* from God. He will take away the sin* of the world.'**[3] John the Baptist was saying that Jesus would be like one of the lambs that people gave as a sacrifice.* Somehow, Jesus would be like that kind of lamb.[4]

John wanted people to remember what the prophets* said. The prophets said that people would not welcome the Messiah.* That is what happened to Jesus. John said that the leaders in Israel* did not welcome Jesus. He came to his own people, the Jews.* But many of them turned away from him.

But many people were happy to listen to Jesus. He found men who wanted to follow him. Some of those men were followers* of John the Baptist. They did what John the Baptist hoped they would do. They turned to follow Jesus.

Jesus did many miracles* among the people. He did these things to help people know that he was the Son of God. He healed a man who could not walk. He fed 5000 people with only a few fish and some bread. He walked on the sea. But the leaders in Israel still did not believe in him. Other people, like many people in Samaria,* did believe.

John also told us many things that Jesus said to the people at the temple.* Jesus said that his message came from God. He told them that he came because God sent him. Jesus did many other things to help the people see who he was. He healed a blind man. When his friend Lazarus died, Jesus made him live again. These are the kind of things that Isaiah* talked about many years before. He said that God's promised saviour* would do things like this. But the people still did not understand.

John told about the last week of Jesus' life in the last part of his book. Jesus said many important things in that last week. He told his friends to be humble and he gave them a new command.

> **'I give you a new command. Love one another. You must love one another, just as I have loved you. If you love one another, everyone will know you are my disciples.'***[5]

He told them about the Holy Spirit.* Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would help them when he left. Jesus prayed for his friends and for everyone who

would believe in the future.[6]

John wrote his book to help people see that Jesus was the Son of God. He came to rescue his chosen people. He came to begin his new kingdom.* That was why he went to the cross.* That is why God made Jesus alive again after he died.

1. John 20:31
2. John 3:16
3. John 1:29
4. John 1:29
5. John 13:34-35
6. John 17

THE BOOK OF HISTORY

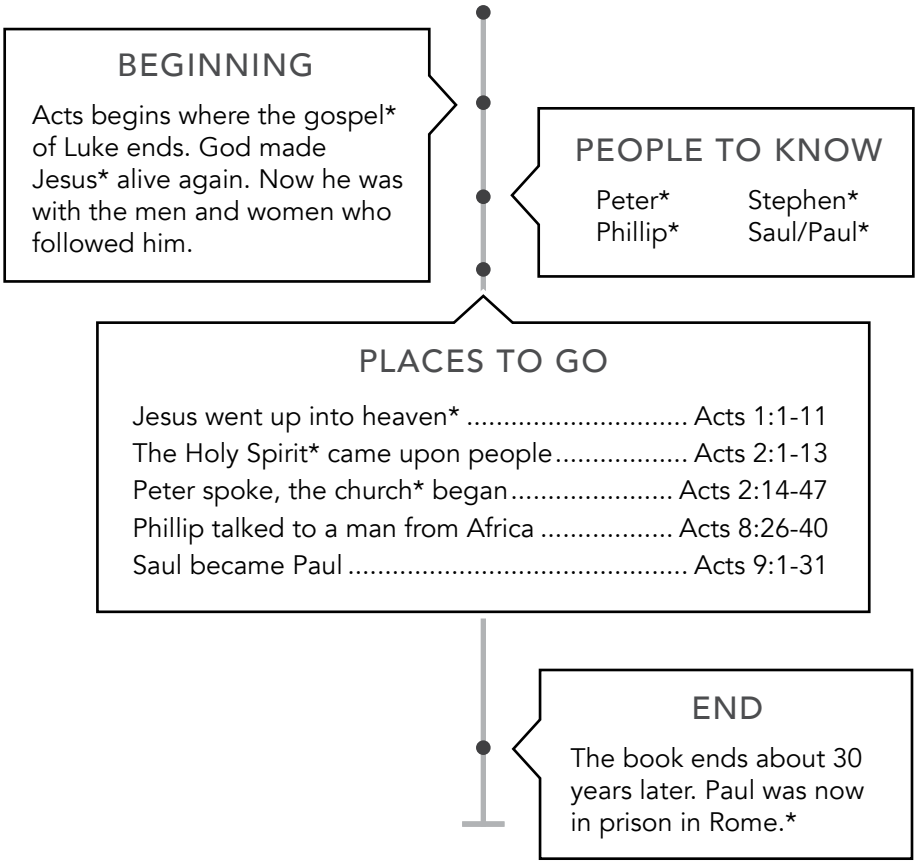
We call the next book 'the Acts'. Acts is a book of history. The book tells the story of how the people who believed* in Jesus* spread the good news. They told the entire ancient world the good news about Jesus.

THE BOOK OF HISTORY

Acts

ACTS

THE NEW TESTAMENT | THE BOOK OF HISTORY



CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

THE STORY OF ACTS

The book of Acts starts where the gospel* stories end. Luke* wrote the book. He wanted to tell his friend what happened after Jesus came back alive. Acts tells stories about the first followers* of Jesus. Luke told what they did after Jesus rose from the dead.

Acts begins when Jesus was still on the earth with the believers.* He talked to them about the kingdom* of God. Jesus went up into heaven soon after he said these things. Soon after Jesus went away, he sent the Holy Spirit. Many

people were there that day. They came to have a feast called Pentecost.* When the Holy Spirit came, some people were confused. They did not know what was happening. So Peter stood up and spoke to them. He told them about the Holy Spirit. He told them about Jesus. Jesus, he said, was the king that God promised to David.* But the people did not listen to Jesus. They killed him on a cross* instead. But God made Jesus alive again. And now everyone should trust* Jesus to rescue them from their evil* ways. They should believe* on him and God would forgive* them.

Many people believed what Peter said. They believed on Jesus. They believed he was the one who came to save them. But some people were not happy about this. The leaders of the Jews* tried to stop Peter. They did not want him to talk about Jesus any more. So they started to behave badly toward the Christians.* They put them into prison. They killed some of them. They put Peter and John* in prison. Later, they killed a man named Stephen* because he believed on Jesus.

The church* grew very fast at the beginning. They stayed in Jerusalem* for a long time. But many of the Jews turned against the Christians there. The Jews became angry. They started to act badly toward the Christians. When they did, many of the Christians moved out of the city. They went to many other towns and villages. And they told people about Jesus in all of those places. So, many people who were not Jews believed. And the church grew.

God gave the church many good leaders when it began. Men like Stephen,[1] Philip,*[2] Paul, and Peter spoke for God. They healed people just like Jesus did. They even made someone who was dead to live again.[3]

Most of the first people who believed in Jesus were Jews. But that began to change. The Christians told the good news about Jesus in many places. Many people that were not Jews believed it too. That is what the story of Cornelius* tells us.[4]

Some of the early Christians moved to a town called Antioch. The church there was strong. But many people did not like the Christians. A king named Agrippa*[5] tried to stop them. But the good news about Jesus only went to more places. The Christians told people about Jesus wherever they went.

One of the most important people in Luke's book is a man named Paul. He did not believe in Jesus. But God came to him and spoke to him. After that, Paul believed. Soon, Paul became one of the most important leaders in the early church. He went on three different journeys to tell people about Jesus. The last part of the book of Acts tells about those journeys.

The book of Acts has many stories about the new church. Things were not always easy for them. They had to decide how to care for each other. They

had to decide if they should still obey the law of Moses.* But God gave them wisdom. They met together to talk about these hard things. And each time, God helped them find an answer.

Near the end of the book, soldiers put Paul in prison. The Jews said that he was teaching against Israel.* They sent Paul to a town named Caesarea* and then to Rome.* They put him in prison there too. But, even in prison, Paul did not stop talking about Jesus. Luke told us many of the things that Paul said. The good news was the message that Jesus gave his life on the cross. And God brought him back from the dead. God did that to show who Jesus was – the Son of God.* When God raised Jesus from death, he kept his promise to David.[6] Jesus was God's king. His kingdom would last for ever.

1. Acts 6-8
2. Acts 8
3. Acts 9:36-43
4. Acts 10:1-11:18
5. Acts 12:1-25
6. 2 Samuel 7:12-16

THE LETTERS OF PAUL

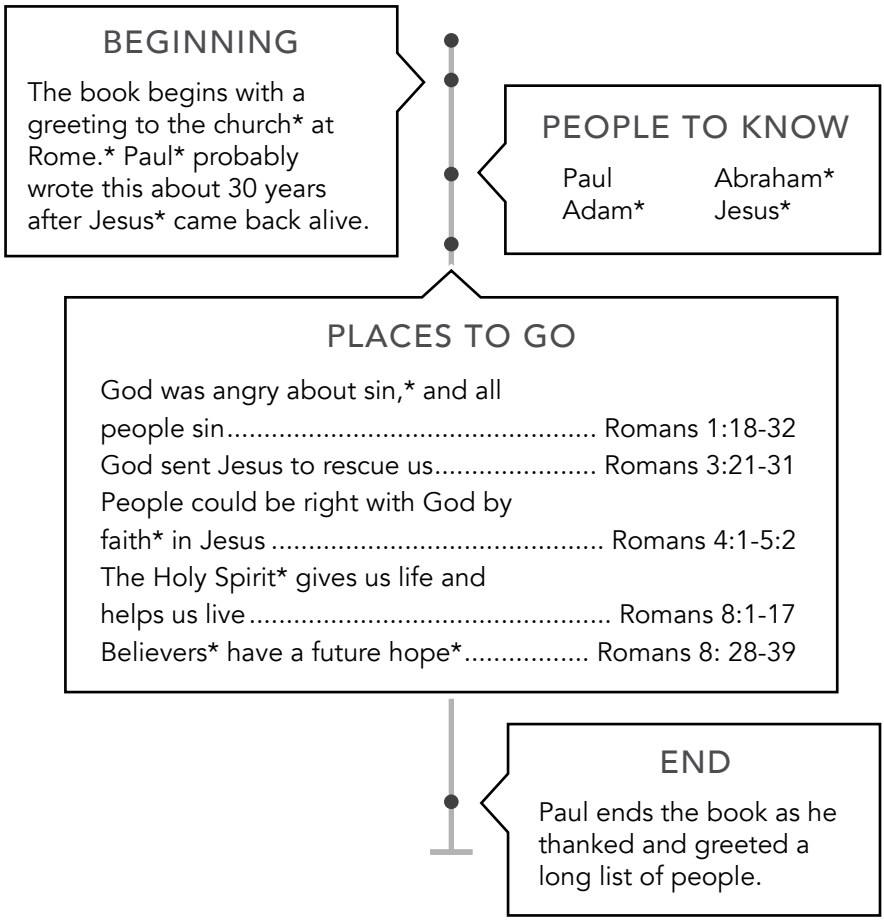
This is part of 'the epistles'.* The word epistles means 'letters'. Paul, a leader of the new church,* wrote these letters. These letters tell the readers how to live as God's people. The letters remind them that God will keep his promises.

THE LETTERS OF PAUL

Romans
1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians
1 Timothy
2 Timothy
Titus
Philemon

ROMANS

THE NEW TESTAMENT | THE LETTERS OF PAUL



CHAPTER FIFTY

THE STORY OF ROMANS

Paul wrote many letters. He wanted to teach the churches more about Jesus. He also wanted to help them know how to live as Christians.* The book of Romans is one of those letters.

Paul wrote more than a dozen books in the New Testament* section of the Bible.* He wrote more books than anyone else. Paul wrote this letter to the people in the church at Rome. He started the letter with a greeting.[1] He ended the letter by saying thank you to several people in the church.[2]

But Paul used most of the letter to talk about one thing. He wrote about the good news about Jesus. Most of the book is about the gospel.* Paul argued about the gospel. He gave examples. He asked the Romans to think hard about Jesus. He did not want the Roman Christians to be wrong about the gospel.

One of the most important words in the book is 'grace.'* Grace means that God blesses* us when we do not deserve a blessing.* He is kind to us when we deserve his anger. He brings us close when we deserve to be put far away.

Paul talked about a problem first. All people were sinners.* Every person did things that God was not pleased with. We broke God's laws. We did not listen to what he said. Some people even worshiped* idols.* We fell short of what God wanted for us. God was angry with us because of our sins. Our sins must be punished. And the punishment for our sins was death.

And there was nothing that we could do to fix the problem. This was true for all people – those who were Jews* and those who were not. God gave Moses* the law for the Jews. But that law could not make them right before God.

The good news is that God made a way to fix this problem. God sent his own Son, Jesus Christ,* to rescue us. Jesus did all of the things that Moses' law required. He did not sin. He pleased God in every way. He did not deserve to be punished by God.

But Jesus took our place. God punished Jesus instead of us. Jesus took our sin, our guilt* and our shame. He was punished so that we could go free. He took care of God's anger so that we could be at peace* with God. This is the gospel. This is the good news that Paul wanted the Romans to understand.

Paul said that this good news was for everyone who would believe.* A person who wanted to be right with God must believe. They must believe that Jesus was the one that God sent to rescue sinners. They must believe that he died on a cross* and came back to be alive again. Then they must trust* Jesus to rescue them. They must believe that Jesus is their only hope.

Paul said that God blesses us in many ways when we believe. God forgives* us. Paul said that we are now right with God. Then God makes us a part of his family. He adopts us as his own dear children. And God makes us holy.* He changes our hearts. He changes the way we think and act. He does this for us by giving us the Holy Spirit. And God will some day make us perfect. Our bodies will be perfect. Our souls* will be perfect. He will do this for us at the day when he raises all people to live again.[3]

Paul answered two big questions in the last part of his book. The first question is about the Jews. God promised Abraham* a people and a land. He promised David* a kingdom* that would last for ever. Would God keep those promises? Paul said that God still intended to keep his promises to Israel.*

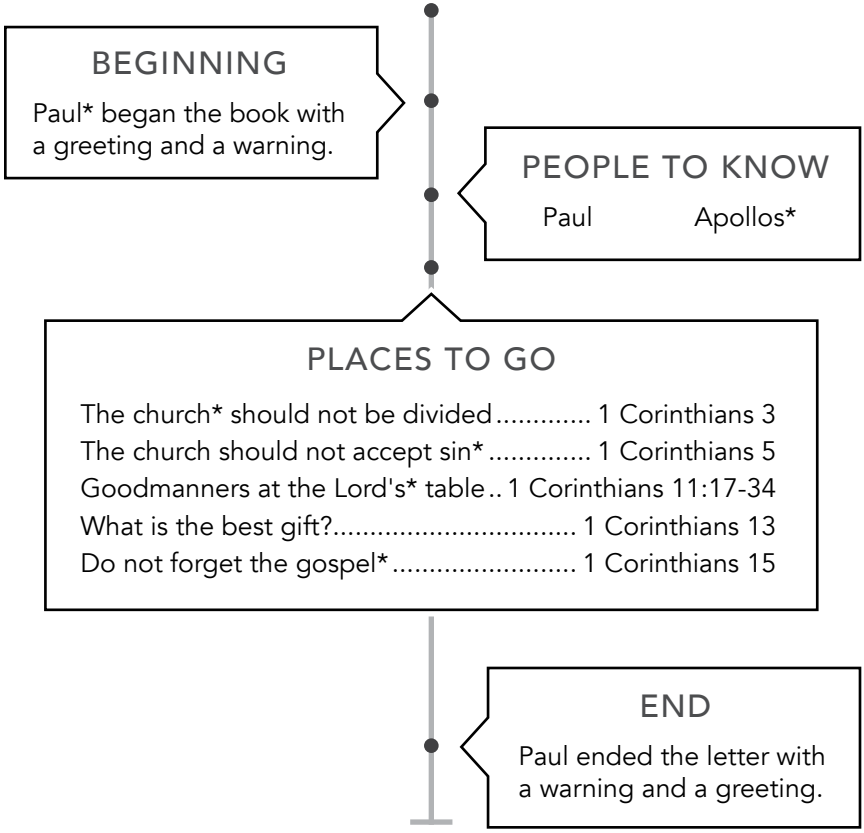
Some day in the future, they would turn to Christ. They would know him and believe in him.[4] Now, God was giving the blessings that belonged to the Jews to people who were not Jews.

Paul answered another question too. How does the gospel change the way we are to live now? How should we live every day now that we believe the good news? Paul answered that question in the last four chapters of Romans. He said that God had shown us mercy.* He sent Jesus to rescue us. So, we should show mercy to people too.[5]

1. Romans 1:1-7
2. Romans 16:1-27
3. Romans 5-8
4. Romans 11:12-32
5. Romans 12:9-21

1 CORINTHIANS

THE NEW TESTAMENT | THE LETTERS OF PAUL



CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE

THE STORY OF 1 CORINTHIANS

When Paul wrote this letter, he did not seem very happy. He wrote to the people in a city named Corinth.* Corinth was a city in the country of Greece. Paul knew these people very well. In fact, Paul once lived in Corinth. He was there for many months. When he lived there, the church at Corinth was healthy and strong.

But now the church in Corinth was not strong or healthy. Someone from Corinth told Paul about many problems in the church. So Paul wrote this

letter to the leaders there. Paul wrote the letter to help them.

The people in the church at Corinth were not getting along. They argued with each other. Some of the people were doing things that did not please God. So Paul wrote a very strong letter. He wanted them to stop doing wrong. He told them to start living the way that God has taught them.

Some of the people in the church thought that they were very wise. They sometimes argued about who was the wisest. Paul told them that the wisdom that men had was foolish when you compared it to the wisdom that God has. Jesus* is Lord. He is the one who is truly wise. So, the people in Corinth must listen to what God has said. And they must stop arguing about things that do not matter. Then, when they do know what God wants them to know, they must act in ways that are wise.

Paul talks about unity in this letter.[1] He wanted the people in the church to get along with each other. They should not be angry or argue with each other. They should care about each other and help each other. They should show respect for one another and build each other up. Paul knew that this would not always be easy for them. But God would help them. And he would value the work that they did for him.[2] God would see how they cared for each other. And when Jesus returns to earth, he would remember them.[3] He would reward their work.

There were many problems in the church at Corinth. So Paul wrote to help them solve those problems. He told them to remember that God wanted the church to be holy.* He wanted them to be loyal to their husbands and wives.[4] He wanted them to be pure and not use their bodies to sin.[5] Paul told the leaders in the church to help people remember this. They must correct the people if they refused to obey God in this way. The church must call people to repent* when they acted in wrong ways.

Many of the people in the city of Corinth followed false gods. Many of them prayed to an idol.* The people in the church did not bow down to an idol any more. But they did not always know what to do about their old ways. They did not always know how to make good choices. They wanted to do things that would help other people follow Jesus well. But sometimes, they did not know what was best. So Paul helped them. He showed them how to think about what to do. Helping other people in the church to grow was important. God's people should not do things that made people fall. They should always show respect for each other.[6]

Paul said that the church is like a body. All of the people were different. Every person has a part to play. Every person is important. The Holy Spirit* helps every person that is part of the church. He helps the church to do the work

that God gave them to do. He helps people to serve each other.[7]

But there was another problem in the church. Some people said that Jesus did not come to life again after he died. They said that no one would become alive again after they die. A body would never come out of the grave alive. So Paul wrote to remind the church that Jesus was alive. This was the good news about Jesus. Jesus rose from the grave in a real body. And, some day, God would make everyone live again. Jesus would come to earth. He would gather all of his people to live with him for ever. Then God would judge* the people who did not follow Jesus.

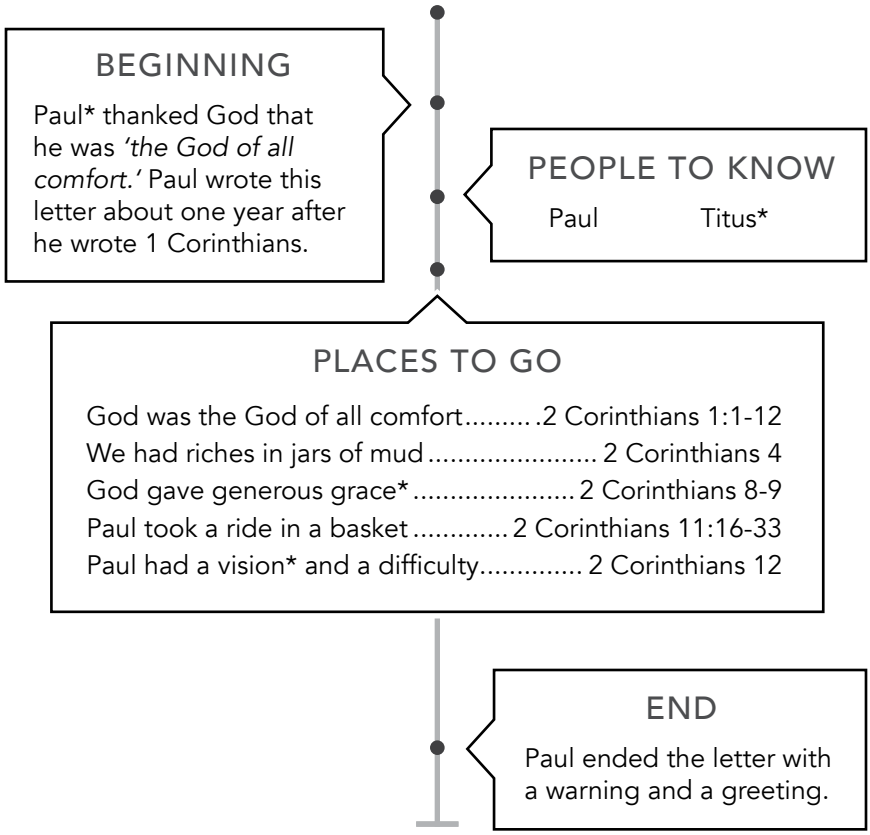
Paul wrote this letter so that the church at Corinth could have hope.* They did not need to be afraid to die. They could obey God even when that was hard to do. Jesus is alive. He would watch over them. He would see how well they served him. Some day he would come again to reward their work. And, on that day, they would begin a new life that would last for ever.

'My dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Do not let anything move you. Always give yourselves completely to the work of the Lord. Because you belong to the Lord, you know that your work is not empty.'[8]

1. 1 Corinthians 1:10-4:21
2. 1 Corinthians 15:58
3. 1 Corinthians 15
4. 1 Corinthians 7
5. 1 Corinthians 5-6
6. 1 Corinthians 10:14-33
7. 1 Corinthians 12-14
8. 1 Corinthians 15:58

2 CORINTHIANS

THE NEW TESTAMENT | THE LETTERS OF PAUL



CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO

THE STORY OF 2 CORINTHIANS

Second Corinthians is a letter. Paul wrote this letter to the church* in Corinth.* Paul wrote about some of the things in his first letter. Some of the bad things that the church was doing before were better now. But now, the church had a new problem. Now there were false teachers in the church. Some of those teachers spoke against Paul. They said that he did not speak for God. They said that he was not a true apostle*[1] of Jesus. So Paul wrote this letter to talk about this.

Paul said many hard things in this letter. But his letter is also filled with words of love. Paul loved God. Paul loved the people in Corinth too. So he wrote to help them. He did not want them to be fooled by these false teachers. He was very sad that some people did not trust* him. Some of his letter talks about how sad he was. Parts of his letter say hard things against the false teachers. But he was careful with his words. He wanted them to understand the good news – the gospel.* And he wanted them to know that he cared for them. He said,

'We do not preach* about ourselves. We preach about Jesus Christ.* We say that he is Lord.* And we serve you because of him.'[2]

Paul began by asking them to remember how hard he worked for them. Many times he had suffered so that he could help them. But they did not remember this.

Paul was happy that they had done some of the things that he told them to do in his first letter. He had told them to help a certain man to stop doing wicked things. And now, the man had stopped doing those things. But the people had not forgiven him and welcomed him back. So Paul asked them to be kind to him.[3]

Paul had suffered many times when he tried to help the Corinthians. He wanted them to remember this. He was not asking them to pity him. He knew that God was in control. Even when he suffered, God had used him. Paul was the one who taught them about God's good news. God had used Paul to bless* them. If they remembered this, they would not doubt him any more.

Paul was sad that some of them forgot what the good news was about. The good news brought people together. But the false teachers were pulling people away from each other. That was one way that the Corinthians could tell that they were not telling the truth.

Paul also wanted them to remember God's new covenant.*[4] When Jesus came, he brought them a new promise – a new covenant. Paul told them about these new promises when he was with them. This new covenant was a promise to change their hearts. It was a promise to give them a new life. It was a promise that they would live again after this life is over. It was a promise to change them from the inside and make them more and more like Jesus.

These promises helped Paul not to be sad. He knew that he was weak. But God's message was not weak. And God had chosen him to carry that message. He was like a jar made of mud.[5] But the message he carried was a gift of great value from God.

Paul sounds sad in some parts of this letter. He talked about the problems that this life brought. He talked about how our bodies are like a house that gets old and worn out. He told many stories about how much he had suffered. But, in all of these things, Paul did not lose hope.* He knew that God had given him a message of peace.* He knew that God was using this message to bring people back to God. He knew that God would keep his promises.

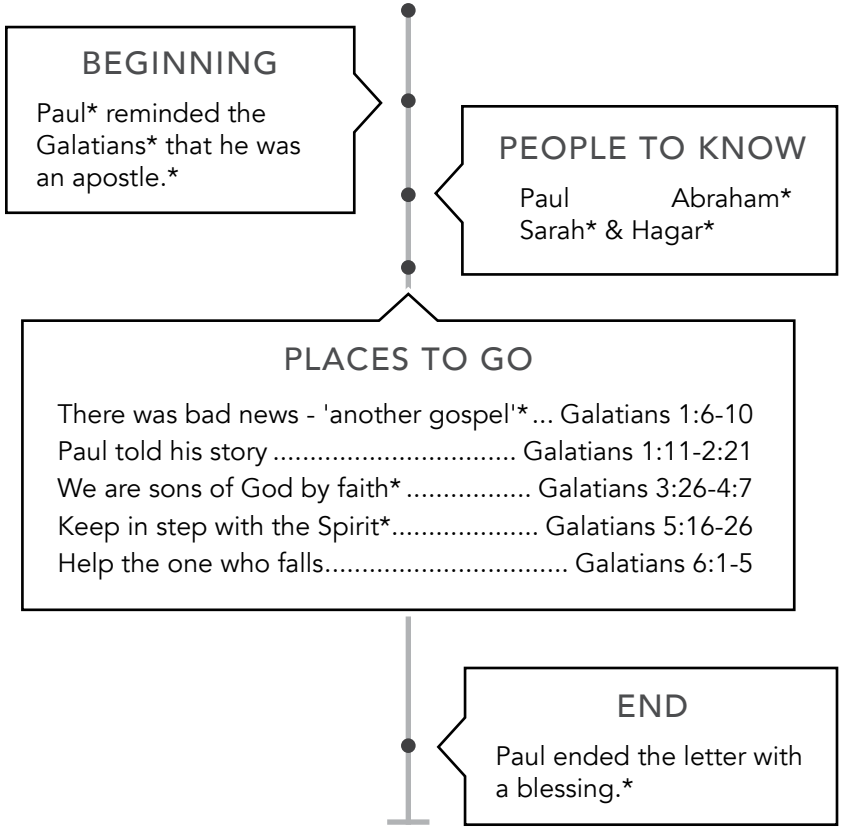
He also had hope because he believed* the Corinthians would listen to him. They would turn away from the false teachers. They would return and follow the way that Paul showed them.

Parts of this letter are hard to understand. Some parts are very personal. Paul told us many things about his own life. He talked about the way he suffered.[6] He told about the way he felt. He talked about what made him sad. He talked about what gave him hope. Paul showed us that it could be difficult to follow God. But God promised to bless those who followed him. Troubles here would only last for a short time. God's blessings would last for ever.

1. 2 Corinthians 11:1-15
2. 2 Corinthians 4:5
3. 2 Corinthians 2:5-11
4. 2 Corinthians 3:1-11
5. 2 Corinthians 4:7-18
6. 2 Corinthians 1:8-11

GALATIANS

THE NEW TESTAMENT | THE LETTERS OF PAUL



CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE

THE STORY OF GALATIANS

Paul wrote this letter to a group of people who followed Jesus. They lived in a place named Galatia.* Paul had visited that area on one of his journeys. He went there to tell the people about Jesus.* When he told them the story, many people believed* in Jesus. Most of the first people who followed Jesus were Jews.* But, now, many people who were not Jews began to follow Jesus. After Paul left Galatia, some false teachers came. They thought that the new Christians* should not only believe on Jesus. They should become Jews as well. So

they tried to teach people these things. They said that people needed to follow the customs of the Jews. They needed to keep the laws that God gave the Jews too. If they did not do these things, God would not accept them. They would not be right with God.

Paul heard about the false teachers. That was why he wrote this letter. He wanted the Galatians to know that these teachers were not from God. What they said was wrong. Most of the letter tells the Galatians why these teachers were wrong.

He began by saying some very hard things. He told them that these new teachers had not helped them know the gospel better. Instead, they had caused them to leave the gospel behind. The people who taught new ideas would be cursed* if they did not change their minds.[1] What they said was not from God.

No one can make himself right with God by obeying the law. God gave the law to the Jews to protect them. He wanted them to listen and obey him. When they did those things, God gave them a land. He protected them from their enemies. But when they did not obey those laws, they lost their land. And their enemies carried them away. The law did not change them inside. It only showed them how to act. But they could not keep all of the rules God gave them. The law could not make them free from their sin.* It could only tell them what was right and what was wrong.

The only way the law could help people is if they kept it all. They must keep the whole law, every moment, and never fail to obey it. When they failed to obey the law, they came under the curse of the law.

That is why the story of Jesus was good news. God sent his son. He was born under the law. He came to rescue the people under the curse of the law.[2] He did this by keeping the law in every way. Then he took the curse of the law upon himself. He died on a cross.* Jesus died to take the punishment for all of the evil* things that we had done. All the people who believe in him are no longer under the curse of the law. They are free from the law. They are free to follow the way of Jesus.

The people who followed Jesus were not under the law that God gave the Jews. But they did have a 'law' to follow. It was the **'law of Christ.'***[3] The Holy Spirit* would lead them to love their neighbour.[4] They were free. They were not slaves to the desires that caused them to sin. They could be people of love, kindness and self-control. Paul called these things the fruit of the Spirit. It was the Holy Spirit that made these good things grow in the people who followed Jesus.[5] This was the new life that Jesus gave them. It was the life that came from Jesus living in them.

All of these things came to the people who lived by faith. They believed in

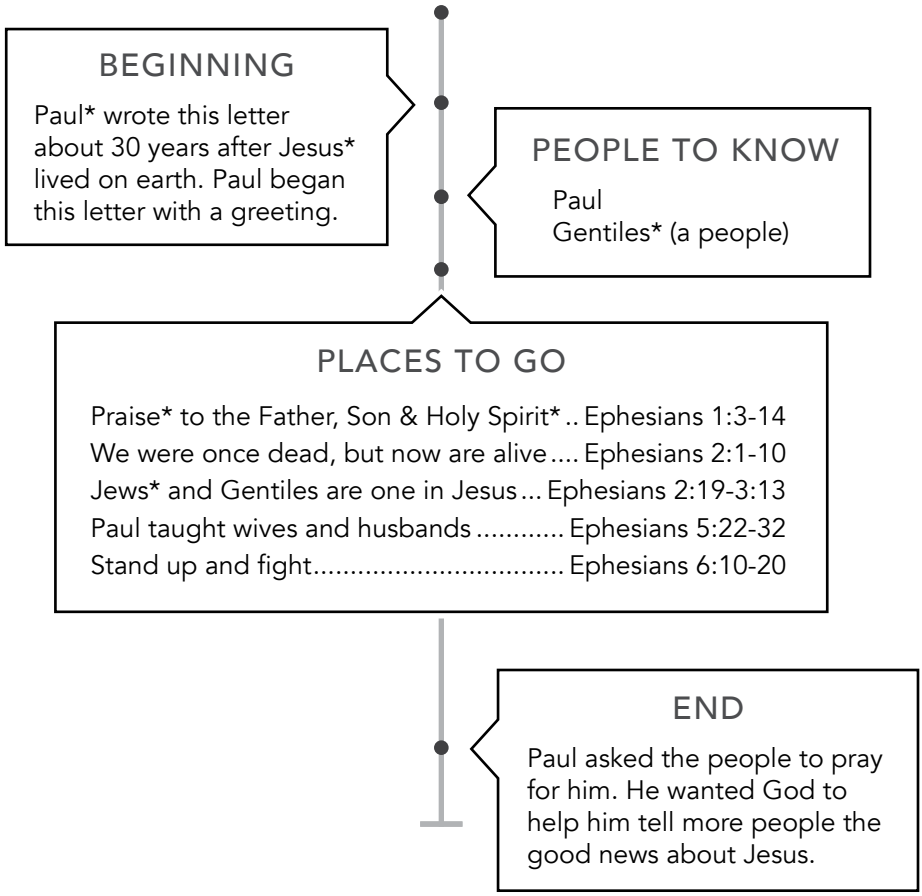
Jesus. They believed that what Jesus said was true. They believed that Jesus would keep all of his promises to them. They believed that what Jesus did for them on the cross was enough.

The Galatians did not have to become Jews to be right with God. When they believed in Jesus, they became part of God's family.[6] They were not slaves to the law. They were sons and daughters of God.

1. Galatians 1:9
2. Galatians 3:13
3. Galatians
4. Galatians 5:13-15
5. Galatians 5:22-24
6. Galatians 4:4-7

EPHESIANS

THE NEW TESTAMENT | THE LETTERS OF PAUL



CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR

THE STORY OF EPHESIANS

Paul wrote this letter to the church* in a place named Ephesus.* Paul once lived in that city. He knew many of the people there. He wrote them this letter to tell them more about how to follow Jesus.

Paul began the letter with a greeting. Then he told the Ephesians to think about the great plan of God. God's plan did not just start when Jesus came. Nor did it start with Adam.* God's plan started before he created* the world.[1] His plan was to choose a people for himself. Then he would give them many

blessings* from heaven.* Paul told the followers of Jesus that all of these blessings belonged to them. Those blessings belonged to them because they belonged to Jesus.[2]

God's plan was so big that it included all of the heavens and the earth. And one day, God would put everything under the rule of Jesus. All people and all things would belong to Jesus. And he would share all things with his people. Those people were the ones that Jesus gave his life for. They were the ones who now followed Jesus. They were the ones who he had called out to be his. They were the church.* Jesus would some day share all of the blessings of heaven with them. He had already begun giving them these blessings. And they could be sure that they would get what God had promised them. They knew this because Jesus had already given them the Holy Spirit.[3]

Paul told them that he prayed for them. He prayed that they would understand how great Jesus was. He asked God to help them see God's great plan. He asked God to help them see that they were part of that plan. God's plan would not fail.

Paul told them many things they needed to know. They needed to remember that God welcomed them because of his grace.* They deserved God's anger because they did not love or obey God. But Jesus gave his life for them. So God gave them new life instead.

Paul said that the plan of God included people who were not Jews. Now the church was made up of all kinds of people. So the people who followed Jesus should be one people. They should be kind to every person. They should welcome people of all nations. They should not act like they are better than anyone else. God welcomed all kinds of people. They should not refuse anyone. The church was made up of people of every nation. The church was made up of people of every skin colour, and of every language. Many people did not know this. So God gave Paul the special task to tell everyone.[4]

Paul taught them these things in the first half of the book. He told them how they should live in the second half of the book. God chose them. He gave them a new purpose. Now, Paul wanted them to live like people who belonged to God. They were God's people. So Paul told them how to follow God's ways.

They must be humble and gentle. They must always tell the truth. They should love people the way Jesus loved them. They must not be greedy or angry. They must not steal from other people or say bad things about other people. Paul wanted them to turn away from their old ways and live the new life that God had given them. This would not always be easy. But Paul told them that God would help them. God had given them other people in the church to encourage them. God gave them his own power to make them strong. God

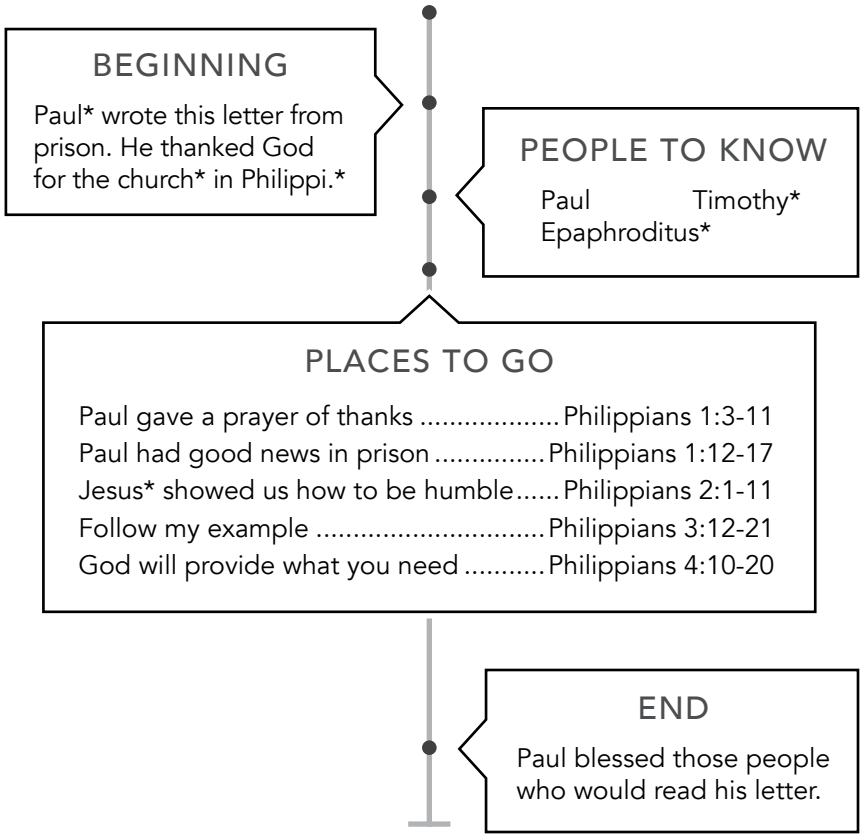
had given teachers[5] to the church to help them know what God says. And God had given them the Holy Spirit. The Spirit would change their hearts to be more like Jesus.

God changed all parts of a person's life when they trusted* him. God would help husbands love their wives. He helped children obey their parents. He helped people work hard and be honest in their work. God gave them what they needed to do the right things. Even if the devil* tried to make them fall, God would protect them. God had given them what they needed to help them stand.[6]

1. Ephesians 1:4
2. Ephesians 1:6-14
3. Ephesians 1:13
4. Ephesians 3:1-7
5. Ephesians 4:11-13
6. Ephesians 6:10-19

PHILIPPIANS

THE NEW TESTAMENT | THE LETTERS OF PAUL



CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE

THE STORY OF PHILLIPPIANS

Paul was in prison when he wrote this letter. But he did not want the people to worry about him. God helped Paul tell the people in prison about Jesus. So he felt joy,[1] even in that difficult place.

Paul wrote this letter to the church* in Philippi. Paul was the one who first told them about Jesus.[2] Many people there loved Jesus. They also loved Paul. Some of them had helped Paul on his journeys. So Paul wrote this letter to say 'thank you.' He wrote this letter to tell them how he was doing.

He also wanted to help them live the kind of life that pleased God. The people had done well since they came to Jesus. But Paul knew that there were tests ahead. Some people outside the church were angry with the people who followed Jesus. There may be times in the future when they would suffer. Paul wanted them to live like Jesus and follow his example[3] no matter what happened.

They should follow Jesus' example in many ways. One way was to be humble. Paul did not want them only to think about themselves. He wanted them to care for each other. But they would not do this if they were not humble. So Paul told them about the ways that Jesus was humble.[4]

Jesus was God. But He came to be a servant. He was willing to die to rescue them. After he did this, God gave Jesus a place of great honour. So they should serve people too. They should be careful not to complain or fight with each other. But they should live in a way that would help people see the right way.[5]

Jesus lived a humble life. But Paul knew other men who were humble too. Timothy was humble. He served people and served God. He was a good example. Paul was a good example too.

Paul wanted the people to follow Jesus in every way. He warned them not to follow proud people. Some proud men had come to Philippi. They were proud of the things that they knew. They were proud of things that they had done for Jesus. Paul said that he could be proud too. But he would not be proud about the things that he did. These things did not make him right with God. He would only thank God for what Jesus did for him. God was pleased with Paul because he had faith* in Jesus.

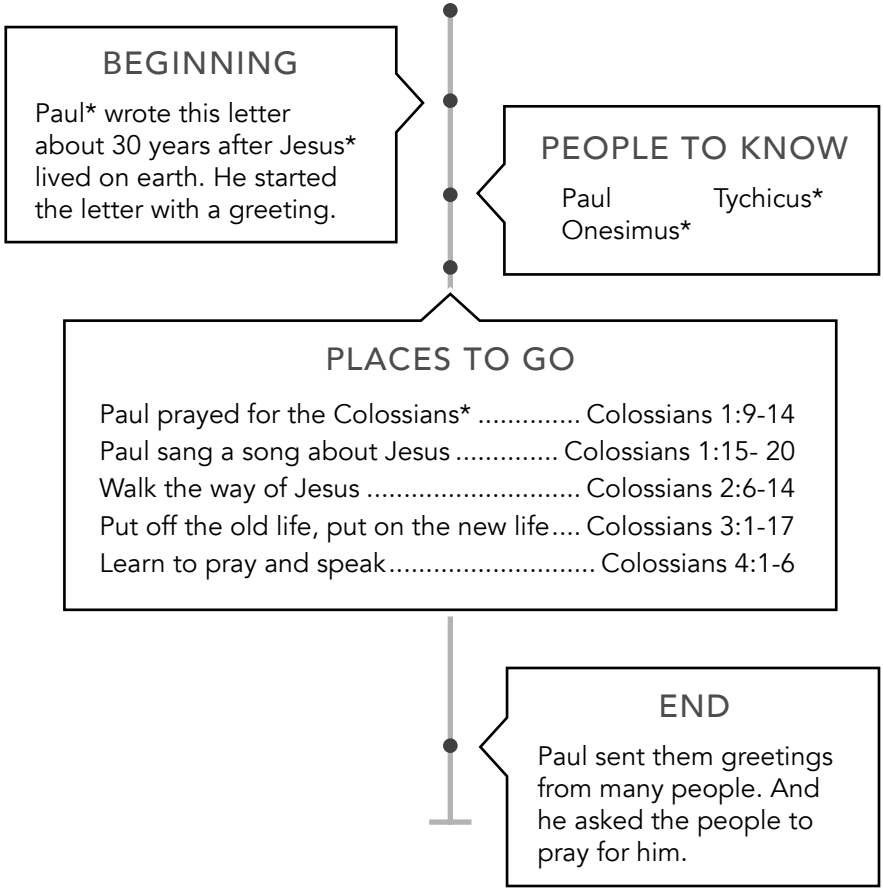
Paul was not a perfect man. But he knew Jesus was making him a better man. And he wanted the people in Philippi to follow Jesus. Paul wanted to know Jesus better. He wanted them to know Jesus better too. And Paul wanted them to feel joy. God gave this joy to the people who knew him. They knew that some day, God would make them perfect. They would be just like God wanted them to be.

Until that time, they should do the right things. They should think about the best things.[6] They should always trust* in Jesus. Sometimes, they may have problems. They might even suffer because they believed* in Jesus. But God would always be with them. He would always give them what they needed.

1. See Philippians 1:4, 25; 2:2, 29; 4:1
2. Acts 16:12-40
3. Philippians 3:17
4. Philippians 2:1-11
5. Philippians 2:12-18
6. Philippians 4:8-9

COLOSSIANS

THE NEW TESTAMENT | THE LETTERS OF PAUL



CHAPTER FIFTY-SIX

THE STORY OF COLOSSIANS

This book is a letter. Paul wrote 13 letters that are part of the Bible.* He wrote this letter to the church* in Colossae.* Paul never visited that city. But he prayed for the people there many times.[1]

Many people in Colossae believed* in Jesus. But some people said things about Jesus that were not true. Paul did not want the people to believe the false teachers. So he wrote this letter to help them.

He wanted the people to remember the truth about Jesus. So he told them

many things about Jesus. Jesus is God.[2] We see God when we see Jesus. He made all things. He became a man and died on a cross.* God made Jesus alive again. And Jesus did this to bring people back to God. He did this for all kinds of people. He did this for both Jews* and people who were not Jews too.

Jesus is the great one. No one has more power than Jesus. No one is as wise as he is. Paul did not want people to forget that.

But some people at Colossae said other things about Jesus. They were not sure if Jesus was a man at all. They were not sure that Jesus had a real body. And some of them said that what Jesus did on the cross was not enough to make people right with God. They wanted people to go back and follow the laws of Moses.* They wanted people to eat some things and not eat other things. They said that this would help them be right with God.

Paul did not want people to believe these bad teachers.[3] He wanted the people to follow Jesus. Jesus was the only one who could make people right with God. He had the power to rescue people from their sin.* He had the power to change people's hearts. Laws and rules could not change people's hearts. Traditions could not make people friends with God.

Paul said that people who trusted* in Jesus had a new life. But what did this new life look like? The last part of the letter answers that question.

People who had this new life from God turned away from the sin of their old life. God made them to be kind and humble. They learned to forgive* people. They learned to live in peace* with God and other people. They were grateful and patient. They acted in wise ways. They cared for their families. They honoured God when they worked.

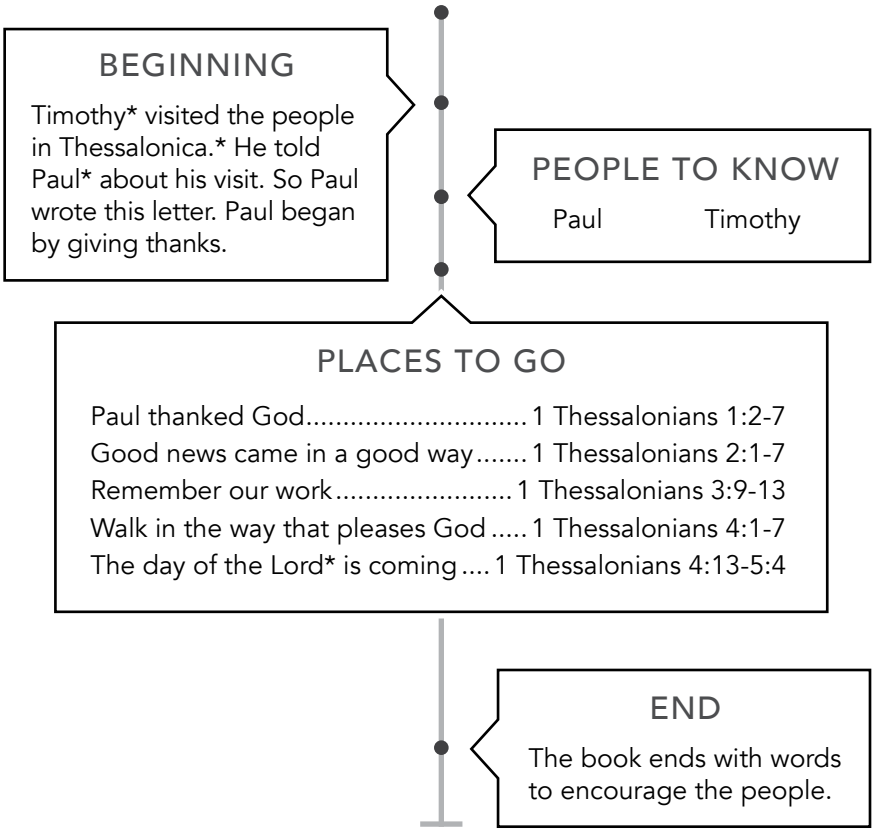
Paul wanted the people in Colossae to live in this new way. They belonged to Christ* now. They should think about the things in heaven.*[4] They should not act in evil* ways.[5] But they should serve God and love other people.[6]

Paul greeted many people at the end of the letter. He greeted both Mark*[7] and Luke.*[8] Those two men helped write the story of Jesus in the books called the gospels.*

1. Colossians 1:3-8
2. Colossians 1:15-17
3. Colossians 2:16-23
4. Colossians 3:2-4
5. Colossians 3:5-11
6. Colossians 3:12-14
7. Colossians 4:10
8. Colossians 4:14

1 THESSALONIANS

THE NEW TESTAMENT | THE LETTERS OF PAUL



CHAPTER FIFTY-SEVEN

THE STORY OF 1 THESSALONIANS

Paul wrote to the people in Thessalonica to encourage them. He had not seen them in many years. The last time he was there, some people wanted to hurt him. So Paul had to leave very fast. Those bad men did not want him to talk about Jesus.* But many people in that place believed* the things that Paul said. They began to follow Jesus. But, after Paul left, some people made trouble for the people there. So Paul wrote them this letter to help them.

First, Paul wanted them to know that he loved them. He was happy that

they were following Jesus so well. They were doing what Paul had told them. They had turned away from false gods. They showed their faith* and hope* and love by the way they acted.[1] They also had joy, even when people tried to hurt them. That was a good example for other people to follow.

Paul also told them not to forget the way he acted when he was with them. He worked hard. He did what was holy* and right. He was not a problem to them. He cared for them like a father cares for his children.[2] Everyone who spoke for God should act this way.

Paul also talked about the time when Jesus would return. The people knew that Jesus would return. They were very happy about that. But they had questions. They did not know what would happen to the people who were dead. So Paul answered those questions in the last part of the letter. Jesus would come down from heaven.* He would return when they did not expect him.[3] He would gather all of the people who believed in him. He would gather the people who were alive. And he would gather the people who were already dead. God would make them alive again. Then, all of his people would be together again.[4] And they would all be with the Lord.

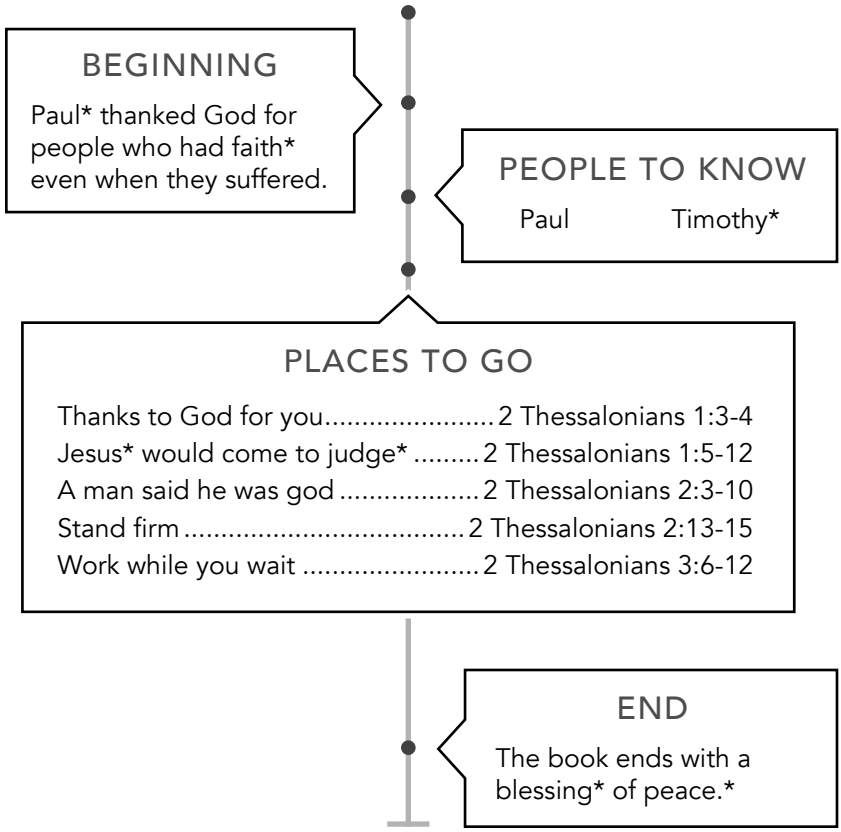
Paul wanted them to be patient. They should work hard and take care of their families. They should do good to one another. Help the weak. Live in peace* with each other. Pray all of the time about all kinds of things. Give thanks. And do not do things that are evil.* The people who followed Jesus must never forget that he was going to return. They should wait for him. They should watch for him and live good lives while they wait.

The Christians in Thessalonica did not have an easy life. People in the city did not want them to follow Jesus. So they were cruel to them. Paul told them that they should not be surprised. This was a common thing.[5] He told them that they could expect to suffer for Jesus. After all, the prophets* suffered. And Jesus suffered too. But he encouraged them to be strong in spite of their troubles. God was watching. Some day, he would return and comfort them. He would also judge* those who had been causing them trouble.

1. 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10
2. 1 Thessalonians 2:9-12
3. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3
4. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17
5. 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 3:1-5

2 THESSALONIANS

THE NEW TESTAMENT | THE LETTERS OF PAUL



CHAPTER FIFTY-EIGHT

THE STORY OF 2 THESSALONIANS

Paul wrote this letter to the people at Thessalonica. He wrote it not long after he wrote the first one. He had told many of the churches* about the people there. He told them how they loved each other and had a strong faith. This was not easy, because they suffered many hard things. Some people in that place were not kind to the Christians.* They did many cruel things to them. But the people who followed Jesus did not give up. The church grew stronger and stronger.

Paul told the Thessalonians that God would not forget them. He would punish the people who made them suffer. The people had some questions about the day that Jesus would return. Some people said that Jesus had already come back to earth. But Paul told them that was not true. Before Jesus returned, a Wicked One would come first. This Wicked One would oppose Jesus and the people who followed him. But God would take care of his own people. So the people who trusted* God should not worry. Jesus would return at a time in the future.

When Jesus returned, he would come from heaven* with his angels.* He would bring peace* to the people who trusted him. But he would punish the people who did not trust him. And he would destroy the people who opposed him. So Christians should live good lives while they wait for Jesus to return. God chose them to be his people.[1] So they should stand firm.[2] They should always remember what Paul told them.

Paul also wanted the people there to pray for him. He wanted to see many more people believe,* just as they did. So he asked them:

> **'Brothers and sisters, pray for us. Pray that the Lord's* message will spread quickly. Pray that other people will honour it just as you did. And pray that we will be saved from wicked and evil* people. Not everyone is a believer.'*[3]**

Paul also told them to work hard while they waited. They must not be lazy. They should not take food from other people. But each man should provide the food his family needs.

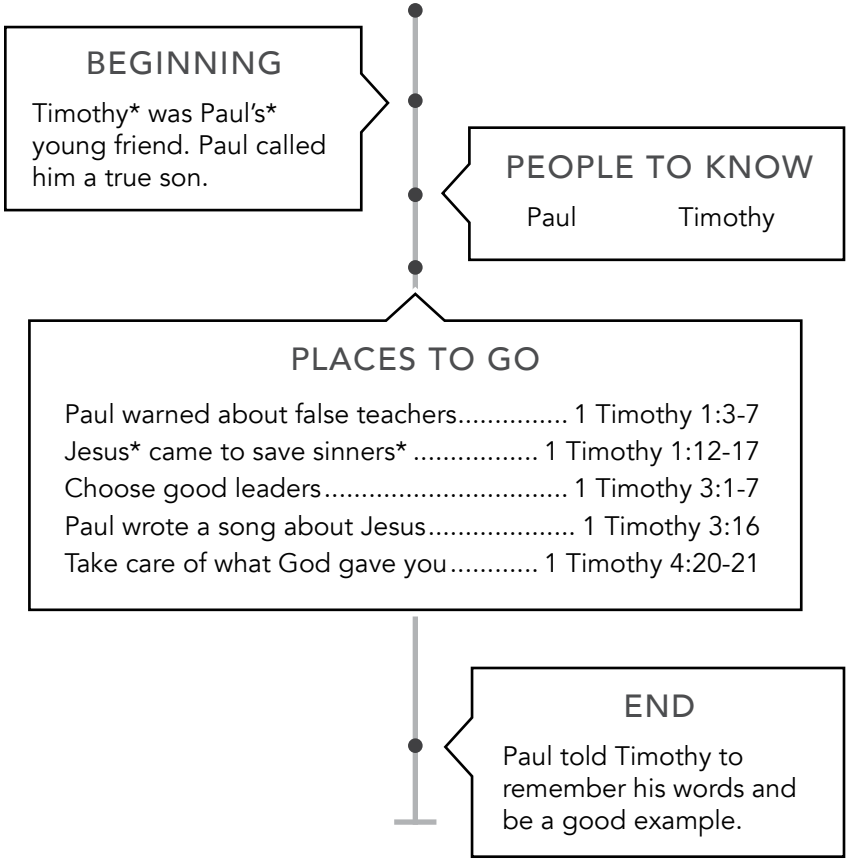
> **'Anyone who will not work will not eat.'[4]**

In both of his letters to them, Paul reminded them how hard he worked when he was with them.[5] He did not ask for their money. He worked so that he would not be a trouble to them. So he wanted them to be hard workers too.

1. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14
2. 2 Thessalonians 2:15
3. 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2
4. 2 Thessalonians 3:10
5. 1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:8

1 TIMOTHY

THE NEW TESTAMENT | THE LETTERS OF PAUL



CHAPTER FIFTY-NINE

THE STORY OF 1 TIMOTHY

Paul wrote this letter to his friend Timothy. Timothy was a young man. He had helped Paul tell people about Jesus. Now he was going to do some difficult work. So Paul wrote this letter to help him.

Paul wrote two more letters like this one. He wrote one more to Timothy. And one to a young man named Titus. In these letters, Paul helped these young men know how to lead the churches* where God had put them. Timothy was a leader in the church at Ephesus.*

Paul said many things in this letter about how to do good work for God. Teach the things that are true. Live in a way that shows people that the truth is good. Paul used his own life as an example. Once he believed* wrong things and acted in bad ways. But God showed him the right way and changed his way of life.[1]

Paul also warned Timothy about many things. Some people among them taught things about God that were not true. Some of these teachers lived in ways that did not honour God. They were proud men, but they had nothing good to say.[2] They taught bad things and lived bad lives. So, Paul told Timothy what to do and what to say to these false teachers.

Paul wanted the church to be wise in the ways that they worshiped.* He said that they must pray at all times. They must not quarrel.[3] They should live humble lives and do good. Both the men and the women were important. They all must listen and learn in the right ways. The men must care for their families and be wise in the way they led them.[4]

Timothy must be careful to teach only what is true. And he must choose good men to lead the church. So Paul gave Timothy a list of things to look for in a leader.

> **'He must be free from blame. He must be faithful* to his wife. In anything he does, he must not go too far. He must control himself. He must welcome people into his home. He must be able to teach. He must not get drunk. He must not be controlling. He must be gentle. He must not be a person who likes to argue. He must not love money.'[5]**

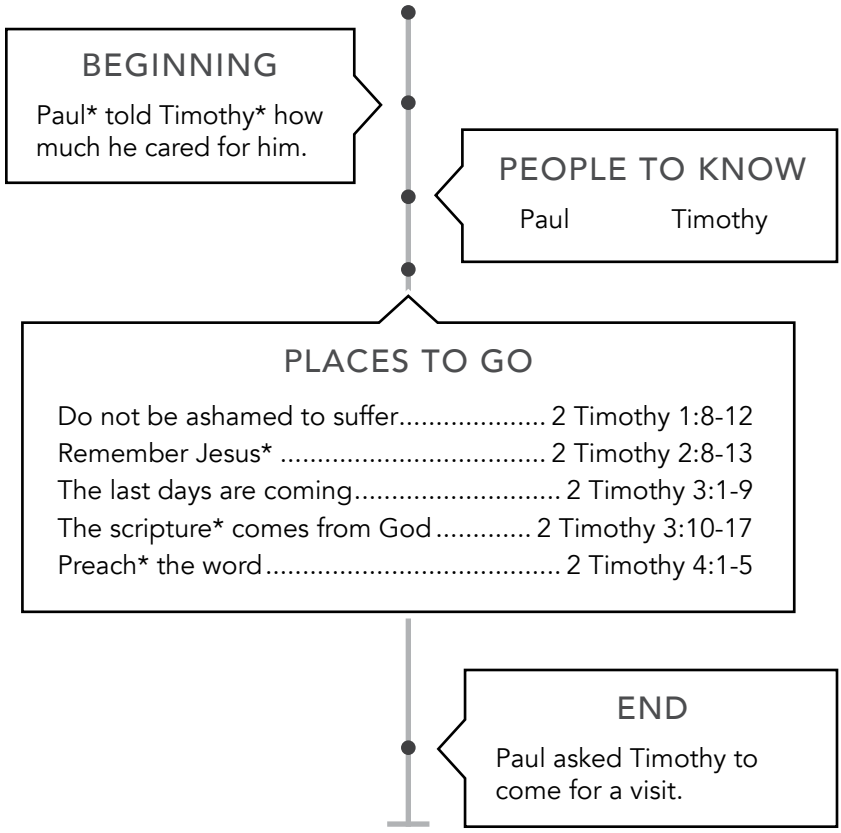
They must be men who lived in a way that showed that they followed Jesus. These kind of men could lead the church well.

Timothy must tell the church to honour these new leaders. God wanted these men to take care of the church. And this could be a very hard job. Not all of the people would stay in the church. Some would leave and follow false teachers. Some would believe lies. But Timothy and the men he chose must be careful of how they lived and what they said. They must be examples of how to live and what to believe. Paul wrote this letter to help them do that.[6]

1. 1 Timothy 1:16
2. 1 Timothy 1:6
3. 1 Timothy 2:10
4. 1 Timothy 2:13
5. 1 Timothy 3:2-3
6. 1 Timothy 4:12-16

2 TIMOTHY

THE NEW TESTAMENT | THE LETTERS OF PAUL



CHAPTER SIXTY

THE STORY OF 2 TIMOTHY

This is the second letter that Paul wrote to Timothy. It may be the last letter Paul wrote. Paul was in prison. He knew he was going to die soon. So he wrote to his friend to say goodbye. And he wrote to encourage him to be strong. He said that a man of God must be like a soldier, like a farmer, and like a runner. He must not be afraid. He must be patient. He must keep on going.

Timothy was a leader in the churches* in Asia. There were already many false teachers in the world. These men and women were causing people to be

confused. They were leading them away from the truth. And things would get worse before they got better. So Paul told Timothy to avoid foolish arguments. He must be patient. He must study to be a good teacher. He must teach them the truths that he learned from the scriptures.* He must remember the example that Paul showed him. If he did these things, God would reward him for his work.

There were many problems among God's people in those days. False teachers were more and more bold. They taught things that were not true. They were jealous. They were selfish. So Paul wrote to encourage Timothy. He must not be uneasy. He must trust* God's Spirit.* God's Spirit would not make him weak and afraid.[1] God had given him the gifts he needed. And God's Spirit would give him power and love and help Timothy control himself.

Timothy must be loyal to God.[2] He must be true to the good news God gave him. This 'gospel'* was God's plan **'before the beginning of time'.**[3] There would always be people who opposed it. There would always be people who tried to change it. So Timothy needed to be careful to teach it just the way that he had learned from Paul.

This would not be easy. Paul was in prison because of the gospel. Many of his friends left him.[4] So he warned Timothy to bear the hard things that may come.

It was the good news about Jesus that would help him. God had kept his promises. Jesus was the Messiah.*[5] He had risen from the dead. He had chosen a people.[6] And he would save them by his gospel. Timothy must remember these things.

Timothy must remind people in the church of the teachings of God's Word. He should study it well. He must be able to answer questions when people asked them. When people opposed him, he must 'be gentle when he teaches' them.

> **'Maybe God will give a change of heart to those who are against you. That will lead them to know the truth.'**[7]

But some people would refuse to learn. Paul said that there would be more and more people like this as the Lord's return approached. They would not love other people. They would not forgive* people. They would tell lies about people. They would hate what was good. They would turn against their friends. They would think they were better than other people. They would love what pleased them instead of loving God. Paul told Timothy to have nothing to do with these people.

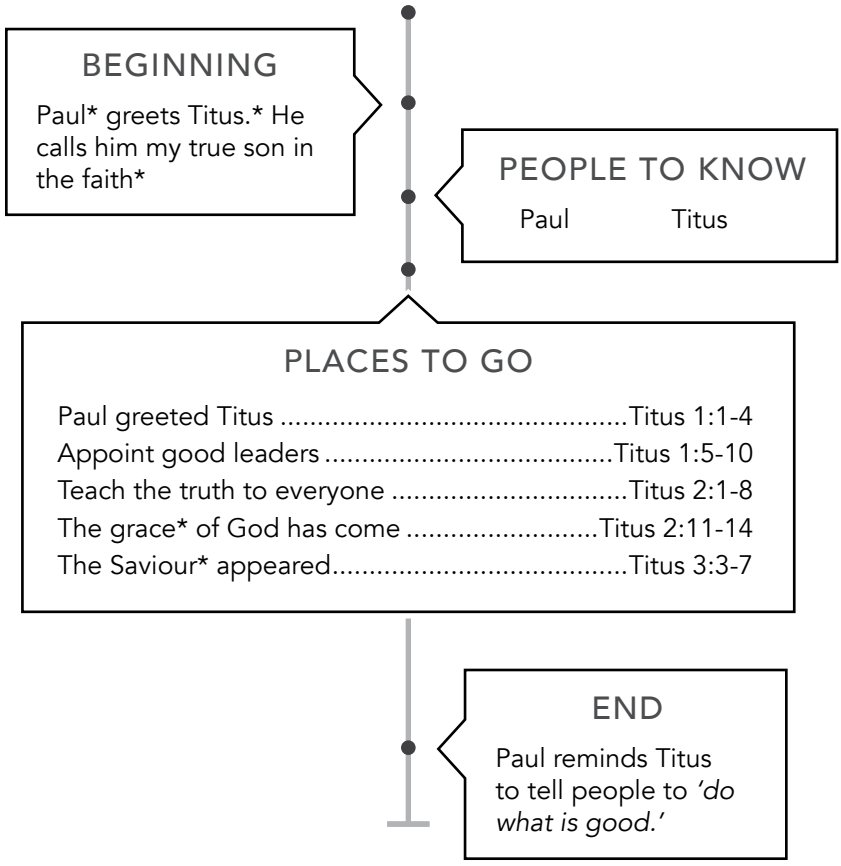
But Timothy must follow the words Paul taught him. He must always continue to hold on to them. He must 'preach the Word' at all times.[8] He must

be patient. He must teach carefully. People may leave him and follow teachers who said what they wanted to hear. But Timothy must never desert the scriptures. He must be prepared to do every good work.[9]

1. 2 Timothy 1:7
2. 2 Timothy 2:1-2
3. 2 Timothy 1:9
4. 2 Timothy 1:15-18
5. 2 Timothy 2:8
6. 2 Timothy 2:10
7. 2 Timothy 2:25
8. 2 Timothy 4:2
9. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

TITUS

THE NEW TESTAMENT | THE LETTERS OF PAUL



CHAPTER SIXTY-ONE

THE STORY OF TITUS

Paul wrote this letter to his friend named Titus. Titus was Paul's helper. He had helped Paul tell people the good news about Jesus.* Now he lived on an island named Crete.* Many people in Crete believed* the message about Jesus. But there were not enough leaders to help them grow.

Paul wrote this letter to tell Titus what to do to make the church* strong. He told him many of the same things that he told Timothy.* Paul told Titus to appoint leaders in each church. But he must be careful. They must be good

men. They must not have a bad temper or be greedy. They must be faithful* to God and to the truth about Jesus.[1]

But all of the people in Crete were not following Jesus. Some teachers were not telling the truth. These false teachers were a problem. So Paul told Titus to make them stop.

Paul wanted Titus to help people to have hope.* That hope came when people remembered that Jesus would return. When he did return, he would make everything right again. Paul also wanted them to remember what God had already done for them. God had rescued them. He was teaching them how to live good lives. All of these blessings* belonged to them. God gave them these gifts because he was a God of grace.

When people believed these things, it helped them to have hope. It also helped them to live in ways that pleased God. They did good works. They made it easy for people to know how to follow Jesus.

Titus must teach everyone in the church. He must teach older men and young men. He must teach older women and they must teach the young women. Then all of the people would be careful to do what was good.[2]

Some parts of the letter asked Titus to do difficult things. When false teachers made trouble, Titus must stop them.

> **He must 'warn anyone who tries to get people to separate into their own little groups. Warn him more than once. After that, have nothing to do with him.'[3]**

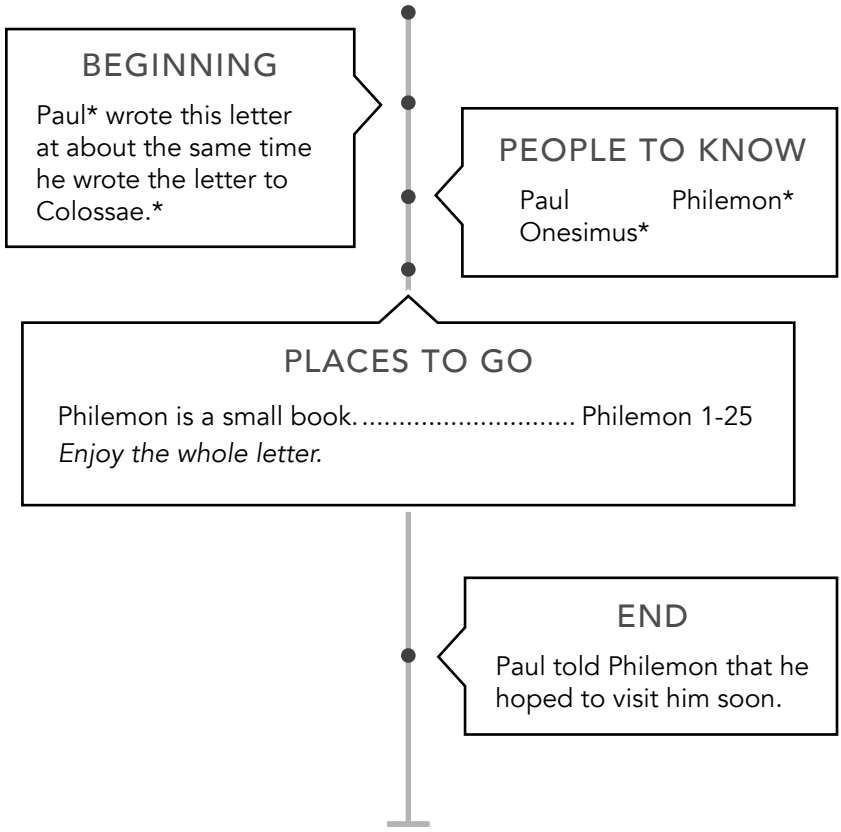
Paul told Titus these things to help him as he helped the church. He wanted Titus to remember the good things God had done. He was our great God, the one who saved us. He chose us to be his own. When God's people remembered these things, they would want to live good lives.[4]

> **'God's grace has now appeared. By his grace, God offers to save all people. His grace teaches us to say no to godless* ways and sinful* desires. We must control ourselves. We must do what is right. We must lead good lives in today's world. That's how we should live as we wait for the blessed* hope God has given us. We are waiting for Jesus Christ to appear in his glory.* He is our great God and Saviour.'[5]**

1. Titus 1:5-9
2. Titus 3:8
3. Titus 3:10
4. Titus 2:12-14
5. Titus 2:11-13

PHILEMON

THE NEW TESTAMENT | THE LETTERS OF PAUL



CHAPTER SIXTY-TWO

THE STORY OF PHILEMON

Paul wrote this letter to a man named Philemon. He lived in a place called Colossae. Philemon was a very good man. He loved God's people. He shared good things with people who needed them.[1] His good life made Paul feel joy when he remembered Philemon. But Paul wrote this letter to talk about a slave. The slave's name was Onesimus. He once worked for Philemon. But Onesimus ran away. Then, he met Paul when Paul was in prison. When Onesimus heard the message about Jesus,* he believed.* Now he was a Christian.*

But he was still a slave who had run away from his owner.

So Paul wrote this letter. He asked the slave owner to let the slave come back. But Paul did not want Philemon to punish Onesimus. He wanted him to welcome this man back like he was his brother. Paul even promised to pay the debt Onesimus owed.[2]

Paul had been kind to the slave owner. Now he asked the slave owner to be kind to the slave. This letter helps us understand how the good news changes people. God made a way that people who were far away from him could now be close to him. And now people who were far away from each other could come back together too. Christian masters must respect their servants. Christian servants must respect their masters. Both servants and masters are brothers in the Lord.*

1. Philemon 5 2. Philemon 17

THE GENERAL LETTERS

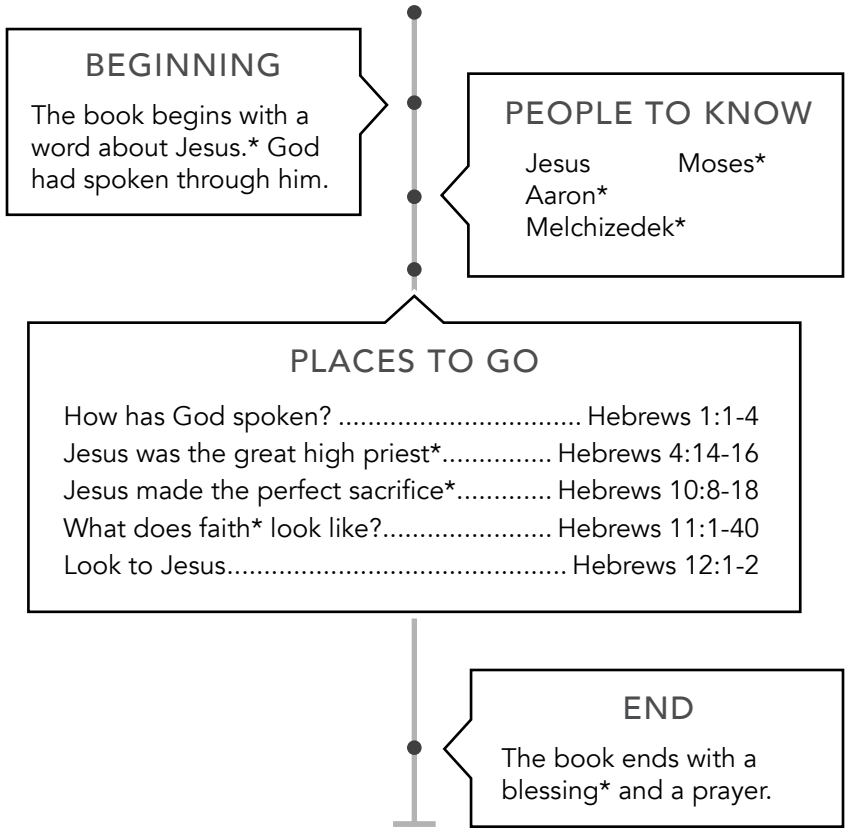
This is part of 'the epistles'.* The word epistles means 'letters'. The leaders of the new church* wrote these letters. Peter,* James,* and John* wrote most of the general letters. These letters tell the readers how to live as God's people. The letters remind them that God will keep his promises.

THE GENERAL LETTERS

Hebrews	1 John
James	2 John
1 Peter	3 John
2 Peter	Jude

HEBREWS

THE NEW TESTAMENT | THE GENERAL LETTERS



CHAPTER SIXTY-THREE

THE STORY OF HEBREWS

This book is the first of the books called the 'general letters'. Paul* wrote all of the letters from Romans to Philemon. Five other men wrote the last eight letters. We do not know who wrote the book of Hebrews. But we do know that the writer knew many things about the scriptures.* We also know that he loved Jesus. Hebrews is a book about Jesus. It says many things about Jesus. But it says one thing above all. Jesus is better.

There are many stories in Hebrews from the books that Moses wrote. All of the stories tell us more about Jesus. Hebrews tells us that Jesus brought a new promise from God. He brought a new covenant.* Jesus was the eternal* Son of God.* He was the One who came to make peace* between all people and God. He was the only one who could do that.

Hebrews tells us many other stories from the Old Testament.* If we did not know those stories, we would not know how great Jesus was. Those stories show us many things about God and what Jesus came to do. We could not know these things if we did not know those Old Testament stories.

Hebrews also tells us that Jesus was better than Moses. He was better than the prophets.* He was better than the priests in the Old Testament. He made a better promise. He would give his people a better rest.

Jesus came to speak for God. But he was better than all of the prophets who came before him. He was the exact image of God. He did not just speak for God. He was God speaking.

Jesus was not an angel.* He was different from the angels. He was better than the angels. He was the son of God. He made all things. And God put everything under his control.

Moses and Joshua* were great leaders. They brought people to a new land. And the people of God found rest there. But Jesus was a better leader than Moses and Joshua. He led God's people to a better rest.

Jesus also came to be our priest. But he was not like the priests from Aaron's family. God chose Jesus, God's own son, to be the great high priest. He was the perfect priest. He understood us. He was **'a high priest who can feel it when we are weak and hurting.'** He was a **'high priest who has been tempted in every way, just as we are. But he did not sin.'***[1]

Jesus acted as the perfect priest when he died on the cross.* On the cross, he offered the perfect sacrifice.*

> **'But Jesus gave one sacrifice for the sins of the people. He gave it once and for all time. He did it by offering himself.'**[2]

Now those people who believed* on Jesus had great hope.* They were the people of God's new covenant. God would give them new desires. He would forgive* their evil* ways. He would not hold their sins against them.

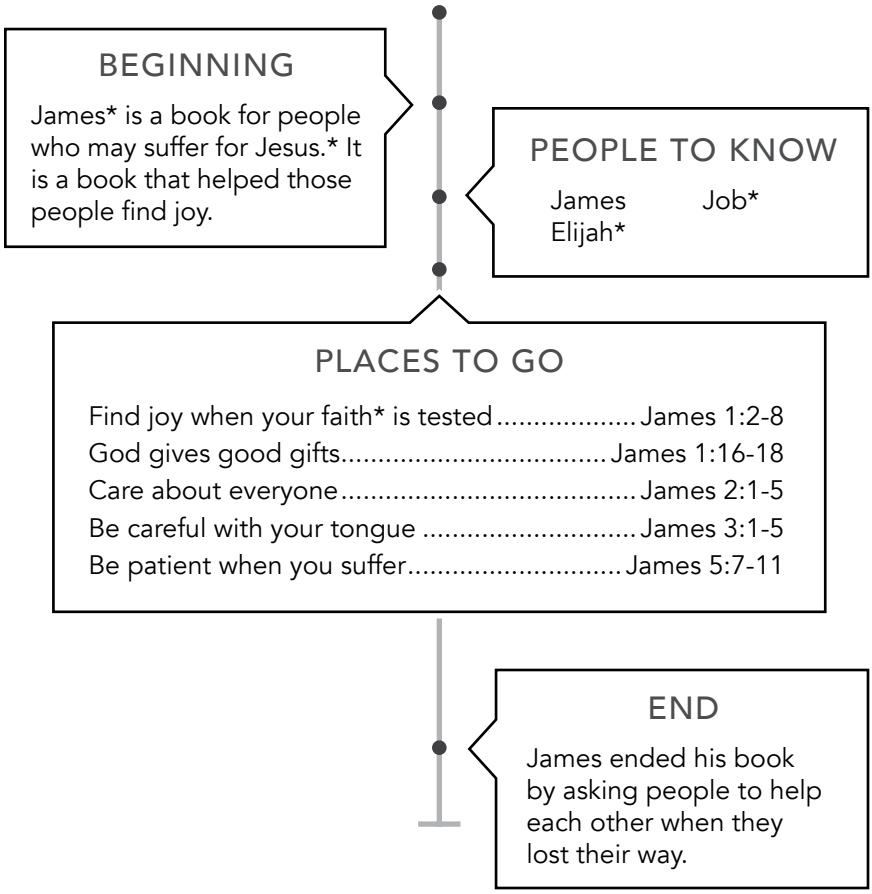
The last part of Hebrews is filled with instructions for those who believed in Jesus. They must live their lives with confidence and hope. They could love each other. They could be loyal to their families. They should care for people who suffer. And when they suffered, they did not need to be sad. God kept his promises to the people in the Old Testament days. He would keep his promises

to them too. They could show faith in God just like Abraham* and Moses did.

1. Hebrews 4:15 2. Hebrews 7:27

JAMES

THE NEW TESTAMENT | THE GENERAL LETTERS



CHAPTER SIXTY-FOUR

THE STORY OF JAMES

The book of James is a letter. In that way, it is just like the other letters. But James is also different. In some ways, James is like the wisdom books in the Old Testament.* It is filled with wise sayings much like the books of Proverbs or Ecclesiastes.

James was a leader in the early church.* He was also one of the brothers of Jesus. He wanted people to follow Jesus. And he wanted them to live well as they followed him. So James wrote about many different things. But he talked

most about two things. He talked about[1] suffering. And he talked about how to obey the Scriptures.*[2] The book of Hebrews ends with those two lessons. James wrote his whole letter about them.

James said many things about how to become wise. You begin by asking God to make you wise. God gives wisdom. He helps people know how to pass the test when they suffer. The tests make us stronger[3] when we trust* God to help us. God makes our faith stronger when we trust him and do not doubt.

God's people may suffer. They may be tested by problems. But God uses the tests. He could make people strong. God used the tests as a tool to make people wise. But God's wisdom was not the same as man's wisdom. God's wisdom did not make people proud. God gave wisdom that brings peace.*

When God gave us wisdom, it taught us how to live. God's wisdom helped us to be humble. It showed us that we must not care about rich people more than we care about poor people. James wanted people to remember the words of Jesus,

'love your neighbour as yourself.'[4]

God's wisdom also helped people do good work. They listened to God's words. And they did not forget what God said. They obeyed the things that God told them to do. They served God and served other people too. The person who was wise said 'yes' to God's words.

James also said that wise people controlled their tongue. The tongue was a part of the body that was hard to control. But God helped his people tame their tongue. Wise people used wise words. Wise people spoke words that blessed* God. They did not curse* people. They did not fight and argue with each other. They wanted to have the things that God wanted them to have.

James wrote to people who would suffer because they believed* in Jesus. So he wrote to give them hope.* He told them to be patient. The Lord* was coming. The rich and the proud may succeed now. But God would judge* the rich and the proud when he returned. And he would give his people good things. So he told them to be patient – just like Job was patient. And they must believe God and pray – just like Elijah did.

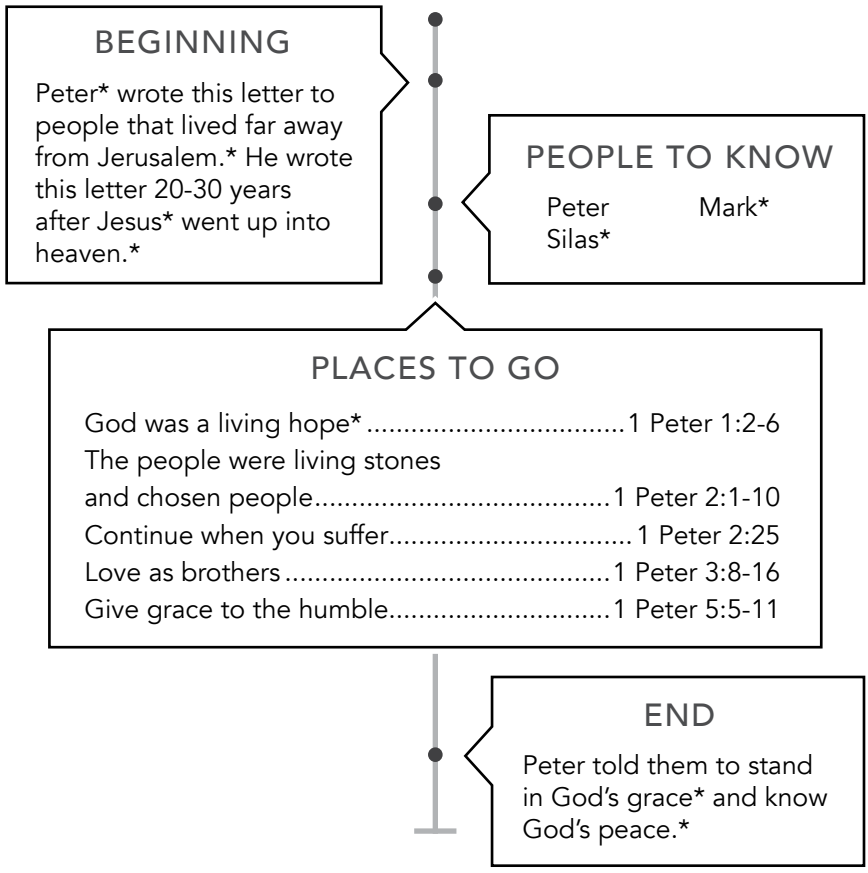
Wise people helped each other find the way. When people followed the wrong way, wise people brought them back to the right way.

If you want to live well and be wise, James is filled with words that will help you.

1. James 1:2-18
2. James 1:19-27
3. James 1:4; See Hebrews 12:5-6
4. James 2:8

1 PETER

THE NEW TESTAMENT | THE GENERAL LETTERS



CHAPTER SIXTY-FIVE

THE STORY OF 1 PETER

Peter is the author of the letter. He was one of the men that Jesus chose. He became a leader in the church* at Jerusalem. He wrote this letter to help Christians* who were having problems. Many people did not like these new Christians. They did not want anyone to follow Jesus. These people made trouble for them. So, many of the new Christians left their homes and moved to other places. They felt like strangers in a strange land. They were far away from home. And people were still not kind to them.

Peter wrote this letter to encourage them.

He wanted them to remember that God chose them to be his people. And Jesus would return to earth to set up his kingdom.* They may suffer now for a short time. But they would never suffer again when Jesus returned. That was why they could have hope. Even the prophets* in the Old Testament* talked about this hope. So the Christians could trust* God to take care of them. He sent Jesus to rescue them. He made Jesus come alive again after he died. He brought him out of the grave. God did this for them. He had great power. Nothing could make him break his promise.

Now they should live in a way that pleased God. They should be a holy* people. They must stop doing evil* things. They must not lie. They must stop wanting what other people had. They must not speak against each other. But they should desire to listen to God's words and obey them.

If they did, people would see how they lived. And when they saw how they lived, they would want to know why. When the people asked them questions, they must be ready to answer them. Then they could tell them about Jesus.

When they suffered, they must remember that Jesus suffered too. He took the punishment for the evil things that they did. That is how he made them his people. When Jesus suffered, many people shouted at him and said angry words. But Jesus did not shout back at them. He did not say bad things would happen to them. He trusted God. He knew that God always judged* fairly. That was the way they should act when they suffered too.

Peter did not want them to forget who they were. They were priests.*[1] They were God's royal people. Together, they were the place where God lived. They were God's holy nation. They were the people who trusted God's word. God's word gave them new life. God's word was true then and for ever.[2]

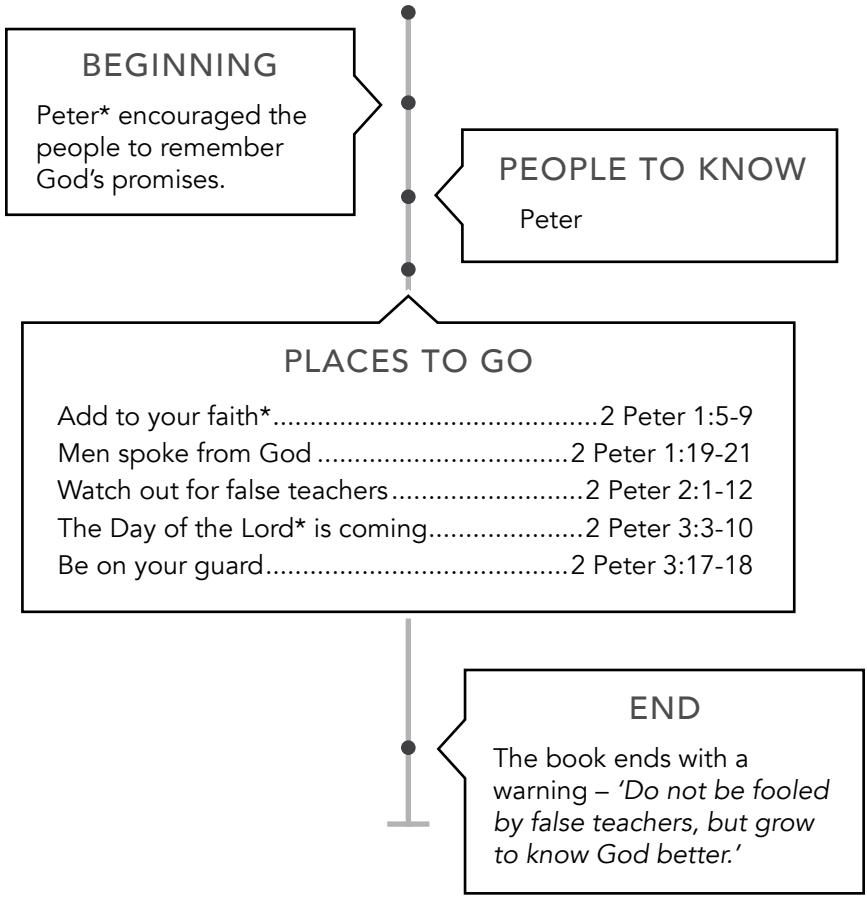
So they should follow the kind of life Jesus lived. They should love one another. They should show respect for their husbands or wives. Show proper respect to everyone. Love God's people. Have respect for God. Honour the king.

Peter wanted them to live good lives. When they did, people that did not know Jesus would want to know him. The church leaders were to care for the people who were in the church. They were to be examples to the people. The young men were to respect the older men. They were to listen to them. They were to learn from them. God wanted everyone to be humble and control themselves. Trust God for power and strength. He would provide it.

1. 1 Peter 2:5 2. 1 Peter 1:23

2 PETER

THE NEW TESTAMENT | THE GENERAL LETTERS



CHAPTER SIXTY-SIX

THE STORY OF 2 PETER

Peter was a leader in the early church.* He was one of the men that Jesus* asked to follow him. He spent three years listening to what Jesus said. He was the man who spoke for God to the people just after the church began. But some men had come into the church and started to teach many false things. Peter did not like this. He did not want people to listen to these men. So Peter wrote this letter.

Peter wanted the new Christians* to grow. In order to grow, they needed

to know more about Jesus and to know Jesus better. But that was just the beginning. He wanted them to add to their faith. What they knew about Jesus would change the way they lived. They must grow in faith and knowledge. This knowledge would help them to control their actions and live the way Jesus lived. People who followed Jesus could do these good things. God helped them. God gave them the power to overcome evil* and do good.

Peter knew that some evil teachers had come into the church. They were teaching false things. And they were acting in bad ways. Peter warned the people not to listen to them. He told them that they must not live like these evil men lived. They were selfish. They were greedy. They followed their own desires and not the ways of Jesus. People should not listen to what these men said. God would punish these men. And God would punish those who listened to their words and did what they did. Instead, they should listen to the words of the apostles.* Peter knew Jesus. He saw the glory* of Jesus when he was with Jesus on a mountain. He heard God's voice.

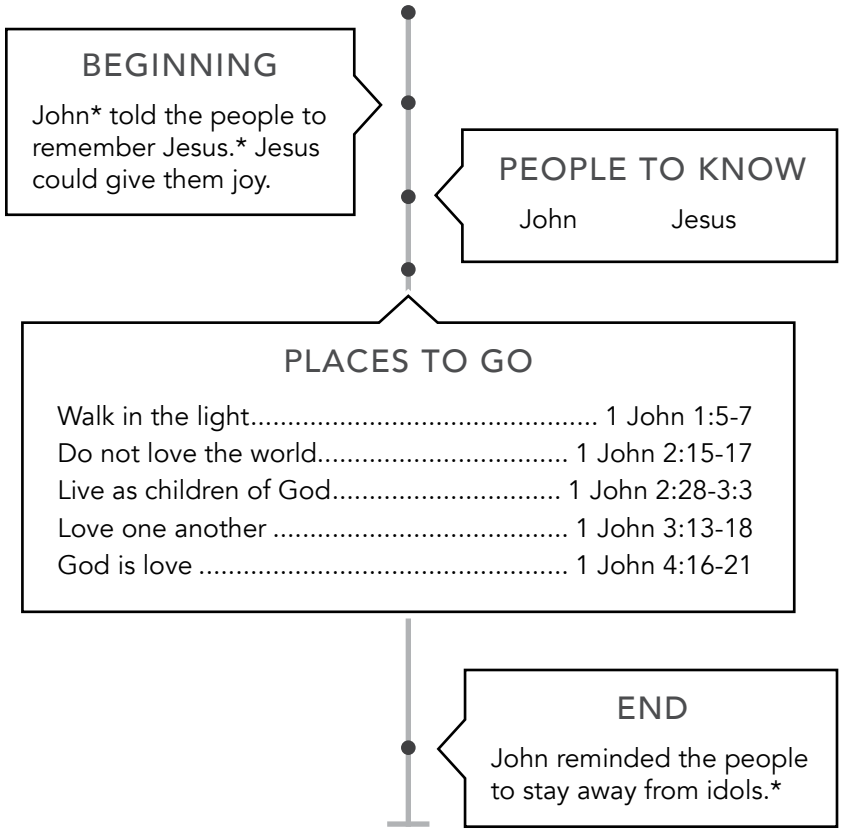
And the people must listen to the words of the prophets.* Because these men spoke the words God gave them to speak. The prophets did not make up stories about God on their own. They were 'carried along by the Holy Spirit'.*[1] The false teachers did not know Jesus and they did not speak the truth from God.

The false teachers confused many of the people. They said that Jesus was waiting too long to come back from heaven.* So they said that Jesus was not going to come back at all. Peter told them that Jesus would come back. And when Jesus came, he would judge* the false teachers. Yes, God did not come back right away. But he would keep his promise to return. Jesus delayed his return because he was patient. He wanted to give everyone time to repent* and turn to him. But, some day, the day of the Lord would come. When that day came, God would destroy the old world by fire.[2] God would remove all evil things from the world. Then, he would make a new heaven and a new earth.

1. 2 Peter 1:20-21 2. 2 Peter 3:10-12

1 JOHN

THE NEW TESTAMENT | THE GENERAL LETTERS



CHAPTER SIXTY-SEVEN

THE STORY OF 1 JOHN

John was an apostle.* He followed Jesus when Jesus walked on the earth. He saw Jesus with his own eyes.[1] He heard him speak. He touched the body of Jesus. So he wrote this letter to witness about Jesus. He wanted people to know about Jesus. He wanted people to know Jesus too.

John wrote this letter to tell people about Jesus. He said that Jesus was God's own son. He was the 'Word' that God sent to give us life. Jesus died to pay for our sins*[2] so that we could be a part of God's family. God would forgive*

people's sins because of what Jesus did. People did not have to sin after they believed* in Jesus. But, if they did, God would forgive them.

> **'But God is faithful* and fair. If we admit that we have sinned, he will forgive us our sins. He will forgive every wrong thing we have done. He will make us pure.'**[3]

Now people could walk with God like people who walked in the light. When people listened to what Jesus said and did what Jesus did, they walked with God. When people said that they followed Jesus, but did not do what Jesus did, they lied.[4]

The way to walk with Jesus was to obey his commands. And Jesus commanded people to love one another.[5] This was not a new command. It was what the law said all along.[6] So, if we loved God, we would love each other also.[7] If we said we loved Jesus but we did not love other people, we were not telling the truth.

John told people that Jesus was the Christ.* He was the one God promised to send to rescue his people. If anyone did not believe this, that person did not know God. In fact, they were the enemies of God the Father and the Son. John wanted everyone to know this.

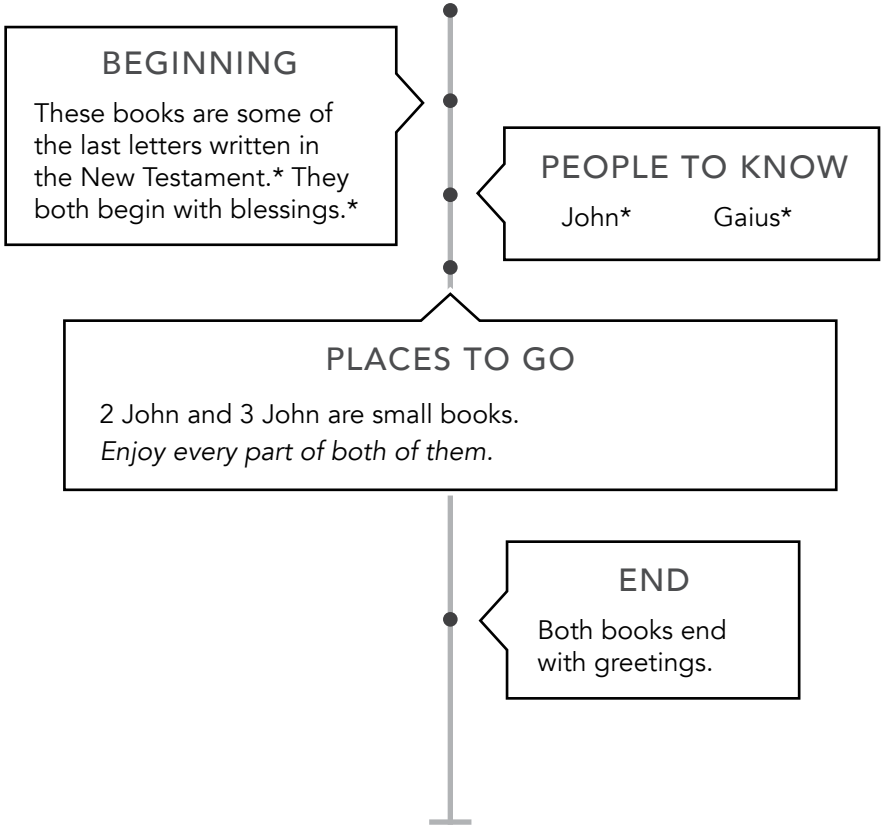
But not everyone agreed with John. There were people in the church* who wanted to lead people down the wrong path. They did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God.* They did not love their brothers and sisters. They did not live good lives. So John warned the Christians not to listen to them or live the way they lived. These people did not belong to God. They belonged to the devil.*[8]

How could people know the true people of God? The true people listened to his word. They listened to God's Spirit.* They told the truth about Jesus. They enjoyed friendship with God and with each other. And they had hope* because they remembered that Jesus would return.

1. See John 1:1-14
2. 1 John 2:2
3. 1 John 1:9
4. 1 John 2:2
5. Leviticus 19:18; Deuteronomy 30:6b
6. 1 John 2:7
7. 1 John 2:9-11
8. 1 John 3:7-8

2 JOHN & 3 JOHN

THE NEW TESTAMENT | THE GENERAL LETTERS



CHAPTER SIXTY-EIGHT

THE STORY OF 2 JOHN & 3 JOHN

The letters called 2 John and 3 John are very short. But they are still very important. The writer of the book calls himself 'the elder'.* Most people believe* that John wrote these two letters. He used many of the same words that appear in the gospel* of John and the letter called 1 John. These two letters talk about many of the same things that 1 John talks about. People should love God and love other people. People should obey God's commands. People should walk in the way of the truth.

John wrote these letters in a very personal way. He loved the people that he wrote to. He wanted them to have joy. He wanted them to have grace* and mercy* and peace.* And he did not want them to be fooled by false teachers.

So John warned them to watch out for people who tried to fool them. They would say that Jesus did not come in a body. People like that were the enemies of Jesus. Do not let them fool you.

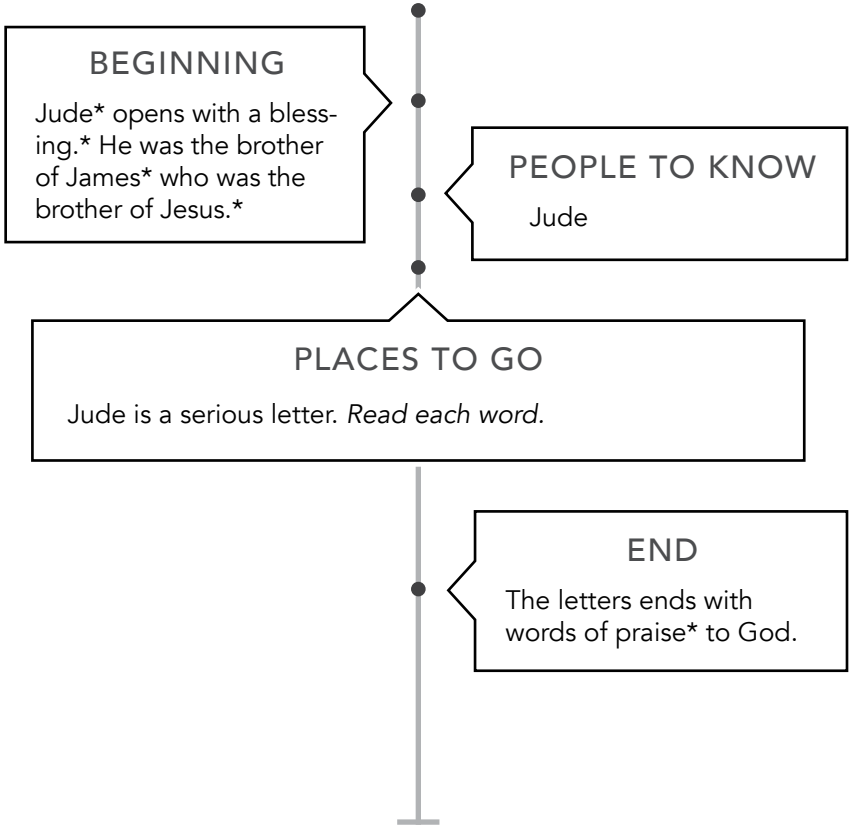
> **'Dear friend, do not be like those who do evil.* Be like those who do good. Anyone who does what is good belongs to God. Anyone who does what is evil has not really seen or known God.'**[1]

Some people in the church* were good examples to follow.[2] And some people were bad examples.[3] John wanted them to be careful to know the difference. They must welcome people who told the truth about Jesus. They must not listen to people who did not.

1. 3 John 11
2. 3 John 6; 3 John 12; see 1 John 2:7; 2 John 5
3. 3 John 9

JUDE

THE NEW TESTAMENT | THE GENERAL LETTERS



CHAPTER SIXTY-NINE

THE STORY OF JUDE

The Book of Jude is a short letter. But Jude is not so easy to understand. Jude wrote the letter. He was a brother of James and a brother of Jesus. Jude wrote to people who knew many things about the Old Testament* part of the Bible.* They also knew many of the stories that the Jews* told about their history. So, if you do not know these stories, Jude can be hard to understand.

Jude wrote this letter to warn people. False teachers had come into the church.* These people were saying things that were not true. But they were

very clever. They were able to fool many people. They said many new and interesting things. But Jude said that the people must not listen to them. They were like many false teachers in the old days. They said things that were not true. They did things that did not please God. And they did not listen to the words that the disciples* taught. They said that their words had authority. But they did not follow God's word that he gave to the apostles.*

Jude said many hard things against these teachers.[1] Jude said that they were very dangerous. They denied Jesus was Lord.*[2] They would fool people. They would lead people down the wrong path. These men refused all authority but their own. They lived bad lives. They were like Cain.* He did not listen to God's warning to him.[3] They only served God to make money. And God would punish these men. He would punish them like he punished Israel.*[4] He would punish them as he punished the angels*[5] who turned away.

Jude wanted God's people to be strong. They must grow to know more about their faith.* They must keep loving God. And they must rest in the hope* that Jesus would return.

1. Jude 4
2. Jude 5; see Numbers 14:11; 20:12
3. Jude 11, 17
4. Genesis 4:6-12
5. Jude 6

THE BOOK OF PROPHECY

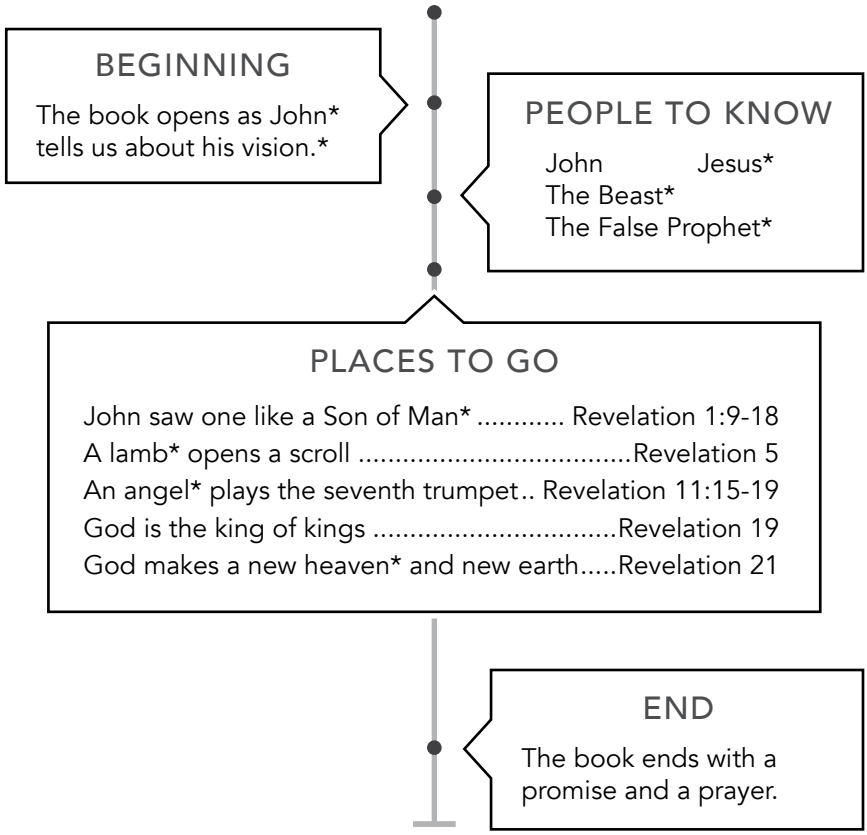
This book talks about the future. It tells the story about a man named John.* He had a dream, or a revelation,* from God. God showed John many strange things. His book tells about the time that Jesus* will return to the earth. It shows us that Jesus will win over evil.* It tells of a new heaven* and a new earth.

THE BOOK OF PROPHECY

Revelation

REVELATION

THE NEW TESTAMENT | THE BOOK OF PROPHECY



CHAPTER SEVENTY

THE STORY OF REVELATION

The last book in the Bible* is Revelation.* John wrote the book. God gave John a revelation, so John wrote this book to tell what he saw. God showed John things that have not yet happened. But these things will happen in the future. Many of the stories are about the last days before Jesus returns to earth.

The book is not easy to understand. But you can understand it if you remember one thing. This book is about Jesus. Jesus is the hero of this book. Look for him as you read it.

John was a student of Jesus. He followed Jesus for the years he lived on earth. But now John saw Jesus in a new way. So he used picture stories to tell people what he saw. Some of the pictures are very strange. Many people have tried to understand all of the details in these stories. No one understands all of them. We do not know if all of these things will happen in the order John told us about them. But we can understand the big ideas in the book.

John talked about Jesus in many ways in this book. He called Jesus a **'faithful* witness'.** He called Jesus **'the first born from the dead'.** He called Jesus the **'ruler of the kings of the earth'.**[1] Each of these names tells us something about Jesus.

John said that Jesus is one like the Son of Man in the first part of the book. This is the same name Daniel* used to describe God's ruler in his book. He will come to judge* his saints.*[2] Then, he will set up his kingdom.*

Then, Jesus told John to write down what he said. He was to send those words in letters to some of churches* in Asia. Most people think that these churches existed during the time that John wrote. But one thing is certain. All churches can learn from these letters.

The middle part of the book has many strange story pictures. John saw a throne* room. He saw a scroll* with seven seals.* The seals can only be opened by the Lamb of God.* Every time one of the seals is opened, a bad thing happens on the earth. Then, John told about seven trumpets. And many strange things happen on earth or in the heavens each time a trumpet sounds. Then, John told about a great battle. An evil* leader with a wicked army fights against God.[3] Seven troubles follow this battle. Then, John saw the powerful nation of Babylon* destroyed.

The book is hard to understand. But it is not impossible. Other parts of the Bible can help us as we read this book. The books of the prophets* can help us understand this book. So can the words of Jesus in the last part of the book of Matthew.*

Near the end of the book, John talked about another great battle. The army of heaven comes to fight against the armies of the nations. The leader of the army from heaven rides a white horse.[4] His name is the **'Word of God'.** This is a picture of Jesus. He is the King of Kings and Lord* of Lords.[5] When he comes, he defeats all of the wicked kings. He defeats all of his enemies. He puts Satan* in chains and locks him away for 1000 years. At the end of those years, God lets him out. Then, Satan gathers together the armies of the nations. They go to attack Jerusalem.* But God sends fire from heaven. Then, he catches Satan and throws him into a burning lake.

Then God gathers all of the living and the dead before him. He reads from

the record books in heaven and judges them.

In the last part of his book, John told about a new heaven and a new earth. This is a place that God has made for all of his people. He will live with his people there. John told of a great city, a new Jerusalem. A great river will flow through the city. The river will give water to **'the tree of life.'**[6] The curse* that God spoke in the garden will be removed. God will live with his people for ever in a kingdom that will last for ever.

There are many things in this book that are a mystery* to us. But some things are clear. People who trust* God may suffer now. But they will not always suffer. When Jesus returns to earth, everyone will know he is God. Satan and evil people have power now. But they will not always have power. God will reward the people who know him. He will punish those who turn away from him. The world will get worse before it gets better. But Jesus will return and solve every problem. He will make everything right.

1. Revelation 1:5
2. Revelation 1:9-3:22; see Daniel 7:9-10
3. Revelation 12-14
4. Revelation 19:11-16
5. Revelation 19:16
6. Revelation 22:1-2

NOW THAT YOU HAVE FINISHED!

Well done! You have finished the book. If you have used this book as a map for reading your Bible,* perhaps you have read through the entire Bible as well. For most people, it takes as many as 80 hours to read through all of it. So, if you read through it all, you have done a very good and very important thing. Now what? What should you do next?

HERE ARE A FEW IDEAS..

1. START AGAIN

Yes, the first thing you should do when you finish reading the Bible is begin again. You may want to start from the beginning at Genesis. Or, maybe you will start with the Psalms* this time – or the gospels.* Perhaps you could begin with the letters of Paul* – or the stories in Joshua* and Judges.* In some ways, it does not matter where you read.

Just keep reading the Bible.

2. LISTEN TO OTHER PEOPLE READ & TEACH THE BIBLE

Find other people who want to know God and understand his ways. Find a church* where the Bible is important. Meet with people who love God and love the Bible. Read the scriptures* together with other people. And ask God to help you know how to do what it says.

3. WORK HARD TO REMEMBER THE WORDS OF THE BIBLE

Remember them so well that you can say the words from memory. That way, the words from God can be with you all of the time. King David* said that he hid the word in his heart. That means that he could remember it and take it with him where ever he went. Find some small parts of the Bible that help you and work to remember them word for word.

4. USE THE WORDS OF THE BIBLE WHEN YOU PRAY

Prayer is talking to God. But, sometimes, it is hard to know what to say when we pray. So, why not learn to pray like the people in the Bible prayed? The words of many of the Psalms are prayers. And there are many other prayers in the Bible as well. Praying to God with the words from scripture will not only help you learn how to pray, it will help you have a deeper love for the Bible.

WHY IS THE BIBLE SO IMPORTANT?

There are many answers to that question. Maybe the most important is this. We meet God in the words of the Bible. We hear what God says to us. We understand the way he wants us to live. We hear and remember the promises that he made to us. And in the pages of the Bible we meet Jesus.

That is why you should make reading the Bible a habit. If you can, you should read it every day. You should remember the words from the Bible so that you can say them without looking at the words on the page. The Bible can make you wise, keep you from sin,* make you strong in times of trouble, help you resist the evil* one, guide your steps, bring you joy and give you hope.* The Bible is filled with good things for the person who reads it.

So – what are you waiting for? Read on!

WORD LIST

HOW IT WORKS

Understanding the words used in the Bible is important. This list will help you to read and understand the Bible. Any word in this book with an * beside it is defined in these lists. You will find all of the PEOPLE and the PLACES mentioned in the book in this Word List as well.

WORD LIST

A

Aaron — Aaron was the brother of Moses.* He helped him lead the people out of Egypt.* He was the first high priest.* But he did not always lead the people in a wise way.

Abraham — Abraham is the father of all of the Jews.* His name was Abram. Then God changed his name. God made a promise to him. He said that Abraham's family would become a great nation. God would bless* all of the other nations through one of his children.

Absalom — Absalom was David's* son. He turned against his father and tried to take the kingdom* from him. He died in battle. This made David very sad.

Adam — Adam was the first man that God made. God made Adam from the dust of the ground.

Adonijah — Adonijah was a son of David.* He thought he would be the next king. But David decided that he would not be the next king. Solomon* would be king instead.

Africa — Africa is the large land south of Israel.* People from that land believed* on Jesus.* They became part of the church* when it first began.

Agrippa — Agrippa was a Roman.* He was a ruler when Paul* was in prison. He heard Paul speak and said that he should not be in prison. But he did not let him go free.

Agur — Agur was not from the family of Jacob.* But he was very wise. Many of his wise words are included in the book of Proverbs.*

Ahaziah — Ahaziah was a king of Judah.* He was king before the exile.* He ruled only a short time in Jerusalem.

Almighty — A name for God. He has great power. No one is stronger than God. He has no enemy that can defeat him. He overcomes all who oppose him.

Altar — A table (usually stone) where the priest* burned the meat from animals and gave other gifts as a sacrifice* to God or false gods; a tall structure with a flat top where the priest puts the sacrifice to God or a false god; the 'holy* table'.

Amaziah — Amaziah was a king of Judah.* He was king before the exile.* He won a great battle. But he did not follow God's ways.

Ammon Ammon was one of the sons of Lot with one of his daughters. Ammon became a nation east of the Jordan River.* The Ammonites often fought against Israel.*

Amos Amos was a prophet* who spoke to the people of Israel.* His book is one of the books of the minor prophets.*

Ancestor A person from your family who lived long ago.

Angel An angel is a spirit* being. God created* them to serve him. Sometimes, he used the angels to carry a message for him. Angels help those who trust* God and are part of God's family. God made so many angels that we can not count them. But not all of the angels followed God. Some of them turned away from him. They became the enemies of God. They became known as evil* spirits.* Satan* is their leader. Some day, God will throw Satan and his angels into a fire that never goes out.

Anoint To mark a person with oil to show that God has chosen them; to be marked by the Holy Spirit.* The priests* and the first kings of Israel* had oil put on them when they were chosen.

Apollos Apollos was a Jew* who followed Jesus.* He could speak well. He helped people in Ephesus know how to follow Jesus.

Apostle An Apostle was a man sent to speak for Jesus.* Jesus chose these men. Each of them spent time with Jesus. Each of them saw Jesus after he came back from death. God used them to start his church* and give us the New Testament.* One sent to bring a message.

Ark The boat Noah* built was called an ark. God also told Moses* to make a special box made of wood. Moses kept the laws God gave him in this special box. The priest* put the box in the holiest place in the temple. That box was called the Ark of the Covenant.*

Asaph Asaph helped people worship* during the time David* was king. He wrote many songs. Some of these songs are included in the book of Psalms.*

Assyria Assyria was a nation north of Israel.* For many years, it was the enemy of Israel. Assyria came and took many of the people in Israel away into exile.*

Assyrians The Assyrians were the enemies of God's people. They lived in the land of Assyria.* They had a great army. They made war against God's people for many years. One day, they came and carried many people away.

B

Babel Babel was a city in the land of Babylon.* It was the place where God confused the languages.

Babylon Babylon was a nation to the north of Israel.* For many years, it was an enemy of Judah.* One day, Babylon came into Judah and took many people away into exile.*

Balaam Balaam was a prophet.* But he was not a prophet from Israel*. One of the foreign kings asked him to curse* the army of Israel. He would not do it. But he was not a good man or a wise prophet. He was on his way to do a foolish thing when the animal he was riding would not go any further. When he spoke to the animal, the animal spoke back to him.

Baptize A teacher or leader puts someone under the water for a moment. Then the person is brought up from the water. In this way we show that we believe* the message. We have turned from our sin.* God has made us clean. After Jesus* rose from the grave, this was the way to show that we belong to Christ* and his church.*

Beast The Beast is one of the enemies of God in the last book of the Bible.* He tries to fight against God. But Jesus* overcomes him. He puts the Beast into a fire that never goes out.

Believe/Trust To follow something that you are sure is true; to trust someone; to have confidence in someone. I trust someone when I depend on what they say to be true.

Believer A person who knows and accepts Jesus* as Lord;* a person who trusts* Jesus.

Belshazzar Belshazzar was a king in Babylon.* He had a party. During the party, he brought out the things his father took from the temple.* He showed no respect for these things. He showed no respect for God. A hand appeared and wrote a message on the wall. Soon after that, the Persians* destroyed Babylon.

Benjamin Benjamin was the youngest son of Jacob.* His land was in the south. After Israel* broke in two, his family stayed in the land of Judah.* Years later, Paul* was born into this family.

Bethel Bethel was a village north of Jerusalem.* It was the place where Jacob* saw a ladder that reached into heaven.*

Bethlehem Bethlehem was the village south of Jerusalem.* David* was born there. Jesus* was born there as well.

Bible Another name for the scripture;* the writings of the prophets* and the apostles;* all of the books of the Old and New Testaments.*

Bildad Bildad was one of the friends of Job.* He gave Job some advice. His advice was not helpful.

Bless To say or do something good for someone; to speak well of someone; to give things to someone to honour them; to ask God to do good to someone; to call for good things to happen to someone; to set someone apart for special benefit.

Blessed A word to call someone who receives many good things; a word to call someone who is kept holy.*

Blessings The good things God does for us. When we ask God to help us receive good things, we are asking for blessings.

Boaz Boaz lived during the time of the judges.* He owned land in Israel.* When he saw a young woman getting grain from his field, he became interested in her. Not long after, he took her as his wife. Her name was Ruth.*

Burnt Offering A gift for God (or a false god) that people brought to be burned. When the priest* killed an animal for a sacrifice,* he burned it and offered it as a gift to God.

C

Caesar Caesar was the title for the king of the Romans.* The Bible* mentions many of these men. The first one was the king who was in control when Jesus* was born.

Caesarea Caesarea was a city on the sea coast. It was named to honour Caesar,* the ruler of Rome.* Paul* stopped in this city on his way to Rome.

Cain Cain was the son of Adam* and Eve.* He became angry with God and killed his brother.

Caleb Caleb was a soldier during the time of Moses.* He was a friend of Joshua.* He went into the land that God gave to Abraham.*

Canaan Canaan was the name of the land that God promised to give Abraham.* Before the children of Abraham lived there, the land was called Canaan. The territory began just across the Jordan River.*

Canaanites These were the people from the land of Canaan.* Before the children of Abraham* lived there, the land was called Canaan. This was the name of the land that God promised to give Abraham.

Christ — Christ is a title that is used to name Jesus.* It means 'the chosen one'. It is a way that the early Christians* said that Jesus was the Messiah,* the One God had chosen.

Christian — The word Christian means one who follows Christ.* This was not a name that Christians chose for themselves. People started calling them Christians because they were always talking about Christ. They followed what Jesus* taught. They lived the way Jesus lived.

Church — The church is a group of people who know God. It is a group or gathering of people who believe* in Jesus.* The church began when many people heard Peter* speak and believed. They believed what he said about Jesus. More and more people believed. And the church grew and grew.

Colossians — Colossians were the people who lived in the city of Colossae. There were many people there who believed* in Jesus.* Paul* met many people from this city. He wrote a letter to help them know more about Jesus. That letter is now a part of the Bible.*

Confess/ Confession — To say that you have done wrong things; to say that you believe* in God.

Cornelius — Cornelius was a Roman* soldier. But he showed respect for the God of Israel.* An angel* came to him and told him to go and get Peter.* Peter had some words for him. He did send for Peter. He came. Cornelius believed* what Peter said. He is the first Gentile* mentioned in the book of Acts.

Colosse — Colossae was a city in Asia. There were many people there who believed* the good news about Jesus.* Paul* wrote a letter to help the church* there.

Covenant — When two or more people agree together; when God and people agree to something by making a promise; when God and a person or people agree to a special thing.

Corinth — Corinth was a city in Asia. Many people travelled through that city. Paul* helped to take the good news there. He wrote many letters to help the church* in Corinth.

Creation/ Created — When God made the world and everything there is; everything that God has made; what God did when he made everything from nothing.

Creator/Maker — Creator is the name used for God because he made all things. He created* all of the things we can see and things that we can not see.

Crete Crete is an island. Paul* helped the church* there. He sent Titus* there to tell them how to help and protect the church at Crete.

Cross Two pieces of wood fixed together. The Romans* punished people by fixing them to a cross to die. Jesus* died this way; to carry your cross means not to put yourself first but to put Jesus and other people first in your life.

Curse/Cursed To use bad words; to wish evil* upon a person; to speak strong words against a person; when a person is sad because of the bad words that someone has said against them.

Cush Noah had a son named Ham. Ham had four sons. Cush was one of them. His people settled in the north of Africa.* Cush became the name of that area.

Cyrus Cyrus was the King of Persia.* He told the Jews* that they could go back to their land after they had been in exile.*

D

Daniel Daniel was a prophet* during the exile.* He lived in Babylon.* God helped him know how to understand dreams. God told him many things about the future.

David David was the king of all of Israel.* God made a promise to David. He told David that one of his sons would be king for ever.

Deborah Deborah was one of the judges.* She helped Israel* overcome her enemies. She was also like a prophet.* She spoke for God to the people. Her story can be found in the book of the Judges. One of her songs is recorded there as well.

Devil/Satan The Devil is another name for Satan.* Satan is the leader of the evil* spirits.* He is the enemy of God. He came into the garden to fool Adam* and Eve.* He caused Job* many problems. But God will not let him go without being punished for ever. God will throw him into a fire that will never go out.

Disciple A person who wants to do the same things as another person and learn from them; one who follows another and learns from him; a person who believes* in Jesus* and follows the things he teaches.

Divine Things that are of, or from, God.

E

Eden Eden was the name of the garden God made for Adam* and Eve.*

Edom Edom was the place where the family of Esau* settled. It was north of Judah.* The people built many towns there. The name of that area was Edom.

Egypt Egypt was a land to the south of Israel.* The sons of Jacob* lived in Egypt* for many years until Moses* came to lead them out. When Jesus* was a small boy, his family went there for a while.

Elder An older man or woman; the men who led the early church;* a leader of the church.*

Elihu Elihu was one of the friends of Job.* He gave Job some advice. His advice was not helpful.

Elijah Elijah was a prophet.* He spoke for God to the people of Israel.* The king did not like Elijah. The queen did not like him either. But God watched over him. He did many wonders in Israel. He overcame many of the prophets who served false gods.

Eliphaz Eliphaz was one of the friends of Job.* He gave Job some advice. His advice was not helpful.

Elisha Elisha was a prophet.* For many years, he helped Elijah.* When Elijah went to be with God, Elisha took his place. He did many wonders in the land. God gave him great power.

Elizabeth Elizabeth had a son in her old age. She named him John.* He became a prophet.* One day, he baptized* Jesus.* She was related to Mary,* the mother of Jesus. Mary went to visit her before she gave birth to Jesus.

Epaphroditus Epaphroditus was a leader in the church* at Philippi.* He came to visit Paul* when he was in prison. He brought him money as well. While he was there, he got sick. When he got better, he went back home. Paul called him a brother and a partner.

Epistle One of the letters written by one of the first followers of Jesus;* a letter from an apostle.* Many of these letters are a part of the New Testament.*

Ephesians Ephesians were people were from the city of Ephesus.* There was a strong church* there. Paul* spent time there and taught them many things. He wrote a letter to the people there. That letter is now a part of the Bible.*

Ephesus Ephesus was a town in Asia. Paul* travelled there and lived there for two years. The church* there was strong. Paul wrote a letter to help the church there.

Esau Esau was the oldest son of Isaac.* His did not get the blessing* that should have been his. His children did not follow God.

Esther Esther lived in the land of Persia.* She was a Jew.* She became the queen. She helped to save her people from their enemies.

Eternal Things that have always been and will always continue to be; a thing that has no beginning or ending; a thing that never changes.

Eve Eve was the first woman God made. God made Eve from a bone from Adam's* side.

Everlasting Things that continue forever.

Evil Bad; the opposite of good; wicked; doing bad; things that hurt someone.

Evil Spirit A bad spirit* who works for Satan* and does bad things.

Exile/Exiles People who have to leave their own land, often for a long time; the times when the Jews* were taken from the land of Israel.*

Ezekiel Ezekiel was a priest* and a prophet.* He lived in Babylon* during the exile.* He spoke for God to the people there. God asked him to do many strange things to get his message to the people. He always obeyed. He told them that God would punish Babylon. And they would go back to their home land some day.

Ezra Ezra was a priest* after the exile.* He led some of the people back to the land. He taught them to follow God again.

F

Faith Belief or trust.* To have faith is to believe* in someone or something. To have faith is to agree with God; to be sure about God and the things he has said. To act in faith is to do what God tells us to do; to do what God says even when it seems difficult. To hold to 'the faith' is to follow the words of the scriptures.* 'The faith' is a way to speak of the teaching that Jesus gave to the apostles* for the church.*

Faithful To be full of faith* and not moving from what you think is true; to be true to do the right thing; to follow God's ways.

False Prophet (the) The False Prophet* is one of the enemies of God in the last book of the Bible.* He tells lies and fools many people.

Follower To go after someone who leads; the men and women who believe* in Jesus* and do what he says.

Forgive/ Forgiven/ Forgiveness To show mercy* and not to remember bad things against someone; to set someone free from wrong things that they do; to let someone go free from punishment. When God forgives us, he does not hold the wrong things we do against us.

G

Gaius Gaius was a leader in the church* and a friend of John.* He says many good things about this man in his letter.

Galatia Galatia was an area north of Israel.* There were many towns and villages there. Many people from that area heard the good news about Jesus.* Paul* wrote a letter to help the church* there.

Galatians These were the people who lived in an area called Galatia.* There were many cities in that area. It belonged to Rome.* But there were many churches* there. Paul* wrote them a letter. He was concerned that they no longer believed* what he told them. He told them to stand against false teachers.

Garden (the) God made the first man and woman. He also made a special place for them to live. They had everything they needed there. That place was called the Garden.

Gentiles Gentile was the name given to any people that were not Jews.* No matter what nation people came from, if they were not Jews, they were called Gentiles. People who did not know the God of the Jews.

Giants Giants are men or women that are very big – much bigger than most people. There were giants in the land when David* was a young man. They lived in the land for many years after that too.

Gideon Gideon was one of the judges.* He drove Israel's* enemies out of the land. God came to him and told him what to do. Gideon had a very small army. But he overcame a large army with God's help.

Glory Everything that makes God beautiful and great; like a great king; a bright light from God or Jesus.*

Godless To be without God; separated from God; someone who does not know, believe* in, or care about God.

God's Tent — God told Moses* to make the tent as a place for God to live with the people. The people took the tent everywhere they went. They took the tent into the land God promised them.

Goliath — Goliath was a giant who fought for the enemies of Israel.* David* killed him with a stone.

Gomer — Gomer was the wife of Hosea* the prophet.* She was not loyal to him.

Gospel — The good news for everybody that God saves people from sin* through Jesus* Christ;* the good news of the things Jesus has done for us by his life, death and raising from the dead; the message from God to us; the four books at the beginning of the New Testament.*

Grace — A gift of God that we should not get because of the bad things we have done; what God gives because he is so kind to us; the help and safe keeping from God. We cannot get grace* by working for it.

Guilt/Guilty — When we know we have done wrong things and feel bad about them; when we feel shame for wrong things we have done.

H

Habakkuk — Habakkuk was a prophet.* He spoke for God to the people of Judah.* He was unhappy about the many problems in Judah. So he asked God to make things right. God spoke to him and said that he was going to send an evil* nation to punish Judah. This did not make Habakkuk happy. He told us the story in his book.

Hagar — Hagar was Sarah's* maid. Abraham* had a child with her. This caused many problems.

Haggai — Haggai was a prophet.* He spoke for God to the people who returned from exile.* He wanted them to return to God. He told them to repair the temple.*

Haman — Haman was a servant of the king of Persia.* He hated the Jews.* He decided he would make a plan to kill them. But Mordecai* discovered his plan. When the king found out that Haman was a bad man, he hanged him. His plan did not work and the Jews did not die.

Heaven — The place where God and Christ* are; the future home of the people who know God; the place of happiness and peace*where God lives and rules; the place where people who know God and Jesus* will go after they die; the sky God made.

Hebrew The language of the Jews;* another name for a Jew; a person from Israel.*

Hell A place where people are always separated from God; the place where people who do not know God go after death; the place prepared for the Devil* and his evil spirits.*

Hezekiah Hezekiah was a king of Judah.* While he was the king, an army overcame Israel* and Samaria* in the north. He did many good things. He repaired the temple.* He made the priest* help people worship* God again. But his life did not end well. Enemies came to Judah that he could not overcome. They took away the wealth of the land and of the temple.

Holy/Holiness What God is like; different and better than all other things; all good with no bad in it; a thing that God has; separate from sin;* clean.

Holy Spirit The Holy Spirit is God, as is God the Father and God the Son. Jesus* promised to send the Holy Spirit to all who know him as the Son of God.* Nobody sees the Holy Spirit, but he joins with the spirit of those who know Jesus. The Holy Spirit helps a person to follow Jesus and to do good things.

Hope To look for a future thing that God has promised.

Hosea Hosea was a prophet.* He spoke for God to the people of Israel.* God told Hosea to marry a woman. This woman was not loyal to Hosea. So God used this to show that Israel had not been loyal to God either.

I

Idol An object made of wood, stone or metal for people to worship* instead of the real God; an image of a person or object that people worship instead of God; a false god; something that we love more than God and put in his place.

Isaac Isaac was the son of Abraham.* God gave him to Abraham in his old age. He was the son that God had promised him.

Isaiah Isaiah was a prophet* in Judah.* He spoke for God to the kings of Judah. He wrote a book that is part of the major prophets.*

Israel Israel was the name God gave to Jacob.* He had 12 sons. His children were called the children of Israel. Israel also became the name of the nation that grew from his family. When the people got into the land God gave them, they called it the land of Israel. After the nation divided, the land to the north was called Israel. The land in the south was called Judah.*

Israelites The people of Israel; the people that are Jews* and live in Israel; the people God chose.

J

Jacob Jacob was the son of Isaac.* He had many sons. God spoke with Jacob and changed his name to Israel.* His children became known as the children of Israel. When there was no food in the land, they went to Egypt* to find food. Jacob died there. His family stayed there for 400 years.

James James was a leader in the first church.* He was a brother of Jesus.* He wrote a letter that is part of the Bible.*

Jephthah Jephthah was a judge.* He helped keep the people of Israel* safe. He also made a foolish promise.

Jeremiah Jeremiah was a prophet* to the people who lived in Jerusalem.* He lived before the city was burned.

Jericho Jericho was a town in the Promised Land. Joshua* overcame the city soon after he led Israel* into the land.

Jeroboam Jeroboam was a king. The nation of Israel* became two nations. One nation was in the north. One nation was in the south. Jeroboam became the first king of the nation in the north. That nation was named Israel.*

Jerusalem Jerusalem was the city where David* lived. Solomon* built the temple* there. It was the chief city of Judah.*

Jesse Jesse was a man from the family of Judah.* He had many sons. God chose his son David* to be the king of Israel.*

Jesus Jesus is the Son of God.* He came into the world to rescue people from their sin.* He is the Messiah* that the people of God had waited for.

Jew A Jew is a person who is from the family of Abraham,* Isaac* and Jacob.* A Jew is a person who believes* the faith* of the Jews. They are also called Hebrews.* Anyone who was a part of the nation of Israel* became known as a Jew.

Jezebel Jezebel was the evil* queen of King Ahab. She was angry with Elijah.* She wanted to kill him. She did not succeed. She died a terrible death.

Joab Joab was a soldier. He was part of the army of king David.* He helped him fight against his enemies.

Job Job was a man who followed God. He suffered many things for a long time. Satan* took his family and made him sick. But God gave him back all that he had lost.

Joel Joel was a prophet* to Judah.* He said that God would judge* the nations some day. He called that day the 'Day of the Lord.'*

John John was an Apostle.* He was a very close friend of Jesus* as well. He listened carefully to Jesus and wrote many of the things he said in his book. When he was an old man, God gave him a vision.* He wrote what he saw in the last book of the Bible.*

John the Baptist John the Baptist was the man who went before Jesus* to prepare the way. He called people to turn from their sin.* He baptized* Jesus.

Jonah Jonah was a prophet.* God told him to go speak to Nineveh.* Jonah tried to run away. A big fish swallowed him. Then he did what God asked him to do. But he was not happy when people turned back to God.

Jordan River The Jordan River was part of the border of Israel* on the east. The people crossed this river to get into the land God promised to Abraham.* Later, Jesus* was baptized in this river.

Joseph Joseph was the favourite son of his father Jacob.* His brothers hated him. They sold him to people who were going to Egypt.* He faced many difficult things. But God used him to rescue his family when there was no food to eat.

Joshua When Moses* died, Joshua became the leader of God's people. He led them into the land God promised them.

Joshua the High Priest Joshua was the High Priest* after the exile.* He served at the temple* when the people came back to Israel.*

Josiah Josiah was a king in Judah.* He became king when he was just a boy. He grew to become one of Judah's best kings. He pushed the foreign armies out of the land. He made repairs to the temple.* When he found the 'book of the law of Moses'* in the temple,* he led the people to worship* God again. The people followed Josiah for many years.

Judah Judah was one of the sons of Jacob.* When his father was dying, he blessed* him. He said that his family would rule the others. David* was from that family. Many years later, Jesus* was born from the family of Judah.Judah was also the name the people gave to the southern part of Israel.* After the nation divided, the land in the north was called Israel. The land in the south was called Judah.

Jude Jude was the brother of Jesus.* He wrote a letter to warn the church* about false teachers.

Judge A person who says what is right or wrong; a person who decides if someone has done right or wrong; to decide what is right or wrong; to speak against someone who has done wrong.

Judges God chose new leaders for Israel*after Joshua* died. These men and women were called judges. They helped keep Israel safe from its enemies.

Judgment When God says what is right or wrong; when someone says who is good or bad; when people are tested or judged by God; the day when Christ* will judge all people is called the day of judgment.

Just/Justice The quality of being completely fair and being right; the way that God is right in dealing with all that he has made; the correct thing that God does with all that he has made.

Justified To be made right with God through the death and return to life of Jesus* Christ;* to say someone is made right with God.

K

Kingdom Where a king rules; a land where a king rules. The kingdom of God is where God rules.

Korah Korah was from the family of Levi.* He was unhappy with Moses.* So he tried to turn the people away from following him. But God was not pleased with Korah. God opened a large hole in the earth. Korah and his friends fell in and the earth swallowed them up.

L

Lamb A small sheep like the animals given as a sacrifice* to God in the temple.*

Lamb of God The Lamb was the name that John* called Jesus.* The name was like a title. It means that Jesus is like a small sheep that someone brought to sacrifice* at the temple.* This is a way to say that Jesus was the sacrifice that was offered for us. He died so that God could forgive* the bad things we do.

Lazarus Lazarus was a friend of Jesus.* Jesus sometimes stayed at his home. He became sick and died. Jesus raised him from the dead.

Lemuel Lemuel was a king. He was wise. Some of the wise things he said are included in the book of Proverbs.

Levi Levi was one of the sons of Jacob.* The men from his family became priests.* They helped the people worship* God. They took care of God's Tent.*

Levites Levites was the name given to the sons of Levi.* They were the priests* for God's people. They helped the people worship* God. They took care of God's Tent.*

Lord Lord is the name that is used most often of God in the Bible.* It tells us that God is the one who is in control. There is no one with more authority than God. He is the ruler over all things. Jesus* is also called Lord* in the New Testament.* In some places, the word may be used to speak of a person with authority.

Luke Luke was a man who followed Jesus.* He was not an Apostle.* But he knew many of these men and heard their stories. He sometimes went with Paul* on his trips. His book about Jesus is in the Bible.* It is one of the gospels.*

M

Maker/Creator The Maker is the name used for God because he made all things. He created* all of the things we can see and things that we can not see.

Malachi Malachi was a prophet.* He spoke to the people of Judah* who came back from the exile.* His book is the last book of the minor prophets.*

Mark Mark was a young man when he began to follow Jesus.* He spent time with Peter.* He told the story of Jesus in the book that bears his name.

Mary Mary was the mother of Jesus.* She cared for him as a boy. She was there when he died on the cross.* Remember: There are many different women named Mary in the New Testament.*

Matthew Matthew collected taxes before he met Jesus.* Jesus called him to leave his job and follow him. Matthew was an Apostle.*

Melchizedek Melchizadek was a priest.* He met Abraham* and blessed* him. The book of Hebrews says that Jesus* was a priest like him.

Mercy/Merciful Being kind to bad people; help to those who are in need or difficulty; the love God shows in forgiving;* God's love and goodness; God's pity towards all he has made.

Messiah Messiah is a title for the special servant of God. It means 'the one God chose to anoint'.* Samuel* put oil on David* to show that God had chosen him to be king. So the Jews* used the name Messiah to refer to the king that God promised to send from David's family. This king would rescue the people from all of their enemies. He was the king who would build God's kingdom.* That kingdom would last for ever. When Jesus* came, he said that he was the Messiah that the Jews had waited for. He was the Christ.* Christ is the Greek word for Messiah. But many of the Jews did not believe* him.

Micah Micah was a prophet.* He spoke to the people of Israel* before the army of Assyria* attacked them.

Miracle Wonderful works that God does by his power; a wonderful thing that shows that a person's message is from God.

Moab and Ammon Moab was the son of Lot* and one of Lot's daughters. Moab's sons grew to become a nation. They lived near Israel.* They were not friends of God's people. They joined with the nation of Ammon* and made war with Israel. They helped Israel's enemies. The prophets* often spoke against these countries.

Mordecai Mordecai was Esther's* uncle. He was a Jew.* He knew that some bad people wanted to kill all of the Jews. He helped Esther to stop them from hurting the Jews.

Moses Moses was born in Egypt* when Jacob's* family lived there. God chose Moses to help the Jews.* He rescued them and brought them out of Egypt.

Mystery A thing that is hidden; a thing that we do not know or can not understand; a thing that we can only know if God helps us know it.

N

Naaman Naaman was a soldier. He was the leader of the army of a foreign king. He was a brave man. But he was a very sick. He came to Elisha* to see if he would help. Elisha told him to go bathe in the river seven times. This made Naaman angry at first. But when he did what Elisha told him to do, he was healed and made clean.

Nadab and Abihu Nadab was the oldest son of Aaron.* He and Abihu were priests.* But they did not follow the instruction of the Lord.* They did not burn the offering* the way they were supposed to. So God sent fire to kill them both.

Nahum Nahum was a prophet.* He lived In Judah.* He spoke for God against the people of Ninevah.* Years before he spoke, Ninevah had come down into Israel.* The army was very cruel. They killed many people. They took many people away in exile.* Now God was going to punish them. He would send an army to destroy Ninevah. God would make it so. There was nothing they could do to stop him.

Naomi Naomi was a woman from the land of Israel.* She lived during the time of the judges.* She went to another land to find food when there was no food in Israel. Her husband died there. When she came back to her home, a young woman named Ruth* came with her.

Nathan Nathan was a prophet* during the time of David.* He told David what God wanted to say. He told David a story that led him to repent* of the sin* he had done.

Nebuchadnezzar Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon.* He came to Israel* with his army. After many years of war, he came in and burned the temple.* He took many people away into exile.*

Nehemiah Nehemiah served the king of Persia.* He was a Jew.* He heard that his people needed help. He went back to the land. He helped the people build the wall.

New Testament The last part of the Bible,* which the writers wrote after Jesus* rose up from the dead. It is about the things that Jesus did and taught. It is also about the church.*

Nicodemus Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews.* He came to Jesus* to ask him some important questions. He was there when Jesus died. He helped to bury his body.

Ninevah Ninevah was the capital city of Assyria.* God sent one of his prophets* there to give them a message. Many years later, the people from Ninevah brought their army to make war on God's people. They killed many of them. They took many into exile.*

Noah — Noah was the man God chose to build a boat. When the flood came, Noah and his family were safe in the boat. God covered the land with water and all of the other people died. God told Noah and his family to fill the earth with people again after that.

O

Obadiah — Obadiah was a prophet.* He spoke for God to the people of Edom.* The nation had not been kind to Judah.* Now God would not be kind to them. A powerful army would come against them. No one would remember them after that. But God would bring his people back to their land. This is what he promised to do.

Offering — A gift for God (or false gods) from the priest* and people; an animal to be offered as a sacrifice.*

Old Testament — The first part of the Bible;* the holy* books that men wrote before Jesus* was born.

Onesimus — Onesimus was a slave. He ran away from his master. He met Paul* and helped him when he was in prison. He also believed* what Paul said about Jesus.* Paul sent a letter to his master to ask him to be kind to him. That letter is now part of the Bible.*

P

Parable — A story, like those told by Jesus,* to explain the things that he taught; a saying or a story from which you can understand more than one thing; a story where part of the meaning is hidden.

Paradise — The place of God where people who know God go when they die; the place of a person's spirit* after the death of their body, for those who know God.

Passover — An important holy* day for the Jews.* They ate a special meal on this day every year. This was to remember that God freed them from being slaves in Egypt* at the time of Moses.*

Paul/Saul — Paul was a man who did not believe* in Jesus.* His name was Saul then. Jesus came to him and made him an Apostle.* That is when Jesus changed his name to Paul. He wrote many letters. Some of those letters are now in the Bible.*

Peace — When we do not fight God or other people; when we have no troubles in our mind or spirit;* when we are friendly towards other people.

Pentecost The time each year when the Jews* thank God for their food; the time when God gave the Holy Spirit* to the church.*

Persia Persia was a great nation. It took control of Babylon* after the people went into exile* there. The leaders there allowed some of the people of Israel* to return to their land.

Peter/Simon Peter Peter was an Apostle.* He was one of the first people to see Jesus* after he came back from death. God used him to help the church* get started.

Pharaoh Pharaoh was the title for the king in Egypt.* There was a Pharaoh in Egypt when Moses* lived there. He did not want to let the people of Israel* leave. But God did many miracles* and he changed his mind.

Pharisees Pharisees were men who were leaders of the Jews* when Jesus* was on earth. They tried to follow the laws of Moses.* They did not want people to follow Jesus. They were the people who wanted Jesus to be killed.

Philemon Philemon was a friend of Paul.* He was wealthy and owned many slaves. Paul knew one of the slaves who had run away from Philemon. He wrote him a letter to ask him to take that slave back. He wanted him to think of the slave as a brother.

Philip Philip served the new church* in Jerusalem.* He helped give food to the widows there. God used him to tell many people about Jesus in many places.

Philippi Philippi was a city in Asia. Paul* went there to tell people the good news about Jesus.* Many people there believed.*

Philippians Philippians were people from the city of Philippi.* There were many people there who believed* the good news about Jesus.* Paul wrote a letter to the church* there. He wanted to thank them for helping him do his work. That letter is now part of the Bible.*

Philistia Philistia was the territory on the south and west side of Israel.* It was the land where the Philistines lived. These people were enemies of Israel. They were a people who were good at war.

Praise To say how good a person is; to tell God how great he is, as when we are praying and singing to him.

Preach To tell the good news about Jesus Christ to someone or a group of people; to explain the truth about God.

Priests — The priests in Israel* were the men who helped people worship* God. The priests began to do this work when Moses* was the leader. They took care of God's Tent. They made the sacrifices* for the people. When Solomon* built the temple,* they took care of it. They served the people up until the time that Jesus* lived and for many years after. There were also priests in other nations. They sacrificed to false gods.

Promised Land (the) — The Promised Land is one of names for the land of Israel.* It is the land that God promised to Abraham.*

Prophecy — Words and stories that God gave to a person; words that tell of things that will happen in the future; the words that a prophet* speaks or writes.

Prophesy — To tell of things that will happen in the future; to speak with God's (or a false god's) help and on God's (or a false god's) behalf.

Prophets — The Prophets were men that spoke for God. God told them what to say and they told people what God had said. Some prophets told of things that would happen in the future. A person who spoke the words that God gave them to speak.

Psalms/Psalm — Songs that tell God how good and great he is, and what he has done for us; songs for when we are praising God; one of the books of the Old Testament.*

Q

Queen of Sheba — This queen visited Solomon* to see his city and look at his kingdom.* She was impressed with what he had done.

R

Rahab — Rahab was a woman who lived in Jericho.* When Joshua* sent men to look at the land, she hid them and kept them safe. Later, the army of Israel* spared her and her family.

Rechabites (the) — The Rechabites were a family that Jeremiah* talked about in his book. They made a promise to their father. They would not break that promise even when the prophet* told them to.

Redeem — When someone pays the price so that a person in a prison can be let out; to get back by giving money; to get back, to bring back from a dangerous place, when you have help out of a problem; what Christ* did when he gave his life so that God could forgive* us for the bad things we have done.

Rehoboam Rehoboam was the son of king Solomon.* When Solomon died, he became king of all of Israel.* But he was not wise. He told the people that they must pay more taxes and work harder than they did for his father. The people turned against him. Ten families in the north broke away. They made their own nation and chose their own king. Rehoboam stayed in Judah* and became its first king.

Repent To turn from sin* to do what God wants us to do; to decide not to do the bad things you did before; when you turn your mind away from bad things.

Resurrection To be raised from death, to come alive again after you have died.

Revelation Something God makes known to people; the name of the last book of the Bible.*

Righteous/ Righteousness The act of meeting God's standards of right; when God makes a person right with him; people God sees as clean and not his enemies.

Rome Rome was a city in Europe. Rome was the capital city of the kingdom* of the Romans.*

Romans Romans were the people who lived in the city of Rome.* Or they were people who lived in other places but were part of the nation that ruled from Rome.

Ruth Ruth married one of Naomi's* sons. She followed Naomi and her God. She married Boaz.* Her story is found in the book of Ruth.

S

Sabbath A day of rest in which the people are not allowed to work. In the Old Testament* it was Saturday (from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday); day seven of the week for the Jews.* It is a special day for the Jews, for doing what is pleasing to God.

Sacred That which is set apart for God; something God has kept for himself; a thing that God makes holy.*

Sacrifice To kill an animal as an offering* to God so that God will forgive* an evil* thing. The Israelites* were told to make sacrifices to God. Usually, it was a special animal that the priests* killed and burned on the altar.* Some people made sacrifices to false gods. Something a person gives up for a special purpose can also be called a sacrifice; giving up something that is important to you on behalf of someone (God); offering yourself to work for God; Christ's* death for us.

Saint — A holy* person; everyone who trusts* Jesus as Lord;* a name for all of the people of God.

Salvation — When God rescues a person from the result and power of sin;* to save a person from the bad results of the bad things in their lives.

Samaria — Samaria was a city in Israel.* It was the capital of the northern kingdom.* Samaria was also the name given to the territory around that city.

Samaritans — Samaritans were the people who lived in Samaria.* They were part Jews,* but they did not worship* the same way that the Jews did. The Jews did not like the Samaritans.

Samson — Samson was a judge* in Israel.* He had long hair. That hair was a sign that he was set apart for God. It made him very strong. He won many battles. But he was not careful to obey God. He killed many of the enemies of God when he died.

Samuel — Samuel was the last of the judges* of Israel.* He was also a prophet.* God used him to make David* the king of Israel.*

Sanballat and Tobia — These two men lived in Jerusalem* after the exile.* When the people came back to the land, these two men tried to oppose them. They tried to stop them from repairing the wall that surrounded the city.

Sarah — Sarah was the wife of Abraham.* God changed her name from Sarai to Sarah. God promised that she would have a son when she was old. She gave birth to a son named Isaac.*

Satan/Devil — Satan is the leader of the evil* spirits. He is the enemy of God. He came into the garden to fool Adam* and Eve.* He caused Job* many problems. But God will not let him go without being punished for ever. God will throw him into a fire that will never go out.

Saul — Saul was the first king of Israel.* He was a strong leader at first. But he was not patient and careful to obey God. Saul died and David* became king.

Saviour — Jesus, the one who saves us; the one who rescues; someone who will bring us to back God from the bad things we have done; someone who saves us from the bad things other people have done to us.

Scripture — The writings of God's holy* words; another name for the Bible;* the book which tells God's truth and shows that Jesus is Lord,* the saviour* and Messiah.*

Scroll A long piece of paper or animal's skin. It is fixed around two poles of wood. It usually has writing on it.

Seal To close something so that it can not be opened; a thing that is used to close something so that it can not be opened; a mark on something that shows who it belongs to. In the book of Revelation,* Jesus* opens a scroll that had a seal on it that no one else could open.

Serpent/Snake The serpent was the animal that spoke to Eve* in the garden. Satan* used the serpent. He lied to Eve and got her to doubt God.

Servant of the Lord The servant of the Lord* is a name Isaiah* used to talk about the Messiah.* He would come to rescue his people.

Shepherd A person who cares for a group of sheep. The Bible* sometimes says that God is like a shepherd. He cares for his people. Jesus* said that he was the good shepherd. He would give his life for his people (sheep).

Shulamite The Shulamite is a name for the woman in the book of the Song of Solomon. She loved a young man. He loved her. The book is about what they said to each other.

Silas Silas was one of Paul's* friends. They went many places. They told people the good news about Jesus.* They helped the churches* every place they went.

Simon Peter Simon Peter was an Apostle.* He was one of the first people to see Jesus* after he came back from death. God used him to help the church* get started. He is best known by the name Peter.

Sin/Sinned/ Sinful When people do things against God or other people; when we do not obey the commands of God; when we do not do what God wants us to do; the evil* that is in us which we have from birth.

Sinner A person who breaks God's rules; a person who does things against God.

Solomon Solomon was David's* son. He was the king after David died. God made him very wise.

Son of God Son of God is a title. It is used to speak of Jesus* in the New Testament.* It means that Jesus comes from God the Father. Christians* can also become the sons of God. This happens when they believe* in Jesus and he makes them a part of God's family.

Son of Man — Son of Man is a name for Jesus* used in the New Testament.* Jesus is the only one who uses this name in the Gospels.* Daniel* uses this name in the Old Testament.* He has a dream. In that dream, he sees a mighty king, 'one like a son of man.' God gives this king rule over all other kings. And his kingdom would last for ever. In the New Testament, the title always refers to Jesus.

Soul — The part of a person that we cannot see that is in us during our life, and lives after we die. God gave a soul to Adam* and Eve* when he breathed life into them. The soul of a person is sometimes called the person's spirit.*

Spirit — A being that does not have a body and no one can see it. God is spirit. God made other spirit beings (angels*) that we cannot see, who can be good or bad. The spirit of a person is sometimes called the person's soul.*

Stephen — Stephen was part of the first church* in Jerusalem.* The people trusted* him. When the widows needed food, the church asked Stephen to help them. He died because he spoke about Jesus.* Some of the Jews* were angry with him. They threw stones at him until he died.

T

Temple — The Temple was the place that Solomon* built for God. Israel* went there to worship* God. The priests* made sacrifices.* It was the place where God would come and live with his people. The temple was in the city of Jerusalem.* Other nations built temples. They went to those places to honour false gods.

Testament — Another word for covenant;* a special agreement or promise. When God and people agree to a special thing, they make a covenant.* An agreement between two or more people.

Thessalonica — Thessalonica was a city in the country we now call Greece. Paul* visited that place on one of his trips. He wrote two letters to the people in that city.

Thessalonians — Thessalonians were the people from Thessalonica.* Paul* visited that place on one of his trips. Many people listened to him. Many of them decided to follow Jesus.* He wrote two letters to them. Both of those letters are now part of the Bible.*

Thomas — Thomas was an Apostle.* He was there when Jesus* died. But he was not there the first time people saw Jesus after he rose from death. So Thomas doubted. But, when he did see Jesus, he believed.*

Throne A special chair where a king sits. It is the place the king rules from.

Timothy Timothy was a young man who was like a son to Paul.* He helped lead the church* and choose leaders for it. Paul wrote two letters to help him know how to care for the church.

Titus Titus was a young man who helped Paul.* He also helped God's people in many ways. Paul wrote him a letter so he would know how to care for the church.* That letter is now in the Bible.*

Tribe A group that has a common beginning or purpose. The sons of Jacob* each had families. Those families became known as the tribes of Israel.* The tribes were named after the sons of Jacob.

Trinity The word we use to speak of the one God that is three persons; the word we use to speak of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.*

Trust To follow something or someone you think is true; to believe* in someone or something; to have faith* and act in faith; to believe in someone you think speaks the truth.

Tychicus Tychicus was a friend of Paul.* He went with him on some of his trips. He helped him collect money for the poor people in Jerusalem.* When Paul wrote his letter to Ephesus,* Tychicus took it there for him.

U

Uzzah Uzzah was a man that lived during the time of David.* He saw the special ark* of God come by on a wagon. He thought it was going to fall off so he touched it. When he touched the ark, God took away his life.

Uzziah Uzziah was a king in Israel.* He lived during the time of Isaiah.* He did many good things. Soon after he died, Isaiah went to the temple* and had a special vision* of God.

V

Vashti Vashti was the queen of Persia.* She would not dance at the king's party. So the king decided to choose a new queen. After some time, Esther* became the next queen.

Virgin Someone who has never been with another person to have sex. Jesus' mother Mary* was a virgin when God came to her. She had never been with a man.

Vision A dream that someone can have while they are awake. In the Bible,* God uses visions to speak to his people. God gave the prophets* visions to show what he wanted them to say to the people. Not all visions come from God.

Vow A promise. Most often in the Bible,* it is a sacred* promise made to or before God. It is a sin* to make a careless vow or to not keep the vow you have made.

W

Wilderness (the) The 'wilderness' was the place where Israel* wandered after they left Egypt.* It was a desert place. God led them through the wilderness for 40 years.

Worship The way we should act when we are with God. We honour him with prayer. We sing and speak praise* to him. We bend down before him to honour him. Worship is a way that we show that God is great and we love him. To show honour to God; to act in ways that please God. Some people do not worship God. They worship false gods.

Wrath What a person feels when they are very angry; what a person does when they are very angry. The wrath of God is the right thing he feels when he is angry with sin;* the right thing God does when he is angry with people who sin.

X

Xerxes Xerxes was the king of Persia.* He told his queen to dance for him at a party. When she refused, he decided to choose a new queen. Esther* was the queen he chose.

Z

Zechariah Zechariah was a prophet.* He was also a priest.* He spoke for God to the people of Judah.* He was a prophet after the people came back from exile.* He told the people to remember God and finish the work on the temple.*

Zephaniah Zephaniah was a prophet.* He spoke for God to the people of Judah.* He saw many things that needed to be changed. The people were not living for God. They were not acting in kind ways to one another. He told them to repent*. It is possible that his words led King Josiah* to lead the people back to God.

Zerubbabel Zerubbabel was a Jew.* He was born in Babylon.* He was from the family of David.* He led many of the Jews back to their home land. Some of the prophets* said that God chose him to lead the people back to the land.

Zion

Zion was the name for the holy* hill where the city of Jerusalem* was built. Sometimes, it was used as a name for the city of Jerusalem or the city of God. The prophets* used the word to talk about the place where God lives. That could mean the hill where the temple* was. Or Zion can speak of heaven,* the place where God is now.

Zophar

Zophar was one of the friends of Job.* He gave Job some advice. His advice was not helpful.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tom Castor is the founder of the Clear and Simple Media Group, a ministry of the Baptist General Conference of Canada. Tom is a seasoned writer and communicator who has done pioneer mission work in the subarctic of Canada, church planting in a restricted access country in SE Asia, and story development work in Africa. He did his undergraduate work in Biblical studies and English literature, and he has a graduate degree in linguistics. For more than a decade he was the senior pastor of Grant Memorial Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.