



DISCOVERY

**Mark, 1 & 2 Corinthians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus,
Philemon, 1 & 2 Peter**

The Credentials, Introduction, and Opposition of the Son of God

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The Authentication of the Son of God

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Discovery is a Bible study course for the high school and adult levels. Bible references are taken from the King James Version. The companion to these Sunday school lessons is Daybreak, a daily devotional and personal Bible study continuum. All of the material is available on our website, as well as in printed form. The print version is designed to be stored in a binder; subsequent modules can then be easily inserted. Discovery is an official publication of the Apostolic Faith Church. All rights are reserved.

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DISCOVERY



The Credentials, Introduction, and Opposition to the Son of God

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Mark 1:1 through 3:35

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: and there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Mark 1:10-11)

BACKGROUND

John Mark, author of the Book of Mark, was the son of Mary, a devout woman who lived in Jerusalem and in whose home early Christians assembled. Mark was a cousin of Barnabas, and traveled with both Barnabas and Paul. It is possible that Mark was converted to Christ through the ministry of Peter, and later he acted as Peter’s interpreter and helper.

The Book of Mark is considered by many to be the earliest of the Gospels, probably written between A.D. 50 and 67. The book was likely written from Rome for the purpose of reaching the Gentile Christians, to prove unquestionably to them that Jesus Christ was the Messiah.

From the opening words, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God . . .,” Mark established Jesus’ credentials. The book documents the ministry of John the Baptist, then tells of the baptism of Jesus, His temptation, and the call of the disciples. By the third chapter, Jesus is already beginning to face opposition.

Most of the events recounted in these first three chapters took place in the area of Galilee. Capernaum, a city on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, was an economic center and had a military installation. This city became Jesus’ headquarters.

The narrative is fast-paced, and the Greek word *eutheos*, translated *straightway*, seems to be a favorite of Mark’s. While various English words are used, the original word was used eight times in the first chapter and thirty-nine times in the other fifteen chapters.

QUESTIONS

1. What aspects of John the Baptist’s ministry were identified in Mark 1:3-4? In what way does this message apply to us today?

2. Jesus’ water baptism was a milestone in His earthly life. Prior to that event, He had been little known. When He came to be baptized by John, He was publicly introduced as the Messiah, and shortly would begin His ministry. Why do you think His personal baptism was necessary? Mark 1:9-11

3. What does Christ expect us to give up to follow Him, and what can we learn from the disciples’ response to Jesus’ call? Mark 1:16-18

4. While Jesus was in the synagogue on the Sabbath, one who had an evil spirit spoke out about Jesus. How did Jesus respond to the man possessed by the evil spirit? (Mark 1:23-26) What does this account tell us about evil spirits and Jesus’ power?

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The Authentication of the Son of God

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Mark 4:1 through 8:38

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.” (Mark 8:29)

BACKGROUND

Chapters 4-8 of the Book of Mark focus on proving to believers among the Greek-speaking residents of the Roman Empire that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. A selection of parables is given, although in keeping with Mark’s stress on action, he presented fewer of Jesus’ teachings but proportionately more accounts of His miracles than did the writers of the other Gospels.

Jesus’ credibility was established in these five chapters by accounts of His power over nature, disease and physical disabilities, the antagonism of the Pharisees and scribes, and evil spirits.

In this portion of text, Jesus continued to minister in the region of Galilee and, as recorded in chapter 7, He also reached out into the surrounding areas such as Tyre, Sidon, and Caesarea-Philippi. By ministering in Phoenicia, where Tyre and Sidon were located, Jesus established that His ministry was to all people—first to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles. In addition to performing miracles and teaching in parables, He expanded His outreach by commissioning and sending out the disciples.

The people of Jesus’ own town of Nazareth did not accept Him as God’s Son, nor did the religious leaders. Yet Peter, speaking for the disciples, made the profound declaration that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah from God.

At the end of chapter 8, Jesus gave the disciples His first prediction of His death.

QUESTIONS

1. Mark 4:2 indicates that Jesus taught many things by parables. Given the importance of Christ’s teachings, why do you think He chose to use this method?

2. What can we learn from Christ’s demeanor and actions in the midst of the sea storm? Mark 4:35-41

3. In Mark chapter 5, we are given three accounts of healing. In what ways are these three instances different from each other?

4. How are the miracles referred to in the previous question similar?



The Instructions of the Son of God

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Mark 9:1 through 13:37

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.” (Mark 13:35-37)

BACKGROUND

A shift of focus is evident in this section of the Book of Mark. The last verses of chapter 8 and the beginning of chapter 9 are considered a midpoint of this book. From here on, Jesus began to interact more with His close followers and less with the multitudes. In about six months, He would face the Cross.

Chapter 9 tells how Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James, and John. Moses (representing the Law) and Elijah (representing the prophets) stood before them. Yet Jesus in shiny, white raiment transcended them both. Jesus was the fulfillment of both the Law and the messages of the prophets, and God’s Voice confirmed that He was the divine Son of God.

With His steps headed toward Jerusalem, Jesus began to intensify His instructions to the disciples to help prepare them for the traumatic days ahead. He taught them about humility, unity, marriage and divorce, positions in the kingdom of God, and faith. Twice He warned them that He would be put to death, but also promised that He would rise again the third day.

Chapter 11 tells of Jesus’ Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem and His cleansing of the Temple. The opposition of the religious leaders was strong, and Jesus gave parables and instruction to them, as well as to His disciples. The stage was being set for the crucial event of all time.

The events recorded in chapter 13 are not in chronological order. Some took place in history, some are present-day happenings, and some are yet to come. The purpose was not to pinpoint the timetable of events, but rather to warn believers to be ready for the terrible times ahead. The text concludes with the theme: “And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch” (Mark 13:37).

QUESTIONS

1. The Transfiguration was a glorious revelation and an important event in the life of Christ. Why do you think Jesus told Peter, James, and John not to tell others about this until after His death? Mark 9:9

2. In Mark 9:43-45, Jesus gave a stern warning about the consequence of allowing sin into one’s life. He told us to cut off our hand, our foot, or to pluck out our eye if they would cause us to sin. How should we apply this concept?

3. Jesus instructed His disciples to “have salt in yourselves” (Mark 9:50). Salt has several properties, including enhancing flavor, purifying, and preserving food. How can each of these attributes of salt be exemplified in our Christian lives?

DISCOVERY



The Crucifixion and Resurrection of the Son of God

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Mark 14:1 through 16:20

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.”
(Mark 15:39)

BACKGROUND

The final chapters of Mark contain the account of the most crucial event of all time: Jesus’ ultimate deed of servanthood. Chapters 14 and 15 are sometimes called the “passion narrative,” and offer Mark’s account of the events that were preliminary to Jesus’ death, His Crucifixion, and details regarding His burial. Chapter 16 gives the Resurrection story.

Not one of the events that transpired was an accident, nor was Jesus a victim. The plotting of the religious leaders, the betrayal by Judas, the trials, the mocking and physical abuse, and the agony of the Cross were all foretold by the prophets. Jesus willingly submitted Himself and was obedient to His Father’s plan, thereby making it possible for all people to be delivered from sin and death.

The city of Jerusalem was exceedingly crowded during this final week before the Crucifixion, because Passover had to be observed there. Jesus’ nights during this time were spent either on the Mount of Olives, where the Garden of Gethsemane was located, or in Bethany, a city about two miles from Jerusalem on the east side of the Mount of Olives.

After Jesus’ betrayal by Judas, arrest, and the mockery of a trial, Mark tells how Jesus was led away to be crucified. Crucifixion was an agonizing and degrading form of punishment used by the Roman government. Jesus died about 3:00 p.m. on Friday, and was buried quickly before the Sabbath began at 6:00 p.m.

On Sunday morning, the angel inside the tomb declared the message that contains hope for every person: “He is risen.” Because Jesus conquered death, every soul has the opportunity to have eternal life.

QUESTIONS

1. The word *Messiah* means “Anointed One.” Given this, why were some of those present at the home of Simon the leper indignant when Mary anointed Jesus?
Mark 14:4-5

2. Why do you think Jesus made the comment, “Verily I say unto you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her”?
Mark 14:9

3. What instructions did Jesus give two of His disciples about finding the place where they would spend the Passover? (Mark 14:13-15) What are the benefits of simply obeying God’s instructions?

4. In Mark 14:22-25, during the Passover observance with His disciples, Jesus instituted the ordinance we know today as the “Lord’s Supper.” What did the broken bread and “fruit of the vine” symbolize? Why is this observance significant to us?

4. At the beginning of chapter 3, Paul refers to the Corinthian believers as “babes” in their spiritual lives. How would you define a “babe” in Christ? How does a “babe” differ from one who is spiritually mature?

5. Paul said he could not address some of those who attended the church in Corinth as spiritual people because they were still carnal. How was their carnality manifested? (1 Corinthians 3:3-4)

6. In 1 Corinthians 3:23, Paul says that believers “are Christ’s.” What does that imply regarding our actions and attitudes as they relate to the maturing process?

7. According to 1 Corinthians 4:12-13, Paul and the other Apostles had suffered deeply at the hands of some individuals. Identify three forms of negative treatment that they had received. How did the Apostles choose to react? What can this teach us about how to deal with those who oppose us?

CONCLUSION

There is a big difference between *knowing* the Gospel and *living* the Gospel, and part of “living it” is getting along in peace and love with our fellow believers. Let us do our part to build unity in the Body of Christ!

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Instructions for Unity



SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

1 Corinthians 5:1 through 11:34

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”
(1 Corinthians 6:20)

BACKGROUND

Chapter 5 begins the second major division of the epistle. In these chapters, Paul was writing to this group of believers to address a variety of issues that had arisen and were severely affecting the unity of the church. Basically, the Christian faith was under attack in Corinth.

Although the Corinthian converts had broken from idolatry and stepped out of the corruption of their society to form a local church, it was imperative for them to realize that the Gospel does not tolerate compromise. There must be a clean break with the old sinful lifestyle, and it was at this point the Corinthian believers had faltered.

In addition, the Corinthians needed to understand the supreme importance of love in order to build and preserve unity among their members. Followers of Christ cannot be in unity if they are in conflict with one another, and this was a primary issue in the church at Corinth.

Non-believers watched the Early Church, much as they do today, to see if Christians lived the message they preached. Paul desired for the Corinthian church to grow spiritually and mature into the Spirit-led believers he knew they could be. How could a church reach out to those in need of the Gospel when they are bickering from within? So many issues were unresolved in Corinth that the Holy Spirit was hindered. When hearts of believers are in unity with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit is able to move on their behalf, convicting sinners, healing the sick in body and spirit, and moving believers to a closer walk with God.

As in any church, those at Corinth were in different stages of growth. Many were truly “babes in Christ.” Others were slow to abandon their pagan ways. Because of this, they did not know the answers to questions that arose and they needed guidance. Paul offered that guidance—a sort of “how to” manual; gentle when appropriate, but in many cases up front and to the point. Some of the key issues needing to be addressed included: fornication, marriage, discipline within the church, handling differences with fellow

believers, caring for those who were weaker in the faith, eating food that had been offered to idols, and proper conduct at the Lord’s Supper.

The Gospel message is plain and simple. Paul encouraged the church to pursue a bond of unity with this being the focus.

QUESTIONS

1. Leaven was symbolic of sin, and Paul wrote that “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” Why should a church be diligent in dealing with sin? (1 Corinthians 5:6-7) How can we keep the sinful practices of our culture from creeping into our lives and our church?

2. What two points did Paul make regarding settling disputes among Christians? (1 Corinthians 6)

3. What Bible doctrine does chapter 7 teach?

4. In what way should we apply Paul’s advice concerning stronger and weaker brothers to our lives? (1 Corinthians 8:12-13)

5. To what two athletic events did Paul compare the Christian walk? (1 Corinthians 9:24-26) What disciplines does an athlete have that can be applied to our Christian walk?

6. Name the transgressions of the Children of Israel that Paul mentioned in 1 Corinthians 10. Why is it important to remember lessons from the past?

7. What are some practical steps that we can take to maintain unity with our fellow believers?

CONCLUSION

Paul had a desire for the church at Corinth to have unity with the Spirit of God. We should have that same desire for our church today, and be taking steps to ensure that we are building the unity of the Body of Christ, not tearing it down.

NOTES



Results of Unity

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

1 Corinthians 12:1 through 16:24

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.” (1 Corinthians 12:12)

BACKGROUND

Instead of building up and unifying the Corinthian church, a misconception regarding spiritual gifts was dividing it. This misconception revolved around some members thinking they were more “spiritual” than others because of their gifts.

In chapter 12, verses 1-11, Paul described many spiritual gifts given by God. He then explained how essential each gift was in unifying the Body of Christ, the Church. Imagery of the human body was common in the ancient world, although Paul used it in a special way. He stressed both sides of the picture—first, the oneness of the body, and second, its diversity. Paul compared the necessity of each gift in the Church to the necessity of each part in the body; each part has its own function and all must work together for the good of the whole.

Chapter 13 reveals the greatest of God’s gifts, which is charity (love). In morally corrupt Corinth, the word *love* had little meaning. Four Greek words which translate into the English word “love” are:

- 1) *Agape*—selfless, sacrificial love that acts in conformity to the character and nature of God.
- 2) *Phileo*—endearing love that cherishes, such as the husband/wife relationship, the love of a brother/sister, or dearest friend.
- 3) *Eros*—passionate or physical love.
- 4) *Storge*—affectionate love, such as the loyalty of an employee to his employer.

Of the four, 1 Corinthians 13 describes *agape* love. Translators had no proper word to use when attempting to convey the true meaning of Christian love. Hence, in this chapter, the English word chosen to represent *agape* love was “charity,” which is related to “cherish.”

The misuse of the gift of speaking in tongues by some individuals was also a concern in the Corinthian church because it had caused disorder in worship. Paul instructed that speaking in tongues was a legitimate gift from the Holy Spirit, but should not be used as a sign of spiritual superiority. Rather, it should be a means to spiritual unity.

Chapter 14, verses 34-35, address the practices of women in the church. It is clear from chapters 12 through 14 that women had spiritual gifts and were encouraged to exercise them in the Body of Christ. However, in the Corinthian culture, women were not allowed to confront men in public. Apparently, some of the women who had become Christians thought their Christian freedom gave them the right to question men in public worship. This was causing division in the church. In addition, women of that day did not receive formal religious education, as did the men. Paul was asking the women not to flaunt their Christian freedom during the worship service. He did this to promote unity, not to teach about a woman’s role in the church.

In Chapter 15, Paul reviewed the subject of resurrection. Corinth was a Greek city. Greeks generally believed in immortality of the soul, but not physical resurrection of the body. Christianity, in contrast, teaches that the body and soul will be united after resurrection. Because the church at Corinth was in the heart of Greek culture, Paul addressed this point of confusion and disbelief among its members. He lovingly but fervently emphasized to the Corinthian believers, the importance of their belief in physical resurrection, giving detailed examples of what Christians’ resurrected bodies will be like.

At the conclusion of this epistle, Paul offered brief comments about his travel plans and the plans of his co-workers, Timothy and Apollos, and then made his closing remarks. He directed the Corinthian believers to be alert to spiritual dangers, to remain true to the Lord, to behave maturely, to be strong, and to do all things with kindness and love.

QUESTIONS

1. What does 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 reveal about the unity and diversity of spiritual gifts? Consider what unique talents God has given you. How might they be used to benefit the Body of Christ?

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Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians



SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

2 Corinthians 1:1 through 13:14

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.” (2 Corinthians 2:4)

BACKGROUND

The church at Corinth was founded by Paul on his second missionary journey (see Acts 18:1-11). He ministered to this assembly for about a year and a half, but after his departure, problems emerged in the infant congregation. The church at Corinth was weak and its members struggled with their Christian faith and lifestyle. They were surrounded by idolatry and immorality, and false teachers were a constant threat. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus during his third missionary journey, in order to deal with moral problems in the church and to answer specific questions on several issues. That letter, however, did not produce the desired results.

Paul made a brief and painful visit to Corinth to confront some who were creating division in the church. Upon his return to Ephesus, Paul was so distressed that he wrote a severe letter (which is now lost) to the assembly, urging discipline for those who had risen up in arrogant defiance of Paul. This letter was delivered by his associate Titus.

It was with relief that Paul, while on his third missionary journey, received the report from Titus that the majority of the Corinthians had been genuinely grieved by his letter. Yet, there were still issues to deal with. The challenges against Paul's apostolic authority had increased and attempts were being made to discredit him. Paul wrote the Book of 2 Corinthians to express his relief at hearing Titus' message, but also to set forth his credentials as a true Apostle of Jesus Christ and to denounce those who were attacking his integrity.

The Book of 2 Corinthians is the least methodical and most personal of Paul's epistles. One of the key words in this letter is *comfort*, or *encouragement*. The Greek translation of this word means “called to one's side to help.” The verb form, “to comfort,” is used eighteen times in this letter, and the noun form, eleven times. In spite of all the trials Paul had experienced and was still experiencing with this church, he was able by God's grace to write a letter threaded through with encouragement.

QUESTIONS

1. What was Paul's secret for victory in the midst of tribulations? (2 Corinthians 1:3-5) What truths are revealed about God in these verses?

2. In 2 Corinthians 2:5-11, Paul began to address the specific problems that were troubling the Corinthian church. It seems, an individual in the assembly had undergone discipline by the Church for his sinful actions, and had subsequently repented. How did Paul instruct the Corinthians to treat this individual, and what godly principle is brought out through Paul's instructions?

3. Legalists who had already created problems in Antioch and Jerusalem (see Acts 15) had infiltrated the believers in Corinth and persuaded some to live by the Law of Moses. Paul refuted these false teachings by contrasting the New Covenant ministry to the Old Covenant Law. Name at least three differences between the old Law and the New Covenant. 2 Corinthians 3:3-18

4. We all face problems in our Christian lives. Paul had learned that the secret of endurance was inner strength from the Holy Spirit. He said, “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinthians 4:17). What are some ways that affliction can bring about “glory” or blessing in our lives?

5. Paul appealed to the Corinthians to separate themselves for God, and not to form binding relationships with nonbelievers. What three arguments did he present to try to convince these believers that they must separate from that which is contrary to the will of God? 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

6. Chapters 8 and 9 deal primarily with benevolent giving. Paul saw the members of the Gentile congregation as debtors to the Jews for sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with them, and he encouraged the Corinthians to help the Jerusalem Christians financially in their time of need. What principles regarding giving did he establish?

7. Certain members of the Corinthian church had resorted to discrediting Paul, while boasting of their own qualifications. Paul boldly rejected the idea that he was inferior to these men, who claimed divine authority but whose claims were false. He intentionally mimicked them by providing details of his own “résumé,” which was far superior in the Gospel. What personal experiences did Paul list that proved his authority? 2 Corinthians 11:23-33

8. Paul was planning another trip to Corinth, and he was concerned he might find that ungodly practices had infiltrated the Corinthian congregation. He wrote sternly to the group, hoping they would deal with such issues before he arrived. What particular problems did he name? How can we guard against such problems creeping into the church today? 2 Corinthians 12:20-21

CONCLUSION

In Paul’s closing words to the believers at Corinth, he gave a parting plea in the form of a series of exhortations. He encouraged them to seek reconciliation, to share a common purpose, and to live in harmony with one another. His admonition is still fitting for the church today. Like the Corinthians, we must apply the principles of God’s Word in order to have God’s blessing upon our fellowship!

NOTES

DISCOVERY



Paul's First Letter to Timothy

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

1 Timothy 1:1 through 6:21

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” (1 Timothy 4:12)

BACKGROUND

Paul's first epistle to Timothy is thought to have been written about A.D. 64, during the last few years of Paul's life. It is referred to as a “pastoral epistle,” as are 2 Timothy and Titus. Paul was Timothy's spiritual father, and wrote to encourage and instruct him in practical subjects such as doctrine, public worship, qualifications for Church officials, and confrontation of false teaching in the Church. He also instructed Timothy concerning the treatment of widows, elders, and servants.

Timothy was the youngest member of the only three-generation family of believers mentioned in the New Testament. He was a young man when he joined Paul in the city of Lystra in Galatia (Acts 16:1-4), on the Apostle's second missionary journey. His father was a Greek and his mother, Eunice, was a Jew. Paul took Timothy with him on his third missionary trip, spending three years with him in Ephesus and the surrounding areas (Acts 18:23—21:14). After Paul's trip to Jerusalem for the Passover, he was sent to prison in Rome (Acts 21:18—28:31). Timothy was present with Paul in Rome when Paul wrote three of his prison letters: Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

After Paul's release from his first imprisonment, he and Timothy visited the churches in Ephesus. Paul eventually left for Macedonia while Timothy stayed to minister in Ephesus. It was during this time that Paul wrote this letter to Timothy.

Ephesus was a strategic center of travel and commerce. Situated on the Aegean Sea at the mouth of the Cayster River, the city was one of the greatest seaports of the ancient world. It was distinguished by the Temple of Diana and a theatre that could hold fifty thousand spectators. Many Jews lived there and the seeds of the Gospel are thought to have been sown in Ephesus immediately after Pentecost.

QUESTIONS

1. Paul had a spiritual father/son relationship with Timothy (1 Timothy 1:2, 18). How can we benefit from the example that Paul demonstrated?

2. Why did Paul consider himself to have been “chief” among sinners? 1 Timothy 1:13-15

3. In Chapter 2, verses 1 and 2, Paul exhorted Timothy to pray for all men, including government officials. What is our responsibility today concerning our government officials?

4. In Chapter 3, Paul listed qualifications for two church “offices,” or leadership roles. What were these roles? Why do you think Paul felt it necessary to list the qualifications for those who held these roles?



Paul's Second Letter to Timothy

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

2 Timothy 1:1 through 4:22

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.” (2 Timothy 4:5)

BACKGROUND

The Book of 2 Timothy is probably the last recorded words of the Apostle Paul. After a period of freedom following his first house arrest in Rome, Paul had been imprisoned again under much more stringent terms. In that setting, this intimate admonition by a veteran minister nearing the end of his life's assignment to his “son in the faith” was written.

It is possible that Timothy's family (his mother, Eunice, and grandmother, Lois) was converted on Paul's first missionary journey through Lystra and Derbe. Paul warmly spoke of the “unfeigned faith” which seemed to belong to all three generations. Later, Timothy joined the missionary team of Paul and Silas as they traveled through Lystra and Derbe during Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 16:1). He accompanied Paul to many locations, including Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Thessalonica, Berea, and possibly even Rome. Apparently, he later became Paul's emissary to the church in Ephesus. Tradition suggests Timothy was the first bishop, or pastor, of the Ephesian church.

Scholars generally date the composition of this letter to be approximately A.D. 67. In A.D. 64, a great fire in Rome devastated much of the city. Emperor Nero subsequently began a period of persecution of Christians in an effort to turn the blame for the fire from himself to Christians. During this time, Paul was imprisoned in a Roman dungeon, and it was from that prison he wrote this letter to Timothy.

Paul's final instructions included personal encouragement to Timothy to stand as a strong witness in the face of opposition and persecution. The Apostle warned of false teachers and instructed Timothy in how to counter them and their teachings. His advice was sprinkled with gems of wisdom acquired during his years of ministry that he passed on to Timothy and others who would later read this letter. Paul concluded with his “last words,” charging Timothy to remain faithful in his ministry, and indicated that his own ministry was coming to an end.

Tradition holds that after this letter was written, Paul was beheaded for his faith in Jesus.

QUESTIONS

1. How did Paul address Timothy in verse 2 of chapter 1? What does this indicate about their relationship?

2. In reading 2 Timothy 1:6-12, we find indications that Timothy had apparently come under fire for his youth, his association with Paul, and his leadership. Paul encouraged Timothy, who perhaps was more timid by nature than the older man, to persevere and to stand up for the truth he had received. Paul stated that he was “not ashamed” of the testimony of Jesus. What are some ways we can show the world that we are not ashamed of the Gospel?

3. The three illustrations Paul used in verses 3-7 of chapter 2 are that of a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer. What point is brought out about each of them individually? What attributes do they all have in common?



Peter's First Letter

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

1 Peter 1:1 through 5:14

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.” (1 Peter 4:12-13)

BACKGROUND

The Book of 1 Peter is a letter written by Peter around A.D. 62-64, to the saints who had been scattered throughout Asia minor because of the rampant persecution of the time. Emperor Nero had come into power in Rome and great persecution followed in his wake. History tells us that Peter was later executed during this same period of oppression.

The purpose of Peter’s letter was to comfort and encourage the saints who were suffering. Before He ascended, Jesus had told Peter to “strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32) and to “feed my sheep” (John 21:15-17). Peter was fulfilling this charge by encouraging believers in their time of intense persecution. He offered concluding thoughts when he said, “I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand” (1 Peter 5:12). Peter was describing their ability to stand as “the true grace of God.”

Peter started the epistle by giving thanks for salvation, and pointed out the hope there is in the Gospel. He reminded the saints that adversity would come—in fact, it should be expected—but these trials would work to strengthen their faith. Peter admonished the saints to live holy lives, reminding them of Christ who suffered for them and had redeemed them. They were encouraged to react with love in the face of persecution, just as Jesus did when He faced the Cross.

Beginning with chapter 2 verse 11, Peter advised the believers on how to conduct themselves in many aspects of their lives. He spoke of submission to civil authority, to their masters, within the family, and among each other. He wanted them to live in God’s will, with prayer, love, hospitality, and service.

Peter drew this epistle to a close by reminding the saints to be vigilant and to resist the devil, who as a roaring lion would try to devour them. He let them know that God’s grace would be available to make them perfect, established, strengthened, and settled in the faith.

QUESTIONS

1. The saints Peter was addressing were suffering great persecution. He encouraged them by stating that there are benefits in suffering. What purpose might suffering accomplish in God’s people? What should be our attitude when we go through trials? 1 Peter 1:7; 4:12-13

2. In 1 Peter 1:15-16, we are admonished to be holy as God is holy. How is this possible when we are born with a sinful nature, and we live in a world where sin is all around us? How can we maintain our hearts in a manner so God’s holiness can shine out through us?

3. The saints were instructed to “love one another with a pure heart fervently” (1 Peter 1:22) and to “have fervent charity among yourselves” (1 Peter 4:8). What does it mean to love with a pure heart? How do we love a brother or sister in Christ fervently?

DISCOVERY

Peter's Second Letter



SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

2 Peter 1:1 through 3:18

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)

BACKGROUND

Whereas the epistle of 1 Peter defined the true grace of God as the ability for Christians to stand in the face of intense suffering and persecution, 2 Peter addressed the distinction between true and false teachers. The words of 1 Peter were designed to encourage and strengthen the brethren. The words of 2 Peter were designed to help them stand in the face of the false teachers who had emerged. In 2 Peter 3:1-2, we find the purpose of the epistle: “This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour.”

These early believers had been converted as the result of true teaching, and they understood the words of the Lord Jesus and the prophets. With this letter, Peter encouraged them to hold to those truths. At the same time, he reminded them to be alert to false teachers, including “false prophets . . . who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Peter 2:1).

The style of the letter is that of a “testament” or farewell discourse. Peter’s impending death, which he alluded to in verse 14 of chapter 1, set the backdrop for such a testament to be written. This form of address was well known in Old Testament and early Christian writing traditions. It gave opportunity for a great leader to summarize his teachings, instruct his followers, and make warnings concerning the future. These words often carried special weight because of their nearness to the final passing of the leader.

It appears that with the passing of the first generation of disciples, questions began to arise concerning the Lord’s promised return. Peter’s letter responded to these questions, mounting a defense of the apostolic expectation of coming judgment and final salvation. The letter also used the imminent return of the Lord as motivation for righteous living until that day.

In this epistle, Peter confronted false teachers and heresies with the Gospel message in terms which were applicable to the Hellenistic (Greek) culture. He refuted skepticism over end-time issues and condemned the lowering of moral standards, including purity and holiness. Examples of judgment from Old Testament writers were used to remind Christians of the faithfulness of God both to deliver the godly and to judge the wicked. Peter outlined the requirements of godly living, grounding those requirements in the abundant salvation offered by Christ, and the inspiration of the Scriptures.

QUESTIONS

1. Peter opened his letter with a greeting to those who had obtained “like precious faith with us.” Why is faith precious? Why do you think Peter used the word “like” (or “alike”) to describe the faith they had?

2. In 2 Peter 1:3-4, it is clear that God has given us all that we need for life and godliness by His power through Christ. He mentioned “exceeding great and precious promises,” which are given so that we can be partakers of the divine nature, escaping the world’s corruption. It is out of this sufficiency that we are called to diligently supplement or nourish our lives in Christ by adding certain godly qualities. List and describe the attributes Peter mentioned that Christians should diligently seek in their spiritual lives.

2 Peter 1:5-7

3. Peter did not indicate that the attributes listed in question two were optional. If we do not seek to possess them, how will this affect our walk with God? (2 Peter 1:8-10) What will be the result if we do?

4. Peter, James, and John heard the voice of God at the transfiguration of Christ. Peter alluded to this experience in 2 Peter 1:16-18 and, in the concluding verses of the chapter, indicated that God's written Word is as reliable and verifiable as the spoken words heard on the mountain. Why is this true? 2 Peter 1:20-21

5. In chapter 2, Peter predicted that false teachers would imperil the church by coming in "privily," or under pretense, disguising their motives. What types of false doctrinal teachings can we observe in religious society today? How can we guard ourselves from being influenced by them?

6. Make a list of some of the word pictures Peter painted in chapter 2 of those who teach falsely or embrace false teachings. Why do you think he chose to use some unpleasant illustrations?

7. Why was Peter so concerned that believers stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance? 2 Peter 3:1-2

8. In 2 Peter 3:10-14, what actions did Peter call for from believers?

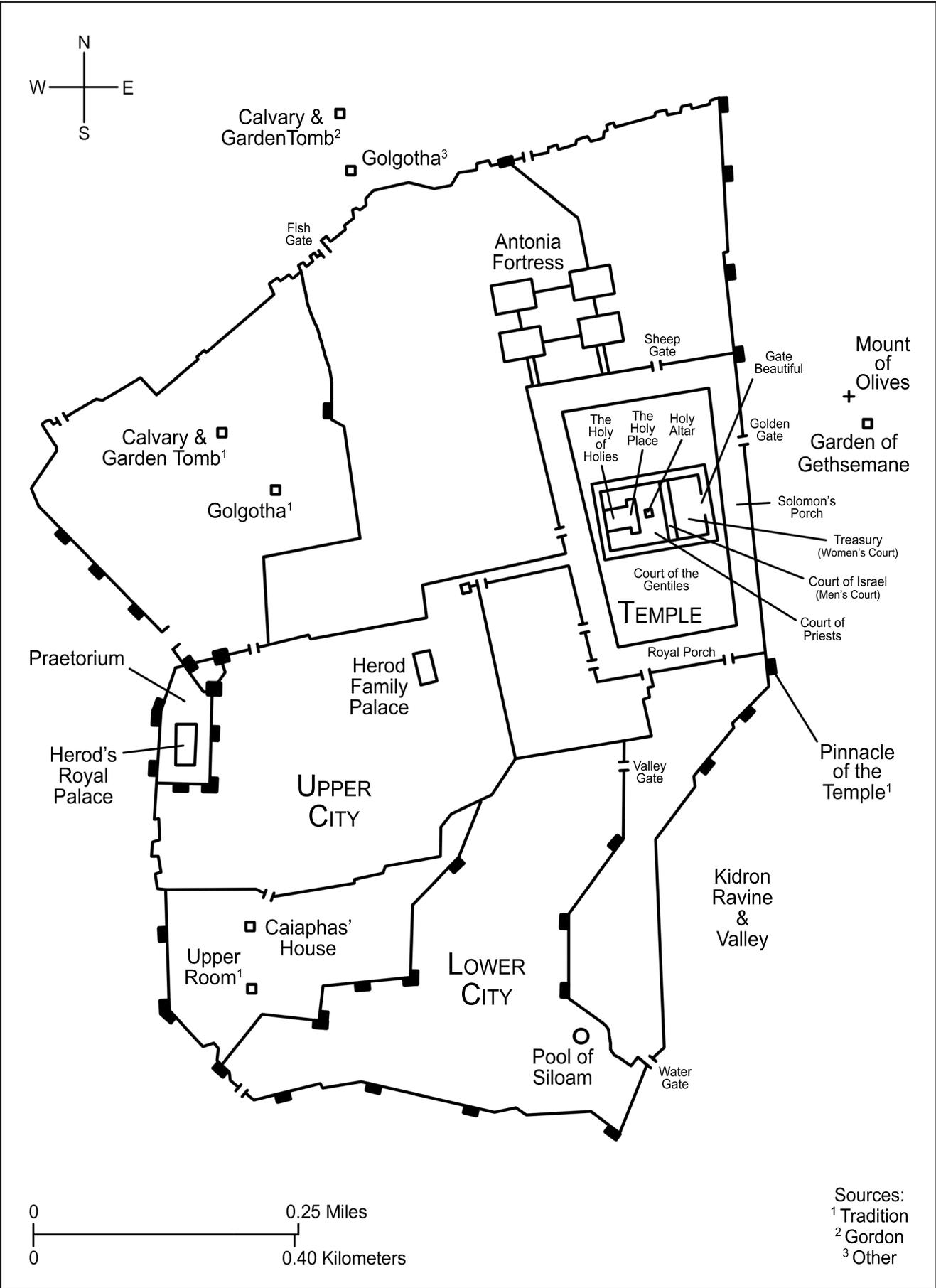
9. We are instructed to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). Note several ways this spiritual growth can be encouraged in our lives.

CONCLUSION

If there were ever a time when individual believers and the Church as a whole needed to rehearse and heed the warnings of 2 Peter, it is today! Peter asked, "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God?" (2 Peter 3:11-12). This is certainly an appropriate question for today's generation!

NOTES

New Testament Jerusalem



A Traditional View of Passion Week

PALM SUNDAY



- Jesus makes His Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem on a donkey. The crowd waves branches, shouts “Hosanna,” and puts garments and branches in the road. (Matthew 21:1-11)

MONDAY

- Jesus cleanses the Temple, overturning the money changers’ tables and declaring, “My house shall be called the house of prayer.” (Matthew 21:13)



TUESDAY

- Jesus teaches the disciples and Jewish leaders with parables. (Matthew 21:23)

WEDNESDAY

- Judas plots to betray Jesus the priests for 30 pieces of silver. (Matthew 26:14-16)



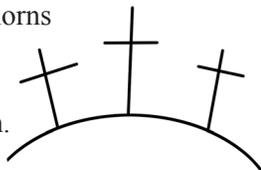
THURSDAY

- Jesus celebrates the Passover Feast and institutes the Lord’s Supper and Foot Washing ordinances. (Matthew 26:26-28 • John 13:1-17)
- Jesus prays in Gethsemane. (Matthew 26:36-46)
- Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss. (Matthew 26:47)
- Jesus is arrested and taken to Caiaphas. (Matthew 26:57)



FRIDAY

- Early in the morning, Jesus endures a Jewish trial. (Matthew 26:59-68)
- Before daybreak, Peter denies Jesus three times. (Matthew 26:58, 69-75)
- Jesus stands before Pontius Pilate, is sent to Herod, and is sent back to Pilate. (Matthew 27:1-2 • Luke 23:6-11)
- Soldiers crown Jesus with thorns and mock Him. (Matthew 27:29-31)
- Jesus is crucified at 9:00 a.m. (Mark 15:25)



- There is darkness from noon to 3:00 p.m. (Matthew 27:45)
- The veil in the Temple is torn from top to bottom. (Matthew 27:51)
- Jesus’ body is buried in a borrowed tomb. (Matthew 27:57-60)

SATURDAY

- Jesus’ body remains in the tomb. (Matthew 27:62-66)



EASTER SUNDAY¹

- Soldiers guarding the tomb become as dead men because of an earthquake and an angel who rolls away the tombstone. (Matthew 28:2-4)
- The women in a group (Mary Magdalene in advance of the others) approach the sepulcher. (Matthew 28:1 • Mark 16:1 • Luke 23:55-24:1 • John 20:1)
- Mary Magdalene, seeing the stone removed and hastily concluding that the body has been removed, runs for Peter and John, thus separating herself from the rest of the women. (John 20:2)
- The other women arrive at the sepulcher and see two angels. They depart to tell the disciples. (Matthew 28:5, 8 • Mark 16:5 • Luke 24:4, 9)
- While the women are gone, Peter and John run to the sepulcher, find it empty, and leave. (Luke 24:12 • John 20:2-10)
- Mary Magdalene, having followed Peter and John to the sepulcher, stands outside weeping. After they depart, she sees two angels and then Jesus. According to His command, she departs to carry His message to the disciples. (Mark 16:9-10 • John 20:11-18)
- The women on their way—before their arrival at the abode of the disciples, but after the appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene—see Jesus. (Matthew 28:9)
- All the women, including Mary Magdalene, unite in relating their story to the incredulous disciples. (Matthew 28:9 • Luke 24:10)
- Jesus appears to the disciples: to Peter, to Cleopas and another follower on the road to Emmaus, and then to a group of disciples in Jerusalem. (Luke 24:13-36)



1. D.D.. Whedon, *Commentary on The Gospels: Luke-John*, p. 408