

A scenic view of a hilltop with ancient ruins. In the foreground, a person wearing a hat and a sleeveless top sits on a pile of rocks. To the left, a stone wall is visible. The middle ground features a large, curved structure made of dark, corrugated material, possibly a roof or a wall, with a series of parallel lines. In the background, a town is visible, followed by rolling hills and mountains under a clear sky.

# *The Right Time The Right Place*

*Brian E R Limmer*

# **The Right Time, The Right Place**

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To the weary, downtrodden and persecuted  
Keep hold of your hope through the long dark night.  
Dawn will soon break and restore your joy.

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Cover photo Anne, beside the Theatre at Pergamon 1985 (Photo by Brian)



# Table of Contents

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>Introduction.....</b>                          | <b>7</b>   |
| Historically:.....                                | 13         |
| Philosophy and Religion:.....                     | 18         |
| Deviations:.....                                  | 29         |
| <b>Preamble to Synoptic Gospels and Acts.....</b> | <b>35</b>  |
| <b>Matthew.....</b>                               | <b>42</b>  |
| The person:.....                                  | 42         |
| The Gospel:.....                                  | 43         |
| <b>Mark.....</b>                                  | <b>50</b>  |
| The person:.....                                  | 50         |
| The Gospel:.....                                  | 51         |
| <b>Luke.....</b>                                  | <b>56</b>  |
| The Person:.....                                  | 56         |
| The Gospel:.....                                  | 57         |
| <b>John.....</b>                                  | <b>62</b>  |
| The Person:.....                                  | 62         |
| The Gospel.....                                   | 66         |
| <b>Acts.....</b>                                  | <b>72</b>  |
| The Person:.....                                  | 72         |
| The Book:.....                                    | 72         |
| <b>Preamble to the Letters.....</b>               | <b>80</b>  |
| <b>Galatia.....</b>                               | <b>90</b>  |
| The History:.....                                 | 90         |
| The Letter:.....                                  | 92         |
| <b>James.....</b>                                 | <b>98</b>  |
| The History:.....                                 | 98         |
| The person:.....                                  | 100        |
| The Letter:.....                                  | 102        |
| <b>Thessalonians.....</b>                         | <b>108</b> |
| The History:.....                                 | 108        |
| The Letter:.....                                  | 112        |
| <b>Corinthians.....</b>                           | <b>114</b> |
| The History:.....                                 | 114        |
| The Letter.....                                   | 115        |
| <b>Romans.....</b>                                | <b>126</b> |
| The Person:.....                                  | 126        |
| History:.....                                     | 127        |
| The Letter:.....                                  | 130        |
| <b>Ephesians.....</b>                             | <b>134</b> |
| The History:.....                                 | 134        |
| The Letter:.....                                  | 137        |
| <b>Colossians.....</b>                            | <b>142</b> |
| The History:.....                                 | 142        |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| The Letter:.....  | 143        |
| <b>Philemon.....</b>  | <b>148</b> |
| The History:.....   | 148        |
| The Letter:.....  | 148        |
| <b>Philippians.....</b>                                     | <b>152</b> |
| The History:.....   | 152        |
| The Letter:.....  | 153        |
| The people:.....  | 154        |
| <b>Timothy.....</b>   | <b>158</b> |
| The History:.....   | 158        |
| The Letters:.....   | 160        |
| <b>Titus.....</b>   | <b>166</b> |
| The History:.....   | 166        |
| The person:.....  | 167        |
| The Letter:.....  | 167        |
| <b>Peter.....</b>   | <b>170</b> |
| The History:.....   | 170        |
| The person:.....  | 170        |
| The Letter:.....  | 171        |
| <b>Hebrews.....</b>   | <b>176</b> |
| The History:.....   | 176        |
| The Letter.....   | 177        |
| <b>Jude.....</b>  | <b>182</b> |
| The History:.....   | 182        |
| The Letter:.....  | 183        |
| <b>John (Letters).....</b>                                  | <b>190</b> |
| The History:.....   | 190        |
| The person:.....  | 190        |
| The letters.....  | 192        |
| <b>Preamble to Revelation.....</b>                          | <b>195</b> |
| <b>Revelation.....</b>                                      | <b>212</b> |
| Things that are: (a View from earth).....                   | 212        |
| The Letter.....   | 213        |
| Interlude 1.....  | 218        |
| The next Section also begins with- <i>After This</i> :..... | 219        |
| Interlude 3:.....   | 223        |
| <b>Postamble to Revelation.....</b>                         | <b>225</b> |
| And finally:.....   | 234        |

## ***Introduction***

The new is in the old contained, the old is in the new explained<sup>1</sup>

We cannot just simply move from the Old-Testament to the New without setting the scene of transition.

There are two golden rules for reading scripture. The first is to get as close to the mind of the writer as you can, the second to get as close to the understanding of the original reader as you can. In other words, it is about getting into the right time and the right place. Without these considerations you can guarantee to introduce error. The New-Testament fulfils what the Old-Testament predicted. It puts its seal of approval on all that was anticipated. The Old-Testament has made it clear that, although the promise was sufficient to save from the beginning of time, the means of salvation needed be implemented at a certain point of time in history. Confidence in, and compliance with God are all He needs to deliver Salvation from the time of Adam through to the final Judgement day. Anyone can receive salvation and eternal life by a life of faith and obedience to God the creator.<sup>2</sup> However:

when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them which were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Augustine

2 pp 8-16 Surfing the Scriptures: Brian E.R.Limmer

3 Gal 4: 4

So, understanding events leading up to that moment in time, is essential for understanding the teachings Jesus gave, and why He taught them. Without that, we are bound to adapt these books into our time and our place.

The New-Testament focuses in on the means of salvation. It tells us, the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, is the means by which all people might be saved. God never promised anything without providing the means of fulfilment. We may not like that means, we may not understand that means, but be sure, it will be the *only* means. The Old-Testament is a historical record of how God kept His promises safe. The New-Testament records show the means God chose to deliver those promises. Many have rejected God's means, and many have accepted it. Either way, the promise was sufficient to make salvation active from the time of Adam onward.

The Church can be misled by calling the gap between the Old-Testament and the New, '*four-hundred-years of silence*'. What that implies is, nothing much went on in those years that is relevant to our modern Bible. When the Puritans and Reformers cut the apocryphal books and the book of Maccabees from between its covers, we were forced to look either look outside of scripture, or assume nothing in that period was relevant to God's Plan. This in turn gave a green light to later individuals who would have happily cut James and Revelation from Scripture which, ac-

according to their opinion, was not up to standard.

When God is silent, He is waiting for time to catch up. God is not changing direction, God is compacting. He is laying down a cement base on which He will build the next step. When the Church arrives in the New-Testament, it comes complete with a canon of scripture recording the concrete foundation of its mission. But it also came with a bundle of other writings to expound or explain. The ‘*Apocryphal*’ books, Enoch, Baruch, Mishna, Talmud and other ‘Oral Laws’, were all part and parcel in the Synagogues and often read in place of the sermon, (though always in addition to scripture).

As we left the Old-Testament, Ezra and his team of seventy Priests were busy writing out these writings in preparation for when there would be no more national prophets to lead the way through those four hundred years. Instead, the baton must be handed over to priests, armed with the scriptures, and other writings to encourage the people until Messiah comes. Messiah would release the means by which everyone will have the scriptures written into their heart. Looking back, we can see that right on time, immediately before Messiah, another prophet like Elijah<sup>4</sup> roamed the desert calling for repentance.

Daniel and the prophets had told us what God intended to do during the so called, ‘four-hundred-years of silence’.

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4 Named ‘John the Baptist’ - Malachi 4: 6

We make a mistake if we think that everything God does is written in our scriptures.

And there are also many other things which Jesus did, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written.<sup>5</sup>

We close the Old-Testament with seven outstanding events unfinished, These things must take place before the New-Testament can open. First, the relevant parts of Daniel and Ezekiel's prophecy must be fulfilled. Four conquering nations must come, each swallowing up the previous empire to enlarge it. Babylon and Assyria had come, Greece and Rome had yet to come.<sup>6</sup> Second, The scriptures must be consolidated and canonized as the foundation. National prophets were about to hand over the baton to Priest for a time; There was to be no more national prophesy, until one like Elijah would announce the Messiah.<sup>7</sup> Third, the promised seed line must hand over the baton safely to one who could combine the role of Prophet, Priest and King, *'after the example of Melchizedek'*.

The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit at my right hand,<sup>8</sup> until I make your enemies your footstool. The LORD shall send the sceptre of your authority out from Zion: rule in the midst of your enemies until the people own your power. In the beauties of

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5 John 21: 25

6 See Daniel Chapter 2 & Surfing the Scripture Chapters 21 & 22.

7 See the book of Zechariah & Surfing the Scripture Chapter 26.

8 See Matthew 22: 41- 46 for clarification



holiness from the womb of the morning you have the dew of youth. The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Fourth, Judaism must refocus away from the central temple worship, to form congregational groups. The Temple is to be destroyed after the '*abomination of desolation*', and synagogue congregations around the world must be ready to transform into church. Church is going to spread like wildfire and will need synagogue bases ready to receive the fire and pass it on. This process had already begun when they were carried away to Babylon, where they formed congregations up and down the land. We will return to this in a minute.

Fifth, for the gospel to spread to the whole world, geographically the world must have road networks to carry it. This part of the pre-planning of God will be carried out by the Greeks and consolidated by the Romans. Sixth, the people need to be one tongue. Pentecost was an exceptional sign that the Gospel will be world-wide. While the gift of tongues is still present in the Church, it is rarely<sup>9</sup> reported that evangelists speak to peoples of all tongues without an interpreter. Even Paul needed Mark to interpret for him in Rome. Greek and Aramaic were to become the common languages of the known world, and the language in which most people received the gospel. Seventh, but by no means the final point, the political climate needed to be right. Leaders must be both tolerant at times, and hostile enough

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9 Rare but not extinct

to drive the Church further round the world at other times.

What happened in that four-hundred-years was a seismic shift in world culture. But because it is not recorded in scripture it is often ignored by Christians. As a consequence, Church had and has become a hotbed of '*Good News Plus*'. Not only teachings of Paul but also teachings of Jesus are interpreted without understanding why, where or when they were taught. Like the Judaizers of old, rules and regulations are added to the gospel without rhyme or reason. For that reason the introduction of this book will be longer. But it will considerably shorten the time needed to explain verses in chapters following. That is because the background is common to most of the world at that time, and the passages will become self-explanatory.

God deals with nations. God chose Israel to deliver the seed line from Adam to Messiah, and also to demonstrate God's '*Kingdom ways*' to the world. Four other empires, prophesied by Daniel, Ezekiel, (and others), were also allowed (or chosen<sup>10</sup>), to rise and conquer. Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and Romans, were all part of the preparation for Messiah's coming. Each of the four nations shaped the world ready for one who will be Prophet, Priest and King. The New-Testament writers had to deal with many false ideas that had crept into the Church, almost as soon as it is born. Most are still around to this day. So, to avoid repeating them in each book or letter, we will deal with them here and refer back to them as we meet them later.

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10 According to your theology

Historically:

Geographically, Palestine was the centre of God's activity. God called Abraham out of Babylon and placed his descendants slap bang in the middle of three continents. Consequently, whenever one land had a disagreement with another they would invariably have to fight over the top of this little bridge point called Palestine where they lived.

We left the Old-Testament with the Persians as top nation. Daniel prophesied the Greeks would rise next, to conquer Persia and become the next superpower. They duly emerged to rule from three-thirty-one<sup>BC</sup> to three-twenty-three<sup>BC</sup>. A triangle of three small states, Macedon, Thrace and Sparta<sup>11</sup>, were being starved of water by surrounding nations. Philip of Macedon made some deals with the crushing nations to take over the region. He quickly grew his army and conquered the surrounding nations. But he died young.

His son Alexander-the-Great took up the mantle to conquer all the lands from Macedonia to India. Alexander's new elephant-tank corps required new direct roads which they cut through the surrounding lands. Later the Romans upgraded them and took the credit as great road builders. On his way to Egypt, Alexander marched toward Palestine. Josephus records that the high priest, named Juddua, rode out to meet him and showed him the prophecy of Daniel. Whereupon Alexander, recognizing himself in the prophecy, favoured the Jews with a puppet priest rather than destroying them.

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<sup>11</sup> Where Spartacus came from

He then passed through their land to conquer Egypt. This allowed Israel leeway to keep their laws and worship God for a while longer. Juddua befriended Alexander-the-Great and secured exemption from paying the tribute.

When Alexander built the great city of Alexandria, he invited at least seventy Jewish scholars to live there in his newly built university. The Jews continued in good favour under the next Polytomy General. Ptolemy II or Philadelphus ordered the Septuagint<sup>12</sup> translation of Hebrew Scripture. This translation of the Old-Testament into Greek shows the strong Hellenisation that had occurred to Hebrew people who, up to now, would not write in anything but Hebrew.

When Alexander-the-Great was dying, His generals asked him who would inherit the Empire. Alexander was reported to have replied ‘*The strongest*’! Five of his generals each grabbed a part of the empire and started to fight among themselves for supremacy. This quickly turned to four as the weakest link was ousted. Cassander took Northern Turkey, Lysimachus took the Southern borders of Russia and Ukraine, Ptolemy took Egypt and Seleucus took Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan<sup>13</sup>. The struggle for power between Polytomy and Seleucus with Palestine in the middle caused a permanent change in the politics and religious hierarchy of Palestine. In two-hundred-and-fifteen<sup>BC</sup>, Antiochus IV (Epiphanes), became king of the Seleucid

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12 The Septuagint or XII Version named after the seventy scholars who translated it and also the initial ‘Mishna’ or rabbinic law and The Talmud - Rabin commentaries.

13 See Figure 4 Heliopolis the city

region.<sup>14</sup> He was certainly not favourable toward the Jews — nor indeed to anyone.

The translation of the Scriptures into Greek began a civil war back in Palestine, the people divided between '*progressives*', who formed the Sadducees, and '*Conservatives*', who became the Pharisees. Epiphanes appointed a compliant Sadducee priest to the priesthood for the purpose of promoting worship of Hercules. When the people rebelled against that, Epiphanes sent general Antiochus to sort them out, but he made things worse by desecrating the temple. He took the treasures from it and erected a statue to Jupiter where the alter once stood. He also burned some scripture and forced Jews to eat pork. All this led to the people looking for a champion which they found in the Maccabees.

You may have heard of the Hasmonean dynasty, these were the Maccabees. In a tiny town of Modi'in,<sup>15</sup> A priest of this period named Mattathias, when told by Antiochus to offer a pig on the alter of the temple, refused. But another priest, sucking up to the Greeks, offered to do so. Mattathias killed that priest and when the Greeks tried again to enforce the order, Mattathias killed some of them also. Then he took his sons John, Simeon and Judas into the desert from where they carried out Guerrilla warfare on the Greeks. Judas Maccabee, (God's Hammer), successfully recaptured the temple from the Greeks, with a handful of men, (despite the

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<sup>14</sup> His name means -above manifestation and claimed to be a manifestation from the gods above (Platonism).

<sup>15</sup> Excavations conducted at Umm el-'Umdan within the modern Israeli city of Modi'in have uncovered this ancient Jewish village in the west bank.

large Greek armies). He lit the lamp in the temple which was to never supposed to go out<sup>16</sup>. There was only enough kosher oil for one day but the lamp stayed alight for eight days until they could produce some more kosher oil. This is the origin of the Jewish Hanukkah celebrations to this day — The festival of light.

John Hyrcanus was a son of Simon Maccabee. He fused the Hebrew civil and the religious authorities together. Combining civil and priestly authority was a no, no under Mosaic law until Messiah should come. This evolved into the Sanhedrin, a council of priests with civil authority, the very authority that tried Jesus later. Thus began a dynasty, which saw human beings, trying to establish the kingdom by force rather than being patient for God to establish it under Messiah. ‘Palm-Sunday’ would not have been without this change in culture. God had already quietly taken care of the true kingly line. This was to come via David and Zerubbabel, but it had not been noticed during this four-hundred-year period. As so often happens when people do not see what God is doing, the new Jewish leadership attempted to fulfil the scriptures with a human solution.

But, when the full and right time came, God sent his Son, who was born from a woman and lived under the law. God did this so that he could buy the freedom of those who were under the law. God's purpose was to make us his children.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See Ex 27: 20-21 & Exodus 30: 8 ‘he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout all your generations.

<sup>17</sup> Galatians 4: 4



All of this is important to this silent period because it is setting the scene for the coming Messiah. How can Jesus now recruit the '*sons of Thunder*' onto his team, and still proclaim a mission of peace?

All this absorption of Greek culture was preparing the way both for and against the Church. Up until now there had been no Israel without the temple. The word of God came down through the High Priest until, while in Babylon, the Babylonians destroyed the Temple, and they assembled outside until they could build synagogues. This time, under the Greeks, Hebrews had become accustomed to the idea of synagogues rather than Temple. Some had even offered, of their own free will, to go to Alexandria to translate the scriptures in order that the scripture could be spread into the synagogues. Meantime synagogues revived and spread. This separated the two priestly groups even further. Sadducees embraced the changes and centred it around the plans for a new Roman temple, Pharisees, having their nose put out of joint when the Romans gave Sadducees oversight of the temple, reluctantly turned to this new phenomenon of synagogue to maintain their influence. So when Rome finally conquered the Greek empire, Sadducees had compromised with Rome to receive custody of the new Temple. Pharisees hung on to their prestige by taking over the responsibilities of synagogues.

When '*Jesus-Jews*' spread to these Synagogues after the resurrection, Pharisees tried to keep '*old-time-religion*' alive

by aggressively opposing their new freedom. Thus began the sect known as '*Judaizers*'. The early church assemblies would have to combat these. Pharisees never started Synagogues because they were against them in principle. But as soon as one was formed, they moved in on it. Their theology was, '*You only have part of the gospel. To be real Christians, you must return to the Jewish law, males must be circumcised, and all must keep the ceremonial institutions laid down by Moses*'. We will see Paul, John and Peter angrily battled this out in their letters. But for the grace of God, Paul himself might have been one of these Judaizers.

### Philosophy and Religion:

It is said every living religion today can be found in early Babylon. When Abraham left Ur in Babylon, having rejected all their '*ambitious and scheming gods*' in favour of '*The one creator and sustainer God- Yahweh*', God chose him to bless him, and he would become the seed, through which God would save the world. From that point on Christians, focused only on this one account we call the scriptures. But all the other philosophies of Babylon did not go away, they simply spread unseen throughout the world via other routes, and through other nations. We see them in the Old-Testament weaving in and out of conflicts with Israel, so we know they are there. Likewise, Israel was not the only nation with the truth. Melchizedek did not descend from Abraham, nor did many others: Jethro, Balaam, Caleb, Job, Gibeonites, Othniel, Shamgar, Jael, Ruth, Obed-Edom, Uriah the Hittite, Bathsheba, Queen of Sheba, Widow of

Zarapeth, Samaritans, Rahab, People of Nineveh and so the list goes on. All these accepted, *'The one true God of heaven and creation'*. All these also fulfilled the New-Covenant conditions of *'trust and obedience in the one true God'*. Israel was favoured to carry the seed down to Jesus Christ who made it possible for all people of all time of all places to be saved, but they were not the only ones to actually benefit from this calling.

Persia, Greece and Rome all grow their philosophy from an early Babylonian base. The Persians were top-nation as we enter the four-hundred-year silence, and they had already influenced Israel's culture alongside the rest of the known world. Greece was to make by far the biggest changes, not only to Israel but the whole world. The Greeks were pantheistic and left a legacy that is very prominent in the Gospels and in the world today. Without understanding this period, it is very easy to misunderstand much of what Jesus was teaching and Paul was correcting. We will have to ask, *'where, when, and why'* certain events occurred, precisely because the gospels make sense only when these points are understood. We will meet this time and again in the New-Testament but for now we must see that Sadducees denied the resurrection of Jesus. This denial is based on the Greek philosophy of separating the physical from the spiritual. It allowed them to lie, steal, cheat or commit adultery without fear of judgement. They assumed the body and the spirit were not connected as indeed, some still think today. The multi-god philosophies of Babylon mentioned earlier,

seeded themselves again in Greek culture and quickly spread around the world in the four-hundred-years of silence.

Three types of god worked independently according to Greek teaching: Gods that kept the universe in order<sup>18</sup>; Gods that kept the world elements in order (wind, sea, etc.)<sup>19</sup>; and gods of human wisdom who hold the *'tablets to ultimate human happiness'*.<sup>20</sup> These three groups, deciding the fates of mankind, were originally, heavenly deities with immense powers, but fell to became underworld deities<sup>21</sup>. These three groups also found enough common ground to attack Hebrew beliefs intrinsic to Abraham's faith,<sup>22</sup> especially *'One God who is creator and sustainer of life'*.

Heraclitus<sup>23</sup> Lived in Ephesus and became famous for saying *'You cannot step twice into the same river, for other waters are continually flowing on and you are not the same person.'*<sup>24</sup> He also coined the word *'Logos'*, which is badly translated into English as *'Word'*<sup>25</sup>, Heraclitus, if not the founder, was certainly a conduit for the theory of evolution.

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18 These are minions of Anu or Ilu the supreme God and prime mover in creation who is embodied by the sky.

19 Ellil, is the chief god of wind, air, earth, and storms who watch over humanity and cares for their well-being. (His minions are the authors of sex cuts).

20 Enki, later known as Ea, who is also the author of wisdom, magic, incantations, arts, and crafts. (These minions are the main authors for human sacrifices ).

21 We can see a parallel here with the fall of Satan and one-third of the angels

22 It of course started with God in the garden of Eden but focus was lost to some extent until Abraham. Abraham was by no means the only person to believe in one only creator and sustainer God, Melchizedek is the most notable but there are others.

23 b. c.535 –d. c.475 BC

24 The logos of Heraclitus: The book begins with this statement: "Although this Logos is eternally valid, yet men are unable to understand it – not only before hearing it, but even after they have heard it for the first time ... What does Heraclitus mean by "Logos"? The Greek translation is "word" and it is sometimes rendered as "account." He is saying that what follows in the book is an account of something timeless and truthful: an unseen force, not that different from the biblical "Word" or the "Tao"

25 'Reason' or account'.

Heraclitus said, *'We must train ourselves to observed what is going on around us in the universes and continually ask why'*? Logos in its suffix form became *'ology'*. Biology is the study of, Why the Biosphere? Psychology is discovering, 'What is going on in the mind', Ethology asks How Animals behave as they do, and so on. This sort of teaching was common in Gospel days, and occurs throughout the New-Testament.

John is probably the most well known example for using this term Logos. He opens his Gospel claiming the reason for creation was because God *'Said-So'*, Logos is God's *'Say-So'*, and if He does not *'Say-So'* it is not <sup>26</sup>. In the Targum<sup>27</sup> *'Logos'* is actually used in place of the word *'God'*, (a word Jews would not utter). It is understood as, *'The being of God, the nature of God, the Power of God and the authority of God'*. It is God in action! We might rightly interpret that as the Trinity today.<sup>28</sup> James certainly had a grasp of that concept with his argument, *'works are the fruit of character'*. But we will wait for that debate.

Heracles' next question of influence was, *'Why should the gods behave so badly'*. You will have to read Greek mythology to see just how badly they did behave. However, this did not lead him to dismiss the gods personally, but it left

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<sup>26</sup> Logos is the 'why' of creation.

<sup>27</sup> As an interpretation of the Hebrew text of the Old-Testament the Targum had its place both in the synagogal liturgy and in Biblical instruction. Reading of the scripture text combined with the Targum in the presence of the congregation assembled for public worship was an ancient institution which dated from the time of the Second Temple, and was traced back to Ezra

<sup>28</sup> God is described as Elohim in Genesis 1: a plural term for describing God as : God the authority, God, the 'say-so' (word), and God, the action (spirit moving int result).

the way open for Plato to separate the spiritual from the physical. Plato, you may know, came up with the statement:

‘There is only one chair, that is the original idea, all the others are forms or copies’.

His theory<sup>29</sup> is that there is one original idea from which ‘categories’ can develop. These evolve freely into all shapes and sizes, but the ‘original’ concept is the ‘*real thing*’.<sup>30</sup> His theory developed into a direct challenge to the basic Hebrew and biblical understanding, ‘*We are spiritual in nature and dwell in a body*’. Biblically, you cannot behave badly in the body without affecting the spirit. Jesus, Paul, James and John are going to confront that very notion, what you do in the body will indeed affect the ‘*real spiritual-You*’. Plato challenges the issue of the resurrection of the body. Plato-ism opposes John’s injunction:

*‘I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul’,*

Plato’s scholarly descendants firmly disagree with James,

*‘But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire, which when it is fully grown brings forth death.*

Aristotle was a pupil of Plato. He progressed Plato’s teaching, dismissing the gods as irrelevant because they

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<sup>29</sup> Known as the theory of forms

<sup>30</sup> The reader might already see how later this develops into the theory of evolution.



behaved so badly. The gods, (and by implication God), are irrelevant. The humanism seed is sown. Aristotle regarded humanity as the '*be-all and end-all*', of life. His philosophy developed that humans should strive to becoming the best they can without the help of gods. Life is purely on a physical plane. This will certainly become a bone of contention when Paul takes the Corinthians to task. The Corinth Olympics may have sought to build up the body during the day time, but one-thousand priestesses from the temple of Apollo came down under cover of night to ply their trade. Olympics or no, it was all legitimate to the Corinthian church who had convinced themselves that the body and the spirit are separate entities and one does not change the status of the other, so all must be well in the end.

In summary and explanation then, Heracles influenced Plato. Plato tutored and influenced Aristotle. Aristotle tutored and influenced Alexander-the-great who did more to influence the world than just conquer it, he set the schooling structures for propagating these philosophies. These became the foundations of thinking that swayed the world by the time of Jesus, and continue to this day. The New-

| THE HEBREW ALPHABET |                |                 |
|---------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| UNITS               | TENS           | HUNDREDS        |
| Aleph א = 1         | Yod י = 10     | Koph ק = 100    |
| Beth ב = 2          | Kaph כ ך = 20  | Resh ר = 200    |
| Gimel ג = 3         | Lamed ל = 30   | Shin ש = 300    |
| Daleth ד = 4        | Mem מ ם = 40   | Tau ט = 400     |
| He ה = 5            | Nun נ ן = 50   | Kaph כ ך = 500  |
| Vau ו = 6           | Samech ס = 60  | Mem מ ם = 600   |
| Zayin ז = 7         | Ayin ע = 70    | Nun נ ן = 700   |
| Cheth ח = 8         | Pe פ ף = 80    | Pe פ ף = 800    |
| Teth ט = 9          | Tsadi צ ץ = 90 | Tsadi צ ץ = 900 |

Figure 1: Hebrew Alphabet

Testament is to be born into this world. These ideas had been fighting to dominate the world ever since Babel. Under the consolidation of Greece and Rome, during the darkness of four-hundred-years of silence, these ideas 'piggy-backed' on the enlightenment of knowledge Greeks brought to the world order.

But, *'Behold the kingdom of God is at hand'!*

As we leave the Old-Testament and enter the age of the New-Testament we face a global world. Up to this point there has been ample place in the world for two views to exist side by side. Hebrew thought and Greek thought come to a major battle for supremacy during this four-hundred years. Greek thinking is about to undermine everything Hebrew thinking had built its picture of God upon. Basically, Hebrews unite everything, Greeks dissect, separate and individualize everything. At the root of the Hebrew view of God is love, unity, boundary and direction. Greek and Roman philosophy is about power, individualism, dominance and self-ambition. Possibly three-quarters of the New-Testament is about correcting the basic concept of Love. From Genesis onward, scripture has based its view of God on the foundation 'God is love'. So we cannot proceed into New-Testament until we see the underlying contrast between Greek and Hebrew Love.

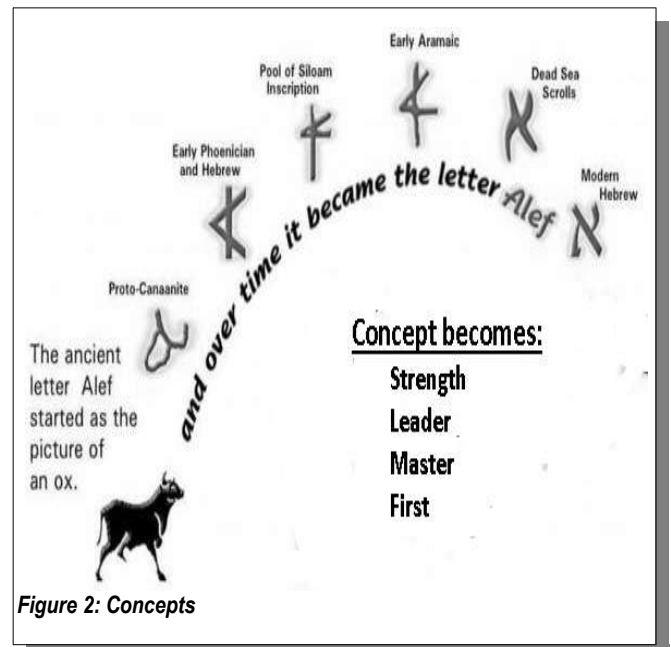
From the moment we open the Old-Testament we are introduced to this powerful motivation called love. Genesis-one

teaches us that love's nature is Co-operative, Creative and giving. If God by nature is singular he cannot **Be** love because love requires a subject, an object and a binding spirit between the two<sup>31</sup>. Thus, we are introduced to the Trinity in Genesis chapter-one. When God (the subject), The word (the object) and the Spirit (the bonding between them), come together, they are one<sup>32</sup>. As one, they form stability, strength, protection and a resultant creativity<sup>33</sup>.

How did Adam<sup>34</sup> name this thing called love? Without writing another book, (and hopefully not turning the reader away), the process went like this:

As the spoken word began to be written down, Hebrew changed from pictures to words. Twenty-two basic pictures formed the Hebrew Alphabet. Each picture was named in an alphabet from '*Aleph to Tav*'. Each picture evolved from a representation into a concept.

For example, the picture representation of an Ox evolved into the concept of Strength, Self Mastery (control), Unity



31 God can love but not be love. He can only BE love if he can fulfil the conditions within his own makeup.

32 Gen 2 :24 the doctrine of Marriage begins here in the trinity.

33 The reader will see how this value is transferred in scripture to the institution of marriage and the family throughout scripture.

34 Or his Hebrew descendants

and Source<sup>35</sup>. This concept was given was named Aleph.

So:

The Hebrew word '**Ahava**' (love) is spelled 'aleph, hei, bet, hei.'

The symbol of strength, Strength, Self Mastery, and Unity and Source became א, (Aleph)

The symbol for, breathe, sharing, word, help, life, and giving became ה, (hei)

The symbol for covering, sheltering, guarding, and gathering became ב, (bet)

The symbol for, breathe, sharing, word, help, life, and giving became ה, (hei)

When the Hebrews wanted a word for 'Love' they put these concepts together to make the word אַהֲבָה '*Ahava*'. Ahava is a compound of all these elements. Hebrew love must carry all these components or it is less than love. Ahava-love is the strength that enables you to love your enemies, Ahava-love leads in the higher path, Ahava-love is giving, Ahava-love is helping, Ahava-love gathering, not smothering, Ahava-love is protecting, Ahava-love sets boundaries for behaviour, Ahava-love is all embracing, it is seemly and the power-bond in relationships.

Greeks did not have a word to describe this kind of love as a concept. Instead, they split it into seven elements treating each as a god in itself.

### **1 Eros**

Is sexual or passionate act. Greeks understood Eros as a form of madness caused by driven passion and as such not

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<sup>35</sup> 'Creativity or copy' of if you translate it into Plato's arguments.

subjective to human discipline. That brings it into direct conflict with Hebrew Ahavah which has built in '*Logos*', or 'reason and decision'. The Greeks said, '*Those the gods would destroy they first make mad*'<sup>36</sup> Eros was the god that brought down Troy and half the Greek army.

Jesus is going to confront this concept when he takes the disciples to Caesarea Philippi which was dominated by the Temple of Pan, This will be the turning point of His ministry. From that point he will concentrate on the power of Ahavah-love in the Cross. There is little doubt the power behind Eros and Pan is the same power behind the angels lusting over at the daughters of men<sup>37</sup>.



## 2. Philia

Often wrongly quoted as '*brotherly love*', it is a friendship without ties. Aristotle said it was a common friendship based on one of three reasons: Is it useful? Is it pleasant? Is it rational and virtuous?

Plato corrupted this by saying, '*The best kind of philia is born out of Eros*'. This gave legitimacy to incest, bestiality or homosexuality.

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<sup>36</sup> Attributed to Euripides,

<sup>37</sup> Genesis 6: 1.

### **3 Storge**<sup>38</sup>

Storge is a disciplining relationship such as between parents and their children.

### **4. Agape**<sup>39</sup>

*Agape* is social concern, such as the concern for strangers, or nature. It is translated charity in the New-Testament, based on unselfish concern for the welfare of others and motivated by discipline or duty. It is nowhere near the Hebrew concept of love, but was the nearest choice when translating Hebrew ‘Ahavah’, into Greek.

### **Ludus**

Is playful or uncommitted love demonstrated by teasing, flirting, seducing, and conjugating. Motivated by lust, fun, or conquest, it has no strings attached.

### **6. Pragma**

*Pragma* is a kind of practical bond founded on a common goal. Roman marriages were often pragmatic, as were adult adoptions. Pragma would be a bond to perpetuate a family fortune, power base or business.

### **7. Philautia**

*Philautia*, is a self-love. It demonstrates itself in an arrogant or haughty manner, an inflated sense of status, abilities, or accomplishments, ‘Puffed-up’.

Why have we spent so much time on these differences?

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38 [store-jay],

39 ["aga-pay"]



The New-Testament confronts most of these separated attitudes putting them firmly back into the concept of 'Ahavah'. When Jesus says, '*if you look at another woman you are unfaithful in your thoughts*',<sup>40</sup> He is confronting *Ludus*. When Paul challenges Homosexuality,<sup>41</sup> he is confronting Plato's *philia*. When Jesus faces up to the Pharisees,<sup>42</sup> he is confronting *Philautia*. When James writes his letter on practical behaviour, he is confronting *Pragma*. When Jesus or Paul talk of divorce or sex<sup>43</sup> they seek to replace Eros with 'Ahavah'. That is why Paul, in One-Corinthians-thirteen, challenges each of these elements clearly saying they are not love unless firmly placed in the concept of Ahavah<sup>44</sup>.

There are three commands to love in the Torah; '*Love your neighbour as yourself*'<sup>45</sup>; '*Love the stranger as yourself*'<sup>46</sup>; and '*You shall love the Lord your God for all your heart, soul and strength*'<sup>47</sup>. All are based on the concept of Ahavah.

#### Deviations:

During the four-hundred-years of silence, the nation underwent massive changes in its 'religious' foundations. Before this time, the temple was its focus. No temple meant no sacrifices and no sacrifices meant no Judaism. From the time

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40 Matthew 5: 28

41 Romans 1: 24 -32

42 Matthew 23: 12- 36

43 Matthew 19: 4-6 ; Ephesians 5: 22 - 33 Mark 10: 5 -12

44 1 Corinthians 13

45 Leviticus 19: 18

46 Leviticus 19: 34

47 Deuteronomy 6: 4

of Moses, the Temple, (or the Tabernacle), had been the centre of everything in society, its health service its shopping centre, its ceremonial centre, its school and adult learning centre and much more. Now the spread of Jews all over the world meant change.

In the Temple there was one major copy of the scriptures. Now, the Greek version had been published and Greeks were prolific with their copies. The Hebrew's reserve for only minimal copies was to preserve accuracy. But that had given way to Greek education for all, and libraries for all.

Hebrews were still intent on preserving traditions so the oral laws which Rabbis used as their wisdom were now being written down in books. One was called the 'Mishnah' or '*sayings*'. Another was named the 'Talmud' or '*hedge about the law*'. These would be distributed to Main Synagogues, because these had Synagogue schools attached. Paul's Letters would be classed under these headings, until Peter later put them on a par with Old-Testament scripture.<sup>48</sup> Unfortunately, as only the richer class of Pharisee could attend these schools, the Talmud would be only open to higher level students or private tutors. On completion of a course, these would issue written papers of recommendation as proof of attendance, (much like degree certificates). Judaizers, following Paul, will use these certificates to pull rank on Paul and try to discredit him. '*We have Papers while Paul has to work for a living*'<sup>49</sup>, they would say. We

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48 2 Peter 3: 15-16

49 As the modern joke pointedly has it, '*a case of emptying the Churches by degrees*'

will see Paul confronting this notion in two-Corinthians.

### **Pharisees**

Pharisees considered it essential to keep themselves pure. The methods they used are no different today. Some blamed the object rather than accept responsibility themselves. The burka was not a Muslim invention, it was raised in prominence by them when Islam became the national religion of Arab lands. It was an attempt to keep society pure by hiding the object of temptation rather than owning the responsibility for sin within the eye of the beholder. It was a reaction to Greek culture which idolized the body. You may think this strange, but British Victorians would cover piano legs out of an opposite prudish leaning. Likewise, Pharisees liked to blame the object by disdain of anything remotely pleasing in society.

### **Essenes**

Essenes dealt with this problem by moving themselves to desert caves to live like monks, away from temptations of society. The Essenes were celibate and would keep the sect going by adopting people into the group. We will see some of them trying to recruit from churches in Galatia.

### **Zealots:**

The Essenes were peaceful but Zealots hid in the dessert for a different reason. Zealots would carry out gorilla attacks on the Greeks, (and later the Romans).

### **Scribes**

Scribes were also branched from Pharisees. These moved away from pure priesthood to become Doctors-of-law, having graduated out of the new Greek trend for certificates of achievement. Their authority and status no longer came from performing the temple rituals but came from their judgements and education.

### **Sadducees**

Sadducees were elitists who also made it to study, but theirs was at the temple school. These '*Etonians*' believed they were superior often claiming to be direct descendants of Zadok the Priest. They were also rationalists who denied miracles. They also denied gentiles were acceptable to God. Like many Pharisees they believed God created gentiles as '*kindling for the fires of hell*'.

### **Herodians:**

Not all Sadducees believed this however, Herodians generally agreed with the bulk of Sadducees who had no problem with foreigners, so long as they brought their money with them and did not stray from the gentile court in the Temple.

### **Gnostics:**

Gnostics were added to this list when Greeks started appointing priests, usually Sadducees. Combined with Jewish elitism, they propagated '*Gnostic Mysticism*'. Greeks had influenced the thinking of some Jews, saying, '*knowledge is the only key to knowing God*'. They expanded Plato's

separation of the spiritual and the materialism saying, '*spiritual equals good; material equals bad*'. Therefore, they argued, God could not have created the material world because he is Spirit and Good. This automatically denied the deity of Christ because Jesus was human. Some compromised a little saying, 'deity came upon him at birth and left him at death'. Others said Jesus was a phantom. Jesus confronted this idea after his resurrection, for forty-days people mingled with him in a body almost indistinguishable, walking, eating, talking about the resurrection of the body. This particular belief had a surge in popularity about the time John wrote his three letters. So we will encounter it there.

### **Syncretists:**

One other danger to the Church came from Rome. Rome was not against any religion and was happy for the Christian Church to be around while it was under the umbrella of Judaism, Rome had secured control of Judaism via the Sadducees and the Temple. Rome only objected to adding another god to its archives if it did not accept all other gods as well. Syncretism was encouraged. Once you had Hailed Caesar as Lord, you were free to worship any other god. Rome was happy to accommodate Jews or Christians so long as it could put statues of its emperors in their Temple.

Syncretism is confronted right through the New-Testament, but we will especially see warnings to later day church, from Jesus, in Revelation.

All these views attacked the early church. All these views found their way back into the Church of the middle-ages. All these have found their way back into churches today and are spreading. Scrape away the modern labels and you will find them. The New Testament letters as a whole are essentially a rebuttal against one or other of these distortions of the gospel. Paul wrote to Gentiles to prevent them falling into legalism of Jews, James wrote to Jews to stop them falling into licence of Gentiles.

The two stances of false doctrine protected by the early apostles are:

**Legalism:** *'The Gospel Plus'* is: Be saved by God's grace through faith, but also you must keep the law.

**Licence:** *'The Gospel Minus'* is: says 'Be saved without works and but be free to sin as you will'.

The early apostle proclaimed:

**Liberty:** *The Gospel as it is:* 'You have been saved by grace through faith in order to enable you to do good works'.



## ***Preamble to Synoptic Gospels and Acts***

We ought to slow down a little here, to understand what is going on, as it is very relevant to our times.

Christianity was born from Judaism. It was born out of Old-Testament prophecies, hope and faith; it was born out of the expectation of a Messiah. The great question of that time was, *'Is Jesus that Messiah'*? In the early years, the Sadducees, who were very liberal in their thinking and also in charge of the Temple, were prepared to tolerate this new movement of *'Messianic-Jews'*<sup>50</sup> under the umbrella of Judaism within the overall structure of the temple<sup>51</sup>. There were many modern ideas arising at the time. With the temple fixed in Jerusalem, synagogues were growing rapidly as homogenous groups all around the continent, each formed its own slight variation on this new doctrine. Some were fashioned on narrow doctrines, rejecting everything outside a written constitution, some welcomed any or every new doctrine to its pulpit. Sound familiar in modern day terms?

By seventy <sup>AD</sup>, the Temple was gone, Jesus had not returned and Sadducees, who had been willing to tolerate the *'Messianic-Jews'*, were now intolerant because their control had gone along with the focal point of their faith, the temple. Surely Messiah would not allow the focus of their faith to

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50 Later called Christ-ones

51 This does not mean they were happy but as administrators they accommodated the movement.

be destroyed; would he?<sup>52</sup> In consequence, those '*Messianic-Jews*' worshipping at the Temple, were spreading out to influence Synagogues all over Judea and Samaria. What we see as the hand of God moving to spread the Gospel fast and furious, was a thorn in the side to the Pharisees, They saw Synagogues as their power base and main influence in society while Sadducees had control of a Sanhedrin. So a battle began for control of these assemblies. Pharisees and *Messianic-Jews*, (who were now newly nicknamed '*Christians*'),<sup>53</sup> were both looking to influence these small groups. Alongside this, the disciples who had witnessed the events of Jesus were getting fewer while the Church was getting bigger. There was a need to write things down.

Today when we read a book, we look for the purpose and authors strategy at the beginning. The custom then was to declare it at the end. The material chosen by each writer of these four gospels clearly indicate for whom it is written.

Nobody knows which gospel was written first. Modern styled criticism by scholars, love to point out Mark has six-hundred-and-sixty verses. Six-hundred of these appear in Matthew, and three-hundred-and fifty in Luke. Two of these gospels also take the same non-chronological progression of story-line. The story line starts with thirty-months in Galilee then moves to Jerusalem for the final six-months.

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<sup>52</sup> Remember, without the Temple there could be no sacrifices and therefore no Judaism

<sup>53</sup> Paul later got caught up in this battle, most of his letters urge his readers to disregard bad teachers. 'become imitators of me'-1 Cor 4:16. .

John, who takes a more chronological line, shows Jesus going up to Jerusalem several times in between. Thus, clever thinking critics have deduced three writers copied verbatim from a single source. If you are old enough, (and clever enough<sup>54</sup>), to have taken GCE in religious studies, you would have been treated to the required reading of what I call, '*Enid Blyton and the case of the vanishing Q*'<sup>55</sup>. According to this plot, Matthew, Mark and Luke copied a mysterious document called '*Q*'. This theory was started by an agnostic Bishop<sup>56</sup> and expanded by an agnostic theologian<sup>57</sup>. The latest version of this theory has three '*Q*' documents to make it fit properly. However, by the time Matthew came to write the final draft of his Gospel in about seventy-five<sup>AD</sup>, the document, (or perhaps all three documents), had vanished without trace. (No doubt the lemon juice ink had faded by then). You will forgive me if I take my '*cue*' from Augustine of Hippo to form a different opinion, preferring his writings as my base source<sup>58</sup>.

Matthew, (the man with pen and paper and a habit of documenting everything from his tax collecting days), organized his notes, not for a diary (sequentially), but for another purpose.<sup>59</sup> Matthew categorized them in groups as the modern Greek thinking tax collector would have done<sup>60</sup>. When Luke, (who was not an eyewitness of the events of

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54 I wasn't.

55 Enid Blyton was a popular writer of children's adventure books .

56 Herbert Marsh,

57 Friedrich Schleiermacher

58 Augustine cites Matthew as the source. More traditional churches also cite Matthew as the source.

59 Who knows? Sermons perhaps?.

60 Tax collectors also took census information and categorised it.

Jesus), researched his material, to write his evidenced for Theophilus, he used three-hundred of Matthew's verses and cross-checked with other witnesses like Mary, Peter, and others. Matthew used his own notes collected over the years, to write up his gospel in about seventy<sup>AD</sup>. Mark, (who was a second generation disciple) used Matthew's Gospel as the basis of his writings, changing the emphasis to make it more suitable for a Greco-Roman audience. His readers were not interested in genealogy or scripture references. This will become clearer as we examine the gospels. But for now, I have outlined the approach.<sup>61</sup>

One other unwarranted criticism is, the gospels do not always agree as to the venue or time of gatherings. Jesus was an itinerant preacher and used his sermons material several times over, sometimes on the hillside, sometimes in the plain. The same content was adapted for different audiences. (How many times have you heard the same old jokes from the pulpit)?

The Gospels are not biography or a documentary, they are more an apologetic. They demonstrate Jesus is who he said He is. The word Gospel comes from an old Anglo-Saxon word meaning '*a good story*'. It lost the secular side of its meaning when the Church got hold of it, preferring '*Good News*'. The disciples formulated how they told that news, first, to suit their character, and then to suit their audience.

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<sup>61</sup> There are other arguments placing each of the three gospels as the original but I will leave you to research and decide.

The four gospels inadvertently give us a three dimension view of Jesus. Basically:

Matthew pictures him through the eyes of a strict Jewish upbringing, as King of Jews. He emphasizes what Jesus said and how it ties into the Old-Testament Scriptures; The most important word in his gospel is the word '*Fulfil*', He emphasizes what Jesus said and probably transcribed his notes in his free time after the sermon was finished, (like all good Christians do after Church)?

Mark writes to a Roman audience. He portrays Jesus as the obedient servant of the Lord, he shows Jesus as '*the son of man*', and is interested in what Jesus did; the word to watch here is '*immediately*'. We will see why later, but his book reads like a film that edits the bits in between the essential story line.

Luke writes both Luke and Acts with a wider objective. He portrays Jesus as the perfect man qualified to be Saviour of world. He has two reasons for this. First, he is writing to Theophilus who is in an official in the Roman hierarchy, But also, (if not directly then indirectly), having Paul's trial in mind, he presents his writings as factual evidence, suitable as character witness testimony. As such he brings out the stainless and innocent character of both Paul and Jesus. He also clearly shows the non-threatening side of Christian beliefs toward Rome. The phrase to watch in this book is '*The son of man*'. Luke emphasizes what Jesus felt.

John writes with the whole world in mind. He knew his time was short. Ephesus, from where he wrote it, had become a centre for the next staging post of evangelism. He declares Jesus as the son of God. He is more chronological and shows who Jesus was by his actions and His mysticism<sup>62</sup>. The word to watch for is '*Believe*'. John had that 'kindred-spirit' with Jesus, bringing out who Jesus was.

There are only Two events that the synoptic-gospels and John share, when Jesus walked on Water and when Jesus fed the five-thousand. There are only two-chapters in all the gospels that speak of Jesus' younger days. There are eighty-five that focus on the last three-years of his life. Twenty-nine of these focus on the last week and thirteen focus on the last hours. A clear indication of the purpose of these records put together.

If I asked, 'who wrote the most of the New-Testament', I suspect the answer would come back, 'Paul'. But for the geek, Luke has the fullest account of Jesus and beats Paul on a word count.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> John 1: 1

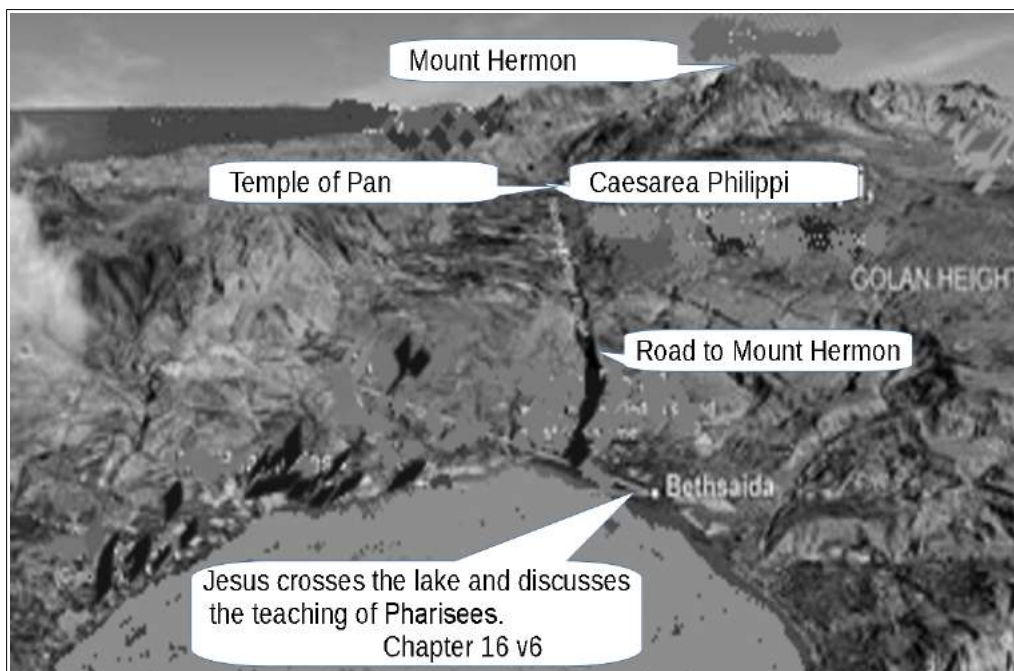
<sup>63</sup> For those interested twenty-seven-percent of the New-Testament was written by Luke the gentile doctor. Paul comes close second. The word-count of is Luke equals 37,923 words, Paul 32,407 words (23%) Third is John with four books at 20%

# Matthew

## *Gospel in Brief*

|                                 |       |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| Insight into Kingdom            | 1-4   |
| 1 The sermon on the Mount       | 5-7   |
| 2 Commissioning of Apostles     | 10    |
| 3 Kingdom Parables              | 13    |
| 4 community of Childlike people | 18    |
| 5 Olivet Discourse on end days  | 24-25 |

*Figure 4: Heliopolis the city*



*Figure 5: Journey to Mount of Transfiguration*

## Chapter 2:

### *Matthew*

#### The person:

Matthew was a Jew, of the tribe of Levi. He very aware of his heritage, but with a heart for the growing universal church.

Probably born in Capernaum<sup>64</sup>, he probably had Sadducee leanings at first, which allowed him to become a tax collector without conscience, (no true Pharisee could justify a position as a tax collector for Rome). He was methodical in his approach to life, which was probably refined by book-keeping techniques. Tax collecting was not confined to accounts but also local census taking. Romans used the data collected by publicans to analyse society much like internet collects data today. His Jewish name was Matthew meaning '*gift of God*'. But as he associated with Roman people he was known to them as Levi which means '*Attached to*'. It was much more common for a Roman to refer to a Jew by his tribe than his first name. We can assume that James, son of Alphaeus was a brother of Matthew because Alphaeus was not a common name, and because he is placed next to James in some passages<sup>65</sup>. Matthew records his own call in Chapter-nine.

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<sup>64</sup> He certainly worked as a Tax collector in the area but most commentaries play safe with Palestine as his birthplace

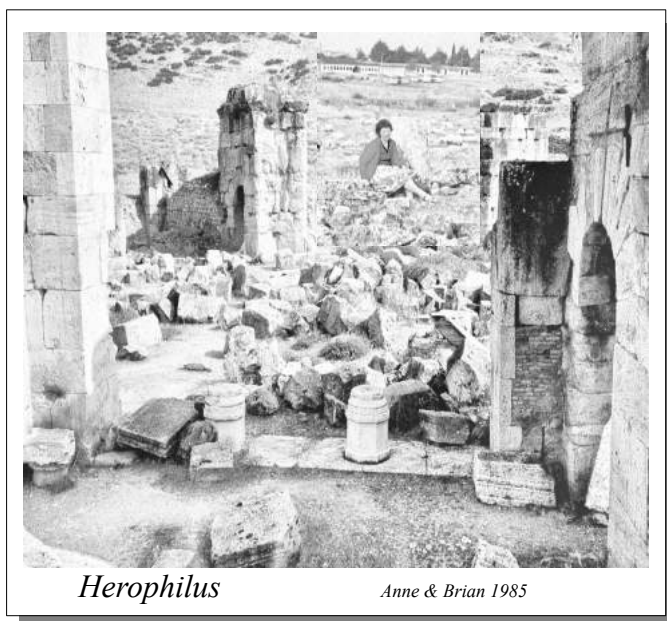
<sup>65</sup> Acts 1:13 ... they went up into an upper room,... Matthew and James *the son* of Alphaeus, ...



Matthew stays very much around the Jewish temple as the base for his early mission. Around seventy<sup>AD</sup> when the Temple was destroyed, Messianic-Jews were also being expelled from the synagogues. In response to this upheaval of the new church, Matthew used accumulated notes to write them into a Gospel later in life. His chief aim is to tell the Christians not to forget their Jewish roots, and Jews not to reject the Messiah was Jewish. When the Temple was destroyed he travelled north to Herophilus in Turkey, then probably onto Spain<sup>66</sup>.

### The Gospel:

This book is Jewish in nature. Some bible teachers like to say there is a difference between the '*kingdom of heaven*' and the '*kingdom of God*'. Not so! Devout Jews would not say the name God. Even today in Jewish literature you will see 'G\_D', lest they take the name of God in vain. So when Matthew talks of the kingdom of Heaven he is using a euphemism for the kingdom of God.



Herophilus

Anne & Brian 1985

In his prologue, Matthew gives Joseph's ancestry, because Jewish readers would want to know his pedigree. That was

<sup>66</sup> The Quran holds the view that they were 'Helpers of Allah' in Ethiopia Quran 3:49, but it is much more widely believed he worked in Turkey.

essential to fulfil the Law and to give Joseph the right to adopt Jesus legally. But if it had been Jesus' *genetic* genealogy, Jesus could not have been '*King of the Jews*', because Jeconiah is there in the list of ancestors, and he was cursed never to have an ancestor to sit on the throne of Judah:

King Jehoiachin, son of Jehoiakim, even if you were the ring I wear as the sign of my royal power, I would still pull you from my finger I would hand you over to the enemy you fear, to King Nebuchadnezzar and his army, who want to kill you. You and your mother were born in Judah, but I will throw both of you into a foreign country, where you will die, longing to return home. Jehoiachin, you are unwanted like a broken clay pot. So you and your children will be thrown into a country you know nothing about. Land of Judah, I am the LORD. Now listen to what I say! Erase the names of Jehoiachin's children from the royal records. He is a complete failure, and so none of them will ever be king. I, the LORD, have spoken. <sup>67</sup>.

Matthew witnessed Jesus' speeches and gathers them into logical categories, so when he writes his Gospel, he groups the sermons into similar themes rather than putting them into chronological order. He is steeped in the Old-Testament, often quoting 'That it might be fulfilled', and emphasizing '*I have not come to abolish law*'.

When Matthew wrote up his Gospel, he gathered his material into clear groups: The sermon on the Mount, The kingdom Parables, Olivet discourse, the lost articles etc. Chapter-one begins the genealogy of Jesus because readers

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<sup>67</sup> Jeremiah 22: 24-30 and another argument for the Virgin Birth.

want to know His pedigree. Matthew uses Joseph's line.<sup>68</sup> Any claimant of the throne of Israel must come from David. You may notice he grouped them in three sets of fourteen generations, this is probably no more than a checksum system to demonstrate his accuracy.

Matthew introduces us to the word '*Assembly*', which is translated as Church in most versions of the English Bible. The word church here means a Congregation or Assembly. It is the usual Greek word when translating the Hebrew word, first mentioned by Moses to describe the assembly of Israel at Sinai. Matthew quotes Jesus using the word 'assembly' twice in his gospel, the second time he uses it is in the context of the local assembly.<sup>69</sup> But when Jesus introduces us to His concept of the term *Church*. Jesus does so in a particular geographical place and historical moment of time. Jesus first introduces us to 'Church' in the context of a direct conflict between Church and Hell, which Satan will not win<sup>70</sup>.

Matthew records, Jesus took the disciples on a journey through Caesarea Philippi,<sup>71</sup> to the Mount of Transfiguration. This road takes them right past the temple of Pan. You will remember this was heart of Dan country. Dan had set up groves and shrines all over its territory. Pan was a prime god in both Greek and Roman culture. The mouth of a

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68 Greek for 'Genealogy' is Genesis, the origins of. Or 'the Why and Wherefore of'

69 Matthew 18:17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the Church: but if he neglects to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

70 This battle will reach its climax in Revelation chapters 16 ff

71 (in the Golan heights), Baniyas or Panyas (Greek B or Roman P), There was a thriving Church in the locality between 300 & 500 AD as it sent representatives to both the Nicean council of 325 AD and Chaldean Council in 452 AD.

seemingly bottomless pit, at the altar in the temple of Pan was called the '*Gate of Hades*'<sup>72</sup>. Each year in the spring, Pan required a sacrifice of children be thrown into it before leading his menials out of Hades for a bestial orgy. This was the place Jesus passed with his disciples on route to mount Hermon<sup>73</sup>. Here he broached the subject that would change the focus of his mission.

The disciples had been with Jesus some thirty-months now and Jesus was keen to change the focus of his ministry away from the preaching and healing and toward the main purpose for which he came, the journey to Jerusalem and the cross. So he asked them who they thought He



Figure 6: gate of Hades ..Banias Brian & Anne 1990

was. Peter gave his famous reply, '*You are the Christ*'! And Jesus answered him, '*you are blessed Simon son of Jonah because it was not flesh and blood that answered but what was given to you from my Father in heaven. I am telling you Peter that on this rock I will build My church so the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. And then I will give you the keys to bind what is bound in Heaven and loose what is loosened in Heaven.*

One thing is for certain here, no matter what role you think Peter is given later, he is not the rock on which the Church

<sup>72</sup> See Figure 5. This is the very place they threw the children sacrifices.

<sup>73</sup> Some scholars thought the transfiguration might have been on Mount Tabor but this is unlikely, as Mount Tabor was the site of a Roman military camp at the time of Jesus.

is built. Peter could not descend into Hades and return triumphant after three days. Jesus is looking at this temple, housing the great pit into which children were thrown. He does so, with the full knowledge that in a few months, defeating this evil instigated by Satan, would bring Him to the culmination of his mission. Defiantly Jesus declares, '*the gates of Hell will be defeated*'!<sup>74</sup> I will assemble my church on the declaration '*I am the Christ*'.

Jesus was only free to complete this task once His father had confirmed the disciples were ready, This statement by Peter was that sign. At that time and in that place marked the move of the disciples from flesh and blood understanding of the kingdom, to spiritual recognition. It had been voiced through Peter.

After this confession, Jesus turned his face toward Jerusalem<sup>75</sup>. The time for general teaching to the nations is over. Jesus now concentrates on His disciples, telling them plainly about the cross, his death and resurrection. Peter has seen the Messiah, Jesus has recognized the spiritual statement of Peter, Jesus can now move on even though the group had not connected Him to the cross.

From that time began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up <sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> In the words of the creed, 'He descended into hades and on the third day arose'.

<sup>75</sup> Luke 9

<sup>76</sup> Matthew 16: 21

Directly from this incident, Jesus continued up the road to the mountain where he was transfigured. On that Mountain we are privy to a conversation between Moses, Elijah and Jesus.<sup>77</sup> Moses representing the Law and Elijah representing the Prophets, discussed all that Jesus' death in Jerusalem would mean.

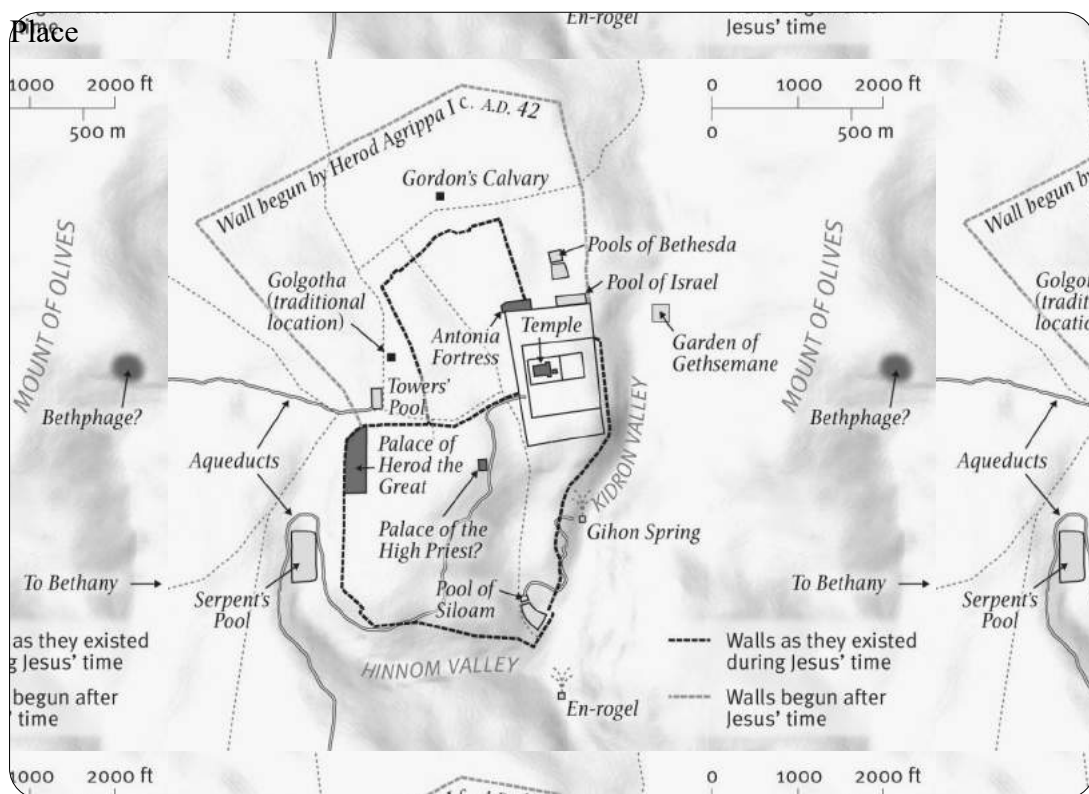
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<sup>77</sup> Representing the law and the prophets

## Mark

### *Gospel in Brief*

|                                    |                |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Preparation for Jesus' ministry -  | Mar 1:1-13     |
| ministry in Galilee -              | Mar 1:14-9:50  |
| Journey to Jerusalem -             | Mar 10:1-52    |
| His ministry in Jerusalem -        | Mar 11:1-13:37 |
| Suffering and death in Jerusalem - | Mar 14:1-15:47 |
| Resurrection and appearances -     | Mar 16:1-13    |
| Great commission                   |                |
| continued work from heaven -       | Mar 16:14-20   |



## Chapter 3

### *Mark*

#### The person:

Who was John Mark? What we know, we glean from the Gospels and Acts. There are a few outside sources.

Johanan (John) was his Hebrew name, Mark was his Greek name. He comes from fairly wealthy family who have at least one servant, (Rhoda). His mother was one, Mary, and they lived in a house with an upper room between Gethsemane gardens and the pools of Bethesda<sup>78</sup>. John-Mark was only a lad during Jesus' time, and he should have been in bed after the last supper, but he sneaked out and hid behind a tree, listening to Jesus' prayer, which he recalls for his gospel<sup>79</sup>. Both the house and the household of Mary were significant for the early Christian community in Jerusalem. Peter seems to have known that Christians would be gathered there for prayer when he was let out of Antonia Fortress by an angel. It was a very conveniently house for the prayer meeting in Acts.

The early church nickname Mark '*Stubby-Fingers*'.<sup>80</sup> His uncle was Barnabus.<sup>81</sup> we will see Mark pop up time and again through the New-Testament, especially in Acts and the letters of Paul. He was very much the assistant. The Bible would not been written but for several of such assist-

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<sup>78</sup> Acts 12: 12 see map page 49

<sup>79</sup> Mark 14: 51–52 --The most probable way we have a record of what Jesus prayed because the other gospels record Jesus going to pray alone .

<sup>80</sup> Hippolytus (Philosophumena, VII, xxx)

<sup>81</sup> Colossians 4: 10



ants that get minor mention in passing. Mark never becomes a leader in the Church but rather pursued his ministry by assisting, Barnabus, Paul, Luke and Peter. He knew Latin and translated and interpreted for Peter while in Rome.

*“Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.”<sup>82</sup>*

### The Gospel:

Mark was not an eyewitness of most early events. But there are some bits in Mark that belonged to a young lad who crept out and hid in the garden of Gethsemane. These are eyewitness account. For example, it is not hard to believe that Peter dictated the largest chunks the Gospel of Mark because of its style and some phraseology.

“Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, though not in order, whatsoever he remembered of the things said or done by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but afterward, as I said, he followed Peter, who adapted his teaching to the needs of his hearers, but with no intention of giving a connected account of the Lord’s discourses, so that Mark committed no error while he thus wrote some things as he remembered them. For he was careful of one thing, not to omit any of the things which he had heard, and not to state any of them falsely.”<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> 2 Timothy 4:11

<sup>83</sup> Eusebius : Ecclesiastical History

Mark is the shortest of the gospels. Mark does not have all the teachings of Matthew or Luke either. Usually an author decide upon his readers before beginning to write as this affects the language and style of a book. But this book does not seem to have a particular audience in mind, which is additional evidence that he is being dictated to. It is generally accepted, Mark wrote down the gospel while in Rome with Peter as his personal assistant for two-years.

Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter.”<sup>84</sup>

Everything was ‘*Immediate*’ for Peter.<sup>85</sup> the disciples managed to get from boat to shore, from Galilee shore to Capernaum ‘*immediately*’. Peter, the action-man was not interested in walks and conversation in between. Mark has to omit all the detail to keep up with Peter telling the story. Miracles appealed to Peter because results were ‘*immediate*’; there are eighteen recorded in Mark. Parables required sitting still to listen, so there are only four of those. In contrast, Matthew and Luke have more than seventeen teaching sessions each. Peter was the disciple that sneaked into the trial of Jesus. Mark writes about the illegality of that trial<sup>86</sup>. They tried Jesus for blasphemy and passed a death sentence, (which Rome would not allow them to do). They also disregarded the witnesses ‘*right to silence*’, to which any accused is entitled to under Roman law. But

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84 *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus of Lyons (who lived from about 115–202 AD) & commentary on 1 Peter, by Clement of Alexandria

85 Mark 1:12, 1:28, 1:42, 2:8, 2:12, 4:5, 4:15, 4:16, 5:13, 6:27, 10:52, 14:43.

86 John 18:15 suggests there was another disciple who knew the high priest and got inside. It was unlikely to be John but as a minor from a well established family and with a disability, might it be Mark? It might also be referring to Joseph of Arimathea of course, we may never know for certain because Mark is deliberate in not saying..

Mark also records another illegal act. The Sanhedrin falsely found Jesus guilty of **blasphemy**. Then changed the charge sheet saying they had found him guilty of **treason**. Rome did not recognize blasphemy as a crime but treason carried the death penalty. Peter would have been there to witness all that.

Regarding the law, Mark also mentions the incident of Joseph of Arimathea who went to Pilot ask for body. This was a courageous act, first, because he was a member of Sanhedrin and so risked being called a traitor and being tried himself, Second, because Pilot actually broke the rules by saying, 'yes'. Under Roman law Jesus should have had his legs broken and left to be pecked by birds on the side of the road, Crucified victims were not entitled to be buried. Once again, Prophecy told us in advance it would not happen that way. According to both prophecy and fact, Jesus, the sacrifice, could not be left until morning, not left for birds to peck, but must be buried in a borrowed tomb, without a broken bone. How else could Jesus rise again on the third day, *'in accordance with the scriptures'*.

## Luke

### *Gospel in Brief*

|                                      |                     |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| His Birth, Childhood, Early Ministry | Chapters 1:1-4:13   |
| His Ministry in Galilee              | Chapters 4:14-9:50  |
| His Journey to Jerusalem, Ministry   | Chapters 9:51-21:38 |
| His Rejection and Death              | Chapters 22:1-23:56 |
| His Resurrection and Ascension       | Chapter 24:1-53     |

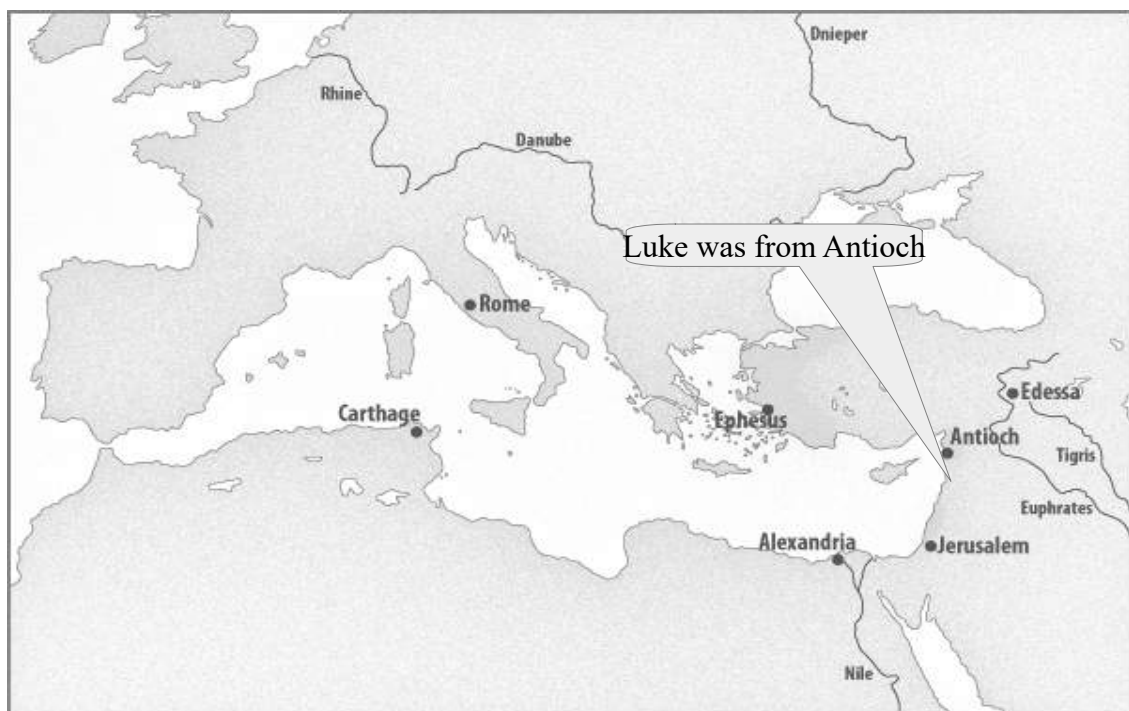


Figure 7: Luke was from Antioch

## Chapter 4

### *Luke*

#### The Person:

Luke was a gentile,<sup>87</sup> he was not an eyewitness, but was a skilful writer. As a gentile doctor, he is the only gentile writer of scripture. As a doctor, he was: methodical, meticulous, Greek educated<sup>88</sup>, familiar with the discipline of research, and used to keeping good records. To train as a doctor required advanced education. During that training, doctors were taught to be observant, analytical, precise in record keeping, ethical, trustworthy and willing to abide by the Hippocratic-oath which was established four-hundred<sup>BC</sup>. It is fitting that God uses a doctor to record the virgin birth. After Luke has satisfied himself of the facts by interviewing Mary, he gives the physical genealogy through Mary's line.

Luke was a native of Antioch which is described as the '*Paris of Ancient Greece*'. It was where everyone went to spend money and have a good time. But it was also the site of the first fully Gentile church. That was a problem to people who could not be called Jews, so Antioch was the place of origin for the nickname, '*Christians*'.

Luke fits all the facts into coherent format using themes which other gospel writers unpick and put in different order. Luke was not a preacher but a writer and writes to one man in particular, Why? Theophilus may well have been Paul's

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<sup>87</sup> People offer Colossians 4: 10-14 as proof. However no direct statement of that kind is made in the text

<sup>88</sup> Most of the books in the famous Pergamon Medical library, were in Greek or Aramaic

lawyer during his time in Rome. ‘*Most excellent*’ is a legal title. Luke addresses him as most excellent.

### The Gospel:

Did Theophilus possibly own Luke? Doctors did not work for the NHS in those days they were employed by households and dignitaries<sup>89</sup>. Was Theophilus a ‘Public Servant’ in the court of Caesar? Was he a Lawyer in the Caesar’s Court?<sup>90</sup> These are three questions that are asked regularly and cannot be answered for certain. He may have been all three. The strongest indications are, that he was a lawyer and that is why Luke took so much trouble with accuracy in his Gospel.

It is highly probable that Luke’s purpose in writing both the Gospel and Acts was to write with a twofold plan, as a researched, long term record to go into the library of Theophilus, but maybe with one eye open as a defence for the trial in Rome. Certainly the accuracy of his research is of ‘Legal’ standard. From where I stand, it is simply not logical to presume he just copied material from Mark as some suggest. He went to see Peter and Peter repeated a lot of what he later dictated to Mark, as one does. Luke’s defence of Christianity is that it is unharmed to Rome. The character reference of Paul and the character of the Church could easily be presented as evidence at the trial. These letters would certainly aid Paul in court against charges of insurrection and, they would defend Christianity against the

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<sup>89</sup> Philippians 4: 22.

<sup>90</sup> Luke 1: 1-4 ; Acts 1: 1.

charge that it was an illegal, anti-Roman religion. His emphasize that both Pontius Pilot and Festus declared him innocent carries weight, as both were Roman Judges.

While Paul was under house arrest at Caesarea for two-years, Luke could go round the country interviewing and researching. His bedside manner was very useful when speaking to Mary about the virgin birth, something she had kept close to her heart. Other childhood stories came from Mary and Elizabeth, who revealed the details of the revelation by angels and the leaping in the womb when they met. The details of Jesus' presentation for circumcision, when Hannah and Simeon prophesied over Jesus and Mary, were all words she deliberately stored in her heart, as she recalled to Luke. At the time of the Bar-Mizpha, it was customary for the women-folk to travel ahead with the children and prepare the evening meal for when the men-folk arrived. Jesus would have gone up with the women-folk being a child and returned with his father as a man. Hence, the mix-up as to where he was after the day's journey. Luke also interviewed John<sup>91</sup>. Matthew probable lent him his journal notes, from which he selected relevant material<sup>92</sup>. I guess he winkled out of James how the family tried to stop Jesus preaching one time.

Matthew traced the line through Joseph to prove Jesus was legally a descendent of Abraham. That was necessary to

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91 Only **Luke and John** state that the servant's right ear was cut off, **Luke and John** agree the concept of the master serving the slaves, which is not found in Mark or Matthew as well as other issues common to both

92 The suggestion of Matthew keeping a journal has its Orogen in first century writings .

comply with the law as legal guardian. But as discussed, Joseph's genealogy comes through Jehoiachin, he could not be the genetic father.<sup>93</sup> If Joseph was the *only* genetic route then we might rightly say God does not keep promises and Jesus was not King of the Jews. But Luke provides a Genealogy from Mary's line to show God has his own indisputable and clever ways of keeping his promises.

Luke also, not being Jewish himself, mentions other non-Jews like the Samaritan lepers who thanked Jesus, He also wheedled from James and John how they asked Jesus to call down fire on Samaritans, he mentions the non-Jewish widow of Zarapeth and Nahum the Syrian. Luke being a doctor notices the sick and outcast, lepers, tax-collectors and prostitutes. Ten women are mentioned in his gospel but no other. Luke, being less protective of the Jewish heritage, is much more pronounced in his account of the Sermon-on-the-mountain<sup>94</sup>. Matthew's Jewish account does not record the 'woes' in the sermon on the mount, Luke does. Woes are a curse and many Jews do not like to repeat them.

Luke also has a special heart for sinners. Jesus was a friend of those that have given up trying to keep the law. Luke ends with an account of the ascension which is also unique among the gospels. His second book begins where he leaves off the first. Later when Paul was in Rome and once again imprisoned, Luke uses the time to gather material gleaned from the saints they had met on the journey. With it

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<sup>93</sup> Jeremiah 22: 24-30

<sup>94</sup> Recorded as the sermon on the plain in Luke



he writes a defence of the Church to present as evidence the Church was no threat to Rome. But that is another book.

## John

### Gospel in Brief

|                          |                |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| Insight into Kingdom     | 1: 1-18        |
| Lifestyle of Kingdom     | 1: 19 - 4: 54  |
| Mission of Kingdom       | 5: 1 - 10: 42  |
| Growth of Kingdom        | 11: 1- 12: 50  |
| Community of the Kingdom | 13: 1 19: 42   |
| Future of the Kingdom    | 20: 1 - 21: 25 |

**Key Verse:** Jesus worked many other miracles for his disciples, and not all of them are written in this book. But these are written so that you will put your faith in Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God. If you have faith in him, you will have true life.

### Place

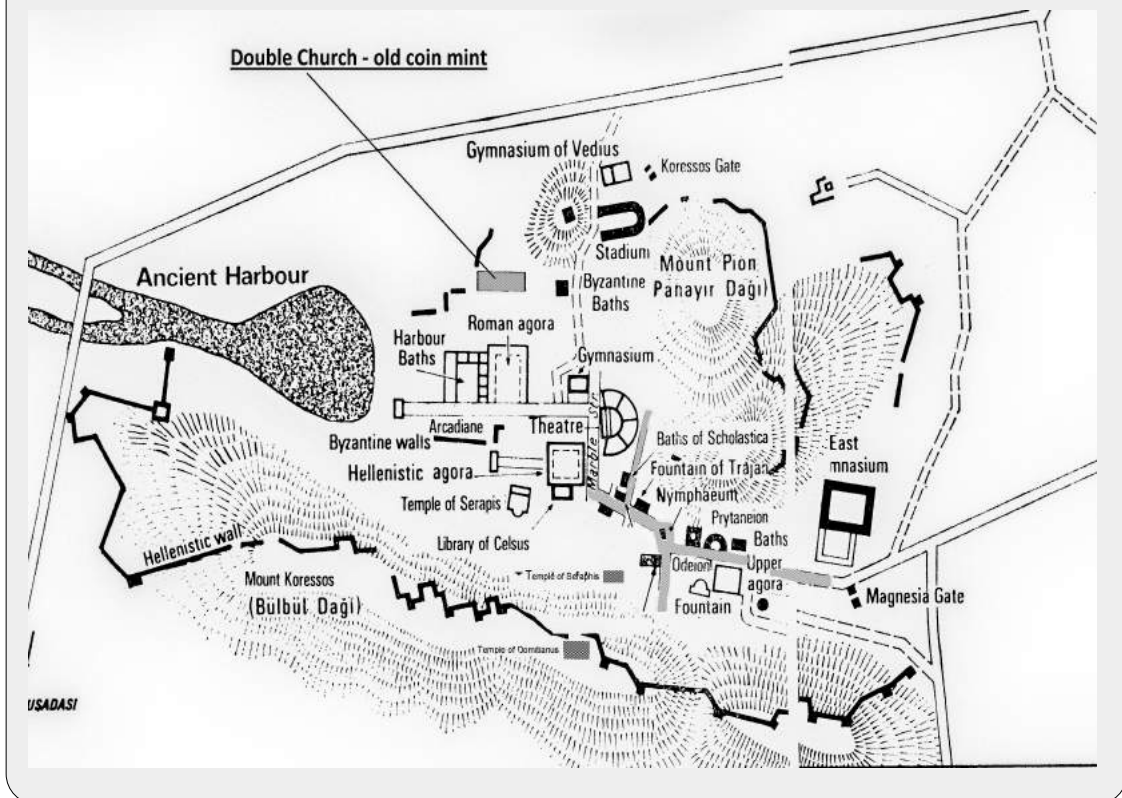


Figure 8: After the Resurrection, John settled in Ephesus with Mary

## Chapter 5

### *John*

#### The Person:

John, born around ten<sup>AD</sup>, was a son of Zebedee who had a fishing business by Galilee. His mother was named Salome and his elder brother was James. These two brothers were among the first disciples called by Jesus<sup>95</sup>. Together with Peter, they formed an inner group of disciples. These were privy to events like the transfiguration, the raising of Jairus' daughter and praying privately in the garden of Gethsemane. John refers to himself throughout the book as '*the disciple whom Jesus loved*'. John's gospel is written in very basic Greek. All his words are in the '*Ogden's Basic Word List of Greek*'.<sup>96</sup>

John was present when Christ was crucified, and he also was extremely loyal to Jesus during his ministry in Jerusalem. Jesus told him to look after Mary his mother, which he did, despite Mary having other children. After the resurrection, John spent twelve-years working in Judea and Samaria with other disciples. After this, when he was about forty-two, he went to Asia and settling in Ephesus, one of the seven major churches in Turkey. Ephesus was still at 'housegroup stage' then<sup>97</sup>. The city bye-laws show Jews were not supposed to hold any office or major property,

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95 Which means he was a teenager when he was called

96 Here I rely on Greek students who tell me this,

97 See further information in chapter on Ephesians under History section.

presumably to hold back the Jewish capacity to rise rapidly in business.

After John had spent several years in Ephesus, he was falsely accused of preaching against Rome and brought for trial before the emperor Domitian<sup>98</sup>. Domitian had begun a cruel persecution against the Christians, accusing it as a public subverter of Roman religions. This was a capital crime punishable by being placed in boiling oil until dead, and should have been dealt with in the supreme court. There is no concrete evidence John actually

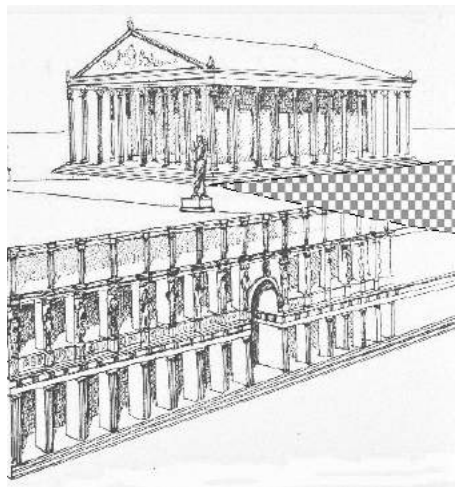
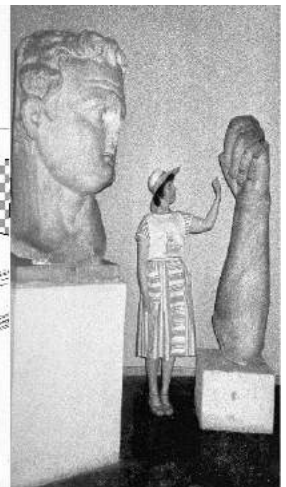


Figure 9: The Temple of Domitian



Anne & Brian 1985

went to Rome, neither do we know how the sentence was commuted to *'life'* of hard labour in the salt mines on the island of Patmos. It is here he wrote the book of Revelation.

On the death of Domitian in ninety-six<sup>AD</sup>, Narva repealed Domitian's act, recalling all those he had banished. John returned to Asia, and, at the age of about eighty-six, settled again in Ephesus. John came back to a very different and declining Ephesus. Timothy, its pastor, had also been put to death by Domitian. The Church had by now, been permitted

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98 It was reported John had preached Jesus was Lord and so was taken to Caesar to proclaim him Lord.

to buy the old coin-mint<sup>99</sup>, the Church had reached its peak and flourished for a few years, before the more wealthy members moved to a modern, purpose built synagogue in the suburbs. This effectively split the Church especially as Judaizers infiltrated the newly built Synagogue congregation via the trade guilds. John came back from exile to settle at the coin-mint church in the town centre, where he spent his last days mentoring Polycarp to be the overseer of the seven local churches.

It is suggested that Polycarp urged him to write his Gospel because he recognized he would not be around for much longer despite the misinterpretation of Jesus' words,

Jesus answered, "What is it to you, if I want him to live until I return? You must follow me." <sup>100</sup>

The story is told that, because of his age and disability from working in the mines, Church members would carry him to church each sabbath to give the final blessing. When they asked him why he would always say *'My Children you must love one another'*, he would simply reply *'because, My Children, you must love one another'*. Very poignant as Jesus told them to do the same in Revelation.

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<sup>99</sup> Into which they built another church back to back which is marked on archaeological maps as 'the Double Church'. See Lower Ephesus Figure 8: After the Resurrection, John settled in Ephesus with Mary (source Ephesus Museum).

<sup>100</sup>John 21: 22

In John's later days John took to teaching leaders, Polycarp studied under John, who in turn taught Irenaeus. These two became founding fathers of the Church. Although he used simple language, he was by far the most theological of the disciples.

John held an authoritative position in the early church as shown by his visit with Peter to Samaria to lay hands on new converts. He was helpful in the conversion of St. Paul.<sup>101</sup> Besides the Gospel, John wrote three letters (1 John, 2 John, and 3 John), and the book of Revelation<sup>102</sup>

Mark's Gospel hints of John's martyrdom, but his death as a martyr is unknown. The theologian Tertullian reported that, according to the apocryphal '*Acts of John*', John was plunged into boiling oil but miraculously escaped unscathed. This is highly unlikely as that was a High court punishment and John was never sent to Rome. He refused to declare Caesar as Lord and was sentenced to hard labour in the salt mines of Patmos where he penned Revelation. Among later traditions it was propagated that he ascended to heaven without dying. Officially, the apostle's grave is in Ephesus.

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101 Paul went up to Jerusalem to speak with John, and James after his conversion.

102 This is the considered conclusions of the author. Other people question which John wrote Revelation but the style content and spiritual insight of John are strong evidence that he is the writer.

## The Gospel

Solomon asked, *‘Will God indeed dwell on earth’?* Solomon built the temple, it was filled with God’s Glory at first, but Glory departed once the people got their hands on it. Moses had raised a tabernacle in the wilderness, God’s Glory arrived and no-one could go in for the glory. But by the end of Exodus, they could not go in because of their own sin. Jeremiah saw the Glory of God depart at the beginning of his book, but it returned again at the end. Later John will see the glory being carried away in a Basket only to return immediately before the final Judgement<sup>103</sup>.

John picks up from there.

The Word became a human being and lived here with us. We saw his true glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father. From him all the kindness and all the truth of God have come down to us.<sup>104</sup>

John is a contrast to the synoptics gospels. Where the synoptic gospels observe the teachings and the actions of Jesus, John looks at the person Jesus. He tries to capture the heart of the Son of God, in an attempt to see the Father. Ninety-percent of John’s writings is not in any other gospel. He does not mention Jesus’ birth, baptism, temptations, transfiguration, last supper, Gethsemane or his ascension. Instead, he chooses seven incidents in Jesus’ life that he sees as signs of the essential nature of Jesus. He calls them

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<sup>103</sup> Revelation 19: to 22.

<sup>104</sup> John 1: 14

‘Seven-Signs’: Turning water into wine, Healing the nobleman’s son from a distance, Healing the Cripple of thirty-eight-years, Feeding five-thousand, walking on water, healing the man blind from birth and raising Lazarus after four-days in the grave.

John also picks seven, ‘*I Am*’ statements made by Jesus about himself: I am the Bread of heaven<sup>105</sup>, I am the Light of world<sup>106</sup>, I am the Good shepherd<sup>107</sup>, I am the Door<sup>108</sup>, I am the Resurrection<sup>109</sup>, I am the Way Truth and Life<sup>110</sup>, and I am the True vine<sup>111</sup>.

Jesus himself said, ‘*If I bare witness of myself it means little*’. He is citing the law which says two witness in agreement is the minimum allowed to substantiate a claim. So John provides seven: The seven witnesses recorded by John are: John the Baptist<sup>112</sup>, God himself<sup>113</sup>, Nathaniel<sup>114</sup>, Peter<sup>115</sup>, Martha<sup>116</sup>, Thomas<sup>117</sup> and John himself<sup>118</sup>.

Further to the seven witnesses, John mentions seven titles given to him during his public ministry and endorsed by

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105 John 6 :51

106 John 9: 5

107 John 10: 11-14

108 John 10: 7 - 9

109 John 11: 25

110 John 14: 6

111 John 15: 1

112 John 1: 29 -36

113 John 1: 33 -34

114 John 1: 49

115 John 6: 68 -69

116 John 11: 27

117 John 20: 28

118 John 21: 24



others: The Lamb of God<sup>119</sup>, The Son of God<sup>120</sup>, The Son of Man<sup>121</sup>, The Messiah<sup>122</sup>, The King of Israel<sup>123</sup>, Rabbi<sup>124</sup> and the *Nazerene*. Joseph took Jesus and Mary to live in Nazareth when he returned from Egypt. Matthew says this was to fulfil what prophets had foretold that, '*He shall be called a Nazarene*'<sup>125</sup>. This phrase is certainly accepted by John's readers as prophesy but is not directly stated in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is foretold by Jeremiah and Isaiah who specifically say Messiah will be born in the North country. The term '*Nazarene*' was used to describe '*Northerners*' back then. Samaritans certainly expected Messiah would come from among them as the woman at the well intimated.

We have already talked about the origin of the word Logos in the introduction. Greeks used the word Logos in everyday language. To their mind it meant '*The prime cause*', and they used it in connection with the order of the universe, '*And Logos became flesh*'. John also records Jesus' longest Prayer in chapter-seventeen before he gives the remaining one-third of the book over to the last eight days of Jesus' life.

For speed reader's benefit, the prime subject of the book is found in the two words, '*Jesus*' and '*Christ*', which appear

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119 John 1: 29-36

120 John 1: 49

121 John 1 : 51, John 3: 14, John 6: 27

122 John 1: 41, John 4: 26

123 John 1: 49

124 John 1: 38

125 Matthew 2: 2 John 19: 19

one-hundred-and-seventy-times. And the word '*believe*' which occurs over ninety-times.

John is Hebrew minded, not Greek. Heaven and earth are not an age to come but a reunion of earth with heaven. God always intended heaven and earth to be interconnected. That is why he was so keen to come and dwell among his people at Sinai. It is often overlooked that even when this earth is finished with there will be a new heaven *and* a new earth. John is very clear in his Jewish thinking that, just as the resurrection requires a new body, so the new Heaven requires a new earth. It was Greek thinking that separated them.

Jesus came from heaven to reconcile earth to heaven. Earth is not a separate entity with a separate destiny; '*... On earth as it is in Heaven*'. In his final words, '*Go and lo I am with you always*'!

John also brings out the meeting with Nicodemus, highlighting the unity spirit to a body. The connection between water and spirit in a new birth confused Nicodemus and Jesus remarks 'but you are a Jew and leader among Jews what stops you seeing that? Jesus understood Greeks might get not get it, but it had been part of Jewish understanding from Eden when God breathed into a body to give life. There is no separation of Spirit and Body, the body is integral to being born of the Spirit. Being born of water is essential to being born of spirit. It is a clear confrontation to

the Greek idea that, body and spirit are separate and have no effect on each other.

John three-sixteen also challenges the popular Plato view that human beings must become the best they can without the help of gods. It is God who sought to rescue humanity while they were dead in sins. The dead do not search. Further, the motivation to rescue carries the motivation of perfect love, not the segregated sections of love understood by Greeks.

John is the only one to recall the incident with woman at well. When John says, 'Jesus needed to go through Samaria', he is speaking of spiritual guidance. There are two other routes to pass by Samaria, much preferred routes by most. It is this insight into the motivations of Jesus that marks John out as more in tune to Jesus than the others. When he did preach in Samaria, it turned into a revival to which the disciples would have to return later in acts to establish and build up a church.

In chapters-five-to-twelve, we see seven confrontations leading to seven '*I Am*' statements. At the feast of Tabernacles, the priest would go down to the pool of Siloam and get jug of water. It had to be '*living*' water from the spring source which he brought back. Pouring it around the altar, he would quote:

Behold, \*God is my salvation: I will trust, and not be afraid; for Jehovah, is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation. And with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salva-

tion. And in that day shall ye say, Give ye thanks to Jehovah, call upon his name, declare his deeds among the peoples, make mention that his name is exalted.<sup>126</sup>

This is the time and place for Jesus to Say:  
On that day Jesus stood up and said loudly, "Whoever is thirsty may come to me and drink."<sup>127</sup>

## Acts

### Acts in Brief

|                               |               |
|-------------------------------|---------------|
| Birth of Church               | 1-6: 4: 37 –  |
| Jews to Jew in Jerusalem      | 5: 1 to 6: 7  |
| Greek to Samaritan in Samaria | 8: 1 to 9: 31 |
| Gentile to gentile in Antioch | 10 to 12: 24  |
| All to the ends of the earth  | 12 :24 to 20  |



Figure 10: Paul's Life Travels

## Chapter 6

### *Acts*

#### The Person:

Luke is a Gentile writer, and we introduced him in at the beginning of his Gospel. Medical terms are common throughout his writings, especially in the healing passages. Luke changes roles slightly throughout the book of Acts as he leaves his profession as a doctor and joins the mission working alongside Paul. Sometimes the passages use the pronoun 'we' sometimes 'they'. Sometimes it is research sometimes experience.

#### The Book:

Up until the Second-Century <sup>AD</sup>, The book of Acts and the Gospel of Luke were one scroll. The book of Acts was never completed. It is still being written today and will be until Jesus returns.

Once again, when you give a book a title it can mislead the concept if its contents. The book of Acts is, '*The acts of the Holy Spirit*', not '*The Acts of the Apostles*'. The apostles did not do these works, calling on the Holy Spirit for backup. No, they looked with a spiritual eye as to what the Holy-Spirit was doing and co-operated in it. We will explain this in a moment but for now, '*Jerusalem to Rome*' is the theme of these chapters that have been written, but that is only the beginning.

The gospel moves from Jerusalem to the rest of the world via Rome, a Jewish story spread throughout a Gentile world. Luke probably wrote this second book while he was with Paul. While Paul was under house arrest in Rome for two-years, there was plenty of time to check out what Paul did, using the occasions Luke was with him. Luke was with Paul for a large part of his journey but, it seems, always with him when he journeyed by sea. I wonder why? Perhaps Paul was not so good at sea?

The first part of this book is about the Church and how it spread. The second part narrows in on Paul and his particular mission to the Gentiles. It would be nice if we had another book telling what was going on meantime outside the picture frame of Paul, but the book would be massive. If all the other seventy, sent out by Jesus, were as prolific as Paul, and all the Messianic-Jews chased from Jerusalem in seventy<sup>AD</sup> were as energetic, we would wonder why the whole earth was not in the Kingdom of Christ by the end of the book. Jesus had completed his work of redemption, it was finished on the Cross. But his work of *Mediation, Proclamation and Reclamation* is still going on.

And he said to them, It is not yours to know times or seasons, which the Father has placed in his own authority; but ye will receive power, the Holy Spirit having come upon you, and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. And having said these things he was taken up, they, beholding him, and a cloud received him out of their sight. And as they were gazing into

heaven, as he was going, behold, also two men stood by them in white clothing, who also said, Men of Galilee, why do ye stand looking into heaven? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, shall thus come in the manner in which ye have beheld him going into heaven.<sup>128</sup>

The disciples asked, *When?* They should have asked, ‘What’, ‘*What is the Holy Spirit doing Now?*’ Fifty-times in the book of Acts, the Holy-Spirit is described as moving. It is not the people moving with the Holy-Spirit tagging along. The action of the Holy-Spirit initiates, He is not confined to the moving of the people, He is moving in the world and His people pick it up and respond. The Holy-Spirit moves mainly within a sequence through this account: Opposition, Persecution, Thrust-out and Church growth. The disciples were largely effective in their mission when they worked in tandem with the circumstances engineered by Holy-Spirit. Then, as today, the disciples that saw the circumstances being engineered by the Holy-Spirit, were the same disciples that had the power of the moment to do signs and wonders. The disgruntled disciples who just saw the disruption of their lives and hindering their work, were the ones who have little story to tell. Whenever the early church had a crisis, the circumstances were viewed as part of Holy-Spirit’s movement.

When the Church had a church crisis because the widows not being served in Acts-chapter-six, The leaders did not clechě, ‘*We hear what you are saying but ...*’, they looked

beyond to see an opportunity to lift the Church to a higher plane. They called a meeting of the Church, yes but, it was not a democratic meeting as the Greeks were used to<sup>129</sup>, it was a meeting to discern the Holy-Spirit's solution. Church members might have perceived it to be democracy because the practical answer seemed obvious to the people, but, it had to be pursued at a spiritual level, not a democratic level.

These new Christians needed to be taught the difference. In structure, a meeting is a meeting. It may have opened in prayer but otherwise it might be conducted as any other meeting. The disciples brought the congregation together to teach them the difference. The disciples did not assume the congregation automatically knew how to discern the movement of the Spirit, it had to be learned. After all, these were Greek democrats. They were used to arguing their corner and championing self opinion. May the strongest argument prevail. They might have appointed representatives from among the complainers to suit their particular circle in the food distribution. That would have simply encouraged complainers in the Church to complain more, because by complaining they would have been rewarded for their moans. Thus, the Church would remain at a human level and slowly die. The challenge was not only to seek out *spirit filled* people who could demonstrate the character and anointing or the job, but also to teach the congregation of believers how recognize them. There is no mention of volunteers.

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129 we might say the modern Western Church



The objective that the apostles had picked up from Jesus, was to lift the Church to a Spiritual level by teaching the Church about insight, (*'It seemed good to them and the Holy-Spirit'*), It was to see the problem as an opportunity to test and prove people at obedience level and to allow the Holy-Spirit to train people for more exacting roles in the Church. Six of the seven chosen to serve, would be cutting their journey to martyrdom here. One failed and took another root to fame- proclaiming heresy.<sup>130</sup> Philip, one of the deacons, went on to water the seed Jesus had planted at the well in Samaria. He asked Peter and John to come and pray for the fire of the Holy-Spirit over the Church, which is ironic, as last time Peter and John were there in Samaria with Jesus, they wanted to call for fire to come and consume them.<sup>131</sup>

The book of Acts also challenges another modern trend. Using the terminology without understanding the principle leads to error. When people in Acts claim to be *'Led by the Spirit'*, it is not accepted as a fact without a challenge. The leading of the Holy-Spirit was not in 'a nice warm inner feeling' or 'a big idea', it was a sense of direction confirmed by circumstance and opportunity, mostly by persecution.

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130 Acts 5: 5: **Steven** was stoned: **Philip**, after sowing the seed of a church in Ethiopia by the Enoch, went to Samaria where he was Martyred. **Prochorus**, nephew of Steven, accompanied John first, then Paul and was martyred in Antioch: **Nicanor** went to Asia to be Martyred in 76 AD: **Parmenas** also went to Asia to be Martyred by Trajan in 98 AD: **Timon** remained in role of serving tables until the exile: **Nicolas**, disgruntled by his lack of progress in church Hierarchy, started a sect know as the Nicolaitans which is confronted by Paul in his letters

131 0Luke also records that in Luke 9: 54.

Peter challenged Ananias and Sophia on their leading of the Holy-Spirit, not on how much they put in the collection. This is a Lesson in being Spirit-led, not on expected Christian behaviour. Because the members were selling all and bringing it to the Church, there would have been group pressure. That is not being '*Spirit led*', that is group pressure. When it came to the crunch, they did not have an answer.

They wanted to be part of the Church but only in appearance not united in spirit. Peer pressure can cause compromise. That led this couple to lie. Once again we see in this chapter just how much the Church needed to learn the difference between the Kingdoms of this world and the Kingdom of God. These may look the same on the outside sometimes, but there is a vast difference inwardly. It may be that the Church itself should bear part of the blame, if it put a pressure of belonging on this couple to find a compromise. I wonder if Peter addressed that in one of his sabbath sermons.

*'But keep the Holy Spirit in your hearts. Always be ready to answer everyone who asks you to explain about the hope you have'*<sup>132</sup>,

Peter, in the house of Cornelis was challenged by a dream in which the Holy-Spirit spoke about eating non-kosher food. At the Council of Jerusalem, he did not use as his defence, '*The Spirit told me to eat*'. Had he done so, the

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132 1Pe 3:15

Council would rightly have decided, '*we only have your says-so, and we do not agree*'. The Holy-Spirit does not act without evidence. The evidence was the call of a Gentile Centurion, **plus** the vision telling Peter what to do, **plus** the arrival of the request at the precise time and **plus** the evidence of the Holy-Spirit coming upon the Gentiles. That is what the Jerusalem council could not dispute. It was not just a case of encouraging a worker in what he thought was right. It was a case discerning the Holy Spirit in his direction for the Church.

Beware, it is so easy in the Church of today to justify a personal ambition or a deep self-motivation with the words '*The Spirit told me*'. If evidence of the Spirit is not forthcoming, Check again! Look for evidence of the Spirit in: Regeneration (*conversion*), Baptism (*water and Spirit*); Sending people out (*mission*) and Fruit (*Peace, patience etc.*). If you don't see any, question the motivation of the work. The book of Acts, speaks to this more than any other book in the Bible. If you want to stick around in Jerusalem in case revival breaks out, you might miss what the Spirit is saying to the Churches. The new church was born in Jerusalem but the action was carried out in the world. God said, 'spread out'!<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Genesis 1: 28

| Book              | Date Written (A.D.)    |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| Jerusalem Council | 49                     |
| Galatians         | 49                     |
| James             | 49                     |
| 1 Thessalonians   | 50 - 51                |
| 2 Thessalonians   | 50 - 51                |
| 1 Corinthians     | 54                     |
| 2 Corinthians     | 55                     |
| Romans            | 55                     |
| Mark              | 57 - 59                |
| Luke              | 60                     |
| Ephesians         | 60                     |
| Colossians        | 60                     |
| Philemon          | 60                     |
| Acts              | 61                     |
| Philippians       | 61                     |
| 1 Timothy         | 62                     |
| Titus             | 62                     |
| 2 Timothy         | 63                     |
| 1 Peter           | 63                     |
| 2 Peter           | 63 - 64                |
| Matthew           | 60's                   |
| Hebrews           | 60's                   |
| Jude              | 60's or 70's           |
| Revelation        | Early 80's             |
| John              | Late 80's              |
| 1 John            | late 80's - early 90's |
| 2 John            | late 80's - early 90's |
| 3 John            | late 80's - early 90's |

Figure 11: Order of New Testament Letters

## ***Preamble to the Letters***

Greeks thought they were the most logical and rational people on earth. But when they ordered the bible books, their logic seems most illogical. It looks like they grouped the books into categories, then each category from largest to smallest book. This is certainly not helpful when we come to these letters, especially when we try to see the thoughts in God's mind, or even watch Paul's maturing as a Christian. So how should we look through these books? Paul progressed in his Christian faith and ministry, as anyone else would. His concerns change as the Churches changed. His advice changed as the Churches matured or met new challenges. When you teach a child to ride bike you start with stabilizers but when they have learned to steer and peddle you can take the stabilizers off and concentrate on balance and road sense. Jumping around in Paul's letters while they are out of chronological order gives us the impression he just went with the moment.

If the Old-Testament concentrated on the nation of Israel and its mission, the New-Testament concentrates on the Church and its mission. It is not about the kingdom of God for itself, it is about staying in tune with God as He fulfils His purposes on the earth through the Church. Two key verse must be taken in conjunction throughout the scriptures:

'Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven'<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Matthew 6: 10.

No one has gone up to heaven except the Son of Man, who came down from there.<sup>135</sup>

The New-Testament is not about Church Strategy as some would like us to believe. Doing things by the same method as the early church is not ‘good strategy’. Seeing the way the early church discerned the mind of God, is far more profitable than trying to do things the way they did things back then. It is about God’s strategy as revealed by the Holy Spirit. Only Jesus who came down from heaven has full insight as to what goes on in Heaven. All we know is what He told us. Progressing through the book of acts shows us, when the early church made mistakes, the hand of God brought it back into line. But it did so only because the early church had the flexibility to allow Him to do so. It was never a case of, ‘*try it and see*’.

We might use different metaphors for it, ‘*Preparing the bride for her groom*’, or, ‘*Inviting guests to the banquet*’, but at heart, it is about God longing for the day when Heaven and Earth are united under the Kingship of Christ. From the day God expressed his desire to come and dwell among his people, first to Adam, then to Moses in the wilderness, we meet an obstacle, His pure Holiness and our sinful nature. Moses tried the elaborate separation by the rituals and procedures of the temple, but we left the Old-Testament with Zechariah seeing the Glory of God leaving the Temple, and we enter the New-Testament with the de-

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<sup>135</sup> John 3: 13 .

struction of the temple altogether in seventy<sup>AD</sup>. Joel prophesied the weeping over it<sup>136</sup> and Josephus records the fulfilment of it<sup>137</sup>. Even today the Jews line up in thousands to weep at the remaining wall. That barrier was broken down in the New-Testament when the Holy Spirit came upon the people, and they fulfilled two conditions; they met together to discern the Holy Spirit, and they obeyed the Holy Spirit. David's cry '*Take not your Holy Spirit from me*', is just as relevant today as it was then.

We are dealing primarily with the present heaven and present earth. One day we are promised a new Heaven and a new earth, but not until the purpose of present time is fulfilled. Then we will have new bodies to suit the new heaven and new earth. In the meantime God's overriding heart is to see those who share His passion for the reconciliation of Heaven and Earth in this present age.

We saw the heart of God while we skimmed through the gospels. The parable of the prodigal son is, at base level, about the heart of God. He longs to see, not only the lost son returning, but also the heart of the older son rejoicing within the Family. Both sons needed to understand, the father's heart is to reconcile the whole family. It is not about a reluctant son waiting for his inheritance but a father rejoicing at the prospect of reconciliation to the family in both his sons.

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136 Joel 1: 13.

137 Antiquities of the Jews — Book XI

Even if we only see the parable of the sower as sowing seed, it is not just on good ground. Jesus was just as delighted when he saw the struggling seed in cracks or crannies, along the road. He saw a different dimension of the Holy Spirit. Sowing seed is not a work Christians *do*, it is the fruit of a Christian, naturally dropping seed where they walk. The seed will drop, be it in a nutritious field, or the crack in the path, dropping seed cannot be helped if the pilgrim is maturing in Christ no matter where he or she is happens to be. Now that is the root of New-Testament Strategy.

Again, the parable of the lost coin is not just about seeking the coin that was lost, it is about the sweeping and dusting of the environment to let the light in so seed can grow. If the Church is doing its job properly, while God is seeking the lost, the Church is sweeping the floor, letting light shine in dark places. But as we shall see, there are times when the Church syncretizes with the world and allows the world to muddy the windows. Again the parable of salt that has lost its saltiness. When Jesus told that parable, He was by the Dead Sea where they would collect the salt, extract the minerals for fertilizer and discard the remainder on the roads as filling between bigger stones. Paul warn believers you lose saltiness by stepping out of line with the Holy Spirit.<sup>138</sup>

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138 1 Thessalonians 5:19–22 ; Romans 15: 13, 1 Corinthians 12: 7 ; Romans 8:15–16; Galatians 4:4–7



In the book of Acts, we will see this is not an automatic trait in a Christian to keep in step with the Holy-Spirit, that has to be learned. The leadership of the Apostles was not primarily about holding a church together, Primarily it was about discerning the Holy Spirit and teaching Church to do the same. That is why Peter is hard on church members. Ananias and his wife Sapphira, or other such members that Paul hands over to Satan are part of the learning curve for the whole church<sup>139</sup>. I suspect today, we would rather keep the membership numbers up under the modern notion of the term '*God is love*'. God was love then too but his love was not an excuse for church syncretization.

With that in mind I have rearranged some of the letters of Paul into chronological order. Hopefully it will take our mind off the controversies about, '*what Paul really meant here ...*', to concentrate on, '*What is God doing here through his Holy Spirit*'?

We are left with one other matter helpful to understanding the general letters. Peter, Paul, James and John hold to a similar structure which holds true to the general letters.

After the common courtesy introduction<sup>140</sup> and a recognition of those to whom the letter is sent, there follows a doctrinal basis on which the reason for writing rests. Too often, what follows that, is viewed as a list of behaviour changes the writer expects the reader to work on. If you come out of

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<sup>139</sup> 1 Corinthians 5: 5 ; 1 Timothy 1: 20

<sup>140</sup> The writers name is at the beginning to save unwinding the scroll to see who it from then rolling it back up.

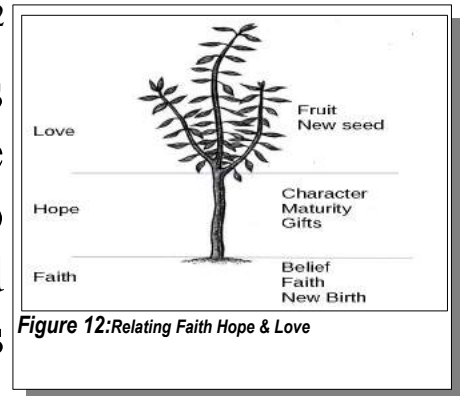
church after the sermon, thinking the preacher has just given you another set of things to put right in your life, the preacher has failed. These letters were never meant to have chapters and verses, they were meant to be read from start to finish, aloud among the congregations<sup>141</sup>. That is how the early church received them. To take the verses from the second half of a letter without explaining the doctrinal base in the first half, can give rise to the misunderstanding that these are required works on our part. Not So! These are fruits of the spirit that grow out of the doctrines explained in the first half of the letter.

To pick one example, one-Corinthians-thirteen is held to be a chapter about love. So it may be, if taken out of the context of the whole, In the context of the letter Paul is talking about growth in the kingdom of God. It is about a comparison of the two kingdoms. Love is one fruit that underpins, but there is also hope and faith which are dealt with within the context. All three working together bring about natural kingdom growth. But, each term needs to be explained within the context. Paul's short sermon comes in chapter-two and it is entitled, *'The mystery of the power and wisdom of God'*. It is about being born again, into the Kingdom of God. The letter compares and contrasts the understanding of two Kingdoms.

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<sup>141</sup> Sermons were not the expected form of early assembly but a scriptural reading followed by the appropriate explanation from the Didache , Mishnah or Talmud. Paul's letters were treated in this way,

Only then does he speak of the fruit<sup>142</sup> of Faith, Hope and Love that grows within this new birth. This principle carries through the New-Testament, so we will do well to stop off here and look at ‘Kingdom of God growth’; its terms and meanings:



Every human being believes, it is built into the nature of life itself. Belief needs to be grounded into something. Grounded in self, for example, will grow self-righteousness fruit. This is a small, distorted fruit of good-works, limited by self-esteem, self-significance or self-worth. Paul’s letters work on the assumption that everyone will be righteous<sup>143</sup>. Either he will be made righteous by the work of Jesus Christ, or she will be self-righteous. Only the ‘*Christ-righteous*’ person belongs to the kingdom-of-God, this is when the seed of belief is grounded in Jesus-Christ.



Belief grounded becomes faith. Belief grounded in self, saps the soil for growth for self-preservation, self-opinion, self-righteousness and self. Belief grounded in kingdom soil, produces repentance, humility, and a new-kingdom outlook on life. Wherever the New-Testament speaks of faith, it is talking about where a person’s belief is grounded and taken root, either in Christ or in self.

<sup>142</sup> Singular fruit of Faith, hope and Love,

<sup>143</sup> For a fuller understanding read Romans but in particular Romans 10: 3

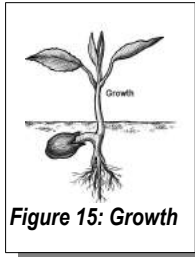


Figure 15: Growth

Once a seed puts its head above the ground, it enters the environment of hope. Hope can only respond to the root of Faith. How a plant behaves in hope, depends on where it is grounded. The self-righteous faith will develop by what it **sees**, It will see a world, and will hope things will be comfortable, hope things will get better, hope the world will treat it well. The self-righteous will demonstrate a life of works, ‘*See what I have done*’, or ‘*I did it my way*’. It rarely owns failure, it cannot be at fault, ‘*They stopped me*, or ‘*Circumstances hindered me*’.<sup>144</sup> ‘Christ-righteous’ faith will grow on what it has **heard**. It will build on promises it can trust. It will recognize its own failings using words like repentance<sup>145</sup>, forgiveness<sup>146</sup> and humility<sup>147</sup>, it will develop joy not happiness, peace of mind not peace of circumstance, patience not control<sup>148</sup>.

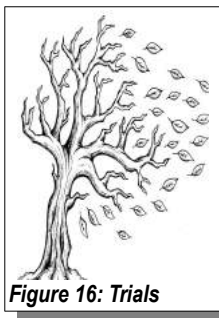


Figure 16: Trials

Once growth puts its head above the ground, it will find itself in Hope-world, full of weather. These are trials of hope which produce character. The self-righteous tree will produce thorns and thistles,<sup>149</sup> the Christ-righteous tree will produce a harvest of goodness and an acceptable fruit.<sup>150</sup>

144 The seven markers of self-righteousness : 1)The self-righteous see themselves as better than, not better together. 2)The self-righteous blame others for their failures rather than take ownership of them. 3)The self-righteous are selfish, not selfless. 4)The self-righteous are repulsive, not attractive. 6)The self-righteous are haughty, not humble. 7)The self-righteous need more self, not more Jesus. [Josh Laxton].

145 Hebrews 6: 1 ; 6: 4

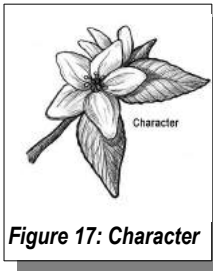
146 Ephesians 1: 7 ; Colossians 1: 14

147 Philippians 2: 3-8 ; 1 Peter 5: 5

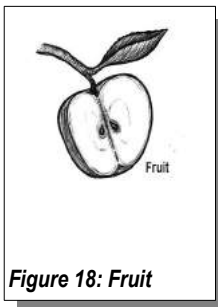
148 Galatians 5: 23 ff

149 Hebrews 6 : 8 ;Ephesians 5: 11

150 2 Corinthians 9: 10 ; James 5: 7



Character is the part of us that will one day have a new body. Your character, your personality, Your motivation will pass beyond the grave, not like a disembodied phantom, but fitted with a new body, fit for the new kingdom. <sup>151</sup>



The fruit of the self-righteous life will produce adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; These will not pass the grave to inherit the kingdom of God.

The fruit of the Christ-righteous life will be love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness meekness, temperance and so on. These are not under the Law, will not die with the body at the grave, but will pass over into a new body in the kingdom of God.

That is how the New-Testament contrasts the two kingdoms.

Galatians

**Letter in Brief**

Legalism

3-4 -**Faith plus**

Liberty

1-2 -**Faith Progressing**

Licence

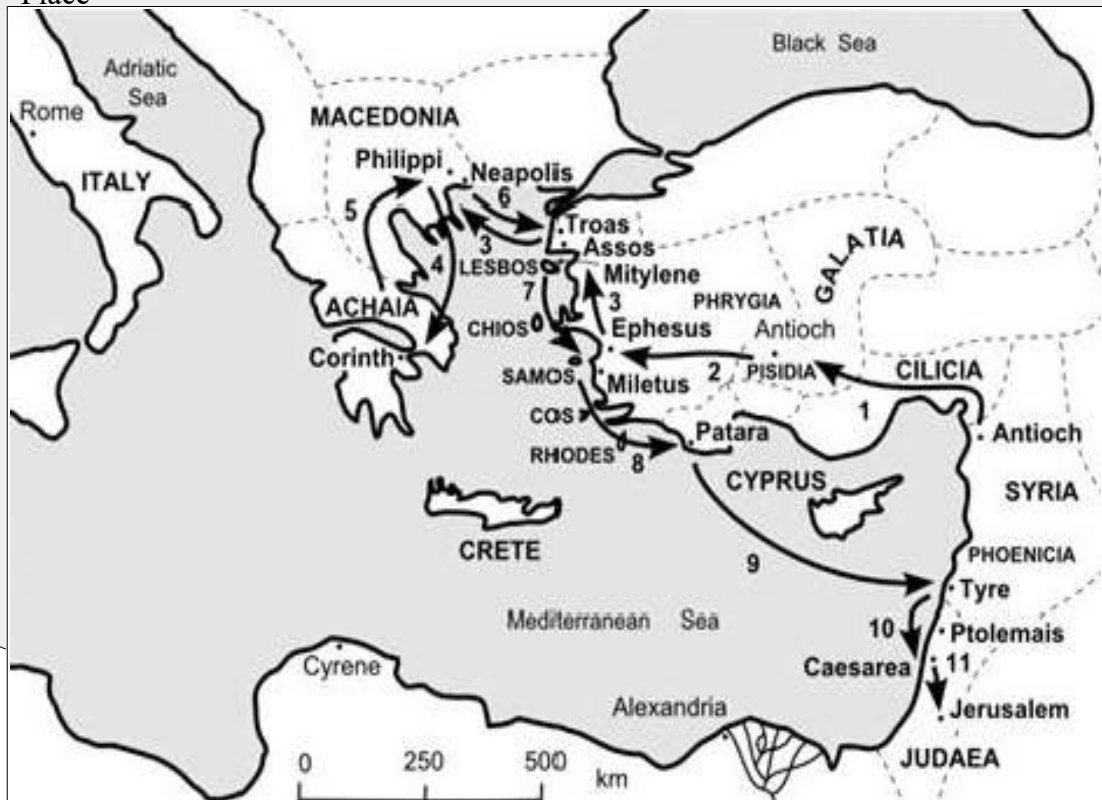
5-6 -**Faith minus**

Key words

Law 32 times

Faith 21 times

Place



## Chapter 7

### *Galatia*

#### The History:

Galatia is a region not a town or city. It is in North-Central Turkey<sup>152</sup>. The name comes from the Greek for ‘Gaul’, because Celtic-Gauls settled there around two-seventy-seven<sup>BC</sup>. Galatia was part of the territory overrun by Alexander-the-Great and so became Greek in culture. Then it became Roman under the conquest of Rome in one-eighty-nine AD.

The letter to Galatians is a letter written, by Paul to all the Christian communities in the area. Paul and Barnabus had just attended a Council of Churches, meeting at Jerusalem. In it, the first and foundational declaration of the doctrine of Salvation laid down:

Any person may be saved, by God’s grace channelled through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

The conclusion of that council was, nothing is to be added or subtracted from this foundation. And as Paul makes clear:

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we have preached to you, let them be under God's curse!<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Anatolia

<sup>153</sup> Galatians 1:8

The agenda at that meeting then turned to the issues of practicality concerning conditions for church membership, (no doubt raised by Paul and Barnabus). Here there was clearly debate on issues of circumcision, keeping the laws, and kosher diet. James, as chair-person, summed up the debate at the end:

Therefore, our judgement is that we do not trouble those of the Gentiles who have turned to God; But that we will write to them to abstain from pollutions of idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled and from blood<sup>154</sup>

So it was that James, as the chair-person, and separately Paul, as the apostle to the Gentiles, wrote to all the Churches in the region of Galatia, clarifying the situation around fifty<sup>AD</sup>. The decision of the conference was written down and sent to other churches also, including the Churches in Jerusalem. This letter was to be 'on headed note paper', (so to speak). Some 'right-wing' Pharisees were using the council as their authority to preach Judaizer-doctrines, so the letter was written in defence of the council, and to distance the council from this group. The opening Paragraph was to be as follows:

Inasmuch as we have heard that certain ones among us, [i.e. former Pharisees] who went to you, have troubled your souls with words, saying, 'You are obligated to be circumcised and to keep the law'. We gave no such command<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Acts 15: 19 - 20, see also verses 28 - 29.

<sup>155</sup> (Acts 15: 24)



### The Letter:

There are three categories of letter written by Paul. Personal, Specific and Open, this is an ‘Open letter’ to all the saints (assemblies) scattered in Galatia. The letter was probably the first letter written by Paul, and written about fifty<sup>AD 156</sup>. It was written because the area had been targeted by the Judaizers and Greek Libertarians.<sup>157</sup>

The letter gives us great insight into Paul’s understanding of his own calling, It also gives great clarity of the essential gospel, It also gives great insight as to how Paul understood God’s mind for spreading the Gospel. The gospel is going to collect a goodly number of barnacles as it travels outward. All sorts of people are going to want to adopt it, adapt it and distort it for their own purposes, (now as then). Paul clarifies the essential nature of salvation and then warns them not to deviate either by adding to it or taking away from it. It is a book every generation from then till now should revisit, to clean off the unhealthy growth the gospel has collected through time or intention. Today more than ever the Church has been contaminated by those wanting to add to the gospel, and those that want to subtract from it. We are not confined to well advertised warnings against Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mary Eddie-baker or Joseph Smith and their version of Gnostic-interpretation, we are also well warned against legalists shaping the Church. One commentator asks, ‘How large is your church constitution’? That is the first place you will find subtle legalism. The

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156 Some people think it may be later and others think it was written before the Jerusalem council. As it covers nearly all the issues James covers, it seems to me the two are motivated by the same event.

157 See section Judaizers in the introduction to this book

constitution of a church can be an enemy to the culture of a church, it can destroy a church by taking prominence over the essential culture of the pure gospel within a church. Church becomes Church-Plus the constitution, when it is upheld by the letter of the law and not the spirit.

Today, new-age, universalism, and syncretism are encroaching rapidly. Such libertarians take away from the gospel and end up killing church with a long list of things which Paul has warned can never be part of the kingdom of God<sup>158</sup>.

This letter is Paul's first chance, with the Blessing of the apostles and founders conference, to warn that enemies of the gospel will attack from both sides, legalism and licence; Church-Plus and Church-Minus. Greek influence will lean to licence and Jewish influence will go for legalism.

This was Martin Luther's favourite letter. It was the base of his justification by faith. Reformers viewed it as, '*the pebble that slew the pope*'. On the other hand, modern church values of tolerance and tact must be clearly seen as for what they are, an encroaching syncretism that will incur God's wrath<sup>159</sup>.

That is to say that not by ourselves, neither by our works which

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158 1 Corinthians 6  
159 Revelation 2: 15

are less than ourselves, but by another help, Jesus Christ who redeems us from sin, death and the devil to make us partakers of eternal life.<sup>160</sup>

After the usual introduction, Paul has to start defending himself. Judaizers had been to town, and they saw Paul as enemy number-one. *‘If you cannot win an argument, trash your opponent’*,<sup>161</sup> is not a modern phenomenon it was taught by the Greeks in their debating tuition classes. So Judaizers<sup>162</sup> ‘trashed’ Paul. Paul is forced to start with his accreditation. Educated at the third most prestigious university in the world, (Tarsus), under the most renowned scholar of the day, circumcised, Zealot, chosen by Jesus Christ himself on the way to Damascus, endorsed by Peter, James and John, and with fourteen-years of apostleship experience. But all that is nothing when it comes to the Gospel.

What is the Gospel?

Salvation by Grace through faith. Not by works (Law). Not even by faith plus (Legalism). Not by exploiting grace (libertarianism), Not by faith alone (belief). But in faith, demonstrated by obedience to the God, the source of our faith (faith through Grace). Growing in faith produces hope and hope produces fruit. (deeds)<sup>163</sup>

In Chapter-three, Paul outlines the logical result when you add to the gospel. If God wants all people everywhere to be

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<sup>160</sup> Martin Luther

<sup>161</sup> The Etonian *‘Gish- Gallop technique’*

<sup>162</sup> We know about them we covered them in the introduction

<sup>163</sup> James uses this word to describe the fruits of faith. This is not the same as works but the manifestation of a living faith.

saved, there can be no hidden mysteries. God promised the means of salvation and described it by announcing it to Adam. This was long before Abraham was circumcised or Moses gave the law. So, the law cannot be said to be necessary for salvation.

In chapter-four, Paul lays out what will happen if they even listen to *gospel-plus* propagators; their own spiritual growth would be stunted. Not only that but if they return to the law they will lose God's favour. His argument is:

***'Abraham had two sons, the first produced by works with Hagar and the second by faith in God's promise by Sarah. God, ignored works favouring faith. He chose Isaac as the seed of promise because of faith'.***

In chapter-five, he again makes the strong connection between faith and hope, warning that the law stifles the spirit of hope. Law is a contraceptive to fruit. Faith brings with it the spirit to produce fruit, The Spirit produces fruit through hope, but the law poisons it.

However, there is another enemy, those that separate the body and spirit under the modern Greek thinking. 'Keeping in step with the spirit', does not just apply to the spirit, it keeps the flesh in check also. You cannot live as you like in the body and expect salvation to apply to a phantom spirit. The spirit will have a body, either a physical body here, or a new body there. Body and Spirit are intertwined:

People's desires are aligned to their bodies making them give in to immoral ways, filthy thoughts, and shameful deeds. They worship idols, practice witchcraft, hate others, and are hard to get along with. People become jealous, angry, and selfish. They not only argue and cause trouble, but they are envious. They get drunk, carry on at wild parties, and do other evil things as well. I told you before, and I am telling you again: No one who does these things will share in the blessings of God's kingdom. They will die like their earthly bodies.

God's Spirit however, makes us loving, happy, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled. There is no law against behaving in any of these ways. And because we belong to Christ Jesus, we have subjected our selfish feelings and desires to God's Spirit, and He has given us life, and so we should follow the Spirit. But don't be conceited or make others jealous by claiming to be better than they are.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Gal 5: 19 ff

## James

### *Letter in Brief*

The true Essence of Christian Faith

Ch. 1: 1-27

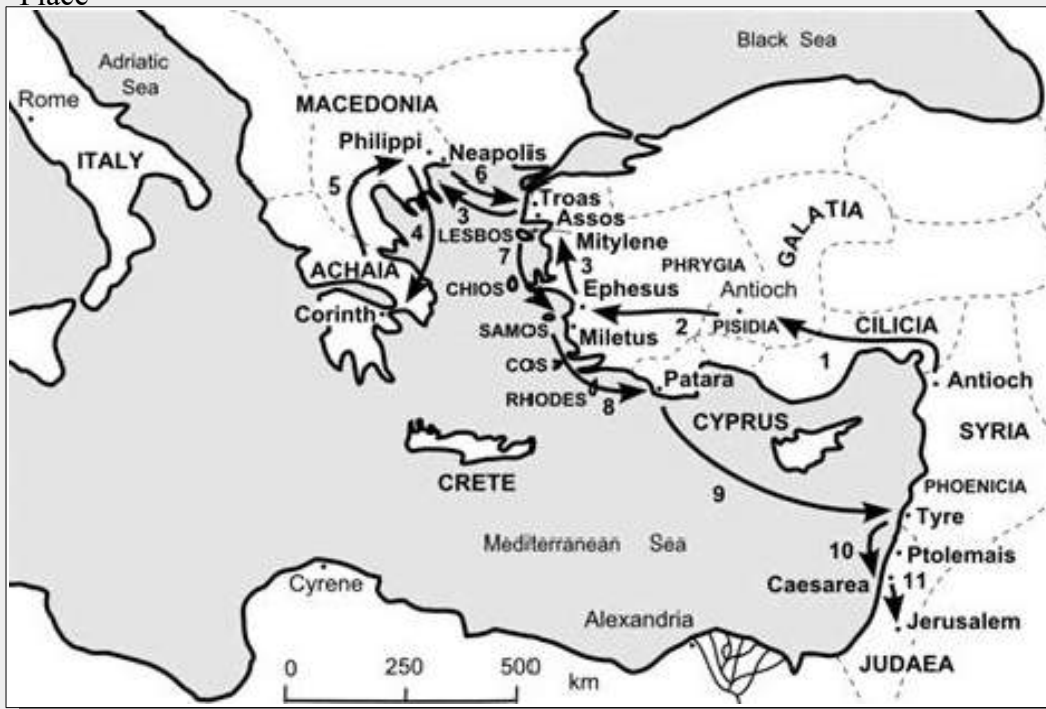
The true essence of Christian Hope

Ch. 2: 1 - 3: 12

The true essence of Christian Wisdom

Ch. 3: 13 - 5: 20

### Place



## Chapter 8

### *James*

#### The History:

Five out the twelve apostle were cousins of Jesus, that is why they were all at the wedding in Cana. Among Jesus' followers were several people named James. These were: James the father of Judas, (not Iscariot), James the Little (the Less), James, the brother of John, who was martyred by Herod, James, half brother of Jesus, Jesus had four brothers from whom Jude and James became writers in Scripture.

What happened to the Church immediately after Jesus ascended into heaven? There was no New-Testament book written for the first twenty-years. Paul and James were the earliest to pen a letter, and the Gospels only began to appear about forty-years after Jesus' ascension.

Near the end of Jesus' ministry, many of the crowds that had followed him, abandoned him. This new Jesus movement, looked like a failure at first. The turning point came at Pentecost. James, the brother of Jesus, and Mary were in the upper room at Pentecost with all the other disciples. This turned the Church into a rapid fire that spread across the continent. The growth of the Church was tolerated at first, until it became too big to ignore. Then it became a threat to the established norms of Roman world.

After the stoning of Stephen, the authorities of Jerusalem banned and exiled this new, '*Messianic-Jew*' sect. Soon after, Saul's conversation sent shock waves across the Jewish landscape as, the persecutor became the persecuted.

Agabus prophesied in Antioch that there would soon be 'a great famine over all the world'<sup>165</sup>, so Paul organized a collection of all the Churches to send to Jerusalem, because it was harder hit than most other areas. Herod blamed the Jews for the famine, mainly because the Jews were predominantly business people and the economy had slumped. So he began by persecuting *Messianic-Jews*<sup>166</sup>.

A doctrinal rift grew up between '*Orthodox-Jews*' and '*Messianic-Jews*', So the leaders of the Church called the first council to solve the argument. Peter, John, Paul and Barnabus were delegates and James, the half-brother of Jesus was the chair-person. It is worth repeating that the unanimous conclusion of this counsel was:

*"We believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus through Faith, just as they [the Gentiles] are"*<sup>167</sup>.

But after that motion was passed unanimously, further debate on some practicalities of church membership took place. Items on the addenda were: '*should gentiles believ-*

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<sup>165</sup> Acts 11: 28.

<sup>166</sup> Acts 12: 1

<sup>167</sup> Acts 15: 11



*ers be circumcised*' and '*should gentiles be made to keep the law of Moses*'. James as presiding elder sums up the conclusions:

Therefore, our judgement is that we do not trouble those of the Gentiles who have turned to God; But that we write to them to abstain from pollutions of idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled and from blood<sup>168</sup>.

However, with a heart for unity, and to try to keep both Jews and gentiles in the same church, (while not expected to gentiles to be subject to the Law of Moses), Gentiles would be expected, not to offend Jewish believers. They could help by:

*Abstaining from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood*<sup>169</sup>

### The person:

James, the brother of Jesus, was not always a believer in Jesus. He had been a good scholar at the temple and become part of the leadership. It may have been this leadership that put pressure on him to stop Jesus claiming to be Messiah. One day, together with a concern for his mother and the family name, he and the rest of the family, tried to take Jesus home in the middle of a teaching session. They suggested he had schizophrenia, (he was '*Beside Himself*').

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<sup>168</sup> Acts 15: 19 - 20, see also verses 28 - 29.

<sup>169</sup> Acts 15: 20. - In other words not to offend the ceremonial expectations of the law

Somewhen between then and Pentecost there was a transformation. James and Mary were both in the upper room with the other disciples, when the Spirit arrived. James stayed in Jerusalem as a prominent leader after that, where he earned the nicknames '*James-the-Just*', and '*James-the-Bulwark*' [the solid].

By the time of the first council gathering, to settle the question of how Gentiles could become part of the '*Messianic-Jews*' movement, James was president of the council, where he shows a remarkable ability in discerning how the work of the Holy Spirit tied in to scripture. When Peter testified to the Spirit coming upon the gentiles, James straight away tied it to Scripture.

It was probably his signature on the letter from the council that was sent around all the Church, saying to gentiles, '*We are not laying on you any burden of the law but remember when you are with Jews, they have a different calling. Remember that and don't seer their consciences*'. In other words, The free man must give way to those under a different vow. This letter tells Jews how to behave in gentile world. And gentiles how to behave in a Jewish world.

When Roman governor Porcius Festus died, his successor, Lucceius Albinus, took two months to travel from Rome to take up the post. During that time, Jewish High Priest Ananus-ben-Ananus used the opportunity to convene the Sanhedrin and have James the brother of Jesus sentenced to

death by stoning for violation of religious law. They took him up to the pinnacle of temple, (where Satan took Jesus), telling him to blaspheme Jesus or be thrown off. James refused and was thrown down. He survived that, so they stoned him. James died in sixty-two<sup>AD 170</sup>.

### The Letter:

The book is written in polished Greek and shows a number of techniques used by public speakers. So either James had excelled in his education, (which may be how he became the chairman and spokesman for the council), or he had succumbed to the new Greek idea of employing a ‘writer’ to write up the minutes of the council and simply signed it as Chairman.

Obey God's message! Don't fool yourselves by just listening to it.<sup>171</sup>

Following the decision of the council : ‘*We believe that we will all be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they are*’<sup>172</sup>, James thought there was need for further clarification. He wrote an open letter to all the Churches at Galatia. The theme is ‘Faith displays genuine proof’ or ‘Faith produced evidence in the form of fruit’.

Unlike Paul, James does not start with doctrine. Because James now spends most of his time among other leaders he

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170 Sources : Eusebius, Pappus and Clement

171 James 1: 22

172 Acts 15: 11

takes the basic doctrines as read.<sup>173</sup> He does start by reminding them that there will be a judgement day, but then he states that on Judgement day God will be looking for the evidence of their faith. We will not be judged for what we do not know, but by the evidence of a genuine belief.

If this letter was in the Old-Testament, it would be in Wisdom books. There are five chapters and five themes but the points he wants to make, jump about a bit in the letter. Gathered together we can see he is saying exactly the same as Paul, and lays it out in an almost identical manner to the outline of faith described in the, '*Preamble to the Letters section*'.

Belief comes alive and becomes Faith when it is sown into God's promises. Faith grows into strong hope when it meets trials and disciplines. A strong hope produces good fruit. Good fruit spreads belief-seeds which are ready to fall into the Ahavah-love of God.

James stresses five things:

- 1 A maturing faith is not a one off statement like, '*I Believe*'.
- 2 Faith becomes unwavering hope when it meets opposition.
- 3 Hope is the evidence of faith, it is the natural outcome.
- 4 Faith and Hope are goal orientated, they do not flit to the latest fad.

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<sup>173</sup> Let the leader beware, that assumption subtly widens to a divide

5 The fruit of Faith and Hope drop seeds of belief to increase the Church. It is not by works of the Church but by the culture or nature of church that it grows.

James addresses his readers as '*the twelve-tribes scattered*'.<sup>174</sup> He shows remarkable understanding that the 'scattered' Jews were not like the ones in Jerusalem, who had become proud and insular in their thinking. But the scattered Jews had become lax, assimilating and greedy.

Their newfound prosperity and freedom produced wealth and wealth produced godlessness. Yes, these believers were exploiting employees, spending money on self-indulgence, flattering other rich people while side lining the poor, financing for power, and becoming self-sufficient and self-important. The temptations of rich are well documented in the letter under the words: Envy, Selfish-ambition, Pride, Boasting, Presumption, Impatience, Covetousness and Litigation.

*'The same tongue blesses and praises also curses'*, as Paul might say. Grumbling, lying, cursing, and swearing are all spoken of in this letter.

James has a simple argument. If the spirit of this world can produce these things then the Spirit of the new-born should produce works shown as fruits of the Spirit.

Unfortunately, although he firmly packages 'works' in the context of 'fruit' throughout chapter-one, he does use the

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<sup>174</sup> This verse alongside several others addresses a modern false doctrine by sects that declare the 10 tribes were lost.

word ‘works’ rather than ‘fruits’, in chapter-two, which greatly upset Martin Luther, and his disdain for the letter has bugged the Church since. Martin Luther was so disgusted with this letter he took it out of scripture, putting it in an appendix at the end. He saw it through the narrow eyes of his battle with the Pope. But Martin Luther was no more infallible than the Pope he opposed.

The answer is simply this: The foundation of new-life is ‘grace channelled through Faith’. Faith naturally produces in a person hope. Hope naturally produces in a character, fruit, which is displayed in the form of behaviour. That is the same teaching of all Scripture. It is the fundament of the sermon-on-the-mount, It is the fundament of Paul’s complex doctrinal arguments, it is the simple teaching of Peter and John as they seek to strengthen hope in the believers for future trials.

James writes to Jewish believers. Paul writes to gentiles. Paul defended gentiles from Jewish law. James defends Jews from gentile licence.

‘All behaviour is caused, ... All behaviour is goal orientated’<sup>175</sup>

The most important things in a person’s life will be captured in the fruit of a person’s character<sup>176</sup>.

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<sup>175</sup> Burrhus Frederic Skinner (1904 - 1990)

<sup>176</sup> Brian Limmer

## Thessalonians

### Letter in Brief

**The Nature of Church**

ch 1: 1-10

**Paul's Calling and Ministry to Gentiles**

ch 2: 1-3: 13

**Dealing with Practical Problems**

Ch 4: 1- 5: 11

**Conclusion.**

ch 5 :12 -28

### Place



## Chapter 9

### *Thessalonians*

#### The History:

Paul had the vision come over to Macedonia. The first cities he came to were Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens then Corinth. The place is at the top of the Aegean Sea. The Church is addressed as the Church in God, (not the Church at Thessalonica)

Thessalonica was originally an ancient town named *Thermaí*, meaning ‘Hot Springs.’ It became a strategic location near the Aegean Sea. In the Roman Empire, it became the capital of the province of Macedonia and its largest city with two-million people. Thessalonica was on the Roman- ‘Road to the East’, making it an important city of commerce. By Paul’s time, Thessalonica had become the Capital of this Roman Colony area, and named after the half-sister of Alexander-the-great. The town had its own coinage and produced more coins than Ephesus.

After spending a night in prison at Philippi, Paul and Silas travelled to Thessalonica. This was a new road to them.

This main Roman road from Rome to Asia (Egnation way) led up from a main port on the Aegean Sea. When they got there they found enough Jews had migrated there to form a Synagogue.<sup>177</sup> Paul stayed about a month in Thessalonica.

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<sup>177</sup> There must be at least 10 men over the age of 30 years to start a synagogue.



We are told he preached for three sabbaths in the synagogue.<sup>178</sup> It attracted a lot of Jewish traders and a number of Samaritans. Archaeologists have found the sign for a separate ‘Synagogue’, or meeting place, for Samaritans, so it looks like old divides were still present. Many Christians today can testify to being damaged by other Christians, often in the same church fellowship. This is not a new phenomenon. Paul is trying to write so sensitively to heal obvious past hurts.

Brothers and sisters, you are no different to churches in Judea. I mean that you were treated badly by your own people, just as those believers in Christ Jesus were treated badly by other Jews, the same Jews who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, then forced us to leave their country. They are not pleasing to God, and they are against everyone else. Now they are trying to stop us from teaching those who are not Jews. They don't want them to be saved. But they are just adding more and more sins to the ones they already have. Now the time has come for them to suffer God's anger<sup>179</sup>.

Thessalonica is the only recorded town that called its mayor a ‘*Politarch*’, so Luke was right and early critics of Luke’s writings were wrong<sup>180</sup>. The Politarch was senior mayor of the area.

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178 Acts chapter 17.

179 1 Thessalonians 2: 14 ff

180 Academics tried to ‘trash’ Luke’s writings as unreliable based on his term Politarch, until the later discovery of other documents.

There were some leading women of the city. There were also many idol-worshipping pagans who had repented and believed. So, when many of these responded to the message of Christ's sufferings and resurrection, unbelieving Jews organized a gang of roughnecks to attack the house of Jason where Paul and his friends had been staying. Unable to find Paul and Barnabus, the mob dragged Jason before the magistrates, who bound him over to keep the peace. Out of concern for Jason, Paul, Barnabus. Timothy and Silas left the city by night travelling to nearby Berea where they went into the Synagogue, only to be followed by the paid-rabble (*Lewd Men*). None-the-less, Many Jews believed, so the team split. Silas and Timothy remained in Berea, Paul and Barnabus set off for pioneer work in Athens. Paul later sent for Silas and Timothy to join them in Athens, which they did for a while, but soon Silas went back to Berea and then on to Philippi. Meanwhile, Timothy went back to Thessalonica to collect for the famine relief in Jerusalem. They all met up again in Corinth with their collected gifts. At the reunion, Timothy reported the conditions in the Thessalonian churches. This led Paul to write the first letter, shortly after he arrived in Corinth.

Persecution from the Gentiles as well as the Jews still oppressed the believers. They were holding fast, but the sudden intensity had had started the rumour that the last days were beginning. Some Thessalonians apparently believed that Jesus Christ was about to return momentarily. They had consequently given up their jobs and become dis-

orderly. Others were worried about, what had happened to loved ones who had died before the Lord had returned. Yet others had got caught up with Greek libertarians and returned to the sexual impurities of their former days, assuming they could enjoy themselves now because their spirit was all secure in Christ.

Paul wrote one-Thessalonians to correct several things. First, he wanted to encourage those who were making good progress in their new faith. Second, to put the record straight about himself and challenge the new school of '*Philautia-Judaizers*'<sup>181</sup>. Third, he wrote to give additional guidance as to what to look for in spiritual growth.

Upon receiving back news about the Thessalonian church, Paul wrote the second letter perhaps within a few months of the first one. Some continued to grow and to remain faithful to Christ despite persecution. Unfortunately, another sect had started recruiting. A branch of the Essenes who had given up normal life to lived in the desert until Messiah came, spread the message '*The day of the Lord is any day now*', and '*Come and join us in the desert*'. This movement caused confusion and some Christians quit their jobs in expectation of the Lord's imminent return. Paul wrote his second letter to Thessalonians, to correct this doctrinal error, and to warn the idle to get back to work.

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181 *Philautia-Judazers, for want of a better name, were the new breed of puffed up Judaizers who studied under the new-Greek based Rabbis. These issued certificates. They taught the need for Christians to be circumcised. They claimed their authority in their breeding and in their wealth. (A sort of ancient Prosperity-teaching - claiming 'look at Paul he has to work for his living'). Some of these were the 'lewd men' hired to follow Paul and discredit him.*

### The Letter:

One in every four verses deal with end times through this letter. Every chapter ends with a verse about the second coming.

Thessalonica was the home of Greek gods Dionysus, Aphrodite and Osiris, all of whom were worshipped by sexual activities. Chapter-four concentrates on the subject the sanctification, which is the preparation of a Christian for the kingdom of God. Once again we see direct conflict between Greek culture and the Kingdom of God. In particular, Greek Eros has no part in the new kingdom. Eros makes slaves of the whole person, there is no separation of body and spirit. When Christ comes, *'we shall be seized up to for a meeting with Christ in the atmosphere'*<sup>182</sup>, (Body and Spirit together).

The letter was written before the desecration of the Temple at Jerusalem. Paul writes the second letter to warn, *'this will be just the beginning'*. Thessalonica became the first town where you had to stand in front of an alter declare Caesar is lord and throw pinch of incense on fire.

Paul's first letter concentrates on Jesus Christ working in His church, with the second letter centred around the day of Jesus Christ coming as back as judge, not only to the world but also to the Church. The emphasis is the unity of the body and the spirit as Jesus will not be without a body when he returns, and the new-body, to suit the real-you, and

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<sup>182</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4: 16 ff

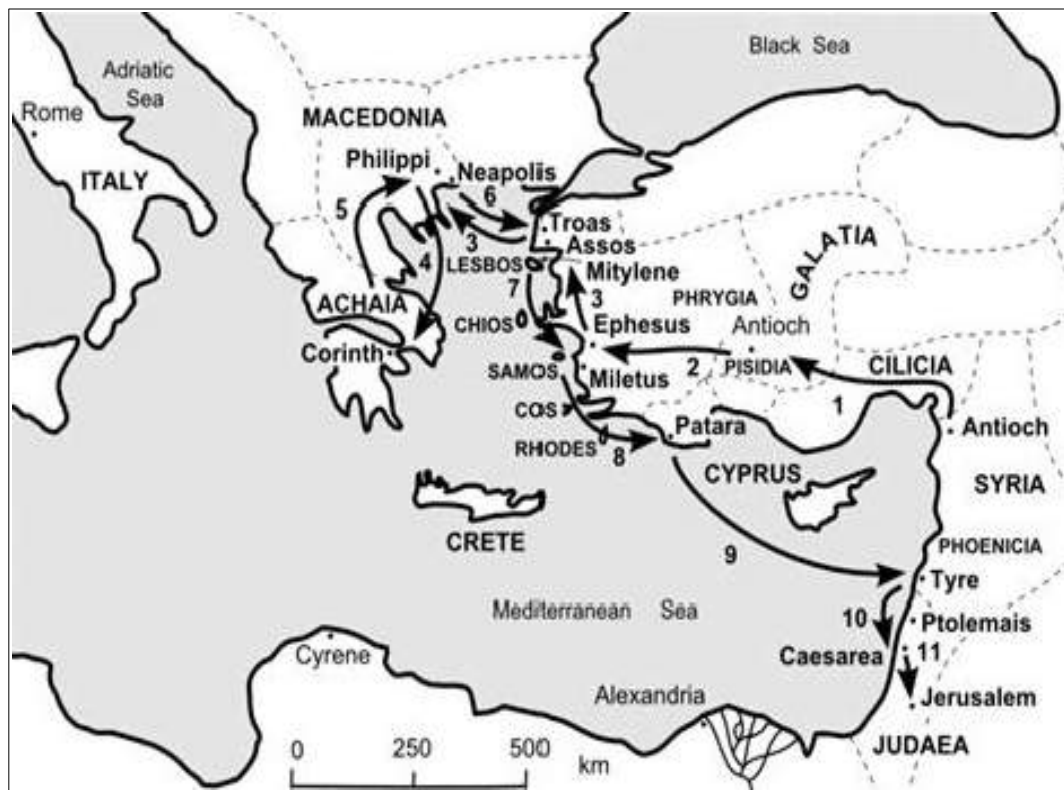
enable you to function in the new-heaven and new-earth.

### Corinthians:

The Time:

#### Letter in Brief

|  |                        |                       |
|--|------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b><i>Faith (You have been saved )..</i></b> | <b><i>Ch 1-4</i></b>   | <b><i>Past</i></b>    |
| <b><i>Hope (You will be saved)</i></b>       | <b><i>Ch 5-11</i></b>  | <b><i>Future</i></b>  |
| <b><i>Love ( You are being saved )</i></b>   | <b><i>Ch 12-16</i></b> | <b><i>Present</i></b> |



## Chapter 10

### *Corinthians*

#### The History:

Paul worked his way down from Athens to the little neck of land, a corridor ten-miles long and three-miles wide onto Corinth. To sail around the coast is two-hundred-and-fifty-miles of rough seas. One ancient Greek writer wrote, *‘You should have a will made out if you take that trip’*.

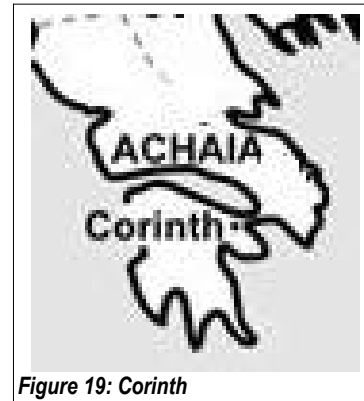


Figure 19: Corinth

Periander-the-second, Tyrant of Corinth, conceived the idea of digging a Corinth Canal across the three-miles. He tried and failed. Alexander-the-great tried and failed. Nero tried and failed. It was finally built in eighteen-ninety-three<sup>AD</sup>. Corinth was a key port in Paul's day, so they came up with the idea of loading boats onto wagons to travel across that three-mile strip, then refloating the ship on the other side.

For its good qualities, Corinth hosted the Olympic-Games. For its sins, The acropolis housed the temple of Aphrodite. At least one-thousand priestesses came down from the Acropolis temple each night to apply their trade in the town. Corinth became a bye-word for all that is bad, amoral or immoral. To *‘Corinthian-ise’* was a common phrase all over the Roman world and is still used today. Even the Romans frowned at Corinth. They destroyed the first Greek city, but rebuilt a Roman one in one-fifty<sup>BC</sup>. It was re-

populated by '*freed men*' or ex-slaves who were not well-educated but self-made traders. That is what Paul is referring to when he says:

For behold your calling, brethren, that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:<sup>183</sup>

It was Greek, it became Roman but still kept all the bad bits. It was a very self-serving and selfish town for businesses and lawyers. So, added to the list of things Paul writes about, is their culture of law-suits. Church members were taking each other to court for the slightest errors.<sup>184</sup>

Low social and moral standards abounded in church life, party-spirit was rife, primarily among the secret-trade and freed-men alliances. These split the Church over leadership choices. Greek obsession with democracy governed the Church meeting, voting had replaced the principle of Spirit-filled-leaders with popular choice. (Then as now)?

## The Letter

Paul will have to address all these issues:

Now this I mean, that each one of you say, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Peter; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized into the name of Paul?<sup>185</sup>

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183 1 Corinthians 1: 26

184 See 1 Corinthians 6:

185 1 Corinthians 1: 12-13

Most of the problems in church are not spiritual but social and cultural background problems. We all have a background that we bring to the Church. Paul wrestles with two big problems, how to keep church in the world and world out of church.

Paul wrote four letters but we only have two. Paul stopped off at Corinth for year-and-a-half in fifty-one<sup>AD</sup>, staying with Aquila, (a Jew from the Roman province of Pontus in Asia Minor), and his wife Priscilla. These had recently fled from Rome when the emperor, Claudius, expelled all the Jews from the city in forty-nine<sup>AD</sup>. Being tent-makers, like Paul, they worked together in an agora shop<sup>186</sup>. When Paul arrived at Corinth, Paul visited Jewish families first. He also visited the local synagogue every Sabbath, preaching the news of Jesus and his resurrection. When he met opposition from some Jews in the synagogue, he continued preaching next door, in the home of Titius Justus, another Gentile believer.

Silas and Timothy stopped in on their way back from working among Macedonian gentiles. On hearing about the work among the gentiles, some in the the synagogue stirred up rebellion among the Jews. So Paul left after eighteen-months. After he had gone, he continued to receive bad reports about the Church, so he wrote his first letter telling them to stop flirting with the world. We do not have a copy of this letter, but he does later acknowledge he was perhaps

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<sup>186</sup> Tent -makers also made and repaired awnings and shelters work to protect people from the hot Mediterranean sun also any leather work.



a bit hasty in sending it.<sup>187</sup> Paul also received a report a little later, from Chloe, telling him things were no better. The same postman brought a letter from three elders at the Church<sup>188</sup>, asking some questions asking about spiritual gifts, marriage etc. We do not have this letter either, but it is clear Paul is answering their questions when he wrote his reply. The reply is one-Corinthians. In it, we see the cunning mind of Paul. He weaves what he wants to say around replies to their questions. They asked about Marriage and Divorce.<sup>189</sup> They ask about meat sacrificed to idols.<sup>190</sup> They ask about Spiritual Gifts.<sup>191</sup> Paul answers ‘Hold your horses’, get your foundations right and these things will fall into place. Added to this, Chloe’s letter had highlighted: Division, Immorality, Litigation, Idolatry, Transsexualism and Bad behaviour at communion services.

We cannot understand this passage without reminding ourselves of the difference between Hebrew and Greek thinking which we discussed in the introduction. Paul list all the subjects above looking for the foundational errors to address. One fundamental error on the part of the Church, and one fundamental error on the part of the leadership teaching, stood out. First they were thinking Greek not Hebrew. Second the teaching had tried to accommodate the behaviour of the people.<sup>192</sup>

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187 1 Corinthians 5: 9 I wrote unto you in my epistle to have no company with fornicators;

188 Stephenus, Fortunus, and Achaius

189 1 **Corinthians 7: 1**

190 1 **Corinthians 8: 1**

191 1 **Corinthians 12: 1**

192 1 Corinthians 1:26

Paul starts at the Cross because it gives him the base for unifying the body and the spirit which Greeks had separated. Paul finishes the book with teaching on the Resurrection of the dead. Greeks had disconnected the eternal consequences of their human behaviour on the body and the resurrected body. In between, he illustrates with example of how these basic understandings are affecting their lives.

Division, immorality and litigation problems arise when we cannot see the wisdom of God in uniting the body and spirit. The cross makes no sense if you cannot see the unity of body and spirit. If your soul is disembodied why did Christ need to die bodily? We need to die for the spirit to be resurrected into a new body.

But we preach that Christ was nailed to a cross. Most Jews have problems with this because they look for miracles. Greeks think it is foolish because they regard themselves wiser in treating the body and the spirit as independent. But the resurrection will house the spirit in a new body.<sup>193</sup>

For who can know the mind of God, that he may instruct him except it is given by the mind of a bodily Christ <sup>194</sup>

Having established the need for a unity of body and spirit Paul is free to apply that to church unity. Regarding divisions, God is not divided and the leaders are not divided. God used each leader to bring you to a unity in Christ. You

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<sup>193</sup> 1 Corinthians 1: 18-28 TBIS (a summary of the book)

<sup>194</sup> 1 Corinthians 2: 16

are baptized into Christ not the leader. You are not saved by a leader but Christ.

Regarding sexual immorality, have you not been taught that your bodies are the Temple of the Holy Spirit? If you abuse your body, you abuse your spirit. But more than that, you give leave to fornication, covetousness, adultery, drunkenness, extortion or any other destructive principalities to destroy your spirit. Remember, thieves, extortioners, and sexual perverts, none of these can inherit the kingdom of heaven as you know.<sup>195</sup> Some of you were like that before you repented and accepted the grace gift of Jesus Christ<sup>196</sup>

Regarding litigation, has not the cross of Christ freed you of litigation of God against you? Earthly judges could not free you of the crimes you committed against God, so why should you have them judge between you and your brethren?<sup>197</sup>

Now, says Paul let me address the issue of marriage and divorce you raised in your letter. To marry or not to marry is not a matter for church ruling. There are good arguments for and against so best live as you are called to live by God through His Spirit and not try to legislate for others<sup>198</sup>.

Regarding your question about meat offered to idols, let me first talk about idols. Idols are no more than pieces of wood,

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<sup>195</sup> I Corinthians 6: 9-11

<sup>196</sup> I Corinthians 6: 11

<sup>197</sup> I Corinthians 6: 10-11

<sup>198</sup> I Corinthians 7: 17 -24

provided it is not you offering the food to an idol it is of no consequence. But if you are still concerned for your own conscience sake, then abstain.

We have only one God, and he is the Father. He created everything, and we live for him. Jesus Christ is our only Lord. Everything was made by him, and by him life was given to us<sup>199</sup>.

You ask about spiritual gifts, writes Paul.<sup>200</sup> These should be used decently and in order not causing chaos. But neither should general behaviour. Some of you are turning up early and scoffing the best food at communion meal, leaving the poorer among you without anything. To stop that sort of behaviour, eat at home and just come together to share a sample of bread and wine.

Paul then hits at the root of their problem. Greek Thinking separating Body from soul. So he concludes his letter with the issue of the resurrection of the body. Paul starts with providing eyewitness evidence for the resurrection of the body then ties it together. Understand that how you behave in the body affects the soul and how your new body will house your soul. 'When this mortality puts on immortality, it will be in a body, and will be shaped to suit the soul you have cultivated'. 'Don't you know your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit'

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199 1 Corinthians 8: 6

200 1 Corinthians 12: 1

Paul sent this letter back with Timothy. But Timothy was too nice and the leadership ran rings round him. A report came back they are worse than ever. Now they were insulting Paul. After Paul left last time, things were good for a while. They had good leaders, Apollos very intelligent and very good speaker, (not a stutterer like Paul). Peter, working-class, but one of the twelve, held their attention. But, gossip in the ranks began to compare and divide. People began to reminisce, stunting growth in the Church.

After this, Judaizers caught up with church, and on the back of division they ripped Paul apart. The accused him of fickleness, changing plans, cowardly timid not having any testimonial certificates. Oh! And Paul doesn't charge a fee either! Even today this Greek idea has crept into the pay structure of some churches. Pay depends on the number of people you can hold in the congregation<sup>201</sup>.

The second book of Corinthians is very different to his first, Its a Journal, it is compassionate and Paul wears his heart on his sleeve. In chapter-one he talks of his despairing of life, in chapter-four, he feels weary which he expresses as hard-pressed and perplexed. In Chapter-six he is distressed.

### **History:**

To recap: (into Two-Corinthians)

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<sup>201</sup> The practice was common in some South African churches during apartheid and copied by a number of American churches.

Paul stayed eighteen months in Corinth, the second longest stay in any church, taking the gospel to the Jews first, as was his custom. When they rejected him he went next door and taught from the home of a believer. Paul was partially funded by the Church of Macedonia, after eighteen months he moved on to Ephesus where he stayed three-years. From here he wrote the letter to Corinth and sent Timothy with it to work with the leaders. But the leaders were not the humble sort and stood up against Timothy so things did not get sorted out. So Paul sent Titus who was much stronger as an administrator, and Apollos who was a powerful preacher.

Timothy wrote to Paul that the Judaizers were in town and muscling in. Not only that, they are character assassinating Paul. Paul wrote two-Corinthians for two reasons, One, personally to correct the personal errors but also publicly to expose the Judaizers.

### **The letter**

He began, correcting why he changed his plans. Judaizers had used these as evidence of untrustworthiness.

In chapter-five of his first letter, he wrote about an immoral person in the Church sleeping with his mother-in-law and the Church was bragging about how loving and accepting they were as a church. Paul had told them that tolerance of sin was not a Christian virtue. This pair must be given a chance to repent or be put out of the Church. They did what Paul had said, but they went overboard by shunning them

altogether in society. The Church would not forgive them even when they repented. Paul says, enough is enough. Repentance is the gateway back into the Kingdom and should also be the gateway back into Church. 'Remember you repented and you were forgiven', Remember what Jesus said about the unjust servant.

By chapter-four he needs to explain what ministry is. Ministry is not, '*what I want to do*', it is what God wants me to do. Paul knew this well. '*What is it you want me to do, Lord*', Paul asked on the Damascus road. He explains, I have just told you how low you can get under the pressures of ministry, but the reason we are perplexed but not struck down is because it is His ministry and His power. One commentator says: '*Ministry need the heart of a child, the mind of a scholar and the hide of a rhinoceros*'. To which Paul would add, 'And a clear call of God, not a romantic self desire.'

## Romans:

### *Letter in Brief*

|                                     |                 |                |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| <i>Faith (You have been saved )</i> | <i>Ch 1-4</i>   | <i>past</i>    |
| <i>Hope (You will be saved)</i>     | <i>Ch 5-11</i>  | <i>Future</i>  |
| <i>Love ( You are being saved )</i> | <i>Ch 12-16</i> | <i>Present</i> |



Figure 20: Rome



## Chapter 11

### *Romans*

#### The Person:

Paul has been travelling and preaching for twenty-years. He had established many smaller churches across Turkey, in particular he had built up seven strategic churches. As a last act in establishing these, he had visited each asking for a collection to take to the Jerusalem church which was in the grip of a famine.

Despite getting older, he felt one more push to take the gospel to Europe was in order. He was on his way to Jerusalem with the collection, but was stuck in Greece for three-months due to bad sailing weather. During this period, the Holy-Spirit confirmed to him '*Go west to Europe*'. To Paul, that meant Rome because he strategizes the best town, and Rome must be that key town. When he got to Jerusalem, some prophets confirmed he would go to Rome, but not under favourable circumstances. This manifest itself when Paul was falsely accused of taking a gentile into the Jewish sector of the Temple<sup>202</sup> Gentiles went beyond this barrier on pain of death. Nobody actually witnessed this, but it was 'supposed', and the fake-news caused a riot. Paul was arrested, sent to Felix the Governor, given a choice of going back to Jerusalem or going to Rome he chose Rome, which was the opportunity Paul was not going to miss, and at Rome's expense too.

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<sup>202</sup> Trophimus (Acts 21:27-29).

Being stuck in Greece again, waiting for the winter to pass, was an opportunity time to write a summary of what he had been preaching over the last quarter-century. Recognizing he was getting older, he set out his teaching on: Kingdom, Resurrection, Ascension, Church, Heaven, Hell, being born, again, together with his concern that Christians should remember their Jewish roots. Most of this is incorporated into the letter because Rome would not be familiar with the Jewish origins of the gospel.

### History:

The Church in Rome began in Acts-chapter-two when some Jews from Rome were visiting Jerusalem for the feast. When the Spirit came upon the believers, they were among those out in the streets preaching, before returning home.<sup>203</sup>

The Church in Rome was in need of the letter. Besides doctrinal background, the letter deals directly with the circumstances in which the Church found itself.

Chapter-one plunges straight in the issue of homosexuality. This had directly affected the Church because thirteen of the sixteen Roman emperors had been openly promiscuous gays. In chapters-two-to-three, Paul describes the contrast between the Kingdom-of-God and the kingdoms of this world, accusing them of not being able to tell the difference. Syncretism had affected, not only the society in

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203 Acts 2: 8-10

Rome, but also the Church and its mission field. Antisocial behaviour, offering meat to idols and tax evasion were also rampant in society, and, as Paul plans this to be a strategic church base, he has to deal with it.

Romans-thirteen addresses how the Church should respond to these challenges. But before that Paul needed to lay the contrast by reminding them the Church started under the Hebrews, and how God deliberately set these to be a people apart, to show a different way of life. The Church itself was at war with its past because Romans had conquered the Jews and in doing so had ridiculed everything Israel stood for.

Claudius was anti-Jewish, not least because they opposed his way of life. When a civil riot broke out, he blamed the Jews. Hoping to remove those opposing his values, he expelled forty-thousand Jews from Rome, citing riots as the excuse. What *was* a large church with Jewish influence, now became a small gentile church which grew. These Gentile believers changed the structure and nature of the Church. The next Emperor realized when the Jews went, so did Rome's economy, (because Jews were the backbone of trade). So, he brought the Jews back. When the Jews came back they found the Church so changed that it caused friction between Hebrew and Greek believers. The Sabbath had gone, (because Romans only had one day in ten as a rest day). Slaves never had a day off, and plenty of these were now Christians. Besides which, up to now, as the

Church spread, it kept the Sabbath, but now it met on the first day of the week, for communion and prayer, (before work). Kosher butchers had gone, with the exile Christians began eating any meat. Jewish strict law observance had now gone, but it had been replaced with licence. All this, Paul regards as cultural, not essential to faith but affecting it. It was causing many disputes among the believers.

Paul uses this letter to address all these issues at two levels. First he addresses the theological arguments, then, in part two of the book he leaves them with practical solutions.

John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's progress* is the journey through Romans; from destruction to salvation. The characters in it are very recognizable in Romans.

Salvation is not instant. It takes at root the word for salvaged or recycled. Recycling required time and process and is therefore tied tightly to the doctrines of Salvaging, Processing and Finishing<sup>204</sup> which are all found in Romans.

Paul is writing to pagans and, moralists who believed keeping a moral code to become the best you can be was all that was required for salvation. Paul regards these as self-righteous, religious folk<sup>205</sup>.

The book of Romans was the means to convert Martin Luther in fifteen-hundred-and-five.

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<sup>204</sup> In the Jargon, Justification, Sanctification and Glorification.

<sup>205</sup> I refer you back to the Philosophies of Plato, Aristotle discussed in introduction, and *Pilgrims Progress*

“At first I clearly saw that the free grace of God is absolutely necessary to attain to light and eternal life; and I anxiously and busily worked to understand the word of Paul in Romans 1: 17: The righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel. I questioned this passage for a long time and laboured over it, for the expression ‘righteousness of God’ barred my way. This phrase was customarily explained to mean that the righteousness of God is a virtue by which He is Himself righteous and condemns sinners. In this way all the teachers of the Church except Augustine had interpreted the passage. They had said: The righteousness of God, that is (id est), the wrath of God. But as often as I read this passage, I wished that God had never revealed the Gospel; for who could love a God who was angry, who judged and condemned people? This misunderstanding continued until, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, I finally examined more carefully the word of Habakkuk 2:4: ‘The just shall live by his faith’ From this passage I concluded that life must be derived from faith.... Then the entire Holy Scripture became clear to me, and heaven itself was opened to me. Now we see this brilliant light very clearly, and we are privileged to enjoy it abundantly”<sup>206</sup>

### The Letter:

Interestingly, the book was written from Corinth where similar practices were rife, but for different reasons.

I am told there are about fourteen-thousand letters in museums and archives dating around this time. Comparing this letter against them, few are longer. The book of Romans has an unusually long greeting and closing, it is not

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206 Martin Luther

a normal letter for its time, it is more a lecture, probably coming about by Paul's time of recollection while waiting for the sailing season to begin. It is written to a church Paul has never seen. Paul does not usually interfere with churches he did not start but this was to be a strategic church in his eyes. He has a desire to visit, but so far that door has been closed.

This book contains all the basic doctrines of the early church because the Church at Rome did not have a Jewish theological base. Righteousness is the key word. For the benefit of those who have been taught the principles of speed reading, it is used at least forty-times. Paul sees righteousness as biggest barrier getting into the kingdom of God. Either a person is made righteous by repentance and forgiveness or he is self-righteous and the self-righteous cannot enter the kingdom of God.

The first half of the book lays out the doctrinal shape of the Church. The second half deals with the practical application of those doctrines. Paul, Like Luke, has a strong desire to see a united church. This is meant to be a two-way thing, gentiles fully aware of their inheritance from the Jews and Jews fully accepting the grafting of gentiles into the kingdom. So, Paul speaks to Jew and Gentiles who are both at fault. In Chapters-six-to-seven he addresses legalism of the Jews and the licence of the Gentiles. In Chapter-eight, he addresses the inheritance of ritual by the Jews and the libertarian-spirit of the gentiles.

Chapters-nine-to-eleven address the growing attitude of the gentiles who thought, *'We are the new Israel now'*. (Modern church, please take note)!

When Israel rejected God, the rest of the people in the world were able to turn to him. So when God makes friends with Israel, it will be like bringing the dead back to life. If the roots of a tree are holy, the rest of the tree is holy too. You Gentiles are like branches of a wild olive tree grafted into a cultivated olive tree. Some of the old branches have been pruned and you have been grafted in to take their place. You only enjoy the benefits and blessings because you are grafted into the cultivated tree. Don't think you are better than the branches that were cut away. Just remember that you are not supporting the roots of that tree. The root of that tree are keeping you alive.

Maybe you think those branches were cut away, so that you could be put in their place. That's true enough. But they were cut away because they did not have faith, and you are attached by your faith. Don't be proud, but be afraid. If God cut away those natural branches, he can do the same to you? <sup>207</sup>

## Ephesians

### Letter in Brief

|                       |            |
|-----------------------|------------|
| Greetings             | 1: 1-2     |
| Christ the Head       | 1: 3 -23   |
| Church as the body    | 2: 1 3: 21 |
| Conduct of a Believer | 4: 1- 6: 9 |
| The war of a Believer | 6: 10 -20  |
| Sign off              | 6: 21 -24  |

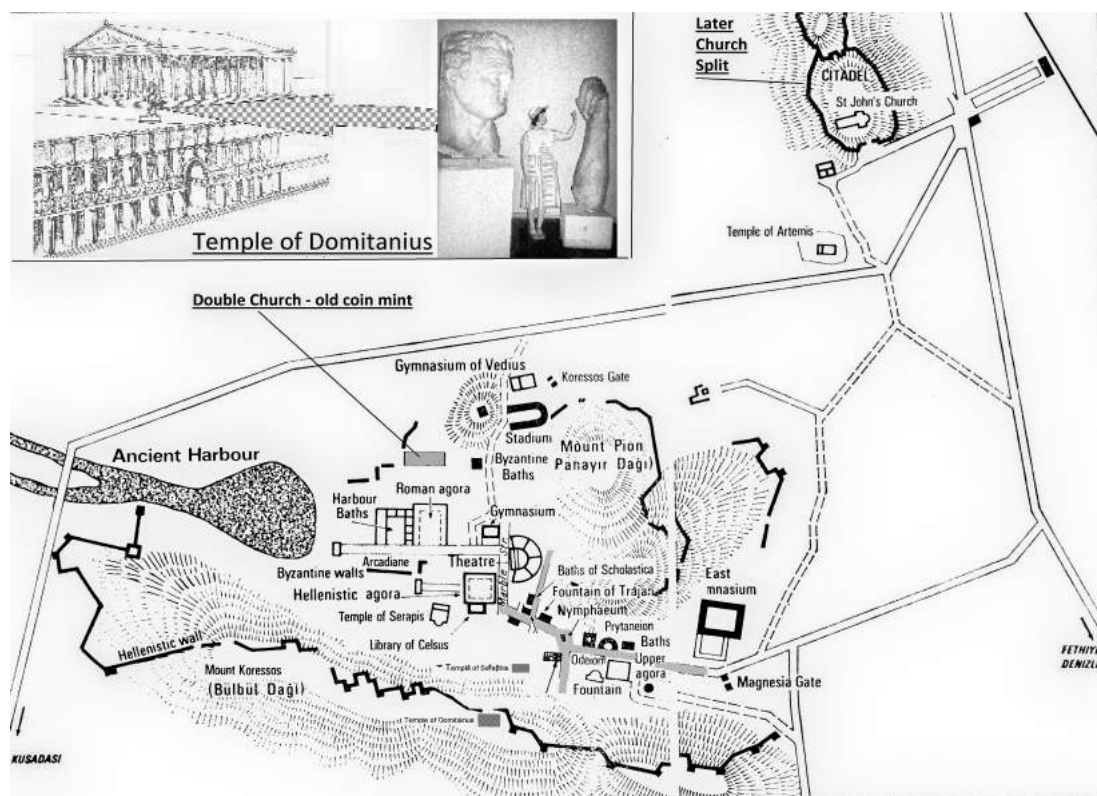


Figure 21: Ancient Ephesus

Anne & Brian 1985



## Chapter 12

### *Ephesians*

#### The History:

Ephesus was the Capital of the Eastern part of the Roman Empire. It was the seat of Government and religion. Because of where it was situated, it was very wealthy, and as the reserve bank, minted Roman coins.

It had boasted the temple of Artimus or Diana,<sup>208</sup> which was less than half a mile from the port. The goddess was made from a black meteorite that fell on Ephesus.

A record of the Apostle's visit is described in Acts chapters-eighteen-to-twenty. The letters to Timothy were both written from here. Paul visited Aquila & Priscilla in Ephesus around sixty<sup>AD</sup>. Some suggest it was these two who started the Church. It was certainly these two who heard Apollos impressively speaking one Sabbath, and took him under their wing to correct his doctrine. Paul later come back to establish debating sessions and doctrinal teaching in the debating chambers next-door-but-two from the temple of Diana. After a couple of years, Paul went up to Jerusalem.

The early church in Ephesus, were not allowed to own property, so church consisted of a network of house-groups scattered over the town, at first. As the harbour silted and

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208 Greek **Artimus** Roman Diana

larger ships could not enter, the city declined. When the coin-mint became vacant, the Church bought it, doubled its size and came together as one church. This caused many headaches when small homogenous groups from all over the town came together in one place.

Paul did go back to meet with the elders at a later date, but not into the town. His ship put into Miletus. This is recorded in Acts-chapter-twenty. He warned them, savages will come and strip the Church.<sup>209</sup> Paul did not stay himself, but left Timothy to pastor the Church. As always happens when small groups combine to make a bigger church, they sought to solve differences by writing a constitution. Eventually the constitution took priority over grace and love, until a group of more wealthy Jewish Christians built an impressive synagogue in the suburbs, leaving the less wealthy Christians in the town centre. John stayed, settling in the original church at Ephesus. He spent his time defending the Church against false teachers<sup>210</sup> and training others for leadership.

This church had the best leadership available and yet, by the third- century<sup>AD</sup>, the Church had all but disappeared. John dictated what he heard from Jesus in Revelation.

This is what you must write to the Church in Ephesus: I am the one who holds the seven stars in my right hand, and I walk

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209 Act 20: 28 Possibly speaking of Judaizers and their influence

210 Not only Judaizers but also a new brand of Greek false teachers names gnostics (who believed they had Plato's 'Mysteries' sorted.

among the seven gold lampstands. Listen to what I say. I know everything you have done, including your hard work and how you have endured. I know you won't put up with anyone who is evil. When some people pretended to be apostles, you tested them and found out that they were liars. You have endured and gone through hard times because of me, and you have not given up. But I do have something against you! And it is this: You don't have as much love as you used to. Think about where you have fallen from, and then turn back and do as you did at first. If you don't turn back, I will come and take away your lampstand. But there is one thing you are doing right. You hate what the Nicolaitans are doing, and so do I. If you have ears, listen to what the Spirit says to the Churches. I will let everyone who wins the victory eat from the life-giving tree in God's wonderful garden.<sup>211</sup>

Paul speaks to Christians with two passports, As Ephesians and as citizens of the kingdom of Christ Jesus. The first three chapters are speaking to the Kingdom of God and the second three, to the people of Ephesus. Paul might find it strange if you asked him *'Are you a Christian'*? He would understand better the term *'are you in Christ'*? In Ephesians, he is exploring the question, 'Which kingdom are you in? The kingdoms of this world or the Kingdom of Christ'? How are you living?

At first, these Ephesians were a small group of common folk seemly not making much headway in the city. These house-groups, were up against one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, the Temple of Diana.

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<sup>211</sup> Revelation 2: 1 ff

### The Letter:

The theme of letter is, the new society called Ecclesia (Church). Jew and gentile are all equal in this new church. It is a book of two-halves The first half is doctrinal and the second practical. Chapters one-to three are about the work of God in setting them apart as Saints. The wonder of that, makes them citizens of God's Kingdom, and faithful citizens at that.

Chapters four-to-six are about the way this awareness is displayed. It is about the fruit that should naturally grow from being planted in kingdom soil. It questions how a tree planted in one vineyard can produce fruit planted in another. It is about the discrepancy between physical behaviour on the horizontal plane, behaving differently to the spiritual behaviour of the vertical plane. So once again we see confrontation with Plato's teaching suggesting separation of body and spirit. The vertical and the horizontal meet in the cross. Besides showing the unity of body and spirit. He also focuses on the cross as the means to unite Jew and Gentile church: *'reconciling both to God in one body by the cross, killing the enmities in himself.'*<sup>212</sup>

In chapter-one he uses Prayer<sup>213</sup>, Praise<sup>214</sup> and Preaching<sup>215</sup> to illustrate the unity of body and spirit. What part do these have to play if body and spirit are separate entities?

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212 Ephesians 2: 16

213 Verses 3-14

214 Verses 15-17

215 Verse 19 to ch 3: 21

That leads on to the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. Resurrection has the power to re-unite both, the spirit with the natural body, then the spirit with the new body. Paul progresses the argument saying, both Jew and Gentile are dead in sin, both Jew and Gentile are raised through the Cross. Therefore, the Cross calls both Jew and Gentile into one church<sup>216</sup>.

In chapter-three, having formed the basic doctrine of unity, he opens up the doctrine of Duty.

Duty is not the same as works. Works is used to obtain salvation but God has taken care of all that in the cross. Duty is a response, it demonstrates gratitude and loyalty. Even today, the Church is keen to separate faith and works. But in doing so it hides the doctrine which unifies faith with duty. We are not expected to work for salvation but the duty of obedience, comes out of the free gift of salvation.

In chapter-four, Paul begins with ‘Therefore’. Therefore, is the uniting word between the two halves of the letter. The work of Jesus Christ in uniting body and spirit, Jew and Gentile, death and Life. Therefore, your duty is to live in this unity. It is the vision for the church assembly. The vision is not based on some fantastic mission but on a righteous functioning of church within this corrupt city.

Paul is not talking of unity of faith; Paul is talking of unity in spirit<sup>217</sup>. Trying to bring the Church to unity of one doctrinal faith, will destroy it. That misunderstanding eventually brought the Ephesian church down. Bringing unity of Spirit enables it to move from strength to strength. Paul uses a term coined by Plato

And this is the *Mystery-truth*: that by hearing the Good News, those who are not Jews will share with the Jews in the blessings God has for his people. They are part of the same body, and they share in the promise God made through Christ Jesus. (Eph 3:6 ERV).

Plato argues the **mystery** of the idea of the chair is revealed in the **diversity** of designs produced from the idea. Paul argues the mystery of God and the Church is revealed in its diversity of Jew and Gentile not absorbing it under one constitutional detail<sup>218</sup>. Mystery is not that Gentiles should be saved, but that they should be co-equals in the Church. Paul had this confirmed, when a Gentile of Macedonia called out, ‘come over and help’. Peter had this mystery confirmed when the Roman centurion called out for Peter to, ‘come over and help’.

This ‘mystery’ is also displayed in both unity and behaviour one to another. Paul splits the last section into two parts to discharge this duty. The walk of a believer in chapter-four is sub-divided into a *Christian’s walk before other believers*,

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217 Unity of Doctrine is not unity in Spirit. If unity of doctrine is the basis of the church it brings together people who cannot belong wholeheartedly for compromise of inner understanding or belief.

218 Perhaps he is pointing a finger at Judaizers

and *Christian's walk before unbelievers*. There is a special focus on a weak point in the Church, home life and marriage. In all these areas the '*secret mystery*' is :

Be willing to serve each other out of respect for Christ.<sup>219</sup>

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219 Eph 5:21

## Colossians

### Letter in Brief

|                                       |            |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| Greetings                             | 1: 1-8     |
| Putting down roots in Jesus Christ    | 1: 9 -2: 7 |
| Dangerous Doctrines                   | 2: 8- 3 :4 |
| Practical Fruit comes from firm roots | 3: 5- 4: 6 |
| Sign off                              | 4:7 - 18   |

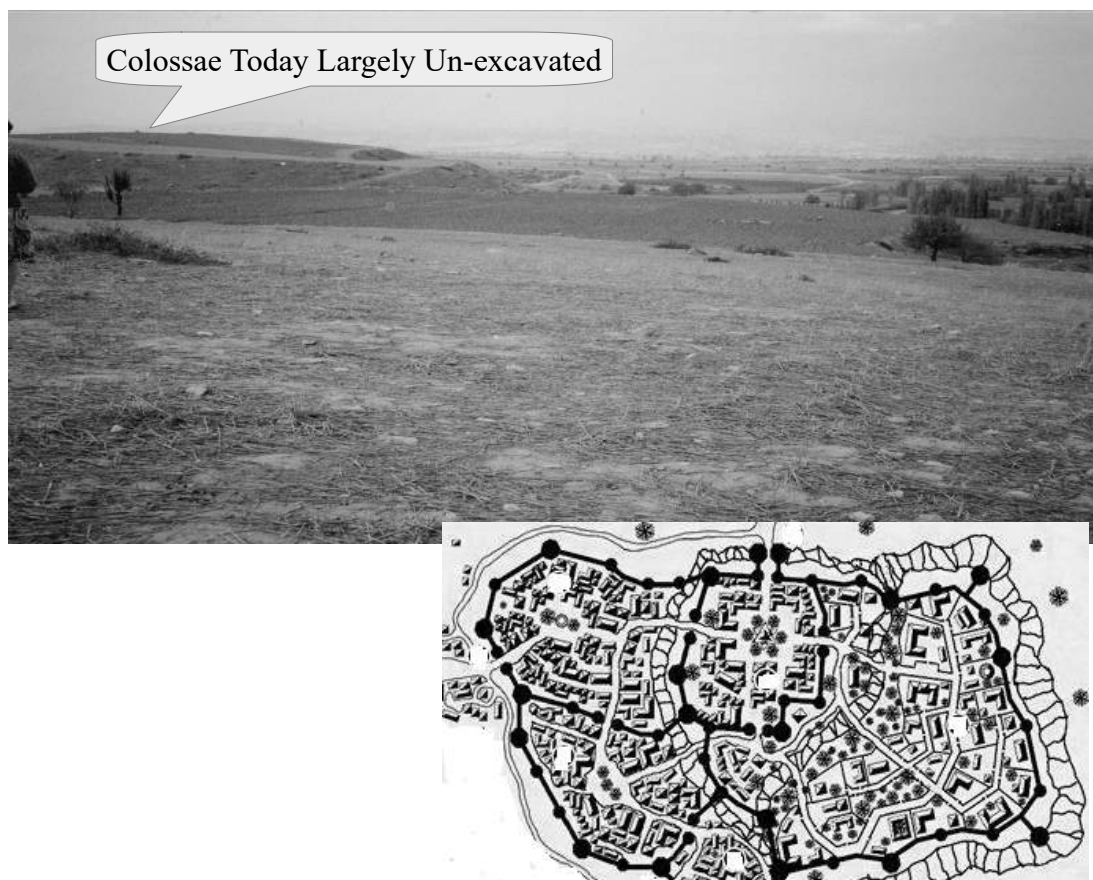


Figure 22: Colossae Today Anne & Brian 1985



## Chapter 13

### *Colossians*

#### The History:

Colossae is one-hundred-miles inland from Ephesus in Turkey, in the valley Lycos. Greek Colossae today is a hill in the middle of a field but treasures of the old city might still surface as you kick the ground while walking. In nineteen-eighty-five, a small pilot shaft had been dug but otherwise it was largely unexplored. Originally it was a Hittite city, called Huwalušija<sup>220</sup>. Persian King Xerxes I encamped there on his way to war against the Greeks. By the 5th century<sup>BC</sup>, it was, ‘*a populous city, wealthy and of considerable magnitude*’. It was famous for its wool trade. In three-ninety-six<sup>BC</sup>, Persian Satrap Tissaphernes was executed there by Cyrus the Younger. Colossi was on a major route to Arabia which gave it a very mixed population and many religions. Herodotus called Colossae that, ‘*great city in Phrygia*’, which accommodated the Persian King Xerxes I on his way to wage war against the Greeks

It suffered an earthquake in sixty<sup>AD</sup>, and Rome rebuilt it. When Ephesus church began to decline, this church took over as the prime mission centre in the area. It is believed that while Paul was teaching in the School of Tyrannus in Ephesus, Epaphras came from Colossae and took the gospel back. He started a bible study in his home which grew into the Church. But because of the Judaizers legalism, Gnostics

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220 17th-century BC

mysticism, and Essene asceticism, were all trying to muscle in and take over, Epaphras, (the first pastor), turned to Paul for help. He went to Rome to visit Paul in prison around sixty-one<sup>AD</sup> to ask his advice. Later Paul wrote this letter and sent it, with Tychicus, who, as postman, also delivered the letter to Philemon and a general letter to all the Churches in that area. (That was the letter which we call Ephesians).

### The Letter:

The letter has four sections and two themes. The first is a personal update, the second, the doctrinal basis for what he is about to say, (we are getting used this format), Third, he addresses the practical outcome he expects to see, based on the doctrines he has just expounded, and finally he recommends some people who can help with their problem of ‘dodgy doctrines’.

Colossae shares a common problem with other rapidly growing churches. Most noticeably, Paul compares it with the similar growing problems within the Church in Laodicea, which Paul is also trying to help<sup>221</sup>.

Both churches were rapidly growing in numbers and actions without any depth of doctrine to feed upon. Both churches had grown without teachers who could ensure their roots were firm in nutritious ground. As a result these church plants had grown long spindly, desperately looking

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221 Colossians 2: 1

for anything that looked like food for the soul. Any passing speaker was welcome to the pulpit. But here is a clear lesson for any church not watching over its pulpit. Both churches ended up the same. Laodicea is better known for the warning, *'Luke warm I will spit you out of my mouth'*, but both ended up as wasteland. Leaders were constantly looking for new sermon material. Under the Jewish synagogue system, there would have been a fall back position. If no one was recognized as a teacher, the appropriate commentary on the scriptures would read from the Mishna or the Didache.<sup>222</sup> But Jewish Synagogue customs were being modernised and Gentiles wanted to do things differently. So any passing ministerial with a story would do.

In this letter Paul puts out some warning signs, like *'cats-eyes'* on a road, to keep the Church in the right lane. There was the usual onslaught of Judaism which we have dealt with in most of the letters so far. But the Gnostics, returning from a stint at Laodicea, had their turn in the pulpit too. Greeks had influenced the thinking of some Jews into believing that knowledge is the key to knowing God, and as *'Know all's'* themselves, they could tell the *'hidden mysteries'* of how to please God. These expanded Plato's separation of the spiritual and the materialism theory. These were preaching, *'spiritual Good, material Bad'*, theology. They argued, *'God could not have created the material world because it is bad'*. This argument also denied the deity of Christ because Jesus was human. So they split into two groups. Some said Deity came upon Jesus at birth and left

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<sup>222</sup> Paul's letters would have been read this way, in place of a sermon.

him at death. Some said he was a phantom and just appeared to be human. (This belief had another surge when John wrote his three letters).

The Essenes were also trying to recruit to their aestheticism. They were doing it as most sects do — bit at a time. They were saying if you deny yourself this or that, God will like you better. Better still, we can adopt you and initiate you into our church so you can be sure.<sup>223</sup>

While all these were trying to take over completely, only bits of each did so. So the Church was a mishmash of all these beliefs like new-age thinking today. This is directly applicable to today where churches up and down the land are returning to syncretism; absorbing the values of other religions and the world. This letter refocuses on the preeminence of Christ.

The effect of mixing Christ with other religions is to reduce belief. To reduce belief is to reduce relationship with God. When God seems distant, look first at your beliefs. What your belief roots in affects the fruits of your faith.<sup>224</sup>

So Paul lays out his doctrinal basis. If you are rooted in Christ alone, you will have all the necessary nutrition to produce good fruit. If you add or subtract from Jesus Christ, you will produce spindly weedy fruit.

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<sup>223</sup> Jehovah's Witness bears this hallmark

<sup>224</sup> In the jargon it is the balance of Transcendence and Imminence. Doctrines the saints of old have fought to preserve for us we are now ignoring.

Chapter-three begins a list of fruit that show evidence of good grounding:

Your old nature will die and a new nature will rise. Sexual sin will go, immorality will cease. You will become less selfish, less angry, more forgiving, kinder, more humble, more gentle, more patient, more thankful. You will become wiser, and it won't matter if you are circumcised or not. Wives, will love to serve their husbands, because husbands will Ahavah-love<sup>225</sup> their wives. Children will obey their parents because parents won't upset children by being unreasonably hard.<sup>226</sup>

Finally, says Paul, here are some people you could ask for help to restore the imbalance of spiritual gifts in your assembly. Tychicus is a faithful helper, he is serving me at the moment, but I am sending him to you to encourage you. I am also sending Onesimus who came originally from your group. He can help with your doctrinal base also.

All the team send prayers and blessings, Aristarchus, Justus, and Mark, If Mark comes your way later welcome him. Epaphras constantly struggles for you and for Laodicea in prayer, he is most burdened that you change and receive the blessing of God. Of Course, Dr. Luke and Demas who you know well ask to be remembered.

After you have read this letter in your assembly Please be sure to send it on to Laodicea and swap it with the one I sent them.

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<sup>225</sup> The contrast is between Greek and Hebrew understanding of love. There is no Greek equivalent to Ahavah love. Much of Jesus' teaching about love was to take Greek thinkers to different concept of Love.

<sup>226</sup> Colossians 3.

## Philemon

### Letter in Brief

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Greetings   | 1-3   |
| Paul's concern                                    | 4-7   |
| Paul's intercession between Onesimus and Philemon | 8-22  |
| Sign off  | 23-25 |



## Chapter 14

### *Philemon*

#### The History:

Onesimus, a solemn, rebellious, resentful slave, runs away to the big city of Rome because, there is less chance of being found. We are not told how, but he met Paul chained to a Roman soldier and is converted under Paul's leading.

Philemon lived in Colossi and had a church in his house. His wife and son and other members of the household were also involved in the Church.

The normal punishment for a runaway slave was automatic crucifixion. However, The slave's master could ask for clemency, in which case the slave would be branded with the letter F for fugitive on his forehead and returned to the master. Paul chooses a different option, he sent Onesimus back with a letter. This left Onesimus with the chance to disappear again.

#### The Letter:

Paul has a clear understanding of being born again. It is not for simply praying, *'I believe, and now I am saved forever'*. From his Damascus road experience, Paul had learned conversion meant facing the past, deciding to change, calling on the name of Jesus to facilitate that change in the heart, and repairing whatever you can from the past. Paul is often reminding his readers to remember the past, *'Such were*

*some of you*', is a phrase that comes to mind. The first fruit from conversion is often, *'I will repay double of all I cheated from them'*,

As the way of God is, *'It just so happened'*, Paul knew the slave owner. And the slave owner *'just so happened'*, to be a Christian that, *'owed Paul one'*.

You can't run from your past, you must face it. Repentance is putting the past right not starting new. What you can put right is covered by the fruit of repentance. What you cannot put right is covered by the account of Jesus.

Artful Paul writes Three things. He offers to cover any loss, He reminds Philemon he too has debts, and he points out his temporary loss was an investment because Onesimus could now live up to his name which means *'useful'*.

If you look at it ethically, Paul didn't speak against slavery but changed the nature of it from inside. Paul lists slave traders as those who will not get into heaven in Timothy. But he could do nothing about it himself.

If you look at it spiritual it is a picture of our salvation we ran from God and Jesus covered the cost, writing a name in a book to square it on Judgement day.

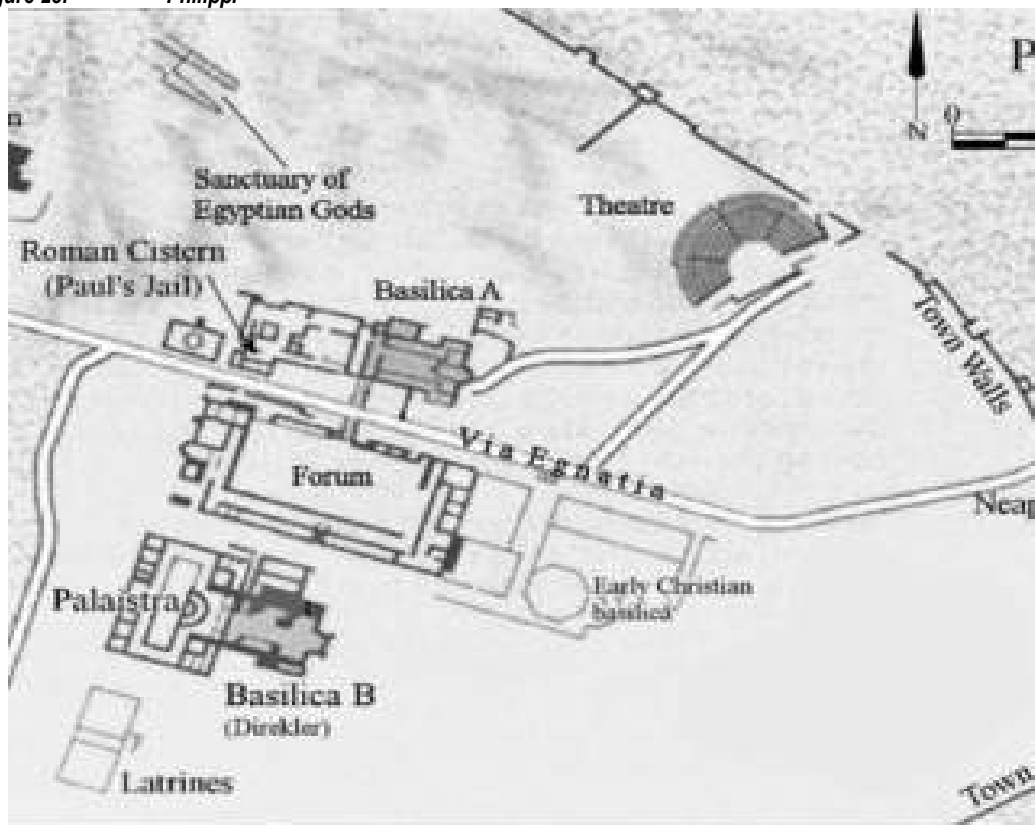


## Philippians

### Letter in Brief

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| Greetings                                   | 1: 1-11     |
| Paul's Concerns and Circumstances           | 1: 12 -20   |
| Serving one another as Christ served        | 2: 1-18     |
| Introducing and ordaining Timothy           | 2: 19-24    |
| Retuning Epaphroditus on Furlough           | 2: 25-30    |
| Warning the Judaizers and others are coming | 3: 1- 4: 20 |
| Sign off                                    | 4:21 -23    |

Figure 23: Philippi



## Chapter 15

### *Philippians*

#### The History:

In three-fifty-six<sup>BC</sup>, King Philip II of Macedon conquered the city and renamed it to Philippi. Philip established a mint there on discovery of gold mines near the city Philip was the father of Alexander-the-Great. Philippi was strategic because above it was a range of mountains. It has one main gap through it at Philippi, North to South. It was the point of many battles because of its strategic value.

Recent Archaeological digs have uncovered Philip II tomb full of Gold treasures dug from the hills. The Romans conquered it in one-sixty-eight<sup>BC</sup>, Antony and Cleopatra were defeated here in thirty-one<sup>BC</sup>. The apostle Paul was called there by a vision during his second missionary journey,<sup>227</sup> Clearly God had his eye on it, as the Gateway to Europe. Paul contrasts it with a, ‘Colony-of-Heaven’<sup>228</sup>.

This church became Paul’s closes bond, They adopted him as a missionary sending him money gifts. When Paul was in Rome under house arrest they sent Epaphroditus to cook his meals and look after him together with money for his legal expenses.

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227 AD 49 or 50 -- Acts 16 :9–10

228 Philippians 3:20-21

Accompanied by Silas, Timothy, and possibly Luke, Paul returned to the city,<sup>229</sup> then subsequently wrote this letter to them.<sup>230</sup> After Paul, the Church came under the jurisdiction of Ephesus, and when the Ephesian church declined, by Polycarp of Smyrna.

### The Letter:

Paul writes this letter and three others from Prison.

Alongside other great saints, from Joseph & Daniel, to Bunyan and Calvin, Paul acknowledges he is imprisoned by God's will, and makes the very most of it. Lesson-one must be, 'the worst parts of life maybe the best parts of ministry'. Going to Philippi a few years earlier was the first time the Gospel reached Europe by apostolic strategy.

The letter is a thank-you letter It is not a corrective letter like most of the others. There is a bond that has grown up between Paul and Philippi that is not in any other letter.

It is a letter about Christian life, moving together in church. Chapter-one is about the wonder of a church based on love, Chapter-two is love defined by the person of Jesus, Chapter-three is about a steady pilgrimage forward to the Kingdom of God.

Chapter-four tells of the fruit we produce on the way in joy and peace. Joy is mentioned sixteen-times in this book, written from prison. Paul's point out happiness is based on happenings, (hap means chance), but Joy carries through

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<sup>229</sup> AD 56 and 57.

<sup>230</sup> AD 61-62

the circumstance.

The people:

Paul never planned to go to Philippi. While they were in Antioch he fell out with John Mark and Barnabus. He accused John Mark of being a quitter. Whatever Paul was, he was not a quitter and could not take the risk of travelling with one. So they parted company, Barnabus and Mark went south to Cyprus while Paul took Silas and followed the trade route. This was in line with Paul's planned strategy to revisit the seven churches in Turkey. His intention was to revisit those churches he had visited to ensure they were going on in faith and to encourage them to widen their mission field. But, as only God can, he has a lesson to learn. He intended to go to South Turkey but The Holy Spirit forbade him to go.<sup>231</sup> So Paul suggests they go North but again The Spirit says, No!

Now Paul is at last in a position for God to work. It is not only the steps of a righteous man that God guides but also his stops. If Paul cannot go North and cannot go South, must he go back the way he came as a quitter? Must he go back and eat humble pie? Yes he must, but not just yet. I am sure it was here that the seed of repentance was sown. The next time they meet he will be reconciled. But meantime there is another lesson to learned. His plans have to be abandoned, Europe needs a missionary. The only option Paul has is go West. Paul had the vision of someone beckoning, come over to Macedonia. He will go on to

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<sup>231</sup> This was not a prohibition for all time because he will go there on his 'Third missionary journey'.

Thessalonica, Berea, Athens then to Corinth, but the first city he comes to is Philippi.

Paul's first task was to look for the synagogue to see if he could find the man who had invited him over. But there was none. A Synagogue required ten Jewish men before it can be formed, that is the Jewish law. But, by the sea, he found a group of ladies holding the fort with a prayer meeting. So, Paul met with them and was introduced to Lydia their leader. Lydia was not from Philippi but a wealthy business lady from Asia. Then things turned for the worse. Paul was arrested, for depriving a businessman of income when he cast out a familiar spirit from a girl. Everywhere else up to now, it had been Jews opposing him, now it was a gentile.

The jailer and his household become Christians and are baptized. Households are bigger than a family units, they include servants, slaves and often in-laws. The jailer himself may have been a slave as this was the sort of status the job held.

The Church at Philippi is born. Paul continued his journey and finally returns to Jerusalem. Two years later, he is detained under house arrest. While waiting for a boat to take him Rome for trial, it is this little church in Philippi that sent a letter and some money via Epaphras. Paul writes this letter, and gives it to Epaphras to take back.

The first two-chapters are an insight into how Paul thinks:

I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.<sup>232</sup>

Paul knew many people but there was only one person in all of those who is of *'kindred-spirit'*. At this time, in his greatest hour of need, Paul says:

*'I have only one 'soul-mate' in all this world, Timothy<sup>233</sup>, but I will send him to you'.<sup>234</sup>*

Once again, we see those Judaizers muscling in on the Church. At a time when Timothy could be the most comfort to Paul, Paul sees the need of the Church as greater, and he sends Timothy to them. Paul knew Judaizers were skilful arguers and without a clear and firm foundation, this church could be made mincemeat. This was more of a Job for Barnabus who had proved to be the stronger leader, but Barnabus had taken Mark down south. In the meantime Paul warns the Philippians Judaizers will try to preach *'Gospel-Plus'*<sup>235</sup>, but they must follow the heart of God described in chapter-two, remember their citizenship is in heaven<sup>236</sup>

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232 Php 1: 12 -14

233 This is the only time in the New Testament this Greek word is used. It means equal -soul.

234 Literal translation of Philippians 2: 19-20

235 Philippians 3: 1-11

236 Philippians 3 :12- 21

## Timothy

### Letter in Brief

|                              |               |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| Greetings                    | 1: 1-17       |
| Instructions for the Church  | 1: 18 -3: 16  |
| Instructions for the Timothy | 4: 1 - 6: 19  |
| Sign off                     | 6: 20 - 21    |
| Greetings                    | 1: 1-2        |
| Stay faithful                | 1 : 3 - 2: 13 |
| Stay true                    | 2: 14- 3: 17  |
| Stay strong                  | 4: 1 -8       |
| Farewell                     | 4: 9-22       |



## Chapter 16

### *Timothy*

#### The History:

These two letters were written after the book of acts ends. Nero is now in Power and is having a purge on Christianity. Paul had expected to be released from his first trial, and he was. In sixty-one<sup>AD</sup>, Paul was in prison, He was freed in sixty-six<sup>AD</sup>. He then travelled to Crete and was arrested again in sixty-eight<sup>AD</sup>. This time he was put in Mamertine prison in Rome. Nero was an unstable man and Paul knew he would not have a fair trial and it was his end days. His very last letter was his second letter to Timothy.

Timothy was sent by Paul to Ephesus to try to sort the Church out. You will remember the Church started out as house-groups and when Christians were later allowed to own property they bought the mint. Business people just fell into the leadership<sup>237</sup>. These began to lead the Church like a business, Setting up codes of conduct and structures rather than leading the people spiritually. Timothy was given the task of training these leaders in Kingdom principles and bring other leaders more suitable to lead a church into place.

In Ephesus, the membership had been great. It had made great strides in the city under a housegroup setup<sup>238</sup>. But, now the leadership were trying to organize all these homo-

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<sup>237</sup> Ephesus Museum : Office could not be taken unless it was approved by the trades guilds or Roman authority.

<sup>238</sup> Ephesus Museum and history of Ephesus



genous house-groups into one united church, and it proved to be a nightmare. Businesses had helped them purchase the old coin-mint, but they wanted to run it like a business.<sup>239</sup> For Timothy this was a challenge. He was charged with completing the transition of setting up quality spiritual leaders, who can ensure the members are not sidetracked by material concerns. Second, he was charged to make sure the church understood the problems it would face in coming days, and to change the basic culture of the church. Third, he was to leave the Church once it had a clear understanding of the truth; when it was ready to combat the errors attacking it.

One wise leader once said, *‘Leaders see their own strengths and weaknesses in the mirror of the Church. Congregations become what the leaders do, not what they say. The character of the leader becomes the character of the Church, because Church is based on relationships’*.<sup>240</sup>

Apostles were troubleshooters. Whether this was their intended role or not I cannot say, but that is what they became. Apostles are not a part of the permanent structure of the Church like pastors and deacons, but they move in to help restore a church to its right lines.

In these letters, Paul says his first trial went well, but he does not expect the second to go as well. Perhaps that is a

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<sup>239</sup> Ephesians 4: 19-23

<sup>240</sup> I am not sure of origin but someone in late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

hint that he recognizes he is getting older, perhaps that is why he is keen to establish Timothy as an elder.

### The Letters:

One of three personal letters, (Titus, Philemon and Timothy), this is a personal letter for a different reason. Paul regards Timothy as his true son in the faith. Both Timothy and Titus were trained to be leaders under Paul.

Timothy means, '*honours God*'. It was the name given by his mother or grandmother, both of whom had both been praying for him and both are mentioned in the letter.

Timothy was Paul's protégé. Initially from a town called Lystra, on Paul's first missionary journey, these two had worked the area of Galatia. On Paul's second missionary journey while Timothy was still a teenager, he was asked to become team member. Paul describes Timothy as like-minded<sup>241</sup> That is why he was keen to send Timothy to Ephesus:

...so that if I am delayed, you will know how everyone who belongs to God's family ought to behave. After all, the Church of the living God is the strong foundation of truth.<sup>242</sup>

Paul, recognizing his second trial will be his last, wants to hand the baton over to Timothy. So he lays out the responsibility of a leader. In chapter-one, he starts with the something Timothy will find hard to face, standing up to false

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<sup>241</sup> Philippians 1 : literally equal-souled or identically twined in soul. He was a soul mate.

<sup>242</sup> 1 Timothy 3: 15

teachers. There is going to be confrontation but it must be faced. Faith relates to truth not just any old faith. Faith in faith will not save. Faith in false doctrines will not save. Faith must relate to the one who is the way, the life and the truth. Doctrines of another kind are not the means of salvation. Next he deals with those appointed to leadership.

Paul then lists sixteen qualifications needed before a person should be appointed to leadership. It requires a one-hundred-percent pass mark. A desire to lead on its own is a disqualifying mark<sup>243</sup>. The list for deacons or servers is not less strict.<sup>244</sup> Even when in leadership, chapter-four sets out accountability in leadership, because it is the long-standing ministers who are prone to become lax or depart from the gospel. Be sure to be watchful of the gifts given in your younger days.<sup>245</sup>

Remember Timothy is not yet thirty, and in Jewish culture not old enough to lead, but Greek culture has does not have that regard, so many were fast tracking through education, and woefully lacking experience. Paul gave some instruction on handling the congregation. How should Timothy deal with older folk in their walk? Chapter-five and six deals with this. Don't rebuke an older person, encourage them into the right direction. Respect widows, don't encourage younger widows to give up and just accept handouts, encourage them to serve. And so on.

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243 Timothy 3: 1-7 The desire and the ambition are not sufficient grounds by themselves, leadership must be confirmed by the church in line with the other qualifications in this passage

244 Timothy 3: 8-13

245 Timothy 4: 1-16

Rome had six-million slaves. You can't change that. '*Let bondservants serve their masters honourably*', is not condoning, but accepting the fact. Many of those six-million slaves were highly educated, Some commentators suggest Luke was a slave; highly educated but under a master. Paul is trying to teach Timothy to find ways to show when you are in church you are in kingdom-of-God territory. Everyone there is equal. But in the world there is dual citizenship. That is going to take some working out in practice. But whatever or however it is done, don't substitute grace and love in the kingdom, for a written constitution.<sup>246</sup>

In the interlude, Paul is released from prison after his first trial went well. Paul then went to Colossae where he met Philemon and his house-church. Paul is arrested again and sent to Rome where he is imprisoned in Mamertine prison. Knowing he is not going to get out this time he writes his swan-letter; his second letter to Timothy.

Finally, guard the truth, guard your charge, guard the gospel, guard your heart lest you fall out with the Holy Spirit. Guard your mind, lest you become discouraged. Guard your character against the challenges ahead.<sup>247</sup>

Personally, I love Paul's mixed metaphors. Don't let the grammarians distract you away from being a soldier putting on armour; an athlete running to win; and a farmer plough-

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<sup>246</sup> Timothy 5: 1-25

<sup>247</sup> Timothy 1:3 -18

ing good straight lines. Be all at once.<sup>248</sup>

Be warned, says Paul to Timothy, your calling will not be easy. You will meet all the things we have been through together so far, and worse. You and I have a kindred-spirit, so live as you have seen me live.<sup>249</sup>

And as a last word, (before Paul is beheaded at the end of his mission), keep an eye on yourself, constantly examine and charge yourself to preach the Word, not opinions. Preach with the last Judgement in mind, and even if they do not listen, live a life that will hear the Master's '*Well Done*' at the end.<sup>250</sup>

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248 Timothy 2: 1- 2: 26.

249 Timothy 2: 1- 3: 9

250 Timothy 3: 10 - 4: 18.

## Titus

### Letter in Brief

|                        |             |
|------------------------|-------------|
| Greetings              | 1: 1-4      |
| The duties of an Elder | 1: 5-15     |
| Duties of a Pastor     | 2: 1- 3: 11 |
| Sign off               | 3: 12 -15.  |

### Place



## Chapter 17

### *Titus*

#### The History:

In the first century<sup>AD</sup>, there were several cults in Crete: The cult of Augustus, the cult of the deified Claudius, the cult of Asclepius - a god of healing, and the Egyptian cults of Isis and Serapis. Under Tiberius<sup>251</sup>, Crete was used to send exiles to from Rome. Roman administrators organized quinquennial games and issued coins, but Crete tried to maintain a distinct Greek identity.

Paul established the Church in Crete on his fourth missionary journey, in the short period after being found not guilty at his first trial and his second and final trial. He is understood to have gone from Rome to Crete<sup>252</sup>, then onto Corinth, Miletus, Macedonia—(possibly Philippi), Colossae, Troas, Ephesus and Nicopolis<sup>253</sup>. As Paul left, he is reported to have wept with the Church on the shore saying, *‘I know after I go, wolves will come in sheep’s clothing and ravage you’*.<sup>254</sup> Paul’s second arrest brought his fourth missionary journey to an end. He was sent to Mamertine Prison, which was much rougher than being kept in house arrest in his own lodgings. During his second Roman imprisonment, Paul knew the time of his departure

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251 AD 14–37

252 Titus 1:5

253 2 Timothy 4:20, 2 Timothy 4:20, 1 Timothy 1:3, Philemon 1:22, 2 Timothy 4:13, 1 Timothy 3:14; 4:13, Titus 3:12

254 Acts 20: 29

from this world was near<sup>255</sup>. He was cared for by Luke and Onesiphorus, but abandoned by many others. Nero was on a rampage against Christians in Rome and beheaded Paul. While Paul was in Mamertine prison, he sent Timothy to Ephesus. He also confirmed Titus was to remain leader of Crete church.

### The person:

Titus was from a Gentile and pagan background. Titus was commended for his quality character, by the members of his home church. And Paul took him on as a second protégé in the mission, alongside Timothy. Paul did circumcise him in order that he might go into the synagogue with him while they travelled together. He was an excellent worker, much more confident in character than Timothy. In Crete, they didn't have elders, so Paul appointed Titus as pastor,<sup>256</sup> leaving him to establish the other roles in the Church. Paul did this because Titus was strong on doctrine and could better face up to the Judaizers who were trying to get a foothold in church. Paul was concerned about the quality of membership at Crete. They were a mixed bunch and a competitive lot. Philosophizers rather than biblical teachers were heading the Church, so Titus was the better man to sort that out.

### The Letter:

The letters to Timothy and Titus are quickly criticized by Feminists for their portrayal of women. Bear in mind that

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<sup>255</sup> 2 Timothy 4:6

<sup>256</sup> who had now been with him for about fourteen-years,



Paul is writing a personal letter. Bear in mind that Paul is writing to Titus, a new pastor in a Greek church, where philosophers, not scripture teachers in the pulpit. Bear in mind also, the number of women in these two books commended and honoured.<sup>257</sup> Bear in mind that these are letters written to two young *men* pastors in a lax Greek environment. Bear in mind that as far as we know these are young, *unmarried* men, in a promiscuous society, who only have the advice from the book of proverbs as their reference point in these matters.

Once again, the advice given is about establishing leadership. Paul is aware of an indisputable fact that no church can go further than its leader. Therefore, leaders must be of irreproachable character, (by scriptural standards, not Greek). Preachers and Teachers must be likewise in character, plus they must be fully conversant with the whole of scripture, not Greek philosophy.<sup>258</sup>

On a different level, behaviour must demonstrate a rightful and reverent respect for authority, both civil and church. Behaviour is the outward demonstration of what is going on in their heart<sup>259</sup>. Paul will send Titus some support in either Artimas or Tycheus, as soon as he is able. But please could the Church send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos to him ASAP. Every Blessing from myself and the team here.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> 2 Timothy 1: 5; 1 Timothy 5: 2, 4, older women instructors: Titus 2: 3-5, 1 Timothy 5: 3, 16, 1 Timothy 5: 9-10, 1 Timothy 5: 16, women deacons 1 Timothy 3:11.

<sup>258</sup> Titus 1: 6 - 2: 15

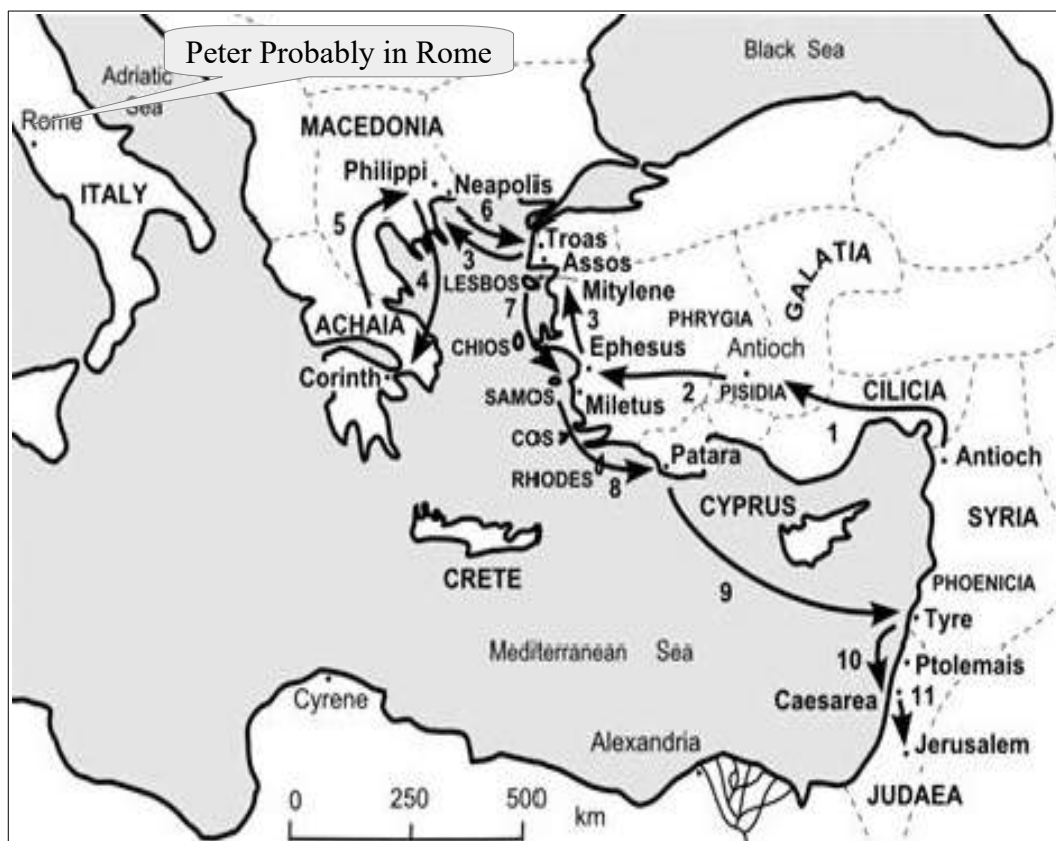
<sup>259</sup> Titus 2: 16 - 3: 12

<sup>260</sup> Titus 3: 13 - 3: 15

## Peter

### Letter in Brief

|  |                              |
|--|------------------------------|
| <b>Greetings</b>                       | <b>1 Peter 1: 1-2</b>        |
| <b>The basis of salvation</b>          | <b>1 Peter 1: 3 - 2: 10</b>  |
| <b>The expected fruit of salvation</b> | <b>1 Peter 2: 11 - 4: 11</b> |
| <b>The effects of suffering</b>        | <b>1 Peter 4: 12 - 5: 11</b> |
| <b>The essence of true teaching</b>    | <b>2 Peter 1: 1-21</b>       |
| <b>The mark off false teaching</b>     | <b>2 Peter 2: 1-22</b>       |
| <b>The warning of Judgement</b>        | <b>2 Peter 3: 1-8</b>        |



## Chapter 18

### *Peter*

#### The History:

One-Peter was written sixty-three<sup>AD</sup>, just before the burning of Rome. Two-Peter was written in sixty-seven<sup>AD</sup>, just before his death.

The book claims Peter was writing from Babylon<sup>261</sup> but, although we know there was a number of Jewish believers in Babylon, we have no record of Peter going there. So it may be figurative. We do know Peter did go to Rome, (with his wife) and lived there a while before his death. We also know that Rome was referred to by some, as the second Babylon. So this is probably code. Why code? Once again, the Church was under scrutiny by Rome intelligence, and it would help protect the people mentioned in the letter. To whom is he writing? The Christians in modern day Northern-Turkey. That is higher up than the seven churches to which Paul and Timothy went. Places include: Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

#### The person:

Peter the Pebble, a blue collar worker with an impulsive nature, that is a general view. But the Sanhedrin made that mistake and had to change their minds, saying How did these unlearned and ignorant persons get to know all this?

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261 I Peter 5:13

Born in a little fishing village on the edge of Galilee called Bethsaida he moved to Capernaum where Jesus set up his ministry base.

### The Letter:

Peter might almost be a synopsis of Paul's doctrinal letters. In Peter's letters, he lays out a basic relationship between Faith, Hope and Love, this is the basis of: Salvation, Citizenship and Destination.<sup>262</sup> Peter recognizes, he does not cover the subject as fully as Paul<sup>263</sup>, recommending his readers should also read what Paul has to say on the subject, and treat Paul's writings as scripture, alongside the Old-Testament scriptures they already have<sup>264</sup>. Peter's treats Faith, Hope and Love as the three essential steps, each based firmly on the foundation of the previous level<sup>265</sup>.

In 1 Peter he deals mainly with the foundation of faith, and building on it hope. In 2 Peter he deals with continuing in hope for the reaping benefits to come.

In the New Testament, Simon is the name of several characters, including the man who carried the cross for Jesus. This Simon, the son of Jonah, (Simon Peter), was a natural leader. 'Simon'<sup>266</sup> means, '*rustling*'. It also means '*a wavering reed*,' or '*sand-like*'. Jesus of course, nicknamed him Peter, '*a stone*'. It was probably this renaming that gave Peter the confidence to open his letter '*A special Mes-*

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262 Justification, sanctification and glorification are the technical terms.

263 Not surprising when Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones spent 780 hours expounding Paul's Letter to Romans alone.

264 2 Peter 3: 15-16 (this also shows the Church were accepting the writings of Paul as early as 65 AD)

265 See preamble to Letters or fuller description

266 verse 17

*senger...chosen and foreknown by God the father, changed by the Holy Spirit and obedient to Jesus*'.<sup>267</sup> Peter is going to tell us how to cope with trials, but his opening remarks are, *'before you can cope with the trials, you must be sure of your salvation'*. Once you submit to Jesus the Messiah, (who submitted to God the Father), you don't fight troubles, you submit to them. In the kingdom you have no rights. If the Son and Master gave them up, then so must his followers. Faith, Hope and Love, is a trinity that carries us through trouble. If you want a stable life now, see Hope as the rope, secured to the anchor. You cannot see the far end but you know it is securing and stabilizing you from the tumult. Hope changes the character attitude from, *'I want to stay, but I am willing to go'*, to *'I want to go, but I am willing to stay'*.

By chapter-four, (having establishing hope as an essential foundation), Peter turns to Persecution. As people of God, you are part of the Temple of God. As a church that is, not as individuals, you are a Priests to your persecutors. Never deserve the suffering, never seek revenge, do not let it get you, it cannot touch the spirit. While you live in their kingdom, submit to their authority. Learn to be happy, pay taxes, be loyal subjects, do most things expected, except where it conflicts with immoral or the illegal issues against God's Law. In that way, when trials come your attitude will be right.

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267 1 Peter 1:2

Maybe, Peter was reminiscing the time Jesus spoke to them at the temple of Pan in Caesarea Philippi as he wrote chapter-three verses eighteen and following.

Christ himself suffered when he died for you, and with that one death he paid for your sins... In his physical form he was killed, but he was made alive by the Spirit. And by the Spirit he went and preached to the spirits in prison.

These verses have caused controversy in the Church. Everywhere else, scripture is clear death is the end of our chances to accept salvation. Mormons, Liberals and some others, seize upon these verses to argue, *'See, we do have a second chance'*. Evangelicals and conservatives say. *'Jesus only went to Herald<sup>268</sup> his victory to those imprisoned, not to preach'*. Any Greeks reading this would think that natural as the Conqueror always rode through the conquered to announce His victory.

One thing only we can be certain of, Jesus kept his word the thief when he said 'Today you will be with me in Paradise'. Peter is clear Jesus was alive in the spirit from the moment of his death on the cross.<sup>269</sup> Jesus is active conscious between death and resurrection. Taken at face value Jesus is awake alive and active immediately after separation of body and spirit, even if it is three days later when he is first seen in His new body.

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<sup>268</sup> The Greek is Herald but it translated preach here as elsewhere in scripture.

<sup>269</sup> 1 Peter 3 :18-22.

Take comfort in this Hope.

The second letter is written to the same people but in a totally different situation four-years later. Rome had been burned by Nero and the Church was under intense persecution having falsely been blamed. For many, these accusations were a sign of the tribulation that Paul had spoken of in Thessalonians. Why should they be punished when they are not guilty? Why doesn't God punish the wicked? Peter explains:

It is important for you to understand what will happen in the last days. People will laugh at you. They will live following the evil they do. They will say, 'Jesus promised to come again. Where is he? Our fathers have died, but the world continues the way it has been since it was made'. But these people don't want to remember what happened long ago. The skies were there, and God made the earth from water and with water sent a flood. All this happened by God's word.<sup>270</sup>

In all of this, the theme of two-Peter is. Use all circumstances to pursue spiritual maturity. Look after virtue, true knowledge, patience, self-control, godliness, and brotherly-kindness because your hope is in the eternal Kingdom where righteousness reigns.

My friends, do all you can to show that God has really chosen and selected you. If you keep on doing this, you won't stumble and fall. Then our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ will give you a glorious welcome into his kingdom that will last forever.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> 2 Peter 3: 5

<sup>271</sup> 2 Peter 1

## Hebrews

### *Letter in Brief*

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
| Don't go back to your Old covenant        | 1: 1 - 14      |
| Jesus is the better Intercessor           | 1: 15 - 4: 13  |
| Jesus is the better Priest                | 4: 14 - 7: 28  |
| Jesus is the better Offering              | 7: 29 - 10: 18 |
| Please don't go back to your Old covenant | 10: 19 -13: 25 |

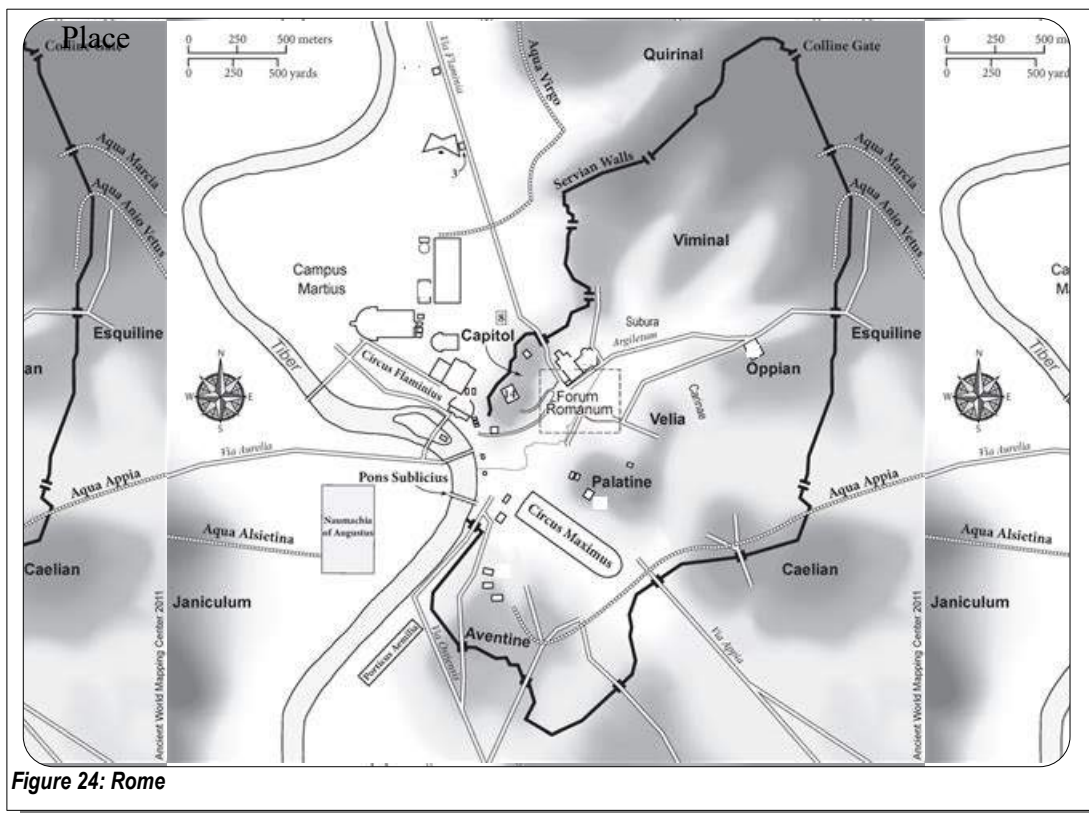


Figure 24: Rome



## Chapter 19

# *Hebrews*

### The History:

#### **Who wrote the book?**

The author of the letter to the Hebrews remains a subject of discussion. Eastern churches never questioned Paul was the author, the Roman Empire believed Paul was the author, putting it into the earliest Canon of Scripture. Clement of Rome believed it. But fourth generation Western church questioned everything. Luke, Barnabas, Apollos, and even Clement were suddenly put forward as candidates, though why Greeks like Luke and Clement were in the list, writing to Hebrews about their own faith, I cannot imagine.

It was written about the time Paul was in prison for the second time around sixty<sup>AD</sup>. It is midway through Nero's reign Nero started out being very popular and did many good things for Rome. It was about halfway through his reign he began to persecute the Jews but it was a gradual increase, starting with confiscating their property and putting them in prison. The letter was written before seventy<sup>seventy</sup><sup>AD</sup> as it makes no reference to the destruction of the temple and sacrifices were still being carried out.<sup>272</sup> It was obviously sent to a Jewish community, but there is no direct reference as to where. We will see in a moment it would have been of special benefit to the Jewish community in Rome.

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<sup>272</sup> Hebrews 10: 1-2, 11

But if it is written to Christians in Rome why just the Jews? After all, Christians were going through the same treatment. But Christianity was at that time Illegal, but Judaism was still legal. So the Jews were tempted to go back to the synagogue. But these were in the hands of Judaizers who were by now, denying Jesus is Messiah and requiring returning Jews to say so.

### The Letter

Hebrews was not written as an exposition of the nature of Christ. It was written as a letter urging the Jews not to go back to old theology; not to give up.

Hebrews concentrates on the present priestly ministry of Christ in the life of the believer. Jesus is both the divine Son of God and completely human, and in His priestly role He clears the way for human beings to approach the Father in heaven through prayer<sup>273</sup>. The great theme of the letter is ‘Jesus is better than...’: He is better than the priesthood of Aaron, because only through Jesus do we receive eternal salvation.<sup>274</sup> Better than any High Priest going beyond the curtain, because He offered Himself as a sinless sacrifice on behalf of the sins of human beings.<sup>275</sup> Better than the angels bringing better lives to humanity through salvation. Better hope than the Mosaic Law could promise, Better sacrifice for our sins than a bull or a goat, and providing a better inheritance in heaven for those who place their faith in

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273 Hebrews 4: 14–16

274 Hebrews 5:1–9

275 Hebrews 7: 24–26; 9 :28

Him.<sup>276</sup> Jesus is indeed superior to all others.

Paul argues with Jews in Rome, who were struggling under Nero's persecution as Christians, Don't go back to the Mosaic Law, stick with the better way. To Paul's mind it was clear, the old system was a shadow of the real thing. If you go back to the Old-Covenant, you realize you will have to repeat your sacrifices daily. If you deny Jesus, the ultimate sacrifice, you have no other choice but you have no temple to sacrifice in. The writer to the Hebrews showed these Jewish Christian believers that, though they were faced with suffering, they were indeed following a better way, and they should persevere.

The second half of the book takes groups of Old-Testament believers, whose faith held steadfast even though they had not seen what they had been promised. Their faith was demonstrated in what they did. They persevered on, they did not return to their old ways. Some did but they lost everything. So press on and don't look back, don't look for the easy way out. By faith Noah built an Ark, if he had not kept faith we would not be here today, for all flesh would have been wiped out. By faith each of those listed did what was asked of them. Take your eyes off Noah, Abraham, Moses, Gideon, or the prophets because they fulfilled their part in a chain that led to Christ Jesus. If they had not, you would have no destiny. Now fulfil your part by holding fast to Jesus that God might complete his vision of a new heaven and new earth in which all these and you might be reunited.

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<sup>276</sup> Hebrews 1: 4; 6: 9; 7: 19; 9: 23; 10: 34

All this depends on the one who fired the starting gun on this destiny in faith, He will also be there at the finishing line to see us complete the journey. He is the author and finisher of our faith<sup>277</sup>.

*‘How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation’?* Is Paul’s question and it is addressed to these believers. Drifting away is a recognized state that can happen to any believer not only these Jews. It comes if we neglect the source of our salvation, Jesus.

By chapter-ten, Paul is ready to lay out the final analysis of this argument. If you neglect the source of your salvation, there is no longer a remedy for your sin. Without entering into the side-lining debate, *‘Once saved always saved’*, this letter is speaking to those, who have once accepted that Jesus is the only means of salvation, only to then deny it. No matter what you conclude as your answer to this question of *‘once saved always saved’*, this is a very grave warning. *‘How then shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation’?* Peter argues the positive side of this question, *‘Make your calling sure by living in the way that shows it’*<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> Hebrews 12

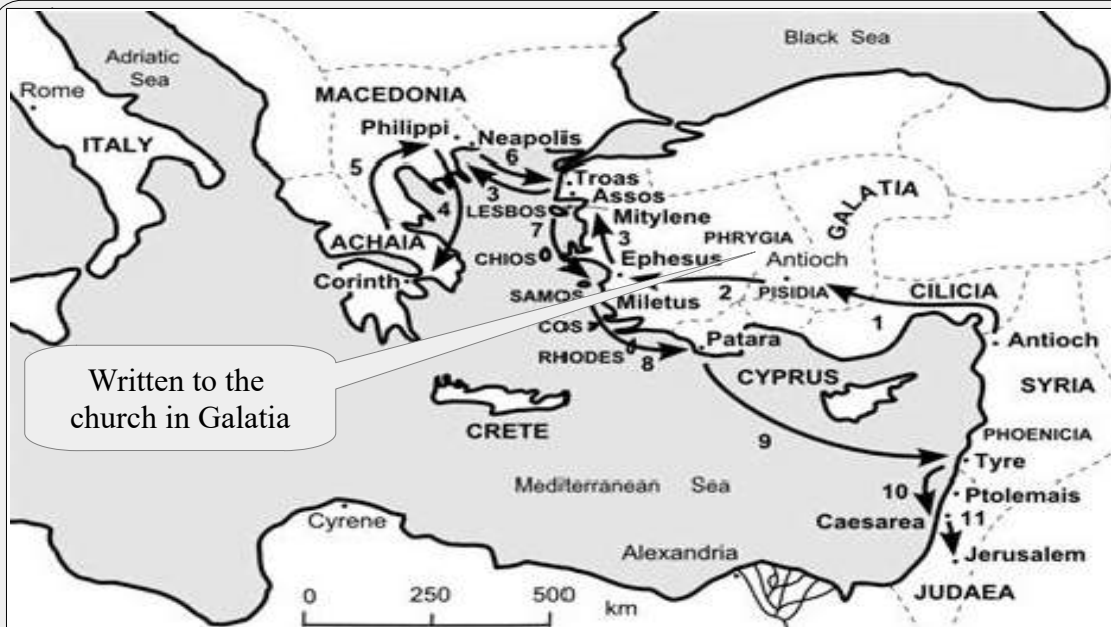
<sup>278</sup> 2 Peter 1: 10; also 2 Timothy 1: 7-15 ; Romans 11:28-32

**Jude**

**Letter in Brief**

|                                 |       |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| Greetings                       | 1-4   |
| Warnings against false teachers | 5- 16 |
| Encouragements past and present | 17-25 |

**Place**



## Chapter 20

### *Jude*

#### The History:

Written by Judas (Jude) brother of James, forth-youngest brother of Jesus<sup>279</sup>. Not to be confused with other people of the same name in the New-Testament: Judas Iscariot<sup>280</sup>: Judas, Son of James (Thaddeus)<sup>281</sup>: Judas, Paul's host in Damascus<sup>282</sup>: Judas, called Barsabbas<sup>283</sup> or Judas the revolutionary<sup>284</sup>

As half-brother to Jesus, and alongside his other brothers, he did not believe Jesus was Messiah at first. You will remember the occasion the family went together and while he was preaching tried to take him home, on another occasion his brothers said:

So his brothers said to him, 'You should leave here and go to the festival in Judea. Then your followers there can see the miracles you do. If you want to be well known, you must not hide what you do. So, if you can do such amazing things, let the whole world see you do them.' Jesus' brothers said this because even they did not believe in him. Jesus said to them, "The right time for me has not yet come for me, but any time is right for you."<sup>285</sup>

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279 Matt 13 : 5

280 Matt 10: 4

281 Luke 6 : 16.

282 Acts 9: 11

283 Acts 15: 22

284 Acts 5: 37

285 John 7: 3 ff

All this changed, after his resurrection. After Jesus appeared to them,<sup>286</sup> James, eldest half brother, became the first pastor of the Church at Jerusalem, generally believed to be followed by brother Jude. Jude had a family, his great-Grandson is known to be Bishop Judah Kyriakos from one-fifty<sup>AD 287</sup>. Jude appears to have written this letter as a pastoral letter while he was leader of the Jerusalem church around sixty-five<sup>AD</sup>.

With Paul, supposedly out of action in prison, care for the Galatian province became the concern of the Jerusalem church and its leaders once again. The Judaizers and the Gnostics saw it as an opportunity to gain control over the synagogues in Galatia, so there was a concerted push to influence them.

### The Letter:

Probably hearing of Paul's imprisonment, Jude, as part of the Jerusalem Council, (which still held the loyalty of synagogues in the area), started out wanting to write a general letter of encouragement to the synagogue assemblies<sup>288</sup>. But, hearing of the plot to propagate false doctrine, he had to change the tone to a warning. The change is about the consequences of abandoning the message they had received from the missionary team of four under Paul. There were four main groups trying to corrupt the Church, The 'Gospel-Plus' groups, these were the Judaizers who said Christi-

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286 He appeared to His brother James (1 Corinthians 15 :7).

287 Richard Bauckham : *Jude and the relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*,

288 Jude v3

ans must keep the law as well as believe in Jesus. The Greeks were pushing in the form of Gnostics, who proclaimed faith in Jesus must be accompanied by their '*special understandings*' of the scripture, (this was hidden from all the others). In the 'Gospel-Minus' groups were: some groups denying the Jesus was the son of God. These said Jesus was only *a* son and created like all other creation. Also. Under Greek influence, another group were saying the soul was safe once you had said '*Jesus is Lord*', It was like going to the temple on Lordy-Day<sup>289</sup>, you could say '*Caesar is lord*', take a pinch of incense and go out to worship any other god afterward<sup>290</sup>. Once said, you are free to live as you fancy. The book of Jude is important for today as all these four variations are trying, once again, to take over the Church.

In his first argument, Jude takes his severe warning arguments from Scripture, and directs them at the Churches:

First remember Israel in the Wilderness. They were saved from Pharaoh but when they became disobedient and wanted to add a golden calf to their salvation God killed the lot in one day.

Second: Remember the Angels who thought they were in heaven for ever, no matter how they behaved. God kicked them out of heaven to await eternal torment. Quoting from the Book of Enoch,<sup>291</sup> he reminds them of the sticky-end of the two-hundred angels that misbehaved seducing women

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289 Lordy-day was a local annual Roman holiday when people were expected to declare Caesar is Lord at his temple

290 This where the saying, '*Take it with a pinch of salt*', came from

291 Found in the Hebrew Apocryphal books



to produce Nephilim. This led to occultism, violence and finally the great flood.<sup>292</sup>

Third: remember Sodom and Gomorrah. There were four cities in the Dead Sea area, Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim. When they syncretized their towns, tolerating bad behaviour, God sent the angels to cause an earthquake, set light to the pitch in the sand and destroyed all the people except Lot.

Jude then turns his attention to the perpetrator seeking to lead the people away from the truth:

First, Cain was rejected by God and became a murderer when he neglected to take God's warning of sin crouching at the door of his heart. God is not tolerant of the selfish leader.

Second, Balaam's love of money and power challenged God. He sold his soul to four kings. God was merciful in allowing the donkey to warn him but when he refused to repent God allowed the same four kings to kill him.<sup>293</sup> God is not tolerant of the ambitious leader.

Third, Jude uses the story of Korah as an example of false teachers in his day. Addressing the issue of '*wolves in sheep's clothing*', he warns against the particularly harsh judgement on those that compromise the truth, in this case the Nicolaitans and Gnostics.<sup>294</sup> The earth opened up and

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<sup>292</sup> Genesis 6

<sup>293</sup> Numbers 32: 8.

<sup>294</sup> Numbers 16

swallowed Korah and his group,<sup>295</sup> God is not tolerant of the false preacher.

Finally, Jude turns to the congregation. He reminds them they have been warned about these people by Old-Testament prophets, starting at Enoch. They can check out the apostles who introduced them to salvation and taught them, by reading the scriptures for themselves. He tells them, one way to know is by the fruit the Church produces:

***Listen*** among the Church for: *grumblers, continuously dissatisfied members, boasters or flatterers.*

***Look*** for those who behave badly: *Those that grab the best seats or food, Those that leave the weaker to fend for themselves. Any that go around pompously rebuking the Devil, (even the angel Michael did not do that).*

***Observe*** any that show little respect for the lower classes, not treating all as equal. And any who are not looking out for the vulnerable by their behaviour. These are just signs and symptoms of the wrong spirit being spread by false doctrines in the Church.

This very severe letter by Jude can be summed as:

**Legalism** in the Church says: *'You are not free to sin, and we will make sure you don't'.*

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295 Numbers 16: 41-50

**Licence** in the Church says: *'You are free to sin and its OK because you are in the family'*.

**Liberalism** in the Church says: *'You can accept any behaviour in the Church because God is tolerant.'*

**Syncretism** in the Church says: *'We can get along with any view of Jesus even if it devalues him from his rightful place as the only begotten son of God'*.

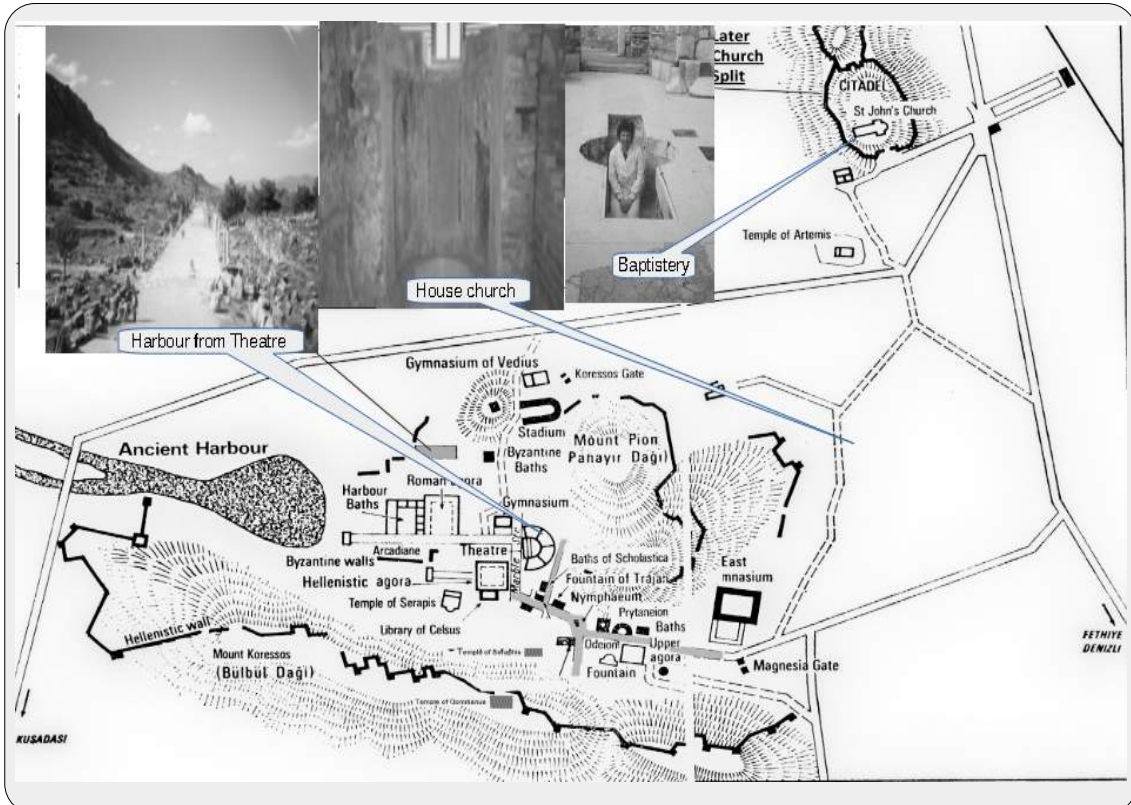
Jude says the right way is :

**Liberty** in the Church which means, *'We are free not sin by the Grace of God'*.

**John**

### Letters in Brief

|   |                     |               |
|---|---------------------|---------------|
| <b>Greetings</b>  |                     | <b>1: 1-4</b> |
| <b>Walk in Light</b>                                    | <b>1: 5 - 2: 29</b> |               |
| <b>Walk in Love</b>                                     | <b>3: 1 - 4: 21</b> |               |
| <b>Walk in Faith</b>                                    | <b>5: 1-21</b>      |               |
| <b>-----</b>  |                     |               |
| <b>Greeting</b>   |                     | <b>1-3</b>    |
| <b>Warning Love without Boundaries kills the church</b> | <b>4- 15</b>        |               |
| <b>-----</b>  |                     |               |
| <b>Greetings</b>  |                     | <b>1-4</b>    |
| <b>Warning Boundaries without Love kills the church</b> | <b>5- 25</b>        |               |



## Chapter 21

### *John (Letters)*

#### The History:

John ‘retired’ to Ephesus with Mary about the mid eighties<sup>AD</sup>.

Paul had sent Letters to the Ephesian Church, but the Church was prohibited from meeting as one body by the city bye-laws, so Paul’s letter was circulated among the House-groups who discussed them as outlines for study.<sup>296</sup>

John had sent one open letter and two personal letters possibly before finally settling in Ephesus, but while the Church was still in its housegroup format<sup>297</sup>.

#### The person:

John and Paul have much in common. My suspicion is that Paul spent more time with John than the account gives credit to. After his conversion, during the three-silent-years Paul prepared for ministry, Paul admits he went up to Jerusalem twice. When he felt called to go to the Gentiles, he went once to see Peter and James regarding his call to go to the Gentiles. Peter, although called to the Jews, had an interest in the gentiles<sup>298</sup>. On a second occasion, he spent time with John as well<sup>299</sup>. When John settled in Ephesus, the

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<sup>296</sup> see Ephesus History: section.

<sup>297</sup> This is circumstantial evidence as 2 letters are addressed to individuals having control over places of meeting

<sup>298</sup> Acts 11 :6 ff

<sup>299</sup> Galatians 2: 9

Church had been firmly shaped by Paul's teaching. Within this setting, early writings claim John had been asked by the Church to write down his memoirs of Jesus on grounds that he might not be around much longer, and they needed some more permanent record of authority. If you compare the book of Ephesians with the book of John, the two books have many parallels and similar arguments. You might imagine John going to a housegroup and listening to Paul's letter as it is being studied, and saying to himself, '*That is right. Jesus said that and I told you Paul*'. These two books have much in common that the other gospels do not share. The insight and the focus are similar. Several Greek words are unique to both Ephesians and John.<sup>300</sup> and the style of teaching of these two men is also similar.

Towards the end of his life John stopped travelling and settled in Ephesus with Mary the Mother of Jesus.<sup>301</sup> The culture and the language in Ephesus are very different to Jerusalem. Ephesus Church was the key outpost church of the area, it was the mother church of six others in the area<sup>302</sup>. It was one of Paul's strategic churches, and he had spent a lot of energy influencing it.

John is confronting the Gnostics who taught that Jesus never had a physical body because a body is corrupt. So he will say clearly, '*every spirit that denies God came in the flesh is error*'.

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300 I rely on Greek scholars to tell me that

301 John 19: 26-27

302 Not necessarily mother by birth but certainly mother by care.

## The letters

The three letters are written by John the apostle. During the early twentieth- century, these letters, like most others were the subject of doubting scholars, who questioned which John. But the early fathers, (being around then and knowing John the apostle), have no questions. The question if all three were written by the same hand is also superfluous, as the style, language, argument, proximity and subject-matter all portray one person's hand. During this period of '*Critical scholarship*', it was also questioned if the 'elect-lady' referred to by John, was code for another underground church. But we shall see why this is an unnecessary interpretation in a moment.

One-John declares and examines: God is Life<sup>303</sup>, God is Light<sup>304</sup>, God is love<sup>305</sup>. John is a Jew and thinks like a Jew. So it is remarkable that he is the only person in Scripture to declare '*God is Love*'! Right through scripture. it is declared 'God Loves'. But as we have already seen, Ahavah-love must take a subject, an object and a uniting bond. If God is singular, He cannot *be* love, under the Hebrew concept of love. But, by nature God was three-in-one before he even thought of creation, so there is no problem with John's statement. No other religion can say that.

*They, them and us*, are words scattered through this letter whenever John speaks of the Greek argument, John wants

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303 I John 1: 1-4 & I John 5: 1-21

304 I John 1: 1-5 to I John 3: 10

305 I John 1: 3-11 4: 21

to bring the Christians back to the unification of spiritual and material. Greeks wanted to divide Jesus in material and spiritual. Even today you can hear people proclaiming Jesus was human, and the spirit only controlled him from his baptism on. On his death it separated again. John opposes this. *‘We saw him, we touched him, we heard him’*:

Anybody or any spirit that does not confess Jesus is in God and God in him, is in the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.<sup>306</sup>

The second and third letters are short, to the point and about hospitality. This was a very relevant issue in the early church as which had a big sense of belonging to the whole. The local church had its local ministries but itinerant ministry was important to hold that unity.<sup>307</sup> These two letters address the two extremes.

In the second letter, John writes to a lady who was welcoming any and every itinerant preacher to stay, and then to preach to her housegroup. This was a constant source of introducing the Church to wrong teaching. Paul also warned Timothy against wrong teachers preying on the hospitality of widows who minister in hospitality.

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306 Jn 4: 3

307 The Didache has sections on how to behave in Itinerant ministry even to how long you may stay in one place.



The third letter is to a man who is too dogmatic and too narrow in his doctrine, This man is refusing the right people and even apostles from occupying the pulpit.

Taken together, in these letters, John is talking about motivation. The one loves without reason the other reasons without love. Love without discernment leaves people vulnerable to any unscrupulous scoundrel. Reason without love is inflexible closed and growth stunting. A balance of love and judgement is needed to lead any group of people, all the more in church where the gift of discernment is a leadership requirement.

If these were written to two housegroup leaders during the Housegroup era of Ephesus, it will show the diversity of groups in Ephesus, and be a foretaste of how difficult it is going to be to integrate all the housegroups into one church.

## ***Preamble to Revelation***

One thing is for certain, there will be an awful lot of disappointed people in the New-Kingdom. The Republican will shudder at the appointment of a King. The Democrat will lament not having appointed Him. The staunch Feminist will regret He is male. The libertarian will be frustrated by the King's high standards, the ambitious will be disappointed at not being on the short list and the rich will then have their wealth redistributed. These are just a few differences between the Kingdom of earth and the Kingdom of God. So how will it work? It will work because the hearts people are right. Any of the world's political systems could work if the hearts of all its people were right. Honesty, integrity, competence, trust, respect, empathy, selflessness concern and putting others first, These and so much else are all derived from the heart.

Revelation needs a preamble. Because there is a tendency to, *'leave it to the experts'*. Revelation is not for the faint-hearted. John does say it should be read aloud. John does not say you should attempt to interpret it in detail, but watch it unfold. Interpreting Revelation has become the foundation of many false sects and weird ideas. This book was not written to graduates, it was written to ordinary folk. It was not written in complex Greek but in basic everyday lingo. It was penned by John; he penned it, he did not write

it. He was told to write down what he saw and heard, as he saw it,<sup>308</sup> and not to polish it, add to it or subtract from it.<sup>309</sup>

Give this book to the experts, and they will question the author, the grammar, the logic, the style, then invent all sorts of allegories and rearrange its content to suit taste. In fact, they will do precisely what John was told not to do. If it was penned to ordinary people not university students, then the only proviso is, that we might get back into the shoes of ordinary folk of that time. They were a suffering, persecuted people. The circumstances have a bearing on the understanding.

There are said to be fifty-six predictions in this book. That is an awful lot of speculation. Not least of these is when the end time will be? Before the book was even written, the Essenes were predicting the world would end in Seventy<sup>AD</sup>. It might have seemed like that when the temple in Jerusalem was being destroyed and the people running for their lives. French Bishop, Hilary of Poitiers, predicted the end would come in three-hundred-and-sixty-five<sup>AD</sup>. Hippolytus of Rome predicted the nice round number of five-hundred<sup>AD</sup>. Christopher Columbus, with his precise mathematics, said it would end in one-thousand-six-hundred and fifty-eight<sup>AD</sup>.

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308 Revelation 1 : 19

309 Revelation 22 : 19

Charles Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, foresaw the Millennium beginning. His estimate was the year eighteen-thirty-six<sup>AD</sup>, '*When Christ should come*'.

Luther, a German priest and professor of theology known for starting the Protestant Reformation, predicted the end of the world would end no later than sixteen-hundred<sup>AD</sup>. He predicted such a time, even though he was not keen on the book, and thought Revelation should be cut out of Scripture saying:

'It is neither apostolic or prophetic everyone thinks of the book what his spirit finds there. There are many noblere books to be retained'

Jehovah's Witnesses are more persistent, proclaiming Jesus would come again in 1878<sup>AD</sup><sup>310</sup>. When He didn't, they proclaimed 1914<sup>AD</sup><sup>311</sup>. When He didn't turn up then either, they claimed Jesus *did* receive his heavenly crown on that date and was installed as king, but invisibly so.

John Calvin omitted the book of revelation from his commentary translation altogether, assigning it to an appendix.

This book is not contrary to the statement of Jesus, 'only the father knows the times and order of the end'. If it is read to satisfy our curiosity about the future, it will deceive,

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310 " *The Time is At Hand* (1911 ed) p.239

311 *Watchtower* 1993 Jan 15 p.5

because it will project hopes and fears into interpretation. It needs to be taken at face value.

Not one of the many interpretations takes the whole of the book metaphorically. Not one takes it all literally. So there is an element of interpretation. But that must be used with common sense. We are not Gnostics!

The Greek word translated ‘soon’ or ‘shortly’, is not ‘*in a short while from the time of writing*’. It is, ‘*from when you see these things beginning, they will happen rapidly and end shortly*’. Which leads to the next point, All prophesy carries a foreshadowing. We will see many false prophets, but the one in Revelation will be worse and more obvious. We will see many Antichrists but these will be only a foreshadowing of the real thing. Throughout history the anti-Christ has been named as: Rome, Nero Caesar, Napoleon, The Pope, Hitler, Henry Kissinger, Mikhail Gorbachev and many others. The list is long but at worst these are a foreshadowing of the real thing.

Prophecy is not allegory, there *are* symbols because symbols transcend time language and culture but these are explained in the text and have their foundation in the Old-Testament. I rely on others that tell me there are four-hundred-and-six symbols in these verses and three-hundred-and-sixty allude to Old-Testament pictures.

After Pentecost, the Church in Jerusalem became the centre of mission. It became very active and drew the attention of Rome. Expelled Jews, being mainly businessmen, migrated to another good trading position in Turkey where the trade route crossed between three continents. This became the strategic area for the next thrust of the gospel. Ephesus was their mother Church<sup>312</sup>, but when Ephesus declined<sup>313</sup>, the baton passed to Smyrna church under Polycarp. There were seven churches close together, both in geography and mission, but a number of others in the region were not singled out in Revelation. These, were all based in this fertile basin of Turkey, which was formed by a number of rivers at the meeting place of western and eastern worlds.

Without sidetracking, it is worth mentioning when John said he was in the spirit on '*The Lord's Day*', it could mean one of three things. Jewish believers were still holding to the Sabbath, Gentiles Christians were beginning to prefer '*the first day of the week*', but he could also have been talking of the Roman holiday '*Lordy Day*'<sup>314</sup>. On this day once a year, all citizens were required to go to the Temple of Caesar, take a pinch of incense and declare '*Caesar is Lord*'. That would make it an anniversary of John's original arrest. We do not know which view holds the original intent of John.

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312 We cannot be sure she birthed the other churches but with Paul and John being there she fed and educated them.

313 Soon after the book of Acts concluded

314 There is a definite article in the original, which might argue the case either way.

The first three chapters contain letters to these seven churches. This has given rise to several major approaches of these letters: The letters were written to real churches with real people at a given time. The issues can apply to all churches in all places and all times. In terms of Prophecy, for us who look back we can match each church to a period in history described in their letter, so it could also be read as a seven stage progression toward the end times.

*1-Preterists:* say all these warnings were fulfilled literally in history by seventy<sup>AD</sup>, (at the fall of Rome).

*2-Historicists:* take the approach that the seven churches represent the state of the Church in each of seven ages that will occur before end times. History can certainly plot a remarkable parallel corresponding to the seven letters, but as to if this is the primary intent, that is conjecture.

*3-Futurists:* view all the states of the Churches as literal, but yet to come.

*4- idealists:* will say these things can apply to past present and future. That is, they apply to all or any age.

- A) Preterist = all fulfilled .
- B) Historicist = Being fulfilled as history unfolds
- C) Futurists = yet to come.
- D) all the above.
- E) A and B above

*Its your View*

### **The book**

This book is a Revelation. It is not Revelations. As such it is a whole, and we are not entitled to dissect it or move its parts around. The phrase '*coming soon*' literally means, '*when these things start they will come at high velocity*'.

The book is an open, or circular letter. Chapters one to three contain a letter to individual churches but all the Churches will read it all the letters. The faults and praises in each are open for all to see. Each letter is in seven parts, the Church to whom this section is addressed, followed by the particular title Jesus gives himself for that particular church<sup>315</sup>. Next comes a recognition of something good within the Church. This is important because these are hard times for the Church and Jesus is not about to crack the whip or break the reed with yet even more burdens.

If the Church is not to fall away by sinful influence, there are some particular things to watch<sup>316</sup>. It only takes one sin

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<sup>315</sup> He addresses Himself differently to each in turn relevant to what He is about to say

<sup>316</sup> This takes us back to Cain and Abel. '*Sin crouching at the door*', is a compassionate warning of sin, which got the better of Cain.



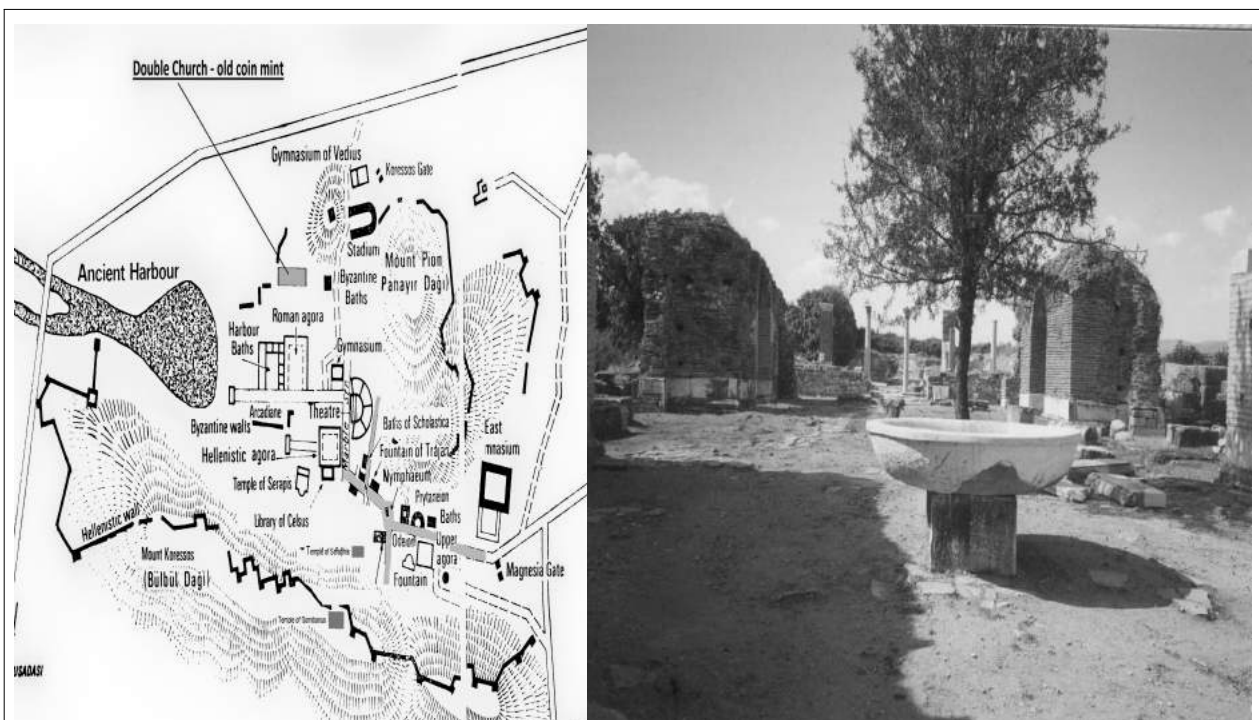
to get the better of a church to disqualify her from God's purposes. Jesus tells them what to watch for and how to put it right. Finally, Jesus assures them that if they put it right and remain vigilant. He will remain with them and bless them.

These chapters are about the Priest-King ministering to Christians through the Churches It is the age of the Church. The Churches are meant to be Lampstands and will be judged according to this image.

To this end I must clarify why I use the term Ram rather than Lamb in these Chapters. The Hebrew language, besides not having vowels and other strange anomalies, relies on the context to complete a word picture. In Isaiah, the Lamb is pictured as one of the flock, being taken out and led to the slaughter on behalf of the flock<sup>317</sup>. In Revelation the picture is still the Lamb, but now he is a male lamb in the peak of his prime with seven horns. He is now king and Master of the flock. Same lamb, different role and character.

## **To the Church in Ephesus (Modern day Selçuk)**

***The one who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lamp-stands. Says: You work hard and are tenacious. You test those who say they are apostles by your constitution. You never stop trying, enduring troubles for my name. But, Your safeguarding has made you cold and ridged. Legalism has pushed out Love. Therefore, Change your hearts and do what you did at first. Otherwise, lack of love will quench your life  
All churches should take note of this***



**Figure 25: Ephesus**

**Coin Mint Church known as Double-Church : Anne & Brian 1985**

Ephesus church began as house-groups as the bye-laws did not allow Jews to own property or take office. By the time Paul and Apollos arrived, Ephesus was declining due to the silting of the harbour and the bye-laws were being relaxed. The coin mint stopped making coins and the Christians bought it and extended it to accommodate around 6,000 people. Merging so many homogenous house-groups caused people to concentrate on a legalistic constitution rather than love. By the time Timothy was called to Pastor, Judaizers had moved in and built a rather grand Synagogue in the suburbs. John and Mary finished travelling and settled here in time for Domitian to require everyone to declare him a God. John refused and received a life sentence in the salt mines of Patmos where he wrote Revelation. Timothy was killed shortly after. Domitian died and his successor rescinded the life sentences, allowing John to return to 'Double-Church'. He trained up Polycarp to succeed based at Smyrna. Ephesus church declined with the town and Smyrna became the mother church of the area.

## To the Church in Smyrna (Modern day Izmir)

***The First and the Last, the one who died and came to life again says: I know that you are poor in wealth, but really rich in spirit! I also know the insults you have suffered from Jewish sects and other religions who hold the power in your region. But, I need to tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison. Therefore, concentrate on being faithful, I will give you the reward of life. Otherwise, you will die with them. All churches should take note of this.***

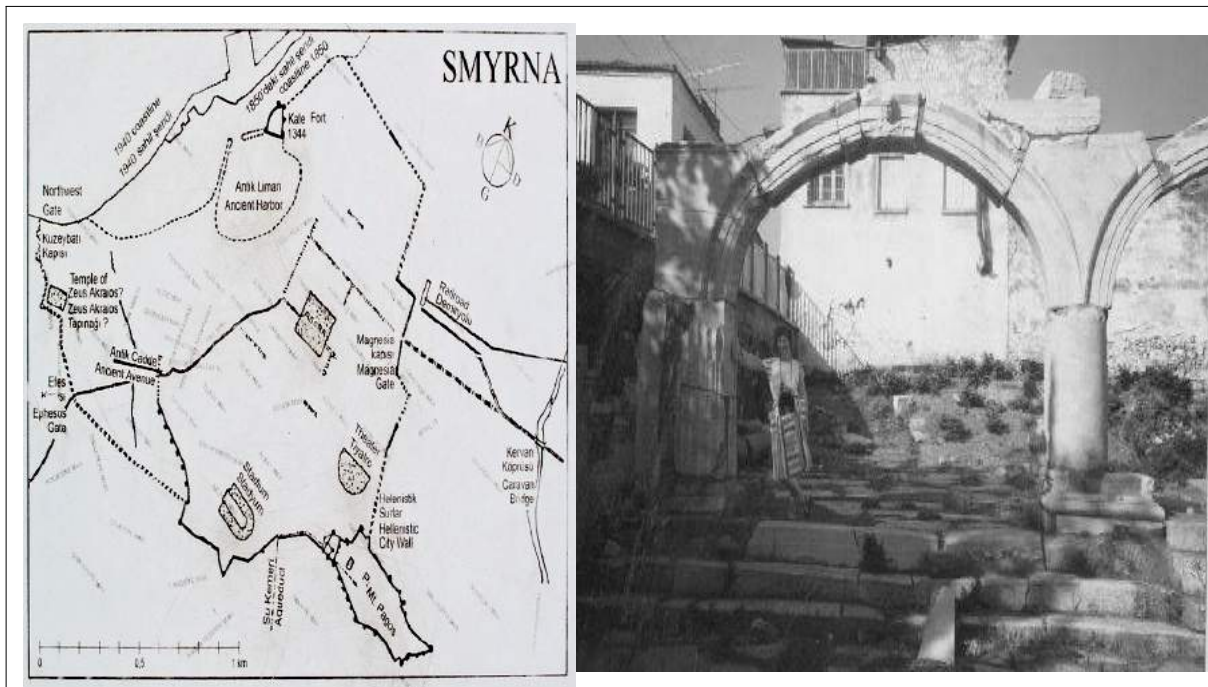


Figure 26: Smyrna

Smyrna Agora

Anne & Brian 1985

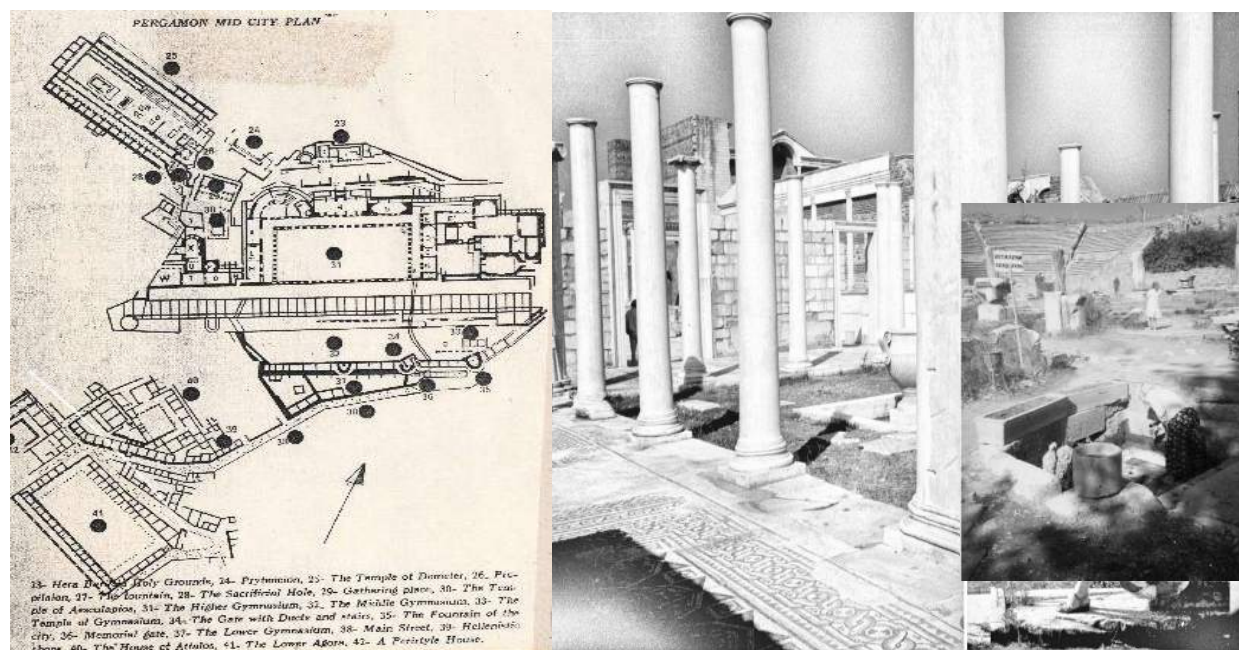
During the Graeco-Roman period, the city had a population over 100,000. On the decline of Ephesus, Judaizers split the Synagogue causing Gentile Christians to form Church under Polycarp. Polycarp trained up Irenaeus as leader just before Judaizers were instrumental in the Martyrdom of Polycarp.

The church was so active in the expansion of the Gospel in Turkey, that during the mid-3rd century, Tertullian felt it had the real leadership role within Greek churches. During the Ottoman era, Greek influence was so strong the Turks called it ‘Smyrna of the infidels’.

### **To the Church in Pergamum (Modern day Bergama)**

***The one who has the sharp two-edged sword says: You live where Satan has his throne, but you are true to me refusing to be silenced about your faith. But, you are syncretizing by eating food offered to idols in the company of those who claim licence to sin, and joining them in sexual sins. Therefore, become single-minded and apart from them. Otherwise, when I bring the sword you will die with them.***

***All churches should take note of this***



**Figure 27: Pergamum**

**Temple to Zeus**

**Anne & Brian 1985**

Pergamon had many cultural centres, Its library was second to none in the known world and I am sure Dr. Luke would have browsed its medical section. It was dominated by a huge temple, carved around Mountain and dedicated to Zeus. It looked like an arm chair and became known as the 'seat of Satan'. The alter of this Temple is in east Berlin museum. Pergamon also housed the Temple of Dionysus, temple of Athena and temple of Serapis.

Antipas, the first Church leader of Pergamum, (trained by John), was a victim of Serapis worshippers, who burned him alive on a brazen-bull incense burner, in front of the temple.

**To the Church in Thyatira (Modern day Ak-Hissar)**

***The Son of God, the one who has eyes that blaze like fire and feet like shining brass says: I know about your love, your faith, your service, and your patience. But, your love is far too lax because it allows licence for everyone to do what they fancy. Therefore, you must separate yourselves from them, because they refuse to change. Otherwise, my judgement will fall on all and the whole church will die.***

***All churches should take note of this.***

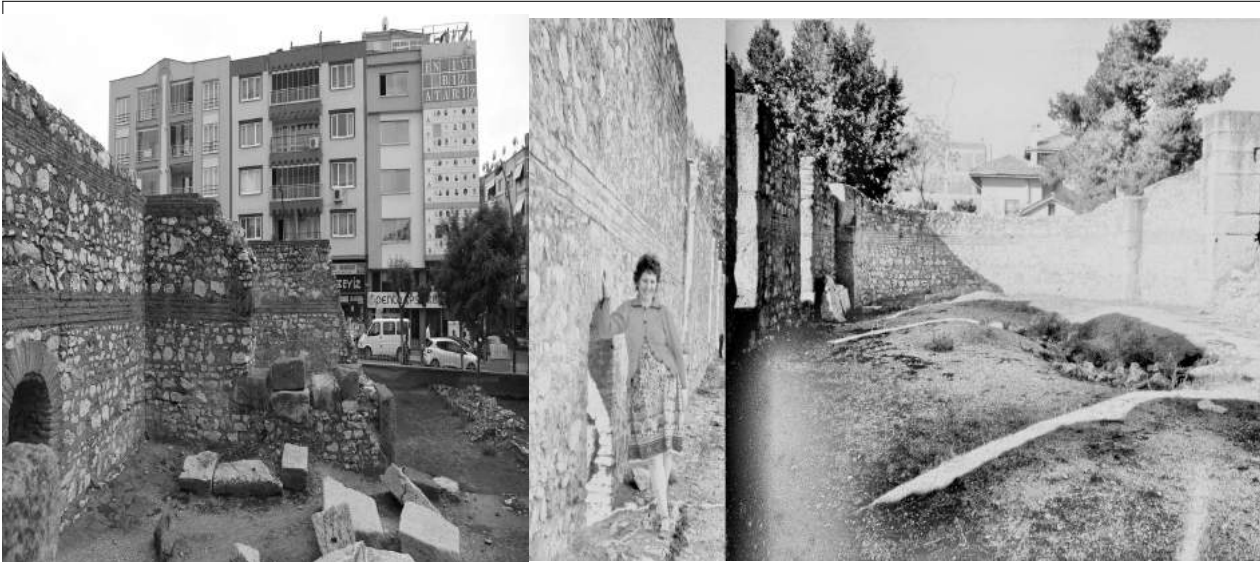


Figure 28: Temple of Zeus (Berlin Museum)

&

Thyatira church remains

Anne & Brian 1985

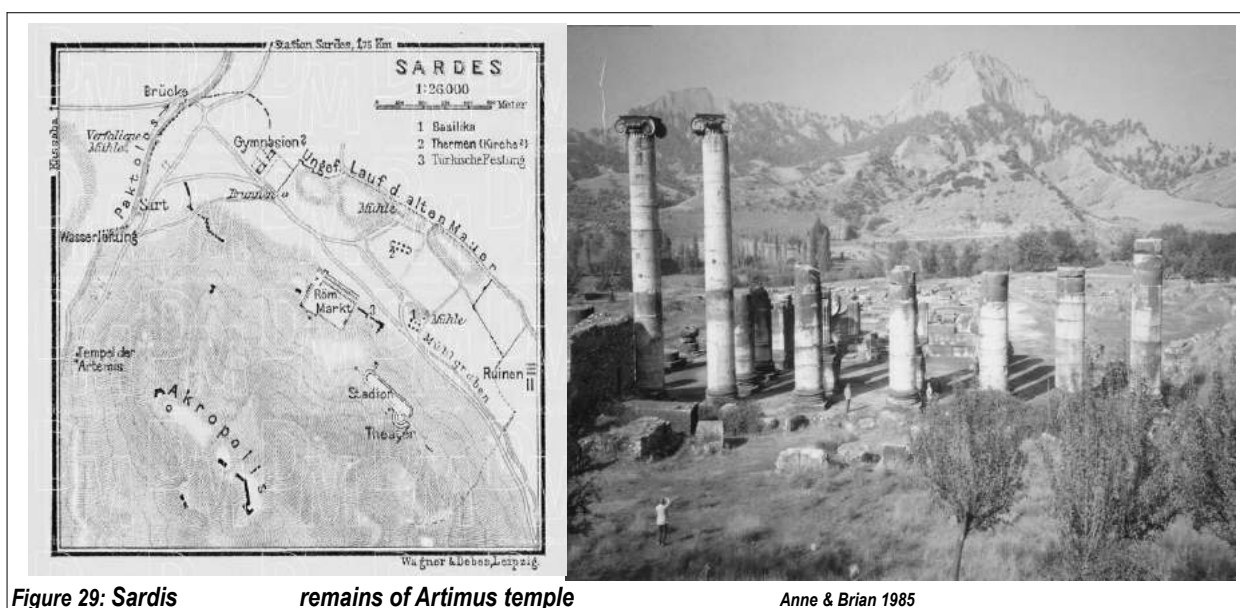
Still a Trading town, but then famous for its purple cloth. It was the headquarters for many ancient and secret guilds: the potters, tanners, weavers, robe makers and dyers guilds.

Many of the church were compromising with these guilds and the guilds were influencing the church, sometimes secretly undermining church behaviour. It was not just Judaizers at work here, a temple dedicated to Sambethe housed a shrine occupied by a prophetess representing Jezebel and frequented by many tradesmen who wanted to keep their businesses .



### **To the Church in Sardis (Modern day Sart)**

***The one who has the seven spirits and the seven stars says, I know the true you, people may say that you are alive because you are happy-clappy and always very busy. But, really you are dead inside. Therefore, Wake up! Make yourselves stronger before what little spark you have left is completely gone. Return to what you originally received and heard, and obey it. Wake up, otherwise you will die. Those worthy to walk with me, will be clothed in white. But those that do not listen will have their names erased from the book of life. All churches should take note of this.***



Sardis was destroyed by an earthquake in 17 AD, but it was rebuilt by Rome. In return it was dominated by one of the 7 ancient wonders - The Temple to Artimus. Rome also built an impressive Synagogue for the Judaizers.

## **To the Church in Philadelphia (Modern day Alaşehir)**

***The one who is holy and true, the one who holds the key of David says: When I open something, it cannot be closed. And when I close something, it cannot be opened. But, I have put before you an open door that no one can close. I know you are weak, but you have followed my teaching. Therefore, you must stop the group that belongs to Satan infiltrating. They say they are Jews, but they are liars. They are not true Jews. Stay true to the plain Gospel, and they will submit. Otherwise, I will not be able to keep you from the time of trouble that will come to the world.***

***All churches should take note of this.***



**Figure 30: Philadelphia**

**Site of earliest Church**

**Anne & Brian 1985**

In the Middle of a Busy little town today stand the remains of the early church building.

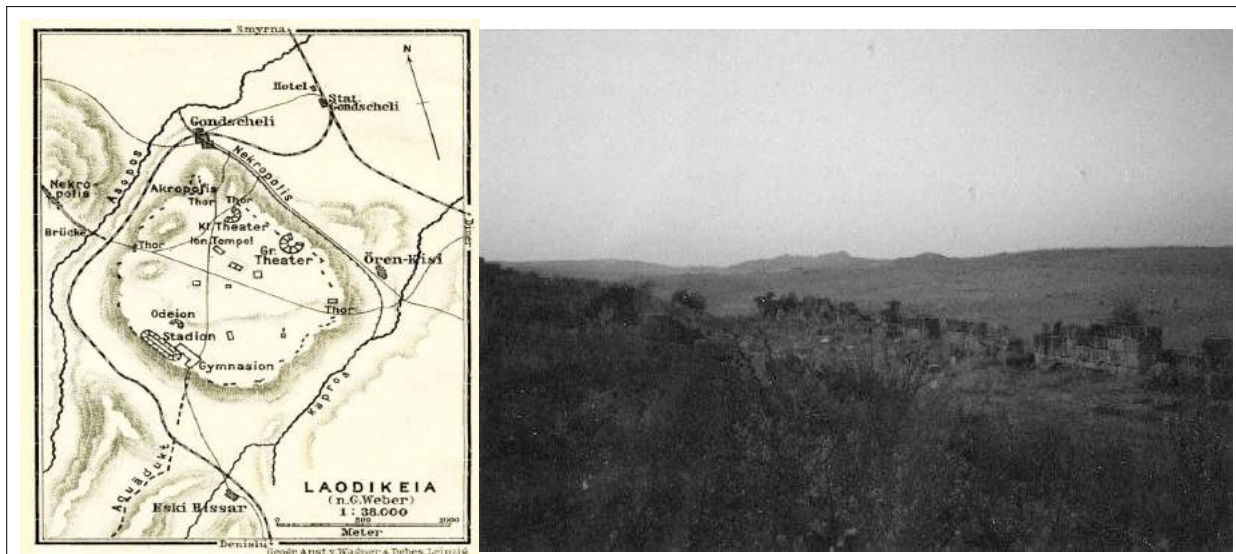
It suffered an earthquake in AD 17 and Caligula relived them of paying the tribute while they rebuilt the town. But in return they were to house a prominent and impressive building for the 'Neokoron', an imperial cult headquarters. This may be the reference to stop Satan infiltrating.

The main hall of the Synagogue is over 50 meters long, with enough space for almost 1.000 people.

**To the Church in Laodicea (Modern day Denizli)**

***The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of all that God has made, says: I have nothing good to say about you I have looked hard But, You are so lukewarm. Your swing with the mood. You suck up to the wealthy, use your money for fine buildings, while neglecting the poor, blind, and naked, you cannot see that your spirit has become poor, blind, and naked. Therefore, return to your first love. Change your hearts and lives. Here I am! Ruler of all that God has made, and you won't let me in to church. Let me in. Otherwise, you will not be with the victorious and will not sit with me on my throne.***

***All churches should take note of this.***



**Figure 31: Laodicea**

**Site where lukewarm church was**

**Anne & Brian 1985**

Sadly No More today. They preferred to remain lukewarm. Rome declared it a free city. Antiochus the Great transported 2,000 Jewish families to Phrygia from Babylonia so most of Laodicea's inhabitants were Jews.

By the time of the Council of Laodicea (in AD 364) the church had become legalistic and ritualistic. 30 churches sent representatives to produce 60 rules and directives, ranging from what could be eaten in lent, what should be worn by women, what could be done on the 'Sabbath', (which tells us they were back in the hands of the Judaizers). Who should or not receive ministry from the church was discussed.

They also dropped the book of Revelation from the canon while adding the book of Baruch to the Old.

The city experienced a second earthquake and the town of Denizli was built further up the valley while Laodicea was left as the rubble we see today.

Within a 5 mile circle, Collosae Had ice cold springs and Hierapolis (Pamukkale), had hot mineral springs. Laodicea had to pipe all its water from Denizli, by the time it arrived it was lukewarm and silty. For all their wealth they could not buy fresh water.

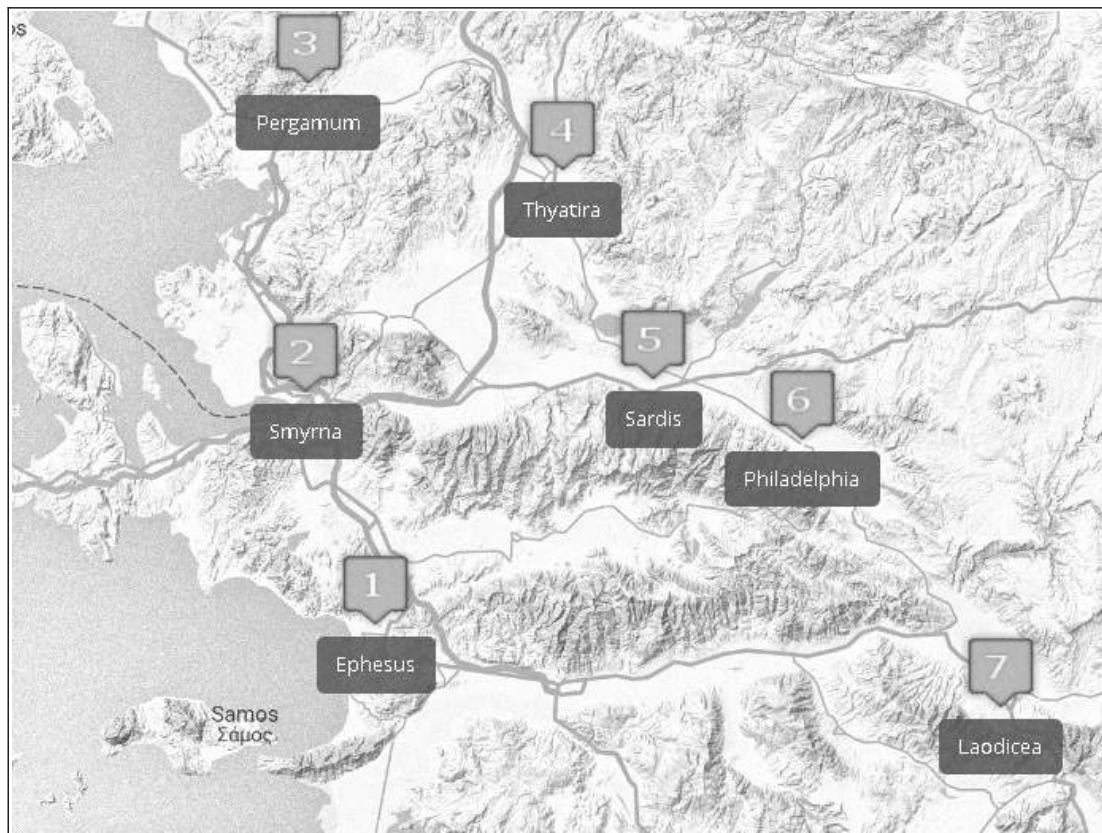


This is the last time ‘churches’ is mentioned until chapter-twenty-two. The picture changes from here. God deals with the nations until the final two chapters when earth and Heaven are united and the Church is regenerated so God can finally get his wish to live with Man as he did in the Garden before the fall.

## **Revelation**

### **Letter in Brief**

|                                      |                 |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Letters of warning to 7 churches     | 1: 1 - 3: 22    |
| Heaven and the 7 seals               | 4: 1 - 8: 5     |
| Jerusalem and the 7 trumpets         | 8: 6 - 11: 19   |
| The world and 7 bowls                | 12: 1 - 16: 21  |
| The final victory                    | 17: 1 - 20: 3   |
| The establishment of the new kingdom | 20 : 4 - 20: 15 |
| The move to new heaven and earth     | 21: 1 - 22: 5   |



## Chapter 22

### *Revelation*

Things that are: (a View from earth)

**Chapters one-to-three** are about the things that **are**. These are about the seven Churches which we covered in the preamble. There are four main interpretations of this section:

A), the Churches are just the seven churches, at the time and place they are addressed.

B), the Churches are a picture of all churches between then and now.

C), the Churches are representing a period in the progression of the worldwide church through history until now, (as shown below).

D), the Churches represent all three views.

| Church History |             |            |            |
|----------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| Church         | type        | Dates      | Revelation |
| Ephesus        | Apostolic   | 30 -100    | 2: 1-7     |
| Smyrna         | Roman       | 100-313    | 2: 8-11    |
| Pergamon       | Constantine | 313 -600   | 2: 12-17   |
| Thyatira       | Dark ages   | 600-1517   | 2: 18-29   |
| Sardis         | Reformation | 1517 -1648 | 3: 1-6     |
| Philadelphia   | Missionary  | 1648- 1900 | 3: 7-13    |
| Laodicea       | Apostasy    | 1900-now   | 3: 14-22   |

*Figure 32: Seven Churches as some see it*

## The Letter

Section two of the book begins with the words: *After this:*

From here on, we alternate between what is going on in Heaven and what is going on earth. We start with a view from heaven.

**Chapters four-to-eleven:** we read, '*Things that will come, after the time of the things that are*'!

After the Church-age, comes the Judgement-age. Having had the account of the angels visit to the Churches, we are taken to the judgement throne room. Jesus is Glorified. He has taken His rightful place in Heaven as the Ram<sup>318</sup> of God. In this vision, John seems to be experiencing what Paul wrote about in one-Thessalonians-four.

Brothers and sisters, we want you to know about those who have died. We don't want you to be sad like other people—those who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died, but we also believe that he rose again. So we believe that God will raise to life through Jesus any who have died and bring them together with him when he comes. What we tell you now is the Lord's own message. Those of us who are still living when the Lord comes again will join him, but not before those who have already died. The Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet-call of God. And the people who have died and were in Christ will rise first. *After this* we who are still alive at that time will be gathered up with those who have died. We will

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318 Male Lamb in its prime with seven horns

be taken up in the clouds and meet the Lord in the air. And we will be with the Lord forever. So encourage each other with these words.<sup>319</sup>

Some of the things John saw in heaven can be explained by the common understanding in the early church. Twenty-four elders is a New-Testament and early church concept. The Earliest church saw the union of the Jews and Gentiles into one church by the grafting of Gentiles into the Church. Twelve elders, represent the tribes of Israel, and twelve elders, represent the apostles<sup>320</sup>. This representation was voiced at the first council in Jerusalem where they discussed the unity of Jews and Gentiles. While appealing for unity, the council recognized diversity between the two groups. All the elders are robed in white, a direct reference back to Exodus where, a robe was put upon the priest after a sacrifice had been made for his sin. This was recognized by the Council, for Jew or Gentile, there is only one entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, by the Sacrifice of the Messiah on the cross. One other observation, all these elders appear to have been through their judgement, as they are now wearing crowns on their heads, which are given at the judgement. The twenty-four are also remembered in stones laid in stone in the new Jerusalem, the twelve stones representing the twelve tribes and the twelve foundation stones named after the apostles.

## Why did John weep?

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<sup>319</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4: 13

<sup>320</sup> These are also represented by the 12 gates named after the tribes and 12 foundations named after the apostles of the Lamb found in Chapters 21 & 22. Another interpretation is from book of Leviticus where 24 priests are appointed to represent the people by rota represented the people before God in the Holy of Holies.

God created the earth and it belongs to him. Mankind was given stewardship of it. Adam sold the earth rights to Satan for a small portion of knowledge fruit<sup>321</sup>. Under the law, that gave Satan tenure rights unless a Kinsman-Redeemer can purchase it back<sup>322</sup>. The kinsman-redeemer must be one of human-kind. John weeps because, at first, there seems no one that can be called Kinsman to fit for this role. No Kinsman-Redeemer can be found, and it looks like the inheritance is lost forever. But, the Lion declares, the Ram with seven horns, is indeed a worthy Kinsman-Redeemer, and hands to Him the title deeds of the earth.

The deeds of the earth are sealed with seven seals, each seal representing a judgement which must be made as it is opened. Now the seven-horned ram is found fit to judge those issues, the Church in heaven erupts into praise that its inheritance might now be restored.<sup>323</sup> As each seal is broken, so each issue is examined and judged.

**Chapters-six to nineteen**, arguably,<sup>324</sup> begins with judgement of how the Church responded to the warnings it had been given. Under this view, Church should be judged first as this has been charged with being the light on the hill of the world and the salt of the earth. It would be an unfair judgement on the nations, if the Church has misrepresented

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321 See the story of Esau and Jacob for illustration. Jesus never questioned Satan's right to own the deeds until they were bought back.

322 See the book of Ruth for illustration.

323 As pictured in the story of Ruth.

324 Chapters 1-19 run as part as a whole before chapters and verses were added to the text. There are other views.

its calling. These judgements are caused by Human means, aggression, which leads to bloodshed, famine and disease.

Judgements by God, always seem to fall on the just and the unjust regardless of the cause. The method of God's judgements are described in the parable of the wheat and tares. The two grow up side-by-side until all are harvested together<sup>325</sup>. The pronouncement of judgement comes after the harvest, and results in the separation. Judgement separates people out naturally by their fruit<sup>326</sup>.

Six seals are followed by an interlude, then followed by the seventh seal. The disasters are to come upon the earth, but the interlude describe what will happen to God's People. As each seal is opened, it releases the punishment or rewards awarded under that Judgement. How well will the Churches do?

***What was required in brief***

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| Ephesus      | Watch your love it can grow cold                                   |
| Smyrna       | Watch your faithfulness it can erode without you noticing          |
| Pergamon     | Watch your pulpit cunning words can rob your salvation             |
| Thyatira     | Watch your morality or you can be indistinguishable from the world |
| Saudis       | Watch your tenacity or you can become insular                      |
| Philadelphia | Watch your mission, the enemy can compromise it                    |
| Laodicea     | Watch your wealth, it can lead to indifference.                    |

***'All churches should read this' Rev 2:7***

**Figure 33: What was required?**

325 Matthew 13: 24 ff

326 Jeremiah 30: 7ff Daniel 12 : 1. Matthew 24: 21 .

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Seal-one,   | Horse-one is white and carries aggression.                                |
| Seal-two,   | Horse-two is red and carries bloodshed.                                   |
| Seal-three, | Horse-three is black and carries famine.                                  |
| Seal-four,  | Horse-four is green and carries disease.                                  |
| Seal-five,  | Releases a persecution of believers.                                      |
| Seal-six,   | Releases a great fear over all the world <sup>327</sup>                   |
| Seal-seven, | Is opened, and it ushers in an earthquake on earth and silence in Heaven. |

### Interlude 1

After the sixth seal John looks around the earth and see four angels taking up their posts to hold back hurt from the earth. The Israeli people have a seal of protection on their foreheads, (not the mark of the beast but a seal of protection). These appear to be still on earth. Then He looks around heaven to see a multitude in white robes around the throne of the Lamb. The tribes of Israel appear to be protected on Earth while the multitude appear to be in heaven. There is no reason to presume the group in Heaven does not include Jews, that is a false logic. The People on earth, we are told are from the tribes of Israel. But those in heaven are any and all of those washed in the blood of the Lamb. That is inclusive of all and any. It is also false logic to presume these are in heaven before the tribulation, because an angel tells John: *‘These are the ones coming out of the great suffering’*. These are arriving one by one.

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<sup>327</sup> All these things are already happening locally around the world but appear to intimate will be worldwide.



There are three sets of seven Judgements: Seals, Trumpets and Bowls.

The next Section also begins with- *After This*:

After this, the angel filled the incense container with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth. Thunder roared, lightning flashed, and the earth shook.<sup>328</sup>

**Chapters eight-to-nine** continue with the Trumpet Judgements.<sup>329</sup> These have been described as ‘Natural disasters’.

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Trumpet-one   | Announces a Scorched earth.   |
| Trumpet-two   | Announces a Polluted sea.   |
| Trumpet-Three | Announces Polluted lakes and springs.   |
| Trumpet-four  | Announces Reduced sunlight.   |
| Trumpet-Five  | Announces An invasion from the East <sup>330</sup> .  |
| Trumpet-Six   | Four Angels release effect on the rest of the world.  |
| Trumpet-Seven | Announces an earthquake on earth and the second interlude where John sees the world Kingdoms surrender to the kingdom of God. |

## Interlude 2

During this interlude, John first sees some things he is told not to write down. We will return to this in the Postamble.

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<sup>328</sup> Rev 8:5

<sup>329</sup> As to the scope of this judgement, it is unclear if the judgement is upon one third of the earth in area, or the devastation of the whole earth will result in damage to one-third around the world.

<sup>330</sup> Pictorial as Locusts, Daniel and Zechariah also speak of this.

Then he is handed a scroll which he is told to eat. He describes it as tasting sweet and sour and is told the Judgment will be both sweet and sour upon the earth and for that reason the Gospel must be preached regardless of the response it receives.

From this we zoom to earth again and centre on the area of Jerusalem and the Temple area, where two witnesses enter the scene on earth. The scroll and the witnesses have been mentioned before in Zechariah chapter-four and following. In that passage the witnesses are described as two men, of one common spirit, who stand beside two world leaders. These two witnesses will be untouchable until they have finished their allotted time. But they will have extraordinary powers. Like Elijah, who stopped the rain for three-and-a-half-years, they will have powers over the elements. At the end of this interlude they will be killed. Three-and-a-half-days after they will be raised and ascend in front of witnesses.

John is then returned to heaven in time to see a great battle taking place. A third of the angels rebels, under the leadership of a dragon with seven heads and ten horns. They retreat to the earth where they join forces with two beasts.

The first beast is a union of Leopard and Bear with the voice of a lion. It joined forces with the dragon. The time limit starts here<sup>331</sup>, it is allowed to terrorize the world and

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<sup>331</sup> The time limit will be discussed in the post-amble.

kill its saints for a short period of time. John is told to pass on to the saints, the message *'Hold on and be faithful'*.<sup>332</sup>

A second beast manages to defeat the first and to hoodwink all the people with lies and deception, until he has brought them all under his control and marks them with a mark of possession. Not all the world is conquered as Jerusalem has held out.

**Chapter fourteen** begins the gathering of troops, under the influence of the dragon, to confront Jerusalem. The Ram is joined, as a noise like thunder brings the saints and angels to line up beside the Ram. An angel explains to John that the singing by the hosts is a song of victory, in every language of the earth, A song of worship to the Ram. A second angel announces Babylon and all it signifies, is fallen, A third angel announces, those that have followed the beast will be cast into the lake of fire and those that resisted will be blessed forever. John then sees the Son of Man, sitting above the earth in judgement as it is being carried out.

**In Chapter-fifteen** John is introduced to seven angels, each with a bowl. He is warned the next section will be the worst, but once delivered God's wrath will be satisfied.

**In chapter-sixteen** John's eyes focus on the incense bowl. To the average believer of the day this would have been understood as the bowl containing the prayers of the believ-

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332 Revelation 13: 10

ers<sup>333</sup>. Moses was told to make the gold incense bowl and place it in front of the Holy of Holies.<sup>334</sup> But now at the signal of the seventh trumpet the bowl and its incense is thrown back at the earth, the four angels step back and the seven bowl-judgements begin.

**Chapter-seventeen** describes what the bowls hold. These have been categorized as '*Super-natural*' catastrophes.

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| Bowl-one   | Brings Cancers.                                     |
| Bowl-two   | Turns the sea blood-red.                            |
| Bowl-three | Turns springs and lakes blood-red.                  |
| Bowl-four  | Triggers earth fires.                               |
| Bowl-five  | Blocks out sunlight.                                |
| Bowl-six   | Begins Armageddon. <sup>335</sup>                   |
| Bowl-seven | brings a Earth shattering Earthquake <sup>336</sup> |

And an Angel proclaims **It Is Done!**

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<sup>333</sup> Revelation 8: 4-5

<sup>334</sup> Exodus 30 1-10 : The prayers of the saints are probably the reason four angels are told to stand at the four corners of the earth and hold back punishment in chapter-seven.

<sup>335</sup> Armageddon is crossroads of world where nations meet and do battle. Josiah was Killed here, Saul and Jonathan killed by Philistines here, now a huge army will gather called together by the false prophet and the anti-Christ. Ready to march on Jerusalem but at the word of Jesus the armies will be destroyed the beast and Prophet taken and cast into hell. Satan is not yet thrown into hell but bound and put in a dungeon.

<sup>336</sup> It describes a tectonic plate shift splitting the continent three ways totally destroying Babylon. John is told, Babylon will be drunk with the ambition to kill all believers. Also, believers are told to leave for their own safety. We can therefore conclude Martyrdom will not be total - there will be those that come out.

### **Interlude 3:**

This time John zooms in on Babylon. Babylon is drunk on the blood of martyrs and almost every kingdom on earth will have made an alliance her.<sup>337</sup> She is totally destroyed by the splitting of the continent, and there are eruptions of celebration in heaven.

In heaven, John then watches seven events in succession.

- The Marriage of the Lamb to His Church.
- The ‘King of kings and Lord of Lords’, (also called the Logos<sup>338</sup>), finally riding into Jerusalem on a white horse (not a donkey this time).<sup>339</sup>
- A thousand years of reign by the King.<sup>340</sup>
- The binding, imprisonment and final judgement of Satan.<sup>341</sup>
- The New heaven and New earth.<sup>342</sup>
- The new Jerusalem<sup>343</sup>
- The River of Life that flows from the Throne to water the whole New Earth.<sup>344</sup>

Final words of warning by the angel, before John is returned to earth.

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337 Revelation 17: 1

338 Revelation 19: 13

339 Revelation 19 : 16

340 Revelation 20 : 1 -6

341 Revelation 20 : 7 -10

342 Revelation 21 : 1 - 8

343 Revelation 21 : 9 ff

344 Revelation 22 : 1 ff

Then the angel said to me, 'These words are true and can be trusted. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must happen soon: 'Listen, I am coming soon! Great blessings belong to the one who obeys the words of prophecy in this book.'<sup>345</sup>

John signs off his Letter confirming it is him and warns anyone wanting to tamper with these writings will himself be excluded from Heaven.

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<sup>345</sup> Revelation 22: 6- 7

## ***Postamble to Revelation***

This is the part where we try to make sense of it all. This is the part where speculation runs riot. This is the part where the dogmatic become fools.

It was never my intention to rehearse the arguments of the three-millennialists. It has been well said, '*The millennium is the thousand years of peace Christians love to fight over*'. Revelation fits into Scripture, despite some attempts to take it out.

As we read through Scripture, we must by now have observed that we are moving through the progression of a divine Plan. Those travelling through a plan are the least able to see where they fit into the whole. The two disciples on the Emmaus road had seen the Crucifixion and heard reports of some had seen the resurrection, but were so close to the events they could not make sense of it all. Jesus to come alongside and gave the view from a greater height. He began at the beginning, showing from Moses, through the prophets, what was going on. Only then did their disappointment turn to joy.

So we need to fit Revelation into the whole. We have seen from the Old Testament survey<sup>346</sup> that God's plan for creations has been written on a baton-scroll that has been handed down from Creation to the New heaven and Earth.

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346 Surfing the Scriptures by B E R Limmer

Each baton pass overlaps, it is not a cut off point. The baton of earth's stewardship passed from God to Adam, From Adam to the Patriarchs, then to the Former-Prophets. The change spanned about one-hundred years. Likewise, the Baton change from Former-Prophets to Kings, from Kings to Priest, from Priests to the Pinnacle of History, Prophet Priest and King-Jesus. The baton changes described in Revelation are no different. One baton change, from the end of this present heaven and earth to the new, will take a thousand years, be that literal or not. Another change over may take either three-and-a-half years or seven years.<sup>347</sup>

We must start with a warning.

And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.<sup>348</sup>

Why mention that? John is a little humbler than to say, *'I know something you don't'*, he is saying *'be careful how you interpret this vision because there is a key here that could change the whole interpretation'*. We will have learned nothing if we have not read the prophets of old. Every prophesy came true,<sup>349</sup> but when it did the world was caught out, because it had read the prophesy and interpreted it into something different. Who would have thought, that whole town would have been picked up and cast into the

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<sup>347</sup> We argue the time in line with our interpretation but the time is not dependent on our view.

<sup>348</sup> Revelation 10: 4

<sup>349</sup> This can be explored further in : Surfing the Scriptures by the author.



sea? But Tyre was! Three-hundred years after the prophecy.<sup>350</sup> The Messiah himself was totally misunderstood because one key fact was not generally known then. But now, in hindsight, we know Messiah will come twice, once to fulfil the law and once to judge it. Watch out for the foolish, they predict the order or times of the events in Revelation. Don't repeat the errors of the Pharisees and Sadducees. God will not fulfil his plan in accordance with what we believe, but in accordance with what the scriptures actually says.

If you can, take John's advice, read the whole letter out loud.<sup>351</sup> It is easier to pick up certain patterns.

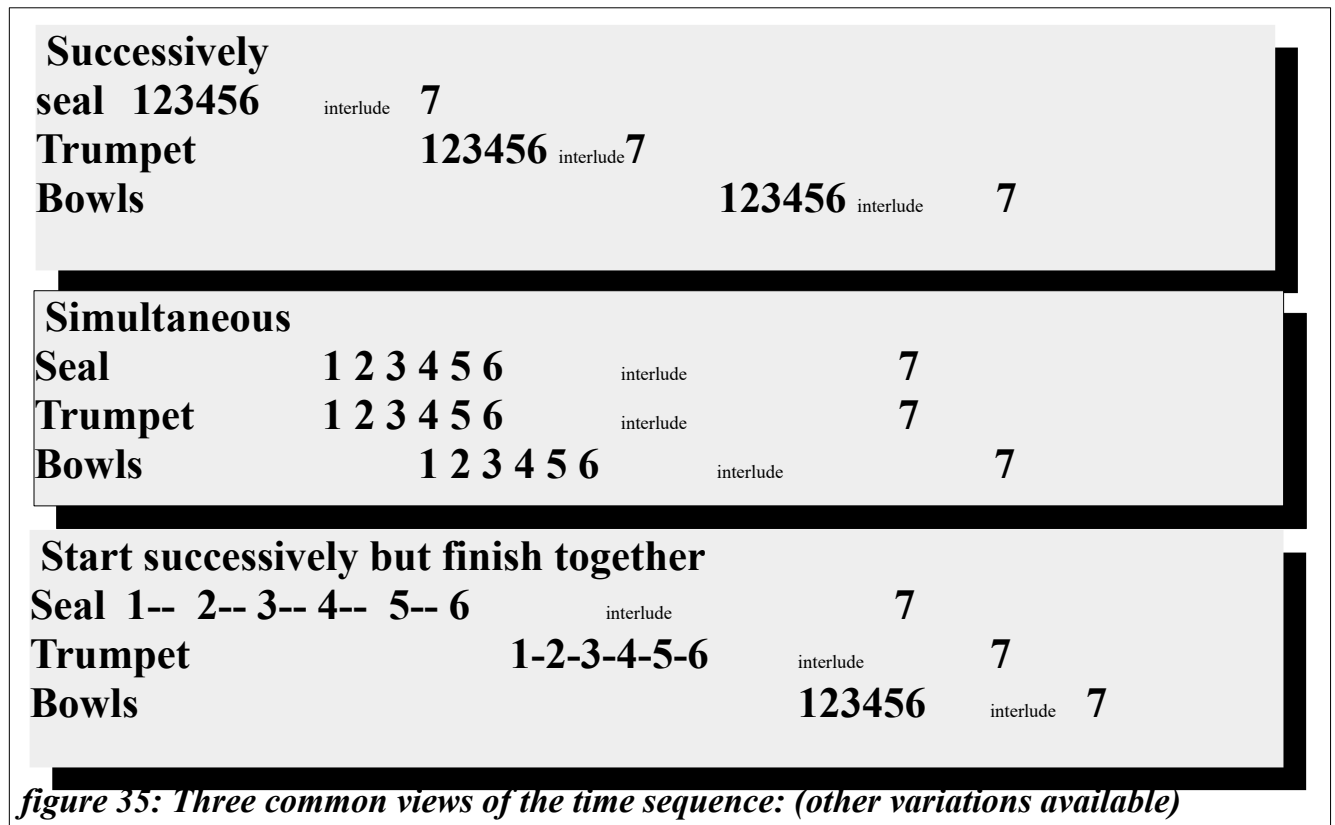
If we begin with the three sets of seven Judgements: Each set is in fact, six judgements and an interlude. The seventh seal, the seventh trumpet and the seventh bowl, each contain an earthquake, followed by John returning focus to Heaven where the angel describes what will happen to God's people through that time. We can notice a further pattern, each set is subdivided into four, two and one. The seventh, being an earthquake.

This has led us to question, what is the sequence of these events. Three basic suggestions exist, the three sets run consecutively, concurrently or progressively as follows:

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<sup>350</sup> Ezekiel 26 : prophesied in C 610 BC - the prophecy fulfilled in detail by Alexander-the-Great in C 333 BC

<sup>351</sup> Revelation 1: 3



If we ask, ‘*Why three sets of Judgement?*’, we again have three answers:

### **Option 1**

the three judgements are 3 versions of the same judgement

### **Option 2**

the seals are Judgement on the Church

the trumpets are judgement on the nations for the martyrdom of saints

The bowls are judgement on the world for its stewardship of the world

### **Option 3**

the seals are judgement on the human world

the trumpets are judgement on the spiritual world

the bowls are the rolling up of the old world turning into the new

*figure 36: Three common views of judgements (other variations available)*

If we ask for how long will each trial last, we are given an ambiguous answer. We are told One-thousand-two-hundred-sixty-days. But this is written in three different ways within the text. One-thousand-two-hundred-sixty-days, is equal to forty-two months, or ‘a-time, two-times, and half-a-time’. This raises questions: Do these signify different patterns within that time period?

The focus narrows to the site of the Temple, which will be trampled on by foreigners for forty-two months. But, during that same period two witnesses will preach for one-thousand-two-hundred-sixty-days.<sup>352</sup> The woman is to be taken care of for one thousand two hundred sixty days, while she is escaping the snake for a time, two times, and half a time.<sup>353</sup> Is all this happening at the same time as the beast

<sup>352</sup> Revelation 11: 2 - 3

<sup>353</sup> Revelation \_12: 6 and Revelation \_12: 14 ; Daniel 7: 25 ;Daniel 12: 7

was allowed to brag and claim to be God, and for forty-two months, or is it another time?<sup>354</sup> Again we have three options:

**Literal**

The three terms refer to the same period of time 1620 days

The may be sequential or consecutive. (3.5 years or 14 years)

**Symbolic**

Daniel's time + 2 time + half cannot be condensed into 3.5 years so Revelations cannot either. but can be divided into such periods of progression.

As can Foreigners trampling (1 time), Prophets prophesying (2 times), saints triumphing (half a time).

**Historic**

The persecution of the church period ( A time).

The dark ages period (2 times).

The end times period (half a time). (time shortened for sake of elect).

*figure 37: Three common views 3.5 times (other variations available)*

The next natural question is: *'What is the thousand-year reign'*. The millennium is the period of time between when Jesus the King begins His rule on earth and when the Earth is rolled up and replaced with the new heaven and New earth. So, *'Will it be a literal time or a symbolic time'*. Again, three answers. There was no problem to the earliest Jewish community. Messiah would come, conquer the world, reign from Jerusalem and judge all nations in turn. When John introduced us to the millennium, theologians got to work to divide the Church with three more clever views.

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354 Revelation 13: 5

**The Non-millennialists** do not believe in a millennium but the world will just get better in the end.

**Postmillennialists**, cut chapter twenty out, and paste it before chapter nineteen. They believe Christ will return *after* the thousand years. This view arose from Greek separatist.<sup>355</sup> Christ's millennial Kingdom is therefore spiritual and symbolic in their eyes, extending from His Resurrection to Armageddon. At the point of the resurrection of the righteous, Messiah will come to defeat the wicked. From then on, the Messiah will reign in the hearts of his people forever. The millennial Kingdom of Christ is therefore *now*, both in heaven and on earth. On earth, Christ's kingdom '*is not of this world*,' but He reigns in the hearts of His people on earth, and in heaven over the hosts of the redeemed and His Holy Angels. This view, not held by all believers, did suit the political classes. Constantine saw it as his justification to conquer when:

A most marvellous sign appeared to [Constantine] from heaven, the account of which it might have been hard to believe had it been related by any other person. . . . He said that about noon, when the day was already beginning to decline, he saw with his own eyes the trophy of a cross of light in the heavens, above the sun, and bearing the inscription, CONQUER BY THIS. At this sight he himself was struck with amazement, and his whole army also, which followed him on this expedition, and witnessed the miracle<sup>356</sup>.

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355 Separating the spiritual from material

356 Eusebius

Not to be outdone, middle age Popes and Kings used the same argument that Christ was king of Heaven and his church must conquer the earth by their Crusades. Some today still hold a slightly modified view of this. During colonial Britain<sup>357</sup>, and in USA today,<sup>358</sup> there is the belief we must win the world for Jesus and keep it for a thousand years before Jesus returns and takes the Church to a new Heaven and Earth<sup>359</sup>. The Church will rule the world before Jesus comes back to take over.

### **Pre-millennialism**

The early Church, through the apostles and Paul taught the world will not be converted before the Second Coming of Christ. Christ may come at any time after the fulfilment of certain prophecies. Jesus will judge both, the living and the dead, and Jew and Gentile. Further, after a period reigning over all nations on earth, He will fold up the earth and his kingdom will be set up in a new heaven and a new earth. In this view Jesus will come again in order to establish His kingdom. He will come with his angels, gathering the Church into the air to be with Him.

Augustine found this disconcerting, Under Greek obsession to separate everything, He proposed the Jews will remain in the Kingdom on earth, while Christians will go to Christ's Heavenly Kingdom. This view raised its head again in

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357 See many of the triumphal Hymns of the period where the Church will win Jesus's rule wherever the sun rises

358 Even today in the USA it is a prevalent view of ACMTC (**A**ggressive **C**hristianity **M**issionary **T**raining **C**orps) and others

359 Many Restoration churches hold this view.

eighteen-thirty<sup>AD</sup>, when a prophecy was given in a Brethren Church that went viral. The prophecy was that Christians would be caught up in the air to meet Jesus *before* the tribulation. No record of this view being held before then has come to light, and Brethren Elders did not countenance it at the time. But, it was included in the Schofield bible which, being a very popular bible of the age, spread it the theory rapidly to be held by some today.

**A- millennialism-does not believe in millennium at all**

Usually held by Liberal theologians

- a) Sceptical -
- b) Myth - like Adam and Eve (allegory)

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**Post-millennialism Jesus will not come before millennium**

- a) Cut Chapter 20 and paste before chapter 19. The church must win the world for Christ before He comes to claim it.
- b) believe last 1000 years of this age will come when church rules the world, the Church will do it before Christ returns. (restorations movements and modern churches believe this)

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**Pre-millennialism Jesus comes to Establish his own Kingdom**

- a) The early church believed and taught this. whole church age between first and second coming
- b) Augustine tried to separate Jews and Christians, Jews stay on earth and Christians go to Heaven His views did not prevail until revived in eighteen-thirty AD.

*You Choose box 1: Views on the Millennium*

The next question is usually: ‘*Will Believers go through the tribulation*’? To which you will be given, (you guessed it), three answers.

**Yes, Before the millennium (Post-Millennialism)**

**No, After the millennium (Pre-Millennialism version 1)**

**Yes/No, During the millennium (Pre-Millennialism version 2)**

*figure 37: Three common views of the rapture (other variations available)*

And finally:

Revelation is Prophecy. Like the Old-Testament prophecies, it will come to pass. It is written, so we can watch and pray, it was written so, when it happens, we will know God has all things in hand. It was not written for us to know detail in advance. It will not unfold in accordance with our belief.

I am the First and the Last, the start and the end. I am Jesus! I am the one who sent my angel to tell you these things. I am David's Great Descendant. Come everyone, come and share. It is free!

But there is a warning for or everyone who hears the prophecies in this book: If you add anything to them, God will make you suffer all the terrible troubles it. If you take anything away from these prophecies, God will not let you partake of the life-giving tree and in the holy city described in this book.

Watch, I have spoken these things, and I am coming soon!<sup>360</sup>

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360 Revelation 22 : 13 ff



*The Right Time, The Right Place.*

## Other books by the Author

A History of Limmer  
(Person, place and thing).

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I-Think-I'd-Better-Think-It-Out-Again!

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Overturning Tables

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Surfing the Scriptures



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