A PANORAMA OF THE BIBLE

This 12 lesson course features easy-to-remember visuals for each of the 12 Bible periods. Learners will thrill as they learn and remember the big picture of the Bible’s content and message.

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INTRODUCING
iTIM

Jesus gave one final command to his disciples, to “make disciples”. The Institute for Training in Ministry (iTIM) will help your church to “equip the saints” and so help build up the body of Christ. (Eph. 4:12).

To get started, log on to traininginministry.com and view the video, then purchase the Operations Manual. These two steps will help assure success in using iTIM.

Learning Approach

TIM incorporates a Head, Heart, and Hands approach to learning. Head represents the content to be learned in every iTIM course. Heart represents the application of this content to the learner’s personal life. And Hands represents using this content to minister to others.

Group Meeting Approach

The weekly group meeting features a discussion of the lesson, with integrative and application type questions asked in the leader’s guide.

Time Involvement

Learners need to commit to one hour of preparation in advance of each group session. Group leaders must commit to an additional hour weekly to prepare to lead the group session.

Curriculum Tracks

iTIM consists of 5 ministry tracks: Discipleship, Church Ministry, Church Leadership, Bible Teaching, and Pastoral Ministry. See the Operations Manual for more details.

Ministry Involvement

The goal of iTIM is that learners become involved in actual ministry, based on the iTIM course they have completed. The result will be that the body of Christ will be built up and your church will grow!
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**Bible Translation:** Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible: English Standard Version, Copyright 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois.
OVERVIEW
OF THE COURSE

Mountain climbers love their sport. For them, nothing can compare with the exhilaration and sense of accomplishment derived from reaching a lofty summit.

Becoming well acquainted with the Bible is similar to mountain climbing. It takes determination. As you study this course, like climbing a mountain, you will attain higher and higher goals until you are able to view the grand panorama of God’s Word.

Learning twelve simple visual symbols will enable you to remember the twelve periods of Bible history. Notice that the first symbol represents God’s creation. The rectangle in the next eight symbols represents Israel, God’s channel for the Messiah. The Cross, in the last two symbols represents Christ’s Gospel age. Take a few minutes now to study the symbols.

Twelve Periods of Bible History

1. BEGINNINGS. Creation of the heavens (cloud) and earth (circle).

2. PATRIARCHS. The four intertwined circles represent four patriarchal persons.

3. EXODUS. The nation Israel is formed. (The four circles become a rectangle that hereafter represents Israel.) Arrows represent Israel’s departure from Egypt.

4. SETTLEMENT. The nation enters, conquers, and divides the Promised Land. (Imagine the two rectangles of #3 and #4 as rockets making exit and entry.)
5. JUDGES. Israel is suppressed (dark cloud) by other nations, and boundaries disappear (broken line).

6. UNITED KINGDOM. The kingdom is united under a king (crown).

7. DIVIDED KINGDOM. The kingdom is divided between the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah (represented by the torn rectangle and broken crown).

8. CAPTIVITY. Assyria scatters Israel, and Babylonia carries Judah into exile.

9. RESTORATION. Persia now rules the world, and allows Judah to return to restore Jerusalem.

10. SILENT YEARS. The inter-testamental years are represented by brackets (only the ends of a rectangle).

11. CHRIST. Jesus Christ comes as the world’s Messiah, represented by the Cross.

12. CHURCH. Christ’s Church is a new people comprised of Jews and Gentiles.

Chapter 1
PERIOD ONE:
BEGINNINGS

This is the symbol that identifies the first of twelve great periods in Bible history. We have given the name of this period BEGINNINGS. The book of Genesis, the first book in the Bible, emphasizes “birth”, “generation”, or “beginnings”. This phrase is repeated numerous times in the book. Therefore the book of Genesis is the book of Beginnings.

The key words in each lesson are in BOLD type, such as GENESIS 1—11 below. You will be asked to remember these BOLD printed words at the end of each lesson.

Some of the important things that began in GENESIS 1—11 are creation (1:1, 8, 10, 14, 24); the human race (1:26-27); the Sabbath (2:2-3); marriage (2:18, 21-25); sin (3:1-7); sacrifice (3:21, 44, 8:20); family life (4:1-2); death (2:17, 48); godless civilization (4:16-17; 11:4); nations (10:5, 32) languages (11:6-9); and redemptive revelation (3:15).

Creation

God’s CREATION of the universe is the first of the key events of the first period. Notice the order of God’s creation on the creation days. How does this order compare with modern science, which teaches that life began with very simple life forms and gradually became more complex, until finally man appeared on earth?

__________________________________________________________

True science and the Bible must ultimately agree. Why?

__________________________________________________________

What was it about the creation of man that made him essentially different from the rest of creation (Genesis 1:26-27)?

__________________________________________________________
This symbol identifies the second period of Bible history. We call this the period of the PATRIARCHS.

“Patriarch” was the title given a paternal leader of a family or tribe. The term applies generally to persons whose names appear in the genealogies prior to Moses. More particularly however, it refers to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and his brothers (the heads of the tribes of Israel).

GENESIS 12-50 records the history of four patriarchs. Whereas Genesis 1-11 focuses on four events, the remainder of Genesis focuses on four persons: Abraham, in Genesis 12-23, Isaac in Genesis 24-27, Jacob in Genesis 28-36, and Joseph in Gen. 37-50.

Abraham

Around 2000 B.C. God called ABRAHAM, first named Abram, to leave his homeland in Ur and travel 1,000 miles to a new and strange country. Skim Genesis Chapter 12, where God makes some very special promises to the childless Abraham. What did God promise him in regard to:

1. A nation? (Genesis 12:2)

2. Relationships with other nations? (Genesis 12:3)

3. A land? (Genesis 12:7 and 13:15.)

Abraham began this journey with his father Terah and brother

1 The name “Patriarch” means Father-ruler.
Nahor and their families, and traveled as far as Haran (Genesis 11:29-32).

After his father died, Abraham again heard God’s call to go to Canaan (Acts 7:2-4). Abraham obeyed. Traveling slowly with their sheep and other animals, the trip may have taken as long as several years.

There was fairly constant bickering between the herdsmen of Lot and those of Abraham. This finally resulted in the two groups going their separate ways. Lot then moved his home near the city of Sodom and became identified with these vile people (chapter 13). Later Abraham was forced to rescue him in a pitched battle with neighboring kings (chapter 14). Even after being delivered from the destruction of Sodom, Lot’s daughters promoted an incestuous relationship with their father (chapter 19:30-38).

Abraham did not always walk uprightly before the Lord either. He went into Egypt, where he deceived Pharoah (Genesis 12:10-20); he took Hagar as his wife, instead of waiting for God’s promise (Genesis 16:1-4); he doubted God (Genesis 17:17); and he went a second time into Egypt where he again compromised truth (Genesis Chapter 20).

God could have left these things out. Why didn’t he?

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

Dominant in the book of Genesis, however, are the many examples of Abraham’s godly character and faith.

- He believed God when he left Haran to go to Canaan (12:1-9).
- He evidenced godly character in separating from Lot (13:5-13).
- He tithed all his possessions to Melchizedek (14:17-24).
- He was a man of prayer (13:3-4; 18:22-33).
- He trusted God even in the offering of his son Isaac (Ch. 22).

In what ways can you relate to Abraham’s godly character?

_________________________________________________________________________
Chapter 3

PERIOD THREE: EXODUS

This is the symbol that identifies the third period in Bible history. We have given it the name EXODUS.

God’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt illustrates the struggles every person has who seeks deliverance from the entrapping influences of the world. It reveals God’s power to deliver us from sin.

During Israel’s stay in Egypt, the twelve tribes developed into a distinct nation. Their God-led culture was established. They developed skills that they would later need in their long years of travel and wandering. God was preparing them for the Promised Land.

The conditions Israel experienced in Egypt had greatly changed from those of Joseph’s day. What was the relationship of Israel to the new king of Egypt? (Exodus 1:8-11)

The Egyptians were fearful of the increased power of the Israelites and therefore they enslaved them. God prepared Israel during the tests of Egyptian bondage and then brought her out of Egypt with a mighty deliverance.

Exodus and Numbers

The history of the Israelites from the time of their oppression in Egypt until they occupied Canaan is given in the Books of EXODUS and NUMBERS. Leviticus and Deuteronomy also cover this same period, but from another point of view. Leviticus records ceremonies prescribed by God at the end of the period covered by Exodus. Deuteronomy records spiritual lessons as Moses restates

2 Probably Ramses 2.
the Law.

You will need a Bible map in order to complete the following exercise. If your Bible does not contain a set of maps, look for them in a Bible atlas, a Bible dictionary, or on-line.

Write in the following five names in the appropriate spaces in the map above: Ezion-geber; Kadesh-barnea; Moab; Mt. Sinai; Rameses.

Next, draw a line showing the route the Israelites took in their journey from Rameses to Moab.

The major events and movements of Israel during this third period are as follows

**EVENTS:** | **PLACE:** | **SCRIPTURE:**
--- | --- | ---
Moses’ call, Plagues, Passover | At #1 | Exodus 1-13
Red Sea crossing and journey | From #1 to 2 | Exodus 14-18
Law, tabernacle, | At #2 | Exodus 19-40
Chapter 4

PERIOD FOUR:
SETTLEMENT

This is the symbol for period four, and the name of the period is SETTLEMENT. Having surveyed the first three periods of Bible history, are you now ready for a military adventure? That’s right, a military adventure, because the fourth period finds us in the company of Joshua and the men of Israel as they invade Canaan and blitz its territories. Their objective?—to claim and settle Canaan as their God-given land. Canaan was made up of a number of independent city-states that frequently were at war with one another. Their religious rites included many degrading practices—such as child sacrifice, snake worship and prostitution. Thus Israel’s conquest was also God’s judgment against Canaan’s deep moral corruption.

Joshua: The Book

Period four is covered in the Book of JOSHUA. It covers a period of thirty years. God’s faithfulness to fulfill his promise is seen in his provision of the land of Canaan for the people of Israel. Israel now would have its own land and would be a true nation for the first time.

Joshua: The Man

Following Moses’ death, Joshua was used of God to bring Israel into Canaan. Joshua’s name means “Jehovah is salvation.” Its New Testament equivalent is Jesus. Joshua was a man of great spiritual power, including courage, faith, prayer, dependence on God, enthusiasm, loyalty, and leadership. Just as Moses had led Israel out of bondage, Joshua now led her into the promised land. Turn now to Joshua Chapter 1 in your Bible.

What was Joshua’s relationship to Moses, verse 1?
What was God’s promise to Joshua, in verses 3 and 4?

In verse 5?

What was Joshua’s responsibility, verse 6?

In verse 7?

Verse 8 is a wonderful verse to guide your life. Look at it again. “This book of the Law shall not depart from your __________, but you shall __________ on it day and night, so that you may be careful to ____ according to all hat is written in it. For then you will make your way __________, and ____________

God calls all of us to some ministry or leadership in his work. This is a great honor, as well as responsibility. How can we become effectively involved in God’s work? One way is by working with and learning from one of God’s servants. This was Joshua’s approach, and it worked effectively. Paul sets forth this principle when he says, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Jordan Crossing

Two spies were first sent to Jericho. They were protected there by the harlot Rahab, who, in Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25 is mentioned favorably as an example of a woman who had faith in God. What important information did Rahab give the spies, Joshua 2:8-11?

The JORDAN CROSSING was the same kind of miracle that God performed for Israel at the beginning of her exodus from Egypt. Now forty years later, and for a new generation, God again parted the waters, allowing Israel to cross the Jordan on dry ground. The ark, which was carried by the Levites, led the way. While the priests stood with the ark in the middle of the river, the people
PERIOD FIVE:
JUDGES

This is the symbol for the fifth period in Bible history, named JUDGES. The period of the Judges was the “Dark Ages” of Israel’s history. In seven apostasies Israel forsook Jehovah and turned to idolatry, and suffered the terrible consequences of her sin.

Following Joshua’s death, the tribes continued to occupy additional Canaanite territories. What did Israel fail to do with the Canaanites (Judges 1:19, 21, 27-33)?

During the period of the Judges, Israel had the opportunity to show its gratitude to God and its willingness to meet its covenant obligations. God had placed Israel in the land and had promised to be with her. This was a period of probation. But Israel failed again and again. What did God warn Israel would happen because of her incomplete obedience, Judges 2:1-3?

Because Israel disobeyed God, the nation was repeatedly plundered and dominated by the very nations they were supposed to conquer. It was then that God “raised up judges who delivered them” (Judges 2:16). The Hebrew word for judge means one who dispenses justice, punishing the evildoer and vindicating the righteous. The judges were not the same as our modern conception of “judge.” Normally they did not hold court or make legal decisions. These deliverers and temporary rulers did not inherit their authority; they were not kings. Moreover, their rule was territorial, not nationwide. Their periods of office, therefore, may have overlapped.
Judges

The history of the judges is covered in the Book of Judges. Twelve judges are named: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, and Samson. Underline the names of the judges beginning with the letters D, G, and S, in that order. These are the three judges that we especially want you to remember. Note that these three letters fit into the name judges—which should further help you to remember it!

Two later judges, Eli and Samuel, are recorded in 1 Samuel. Samuel is the link between the judges and the kings of Israel.

The Book of Judges underlines the fact that God delights in using weak things: left-handed assassin Ehud; Deborah, a woman; Gideon, an unknown from the smallest tribe; Shamgar and his ox goad; Gideon’s small pitcher-armed band; and the jawbone used by Samson.

In our day too, God continues to use the weak things of this world to accomplish his purposes. For your encouragement, meditate on 1 Corinthians 1:26-31. What is God’s overriding purpose in using weak things, v. 29? (Compare 2 Corinthians 4:7.)

Seven Apostasies

During the 400-year period of the judges, Israel experienced seven apostasies, each resulting in servitude to an enemy people. Israel’s pattern is seen in the first cycle, as follows:

1. Into what evil did Israel fall? (Judges 2:11-13)

2. What judgment did God bring upon Israel? (Judges 2:14-15)

3. What moved God to look on Israel in mercy? (Judges 2:18)

4. What did God do on Israel’s behalf? (Judges 2:16)

This fourfold cycle may be characterized by four words: sin, suffering, supplication, and salvation.
Chapter 6

PERIOD SIX

UNITED KINGDOM

The symbol for period six shows a crown over a rectangle and represents the UNITED KINGDOM. As you learned, period five was a bleak time in Israel’s history. By contrast, period six was one of the nation’s brightest times. However there were lapses into sin even in this period, which covered the reigns of three Kings, each of which lasted forty years.

1 and 2 Samuel and 1 Kings 1-11

The establishment and glory of the Hebrew kingdom is presented in the Books of 1 AND 2 SAMUEL and 1 KINGS 1—11. 1 and 2 Chronicles covers this same ground from a later viewpoint in Jewish history.

Samuel: Organization

SAMUEL was the last of the judges and the first of the writing prophets. He was the person God used for the ORGANIZATION of the kingdom. By far the greatest of all the judges, he was used of God to anoint the first two kings of Israel.

When Samuel began his ministry, Israel was hard pressed to maintain any semblance of freedom as a nation. The Philistines had struck so often that the people lived in constant fear. If ever a nation needed a man of godliness and spiritual stature, Israel needed one when Samuel came upon the scene.

The declining office of judge, combined with corrupt and selfish priestly practices, was worse than ever. Eli, the current priest, was a very indulgent and weak spiritual leader. He failed even to control his own sons, who made lust and selfish gratification their objectives in the temple service. As a result, the populace abhorred the annual festivals. Spiritual interest waned and the people turned
to other pursuits.

Samuel came like a refreshing rain on parched land. Born of godly parents, he was first presented to the Lord, and then allowed to stay at the tabernacle to assist in the divine services (1 Samuel 1:21-28). While he was yet a child, God called Samuel to serve him (chapter 3). Following Eli’s death, Samuel became priest at Shiloh. He also was established in Israel as a prophet and a judge (3:20-21; 7:15-17).

Given in answer to the prayers of his devout mother Hannah, (1 Samuel Ch. 1) Samuel also was a man of the Word and of prayer. His ministry to Israel may be summarized in 1 Samuel 12:23 “Far be it from me that I should sin against Jehovah in ceasing to pray for you; but I will instruct you in the good and right way”.

**Saul: Evil Heart**

The first king of Israel was **SAUL** (1 Samuel Chs. 9—31). Samuel was greatly distressed when the nation demanded a king to rule over them. What were two reasons Israel gave for wanting a king? (1 Samuel 8:4-5, 20)

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

What was wrong with Israel’s motive for wanting a king? (1 Samuel 8:6-7)

________________________________________________________________________

What warning did Samuel give Israel about their choice of a king? (1 Samuel 8:9-18)

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

What was it about Saul that may have attracted Israel to him? (1 Samuel 9:1-2)

________________________________________________________________________

Saul began well and, for a while, was obedient to the will of God. But he later became self-willed, abusive and prideful.

Israel was controlled by the Philistines when Saul began his reign. It was Saul’s noble son Jonathan who destroyed the Philistine
Chapter 7

PERIOD SEVEN:
DIVIDED KINGDOM

This is the symbol for period seven. The United Kingdom now becomes the DIVIDED KINGDOM. In this period the kingdom was torn into two parts.

Rehoboam (931 B.C.), Solomon’s son, continued his father’s high taxation. The ten northern tribes under the leadership of Jeroboam revolted and set up an independent kingdom, Israel, which he ruled from Samaria.

The two remaining tribes became the kingdom of Judah (named after its prominent tribe) and remained loyal to the Davidic throne. Each nation had its own succession of kings.

1 Kings 12—2 Kings

The story of the Divided Kingdom is told in 1 KINGS 12—2 KINGS. These Chs. record the decline and fall of both Israel and Judah. They also provide the historical setting for the Old Testament books of prophecy.

Kings of Israel: All Bad

The KINGS OF ISRAEL were Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri, Ahab, Ahaziah, Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz, Joash, Jeroboam II, Zachariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hoshea.

The nineteen kings of Israel were ALL BAD. Not a single one paid heed to the true worship of God. The pagan calf worship instituted by Jeroboam remained a constant snare to the northern tribes.

Ahab and Elijah

The most infamous of Israel’s kings was AHAB. Turn to 1 Kings
16:29-33 to read a description of Ahab. In what areas did Ahab’s wickedness abound?

Ahab married Jezebel, daughter of Tyre’s priest-king, in order to ratify an alliance between Tyre and Israel. Provision was made for her to continue worshiping her native god Baal in Samaria (1 Kings 16:32). Jezebel clamored for the propagation of the Baal cult and the extermination of those who worshiped Jehovah (1 Kings 18:4, 13). This activity brought her into direct conflict with the prophet Elijah.

Elijah was a striking character with long hair who wore a sheepskin cloak. He thundered out warnings to idolatrous Israel during Ahab’s reign. Many of the episodes of his life involved a clash between the worship of Jehovah and Baal. Perhaps the most awesome incident was the contest at Mt. Carmel, where God spectacularly demonstrated his superiority over Baal, 1 Kings 18:17-40.

Elijah had predicted that God would judge both Ahab and Jezebel. In a war with Syria, Ahab was mortally wounded by a random arrow (1 Kings 22). Soon afterward Jezebel came to her grisly end, (2 Kings 9:30-37).

Elijah was succeeded by Elisha, whose ministry spanned more than fifty years (2 Kings Chs. 2—9). Most of his miracles were deeds of kindness and mercy.

**Kings of Judah: Eight Good**

The **KINGS OF JUDAH** were Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, Ahaziah, Athaliah, Joash, Amaziah, Azariah, Jothan, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon, Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah (1 Kings 15:1-24; 2 Kings Chs 12—23; 2 Chronicles Chs 10—36). There were **EIGHT GOOD** kings among Judah’s twenty. They were Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Amaziah, Azariah (Uzziah), Jotham, Hezekiah, and Josiah.
PERIOD EIGHT: CAPTIVITY

This is the symbol for period eight. It indicates that first the Northern Kingdom, and then the Southern Kingdom, were carried away into CAPTIVITY.

Israel had disastrously compromised truth and faith in idolatrous worship. This led to a virtual abandonment of her worship of the Lord. First Israel, and later Judah, were carried away by foreign powers. Israel was never heard of again, and Judah spent 70 punitive years in captivity. God used these years however, as Judah learned once and for all not to bow before pagan idols.

In 2 Kings we read of the captivities—of Israel in Chapter 17, and of Judah in Chs. 24—25. Also, 2 Chronicles 36:5-21 and Jeremiah Chs. 39 and 52 deal with the captivities.

The prophets who ministered to Judah during the captivity were Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. Obadiah wrote against the nation of Edom, who were descendants of Jacob’s brother Esau.

Israel: Assyria, Scattered

For 130 years the northern kingdom of ISRAEL lived under the threat of Assyrian attack. Serious internal instability gripped the nation during those years. The majority of their last kings were killed by assassination. Hosea 7:7 refers to this relentless pattern of intrigue. Israel’s resources were seriously depleted, either by decades of warring, or by paying tribute to avoid battle. The nation scarcely survived the attacks of the mighty king Tiglath-pilesar, who carved off huge portions from her boundaries.

Finally, during Hoshea’s rule, Israel was destroyed by ASSYRIA, when Shalmaneser V swept through their land. Following the capture of Israel’s other cities, Shalmaneser’s armies surrounded
the capital city of Samaria. The fortress held out for two years. Then a new king, Sargon II, finished the task in 722 B.C. God had used a pagan nation, Assyria, to bring judgment on idolatrous Israel.

The Assyrian kings SCATTERED the ten tribes to eastern parts of their empire. Some 27,000 people of the upper classes were deported. The policy of deportation was a means of discouraging revolt. Natural leaders were less likely to start a rebellion if they were transplanted to distant parts and settled among aliens. Few people, if any, returned from the Assyrian captivity. Thus Israel was gradually absorbed by this pagan culture, becoming the “lost tribes” of Israel.

The capital of Samaria was made desolate, just as predicted in Amos 5:2-3. The area was then repopulated by settlers that the Assyrians brought from other parts of the empire (2 Kings 17:24). These foreigners intermarried with the Israelites who had been left behind. In time the whole of Palestine, except the kingdom of Judea, became populated by these peoples of mixed heritage.

These same foreign peoples introduced their own pagan religions into the land. Later, however, they found it expedient to worship Jehovah as well.

Why was this so? (2 Kings 17:25-28)

This mixed population, with its mixed religion (2 Kings 17:29-33) became the Samaritan race of the New Testament period.

Judah: Babylonia, Exiled

The southern kingdom of JUDAH fell about 150 years after Israel’s fall. Although Hezekiah had resisted collaboration with Assyria, his son Manasseh went the opposite way. His rule resulted in a return to the pagan practices of idolatry and astrology.

From 2 Kings 21:1-9, 16, summarize Manasseh’s reign.

This idolatrous trend, set by Manasseh, now moved relentlessly toward national disaster. Even Josiah’s revival could not
Chapter 9

PERIOD NINE & TEN:
RESTORATION & SILENT YEARS

Following the 70 years captivity in Babylon, God reestablished a remnant of his people back in the city of Jerusalem. Period nine, the RESTORATION, is symbolized by the rectangle and the arrow pointing backward.

Ezra and Nehemiah

The history of these events in Jerusalem is presented in EZRA and NEHEMIAH. The book of Esther sheds further light on God’s preservation of his people in the dispersion.

The last three Minor Prophets, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi ministered to the Jews during the restoration.

Return from Persia

During the 70-year exile, many Jews entered into commercial or agricultural pursuits in Babylon. There they prospered—and forgot their religion. But a remnant remained true to their faith and longed to see the time when they might be permitted to return to the land God had given their forefathers.

Following Nebuchadnezzar’s death in 562, civil wars erupted, resulting in the disintegration of the Babylonian empire. In 539 B.C. the empire fell to the united armies of the Medes and the Persians. Cyrus became the ruler of this great empire.

The new emperor won the gratitude of the exiles by reversing the deportation policy practiced by the Assyrian and Babylonian conquerors. In 538 B.C. he issued a decree that freed the Jews and permitted them to RETURN FROM PERSIA to Palestine. He even helped them rebuild their cities and places of worship.

What did God also call Cyrus to do, Ezra 1:1-2?
Amazingly, Isaiah had named Cyrus 150 years before his reign, as the “shepherd” whom God would use to liberate his people from their captivity (Isaiah 44:28—45:4).

Most Jews had grown comfortable in Babylon and did not choose to leave. Only a relatively few enthusiasts and idealists accepted the king’s permission to return to Jerusalem that first year. But many small groups did return in the following years, even though they experienced hardship, discouragement, and alternating failures and triumphs.

**Zerubbabel: Temple**

Close to 50,000 people were in the first group to return to Jerusalem (Ezra 2:64-65). The active leaders of the people were ZERUBBABEL, a prince of the house of David; and Jeshua, the high priest.

Soon after they arrived in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel and Jeshua led the people in laying the foundation of the TEMPLE. The racially mixed people from Samaria expressed interest in the building program, but the zealous Jews denied them participation. The Samaritans then responded with hostility, slandering the Jews to the Persian king, successfully stopping the temple reconstruction for about 15 years.

**The Prophets After Exile**

A year after their return to their promised land, God spoke through Haggai. What was his message to the people? (Haggai 1:2-9)

What application do you see here?

As a result of his urgent preaching, the work of rebuilding was resumed. The book of Haggai is filled with encouragement to build. As a practical man of action, he worked alongside those who built.

When the work was again challenged by the Samaritans, Darius was encouraged to search for Cyrus’ decree that first authorized the rebuilding. Upon its discovery, Darius commanded that the
Chapter 10

PERIOD ELEVEN:
CHRIST

The cross is the symbol for the eleventh period, which is given the title, CHRIST. The times were ripe politically, culturally, socially, morally, and religiously for the coming of Christ. Paul wrote about Christ’s birth, “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son” (Galatians 4:4). The world desperately needed the Babe of Bethlehem, who was God in human flesh.

The Four Gospels

The story of the life of Christ is presented in the FOUR GOSPELS Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Though all four gospels deal with Christ’s earthly life and ministry—his teachings, miracles, and his death and resurrection—each present a different picture of our Lord.

MATTHEW presents Christ as the King and writes primarily to the Jews.

MARK writes to the Romans and presents Christ as the obedient servant.

LUKE depicts Christ as the perfect Son of Man and writes primarily to the Greeks.

JOHN portrays Jesus as the Son of God. He presents to all men, especially to believers, Christ as the personal Savior.

Matthew: King

MATTHEW wrote primarily to show that Jesus was the KING whom the prophets foretold. Matthew also serves as a bridge between the two Testaments. Since his Gospel was written to the Jews, it is filled with quotations from the Old Testament (Matthew
contains 52 citations and 72 additional allusions).

Matthew introduces the King by announcing his royal genealogy, birth, the visit of the Magi, and Jesus’ forerunner, John the Baptist. Jesus’ baptism and temptation follow in Matthew Chapter 4. The King’s subjects are described, and the laws of the kingdom are given, in Chs. 5—7. The King’s power is displayed through his miracles in Chs. 8—9, and his ambassadors are commissioned and granted power to exercise his authority in Chapter 10. The King’s program is revealed in his responses to various groups in Chs. 11—12 and the growth of his Kingdom is predicted through parables, Chapter 13.

Growing opposition creates a crisis in his kingdom, and he predicts his death and the glory to follow, in Matthew Chs. 14—17. Personnel problems among his followers become evident through his discourses on greatness and forgiveness, Chapter 18. Further conflict in his kingdom is evidenced in questions, debates, and in the final encounters with his enemies, Chs. 19—25.

The book climaxes with the story of the death and resurrection of the King, in Chs. 26—28 and the book closes with the King’s final order. What was that command (Matthew 28:18-20)?

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Mark: Servant

Why did Jesus come to earth, according to Mark 10:45?

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That MARK wrote for Roman readers is generally agreed. He tells what Jesus did as the humble but perfect SERVANT of God.

It’s not surprising therefore that Mark does not include the circumstances of Jesus’ birth or genealogy, such as Matthew included. After all, one is more interested in a servant’s performance than in his pedigree! Only in Mark are we told that Jesus was a carpenter.

Mark moves rapidly through the Servant’s life, giving us an orderly account of Jesus’ actions. The Greek word for immediately
You're coming down the home stretch now. You have almost completed your overview of the entire Bible. Period 12 will be divided between two lessons: Part 1—The Acts, and Part 2—The Epistles. The symbol for this period is a church building, and the name of the period is CHURCH.

What did Jesus promise his disciples in connection with the Church that he would build (Matthew 16:18)?

What would its purpose be (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8)?

The Church is central in God’s plan for this age. It is his channel for discipling the world for Christ.

We should note that the word for “church” (ekklesia) in the New Testament never means a building. What does it mean (Acts 8:1; 14:27; 18:22)?

Check out the following uses of the word “church”. Do they refer to a worldwide body or to a local entity of believers? (1 Corinthians 1:2; Col. 4:15; 1 Thessalonians 1:1)

Now do the same with Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 12:27-28;
and Ephesians 5:25. Do they refer to a worldwide body or to a local entity of believers?

These passages teach that the Church is the worldwide body of all believers, and that it functions in the New Testament as local churches, or groups of believers. List the several areas of ministry in which the early church was involved. (Acts 2:42)

acts

The book of ACTS was written by Luke, Paul’s co-laborer, during Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome. Acts provides the historical setting that connects the four Gospels with the other apostolic writings found in the New Testament.

In Acts we see the beginnings of the fulfillment of Christ’s plan for the world. Acts shows how members of the Church became Christ’s witnesses to the world. (The word “witness” is used over 30 times in Acts.) A healthy church is a witnessing church, and every Christian is called to be a witness. Acts shows what a New Testament church should provide, what Christian fellowship should be like, and how missionary work should be carried out. The events of great importance in the book of Acts are:

- The baptism of the Spirit at Pentecost, Chapter 2. Immediately following this coming of the Spirit and the disciples speaking in other languages, what was the result of Peter’s preaching to the assembled crowd? See Acts 2:41

- The persecution of the early church (8:1). This persecution may have been precipitated by Stephen’s preaching and subsequent martyrdom. See Ch. 7.
- The conversion of Saul of Tarsus in Chapter 9. What did the Lord tell Ananias in regard to Saul (9:15)?

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Lesson 11 covered the historical side of the Church period as contained in the book of Acts. This final lesson covers the teaching of the Church, as presented in the New Testament Epistles and Revelation.

Epistles: Application

The EPISTLES (letters) are divided into: 1) the Pauline Epistles, written by Paul, and 2) the General Epistles, written by other apostles. These authoritative letters were written to various church communities and individuals during the early years of the Church. They addressed various needs in the churches, giving Christian truth and the APPLICATION of that truth to life.

A major teaching from each of the epistles is covered in this lesson. Don’t try and complete all of these studies however. Instead, focus your study time on one, or perhaps two of them. Be prepared to share the results of your study during the next group meeting.

The Pauline Epistles.

ROMANS is a comprehensive presentation of God’s plan of redemption. In it, Paul spoke decisively about the sinfulness of all men in Chs. 1—3. Then showed that all men can be justified by faith in Chapter 4. The results of justification, and how to live in Christ are then covered in Chs. 5—8. Paul dealt with the matter of Jewish unbelief in Chs. 9—11. He concludes with many practical applications of truth for daily living in Chs. 12—16.

Reflect on these major themes from Romans as they relate to your
own service for Christ. Why is it so important to first lay the foundation of man’s sinfulness?

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Why is the truth that men are justified by faith essential?

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Why is the message of Romans Chs. 5—8 of particular importance to you?

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In what way is Romans 12—16 an example for our teaching?

________________________________________________________________________

In 1 Corinthians Paul responded to errors in personal conduct and doctrine. Make a brief study of one of these issues: church divisions, 1:10-4:21; sexual immorality, 5:1-13; lawsuits, 6:1-8; marriage, 7:1-40; the Lord’s supper, 11:17-34; spiritual gifts, Ch. 12—14; the Resurrection, Ch. 15. Be prepared to report your findings during your next group session.

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In 2 Corinthians Paul defended his apostleship from false apostles who were seeking to undermine his authority. He also wanted the church to participate in an offering for the needy Christians in Jerusalem. What principles about giving can you glean from 2 Corinthians 8 and 9?

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Galatians stresses that salvation is solely by grace through faith,
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