



DISCOVERY

UNIT
3

**TEACHER'S
GUIDE**

**Matthew, Hebrews, Ephesians, Philippians,
Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians**

Birth of the King

Matthew 1:1 — 4:11

Proclamation and Proof of Kingship

Matthew 4:12 — 11:1

Instructions of the King

Matthew 11:2 — 20:19

Rejection and Prophecies of the King

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Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 1:1 — 5:28

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

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Birth of the King

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Matthew 1:1 through 4:11

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21)

BACKGROUND

Some twenty or thirty years after Jesus ascended to Heaven, one of His chosen disciples, Matthew, was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write a book that would introduce the New Testament. The special emphasis of Matthew was that Jesus was indeed the Messiah (“anointed one”) and King who had been foretold by the Old Testament prophets centuries before. Matthew quoted often from the Old Testament. In this Gospel, there are about sixty references to the Jewish prophecies and about forty quotations from the Old Testament, a clear indication that Matthew had a Jewish audience in mind. Christ’s mission to the Jews was especially emphasized.

Matthew (also called Levi) never spoke of himself, so we have little personal information about him. We know that he was once a despised publican [tax collector] who made a great feast for Christ and then followed Him. From that moment on, his life was changed. We know that Matthew was a companion of Jesus, so he would have seen firsthand the wonderful miracles and heard with his own ears the teachings of the Son of God. He is named as being one of the disciples in the upper room before Pentecost.

Being accustomed to keeping systematic records, Matthew gave a beautifully organized account of the Lord's life and ministry. The book opens with a careful record of the birth of Jesus Christ and the events that accompanied it. In chapter 1 of Matthew, we find the genealogy of Christ (Joseph's line; Luke's genealogy gives Mary's line). Chapter 2 details three key points about Jesus as King: the homage paid to the King (the visit of the Wise Men), the hostility against the King (Herod's anger and attempt to destroy Him), and the humility of the King (the circumstances of His humble birth).

Some thirty years pass between the events of chapter 2, and the beginning of chapter 3 of Matthew. Chapters 3 and 4 detail John the Baptist's proclamation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and the temptation of Christ in the wilderness. These both led to the beginning of His public ministry.

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SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

NOTES

1. What was Joseph's concern in Matthew 1:18-19? What is revealed about Joseph's character in how he handled the situation?

Mary was found with child before she and Joseph were married. The Child was conceived of the Holy Ghost, but Joseph did not know that at first. God's truth had not yet been revealed to Joseph.

Discuss what this portion of text reveals about Joseph's character. While he did not understand what was happening, he did not want to make Mary a public example or expose her. He was searching for a way to begin the divorcement process privately, for Mary's sake—a process that normally would be expected and was allowed by law in this circumstance. One can imagine the weight of the situation upon him, and no doubt he experienced a great range of emotions. Yet, from Scripture, we can conclude he was very careful and considerate as to how he would handle this situation, all the while caring for Mary's reputation.

2. According to verses 20-25, how did Joseph respond to the message from the angel in his dream? What did his action reveal about his character?

Joseph was immediate in his obedience. This was no small thing, as this was the first and last time a virgin woman would be selected by God to bear His only Son, and conceive of the Holy Ghost. There could have been many questions, fears, and uncertainties. Joseph could have felt he needed answers or proof. Ask your class to consider what could have gone through his mind. Possibly there were questions like: Why was Mary chosen? Why didn't anyone ask me first, since I am to be her husband? Why is God's Son coming now? Can I really be sure this is true? How will one Man save all people from their sins?

Joseph could have offered any number of responses, but he not only willingly, but also immediately obeyed. Take some time to reflect on the certainty God puts in our hearts when He calls us to a task. He calls in such a way that many times He answers our questions before we can ask them. After his dream, instead of having fear and doubts, Joseph must have felt honored at being chosen to be the earthly father of God's Son. Verse 25 reveals Joseph's respect for the holy process that was taking place. How wonderful it is to be in a position to willingly answer God's call!

3. The Wise Men who went in search of the Holy Child may have been from the Parthian Empire, located in present day northern Iran. These religious leaders, called Magi, had great power over their realm, even to choosing their own king. Why would these men of influence travel over 2000 miles from their homeland to bring gifts and to worship a Child?

They had seen His star in the east. The Bible does not say how they knew it was Jesus' star. They would

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can lose sight of the sweet daily fellowship with Him, and miss many blessings along the way. The best part of our journey towards Heaven is the sweet day-by-day fellowship with our Savior. By focusing daily on Him and surrendering our hearts, we will find that we are following His perfect plan for our lives, and wonderful doors will open up for us along the way.

6. What was John the Baptist's main purpose in life? What can we learn from this regarding our purpose? See Matthew 3:2-3.

John's purpose was to prepare the way for Jesus Christ. John was not at all concerned about his reputation from his preaching, nor caught up with self-importance regarding his unique calling of being the forerunner of Jesus Christ. He was content to be "a voice crying in the wilderness," his only passion that of proclaiming Christ's truth, and preparing hearts to receive Him. We are not called to be important in the Gospel, but faithful. We are not called to make a name for ourselves, but to make Christ's name known.

Discuss the importance of losing ourselves in Christ so that others might see only Him through our lives. There is a joy that can be found no other way than by laying ourselves down and being committed to the cause of the Gospel.

7. Matthew 4:1-11 describes Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. Why is it important to us that Jesus was tempted as a man?

Christ became flesh and accepted all the weaknesses of it, which meant that He could be tempted as we are. That is the reason He is able to understand our feelings, concerns, and weaknesses. That is the reason He is able to succor and strengthen us when we are tempted—because He has been tempted as we are tempted, and knows from experience exactly what we are going through. Discuss how everything would be different if Christ had not taken on the flesh and walked through life as we do.

8. What can we learn about the devil's tactics from this account? What can we learn from Christ's example about how to withstand temptation?

In response to the second question, discussion should bring out that Satan is sly. He did not directly tell Jesus He wasn't the Son of God. Twice he said, "if you are the Son of God," thereby tempting Him not only to satisfy His hunger, but to stoop to following the devil's suggestion in order to prove that He was God's Son. Satan will challenge us in the same way. He will say, "if" God answered your prayer . . . or, "if" you are saved . . . Discuss several ways the devil slyly puts questions into our minds, bringing out that his point is always to inject doubt. It is important to realize that we don't need to prove anything to him, nor do we need anything that he promises to give us. We must remember that he is a liar and the father of lies (see John 8:44). Would he really have given all the kingdoms

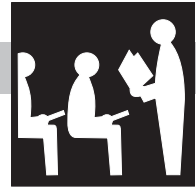
of the world to Christ? Were they really his to give? The devil may tempt us with things that he cannot possibly give, such as peace, joy, or satisfaction.

In each temptation, Jesus used Scripture to defeat Satan. He did not engage in an argument with the devil, but appealed to the commands and promises of God. The Word of God is sufficient to overcome any tactic of the enemy, and as we stand on God's Word faithfully, there will be comfort and rest coming to us from Heaven (Matthew 4:11).

CONCLUSION

Because Jesus came as a man, suffered, and triumphed over temptation, we have Someone to go to who understands us. He is a comforting Friend who feels our pain, weaknesses, and joys. Even more importantly, He is able to give us strength and help, so that we too can have real victory in any circumstance.

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Proclamation and Proof of Kingship

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Matthew 4:12 through 11:1

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” (Matthew 7:28-29)

BACKGROUND

After hearing of the imprisonment of John the Baptist, Jesus left Nazareth and went to the area of Galilee. He made His residence in Capernaum—a city located on the northwestern end of the Sea of Galilee, a large lake that was also at times called the Lake of Gennesaret, Lake of Tiberias, and the Sea of Tiberias.

It was at this time that Jesus began to preach the message of repentance. Along the shoreline of Galilee, He called four fishermen, Andrew, Peter, James, and John to be His disciples. He healed the sick, preached the Gospel, and taught in the synagogues. The word *synagogue* comes from the Greek words *syn* which means “together” and *ago*, which means “to collect.” During the time of Jesus’ ministry, there were numerous synagogues in Israel; the number in Jerusalem alone was thought to be as high as 480.

It was on a hillside rather than in a synagogue that Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount to His disciples and the multitude. The fame of Jesus' miracles had spread throughout the area and great numbers of people followed Him from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond Jordan. Decapolis was a region east of Jordan, containing ten cities, primarily inhabited by Greek settlers. People from Perea inhabited the area "beyond Jordan." Jesus used this opportunity to teach on a mountain by the Sea of Galilee. The topography of the region provided a natural amphitheater, so His voice would have projected well. Tradition maintains that a sixty-foot hill once called the Horns of Hattin, square-shaped with two tops, is the location of the Sermon on the Mount. The location is now commonly called the Mount of the Beatitudes.

Jesus' discourse began with the Beatitudes: nine blessings that result from proper attitudes of the heart. Next, He used salt and light to illustrate the effect His disciples should have in the world. He then taught about murder and anger, temptation, divorce, oaths, forgiveness, loving one's enemies, giving, praying, fasting, obtaining treasures in Heaven, and worrying.

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He concluded the sermon by encouraging His listeners not to judge others, and instructing them on how to ask and receive from God. Jesus described the way to Heaven as a “strait [narrow] gate” and the way to destruction as a “wide gate.” After warning about false prophets, He closed the sermon by describing people who would build on rock or sand, using this visualization to illustrate the importance of not merely hearing, but hearing and then obeying.

Chapters 8 and 9 record several of Jesus’ miracles: healing a leper, calming a stormy sea, casting the devils out of two men, and restoring sight and speech.

Jesus then called twelve men to be His disciples, giving them power to cast out unclean spirits and to heal every type of disease and illness. It was at this time that they began to be called Apostles.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. After John the Baptist was imprisoned, Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17). What do you think He meant by this phrase?

The Jewish people had expected that when the Messiah came, He would set up an earthly kingdom and deliver them from bondage, but that was not the kingdom of heaven that Jesus spoke of. To an oppressed world under the dominion of Satan, God’s kingdom, and the plan of salvation, was about to unfold. The Greek word engidzo, which is translated “at hand,” means, “to make near.” Soon Christ would be crucified and mankind would have access to redemption through His sacrifice, thus beginning the dispensation of Grace. Jesus began His first message of this Good News with the key to that kingdom—repent.

Ask your students to share ways that people today are made aware of the “kingdom of heaven.” They will possibly bring out that Holy Ghost conviction, an invitation to church, personal testimonies, and printed Gospel literature are some of the ways God uses.

2. What was the profession of the first four men that Jesus asked to follow Him? Why do you suppose He singled out these four men?

The first four disciples—Peter, Andrew, James, and John—had been fishermen. They appeared to be industrious, hard-working men. However, it was not these character attributes alone that caused Jesus to call them. He knew it was in their hearts to forsake their livelihood and to become His disciples.

As a class exercise, you could ask for a list of things that we may need to leave in order to be followers of Christ. Suggestions may include: businesses, family, friends, hobbies, jobs, material possessions, and personal ambitions.

3. The word *beatitude* comes from the Latin *beatus*, which is translated “blessed.” In your own words, describe how each of the Beatitudes applies to us today.

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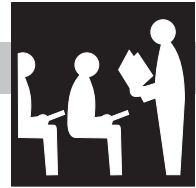
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Instructions of the King

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Matthew 11:2 through 20:34

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?” (Matthew 13:54)

BACKGROUND

Chapter 11 begins with John the Baptist seeking to have his belief in Christ confirmed. As he was languishing in prison, John was evidently tempted to be discouraged and disillusioned. He sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus if He was really the Messiah or if they should look for another. Instead of giving a direct answer, Jesus told the disciples to go back to John and report what they had seen and heard. His healing of the blind and lame, and the preaching of the Gospel to the poor were a fulfillment of the Messianic role that was prophesied in Isaiah 35:5-6 and 61:1.

Chapters 12 through 20 center on Jesus' ministry and teachings. Despite growing antagonism from the Pharisees and others in the religious world, Jesus continued to teach concerning the Kingdom of Heaven, and explained the consequences of rejecting Him.

Jesus was the Master Teacher, instructing His hearers with authority and reaching people at their point of need. He taught the people through parables, sermons, picture illustrations, and personal examples. Through these teachings, Jesus revealed the true ingredients of faith, how to be fruitful, how to guard against hypocrisy, and how to prepare for Heaven.

The authority with which He taught was validated by the miracles that He performed: He fed the multitude with a few loaves and fishes, walked on water, cast out demons, and healed all who came to Him. He sent out his disciples to present His claims—they had gone into the highways and byways until they covered all the cities of Israel.

During this period, Jesus for the first time spoke with His disciples about His coming death and resurrection. He was transfigured on the mountain before Peter, James, and John, and continued His instructions to His followers, even though public animosity against Him was increasing.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. What invitation is given to sinners in Matthew 11:28-30? What good can come from accepting this invitation?

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for granted that he must forgive, and since the rabbis taught that people should forgive three times, he probably thought he was being especially generous by suggesting that perhaps seven times was enough. What response did Jesus give, and what was the significance of His response?

Christ told Peter that he should forgive, “until seventy times seven.” The large number was not a precise guideline; rather, it indicated that unlimited forgiveness is expected from those whom God has forgiven. Discuss with your class some of the excuses people offer for not forgiving. “He doesn’t deserve it.” “He didn’t ask for forgiveness.” “I was hurt too badly.” Note that Jesus did not say that there were any extenuating circumstances. The requirement is simple and direct: we should always forgive.

9. A rich young man asked Jesus how he might gain eternal life. Jesus told him to keep the Ten Commandments, and listed six of them, which related to relationships with others. When the young man replied that he had kept all of them, Jesus told him that he needed to do one more thing. What was that final requirement, and why did Jesus ask it of the man? Matthew 19:16-22

Jesus required the man to sell everything and give his money to the poor. Jesus knew the man’s heart, and this requirement revealed his weakness: his wealth was his god, and he would not give it up. By refusing to do so, he violated the first and greatest commandment (Exodus 20:3).

Discussion could revolve around the fact that God also sees what is deep inside our hearts. He knows if we are holding something back from Him, and at some point in time, He will address that very point with us. We cannot love God with all of our hearts and still cling to our own way in certain areas. As the songwriter says, “If He’s not Lord of everything, then He’s not Lord at all.”

10. In the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, recorded in Matthew 20:1-16, the householder is God, the vineyard is the kingdom of Christ, and the laborers are His followers. What lesson for our day can we find in this parable?

God’s gracious salvation and the rewards of serving Him are offered to all, no matter what era they live in, nor how long they serve Him. Our focus should be on serving God to the best of our abilities, rather than on what we might receive from Him in comparison to what another receives.

CONCLUSION

We can know the way God wants us to live by carefully heeding what Jesus taught. His teachings show us how to live for Him in our day, and how to prepare for life eternal.



Rejection and Prophecies of the King

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Matthew 21:1 through 25:46

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.” (Matthew 21:44)

BACKGROUND

These chapters describe Jesus' presentation as King, His instruction regarding end-time events, and His rejection by the Jewish people.

Near the end of His earthly ministry, when Jesus entered Jerusalem on what we now commemorate as Palm Sunday, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, as was part of the coronation custom of the Israelites each time a new king was appointed. The people cheered him with shouts of “Hosanna” and laid garments and branches on the road. Conquering men and royalty were honored in this manner at that time. Yet, in less than a week, when asked by Pilate what should be done with Jesus, the crowd roared, “Crucify him!”

After entering Jerusalem, Jesus went to the Temple and removed those who had brought merchandise to be sold for the sacrifices and overturned the tables of the moneychangers. The merchandise would have consisted of doves, oxen, sheep, and other sacrificial items. The moneychangers furnished the Jews and proselytes who came from other countries, with the current coin of Judea, in exchange for their own.

Despite mounting opposition, Jesus continued to teach His followers. Many parables in today's lesson have to do with true worship as opposed to hypocrisy.

During this time, Jesus' jealous critics approached Him with many questions that were not honest inquiries, but rather were designed to incriminate Him. The Pharisees (a religious group) and the Herodians (a political group) were enemies, and yet, they united at this time against Jesus. They asked Jesus about paying Roman taxes. They had reasoned that if Jesus said they should, the Pharisees could accuse Him of being against God. If He said taxes should not be paid, the Herodians would have Him arrested for rebellion against Herod. His answer exposed their evil motives.

Jesus then silenced an attempt by another religious group—the Sadducees. Sadducees accepted only the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament, as sources of law. This group did not believe in the resurrection because it is not directly mentioned in the Pentateuch. In His response (Matthew 22:32), Jesus quoted from Exodus, chapter 3, verse 6. He used this

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verse and its tense to illustrate to them that the men referred to in the verse, who had once died, were alive.

Jesus cautioned His disciples and the multitude that greatness is not measured by how much honor and prestige one has from people. Rather, He said, “he that is greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matthew 23:11). Addressing the false religious leaders, He condemned them, saying, “Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.” The Pharisees strained their water to avoid accidentally swallowing a gnat or any small unclean thing forbidden by the Law. They took such care in the details of ceremonial cleanliness, yet they made no effort of avoiding the much greater issues of hypocrisy, lust, and deceit.

Chapter 24 is a sobering series of warnings concerning the last days—the days in which we now live. Jesus prophesied that in the last days, many would fall away and be lost; however, those who endured to the end would make their heavenly goal.

In Chapter 25, Jesus gave three parables to illustrate how we should be prepared when He returns. The parable of the ten virgins warns of the need to be responsible for our spiritual condition and readiness. The parable of the talents shows the rewards for faithful service and the eternal consequences of neglect. The last parable calls us to demonstrate our faith by personal involvement in acts of love and mercy.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. Imagine yourself among the crowd of people who witnessed Jesus’ Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, recorded in Matthew 21:1-11. Now, contemplate the fact that within the week, those who shouted “Hosanna” were possibly among those who cried for Jesus’ crucifixion. What conclusions can we draw from this?

Class discussion may bring out that it is easy to stand up for Christ when surrounded by those who believe as we do, but it takes courage to take a stand for Him when it is not “politically correct.” Discuss times when this might be difficult. For example, some have a hard time bowing their head over their meal when eating with non-Christian co-workers or in a public place. Some find it difficult to speak up for the Lord in a classroom where the teacher ridicules those who are Christians. Have your class list some ways we can gain courage to take a stand for Christ.

2. In Matthew 21:12-17, we read of Jesus cleansing the Temple. What had occurred within those sacred walls that so displeased Him? What principle does this teach us regarding our attitude toward God’s House?

Merchants and moneychangers had set up their booths in the courtyard of the Temple and were conducting business, crowding out the Gentiles who had come from all over the civilized world to worship God.

While most of us would agree that we should not conduct secular business within the walls of the church, the point of this question is to emphasize that

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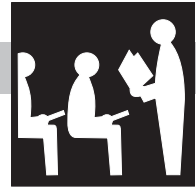
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Suffering, Death, and Resurrection of the King

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Matthew 26:1 through 28:20

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“For this is my blood of the new testament,
which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”
(Matthew 26:28)

BACKGROUND

At this time in history, the Roman government appointed the political as well as religious leaders for Israel. Caiaphas was chosen as high priest, being son-in-law to Annas, a former high priest. It appears that Caiaphas worked well with the Romans, as he remained high priest longer than most—eighteen years. It was Caiaphas who first recommended that Jesus should die, and he, along with the other chief priests, scribes, and elders, conspired to arrest Jesus.

Matthew wrote his book primarily for Jewish Christians; therefore he emphasized Jesus' kingly role and presented a portrayal of the Kingdom of God. Matthew strove to show that Christ's Kingdom was in the hearts of men, and not in the politics of the time.

As world-shaping events were being plotted in Jerusalem, in a small corner in Bethany, Mary, sister to Martha and Lazarus, anointed Jesus with precious ointment from an alabaster box as a memorial for His burial. This was a small picture of what the Kingdom of God was really about—His love.

After partaking of the last supper, Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane, where He fought the supreme battle of all time. Jesus' agony was because He would bear the sins of all mankind, and would be rejected for a time by His Father. Jesus' human flesh struggled with the physical agony before Him, but as His spirit and will were completely subjected to God, He won the battle and accepted His "cup" with peace.

After being apprehended in the Garden, the next morning Jesus was sentenced to death by the chief priests and elders. They bound Jesus and sent Him to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judaea who was known for his cruelty. Rome had taken away the Jew's authority to perform capital punishment; therefore Roman leaders had to do the sentencing and execution. The Jews knew that a charge of blasphemy would carry no weight in a Roman court, so they accused Jesus of claiming to be superior to Caesar when He said He was the Son of God.

Those who were condemned to die by crucifixion were forced to carry their own crosses, but Jesus, weak from the terrible scourging which had been inflicted

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As finite individuals, we cannot see the perfect plan of God. Based on his own thinking about what should happen, Peter tried to step in and defend Christ, but the fact that the soldiers had not arrested Jesus in the Temple indicates that there was a divine timetable controlling His life. These events were not happening by accident, but by appointment. We may decide how God should answer our prayers or work

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10. At the time of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) Jesus promised to be with us always. How does He accomplish this?

Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit to be in our midst and to comfort us. At salvation we have a measure of His Spirit. At sanctification He comes to us in a greater measure and at the baptism of the Holy Ghost, His presence fills us and overflows in our lives. What a treasure this is!

CONCLUSION

God had a perfect plan when He sent Jesus to die for our sins. Jesus was faithful and fulfilled God's plan in every aspect. The challenge that faces us is this: What will we do with Jesus?

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SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

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1. Why do you think the author makes such a point of Christ's deity to these Hebrew Christians?

It was important that the Jewish readers understood Jesus to be the incarnate Son of God, who alone had power to purge sins (Hebrews 1:3). His incarnation, atonement, and glorification spoken of in Chapter 1 lay the groundwork for describing a better way than the Mosaic system of worship, which foreshadowed Christ. Discuss with your class: In what ways does the deity of Christ come under attack in our day? Why is it important for us to hold firmly to our belief in His divinity?

2. The writer, in beautifully poetic language, described Jesus Christ in the opening verses of our text. Review the facts, attributes, and actions detailed in Hebrews 1:2-3, and write your own description of Christ based on your findings.

As your class shares their thoughts, the picture should emerge that Christ is the Son of God, the Heir of the universe, the Creator, Radiance of divine glory, Sustainer of the universe, Redeemer from sin and the Exalted one. What other descriptive phrases could they add about Christ that would expand the picture? (Healer, Friend, Guide, Living Word, Good Shepherd, Bread of Life, Living Water, Alpha and Omega, etc.)

3. Angels are heavenly beings, and many times in Scripture we find where God used them. In what seven ways did the writer show that Jesus was superior to the angels? Hebrews 1:3-14

Your class should come up with the following thoughts:

- *He has a more excellent name—the Son of God (verse 4)*
- *He is the firstborn, that the angels were to worship Him (verse 6)*
- *He has an eternal throne and position (verse 8)*
- *He has been anointed above His fellows (verse 9)*
- *He is the Creator (verse 10)*
- *He is eternal (verses 11-12)*
- *He sits at the right hand of the Father (verse 13)*

4. In the first four verses of chapter 2, the writer set forth a strong warning against spiritual neglect. Why did he stress the danger of neglect? How might we tend to drift away or fail to pay full attention to what Jesus has said?

Jesus' message was interwoven with His person. One could not reject any portion of His message without rejecting Him—so it was a life and death issue!

As your students discuss the second question, they may bring up that we could drift away by neglecting

What the Law could not do because it was weak through the flesh, Jesus has accomplished by the merits of His death and resurrection. The Law could never completely reveal God, but Jesus Christ can. He is the perfect reflection of God.



Christ Our Mediator

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Hebrews 4:14 through 10:39

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” (Hebrews 9:24)

BACKGROUND

The Book of Hebrews has been regarded by the Church through the ages as a wonderful portrait of Christ as prophet, priest, and king of the New Covenant that was foreshadowed by the Old Covenant (Old Testament Law). The Hebrew believers were under severe persecution, apparently by non-Christian Jews. After accepting and enduring this persecution, it seems they had weakened. While never renouncing Christ, they were at risk of drifting back to the Jewish teachings and customs, many of which had supplanted the Old Covenant.

In this portion of text, the writer emphasized the priestly role of Christ, comparing it with that of the Old Testament priest/king Melchizedek and contrasting it with the Levitical priesthood established in the Old Testament Law. The Jews were well aware that the priestly offices could only be held by descendants of Levi, the great-grandson of Abraham. Christ was descended from the tribe of Judah, making Him ineligible to minister as a priest under the Old Covenant. The writer emphasized that there was an earlier precedent for both priesthood and also the combination of priesthood and kingship. (These two roles were always separated in Israel after they were given a king.) Melchizedek was both king of Salem (Jerusalem) and a priest of God, although the Old Testament presents no record of birth, death or genealogy for him. He blessed Abram, and Abram acknowledged his position by paying him tithes.

The Greek word for *mediator* is *mes-ee-tace* and means “one who intervenes between two, either in order to make or restore peace and friendship, or form a compact, or for ratifying a covenant.”

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. What was the role of the high priest? What were the priests' duties? Hebrews 5:1

The high priest was the ultimate mediator for the people as his role included offering sacrifices to God on behalf of the entire Jewish nation. The primary duty

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This is a warning against apostasy, which implies an entire renunciation of Christianity. Explain to your class that there is a significant difference between

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important second step. Patiently waiting in faith for God to fulfill His promises is how we should live on a daily basis. Have your class consider some examples of how God has always come through. Have them consider why sometimes it may seem that God isn't answering or coming through.

CONCLUSION

We are privileged to have a great High Priest and Mediator standing between us and God. Since we now have access to God through Christ, we enjoy a close, intimate relationship with Him. We can have confidence that our hope in Christ is an anchor that will hold steadfast and secure through the storms of life and deliver us from this life to an eternity in Heaven with our great High Priest, Christ.

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things we cannot see. Some examples might include the following:

- *Flipping a light switch = trust in electricity*
- *Turning the key in a car ignition = trust that the car will start*
- *Flying in an airplane = trust in air currents, the powerful engines, or the pilot*
- *Riding in an elevator = trust in the hydraulic system.*

Although we cannot see God, He has given us ample evidence that He is alive and can work in our lives. You could generate another list on the board with such examples as: instant deliverance from drugs at salvation, a healing, the wonders of nature showing the Creator.

2. Hebrews 11:2 lets us know that by faith “the elders obtained a good report.” The word *elders* refers to the many believing individuals cited in this chapter. How did these people demonstrate their faith?

They demonstrated their faith through action. Each one of these heroes had to act in order to get a response from God. Bring out the difference between a faith that “talks” and a faith that “acts.” Discuss a few examples from the chapter, and show how they acted because they were convinced. For example, Noah took action by building the ark according to God’s instruction, and the result was deliverance from the Flood for him and his family. Obedience to God may mean stepping out and taking a risk, but if we have a faith that is fixed on God’s promises, He rewards that action. Ask your class to suggest current-day situations where a seemingly “risky” step of faith brings God’s reward.

3. Where do “spiritual giants” come from? Consider those who have influenced you in your spiritual walk. What steps can we take to gain more faith and stability in our own lives?

Remind the students that those we might call “spiritual giants” did not start out that way. They are simply people, like all of us, who wanted results from God. They stepped out based on His promises, pursued the faith that would bring results, and acted on that faith. Point out that all of us can gain that same faith and be an encouragement to others. We must want results from God, and we must be faithful and obedient. Steps we can take might include being more sensitive to the Holy Spirit with regard to our own lives, hobbies, actions, priorities, loves, etc. Sometimes steps that need to be taken may seem difficult. That is where spiritual giants come from—with God’s help, they take those steps anyway, because they want God’s approval and blessing. Sometimes it is much easier not to act when God speaks, but if we want God’s results, we must do what is right, not what is easier.

4. Consider the key verse. What are some of the “weights” we may carry that hinder us?

Your class should have thoughts about possible weights. They may mention what people look at or listen to, possessions, position, prestige, hobbies, other people's opinions, etc. Many times it seems self can get in the way, and those weights that "so easily" beset us, those little things that we are familiar with, do not come off so casually. Sometimes we must make a very deliberate act of being rid of something that hinders, as if we were taking off a heavy piece of clothing in order to run a race.

5. Hebrews 12:5 mentions the “chastening of the Lord.” Such chastening may not be enjoyable, but it is very necessary. What encouragement did the writer give to the Hebrew Christians regarding these times of discipline from the Lord? Why is chastening necessary for us today?

The writer reminded them that while correction is not joyous, they should be careful not to despise it but to take it humbly, since God has a reason which was for their good. He is a loving heavenly Father, and that is why He must do it. Every Christian will be chastised and disciplined at some point (verse 8), for that is part of growing and maturing as Christians.

Class discussion could cover ways God might chastise us. This may include the voice of the Spirit speaking to our hearts or something we hear in a sermon that points out an error. Discuss together the results that are promised if we take correction patiently: we will be partakers of His holiness (verse 10), and the “peaceable fruit of righteousness” will grow in our lives (verse 11). The class may have other suggestions on benefits of chastisement. We should be thankful to the Lord for His interest in making us what we need to be.

6. What is being compared and contrasted in verses 18 through 29 of Hebrews 12? Why does the writer make this comparison?

The writer is contrasting the Law and the Old Testament dispensation with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the New Testament dispensation. Israel was punished because they refused Moses, who spoke on earth. Those who refuse Him who speaks from Heaven are more certain of judgment. As mighty and powerful as the demonstration at Mount Sinai was, and as significant as the giving of the Law was, they do not compare to Mount Zion, the New Jerusalem, and all that God is preparing for His saints.

This comparison was made to encourage the Christians and to motivate them in following the Lord. Whatever the cost, we must be sensitive to the Spirit and obey, for He alone knows the way to eternal life. Discuss ways to develop and maintain sensitivity to the Spirit.

7. Chapter 13 includes a number of practical applications. List three instructions the writer gives these Christians. How can we apply these in our day?

Making a list on the board would be beneficial.

Thoughts may include:

Verse 1—Love other Christians.

Verse 2—Be hospitable.

Verse 3—Help the suffering.

Verse 4—Be true to your mate.

Verse 5—Be content.

Verse 6—Trust God to help you.

Verse 7—Follow your leaders.

After making the list, discuss how these apply to our daily lives.

8. The writer warns of being carried away with “divers and strange doctrines” (Hebrews 13:9). In the world today, what might be some doctrines that would threaten the pure message of the Gospel?

There are several false doctrines that could be listed and discussed—evolution, that we all sin every day, allowance for adultery and for gay marriages, etc. Encourage discussion of the writer’s admonition to be “established with grace.” If we know the true doctrine, and are established in it, we can avoid being carried away with new, strange doctrines that might even sound reasonable on the surface. We could study hard and long to know all the false doctrines in order to be aware of them, but the best way to spot the counterfeit is to be completely familiar with the genuine article. If we are established with God’s grace, it will eliminate questions in our own minds of what is of God, and what is not.

CONCLUSION

Those who lived under the Old Testament dispensation caught glimpses of the age in which we live, but they died in faith, not having received the fullness of the Gospel because Jesus had not yet come. We *have* received the Gospel in its entirety. Their testimonies and examples of faith need to cause us to be complete and entire representatives of this dispensation of grace. We must “carry the torch” down the final stretch of God’s perfect plan for mankind to our Home in Heaven.

This letter to the Ephesians was written while Paul was in prison in Rome from A.D. 60-62 and sent to the Ephesian church with Tychicus. Unlike other letters he wrote, this letter was not written to address any particular problem in the church. It was written to strengthen and encourage the Ephesian church. It was also possibly circulated around other churches in the area for the same purpose. In it, Paul described the nature and appearance of the church. He challenged believers to function as a living body of Christ on earth.

The Book of Ephesians can be broken down into two major sections. The first three chapters deal with doctrine (the calling of the church), and the last three deal with application (the conduct of the church). The overall theme of the book is the unity of believers.

In chapter 1, Paul began with a prayer that the church may have wisdom and revelation. In chapters 2 and 3 he discussed the believers' positions individually and corporately before God, and the mystery of their calling. He ended with a prayer that their faith might be strengthened through the love of God.

Chapter 4 is a pivotal point in the book. Paul admonished the believers to walk worthy of their calling in Christ. In the last three chapters alone, there are thirty-five directives that speak of the believer's responsibility to conduct himself according to his individual calling. Throughout chapters 4 and 5, Paul discussed the Christian's walk in unity, holiness, love, light, and wisdom. In chapter 6, he concluded the book by instructing believers regarding how to endure spiritual warfare.

Like the Ephesian church, we are called to know Biblical doctrine and then live it out before the watching world. A loving, unified church is a strong church that unbelievers will be drawn to.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. In the first verse of chapter 1, Paul refers to "the faithful in Christ Jesus." What would it take for others to characterize you as faithful in Christ Jesus?

Faithful—what an excellent reputation! Such a label would be an honor to any believer. A response might include: being strong in your commitment one day at a time; trusting God in the hard times of life as well as in the good times; and being consistent in the "little things." Expand this list to adapt to the age, spiritual maturity, etc. of your class.

2. In Ephesians 1:3, Paul wrote that God had blessed the believers with all spiritual blessings. List some of the spiritual blessings God has bestowed upon you. What is the greatest spiritual blessing? After compiling your list, take a moment to thank God for these blessings.

With your class, make a list of the blessings Paul mentioned in chapter 1. Your list should include: The believer is chosen and called of God. We are re-deemed through Christ's Blood, which gives us eternal

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life. The Holy Spirit gives us spiritual wisdom. Discuss how these blessings are an integral part of the life of the believer.

3. What do Ephesians 1:7 and Ephesians 2:13 tell us about how we are brought closer to God?

Ephesians 1:7 says we are redeemed through the Blood of Christ; Ephesians 2:13 says we are drawn nigh (near) by the Blood of Christ. Bring out that sin is a barrier that separates us from God. Only the Blood of Christ can break down that barrier, provide redemption from sin, and draw us closer to God. What is meant by the phrase, "Pleading the Blood," and how do we do that? You may wish to ask your class to share personal examples of times when the Blood availed in their lives.

4. In Ephesians 2:14, we read that Christ has “broken down the middle wall of partition between us.” The Temple had a wall separating the Jews and the Gentiles, but Paul was indicating that the Gospel is for all. What “walls” might we build today that God might want broken down?

God does not want any barriers that prevent true unity in the Body of Christ. Some walls might be physical, racial, socio-economical, political, age, gender, appearance, etc. They may even be walls of division due to hurt feelings or other offences that occur. Christians have the responsibility to search their hearts and make sure they have clear consciences with both God and man. If there are any barriers, they can be removed by asking God for forgiveness, which then provides the peace that Jesus gives. They also have the responsibility of going to their brother or sister and making any offences right.

5. Give the progression in Ephesians 3:20 from the first thought in the believer's mind to God's full purpose achieved in our lives. What is the power that works within us?

We think, we ask, we receive, then we use what we receive according to the power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives. Bring out ways that God is able to do more for our spiritual lives than we could ever ask him for or even think possible. Develop the word “able” as an acrostic: almighty, boundless, limitless, everlasting. It is up to us to ask for these things and to seek His will in our lives. Then the power of the Holy Spirit can work more fully in us.

6. In chapter 4, what instruction does Paul give about *how* we should walk worthy of our calling?

Class response should bring out that one key element to unity in the Body of Christ is humility (verse 2). Christ taught this throughout His time on earth. The other key element to unity is endeavoring (verse 3). The Greek word for endeavor (spoudazo), means “to use speed, to make an effort, to be earnest (do or

give diligence), labor.” The point should be made that unity doesn’t just happen. It takes a concerted effort among believers, with the help of the Spirit of God.

7. Ephesians 4:11 lists a number of gifts (callings) that are given to different believers by God. Write down each of them, then alongside each one, note how that gift benefits the Body of Christ. Why does God give these gifts?

- *Apostles: To establish churches*
- *Prophets: speaking God's Word to the Church*
- *Evangelists: do mission work to gain converts*
- *Pastors: to lead the converts*
- *Teachers: to instruct the converts*

Discuss with the students how these gifts apply to-day and why God gives them. He gives these gifts for the perfecting (bringing to spiritual maturity) of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying (building up) of the body of Christ, until we all come to the unity of faith and are not carried about with every wind of doctrine (verses 12-16).

8. In Ephesians 5:1, Paul instructs his readers to be followers of God, “as dear children.” Explain what you think he meant by this.

Just as children imitate their parents, we should imitate Christ. In verse 2, we read that Christ's great love for us led Him to sacrifice Himself so that we might live. Our love for others should be the same—a love that goes beyond affection and leads to self-sacrificing service. What are some ways this type of love will be evidenced in our daily lives?

9. In Ephesians 6:18, we read that we are to pray always, with all prayer and supplication (petitioning) in the Spirit, and with perseverance and supplication for all saints. Review your prayer time this week. How have you prayed for others? How have you persevered in prayer for them? What steps can you take to improve this aspect of your prayer time?

This would be a good time to bring out the importance of praying without ceasing and earnestly interceding for others. Obviously one cannot physically close his eyes and pray at all times, but to be in an attitude of prayer throughout the day is important. Praying for others is important because it helps us to think less of our own needs and more about the needs of others. We find that when we are praying for another brother or sister, not only does it help them but it also helps us. We benefit because we are privileged to share in their victories and blessings. There is also a sense of renewed unity among the believers when they pray one for another. Steps that can be taken to improve this area in our lives might be a prayer journal, note cards, or a prayer list, and should include a time set aside each day to pray for others.

CONCLUSION

It is a great privilege and encouragement to be a part of the family of God. As we walk together with other believers, we must be faithful in our individual walk with God, consistent in our prayer lives, and strive for unity among the believers. If we do this, we will experience the many spiritual blessings God has in store for us.

than planned. Once he was well again, Paul sent him home with this letter of thanksgiving and a commendation for his helpfulness.

In addition to making very personal statements about his own faith, Paul encouraged the church at Philippi to keep the faith, be joyful, develop humility, and remain unified under Christ. Paul also took this opportunity to address two issues in the church that had come to his attention.

Apparently, there was a faction in the church that was causing strife over issues relating to the law and circumcision. Paul told the church to beware of these “evil workers” and to seek to have humility like Jesus. Also, he exhorted two women, Euodias and Syntyche, who were leaders of house churches in Philippi, to “be of the same mind in the Lord” instead of allowing a personal argument to cause division in the church.

He ended the letter by encouraging the church (and ultimately us) to rejoice, pray, be thankful, and keep their minds on the things of God.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. Like most of Paul’s letters, the greeting in the letter to the Philippians includes some words of encouragement, and Paul’s prayers and spiritual desires for the church. What were some of the things that Paul wanted for the Philippians? Why do you think he might have included some of these in his greeting to them?

Paul prayed that the Philippian Christians would grow in Christ’s love, and he told them that God would continually help them to grow. He hoped that the Philippians would grow in knowledge, judgment, righteousness, and sincerity, and he wanted them to be mature Christians: people with good judgment and a genuine love for Christ and the church. He also told them of his love for them, and how he had missed them. The students may conclude that Paul included these things in his letter to encourage the saints at Philippi to continue to grow in Christ. He painted a mental picture for them of what a mature Christian is like so that they would have an example after which they could model their own lives.

2. At the time Paul wrote this letter, he was imprisoned in Rome. This may seem like a dire circumstance to us, but Paul had an interesting perspective about his situation. In Philippians 1:12-18, what did Paul say about how God used his imprisonment?

Paul wanted the Philippians to understand that God was using his imprisonment to further the Gospel. Paul’s status as a prisoner opened doors for him to witness to people he would not have otherwise met. He was able to influence people from the palace, and it seems that other Christians were emboldened by his example to preach as well. The Word of God was being preached throughout the city of Rome due to Paul’s imprisonment there.

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listen to the discernment that the Holy Spirit gives us. Also, we need to evaluate what we hear from teachers and spiritual leaders, comparing it to what we know of God and His nature. If it doesn't sound right, or we feel troubled about something we see or hear, we need to investigate further, and ask God to show us the truth.

7. In verses 9-21 of chapter 3, Paul recorded his own personal statement of faith, and reminded his readers that they were seeking the “prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” He encouraged them to copy his attitude, and promised that God would be faithful to show them if they did not have the right attitude. How can you “press toward the mark?”

Students can “press toward the mark” by opening their hearts in prayer, and by listening for and recognizing the Voice of God. He will be faithful to reveal His will for each individual life. Many times, God may call us to relinquish some seemingly difficult things, but once we do, He is able to bless us more abundantly than before. Make sure students understand that the things of value on earth are worth nothing compared to the treasure waiting for us in Heaven.

8. In chapter 4, Paul challenged the Philippians to “rejoice in the Lord.” What are some ways of ensuring this joy?

Class discussion should bring out: keeping a continual attitude of rejoicing (v. 4), being considerate to “all” – saved or unsaved (v.5), praying instead of worrying (v.6), keeping God's peace in our hearts and minds (v.7), keeping our minds on positive things (v.8), following the faithful ones who have lived Christian lives before us (v.9), learning to be content (v. 11).

9. In verse 13 of chapter 4, Paul gives us the ultimate answer on how to cultivate humility and obedience, serve God, press toward the mark, and keep the joy of the Lord in our hearts. What is his conclusion?

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” In our own strength, living the Christian life can seem like an insurmountable task. However, when we allow Jesus to be our strength, He gives us the ability to do what we need to do. Ask your class to share personal examples from their own knowledge or experience.

CONCLUSION

Paul remained faithful and kept drawing closer to Christ until the end of his life. We can learn much from his example. He kept a positive attitude in hard times, faithfully followed and obeyed God, prayed regularly, kept himself humble, and shared his joy in the Lord with others.

2. Though Paul had never met the Colossian believers, he faithfully prayed for them. What are some specific areas of prayer support we should weave into our prayers for others, based upon Paul's prayer in Colossians 1:9-12?

Answers may include: that the ones for whom we pray will understand the will of God, gain wisdom and spiritual understanding, please and honor God, do good things for others, know God better, be strengthened by God, have grace to endure, retain the joy of God in their hearts, always be thankful.

3. The Colossian church seemingly had several misconceptions about Christ, and Paul addressed their concerns in this epistle. Summarize how Paul refuted each of the following false beliefs.

Allow time for your students to share their summaries of the verses that refute the heresies Paul was addressing. You may wish to include these points.

Christ could not be both human and divine.
Colossians 1:15

Christ had more than a resemblance to the Father; He was a manifestation of Him. In the incarnation, the Son of God, part of the triune Godhead, became visible in Christ; deity was now clothed with humanity. Christ was the first-born, not the first created.

Christ did not create the world.
Colossians 1:16-17

The preposition “by” indicates that Christ was the divine agent of creation. The preposition “for” indicates that all things were created for God’s use and for His glory. The tense of the Greek word “created” indicates that creation was a definite, historical, and completed work.

Christ was not the unique Son of God.
Colossians 1:18-20

The word “he” in verse 18 is emphatic. Representing the Godhead, Christ controls, guides, and governs the Church, which is His body. He is its head and its life.

Christ is not the source of salvation.
Colossians 1:20-22

Christ's death made a way for all people to come to God. The only way to become blameless in the sight of God is through trusting Him to forgive our sins.

4. In verse 24 of the first chapter, Paul indicated his willingness to endure suffering in order to further the Gospel. List ways in which you might be called on to “suffer” for Christ’s cause. What are the benefits of enduring?

Your discussion should bring out that in some countries, persecution and death await some believers. However, Christians may suffer ridicule even in

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CONCLUSION



Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

1 Thessalonians 1:1 through 5:28

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

(1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

BACKGROUND

Paul wrote the Book of 1 Thessalonians while he was in Corinth in A.D. 50 or 51, a couple of years after he had established the church at Thessalonica. It is believed to be the first of the Pauline Epistles (with the possible exception of Galatians), and in fact was likely the first book of the New Testament to be written.

Paul established the church at Thessalonica during his second missionary journey in A.D. 49, following his night vision of the Macedonian man calling for him to come to them. He responded to the call, and traveled across the Aegean Sea to Neapolis, Philippi, and then to Thessalonica where he preached in the Jewish synagogue for several weeks. The church subsequently established there became the second major church on the European continent. While Paul's base of operation was the synagogue (Acts 17:2), not only did some Jews accept the Gospel message, but numbers of Gentiles did also.

As the faith of the new believers in Thessalonica became known, this upset the Jewish leaders and they sought to arrest Paul and his co-worker, Silas. The two men fled under cover of darkness to Berea in the southwest, but the authorities arrested Jason, who had been host to Paul and Silas in Thessalonica. When these Jewish authorities heard Paul was preaching in Berea, they went to that city and attempted to incite riots against him. Paul escaped, and went on to Athens where he waited for his companions, Timothy and Silas.

Because Paul had left Thessalonica in such a hurry, he no doubt felt concerned that he had not been able to tell the new believers in that city all they needed to know. He sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to see how the young church was doing, and Timothy returned with a good report.

Paul also wrote to the new church a personal message: the Book of 1 Thessalonians. He started out by

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affirming and encouraging the believers in their faith, he exhorted them to live a holy life, and finally he instructed them about the second coming of the Lord.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. What was the response of the Thessalonians to the Word of God preached by Paul and Silas? In what ways were those in the Thessalonian church a model for other believers?

Verses 6-8 tell us they became followers of Paul and the Lord with joy, despite much affliction. In response to the second question, your class may bring out that the Thessalonians gave evidence of works of faith, labors of love, and patient hope (verse 3). They had suffered persecution (verse 6) but they still had joy in the Holy Ghost. They were examples to others (verse 8). They had welcomed the missionaries into the Thessalonian community in spite of persecution, and had turned from idolatry to follow God (verse 9). They were waiting for and anticipating the coming of the Lord (verse 10).

You may wish to bring out that the word wait, in verse 10, comes from the Greek word anameno, which means more than just enduring, but rather an expectant, confident, and active attempt to live for God's glory in the meantime. It portrays an attitude of faith toward the complete fulfillment of the messianic promises of the Old Testament in the second coming of Christ.

2. In 1 Thessalonians 1:5 we read that the Gospel came to the Thessalonians “in power, and in the Holy Ghost.” In other words, the Gospel had a powerful effect on their lives. List four specific effects that the Gospel has had on your life since you were first saved.

Encourage your students to list or verbally testify about specific changes in their lives. Bring out that whenever the Gospel crosses a person's path, it has some type of effect on them that cannot be denied. The person either accepts or rejects what they have heard. When the Word of God is heard and obeyed, lives are changed! Refer also to 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

3. In 1 Thessalonians 2:4, Paul wrote that he had been “allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel.” What did he mean by this phrase?

Paul had originally been a great persecutor of those who promoted the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Given his background, Paul felt he was privileged to have been entrusted with the responsibility of proclaiming the Gospel. He saw himself as a steward, for the Gospel he preached was not his own, but God's. Thus, his purpose was to please God and not men.

4. In chapter 3, what three reasons did Paul give for sending Timothy back to Thessalonica? In what ways do ministers of the Gospel today accomplish the same purpose?

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to spiritual darkness. Jesus referred to Himself as the Light of the world, and the Thessalonians had trusted in Him for salvation. Discussion may bring out that light illuminates and makes things plain, while darkness obscures. Light is beneficial and even physically invigorating, while darkness lends itself to depression. As children of God, the newborn Thessalonians were truly “sons of light and children of the day.”

8. In 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Paul encouraged those in the Thessalonian church to comfort themselves together and edify one another. In the original Greek, the word *edify* means “to build up and promote spiritual growth by teaching or example.” Think back over your spiritual walk with God and note five specific ways other believers have comforted and edified you.

The point of this question is to bring out the importance of comforting and encouraging others. Note that the words comfort and edify in this verse are both in the present tense in Greek, implying a continuing obligation of believers to encourage and build up one another. This, of course, is one of the reasons for fellowship in the Church.

9. In Paul’s closing comments, he gave several exhortations to the believers of Thessalonica. Paraphrase the directives given in chapter 5, verses 15 through 22, and explain how they can be followed in our day.

Verse 15: Resist revenge. Don’t try to get even or retaliate for unkindness.

Verse 16: Maintain a cheerful outlook. Don’t be gloomy or negative.

Verse 17: Pray continuously. This doesn’t mean remaining on your knees around the clock, but rather, keeping a prayerful attitude at all times.

Verse 18: Be thankful. Express your gratitude to God for all He has done for you. It is good to express gratitude to others also!

Verse 19: Honor God’s Spirit. Do not grieve or smother the workings of God’s Spirit.

Verse 20: Honor those who preach and teach. Respect the ministry and their message.

Verse 21: Be judicious, and choose what is right. Examine all you hear, and accept that which is true.

Verse 22: Keep away from evil. Avoid situations where you might be subject to temptation or that might lead others astray.

CONCLUSION

How vital it is to be sure we are ready to meet our Lord in the air when He returns for those who are ready! Let us endeavor to encourage and build up each other in the faith so that none will be left behind when that great day occurs.

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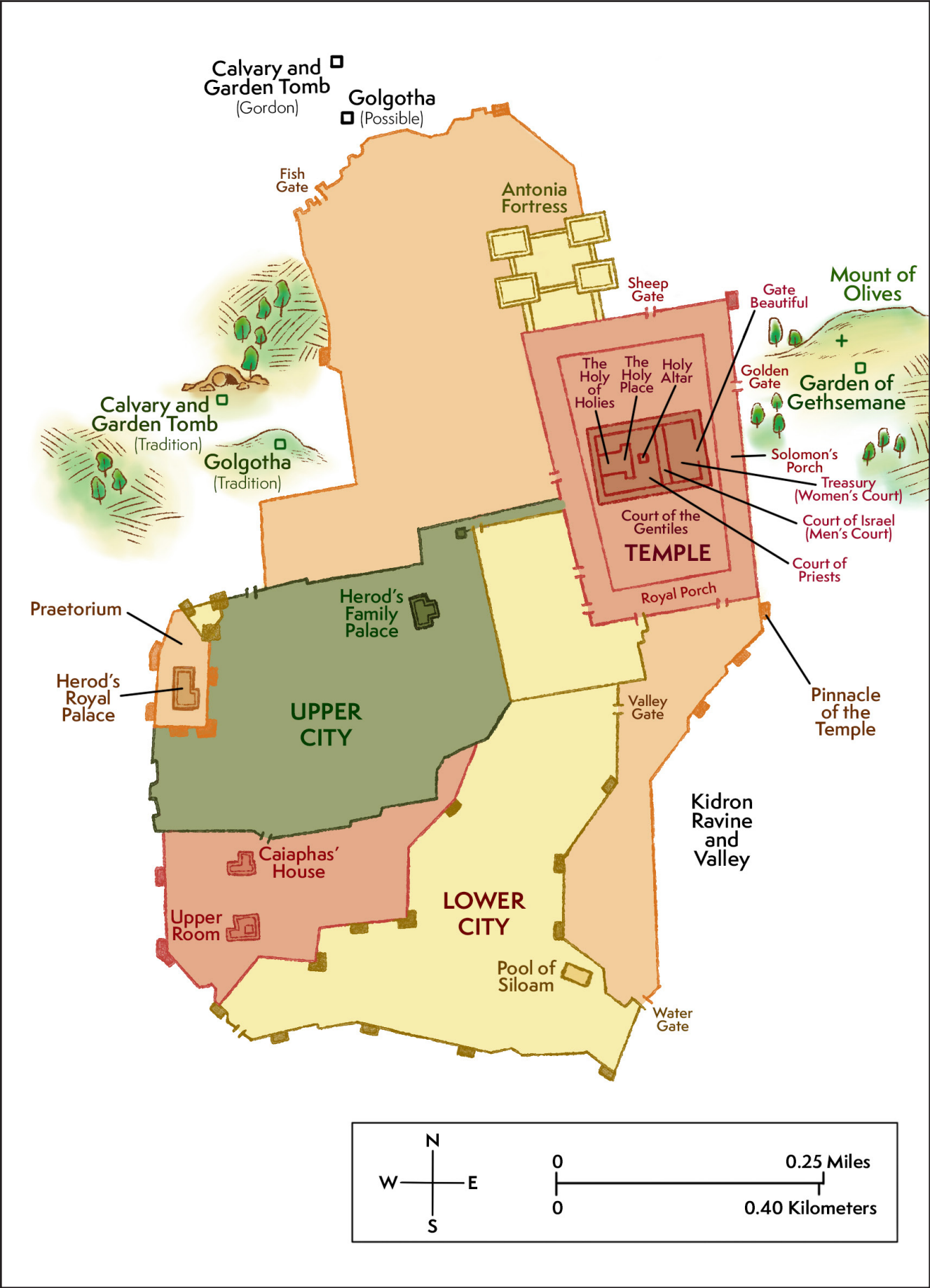
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Key Locations in Matthew



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New Testament Jerusalem



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A Traditional View of Passion Week



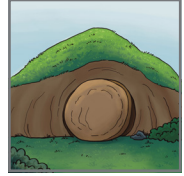
PALM SUNDAY

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

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

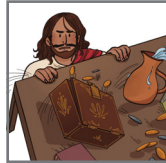
SATURDAY

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



MONDAY

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



TUESDAY

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



WEDNESDAY

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



THURSDAY

- Jesus celebrates the Passover Feast and institutes the Lord’s Supper and Foot Washing ordinances. (Matthew 26:26-28 • John 13:1-17)
- Jesus prays in Gethsemane. (Matthew 26:36-46)
- Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss. (Matthew 26:47-50)
- Jesus is arrested and taken to Caiaphas. (Matthew 26:57)



FRIDAY

- Early in the morning, Jesus endures a Jewish trial. (Matthew 26:59-68)
- Before daybreak, Peter denies Jesus three times. (Matthew 26:58, 69-75)



- Jesus stands before Pontius Pilate, is sent to Herod, and is sent back to Pilate. (Matthew 27:1-2 • Luke 23:6-11)
- Soldiers crown Jesus with thorns and mock Him. (Matthew 27:29-31)
- Jesus is crucified at 9:00 a.m. (Mark 15:25)

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

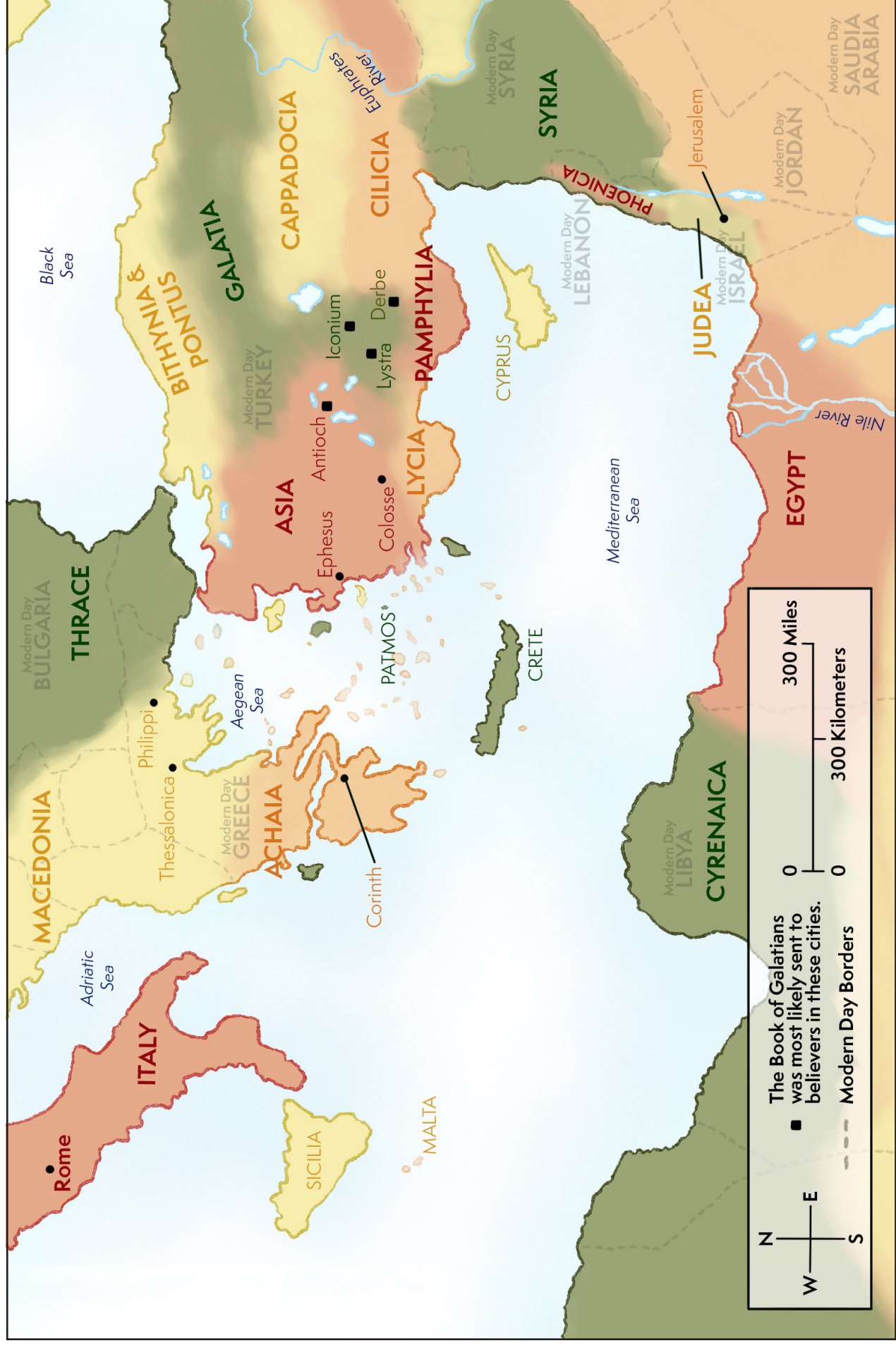
- Jesus appears to the disciples: to Peter, to Cleopas and another follower on the road to Emmaus, and then to a group of disciples in Jerusalem. (Luke 24:12-36)



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

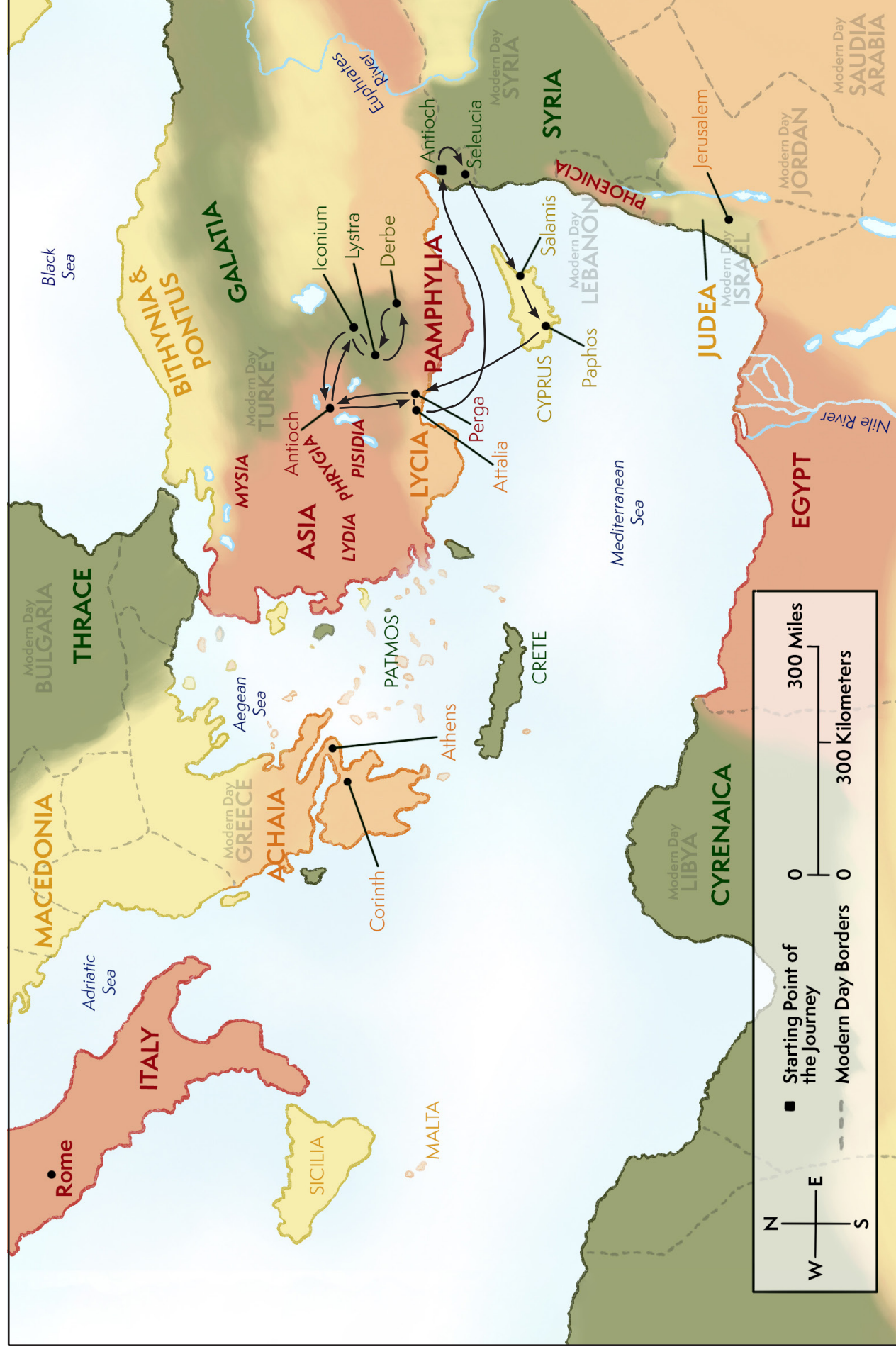
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Recipient Churches of Paul's Letters

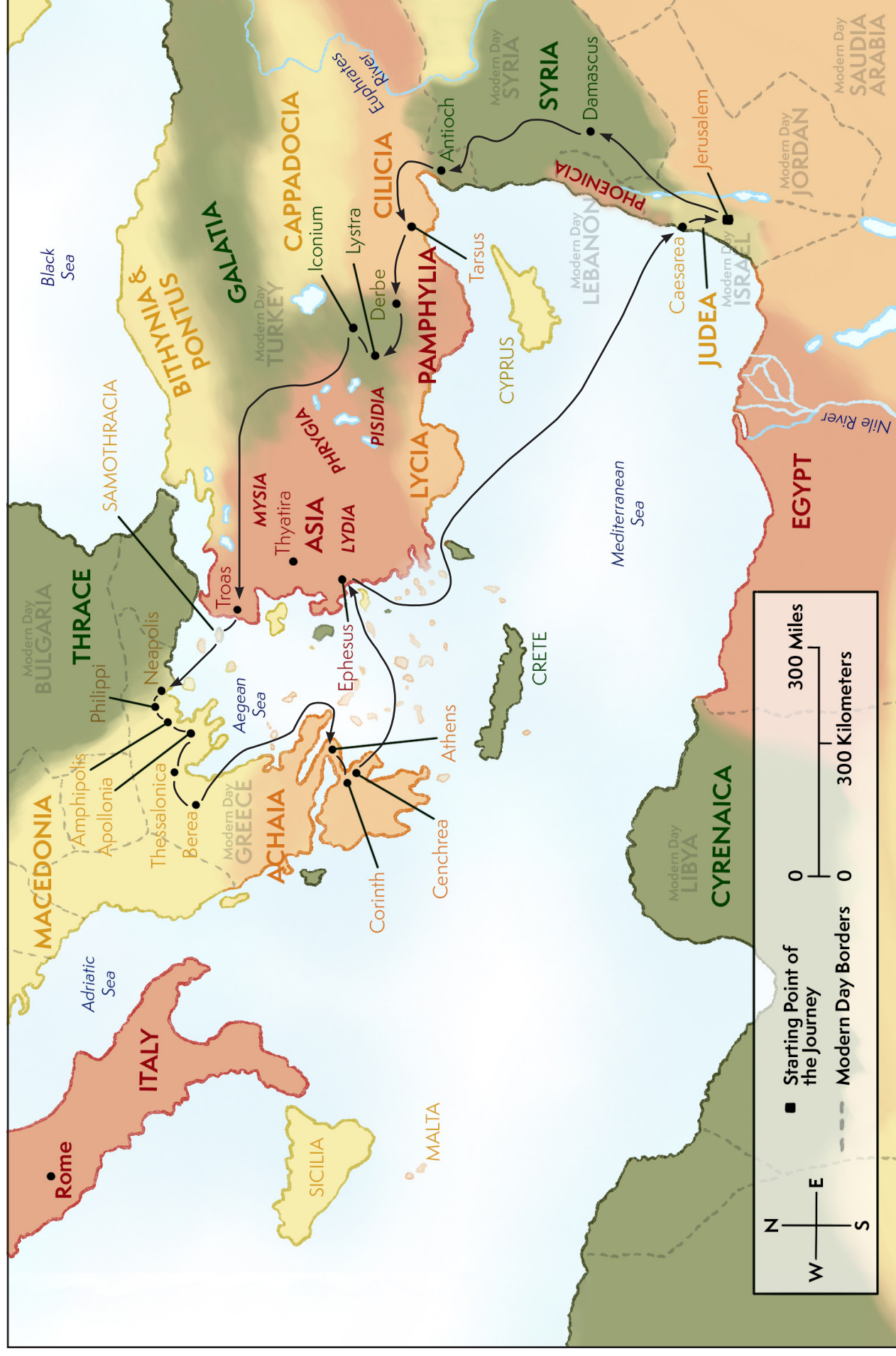


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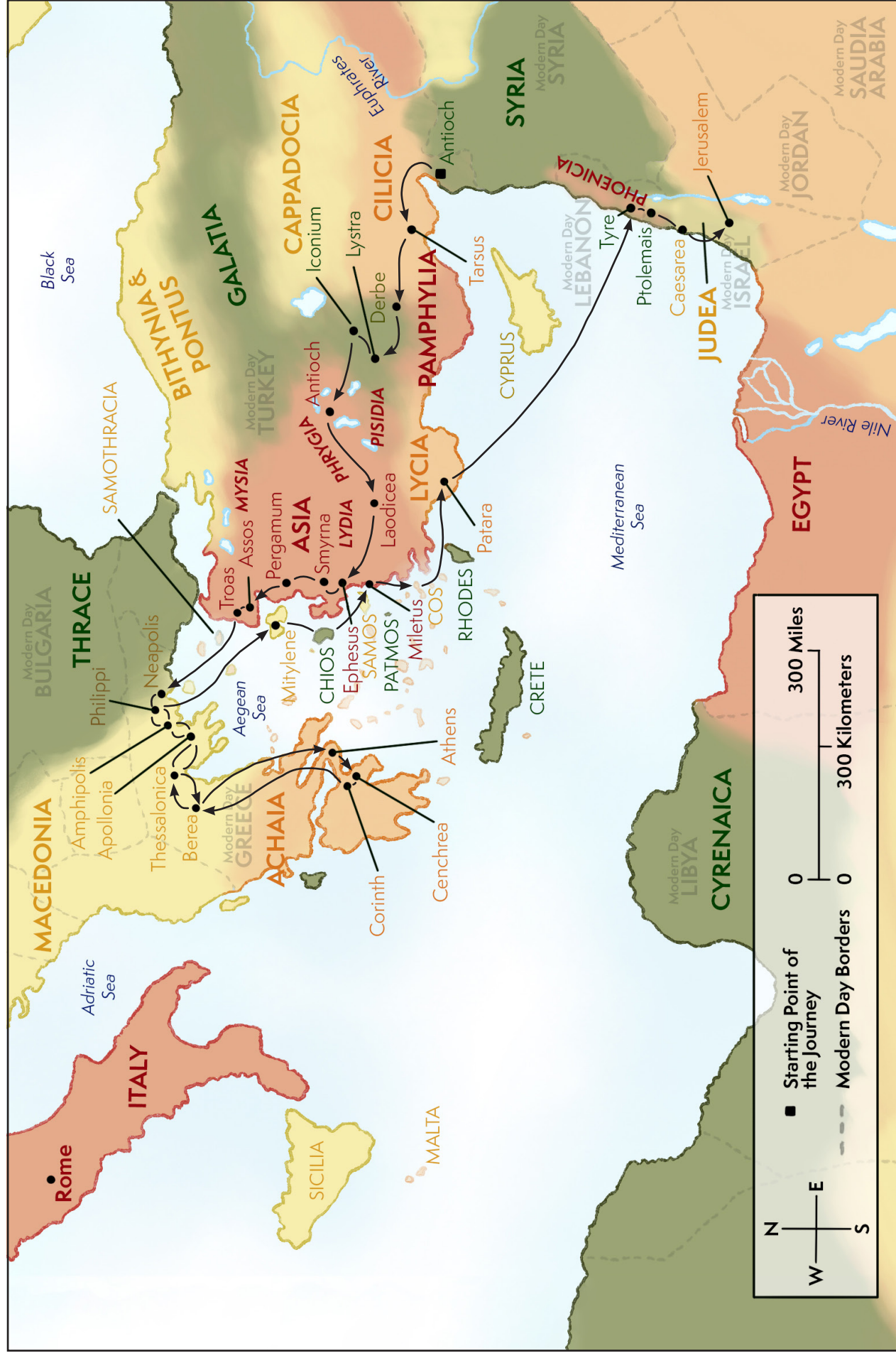
Paul's First Missionary Journey



Paul's Second Missionary Journey



Paul's Third Missionary Journey



Paul's Journey to Rome

