

# Bible Basics – Lesson Three

## New Testament; Parables

### Sunday, March 11, 2018

\*\*Reflections from monthly Bible readings

\*\*Sharing Bible Basics

### What Happened Between the Old and New Testaments

When you flip from the last page of the Old Testament to the first page of the New Testament, *you've just skipped over 400 years of history*. What exactly happened during these 400 years? Who was in control? What people groups shaped the experience of the earliest Christians?

In those four hundred years, the Pharisees and Sadducees, synagogues, Roman governors, and the family of Herod emerged onto the scene. Countless events not mentioned in the New Testament had a profound impact on the world of Jesus. Here are four things you need to know about these 400 years.

**1. The Greeks:** After the Persians were defeated by Alexander, the Greeks invaded Palestine. With them they brought their language and culture—their architecture, names, styles of clothing, and entertainment.

The influence of the Greeks was long-lasting: the entire New Testament was written in Greek. And when Paul wrote his letter to the Romans, who spoke Latin, he still chose to write in Greek. For the Jewish people—who were to be set apart—the coming of Greek culture represented a moral and spiritual crisis. How were they to deal with the invading culture? They wrestled with this question up to and during the time the events of the New Testament took place. And it remains an important question we must wrestle with today.

But the story of the Greeks doesn't end with Alexander. Alexander's empire broke into four parts, two of which are important for understanding the context of the New Testament.

- a) The first group—the **Ptolemies**—were centered in Egypt and ruled over Palestine. They treated the Jews well.
- b) Eventually the **Seleucids**—the second group—took control, and they were brutal. They forced pagan religion on the Jews and set up an altar to Zeus in the temple courts.

**2. The Romans:** Every person mentioned in the New Testament felt the pressure of the empire. In the first century BC, Pompey conquered the eastern Mediterranean, including Palestine, and Julius Caesar conquered Gaul. Rome dominated Palestine from that point on.

During a struggle for power, Julius Caesar was assassinated, and his adoptive son, Octavian, took control. Octavian was known as Augustus—the same Caesar Augustus we read about in the story of Jesus' birth. The time of peace and economic stability during Augustus's reign allowed Christianity to grow and flourish—Christian missionaries could travel widely on Rome's transportation networks and spread the gospel throughout the empire.

**3. The Pharisees and Sadducees:** If we rewind the clock back to the Maccabean period, we see the Jewish rulers becoming more and more corrupt. The early supporters of these rulers turned against them and became known as the Pharisees. Those who remained supportive became the Sadducees. They were high-ranking priests and aristocratic laymen centered in Jerusalem. The Pharisees and the Sadducees hated each other, but they found a common enemy in Jesus.

**4. Who was Herod?** The Romans allowed native peoples to rule the lands they conquered. In Palestine, they allowed Herod to rule. Herod was a clever politician and an efficient king—but very cruel and constantly suspicious. He had three of his wives and three of his sons killed.

Jesus was born under Herod the Great's rule, and His family fled to Egypt to escape His massacre. Herod is best known for his building projects in Palestine, the greatest of which was the temple in Jerusalem—the site of numerous scenes from the New Testament.

### **Old Testament Prophecies Fulfilled in the New Testament**

The Old Testament is tied together by a successive string of five major covenants that God made with His people. A covenant is a binding agreement between two or more parties. When we speak of Biblical covenants, we are referring to instances where God has entered into an agreement with mankind that involves both promises and responsibilities for each party. While there are many covenants and promises found in the Old Testament, a study of the following will provide you with a framework to better understand God's history of redemption.

#### **1. The Noahic Covenant – Genesis 9**

After having sent a global flood to destroy the wickedness that had become so prevalent on earth after the Fall, God promised Noah (and by extension all humanity) to never again destroy the world with a flood. There is nothing that Noah or his descendants must do to ensure that this promise is fulfilled. Instead it finds its validity purely in God's faithfulness.

#### **2. The Abrahamic Covenant- Genesis 12**

Years after the Flood, pride leads the people to rebel against God by constructing the tower of Babel. After having dispersed them by confusing their languages, God would eventually choose one man and one nation as the instrument of His blessing to the entire world.

#### **3. The Mosaic Covenant – Exodus 19-24**

The Mosaic Covenant is dependent on the peoples' response to the law He gives through His servant Moses. God tells Moses that if Israel obeys, they will be His chosen people, His treasured possession. Ultimately, these blessings will be extended to all people.

#### **4. The Davidic Covenant – 2 Samuel 7**

After the people disobeyed the commands made in the previous covenant, God made the Davidic covenant as a means to bring them back into relationship with Himself. Here, God makes a royal covenant to David and his descendants that his heirs will rule over Israel forever. The promise of an eternal kingdom is ultimately fulfilled in Christ, who is of David's kingly lineage. See Luke 1:30-33.

## 5. The New Covenant with Israel – Jeremiah 31

Despite the failure of God’s people to live up to the covenants that were made, God graciously made a new one with His people. In Jeremiah 31:31-34, God makes several distinct promises: He would give them the ability and the desire to follow Him. This promise finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ (Hebrews 8:7-13; 9; 10:11-24).

### Books of the New Testament

<b>New Testament (27 Books)</b>		
<b>History – 5 Books</b>	<b>Letters – 21 Books</b>	<b>Prophecy – 1 Book</b>
Gospels	Paul’s Letters	Revelation
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Matthew</li> <li>2. Mark</li> <li>3. Luke</li> <li>4. John</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Romans</li> <li>2. I Corinthians</li> <li>3. 2 Corinthians</li> <li>4. Galatians</li> <li>5. Ephesians</li> <li>6. Philippians</li> <li>7. Colossians</li> <li>8. 1 Thessalonians</li> <li>9. 2 Thessalonians</li> <li>10. 1 Timothy</li> <li>11. 2 Timothy</li> <li>12. Titus</li> <li>13. Philemon</li> </ol>	
<b>History of the Early Church</b>	<b>General Letters</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Acts</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Hebrews</li> <li>2. James</li> <li>3. 1 Peter</li> <li>4. 2 Peter</li> <li>5. 1 John</li> <li>6. 2 John</li> <li>7. 3 John</li> <li>8. Jude</li> </ol>	

## Introductions to the New Testament Books

*Beside each of the following introductions, write the name of the book that is referenced.  
The books are listed in the order they appear in the Bible.*

### History – 5 books

1. \_\_\_\_\_ In this book, Jesus is presented as Israel's Messiah. The account alternates between Jesus' activities of healing and casting out demons, and major blocks of his teaching, including the Sermon on the Mount (chs. 5-7), the Parables of the Kingdom (ch. 13), and the Olivet Discourse (chs. 24-25). The book closes with the Great Commission (28:18-20).
2. \_\_\_\_\_ This Gospel emphasizes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus announced the Kingdom of God, healed the sick, and died as a ransom for sinners. In addition to Jesus, John Mark features three main groups of people: the disciples, the crowds, and the religious leaders, none of whom understood Jesus. Tradition identifies John Mark (Acts 12:12) as the author. He may have based his Gospel on Peter's preaching, writing sometime in the 50s or 60s a.d.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ This Gospel, written by a gentile, who was a physician, is in the form of a letter to a man named Theophilus. After having carefully investigated all the facts about Christ (1:1-4), the writer documents Christ's life from before His birth through His ministry, death, and resurrection. He showed numerous times His compassion for the poor and the outcast. This Gospel gives the fullest account of Christ's birth, and is the only one that records the parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. This writer, a physician and a colleague of Paul, probably wrote this account in the early 60s a.d. He also wrote Acts.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ This Gospel was written by one of the disciples to persuade people to believe in Jesus (20:30-31). The opening verses declare that Jesus is God, stressing His unique relationship with God the Father. The book focuses on seven of Jesus' signs (miracles), to show his divinity.

### History of the early church

5. \_\_\_\_\_ This Gospel records the early progress of the Gospel as Jesus' disciples took it from Jerusalem throughout Judea, Samaria, and the rest of the Mediterranean world.

### Paul's Letters - 13

1. \_\_\_\_\_ This Gospel is the longest of Paul's letters. Paul announces its theme in 1:16-17: the Gospel is God's power for salvation, because it shows us that the righteousness of God is through faith for all who believe. Paul wrote his letter to Rome in about a.d. 57.

2. \_\_\_\_\_ The city of Corinth was at the heart of an important trade route in the ancient world. Like many cities that thrive on trade, Corinth had a reputation for sexual immorality, religious diversity, and corruption. The church that Paul planted there (Acts 18) floundered under all of these influences and began to divide over various issues.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ In this letter Paul urges the church to be unified with him in his ministry. Paul's opponents were undermining his work, claiming that his suffering (11:24-29) proved he was not a true apostle. Paul responds that his suffering highlights his dependence on Christ, as it points to Christ's strength rather than his own.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Paul addressed this letter to a group of churches in Galatia, a region of present-day Turkey. Paul had preached the Gospel in these churches. He wrote to counter those who taught that Christians must be circumcised in order to be accepted by God.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ The apostle Paul wrote this letter to the churches around Ephesus (Acts 19) to display the scope of God's eternal plan for all humanity - for Jews and Gentiles alike. Paul wrote this letter while in prison, probably in Rome about a.d. 60.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Paul wrote to the church in Philippi to thank them for a gift. He reported the joyful news that Epaphroditus, who had brought their gift to Paul, had recovered from his illness and was returning to Philippi. Wanting the Christians in Philippi to be unified, he challenged them to be servants just as Jesus was when He "made himself nothing" and became a man rather than clinging to the rights of his divine nature (2:1-11). Paul wrote this letter while in prison, probably in Rome about a.d.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Paul wrote to the church in Colossae to fortify it against false teachers who might try to impose strict rules about eating and drinking and religious festivals. Paul wrote while in prison, probably about the same time as he wrote to the Ephesians.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Paul wrote this letter to encourage new Thessalonica believers in their faith, to give them assurance about the eternal state of believers who had died, to remind them of "the coming of the Lord" (4:15), and to exhort them to godly living. He urged them to be at peace, and to "give thanks in all circumstances" (5:18).
9. \_\_\_\_\_ This letter from the apostle Paul was probably written shortly after his first letter to the church in Thessalonica. He had been boasting of them to other churches, telling of their faith and their love for each other in the face of persecution. Paul reminded them that God will repay their persecutors.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ is one of three pastoral letters (including 2 Timothy and Titus) that the aging apostle Paul sent to those who would continue his work. Timothy was, in every way, Paul's spiritual son. Young but gifted, Timothy had been assigned to lead the church at Ephesus - a church needing order in worship as well as doctrinal correction, plagued as it was by false teachers.

11. \_\_\_\_\_ was written as Paul awaited execution. Despite all that he was facing - death, the end of his ministry, abandonment by most of his friends for fear of persecution - he faithfully directed his spiritual son Timothy to the hope that is in Christ.
- 12, \_\_\_\_\_ This pastoral letter from Paul to Titus was intended to offer encouragement and wisdom as Titus endured ongoing opposition from the ungodly and from legalists within his congregations. Paul instructed Titus to complete his assigned job of establishing overseers (elders) for the churches under his care. Paul probably wrote this letter in the 60s a.d.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ is about reconciliation and relationships between Christians. Onesimus (which means "useful") was a slave of a believer named Philemon in Colossae. Apparently Onesimus had stolen from Philemon and fled. At some time while Paul was under arrest, Onesimus met him and became a Christian. Paul apparently wrote this letter at the same time as Colossians and gave it to Onesimus to carry back to Philemon (see Col. 4:9). Paul appealed to Philemon to accept Onesimus back into his household, but as a brother in the Lord rather than a slave.

## General Letters - 8

1. \_\_\_\_\_ The letter to the Hebrews was written to encourage Christians in a time of trial. It does so by focusing on the absolute supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ. This letter, whose author is unknown, was probably written between a.d. 60 and 70.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Sometimes called "the Proverbs of the New Testament," the book of James practically and faithfully reminds Christians how to live. Possibly one of the earliest of the New Testament writings (a.d. 40-50), the book is believed to have been written by Jesus' brother James (Gal 1:19).
3. \_\_\_\_\_ The readers of the apostle Peter's letter were confused and discouraged by the persecution they were encountering because of their faith. Peter exhorted them to stand strong, repeatedly reminding them of Christ's example, the riches of their inheritance in Him, and the hope of His returning again to take them to heaven. Peter probably wrote this letter in the mid-60s a.d.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ describes some twisted versions of Christian truth being taught. Recalling his experience of Christ's glory at the transfiguration (1:17-18), Peter explains the "more sure" truth of the gospel as an antidote to heresy. Peter probably wrote this letter about a.d. 67-68, shortly before his death.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ This apostolic letter speaks authoritatively about the truth of the incarnation - a message his doubting readers needed after hearing false teachers deny the full divinity and humanity of Christ. This general letter to congregations across Asia Minor (now Turkey) was probably written by the apostle John in the late first century a.d.

6. \_\_\_\_\_ warns against the same false teaching mentioned in 1 John. This letter, however, was addressed to "the elect lady and her children" (perhaps a local congregation), and focused on Christian hospitality. The letter was probably written by the apostle John in the late first century a.d.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ applauds a Christian named Gaius for living out the teachings of the apostles. He had welcomed traveling Christian missionaries into his home while condemning Diotrephes, a selfish church leader who not only refused to help these itinerant, godly teachers but also had slandered and opposed those who disagreed with him. The letter was probably written by the apostle John in the late first century a.d.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ The letter of Jude warns against those who, having gained admission to the church, were perverting the grace of God, denying "our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ" (v. 4). Jude was the brother of James (probably "James the Lord's brother," Gal. 1:19). He likely wrote sometime between a.d. 65 and 80.

## Prophecy – 1 Book

\_\_\_\_\_ "The revelation of Jesus Christ" was probably written by the apostle John while in exile on the island of Patmos, off the coast of present-day Turkey. It was addressed to seven actual churches. Revelation begins with letters from Christ himself to these churches, letters that include commendation, criticism, and comfort. Then comes a long series of visions of judgment on the wicked, all in highly symbolic language. The church is depicted under great distress but is assured of the final triumph of Jesus as "King of kings and Lord of lords" (19:16), bringing to an end the rebellion of humanity and ushering in "a new heaven and a new earth" (21:1), where God himself will reign forever and ever (11:15). Revelation was probably written a.d. 95-96.

## Synoptics of the Gospels

The Synoptic Gospels are the first three books of the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. These three books plus John are called the "Gospels" because they chronicle the good news of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection—the basis of our salvation.

The first three Gospels are called "synoptic" because they "see together with a common view" (the word *synoptic* literally means "together sight"). Matthew, Mark, and Luke cover many of the same events in Jesus' life—most of them from Jesus' ministry in Galilee—in much the same order. Nearly 90 percent of Mark's content is found in Matthew, and about 50 percent of Mark appears in Luke. All of the parables of Christ are found in the Synoptics (the Gospel of John contains no parables).

### Synoptics of Jesus' Ministry in Galilee

Pericope	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
The Journey into Galilee	4:12	1:14a	4:14a	4:1-3
The Discourse with the Woman of Samaria				4:4-42
Ministry in Galilee	4:13-17	1:14b-15	4:14b-15	4:43-46a
Jesus' Preaching at Nazareth	13:53-58	6:1-6a	4:16-30	
The Call of the Disciples	4:18-22	1:16-20		

Pericope	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Teaching in the Synagogue at Capernaum		1:21-22	4:31-32	
Healing of the Demoniac in the Synagogue		1:23-28	4:33-37	
The Healing of Peter's Mother-in-law	8:14-15	1:29-31	4:38-39	
The Sick Healed at Evening	8:16-17	1:32-34	4:40-41	
Jesus Departs from Capernaum		1:35-38	4:42-43	
First Preaching Tour in Galilee	4:23	1:39	4:44	
The Miraculous Catch of Fish			5:1-11	
The Cleansing of the Leper	8:1-4	1:40-45	5:12-16	
The Healing of the Paralytic	9:1-8	2:1-12	5:17-26	5:8-9a
The Call of Levi (Matthew)	9:9-13	2:13-17	5:27-32	
The Question about Fasting	9:14-17	2:18-22	5:33-39	
Plucking Grain on the Sabbath	12:1-8	2:23-28	6:1-5	
The Man with the Withered Hand	12:9-14	3:1-6	6:6-11	
Jesus Heals Multitudes by the Sea	4:24-25 12:15-16	3:7-12	6:17-19	
The Choosing of the Twelve	10:1-4	3:13-19	6:12-16	

## Parables

A parable is a figure of speech, a short allegorical or symbolic story designed to illustrate or teach a truth, principle, or moral lesson. The word parable comes from the Greek word *parabole*, which means to place beside or side by side for the purpose of comparison. A parable can usually be identified by the use of the word "like." As used in the New Testament, a parable is usually a story drawn from nature or common life scenarios used to teach a spiritual truth.

**When the disciples asked Jesus, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"** Jesus answered them, *"11-15 He replied, "You've been given insight into God's kingdom. You know how it works. Not everybody has this gift, this insight; it hasn't been given to them. Whenever someone has a ready heart for this, the insights and understandings flow freely (The Message)".* Read more of Jesus' reply in Matthew 13:10-17. From this point on in Jesus' ministry, when He spoke in parables, He explained them only to His disciples. But those who had continually rejected His message were left in their spiritual blindness to wonder as to His meaning.

Parables	Location	Matt.	Mark	Luke	Lessons
<b>Recorded in One Gospel</b>					
The tares	Gennesaret	13:24-43			Good and evil in life and judgment.
The hid treasure	Gennesaret	13:44			Value of Gospel.
The goodly pearl	Gennesaret	13:45-46			Christian seeking salvation.
The draw net	Gennesaret	13:47-50			Visible Church of Christ.
The unmerciful servant	Capernaum	18:23-35			Danger of ingratitude.



<b>Parables</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Matt.</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Luke</b>	<b>Lessons</b>
The labourers in the vineyard	Jerusalem	20:1-16			Call at various epochs.
The two sons	Jerusalem	21:28-32			Insincerity and repentance.
The marriage of the king's son	Mount of Olives	22:1-14			Need of righteousness.
The ten virgins	Mount of Olives	25:1-13			Watchful and careless profession.
The ten talents	Mount of Olives	25:14-30			Use of advantages.
The sheep and goats	Mount of Olives	25:31-33			Final separation of good and bad.
The seed growing secretly	Gennesaret		4:26-29		Gradual growth of religion.
The householder	Gennesaret		13:32-37		--
Gratitude for pardon.	Galilee			7:41-47	Gratitude for pardon.
The good Samaritan	Jerusalem			10:30-37	Compassion to suffering.
The friend at midnight	Jerusalem			11:5-8	Perseverance in prayer.
The rich fool	Jerusalem			12:16-21	Worldly-mindedness.
The wedding feast	Jerusalem			12:35-38	Vigilance towards Second Advent.
The wedding feast	Jerusalem			12:41-48	Conscientiousness in trust.
The barren fig tree	Jerusalem			13:6-9	Unprofitableness under grace.
The great supper	Jerusalem			14:16-24	Universality of Divine call.
The piece of money	Jerusalem			15:8-10	Joy over penitence.
The prodigal son	Jerusalem			15:11-32	Fatherly love to penitent son.
The unjust steward	Jerusalem			16:1-8	Preparation for eternity.
The rich man and Lazarus	Jerusalem			16:19-31	Recompense of future life.
The unprofitable servants	Jerusalem			17:7-10	God's claim to all our service.
The unjust judge	Jerusalem			18:1-8	Advantage of persevering prayer.
The Pharisee and publican	Jerusalem			18:9-14	Self-righteousness and humility.
The pounds	Jerusalem			19:11-27	Diligence rewarded; sloth punished.
<b>Recorded in Two Gospels</b>					
House on rock and sand	Galilee	7:24-29		6:47-49	Consistent and false profession.
The leaven	Gennesaret	13:33		13:20-21	Pervading influence of religion.
The lost sheep	Jerusalem	18:11-14		15:3-7	Joy over penitent.

<b>Parables</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Matt.</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Luke</b>	<b>Lessons</b>
<b>Recorded in Three Gospels</b>					
New cloth and old garment	Capernaum	9:16	2:21	5:36	New doctrines on old prejudices.
New wine in old bottles	Capernaum	9:17	2:22	5:37	New spirit in unregenerate heart.
The sower	Gennesaret	13:3-23	4:1-20	8:4-15	Hearers divided into classes.
The mustard seed	Gennesaret	13:31-32	4:30-34	13:18-19	Spread of Gospel.
The wicked husbandmen	Jerusalem	21:33-46	12:1-12	20:9-18	Rejections of Christ by Jews.
The fig tree and all the trees	Mount of Olives	24:32-33	13:28-29	21:29-31	Indications of Second Advent.