
a *Grace Notes* course

Foundations I

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Foundations 102

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Grace Notes

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Contents of this Lesson

Lesson 4 – A Chronological Overview..... 3

Lesson 5 – Preparing to Study the Bible 5

Lesson 4 – A Chronological Overview

Chronology refers to the sequence of historical events. It is extremely important to the Bible student because it is essential to understand the time relationship between major events in order to understand many passages in God's Word. It helps us to answer the question "When." In this lesson our objective will be to learn the sequence of key Biblical events and the span of time between them.

The student will also be introduced to the time of writing of each book of the Bible, so that he may develop a general understanding of the scope of God's revelation to man.

Dates that have "B.C." after them refer to the years "before Christ." Those that have "A.D." refer to the years after Christ (A.D. was taken from the Latin, Anno Domini, which means "in the year of our Lord).

The dates given are based on a literal understanding of God's Word. At this point in our study we are more interested in learning the sequence of events.

TEN MAJOR EVENTS AND THEIR DATES.

1. THE FALL OF ADAM (3898 BC).

A literal understanding of the genealogies (sequences of birth) that are given in God's Word lets us arrive at a date around 3898 B.C. for the fall of Adam. The Biblical chronology is given in such a way that we must work forward from our starting point. When we discuss the 4th year of Solomon (later in our study), we are able to take the dates backward to this point of beginning.

2 THE FLOOD OF NOAH (2242 BC).

When we follow the genealogy of Genesis 5, we find that a span of 1,656 years elapsed from the fall of Adam to the Flood. This gives us a date of 2242 B.C.

3 THE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM (1875 B.C.).

The genealogy given to us in Genesis 11:10-26 establishes that Abraham was born 292 years after the Flood, or 1948 years after Adam. This would indicate that he was born in 1950 B.C. We learn from Genesis 12:4 that Abraham was 75 years old when he received the promise from God that

became the Abrahamic Covenant. This would mean that the promise was made in 1875 B.C.

4 THE EXODUS OF ISRAEL (1445 B.C.).

Genesis 12-50 reveals to us information concerning the direct descendants of Abraham. The children of Jacob (Abraham's grandson) moved to Egypt where they were eventually enslaved by the Egyptians (Exodus 1). God delivered them from Egyptian slavery by the hand of Moses. The apostle Paul tells us that a span of 430 years had passed from the promise to Abraham to the giving of The Law (Gal 3:17). This dates the Exodus in 1445 B.C. or 2,378 years after Adam.

5 THE FOURTH YEAR OF SOLOMON (965 B.C.).

Solomon was the third king of Israel, following his father David and King Saul. In 1 Kings 6:1 we are told that 480 years had elapsed from the Exodus to the fourth year of Solomon when he began to build the Temple. This lets us calculate the date as 965 B.C. or 2,858 years after Adam.

We are able to date the fourth year of Solomon from other historical records. This lets us establish a fixed date by which we may work backwards and establish the dates previously mentioned for the Exodus, the Promise to Abraham, The Flood and Adam.

6 THE FALL OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM (721 B.C.).

After the death of Solomon, Israel split into two separate kingdoms which became known as the "Northern Kingdom" or Israel, and the "Southern Kingdom" or Judah. The Northern Kingdom fell to the Assyrian Empire in 721 B.C. and ceased to be a kingdom.

7 THE FALL OF THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM (586 B.C.).

The Southern Kingdom fell to the Babylonian Empire in 586 B.C. and was taken into exile for 70 years before the Israelites were able to return to their homeland in 516 B.C.

8 THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST (4 B.C.).

The "B.C." and "A.D." system of dating was not developed until the sixth century after our Lord came. It was designed to reference all historical

dates to His birth. When the Church established this system, it was based on an incorrect understanding of when King Herod lived (who was mentioned in the Bible as being in power when Jesus was born-Luke 1:5). Much later it was discovered that a mistake of 4 or 5 years had been made, but the system was already well established so instead of trying to change all the dates that had previously been established with new dates, it was decided to just say that Jesus was born in 4 or 5 B.C.

9 THE DEATH, BURIAL AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST (33 A.D.).

The majority of Bible scholars establish the date of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ at 33 A.D.

10 THE LAST BOOK OF THE BIBLE (96 A.D.).

This date is related to the apostle John's exile to the Isle of Patmos (Rev 1:9), during the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian, where the Bible was completed (Rev 22:18-19).

CHRONOLOGY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS.

1 ADAM TO THE FLOOD (3898-2242 B.C.).

Genesis 1-5

2 THE FLOOD TO THE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM (2242-1875 B.C.).

Genesis 6-12

3 THE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM TO THE EXODUS (1875-1445 B.C.).

Genesis 12-50, Book of Job

4 THE EXODUS TO THE FOURTH YEAR OF SOLOMON (1445-965 B.C.).

Exodus.

Leviticus.

Numbers.

Deuteronomy.

Joshua.

Judges.

Ruth.

1 Samuel.

2 Samuel.

1 Kings 1-5.

Psalms.

1 Chronicles.

5 THE FOURTH YEAR OF SOLOMON TO THE FALL OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM AND SOUTHERN KINGDOM (965-586 B.C.).

History.

1 Kings 6-22.

2 Kings.

2 Chronicles.

Poetry.

Proverbs.

Ecclesiastes.

Song of Solomon.

Prophecy.

Obadiah.

Joel.

Jonah.

Amos.

Hosea.

Micah.

Isaiah.

Nahum.

Zephaniah.

Habakkuk.

6 THE BABYLONIAN EXILE (586-516 B.C.).

Jeremiah.

Lamentations.

Ezekiel.

Daniel.

7 AFTER THE EXILE (516-400 B.C.).

History.

Ezra.

Nehemiah.

Esther.

Prophecy.

Haggai.

Zechariah.

Malachi.

C CHRONOLOGY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS.

The sequence in which the authors wrote the various inspired New Testament books (referred to as inscripturation) is generally viewed to be as follows:

HISTORY OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST AND THE EARLY CHURCH (55 - 85 A.D.).

Matthew.

Luke.

Mark.

Acts.

John.

EPISTLES FOR THE CHURCH (46 - 85 A.D.).

James.

Galatians.

1 Thessalonians.

2 Thessalonians.

1 Corinthians.

2 Corinthians.

Romans.

Philemon.

Ephesians.

Colossians.

Philippians.

1 Timothy.

Titus.

2 Timothy.

Hebrews.

1 Peter.

2 Peter.

Jude.

1 John.

2 John.

3 John.

Prophecy (96 A.D.)

Revelation.

Lesson 5 – Preparing to Study the Bible

In the last two lessons we were introduced to the importance of knowing significant events that occurred in the past (Lesson 3) as well as the sequence in which they occurred (Lesson 4). We were laying a foundation to help us answer an important question one must ask when studying the Bible—the question "When?" As we seek to understand the Bible, we find ourselves constantly searching for answers to questions we have. There are some basic questions which we must ask and answer because they are important to "handling accurately the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15). God invites us to bring all of our questions to Him (Matt 7:7-8).

The basic questions that we must ask of every verse are very simple: who, what, when, where, why, and how? The answers must be considered while keeping in mind the two primary questions concerning the Christian Life: How does this help us develop a close, personal relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ (Php 3:10)? And, how then shall we live (John 7:17)?

SIX BASIC QUESTIONS FOR EVERY VERSE:

1 "WHO?"

As we ask the question, "who?" we are seeking to determine who is doing the speaking and to whom it is addressed. One example is found in Genesis 22:2 when God told Abraham to sacrifice his son, his only son, to Him. God spoke directly to Abraham, not anyone else in this case, so we, as hearers of the Word, are not under that particular order.

2 "WHAT?"

"What" deals with the reality of the thing being said. Jesus Christ is referred to in Revelation 5 as "the Lamb." This does not mean that He is a shaggy, four-footed creature, but refers to His sacrifice for sin (John 1:29) which is the "reality."

3 "WHEN?"

The "when" question refers us to the time frame to which a particular passage may refer. For instance, Abraham's marriage to his half sister Sarah might be interpreted as immoral until the

reader understands that this marriage occurred before the giving of the Mosaic Law, which forbade such practice. Since personal sin is not an issue when there is no law (Rom 4:15), we conclude that in Abraham's case, incestuous marriage was not sin. Clear answers to the question "when" is crucial to complete understanding.

4 "WHERE?"

"Where" deals with the geography and frequently the culture in which a passage was written. Frequently in the Bible we find the phrase "up to Jerusalem." In many cultures, the phrase "up to" has come to mean to travel north. However, the Biblical intent has to do with elevation and not direction. When Jesus came from Galilee and was going "up to Jerusalem," He was actually traveling south, but going higher up in elevation.

5 "WHY?"

The "why" question is often the most difficult question to answer. The answer is most often found through studying other passages. If one reads the phrase in Isaiah 7:14 which says, "Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel," an obvious question would be "why a virgin?" We might just answer the question with, "that's the way God wanted to do it." That answer, while correct, is not complete.

As we look for the answer we will find the passage in Romans 5 that addresses the effect the sin of Adam had on the human race. We find that through the man, Adam, each member of the human race is given a Sin Nature. If Jesus had had an earthly father, He too would have had a Sin Nature. The answer to "why", in this case, is crucial to Christ's qualifications to pay for sin.

6 "HOW?"

The question of "how" is often difficult to answer as well. We might ask, "How did Jesus walk on water?" The answer is simply that He depended upon the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:18). We also might ask, "How does God control history when mankind has the freedom of choice?" That question is not as easily answered and we will explore it later in our study.

WHAT IF WE CAN'T ANSWER THEM ALL?

These questions and their answers are important. We must remember, however, that our relationship with the Living God is based on faith (Eph 2:8-9; Col 2:6). We won't get all of the answers that we seek in this lifetime, but God has promised that eventually all of our questions will be answered (1 Cor 13:12).

TWO IMPORTANT PERSONAL QUESTIONS:

1 HOW WILL THIS HELP DEVELOP MY RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST?

This is one of the most important questions we can ask. The knowledge that we have gained through the study of God's Word must be united with faith (Heb 11:6), so that our relationship with the Lord will grow. We must trust God's Word as accurate and dependable. The result will be a relationship with the Lord that is grounded in His love and is beyond human knowledge. The apostle Paul said it clearly in Ephesians 3:14-19 when he wrote:

"For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God."

If we are simply studying God's Word for intellectual reasons and not seeking to grow in our love for God and others (Mark 12:29-31), we are becoming arrogant (1 Cor 8:1). The apostle Paul, who knew more theology than any other man on earth (2 Cor 12:1-4), expressed his greatest desire in saying, "that I may know Him" (Php 3:10). Paul, as a Pharisee, had already been on an intellectual quest, but, as a Christian, began a quest for a vital relationship with the Living God.

Look for God's promises, and trust them, so that you might "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet 3:18).

2 HOW THEN SHALL WE LIVE?

Once we come to understand the meaning of the verses we are studying, we must seek to

understand how it applies to everyday life. We are given a beautiful example of this concept in Hebrews 12:1-3. Read the first two verses:

“Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

The illustration the writer of Hebrews chose in these two verses is that of running a race. People in the stands are watching (the heroes of Chapter 11). The race is for speed and distance, and to the victor goes the seat of honor. The contestant removes any additional weight that would slow him down, or any obstacles that could trip him up. His eyes are on the finish line, where the One (Jesus Christ) who has already run His race, and won, stands. Potential joy becomes more important than any fatigue experienced, so the runner endures.

The writer then applies these two verses to our lives in verse three. He writes:

“For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart.”

When we face trials and opposition, pain and sorrow, shame and disgrace for the cause of Christ, we are to consider our Leader and be encouraged by Him! Realize that, “we do not have a great high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15).

WHERE ARE WE GOING NEXT IN OUR STUDY?

Beginning with the next section, we will take a simple look at principles we ought to keep in mind while studying the Bible. These foundational principles of interpretation have been revealed by the Holy Spirit Himself through the written Word. They are principles that we are to pass on from one generation to the next (2 Tim 2:2) so that we all might grow in all respects in our Lord (Eph 4:11-16).

Let God’s Word make a difference in your life.
