The Gospel Message

A short study of these vital topics . . .

- **Respecting Bible Authority**
- **God's Plan for Man's Salvation**
- **Working and Worshipping Together**
- **Introduction to the New Testament**

Simply work your way through the booklet, opening your Bible to the passages mentioned; filling in the blanks that come up along the way. (NOTE – Bible verses are in New American Standard Version, 1995 edition, unless noted otherwise.)

Suggestion: If you are set up to study with someone, as teacher OR student, have blanks filled in for the assigned lesson before class begins.

Based on *Home Bible Study* by Johnny Edwards

Revised and Edited by Kris Emerson (April 2016)

Old Testament Books:

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy
Joshua
Judges
Ruth
I & II Samuel
I & II Kings
I & II Chronicles
Ezra
Nehemiah
Esther
Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Solomon
Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentation
Ezekiel
Daniel
Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

New Testament Books:

Matthew
Mark
Luke
John
Acts
Romans
I & II Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
I & II Thessalonians
I & II Timothy
Titus
Philemon
Hebrews
James
I & II Peter
I, II & III John
Jude
Revelation

Lesson 1: Respecting Bible Authority

Introduction

- Most religious error and division today grows from a lack of understanding of Christ's authority. He has all the right to make all the rules for our salvation, worship and life.
- This lesson is a study of the true standard of Divine authority for today.

Discussion

I. Christ Has All "Right to Rule"

A. "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All _____ has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.'" (**Matthew 28:18**)

B. Christ's authority is revealed to us in the New Testament. "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I _____ to you are the Lord's _____." (**I Corinthians 14:37**)

C. The Bible is God's final and complete revelation to man. (**II Timothy 3:16-17; Jude 3**)

D. Is Christ's authority revealed to us in the New Testament – Yes or No? _____

II. God's Law Demands Respect

A. God expects men to respect what He says! "You shall _____ _____to the word which I am commanding you, nor _____ _____ from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." (**Deuteronomy 4:1-2**)

B. John said, "Anyone who goes too far and _____ _____ _____ in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son." (**II John 9**)

C. Examples of God's strictness:

1. Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit and were driven from the garden of Eden for not respecting God's command. (**Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-24**)
2. Nadab and Abihu offered "strange fire" which they had no authority to do and were killed. (**Leviticus 10:1-2**)
3. David incurred the anger of God for moving the ark of the covenant in an unauthorized manner. (**I Chronicles 13:1-14; 15:11-15)**

III. God's Will Can Be Understood

A. Many think the Bible cannot be understood. However, we are expected to understand it. "By referring to this, when you read you can _____ my insight into the mystery of Christ." (**Ephesians 3:4**) "So then do not be foolish, but _____ what the will of the Lord is." (**Ephesians 5:17**)

B. Do you think that God would give us a book to read, believe, and obey and then make it too hard to understand – Yes or No? _____

C. This does not mean that the Bible reads as a first grade reader. It simply means that with study you can understand what God expects of you without some special anointing of God, or degree from a seminary, or having to unquestionably rely on a church or a preacher.

IV. False Standards Of Authority

Let's look at some wrong standards of authority that many appeal to in religion.

A. Conscience

1. In religious matters, many people just let their conscience be their guide. Conscience is that which tells us whether we are doing right or wrong based upon what we have been taught. If we have been taught wrong, our conscience has faulty data to work from, and may approve of what is unapproved, or condemn what is approved.
2. Personal experiences and feelings can lead one astray, yet many are guided by them. "There is a _____ which _____ right to a man, but its end is the way of _____." (**Proverbs 14:12**)
3. The apostle Paul was guided by his conscience (**Acts 23:1**), but he did many things which were religiously wrong. "So then, I _____ that I had to do many things _____ to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." (**Acts 26:9**)
   a. *Was Paul wrong for persecuting Christians – Yes or No?* _____
   b. *Can one be taught wrong and yet their conscience feel right – Yes or No?*_____

B. The Wisdom of Men

1. Men can be wrong. Our faith must not be in our own thinking, nor in the wisdom of others. "…so that your faith would not rest on the _____ of _____, but on the power of God." (**I Corinthians 2:5**)
2. God's way and man's way are different. "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its _____ did _____ come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe" (**I Corinthians 1:21**). "I know, O Lord, that a man's way is not in himself, nor is it in a man who walks to _____ his steps." (**Jeremiah 10:23**)
3. This will eliminate all man-made creed books as authoritative standards. God's only creed is the Bible! *Are there other books we need besides the Bible – Yes or No?*____

C. The Majority

1. The majority of people can be wrong.
2. Just because the majority may do a thing does not make it right. There were only _____ persons saved in the ark. (**I Peter 3:20**)
3. "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are _____ who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are _____ who find it." (**Matthew 7:13-14**)
4. Throughout history, those standing for what is right have often been the few. (**Genesis 6/7 -** Noah and His Family **/ I Kings 18:17-19 -** Elijah versus 850 Prophets)

D. Parents

1. Many want to follow tradition handed down by their parents. Belonging to a church solely because one's parents did is going by a false standard.
2. Paul was involved in religious error because he followed tradition. "…and I was advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral _____." (**Galatians 1:14**)
3. Christianity is an individual effort. You must examine the Bible for yourself and do what it teaches. We will be judged for our faith and practice, not our parents.
4. "He who loves _____ or _____ more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." (**Matthew 10:37**) *If you love family more than Jesus are you worthy of Him – Yes or No?*_____

E. The Law of Moses

1. Many fail to realize that the law of Moses is not our standard of authority in religion today. It served its purpose and is no longer the authoritative standard for worship.
2. "It was added because of transgressions … until the _____ would come to whom the promise had been made." (**Galatians 3:19**) Who is identified as the seed? _____ (**Galatians 3:16**)
3. Two covenants are the Law of Moses, the "first," and the Law (or Covenant, or Will, or Testament) of Christ, the "second." (**Hebrews 8:6-13**) Christ, through his ministry, "_____ the first in order to _____ the second." (**Hebrews 10:9,10**)
4. Since the first covenant has been taken away along with its "regulations of _____" (**Hebrews 9:1**), Christians do not keep the Sabbath, burn incense, offer animal sacrifices, and do other things they did under the Law of Moses. See also **Colossians 2:14-17**. *Was the law of Moses taken away – Yes or No?* _____
5. It was the death of Christ that put into force the New Covenant. (**Hebrews 9:16-17**)
6. The Old Testament is still beneficial for us today. We learn how God deals with people and receive many moral lessons from it. (**Romans 15:4; I Corinthians 10:11**) It is inspired of God and we believe what it says. We just do not live under the same specific laws as the Jews did.

False standards of authority keep people from understanding the Lord's will for us today.

V. Conclusion

A. The standard of authority for today is Christ's will in the New Testament.
B. In the judgment to come, we will be judged by the gospel of Christ! (**John 12:48**)
C. If we follow mistaken human authority, we will suffer the same mistaken destiny. "And if a blind man guides a blind man, _____." (**Matthew 15:14**)

Additional Notes:

Jesus asked, "The baptism of John was from what source, from heaven or from men?" (**Matthew 21:25**). He only gave two choices—either a religious practice or belief has authority from God (heaven), or from men. For thought and discussion:

- **Why** do you believe what you do?
- Is the **ultimate** source of this belief from Heaven (God's Word), or men (parents, friends, society, preacher, feelings)? That is, while we may have learned it from our parents, preacher, or simple "think" it's so, can its source be **ultimately** traced back to God's Word?
- Each of us, at one time or another, will read something in Scripture that does not align with our conscience, parents, or experience.
- *Do we believe in God's authority no matter what – Yes or No?*_____

Lesson 2: God's Plan for Man's Salvation

NOTE - *important*: Answer these questions as best you can BEFORE doing this lesson. Write your answers down. AFTER you have done the lesson, come back and compare what you have studied from God's Word with your answers.

- Are you saved? _____ If not, do you want to be saved today?_____
- If you are saved, how were you saved? _____
- How old were you when saved? _____ Have you been baptized?_____
- If so, were you immersed? _____ Why were you baptized?_____
- Finally, were you baptized *before* or *after* you were saved?_____
- What do you believe is the purpose of water baptism?_____

Introduction

- All men are lost in sin and cannot save themselves. However, in His matchless grace, God has made salvation available to all.
- There are many conflicting ideas about salvation, but God's plan is clearly revealed in the New Testament.

Discussion

I. Why do we need God's plan?

A. Because we all sin.
No one is "good enough." "For _____ have _____ and fall short of the glory of God." (**Romans 3:23**) Sins are not inherited, but are transgressions of God's law. (**1 John 3:4**)

B. Because sin leads to spiritual death
"For the wages of sin is _____." (**Romans 6:23**) This "death" is separation from God and His grace.

C. Because goodness alone does not save
Good works, being a good moral person, and acts of worship cannot take away sin.

1. List four things about Cornelius that showed his character. (**Acts 10:2**)
   _____
   _____
2. However, Cornelius needed to hear "words to you by which _____ _____ _____ _____," you and your household." (**Acts 11:14**)
3. David was sorry about his sin, but knew that acts of worship alone would not atone. (**Psalm 51:15,16**) He appealed to God's _____. (**Psalm 51:1**)

D. Because God's plan offers the only hope

1. Jesus said, "Unless you believe that I am He, you will _____ _____." (**John 8:24**)
2. He also said he was "the way, and the truth, and the life" and that _____ _____." (**John 14:6**)

II. God's Role in God's plan for our salvation

There are some things that God has already done for us to make salvation available to all.

A. God sent His Son to die.

"For God so loved the world, that He _____, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." (**John 3:16**)

B. God bestowed His grace through the death of Jesus.

"In Him we have redemption _____, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace." (**Ephesians 1:7**)

"For by _____ you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." (**Ephesians 2:8)**

C. Jesus was raised from the dead and appointed as Judge over us all.

"Because He has fixed a day in which He will _____ _____ _____ in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." (**Acts 17:31**)

D. The Holy Spirit revealed God's plan for man.

1. God's plan for our salvation in Christ was "revealed _____ ____ _____" to chosen men who would teach it to others. (**1 Corinthians 2:9-10,13**)
2. These chosen men are apostles and prophets. Writing about God's plan of salvation in Christ, the apostle Paul said it had "now been revealed to _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ in the Spirit." (**Ephesians 3:5**)

E. Jesus sent his disciples to teach the Gospel.

1. This message is called "the gospel" or "good news." It is God's good news of salvation, and it is man's only way to find God. (**John 14:6; Romans 1:16-17**)
2. Jesus told his disciples, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." The gospel must be communicated to every person. (**Mark 16:15**)
3. This one gospel must not be changed. The one who changes it will lose their soul and lead others to lost their souls as well. (**Galatians 1:6-9**)

III. Mankind's role in God's plan for our salvation

A. Hear, Believe and Obey the Gospel of Christ

1. "And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has _____ and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has _____shall be condemned" (**Mark 16:15-16**).
2. This faith will cause one to obey, just as Noah's faith caused him to build an ark (**Hebrews 11:7**) and Abraham's faith caused him to obey and go to another country (**Hebrews 11:8**). In fact, all through time, true belief has spurred authorized action.
3. *If someone believes in Jesus will they obey His gospel – Yes or No?* _____

B. Repent and give up one's will to Christ as Lord

1. "Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?' Peter said to them, '_____, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins ... '" (**Acts 2:37,38**)
2. Read **Acts 26:20**. Repentance is a change of will, and in obedience to the gospel of Christ is a commitment to do the will of the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. Confess one's faith in Christ as the Son of God

"that if you _____ with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he _____, resulting in salvation." (**Romans 10:9-10**)

D. Be baptized for the remission of sins

1. When those pierced in heart as a result of believing in Jesus as the Christ (**Acts 2:36-37**) asked the apostles what they needed to do, they were told, "Repent and each you _____ in the name of Jesus Christ _____ _____; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (**Acts 2:38**) Three thousand were baptized "that day." (**Acts 2:41**)
2. Ananias, sent by God to the penitent believer, Saul, told him, "Now why do you delay? Get up and _____, and _____, calling on His name." (**Acts 22:16**)
3. Peter reminded his readers that corresponding to Noah's salvation by water, baptism "now _____." (**1 Peter 3:21**)
4. Baptism is not a plan devised by man, nor does this act "earn" anything, but rather by the grace of God when we in penitent faith are baptized upon our faith in Christ in order to obtain the benefits of His death, God forgives us of all our sins. We are not saved by our works, but by obeying the will of our God who will save us by faith.
5. (**Romans 6:3-4) -** "we have been _____ with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised... we too might walk in _____ of life."
6. **(I Corinthians 12:13**) "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one _____."
7. Baptism is immersion in water, not sprinkling or having water poured on us.
   a. "John was _____ in Aenon near Salim, because _____ _____." (**John 3:23**) It doesn't take much water to sprinkle water, or pour water, on people.
   b. "And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they _____ went down into the water, _____ as well as _____, and he _____ him." (**Acts 8:38**) There would be no need for the baptizer to get into the pool or stream if baptism could be experienced by sprinkling or pouring.
8. *Is baptism, like faith and repentance and confession, essential to salvation?*_____

E. Be faithful

1. When one is baptized in the name of Christ, the Lord adds him to the body of the saved, or the church. (**Acts 2:47**) He then should "walk _____ _____." (**Ephesians 4:1**) This manner of life is discussed in the last three chapters of this letter, as well as in the other New Testament letters from Romans through Revelation.
2. The Corinthian Christians were exhorted to "be _____, always _____, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord." (**1 Corinthians 15:58**)
3. God's plan is that Christians meet together to work and worship together to help them stay faithful. These groups were called "churches," like the ones in Corinth, Philippi, and Thessalonica (see **1 Corinthians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1**). Working together in such local groups, or churches, we can "_____ _____ for the faith of the gospel." (**Philippians 1:27**).

Lesson 3: Working and Worshipping Together

Introduction

- Those who believed and obeyed the gospel of Christ devoted themselves to working and worshipping together. (**Acts 2:41,42**)
- As we learned in lesson one, this work and worship must be according to Bible authority. We cannot simply do as we think best, or what others do, or even what the Law of Moses instructed people who lived under it to do. Churches and denominations cannot authorize work and worship God has not authorized in the New Testament. The apostle Paul wrote to the preacher, Timothy, who worked with the church in Ephesus, "**Hold fast the pattern** of sound words which you heard from me." **(2 Timothy 1:13**, New King James Version)
- This lesson is a study of the New Testament pattern for work and worship together in Christ.

Discussion

I. Worship and Work

A. Prayer

1. Christians should pray, and should also come together to pray.
2. "_____ without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (**1 Thessalonians 5:17-18**)
3. "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and _____." (**Acts 2:42**)

B. Singing

1. Christians should sing songs of worship, and should also come together to sing.
2. "Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to _____." (**James 5:13**)
3. "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing _____ with _____, _____ with thankfulness in your hearts to God." (**Colossians 3:16**)
4. "…_____ to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, _____ and making melody in your heart to the Lord." (**Ephesians 5:19**)
5. "Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the _____ of _____ that give thanks to His name." (**Hebrews 13:15**)
6. There is no record in the New Testament of Christians using, or being told to use, mechanical instruments of music in worship. This practice in churches began centuries later and lacks Divine authority.

C. The Lord's Supper

1. Christians should remember the Lord's death, and assemble to commemorate it.
2. Read **I Corinthians 11:23-26** - "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this _____ _____.' In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, _____.'

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you_____ _____ _____ _____ until He comes."

3. The early Christians assembled on the first day of the week to "break bread," or observe this memorial meal. (**Acts 20:7**)

D. Giving

1. Christians should give to relieve needy Christians and to support the work of the gospel of Christ, and should also contribute to a common fund for these purposes when gathered on the first day of the week.
2. "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. _____ let each one of you _____, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come." (**1 Corinthians 16:1, 2**) Observe when this collection was made.
3. Tithing was required under the Old Testament, but in the New Testament Christians are instructed to give "as he may prosper." (**1 Corinthians 16:2**)
4. "Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves _____. (**2 Corinthians 9:7**)
5. There is no record of churches in the New Testament raising funds by soliciting from the world, having sales of goods, or other type fundraisers.

E. Teaching

1. Christians should study God's Word to grow, and come together to study God's Word. It is the one Truth that will judge us on the last day (**John 12:48**).
2. "Like newborn babies, _____, so that by it you may _____ in respect to salvation." (**1 Peter 2:2**)
3. "And for an entire year they _____ and _____ considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." (**Acts 11:26**)
4. This is why local churches plan Bible classes and sermons.

II. Working and Worshipping Together

A. Local churches

Christians banded together as a "team" to "_____ for the faith of the gospel." (**Philippians 1:27**) These groups, or teams, were called "churches," and since they banded together due to their faith in Christ and for His work and worship, they were sometimes called "churches _____" (**Romans 16:16**), or "church _____" (**1 Corinthians 1:2)**, or "the church of the Thessalonians _____." (**1 Thessalonians 1:1**)

B. Local autonomy

1. "Autonomy" refers to self government. The churches in the New Testament were governed by qualified leaders within each local church. In the New Testament pattern, there was no centralized government that ruled the work and worship of several churches, whether two or two thousand.
2. These governing leaders were called by several terms: "overseers" (same as "bishops"), "shepherds" (same as "pastors"), or "elders" (same as "presbyters"). (**Acts 20:17,28; 1 Peter 5:1,2**) Being a preacher did not make one a "pastor," and never do we read of only one pastor in a local church.

3. The jurisdiction of these leaders was limited to "the flock of God _____ _____." (**1 Peter 5:2**) See also **Acts 20:28**. There were no bishops, elders, or pastors over any church but the local church of which they were members.
4. There were no synods, assemblies, boards, or any kind of centralized oversight over churches, whether by a group of men or by one man.

C. Authorized Work of the Local Church

1. *Help Saints in Need* – "For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor _____ in Jerusalem." (**Romans 15:26**) "And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief _____ living in Judea." (**Acts 11:29**) We have no example of collected church funds being used for anyone other than saints.
2. *Support Gospel Preachers* – The apostles Paul wrote a letter to the Philippians and mentioned how they "sent a _____more than once for my _____." (**Philippians 4:16**) An authorized work of the church is supporting preachers.
3. *Assemble for Worship* – Since the very beginning of the Lord's church, we find Christians assembling for worship services. **I Corinthians 14:26** discusses "when you _____" and how we sing and study. Therefore, we use funds and make it a work of the local church to provide a building and materials for local worship and singing and study of the Scriptures.
4. We have no Scriptural authority for local churches of Christ to engage in work outside of the objectives defined above. When we stand before the Lord to give an answer for where we worshipped and the church with which we worked, these are the activities we can defend with the New Testament.

Conclusion

- Not all worship is acceptable to God. Jesus said, "_____ do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines _____." (**Matthew 15:9**)
- Whether work or worship, we need to be sure we respect Bible authority (see lesson one).

Additional Notes:

Not all churches that claim to follow Christ practice the work and worship that is according to the New Testament pattern. It is every individual's responsibility to find a group that respects the Bible as authority (see lesson one). The most important consideration is how your fellowship with a church impacts your devotion to the Lordship of Christ and your relationship with Him.

Lesson 4: Introduction to the New Testament

Introduction

- God's plan is that the New Testament be read and heard. "When you _____ you _____ _____ my insight into the mystery of Christ." (**Ephesians 3:4**) "I adjure you by the Lord to _____." (**1 Thessalonians 5:27**)
- Many are not familiar with the New Testament, so this lesson is a brief introduction to it with the aim of increasing understanding when reading and studying the New Covenant in Christ.

Discussion

I. The Four Gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

A. Historical foundation for our faith

1. These 4 historical records provide the foundation for our faith: Jesus as Son of God.
   a. Luke said he wrote his gospel so that Theophilus "may know _____ about the things" he had been taught." (**Luke 1:4**)
   b. John said this about his gospel, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but _____ _____; and that believing you may have life in His name." (**John 20:30, 31**)
2. They were written in the first century by the authors whose names are attached. Their age and accuracy are attested to by over 5,000 Greek manuscripts, over 19,000 versions, and over 19,000 quotations of men who lived within 300 years of Christ's death. Fenton John Anthony Hort, 1828-1892 A.D., a renowned textual scholar of the 19th century who served on the committee of the English Revised Version in the 1880s said this about the New Testament, "...the amount of what can in any sense be called substantial variation is but a small fraction of the whole residuary variation, and can hardly form more than a thousandth part of the entire text." (*The New Testament in the original Greek* By Brooke Foss Westcott, Fenton John Anthony Hort, Introduction and Appendix, pg. 2-3). There is no other ancient book like it! We can have confidence that major versions of today (King James Version, New King James Version, American Standard Version, New American Standard Version, English Standard Version) accurately represent the original texts.

B. Further information about the Gospels

1. Two of these four documents were written by apostles of Christ (Matthew, John), and two by prophets who lived at the same time as Jesus and the Apostles (Mark, Luke).
2. Matthew wrote especially for the Jewish reader, and this explains why he began his gospel with a genealogy of Jesus. (**Matthew 1:1-17**)
3. Matthew, Mark, and Luke included material about the life of Christ that is similar in many respects, and thus they are called the "synoptic" gospels.
4. To prove Jesus, Gospel writers largely use Prophecy, Miracles and the Empty Tomb.
   a. *Prophecy* – **Matthew 1:22-23; 2:5-6; 2:14-15; 2:17-18; 3:1-3; 4:12-16.**
   b. *Miracles* – **Matthew 8:1-4, 5-12, 14-17, 23-27, 28-34**
   c. *The Empty Tomb* – **Matthew 27:62-66; 28:1-15**

II. The Acts of the Apostles

A. Sequel to the Gospels

1. Acts was written by Luke. It begins where he left off in his gospel. Compare **Luke 1:3-4; 24:44-53 with Acts 1:1-11**.
2. It records examples of the miracles that were promised to the apostles to confirm the preaching of the gospel. (**Mark 16:15-20)**
3. It demonstrates how the apostles understood and preached the great commission Jesus gave them. (**Matthew 18:18-20; Mark 16:15-16**) In doing so, it serves to clarify vital questions such as the role of baptism in salvation.
4. It is a Divine commentary on the promised mission of the Holy Spirit. (**John 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:13-14**)

B. Background to the rest of the letters

1. Acts provides background of the origin of churches that had letters written to them, e.g. Thessalonians (**Acts 17**), Corinth (**Acts 18**), and Ephesians (**Acts 19**).
2. Acts provides fuller insight into some of the incidents referred to in the letters, e.g. **1 Corinthians 16:8,9.** (**Acts 19:11-20**)

C. Other information about Acts

1. A good outline is in **Acts 1:8** - "you [the apostles] will be my witnesses..."
   - In Jerusalem, **chapters 1-7**
   - In all Judea and Samaria, **chapters 8-12**
   - Even to the remotest part of the earth, **chapters 13-28**
2. The acts of two apostles are focused on
   - Peter, **chapters 1-12**
   - Paul, **chapters 13-28**
3. Acts covers the first 30 years or so of early church history (c. 30 – c. 63 A.D.).
4. Acts contains vital information about the church's establishment, growth, work, and organization (both the universal and local church).

III. Romans - Revelation (22 letters)

B. Value

1. They were written to individuals and to churches in the first century. They were designed to teach, to warn, to refute error, to encourage, and to establish in the faith of the Gospel. Consider the short letter to the **Colossians** as an example:
   a. Chapters 1 and 2 remind Christians of Jesus greatness: **1:15-20; 2:8-14**
   b. Chapters 3 and 4 implore Christians to live for Him: **3:1-5; 3:18-21; 4:5-6**
2. They provide insight about the work, worship, and organization of churches in Christ. Consider the qualifications of an Elder for example: **I Timothy 3:1-7**
3. They challenge us to grow ever greater in our service to Christ. **– I Thess. 4:1-10**
4. Reading them, studying them, and instilling their lessons in the heart is vital to Christians' growth and steadfastness in the faith. If we respect Divine authority, we will respect these letters. (**I Corinthians 14:37** – "The Lord's Commandments").

B. Authors

1. The apostle John wrote five: Gospel of John; 1,2,3 John; Revelation.
2. The apostle Peter wrote two: 1 and 2 Peter.
3. The apostle Paul wrote thirteen: Romans; 1 and 2 Corinthians; Galatians; Ephesians; Philippians; Colossians; 1 and 2 Thessalonians; 1 and 2 Timothy; Titus; Philemon.
4. James wrote one: James.
5. Jude wrote one: Jude.
6. The author of Hebrews is unknown.

Conclusion

- There are 27 letters comprising the New Testament. The authors are four apostles (Matthew, John, Paul, Peter), and four prophets (Mark, Luke, James, Jude), and one unknown (letter to the Hebrews). Christians—their faith, hope, and standard of living—are "built on the foundation of _____, Christ Jesus himself being the corner stone." (**Ephesians 2:20**)

- As prophets (all apostles are prophets, but not all prophets are apostles) these men were given the power to write the exact words God intended by the power of the Holy Spirit. Discussing the gospel of Christ, Paul wrote "it has now been revealed _____ to His holy apostles and prophets." (**Ephesians 3:5**, New King James Version. If you use the New American Standard Version, see the marginal note on "in the Spirit.")

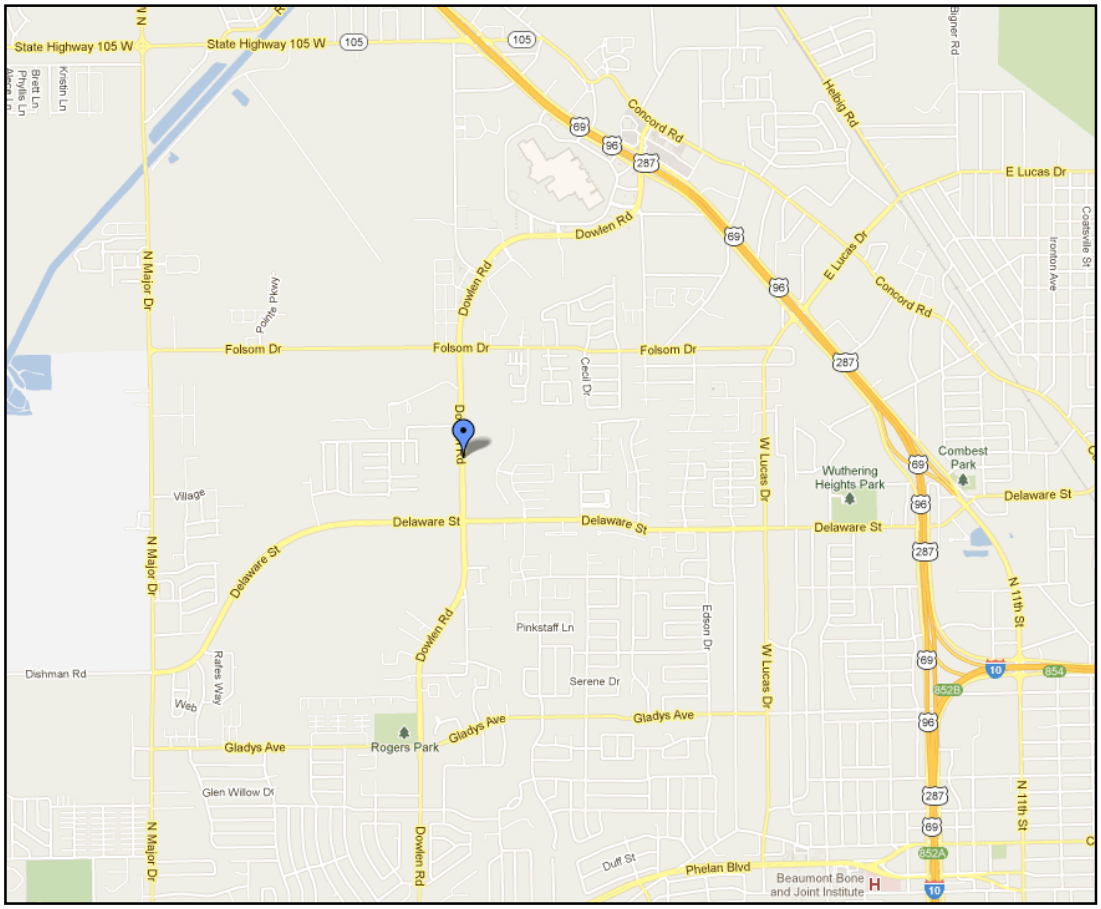
- Preachers should "preach _____" (**2 Timothy 4:2**), not human philosophy, myths, and other "fruitless discussion." (**1 Timothy 1:6**) Christians should expect men to support their teaching by citing book, chapter, and verse. And all should then "examine the Scriptures daily to _____." (**Acts 17:11**)

- The Bible promised that Jesus would come. The Bible promised blessings to those who serve Jesus. But Scripture also teaches us to anticipate and prepare for another promise!

- Jesus is coming again. The New Testament describes that incredible day and teaches us that we must follow the covenant of Christ to be prepared. There's a Great Day Coming!

    - The greatest Demonstration of Power will be seen (**II Thessalonians 1:7-9**)
    - The greatest Resurrection will occur (**John 5:28-29; I Corinthians 15:50-52**)
    - The greatest Crowd will be assembled (**Matthew 25:31-32**)
    - The greatest Judge will preside over us all (**Matthew 25:31; II Timothy 4:8**)
    - The greatest Books will be opened (**Revelation 20:11-12; John 12:48**)
    - The greatest Separation ever known will occur (**Matthew 25:31-33**)
    - The greatest Verdict will follow (**Matthew 25:34, 41**)

- So, of all the questions someone may be asked to answer in their lives, above them all is this simple question: *Are you ready for that day to come*?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