

Learn to Read the Bible Effectively

Distance Learning Programme

Session 11



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Section 1

Motivation in reading the Bible

We cannot compel you to read your Bible. We can give you all kinds of tips, but the motivation must come from you. The Bible says a lot about motivation.

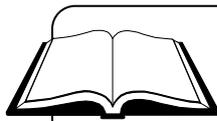
Consider the incident where Joshua gave his final message to the people. In that speech he tried to motivate them and he did so by giving them a choice.



Read Joshua 24 v 14 and 15

Joshua spelt out the choice: serve either the God of Israel or the gods of the surrounding nations.

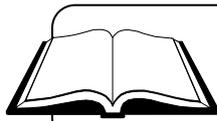
When the Law of Moses was given to Israel, they were promised blessings if they obeyed, and cursing if they disobeyed.



Read Deuteronomy 30 v 19

The real choice was between life or death.

You can see this motivation expressed even more clearly by the apostle Peter:



Read John 6 v 66 to 69

Here some of Jesus' followers were deserting him. Jesus asked the twelve disciples if they were also going to leave him. Peter then said why he was determined not to leave. "To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life". Peter knew of no-one else who could tell him about a better and more lasting life than the one which Jesus was talking about. As far as Peter was concerned, there were big issues at stake here!

The same issues face everyone; "What happens to us when we die?" should be a question everyone wants answered. We have tried to show that the Bible provides evidence to show that it comes from God. That being so, we should trust it when it talks about this vital issue of life and death. This should motivate us to read and understand the Bible.

We are going to look at what the Bible says about life and death.

Where did life come from?



Read Genesis 2 v 7
Job 33 v 4

These verses say that life came from God and is sustained by Him.

Where did death come from?

The first man and woman did not keep the command that God gave them. The result of this was the death sentence. (If you want to read the whole story, read Genesis chapters 2 and 3.)



Read Genesis 3 v 17 to 19

Death was to be the punishment for this rebellion against God.

Everyone has this same rebellious streak, so everyone dies.



Read Romans 5 v 12

What happens at death?

What does the Bible say about death?



Read Job 34 v 14 and 15
Ecclesiastes 3 v 19 and 20;
9 v 5 and 6

Very simply, if God removes His power and the breath of life, people return to the dust. In the Bible, death is often referred to as “falling asleep”. It is an “echo” which often occurs.

What happens after death?



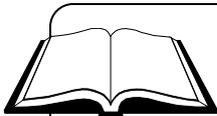
Read Daniel 12 v 2

John 5 v 28 and 29

Acts 24 v 15

The Bible clearly tells us that there is something beyond death.

The subject of life and death is summed up in the letter to the Romans.



Read Romans 6 v 23

Death is like sleep – the person is totally unconscious. But God has a plan which can involve waking dead people out of that sleep.

What greater motivation could we need to look at and understand this book – the Bible!

OPTIONAL ASSIGNMENT 15

Life and Death

Look up the references we have mentioned and write in your own words what they are saying. If you have a Bible with cross-references, write down what you learn from these.

Section 2

Overview of the books of the Bible (Part 5)

We want to conclude the overview by looking at New Testament times.

The New Testament revolves around the Lord Jesus Christ. The four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) tell his life story and message. There is a summary of all four Gospels in the “Summary of the Books of the Bible”. The map below shows the land of Israel in New Testament times including places mentioned in the four Gospels.

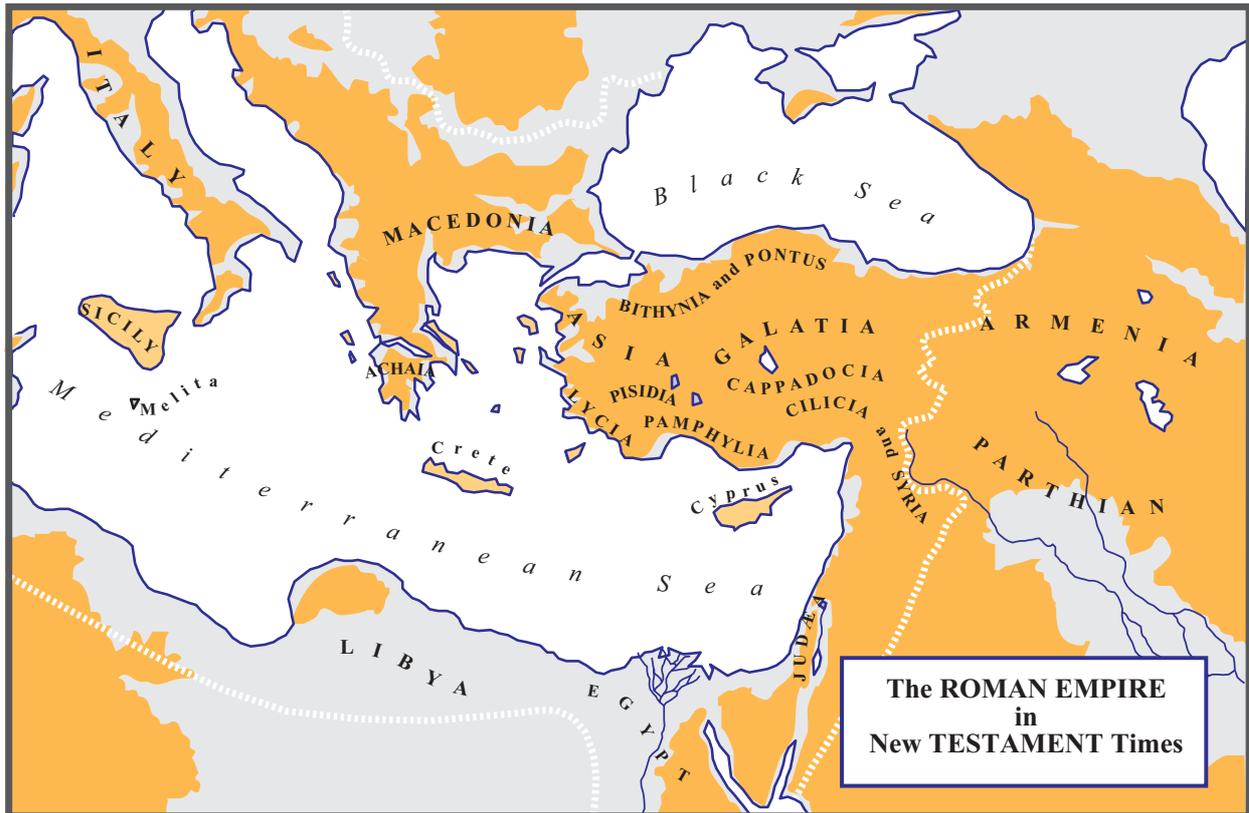


The Acts of the Apostles covers the development of the early church after Jesus had ascended to heaven. It records the spread of preaching from Jerusalem, which was mainly to Jews, through to preaching throughout the known world to both Jews and non-Jews.

- Acts 1 The ascension of Christ.
- Acts 2 to 5 The preaching of Peter, mainly in Jerusalem, and the resulting opposition from the Jewish authorities.
- Acts 6 and 7 The preaching of Stephen and the opposition that brought his death.
- Acts 8 The preaching of Philip.
- Acts 9 The conversion of Saul (later called Paul). Paul was to become the main force in spreading the gospel round the world.
- Acts 10 and 11 The first non-Jewish convert – Cornelius.
- Acts 12 Persecutions.
- Acts 13 to 28 The growth and problems of the early church and the journeys of Paul, who eventually reached Rome.



*A model of a Roman corn ship.
Paul could have travelled to Rome
on a ship like this.*



The map shows the Roman Empire in New Testament times including places mentioned in the New Testament.

It is interesting to see what was happening in the Acts of the Apostles. Paul moved out from Jerusalem and Israel and finally ended up in prison in Rome. You may think that this was not a very good position for a preacher to be in. Yet if you think a little, it was the best possible place for him to be.

Paul was in prison in the capital city of the then known world. He was in fact only under “house arrest” for his own safety, as no charges had been laid against him. So he was free to receive anyone interested in hearing his message. This then, in effect, helped to spread the gospel all round the known world. Those travelling to and from Rome would hear the news of the gospel and take it back home.

Another critical force in spreading the gospel was persecution. This had the effect of scattering the believers throughout the Roman Empire. They would take the message with them, and their beliefs would take root in the areas where they settled.

Rome was the superpower at the time the New Testament was written.

A Roman legionary.

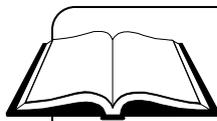


The Roman Empire had swallowed up the Greek Empire which went before it. So the world of the New Testament would have had a very mixed culture. There would have been many different ideas and influences that could affect people in their way of life and thought.



*The great temple of Apollo at Corinth.
The fact that meat which had been offered to idols was on sale in the markets was a real problem of conscience for the early believers at Corinth.*

As a result of this mixed culture there was a lot said in the New Testament to try and prevent the early believers being led astray by the influences around them. It was made clear that these influences would directly affect the early believers.



Read Acts 20 v 28 to 31
1 John 4 v 1

The letters (Romans through to Jude) were sent to the early churches to help them try and resist some of these influences.

You can look at the summary of the contents of the New Testament in the “Summary of the Books of the Bible”.

OPTIONAL ASSIGNMENT 16

Overview of the books of the Bible

Continue from assignments 6, 8 and 11, making your own summary of the Bible story. Using the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, you can now complete the story with the New Testament.