



A Brief Overview of the Bible

*All Scripture is God-breathed
and is useful for teaching, rebuking,
correcting and training in righteousness,
so that the servant of God may be
thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

2 Timothy 3:16 – 17

Notes and Comments by John Sullivan



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I. THE LIBRARY OF THE BIBLE

The Bible is not just one book. It is a library of 66 books written by many different authors over a period of many years and organized in sections.

THE OLD TESTAMENT (39 books)

The Books of Law	<i>Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy</i>
The Books of History	<i>Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther</i>
The Books of Poetry	<i>Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs</i>
The Books of Prophecy	
Major Prophets	<i>Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel</i>
Minor Prophets	<i>Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi</i>

THE NEW TESTAMENT (27 books)

The Biographies of Christ	<i>Matthew, Mark, Luke, John</i>
The History of the Church	<i>Acts</i>
The Letters and Epistles	<i>Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude</i>
The Book of Prophecy	<i>Revelation</i>

*Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light for my path.*

Psalm 119:105

2. A SUMMARY OF THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Books of Law

GENESIS	The book of beginnings or origin telling the story of the creation, the flood, and the beginnings of God's chosen people through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.
EXODUS	The departure of the Israelites from Egypt, the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai, and the journeys in the wilderness.
LEVITICUS	The book of the Levites, the priests, mostly concerned with the laws and rules of worship the priests were expected to follow.
NUMBERS	Contains two accounts of censuses of the Hebrews, a history of the wilderness wanderings, and the appointment of Joshua as Moses' successor.
DEUTERONOMY	The law of Moses set down for the second time, mainly for the non-priests. Continues the history begun in Numbers.

The Books of History

JOSHUA	The history of the Israelites' conquest of Canaan, under the leadership of Joshua, the crossing of the Jordan River, capture of Jericho, driving out the Canaanites, and dividing the land among the twelve tribes of Israel.
JUDGES	The leaders (judges) who ruled Israel after the death of Joshua. The pattern of unfaithfulness, persecution, repentance, prosperity, unfaithfulness, etc. occurs several times in this period.
RUTH	A Moabite widow, in the days of the Judges, left her people to serve her mother-in-law and God. She married a Jew and became an ancestor of David (and, thus, of Jesus).
I & 2 SAMUEL	The history of Israel during the judgeship of Samuel, the reign of the first king of Israel, Saul, and the reign of David, the second king of Israel.
I & 2 KINGS	A history of the reign of Solomon, the building of the temple, Israel's kingdom at its peak, the divided kingdom, and the eventual destruction of each part.
I & 2 CHRONICLES	More history of the kings, mostly devoted to the kings of Judah.
EZRA and NEHEMIAH	The return of the Jews from exile to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple and restore the worship of God.
ESTHER	A Jewish maiden in captivity becomes the queen of Persia and saves her people.

The Books of Poetry

JOB	A long narrative in the form of a poem describing the suffering of Job and the ways of God, which are beyond human reasoning.
PSALMS	150 poems, mostly by David, dealing with matters of religion, history, and daily living.
PROVERBS	A collection of wise sayings, mostly written by Solomon, concerning life and behavior, intended for the moral instruction and guidance of the people of Israel.

ECCLESIASTES More writings of Solomon, pointing out the vanity of following the ways of the world.

SONG OF SONGS A series of poems, probably written by Solomon, about two lovers, which could be symbolic of God's love for his people.

Major Prophets

ISAIAH Prophecies concerning the Babylonian captivity, the restoration of Israel, and many prophecies concerning the Messiah.

JEREMIAH Known as the weeping prophet, Jeremiah mainly predicts doom, but he does express hope for the renewal of God's covenant.

LAMENTATIONS Poems by Jeremiah concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the repentance of the people.

EZEKIEL Ezekiel was one of those carried into captivity in Babylonia. His prophecies deal with both the times before and after the destruction of Jerusalem.

DANIEL A young man carried into Babylonian captivity and used by God to deal with several foreign kings.

Minor Prophets

HOSEA A prophet whose life and marriage was used by God to teach the lesson of God's unfailing love and Israel's unfaithfulness.

JOEL Lamentations over the destruction of the land, exhorting the people to repent and promising that God will forgive.

AMOS Prophecies God's judgment on the nations surrounding Israel, and then prophecies that God's strongest judgment will be on Israel, which, in spite of God's gifts, had still done evil.

OBADIAH The shortest Old Testament prophecy, dealing with the destruction of Edom, an enemy of God's people.

JONAH The account of Jonah's commission to preach to a hostile city, his refusal to do so, his encounter with the great fish, and finally his successful preaching to the city.

MICAH A younger contemporary of Isaiah. He prophesied concerning threats of punishment and appeals to repent.

NAHUM Prophecies concerning the destruction of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria.

ZEPHANIAH Prediction of a great day of wrath upon the nations of the earth if the people do not repent.

HABAKKUK Prophecy concerning the destruction of the wicked city in Judah by the Chaldeans.

HAGGAI Rebukes the Jews for their refusal to rebuild the temple of God, while they concentrated on building their own houses.

ZECHARIAH Contains an earnest exhortation to repent and also promises the coming of the Messiah.

MALACHI Attacks the degeneration of the priesthood, which Malachi finds particularly terrible since they now are able to worship again; challenges the unfaithful lack of tithing; and contains a prophecy concerning the forerunner of Christ.

3. A SUMMARY OF THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Biographies of Christ

- MATTHEW** Matthew was a tax collector who was called by Jesus to be one of His apostles. This Gospel has more references to the Old Testament stories and Scriptures than any of the others and gives evidence to those with a Jewish background that Jesus really is the Messiah.
- MARK** The shortest Gospel was written by John Mark who accompanied his uncle, Barnabas, and Paul on their first missionary journey. This Gospel focusses more on the actions of Jesus as the Servant of the Lord and the worker of miracles.
- LUKE** Luke, who was known by Paul as a dear friend and doctor (*Col. 4:14*), wrote this Gospel and the book of *Acts*. Both of his books are written as evidences to someone named Theophilus, and show Jesus, not only from the Jewish perspective, but also as the Savior of all humanity.
- JOHN** The apostle John wrote the fourth Gospel much later than the other three. He gives his inspired perspective with the teachings and characteristics of Jesus that often were not discussed in the first three Gospels.

The Book of History

- ACTS** This book is usually referred to as *The Acts of the Apostles*, but many have also pointed out that it could also be called *The Acts of the Holy Spirit*. Luke, the author, gives the history of the church from its birth on the Day of Pentecost through the missionary travels of the apostles, with Peter and Paul being mentioned the most.

The Letters or Epistles

- ROMANS** Paul wrote his letter to the Christians in Rome before he had visited them. He talks in detail about the Gospel in the first part of his letter. Then he closes with practical applications of how to live in view of the grace that God has given us.
- I & 2 CORINTHIANS** Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth points out some of the glaring problems they had. He commends them in his second letter for their repentance and uses his personal life and ministry as an example to them.
- GALATIANS** Paul wrote this letter to a group of churches in the region known as Galatia, which is in the middle of what we now call Turkey. He especially them that the Law of Moses, which some people were falsely trying to bind on them, was no longer binding on Christians today.
- EPHESIANS** Paul wrote this letter to the church at Ephesus while in prison. In this letter, Paul shows the blessings of being in Christ and teaches some of the practical aspects of a life that pleases the Lord.
- PHILIPPIANS** Paul wrote this letter to the church in Philippi while in prison. It exalts Christ and shows the Christians how to live lives that shine in the darkness of the world around them. Even though in prison, Paul was rejoicing and wanted others to rejoice in the Lord as well.

COLOSSIANS	Another of Paul's prison letters, this one to the church at Colosse exalts Christ as the head of the church and gives practical instructions for lives that are consistent with being in Christ.
I & 2 THESSALONIANS	In these letters to the church at Thessalonica, Paul expresses his love for them and encourages them to continue building one another up. He also answered some questions that they had about the second coming of Jesus.
I & 2 TIMOTHY	These personal letters of Paul to his young friend Timothy were written during the last few years of Paul's life. He passed on encouraging and practical teachings about Timothy's personal life and about his ministry.
TITUS	This personal letter from Paul was written to the faithful minister Titus, who was serving the churches on the island of Crete. Like <i>2 Timothy</i> , this letter describes healthy ways to organize and instruct the churches so that they will make the teachings about God attractive to outsiders.
PHILEMON	A personal letter from Paul to Philemon, concerning Philemon's runaway slave, Onesimus. Paul had met Onesimus, converted him, and is now sending him back to Philemon, as a brother.
HEBREWS	The author of this epistle is not known for sure, although many assume that it might be Paul. It is also not addressed to a specific church. In this epistle the Old Testament is referred to over and over, with the constant theme that the New Covenant, through Jesus, is superior to the Old. The epistle also has great encouragements about being faithful and keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus.
JAMES	James, the brother of the Lord, wrote this epistle to a general audience. He instructs the churches with practical teachings about Christian behavior. He strongly urges them to not just listen to the Word, but to do what it says.
I & 2 PETER	These two letters were written by the apostle Peter to a general audience. Peter gives the early Christians, as well as anyone reading his letters today, hope in the midst of suffering. There are also encouraging words about the second coming of Jesus.
I, 2, & 3 JOHN	These letters are written by the apostle John. He encourages Christians to walk in the light of God and to love one another the way Christ loves us. He makes it clear that anyone who claims to be in Christ must walk as Jesus did.
JUDE	Jude, another brother of the Lord, was referred to as Judas in the Gospels. (<i>Matt. 13:55</i>) His letter is addressed to all Christians and urges them to stay true to the Gospel in the face of false doctrine that was prevalent at the time and faithful in the face of persecution that was also prevalent.

The Book of Prophecy

REVELATION	The apostle John wrote this beautiful, symbolic prophecy. The first three chapters have straight forward warnings and encouragements to the 7 churches in the province of Asia (which we now call Turkey). Then there is the beautiful description of his vision of heaven and the worship around the throne of God. The rest of the book symbolically shows the triumphal victory of King Jesus and His church over Satan and his followers.
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4. SCRIPTURE READINGS

INTRODUCTION: The following 21 devotional readings will give you a sampling of Bible events and personalities. These readings are just a small sampling. The readings and any summary writing that you may do are designed to take about 30 minutes a day, but you can obviously go at any pace that fits you for now.

Here are three recommended goals for these studies:

- 1) Get a big picture of the story of the Bible – not just facts about events and people, but a better understanding of what God is like and how he views us.
- 2) Build your appetite to want to read much more in the future. In fact, find the desire to spend the rest of your life getting to know God and his Word better.
- 3) Find out that it is possible (though challenging) to develop a good spiritual rhythm in your life to have a daily time of reading and praying. You can do this!

The prayer in **Psalm 119:18** is a great way to start every reading.

*Open my eyes that I may see
wonderful things in your Law.*

Add to that prayer this instruction from **2 Timothy 2:7**.

*Reflect on what I am saying,
for the Lord will give you insight into all this.*

As you pray that prayer at the beginning and throughout your reading and as you devote yourself to do your part of reflecting on what he is saying, believe that God will show you wonderful things in your reading about who God is and how he views you.

Also, close your reading with a prayer to ask God to help you apply what you are reading to your life that day.

Devotional
I

The Creation
Read *Genesis 1*.

Today's Date: _____

God shows his power, his creativity, his wisdom, his attention to detail, and his love of diversity in the amazing creation of all of the natural features of this universe and everything in it. What comes to your mind about God as you read this story of his creation? _____

Concerning those creations, you see the repeated phrase "And God saw that it was good." He seems to view his creation of humans as his crowning glory as he refers to his finished creation as "very good."

What does the statement in verses 26 and 27 about being made in God's image tell you about God's view of you? _____

What else stands out to you or what questions do you have about this reading? _____

**Devotional
2**

The Fall
Read *Genesis 3*.

Today's Date: _____

We learn a lot from this story of Adam and Eve's sin. Notice the way they tried to hide from God and blame others for their sin. Notice also God's announcement to Satan about an offspring of Eve who would later crush Satan's head (verse 15). This is the first, though very brief, description of Jesus' work.

Although the main focus of the Bible is God revealing the truth about Himself, it also reveals the truth about the enemy Satan. What does this story tell you about Satan? _____

What else stands out to you or what questions do you have about this reading? _____

NOTE AGAIN: The readings in these devotionals are just a sampling. Read as much more as you can now, realizing though that you will come back for much more in your future.

NOTE: These next two devotional readings deal with covenants that God made with specific individuals, Noah and Abraham, centuries before he made his larger covenant through Moses, the one that applied to his chosen people as a whole and the one we usually refer to as the Old Covenant (Testament).

**Devotional
3**

The Flood
Read *Genesis 6 – 8*.

Today's Date: _____

You can see how bad it was at that time (6:6) and how it made God feel. You can also see how different Noah was from the rest (6:9).

What do you learn from this story about God? _____

What do you learn from Noah's example of obedience that you want to apply to your life? _____

What else stands out to you or what questions do you have about this reading? _____

Devotional
4

God's Covenant with Abraham

Today's Date: _____

Read *Genesis 12:1 – 3; 15:1 – 21.*

This is God's promise to establish his covenant with Abraham and his descendants (Jews). God promised Abram, as he was called in the beginning, that he would be blessed and that he would be a blessing to others. God promised Abraham many descendants and a land – that's why it's called the Promised Land. This is the beginning of the Jewish nation as God's chosen people to be a blessing to the rest of the world.

What does God's blessing to Abraham tell you about God and his view of us? _____

What else stands out to you or what questions do you have about this reading? _____

NOTE: This is a good time to give a reminder to consider using the two suggestions listed on page 7 from *Psalms 119:18* and *2 Timothy 2:7*.

Devotional
5

The Passover & the Exodus Out of Egypt

Today's Date: _____

Read *Exodus 12.*

This event, which took place some 400 years after the previous reading, is one of the most important times in the history of God's people – the Passover Meal just before the exodus out of Egypt. (This "sampling" of readings unfortunately skips the calling of Moses and the story of the 10 Plagues in *Exodus 1 – 11*. Read those chapters later when you have time.)

This Passover Feast was to be celebrated every year by the Jews. Jesus was killed during that feast, about 1500 years after the first one (*Mark 14:1 – 2*). It was the Passover Meal that we call His last supper. The New Testament refers to Jesus as the lamb of God, in comparison to the Passover lamb (for instance: *John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7; and 1 Peter 1:19 – 20*)?

What does the story of the original Passover tell you about God? _____

What else stands out to you or what questions do you have about this reading? _____

Devotional
6

Giving the Law

Read *Exodus 19 – 20*.

Today's Date: _____

About 3 months after they left Egypt, God gave them His law on Mt. Sinai. If you look up information about the location of this mountain in a Bible resource, you will find that it is very difficult to locate today exactly. Chapter 20 gives what we call the Ten Commandments. This is also one of the most important events in Bible history.

What do you learn from this event about God's view of you (for example 19:5)? _____

What else stands out to you or what questions do you have about this reading? _____

Devotional
7

The 40 Years of Wandering in the Desert

Read *Numbers 13 – 14*.

Today's Date: _____

The Israelites made it to the edge of the Promised Land about 2 years after leaving Egypt. (This sampling of readings skips some of the adventures during the time that lead them to this point. That journey was sometimes characterized by grumbling and resistance on behalf of some of the people, but it was always characterized by the faithful provision and leading of God on their journey.) At this point, however, the majority of the people chose to let their fears get the best of them. As a result, God had to punish them with another 38 years of moving around until they were allowed to go in to the promised land. The only exception of any adults who were currently over the age of 20 were Joshua and Caleb, the faithful two.

What does this story tell you about faith and fears? _____

What else stands out to you or what questions do you have about this reading? _____

They had been waiting for 40 years to cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land. You can imagine how that wait felt.

What do you learn from God's encouragement to Joshua in chapter 1 to apply to your life? _____

What else stands out to you or what questions do you have about this reading? _____

About 400 years after crossing the Jordan River into the Promised Land, the Israelites insisted to God's prophet Samuel that they be allowed to have a king like other nations around them. This upset God, who wanted them to consider him as their king, but he allowed it. The first three kings, Saul, David, and Solomon, each reigned about 40 years. Here is a sample reading about each of them:

1. King Saul (**I Samuel 10:17 – 27**)

From what you read here, what was Saul like at the beginning of his reign? _____

Unfortunately, he did not stay that way. He disobeyed God, and was replaced by David.

2. King David (**I Samuel 16:1 – 13**)

What do you learn from God's statement in verse 7? _____

David had his ups and downs spiritually, but over-all remained faithful. Among other things he is known for his many powerful psalms. (See *Psalms 23*, for instance.)

3. King Solomon (**I Kings 4:20 – 34**)

This passage shows the height of his reign. What stands out to you? _____

Unfortunately, he also did not stay faithful to God. But his proverbs (as mentioned in verse 32) are the basis of the Bible book by that name. The book of *Ecclesiastes* also shows his reflection on his life at the end, and gives a good explanation of the vanity of living only for self. (*Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes* are more books of the Bible that you will thoroughly enjoy reading later.)

What else stands out to you or what questions do you have about these readings? _____

**Devotional
10**

The Divided Kingdom

Read *1 Kings 12*.

Today's Date: _____

The reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon are referred to as the days of the United Kingdom of Israel. This chapter refers to the fall of that United Kingdom. And how great was the fall!

- This is about 40 years after the last reading about Solomon's reign at its height.
- Unfortunately, Solomon did not live up to the spiritual potential that he had in the beginning. He sinned by allowing the worship of idols to come into Israel.
- The Kingdom of Israel divided with a man named Jeroboam becoming the king of the Northern Kingdom (usually referred to as "*Israel*" from that time on) and Solomon's son, Rehoboam, being the king of the Southern Kingdom (usually referred to as "*Judah*" from that time on).

What do you gather from this reading about the main causes of that division? _____

What else stands out to you or what questions do you have about this reading? _____

**Devotional
11**

The Exile

Read *2 Chronicles 36*.

Today's Date: _____

Another 400 – 500 years have passed since the Kingdom of Israel divided.

- The Northern Kingdom, which was started by Jeroboam, had been destroyed by the Assyrians around 721 BC, about 130 years earlier than this event.
- Here you read about the Babylonian captivity of the Southern Kingdom (about 586 BC).

What are the root causes for this extreme punishment, as described in this chapter? _____

Verse 21 says that the land now enjoyed its "Sabbath rests". You can look at *Leviticus 25:1 – 17* to see what that was all about. Like many of the laws God gave his people, the instructions given there about resting the land every seven years were mostly ignored. So God made it happen anyway.

This passage also describes the return from exile 70 years later (verses 22 – 23).

What else stands out to you or what questions do you have about this reading? _____

**Devotional
12**

The Return from Exile

Today's Date: _____

Read *Ezra 1*.

The return from exile, which was also mentioned in the previous reading, was ordered by King Cyrus. He was the king of the Persian empire that had taken over world-domination from the Babylonians. King Cyrus gave the edict. But you can see from verses 1 and 2 that God was really in charge. What does that tell you about God? _____

The returning exiles rebuilt the temple (*Ezra 5:1 – 2* and *6:15*) which had been desecrated and destroyed by the Babylonians some 70 years earlier. Ezra and Nehemiah came later to help strengthen and rebuild the nation's foundation on God. The story of Esther also took place during that time, so that the books of *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, and *Esther* all fit into this period of the return from exile in the 5th Century BC.

What else stands out to you or what questions do you have about this reading? _____

NOTE: As you can obviously see, this is just a small sample of readings from the Old Testament. The focus has been on the major historical events of that time, and, unfortunately, we did not get to sample anything from the amazing poetry and prophet sections. Hopefully, though, this sample has given you an appetite to spend the rest of your life reading all of the exciting and inspiring stories and teachings found in God's Word. We now focus on the New Testament.

**Devotional
13**

Immanuel – God with Us

Today's Date: _____

Read *Matthew 1*.

The genealogy of Jesus (verses 1 – 17) is not just a list of difficult names. It shows the fulfillment of the prophecies that Jesus would come from the lineage of David. It also shows the importance of the events and people in the Old Testament.

Joseph is described as a righteous man (verse 19). An angel appeared and explained to him, and to us, that Jesus was not conceived in the natural way. His miraculous conception points to what we call the "Incarnation" – God becoming man. Meditate on that amazing fact. How does it inspire you? _____

The child was to be named Jesus. What does that name mean? _____

He was to also be known as *Immanuel*, which describes *God with us*. That shows God's desire that is frequently stated in the Old Testament to be in a close, covenant relationship with his people. What does that mean to you? _____

Don't let the birth of Jesus just be a children's story that is thought about only at Christmas time. Think about what this incarnation means to your life today.

What else stands out to you or what questions do you have about this reading? _____

**Devotional
14**

John the Baptist

Today's Date: _____

Read *Matthew 3*.

John was a relative of Jesus. Verse 3 is a quote from a prophecy in the Old Testament (*Isaiah 40:3*) explaining John's role in preparing the way for Jesus.

What stands out to you about John's personality and his ministry? _____

Verses 13 through 17 describe Jesus' baptism. If you're not familiar yet with all of the Bible's teachings about baptism, you will find out more about it later. For now, what do you learn from God's statement about Jesus at his baptism? _____

What else stands out to you or what questions do you have about this reading? _____

**Devotional
15**

The Teachings of Jesus

Today's Date: _____

There is obviously so much that can be said about Jesus' teachings. One part of the definition of the word *disciple* is *student*. Jesus is our Teacher, and we are his students. Here is just a small sample of his teachings. Read each one and write down what stands out to you.

The Blessed Attitudes (*Matthew 5:1 – 16*) _____

The Greatest Commandments (*Mark 12:28 – 34*) _____

Humility and Pride (*Luke 18:9 – 14*) _____

The Good Shepherd (*John 10:1 – 21*) _____

What do you think about Jesus the Teacher?

**Devotional
16**

The Miracles of Jesus

Today's Date: _____

There is also obviously so much that can be said about the miracles of Jesus. Here, again, is just a sample of those miracles.

Matthew 8. What do you learn about Jesus from these 5 amazing miracles? _____

Mark 5. What do you learn about Jesus from these 3 amazing miracles (one of which is a repeat of what is found in the above reading)? _____

What do you think about the power and love of Jesus? _____

**Devotional
17**

The Crucifixion of Jesus

Today's Date: _____

Read *Luke 23*.

In *Luke 22:1*, we are told that Jesus was killed during Passover Week. Recall from our study of the original Passover that the blood of the lamb was crucial in saving the people from death. Jesus showed himself to be the true Lamb of God by choosing this time to die.

What does the fact that he willingly gave up his life for you show you about His heart? _____

What stands out to you about the horrible pain and the despicable shame that Jesus went through that day? _____

What stands out to you about the forgiving attitude that Jesus had towards those doing this to him and towards the thief next to him? _____

What do you think it had to be like for the Father to watch all of this happening to His Son?

The next devotional reading will show the joy of the resurrection, but today spend some time thanking God for what happened on the day of the crucifixion.

The Resurrection of Jesus

Today's Date: _____

Read *John 20*.

In the devotional readings so far, we have often seen events that changed history. Jesus' resurrection is obviously at the top of the list of history-changing events. Verse 9 shows that Jesus' disciples are not the ones who made up this story. Even though Jesus had told them that he was going to be resurrected, they didn't expect it to happen.

How do you think they all felt to see Jesus alive again (if we can possibly imagine that feeling)? _____

The appearance to Thomas is one of several post-resurrection stories that took place over the next 40 days before Jesus ascended to heaven. What stands out to you about Jesus' patience in dealing with Thomas' doubts and how do you think that applies to the way he deals with your doubts? _____

Don't overlook the importance of verses 30 – 31. This shows you one of God's goals for these readings you have been doing: God had the words of this book written down to show you what you need to know about him so that you would have faith. Has reading God's Word promoted faith in you?

What else stands out to you or what questions do you have about this reading? _____

The Birth of the Church

Today's Date: _____

Read *Acts 2*.

The Day of Pentecost was a festival that happened every year, 50 days after Passover. God chose this time, when Jews from all over the world were in town for the feast, to begin the church. What does that reveal to you about God? _____

Jesus had told Peter that he would be given the keys to the kingdom (*Matthew 16:17 – 19*). If keys are thought of as opening the door for others to come in, Peter's sermon on this day might be at least a part of what Jesus was talking about. The Bible tells us that 50 days earlier, at the arrest of Jesus, Peter denied Jesus in a cowardly way (*Matthew 26:69 – 75*). Now, he is very bold. What do you think made the difference? _____

3000 people were baptized that day. According to verse 42, what did these new disciples devote themselves to? _____

What else stands out to you or what questions do you have about this reading? _____

The Conversion of Saul

Today's Date: _____

Read Acts 9.

Saul started off as a man who zealously opposed anyone who followed Jesus. The previous two chapters of Acts show the disastrous results of Saul's persecution. Jesus dealt with that threat, not with violence against Saul, but by converting him.

What does this story tell you about the power and love of Jesus? _____

What do you learn from it about God's love for you? _____

What else stands out to you or what questions do you have about this reading? _____

The New Paradise

Today's Date: _____

Read Revelation 21 – 22.

Yes, this is the end of this journey of our overview of the Bible. But it ends with a beginning. There is a sequel to God's amazing creation of the universe and of His beloved people. The original creation started out in a paradise that we can only imagine. But sin entered, and that paradise was lost. The new creation begins with an even better new paradise that will never be lost.

You see in verse 3 of chapter 21 that the covenant promises – *He is our God; we are His people* – come to a final reality in this new paradise. God always has been and always will be faithful to His part of that promise. Isn't it amazing to think that we will be finally able to faithfully keep our part of the promise?

The tree of life that we saw taken away in Genesis 3 is established in the new paradise (22:1 – 3). There we will live forever. Jesus' final words in the Bible are found in chapter 22. Three times he promises that he is coming back (verses 7, 12, 20). How does that make you feel? _____

Isn't it also great that the final verse in God's revelation to us emphasizes God's grace. As so often asked in these devotional readings: what does that reveal to you about God? _____

What else stands out to you or what questions do you have about this reading? _____

CONCLUSION

Recall the three recommended goals for these devotional readings given in the introduction on page 7:

- 1) Get a big picture of the story of the Bible – not just facts about events and people, but a better understanding of what God is like and how he views us.
- 2) Build your appetite to want to read much more in the future. In fact, find the desire to spend the rest of your life getting to know God and his Word better.
- 3) Find out that it is possible (though challenging) to develop a good spiritual rhythm in your life to have a daily time of reading and praying. You can do this!

How do you feel about those goals?

- 1) Do you think you have gotten to know God and his Word a little better?
- 2) Has this built your appetite to read more in the future?
- 3) Has it shown you both the challenges and the possibilities of developing the daily rhythm of Bible reading and prayer?

Recall also the prayer from *Psalms 119:18* and the instruction from *2 Timothy 2:7*. Do you think that God has shown you wonderful things in his Word, and has he given you insight into the Word as you have spent some time reflecting on it?

Finally, recall also the statement in *John 20:30 – 31*. Has your reading of God's Word helped you grow in your faith of God?

If the answer is "no" or "not yet" for any of those questions, don't give up. Continue with your search until you see those results.

God bless you as you continue to know Him better and know His Word better!