

MASTERING
THE ENGLISH
BIBLE

The Gospels



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Introduction to *Mastering the English Bible*

Mastering the English Bible is a comprehensive survey of the Old and New Testaments, covering the entire Bible history and every book of the Bible.

It consists of the following segments:

- Old Testament History Genesis to the Silent Years
- Old Testament Job to Psalms
- Old Testament Proverbs
- Old Testament Prophetic Books
- The Gospels
- Acts
- Romans to Corinthians
- Galatians to Thessalonians
- Pastoral Epistles
- General Epistles
- Revelation

Mastering the English Bible is for beginning Bible students as well as for advanced ones. It is for youngsters (teens and above) and oldsters. In fact, the Bible pictures can be used for children. It is for individuals, homes, and churches. It is for preachers, both for those formally educated and informally.

Mastering the English Bible is nearly a complete Bible college curriculum in one course. The aim is to educate the student in **Bible history**, **Bible times** (e.g., Egypt, ancient Babylon, the Hittites, Assyria, neo-Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome), **Bible interpretation** (e.g., context, comparing Scripture with Scripture, defining words, paying attention to details, understanding repetition, interpreting metaphoric language), **Bible doctrine**, **theological terms**, **Bible geography**, **Bible typology** (e.g., the Passover, the Tabernacle, the Levitical Priesthood, the Levitical offerings), **Bible culture**, **Bible biography**, **Bible archaeology**, and **Bible prophecy**, and to teach the fundamentals of the law of Moses, the Gospel, Israel, and the Church. The course aims to give the student a broad comprehension of the Bible as a whole and how each part fits into the whole.

Mastering the English Bible is very practical. There are extensive lessons on prayer, Christian growth, spiritual warfare, the husband-wife relationship, child training, evangelism, church planting, pastors, deacons, church discipline, the woman's ministry, youth discipleship, the church as a body, spiritual gifts, congregational singing, and much more.

Mastering the English Bible is accompanied by the *Way of Life Pictorial Bible*, which is an extensive series of multimedia PowerPoints packed with detailed maps, historical backgrounds, treasures from archaeology, Bible pictures, reconstructive drawings of ancient places, charts, video clips, and other visual aids. Many of these were captured by the author in the best archaeological museums in America and abroad, plus research trips to Israel, Greece, Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, Europe, and England.

Mastering the English Bible is the textbook, and *The Pictorial Bible* is the multi-media supplement. Both are an essential part of the course.

Mastering the English Bible is more than a Bible course. It is a philosophy that a true New Testament church is a church in which every member is a serious, lifelong Bible student. If this is not the case, the church cannot possibly be what God wants it to be. It cannot even have the congregational singing that God requires. Consider Colossians 3:16, “**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another** in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” This is a description of a true New Testament church. It is a church in which the Word of God is dwelling in the members richly, not slightly, in all wisdom, meaning that the Word of God is getting down into the daily lives and producing practical wisdom for godly Christian living.

To be a serious, lifelong Bible student is necessary to know God (the greatest benefit), to know God’s will, to be prepared for God’s will (priest, ambassador, teacher, soldier, builder of the church, minister of spiritual gifts, builder of the home); to make wise decisions; to be victorious in spiritual warfare; and to grow in Christ. Philip Henry, father of the Bible commentator Matthew Henry, observed, “All grace grows as love to the word of God grows.”

The goal is that this course will be the foundation for a whole lifetime of Bible study. The student must learn how to carve out time from his schedule so that he makes daily Bible study a habit; he must learn how to *read* the Bible and how to *study* the Bible; he must learn how to apply rules of interpretation and how to use Bible study tools and how to pursue Bible study projects. These things are taught in the Way of Life course *The Effectual Bible Student*.

https://www.wayoflife.org/publications/books/effectual_bible_student.php. This is a basic course. The advanced course is *Understanding the Bible for Yourself*, also available from Way of Life Literature.

Mastering the English Bible is a product of 49 years of serious Bible study and teaching. The author has a passion to help God’s people become effectual Bible students, beginning at the youngest age possible. The church and the home are to work in harmony toward this objective.

Mastering the English Bible also features a syllabus, review questions, tests, test scores, and other teaching tools. These are available to those who purchase the textbooks and register online.

The course syllabus is very important. It explains the course objectives, the requirements, and the student projects, and it gives a weekly timeline of what the student should accomplish and when to take the tests. It is a class schedule that can be used by teachers or by private students. For the larger courses, there are two ‘paces,’ one shorter and one longer.

In 2022, we are in the process of making our multi-media materials (e.g., videos, PowerPoints) available for free viewing and downloading at the Way of Life web site, www.wayoflife.org.

The textbooks are available for purchase.

Passionate about serious Bible study

I am passionate about helping people master the English Bible, because of what it has meant to me. I absolutely love the Bible, and I absolutely love the old English Bible. I fell in love with it as soon as I was saved in 1973. I have loved it more and more as I have studied it for five decades. It is the Book of my life. Since I was saved, no one has ever had to force me, or even to encourage me, to study the Bible. It is truly my delight. I can’t put into words what it has meant to me, but King David has already expressed it.

The Four Gospels Introduction

1. The Gospels continue the further revelation of God's eternal plan.

- It is described in Eph. 1:10, "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him." Everything will be "**one in Christ.**" He is the center of God's eternal plan. God intends to glorify Christ, His beloved Son. He will be the Head of all things. "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence. For it pleased *the Father* that in him should all fulness dwell" (Col. 1:18-19). All things will bow to Jesus Christ as Lord "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living" (Ro. 14:9); "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth" (Php. 2:10). All things will be rooted out of Christ's kingdom that are not submitted to Him. The old creation is under God's judgment and will be destroyed. Everything "in Adam" will be judged. Only that which is "in Christ" will endure into the new heaven and new earth. Christ is the last Adam (1 Co. 15:45). He is the Man that God had His eye on when He made the first Adam, knowing the first Adam would sin. Christ is the perfect man, the man who loves God with all His being. After the Great White Throne judgment, the first creation will be destroyed as described in 2 Peter 3:12-13, "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."
- The Old Testament describes the preparation for Christ's coming. God controls the times and seasons, raising up kings and putting down kings (Da. 2:20-21).
- **Genesis** records man's creation and fall, the global judgment by the flood, the repopulation of the earth by the nations descending from Noah's sons, the call and covenant of Abraham, the beginning of Israel by Jacob's 12 sons, and the descent of Israel into Egypt in the time of Joseph.
- **Exodus to Deuteronomy** record Israel's mighty exodus from Egypt to reveal God as the one true God, the giving of the law and the Levitical priesthood at Mt. Sinai, the 40-year wilderness wandering, and the preparation for the entrance into the Promised Land.
- **Joshua** records the conquering of the Promised Land and the settling of the 12 tribes into their allotted inheritance.
- **Judges** records Israel's first 450 years in the land, during which God kept Israel from disintegration by the ministry of judges.
- **Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles** record the kingdom of David, which is the forerunner to Christ's kingdom.
- The **Psalms and Prophets** contain prophecies of Christ and His eternal kingdom.
- Everything was preparation for the coming of Christ. He is the second Man, the last Adam (1 Co. 15:45, 47), who fulfills God's eternal plan. Christ is the man that God intended from the beginning (perfect in righteousness, loving the Father supremely, delighting in God's will). He redeemed sinners by His blood and rose from the dead as the Head of the new creation of men who are conformed to His image (Col. 1:18-20; Ro. 8:28-29; 1 Co. 15:20-22; Heb. 2:9-11).

2. The Gospels present Jesus Christ as the full revelation of God (Heb. 1:3).

Jesus is the answer to life's most fundamental question, "Who is God and what is He like?"

Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh (1 Ti. 3:16). The God who created the world and walked with Adam in Eden, became a man.

The first thing we learn from the Gospels is what God is like, His character and ways. When we see Jesus, we see God. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (Joh. 1:18). What a wonderful thing that God has so manifested Himself to the fallen creation, that we might know Him! "The incarnation, 'God with us,' shows the purpose of His heart, not only to have man with Him, but for Him to be with man. The Lord God walking amid the trees of the garden which His own hands had planted tells of the yearning of a heart which could not rest content, were He not with His creatures" (Samuel Ridout, *The Four Gospels*).

The Gospels, on their very face, are irrefutable evidence of the divine inspiration of the Bible. Man could not invent Jesus Christ. All of the histories and biographies and legends of human history have never described a Person anything like Jesus Christ. The Person of Christ is as different from the greatest of ancient heroes and mythological figures as light from darkness.

3. The Gospels give a four-fold portrait of Christ.

"Taken together, they set forth, not a biography, but a Personality. ... the four Gospels, though designedly incomplete as a story, are divinely perfect as a revelation" (Scofield).

The Gospels are like a musical quartet in which the four voices harmonize perfectly into one beautiful one.

The Gospels are like four photographs of an individual, each portrait adding another feature.

Each Gospel is unique and is an essential part of the whole portrait. In this course, we are going to study the Gospels by the timeline of the major events of Christ's life. But it is also necessary to study each Gospel by itself so that its particular message can be understood and absorbed. We will learn more about the particular message of each Gospel in the "Introduction to the Individual Gospels."

Consider the emphasis of each Gospel:

Matthew - Christ as God's King

Christ is presented as the "Son of David" (Mt. 1:1). He inherits David's throne and eternal kingdom.

Matthew does not describe Christ's lowly birth but rather the visit by the wise men and their offerings fit for a king (Mt. 2).

Matthew gives the entire Sermon on the Mount with the principles of the kingdom (Mt. 5-7).

In Matthew, Christ presents Himself to Israel as the Messiah and is rejected. His rejection by the Jewish leaders is described as the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Mt. 12:22-32).

Only Matthew gives the kingdom parables that describe the kingdom in its mystery form in the church age (Mt. 13).

Introduction to the Individual Gospels

Introduction to Matthew

The author

The author is the apostle Matthew. His name was also Levi the son of Alphaeus (Mr. 2:14).

He was a tax collector in Capernaum before Christ called him. They were called “publicans.” Compare Mt. 9:9 and 10:3. They were hated by the Jews because they took taxes for the Roman government, and not only so, they were notoriously dishonest. They bought the rights to farm a certain territory of taxes for Rome, and they demanded far more than was required in order to enrich themselves. They were backed by the power of the Roman legions who were stationed in the region. The Roman taxation system was hated everywhere and was often the cause of uprisings.

“The Roman government, usually via the Censors, held auctions where the cartels of Roman businessmen (belonging to the equestrian order) bid to pay for the rights to collect Roman taxes in Asia and paid the Roman treasury upfront. Their profit came from the ability to squeeze more than they bid, and paid to the Roman state, from the locals, all the time backed up by the threat of the Roman army for any ‘acts of rebellion.’ ... [The people were] harassed by the revenue-farmers and oppressed by the rapacity and arrogance of the soldiers quartered there” (Gareth Samson, *Rome’s Great Eastern War*, pp. 79-80).

The date

The book was written in about AD 37, shortly after Christ’s ascension.

The purpose

The purpose of Matthew’s Gospel is to show Jesus as the Messiah, the King of the Jews, the promised Son of David (Mt. 1:1).

The presentation and rejection of Jesus as the Christ

In the Gospels, Jesus first comes to “his own” (Joh. 1:11), the people of Israel, presenting Himself as the Christ, the Messiah, and is rejected. He then begins to announce the church and to prepare for its building.

We see the transition clearly in the Gospel of Matthew, which is the Gospel that presents Jesus most clearly as the Messiah King.

In chapter 1, Jesus’ genealogy is traced to David to identify Jesus as the Messiah (Mt. 1:1). David was promised a Son who would sit on his throne forever (2 Sa. 7:12-13). Isaiah identified David’s seed as the Messiah (Isa. 9:6-7).

In chapter 3, John the Baptist identifies Jesus as the Messiah (Mt. 3:1-3, 13-17).

In chapter 4, Jesus begins His public ministry, preaching the gospel of the kingdom and performing miracles to prove His Messiahship (Mt. 4:23-25). The gospel of the kingdom

pertains to the kingdom promised to David's seed, Christ. Compare Isa. 35:5-6, which prophesies that the Christ will do such miracles.

In chapters 5-7, Jesus preaches the principles of the coming kingdom ("the kingdom of heaven," Mt. 5:1, 10).

In chapters 8-9, Jesus continues to perform great miracles to prove He is the Messiah (Mt. 9:35). Compare John 5:36.

In chapter 10, He sends out the 12 apostles to announce the kingdom and to perform miracles to demonstrate kingdom power (Mt. 10:1, 7).

In chapter 11, He reproves the cities of Israel for rejecting Him (Mt. 11:20-24). He begins to turn to the whole world (Mt. 11:28-30), whereas before He had restricted His preaching to the Jews (Mt. 10:6-7).

In Matthew 12, the Jewish leaders begin to plot Jesus' death (Mt. 12:14). Jesus mentions the Gentiles for the first time (Mt. 12:17-21). Jesus performed exactly the type of Messianic miracle prophesied by Isaiah (Mt. 12:22-23; Isa. 35:5-6), but the Jewish leaders attribute His power to the devil (Mt. 12:24).

In Matthew 13, Jesus begins to hide the truth from unbelieving Israel by the parables of the mysteries of the kingdom, which describe the church age (Mt. 13:10-16). He is rejected by His home town Nazareth and his own family (Mt. 13:53-57).

In Matthew 14, John the Baptist is put to death (Mt. 14:1-10). This was not only a private sin by Herod, it was a sin committed by the chief leader of Israel. It was a rejection of John's testimony about Jesus as the Christ. All of this was prophesied in Scripture (Joh. 12:37-40).

In Matthew 15, Christ leaves Israel for the first and only time and delivers the Canaanite woman's child (Mt. 15:21-28).

In Matthew 16, Jesus mentions the church for the first time (Mt. 16:18). He also begins to teach about His approaching death (Mt. 16:21).

In Matthew 21, Jesus presents Himself to Jerusalem as the Messiah according to Zechariah's prophecy (Mt. 21:1-5; Zec. 9:9). But He is received by the people only as a prophet (Mt. 21:11).

In Matthew 22, Christ gives the Parable of the Marriage Feast which describes the preaching of the gospel to all men (Mt. 22:9).

In Matthew 23, Christ rebukes the Pharisees, Israel's religious leaders (Mt. 23:1-36). He weeps over Jerusalem and prophesies that Israel will not see Him again until she repents (Mt. 23:37-39).

In Matthew 24-25, Christ gives prophecies of the end of the age. He describes the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom during the Tribulation when God will bring the Jews to repentance.

In Matthew 26 Christ establishes the Lord's Supper for the churches.

In Matthew 26-27 Christ is arrested and crucified by the Jewish leaders and the Roman governor.

In Matthew 28 Christ rises from the dead and instructs the disciples to preach the gospel to all nations (Mt. 28:18-20).

Introduction to Mark

The author

The author of the Gospel of Mark is John Mark (Ac. 12:12).

- He was the nephew of Barnabas (Col. 4:10).
- Paul and Barnabas brought him from Jerusalem to Antioch (Acts 12:25).
- He accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, but he quit during the early part of the trip (Acts 13:5, 13).
- Paul and Barnabas had a falling out because of John Mark (Acts 15:37-39).
- Later, Paul said that John Mark was profitable to him (2 Ti. 4:11).

The date

Mark was written between AD 57 and 63.

The theme and distinctive features

1. The emphasis of Mark's Gospel is on Christ as the Servant of Jehovah. The prophets said Jesus would be many things. He would be God (Isa. 9:6) and He would also be the Servant of God (Isa. 42:1; 52:13).

- The key word in Greek is *eutheos*, which is translated "straightway, forthwith, anon, immediately, as soon as." It is used 40 times in Mark, which is more than in all of the rest of the New Testament combined.
- The key verse is Mr. 10:45, "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."
- There is no genealogy and no record of Jesus' early years.
- Jesus is shown to be a "man of sorrows" more in Mark than in the other Gospels (Isa. 53:3). His grief at the people's unbelief is also brought out more clearly (Mr. 3:5; 7:34; 8:12; 8:17-18; 9:19).
- Jesus' rejection at his home town of Nazareth is described in more detail than in other Gospels (Mr. 6:1-6).

2. Even though Jesus is presented as God's Servant in Mark, He is also shown to be the Son of God (Mr. 1:1; 3:11; 15:39).

Introduction to Luke

The Author

The traditional author of this Gospel is Luke the beloved physician (Col. 4:14).

- He was one of Paul's co-workers (Phm. 24).
- He was also the author of the book of Acts. Compare Luke 1:1-4 with Acts 1:1-2.

The date

Luke's Gospel was written between AD 63 and 68.

The nature of Luke's writing

Luke claimed divine inspiration for his Gospel (Lu. 1:1-4). If he wrote the book under normal circumstances, the following would have been false and presumptuous claims:

- He claimed to have had "perfect understanding of all things" (Lu. 1:3).
- He said to be able to impart "the certainty" of those things (Lu. 1:4).

The theme and distinctive features

The emphasis of Luke is on Christ as the Perfect Man.

- Luke gives the genealogy of Christ back to Adam, the first man (Lu. 3:38).
- Luke gives more about Christ's birth than the other Gospels.
- Only Luke describes Jesus at age 12 (Lu. 2:41-52).
- Only Luke describes Jesus visiting the home of Mary and Martha (Lu. 10:38-42), which depicts Him as a man enjoying the family setting.
- It is important to note that Luke also portrays Jesus as God, not merely as a perfect man (Lu. 1:32, 35).

Introduction to John

The Author

The traditional author of this Gospel is the apostle John (compare Joh. 21:20-24 and 13:23-25). We know that this author is a close companion of Peter.

The Date

Traditionally it is believed that it was written in Ephesus between AD 85 and 90.

Outline of John's Gospel

1. The Prologue (Joh. 1:1-14)
2. The witness of John the Baptist (Joh. 1:15-34)
3. The public ministry of Christ (Joh. 1:35 - 12:50)
 - First year of ministry (Joh. 1:19 - 4:54)
 - Second year - popularity (Joh. 5)
 - Third year - opposition (Joh. 6:1 - 12:11)
4. The private ministry of Christ to His disciples (Joh. 13-17)
5. The crucifixion of Christ (Joh. 18-19)
6. The resurrection of Christ (Joh. 20-21)

The Life of Christ - Major Events

We are teaching through the Gospels by examining the major events in historical order of their location. It is very helpful to see the events of Christ's life organized by a timeline, though the exact order cannot be certain in every case. All of the major passages of the Gospels are dealt with in the framework of the geographical and historical timeline.

Christ's Preexistence

John 1:1-18

It is clear that the Gospels are not ordinary biography; they are divine revelation. No man could know these things apart from God. The argument about the human source of the Gospels is thus shown to be in vain (e.g., which Gospel was first, which Gospel had the priority as the basis for others, what were the extra-Gospel sources).

Christ's eternal existence and incarnation are described in this amazing passage. At the dedication of the first temple, Solomon said, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth?" (1 Ki. 8:27). The answer is yes! God did dwell on earth, and God will yet dwell on earth.

This is one of the fundamental passages on the person of Jesus Christ. God's eternal plan is that all things will be one in Christ (Eph. 1:10), and this passage of Scripture is a major part of the revelation of Christ.

This is an infinite description of the infinite Christ.

God's revelation of Christ is given in simple words. A first year Greek student can translate the Gospel of John at a basic level. The English Authorized Version captures that simplicity. In the first 14 verses there are 153 words, and only 14 are multi-syllable.

God's revelation of infinite things *can* be understood by men through the new life of redemption, which gives spiritual sight to the blind, and by God's indwelling Spirit.

This passage refutes many heresies, such as the following:

- matter is eternal
- the universe evolved
- the universe created itself
- life spontaneously generated
- Jesus had a beginning
- Jesus was created
- Christ did not become a man
- Jesus is not the same as Christ
- Christ came upon Jesus at his birth and left Jesus at his death
- Sabellianism (God the Father, Son, and Spirit are three manifestations of God, not Persons in a Godhead)
- pantheism (the universe is God or God is the universe)
- panentheism (God is in the universe)

“As all mists of speculative philosophy concerning the origin of the material universe flee and fade before the sunrise of the first chapter of Genesis, so all heresies concerning our Lord and the eternal redemption of him are dispelled by the Sun of righteousness rising with healing wings in these beginnings of their gospels by John and Paul” (B.H. Carroll).

Consider some of the major lessons about Christ in this peerless passage of Scripture:

Christ is a member of the Father, Son, Spirit Trinity.

- John 1 is a revelation of the Trinity. Jesus is called the Son of God twice (Joh. 1:18, 34). The Father is mentioned twice (vv. 14, 18). The Spirit of God descends from heaven upon the Son (Joh. 1:32-33). God being with God is Trinitarian language (Joh. 1:1-2).

Christ is the Word (Joh. 1:1).

- “Word” is *lógos*, meaning voice, speech, declaration, expression, revelation. It refers “both to the act of speaking and the thing spoken” (*Complete Word Study Bible*). The Son is the Word part of the Trinitarian God. That Christ is the Word is repeated three times for emphasis.

- The Word is the revealer of God. Christ is “the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15), the full and final revelation of God (Heb. 1:1-2). The Word is “the revealer and interpreter of the hidden being of God; the reflection and visible image of God, and the organ of all His manifestations to the world” (*Vincent’s Word Studies*).

- The Word is the source of all knowledge and wisdom and truth. All! “In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). Man, in his fallen condition, is deceived into thinking that he is the author of his own wisdom.

- The Word operated in creation, which is a revelation of God. In Genesis 1, Christ is the creative Word. “Eight times in the narrative of creation (in Genesis) there occur, like the refrain of a hymn, the words, *And God said*. John gathers up all those sayings of God into a single *saying*, living and endowed with activity and intelligence, from which all divine orders emanate: he finds as the basis of all spoken words, *the speaking Word*” (Godet). The entire creation declares the glory of God; it is a voice (Ps. 19:1-3), but the greatest voice is Christ.

- The Word has spoken in Scripture, in which the Spirit received the wisdom of Christ and showed it to men (Joh. 16:13-15).

- In Proverbs 8, Christ the Word is personified as wisdom teaching men in all spheres of life (“Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice?” Pr. 8:1). Wisdom stands in all places on earth (Pr. 8:2-3). Wisdom cries out to all men (Pr. 8:4). Wisdom cries out to the simple (Pr. 8:5). Wisdom is excellent and right (Pr. 8:6). It is pure truth (Pr. 8:7). It is all righteous (Pr. 8:8). It is of more value than all other things (Pr. 8:10-11). Wisdom is the source of witty inventions (Pr. 8:12). Wisdom is the source of right governing (Pr. 8:15-16). Wisdom is the source of right judgment (Pr. 8:16). Wisdom is true, durable riches (Pr. 8:18-19). Wisdom is the source of substance and true treasure (Pr. 8:21). Wisdom is eternal (Pr. 8:22). Wisdom was with the Creator (Pr. 8:23-30). Wisdom was the delight of God and rejoiced with God (Pr. 8:30). Wisdom delights in man (Pr. 8:31). Wisdom must be heeded; wisdom can be rejected (Pr. 8:33). Wisdom must be zealously pursued (Pr. 8:34). Wisdom is life and the favor of God (Pr. 8:35). To sin against wisdom is to wrong one’s own soul and to love death (Pr. 8:36).

Christ is God (“the Word was God,” Joh. 1:1).

- Christ is the Son of God; He is the Word of God; and He is God. John the Baptist identified Jesus as the LORD Jehovah of Isa. 40:3 (Joh. 1:23). Christ is “the LORD our righteousness” (Jer. 23:6), “the mighty God” (Isa. 9:6), “Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Mt. 1:23), “God blessed for ever” (Ro. 9:5), “the Lord from heaven” (1 Co. 15:47), “equal with God” (Php. 2:6), “the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15), “God manifest in the flesh” (1 Ti. 3:16), “the express image of His person” (Heb. 1:3).
- Any teaching that Jesus is anything less than God is damnable heresy. It is a false Christ. Jesus Christ is not “a God” or a “little God” or “like God” or merely a Divine person or an exalted man.

Christ was “in the beginning” (Joh. 1:2).

- Note carefully that the Scripture says Christ was “in the beginning,” not that He was the beginning or that He had a beginning. He *was*; He has always existed. There was no time when the Word was not. This describes eternal pre-existence. As man, Christ had a beginning, but as the Son of God He had no beginning. He is “that eternal life, which was with the Father” (1 Jo. 1:2). Jesus said, “Before Abraham was, I am” (Joh. 8:58). This is a claim to be Almighty Jehovah God, whose name is “I AM THAT I AM” (Ex. 3:14). “Three times in this sentence John uses this imperfect of *eimi* ‘to be’ which conveys no idea of origin for God or for the Logos, simply continuous existence. Quite a different verb (*ginomai*, made) appears in Joh. 1:14 for the beginning of the Incarnation of the Logos. See the distinction sharply drawn in Joh. 8:58 ‘before Abraham was (*ginomai*) I am’ (*eimi*, timeless existence)” (*Robertson’s Word Pictures*).
- Micah 5:2 teaches the eternity of Christ. The One born in Bethlehem had eternal preexistence: “whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” This refers to His works, His doings. Christ has no beginning. He is “before all things” (Col. 1:17). He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end (Re. 1:8).
- Any teaching that Christ had a beginning is damnable heresy. It is a false Christ.

Christ was “in the beginning with God.”

- This is repeated twice for emphasis. “With” is the Greek *pros*, meaning toward, in the direction of, facing. It has the sense of an intimate relationship. “*Pros* with the accusative presents a plane of equality and intimacy, face to face with each other” (*Robertson’s Word Pictures*). “*With* does not convey the full meaning of *pros*, [but] there is no single English word which will give it better. The preposition *pros*, which, with the accusative case, denotes motion towards, or direction, is also often used in the New Testament in the sense of *with*; and that not merely *as being near* or *beside*, but as a living union and communion; implying the active notion of intercourse. ... ‘I sat daily *with you*’ (Mt. 26:55); ‘to be present *with the Lord*’ (2 Co. 5:8). ... Thus John’s statement is that the divine Word not only *abode* with the Father from all eternity, but was in the living, active relation of communion with Him” (Vincent).
- “Was” is imperfect tense, indicating “linear or continuous action in time past.”
- That the Word was in the beginning with God means He had existence and personality distinct from God the Father. “He was not just an idea, a thought, or some vague kind of example, but a real Person who lived with God” (*Believer’s Bible Commentary*).

Himself, the only access to heaven. The angels of God will ascend and descend upon the Son of Man. Angels are servants of God, traveling like flames of fire on His errands. When Jesus reigns as King, these angels will travel back and forth between heaven and earth, fulfilling His will. Jesus was saying to Nathanael that he had seen only very minor demonstrations of His Messiahship. In the future Reign of Christ, he would see the Lord Jesus fully revealed as God's anointed Son. Then all mankind would know that Someone good did come out of Nazareth" (*Believer's Bible Commentary*).

- For a multi-media presentation on this material see *The Way of Life Pictorial Bible 26 Christ in Bethsaida*.

Jesus Turns Water into Wine at Cana (Joh. 2:1-12)

- For map, see *Mastering the English Bible - Maps & Charts 32 Galilee in Jesus' Time*.

1. Verse 11 says this was Christ's first miracle. This means He did not do miracles when He was a child, as some false gospels claim.
2. "And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine" (Joh. 2:3). She expected Him to solve the problem.
3. Jesus gave Mary a gentle rebuke, that in the realm of miracles He was subject only to the Father (Joh. 2:3-4).
4. The pots held 20 or more gallons each. One firkin was about 7.5 gallons.
5. "Wine" in the Bible is a generic term. It can mean the natural juice of the grape (Pr. 3:10; Isa. 65:8), or it can mean alcoholic wine.
6. We believe that the wine Jesus made at the wedding was non-alcoholic. It was the pure juice of the grape. Consider the following reasons why we hold this position:
 - It was unlawful for kings and priests to drink alcoholic wine, and Jesus was both (Pr. 31:4; Le. 10:8-11).
 - It is forbidden to give wine to others to make them drunk (Hab. 2:15).
 - It is unwise for men to drink alcoholic wine (Pr. 20:1), and we know that Jesus, Wisdom incarnate, would not do anything unwise.
 - Alcoholic wine is a deceiver (Pr. 20:1), and we know that Christ did not come to deceive.
 - Had Jesus given the people alcoholic wine at that juncture in the wedding, He and they would have been breaking God's commandment not to tarry long at the wine (Pr. 23:29-30).
 - Christ did not come to cause people to stumble (Ro. 14:21). The late Bruce Lackey observed, "Everyone who has studied the problem of alcoholism has learned that some people cannot handle any amount of alcohol, while others may drink one or two 'social' drinks and stop. Experts do not know why this is true; various theories have been propounded. Some say it is chemical; others insist that it must be psychological. The fact is, we do not know for certain. In any given group of people, there would be several potential alcoholics [drunkards]. What a shame it would be for a person, who is a potential slave to it, to get his first taste at the Lord's table in church, then proceed down the road of misery to an alcoholic's grave! I certainly would not want my children to get their first taste of alcohol at the family meal, nor would I want them to get it at church. One or more of them could well be potential alcoholics. As evidence that this is possible, we should consider that some

denominations which serve alcoholic wine in their religious services also operate homes for alcoholic priests! But we can be absolutely sure that Christ did not come to cause others to stumble!”

- The fact that the people at the wedding recognized Jesus’ wine as superior to the earlier wine shows that they were not drunk (Joh. 2:10). Had they been drunk, they would not have noticed that the wine that Jesus made was better.

- This miracle glorified Jesus as the Messiah (Joh. 2:11). Had He made and distributed alcoholic wine to make the people further drunk, this would not have glorified Him as the holy, righteous Messiah. “Had Christ made alcoholic wine and had the people been drinking alcoholic wine prior to that, He would have made drunk people drunker, or almost-drunken people completely drunk! Such a deed would certainly not have manifested any glory to Him” (Bruce Lackey).

- We know that the Spirit of God would not have put anything in the Bible to encourage drunks and to cause men to offend in sin (Ro. 14:21; 1 Co. 10:31-33), but the idea that Jesus made alcoholic wine for distribution at a wedding has done exactly that. Any lush who knows anything whatsoever about the Bible, believes that Jesus made alcoholic wine and uses that to justify his sin.

After the wedding in Cana, Jesus went to Capernaum with His mother, brethren, and disciples (Joh. 2:12).

• **For a multi-media presentation on this material see *The Way of Life Pictorial Bible 27 Christ’s First Miracle in Cana.***

Early Ministry in Judea

After staying in Capernaum for some time, Jesus returned to Jerusalem for the passover. “And the Jews’ passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem” (Joh. 2:13). His ministry in Jerusalem continues to John 3:21.

This was the first passover during Jesus’ ministry. The Gospel of John records two others (Joh. 6:4; 12:1), which would mean that His public ministry was about three years.

Jesus Cleanses the Temple for the First Time (Joh. 2:13-17)

Only John records this cleansing of the temple. The other Gospels record Jesus’ final cleansing of the temple during the Passion Week before the crucifixion (Mt. 21:12-13; Mr. 11:15-18; Lu. 19:45-46).

The moneychangers and sellers were robbing the people by charging large exchange fees and outrageous prices. Jesus addressed the sellers of doves in particular (Joh.2:16). The price of a dove was supposed to be affordable for low income people, but the sellers had greatly increased the price.

The high priest and his family got a share of the ill-gotten profits. Even in Jeremiah’s day, 600 years earlier, the priests were bearing rule by their means (Jer. 5:31). “When Jesus drove out the money-changers (Mt. 21:12-13), the sons of Annas were apparently among them, if not the most important ones. ... As to Jesus’ accusation that the merchants had made it ‘a den of thieves,’ there is abundant confirmation in the sources of the extortionate prices charged to those who bought sacrificial animals or who needed to change their money to pay the Temple tribute. Who would have had permission to do so inside the area of the soreg, if not the sons of the high priests

exclusively. The high priestly family of Annas was very powerful and Annas used nepotism to get his sons in the most important offices of the Temple, thereby controlling the Temple treasures as well. The Talmud calls some of these priests ‘great hoarders of money’ (“The Palace of Annas the High Priest,” Leen Ritmeyer).

The money changers and animal sellers probably congregated under Solomon’s Porch, which was the colonnaded porch that ran along the eastern side of the Temple Mount. It was here that the apostles healed the blind man (Ac. 3:11) and did other sign miracles (Ac. 5:12). The porch’s double row of pillars were 20 feet high.

The covetousness of the Jerusalem Jews had given the Lord’s temple a bad name among the Gentiles. “And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves” (Mr. 11:17). Here we see God’s intention for Israel and Israel’s temple as a light to the nations, and we see how that Israel corrupted that light by her sin and unbelief.

Later the disciples understood that Jesus was fulfilling the prophecy, “The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up” (Joh. 2:17). This is quoted from Psalm 69:9, which is a long Messianic prophecy. Consider other quotes from this Psalm that were fulfilled in Jesus’ life: “They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored that which I took not away. ... Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face. I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother’s children. ... They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink” (Psa. 69:4, 7, 8, 21).

The Jews Ask for a Sign (Joh. 2:18-25)

This is another major turning point in Christ’s ministry to Israel. They required yet another sign, even though He had given countless signs (Joh 2:23) and fulfilled the prophecies. This was willful blindness. Later Christ said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign” (Mt. 12:39). Seeking a sign is not the mark of a spiritual person.

Jesus answered, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (Joh. 2:19). He was prophesying His death and resurrection. His body would be destroyed, but in three days He would raise it up.

The people misunderstood Him, thinking that He was referring to Herod’s temple, which had taken 46 years to complete. Their minds were set on earthly things rather than heavenly. Their ears were dull of hearing. “This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days” (Mt. 26:60-61). Jesus was just another “fellow” to them, as He is to most people the world over.

Jesus Did Not Commit Himself to Them (Joh. 2:23-25).

This passage teaches that it is possible to “believe” without being saved. The people “believed in his name” because of the miracles, but they did not repent and trust Jesus as only Lord and Saviour. These are the same people who turned away from Christ a little later because they were offended at His teaching (Joh. 6:60-66). He told them, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled” (Joh. 6:26).

Since then, multitudes have committed this sin. They have professed Jesus Christ as Saviour, but they do not repent. They want Christ to do something for them, such as heal their disease or their marriage or rescue them from financial ruin.

Christ knows every man's heart (Joh. 2:24-25). He is God. Christ knows men's secret motives, why they attend church, why they participate in a Bible study, why they read the Bible, why they want to be baptized.

Christ did not commit Himself to these people (Joh. 2:24). If Christ does not receive you and commit Himself to you, you aren't saved! This cannot be because they were not of the elect or that Christ didn't love them and didn't want to save them. He invites all to come (Mt. 11:28-30). It was because they were dissembling and their faith was not saving faith. The Bible has many warnings like this, such as Isa. 29:13; 48:1; Eze. 33:31; Mt. 7:21-23; 2 Ti. 3:5; and Tit. 1:15-16.

Jesus' Conversation with Nicodemus (Joh. 3:1-21)

This is "the born again chapter," and it is one of the most important passages in Scripture. The new birth is taught elsewhere (e.g., Gal. 6:15; Tit. 3:5; Jas. 1:18; 1 Pe. 1:3, 23-25; 1 Jo. 2:29; 3:9; 5:1, 18), but John 3 is the key passage on what it is and how it is achieved.

1. The situation (Joh. 3:1-2)

- Jesus had presented Himself to Israel as the Messiah and had done miracles proving His claim, but the people had believed on Him as a prophet and a political saviour rather than the Son of God and Saviour from sin. See John 2:23-25; 6:14, 26, 40-42. The prophets had plainly taught that the Messiah would make atonement for man's sin (Isa. 53), but the Jews did not believe this. They were not looking for a Suffering Messiah. They did not see themselves as sinners; they were self-righteous, believing that being born of Abraham's seed and keeping the external forms of the law of Moses made them righteous before God.

2. Nicodemus

- He was very religious but unsaved. As such he is an example of multitudes of people on earth who trust in their good works and good character and obedience to religious laws and rituals for their salvation.

- Nicodemus was a rabbi of the Pharisees. The term "rabbi" means "master." Rabbis are also called Rab, Ribbi, and Reb. It is not a title or office found in the Old Testament. It was created by the Pharisees. It is a term of prideful exaltation and Jesus forbade it (Mt. 23:8). The rabbis wrote the Mishnah or Talmud, which is Jewish tradition that is supposed to be the oral law that was passed down from Moses. According to Pharisaism, the law of Moses is the written law and the Talmud is the oral law, and both are equally authoritative. This was another of the errors that Jesus sharply reproved (Mt. 15:1-9). Modern orthodox Judaism is called "rabbinical Judaism" because it is based on the traditions of the rabbis.

- Nicodemus was a master (Joh. 3:10). He was probably a member of the ruling Sanhedrin which consisted of 70 or 71 leading rabbis.

- Nicodemus was afraid of his peers, indicated by his coming at night. Compare John 9:22. The fear of man bringeth a snare (Pr. 29:25), and many will be in hell because they feared man more than God.

- Nicodemus was confused about Jesus. He considered Jesus a rabbi or great teacher, but he did not accept Him as the Messiah, the Son of God.

- Nicodemus was confused about miracles (Joh. 3:2). It is obvious that Nicodemus knew Jewish tradition better than he knew the Bible, because Exodus plainly teaches that the devil's ministers can do miracles. An unsaved person can study the Bible all his life and never have spiritual wisdom.

3. Jesus' first statement to Nicodemus (Joh. 3:3)

- Nicodemus wanted to talk about religion, but Jesus got right to the heart of the matter and did not spend time talking about religion. Many people like to talk about religion, but they don't want to hear the truth.

- Christ emphasized the importance of His statement by prefacing it with "verily, verily." Repetition in the Bible is for emphasis. Nothing in life is more important than being saved, and Christ emphasized the matter. He is a passionate, emphatic teacher.

- The new birth is necessary to see the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is God's eternal rule (Ps. 145:13). It will be established on earth when Christ returns to set up the Davidic kingdom (Mt. 6:12; Mr. 9:1; Lu. 13:28-29; 19:11; 21:31; 22:18).

4. Nicodemus' confusion (Joh. 3:4)

- He was thinking only in terms of the physical. His religion focused on the externals and was oriented toward this world rather than toward the eternal things of God.

5. Jesus' answer (Joh. 3:5-8)

a. He emphasized the importance of this matter by repetition.

b. He said a man must have two births in order to enter God's kingdom (Joh. 3:5-6). Water and Spirit refer to the two births. Water refers to the first or natural birth, and Spirit refers to the second or supernatural. This is clear in the context. See verse 6. Baptismal regenerationists insert baptism here, but when Jesus explained in this same passage how to be born again He didn't mention baptism. See Joh. 3:14-18.

How does the new birth compare to the first birth?

- Both are real events that happen at one certain time. Salvation is not a process.

- Both are of God. Even though the first birth is a "natural process," the Bible teaches that God is the author of conception and life. Compare Psalm 139:13-16.

- Both require seed. The seed for the new birth is the Word of God (Luke 8:10).

- Both are dramatic events that can be seen by others. Salvation changes a person's life (2 Co. 5:17).

c. Jesus tells Nicodemus that all Jews and all people must be born again (Joh. 3:7). "Ye" is plural. All have sinned and all must be born again. Note that Jesus did not say "we" but "ye." Jesus is the sinless Son of God and had no need of salvation.

d. Jesus likens the new birth to the wind (Joh. 3:8).

- We do not know where the wind comes from or how it operates, but we can see its effect. Likewise, we do not understand how the sinner is born again but we can see the change that it makes in his life.

- The wind blows where it will. Likewise, the Spirit of God is in control of the new birth. He convicts and enlightens and draws and regenerates. The sinner's part is to respond to the Spirit's working.

6. Nicodemus' continued confusion (Joh. 3:9)

Nicodemus represents religion. It has no comprehension of true salvation and is confused by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

7. Jesus clarifies the issue and explains how to be born again (Joh. 3:10-18).

a. He states His authority (Joh. 3:10-13). He came down from heaven and is in heaven! This is the mystery of the incarnation. The eternal Son of God became a man, but He never ceased to be God. He was still omnipresent (Joh. 3:13). This verse is corrupted in the modern versions by the omission of the words "which is in heaven."

b. He likens salvation to the serpent in the wilderness (Joh. 3:14). Compare Numbers 21:4-9.

- The image of a serpent signified that Jesus would take man's sin upon Himself on the cross. God the Father forsook Jesus because He was bearing the sin of the world. See Isa. 53:6; 2 Co. 5:21.
- The snake bite was like sin, which brings death (Ro. 6:23).
- The brazen serpent had to be lifted up in order to become effective, which signifies Christ on the cross. Compare John 12:32-33. The lifting up also signifies the preaching of the gospel.
- The offer of healing was to be proclaimed to all. Compare Mr. 16:15.
- God's way of salvation seems foolish to the natural man, just as the brazen serpent must have seemed foolish to the Jews (Nu. 21:5-9; 1 Co. 1:23).
- While the healing was provided for all, it had to be individually appropriated. Compare John 1:12.
- The dying Jews had to acknowledge their sin ("we have sinned," Nu. 21:7) and look in faith at the brazen serpent. Compare Romans 10:9-13. An individual is born again by acknowledging his sinful condition before God and by believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died on the cross for his sins (Joh. 3:14-16). Acknowledging one's sin and changing the mind about one's relationship with God is repentance.
- Salvation is not difficult. The Israelites had only to look and believe.
- There was no other effective remedy for the snake-bitten Jews, and there is only one way of salvation from sin. Compare John 3:18; Acts 4:12.
- The healing was immediate, sure, and permanent, and the same is true for salvation in Christ. Compare Hebrews 10:14.
- The healing was God's free gift. Salvation is the gift of a loving, compassionate God. In His mercy God provided a way of salvation for the Jews who were bitten by the snakes. Their punishment was fully deserved, but their salvation was of God's grace. Likewise, it is because of His great grace and mercy that God offers salvation to the world through Jesus (Joh. 3:16). Grace is the unmerited and undeserved favor of God. Men deserve punishment, but they do not deserve salvation.

c. Christ showed that salvation is through faith in Him (Joh. 3:14-18).

- Salvation is through Christ's death rather than through His life (Joh. 3:14). He had to be lifted up on the cross to bleed and die. It is not enough to believe that Christ was a good man or even that He is God. I must believe that He died for my sin. This is the gospel. See 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.
- Salvation is for all men ("God so loved the world," "whosoever believeth," Joh. 3:16-17). Compare 1 Ti. 2:3-6.
- Salvation is through believing (Joh. 3:15-18). The word "believe" is repeated nine times in John 3. (1) Saving faith is not merely knowing something and giving mental assent to that knowledge, such as believing a historical fact. Compare Jas. 2:19. (2) Saving faith is trusting faith. It is to place

young people began to surrender to the Lord's service. They wanted to leave their secular ambitions and colleges for Bible training, so we started a full-time Bible college to train them.

Christ Commissions the Apostles (Mt. 10:1-25)

See also Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16.

This occurred somewhere in the region of Capernaum where Jesus was based in Peter's home.

1. Christ prayed all night before He chose and commissioned the 12 apostles. "And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God" (Lu. 6:12-16). Every major decision must be made in earnest prayer to God for wisdom and help.

2. Christ commissioned the apostles to proclaim the kingdom of God to Israel as His representatives. They were to do miracles as evidence that Jesus is Christ. "And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease" (Mt. 10:1).

3. This commission is different from the one given to the churches in Mt. 28:28-20; Mr. 15:16; Lu. 24:44-48; Ac 1:8. To try to act on the commission in Matthew 10 today is to confuse dispensations. Consider some of the differences:

- In Mt. 10, the apostles were not to preach to the Gentiles (Mt. 10:5-6), but the churches are to preach to every person in every nation (Mt. 28:19; Mr. 16:15; Ac. 1:8).

- In Mt. 10, the apostles were to preach "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 10:7). This was the message that the king was present and the kingdom was therefore near, but the church's message is to preach the gospel of Christ (Mr. 16:15; Lu. 24:47). This is the message of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ for man's sins (1 Co. 15:3-4).

- In Mt. 10, the apostles were to do miracles (Mt. 10:8), but there is no command for the churches to do miracles. What about Mark 16:15-18? There is no commandment here to do miracles. Christ simply says that miracles will be done, and they *were* done by the apostles as recorded in the book of Acts. See Ac. 2:43; 5:12; 8:18; 9:34, 40-41. Hebrews 2:3-4 says the apostles confirmed Christ's message by miracles. There is a difference between "sign gifts" or sign miracles that were associated with the apostles and general miracles that God does throughout the church age. The Lord has continued to do miracles (such as healing in answer to prayer, Jas. 5:14-15), but such miracles are not the same as the apostolic sign miracles. If there were no major difference between sign miracles and general miracles, then the apostolic miracles could not have been "signs" (2 Co. 12:12).

- In Mt. 10, the apostles were not to take any money or provisions (Mt. 10:9-10), but Christ later changed this commission (Lu. 22:35-36). Paul took wages from the churches (2 Co. 11:8).

When we pray for laborers to be sent, we must be ready to go! The disciples had just been instructed to pray for laborers for the harvest, and it is interesting that the very next thing we see is that they themselves are being commissioned to go.

4. The names of the 12 (Mt. 10:2-4)

Simon Peter, son of Jonas

Andrew (Simon's brother)

James (son of Zebedee, son of Thunder, Mr. 3:17)

John (son of Zebedee, son of Thunder, Mr. 3:17)

Philip

Bartholomew

Thomas (called Didymus, Joh. 11:16)

Matthew (Levi the son of Alphaeus, Mr. 2:14)

James the son of Alphaeus

Lebbaeus Thaddaeus (also called "Judas the brother of James," Lu. 6:16 and "Judas not Iscariot," Joh. 14:22, the author of the book of Jude)

Simon the Canaanite (also called "Zelotes," Lu. 6:15; "Canaanite," Hebrew, and "Zelotes," Greek, mean to be a zealot for a cause)

Judas Iscariot (son of Simon, Joh. 6:71)

5. Are there apostles today like the 12 that Christ ordained?

- Revelation 21:14 says there are only 12 apostles. When Judas died, the apostles selected another man to take his place as the twelfth (Ac. 1:15-26). This was the fulfillment of prophecy (Ps. 69:25). After that no further apostles were selected.

- No one today was with Jesus during His earthly life from the baptism of John or has seen the resurrected Christ, both of which are requirements for an apostle (Ac. 1:21-22; 1 Co. 9:1).

- No one today has the signs of an apostle (2 Co. 12:12). We will see more about this in the studies on Acts.

- There are apostles today in a general sense. The New Testament uses the same Greek word, *apostolos*, to refer to church messengers (2 Co. 8:23). In this sense, there are apostles, but not in the sense of the twelve.

6. Note that men are held accountable for the light that they are given (Mt. 10:14-15).

- Gospel preachers are Christ's ambassadors, and men are responsible for what they hear from them. The preaching of the gospel results in life and death, depending on the response (2 Co. 2:14-16).

7. Matthew 10:16-25 has a two-fold application: for the church age and for the Tribulation.

- Verse 23 says the preaching that began in Mt. 10 will be continued until Christ's return. The church age forms a parenthesis between Christ's offer of the kingdom to Israel at His first coming and the preaching of the kingdom again in the Tribulation. During the Tribulation, Jewish evangelists will preach the same message as Mt. 10:7, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand," in announcing the Lord's soon return. Revelation 7 describes the ordaining of 144,000 Jewish evangelists (Re. 7:9-14).

- This is called the "prophetic perspective," meaning that near and far events are included in the same prophecy. Compare Isaiah 9:6. Christ's first coming and second coming are mentioned in this one verse.

8. "take no thought how or what ye shall speak (Mt. 10:19-20).

- This does not mean that preachers should not study and prepare for their messages. Compare 2 Timothy 2:15. It means that in times of persecution God will give extra wisdom and help. Every passage must be interpreted in its own context.

9. "he that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Mt. 10:22).

- This does not mean that salvation is achieved by enduring. That would be salvation by works and would contradict the clear teaching of the gospel. The born again believer is saved by grace without works (Eph. 2:8-9), has everlasting life and will not perish (Joh. 3:16), has everlasting consolation and good hope through grace (2 Th. 2:16), has received the Spirit of adoption (Ro. 8:15), is a joint-heir

with Christ (Ro. 8:17), is predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ (Ro. 8:29), is blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3), is raised up and made to sit in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 2:6), has been delivered from the power of darkness and been translated into the kingdom of his dear Son (Col. 1:13), has redemption through Christ's blood (Col. 1:14), is quickened together with Christ and forgiven of all trespasses (Col. 2:13), is risen with Christ and his life is hid with Christ (Col. 3:1-4), has been born again unto a lively hope to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you (1 Pe. 1:3-4), is kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation (1 Pe. 1:5).

- Enduring to the end means that those who are saved will continue in faith even during the most terrible trials. Saving faith endures. The endurance is the evidence of their salvation. Compare Joh. 6:66-69; 10:27; Col. 1:21-23; Heb. 3:14; 6:9; 10:38.

10. "the disciple is not above his master" (Mt. 10:24-25).

- Believers will not be respected and loved by this world. When believers and churches seek the acclaim of the world, it is to their downfall. We are pilgrims and strangers in a foreign world, and we must not be surprised at this world's animosity.

11. "Fear not them which kill the body ... fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mt. 10:28)

- This does not teach that the wicked shall be burned up in hell. Seventh-day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses teach annihilation of the wicked, but Revelation 14:10-11 and 20:10 teach eternal torment. It is not only the "smoke of their torment" that is eternal; it is the torment itself. The word "destroy" is Mt. 10:28, *apollumi*, is elsewhere translated "perish" (Mt. 8:25) to refer to the disciples fear that they would drown, and "lost" (Mt. 10:26), referring to lost sheep, and "marred" (Mr. 2:22), referring to ruined bottles.

12. Sparrows and the hairs of your head ((Mt. 10:29-31)

- Lessons about God: (1) God is intimately involved in every detail of creation. He is not a God who is far off. (2) God has infinite knowledge, knowing the numbers of hair on every individual. (3) God has tender love for His children and intimate interest in every tiny detail of their lives. "The hair that you see is nothing more than dead protein that is produced by the cells of the hair follicle anchored inside the layers of the skin. The total number of hair follicles on the adult body is about 5 million; only about 100,000 of them are on the scalp. Each hair grows out of one follicle for about three to five years. Then the hair is shed and the follicle rests for about three months before starting to grow hair again. So, you see, once you know how many hairs are on your head, it's still no easy job to keep track of their changing number. The average scalp hair grows about one inch every two or three months. This means that each day, your head is growing the equivalent of one hair, 100 feet long--that's nearly seven miles per year! Yes, it's true--the Creator cares so much about you that He knows from moment to moment how many hairs are on your head" (*Creation Moments*, Apr. 5, 2022).

- Lessons about man and animals: (1) Man is not an animal. In Genesis 1, man is the only creature made in God's image (Ge. 1:26). (2) Man has more value to God than animals. Animals were made for man, but man was made for God. God cares for all of His creatures, but He cares more for man.

13. Confession of Christ (Mt. 10:32-33).

- We see the importance of public confession of Christ. Those who claim to be "secret believers" are on dangerous ground. Compare Lu. 9:26; 2 Ti. 2:12. Romans 10:9-10 teaches that saving faith is confessing faith.

14. "I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Mt. 10:34-36).

- The peace movement is based on a wrong interpretation of the Bible. The United Nations building in New York City has a statue outside with the words “swords into plowshares.” This confuses the dispensations. The time when swords will be turned into plowshares is after Jesus returns and is ruling the nations (Isa. 2:1-4).

- During this present age, there will be no peace. Compare 1 Th. 5:3. In fact, at the end of this age, God will call upon the nations to turn their plowshares into swords for the final war (Joe. 3:9-16).

15. “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me” (Mt. 10:37-39).

a. Christ is describing true salvation.

- The true believer is a disciple of Christ. The true believer will not love father and mother, son or daughter, more than Christ. He will take up his cross and follow Christ. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (Joh. 10:28). The true believer *has* lost his life for Christ’s sake. He has repented before God. He has rejected his own righteousness for the righteousness of Christ. This is what baptism pictures: dying with Christ and being raised to new life in Christ (Ro. 6:3-4).

- Salvation and discipleship are two different things, but they are closely associated and not so sharply divided as is commonly taught today. Saving faith produces discipleship. Discipleship is the evidence of saving faith. The New Testament associates saving faith with following and obeying Christ in an intimate way. See Consider Ephesians 2:8-10. These verses are tied together. Verses 8-9 describe salvation, and verse 10 describes the product and evidence of salvation. The individual who has the reality of verses 8-9 will exhibit the reality of verse 10. See also Joh. 10:25-28; Tit. 1:16; 2:11-14; 1 Jo. 3:1-3.

- In the context of Matthew 10, Christ was showing true salvation as opposed to the nominal faith of the crowds. We see this more clearly in the Gospel of John. See John 2:23-25. Many believed because of Jesus’ miracles; they were not believing on Him as Lord and Saviour. They wanted a king. And in John 6, those crowds turned away from Jesus because of His hard teaching about discipleship. See John 6:66-69.

- There is no example in the New Testament of a true believer who is not also a disciple of Christ. In every case, there is a dramatic change so that the individual becomes a follower of Christ. The members of the first church at Jerusalem demonstrate this. They “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Ac. 2:42).

- We are not saying that every true believer is a disciple 100% in the sense that he is totally sold out to God’s will in every matter. Discipleship, as with every aspect of the Christian life, is a matter of growing. We see this in Peter’s life. When he answered Christ’s call and left his nets, he was a disciple of Christ. That was evident to everyone who knew him. But he learned many things along the way and had a lot of growing to do. He even rebuked Jesus (Mt. 16:21-23) and temporarily denied Jesus (Mt. 26:69-75). But through it all he grew and became a stronger and more devoted disciple. He was a disciple, but he grew in discipleship. Consider Romans 12:1-2 where Paul beseeches the believer to surrender to pursuing God’s perfect will. Obviously there is a sense in which the true believer might not be fully surrendered to God’s will.

- There is a false teaching that confuses 100% discipleship with salvation. One mark of this teaching is that people who were counted as true believers and showed evidence of salvation come to see themselves as lost and make a new profession of faith because of spiritual insufficiencies in their lives. I recall a missionary named Honeycutt in Singapore who had that type of ministry. A large percentage of people who sat under his preaching “got saved” again. If an individual had struggles with some sin or had doubts about his salvation, he was considered lost

2. We do not preach in order to gain God's favor but because we already have his favor (Joh. 20:21). Having peace with God through faith in the blood of Christ, we do God's work. Contrast this with the Jehovah's Witnesses and others who work as part of their salvation.

3. We can do nothing apart from the Holy Spirit ("he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost," Joh. 20:22). The Spirit imparts the life of Christ; He empowers; He teaches; He comforts and encourages; He leads in God's will. Christ imparted the Holy Spirit at that time, and sent the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

4. The remission of sins is in the hands of Christ's disciples through the preaching of the gospel (Joh. 20:23).

- There is no means of forgiveness of sins apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? (Ro. 10:13-14). If God's people do not carry the gospel to the unsaved, they cannot be saved in any other way.

ACTS 1:6-8

1. The Great Commission is the chief business of God's people today.

- This is what we see in the book of Acts. The apostles did not engage in social justice projects. They did not seek to solve the great social ills of the Roman Empire or to change the empire through political action or to infiltrate the empire's educational system. They preached the gospel, baptized, and disciplined the believers in New Testament churches. That was the work of the church at Jerusalem and the church at Antioch, the two prominent churches that are described in Scripture as models for the church age.

2. The Great Commission depends upon the Holy Spirit.

- We must walk in fellowship with Him and seek His power. This is what prayer is all about: casting ourselves upon God, depending on God, calling upon God.

- The Spirit works when God's people go. We take the convicting power of the Spirit with us as we go and preach. Compare Joh. 16:6-11. We see this everywhere in the book of Acts. When the gospel was carried to a new place, the Spirit operated in the saving and sanctification of souls and establishment of new churches. This is exactly how He operates today.

- The apostles and first churches depended entirely upon the Holy Spirit for the accomplishment of God's work, and the result was much trouble but also great eternal fruit. They did not depend upon impressive educational credentials, worldly prestige, government resources, contacts with the wealthy and powerful, large finances, psychological salesmanship programs, or any other worldly thing.

3. In a nutshell, the work is to lift up Jesus Christ ("ye shall be witnesses of me," Ac. 1:8).

- We are not to preach the church or religion or a preacher or philosophy. We are to preach Jesus Christ as only Lord and Saviour.

4. This is the work of every believer.

- "Ye" is plural, referring to every believer. Every born again saint is an ambassador in this great business. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus

Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Co. 5:17-20).

5. The preaching is to be done everywhere at once.

- Note that Acts 1:8 does not say to preach the gospel to Jerusalem, THEN to Judea, THEN to Samaria, THEN to the ends of the earth. It says AND, meaning that churches are to preach in many places at one time. Every church should seek to fulfill this commandment by preaching the gospel to those near at hand (Jerusalem), and to those a little farther away (Judaea and Samaria), and to those far away through missionary work. - Every church is to have a vision for the community, for the city, for the county (district), for the state (province), for the nation, and for the entire world. No church is to be content with reaching people in its area.

- This work starts at home and extends throughout the world *at the same time* ("BOTH in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth," Ac. 1:8).

- Every church is to have a vision for the community, for the city, for the county (district), for the state (province), for the nation, and for the entire world.

6. The Great Commission teaches us that God loves all men and churches should love all men.

- The Bible refutes any type of "racism." There is only one race of men, and that is the human race that has descended from one man, Adam. The Samaritans and Gentiles disliked the Jews, and the Jews despised all others, but God has commanded the churches to preach the gospel to all men without favoritism.

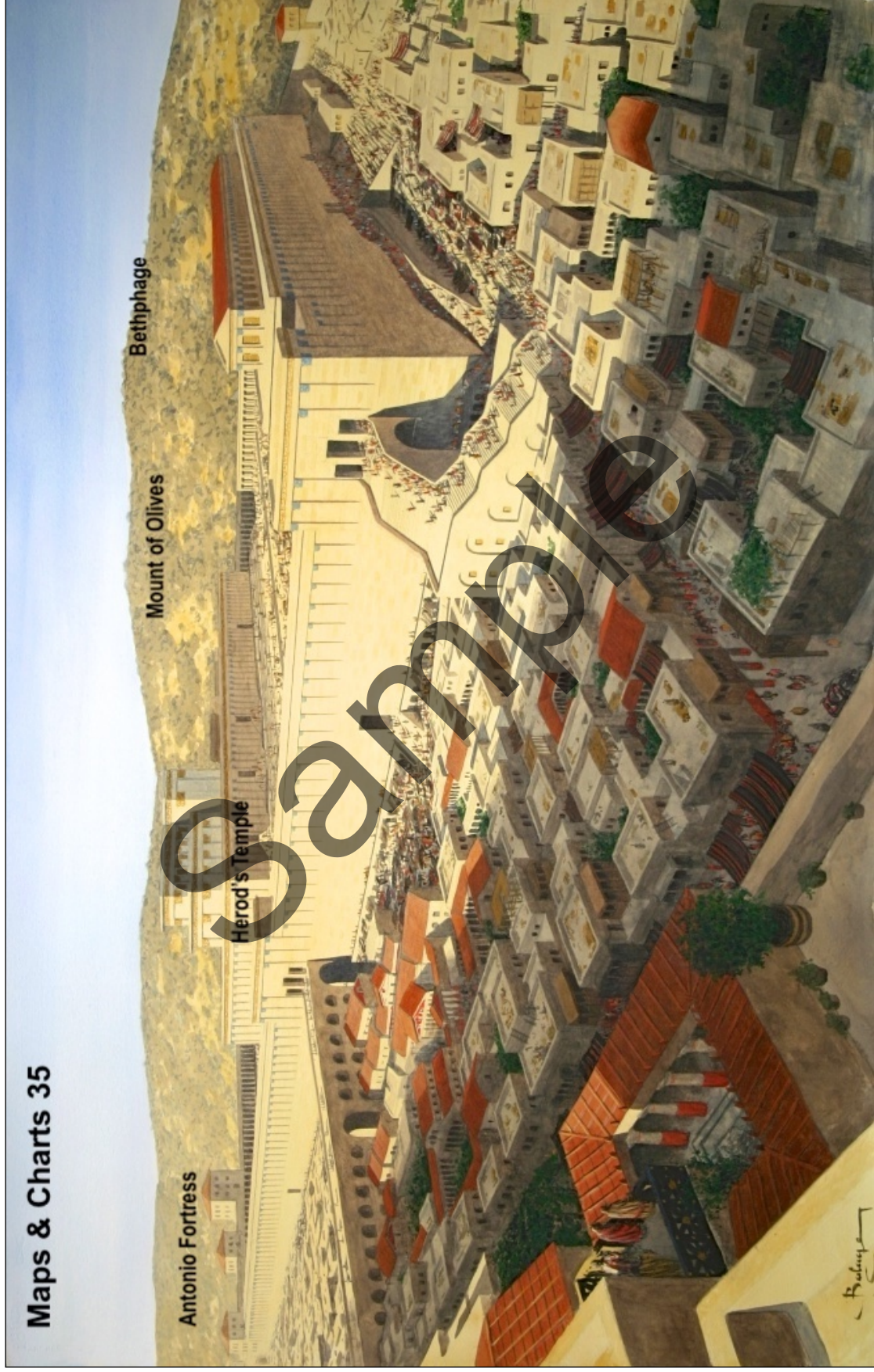
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Maps and Charts

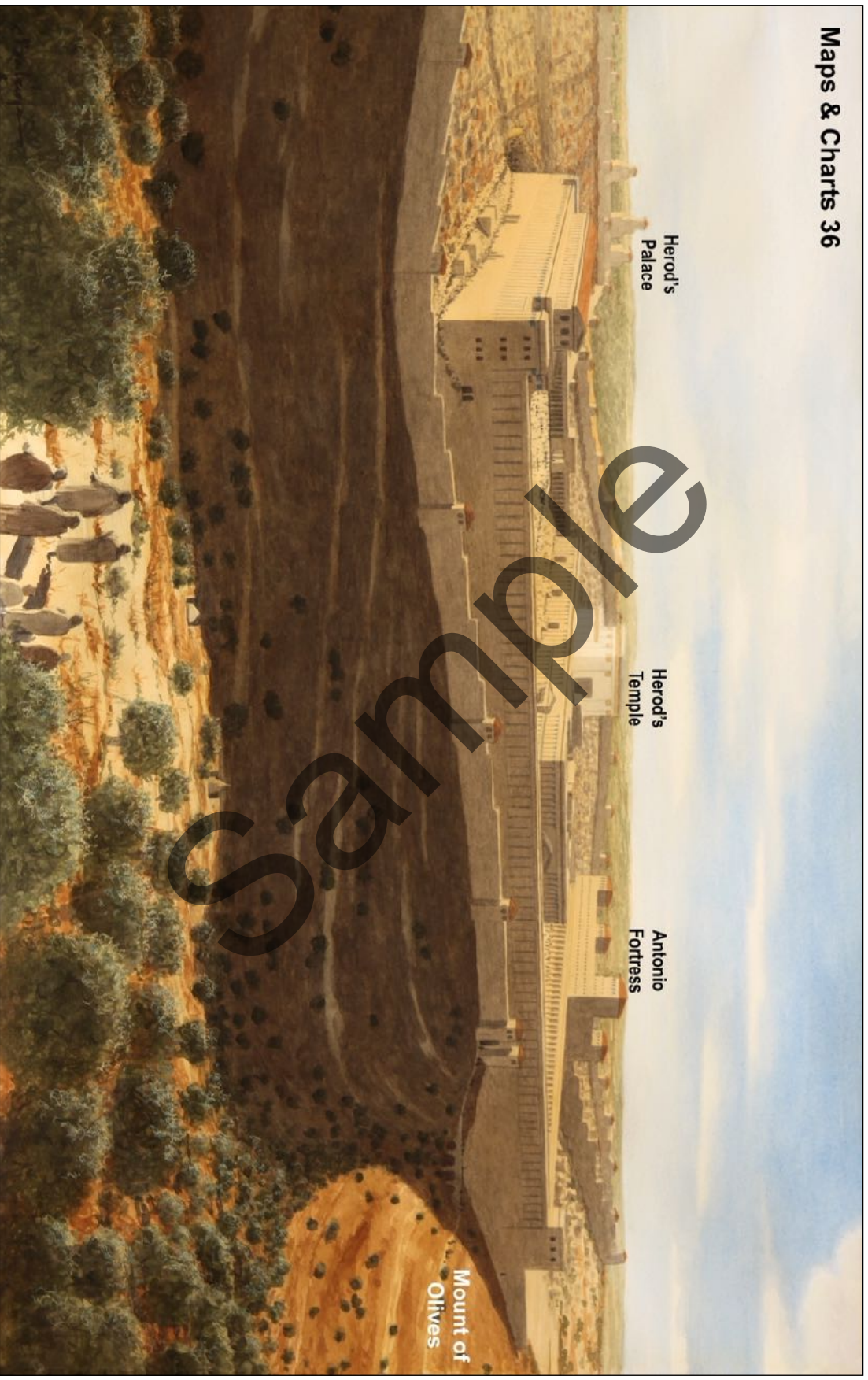
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