

COOKIES ON THE LOWER SHELF

Putting Bible Reading Within Reach

PART III: NEW TESTAMENT

BY

PAM GILLASPIE

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Cookies on the Lower Shelf

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Dedication . . .

Karen Corlew, my dear friend, you taught me just how fun reading the Bible in community can be. Here's to spurring one another along in the faith!

Acknowledgments

Rick, Pete, Cress, and Dave—we all know it takes a team to make a book and I'm blessed to work alongside each one of you. You make me look better than I am and I am grateful. Katie, thanks for being my wingman—I love our adventures. Brad, thanks for always being willing to sit down and “help” when I'm writing.

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COOKIES ON THE LOWER SHELF

Putting Bible Reading Within Reach

There is nothing quite like your favorite pair of jeans. You can dress them up, you can dress them down. You can work in them, play in them, shop in them . . . live in them. They always feel right. It is my hope that the structure of this Bible study will fit you like those jeans; that it will work with your life right now, right where you are whether you're new to this whole Bible thing or whether you've been studying the Book for years!

How is this even be possible? Smoke and mirrors, perhaps? The new mercilessly thrown in the deep end of exegesis or the experienced given pom-poms and the job of simply cheering others on? None of the above.

Flexible Bible studies are designed with options to let you go as deep each week as you desire. If you're just starting out and feeling a little overwhelmed, stick with the main text and don't think a second thought about the sidebar assignments. If you're looking for a challenge, then take the sidebar prompts and go ahead and dig all the way to China! As you move along through the study, think of the sidebars and "Digging Deeper" boxes as that 2% of lycra that you find in certain jeans . . . the wiggle-room that will help them fit just right.

Beginners may find that they want to start adding in some of the optional assignments as they go along. Experts may find that when three children are throwing up for three days straight, foregoing these assignments for the week is the way to live wisely.

Life has a way of ebbing and flowing and this study is designed to ebb and flow right along with it!

Enjoy!

How to use this study

Flexible inductive studies meet you where you are and take you as far as you want to go.

WEEKLY READING:

Main Reading

You'll find this text in the main column of the lesson. Read this—or listen to it—and you'll be able to follow the narrative and stay on track.

More Reading

These texts will give you more of the story. You'll typically find these located in the **One Step Further** boxes.

Even More Reading!

Finish these readings, too, and you'll read through the entire Bible by the time you finish the *Cookies* series. These readings are often in the **Digging Deeper** boxes.

1. WEEKLY STUDY: The main text guides you through the complete topic of study for the week.

2. FYI boxes: For Your Information boxes provide bite-sized material that shed additional light on the topic.

FYI:

Reading Tip: Begin with Prayer

You may have heard this a million times over and if this is a million and one, so be it. Whenever you read or study God's Word, first pray and ask His Spirit to be your Guide.

3. ONE STEP FURTHER and other sidebar boxes: Sidebar boxes give you the option to push yourself a little further. If you have extra time or are looking for an extra challenge, you can try one, all, or any number in between! These boxes give you the ultimate in flexibility.

ONE STEP FURTHER:

Word Study: *torah*/law

The first of eight Hebrew key words we encounter for God's Word is *torah*, (translated "law"). If you're up for a challenge this week, do a word study to learn what you can about *torah*. Run a concordance search and examine where the word *torah* appears in the Old Testament and see what you can learn.

If you decide to look for the word for "law" in the New Testament, you'll find that the primary Greek word is *nomos*.

Be sure to see what Paul says about the law in Galatians 3 and what Jesus says in Matthew 5.

4. DIGGING DEEPER boxes: If you're looking to go further, Digging Deeper sections will help you sharpen your skills as you continue to mine the truths of Scripture for yourself.

Digging Deeper

What else does God's Word say about counselors?

If you can, spend some time this week digging around for what God's Word says about counselors.

Start by considering what you already know about counsel from the Word of God and see if you can actually show where these truths are in the Bible. Make sure that the Word actually says what you think it says.

Week One

Catching Up and Catching On

*The unfolding of Your words gives light;
It gives understanding to the simple.*

—Psalm 119:130

Putting cookies on the lower shelf is a pretty common idiom for making something accessible and easy to understand. I always thought the phrase applied to my Grandpa. “Papa,” as I called him (Pastor Olson to everyone else) was known for “putting the cookies on the lower shelf” because he believed the good words of God should be within everyone’s reach. While the opinion of an old-time Baptist preacher doesn’t make the Bible understandable, God tells us through those very Scriptures that His words are clearly understandable. The psalmist says without hesitation that the unfolding of His words gives light, “It gives understanding to the simple.”

With that truth let’s begin our journey in reading through the New Testament.

Because we are entering part three of a series, the homework is divided into two parts—the first for newcomers and the second for those who have completed *Cookies on the Lower Shelf, Part I* and *Part II*. By next week, we’ll all be back together for the rest of our trip!

THIS WEEK:

Main Reading

This is where you’ll find the texts for “the main event(s)!” If you keep up with this section (reading or listening) you should feel comfortable with what’s going on in class. If you don’t, well, come to class anyhow as there is always something to learn and always grace to get back up and keep pressing on.

Additional Reading _____

More Reading

In case you have extra time, I’ll provide additional reading that will be beneficial but not critical for understanding the main portion of the lesson.

Even More Reading!

This section contains a higher volume of overlapping material designed to further challenge advanced students. If you’re reading through the whole Bible, you’ll want to read or listen to the texts in this section each week in addition to the other assignments.

IF YOU'RE A CONTINUING STUDENT . . .

This section is only for those who have studied *Cookies on the Lower Shelf, Part I* and *Part II*. Take whatever time you need this week to interact with the review questions below.

NEW? SKIP FORWARD to page 6.

Write a simple time line or paragraph summarizing Genesis through Judges.

How did Israel end up being a monarchy?

What was the Divided Kingdom and how did it come about?

What significant events occurred in 722 BC and 586 BC? What nations were involved?

What reading (or listening) strategy worked best for you?

How are you living differently today based on what you learned in reading the Old Testament?

If there are sections you didn't finish in *Cookies, Part I* or *Part II* go ahead and enjoy them now at your leisure. The Old Testament provides such a critical foundation for understanding God's continuing revelation in the New Testament.

ONE STEP FURTHER:

What is this?

ONE STEP FURTHER sidebars give you the option to push yourself a little further. If you have extra time and are looking for an extra challenge, you can try one, all, or any number in between! These optional assignments give you the ultimate in flexibility.

FYI:

What is this?

FYI (For Your Information) boxes provide bite-sized material to shed additional light on the topic at hand.

THIS IS THE PLACE . . .

This week we'll take some time to consider our personal Bible reading history and we'll run through the redemption history of the Old Testament. If you're new to the study, this will catch you up; if you're a veteran it will provide some review.

CONSIDER the WAY you THINK

What success have you had in reading the Bible?

How have you read and studied?

What barriers have you run into?

What has worked for you?

Do you have fears that you're bringing to this study? If so, what are they?

What are your expectations for this study?

FYI:**Sweeter than Chocolate! Hebrews 11**

For a more thorough quick trip through the Old Testament, check out Precept's *Sweeter than Chocolate!*® Hebrews 11. It's a 6-week jumpstart to understanding God's plan to redeem men.

God's Summary of the Old Testament

Before we summarize Old Testament history, let's look at one summary from the New Testament: Hebrews 11. What we often call "The Faith Chapter" frames many major characters of the Old Testament. Let's take a look.

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

READ Hebrews 11. **CIRCLE** the names of every person mentioned and **UNDERLINE** people referred to by action instead of name (e.g. "conquered kingdoms," "sawn in two," etc.).

- 1 *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*
- 2 *For by it the men of old gained approval.*
- 3 *By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.*
- 4 *By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.*
- 5 *By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.*
- 6 *And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.*
- 7 *By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.*
- 8 *By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.*
- 9 *By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise;*
- 10 *for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.*
- 11 *By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised.*

- 12 *Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants AS THE STARS OF HEAVEN IN NUMBER, AND INNUMERABLE AS THE SAND WHICH IS BY THE SEASHORE.*
- 13 *All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.*
- 14 *For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own.*
- 15 *And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return.*
- 16 *But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.*
- 17 *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son;*
- 18 *it was he to whom it was said, "IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED."*
- 19 *He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.*
- 20 *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come.*
- 21 *By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.*
- 22 *By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.*
- 23 *By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict.*
- 24 *By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,*
- 25 *choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,*
- 26 *considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.*
- 27 *By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen.*
- 28 *By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them.*

FYI:

The Basics . . .

How do you keep it all straight? Start by watching people, events, and time periods. Many major characters appear in Hebrews 11. We spaced this out enough so you can jot in other characters not mentioned in Hebrews 11 if you'd like. Getting a grip on main characters makes it easier to drop in other characters. EVENTS and TIME PERIODS below are capitalized.

CREATION

Abel

Enoch

Noah/FLOOD

Abraham|Isaac|Jacob (run 'em together for recall)

Moses

EXODUS

Rahab

PROMISED LAND

JUDGES

KINGS/PROPHETS

- 29 *By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though they were passing through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.*
- 30 *By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.*
- 31 *By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.*
- 32 *And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets,*
- 33 *who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions,*
- 34 *quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.*
- 35 *Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection;*
- 36 *and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment.*
- 37 *They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated*
- 38 *(men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.*
- 39 *And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised,*
- 40 *because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.*

DISCUSS with your group or PONDER on your own . . .

What does Hebrews 11:2 tell us about how the world came to be?

Who is the first person mentioned? What do we learn about him?

What earlier characters are left unmentioned? (Don't read into this. We're simply framing a basic biblical outline.)

What other characters stand out in the remainder of Hebrews 11:1-7? What are they noted for?

What characters appear in Hebrews 11:8-22? What are they remembered for?

Who is the focus of Hebrews 11:23-28? What takes place on his watch?

What event is recorded in Hebrews 11:30? Who is mentioned by name in verse 31? Who else do we typically recall in conjunction with this account?

What judges appear in Hebrews 11:32? Does anything in this list surprise you? Why? What other judges can you remember?

David is mentioned in verse 32. What general category would you place him in? What position did he hold in the nation of Israel?

Looking at Hebrews 11 from a chronological standpoint, David is the last historical figure mentioned by name. After him, though, we have descriptions of many godly men and women. Some of these we can reasonably guess from the Old Testament. If you have some background in the Old Testament, list some names of people that you think agree with the descriptions. If a description doesn't look remotely familiar, smile, nod and move on to the next question.

What did people of faith have in common according to Hebrews 11:39-40? How are they connected to people of faith like us who live after Christ?

Here's where we've been so far . . .

If you're familiar with the Old Testament, Hebrews 11's outline of biblical history should spark your memory. It's a great go-to chapter when you can't quite remember who fits where! If you're new to the Bible here's a quick and simple summary of where we've been so far with a few more pieces filled in . . .

In the beginning **God** creates. **Adam** is the first man created, **Eve** the first woman. God creates them without sin and places them in the **Garden of Eden**. The serpent (later identified as Satan), however, quickly deceives them. Eve eats the forbidden fruit (from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) first and gives it to her husband Adam. Through this act of sin death enters the world and God banishes Adam and Eve from their beautiful garden home.

Although **man rebels** against God, God immediately predicts the coming of a Savior who will crush the head of the serpent (Messianic Covenant). Jesus eventually fulfills this prophecy but in the meantime sin and death rule the day.

Eve bears Adam many children, the first two being **Cain and Abel**. Cain, resentful when God rejects his offering and accepts his brother Abel's, murders Abel. Sin gains speed and man continues downhill until God has simply had enough.

Saying He regrets making man, God tells **Noah** to build an ark in which he and his family will be saved from the coming destruction—a **worldwide flood**. Noah obeys and God saves him, his wife, his three sons, and their wives. After the Flood, God places a rainbow in the sky as a sign of His covenant with all living creatures that He will never again destroy the entire earth by water.

Noah's sons, **Japheth, Shem, and Ham** become fathers of all the nations. Over time the population of the world increases and people again veer off course. In pride they determine to build a **tower reaching to heaven** but during the construction God confuses their languages and thwarts their plans.

Abraham, originally named Abram, is the first major character on the scene after the Flood. Abram and his wife Sarai (whose name later changed to Sarah) live in the land of Ur. God tells Abram to leave his land and go to another one He will show him. **Abram trusts God** and packs his bags, taking his wife and household with him. Although God changes his name to Abraham and promises to make him a great nation, Abraham is within view of being triple-digit old with no blood-related heir in sight.

What he does have, though, is a get-'er-done wife. After waiting "long enough" Sarah decides to act. She gives her handmaiden Hagar to Abraham as a second wife to scoot God's promise along. Not a good idea. Hagar bears Abraham a son named **Ishmael** but Sarah resents the outcome. Ironically the son of Sarah's plan is not the son of God's promise. He will be born later to Sarah.

Isaac is God's fulfilled promise to Abraham. Like his father, Isaac possesses a promise of descendants but has no children for the first 20 years of his marriage. But he prays for his wife Rebekah and God causes her to conceive twins, Esau and Jacob.

Although **Esau** is tough, he is spiritually dull. **Jacob** is instigating and conniving like his mother. The older twin Esau is tricked out of his birthright and blessing respectively by his younger brother and mother.

God chooses Jacob long before He changes his name to . . . **Israel!** Hence, the nation of Israel. Turns out deception runs in Jacob's family. After besting his brother twice, Jacob ends up on the other end of a bait-and-switch. Uncle Laban gives **Leah** to Jacob as a wife after he works seven years for her sister **Rachel**. Although Jacob sets out to marry only Rachel, he ends up with Rachel, Leah and each of their handmaidens. From Jacob and these four women descend the twelve tribes of Israel.

Jacob's most famous son is **Joseph**. Because he is also his father's favorite, his jealous brothers sell him into **Egyptian slavery**. Eventually God raises him up to be the equivalent of vice president of Egypt and reunites him with his family who **relocate to Egypt**.

After **Joseph dies**, everything is stable until a Pharaoh arises who "doesn't know" Joseph. He decides to enslave Joseph's family, now called the Hebrews, who have grown to great numbers in the land. The Hebrews remain **enslaved for 400 years** until the time of **Moses**.

Because the Hebrew population grows so rapidly, Pharaoh orders **all male Hebrew babies killed**. He fears the slaves will turn against him if a foreign country invades. Moses' mother hide her newborn baby boy in a basket and sets it on the Nile River in an effort to save him. None other than Pharaoh's daughter draws the basket from the water and raises him as her own. As an adult, young Moses intervenes in a fight between an Egyptian and one of his Hebrew brothers, killing the Egyptian. He subsequently **flees Egypt** and becomes a shepherd in the **land of Midian** for forty years before God calls to him from a **burning bush** and sends him **back to Egypt** to lead the people **out of bondage**.

Although resistant at first, Moses obeys God and after a series of **ten plagues** and a celebration of the first **Passover** leads the Hebrews on their way to the **Promised Land**. Along the way God **parts the Red Sea**, feeds His people **manna**, and leads them with a cloud by day and a pillar of fire at night. Although the people arrive at the Promised Land quickly, ten of **twelve spies** sent into the land report a population of giants. Instead of trusting

God's promise, the people shrink back in fear. God accordingly makes them wander in the wilderness for forty years before they finally enter the Promised Land.

Moses sees the Promised Land from afar but **Joshua** crosses the Jordan and brings the people into it. Under his leadership the famed walls of **Jericho fall** and the people, more or less, follow God. When Joshua dies, though, the people return to their wandering ways, lured into sin by the peoples in the land they have not driven out.

Into this rebellious situation, God sends **judges** to deliver the people when they call to Him for help. Some of the more notable judges include **Deborah, Gideon, Samson, and Samuel.**

During the time of Samuel, however, the people of Israel cry out for a king so they will be like the nations surrounding them. Bad move! In asking for a king, God says they are rejecting not Samuel as a judge but God Himself as their King. Israel, up to this point a theocracy, now changes to a monarchy as God gives the people a human king named **Saul.**

While Saul starts out as a hesitant king, even hiding from the masses at the beginning, he becomes quite full of himself before long and falls out of favor with God by his blatant disobedience. Because of his rebellion, God chooses another to be king in Saul's place—not one of his descendants but a shepherd named **David.**

Before David becomes king, we hear of his exploits in killing the giant **Goliath**, of his deep friendship with Jonathan, King Saul's son, and of his marriage to King Saul's daughter, Michal. Pursued ferociously by King Saul because he is perceived as a threat to his kingdom, David lives on the edge for several years before King Saul finally takes his own life in battle and David ascends to the throne.

Called a "man after God's own heart," David's life exemplifies seeking and following God with the glaring exception of his double sin of adultery and murder. **Bathsheba** was married to one of David's soldiers, Uriah. One day when David's men are out fighting wars, David sees Bathsheba bathing. Immediately taken by her beauty, David sends for her. One thing quickly leads to another and before long, David creates a soap opera of adultery and murder, killing Uriah after unsuccessfully attempting to cover up Bathsheba's pregnancy.

The prophet **Nathan** confronts David with his sin and David confesses and takes Bathsheba as another wife. Their baby dies as part of the judgment on David's sin but Bathsheba eventually bears David's son Solomon. Solomon succeeds his father as king but not before David's other sons, notably Absalom, make a run at the throne.

Solomon builds a permanent temple for the Lord. David had not been allowed to do this because, although he had followed God with all of his heart, he had been a man of bloodshed and war. Solomon is best remembered for his wealth and wisdom. Ironically, his lack of wisdom with women becomes his undoing. God clearly said foreign wives lead to foreign gods. Solomon disregards these words to his downfall.

Solomon accommodates his many foreign wives' idolatry and eventually it turns his heart away. Because of this, God tears the kingdom from him and from his son **Rehoboam**, who is not a good man. God tears the majority of the kingdom—10 tribes—out of his hand, leaving him only a small part because of His promise to David.

This is where it gets a little complicated, but once you grasp this a big part of the Old Testament history will come together for you. Under Saul, David, and Solomon, Israel was one country with one king, a monarchy over twelve tribes. When God tears the kingdom away from Rehoboam, we begin a period called the **divided monarchy**. Rehoboam becomes king of the **Southern Kingdom** or **Judah** (comprised of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin) while the **Northern Kingdom** or **Israel** (comprised of the other ten tribes) is given to Solomon's former servant Jeroboam. The capital of the Southern Kingdom is Jerusalem; the capital of the Northern Kingdom is, eventually, Samaria. Details? Yes. Important? Extremely!

Until you grasp this history of the division of the kingdom, much Old Testament prophecy and even later historical books will be confusing for you. With reasonable understanding, however, you'll be able to jump in and read anywhere in the Old Testament with some degree of ease. So, because of the importance of this, let's quickly review:

Northern Kingdom

- Israel
- 10 Tribes
- Non-Davidic
- Capital: Samaria

Southern Kingdom

- Judah
- 2 Tribes
- Davidic Line
- Capital: Jerusalem

Once the kingdom divides, a series of kings follows. The kings of Israel are bad, always bad. Okay, Jehu had some good moments, but generally you can remember this: Israel, all bad, all the time.

The kings of Judah, on the other hand, are a mixed bag. Some are horrible, others okay, and at least one you could name a child after. More are bad than good and most of the good ones have reasonable shortcomings. But as a group they prove to be better than Israel, which is why the ax falls on them later than it does on their brothers to the North.

Elijah and **Elisha** prophesy during the time of the divided kingdom. The other prophets are sprinkled throughout the times of the monarchy, the captivity, and the post-captivity.

If you hate historical dates, you may be inclined to skip over the next section. Please don't. Unlike most history that is fraught with countless crucial dates, there are two dates you *particularly* need to remember in studying the Old Testament. The first is **722 BC**, the second, **586 BC**. Others are important but . . . lose sleep over these two!

By **722 BC** the nation of **Assyria has conquered** and deported the Northern Kingdom of Israel as was prophesied. After deporting Israel and dispersing the people, Assyria resettles people from other nations in the land of Israel who have intermarried with remaining Israelites creating a half-breed group called the **Samaritans**. In the New Testament we see "pure-bred" Jews hating these half-breeds. Due to the deportation to and intermixing within the Northern Kingdom, these peoples are often referred to as "the ten lost tribes of Israel."

Seeing their brothers carried away by Assyria does not have the impact on the Southern Kingdom it should. Although it takes a little longer—offset by pockets of revival along the way (notably one under King Josiah)—eventually Judah goes the way of Israel. In **586 BC** Jerusalem falls to Babylon, the temple is destroyed, and Nebuchadnezzar (who has already deported people in 605 and 597 BC) continues taking people away into **captivity in Babylon.**

One notable person (a prophet) carried off to Babylon is **Daniel.** To me one of the most prominent vegetable-eaters of all time, Daniel, along with his three friends **Shadrach, Meshach,** and **Abednego,** are subjugated in Babylon. The three are thrown into a fiery furnace when they refuse to bow down to a golden statue but the Lord saves them. Daniel likewise is thrown into a den of lions because he continues to pray to his God after prayer to anyone but the king is outlawed. God saves him too.

After seventy years of captivity in Babylon, the people of Judah are released to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.

Nehemiah is in charge of rebuilding the wrecked walls of the city.

Between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament is a period of **400** years some refer to as **“The Silent Years.”**

Just prior to Jesus' birth God speaks again to His people beginning with His Word to **Zacharias** foretelling of the coming of **John the Baptist** who will prepare the way of the Lord.

So that's the quick overview of the Old Testament. If you caught on to the general flow let's consider that our victory for the day! Remember, learning God's Word is a life-long adventure. No matter how much and how diligently you study, there is always more to learn . . . and that is an amazingly *good* thing! We will never be able to master it and we will never run out of it. The season will never end like it does on a television show and to use a more biblical metaphor, there will always be more flour and oil for the next day. If you're feeling like you don't "get" all of it, that's perfect because nobody does! There is always another episode, always another chapter, always something fresh for those who are seeking God through His Word.

BONUS MATERIAL . . .

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

Next week's lesson will focus on the book of Matthew. If you're looking for more to do this week, jump into Matthew paying special attention to how the author answers the question, "Who is this Son of David?"

READ Matthew 1–28.

RECORD major sections in the text that you cover. (Really big sections—e.g. Jesus born, Jesus teaches, etc.)

RECORD key words and phrases you noticed. Depending on how far you read, a couple of phrases to watch for are *Son of David* and *kingdom of heaven*. You may want to consider marking these phrases in your Bible.

Digging Deeper

What is this?

Digging Deeper sections challenge students to go further and think harder. Digging Deeper sections are totally optional. If you have the time and energy to dig, you can dig. If you're feeling overwhelmed by the study or by life in general, you can pass over these sections. Digging Deeper sections give students room to reason and think beyond the confines of typical Bible studies.

@THE END OF THE DAY . . .

The Bible's a big book. You won't "get it" all at once but on the bright side, you'll never run out!

As you close out your time today, ask God for a desire for His Word as you undertake this class. It is a prayer He answers. Consider these words from 1 John 5, "This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us *in* whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him." Do you believe God's will involves you desiring and abiding in His Word? If so, don't try to manufacture the power on your own—many have tried to gut their way through the Bible and failed miserably. Your Father has the power, just *ask Him* for it!

