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Companion



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The One Year Bible Companion

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I *ntroductions* *to each book* *of the Bible*

GENESIS

Author: Moses

Date: 1420 or 1220 B.C.

Content: The book of Genesis was written to explain how everything began; in fact, the very title Genesis means “origin” or “beginning.” It explains that God created the universe, how man was created and placed in a perfect environment, how sin began, and how God provided salvation for lost man. The beginning of human history is described, the beginning of human arts and crafts, how human languages began, and where the various nations came from. The focus then shifts to the beginning of the Hebrew people with Abraham, followed by the histories of Isaac, Jacob and his sons, and the book end with Joseph in Egypt.

Theme: The main idea that runs through the book is that although God made everything good and man’s sin has spoiled it, God has not given up, but is now in search of man to save him. The overall control of God is stressed, and special attention is given to how God directs history for the good of his people and their salvation (Gen. 50:20).

EXODUS

Author: Moses

Date: 1420 or 1220 B.C.

Content: The book of Exodus deals with the significant facts surrounding Israel’s emergence as a nation. Moses’ great leadership is described

as he accepted God's call to return to Egypt in order to lead God's people to freedom. God sent the ten devastating plagues upon Egypt because the Pharaoh refused to obey his command. The ceremony of Passover was established during the last plague and became a memorial of God's deliverance for all time to Israel. The Israelites crossed the sea and arrived at Mt. Sinai where God gave the Ten Commandments and the plan for the tabernacle, and the covenant was renewed with the nation.

Theme: The power of God over evil is clearly shown when God defeats the enemies of his people by delivering them from bondage, but God expects that we trust and obey him in return. Worship in the Tabernacle and adherence to the law were two aspects of Israel's obedience.

LEVITICUS

Author: Moses

Date: 1420 or 1220 B.C.

Content: The book of Leviticus was designed to be a handbook for the priests or Levites, hence the name Leviticus. It sets down the regulations that were to govern the life of Israel in general and specifically to give regulations concerning sacrifice and worship. All of the major sacrifices are described, as well as the way they were to be offered. All of the major festivals and holidays are discussed. There are also special sections devoted to the priesthood and regulations concerning ceremonial matters.

Theme: The central theme of this book is that God has provided a way for atonement to be made by the offering of sacrificial blood. This whole system found its fulfillment in the shedding of Christ's blood as the one great sacrifice for the sins of the world. Leviticus also shows that worship is to be orderly and is to follow a regular pattern.

NUMBERS

Author: Moses

Date: 1420 or 1220 B.C.

Content: This book deals with the journey of Israel from Mt. Sinai to the edge of Canaan and the Israelites' preparation to enter the Land. Because of sin and unbelief, however, they were not allowed by God to claim their inheritance but were condemned to wander in the wilderness for forty years. After the forty years they slowly made their way back to Canaan—this time ready to obey God's commands. After winning

MATTHEW

Author: Matthew

Place: Perhaps Antioch

Date: A.D. 60–70

Content: Matthew was a tax-collector, called by Jesus to follow him early in his public ministry; hence, he was an eyewitness of most of the events he describes. He begins with a detailed account of Jesus' birth of the virgin Mary, his baptism and temptation in the wilderness. Jesus came preaching the kingdom of God, entrance into which meant eternal life. One entered by repentance and faith. Matthew blocks the teaching of Jesus together into five discourses in which may be seen the ethics, the proclamation, the parables, the fellowship, and the consummation of the kingdom. Jesus' death and resurrection end the Gospel with the command to go into all the world with the good news (gospel) of Jesus Christ.

Theme: Matthew's main purpose in writing his Gospel is to show that Jesus fulfills the promise of God in the Old Testament. For this reason Jesus is introduced as "a descendant of King David and of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1), and Matthew makes use of numerous Old Testament prophecies and quotations to explain Jesus' life. Jesus came to be the Savior of the Jews (Matt. 1:21), the Gentiles (Matt. 4:13–16), and ultimately the world (Matt. 28:19). The ethics required by members of God's kingdom are found in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7) where the world's values are rejected and the Kingdom of God and his righteousness become supreme (Matt. 6:33).

MARK

Author: Mark

Place: Rome

Date: A.D. 60–65

Content: John Mark was a companion of the apostle Paul. He finally settled in Rome where he wrote down the remembrances of the apostle Peter. Thus Mark's Gospel reflects the words of an eyewitness of the events he describes. Mark's purpose was to put together an expanded Gospel message. Hence it centers upon the acts of Jesus rather than his words and devotes a disproportionately large amount of material to the last week of Jesus' life. Mark's Gospel begins with Jesus' public ministry and preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom of God. Several explicit predictions of his coming death are made (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34, 45) and then Jesus goes to the cross to die for the sins of the world.

Theme: Mark depicts Jesus as the Servant of God who came to do God's will. The miracles, healings, victory over demons, and personal power show the world that Jesus was no ordinary servant, but was truly the Son of God (Mark 15:39). Jesus' resurrection authenticated all that he did, and now we await his return in glory from heaven. Mark also wrote to encourage the Roman Christians in a time of persecution.

LUKE

Author: Luke

Place: Perhaps Caesarea

Date: A.D. 60–65

Content: Luke was a physician and a traveling companion of the Apostle Paul. He wrote his Gospel for a cultured Greek named Theophilus (Luke 1:3) in order to show the true humanity of Jesus and his place in history. For this reason Luke was careful to examine all the evidence very carefully and give precise dates for the events that took place. He begins with an account of Jesus' virgin birth, giving many details not found elsewhere. Jesus' Galilean ministry is described, followed by a lengthy account of Jesus' trip to Jerusalem. After Jesus' death and resurrection, the disciples are left rejoicing, waiting for the promised power of God from heaven to fill them.

Theme: Whereas Matthew shows Jesus to be the Jewish Messiah and Mark shows Jesus as the servant of God, Luke depicts Jesus as the perfect God-man whose genealogy may be traced back to Adam (Luke 3:23-38). Jesus is the greatest man in history and is placed within the flow of world events by Luke. He is the greatest man because of what he taught, what he did, why he died—and because he rose again from the dead. For this reason we ought to accept him as our Lord.

JOHN

Author: John

Place: Ephesus

Date: A.D. 85–95

Content: The Gospel of John was written many years after Jesus' death and resurrection by the apostle John so that those who read it might believe in Christ and thus have life through his name (John 20:31). John begins with a prologue unique to this Gospel where Jesus' preexistent life with the Father is depicted to show that Jesus was not simply a great man, but God. Miracles of Jesus as well as many of Jesus' teachings not found elsewhere are then described. A long

JANUARY 1

Genesis 1:1–2:25; Matthew 1:1–2:12; Psalms 1:1-6; Proverbs 1:1-6

Q GENESIS 1:3–2:27

How long did it take God to create the world?

There are two basic views about the days of creation: (1) each day was a literal 24-hour period; (2) each day represents an indefinite period of time (even millions of years). In response to the claim of scientists that the earth is millions or billions of years old, some Christians say there is a gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. In this view the first creation was wrecked by Satan's fall; the six days were really a re-creation.

Q GENESIS 2:9, 16-17

Were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil real trees?

Two views are often expressed: (1) The trees were real, but symbolic. Eating from the tree of life was a symbol of receiving eternal life from God. (2) The trees were real, possessing special properties. By eating the fruit from the tree of life, Adam and Eve could have had eternal life, enjoying a permanent relationship as God's children. Interestingly, the tree of life again appears in a description in Revelation 22 of people enjoying eternal life with God.

Q MATTHEW 1:18

Why is the virgin birth important to the Christian faith?

Jesus Christ, God's Son, had to be free from the sinful nature passed on to all other human beings by Adam. Because Jesus was born of a woman, he was a human being; but as the Son of God, Jesus was born without any trace of human sin. The sinless Savior lived a sinless life and died on the cross for the sins of the world.

Q MATTHEW 1:20

Why did an angel come to Joseph?

The conception and birth of Jesus Christ were supernatural events beyond human logic or reasoning. Because of this, God sent angels to help certain people understand the significance of what was happening (see Matt. 2:13, 19; Luke 1:11, 26; 2:9). Angels are spiritual beings created by God who help carry out his work on earth. They bring God's messages to people (Luke 1:26), protect God's people (Dan. 6:22), offer encouragement (Gen. 16:7ff.), give guidance (Exodus 14:19), carry out punishment (2 Samuel 24:16), patrol the earth (Zech. 1:9-14), and fight the forces of evil (2 Kings 6:16-18; Rev. 20:1-2). There are both good and bad angels (Rev. 12:7), but because bad angels are allied with the devil, or Satan, they have considerably less power and authority than good angels.

JANUARY 2

Genesis 3:1–4:26; Matthew 2:13–3:6; Psalms 2:1-12; Proverbs 1:7-9

Q GENESIS 3:14-19

What was the result of the serpent's temptation of Adam and Eve?

After the fall God changed the life of Adam and Eve and their descendants in the following ways: (1) The serpent was cursed for his evil work; (2) the Redeemer was promised for the salvation of humanity; (3) women were promised multiplied pain in childbirth and were placed in subjection to their husbands; (4) the ground was cursed to produce thorns and thistles; (5) men were to eke out a living by the sweat of their brow; (6) physical death was to be the lot of all humanity.

Q GENESIS 4:14-17

The Bible has recorded only four people so far: Adam, Eve, Cain, and Abel. Why was Cain worried about being killed by others, and where did he get his wife?

Adam and Eve had numerous children; they had been told to “fill the earth” (Gen. 1:28). Cain’s guilt and fear over killing his brother were heavy, and he probably feared repercussions from his family. If he was capable of killing, so were they. The wife Cain chose may have been one of his sisters or a niece. The human race was still genetically pure, and there was no fear of side-effects from marrying relatives.

Q MATTHEW 2:14-15

Why did Joseph choose to go to Egypt?

Going to Egypt was not unusual because there were colonies of Jews in several major Egyptian cities. These colonies had developed during the time of the great captivity (see Jer. 43–44). There is an interesting parallel between this flight to Egypt and Israel’s history. As an infant nation, Israel went to Egypt, just as Jesus did as a child. God led Israel out (Hos. 11:1); God brought Jesus back. Both events show God working to save his people.

Q MATTHEW 2:16

Why did Herod kill all the children in Bethlehem?

Herod, the king of the Jews, killed all the boys under two years of age in an obsessive attempt to kill Jesus, the newborn King. He stained his hands with blood, but he did not harm Jesus. Herod was king by a human appointment; Jesus was King by a divine appointment.

JANUARY 3

Genesis 5:1–7:24; Matthew 3:7–4:11; Psalms 3:1-8; Proverbs 1:10-19

Q GENESIS 5:25-27 *How did these people live so long?*

Some believe that the ages listed here were lengths of family dynasties rather than ages of individual men. Those who think these were actual ages offer three explanations: (1) the human race was more genetically pure in this early time period, so there was less disease to shorten life spans; (2) no rain had yet fallen on the earth, and the expanse of water “above” (Gen. 1:7) kept out harmful cosmic rays and shielded people from environmental factors that hasten aging; (3) God gave people longer lives so they would have time to “fill the earth” (Gen. 1:28).

Q GENESIS 7:17-24 *Was the flood a local event, or did it cover the entire earth?*

A universal flood was certainly possible. There is enough water on the earth to cover all dry land (the earth began that way; see Gen. 1:9-10). Afterward, God promised never again to destroy the earth with a flood. Thus this flood must have either covered the entire earth or destroyed all the inhabitants of the earth. God’s reason for sending the flood was to destroy all the earth’s wickedness. It would have taken a major flood to accomplish this.

Q MATTHEW 3:16-17 *What is the doctrine of the Trinity?*

The doctrine of the Trinity means that God is three persons and yet one in essence. In this passage, all three persons of the Trinity are present and active. God the Father speaks; God the Son is baptized; God the Holy Spirit descends on Jesus. God is one, yet in three persons at the same time. This is one of God’s incomprehensible mysteries. Other Bible references that speak of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are Matthew 28:19; John 15:26; 1 Corinthians 12:4-13; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 2:18; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-5; and 1 Peter 1:2.

Q MATTHEW 4:8-9 *Did the devil have the power to give Jesus the kingdoms of the world, or did God, the creator of the world, have control over these kingdoms?*

The devil may have been lying about his implied power, or he may have based his offer on his temporary control and free reign over the earth because of humanity’s sinfulness. Jesus’ temptation was to take the world as a political ruler right then, without carrying out his plan to save the world from sin. Satan was trying to distort Jesus’ perspective by making him focus on worldly power and not on God’s plans.

JANUARY 4

Genesis 8:1–10:32; Matthew 4:12-25; Psalms 4:1-8; Proverbs 1:20-23



GENESIS 9:1-17

Did God change his relationship with humanity after the flood?

Following the flood, God made a covenant with Noah. According to Genesis, the agreement specified that: (1) there would always be the seasons of the year with planting and harvest (8:22); (2) Noah and his family would replenish the earth (9:1); (3) law and government were to be reinstated (9:1-6); (4) meat, except for the blood, and vegetables were to be given to humanity for food (9:3-4); and (5) there would never again be a universal flood (9:15).



GENESIS 9:25

Does Genesis 9:25 support racial prejudice and slavery?

Noah's curse wasn't directed toward any particular race, but rather at the Canaanite nation—a nation God knew would become wicked. The curse was fulfilled when the Israelites entered the promised land and drove the Canaanites out (see Joshua).



GENESIS 10:8-9

Who was Nimrod?

Not much is known about him except that he was a warrior, mighty hunter, and hero, the son of Cush. Although he was called “blessed of God,” he is also considered by some to be the founder of the great, godless Babylonian Empire (Gen. 10:11-12). This was the land adjacent to Assyria later called “the land of Nimrod” (Mic. 5:6).



MATTHEW 4:17

What is the difference between the “Kingdom of Heaven” and the “Kingdom of God”?

The “Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew has the same meaning as the “Kingdom of God” in Mark and Luke. Matthew uses this phrase because he was writing to the Jews, and they, out of their intense reverence and respect, did not pronounce God's name. Since heaven is God's dwelling place, the word “heaven” is a circumlocution for “God.”



MATTHEW 4:23

Why did Jesus teach in the synagogues?

Most towns that had ten or more Jewish families had a synagogue. The building served as a religious gathering place and as a school. It was customary for the leader of a synagogue to invite visiting rabbis like Jesus to speak.

JANUARY 5

Genesis 11:1–13:4; Matthew 5:1-26; Psalms 5:1-12; Proverbs 1:24-28

Q GENESIS 11:3-4

What was this tower?

The tower of Babel was most likely a ziggurat, a common structure in Babylonia at this time. Most often built as temples, ziggurats looked like pyramids with steps or ramps leading up the sides. Ziggurats stood as high as three hundred feet and were often just as wide; thus they were the focal point of the city.

Q GENESIS 12:11-13

Why did Abram want to deceive the Egyptians?

Abram was acting out of fear when he asked Sarai to tell a half-truth and say she was his sister. She *was* his half sister, but she was also his wife (see Gen. 20:12). Abram's intent was to deceive the Egyptians. He feared that if they knew the truth, they would kill him to get Sarai. She would have been a desirable addition to Pharaoh's harem because of her wealth, beauty, and potential for political alliance. As Sarai's brother, Abram would have been given a place of honor. As her husband, however, his life would be in danger, because Sarai could not enter Pharaoh's harem unless Abram was dead. So Abram told only half the truth and lost faith in God's protection, even after all God had promised him.

Q MATTHEW 5:17-20

If Jesus did not come to abolish the law, does the Old Testament law still apply to us today?

In the Old Testament, there were three categories of law: ceremonial, civil, and moral. (1) The *ceremonial law* related specifically to Israel's worship (see Lev. 1:2-3). Its primary purpose was to point forward to Jesus Christ; these laws, therefore, were no longer necessary after Jesus' death and resurrection. While we are no longer bound by ceremonial laws, the principles behind them—to worship and love a holy God—still apply. (2) The “civil law” applied to daily living in Israel (see Deut. 24:10-11). Because modern society and culture are so radically different from that time and setting, all of these guidelines cannot be followed specifically. But the principles behind the commands are timeless and should guide our conduct. (3) The *moral law* (such as the Ten Commandments) is the direct command of God, and it requires strict obedience (see Exod. 20:13, for example). The moral law reveals the nature and will of God, and it still applies today.

JANUARY 6

Genesis 13:5–15:21; Matthew 5:27-48; Psalms 6:1-10; Proverbs 1:29-33

Q GENESIS 14:18 *Who was Melchizedek?*

He was obviously a God-fearing man, for his name means “king of righteousness,” and king of Salem means “king of peace.” He was a “priest of God Most High” (Heb. 7:1-2). He recognized God as Creator of heaven and earth. What else is known about him? Four main theories have been suggested. (1) Melchizedek was a respected king of that region. Abram was simply showing him the respect he deserved. (2) The name Melchizedek may have been a standing title for all the kings of Salem. (3) Melchizedek was a type of Christ (Heb. 7:3). A type is an Old Testament event or teaching that is so closely related to what Christ did that it illustrates a lesson about Christ. (4) Melchizedek was the appearance on earth of the preincarnate Christ in a temporary bodily form.

Q MATTHEW 5:27-28 *Did Jesus teach that we should not be interested in the opposite sex?*

The Old Testament law said that it is wrong for a person to have sex with someone other than his or her spouse (Exodus 20:14). But Jesus said that the “desire” to have sex with someone other than your spouse is mental adultery and thus sin. Jesus emphasized that if the “act” is wrong, then so is the “intention.” To be faithful to your spouse with your body but not your mind is to break the trust so vital to a strong marriage. Jesus is not condemning natural interest in the opposite sex or even healthy sexual desire, but the deliberate and repeated filling of one’s mind with fantasies that would be evil if acted out.

Q MATTHEW 5:29-30 *Did Jesus teach that people should disfigure themselves?*

When Jesus said to get rid of your hand or your eye, he was speaking figuratively. He didn’t mean literally to gouge out your eye, because even a blind person can lust. But if that were the only choice, it would be better to go into eternity with one eye or hand than to go to hell with two. We sometimes tolerate sins in our lives that, left unchecked, could eventually destroy us. It is better to experience the pain of removal (getting rid of a bad habit or something we treasure, for instance) than to allow the sin to bring judgment and condemnation.

JANUARY 7

Genesis 16:1–18:19; Matthew 6:1-24; Psalms 7:1-17; Proverbs 2:1-5

Q GENESIS 17:2-8

Why did God repeat his covenant to Abram?

Twice before, he had mentioned this agreement (Gen. 12 and 15). Here, however, God was bringing it into focus and preparing to carry it out. He revealed to Abram several specific parts of his covenant: (1) God would make Abram the father of a mighty nation; (2) many nations and kings would descend from him; (3) God would continue to reveal himself to Abram's descendants; (4) God would give Abram's descendants the land of Canaan.

Q GENESIS 17:9-10

Why did God require circumcision?

(1) As a sign of obedience to him in all matters. (2) As a sign of belonging to his covenant people. Once circumcised, there was no turning back. The man would be identified as a Jew forever. (3) As a symbol of "cutting off" the old life of sin, purifying one's heart and dedicating oneself to God. (4) Possibly as a health measure. Circumcision more than any other practice separated God's people from their pagan neighbors. In Abraham's day, this was essential to develop the pure worship of the one true God.

Q MATTHEW 6:2

What is a hypocrite?

The original Greek word means a play-actor. The English meaning is usually someone who deliberately claims to be what he or she is not. In the New Testament only Christ used the term applying it to scribes and Pharisees where they were blind to their own faults (Matt. 7:5), God's workings (Luke 12:56), and true values (Luke 13:15), overvaluing tradition (Matt. 15:7) and loving display (Matt. 6:2, 5, 16). The term "hypocrites," as used here, describes people who do good acts for appearances only—not out of compassion or other good motives. Their actions may be good, but their motives are hollow.

Q MATTHEW 6:24

What is mammon?

This word occurs only in Matthew 6:24, (KJV); Luke 16:9, 11, 13, and is a transliteration of an Aramaic word meaning wealth or profit. Jesus sees in it a self-centered covetousness which claims people's hearts and thus alienates them from God. When a person owns something, in reality it owns him. Since humanity belongs to its creator, mammon here seems to be a rival to God. Thus the servant of mammon is an idol-worshiper and wealth is the object of his worship.

JANUARY 8

Genesis 18:20–19:38; Matthew 6:25–7:14; Psalms 8:1-9; Proverbs 2:6-15

Q GENESIS 19:1 *Where was Sodom?*

Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela or Zoar (Gen. 14:2) were called the Cities of the Plain. Scholars say they were located either north of the Dead Sea, or lie buried beneath the southern tip of the Dead Sea. The cities were probably destroyed by an earthquake accompanied by an explosion of gaseous deposits.

Q GENESIS 19:1 *Why was Lot sitting in the gate of Sodom?*

The gateway of the city was the meeting place for city officials and other men to discuss current events and transact business. It was a place of authority and status where a person could see and be seen. Evidently Lot held an important position in the government or was associated with those who did, because the angels found him at the city gate. Perhaps Lot's status in Sodom was one reason he was so reluctant to leave (Gen. 19:16, 18-22).

Q GENESIS 19:30-38 *Why doesn't the Bible openly condemn Lot's daughters for what they did?*

In many cases, the Bible does not judge people for their actions. It simply reports the events. However, incest is clearly condemned in other parts of Scripture (Lev. 18:6-18; 20:11, 12, 17, 19-21; Deut. 22:30; 27:20-23; Ezek. 22:11; 1 Cor. 5:1). Perhaps the consequence of their action—Moab and Ammon became enemies of Israel—was God's way of judging their sin.

Q MATTHEW 7:6 *What does the swine represent in Matthew 7:6?*

Pigs were unclean animals according to God's law (Deut. 14:8). Anyone who touched an unclean animal became "ceremonially unclean" and could not go to the temple to worship until the uncleanness was removed. Jesus says that we should not entrust holy teachings to unholy or unclean people. It is futile to try to teach holy concepts to people who don't want to listen and will only tear apart what we say.

JANUARY 9

Genesis 20:1–22:24; Matthew 7:15-29; Psalms 9:1-12; Proverbs 2:16-22

Q GENESIS 21:18

What happened to Ishmael, and who are his descendants?

Ishmael became ruler of a large tribe or nation. The Ishmaelites were nomads living in the Desert of Sinai and Paran, south of Israel. One of Ishmael's daughters married Esau, Ishmael's nephew (Gen. 28:9). The Bible pictures the Ishmaelites as hostile to Israel and to God (Ps. 83:6).

Q GENESIS 22:7-8

Why did God ask Abraham to perform human sacrifice?

Pagan nations practiced human sacrifice, but God condemned this as a terrible sin (Lev. 20:1-5). God did not want Isaac to die, but he wanted Abraham to sacrifice Isaac in his heart so it would be clear that Abraham loved God more than he loved his promised and long-awaited son. Isaac is a type of Christ. He was an only son. His father offered him up as a sacrifice. Through Isaac came the descendants of Abraham. Abraham believed that if he offered Isaac as a sacrifice, God would raise Isaac from the dead (Heb. 11:17-19). Like Isaac, Christ was an only Son who was offered and who was raised from the dead. Through his death and resurrection came the children of God.

Q MATTHEW 7:15, KJV

What is a false prophet?

False prophets were common in Old Testament times. They prophesied only what the king and the people wanted to hear, claiming it was God's message. Scripture abounds with warnings against false prophets. They are called treacherous, covetous, crafty, drunken, immoral, and profane. False teachers are just as common today. Jesus says to beware of those whose words sound religious but who are motivated by money, fame, or power. You can tell who they are because in their teaching they minimize Christ and glorify themselves.

Q MATTHEW 7:21

What does the word "Lord" mean?

The title "Lord" (Greek *kyrios*) is applied to Jesus Christ nearly seven hundred times in the New Testament. The word *kyrios* was used as the equivalent of *Yahweh* in the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint. It is so used in the New Testament, too. Thus Jesus Christ is identified with *Yahweh* in the use of *kyrios* (Lord). Jesus the Christ is called *Lord* because he is *Yahweh*, or God.

JANUARY 10

Genesis 23:1–24:51; Matthew 8:1-17; Psalms 9:13-20; Proverbs 3:1-6

Q GENESIS 23:9

Why did Abraham buy a cave to bury Sarah?

In patriarchal times, successive generations were buried in cave or rock-cut family tombs: Sarah, Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah, Leah, and Jacob were all buried in this cave at Machpelah. This name is applied to the field, cave, and surrounding land bought by Abraham. The modern site at Hebron is venerated by Jews, Christians, and Muslims, but the authenticity of the cave is unconfirmed. In ancient days mourning might last seven days and included weeping, tearing clothes, and wearing sackcloth (Gen. 37:34).

Q GENESIS 24:10

Where is Mesopotamia?

Mesopotamia (Hebrew *Aram-naha-rait*, meaning “between the two rivers”) in the time of Abraham was a fertile land covering the upper and middle Euphrates valley, modern Eastern Syria and Northern Iraq. It was also called *Paddan-aram* (Gen. 25:20; 28:2). It was the original home of Balaam (Deut. 23:4), and provided charioteers and cavalry for David (1 Chron. 19:6). The town of *Nahor* mentioned here was near Haran; its Hebrew spelling is slightly different from Nahor the brother of Abraham (Gen. 24:15).

Q MATTHEW 8:2-3

What is leprosy?

Leprosy was a feared disease because there was no known cure. In Jesus’ day, the Greek word for *leprosy* was used for a variety of similar diseases, and some forms were contagious. If a person contracted the contagious type, a priest declared him a leper and banished him from his home and city. The leper was sent to live in a community with other lepers until he either got better or died. When this leper begged Jesus to heal him, Jesus reached out and touched him, even though his skin was covered with the dread disease. During the days immediately before his crucifixion Jesus stayed in a house belonging to Simon the leper (Matt. 26:6) who may have been one of those cured of this disease by the Lord.

Q MATTHEW 8:4

Why did Jesus send the healed leper to a priest?

The law required a healed leper to be examined by a priest (Lev. 14). Jesus wanted this man to give his story firsthand to the priest to prove that his leprosy was completely gone so that he could be restored to his community.
