

Study Tool from
The Moody Bible Commentary
for

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TRUSTING YOUR UNKNOWN FUTURE TO A KNOWN GOD

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MOODY PUBLISHERS
CHICAGO

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INTRODUCTION

“In order to understand the Bible, you must read it.” This is an axiom that we both firmly believe. A secondary principle to which we both hold is, “If you didn’t understand it the first time, read it again.” More than anything else, the understanding of the Bible requires reading it, and then reading it some more. For many generations, committed believers held to the principle of the clarity of Scripture. Among other things, this simply means that if followers of Jesus the Messiah read the Bible, they can understand it. Nevertheless, there are some qualifications for this general principle:

1. Understanding the Bible requires effort—we need to work at studying the Scriptures.
2. Understanding the Bible will take time—we won’t get it all immediately.
3. Understanding the Bible requires that the Holy Spirit open our hearts and minds to the Scriptures.
4. Understanding the Bible will happen only if we are willing to obey it.
5. Understanding the Bible will never be complete—we can always learn more.

Having said this, we all need some help from time to time to understand the Scriptures. A person may be reading the Bible for his or her own personal time in the Word and run across a phrase or a word, and wonder, “*What does that mean?*” Or a Sunday school teacher or small group leader might be preparing a Bible Study and wonder, “*How does this passage fit with the paragraph that went before it?*” Or pastors or teachers might encounter people confused by a particular verse and might need some help clarifying its meaning. It is for these reasons, and many more, that all of the contributors for this resource have worked so hard to produce *The Moody Bible Commentary*. We want to help that reader, Sunday school teacher, home group leader or pastor have a better understanding of the Bible. Of course, there are many good commentaries to which the Bible student could turn. What makes this commentary distinctive?

The Moody Bible Commentary is trustworthy. For generations Moody Publishers has had the slogan, “The Name You Can Trust.” That derives from being the publishing house of the Moody Bible Institute, an institution that has maintained its commitment to the truth of the Word of God since 1886. Since the founding of Moody Bible Institute, there have been countless attacks on the veracity of Scripture, innumerable attempts to undermine its teaching, and significant challenges to its authority. Nevertheless, in all that time, the administrators and professors at Moody Bible Institute have maintained a commitment to the inerrancy and inspiration of the Bible as the very Word of God. This high view of Scripture, along with a determination to practice first-rate biblical scholarship, has made Moody the name you can trust. Thirty faculty members of the Moody Bible Institute have worked together to produce *The Moody Bible Commentary* with explanations that are reliable.

The Moody Bible Commentary is understandable. The authors and editors have striven to explain the Scriptures in a simple and clear way. They defined theological terms, clarified the meaning of difficult biblical words, identified ancient sources with which readers might be unfamiliar, and gave the geographical locations of ancient biblical cities and towns. Although the writers engaged in excellent scholarly research, they made sure that readers would not need a commentary to help them understand this commentary.

The Moody Bible Commentary shows the logic of biblical books. Too often people read the Bible without regard for its literary context or structure. But the writers of Scripture, under the superintending work of the Holy Spirit, wrote inspired text with great literary artistry. Therefore, all biblical books have literary structure and strategies. One distinctive feature of this commentary

is that it follows the structures that are inherent in the biblical books themselves. The commentary on each biblical book has an outline in its introduction. The body of the commentary follows that same outline so a reader can follow the structure throughout that specific book. Moreover, the commentary itself traces the flow of thought, showing how each individual section fits in the overall argument of the biblical book. In essence, *The Moody Bible Commentary* will provide a road map through each book of the Bible.

The Moody Bible Commentary deals with difficult verses. Sometimes the most frustrating aspect of using a commentary is that it complicates the explanation of difficult or disputed verses and fails to offer help precisely where it is most needed. The authors and editors worked hard to be alert to the possible difficulties in a text and its interpretation, and to address those issues clearly. Of course, every reader finds different questions and sees different difficulties. Nevertheless, this commentary hopes to answer the more perplexing questions. For example, does a particular Bible passage seem to contradict another? Not if it is the inspired Word of God. Also, readers of Scripture are often perplexed by biblical prophecies, wondering when and how these were or will be fulfilled. When these apparent contradictions or perplexing difficulties present themselves, this commentary will address those issues. After all, if a commentary does not address the hard or unclear verses, then it really is not much help at all.

The Moody Bible Commentary uses a literal interpretive method and applies it consistently. By “literal” we mean that the method that governs this commentary understands the words of the text in a normal way. Unless there is a good reason to think otherwise, the phrases and expressions of Scripture are interpreted according to what appears to be their plain sense. If there is a figure of speech or symbol, then it is interpreted with sensitivity to that figurative expression. However, even in the case of figurative language, there is always some spiritual or physical reality the biblical author is conveying through the figure of speech. For example, Jesus is not a literal door (see Jn 10:9), but this metaphor describes Him literally, as the only way for a person to enter a forgiven relationship with God.

Virtually all biblical interpreters agree with this “literal” approach. However, all do not apply it consistently, particularly in prophetic passages. A distinctive feature of this commentary is that it understands much of prophecy in its literal sense and even prophetic symbols are recognized as referring to a genuine reality. As a result, this approach to interpretation will affect how the commentary understands Israel, the Church, and the end of days. In our view, this method of interpretation is the least subjective and easiest way to understand the Bible.

The Moody Bible Commentary sees the Old Testament as a messianic text. The Lord Jesus taught His disciples about “all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms” (Lk 24:44). In commenting on this passage, A. T. Robertson once remarked, “Jesus found himself in the Old Testament, a thing that some modern scholars do not seem to be able to do” (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 2 [Nashville: Broadman, 1930], 294). Even though much of contemporary scholarship does not believe in direct predictive Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah, this commentary does. It presumes that God could and did reveal the messianic hope to the writers of the Hebrew Bible. Moreover, it consistently shows how these prophecies make sense in their literary context, pointing to the coming of the future Redeemer. Additionally, this commentary shows how the New Testament refers to Jesus of Nazareth as the fulfillment of these predictions, identifying Him as the Messiah of Israel and the Savior of the world.

The Moody Bible Commentary is based on the original languages of Scripture. The commentary uses the *New American Standard Bible* as its English language Bible text. When you see quotations from the biblical text in the commentary, they are in bold and taken from the NASB. We chose this translation for the commentary because it is, at the same time, among the more literal and readable translations of the Bible available. However, the commentary authors did not rely on the translation of the NASB. Rather, in their research and study, they used the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts of the Bible. As a result, there are places where a commentary might point out a more favorable translation of a word or phrase. The authors explain why this particular translation is preferred and often show how a different English version may understand it in the same way or, if necessary, include their own translations of that phrase or word. As a result, this commentary provides a fresh exposition of the biblical text based on the original languages of Scripture.

The Moody Bible Commentary is user-friendly. A variety of elements make this commentary easy to use. Besides using understandable language, it is a one-volume commentary. By limiting it to just one volume, the commentary can be the one book on your shelf to which you can turn when you need help understanding the Bible. Of course there are times when readers will want to study a particular passage in greater detail. Therefore, the contributors included in-text citations, directing readers to works they can use for deeper study. Also, for those who would like greater depth in their study, there is a list of recommended works at the end of each individual commentary. Other helpful elements include an introduction to each book of the Bible, dealing with key features, such as author, date, recipients, historical setting, theological issues, place in the canon, and an outline. There are also maps of the Bible lands as they relate to the Scriptures and helpful charts that clarify the biblical text.

Other aids are included to help with your own personal study and deeper application. Of course, there are subject and Scripture indexes to help readers locate or return to key themes and issues as needed. At various points throughout, there are cross references to key Bible passages that discuss related issues (typically shown with cf. and the Bible verses). Also included are notes directing the reader to other parts of the commentary for further discussion of the same issue if it is discussed elsewhere. In addition, each chapter in the commentary includes some points of application for today's reader, reflecting the Scripture's teaching that it remains a light to guide our paths (Ps 119:105) and is useful in daily life "for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness" (2Tm 3:16). Overall, this commentary wants to give you an accessible resource that will readily open the Bible for you, making simple what some might think is overly complex.

Most of all, we want to encourage you never to substitute reading this commentary for actually reading the Bible. All of us, editors and contributors alike, want to support your reading of the Bible by helping you understand it. But it is the actual reading of the Bible that will transform our lives. We concur with the wisdom of Proverbs: "He who gives attention to the word will find good, and blessed is he who trusts in the LORD" (Pr 16:20).

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16:27-30. The earthquake woke the jailer; and when he saw the prison doors were open, he assumed the prisoners had escaped. Since he was responsible for the security of the prisoners, he prepared to take his own life rather than risk execution. It was Roman law to execute the guard who allowed a prisoner to escape.

The jailer could not have been more surprised by what he discovered. Instead of escaping as the apostles did in Ac 5 and 12, Paul, Silas, and all the other prisoners stayed put. Seeing that the jailer was about to take his life, Paul **cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Do not harm yourself for we are all here!”**

The jailer fell on his knees before Paul and Silas in fear, not worship. He called them **Sirs** (lit., “lords”), concluding they were undoubtedly divine men. The question he asked was not to save his life, **Sirs, what must I do to be saved?** He already knew the prisoners had not escaped. Most likely he heard enough of the gospel message from the disruptive but accurate words of the slave girl (Longenecker, “Acts,” 465), or perhaps from the missionaries following their incarceration, to recognize his spiritual need.

16:31. His cry for salvation (16:30) and Paul’s quick and concise answer captured the essence of the proper response to the gospel: **Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.** Paul urged the jailer to place his complete dependence upon the Lord Jesus for deliverance from the consequences of his sin. **And your household** does not mean that when he gets saved his household is automatically saved. The statement means that if he believed, and if his whole household believed, they would all be saved.

16:32-34. The jailer’s household was saved because they also believed, suggesting that his **household** consisted of those who were of sufficient age to exercise faith in Christ, and that infants were not among those baptized. All were immediately baptized after they believed. Though baptism does not save, it symbolizes cleansing from sin and is a further step of submission to the Lord. Luke presented twofold evidence of the authenticity of their faith. One, they opened their home to Paul and Silas. Two, they experienced the gift of joy; they **rejoiced greatly.**

16:35-40. The officials wanted to get Paul and Silas out of town quickly and quietly since the officials themselves had violated Roman law by arresting and punishing them without a trial.

Paul, however, was not willing to allow these administrators to simply dismiss the issue. Since they had been publicly punished, Paul used the leverage of his Roman citizenship to force the officials to admit publicly that they had misused their authority.

Paul did not use his citizenship to “get even.” He forced the officials to admit their error to protect the new faith from becoming an unauthorized or unfavorable religious movement. Paul also met with the believers at Lydia’s house to encourage them before leaving. He probably assured them that the officials would not punish them because of their faith in Christ.

The converts at Philippi were all completely different. Lydia was a successful businesswoman. The demon-possessed girl was a slave being exploited for profit. The Philippian jailer was a cog in the Roman machinery, afraid of losing his life. The conversion of these three individuals from culturally and economically diverse backgrounds is a testimony to the universal appeal and power of the gospel.

In this current time of social and ethnic diversity, believers also need to set an example of the power of Christ to unite rather than divide people by proclaiming the gospel to all people.

Luke, in 17:1-9, has given us only a brief summary of Paul’s ministry in Thessalonica. Paul attempted to minister in the synagogue, but was forced to flee to Berea because of Jewish opposition. The courage Paul and his team showed was remarkable. After enduring the abuse in Philippi, they then walked about 70 miles to Thessalonica to continue their missionary endeavors, but with the wounds on their bodies not yet healed from the beating.

4. The Witness at Thessalonica (17:1-9)

17:1. From Philippi, Paul traveled along the Egnatian Way to **Thessalonica**. It was a free city with its own elected officials (v. 6) and the capital of Macedonia. The city was founded by Cassander, one of the rulers of Macedonia after Alexander the Great’s death, in 315 BC and named after his wife, daughter of Philip II and half-sister of Alexander the Great. At the time of Paul’s visit, the population may have been as high as 100,000.

Paul considered Thessalonica a strategic location for preaching the gospel. The “good news” could spread east and west on the Egnatian Way, plus the synagogue in the city provided a point of contact for explaining how Christ’s life, death, and resurrection fulfilled Scripture.

17:2-3. Paul followed his personal strategy (**custom**) for ministry by going first to the synagogue. Though he had faced opposition from his Jewish countrymen on the first missionary journey, Paul remained committed to the strategy of proclaiming the gospel first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles (cf. comments at 13:46-48 and Rm 1:16). It was a wise strategy. His most effective ministry would have come from sharing the gospel with those whose backgrounds included knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures and the concept of the Messiah, namely Jewish people and Gentile God-fearers.

Paul appealed to the OT to support his message that Jesus is the Messiah. It is not clear whether the reference to three Sabbaths means that Paul was only in Thessalonica for three weeks or that his ministry in the synagogue was for three consecutive weeks. The fruit of his ministry suggests the latter, so that he conducted his outreach even after the three weeks in the synagogue ceased. In either case he was obviously in the city long enough to organize a church.

Luke did not explain how Paul made his case, but his summary of Paul's preaching gives us the core message of the early church. First, Jesus' suffering and death was not a tragic and unexpected turn of events. The OT predicted both the suffering and resurrection of the Messiah. Second, this Jesus who rose from the dead is Israel's promised Messiah.

17:4. Though some Jews believed, Paul's greatest success was with Gentiles. Among the converts were **a number of the leading women**, most likely the wives of some of the city officials.

17:5-7. Some Jewish leaders became jealous. They resented that Paul persuaded Jewish people, Gentiles, and even women to become believers. They incited a mob that went to Jason's house in search of Paul and his companions. Unable to find Paul, they dragged Jason and other new believers before the city officials.

The charges were serious. One, they accused them of political agitation. Upsetting **the world** is hyperbole, but it does suggest that this new faith made a significant impact on the Roman Empire. Perhaps they had heard reports about Paul's arrest at Philippi. Two, they were defying Caesar's decrees by claiming that Christ is a king. Claiming that Jesus is an emperor rivaling Caesar was a capital offense. If the apostles had proclaimed Christ as king, they were talking about a different kind of kingdom. We know

from the epistles to the Thessalonians that Paul emphasized Jesus' second coming. Perhaps he had spoken about the future messianic kingdom. The charges were civil and political rather than religious because the Jewish leaders knew that the Romans would ignore religious issues but take strong action against anyone causing a civil disturbance or advocating a revolt.

17:8-9. The agitators were successful. The city officials required **Jason and the others** to post bail (**pledge**). **Jason** was apparently a leader in the Thessalonian synagogue who trusted Christ under Paul's ministry. He was probably affluent since his house was substantial enough to host the congregation and house Paul and his team, and **Jason** more than likely became the leader of the church after Paul left. The traditional view is that "the bond" was collateral guaranteeing Paul would not return to Thessalonica during the administration of the current officials, but it is equally possible that **Jason** and the other members of the newly founded congregation (**they**, indicating others than strictly Paul) were also implicated in the unrest and posted a bond for themselves. The bail bond may have been the satanic barrier that Paul said prevented from him from returning to Thessalonica (see 1Th 2:17-18).

Paul's ministry at Thessalonica emphasized that Paul based his message that Jesus was the Messiah on the OT and presented the evidence in a logical and persuasive format. He did not attempt to manipulate or trick people to become believers, as he explained in 1Th 2:1-4.

5. The Witness at Berea (17:10-15)

17:10. To avoid further trouble, the believers sent Paul and Silas to Berea under the cover of darkness. When Paul arrived in Berea, which was about 45 miles southwest of Thessalonica, he went immediately to the synagogue.

17:11. Paul could not have known that the Bereans would become a model for how to study the Bible. Luke gave a threefold description of the Bereans' response to Paul's preaching. First, they approached Paul's teaching with some open-mindedness. The expression **more noble-minded** than the Thessalonians means that the Bereans were objective in their evaluation of Paul's message. They judged his message by the standard of Scripture rather than their preconceived prejudices. Second, they also received the Scriptures **with great eagerness**. They had an appetite to learn. Finally, they examined **the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things**

were so. They carefully evaluated Paul's message to determine for themselves if it was true.

17:12-15. The response was similar to what happened in Thessalonica. Many, including, women and men of high social and political standing, believed.

But not everyone was pleased about Paul's preaching the gospel. When the same Jewish leaders from Thessalonica discovered that Paul was preaching **the word of God** in Berea, they took action to stop him. Luke's reference to the Scriptures (v. 11) and to Paul's message as **the word of God** confirmed that the gospel had a divine origin (cf. 13:5; 15:35; 16:32). Paul made the same claim in defending his gospel to the Galatians. The gospel was not his own creation; he received it directly from the Lord (Gl 1:11-17).

The Jewish opponents from Thessalonica incited opposition, forcing Paul to go to Athens, leaving Silas and Timothy behind in Berea. It is not clear whether Paul took a ship to Athens, which was the normal means of travel in and out of that city, or went overland.

6. The Witness at Athens (17:16-34)

At Athens Paul faced the blind wisdom of pagan philosophers. Paul was alone but not intimidated because he was zealous for the honor of God and confident of the power of his gospel message.

17:16. Paul's first observation was distressing. **Being provoked** is the verb *paroxuno*, "greatly disturbed." suggests that Paul was incited to jealousy for the Lord because of the pervasiveness of idolatry. Instead of worshiping the Lord as the only true God, the Athenians were bowing down to lifeless idols. It was this inward anger that motivated Paul to proclaim Christ.

17:17. He preached in the synagogue and the marketplace to anyone who would listen. It is obvious that Paul believed that Jesus Christ was unique and that those who worshiped other gods needed to turn to the living God.

17:18. Paul confronted two of the more popular philosophies in the Roman Empire, Epicureanism and Stoicism. The Epicureans believed in pursuing a life free from pain. They held to the existence of the gods, but thought that the gods were completely detached from humanity, as any interaction with people would disturb them and, true to Epicurean doctrine, the gods had a blessed and undisturbed existence. Epicureans believed the soul was material, though composed of finer atoms than the body, and would deteriorate upon death. There was thus

no room for the theory of an afterlife. Because they prized an imperturbable life, they rejected the idea that one could anger the gods or face punishment or judgment from them since those concepts would disturb one's thoughts and disrupt life—which explains their strong reaction to Paul's mention of the resurrection and future judgment. It is misleading to call them hedonists in the modern sense. Their concept of pleasure involved avoidance of disturbances in life rather than crass self-indulgence. The pursuits of wanton amusements could be counterproductive to a happy life (for a summary of Epicureanism as it intersected with Ac 17, see N. Clayton Croy, "Hellenistic Philosophies and the Preaching of the Resurrection [Acts 17:18, 32]," *Novum Testamentum* 39 [1997], 21–39). The founder of Stoicism was Zeno (342–270 B.C., from Cyprus). Stoics believed that God permeated all things, and that what was rational in humankind was the manifestation of God. Theologically they would be considered pantheists. According to Stoics, Reason or the Logos controlled the universe, but people were responsible for their voluntary actions. They rejected the Epicurean philosophy of pleasure and instead stressed virtue.

17:18. After **conversing** with Paul, the Epicureans and Stoics concluded he was a **babblor** and **proclaimer of strange deities**. **Babblor** refers to someone who picks up bits and pieces of information and then proclaims them as if he were an expert on the topic (Bock, *Acts*, 561–62). The charge Paul was a teacher **of strange deities** meant he was talking about gods they did not understand.

17:19-21. They took Paul to the **Areopagus**, the place where the Athenians discussed ideas of mutual interest. He was not arrested, but given the opportunity to give them more information about what he believed. Luke did not specify what caught their interest. He said only that from their perspective it was a **new teaching and strange things**. Luke's editorial comment in v. 21 implies the Athenians wasted a lot of time in useless discussions about irrelevant issues.

17:22-23. Paul's introductory comment that the Athenians were **very religious** was a commendation rather than a criticism, since he hoped to convince his audience to listen to his message. He connected with the Athenians by referring to an altar erected **TO AN UNKNOWN GOD**. It is probable there was more than one

altar to an unknown god in Athens, but Paul influenced his audience with this comment to have them focus on one God by referring to only one altar (Bock, *Acts*, 565). Paul proceeded to make known the god they worshiped but by their own admission did not know.

17:24-26. Paul began with creation. God is the creator of everything that exists and is transcendent (17:24-25). He does not dwell in man-made temples and is independent. He is the source and sustainer of life (17:26-29). Paul alluded to Adam as the single source of humanity in the statement, **He made from one man every nation of mankind**. Because He is creator, God is sovereign. He controls history (or possibly seasons) and national boundaries (**appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation**). Genesis 10–11 may have been the OT background for Paul's comment, but he did not explicitly cite it since it would have minimal significance for Greek philosophers.

17:27-31. In v. 27 Paul revealed the point of his observations about God in vv. 23-26. As the sovereign creator, God intends for men and women to seek him. The verbs **grope** and **find** are in the optative mood, which suggests finding God through human effort is only a remote possibility. The word picture suggested by **grope** is a blind man fumbling around to find his way (Bock, *Acts*, 567). This implies that, though God is near, it is highly unlikely the Athenians would find Him because their strategy was flawed. While a considerable amount about God can be apprehended from an objective consideration of creation (cf. the comments on Rm 1:18-32), Paul would make it clear that full comprehension of God requires the augmenting truth of the gospel, the proper response of repentance, and recognition of the validity of the resurrection and authority of Jesus Christ (cf. Paul's concluding words in vv. 30-31). Without these additional elements, God will not be found.

The statement **in Him (God) we live and move and exist** (v. 28) probably comes from the Greek poet Epimenides (philosopher, poet, and seer from Crete, c. 600 BC), in a poem entitled *Cretica*. The same poem is quoted in Ti 1:12. The reference to **children of God** is an allusion to a statement by another Stoic poet, Aratus. This is not pantheism. Paul argued that if men and women are living beings made in the image of God, then God is a living being. He is not a man-made object of wood or stone (v. 29). These two references to Greek poets do not mean

Paul endorsed their view of God, but he had no qualms about using pagan poets to support his argument if some of what they had written coincided with revealed truth.

Having established common ground with the Athenians, Paul stressed the need for them to repent in view of coming judgment. **Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance** (v. 30) does not mean ignorance is excusable. God's mercy was the reason that in the past He did not usually pass judgment *in this life* on mankind even though they deserved it. In other words, He did not always bring temporal destruction upon an idolatrous people as an act of judgment for their sin. Now, however, because they knew about God, they could plead ignorance. If they refused to repent, they would suffer eternal punishment. In speaking to Gentiles, the call to repent means to turn from lifeless idols to faith in the living God (1Th 1:9). Polhill writes, "The times of forbearance had now ended because their ignorance had now ended. Now they knew the one true God through Paul's proclamation. He was no longer an 'unknown God'; and should they continue in their false worship and fail to acknowledge his sole lordship of heaven and earth, their sin would no longer be a sin of ignorance but a high-handed sin" (*Acts*, 376).

Paul did not mention Jesus Christ by name, but declared the resurrection proved He has the authority to judge. Though Paul did not give the exact time of judgment, it is on a **fixed day**, meaning it is certain. That Jesus will judge the world **in righteousness** means that his judgment will be just.

17:32-34. The response was divided. Most ridiculed the idea of **resurrection**, but a few became believers. The prevailing view of death among the Greeks was either the complete extinction of the body and soul or a temporal survival of the soul after death. Neither the Epicureans nor the Stoics believed in immortality, thus they not only rejected Paul's message but also mocked (**sneer**) him. For more on the common Greco-Roman view of death, see the comments at 1Co 15:12.

Paul's ministry, however, was not a complete failure—**some men joined him and believed** (v. 34). Luke identified two of the believers by name, Dionysius the Aeropagite and a woman named Damaris. Nothing for certain is known about these two individuals. Providing the names of two individuals gives credibility to Luke's account and is consistent with Luke's

emphasis on the place of women in the life of Jesus and the early church.

Some have criticized Paul for his ministry at Athens. They appeal to 1Co 1:18-25 and claim Paul confessed he made a mistake. He focused on natural theology and Greek philosophy, not special revelation and the cross. This evaluation is too harsh. Some did become believers. Those who refused to believe rejected Paul and his statement about the resurrection not because he erred in attempting to contextualize his message.

Two truths emerge from Paul's ministry at Athens. First, Paul believed in the uniqueness of Christ and the gospel. People will not find Christ by following their felt needs. They will "grope" in darkness. People will find Christ only in the "gospel." Second, not only here but also in other locations where Luke has given us a summary of Paul's preaching, it is plain that he contextualized his message to reach his audience. Paul did not water down or corrupt the gospel, but he did attempt to proclaim the good news in the cultural and historical context of the people he wanted to bring to Christ. His refusal to dilute his message is seen in vv. 30-31. Paul must have known that his words would be a direct affront to the Epicureans who denied eternal life and future judgment, and to the Stoics who denied the transcendence of God. Contextualization is important in spreading the gospel, but doctrinal truth must not be sacrificed upon the altar of cultural relevance.

When he left Athens, Paul went to Corinth, 40 miles west of Athens. Corinth's location on the narrow isthmus that connected the mainland with the south caused it to be "the marketplace of Greece." Paul's ministry in Corinth extended from the spring of 50 AD to the fall of 52, and the mention of Gallio in 18:12-17 helps to provide one of the clearest and most unassailable historical markers for the whole book of Acts (see the comments below).

7. The Witness at Corinth (18:1-17)

18:1. Corinth was infamous for more than its commerce. It was a city of great wickedness. The Acropolis, a high hill about a mile from the city center, dominated Corinth, and the temple of Aphrodite had been built on the Acrocorinth. At one time a thousand cultic priestesses served in the temple as sacred prostitutes and came into the city in the evening to sell sexual services. This was not the case of "New Corinth," Corinth as it existed in Paul's day, though it was

morally corrupt for numerous other reasons during the first century (see the Introduction to the commentary on 1 Corinthians). Barclay quotes a Greek proverb that reads, "Not every man can afford a journey to Corinth" (William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles [Daily Study Bible]*, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1955, 145). Yet in Corinth, Paul witnessed the triumph of God's grace over greed and lust. For more on the background and location of Corinth, see the "The City of Corinth" in the Introduction to the commentary on 1 Corinthians.

18:2-3. Paul sometimes worked as a tent-maker to support himself (1Th 2:9), so it is not surprising that he met **Aquila** and **Priscilla**, who were also Jewish and **tent-makers**. They had been forced to leave Rome because of the edict of Claudius, issued in AD 49, expelling all Jews (whether believers or not) from Rome for causing a civil disturbance because of their dispute about Jesus.

18:4-6. Paul began his ministry in the synagogue proclaiming the gospel first to his own people. When Silas and Timothy arrived with support from the Macedonian churches Paul was able to **devot[e]** himself full time to ministry. Paul also wrote 1 Thessalonians in response to the report Timothy brought about the new church (see the Introduction to 1 Thessalonians, and the comments on 1Th 3:6).

Intense opposition forced Paul to abandon his ministry in the synagogue. In a symbolic gesture, Paul **shook** the dust off his clothes. This was a common practice among the Jews who, when returning to their home from a journey, would often knock dust off their sandals and clothes. They did this to remove any "unclean" substances that might have been picked up in Gentile lands so as to avoid rendering their homes or villages ritually impure. Paul declared the Jews were responsible for their own fate: **Your blood be upon your own heads!** (cf. Ezk 3:14-21). Their opposition justified his ministry to Gentiles (but see the comments on Rm 11:13-14).

18:7-8. Instead of leaving Corinth, Paul relocated his ministry to the house of **Titius Justus**, a god-fearer. He made his home available for Paul to continue his ministry. God honored Paul's courage and persistence. **Crispus**, the synagogue ruler, and his household were among **many of the Corinthians** who believed and were baptized.

18:9-11. Paul was human, not a superhero. In Corinth, he was almost overcome with fear. In

- C. Slow to Get Angry in Trials (4:1–5:6)
 - 1. Worldliness: The Source of Anger (4:1-6)
 - 2. Humility: The Solution to Worldliness (4:7-10)
 - 3. Slander: The By-Product of Anger (4:11-12)
 - 4. Pride: The Accompaniment to Worldliness (4:13-17)
 - 5. Judgment: The Outcome of Worldliness (5:1-6)
- V. Epilogue: Final Applications Regarding Trials (5:7-18)
 - 1. Recall for Endurance in Suffering (5:7-11)
 - 2. Solution to Hopelessness in Suffering (5:12-18)
- VI. Conclusion: Restoring the Disobedient (5:19-20)

COMMENTARY ON JAMES

I. Salutation (1:1)

1:1. James (see Introduction: Author) is God's **bond-servant** (*doulos*, "slave"), a term used of Christ's willing submission to the Father (Php 2:7). He wrote to Jewish Christians (**twelve tribes**; cf. Lk 22:30) who were **dispersed abroad**, a likely reference to the scattering of Ac 8:1. **Greetings** (*chairo*) also means "rejoice" (cf. v. 2).

II. Prologue of the Letter: Testing of Faith (1:2-18)

A. Perfect Design for Testing (1:2-8)

1:2-3. The readers are to **consider** their trials with **all** (not some) **joy**. Trials are unpredictable (**encounter** means "fall into") and not all the same (**various**). **The testing of . . . faith** is designed to reveal the quality of one's faith and to produce stamina. **Testing** could also be translated "the approved part" of one's faith. It is not just the *tested* faith that produces endurance; it is the *approved* or *genuine* part of one's faith that produces maturity.

1:4-8. Believers must cooperate with God and **let endurance have its** beneficial outcome. The words **perfect** [two times, *teleios*] and **complete** introduce the theme of maturity (see Introduction). In maturity, believers are **lacking in nothing** spiritually (cf. 1Co 2:15; Heb 5:14). In trials the believer often **lacks wisdom**, or "skill for living" (v. 5). "Wisdom" is not primarily knowledge, but godly behavior in difficult situations (cf. 3:15). The solution is to **ask . . . God** for it. The readers may have viewed God as miserly and critical, but God **gives to all generously and without reproach**. The prayer for skill for dealing with trials is answered liberally and willingly. Requests must be offered **in faith without any doubting** (v. 6), since in the

NT doubting is usually treated as sin and that which opposes faith (cf. Mt 14:31; Rm 14:23). The imagery of **the surf of the sea** that is **tossed by the wind** depicts the instability of the immature. The **man** who doubts **ought not to expect that he will receive anything** of wisdom **from the Lord** (v. 7), since he is **double-minded** (cf. 4:8). Caught between following Christ and the world (1:27; 4:4), the doubter becomes **unstable in all his ways**.

B. Proper Perspective in Testing (1:9-11)

1:9-11. Joy is dependent on how believers "consider" (v. 2) their circumstances. The follower of Christ who is poor (**brother of humble circumstances**) needs **to glory** or boast in his trials because God is lovingly developing his character through trials. This is a **high position**. **The rich man** (v. 10) is to glory in **his humiliation**, i.e., his mortality. The rich are no different from beautiful, but temporary, **flowering grass**. James probably had in mind physical death for the rich person, which might come suddenly, even **in the midst of** one's **pursuits**. At that time, wealth is of no advantage.

C. Generous God behind Testing (1:12-18)

1:12. **Blessed** means "to be richly rewarded by God" both in this world (referring esp. to the development of character through trials, 1:4) and in the next (Mt 5:11-12). The believer who **perseveres under trial** and is finally **approved** at the final evaluation before God receives the **crown of life**. The **crown of life** is a future reward given to faithful Christians (cf. Rv 2:10), i.e., **those who love Him** (cf. 2:5). This reward is an enriched and enhanced eternal life, bestowed upon those who have persevered, following either death or the rapture. "While heaven is entirely a gift of grace, it admits of degrees of felicity, and that

these are dependent upon how faithfully we have built a structure of character and service upon the foundation of Christ” (Michael Green, *The Second Epistle of Peter and the Epistle of Jude*, TNTC [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968], 76.)

1:13. The phrase **let no one say** subtly introduces the theme of the tongue (see 3:1-12). **God cannot be tempted by evil** can be translated, “God must not be put to the test by evil people.” Jewish Christians would recall how Israel was judged for putting God to the test (Nm 14:22; Ps 78:18).

1:14-15. Satan tempts all believers. But **each one is ultimately tempted when he is . . . enticed by his own lust**. A temptation is not sin unless it is **conceived** and **gives birth**. That **sin is accomplished** means sin has become “full-grown” (NIV, ESV). Any sin by an unbeliever brings eternal death (hell). But “full-grown” sin brings early physical **death** (Pr 10:27; Eph 6:2-3).

1:16-17. Temptation is not from God but **every perfect gift** is. God is **the Father** or creator of **lights** such as the sun (Gn 1:14-16; Ps 136:7). Stars may have **variation or shifting shadow**, but God does not (Heb 13:8). He *never* solicits anyone to sin.

1:18. The most perfect of all gifts (v. 16; Rm 6:23) is new birth (**He brought us forth**). It begins sovereignly with **the exercise of His will**. As the **first fruits**, Christians are the initial harvest that anticipates creation’s redemption (Rm 8:20-21).

III. Maxim: Quick to Obey, Slow to Speak, Slow to Anger (1:19-20)

1:19-20. The maxim lists the three essential character qualities in trials and summarizes the body of the epistle (see Introduction). **Quick to hear** (see 1:22–2:26) counteracts sluggishness to obey God; **slow to speak** (see 3:1-18) corrects sins of the tongue; and **slow to anger** (see 4:1–5:12) evades outbursts in trials. Human anger, customarily sinful (Mt 5:22), **does not achieve** God’s **righteousness** (cf. 3:18; 5:6, 16), either in oneself or in others.

IV. Body of the Letter: Godly Responses in Trials (1:21–5:6)

A. Quick to Obey in Trials (1:21–2:26)

1. Nature of True Obedience (1:21-27)

1:21. Verse 21 begins the body of the letter. Holiness (“righteousness,” v. 20) is developed by **putting aside all . . . wickedness**. The goal of sanctification is to **save your souls** (cf. 5:20), better translated “save your life (lives).” In the OT (LXX), the phrase means deliverance from

physical death (e.g., Gn 19:17; 1Sm 19:11). Jesus used this sense (Mk 3:4; Lk 6:9) but added a spiritual meaning: by submission to Christ, the believer delivers his life from worldliness (see the comments on Rm 6:15-23), enables him to experience the abundant Christian life, and preserves it for eternal reward (Mt 16:24-27; Mk 8:34-38). James uses both concepts: sanctification can save believers’ lives from early physical death (vv. 10-11, 14-15) and bring future reward (v. 12; 2:12-13).

1:22-25. To “receive the word” (v. 21) is now clarified as **prove yourselves doers of the word**. Believers who are **merely hearers** of biblical truth are self-deceived (cf. v. 7; Gl 6:3; 1Jn 1:8). A believer who does not act on truth is like **a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror** (v. 23). James has just referred to our spiritual birth (v. 18) and will allude to our new self in the “law of liberty (v. 25). So **natural face**, which is literally “the face of one’s birth,” corresponds to the believer’s spiritual birth. The Christian looks in the mirror of God’s Word (2Co 3:18 NASB) at his new self, transformed by new birth (v. 18). But the Christian who has **gone away** from the mirror (v. 24) has tragically **forgotten what kind of person he is in Christ** (v. 24; cf. 2Pt 1:9). The **law of liberty** (v. 25) is the “law” or “principle” by which God frees believers from sin (Gl 2:4; 5:1, 13; 1Pt 2:16), namely, the gospel, creating in them new selves (2Co 5:17; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10). For **blessed**, see v. 12.

1:26-27. Pious devotion is **worthless** or empty if it does not curb a person’s tongue or meet practical needs. **To visit orphans and widows** (v. 27; cf. Dt 10:18; Ps 146:9) means to “look after” them (NIV). Providing for the unfortunate is linked to the command to **keep oneself unstained by the world**. Our hearts follow our treasures (Mt 6:21). So the one who gives financially to help others guards her or his heart from the blemish of worldly, monetary values.

2. Sin of Partiality (2:1-13)

2:1-4. The maxim in 1:19 contains the injunction to be “quick to hear.” In this passage, being “quick to hear” God’s Word means, among other things, refusing to show favoritism to the rich. James pointed out that true religion consists in showing kindness to the disadvantaged (1:27), and the related idea is that of refusing to cater to the rich (2:1-13). These readers would be especially susceptible to such partiality in light of their oppressive circumstances (cf. 1:1-12)—that is, they might be tempted to show partiality to the rich in the hope of gaining financial assistance

2:15-17. The fourth **Woe** is for Babylon's inhumanity to their neighbors, the surrounding nations. Babylon deceived its **neighbors** with alcohol, described as **venom** (anger or rage). They were motivated by anger to deceive and control the surrounding nations. Just as a wicked man will get a woman drunk to take sexual advantage of her, Babylon took immoral advantage of its neighbors **to look on their nakedness** ("naked sexual parts"; cf. Gn 9:20-22). In a perfect example of justice, the Babylonians would soon **drink and expose [their] own nakedness** (lit., "show yourself uncircumcised"). Referring to the Babylonians as "uncircumcised" emphasized their godless condition (e.g., Gn 34:4; Jdg 14:3; 1Sm 17:36).

The judgment on Babylon is from the **cup in the LORD's right hand**, a symbol of divine retribution (cf. Is 51:17-23; Jr 25:15-17; Lm 4:21; Rv 14:10; 16:19). Judgment would fall for the **violence done to Lebanon**. Perhaps **Lebanon** is a synecdoche for Israel, as it is elsewhere (cf. 2Kg 14:9; Jr 22:6, 23), and **the town** likely refers to Jerusalem. Or the judgment may be for Babylon's actual wanton **devastation** of Lebanon's **beasts and land**. But the worst sin was the **human bloodshed**.

2:18-19. The fifth and final **Woe** is for Babylon's idolatry. It begins with the question, **What profit is the idol?** The Hebrew means "nonentity" and indicates a worthless thing (cf. Ex 20:4-15; Ps 115:4-8; Is 41:29; 4:9; Jr 10:15). An idol's **maker trusts in his own handiwork when he fashions speechless idols**. These idols are in pronounced contrast to the Lord God, who speaks with thunder (Ex 19:19), who commands and it stands fast, and who "fashions the hearts of all men [and] understands all their works" (Ps 33:9, 15).

That contrast leads to a final **Woe** directed to those who foolishly say **to a piece of wood, "Awake!" To a mute stone, "Arise!"** and who cover an idol **with gold and silver yet there is no breath at all inside it**. Their craftsmen may call them gods, but they are lifeless, in stark contrast to the Lord, who breathed life into humanity (Gn 2:7). When He merely blows on godless nations "the storm carries them away like stubble" (Is 40:24).

2:20. The pronouncement of Babylon's judgment ends with a call to worship the Lord: **But the LORD is in His holy temple** declares that the Lord is the one true God who dwells, not only among His people on Mt. Zion, but over

all from His throne in heaven. The only appropriate response is for **all the earth** (i.e., all people everywhere) to **be silent** (in awestruck reverence) **before Him**. The demand was true then, but one day it will be literally fulfilled in Messiah's presence (cf. 2:14; Ps 18:46-50; Php 2:9-10).

II. Habakkuk's Prayer of Faith (3:1-19)

After two dialogues with God about the problem of evil, Habakkuk still did not fully understand. Therefore he concluded the book with a prayer expressing his trust in the Lord, despite his doubts and difficulties. The prayer is in the form of a psalm (chap. 3): it is poetic in meter, has a heading (as do many of the psalms, v. 1, cf. Ps 4:6; 54), and includes the musical/literary notation *selah* (Hab 3:3, 9, 13, 19).

The prayer/psalm of obedience has three sections: first, praise for the Lord's powerful deliverance in the past, recalling the events of the exodus (vv. 1-7); second, some rhetorical questions focusing on the purposes of the Lord's actions to bring salvation (vv. 8-15); third, a statement of trust in God's plan while waiting for deliverance (vv. 16-19).

A. Praising God for His Past Deliverance of Israel (3:1-7)

This sections recalls God's faithful and powerful deliverance of His people from Egypt at the time of the exodus.

3:1. A **Shigiono**th is a musical notation meaning an energetic, passionate song with rapid changes of rhythm (cf. Ps 7:1).

3:2. The prayer opens by reviewing God's work in the past (**I have heard the report**), and continues with a review of the events at the exodus. It also predicts that God will once again powerfully deliver His people (see Pss 18; 144:5-8; Is 64:1-3 for similar uses of deliverance imagery). While some have understood these images as primarily focused on the Lord's impending dealings with Judah and Babylon, the perspective of history demonstrates that this vision (cf. also 2:3) was not fulfilled then. Rather, it will yet be fulfilled in the Lord's final, eschatological judgment.

This recollection is characterized by **fear** of the Lord. It contains the only petitions in Habakkuk's prayer: that God would **revive [His] work** (accomplish Your promises), provide understanding (**make it known**), and **in wrath remember mercy** in the midst of the coming judgment.

3:3-4. Habakkuk borrows imagery from Israel's history, starting with the exodus. **God comes from Teman** (with the connection to **Mount Paran**), which is a broad geographical region south of Judah including Sinai (Nm 13:3, 26; Dt 32:2) and therefore a reminder for Israel of its deliverance from Egypt (including the giving of the law).

Selah is a musical notation, meaning "pause," "lift up," or "exalt." The three uses of *selah* in this chapter (Hab 3:3, 9, 13) are its only occurrences outside the book of Psalms (where it appears 71 times).

God's **splendor covers the heavens, and radiance . . . like the sunlight** is a poetic description of God's glory at Sinai and elsewhere (e.g., Ex 19:16; 20:18; Dt. 33:2; Jdg 5:4-5; Ps 18:7-15).

3:5. Elements of divine punishment like **pestilence and plague** appear in several OT books and call to mind God's judgment on Pharaoh at the exodus (cf. Ex 7:14-12:30).

3:6-7. The geologic turmoils of **mountains . . . shattered** and **ancient hills collapsed** are similar to those associated with God's descent to Sinai when He gave the law (see Ex 19:18; Ps 18:7). In response to God's mighty acts of deliverance, the **nations**, specifically the nomadic desert tribes of **Cushan** and **Midian** (Nm 31; Jdg 7), were **startled** (cf. Jos 2:10-11; 9:9-10).

B. Praising God for His Power in Bringing Salvation (3:8-15)

3:8. This section (vv. 8-15) opens with rhetorical questions concerning the results of God's actions. The **LORD** was not raging or angry **against the rivers**, referring to the Nile when he changed it to blood (Ex 7:20-24), or the Jordan when He stopped its flow (Jos 3:15-17). Neither was He filled with **wrath against the sea** when He parted the Red Sea (Ex 15:14-16; Jos 2:9-10). Through these actions He, expressed here picturesquely, **rode** on His **horses** and **chariots of salvation** to defend His people Israel and make Himself known (Dt. 32:39-43).

3:9. God is presented as a warrior, whose **bow was made bare**, meaning pulled from its sheath ready for war. The phrase **rods of chastisement were sworn** is obscure, with dozens of potential translations for just three words in Hebrew. Perhaps the best understanding is, "God had enlisted weapons and pledged them on oath for the destruction of his enemies" (O. Palmer Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, NICOT [Grand Rapids, MI: Erdmans, 1990], 234).

3:10-15. In this section various aspects of nature are personified in their reaction to the power of the Lord. To begin (v. 10), the **mountains quaked** in response to God's power, as recorded at Sinai (Ex 19:18; Ps 114:4, 6-7) and torrential rains (**downpour of waters**) **swept by**, causing floods (Gn 7:11, 19-20). The **deep**, a synonym for the seas or oceans, **uttered forth its voice**; it had loud crashing waves in the midst of a storm, and **lifted high its hands** (waves) in response to His command (cf. Ps 77:15-17, 19).

Next, the prophet recalled the episode at Gibeon (cf. Jos 10:12-13) when, by a miracle of God, the **sun and moon stood in their places** (the heavens). Military images again illustrated God's power: **light of Your arrows** and **Your gleaming spear**. In comparison to His brightness, the **sun and moon . . . went away**—were no longer visible (v. 11).

God appeared as a warrior who **marched through the earth** with **indignation** and **anger** to express His wrath against pagan **nations** who assaulted His people (v. 12). It is the Lord who executes judgment: **You trampled**, literally "threshed" even as cut grain is separated from the stalks by driving a wooden sledge fitted with sharp teeth over it. This is a frequent image of judgment (cf. Am 1:3; Jb 41:30; Is 41:15).

The prophet declared God's purposes in His actions and His displays of power. First the Lord **went forth for the salvation of [His] people** (v. 13), the Jewish people. He would deliver them from the oppression of the nations (cf. v. 12). Second, He is described as going out **For the salvation of Your anointed** (v. 13), a term used in the OT, not for the nation of Israel, but for specific individuals. Priests and kings were anointed for God's service (cf. Ex 29:29; 1Kg 1:34), but the English translation of the Hebrew term *masiach* (Messiah) applies to the Messiah Himself in this context (Ps 2:2; Dn 9:26).

When the Lord comes in judgment, He will strike **the head of the house of evil**, which, in addition to the immediate context, is an allusion to the promise of the Messiah's ultimate victory over Satan (Gn 3:15). This depiction, in military terms, shows God inflicting a mortal wound (**from thigh to neck**) on the enemies of Israel who over the years devoured **the oppressed in secret**, by using stealth to gain an advantage (Ex 14:1-9; 2Sm 15:1-12; 2Kg 6:8-20; Ps 10:5-11). God preserved the Jewish people from total destruction by the Egyptians and Babylonians,

and they survived. Through them the Messiah would come to bring salvation to the world (cf. Mt 1:1; 2Tm 2:8).

Finally (v. 15), in an *inclusio* with v. 3, the exodus is again recalled, reminding God's people that just as the Lord **trampled** the Egyptian chariots with His own **horses** while the Red Sea surged with chaos and death (Ex 15:21), so He will defeat the Babylonian army and later ultimately bring salvation through Messiah, who will strike the **head** of Satan.

C. Praising God with Determination in Every Circumstance (3:16-19)

Despite God's past faithfulness and certainty of future salvation, Habakkuk faced one of the most fundamental and challenging questions in a believer's experience: "Am I willing to trust God—even if it means facing trouble experiencing His deliverance?"

3:16. Facing the certainty of coming destruction by Babylon, Habakkuk experienced fear that penetrated his **inward parts**. He was physically shaken by the dreadful events ahead. His **lips quivered**, he was on the brink of tears, and he felt weak as if **decay** was entering [**his**] **bones**. Even in the midst of this emotional and physical anguish, he realized there was nothing to be done. The prophet knew that before God carried out the deliverance for Judah, he would have to wait **eagerly**, literally "rest" before the Lord (cf. Ps 37:7; Is 46:10), while waiting for the **day of distress** when the Babylonians would **invade**.

3:17. Habakkuk knew the coming invasion would lead to devastation and starvation. He outlined the loss of major sources of food in a brief sketch: **fig** would **not blossom**; no grapes **on the vines**; **olive** crop and grain in the **fields** would produce no food; even the **flock[s]** of sheep and goats, as well as **cattle**, would die—**be cut off**. Nothing would be left.

3:18. But in a remarkable statement of faith and trust, Habakkuk pledged to **exult in the LORD** and **rejoice in the God of my salvation**.

This is a personal statement of relationship and confidence in the Lord, expressed in the parallel ideas of exulting (cf. Pss 18:7; 68:4; 149:5; Zph 3:14) and rejoicing (cf. Pss 9:14; 30:1; 31:7; 40:16). These emotions are not centered on circumstances but, on the contrary, they are focused on the Lord, who is the source of his salvation and strength. No matter what the circumstances, the prophet was determined to trust in God and rejoice in the midst of whatever the Lord allowed to come. He was fully confident in God's ability to move His people through judgment to deliverance.

3:19. The antithesis of the Babylonians (whose strength is their god, 1:11b), Habakkuk affirmed **the LORD God is my strength** (cf. Ex. 15:2; Pss 28:7; 18:21; 118:14). He depicted God's delivered people as a **hind** (deer) that securely climbs and lives in mountainous terrain (i.e., **high places**—see Dt 32:13; Ps 18:33).

The final musical movement ends with an indication the psalm was to be sung and accompanied by **stringed instruments**.

This remarkable encounter between Habakkuk and the Lord concludes with a lesson as relevant today as it was two-and-a-half millennia ago when the Babylonians were on the brink of capturing Jerusalem. Habakkuk is a model of righteousness for today, as a man who loved the Lord and was willing to seek to understand His ways—yet also willing to trust and rejoice in God's salvation, even when His plans seemed beyond comprehension. Those who love the Lord may still be facing incomprehensible difficulties, but should not be overwhelmed by them. Those who live by faith will remain loyal to Him despite circumstances. Remembering that God is the salvation and strength of His people (Hab 3:18-19) will produce rejoicing in the Lord and confidence in the Lord's ultimate good plan. He will vindicate His followers at the return of the Messiah Jesus, when the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (2:14).

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messianic King (i.e., His people, believers). As a result of the King's sacrificial-atoning work, they will be brought into relationship with Him (cf. Is 53:10; Rm 8:16) and partake of His royal status as **princes** (as well as priests; see 1Pt 2:9 and comment on Ps 110:4). The psalmist then affirmed that **the peoples will give You thanks** [lit., "praise You"] **forever** (v. 17). This employs the same phraseology Jacob gave in his messianic blessing on Judah and his seed (Gn 49:8-12): "Your brothers shall praise You . . . and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples" (vv. 8, 10). When Israel comes to know the divine King, so also will the nations share in the messianic blessing (Gn 12:3b; 22:18).

Psalm 46: A Meditation on Divine Refuge

On the heading of this **Psalm of the sons of Korah** . . . **A Song**, see comments on the headings to Pss 3, 4, and 42. This and other psalms indicated as *songs* were to be sung and some included additional musical direction (see comments on songs under Introduction: Types of Psalms). The musical instruction, **set to Alamoth** (lit., "maidens"), likely refers to the melody of the psalm (cf. 1Ch 15:20). The description of the divine King who will rescue Israel (Ps 45) is followed by this psalm that describes the King's city, Jerusalem, when He comes (Sailhamer, *NIV Compact Bible Commentary*, 325).

A. Permanence of Divine Refuge (46:1-3)

46:1-3. The depth of God's concern as the **refuge** and **strength** of Israel is stressed by the description of Him as being a **very present** [i.e., always available] **help in trouble**. The permanence and inviolability of God as Israel's **help** is certain (v. 1). Nothing can happen, **though the earth should change**—due to earthquakes, avalanches, raging **waters, quak[ing] mountains**, or any other natural disaster, with all the chaos and emotional turmoil brought about by such disasters, that will ever keep the Lord from being the refuge of Israel (vv. 2-3).

B. Accessibility of Divine Refuge (46:4-7)

46:4-7. The imagery in this section turns to the hope of intimate accessibility to God's presence in the future, when the Messiah reigns from Jerusalem, **the city of God**, when He establishes His throne in Zion (Ezk 43:7) and ultimately remakes all creation in purity and at rest in Him (Rv 21:1-5) **The river whose streams** [or "divisions"] **make glad . . . the holy dwelling places** (i.e., the temple compound and all its compartments, as in Ps 43:3) **of the Most High** (Ps 46:4) parallels both the phraseology and

specific concepts surrounding, first, the garden of Eden. Eden is described as having "a river" that "flowed out" of it and was "divided" where there was communion with God's "presence" (Gn 2:10; 3:8). Second, also similar to Eden is the reestablishment of God's presence through the divine King in the most holy place (v. 5), where He will dwell among the sons of Israel and at which time a river will open up just below the altar and bring the gladness of life and healing to all along its course making alive even the Dead Sea (Ezk 43:1-12; cf. Is 35:1). And third, when creation is renewed it will be God's holy tabernacle where people will commune with **the God of Jacob**. (v. 7; cf. Rv 21:3, 22; 22:1-2).

C. Comfort of Divine Refuge (46:8-11)

46:8-11. The psalmist closed this psalm with words of encouragement to **behold the works of the LORD** (v. 8), referring specifically to His works of redemption on behalf of Israel (66:5-6). In these closing words of comfort God also included a challenge: to **cease striving** [lit., "cease," "relax"] **and know that I am God** (v. 10). Here the verb **know** signifies experiential knowledge (see the comment on Ps 1:6). The believer is commanded to cease worrying when faced with problems, persecution, and circumstances; instead the command is to remember that **the LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold** (v. 11; also v. 7).

Psalm 47: A Public Praise of the Divine King

On the heading of this **Psalm of the sons of Korah**, see comments on the headings to Pss 3, 4, and 42. Thematically and structurally Pss 47 and 48 are closely linked. Both psalms concern divine kingship, already introduced in Pss 45 and 46, with Ps 47 focusing on the person of the divine King, and Ps 48 focusing on the city of the divine King. In both psalms the same three aspects of the person (Ps. 47) and the city (Ps. 48) are considered, reinforcing each other by their chiasmic organization: challenge—praise—preeminence; preeminence—praise—challenge.

A. Challenge of the Divine King (47:1-4)

47:1-4. The psalmist began by addressing **all the peoples**, so that the nations of the earth are called to **joy[ful]** worship (the plural **peoples** signifying distinct religio-ethnic groups; v. 1; see comments on Ps 45:17) with the challenge of affirming the sovereign reign of the true "God of Abraham" (cf. v. 9). Clapping the **hands** and the verb translated **shout** in v. 1 are elsewhere employed in Scripture in connection with the

reforms in the capital city, but he also extended them into the rural regions of his kingdom. His desire was to bring all the people **back to the LORD, the God of their fathers**. The constant need to return is a recurring theme for the Chronicler (and no doubt a need for God's people of any era.)

b. Judges Appointed (19:5-7)

19:5-7. To accomplish his goal of spiritual renewal Jehoshaphat **appointed judges** (v. 5; how this would assist in the renewal, see the comments on vv. 8-11). These judges were to work comprehensively (**in the land in all the fortified cites of Judah, city by city**; v. 5), conscientiously (**for the LORD**, in the presence of the Lord, with the **fear of the LORD** upon them, v. 6), and without **partiality** (v. 7).

c. Levites and Priests Appointed (19:8-11)

19:8-11. Apparently, the task of the judges out "in the land" (19:5) was like "small claims" or a "regional court," while the task of the Levites and priests and **heads of the fathers in Jerusalem** (v. 8) was like a "superior court" or "appeals court." The values imposed on the judges were reiterated and given more specific elaboration (vv. 9-10). Both spiritual (**all that pertains to the LORD**) and secular (**all that pertains to the king**) matters were to be taken up by these courts and resolved with integrity (v. 11b). Both the mere external organization of these courts and the signal values that were to guide them would have been of keen interest to the Chronicler's generation as they sought to forge a just and viable society in the postexilic period.

5. Jehoshaphat Faced Invasion and War with Prayer, Faith (20:1-30)

The narrative of the next major event in the reign of Jehoshaphat is introduced rather abruptly in 2Ch 20:1. The invasion by the forces of Moab, Ammon, and the Meunites (local tribes from the vicinity of Mount Seir, close to Petra in Edom, southeast of the Dead Sea; cf. 20:10) was itself unexpected and a shock to the nation. However, this account is exemplary of true faith under fire and depicts Jehoshaphat as the ideal Davidic king—a man who seeks God, a man of eloquent prayer and sincere faith.

a. Surprise Invasion from the South (20:1-2)

20:1-2. The route these forces took was from the eastern regions around the southern end of the Dead Sea. By the time news of their advance had reached Jehoshaphat, they were in Engedi, about halfway up the western side of the Dead Sea (20:2). They were a formidable force,

a **great multitude**. This surprise attack found Jehoshaphat with little time for preparations and vulnerable, so the king was **afraid** (20:3a).

b. Spiritual Response by King (20:3-19)

Jehoshaphat's response was nearly as surprising as the invasion itself—but it showed him as an ideal Davidic King, a man of committed faith, and an exemplary leader of the nation whose God is the Lord.

20:3-4. Jehoshaphat may have been afraid, but he was not paralyzed with fear. He initially responded by calling for a fast in **all Judah** (v. 3). His previous programs to teach the Word in "all the cities of Judah" (17:9) and to appoint judges in all the cities (19:5) prepared the whole country. That the entire nation was well grounded in the Word and unified in its values is indicated by the repetition of the phrase **all Judah** (20:3, 13, 15, 18; cf. vv. 4, 17, 20, 27). They responded to the king's call and they gathered **to seek the LORD** (see Introduction: Purpose and Themes in 1 Chronicles) a signal feature of the ideal Davidic king (v. 4).

20:5-13. Besides the call to fast, Jehoshaphat offered a remarkable and exemplary public prayer (v. 5), heard by all but primarily directed to the Lord (v. 6). At the outset, Jehoshaphat acknowledged the Lord's sovereignty, noting His rule over the nations and His **power and might** over all (v. 6). Also, the king recognized the Lord's covenantal relationship to Israel, noting that He is the **God of our fathers** (v. 6a), the **friend of Abraham** (v. 7), and the One who promised the land, driving out the Canaanites to **give it to the descendants of Abraham . . . forever** (v. 7). Jehoshaphat then recalled the faithfulness of the nation to live to the Lord in this land—evidenced by the construction of a **sanctuary** (the temple) **for Your name** (v. 8). Next, Jehoshaphat recalled Solomon's prayer (at the dedication of the temple, cf. 2Ch 6:20, 28-31), asking for deliverance from **our distress** (v. 9). All of this was intended to say to the Lord, "You have the power, You made the promise, Your name is our concern"—**Your name is in this house** (v. 9)—the temple. In short, Jehoshaphat's main concern was the name—the reputation and honor—of the Lord. The invaders needed to be repelled for God to keep His promises and to uphold His **name** among the nations.

Accordingly, Jehoshaphat prayed specifically about this threat from **the sons of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir** (v. 10a). These nations had been spared at the time of the conquest (v. 10b;

cf. Nm 20:14-21) but were now seeking to thwart God's intention to give Israel this land as **an inheritance** (v. 11). For this act of ingratitude and attempt to thwart God's purposes, Jehoshaphat implored the Lord, **will You not judge them?** (v. 12a). The king further acknowledged His nation's inability and cast himself and his whole kingdom at the mercy of the Lord—**our eyes are on You** (v. 12b). The poignant note in v. 13 that **all Judah**—men, women, and children—stood **before the LORD**, captured the sense of faith and hope of the nation as a whole in this time of distress. The point was clear: "We are powerless—so You, Lord, must fight for us." No doubt such a prayer echoed the faith and feelings of the Chronicler's generation as well.

20:14-17. The nation's faith and hope were rewarded with a word from the Lord through **Jahaziel** (v. 14b) who was a Levite (v. 14c). In true prophetic fashion, **the Spirit of the LORD came on Jahaziel** (v. 14a), and he spoke the actual words of the Lord (v. 15a). In one of the great clarion calls to faith, the Lord told His people, (1) **Listen to Me** (v. 15b); (2) **Do not fear** them (v. 15c), because (3) **the battle is not yours** (v. 15d) **but God's**. They could be sure that in spite of their weakness, they were strong (cf. 2Co 12:10) because the Lord intended to fight for them. The people were instructed to place themselves where they could observe the battle (2Ch 20:16, 17b), but it was reiterated that they were not to fight (v. 17a). They were given the supreme promise of security and victory—**for the LORD is with you** (v. 17c). The Chronicler no doubt wanted the reader to see this as another of the great instances of the Lord's promise to defend and preserve the nation (cf. Ex 14:13-14; Dt 20:4; 1Sm 17:37)—this was a promise the Chronicler's generation needed to hear and to trust.

20:18-19. The response to the Word of the Lord was, appropriately, humble worship (v. 18) and vociferous praise (v. 19).

c. A Stunning Victory and Triumph (20:20-30)

20:20-23. The king and the people prepared for the battle itself in several steps. First, they obeyed the Word of the Lord (they **went out** to the designated location, v. 20a). Second, Jehoshaphat again encouraged them to put their **trust in the LORD your God** and in His prophets (His Word to them) (v. 20b). Finally, they appointed "song and praise leaders" for the people and the army (v. 21). Apparently, these were the official singers (1Ch 25) and were to wear their

holy attire (2Ch 20:21b; cf. 1Ch 16:29). This battle strategy was similar in intent, if not in form, to that of Gideon (Jdg 7), for the singers were to lead the army in a chorus of thanksgiving to the Lord (2Ch 20:21c)!

Once the singers had begun (v. 22a) confusion in the enemy forces was created, and they began to fight among themselves. Apparently, certain forces of the enemy had been positioned (intentionally by the enemy, providentially by the Lord; v. 22b) to ambush the army of Israel. However these forces were set upon by other enemy forces so that they **rose up against** each other (v. 23a) and they **helped to destroy one another** (v. 23b).

20:24-30. By the time Jehoshaphat and the army arrived on the scene, the destruction of the enemy was so complete (v. 24) that all he and the people had to do was pick up the spoils (v. 25). Days later they returned from the scene of destruction (now called **The Valley of Beracah**, v. 26, "blessing") to Jerusalem with joy and appropriately rejoiced in the temple (v. 28), for the Lord had given them victory. The news of this victory (as with others in the nation's history) spread to the surrounding nations and ushered in a time of peace (v. 30). The Chronicler was careful to emphasize that the nations knew that **the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel** (v. 29b) and it was God who gave the king rest **on all sides** (v. 30). In contrast to the failed alliance with Ahab, Jehoshaphat had learned that absolute trust in the Lord was well placed and that only the Lord can bring the peace, prosperity, and security that the nation sought. This was a lesson the Chronicler's generation and all generations of God's people needed to know.

6. Jehoshaphat's Sad Ending (20:31-37)

20:31-37. The Chronicler finished his record of Jehoshaphat's reign with the typical concluding formula (vv. 31-33) and an atypical additional paragraph (vv. 35-37). In the latter the Chronicler recorded the sad fact that Jehoshaphat made yet another unwise alliance, this time with Ahaziah, the king of Israel. Jehoshaphat made an unwise economic alliance involving trade ships **to Tarshish** (v. 36), and the Lord sent the prophet **Eliezer** to tell him that the Lord had determined to thwart the enterprise. As a result, **the ships were broken** (v. 37) and the alliance came to nothing. The Chronicler was informing his readers that sometimes God thwarts the plans of men for His purposes—and that those purposes are ultimately gracious.

The record of Jehoshaphat's end was, therefore, mixed. He is credited with walking **in the way of his father Asa** (no doubt, thinking of the positive elements of Asa's reign) (v. 32). Yet, he did not undertake the reforms sufficiently to direct the hearts of the people completely back to **the God of their fathers** (v. 33b). His 25-year reign included some of the highest points of faith in the Lord and lowest points of failure to trust in the Lord.

E. Three Who Were “Bad” (Jehoram, Ahaziah, Athaliah) (21:1–23:15)

1. Jehoram Succeeded Jehoshaphat (21:1-3)

21:1-3. Upon the death of Jehoshaphat his son Jehoram became sole king in Judah (v. 1b, 3b). Before he died Jehoshaphat had made arrangements to secure his firstborn son's kingdom by the wise and judicial distribution of his wealth and power among his other sons. He gave Jehoram's brothers (v. 2) jurisdiction over the **fortified cites** (v. 3b) and the wealth necessary to administer them (v. 3a). The **fortified cities** were the border cities and settlements that provided the first line of defense of the kingdom. Having one's own brothers as the “border guards” should have been a source of security for Jehoram.

2. Jehoram's Evil and the Lord's Faithfulness (21:4-7)

21:4-6. Instead of building on the security left to him by his godly father, Jehoram committed several acts of evil. First, he slaughtered his brothers (v. 4) apparently in a foolish and wicked attempt to secure his throne from all potential rivals. Second, his eight-year reign (v. 5) was patterned, not after that of his godly father Jehoshaphat, but, generally **in the way of the kings of Israel** (v. 6) and specifically after his wicked father-in-law, Ahab. Here, the disaster of Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahab (cf. 18:1) was brought home with terrible force. Years of wicked rule followed, and the nation suffered long after Jehoshaphat had passed from the scene. This lesson would not be lost on the Chronicler's generation, as it had suffered much for the sin and ungodliness of their national forbearers. Furthermore, Jehoram, in the pattern of the kings of the northern tribes, was the first king of Judah to actually establish places of idolatry (20:11). Finally, Jehoram's reign was characterized by the sweeping and devastating statement **he did evil in the sight of the LORD** (v. 6).

21:7. Nevertheless, the Chronicler was quick to add that in spite of this particular king's

wickedness, the Lord remained faithful to His promise to David (v. 7). The Davidic covenant had its inviolability as a key provision. God would keep His promises to David and the nation even if a king sinned. However, a wicked king or a faithless generation might be denied the blessings and privileges of that covenant. There is blessing for obedience and humble godliness—there is chastisement for disobedience and prideful wickedness. Jehoram was a classic example of the latter.

3. Jehoram's Punishment (21:8-19a)

a. The Revolts of Edom and Libnah (21:8-11)

21:8-11. The revolts of Edom and Libnah (vv. 8, 10b; Libnah was a “semi-Philistine city . . . in the vicinity of Gath” [Payne, “1 Chronicles,” 506]) were directly attributed to Jehoram's having **forsaken the LORD God of his fathers** (v. 10c). Instead of the security from such revolts that he might have enjoyed had he enlisted his brothers in the fortified cities, Jehoram had to endure this sort of rebellion for the duration of his reign (cf. v. 10a). Even though he was able to fend off such revolts (v. 9) he failed to enjoy the security and prosperity of the Lord's promise to a Davidic king.

b. Letter from Elijah (21:12-15)

21:12-15. Normally a letter from the Lord's prophet would be cause for joy—for Jehoram it was a prelude to more chastisement. Elijah is not mentioned elsewhere in Chronicles. But this is not surprising since his ministry was to the northern kingdom. Contrary to the conclusion of some critics, it was not impossible for Elijah to write such a letter since he was still alive during Jehoram's reign (cf. 2Kg 1:17; see Payne, “2 Chronicles,” 506). Also, since Jehoram acted like one of the kings of Israel, it should be expected that he would attract the attention of the greatest prophetic opponent of those kings.

Elijah's rebuke went right to the heart of Jehoram's wickedness: he had failed to pattern his life and reign after godly kings of Judah (Asa, Jehoshaphat, v. 12b), while he *did* follow **the way of the kings of Israel** (v. 13a) and **the house of Ahab** (v. 13b). His idolatry and fratricide were specifically condemned (v. 13). For these iniquities he and his kingdom were to suffer: the nation was to experience **great calamity** (v. 14b), and he was to suffer a debilitating disease in his **bowels** (v. 15).

c. Punishments of the Letter (21:16-19a)

21:16-19a. The great calamity predicted by Elijah came in the form of yet another attack

Israelites. The next day everyone rose early and readied themselves to cross the Jordan—where impending conflict awaited.

Rahab is immortalized in several ways: she appears in genealogies as the grand-matriarch of David and Jesus (Mt 1:5). She is also recalled for her deeds—not necessarily her words—in both Hebrews (11:31) and James (2:25). There is no need to save Rahab from her reputation: God is in the business of saving the most inveterate liars, cheats, thieves, and even prostitutes. No wall can be built between God and His intended child. Neither should readers be astonished at such magnificats as those of Mary (Lk 1:46-55), Hannah (1Sm 2:1-10), or Rahab (Jos 2:9-11). Rahab, an outlander, reminds believers that “the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.”

As one reads the book of Ruth, remember that Rahab was Boaz’s mother. Rahab probably never lived to welcome her daughter-in-law Ruth into the family; but Boaz’s understanding of an outlander’s loyalty (*chesed*) to Israel’s God was nothing new to him. He learned it from his mother. Neither was the acceptance of such an outlander new. He learned it from Salmon, his father. This enabled him to see past an instinctive nationalism, bringing a “woman of excellence” (Ru 3:11) into his home.

C. Israel Crosses the Jordan (3:1-17)

Israel was about to cross the Jordan; however, several events needed to occur first. These verses proceed in stately cadence, giving a ritualistic feel to the narrative. Other rituals will follow, but now Israel approaches the river.

3:1-2. Israel rose early and camped on the east bank of the river. Perhaps the **three days** were additional if Joshua was wrong in his original assessment, delayed by the late return of the spies; or it could be that the spies had been sent out prior to the command to the officers (1:10).

3:3-4. The people were to wait until they saw the ark of the covenant and then follow; but they were to keep a respectful distance of about a thousand yards.

3:5. The people were commanded: **Consecrate yourselves!** “Consecrate” from *qadash*, means to “be separate.” It also signifies a readiness for service. Jeremiah spoke of God’s anger against Jerusalem and said that He had set apart or “consecrated” destroyers against her (Jr 22:7). Babylon’s army cannot be said to be “sanctified” in any real sense. The word means God was “readying” Babylon for disciplinary action

against Judah. Here “consecration” means separate *from* sin, separate *from* the entanglements of life and separate *to* the Lord’s mission and ready to go take the land.

The writer provides the motivation for their consecration: because **tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.** “Wonders” is the closest word the OT has for “miracle.” Israel was being prepared for exodus-like events.

3:6-7. The priests, ordered to pick up the ark, moved ahead of the people. The ceremony-like cadence mirrors their obedience. Speaking to Joshua directly, the Lord told him his reputation would be advanced in Israel’s sight and he would be compared with the Moses. God reaffirmed the promise that He would be with Joshua.

3:8-13. The priests carrying the ark were instructed to stop at river’s edge. Then the people were given further orders and told what to expect: God would be with them and they would be victorious over the Canaanites (v. 10). The **waters of the Jordan will be cut off**, as the Red Sea had been at the exodus (v. 13). For reasons to be given later, the people were to select tribal representatives.

The lists of nations to be dispossessed vary; however, these are “the usual suspects.” See the introduction for peoples and origins. “The Jebusite” is the only people group represented as a city-state. “Jebus,” the older name for Jerusalem, was difficult for the Jewish people to subdue until David’s time (2Sm 24). It was also represented in the Amarna Letters, where, for instance, one viceroy, Abdu-Heba, complained to the pharaoh about Egypt’s apparent disinterest in the plight of Jebus and that the other city states are not helping (*ANET*³, 487–89).

3:14-16. The narrative advances with Israel breaking camp, the priests moving the ark ahead of the people. The verbs change to progressive action to give the reader a real-time experience: **the priests [were] carrying the ark . . . before the people;** and as those *carrying* the ark *were approaching* the Jordan; and the feet of the priests carrying the ark *were dipped* in the edge of the water . . . the waters going down from above *stood* in one heap . . .” (vv. 14-16, author’s translation and emphasis). Not until the waters *stood* is finality described by the historical tense. It is as though the author was saying, “Do you see how wonderful our God is? Would you like to know more about Him?”

3:17. The water stood far upstream from the ark, perhaps so that Israel could remain at a

respectful distance. Observe the details of the miracle: the waters were cut off at flood stage, long enough for Israel to cross over; the priests stood on, and Israel crossed over on dry ground. This stoppage was not the Jordan alone—all tributaries below Adam and Zarethan had to be stopped as well; the event took place exactly as God had predicted.

In correspondence with the exodus story, the water was separated, dry ground crossed, God was glorified, and God's servant honored (Ex 14:29-31). Believers understand that if God wishes to deliver them by miracles, He certainly can do so. They should, however, trust Him even with the "river" ahead of them.

D. Israelite Men Set Up Memorials (4:1-24)

Joshua 3 and 4 are best read as a single unit. An emphasis on perspective is helpful: there is a difference between "crossing over" the river (e.g., v. 11) and "coming up out of" the river (e.g., vv. 16-18). That is, in the former, participants are in Transjordan crossing over to the land; whereas in the latter, participants are in the promised land watching movement toward themselves. The last verse of Jos 4 concludes: "that all the peoples of the earth may know and so that you may fear the LORD," ending the Jordan crossing episode; so, 5:1 functions as a "hinge" between two episodes.

4:1-10. The command to select 12 men (3:12) was reissued—this time to collect **twelve stones . . . out of the middle of the Jordan** (v. 3) as memorial stones. The men, each representing one of the 12 tribes, brought the stones to the west side of the river; then **Joshua set [them] up at Gilgal** (v. 20; about 7 miles northwest of the Dead Sea adjacent to Jericho; see v. 8). These were to be a **sign** (v. 6), so that inquisitive children might be told of the Lord's miraculous power in bringing Israel across the river on dry ground at flood stage.

Oddly, Joshua also set up his own memorial—in the middle of the river (v. 9)! Large enough boulders might be visible at low water. Although Joshua's purpose is difficult to know, the purpose of any monument is pedagogical, and perhaps his stone monument was less visible so that it would never eclipse the greatness of Israel's God. The reader is only left with the parting: **They are there to this day**, from the date of the final words of the book (24:29-33). Finally, everyone hurriedly did as commanded.

4:11-13. **When all the people had finished crossing, the ark of the LORD and the priests**

crossed before the people. Everything has a ritualistic feel; but the discipline of the nation is also evident. As commanded by Moses, the east Jordan tribes moved across ahead of the rest, having left their families and livestock on the east side. They presented a formidable fighting force in case of initial resistance to Israel's advance.

4:14. Joshua's exaltation was then celebrated in several highlights: The Lord **exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel**; his high station was a lifelong appointment, and he was venerated as Moses had been. When the Lord elevates someone, others will notice and barring the need for humiliation, it may be a lifelong station.

4:15-18. The change in perspective from "go across" to come up out of the river" indicates a new section. The Lord commanded Joshua to direct the priests carrying the ark of the testimony to **come up from the Jordan**; he issued the command, the priests complied, and as soon as their feet touched the **dry ground . . . the waters of the Jordan returned to their place, and went over all its banks as before.**

Again paralleling the exodus account, notice the repetition of the words **come up from the Jordan**. Aspects of the ark are repeated: **the ark of the testimony** and **the ark of the covenant**. The ark was a special container containing a jar of manna, Aaron's budding almond rod, and the plaques of the Ten Commandments—the covenant. It was characterized as the place of testimonial (cf. Ex 25:16).

4:19-23. When the people had come up out of the water on the western bank, an additional parallel with the exodus became apparent. They had crossed the River Jordan during Passover, **the tenth day of the first month** (= Abib, March–April), just as they had crossed the Red Sea during the Passover. Thus here was the final culmination of the exodus: The people are finally in their homeland. The people then moved west and camped at the extremity of Jericho's territory, about two miles away. The memorial stones were then either laid in a circle or heaped. Both ideas fit if the event is somehow related to the name Gilgal, as discussed in 5:9. (This would represent an etiology, the naming of a place to commemorate an event.) The didactic purpose of the memorial stones is explained to the people. They are to tell their sons and daughters who would ask about the stones, **the LORD your God dried up the waters . . . before you until you had crossed, just as the**

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