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House to House Heart to Heart

VOLUME 23 NUMBER 9



The First Christian *in Europe*

Allen Webster

The book of Acts records the quick spread of good news from Jerusalem to Rome through Samaria, Antioch, Asia, and Europe. It gives Spirit-selected examples of conversion to Christ. In some cases, it relates what was preached (the resurrection, righteousness, redemption), and specific responses to it (mocking, denying, accepting).

Acts records the gospel preached to representative kinds of people, so all can find themselves in the book. There are conversions of religious people, a magician, and pagans (Acts 2, 8, 16). There are Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles (2, 8, 10). There are groups (2), families (10, 16), and individuals (8). Some are sudden (jailer), others gradual (17:32–34); some public, others private; some mention emotion and others do not (8:40; 18:8). There are men and women (8:12).

Near the middle of Acts, Paul leaves Asia for the first time and carries the gospel into Europe. Although his vision was of a man saying, “Come over to

Macedonia and help us” (Acts 16:9), the first person to become a Christian in Europe was a woman, Lydia.

Lydia is the only woman whose conversion is detailed. Including her was a departure from first-century culture. In that Greco-Roman pagan world, women were thought of as slaves and generally ignored in historical accounts. Even Jewish rabbis said, “It is better that the words of the Law be burned than be delivered to a woman.”

Jesus forever changed such hateful culture. Whenever His gospel is preached, women are equally invited to receive it (Matthew 11:28–30); everywhere Christianity goes, it elevates women to heights rarely seen in human history (Galatians 3:28); wherever the church is established, women have as important roles to fill as men do (although they differ) (1 Timothy 2:1–15).

Of the thousands converted in that first generation, what made Lydia one of eight included in Acts? What does she teach us?



*“Though your sins are
like scarlet, they shall
be as white as snow;
though they are red
like crimson, they
shall be as wool.”*

Isaiah 1:18

LYDIA LISTENED WITH ONE EAR CLOSED.

One preacher said, “Some listen with both ears, allowing the gospel to go in one ear and out the other. How much better to have only one ear, so the truth goes in but never out”¹ (cf. Isaiah 55:2).

Lydia “heard” (Acts 16:14)—the message went in but did not go out. This placed her under Jesus’ compliment: “Blessed are . . . your ears for they hear” (Matthew 13:16). Others hear but do not hear (Matthew 13:9–15). They are not hard of hearing but hard of heart. Jesus faced some whose ears were full of cotton and whose hearts could not be pried open with a crowbar. He asked them, “Why do you not understand My speech?” (John 8:43)—that is, “Why don’t you listen?” May we never be like them.

Bringing a hard heart to worship would be like wearing earplugs to a concert. The gospel may be explained expertly and preached passionately, yet if there is no desire in a listener’s heart, the message will be lost. One preacher wondered why his sermon had no effect upon an individual he was hoping to reach. “That was as plain as A B C!” “Yes,” his wife replied, “but the man you were talking to is D E F.” Lydia’s example is to listen closely to see whether the things taught are “so” (cf. Acts 17:11).

LYDIA OPENED HER EMPTY HEART WIDE.

Jesus spoke of hearts with no room for truth (Matthew 13:15). By that measure, Lydia’s heart was empty. Luke records that the Lord opened her heart (Acts

16:14)—no doubt by hearing preaching, since Paul’s message preceded it (cf. Romans 1:16; Ephesians 6:17). The truths she had learned in Judaism were stepping stones to Jesus (Galatians 3:24). Like the Ethiopian treasurer, she only needed guidance to better understand them (Acts 8:30–31).

The Bible is a bag of seeds (Luke 8:11), so when Paul scattered the gospel that day, it immediately took root, sprouted, grew, and bore fruit. Satan had no opportunity to snatch it away (Matthew 13:4, 19; cf. 2 Corinthians 4:3–4), for Lydia’s heart was a plowed field.

LYDIA ATTENDED THE SERMON SHE WAS PRESENT TO HEAR.

Since other women had gathered for worship that day (Acts 16:13), Lydia was not the only one who heard the gospel. But she was the only one of them saved (besides her household). Why? Because “she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul” (16:14).

Attended means to heed.² Its tense shows sustained attention. The picture is of her putting her hand to her ear, for fear of missing a word. It is possible to come to Sunday services, but not attend. Pews can be full of non-attenders. While in worship, some people are attending the restaurant, the mall, the farm, the kitchen, the shop, the game, or the business instead of the sermon.

Lydia listened with intent to act (James 1:21–25). She weighed matters carefully and compared what was commanded with what she had done. Good preaching always leaves listeners with things to attend.

While Paul’s sermon is not recorded, his main subject was always the gospel

(1 Corinthians 15:1–4). He preached “Christ crucified” (1 Corinthians 1:23) and was “determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). Paul marched under Christ’s great commission—the gospel message he was to take to the whole world (Mark 16:16; cf. Acts 8:12, 25–38).

When Paul presented Jesus’ words to Lydia, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved,” what did she say? Was it, “Well, I need time to consider it”; “I must wait till I talk to my friends and family”; “What will people say?” or, “The water is probably cold today, anyway”?

No, when Lydia heard Jesus’ conditions of salvation, she did not put off until an indefinite tomorrow what would please God today (2 Corinthians 6:2; cf. Isaiah 6:8).

“She and her household were baptized” (Acts 16:15). In every case of conversion detailed in Acts, as here, baptism occurred immediately after learning. In most cases, as here, it was after hearing only one sermon (e.g., 8:35–38).

Lydia was a merchant, so she knew value when she saw it (cf. Matthew 13:44–46). What Jesus offered was worth more than all the purple cloth in Philippi (Matthew 16:26).

Perhaps garments she had sold were worn by Caesar himself, but this did not compare with the King of Kings dressing her in the white robe of salvation (Revelation 7:13–14).

Surely Paul did not miss the opportunity to teach this seller of purple Isaiah’s words: “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18). Lydia’s hands might have been stained purple, but her heart was a beautiful shade of white.

Lydia was the first Christian in the western world, but she was not the last. Who’s next?

Endnotes:

¹ Charles Spurgeon, *Sermons on Women of the Bible*, Hendrickson Publishers, 2008. Page 357.

² *Strong’s Concordance*.

Trembling before God

The most profound reverence characterized the ancient copyists of the Scriptures. When they came to a name for deity, they put new pens in their writing instruments, took a bath, and changed raiment.

It is amazing how frail humans today approach God and His Word with such contempt and barefaced irreverence. We chuckle at the commercial: "When E. F. Hutton speaks, people listen." Far more seriously, "When God speaks, do people listen?"

The Hebrews writer proclaimed, "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son" (Hebrews 1:1-2). God has indeed spoken, but man has ceased to tremble. Felix, governor of ancient Judea, was by no means a virtuous man. It is said that he, with the help of a magician, se-

duced Drusilla away from her husband, and persuaded her to marry him.

Certainly his morals were not exemplary. Yet when Paul had the occasion to speak to him, he trembled before God's word. "As he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee" (Acts 24:25).

Oh, for a time when men would again tremble at the reading of God's Word—when hearts would be cut and sins laid bare before His auspicious eyes. In a generation when the heart of man has "grown dull," may we continue to point men to the Governor of all life and humbly bow before His rule. —Kerry Knight

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"

PROVERBS 9:10

Are You Okay?

Driving through Texas, a New Yorker collided with a truck carrying a horse.

A few months later he tried to collect damages for his injuries. "How can you now claim to have all these injuries?" asked the insurance company's lawyer. "According to the police report, at the time you said you were not hurt."

"Look," replied the New Yorker. "I was lying on the road in a lot of pain, and I heard someone say the horse had a broken leg. The next thing I know, this Texas Ranger pulls out his gun and shoots the horse. Then he turns to me and asks, 'Are you okay?'"

—Readers' Digest, July 1994

"A merry heart does good"

PROVERBS 17:22



Don't Wait Too Late

A service station attendant was swarmed with last minute customers on a holiday weekend. He shook his head in disgust and said to a preacher who was in the line, "It is funny to me that people always wait until the last minute to prepare for a trip they know they are going to take."

"I know," said the preacher, "I have the same problem in my business." Read Matthew 25:1-13.

God's Plan for Saving Man

Divine Love: John 3:16

God's Grace: Ephesians 2:8

Christ's Blood: Romans 5:9

Holy Spirit's Word: Romans 1:16

Sinner's Faith: Acts 16:31

Sinner's Repentance: Luke 13:3

Sinner's Confession: Romans 10:10

Sinner's Baptism: Acts 22:16

Christian's Love: Matthew 22:37

Christian's Work: James 2:24

Christian's Hope: Romans 8:24

Christian's Endurance: Revelation 2:10

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Do It Together

A Florida church holding monthly events for the entire family had trouble with parents dropping their kids off and not staying for the events. They remedied the problem with this announcement: *"The Magic of Lassie, a film for the whole family, will be shown Sunday at 5:00 P.M. Free puppies will be given to all children not accompanied by their parents."*

"Since his life is bound up in the lad's life"

GENESIS 44:30

Dangers to Our Daughters

65% of high school senior girls in America have had sex.

1 in 5 have had more than four sexual partners.

1 in 4 young female college students has had six or more sexual partners.

"Keep yourself pure"

1 TIMOTHY 5:22

For more material on the home and family, fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, grandparents, and family finances, go to www.housetohouse.com.



Exhortations to Husbands

Read Matthew 19:4–8.

Leave father and mother. By going to a home of his own. By accepting the responsibility as head of his home. Like a New Testament congregation, a home is an autonomous institution.

Cleave to his wife. In true devotion. As a part of his very self. Through all the trials that may come to her. Though tempted by the allurements of business, of male associates, of associates of the other sex. Not as though she were faultless, remembering the common frailties of humanity, including his own.

Love her. How? As he would have her to love him (Matthew 7:12). "Just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her" (Ephesians 5:25–33).

Do not be bitter toward her (Colossians 3:19). Be not bitter in thought, in word, in deed. Because of misunderstandings. Because of her mistakes.

To live with her (Ecclesiastes 9: 9). How? "Joyfully." How long? "All the days of your vain life." Divorce is of human origin—the Creator made no provision for it (Matthew 19:18). If the exhortations are heeded, no divorce will be desired.

—John L. Cox

A Father's Prayer

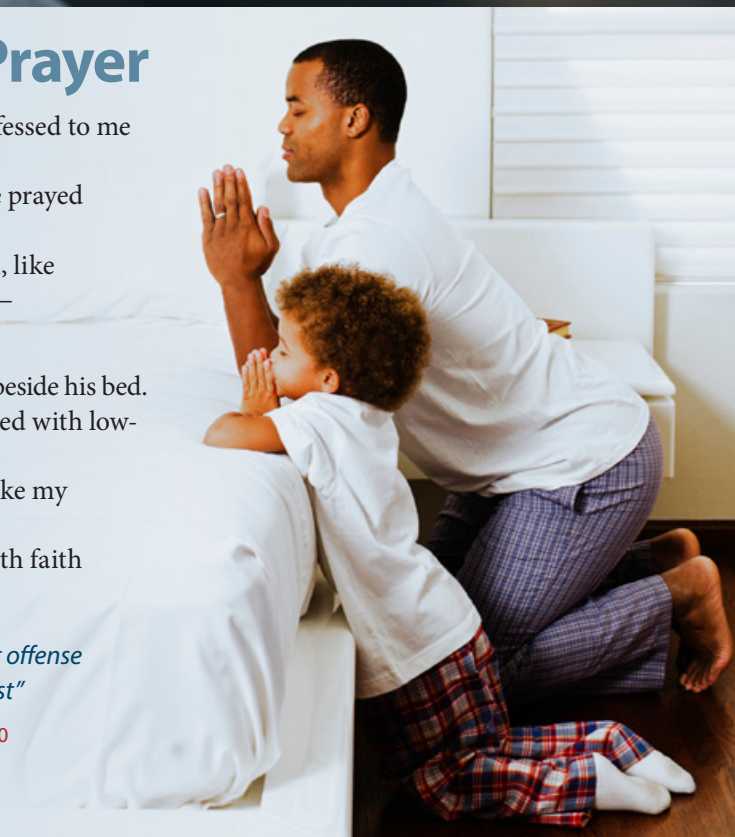
Last night my little boy confessed to me
some childish wrong,
And kneeling at my knee he prayed
with tears
"Dear God, make me a man, like
Daddy—wise and strong—
I know you can."

Then while he slept, I knelt beside his bed.
Confessed my sins and prayed with low-
bowed head.

"O God, make me a child, like my
child here—
Pure, open, trusting thee with faith
sincere. —Author Unknown

*"Be sincere and without offense
till the day of Christ"*

PHILIPPIANS 1:10



Reasons Not to Use PROFANITY



Profanity has become so common that many no longer consider it objectionable. It is printed in papers, used on camera, spoken in mixed company by both sexes, and used in the presence of children, as if God does not object. He does. God's name is not to be treated irreverently.

God forbade the ancient Israelites' taking His name in vain. "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain" (Exodus 20:7).

God's name is holy and reverend; it is to be respected. "Holy and awesome is His name" (Psalm 111:9).

God's name is to be hallowed. Jesus said, "In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name" (Matthew 6:9). The Greek word *hagiazō* means: "to set apart from common use" (Berry).

God's name and His doctrine are not to be blasphemed (1 Timothy 6:1). It may surprise you to know that profanity is more common in so-called Christian America than in heathen countries. Idolaters often have greater reverence for their false gods than some persons do for the true and living God.

A missionary was returning from India with his small son who had never been to America. One day an American on deck was using profuse profanity. The missionary said to him, "Sir, my boy was born and brought up in a land of idolatry, but in all his life he has never heard a man blaspheme his Maker until now."

The New Testament forbids a person's using profanity by command and principle (Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 3:8). As Christ is a member of the God-

head (Colossians 2:9; Matthew 28:19), His name is not to be taken in vain.

Children should be taught not to use profanity (Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4).

To use profanity in the presence of persons who object to it is to manifest a lack of respect for them (Matthew 7:12).

To sin, a person does not have to say the obscene words orally. He can use profanity in his heart even as he can commit adultery (Matthew 5:28) or murder (1 John 3:15) in his heart (see Matthew 9:4; Proverbs 23:7).

"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord" (Psalm 19: 14).

—Eris Benson (adapted)

"For every idle word that men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment"

MATTHEW 12:36

Cut out this section and mail it to the address on the front.



Bible Quiz

VOLUME 23:8

Send us your answers to receive a free Bible bookmark! We'll grade and return your questions and enclose the bookmark "Chapter to Chapter - John" as a way of saying thanks for spending time in the Word (quantities may be limited).

Name: _____
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Questions are taken from the King James Version.

Answers to Previous Quizzes

V. 23:7 Concerning New Testament Christianity: 1. She was found with child of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18); 2. No. The shepherds did (Luke 2:16); the wise men came when they were in a house, evidently later (Matthew 2:11); 3. John the Baptist (Matthew 3:13-16); 4. Love God, love neighbor (Matthew 22:36-40); 5. Yes (John 14:15); 6. His church (Matthew 16:18); 7. No. Jesus had to drink the cup (Matthew 26:39); 8. Send the Spirit to guide them (John 16:13); 9. Repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38); 10. Jesus (Colossians 1:18); 11. No (1 Corinthians 1:10; cf. John 17:20-21); 12. Yes (Matthew 24:5-12; 1 Timothy 4:1); 13. Jesus' (John 14:13); 14. Jesus (Colossians 3:17); 15. Remembrance of Jesus (Luke 22:19); 16. Jesus' body (Luke 22:19); 17. Jesus' blood (Luke 22:20); 18. Solely by New Testament (Colossians 3:17; Revelation 22:18-19); 19. Yes (1 Timothy 2:4). 20. Thief (1 Thessalonians 5:2).

V. 23:8 Noah and the Flood: 1. 120; 2. Grace; 3. Shem, Ham, Japheth; 4. Gopher; 5. Pitch; 6. 300, 50, 30; 7. 1; 8. 3; 9. 2, 7; 10. forty; 11. 600; 12. Eight; 13. God; 14. Ararat; 15. An olive leaf; 16. 1 year and 10 days; 17. Built an altar and offered sacrifices; 18. Rainbow; 19. Noah.

14 Odd Things Found in the Bible

Directions: Find answers in Genesis 34; Joshua 10:12-14; 2 Samuel 6:1-7; 18:8-10; 1 Kings 1:1-4; 2:27; 2 Kings 2:22-24; 13:20-21; Daniel 4:33; Mark 5:22, 40-41; Luke 10:25-37; 23:26; Acts 8:26-38; 20:7-12.

1. God once used a dead man to raise a dead man. Whose bones did the man who was raised touch?

2. In what Bible book do you read of the only time the sun stood still?

3. What boastful king ended up living with animals and eating like them?

4. Who was the only high priest deposed by a king? (Hint: Solomon was the king)

5. There is only one account of people laughing at a funeral. Who was the 12-year-old girl's father?

6. Who is the only native of Africa who is named as an active participant in an account in Acts?

7. In only one parable does Jesus refer to two places (Jerusalem and Jericho). Which parable?

8. Who is the only person in the Bible who is described as naturally bald?

9. God struck this man dead for steadying the ark of the covenant, after it nearly fell off an ox-cart.

10. When children mocked Elisha for his baldness, how were they punished?

11. Who dozed off and fell out a window to his death during Paul's sermon?

12. What very old king had a young woman to sleep with him each night, to keep him warm?

13. What fugitive was killed when his hair got tangled in a tree?

14. Simeon and Levi tricked prince Shechem and his male subjects into being circumcised, then slaughtered them. Why?

—adapted from funtrivia.com

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It Was Right There All The Time

An old Eastern parable titled “The Wealth Is Nearer to You Than You Think,” relates the story of a rich merchant who took a journey to a distant land.

As the businessman traveled, he met a stranger who wanted to travel with him. Although the merchant was glad to have a companion, he was also fearful of his intentions. He was afraid the stranger would steal the treasures that he had brought along on the journey.

Each night when it was time to bathe, he allowed the stranger to go first so that he could hide his jewels. The ingenious hiding place of the rich man’s treasures was beneath the stranger’s pillow. When the merchant would take his bath, the stranger would search through the merchant’s baggage looking for the riches.

Although the stranger knew that the merchant had a bag of jewels, and that the merchant did not take them with him when he went to bathe, the stranger could never find the riches.

Eventually, the day came for the merchant to part company with the stranger. Before the two parted, the businessman revealed the secret hiding place.

The wealth was nearer to him than he thought. In like manner, many individuals today miss spiritual treasures that are right under their noses—in the Bible.

—Wade Webster, College Station, Texas

“Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law”

PSALM 119:18



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Recommended Resource



The Gospel Broadcasting Network is unique in the world of religious TV—commercial free; and they never ask for money! Sponsored by the churches of Christ, GBN is available on many cable systems as well as through their smartphone apps, the Roku device, and at gbntv.org.

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- ☐ Until I Make It Better



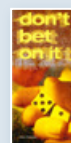
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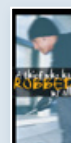
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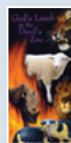
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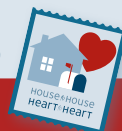
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VOLUME 23:9



The Seven Sayings of JESUS on the Cross

“Father, forgive them, for they do
not know what they do.”

LUKE 23:34

“Assuredly, I say to you, today you will
be with Me in Paradise.”

LUKE 23:43

He said to His mother, “Woman, behold your son!”
Then He said to the disciple, “Behold your mother!”

JOHN 19:26–27

“Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “My God,
My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

MATTHEW 27:46;
cf. MARK 15:34

“I thirst!”

JOHN 19:28

“It is finished!”

JOHN 19:30

“Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’”

LUKE 23:46

SIX THINGS NOT FOUND AT THE JUDGMENT

The Bible speaks often of the moment of reckoning, when the righteous and wicked dead (John 5:28–29) and all living (Matthew 25:31–33) will stand before the King of kings to give account for the conduct of the body (2 Corinthians 5:10).

As we attempt to paint a mental picture of the Judgment Day, some things should not be envisioned because they will not be there. There will not be any

- Unbelievers (Philippians 2:10; Revelation 1:5–7).
- Material possessions (2 Peter 3:10).
- Mistrials (Acts 17:31).
- Secrets (Romans 2:16).
- Baptisms (Matthew 25:31–46).
- Invitation songs (Matthew 25:10).

There will be a righteous Judge who will give a fair trial to every individual. All will give an account. An eternal sentence will be handed down based upon one’s life and acceptance or rejection of Christ’s sacrifice.

There will be no parole, stay of execution, or pardon for the lost. All of us will need abundant grace to be able to stand at His right side, and Scripture tells us how that is extended. We must prepare for that in this life (Hebrews 9:27).

—Neal Pollard, Denver, Colorado

*“I saw the dead, small and
great, standing before God”*

REVELATION 20:12



Back— to the Future

Churches of Christ are committed to restoring the teaching and practice of New Testament Christianity in its purity.

We believe “the seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:11), and that it will produce in the twenty-first century what it produced in the first century—undenominational Christians, people who are members of the church we read of in the New Testament.

We speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent, call Bible things by Bible names, and do Bible things the Bible way (1 Peter 4:11).

We have no hierarchy, no earthly headquarters, and no creed book or church manual written by men. Christ is our only creed and the Bible is our only guide.

We believe with all our hearts that we can be the true and faithful church of our Lord in the present age.

We invite all to come with us as we strive to go back to the Bible, back to the God of the Bible, back to the Christ of the Bible, and back to the church of the Bible.

We believe that going back to the Bible is the only future that the church has.

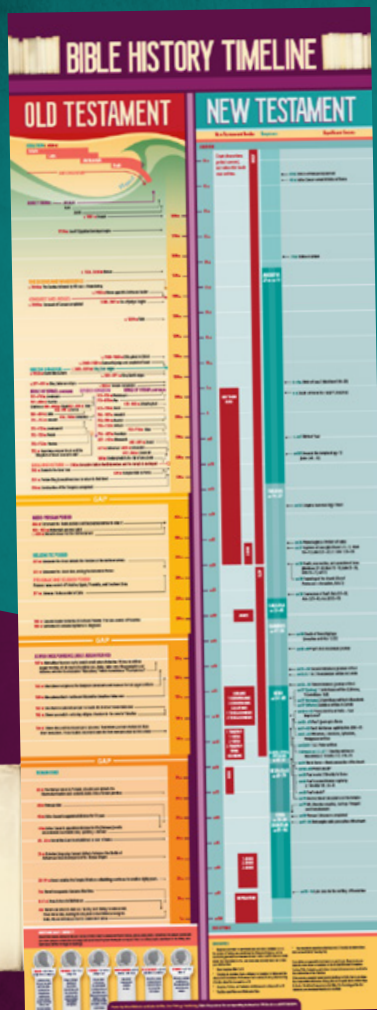
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9/18



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