

## NOTES

I. UNIT ONE — “Myth, Mystery, and *Misunderstanding*”

## A. Modern Myths About an Ancient Book

1. **Myth #1:** The Old Testament is primarily a “\_\_\_\_\_” book, and the New Testament is primarily a “\_\_\_\_\_” book.
2. **Myth #2:** The Old Testament is built around the principle of \_\_\_\_\_ (law), and the New Testament is built around the principle of \_\_\_\_\_ (liberty).
3. **Myth #3:** The \_\_\_\_\_, “*Old Testament*” and “*New Testament*” are reasonable and helpful.

B. *Our Invention*: A “Three Story” Bible

1. Old Testament - the “basement”; the story about the \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Gospels - the “ground floor”; the story about \_\_\_\_\_.
3. New Testament - the “top floor”; the story about the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. We tend to think in terms of an “*old, old, story*” and a “*new and improved*” story:
  - a. Christian book titles betray our bias (88% vs 12%).
  - b. **Question:** When I share “the \_\_\_\_\_,” who do I start with? With Jesus? With Abraham? With Adam?
  - c. **Question:** When I think of “the Gospel,” do I think of a story or a \_\_\_\_\_?
5. We seem to privately believe that the Old Testament is more of a “Jewish” book, and the New Testament is a “Christian” book.
  - a. Yet, out of the 777,687 words in the Bible, the word, “\_\_\_\_\_” appears 286x, and 200 of them are in the New Testament!
  - b. Out of the 188,654 words in our New Testament, the word “Christian” only occurs \_\_\_\_\_ times!
  - c. Of the 66 books of the Bible, 64 of them are written by Jews, including 25 \_\_\_\_\_ Testament books.
  - d. We mistakenly think of the NT as a book on “how to \_\_\_\_\_” as Christians (getting God into *our* “story”), rather than the record of the *living out* of the one Story (getting myself into *his* Story).
  - e. But the greatest tragedy is that we simply do not \_\_\_\_\_ in terms of the Story, so we \_\_\_\_\_ in terms of our own.

C. *God’s Intention*: A “One Story” Bible

1. The Bible contains the one \_\_\_\_\_ of “*the one God and Father of all who is over all, and through all and in all.*” **Eph. 4:6**
2. Believers in that one \_\_\_\_\_ of the one God become part of “*the one Body, the one hope, the one faith, and the one baptism.*” **Eph. 4:4-5**
3. The word that challenges all these misconceptions is the word that turns our “Three Story” Bible back into the one Story of the one God, is the word, “\_\_\_\_\_.”

- a. **covenant** - In Hebrew, is the word, *berith*, and in Greek, the word, *diathēkē*.
- b. appears 282x in the OT and 34x in the NT; but only 6x in the Gospels and Acts!
- c. Unfortunately, our English Bibles follow the designations of the \_\_\_\_\_: *Vetus Testamentum* and *Novus Testamentum*.
- d. The words “testament” and “\_\_\_\_\_” have virtually nothing in common in our modern world, and this is only contributes to our misunderstanding of the one Story.

*“The Abrahamic covenant is the overarching plan that unites God’s dealings with his people and bridges the Old and New Testaments. This was God’s unconditional plan for his people that he would see through to the end.”* [The Journey From Texts to Translation, p 32]

D. *God’s Intervention: Editing the “Story” of a Rabid Rabbi*

1. Paul (like us) believed that there was only one “Story” ...\_\_\_\_\_!
2. Saul’s conversion and subsequent ministry is a parable of sorts, of the problem.
  - a. The details of his \_\_\_\_\_ are very significant (Acts 9:1-22).

*“Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus....And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized;”* [Acts 9:8, 18]

- b. Paul’s “healing” caused him to realize that the Story began with *Adam*, not \_\_\_\_\_, and ended with all of creation, not merely the \_\_\_\_\_ (Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:22,45; Eph 1:7-10; 2:11-16):

*“Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.”* **Romans 5:14**

*“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.... Thus it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being’; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.”* **1 Corinthians 15:22, 45**

- c. Paul called the Story a *mustērion*, a “\_\_\_\_\_” hidden until the proper time.
  - (1) \_\_\_\_\_ only used this word *once*, to talk about what he called “*the kingdom*” (Mk 4:11; Mt 13:11; Lk 8:10).
  - (2) Paul used the word \_\_\_\_\_ times in four letters to refer to the Story (Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians).
  - (3) Paul’s “*mystery*” was what Jesus, the apostles and the early Church called, “the \_\_\_\_\_.”

*“...and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,”* **Ephesians 6:19**

- It was *not* “Four \_\_\_\_\_”!
- Jesus preached it to \_\_\_\_\_ (Matt 9:35; Mk 4:11)
- Peter preached it to Jews, \_\_\_\_\_ and Gentiles (Acts 2,8,10)
- Paul preached it to Jews and Gentiles (Acts 14)

d. This “mystery” was something \_\_\_\_\_ predicted yet didn’t comprehend!

*“Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.” 1 Peter 1:10-12*

e. The Story is a “mystery” even to the \_\_\_\_\_ hosts of heaven and hell! (1 Pet 1:12; Eph 3:8-13).

f. Paul’s “mystery” had three main components:

(1) It was the playing out of the purposes and \_\_\_\_\_ of God; his “*plan for the fullness of time...*”

*“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.” Ephesians 1:7-10*

(2) It would reunite and \_\_\_\_\_ all of God’s creation:

*“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.” Romans 8:18-25*

(3) It was centered around and dependent upon the person and the work of \_\_\_\_\_, the incarnate Son of God:

*“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And*

*he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross."*

**Colossians 1:13-20**

E. *Our Investigation: The Final Chapter of the One Story—“Book of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Covenant”*

1. Our Script: The Book of \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. It is the only book in our New “Testament” that is an \_\_\_\_\_ narrative.
  - b. It’s OK to think of Acts chronicling the “birth” of the Church, as long as we see Genesis 3 through Malachi 4 as its “\_\_\_\_\_”!
2. The Book of Acts: The *Missing* Manual
  - a. Luke-Acts is the \_\_\_\_\_ component of our New “Testament” (27% compared to Paul’s contribution of 24%).
  - b. It provides for the New “Testament” what we *lacked* for the Old “Testament”—a vital \_\_\_\_\_ between what preceded and followed it.
  - c. Acts gives us an amazing look into the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Kingdom of God with three influential cultures of the first century: Greek, Roman and Jewish
    - (1) “*Jew*” - 75x
    - (2) “*Greek*” - 13x
    - (3) “*Rome/Roman*” - 19x
    - (4) “*Gentile*” - 30x
    - (5) “*Samaritan*” - 1x
  - d. Without the Book of Acts, we would lack:
    - (1) Any record of the fulfillment of Jesus’ promised Holy Spirit.
    - (2) Any record of who “\_\_\_\_\_” is and why he called himself an “apostle.”
    - (3) Any record of why “\_\_\_\_\_” replaced synagogues.
    - (4) Any record of what happened to the \_\_\_\_\_ after Jesus left.
    - (5) Any record of how the Story got to Asia, Greece and Rome.
    - (6) The necessary \_\_\_\_\_ for all of the writings of the Apostles.
3. The Book of Acts: A *Misused* “Manual”
  - a. The genre of the Book of Acts is narrative, *not* didactic; it is \_\_\_\_\_ *not* theological.
    - (1) It contains 676 references to 115 names for 134 \_\_\_\_\_! (see chart on page A1 )
    - (2) It contains 432 references to 101 names for actual \_\_\_\_\_. (see chart on page A-1 )

- b. If I am to pull \_\_\_\_\_ from this book, it should come *first* from the teaching or preaching sections, *not* the narrative sections.
- (1) There are only 9 references to “\_\_\_\_\_,” and 5 references to “\_\_\_\_\_” compared to 21 in 1 Corinthians (i.e. 12-14).
  - (2) The “\_\_\_\_\_” is mentioned 53x, the same number as in the Gospels, and less than half as many times as the rest of the New “Testament” (e.g. 136).
  - (3) There are only 2 references to people “\_\_\_\_\_” in Acts (2:18; 19:6).
  - (4) Of the 33 references to “prophets” in Acts, only 4 are for people in the \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (5) There are 13 \_\_\_\_\_ in Acts, by 3 different people that make up 23% of the entire book (see chart on page A-2).
    - (a) The \_\_\_\_\_ of Acts was “*unfolding before their eyes*” in a very real sense.
    - (b) The \_\_\_\_\_ believers were being forced to rethink everything they had known and believed about Yahweh and his purposes.
    - (c) They were, in a very real sense, faced with Jesus’ prior teaching on new wine and wineskins and the “*scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven...*” (cf. Matt. 9:17; 13:52).
- c. This book chronicles the *unfolding* of a Story 20 centuries old, *not* the telling of something “\_\_\_\_\_.”
- d. To miss this is to misrepresent the \_\_\_\_\_, misunderstand the purpose of the Church, and possibly \_\_\_\_\_ my life.
- “Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to **walk** in a manner **worthy of the calling** with which you have been called...” Ephesians 4:1*
- “Only **conduct yourselves** in a manner **worthy of the gospel of Christ**, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;” Phillipians 1:27*
- “...so that you will **walk in a manner worthy of the Lord**, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;” Colossians 1:10*
- “...so that you would **walk in a manner worthy of the God** who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” 1 Thessalonians 2:12*
- “This is a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment so that you will be **considered worthy of the kingdom of God**, for which indeed you are suffering.” 2 Thessalonians 1:5*
- “To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you **worthy of your calling**, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power;” 2 Thessalonians 1:11*
- e. Acts gives us a look at priorities and values of those caught up in the Story when it first moved from “mystery” to \_\_\_\_\_.

F. Summing Up: Our Primary Goals For *"To The Ends of the Earth"*

1. To seek to comprehend the \_\_\_\_\_ of this *"Story we find ourselves in."*
2. To allow this enlarged view of the Gospel to propel us into a new passion for an \_\_\_\_\_ evangelism.
3. To grow in our commitment to *live out* the Story, not merely \_\_\_\_\_ it better.

*"And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." 1 Corinthians 13:2*

**Next Week:** *"What could something written twenty centuries ago possibly have in common with our modern lives?"*