



The books of 1st and 2nd Samuel tell how the nation of Israel became a monarchy. Samuel had ruled as a wise and successful judge, but as he aged the people clamored for a king. Saul was chosen, and at first the people believed they had everything they wanted. Saul proved to be a great disappointment, however, and turned away from God's instruction repeatedly. God promised to choose a new king—one after His own heart—and then enters one of the greatest character of the Bible: David. While David was anointed as the “king-to-be” and enjoyed early success, Saul's jealousy made David's life difficult for several years. The final chapters of 1 Samuel tell of David and his band of mis-fits as they seek to evade capture and death from Saul and his army. Saul's tragic end is recorded at the end of 1 Samuel, and the second volume tells of David's kingship. Initially crowned by the tribe of Judah alone, David was finally recognized as the king of all Israel. David had a wonderful reign until sin brought dark days. Adultery with Bathsheba and the subsequent coverup had consequences that lasted a lifetime. Sadly, the last half of 2 Samuel records the many heartaches David faced in his latter years. The books are an integral piece of Old Testament history, and they shape the way for the future, particularly by recording God's promise to establish David's throne forever—a promise concerning the Messiah!



Galatians is one of the Apostle Paul's unique letters. Instead of being written to a particular congregation or individual, it was written to multiple congregations—“the churches of Galatia” (Gal. 1:2). While we don't know which specific congregations this included, we learn from the letter that they were struggling with dangerous false doctrines. Judaizing

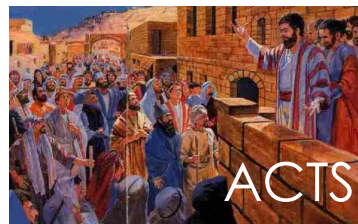
teachers had come and were claiming portions of the Mosaic Law as essential to salvation. Paul wrote the letter to vigorously refute the false teaching and exhort the Galatian Christians to remain faithful to the one, true gospel of Jesus. Galatians is a short letter that packs quite a punch—full of both deep and important doctrine as well as wonderfully practical Christian instruction!

The church at Ephesus is a well known group in the New Testament, and a place Paul had labored extensively. We read of his work there in Acts; he met with the Ephesian elders during his trip to Jerusalem; and he left Timothy there for a period of time. Unlike many recipients of Paul's letters, it doesn't appear there was a major “problem” at Ephesus that precipitated Paul's writing. The letter is an excellent treatise on the Church, however, and the blessings that are found in, and only in, Christ. Similar in a way to Galatians, Ephesians begins with some invigorating theology, followed by practical, everyday application that stems from such truth!

Fifth Quarter Review

Believe it or not, but another quarter of a year is gone! At this point in the reading plan, you've read 25 of the Bible's 66 books! During the first quarter of this second year, you read the book of Luke followed by Luke's “sequel,” the book of Acts. Returning to the Old Testament historical books, you read 1st and 2nd Samuel. Lastly, you read two more of Paul's letters (or epistles) by reading Galatians and Ephesians. As with previous quarters, this week is designed to be a review week. This will give you a chance to catch up on any reading you missed or fell behind on, and it will give you a chance to re-read and review any sections you might like to revisit. Below and on the back are brief recaps of the books you've read this quarter.

The third of the “synoptic” gospels is that written by Luke. This “orderly account” (Lk. 1:3) of the life of Jesus is the longest of the four New Testament gospels. While similar in many regards to Matthew and Mark (thus the designation of synoptic), Luke contains a great deal of unique material as well. Luke records unique accounts of Jesus' birth and childhood, several parables that are only found in Luke's gospel, and some unique stories about the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. Luke's gospel portrays Jesus as the perfect man who is, of course, the Son of Man—the Messiah come to bring salvation to the world!



Acts serves as a sequel to all of the gospel accounts, but specifically it is the second volume in the Luke-Acts work. Picking up where the gospel account left off, Acts records the final days before Jesus' ascension and the spread of Christ's kingdom from there. Jesus told His apostles they would be His witness in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth. Acts records the fulfillment of that commission! Beginning with Peter's sermon in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, the story unfolds as the church grows and expands outward. By the time Paul was converted, the church was already spreading, but the new apostle would take the gospel across the world! Acts reminds us of the church's mission—to serve the Lord and spread the good news of His saving gospel!



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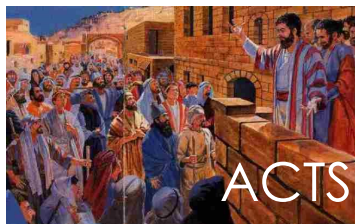
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