

A SURVEY OF
THE APOSTOLIC SCRIPTURES
FOR THE PRACTICAL MESSIANIC

FOR THE PRACTICAL MESSIANIC COMMENTARY SERIES

by **J.K. McKee**

A Survey of the Tanach for the Practical Messianic

A Survey of the Apostolic Scriptures for the Practical Messianic

The Apostolic Scriptures Practical Messianic Edition

Acts 15 for the Practical Messianic

James for the Practical Messianic

Romans for the Practical Messianic

1 Corinthians for the Practical Messianic

2 Corinthians for the Practical Messianic

Galatians for the Practical Messianic

Ephesians for the Practical Messianic

Philippians for the Practical Messianic

Colossians and Philemon for the Practical Messianic

1&2 Thessalonians for the Practical Messianic

The Pastoral Epistles for the Practical Messianic

Hebrews for the Practical Messianic

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J.K. MCKEE

MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS
messianicapologetics.net

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ABBREVIATION CHART AND SPECIAL TERMS

The following is a chart of abbreviations for reference works and special terms that are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as *TWOT* for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

Special terms that may be used have been provided in this chart:

ABD: <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>	<i>halachah</i> : lit. "the way to walk," how the Torah is lived out in an individual's life or faith community
AMG: <i>Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament</i>	HALOT: <i>Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Koehler and Baumgartner)
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)	HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004)
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament	Heb: Hebrew
Ara: Aramaic	HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)	ICC: <i>International Critical Commentary</i>
b. Babylonian Talmud (<i>Talmud Bavli</i>)	IDB: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.	IDBSup: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement</i>
BDAG: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)	ISBE: <i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>
BDB: <i>Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>	IVPBBC: <i>IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)</i>
BECNT: <i>Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament</i>	Jastrow: <i>Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature</i> (Marcus Jastrow)
BKCNT: <i>Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament</i>	JBK: New Jerusalem Bible-Koren (2000)
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.	JETS: <i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
CEV: Contemporary English Version (1995)	KJV: King James Version
CGEDNT: <i>Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words</i> (Barclay M. Newman)	Lattimore: <i>The New Testament</i> by Richmond Lattimore (1996)
CHALOT: <i>Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>	LITV: <i>Literal Translation of the Holy Bible</i> by Jay P. Green (1986)
CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)	LS: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> (Liddell & Scott)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition	LXE: <i>Septuagint with Apocrypha</i> by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls	LXX: Septuagint
ECB: <i>Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible</i>	m. Mishnah
EDB: <i>Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible</i>	MT: Masoretic Text
eisegesis: "reading meaning into," or interjecting a preconceived or foreign meaning into a Biblical text	NASB: New American Standard Bible (1977)
EJ: <i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i>	NASU: New American Standard Update (1995)
ESV: English Standard Version (2001)	NBCR: <i>New Bible Commentary: Revised</i>
exegesis: "drawing meaning out of," or the process of trying to understand what a Biblical text means on its own	NEB: New English Bible (1970)
EXP: <i>Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>	Nelson: <i>Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words</i>
Ger: German	NETS: New English Translation of the Septuagint (2007)
GNT: Greek New Testament	NIB: <i>New Interpreter's Bible</i>
Grk: Greek	

NIGTC: *New International Greek Testament Commentary*
NICNT: *New International Commentary on the New Testament*
NIDB: *New International Dictionary of the Bible*
NIV: New International Version (1984)
NJB: New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic (1985)
NJPS: Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures (1999)
NKJV: New King James Version (1982)
NRSV: New Revised Standard Version (1989)
NLT: New Living Translation (1996)
NT: New Testament
orthopraxy: lit. "the right action," how the Bible or one's theology is lived out in the world
OT: Old Testament
PreachC: *The Preacher's Commentary*
REB: Revised English Bible (1989)
RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)

t. Tosefta
Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament
Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TEV: Today's English Version (1976)
TNIV: Today's New International Version (2005)
TNTC: *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*
TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
UBSHNT: United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition
v(s). verse(s)
Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*
Vul: Latin Vulgate
WBC: *Word Biblical Commentary*
Yid: Yiddish
YLT: Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)

INTRODUCTION

One of the principal goals of the ministry work of Outreach Israel Ministries is to equip Messianic Believers in their spiritual growth, as we are all continually sanctified and made perfect by the power of God's Spirit. One of the main reasons, behind studies such as this, is how we as the Messianic movement can move from having a raw view of the Bible's teachings to having a more defined and well-polished theology.¹ I believe that this has been lacking in significant segments of the Messianic community, and significant lack of establishment (or even working toward more establishment) has made some Messianic individuals easy cannon fodder for the enemy. But this is not what the Lord wants. Our Heavenly Father wants us to have a relationship with Him via His Son, Yeshua, so that we may be equipped to perform His work in the world in a marvelous way. As Paul wrote the Colossians, "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ" (Colossians 1:28, ESV).

But how are we to arrive at this state of being "complete" (NASU)? Is it something that happens instantaneously, or something that must occur over time via a continual and committed process? I think it is safe to say that any of us who have dedicated ourselves to the Lord know that while being forgiven of our sins and spiritually regenerated is something that happens instantly, being conformed to the image of the Messiah (Romans 8:29) is something that can take a lifetime. We often battle with our flesh and with the influence of sin in our fallen world (Romans 7:23; Ephesians 6:12), and it is for this very reason why the transformation of our character to one more like God's character will often take an entire lifetime. The mysteries of God's universe are too complicated for us to understand all at once; we can only take them "in fragmentary and varied fashion" (Hebrews 1:1, NEB).

There are some important keys that any spiritual mentor can tell you that will help you in your journey with the Lord. Each of us needs to pray every day. A consistent, disciplined time of prayer and one-on-one entreating and talking to God is absolutely imperative to have a right relationship with Him. Prayer is the time when we thank the Lord for the life He has given us, we ask Him questions about our lives and what we are doing, and we make requests of Him. Yeshua Himself says, "Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be *granted* you" (Mark 11:24). Of course, this must be tempered by the fact that not everything we ask for may be beneficial for us. But, praying to the Lord and communing with Him will bring the right answer, and He will surely grant us what we need in its proper time.

¹ Consult the various discussions present in *Confronting Critical Issues: An Analysis of Subjects that Affects the Growth and Stability of the Emerging Messianic Movement*.

Each one of us also needs to be in fellowship and have accountability to other Believers. In the Messianic movement today, this is particularly important, as many of us are spread abroad and Messianic congregations for some are few and far between. It can also be extremely difficult. Many feel uncomfortable inside some of the Messianic fellowships or congregations that they attend, for whatever reason. As a growing movement, the spiritual needs of some people are simply not met at the Messianic congregations they visit or attempt to become involved with. This frequently takes place, unfortunately, because the leaders of fellowships and congregations are not mature enough to truly serve the spiritual needs of the people. It also commonly takes place because some Messianic assemblies are fractionalized among various “cliques,” representing a particular view or ideology on a subject or issue. Thankfully, technology has helped eliminate some of the distance barriers, cultural divides, and even social differences. Those who find themselves marginalized in some way need not be permanently alone. In order for any of us to survive spiritually, we need to be in the company of others—*somehow*—lest one of us is killed as a proverbial “lone ranger.”

There is a third critical aspect of the faith process that is absolutely imperative to anyone who wants to grow in his or her relationship with God. Unfortunately—and *surprisingly*—in today’s emerging Messianic movement it gets widely overlooked: **a consistent study of the whole Bible.**

What?! Some of you who attend Messianic fellowships and associate with those “who want to be fully Biblical” may consider this a strong accusation. But I have not accused anyone of not studying Scripture; I have rather made the statement that many do not consistently study the whole Bible. As a Messianic teacher, it has been my observation that the majority of Messianic Bible studies are focused on the weekly Torah portions. While I certainly do not wish to discount the important value of studying the Torah, many Messianics have made the reverse mistake of many Christians who only focus on the “New Testament.” How many of our Messianic youth, for example, are familiar with what the Gospels tell us about the life of Yeshua the Messiah, when all they may be focused on is studying Hebrew so they can read the Torah? How many know what the gospel of salvation truly is, as demonstrated by the Savior’s ministry? How many truly know how the good news was spread abroad in the Book of Acts to the Mediterranean world, and what the Apostles endured? Did you know that some Messianic youth do not even know who Paul was?

I believe I am justified in asking if this is truly acceptable in a movement that strives to be “fully Biblical.” Failing to know who figures such as Paul are, who authored nearly a third of the Apostolic Scriptures, and the basic facts of the Gospels and Acts, are unacceptable for any generation of “Believers.”

It is very true that many of us come from Christian backgrounds where our study of the Bible had primarily been focused around the New Testament, and so entering into the Messianic movement has been a breath of fresh air for us. It is a good thing that people are studying the Torah consistently. But Torah study cannot become an end to itself; it must also be coupled with consistent meditation on the Prophets and histories of the Tanach, and with the instructions of Yeshua and the Apostles. The Torah may make up the foundation of the Bible, but it by no means is the only part of the Bible. What we learn in the Torah must be properly applied elsewhere. We have a responsibility to ourselves and our posterity to

develop a fully Biblical theology firmly based on what we can read and understand in the authorized canon of Scripture.

Christians who primarily focus on the Apostolic Scriptures can frequently become one-sided in their approach to God, thinking that Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) came to abolish the Law of Moses—a Torah that many of them have not frequently examined. These people can also adopt the unfortunate view that our Creator is inconsistent in His approach to humanity in the texts of the “Old Testament” versus the texts in the “New Testament.” Some, whether consciously or not, have adopted the Marcionite heresy of believing that the God of the “Old Testament” is full of anger and wrath, whereas the God of the “New Testament” is full of love and grace.ⁱⁱ Some believe that Jesus was a pacifist who did not believe in any kind of war or violent resistance, whereas Ancient Israel was stoning offenders of the Law left and right and was a society in which no one would have wanted to live. Some believe that God would not condemn anyone as long as they “love others,” and would condone homosexual relationships. These may sound like extreme examples, but these attitudes are evidenced in some churches today.

Reverse errors to these mistakes, however, rear themselves far too frequently in some parts of the emerging Messianic movement. Some people, who focus almost exclusively on the Torah in their Bible studies, forget that God is concerned about the salvation of the whole world, and not only Israel. Some forget the love, grace, and mercy of God—or think that our Heavenly Father’s love is only attainable by those who “keep His commandments,” *as they do*. Some forget that the world in which Ancient Israel during the reign of Kings David and Solomon was not the world that Yeshua the Messiah and the Apostles lived in, and is certainly not the world in which we live today in the Twenty-First Century. And, perhaps worse than anything else, some are not willing to let Yeshua’s instructions be *primary* to the teachings of Moses, in spite of his prophesying that “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him” (Deuteronomy 18:15; cf. Acts 3:22; 7:37). In perhaps the most extreme of cases, some would not hesitate to begin stoning sinners in their midst and would advocate that animal sacrifices must still be offered for the atonement of willful sin. These may likewise sound like severe examples, but you may hear them talked about in a few Messianic fellowships and assemblies (even if just hypothetically).

How or why anyone arrives at these two extremes is not something that any of us can humanly determine, as only the Lord truly knows the true heart intent of every person. But the way to avoid these two extremes is obvious: **we must submit ourselves to a consistent study of God’s Word**. This does not include a selective reading of the Torah once a week, nor does it include selective readings from the Gospels, either. It must include us knowing what

ⁱⁱ Marcionism is “The movement begun with Marcion in the second century, which rejected the validity of the OT witness for Christians because the God of the OT was believed to be incompatible with the loving God revealed through Jesus. Often persons who focus on the NT in their preaching or teaching and who overlook the OT as the ‘cradle’ for Jesus and the Christian faith (and hence who fail to give proper credence to the ‘Jewishness’ of Jesus and the early church) are accused of Marcionism” (Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999], 75).

God's Word says, being able to know the basic facts of Scripture, and being sensitive to the Holy Spirit when issues arise that require us to turn to an absolute authority.

Those of you who have followed my Wednesday Night Bible Study podcast, since it began in July 2005, have noticed that we have largely focused on examinations of specific books from the Apostolic Scriptures (James, Hebrews, Philippians), as well as some topical studies. I fully believe that these have been helpful for many of you wanting to have a good, conservative, Messianic handle on these texts, and they will continue.ⁱⁱⁱ However, these studies take a great deal of time and effort to go through chapter-by-chapter and verse-by-verse. Admittedly, an entire lifetime of committed work lies before the Messianic interpreter, as I certainly do believe we are entering into a season of really being able to seriously refine and systematize our theology. If the history of the Reformation can teach us anything, progress in a movement can only truly be made when the Lord calls out certain individuals who are steadfast and determined enough to devote the time and effort to write commentaries on books of the Bible, and treatises on doctrine. Whether you agree with his theology or not, the Protestant movement is undoubtedly indebted to the work of John Calvin, who spent most of his life in Geneva doing precisely this—in a time when Protestantism was still in its infancy and fractionalized, not at all unlike the emerging Messianic movement today.

We live in a Twenty-First Century that has enabled us to do more work in less time with the advent of computers, mass communication, and the Internet. However, we still have a significant load of projects and analyses ahead of us as the Messianic community, because while God raises up men and women to exposit on Messianic theology, so too must the work of daily ministry continue. No one can devote all of his or her time to exclusively focus on examining this text or that issue, when people have personal issues and crises that need to be dealt with, and new people are entering into the movement every day. People need real world solutions to their problems, and the only way we will find answers for them is by submitting to the instruction of God's Word. Admittedly, it may be several decades before we see the day that a person can have an entire bookshelf full of Messianic commentaries on the Apostolic Scriptures—much less the full Bible.

We can probably wait a little longer to have a verse-by-verse set of commentaries on the Bible, as the Lord increasingly matures us and enables us to deal with those rather difficult issues that the *whole of Scripture* represents. The Holy Scriptures are the only place to which we can go to find the definitive answers for the challenges that our lives present to us. While we can probably wait to have a comprehensive understanding of every verse of the Bible, **we cannot afford** to wait on dealing with the Bible as a whole, on a macro level. Each of us must have a good handle on the basic facts of Scripture, so we can determine what our strengths and weaknesses are as the Messianic movement, and where we need to focus our attention and energies for the short term and the long term. In order to survey Scripture, we must read each book, not to try to figure out everything all at once, but to get a good idea about what the

ⁱⁱⁱ Through 2011, these studies have further addressed: Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon, Acts 15, and the Pastoral Epistles of 1&2 Timothy and Titus.

story is, who the characters are, how they interact, and the broad questions we should be asking ourselves.

We are actually going to begin our survey of the Bible in the Apostolic Scriptures, and not in the Tanach. Some of you understandably may be asking, “Why? Doesn’t the Bible begin with the Book of Genesis?” This is true; the Bible does begin with the Book of Genesis. But in order to properly survey the Bible, we must go back in time and consider issues that are often not dealt with in an individual’s daily meditation on the Word. Most people just pick up the Bible and start reading. I consider this to be a serious mistake, because it is where the vast majority of interpretational errors occur. Most people who read the Bible do not consider when a Biblical book was composed, who the author was, where the author was when writing, and who the intended audience of the text was. When we do this, there is admittedly a great deal of controversy that exists between the far Right and the far Left of the theological spectrum, and everything in between—*that we cannot avoid*. We cannot act as though the Bible just “popped out of the sky.”

I have purposefully chosen to begin our survey of the Bible with the Apostolic Scriptures or New Testament for several reasons. The first is that some Messianic Believers have become so zealous for the Torah that they literally need a re-introduction to Yeshua and the Apostles. The second is that many Messianic Believers who read the Apostolic Scriptures, who may not need a “re-introduction,” do need to have its books placed in a distinct Messianic context for them. The third, and perhaps most important, is that it is much easier to survey the Apostolic Scriptures as we are largely dealing with a broad First Century of 100 to 120 years, whereas the Tanach spans from the Creation of the world to the return of the Jewish exiles from Babylon, with contemporary literature spanning anywhere from 2,200 to 4,000 years. There is actually *less controversy* surrounding the composition of the New Testament than the Old Testament, so not surveying the Tanach before the Apostolic Scriptures has been done to introduce you to smaller issues *before* greater issues.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO SURVEY THE APOSTOLIC SCRIPTURES?

A survey may be defined as both “a detailed study, as by gathering information and analyzing it” and “a general view.”^{iv} This examination of the Apostolic Scriptures will primarily be general, but also be detailed in that aspects of the text will be considered that are often overlooked. Most of these aspects will be related to a text’s composition that will place it in its proper historical and/or cultural setting, and the circumstances which likely precipitated its being written. Imperative to our discussions will be considering how each text should be viewed or applied in a Twenty-First Century *Messianic* setting, and the challenges that are commonly presented to our faith community spiritually and theologically from them.

Before reading the entry accessible in this workbook, you should begin by having read the text beforehand. I would recommend that as much as possible that you dedicate several hours before each study, reading the assigned text in a single sitting. Because we are

^{iv} *Webster’s New World Dictionary and Thesaurus*, second edition (Cleveland: Wiley Publishing, Inc, 2002), 638.

surveying Biblical books, it is not necessary for you to pay close attention to every single detail. Instead, it is necessary for you to read the text as though you were reading a book, as your goal is to try to get a good feel on the overall message.

As you proceed to read large portions of the Bible in a very short timespan, I would strongly recommend that you pick a Bible version that is not translated as literally as some others. While I use the New American Standard, Updated Edition (1995) as my primary version, which is rather literal, the NASU can slow a person down significantly who is trying to read through a text to digest its basic facts. The NASU has not been published to use as a Bible that reads through more quickly like a book. For this job, I would recommend that you use a dynamic equivalency translation such as the New International Version (1984) or the New English Bible (1970). Some of you may want to use a specialty version, such as Richmond Lattimore's translation of the New Testament (New York: North Point Press, 1996), which not only easily reads as a book, but lacks chapter and verse numbers. While I know that David H. Stern's *Complete Jewish Bible* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1998) is quite popular in the Messianic community, its constant use of Hebrew terms may be unfamiliar to many of you, who do not need to be confused. This may be a good secondary source to use, but it is paraphrased and will not easily help gauge the weaknesses that we as Messianics sometimes have in regard to the Apostolic Scriptures.^v

When you read entire books of the Bible in a short space of time, questions will arise that you may not consider when reading shorter selections. There are some excellent study Bibles on the market that I believe can help you considerably to gain a good socio-historical feel of the text. From an evangelical and conservative point of view, these include the venerable *NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002) and the newer *Archaeological Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005). While somewhat liberal, the *New Interpreter's Study Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003) incorporates many Jewish and classical sources into its footnotes for the New Testament. Another good tool to have is a Bible atlas, as we will be going through many places that may be unfamiliar to you. I would specifically recommend the *HarperCollins Concise Atlas of the Bible* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997).

Some of you may also wish to have additional resources to make use of in your survey of the Apostolic Scriptures. I would recommend that you have a good Bible encyclopedia, such as the relatively conservative *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), and a one-volume commentary like the *New Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970). Some of these can be found at discount booksellers new or used, and should be a welcome addition to any Believer's library. For those of you who would like to hone some of your skills of reading Scripture, then I would recommend the book *Bible Study That Works* by David L. Thompson (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Publishing House, 1994). An excellent supplementary read to our survey study is F.F. Bruce's book *New Testament History* (New York: Doubleday, 1969), which will give you a good overview of the First Century world.

^v Likewise, I would seriously recommend that you **not** use the King James Version to use for these studies. The 1611 KJV, while a major contribution to our faith history, is nevertheless four centuries old and reads somewhat archaically. Furthermore, it is based on younger Hebrew and Greek manuscripts unlike newer versions today like the RSV, NEB, NASU, NIV, etc.

Most of the references that I will be making have been gleaned from several Bible encyclopedias, including: the *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), the before mentioned *ISBE*, and the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992). I am also indebted to the thorough work of Donald Guthrie in his *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), as well as the textbook *A Survey of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) by Robert Gundry. Some information has also been incorporated from select commentaries, most notably from the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976-1992) and *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word Books). Of course, all of these are tools that you can have in your personal or congregational library.^{vi}

HOW DO YOU SURVEY THE TEXT?

The procedures of this survey study should be fairly easy to follow for the person who is eager to learn. Make sure that you have set aside some time to read in a quiet place where you will not be disturbed. Make sure that you are alert, as there can be a tendency to “doze off” when reading large portions of text. Your mind will need to be focused—and you need to get those body chemicals moving!

The first thing that you should do before opening your Bible is pray. (Too many people forget to do this!) Ask the Lord to fill you with His Holy Spirit, and stimulate both your heart and your mind. Ask Him to give you the right attitude as you approach controversial passages. Ask Him to give you the skills to read the text and make intelligent observations. Ask Him to show you where your strengths and weaknesses are concerning various verses.

Secondly, you should take your study Bible and jot down a few things from its introduction. Mark down how the Christian Bible version you are working from interprets or views a text. Is its approach conservative or liberal? How many of the views are incorporated from First Century Judaism and/or the Greco-Roman classical world? To what degree is history a factor in the interpretation of a text?

Third, before you begin reading a text you need to remember that the Apostolic Scriptures are a collection of specific literary types or genres. This is one of the reasons why I will refrain, with the exception of Acts and Revelation, from referring to our texts as “the Book of ____.” The Apostolic Scriptures are largely a collection of Gospels and Epistles. The Gospels were originally composed as evangelistic tools that the First Century Believers used to share the good news of salvation with distinct and/or broad groups of First Century society. Likewise, the Epistles, whether written by the Jerusalem Apostles or the Apostle Paul, were letters written to collections of Believers in cities and to distinct individuals. Remember to read these texts as letters that addressed problems and situations that Believers originally faced in ancient times, *before* you begin to consider what they mean for us today.

After reviewing these things, you can then begin to read the assigned text. As you read the text, you may wish to have a sheet of paper divided up into four sections. With each new character you encounter (not withstanding genealogy charts), write down his or her name. Do

^{vi} For a catalogue review of possible reference materials, consult a resource such as David R. Bauer, *An Annotated Guide to Biblical Resources for Ministry* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003).