Israel's Great Commission & Ours

Israel's Great Commissions in contrast to our commissions

A 10-Lesson Study by Keith Blades | Enjoy the Bible Ministries®

Study Overview & Lesson Summaries

About This Series

These 10 lessons are Keith Blades' study of the commissions commonly called the Great Commissions — Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20 and Acts 1. Keith says they really are Israel's Great Commissions, having to do with God's program and purpose with the nation Israel. Lessons 1 and 2 deal with a stumbling block: the Gentiles being mentioned in these commissions, which Keith says is not in view of a dispensation of Gentile grace. Lessons 3–8 examine five issues in these commissions; put together, Keith says, it ought to be abundantly clear that they are Israel's Great Commissions and not our commissions today in this dispensation of grace. The closing lessons turn to our commissions, in the epistles of the Apostle Paul: our ambassadorship to men especially, with the gospel of reconciliation (II Corinthians 5), and in connection with an impact God has designed for us to make in the heavenly places (Ephesians 3).

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Lesson Summaries

L1

Israel's Great Commissions and Our Commissions *Ephesians 2–3; Matthew 28: Time Past, But Now, and the Gentiles in the Commissions*

Israel's Great Commissions and Our Commissions

- The Great Commissions as commonly thought of are in Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20 and Acts 1; they are commissions in accordance with Israel's program
- They have to do with God's program and purpose with the nation Israel, and they really aren't our commissions today in this dispensation of grace
- If they are not the marching orders for the Church, the Body of Christ, we still have commissions: they are in the epistles of the Apostle Paul, very clearly spelled out, in II Corinthians 5 and Ephesians 3

Time Past and But Now

- The portion of God's Word that contains our instructions, promises and doctrines today is the epistles of the Apostle Paul; the portion for the believing remnant of Israel in that day is especially Hebrews through Revelation

Paul a Different Apostle; Israel's Program Interrupted

- This dispensation of grace is a temporary interruption in God's program with Israel: instead of beginning His day of wrath, God interrupted their program with this mystery; after the rapture of the church He resumes it

The Gentiles in the Commissions

- Blessing Gentiles in Israel's program and the dispensation of Gentile grace are two entirely different things; today God has set His program with Israel aside and deals with Gentiles in spite of Israel

L2

Saving Gentiles Is Part of Israel's Program *Genesis 12:1–3; Isaiah 60; Ephesians 3: Defining the Dispensation of Gentile Grace*

Gentiles in Israel's Great Commissions

- Saving Gentiles is part of Israel's program; but the salvation of Gentiles in Israel's program and what Paul talks about as a dispensation of Gentile grace are two entirely different things

The Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1–3)

- Everything about God's program with Israel sits on the covenant God made with Abraham; its end result is the blessing of the nations
- The fulfillment of God's program with Israel according to the Abrahamic covenant is still yet to come; the dispensation of Gentile grace and the blessing of the Gentiles through Israel are two different things — Paul says the dispensation of Gentile grace was a mystery not known in ages and generations past, hid in God

The Prophets: Gentiles Blessed in Blessing Israel

- The prophets talked about God dealing with the Gentiles in fulfillment of His purpose with Israel — but not in a dispensation without Israel that interrupts and suspends Israel's program

Those Aren't Our Commissions Today

- The mention of the Gentiles in those Great Commissions is not in view of a dispensation of Gentile grace, and a Christian cannot fulfill the commission of Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20 or Acts 1 today, because God's not behind it; those aren't our commissions today

Defining the Dispensation of Gentile Grace

- God made the Gentiles fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of promise in Christ by the gospel — not by submitting to Israel, but by believing the gospel of Christ's death, burial and resurrection as their substitute redeemer

L3

Still the Gospel of Israel's Kingdom *Mark 16; Matthew 10 and 24: the First of Five Issues*

Who Fulfills Them; Our Commissions

- Our commissions are the ministry of reconciliation committed unto us (II Corinthians 5) and making all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery (Ephesians 3)

Five Things to Examine in These Commissions

- First: the gospel to be proclaimed in these commissions is still the gospel of Israel's kingdom
- Second: the time frame for their fulfillment is the last days of Israel's program; the Gentiles get dealt with in the day of the Lord's wrath and once the kingdom is established
- Third: the Gentiles are taught to be submissive to Israel and her program; Jew and Gentile are not on the exact same level, because Israel's program is still in effect
- Fourth: the blessing offered to the Gentiles is being blessed in Israel's earthly kingdom — not going to heaven when you die, nor being made part of the new creation, the body of Christ
- Fifth: these commissions fulfill Old Testament passages set forth by the prophets about the last stages of Israel's program — so they aren't part of the mystery revealed to Paul, which the prophets knew nothing about

Matthew 10 and 24; Mark 16:16

- The response in Mark 16:16 is believing and being baptized in water for the remission of sins, a prescription for cleansing God was administering upon Israel; water baptism has no place in this dispensation of grace

L4

The Gospel of the Commissions Is Israel's Message *Mark 16:15–18; Luke 7; Luke 24; Acts 1: Baptism, Signs, Beginning at Jerusalem*

Still the Gospel of the Kingdom (Mark 16:15)

- When Mark 16:15 says "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," that gospel is still the gospel of the kingdom

"He that believeth and is baptized" (Mark 16:16; Luke 7)

- Belief in the gospel of the kingdom demanded water baptism; in Israel's program, belief plus the water baptism equals salvation. That is not the way things work today, but Mark 16 is Israel's program

A Wet One, a Dry One and a Hot One

- Water baptism is not part of this dispensation of Gentile grace; the only baptism for it is one God performs, with no water — the baptism by the Spirit of God into the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:13)

The Signs That Follow Them That Believe (Mark 16:17–18)

- Verses 17–18 are part of the natural response to the gospel of the kingdom, not a provision of God in the response to the message we proclaim today; you are not the "ye" of verse 15

Luke 24 and Acts 1: Beginning at Jerusalem

- "Beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47) is a matter of program, not practicality: Israel has the priority, and until they are dealt with, no one else is
- There is still a difference in the great commissions, but no difference in this dispensation of grace; the commissions are given in accordance with Israel's program as it enters its final stage

L5

The Time Frame of the Great Commissions *Matthew 24:14; Mark 16:17–18; Revelation 6:7–8 and 7: the Day of the Lord's Wrath*

The Second Issue: the Time Frame for the Gentiles

- The first of the five issues took at least the last two lessons; the second is the time frame in which the Gentiles would hear anything under these commissions
- That time frame is the day of the Lord's wrath, the last seven years on the time schedule; the dispensation of Gentile grace was still a mystery, not anticipated or expected
- If Gentiles today were dealt with on the basis of these commissions, we would be in the day of the Lord's wrath; in this dispensation God is holding back that day and dealing with the Gentiles in spite of Israel

Verse 14: the Sign of the End

- Matthew 24:14 tells when the commissions of Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20 and Acts 1 are fulfilled with respect to the Gentiles — and the gospel is the gospel of the kingdom
- No Christian claiming to fulfill the Great Commission is fulfilling it: he would have to preach the gospel of the kingdom and not go to a Gentile until Jerusalem, Judaea and Samaria have heard and the Lord's day of wrath is down to its end

The Signs of Mark 16 and Revelation 7

- Revelation 7 shows the fulfillment: the Lord will kickstart Israel's program,

when this dispensation of grace is over, with the 144,000, and the Gentiles are dealt with in the last half of the Great Tribulation, fulfilling Matthew 24:14

L6

Taught Submission to Israel, Blessed with Israel *Matthew 28:19–20; Revelation 7; Zechariah 14; Matthew 25: the Third and Fourth Things*

The Third Thing: Taught Submission to Israel

- The nations, when dealt with under these commissions, are taught submission to the nation Israel; the baptism of them makes that clear, and so does the last thing the Lord says in verse 20

"Teaching them to observe all things" — Under the Law

- In Matthew 23 the Lord commanded His disciples to follow what the scribes and Pharisees said as they sat in Moses' seat; that is included in "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" — He commanded them to observe the law

Not Under the Law, but Under Grace

- In Romans 6 Paul, apostle to the Gentiles, says what the Lord Jesus Christ told him to say in this dispensation of grace — the exact opposite of Matthew 23: "ye are not under the law, but under grace," which Moses never could have said

The Fourth Thing: the Gentiles Are Blessed

- A positive Gentile response to the gospel of the kingdom under those commissions results in blessing in accordance with the Abrahamic Covenant once the kingdom is established — the opportunity to be blessed with Israel in that kingdom
- In Matthew 25 He deals with the nations on the basis of the Abrahamic covenant, blessing them that have blessed Abraham and his seed — they blessed Israel by a positive response to the gospel of the kingdom preached by an Israelite
- That is not the basis on which God deals with the Gentiles today; He gave us the blessings described in Ephesians 1, "all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ"

L7

The Great Commissions Fulfill Prophetic Utterances *Matthew 24:14; Psalm 2; Jeremiah 31:10–12; I Peter 2 Introduced*

The Fifth and Final Issue

- The fifth and final issue is that the commissions fulfill what is spelled out in the prophets; commissions fulfilling prophetic passages can by no means be part of a mystery program that no prophet knew anything about
- The dispensation of Gentile grace was a mystery, but Israel dealing with the Gentiles in their last days was not; the prophets set forth in general terms that the nations would be dealt with in the day of the Lord's wrath
- Put all five issues together and it ought to be abundantly clear they are Israel's Great Commissions, not our commissions today in this dispensation of grace

Psalm 2: the Sweep of the Days of the Messiah

- In Acts 4 verses 1 and 2 of the Psalm have taken place and they are living during verses 3 and 4; verse 5 is the day of His wrath — with no dispensation

of Gentile grace and no indication of interruption to Israel's program

Jeremiah 31: the Word of the Lord to the Nations

- Jeremiah 31 has in view a message the nations are to hear when God deals with them in the day of His wrath; the message God wants the nations to hear today is that He has a dispensation of grace in effect for them

I Peter 2 Introduced

- Hebrews through Revelation especially focuses on the resumption and fulfillment of God's program with Israel; I Peter 2:9 is a perfect description of the remnant of Israel; the nation did not fulfill God's purpose to make an impact on the nations, but the remnant will

L8

The Day of Visitation and Our Twofold Ambassadorship *I Peter 2; Psalm 59; Jeremiah 46; II Corinthians 5; Ephesians 6 and 3*

Jeremiah 46: The Day of Visitation

- Jeremiah 46:1 is a message against the Gentiles describing what the Lord will do in His day of wrath, and in the passage the day of visitation is spoken of at least six times; this dispensation of Gentile grace is not that day of visitation — that day is the time the Great Commission has in view for dealing with the Gentiles

The Five Issues: Israel's Commissions

- (1) The gospel of the commissions is the gospel of the kingdom; (2) the time frame for dealing with Gentiles is the Lord's day of wrath; (3) the commissions teach the Gentiles to be submissive to Israel's program, including the law
- (4) Gentile blessing is participation in Israel's kingdom on this earth, fulfilling the Abrahamic covenant; (5) the commissions are given in accordance with the prophets on dealing with the Gentiles at the end of the Lord's day of wrath

The Word of Reconciliation (II Corinthians 5)

- Paul talks about our commissions in the context of our ambassadorship; the message is not Israel's kingdom gospel but the word of reconciliation, in view of God putting Jew and Gentile at the exact same level

The Twofold Aspect of Our Ambassadorship

- The commission to proclaim the word of reconciliation is only one half of your great commission; the first part of our ambassadorship is to proclaim a message to men
- In Ephesians 6 Paul is an ambassador in bonds in connection with the mystery of the gospel — the full-blown explanation concerning the reasons why this dispensation of Gentile grace was brought in
- Its ultimate aim is an impact upon the principalities and powers in heavenly places, to whom the mystery of Christ is their great doom; the first aspect affects men with the word of reconciliation, the second those powers with the mystery of the gospel

L9

Our Ambassadorship, Part One: The Gospel of Reconciliation

II Corinthians 5:12–21; I Timothy 2:4–7: the Great Dispensational Change

Founded on the Great Dispensational Change

- Our ambassadorship is composed of two parts — to men especially, with the gospel of reconciliation, and an impact God has designed for us to make in the heavenly places; both are based upon the great dispensational change
- With the raising up of Paul, God suspended His program with Israel and revealed to Paul the mystery of Christ and the information about this new and different dispensation of grace; it ends with an unexpected, unprophesied appearing of the Lord, and then He resumes His program with Israel

Henceforth — and a New Creature

- Time past had Gentiles afar off, a middle wall of partition and two classes of people (Ephesians 2:11–12); II Corinthians 5:16 declares the great dispensational change, and we're to operate upon it today
- Verse 17 is often quoted for the changes within a person at salvation; without denying that, the verse is talking about the new creation God is creating now — the church, the body of Christ; the man in Christ is part of it, not a member of the nation Israel

God Was in Christ Reconciling the World

- Reconciling the world is changing the world's status from time past to now — to reconcile simply refers to a change of status; this is a dispensation of the reconciled world, and the casting away of Israel did not take place at the cross

We Are Ambassadors for Christ: Part One

- Verses 20–21 are our ambassadorship, part one — the message we're commissioned to herald to men, Jew and Gentile alike, not dealing with men on fleshly distinctions; it can't be proclaimed without an understanding of this dispensation of Gentile grace

L10

A Designed Impact in the Heavenly Places *Ephesians 3:9–11: the Second Aspect of Our Ambassadorship*

The Second Aspect of Our Ambassadorship

- There are two aspects to our commissioning as ambassadors; with the commission in connection with II Corinthians 5 — the word of reconciliation committed to us — we beseech men, Jew and Gentile alike, to be reconciled to God
- The second aspect gets little notice or treatment — a shame, for it is an equal issue in our ambassadorship with proclaiming the gospel of reconciliation to men

"to the intent" (Ephesians 3:9–11)

- "what *is* the fellowship of the mystery" means more than the fact that the mystery dispensation is in effect — it is talking about what it's all about and why God has brought it in
- To do something "to the intent" is the purpose behind it, the goal you're after; God wants an objective achieved that goes beyond simply men seeing it
- It is designed to make an impact upon the angelic beings occupying the positions of governmental authority in the heavenly places — the principalities and powers; that impact is the glory and grandeur of His manifold wisdom

Israel's Vocation and the Parallel (Deuteronomy 4)

- There is a parallel: Israel is God's means for reconciling the earth back to

Himself; the church, the body of Christ, is God's means for reconciling the heavenly places back to Himself

Triumphing Over Them (Colossians 2:15)

- The impact keeps before the principalities and powers that God has triumphed over them — in what they thought was their triumph over Him; this aspect we ought to pursue as zealously as witnessing to men with the gospel of reconciliation

Key Doctrinal Distinctions

Israel's Great Commissions vs. Our Commissions

Keith says a Christian cannot fulfill the commission of Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20 or Acts 1 today, because God isn't operating on those commissions today; their fulfillment awaits the resumption and fulfillment of God's program with Israel. Those Great Commissions will yet be fulfilled by the remnant of Israel when God resumes His program after this dispensation of grace is over; our commissions are found in our epistles, Romans through Philemon.

Gentiles in Israel's Program vs. the Dispensation of Gentile Grace

Keith says Israel's program has the salvation of Gentiles in view, but not a dispensation of Gentile grace; the prophets talk about the Gentiles being blessed, but not in a dispensation without Israel that interrupts God's program with Israel and suspends it. Gentiles blessed in Israel's program don't become members of the new creation, the Church, the body of Christ, which is what God is forming today in the dispensation of grace.

Prophesied vs. Mystery

Because the commissions are fully in accordance with the prophets, they aren't part of the mystery revealed to the Apostle Paul, which the prophets knew nothing about. God dealing with us Gentiles today in this dispensation of grace was a mystery; Israel dealing with the Gentiles in their last days, in their final installment on their time schedule, was not.

The Gospel of the Kingdom vs. the Message We Proclaim Today

Keith says the gospel of the so-called Great Commissions is Israel's kingdom gospel, the good news about the fulfillment of God's program and purpose with Israel being at hand — not the gospel of the grace of God given unto us to proclaim today. No one can tell anybody today that the kingdom of God is at hand and be telling the truth, because it isn't; in this dispensation of grace Israel's program is temporarily suspended.

Israel's Baptism, Signs and Law vs. Grace Today

Keith says in Israel's program belief plus water baptism equals salvation; that is not how God deals with us today in this dispensation of grace. The only baptism that pertains to this dispensation is one God performs, with no water: the baptism by the Spirit of God into the body of Christ. The commission in Matthew 28 is operating under the law, and the Gentiles are taught that they're under the law in it. In this dispensation of grace we are not under the law, but under grace — something Moses never could have said.

The Day of the Lord's Wrath vs. Wrath Held Back Today

Keith says that if Gentiles today were dealt with on the basis of these commissions, we would be in the day of the Lord's wrath; in this dispensation of grace God is holding back that day of His wrath and dealing with the Gentiles today in spite of Israel. This dispensation of Gentile grace is not the day of visitation of I Peter 2 or Psalm 59:5; that day of visitation is the time the Great Commission has in view for dealing with the Gentiles.

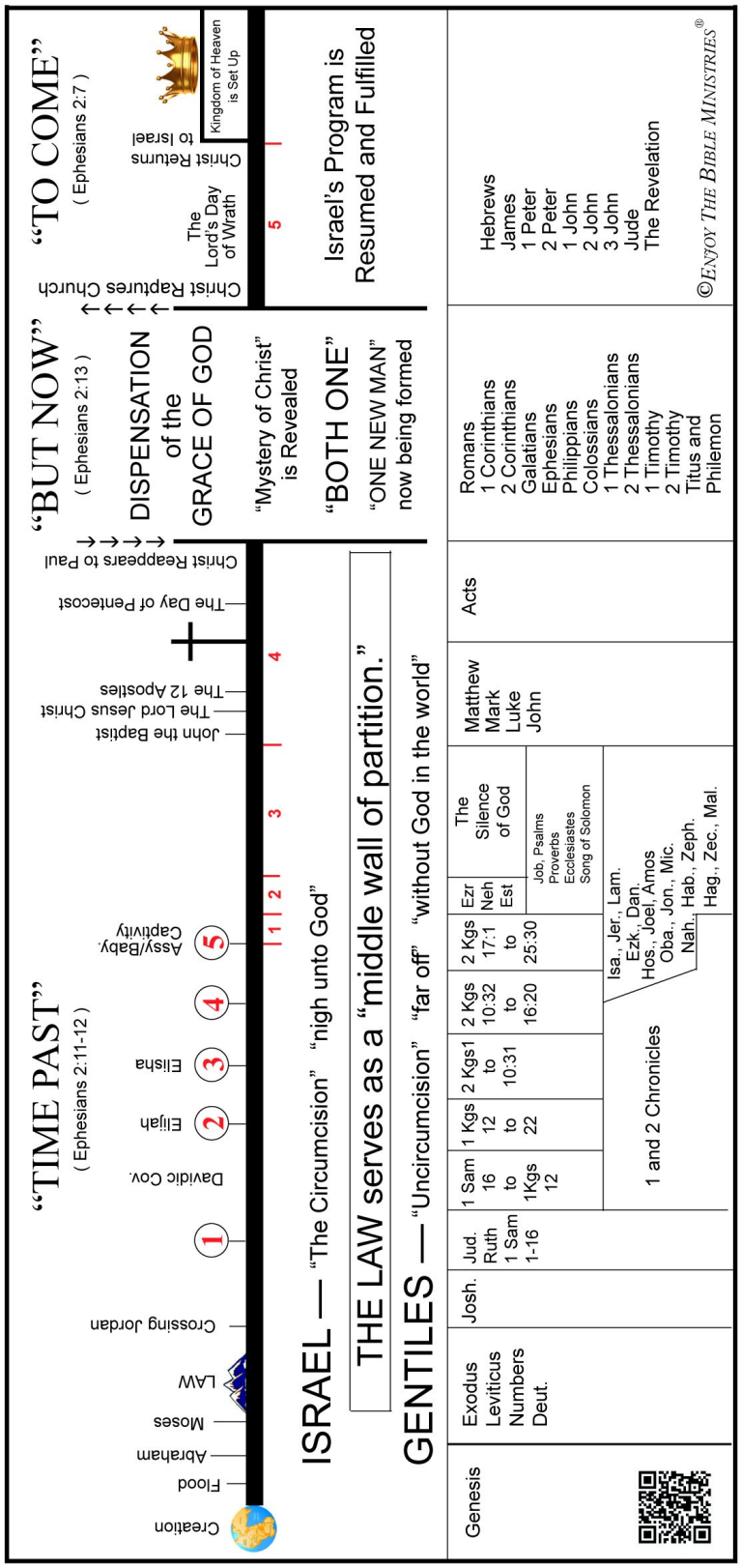
Our Twofold Ambassadorship

Keith says the commission to proclaim the word of reconciliation is only one half of our great commission. The first aspect has to do with affecting men with the word of reconciliation; the second has to do with affecting the principalities and powers in heavenly places with the mystery of the gospel. The second aspect is an equal issue in our ambassadorship with proclaiming the gospel of reconciliation to men, and ought to be as zealously pursued as witnessing to men.

Key Scripture References

Genesis 12:1–3	The Abrahamic covenant: Israel's program has the nations, the Gentiles, in view as its end result
Matthew 24:14	Tells when the commissions are fulfilled with respect to the Gentiles; the one sign of the end they have to be concerned with
Matthew 28:19–20	Gentiles taught submission to Israel's program; "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" includes the law
Mark 16:15–16	The gospel to every creature is still the gospel of the kingdom; belief plus water baptism, as in Israel's program
Mark 16:17–18	Signs in accordance with Israel's program; two of them show the day of the Lord's wrath is in view
Luke 24:47	"beginning at Jerusalem" — a matter of program, not practicality
Acts 1:8	Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria, then the uttermost part — a matter of program
Acts 9	The Lord raises up Paul as a brand-new apostle; the dispensation of grace brought in
II Corinthians 5:16–17	"henceforth know we no man after the flesh" — the great dispensational

	change; the new creature is the new creation God is forming
II Corinthians 5:18–19	The ministry of reconciliation; God reconciling the world — the base on which this dispensation of grace is brought in
II Corinthians 5:20–21	"we are ambassadors for Christ" — our ambassadorship, part one: the message to men
Ephesians 2:11–13	Time past and "But now": our Gentile status before God raised up Paul, and now
Ephesians 3:1–6	The mystery revealed to Paul; the Gentiles "fellowheirs, and of the same body"
Ephesians 3:9–11	"the manifold wisdom of God" made known to the principalities and powers — the second aspect of our ambassadorship
Ephesians 6:19–20	Paul "an ambassador in bonds" in connection with "the mystery of the gospel"
Revelation 7	The 144,000, and those with palms in their hands: the fulfillment of the Great Commissions in the day of the Lord's wrath


"TIME PAST"
(Ephesians 2:11-12)
"BUT NOW"
(Ephesians 2:13)
DISPENSATION of the GRACE OF GOD
"TO COME"
(Ephesians 2:7)
Creation
Flood
Abraham
Moses
LAW
Crossing Jordan
Davidic Cov.
Elijah
Elisha
Assy/Baby. Captivity
John the Baptist
The Lord Jesus Christ
The 12 Apostles
The Day of Pentecost
Christ Reappears to Paul
Christ Raptures Church
The Lord's Day of Wrath
Christ Returns to Israel
Kingdom of Heaven is Set Up
"Mystery of Christ" is Revealed
"BOTH ONE"
"ONE NEW MAN" now being formed
Israel's Program is Resumed and Fulfilled
ISRAEL — "The Circumcision" "nigh unto God"
THE LAW serves as a "middle wall of partition."
GENTILES — "Uncircumcision" "far off" "without God in the world"
Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deut.
Josh.
Jud.
Ruth
1 Sam 1-16
1 Sam 16 to 1Kgs 12
1 Kgs 12 to 22
2 Kgs1 to 10:31
2 Kgs 10:32 to 16:20
2 Kgs 17:1 to 25:30
1 and 2 Chronicles
Isa., Jer., Lam.
Ezk., Dan.
Hos., Joel, Amos
Oba., Jon., Mic.
Nah., Hab., Zeph.
Hag., Zec., Mal.
Ezr
Neh
Est
Job, Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Solomon
The Silence of God
Matthew
Mark
Luke
John
Acts
Romans
1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians
1 Timothy
2 Timothy
Titus and
Philemon
Hebrews
James
1 Peter
2 Peter
1 John
2 John
3 John
Jude
The Revelation
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