

PREFACE

There I was, sitting in the window seat on my first trans-Atlantic flight, from New York City to Tel-Aviv, with goose-bumps on my arms from the excitement in my heart. As we descended toward TLV airport, my head was pressed firmly against the window, wanting to get the absolute best view possible for my first look at what was the earthly homeland of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

As my vista went from the blue waters of the Mediterranean to the housetops of inland homes crammed together like sardines, I knew I was looking down upon modern-day Jaffa, called Joppa in biblical times. With that realization, my mind was bursting with elation, knowing that it was in Joppa where the apostle Peter had raised a woman named Tabitha from the dead. It was on a rooftop in Joppa where Peter had received the ecstatic visual and audible revelation from our heavenly Father that led to the first Gentiles being born-again of God's spirit.

You may be asking, "How did you know where you were as you flew over?" By God's grace, I had been honored to be the keynote teacher on a 2-week tour of the Bible lands with 49 saints who, like me, deeply desired to walk where Jesus walked. As part of my preparation for that responsibility, I had spent considerable time studying maps in my trusty Oxford Bible Atlas.

Almost all of the maps I studied illustrated the same geographical area (ancient Israel), but each one of them had a different theme — topography, climate regions, vegetation, annual rainfall averages, as well as territorial boundaries of Israel at different times, one while under the leadership of Joshua, and later under the rulership of kings, and lastly under the Romans during Christ's life. All depicted the exact same geographical area — but each gave a uniquely valuable view from a different thematic perspective.

I invite you to join me on a journey in the following chapters, with each chapter covering the exact same scope of the whole of Scripture, but from the perspective of 8 differing themes. These themes will intertwine, synergistically intersecting with one another in their historical and canonical travel from Genesis to Revelation. I've seen in my own life and in the lives of many whom I've taught over the years, if you "get" these big-picture themes, you will "GET" the Bible.

We will not be going in depth on any of the individual themes — that would take far more time and ink. These chapters will be more like a fly-over than a landing. Much like that view from my window seat while flying over Jaffa/Joppa, each of the 8 themes will give you a clear view from above on their respective topical focus. Furthermore, each will build your view of the big-picture context of the whole of Scripture. And when it comes to truly understanding any statement within a book or section of the Bible, big-picture context is king!

In the 1st section of this bible-reading tool (38 pages), we'll cover fundamental verses related to each of the 8 themes, leaving countless supporting verses for you to discover in your personal reading of the Scriptures. After that content, you'll find 10 pages of Genesis-to-Revelation graphical charts that will help you visualize the biblical scope of each theme. That is followed by 5 appendices that will guide you in implementing your systematic reading most effectively.

Then comes the meat of the book, the 2nd section, 151 pages covering the 66 books of the Bible. This content takes on the characteristics of a practical workbook, providing you with book summaries and what are called pericopes, i.e. topical recaps of smaller segments of each book. If you use these pericopes for pre-viewing and re-viewing each book as you read it, they stand to maximize your retention of the truths of that given book. With the 8 over-arching themes in mind from the 1st section, I'm hopeful you'll be inspired to faithfully read the entire Bible from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21 using this hands-on 2nd section, gaining far greater comprehension than you ever would otherwise, and leading to an eternally significant understanding of God's Word and will for your life.

My prayer is that in the coming months and years, you will apply what you learn in your faithful reading of the Bible, deepening your experiential knowledge of the Scriptures — not just mentally knowing the Word of God, but LIVING it dynamically day by day! Regardless of any personal prayer of mine, this is what I'm supremely confident of — if you will open your Bible, open your heart, and ask your heavenly Father to open your eyes of understanding, that is a prayer He will be thrilled to answer in a magnificent manner!

The eyes of your understanding being flooded with light; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power.

Ephesians 1:18-19