

CONTENTS

THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST

- THROUGHOUT PALESTINE Parts 1—8
IN JERUSALEM Parts 9—11
TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH Parts 12—16

CHAPTER	PAGE
1. Introduction	1
PART 1 THE SETTING OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY	
2. The History of Christ's People	7
3. The Scene of Christ's Labors	13
4. The People of Christ's Land	22
5. The Records of Christ's Ministry	32
PART 2 THE PREPARATION FOR CHRIST'S MINISTRY	
6. The Word Became Flesh <i>John</i> 1:1-18	43
7. I Will Send You Elijah <i>Luke</i> 1:5-25, 57-80	46
8. God Sent His Son, Born of a Woman <i>Luke</i> 1:26-56; 2:1-39	50
9. And the Child Grew <i>Matthew</i> 2:1-23; <i>Luke</i> 2:40-52	56
PART 3 THE INAUGURATION OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY	
10. A Voice Crying in the Wilderness <i>Luke</i> 3:1-20	61
11. My Beloved Son <i>Matthew</i> 3:13-17	66
12. Tempted by the Devil <i>Matthew</i> 4:1-11	69
13. The Lamb of God <i>John</i> 1:29-51; 3:22-36	73
14. The Beginnings of His Signs <i>John</i> 2	76
PART 4 THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY	
15. A Man of the Pharisees <i>John</i> 3:1-21	81
16. A Woman of Samaria <i>John</i> 4:1-42	85

17.	Fishers of Men	<i>Matthew</i> 4:12-25; <i>Luke</i> 5:1-11; 6:12-19	89
18.	And He Healed Many	<i>Mark</i> 1:21-2:12; <i>John</i> 4:46-5:18	92
19.	He Taught As One Having Authority	<i>Matthew</i> 5-7	95
20.	To Proclaim Liberty to the Captives	<i>Luke</i> 7:1-17; <i>Mark</i> 4:35-5:43	100

PART 5 THE OPPOSITION TO CHRIST'S MINISTRY

21.	Who Hath Believed Our Report?	<i>Luke</i> 4:16-30; <i>Matthew</i> 12:1-14	105
22.	His Brethren Did Not Believe	<i>Matthew</i> 11:2-19; <i>Mark</i> 3:20-21, 31-35; <i>John</i> 7:1-9	109
23.	A Greater Than Jonah	<i>Luke</i> 7:36-50; 11:14-36	113

PART 6 THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY

24.	Laborers into His Harvest	<i>Matthew</i> 9:35-11:1; <i>Luke</i> 10:1-20	117
25.	The Bread of Life	<i>John</i> 6	121
26.	The Leaven of the Pharisees	<i>Mark</i> 7:1-23; 8:11-21	124

PART 7 THE CRISIS OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY

27.	Thou Art the Christ	<i>Matthew</i> 16:13-28	127
28.	Eyewitnesses of His Majesty	<i>Luke</i> 9:28-36; <i>Mark</i> 9:14-32	131
29.	How Oft Shall I Forgive?	<i>Matthew</i> 17:22-18:35	133
30.	Rivers of Living Water	<i>John</i> 7:10-52	136
31.	The Light of the World	<i>John</i> 8:12-9:41	139
32.	The Good Shepherd	<i>John</i> 10	142
33.	Lazarus	<i>John</i> 11:1-53	145

PART 8 THE CHANGE IN CHRIST'S MINISTRY

34.	He Spake in Parables	<i>Matthew</i> 13:1-53; <i>Luke</i> 15	149
35.	To Inherit Eternal Life	<i>Luke</i> 18:1-34	153
36.	The Last Shall Be First	<i>Matthew</i> 19:23-20:28	156
37.	To Seek and To Save	<i>Luke</i> 18:35-19:27	159

PART 9 THE CLAIMS OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY

38.	They Made Him a Supper	<i>John 11:54-12:11</i>	163
39.	Thy King Cometh	<i>Matthew 21:1-27</i>	167
40.	If I Be Lifted Up	<i>John 12:20-50</i>	170
41.	The Stone Which the Builders Rejected	<i>Matthew 21:28-22:4</i>	173
42.	Trying Him	<i>Mark 12:13-44</i>	175
43.	Woe unto You	<i>Matthew 23</i>	179
44.	The Signs of His Coming	<i>Matthew 24:1-41</i>	182
45.	Be Ye Ready	<i>Matthew 24:42-25:46</i>	184

PART 10 THE CLIMAX OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY

46.	Judas	<i>Mark 14:1-11; Luke 22:1-6; John 13:21-30; 18:1-11; Matthew 27:3-10</i>	187
47.	In Remembrance of Me	<i>Mark 14:12-31; John 13:1-20</i>	191
48.	Peace I Leave with You	<i>John 14</i>	196
49.	Abide in Me	<i>John 15</i>	200
50.	I Have Overcome the World	<i>John 16</i>	203
51.	I Pray for Them	<i>John 17</i>	206
52.	Not My Will	<i>Matthew 26:36-56</i>	209
53.	The Council	<i>John 18:12-23; Mark 14:53-65; Luke 22:66-71</i>	212
54.	Peter	<i>Matthew 26:31-35, 69-75; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:10-18, 25-27</i>	215
55.	Pilate	<i>Luke 23:1-25; John 18:28-19:16</i>	218
56.	They Led Him Away	<i>Matthew 27:27-31; Luke 23:26-32</i>	221
57.	They Crucified Him	<i>John 19:18-27; Matthew 27:33-44; Luke 23:33-43</i>	224
58.	He Gave Up the Ghost	<i>Matthew 27:45-56; John 19:28-37; Luke 23:44-49</i>	228
59.	His Grave with the Rich	<i>John 19:38-42; Mark 15:42-47; Matthew 27:62-66</i>	233

PART 11 THE TRIUMPH OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY

60.	The Morning of the First Day	<i>Matthew 28:1-15; John 20:1-18</i>	237
-----	------------------------------	--------------------------------------	-----

61.	The Breaking of the Bread	<i>Luke 24:13-49</i>	242
62.	Thomas	<i>John 20:19-31</i>	246
63.	Feed My Lambs	<i>John 21</i>	249
64.	Ye Are My Witnesses	<i>Matthew 28:16-20; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:1-11</i>	253
65.	His Office Let Another Take	<i>Acts 1:12-26</i>	257
66.	Pentecost	<i>Acts 2:1-42</i>	260
67.	In the Name of Jesus Christ	<i>Acts 3</i>	264
68.	We Cannot But Speak	<i>Acts 4:1-31</i>	267
69.	Of One Heart and Soul	<i>Acts 2:43-47; 4:32-37</i>	270
70.	Ananias and Sapphira	<i>Acts 5:1-16</i>	273
71.	We Must Obey God	<i>Acts 5:17-42</i>	276
72.	Seven Men of Good Report	<i>Acts 6:1-7</i>	279
73.	Stephen	<i>Acts 6:8-8:1</i>	282

PART 12 THE TRANSITION IN CHRIST'S MINISTRY

74.	The Roman World		287
75.	They Were Scattered Abroad	<i>Acts 8:1-25</i>	292
76.	Of Whom Speaketh the Prophet?	<i>Acts 8:26-40</i>	295
77.	A Chosen Vessel	<i>Acts 9:1-31</i>	298
78.	Tabitha, Arise	<i>Acts 9:32-43</i>	302
79.	In the House of Cornelius	<i>Acts 10</i>	305
80.	To the Gentiles	<i>Acts 11:1-30</i>	309
81.	Delivered out of the Hand of Herod	<i>Acts 12:1-24</i>	312

PART 13 THE EXTENSION OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY

82.	Separate Me Barnabas and Saul	<i>Acts 12:25-13:12</i>	315
83.	We Turn to the Gentiles	<i>Acts 13:13-52</i>	319
84.	The Gods Are Come Down	<i>Acts 14</i>	322
85.	Faith Apart from Works Is Dead	<i>James</i>	326
86.	Justified by Faith	<i>Galatians</i>	330
87.	No Greater Burden	<i>Acts 15:1-35</i>	334

PART 14 THE EXPANSION OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY

88.	A Man of Macedonia	<i>Acts 15:36-16:15</i>	337
89.	Thou Shalt Be Saved	<i>Acts 16:16-40</i>	341

90.	To an Unknown God	<i>Acts 17:1-34</i>	344
91.	I Would Not Have You Ignorant	<i>I and II Thessalonians</i>	348
92.	Much People in This City	<i>Acts 18:1-28</i>	352
93.	Great Is Diana of the Ephesians	<i>Acts 19</i>	355
94.	To the Church of God at Corinth	<i>I and II Corinthians</i>	359
95.	The Power of God unto Salvation	<i>Romans</i>	365
96.	The Whole Counsel of God	<i>Acts 20</i>	370
PART 15 THE SUCCESS OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY			
97.	Ready To Be Bound	<i>Acts 21:1-36</i>	373
98.	Hear the Defense	<i>Acts 21:37-22:30</i>	377
99.	Be of Good Cheer	<i>Acts 23</i>	381
100.	When I Have a Convenient Season	<i>Acts 24</i>	384
101.	I Appeal to Caesar	<i>Acts 25-26</i>	387
102.	The Voyage	<i>Acts 27</i>	391
103.	Also in Rome	<i>Acts 28</i>	395
104.	I, the Prisoner in the Lord, Beseech You	<i>Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon</i>	398
PART 16 THE ENRICHMENT OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY			
105.	A Good Minister of Christ Jesus	<i>I and II Timothy, and Titus</i>	403
106.	Having a Great High Priest	<i>Hebrews</i>	407
107.	To Guard You from Stumbling	<i>I and II Peter, and Jude</i>	413
108.	Fellowship with Us	<i>I, II and III John</i>	418
109.	The Alpha and the Omega	<i>Revelation</i>	423
INDEX			429

SUGGESTED MEMORY PROGRAM

First Semester:

John 1:1-14
Titus 2:11-3:7
Psalm 46

Second Semester:

John 15:1-16
Romans 8, all or part (26-39)
I Thessalonians 4:13-5:11

Third Semester:

Ephesians 6:10-20
Philippians 2:1-11
Philippians 4:4-9
Colossians 3:1-17

PREFACE

The Ministry of Christ was written to help students in their early teens make a historical study of the life and teachings of Christ and His apostles. The book originally appeared as a series of three books and is still available in this form. *The Ministry of Christ Throughout Palestine* begins with the events leading to the birth of Christ and traces His ministry to the time of the Passion Week and the work of the apostles in Jerusalem to the time of Stephen's death. *The Ministry of Christ to the Ends of the Earth* portrays the work of Christ through His apostles.

The chapters are grouped into sixteen parts, each with a central theme. The lessons are introduced by study questions which are intended to guide the student in his reading. The chapters do not attempt to retell the Bible passages; rather, they seek to point out the significance of the passages and explain difficult parts in them. Two sets of questions are to help the students learn the facts presented in the chapter and Bible passage. Optional questions requiring research and reflection are listed under the heading "For Further Study."

We are indebted to the Rev. Francis Breisch for writing the manuscript; to the members of the Elementary Bible Committee; John Borst, Sidney Dykstra, Barney Peterson, John P. Vanden Bosch, and Nicholas Yff for planning the book with the author and evaluating the manuscript and to George Benes for making the maps. The maps on pages 16-17, 162, and 286 are adapted by permission from maps copyrighted 1954 by the American Bible Society. Sets of four outline maps of Paul's missionary journeys can be purchased from Christian Schools International.

It is the hope of the author and publisher that *The Ministry of Christ* will help the student make a direct and diligent study of the Bible. May this study delight him and strengthen his devotion to his Lord.

INTRODUCTION

Study Questions

1. How do we know that the New Testament is the Word of God?
2. What is the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament?
3. How does the New Testament picture Christ?
4. How should we study the New Testament?

We are about to study the New Testament together. The New Testament is a very important book. It has influenced the lives of millions of people and changed the course of our Western civilization. A book as important as the New Testament deserves our careful attention. We must be certain that we understand it. Therefore, before we begin to study the New Testament itself, we must learn some important truths about it.

The New Testament Is the Word of God

Of all the truths we can learn about the New Testament, the truth that the New Testament is the Word of God is basic and the most important. When we say that the New Testament is God's Word, we mean that it is God's revelation. Revelation comes from the word "reveal." In the New Testament God reveals Himself to us.

The New Testament was written by men who were inspired by God. The word "inspired" literally means breathed in. God inspired men by breathing into their minds the thoughts He wanted them to write, and by guiding them so that they expressed His thoughts in the way He wanted them to be expressed.

We dare to make such statements about the New Testament because the New Testament itself claims to be inspired. Jesus promised the apostles that after His departure from them He would send them the Holy Spirit who would "guide [them] into all the truth" (John 16:13). Paul explains what effect the coming of the Spirit had upon the apostles. "But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words" (I Cor. 2:12-13). Paul

claims that both the ideas he presents and the words he uses are given by the Spirit of God. And this applies to the other writers of the New Testament as well.

But how do we know that these claims of inspiration are true? There are many wonderful features about the Bible which ought to make us take its claims seriously. It gives all the glory to God, not to man. It shows us the only way of salvation. It has changed the lives of men and of nations. But the real reason why a Christian believes that the New Testament is the Word of God is "the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts" (Westminster Confession of Faith, chap. 1, sec. 5). God the Holy Spirit speaks to our hearts through the Scriptures. This assures us that the New Testament's claim to be the Word of God is true.

The New Testament Is Infallible

Since the New Testament is the inspired Word of God, it is infallible. That means that it is without error. There are no mistakes in the New Testament. It does not give us any false information about God. Nor does it make any mistakes when it talks about geography, history, or any other subject.

How can we be sure that there are no mistakes in the New Testament? We know that this is the case because it was inspired by God. God is the author of the New Testament, and God does not make any errors. Therefore we may be sure that the New Testament is infallible, simply because God is the author.

The fact that there are no mistakes in the New Testament does not mean that we have no problems in understanding it. Sometimes we are not sure how a passage should be interpreted. Sometimes we cannot understand how two passages which seem to disagree can both be true. Sometimes there is a question about the exact wording of the New Testament text. Christian scholars must constantly study the New Testament carefully and try to solve these problems. And they may approach this task with confidence because they know that the problems arise from the errors of men, not from errors in God's Word itself.

The New Testament Completes the Old Testament

The New Testament is the Word of God, but it is not the entire Word of God. In the Bible the New Testament follows the Old Testament. Together the two Testaments comprise the Word of God. They record the development of God's perfect plan for saving sinful men.

God devised His plan of redemption even before He created the heavens and the earth. He first revealed that plan to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden after the Fall. But He did not explain all the details of His plan; He told them only the most simple, basic facts.

God's first promise to save sinners was like a seed planted in the earth. It began to grow and develop. The Old Testament tells us about its growth. The New Testament pictures the full-grown plant of redemption.

Therefore, the New Testament completes the Old Testament. It is as if the Old Testament ends with the words, "To be continued." In the New Testament many Old Testament prophecies are fulfilled, many types become realities. The old saying is true:

"The New is in the Old concealed;
the Old is in the New revealed."

Christ Is the Center of the New Testament

The entire New Testament tells of Jesus Christ, the living Word of God, through whom God provided redemption. The Gospels tell of His earthly ministry. The Book of Acts portrays His ministry in His church through the Holy Spirit. The Epistles explain His ministry and repeat His teachings. The Book of Revelation tells of His complete victory over the forces of evil. The story of Jesus Christ is the center of the New Testament, and a study of the New Testament should bring us face to face with Him.

Christ Is the Servant of God

The Bible pictures the work of our Lord Jesus Christ in many ways. Jesus calls Himself the Bread of Life (John 6:35), the Good Shepherd (John 10:14), and the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). In the Heidelberg Catechism He is called "our chief Prophet and Teacher, . . . our only High Priest, . . . and our eternal King," and that is a true picture of the threefold work of Christ.

However, there is one idea which the Bible uses many times which includes all those we have mentioned. That is the idea of servant or minister. Both words refer to someone who does the work of another. The Bible pictures Jesus Christ as the servant of the Father.

Let us look at some of the statements in the Bible which show this. In the Old Testament there are several passages which speak of the Christ as a servant. The best known of these is Isaiah 53. It tells of the suffering and death of Christ, by which His people will be saved. In the introduction to that chapter (Isa. 52:13-15), God speaks of Christ as "my servant."

In the New Testament we find many statements which refer to Christ's work as that of a servant. Paul tells us that Christ took "the form of a servant" (Phil 2:7). Jesus said that He came, "not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (Mark 10:45). At another time He said, "I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38).

The ministry of Christ includes everything He did and continues to do as the servant of God. That is why we call this book *The Ministry of Christ*. That title emphasizes His life of service. It reminds us that He did not seek to please Himself, but His Heavenly Father. It reminds us that He was doing God's will when He provided perfect salvation for us, His people. Since Jesus is our Saviour, the study of His ministry should teach us that He has done everything necessary to make us children of God. Since Jesus is also our example, the study of His ministry should teach us how to give our lives in service for Him.

How to Study the New Testament

Before we begin our study of the New Testament, we ought to consider the manner in which we should study it. We may never forget that the Bible is the Word of God. Because the Bible is God's Word, our study of it must be marked by certain attitudes.

1. The Bible must be treated with respect. We must study it carefully and diligently, so that we understand it correctly.

2. No one can understand the Bible by himself. The Holy Spirit is the only one who can enable us to understand it. Therefore we should always begin our study of the Bible with a prayer to the Holy Spirit for guidance and wisdom.

3. The Bible is not a collection of the ideas of men of ancient times about God. It is the means by which God speaks to us now. Therefore, when we study it, we should always try to apply it to our lives.

Chapter Checkup

1. In what ways has God revealed Himself?
2. What is inspiration?
3. What does the Bible teach about its origin? II Tim. 3:16; II Peter 1:21; I Cor. 2:12-13.
4. What do we mean when we say that the Bible is infallible?
5. How can we be sure that the New Testament is infallible?

6. How is the New Testament related to the Old Testament?
7. What ideas does the Bible use to picture the work of Christ? Which idea includes all the others?
8. Give some verses from the Bible that prove that Christ came as a servant.
9. How should we study the New Testament?

For Further Study

1. If the Bible were wrong about some matters of history or geography, could we trust its teachings about salvation?
2. Can a man who does not believe in Jesus Christ understand the New Testament properly?
3. In what way was Christ a minister?

The Setting of Christ's Ministry

CHAPTER 2

THE HISTORY OF CHRIST'S PEOPLE

Study Questions

1. What empires had control of Palestine during the years between the Testaments?
2. What happened to the Jews during those years?

The New Testament and the Old Testament are closely related. The Old Testament provides the setting for the New Testament. However, the Old Testament closes in the fourth century B.C., and the New Testament begins four centuries later. Much can happen in four centuries, and many changes can take place. What occurred during the four hundred years between the Testaments?

God's Word is not completely silent about this period. In the Book of Daniel there are several prophecies which refer to the centuries between the exile of Judah and the coming of Christ. They teach us that God guided the affairs of nations and prepared for the coming of His Son. We shall study one of these prophecies.

A Prophetic Dream

In the second chapter of Daniel we learn of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. He dreamed that he saw a huge

statue. The head of the statue was of gold, its breast and arms were of silver, and its abdomen and thighs of brass. Its legs were of iron and its feet of iron mixed with clay. As he was watching this statue he saw that "a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon its feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them in pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken in pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, so that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (Dan. 2:34-35).

Daniel explained to Nebuchadnezzar what the dream meant. The head of gold represented the Babylonian Empire, ruled by Nebuchadnezzar. The rest of the statue represented three other empires which would follow Babylon. And the stone which destroyed the statue represented the Kingdom of God, which would be established during the fourth empire.

From the Book of Daniel and from secular history we learn that the vision of Nebuchadnezzar concerned the following empires:

Babylon (612—536 B.C.)	— The head of gold
Medo-Persia (536—333 B.C.)	— The breast and arms of silver
Greece (333—146 B.C.)	— The abdomen and thighs of brass
Rome (146 B.C.—400 A.D.)	— The legs of iron and feet of iron and clay
The Kingdom of Christ	— The stone cut without hands

The first four of these empires dominated the period from the exile of Judah to the coming of Christ. A brief survey of those empires and the Jews' relationships to them will help us understand the New Testament period.

The Head of Gold — Babylon

The Babylonian Empire began when the father of Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Assyrian Empire in 612 B.C. The Babylonians immediately began to enlarge their empire. In 606 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar first invaded Judah. At this time Daniel and other children of the nobles were taken as captives into Babylon. In 597 B.C. the Babylonians returned, and most of the upper and middle classes were carried away into exile. In 589 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar returned to put down a rebellion. He laid siege to Jerusalem for three years and finally captured it in 586 B.C. He destroyed the city and burned the beautiful temple which Solomon had built.

When Nebuchadnezzar carried Judah into captivity and destroyed

Jerusalem, God was using him to punish the sinful children of Israel. Before the children of Israel entered the land of Canaan, Moses had said to them, "If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, JEHOVAH THY GOD; . . . Jehovah will scatter thee among all peoples, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth" (Deut. 28:58, 64). The children of Israel had not obeyed the Lord. They had sinned again and again. God had sent prophets to warn them and call them to repentance, but they would not listen to the prophets. God had punished them to bring them to repentance, but still they would not repent. God had sent the northern kingdom of Israel into captivity because of its sinfulness, but even this warning did not lead Judah to repentance. Finally God's patience ended. The punishment which He had predicted through Moses He fulfilled through Nebuchadnezzar.

The Exile brought to an end the covenant nation which was established at Mount Sinai. No longer was Israel ruled by a king who was God's servant. No longer was there a temple where God dwelt and His people could worship Him.

The Jews continued to be the covenant people, however. Through them Jesus Christ was to come, and through Christ all the promises God had given the Jews were to be fulfilled. But this covenant people were never again to be formed as a nation whose government and worship were theocratic, that is, whose government and worship were directly from God. That part of God's redemptive plan was ended once and for all by the exile into Babylon.

The Breast and Arms of Silver — Medo-Persia

Daniel lived to see the end of the Babylonian Empire. On the night that Babylon fell, Daniel was called into the king's banquet hall. There he was asked to read the words which had been written on the wall by a mysterious hand. They were words of judgment from God. That night Belshazzar, king of Babylon, was killed, and the forces of Medo-Persia captured the city.

In 536 B.C., during the first year of his reign, Cyrus, the king of the Medes and the Persians, issued a decree that permitted the Jews to return to their own land. Not many were willing to go. However, about fifty thousand devout Jews, led by Zerubbabel, returned to Jerusalem. There they rebuilt the temple and renewed the worship of Jehovah.

The return to Jerusalem and rebuilding of the temple was not a restoration of the Jewish theocracy. The worship in the temple