

One Year Through the Bible

Week 41: October 6th through 12th

Daily Scripture Reading:

Sunday:	Ezra 9,10; Esther 1,2
Monday:	Psa. 10,45; Est. 3; 4:1-9
Tuesday:	Est. 4:10-17; 5-7
Wednesday:	Est. 8-10; Psa. 124
Thursday:	Neh. 1-3
Friday:	Psa. 147-149
Saturday:	Neh. 4-6

Bible Chapter Titles:

Ezra

- 9 Unholy (Mixes) Marriages; Ezra's Prayer
- 10 The Above Sin is Judged and Restitution Made

Esther

- 1 Queen Vashti Disobeys the King
- 2 Queen Esther the Jew
- 3 Mordecai and Haman
- 4 Planned Extermination of the Jewish Nation
- 5 "If I Perish, I Perish"
- 6 Haman Shamed
- 7 Haman Hanged
- 8 The Jews Delivered
- 9 The Feast of Purim (Celebrating Jewish Deliverance)
- 10 Mordecai, #2 in the Kingdom

Psalms

- 10 A Psalm Concerning the Wicked
- 45 Royal Wedding Psalm
- 124 LORD on our Side
- 147 Praise for God's Grace to Israel
- 148 Praise from all Creation
- 149 A New Song of Praise

Nehemiah

- 1 The Ruined Walls
- 2 Nehemiah Surveys the Ruins
- 3 The Builders Begin to Build
- 4-6 Opposition in the Rebuilding

Thoughts & Notes on Chapter Nine

1. The leaders of Israel approached Ezra the Bible teacher with a serious Biblical issue (Ezr. 9:1-4).
 - a. The returnees had been inter-marrying with the idolatrous gentiles in the land of Canaan (Ezr. 9:1b,2).
 - b. This was strictly prohibited under Mosaic Law (Deut. 7:1-4).
2. Ezra sat down appalled, and explained the Law to the returned exiles (Ezr. 9:3,4).

3. Ezra enters into an intercessory prayer ministry on behalf of his sinful nation (Ezr. 9:5-15).
 - a. Ezra practiced "intercessory confession."
 - b. Ezra praised the LORD for the grace He extended in preserving a remnant through the captivity.
 - c. Ezra praised the LORD for the grace He extended in returning a remnant to rebuild His temple.
 - d. Ezra is left to wonder what the LORD's judgment will be upon the returnees who continue to defy His Word.

Thoughts & Notes on Chapter Ten

1. Ezra's prayer ministry towards God prompted a repentance among the guilty parties involved (Ezr. 10:1ff.).
2. Shecaniah represents the people, and encourages Ezra to take the leadership in this national revival (Ezr. 10:2-4).
 - a. The LORD lifts up His servants for His purposes.
 - b. Humble believers will recognize God's calling of others, and appreciate the Godly leadership that is exercised.
 - c. This national revival was not led by a prophet, priest, or king, but by the greatest recognized Bible teacher of that generation.¹
3. Ezra secured the cooperation of the Levitical priesthood, and fasted before the LORD for the three days it took for Israel to be assembled (Ezr. 10:5-8).
4. Ezra bluntly taught Israel's guilt and the need for confession & separation from the paganism of their mixed marriages (Ezr. 10:9-12).
5. The people understood the seriousness of their evil, and accepted the consequences of their actions (Ezr. 10:13-17).
 - a. Rather than the fervor of mob action, the people determined to handle the issue city by city under the delegated authority of the elders and judges.
 - b. Each marriage was "investigated" before a divorce was decreed.

¹ Ezra was, in fact, a priest (Ezr. 7:1-5), but his family did not return from Persia with the High Priest Joshua to participate in the priestly function of the second temple. Ezra's ministry was as a Bible teacher.

Esther
 Ἑσθήρ
 אֶסְתֵּר

Esther is the Book of Divine Providence. “Coincidence” after “coincidence” occurs within the Book that nowhere mentions God, the Law, the priesthood, offerings, or even prayer.

Hadassah is an orphan Jewish girl, raised by her uncle in the Persian capital of Susa. In keeping with her Persian name (Esther=star), she shines forth with a faithfulness that is remembered to this day in the Jewish festival of Purim.

Focus	Threat to the Jews		Triumph of the Jews	
	1:1	4:17	5:1	10:3
Divisions	Selection of Esther as Queen 1:1	Formulation of the Plot by Haman 2:20 2:21 4:17	Triumph of Mordecai over Haman 5:1 8:3 8:4	Triumph of Israel over Her Enemies 10:3
Topics	Feasts of Ahasuerus		Feasts of Esther and Purim	
	Grave Danger		Great Deliverance	
Place	Persia			
Time	10 Years (483-473BC)			

Title: The Hebrew, Greek, & English titles for the Book are all named after the “star” of the tale.

Author: The author is unknown. Traditions of Ezra or Nehemiah authorship cannot be verified. Traditions of Mordecai’s authorship are inconsistent with the epilogue of the Book (Est. 10:1-3).

Thoughts & Notes on Chapter One

1. The drama of Esther begins with the Persian King Ahasuerus and his self-manifested glory (Est. 1:1-9).
 - a. Ahasuerus is better known by his Greek name: Xerxes (486-465BC).
 - b. Xerxes’ assembly of princes in the 3rd year of his reign is attested in secular history (Herodotus vii.8).
 - c. The geographic description of 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia is likewise confirmed by secular history.
2. Queen Vashti’s refusal to be displayed before the Persian princes is not explained in this passage (Est. 1:10-12). If we correctly identify her with the historical Queen Amestris, then at this time she is pregnant with Artaxerxes.
3. Ahasuerus’ advisors warned him about a pending rebellion by Persian noblewomen everywhere if Vashti is not punished (Est. 1:13-22).

Thoughts & Notes on Chapter Two

1. Ahasuerus’ advisors recommend a New Queen Audition Contest (Est. 2:1-4).
2. The beautiful virgin selected from Susa to compete in the NQAC was an orphaned Jewish girl named Hadassah (Est. 2:5-11).
 - a. She had been raised by her uncle Mordecai after her parents death.
 - b. She has hidden her racial background all her life, taking the Persian name “Esther.”
 - c. Mordecai was a Benjamite and apparently a eunuch in the Persian court.
 - d. Esther found favor in the eyes of the chief Eunuch in charge of virgins—Hegai.
3. Esther’s audition goes very well, and Ahasuerus gives her the Queen’s crown (Est. 3:12-20).
4. Mordecai discovers a plot against Ahasuerus, and through Esther saves the King’s life (Est. 2:21-23).

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Thoughts & Notes on Psalm 10

1. Believers under testing feel like the LORD has abandoned them, and the wicked are getting away with their plots (Ps. 10:1,2; cf. 9:15,16).
2. The attitude of the unbeliever is described (Ps. 10:3,4), as are his activities (Ps. 10:5-11).
3. The Psalmist calls upon the LORD to be faithful towards the humble (Ps. 10:12-15).
4. The LORD's absolute Sovereignty reigns over all the nations of the earth, and yet His absolute Love ministers to each individual on the earth (Ps. 10:16-18).

Thoughts & Notes on Psalm 45

1. Psalm 45 is a song of praise to the glorious King (Ps. 45:1,2).
2. The King is a mighty conqueror, and yet one who champions truth, meekness, and righteousness (Ps. 45:3-5).
3. The King is God Himself, Whose God has anointed Him (Ps. 45:6,7; Heb. 1:8,9).
4. The God-King has a Bride prepared for Him (Ps. 45:8-15).
5. The people of the King will no longer be oriented to their fathers—they will be oriented to their sons, the heirs of the King (Ps. 45:16,17).

Thoughts & Notes on Esther Chapter Three

1. Rather than reward Mordecai for his service (Est. 2:21-23; 6:1-3), Ahasuerus promoted Haman to a position of authority second only to his own (Est. 3:1,2a).
2. Mordecai's daily refusal to pay homage became a source of anger to Haman (Est. 3:2b-5).
3. Haman's rage motivated him to murder not only Mordecai, but his entire race (Est. 3:6).
4. Haman followed the Persian soothsaying practice of throwing the Pur (stone) in order to determine fortunate timing for a planned event (Est. 3:7).
 - a. In the Sovereignty of God, the casting of lots provided for nearly an entire year of warning to the Jews of the coming genocide.
 - b. The King's edict cannot be changed (Est. 1:19; Dan. 6:8).

Thoughts & Notes on Chapter Four

1. In response to Haman's edict, Mordecai undertook a public ministry of humble repentance (Est. 4:1,2). Mordecai's response was typical of the mourning of Jews throughout the Persian empire (Est. 4:3).
2. Hathach the Queen's Eunuch became the go-between for Esther and Mordecai (Est. 4:5ff.).
3. Esther offers clothing (and likely sanctuary) to Mordecai (Est. 4:4), but he refuses, and orders Esther to plead their case before the King (Est. 4:8).
4. Esther fears the danger of approaching the King uninvited (Est. 4:11), but Mordecai advises her that she is in danger regardless (Est. 4:13,14).
 - a. She is in danger of Haman's decree.
 - b. She is in danger of refusing her work-assignment of deliverance.
 - c. Although God is not mentioned here by name it is clear that Mordecai views Esther's royal office as the LORD's provision for this very moment.
5. Esther accepts Mordecai's rebuke, and asks for a national three day prayer meeting and fast before she approaches the King (Est. 4:15-17).

Thoughts & Notes on Chapter Five

1. Esther walked by faith and was received in grace (Est. 5:1-4).
 - a. She is offered to name anything her heart desires (v.3).
 - b. She invites Ahasuerus & Haman to a prepared banquet (v.4).
2. At Esther's banquet, Ahasuerus again offers Esther to request anything of him (Est. 5:5,6). Esther asks the King to return with Haman for a second banquet the next day, at which time she will voice her request (Est. 5:7,8).
3. Haman's proud heart was angered by the sight of Mordecai, and he decides to not wait until the decreed execution date (Est. 5:9-14).

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Thoughts & Notes on Chapter Six

1. The LORD prevented Ahasuerus from sleeping, and sovereignly determined the reading material the King would “just happen” to read (Est. 6:1,2).
2. When Ahasuerus realized that Mordecai was unrewarded for his service, he determines to reward him (Est. 6:3).
3. The Divine humor of God (Psa. 2:4) sovereignly determined for Haman to become the planner of Mordecai’s exaltation (Est. 6:4-9).
4. Haman was forced to honor Mordecai in an ironic twist that left him humiliated (Est. 6:10-14).

Thoughts & Notes on Chapter Seven

1. At Esther’s second banquet, she makes her request of the King—save her and her people from wicked Haman’s great evil (Est. 7:1-6).
2. Ahasuerus stormed into the garden in his anger perhaps considering how to undo Haman’s edict (Est. 7:7).
3. Ahasuerus returns and observes Haman’s prostration before the Queen; and orders Haman’s execution (Est. 7:8-10).

Thoughts & Notes on Chapter Eight

1. Mordecai was exalted to Haman’s office, and given the house of Haman for a possession (Est. 8:1,2).
2. Esther made a second faith approach to the King, and begged for a revocation of Haman’s edict (Est. 8:3-6).
3. Ahasuerus permits Mordecai to write any edict he desires in the King’s name (Est. 8:7,8).
4. Mordecai cannot undo Haman’s edict, so he issues an edict arming the Jews and permitting them to defend themselves against the pending massacre (Est. 8:9-14).
5. Mordecai’s salt & light in Persia blessed both Jews and Gentiles (Est. 8:15-17).

Thoughts & Notes on Chapter Nine

1. When the execution day arrived, as determined by the Pur, the Jews defended themselves spectacularly (Est. 9:1-10).
 - a. The Jews killed their enemies.
 - b. The Jews did not plunder their enemies.
2. The Jews needed a second day of battle to finish destroying the agents of Haman in Susa (Est. 9:11-19).
 - a. The 14th of Adar became a Jewish holiday outside of Susa.
 - b. The 15th of Adar became a Jewish holiday in Susa.
3. The death 75,800 throughout Persia seems high at first until the total populations are taken into account. The Jews numbered approximately 3,000,000 (3%) of a total Persian population of 100,000,000.
4. These two days were established by Mordecai and Esther as the Feast of Purim (Est. 9:20-32).

Thoughts & Notes on Chapter Ten

1. The epilogue to the Book of Esther highlights the glory of Ahasuerus and the greater glory of Mordecai as recorded in the chronicles of the Medes & Persians (Est. 10:1-3).
2. Mordecai is attested in secular history:
 - a. An undated cuneiform document found at Borsippa (near Babylon), mentions a Mardukâ who was a high official at Susa in the court of Xerxes I; his title, *šipûr*, indicates he was an influential counselor.
 - b. Ctesias (xiii. 51) writes about Matakas who “was the most influential of the eunuchs.”²

Thoughts & Notes on Psalm 124

1. Psalm 124 is a psalm of ascent, sung by pilgrims as they made their way to Jerusalem for the required feasts (Ps. 120-134).
2. Psalm 124 is David’s praise for the LORD’s deliverance of His people from the world’s snares.

²*The Wycliffe Bible encyclopedia*. 1975 (C. F. Pfeiffer, H. F. Vos & J. Rea, Ed.). Chicago: Moody Press.

Nehemiah

Ἔσδρας Β

נְחֵמְיָהוּ

Nehemiah is the Book of Wall-building. More than simply Ezra, Part-2, Nehemiah should stand on its own as a picture of how a believer’s spiritual life and temporal life go hand in hand.

The picture of the wall-builders with a hammer in one hand and a sword in the other should be an example for Church Age believers to follow.

Focus	Reconstruction of the Wall		Restoration of the People	
	1:1	7:73	8:1	13:31
Divisions	Preparation to Reconstruct the Wall 1:1	Reconstruction of the Wall 2:20 3:1 7:73	Renewal of the Covenant 8:1	Obedience to the Covenant 10:39 11:1 13:31
Topics	Political		Spiritual	
	Construction		Instruction	
Place	Jerusalem			
Time	19 Years (444-425BC)			

Title: The Hebrew & English titles for the Book are taken from the main character introduced in the opening verse: Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah. The Greek title in the Septuagint “Esdras B” reflects the Septuagint’s combining Ezra & Nehemiah into a single work.

Author: Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah is introduced as the author in Neh. 1:1. He was likely a Jew from the Tribe of Judah (Neh. 1:2). A trusted servant of King Artaxerxes, Nehemiah served as a Persian governor over the province of Judah and is responsible for the reconstruction of Jerusalem’s city walls.

Thoughts & Notes on Chapter One

1. The Book begins in Chislew (Nov./Dec.) of Artaxerxes’ 20th year (444BC). It has been nearly 14 years since Ezra led over 4,000 Jews back to Jerusalem.
2. In Nehemiah’s way of thinking, those who returned to Jerusalem from Persia “escaped” and “survived” the captivity (Neh. 1:2,3).
 - a. This is the spiritual escape from the devil who keeps believers from pursuing the will of God (2nd Tim. 2:25,26).
 - b. This is the spiritual escape from the corruption and defilement of the world system (2nd Pet. 1:4; 2:20).
3. Nehemiah is informed that the Jews in Jerusalem are being afflicted and unable to successfully build city walls for their own self-defense (Neh. 1:3; Ezr. 4:12).
4. The struggles of his people motivated Nehemiah to engage in a fervent effective intercessory prayer ministry (Neh. 1:4-11).
 - a. He calls upon the LORD to hear His prayer.
 - b. He confesses the sins of his people.
 - c. He calls upon the LORD to be faithful to His promises.
 - d. He calls upon the LORD to provide grace in his upcoming petition before King Artaxerxes.

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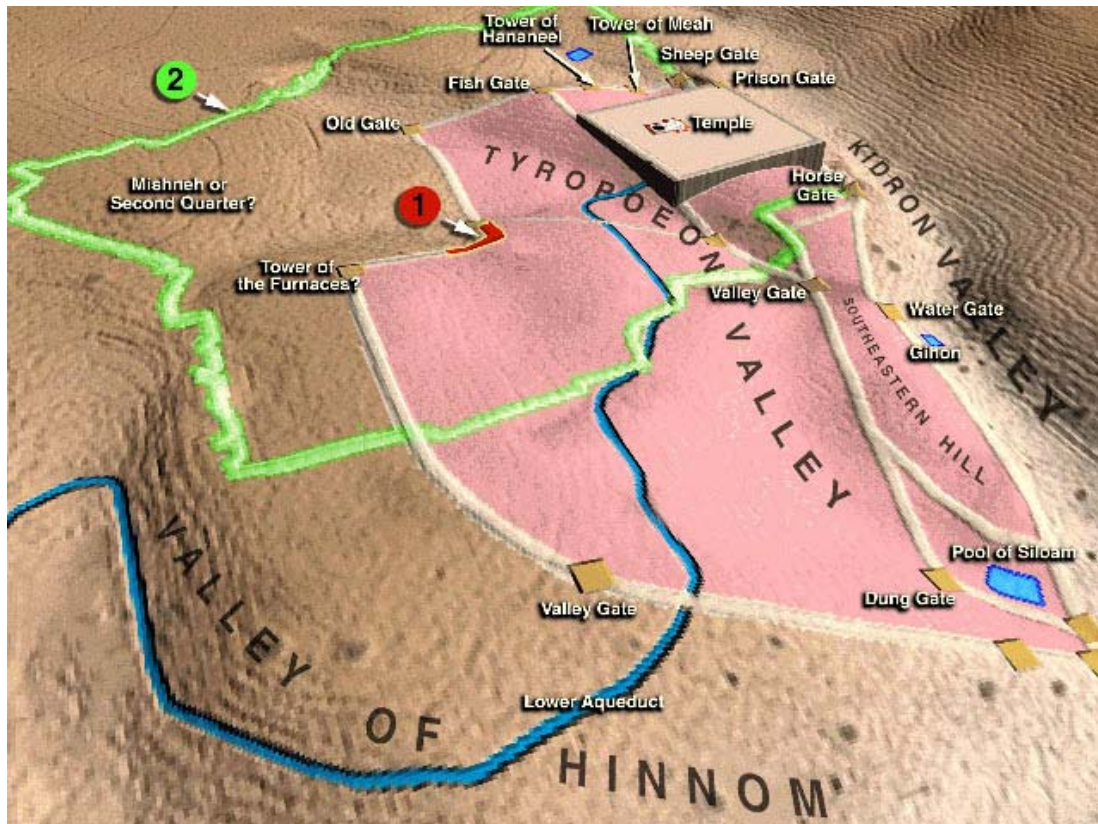
Thoughts & Notes on Chapter Two

1. Nehemiah was the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes (Neh. 1:11b). מַשְׁקֵהּ mashqeh #4945: *butler, cupbearer* (cf. Gen. 40:1ff.).
2. Artaxerxes has the capacity to recognize Nehemiah's spiritual heaviness of heart (Neh. 2:1,2).
3. Nehemiah explains his spiritual burden for Jerusalem, and realizes that the LORD has answered his prayers (Neh. 2:3,4).
4. Nehemiah requests the king's permission to head up a wall-building project in Jerusalem (Neh. 2:5). After determining the length of time until Nehemiah's return, Artaxerxes gives permission (Neh. 2:6) and issues a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem (Neh. 2:7,8).
5. Nehemiah encounters opposition by the local Persian officials, but presses forward anyway (Neh. 2:9,10).
 - a. Sanballat the Horonite.
 - b. Tobiah the Ammonite servant.
 - c. Geshem the Arab.

6. He conducts three days of nightly inspections (Neh. 2:11-16), and then encourages the Jews of Jerusalem to build their walls (Neh. 2:17-20).

Thoughts & Notes on Chapter Three

1. The building of the walls and gates of Jerusalem was a group effort. Many people came together and were responsible for their specific portion in the overall work.
2. Eliashib the high priest (Neh. 3:1) was the grandson of Joshua (Neh. 12:10).
3. Meremoth (Neh. 3:4,21) was the priest who received the temple treasures (Ezr. 8:33).
4. Meshullam (Neh. 3:4) spoke against Ezra's divorce teaching (Ezr. 10:15), and gave his daughter in marriage to Tobiah the Ammonite's son Jehohanan (Neh. 6:18).
5. The walls were completed, and gates were built, but not yet hung until the final stage of construction (Neh. 6:1).
6. Particular residences are also built up within and adjacent to particular sections of wall (Neh. 3:20,21,23,24,28,29,30,31).



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Thoughts & Notes on Psalm 147

1. Psalm 147 is a Hallelujah psalm (Ps. 104-106; 111-113; 115-117; 135; 146-150). הַלְלוּ יְהוָה.
2. The LORD is worthy of praise, and praise is fitting for believers to accomplish (Ps. 147:1-3).
3. The LORD's omniscience & omnipotence is a source for encouragement to those who call upon His name (Ps. 147:4-6).
4. The majestic God of creation is worthy of praise by virtue of His grace towards His undeserving creatures (Ps. 147:7-11).
5. The grace of God has provided a strong defense for Jerusalem, and has established Israel as the unique nation of blessing upon the earth (Ps. 147:12-20).

Thoughts & Notes on Psalm 148

1. Psalm 148 is a Hallelujah psalm (Ps. 104-106; 111-113; 115-117; 135; 146-150). הַלְלוּ יְהוָה.
2. The LORD is worthy of praise in the heavens (Ps. 148:1-6).
3. The LORD is worthy of praise on the earth (Ps. 148:7-12).
4. His name is the only name worthy of exaltation, and Israel is the only people brought near to Him (Ps. 148:13,14).

Thoughts & Notes on Psalm 149

1. Psalm 149 is a Hallelujah psalm (Ps. 104-106; 111-113; 115-117; 135; 146-150). הַלְלוּ יְהוָה.
2. Israel's Millennial blessings produce unparalleled rejoicing—a new song being sung in the congregation of “the godly ones” (Ps. 149:1-4).
3. The godly ones (resurrected/glorified believers) are the judicial enforcers bearing the LORD's sword (Ps. 149:5-8; Rev. 1:16; 19:15).

Thoughts & Notes on Nehemiah Chapter Four

1. The building project came under the ridicule of Sanballat (Governor of Samaria) and Tobiah (Governor of Ammon) (Neh. 4:1-3).
2. Nehemiah responded to this reproach by leading a prayer meeting (Neh. 4:4-6; cf. 1st Pet. 2:23).
3. Sanballat, Tobiah & the others intended to intensify their opposition, and sponsor terrorism to stop the wall-building (Neh. 4:7,8).
4. Nehemiah responded to the terrorism threat by leading another prayer meeting, and setting round-the-clock guards (Neh. 4:9).
5. The terror nearly succeeded until Nehemiah's leadership encouraged the men to fight for their families (Neh. 4:10-14).
6. The imagery of this building project is totally appropriate for Church Age believers to make application: building up with one hand and holding a weapon in the other hand (Neh. 4:15-23; Eph. 4:12; 6:17).

Thoughts & Notes on Chapter Five

1. The Jews building the Jerusalem walls neglected their own farms, and came into serious debt in their service to the LORD (Neh. 5:1-5).
2. Nehemiah became very angry over the profiteering that fellow Jews were engaged in at the expense of their brethren, and preached a message of rebuke against them (Neh. 5:6-13; Ex. 22:25-27).
3. Nehemiah made certain that his personal life was conducted in accordance with his public message (Neh. 5:14-19).

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Thoughts & Notes on Chapter Six

1. With the wall complete, and the gates nearly mounted, Nehemiah's enemies plot his assassination (Neh. 6:1,2).
2. Nehemiah resists four enticements and a threat of slanderous blackmail (Neh. 6:3-9). Nehemiah maintained a diligent prayer life and was blessed by wisdom in these dealings.
3. Tobiah & Sanballat hired a friend of Nehemiah to betray him, but Nehemiah's diligent prayer life allowed him to see through their plot (Neh. 6:10-14).
4. The completion of the wall in only 52 days was a Divine miracle that produced fear in the heart of the LORD's enemies (Neh. 6:15,16).
5. Tobiah's family alliances with Shecaniah the son of Arah, Meshullam the son of Berekiah (Neh. 3:4,30), and Eliashib the high priest (Neh. 13:4) gave him a political edge in his hostility against Nehemiah (Neh. 6:17-19).

Note:

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Sources:

The Bible reading schedule is from a long-forgotten, and uncertain source.

Chapter Titles are from The Categorical Notebook, Vol. 3 / Ralph G. Braun—Brookings, OR: Berean Fundamental Church, 1974.

Book Charts are from Talk thru the Bible [computer file] / Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa.—electronic ed.—Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1983.

Scripture Citations come from the New American Standard Bible : 1995 update [computer file] / The Lockman Foundation.—LaHabra, CA : The Lockman Foundation, c 1995.

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