

Session 1 Harmony of the Gospels

INTRODUCTION

There are six questions you'll go through in the first hour. Every one of you needs to be prepared without exception.

Number one: what did you get out of the Word in the week? Every one of you in your small group needs to be ready with an answer. What did you get out of the Word? After you've gone around the circle, what did you get out of your devotion time?

The second question you'll answer is this: what was the major point you received for your own life or for someone else? What was the major point that you got from the Thursday night session? That's the third question your small group leader will ask: what is the major point you got for yourself or to give to someone else from the Sunday morning lesson?

So there are three questions right there that you have to go all around the circle and answer. Come specifically with that in your mind. Come prepared with it, because you'll be asked point-blank.

The fourth question you'll be asked, if you have time, is this: what is the greatest pressure you had in the week? Have that ready to answer. Really, don't come here unprepared. Have that thing ready.

Number five: what is the greatest victory you had in the week? The greatest breakthrough? That can be either a testimony or a personal breakthrough, like you witnessed for someone, or you prayed and your sister got saved.

Number six: what is your prayer request, your number one burden to pray for during the week?

There's no way you'll get through all of those. Those six questions will keep you moving. You'll never do it in an hour. Everyone have those.

We're going to spend another week on the session I shared last week. There's so much material in Luke 1-4 that if I gave that to you, you would never have that and this week prepared in your mind by next week. Most of you don't have last week's ready, do you? Some of you do, some of you don't. The purpose of the Bible college isn't to finish a curriculum; the purpose is to teach you principles so that you'll know the Bible. If we have to go slower, we have to go slower. The purpose is to teach, not to finish a course. What I want to do right now is open. It won't always work this way.

Are there questions over this thing? First, does everyone have everything? Did you get it on Thursday night?

FROM GALILEE TO JERUSALEM TO GALILEE

OK, everyone look at the chronological overview—the big one. Look at part four of Jesus' ministry. Someone tell me without looking, what is part four? Galilee; that's it. How many months? That's it. There are certain repercussions for missing it if you're my wife. Now, part one under part four. Section one, part four. Ministry in Galilee. Section two says *Jerusalem*, right? Section three says *Galilee* again. Session four crosses the sea.

Session five: back to Galilee. In the brief overview, all I put is the sections; I don't put any of the details, so you can see them in a glance. Because there are many, many things to be gleaned by seeing them at a glance.

He went from Galilee to Jerusalem to Galilee, across the sea, and then back to Galilee. That was His first trip for nineteen months.

Are you all following me? Jesus' Ministry in Galilee. Number forty-six to sixty-four: those correlate to that section in the fourteen page. Those are the steps. Everything correlates to the big one; it's all uniform. Section two: it says Jerusalem sixty-five to sixty eight. That tells you those steps are also in the big one. Step sixty-five, sixty-six, sixty-seven.

Does everyone understand what I said? OK, now listen: part four, section one, ministry in Galilee. Everyone have that? I have here every single detail recorded that He did in Galilee in chronological order. Everything He did in Galilee you have at a glance. If you want all the verses for it, then turn to your big fourteen-page outline, if all you want to do is see what He did in Galilee. He had popularity throughout the synagogues. The next thing that's recorded in His life is when the official's son was healed. Then He's rejected, and then settles in Capernaum. It gives you the chronological order of everything He did while in Galilee. The reason I condensed it all in one page is because it might be hard to glean any insight if you had to go through all fourteen pages working that stuff out. I put it so you can see it in one inch.

There are other insights to be gleaned where all those details kind of fog your mind. Normally what I did is put one little highlight of the trip. For example, turn to the brief overview. Part four: Jesus' ministry moves to Galilee. All I have there is "Ministry in Galilee." I don't give any of the details, though I highlight one or two things. He settled in Capernaum and called the four. That's the highlight of that trip.

If you want to know every detail, go to the big overview. If you want to know every verse, then go to the fourteen-page thing. Basically, you have three different things that are condensing the information smaller every time. Does everyone understand that?

Yes, question. Very observant. We have two part sixes. We forgot to change the typing. It goes part one, two, three, four, five, six, six, seven. There are eight parts, really simply. Just figure it out, OK? There you go. We have two part sixes. You're all educated and in college now, but it is a good point; I'm glad we brought that out.

QUESTION TIME

Let's do this now. Are there any questions over this whole session? We're going to spend twenty minutes answering questions. I want you to ask clear, precise questions—any questions over anything that deals with this. There's no sense going forward if you don't understand this stuff. Stand up and ask your question clearly.

QUESTION:

Did the synagogue begin during the exile or after the exile?

ANSWER:

One statement says *during* with capital letters and the others say *after*. The answer is during the exile. When was the exile? Tell me. 536 B.C. That's when they were released. When did they go into Babylon? How long were they in Babylon? Fifty years, right. During that fifty-year time from 586-536, they began to gather

together in what we call home meetings. They began to study some of the Scriptures and say, “Wait a second, things are not right here.” They began to really covenant themselves, and they vowed that when they returned from exile they would begin to follow God’s law. That was the beginning of the synagogues, those little home groups. Does that make sense?

Yes, during it. They didn’t properly start synagogues until 150 B.C. When does the church become a church? When it has twenty as a small group or when it gets bigger? It’s still a church when it’s smaller.

The Hasmonian priesthood is kind of important in some ways, but not in other ways. Hasmon was the name of Judas Maccabeus’s grandfather. How many of you remember who Judas Maccabeus was? He was “the Hammer,” the warrior. His father was Mattathias. His father was Hasmon. They began to have a priest who was the king or the head ruler politically and was also the high priest. The political headship and the spiritual headship merged into one person in the Maccabean family. They decided to name that whole priesthood that had the governmental authority *Hasmonians* because of the grandfather. This priest had both political and spiritual authority.

When the Herods came in, they did away with that. They just made the priest the high priest. They made him the spiritual head and gave the political head to the Herods then.

The Hasmonian priests were canned after Herod came in. Did everyone understand that?

ANSWER:

When I looked at the notes, it wasn’t just one clear principle, you’re right.

If there was one clear principle, it’s that they didn’t have to write things down in the way we want them to. They had the freedom to omit things, to duplicate things. Jesus could mention the same thing twice in one sermon. The contradictions only come if you have very strict literary rules, and you feel it has to be in sequence, every detail included, and Jesus can never repeat Himself.

It’s the style of writing it down. All the contradictions are summed up basically in that one point there. They had the liberty to omit, add, and duplicate if they wanted to. That was the principle. That solves almost every contradiction right there.

One reason I wanted to educate you on these isn’t just for your Bible reading, but many of you will become people who will read books outside of your Bible. The reason you need to know some of these concepts is because when you read about the Hasmonian priests, Judah, and Galilee, if you know these things, these books will be very valuable to you. I find a lot of books are beyond a lot of Christians because they don’t know about fifty concepts. That’s why I’m teaching you these things.

Here’s one point. Many times one group called it this and one group called it that. When you have historians writing, some refer to this and others refer to that. Many times Judah was Galilee, Samaria, and Judea in the New Testament mind. Many times Judah meant the one-third of that area—just Judah, and not Samaria or Galilee. When you’re reading that, you have to figure that out yourselves. In the Gospels, it always means just Judea. In Acts they may say he’s the ruler over Judea, and that means the whole thing.

ANSWER:

A: It can mean just Judea itself. Then I called it *Samaria*. I don't understand. It would be kind of hard to say this. If you were looking at a ruler over a major, predominant area, and he had two dinky areas that weren't very significant, if you referred to the leader, you would refer to his dominant rule. A lot of times they would say Pontius Pilate was over Judea. He had a few other areas, but Judea was the thing people were interested in. It doesn't necessarily mean just Judea.

ANSWER:

A: The temple didn't get finished until 515 B.C. Twenty-one years later, before the temple was finished; but they did begin sacrifices, yes.

I'll give you a very, very brief overview of the whole picture. Just draw a big line on a sheet of paper. You'll date it from 6,000 and then you'll include 2000 B.C., 1000 B.C., and then zero. Put 4000 B.C. on one end of the line and zero on the other line. That's when Jesus was born—4 B.C.; just call it zero. 4000 B.C. is Adam; 2000 B.C. is who? Abraham. 1,000 B.C. is David. 400 B.C. is when Malachi wrote the last book of the Old Testament; Malachi was the last of the prophets. Then, here at zero, we have Jesus.

A BRIEF SKETCH OF ISRAEL'S HISTORY BEFORE THE TIME OF CHRIST

That's a brief sketch. I'll give you one or two more dates in a second. Does everyone understand that? Now between 2000 B.C. and 1000 B.C., between Abraham and David, guess who pops right in the middle? Moses at 1600 B.C. He's almost 500 years from Abraham and 500 years from David—almost right in the middle of that 500-year period.

The Jewish race began with Abraham, right? There were no Jews before 2000 B.C. There wasn't even a Jew on the earth. There wasn't even a Jew on the earth. When were they first called Jews? Think; it's in the notes. I'll tell you why they're Jews in a minute, but I need to tell you this other stuff first. At 1000 B.C. David comes on the scene. There are twelve tribes of Israel, and they're in perfect harmony with each other. That was the climax of Israel's kingdoms together. It was never greater than in David's reign. At this point, the Jews had only been a race for 1,000 years. They had only been out of captivity for 600 years. They were still a relatively young people.

This is where things came to a climax. All twelve tribes were in harmony. David is the king in Jerusalem over all twelve tribes. At 933, which is how many years after David? About seventy years. Right after Solomon dies, the worst thing happens: there's a civil war in Israel, in Palestine. It's the north against the south. We have two tribes called Judah and Benjamin. Those two tribes fight the other ten tribes—two against ten, in 933 B.C. There's a major split. It breaks everyone's heart. Because they finally got out of captivity, they finally got settled, and then they finally won every battle. Then they fought one another and split into two.

When you read 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel, you get so excited about David. You'll cry a few times, get mad, and throw your Bible down. Keep reading. It's such a great story. Benjamin and Judah are the south. They're now called *Judah*. Benjamin loses his identity. It's all called *Judah* from that point on. Ben is the smallest tribe and Judah the biggest, so he just gets swallowed up. It's a dinky tribe anyway.

If you don't understand what I'm saying, ask a question, but only if it's relevant to this. The other ten tribes are in the north. Here's Judah and Ben down here. All the other ten tribes are up here. The capital of the north is

called Samaria. It's called "the northern kingdom," or *Israel*, from that point on. Many times you'll read books and it says the king of the northern kingdom was this and the king of Judah did that. If you're not familiar with it, you think, "What in the world is happening?" The northern kingdom is called *Israel* and the capital is Samaria—kind of like Washington, D.C. The southern kingdom was called Judah, and there was a terrible split in 933 B.C. They were fighting each other constantly—for 200 years. In the notes it says 250. There was a little movement in there; they were starting to get a little riled up before that.

Two hundred and fifty years of fighting one another and in 721, guess what happens? The Assyrians come in and smash the northern kingdom, and it never exists after that, ever. You never hear of the northern kingdom after that. The ten tribes of Israel were smashed, carried into exile all over the known world by the Assyrians, never to emerge again. They existed as an independent kingdom from 933 to 721. That's it. Goodbye from then on. Judah survived a little longer. The Assyrians came down to smash Judah, but Judah had the spirit of the Lord. It's the most glorious thing in Isaiah 36-37. An angel of the Lord stopped the oncoming forces when they were coming into Jerusalem because of the intercession of Isaiah. The Assyrians came into Judah, but an angel appeared and stopped them. It's a very exciting little story.

The whole book of Isaiah, by the way, is this period of warning Judah that they had better get their act together, because the northern tribe was getting wiped out. They said, "You had better watch out, because you're next!" They got wiped out in 721, never to exist again.

Then in 586, about 140 years later, finally their doom came. Babylon had now wiped out the Assyrians. They were the kingly power, and they came in and smashed Judah. They ransacked it in 586. They burned the temple. They did everything. Now Judah is taken out. Guess who's living in Palestine? Everyone but the Jews. There are no Jews in Palestine except for a bunch of beggars and peasants running around that Nebuchadnezzar said not to worry about: "They're not worth anything anyway."

Fifty years, and here's this covenant people. Imagine the covenant people, and no one is living in Palestine. They're all gone. The northern kingdom never emerges again. They're gone forever, never to come again. Now Judah is in Babylon—and little Ben is with him, too. You never hear anything about little Ben; you only hear about Judah, but he's there. They're in captivity for fifty years, from 586-536 B.C.

Listen to this: this is a parentheses on the side. Isaiah wrote in about 700 B.C. In 721 B.C., when Assyrians were smashing the northern kingdom, Isaiah was writing then.

Isaiah was looking to 586, 140 years later, and he said this. He said, "Number one: Babylon is going to smash you, Jerusalem." They had hardly even heard of Babylon. "Number two: you're going into captivity for fifty years"—seventy years total, but fifty years of captivity.

Two hundred years in advance, he says, "After seventy years are up, then the Persian Empire..."

And people say, "The Persians?" They had never heard of the Persians.

"They'll overthrow the Babylonians"—who at this point they had hardly heard of. They were just a little, dinky power. He said, "A king named Cyrus is going to release you."

Again, this was 200 years in advance. Every detail of the day, Isaiah told it all. Talk about a word of knowledge! He said the guy's name 200 years before he was born. What an incredible event. The book of Isaiah will blow your mind away. It's exciting.

THE MOST MIRACULOUS FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

What happens? They spend fifty years in Babylonian captivity: 586-536 B.C. They're thinking, "Man, our other brothers up in the northern kingdom don't even exist anymore. They're in England as far as we know." They were taken all over the world.

Here they are, moaning and groaning. Daniel comes on the scene and goes on that long, twenty-one day fast, and God said, "The end of captivity has come."

Jeremiah said, "It's time to go back home."

Then the Persians rose up and smashed Babylon in 536 B. C. In the very first year of Cyrus, the king of Persia, the Spirit of God moved on him. He said, "All you people can go back to your homeland."

What a glorious event! This is what happened in the lives of those Jews. They've watched the most miraculous fulfillment of prophecy in front of their eyes. They said, "This is staggering. They were forever cured of idolatry from that day forward. They never, ever worshiped idols again. If you remember, before that time, from 2000 B.C. when they started with Abraham, clear up until they went into Babylonian captivity in 586, they never stopped worshiping idols. They always worshiped idols, except for a brief period with David. For 1,500 years they worshiped idols everywhere they went. No Jew has worshiped an idol since that day. Judaism is so monotheistic, so committed to one God, they've never been prone to idolatry since the Babylonian captivity. They saw the reality and trueness of God. They never flirted with it, not once—even when they fell away and killed Jesus. They never even hinted at idolatry, never again. They saw that one exile; that was the only exile they ever went into, *per se*, where they were taken out of their land and kept somewhere else.

They look at that fifty-year period and say, "God spoke this 200 years in advance. This is unbelievable." When they came out of captivity in 536 B.C., they had two things burning in their heart. They had an intense zeal for the Word of God. The Word of God was *it*. They had an intense zeal for the Messiah to come and do away with the people who were giving them a hard time. Those are the two factors. They were filled with an intense passion to keep the Law, because they didn't want to be whipped or scourged by a foreign nation. They had zeal for the Law, and zeal for the Messiah to come.

When Cyrus, the king of Persia, when he allowed all the remnant to go back to Palestine, you do realize that by that time there were about a million or two or three million Jews in Persia. When he let them go, only about 50,000 out of two million came back. Most of them stayed up there. Most of them stayed. They said, "This king Cyrus, he's such a nice guy."

He wasn't like Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. He wasn't like those guys. He was the nicest guy you ever saw. He said, "Hey, you guys can open up shop. You can sell anything you want. You can have a great time. Just have your liberty."

These people, a million and a half of them, thought, “Why should we go back to Palestine? It’s all beat up, barren ground. Forget it! Let’s stay here where the going is good.”

Those 50,000 people who went back paid a price. They left everything to go to some desolate homeland in 536. So the 50,000 banded together and said, “We’re going to go, because we know the Word of God is right and we know the Messiah is coming. We’re going to get this thing in action here.”

So which of the tribes was in Babylonian captivity? Judah. So which of the tribes was released? Judah. That’s how they got the name *Judea*. Because by that point they were the only Jews in existence—Judah and Benjamin. The other ten were all over the world. No one knew where they were. That’s why they named the land *Judea*. That’s why they named the religion *Judaism*. That’s why they call the people *Jews*. It’s all after that one faithful tribe of Judah. There were no Jews, *per se*, before that time. They didn’t call them *Jews*; they called them *Hebrews*.

What tribe did the Messiah have to come from? Isn’t that interesting? That’s the only tribe that made it out of the twelve. That had to be the tribe preserved to bring the Messiah. That’s no coincidence, is it? They survived all the attacks and everything. The tribe of Benjamin was so small and the tribe of Judah was five times bigger than any of the other ones. The tribe of Benjamin was by far the smallest.

It’s like when my wife and I got married. She had \$4,000 in the bank. I had about \$20. We mixed it up and it was ours—plus her car. She had \$5,000. When we got married, we put it all together and I said, “We’re going to forget whose is whose.”

It’s like that. So everyone forgot about Benjamin. Really, you hardly count Benjamin. They get lost in the momentum.

Listen to this. I want to tell you something very important. This comes out, especially when we get into the life of Paul. These 50,000 resented the two million who didn’t return. They came to plow in a new territory. Being a pioneer is a very difficult lifestyle. They began to hate those people who didn’t return. They said, “You guys are compromisers.”

What happened was this: all the Jews who stayed in the foreign lands were called *Hellenists*. Everyone have that term? You’ll hear that term even in the Bible: “Hellenistic Jews.” They were Jews that didn’t come in the remnant.

They wanted all the promises of the Messiah and the Scriptures, but they wanted everyone else to do the hard work. They wanted everyone else to go do all the hard work. They wanted to stay in the easy land and enjoy the Messiah when He came a few years later. Hellenistic Jews were the Jews who spoke the language of the world, Greek, and they had Greek culture. The Jews that came as part of the remnant, what were they called? *Hebrews*.

They’re Hebrews. You have the Hebrews and the Hellenist Jews. Remember in the book of Acts, there’s an argument between the Hellenists and the Hebrews. That rift never got solved. There has always been contention between those two because of that thing right there. Any more questions?

ANSWER:

Babylon came from over here. Iran and Persia are the same. Greece came from over here. This is the Mediterranean Sea. There was Athens, Greece, right over here. Then there was Rome up there in Italy.

First it was the Babylonians. Did you all realize that Abraham came from Ur of the Chaldeans? Ur was the city. That's Babylon. That was over in here—when he first came to Palestine and made a visit there. It's right over here in this area.

ANSWER:

Chronology of the temple. Here's what happens. In 2000 B.C. there's Abraham. Then they go into Egypt for 400 years. There's Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob and his kids go to Egypt for 400 years. Then, in 1600, Moses takes them out of Egypt. From Moses to David, they had what they called a *tabernacle* out in the wilderness. It was like a tent; it travelled wherever they went. That was the temple right there. It was a tent they carried everywhere. When David came into rule in approximately 1000 B.C., he said, "Hey Lord, this isn't fair. We're living in big houses and You have this little tent we've been carrying around for 600 years with Moses. Let me build You a great temple."

God says, "No, you've been a king of war; let your son, Solomon."

In maybe 1000 – 950 B.C., they built the most magnificent temple you ever laid eyes on. Solomon built it. It was extravagant. The first temple was 1000-950 B.C. Then, in 586 B.C., about 400 years later, when Babylon came in and smashed Jerusalem, they destroyed the temple. They wiped it out. When the Babylonians came crashing in in 586, they wiped out the temple of David and Solomon. That beautiful temple was wiped out. Now they've been fifty years without a temple or tabernacle. The tabernacle they had never comes up again.

So you're thinking, "Where's the tabernacle? What is the temple?" One was the tent and one was the building. That's all.

In 586 B.C., Babylon comes in and destroys them. They're released in 536 B.C. and they work with all their heart for twenty-one years and they put another temple back. It isn't nearly as glorious as the Solomon temple. The second temple is in 515 B.C. Then they go throughout all these six difficult periods. The Syrians come in about 175 B.C. Antiochus Epiphanes buffs the temple up a bit. He doesn't destroy it, *per se*. He takes the sacrifices and breaks a few things down. He doesn't really mess it up royally. He doesn't annihilate it. He did do a little damage to it. So in 515 they build it. In 168 Antiochus Epiphanes messes it up, but doesn't destroy it. Herod comes through in 19 B.C. just to patch it up a bit. He didn't really build it again; he just patched it up.

Then in 70 A.D. Titus, the general of Rome—guess what he does? He destroys the temple and wipes it out—back to zero.

Let's go over a quick review. In about 950 B.C., they build one. In 586 B.C., the Babylonians destroyed it. In 515 B.C., they built it a second time. Then Herod gave it a little remodeling. Then in 70 A.D., after Jesus comes and goes on the earth, then Titus of Rome destroys it for the second time. It's annihilated.

They'll build the temple the third time in this last generation. That's part of prophecy. Is that clear? There were two buildings and two "destroyings," and Herod the Great remodeled it a little. When Jesus promised to destroy

the temple and raise it again (Jn. 2:19), they replied that the temple had been forty-six years in construction. Herod had gone into a mild building program for forty-six years. It wasn't a full-fledged thing, or he could have done it more quickly. He did it when he had time. He began in 19 B.C., and that puts it right at 27 A.D. when Jesus attended His first Passover. The dates really correlate. That's an important date that you'll want to know if you're trying to get when Jesus was born and when He ministered.

ANSWER:

What happened is that Babylon kept it. Remember when Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar's son, was in the big weird feast and beheld the handwriting on the wall. He took the sacred temple articles and used them to drink beer and stuff.

The man says, "You had better watch it!"

They kept them, if you remember. When Titus destroyed it in 70 A.D. they were all thrown away. That's a blessing! We don't want those things anymore. In 70 A.D. they were just taken away. The ark has never been discovered. The ark doesn't work anyway. Jesus is in the ark in heaven. It makes no difference.

ANSWER:

A lot of them kept their identity to themselves. They knew they were from the tribe of Manasseh and Ephraim. They never came together and joined as a nation again. Does that make sense? They still kept their family tree. They kept the records. They were wiped out as a collective nation. They never came back to be the northern kingdom. A lot of them trickled into Jerusalem years later and became part of Judea.

ANSWER:

The promised land was from the Mediterranean Sea clear over to here. It goes twenty-five miles this way, about forty miles that way, and 150 miles top to bottom. That's the whole thing. It isn't just this little area. You can find that in Genesis 15-16. You'll find the correct dimensions somewhere.

ANSWER:

It wasn't like they walked in and they died on the spot. Sometimes that happened. As a rule if that happened, they were stoned by the people. The tribe of Levi was supposed to take it up and tear it down. Your concept was that they walked in and were dead instantly. That isn't true. They were taken out and stoned. Sometimes they put their hand on the ark and that was it.