

The only thing that matters is that you are reading God's word regularly. While that is still true with this schedule, the goal with this one is to get a better understanding of the entire story of the bible. There is no substitute for reading God's word. Keep reading! My website is at <http://graceofourlord.wordpress.com>. I encourage you to get the actual reading plan I am currently following. You can get it from the same place I do - at [this link](#). They have some great guidance for the reading plan there as well, and they have it all in both PDF and in Kindle format!

July 2012						
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1 (Week 27)	2 2 Kings 23	3 2 Kings 24	4 2 Kings 25	5 Daniel 1	6 Daniel 2	7
8 (Week 28)	9 Isaiah 11	10 Isaiah 53	11 Joel 2	12 Jeremiah 31	13 Amos 5	14
15 (Week 29)	16 Ezra 1	17 Ezra 3	18 Ezra 6	19 Nehemiah 1	20 Nehemiah 2	21
22 (Week 30)	23 Nehemiah 4	24 Nehemiah 6	25 Nehemiah 8	26 Nehemiah 13	27 Malachi 4	28
29 (Week 31)	30 John 1	31 Luke 1	Aug 1 Luke 2	Aug 2 Matt 3	Aug 3 Matt 4	

July Week 5 (Week 31) Summary

John 1, Luke 1, Luke 2, Matt 3, and Matt 4- Click the chapter below to go to the ESV Bible passage for that chapter and read or listen.

[John 1](#) – The message of the gospel of John can be summed up in one statement - "Jesus is the son of God." His gospel is full of passages that illustrate that fact, but nowhere is made clearer than in the language of chapter 1:1-4. John leaves no doubt, as it begins with an echo of the opening of the Book of Genesis:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men."

This reference to Jesus as "the Word" has meaning throughout the Old Testament. Two of many examples are seen as God brings things into existence by His very Word ([Genesis 1:3](#)), or accomplishes whatever His purpose may be by His Word, which He sends out ([Isaiah 55:10-11](#)). This is used by John again in his 1st epistle ([1 John 1:1-3](#)), as he adds the fact that he and the other apostles had physical contact with this Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Word is also referred to as living and active, for example in [Hebrews 4:12](#). Jesus confirms that He was with God in the beginning in [John 17:5](#); and John specifically identifies the word in verses 14-17:

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

(John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'")

For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. "

John moves swiftly from this powerful and awesome account to the testimony of John the Baptist. In verses 29-34, this John identifies Jesus as the "Lamb of God" - which they would not yet fully understand - and gives evidence of his own special revelation from God, concerning His son. In verses 19-23, John the Baptist, appearing before the priests and then the Pharisees, denied that he himself was the Christ, or Elijah. "The Prophet" that they ask him about could be a misunderstanding by them of the promise of a "new prophet like me" to lead them, which Moses spoke of in [Deuteronomy 18:15-16](#). He leaves no doubt in verse 23 though, that his baptism is to prepare the way for the Messiah, as he clearly states that he is the one referred to in [Isaiah 40:3](#).

The chapter ends with Jesus calling the first of His disciples, some of which He undoubtedly already had a relationship with. But Nathanael marvels that he knows him, and realizes that He truly is the Son of God (verses 48-49) because of it. Jesus tells them that they will see much greater things to come. Verse 51 is a very clear reference to Jacob's dream in [Genesis 28:12](#).

[Luke 1](#) – Luke, who also wrote the Book Acts, addressed this book specifically to Theophilus, who was likely a government official (note the way that he refers to him in verse 3). As it opens, it has been 400 years since Malachi prophesied. John the Baptist's father, Zechariah, was a priest. In those days, the priests were separated in divisions, each of which served for a week - except during times of major feasts, such as Passover or the Feast of Tabernacles. Zechariah was chosen by lot to serve in the Temple (verses 8-9). Zechariah (as he and his wife Elizabeth were childless and advanced in years) had no doubt prayed often for a child. An angel of the Lord appeared to him and told him they would have a son, and that his name would be John. He was not to drink wine or strong drink, and would be filled with the Holy Spirit "even from his mother's womb" (indicating he would then already be a human person), and would "make ready

for the Lord" (verses 11-17). Also, jumping ahead to (verses 41-44), upon Mary's visit, Elizabeth's baby leaped for joy in her womb.

Both as a rebuke for his unbelief, as well as the sign he asked for, the angel Gabriel told Zechariah that he would be unable speak until his son was born (verses 18-23), and Elizabeth did conceive. The "sixth month" in verse 26 refers to the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy. At this time, the Angel Gabriel appeared to a virgin (Mary), who was pledged to be married to Joseph, who was of the house of David (verses 26-27). The reference to Nazareth being a city of Galilee is confirmation that Luke's intended audience was unfamiliar with the territory. Mary is told that she would have a son and name him Jesus, that God would give him the throne of his father, David, and that "he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end" (verses 28-33). He also tells her of her relative, Elizabeth's pregnancy. Verses 46-55 are Mary's praise to the Lord, and are known as Mary's song.

When Elizabeth bore her child, the neighbors expected them to name him Zechariah after his father, but she insisted that he would be called John. Not satisfied, they tried to get Zechariah to give them a sign (since he still could not speak). He wrote on a tablet that "his name is John," and immediately he could speak again - because then all that the angel of the Lord had said to him previously had come to pass. Verses 65-66 indicate that the word of this miraculous birth and Zechariah's change became famous very quickly. Zechariah's prophecy in verses 67-79 verify that the fulfillment of God's promise to his people through Abraham - and the Messianic age - had indeed begun!

Side note: Excavations at Nazareth by archaeologists have located tombs, olive presses and other indications that it was a small agricultural community. The most interesting discovery of the past few years is that of a first-century house there. A very good article on this discovery can be found at [this article at BiblePlaces.com](http://BiblePlaces.com).

[Luke 2](#) – The circumstances of His birth, the lack of great wealth on the part of His parents, and even the people who this scripture places with Him all point to a King that was not just for the favored few.

Verses 1-20 deal with the miraculous birth of Jesus. The Roman emperor Caesar Augustus was born about 62 BC, and reigned from about 32 BC until his death in about 14 AD. Joseph and Mary had gone to Bethlehem (the city of David, of whose lineage Joseph was descended) from Nazareth because of a decree by Caesar Augustus that all subjects of the Roman Empire must be registered for the purpose of taxation. Of course, had there been no such decree, something else would have brought them there anyway because God's prophets had already told us that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (see [Micah 5:2](#)). Verse 7 says that Mary "gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn." Those were the signs that the angel of the Lord, who appeared to some shepherds, told them to look for when they went to see for themselves (verses 8-13).

At the end of eight days, he was circumcised (according to God's commandment to Abraham in [Genesis 17:12](#)); and named Jesus - just as Mary had been told before He was conceived ([Luke 1:31-32](#)). Verse 22 would be 33 days later in which they would have journeyed to Jerusalem

([Leviticus 12:3-8](#)) to make their sacrifice according to the Law given to Moses. Joseph and Mary would not have the means to offer a lamb, but would obey the Law of the Lord. We do not know anything else about the man Simeon in verses 25-35. The scripture says that the Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would see the Christ before he died, so he had obviously found favor with God. As he held the savior in his arms, his words affirm that verse 10's reference to "all people" means Jews and Gentiles alike as, in verse 32, he calls Jesus "a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel." Verses 36-38 recount more of God's revelations about Jesus to his humblest of servants. The family then returned to Nazareth, where verse 40 tells us that Jesus grew in wisdom and "the favor of God was upon him."

Naturally, as verse 41 says, his parents returned to Jerusalem every year to observe the Feast of the Passover. On the occasion of verse 42, he was 12 years old. This may be about 7 AD, as the best estimates (contrary to what many people might assume), are that He was born about 5 BC. It seems more than a bit strange to us that Joseph and Mary did not notice he had remained behind in Jerusalem until they were well on their way back to Nazareth (verses 43-44), but we must remember that such a journey during an important festival would have had them traveling with a large group of family and friends that trusted and cared for one another. When they returned to Jerusalem to search for Him, they finally found Him in the Temple - and as verses 46-47 say, amazing the teachers there. He demonstrates that He already knows He is the Son of God, as He says in verse 49 "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

[Matthew 3](#) – In verse 1, Jesus is led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. God never tempts anyone to do wrong ([James 1:13](#)), but He has sometimes used situations to test someone's faithfulness and character (see [Hebrews 11:17](#)). This testing had a purpose from the devil's perspective (to derail God's plan for the redemption of man, by preventing Jesus from being without sin). The purpose from the perspective of God's plan was that by having suffered from temptation himself ([Hebrews 2:18](#)), he understands how temptation affects us, and He is strengthened as our savior. It also reinforces for us the value of knowing God's word.

Hungry from fasting forty days, which compares to the 40 years of the testing of the people of Israel in the wilderness, the ability to use His power to feed himself in verse 3 would be a substantial temptation. Jesus quotes the latter part of [Deuteronomy 8:3](#) in verse 4 as an answer to the devil. The devil's quotation of [Psalm 91:11-13](#) in the second temptation of verses 5-6 is a deliberate misuse of the scripture - God does not encourage people to place themselves in needless danger. The pinnacle of the Temple would likely be the southeast corner - some 300 feet above the Kidron Valley. Such a feat would have been a great shortcut to achieve fame and attract people to Him, but would subvert God's plan. Jesus then answers in verse 7 by quoting from [Deuteronomy 6:16](#). The last temptation in verse 8 offers yet another opportunity to reign as king by nothing short of the worst kind of idolatry and betrayal of God; and is answered by a quote from [Deuteronomy 6:13](#).

Then, returning to Galilee to avoid the area where John the Baptist was arrested (verse 12), in verses 13-16, he fulfills the prophecy of [Isaiah 9:1-2](#). Reinforcing John the Baptist's message, Jesus preaches for the people to "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." This simply refers to the kingdom as a new period of the reign of God in people's hearts and in their lives,

shortly to come. The calling of His disciples in verses 18-22 at first reading makes one think that these men dropped everything all of a sudden to follow a complete stranger. But [John 1:35-42](#) demonstrates a prior relationship. Now He was calling them to be apostles. Verses 23-25 detail the great following that He was accumulating, and the wonders such as healing the sick that He began doing.

[Matthew 4](#) - In verse 1, Jesus is led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. God never tempts anyone to do wrong ([James 1:13](#)), but He has sometimes used situations to test someone's faithfulness and character (see [Hebrews 11:17](#)). This testing had a purpose from the devil's perspective (to derail God's plan for the redemption of man, by preventing Jesus from being without sin). The purpose from the perspective of God's plan was that by having suffered from temptation himself ([Hebrews 2:18](#)), he understands how temptation affects us, and He is strengthened as our savior. It also reinforces for us the value of knowing God's word.

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