

EXPERIENCE THE LAND AND THE BOOK

Saul: A Study in Tragedy

1 Samuel 9; 13–15; 17; 28; 31; 2 Samuel 1:19–27



LET'S BEGIN HERE

There is a special grief over a life *not* well lived. We love to celebrate the stories of those who have finished well, but when we encounter those whose lives bear the consequences of poor decisions and slow erosion, we sigh and wonder what could have been. And then, in quiet, private moments, we wonder how our lives will end. Will we finish well? Are we on a good track?

Discover from the life of one of the Bible's greatest examples of failed potential just what it means to take God seriously. And then choose to finish well.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. A Life Well Begun (1 Samuel 9, 10)

Saul had everything going for him. He was tall, handsome, and humble . . . and anointed by Samuel to be God's choice for Israel's king.

When Samuel anointed Saul as king, Saul seemed like the perfect fit—a military leader, tall, powerful, and handsome (1 Samuel 9:1–2). He had a mystique that appealed to the people. On top of that, he was genuinely modest, and God blessed him spiritually (10:6–10).

2. A Life Not Well Ended (1 Samuel 13–15; 17; 28; 31; 2 Samuel 1:19–27)

Saul made five major errors in judgment because his character had become corrupted. He slowly eroded into a paranoid, frightened shell of a man who ended his life in suicide.



Quotable

*The message of
Saul is for all: take
God seriously and
don't play with
sacred things.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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MM01

EXPERIENCE THE LAND AND THE BOOK

Saul: A Study in Tragedy

1 Samuel 9; 13–15; 17; 28; 31; 2 Samuel 1:19–27

Instead of taking God seriously . . .

- Saul took his circumstances seriously (1 Samuel 13:7–14)
- Saul took himself seriously (14:24–45)
- Saul took the people seriously (15:21, 24)
- Saul was plagued by an evil spirit (16:14–23)
- Saul tried to manipulate (28:3–20; 31:4)



DOORWAY TO HISTORY

Beth-shan

The city of Beth-shan was originally allotted to the tribe of Manasseh, but Manasseh, fearing iron chariots, failed to drive out the Canaanites who lived there (Joshua 17:11–16). As a compromise, part of the tribe of Manasseh settled on the hills across the Jordan Valley. Israel finally conquered Beth-shan during Solomon's reign, four hundred years after Joshua's conquest of the area (1 Kings 4:12).

One of the oldest cities in Israel at that time, Beth-shan sat strategically at the junction of the Jordan Valley and the Jezreel and Harod Valleys. Some have called it the “garden land of the north” because of the numerous springs that irrigated the land. Beth-shan's rich pastureland made it an ideal crossroad between the north-south trade route and the east-west route leading to and from the Mediterranean coast.

Five or six major temple complexes, whose inscriptions mention several deities, have been found in the ruins, suggesting that Beth-shan was an important center for worship. During the time of Saul and David, at least two temples stood in Beth-shan; the temple of Ashteroth and the temple of Dagon (1 Samuel 31:10; 1 Chronicles 10:10).

Saul and the army of Israel were fighting the Philistines on Mount Gilboa, a stone's throw from Beth-shan, when he and his three sons were killed. Out of contempt, the Philistines decapitated the men and hung their bodies on the walls of Beth-shan.

In New Testament times, Beth-shan was one of the chief cities of the Decapolis and was renamed Scythopolis—linking it with Greek culture. The Round Temple—with an area paved with white limestone and an inscription to honor Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus and to the worship of Dionysus, the god of wine—dominated the center of the city. The city flourished until AD 749 when it was destroyed by an earthquake.

Until excavations began in 1989, the city's remains were buried underground.



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EXPERIENCE THE LAND AND THE BOOK

Saul: A Study in Tragedy

1 Samuel 9; 13–15; 17; 28; 31; 2 Samuel 1:19–27



LET'S LIVE IT

King Saul's life is a sobering study for any time. This is especially true for anyone who doesn't take God seriously. Rest assured; insensitivity to God always leads to a life adrift.

Ask the Lord to help you target areas of your life He wants to improve for His glory and for your good. Pray through this list, asking God to help you pinpoint areas you desire to submit to Him:

- Reading God's Word
- Tone of communicating with loved ones
- Efforts in disciplining children and expressing love toward them
- Work ethic
- Prayer life
- Entertainment choices



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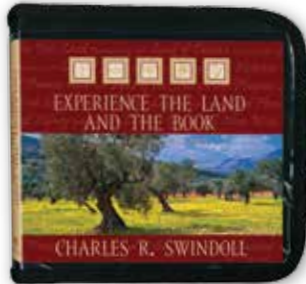
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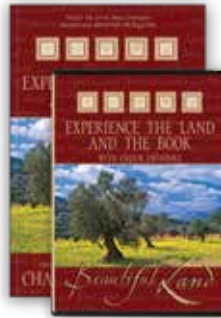
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EXPERIENCE THE LAND AND THE BOOK

The Beatitudes: Lessons by a Lake

Matthew 5:1–11



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Jesus could not have picked a better place to sow seeds of faith than on the hill now called the Mount of Beatitudes. On a carpet of wildflowers and scrub, the people sat, captivated and amazed by this Teacher. While rabbis of the day taught the finer points of Mosaic Law, Jesus' message touched the *heart*. The rabbis' endless, dusty rhetoric said little; Jesus' few words altered the way the people understood life. Even to this day, His words, ignited by the Spirit of God, cut through the stuff of life and call us to live the way God intends for us.



A CLOSER LOOK

Capernaum: Jesus' Adult Home and Ministry Base

Kick over a few rocks in Capernaum and you'll discover the black volcanic basalt that defines the rim of the region that Jesus chose as His adult home and ministry base. An area prone to earthquakes, and in the past, volcanic activity, Capernaum forms the southwestern corner of the "ministry triangle" of Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida. Within this region on the north side of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus performed most of His Galilean miracles (Matthew 4:12–16).

Capernaum was the bustling center of commerce in Galilee. Straddling the nearby international trade route from Egypt to Syria, Capernaum had a thriving fishing industry and supported craftsmen and carpenters who worked with the indigenous basalt stone.

Capernaum witnessed more of Jesus' miracles than any other town. In spite of that, the Pharisees and scribes there consistently and definitely rejected Jesus and His message. They never tried to attack Him or drive Him away; they simply disregarded Him. Jesus rebuked Capernaum for its lack of repentance (11:23–24) and doomed it to destruction, along with Chorazin and Bethsaida which also had front-row seats to Jesus' ministry (Luke 10:13–15).

In the fourth century AD, Capernaum was the epicenter of a major, devastating earthquake, and much of the area was completely leveled. In the seventh century, another quake flattened the town, and a third earthquake in the eleventh century delivered the fatal blow. Capernaum never recovered. Nothing stands there now but ruins and rocks—just as Jesus said.



Quotable

*"Blessed" defines
the wholesome
well-being of
one who shares
the kingdom life
with the King.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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EXPERIENCE THE LAND AND THE BOOK

The Beatitudes: Lessons by a Lake

Matthew 5:1–11



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. A Message You Won't Hear from Our Culture: *Blessedness*

Blessed doesn't simply mean happy, laughing, or cheery. It has in mind the well-being of one who walks with God in peace and wholeness. This kind of life cuts across the grain of our times. Now as then, people say one thing publicly, yet do another privately. But Jesus said, "Do not be like them" (Matthew 6:8). In effect, "Live a different kind of life. Live like this . . ."

The blessed attitudes of the Beatitudes will not come easily or quickly. But kingdom living is for kingdom people who are controlled by the King Himself.

2. The Eight Attitudes of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1–11)

The Beatitudes are divided into two groups of four. The first four deal with our attitudes toward God. The second four deal with our attitudes toward others.

Attitudes toward God:

- *Blessed are the poor in spirit.* (Matthew 5:3)
- *Blessed are those who mourn.* (5:4)
- *Blessed are the gentle.* (5:5)
- *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.* (5:6)

Attitudes toward Others:

- *Blessed are the merciful.* (5:7)
- *Blessed are the pure in heart.* (5:8)
- *Blessed are the peacemakers.* (5:9)
- *Blessed are those who have been persecuted.* (5:10–11)



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EXPERIENCE THE LAND AND THE BOOK

The Beatitudes: Lessons by a Lake

Matthew 5:1–11



LET'S LIVE IT

The eight Beatitudes are not just attitudes; they are Christlike qualities. And though rarely seen in our culture today, all followers of Christ are called upon to adopt each one. When we do, and live them out, what an impact they make!

Look at the Beatitudes again, and reexamine how Jesus modeled each in His life. Then think of some everyday ways you can be a disciple of Jesus—not just knowing His Word but becoming like Him.



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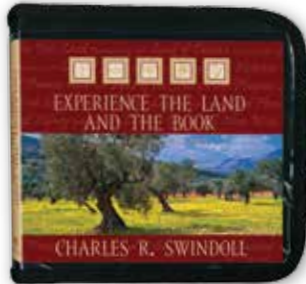
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Matthew 5:1–11



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MM02

EXPERIENCE THE LAND AND THE BOOK

Releasing Our Burdens Beneath the Waves

Mark 6:40–52



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Great things happen on water . . . treacherous things too. Both occurred the night that followed Jesus' miraculous feeding of more than five thousand men. Jesus' disciples shook with terror in a storm-tossed boat on an inky-black sea. Why were they afraid? Weren't they eyewitnesses to His miracles? Mark 6:52 records a heartbreaking moment in Scripture: "[The disciples] had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened." It took a storm to help the disciples learn a valuable lesson. What will it take for you to surrender to Jesus in faith?



A CLOSER LOOK

The Sea of Galilee

Some roads are paved with tar, some with stone. The road across the Sea of Galilee is made of water. Jesus taught most of His sermons, performed almost all of His miracles, and called all His disciples from around these shores. He traveled its waves as a road from one shore to the next—sometimes as a shortcut, sometimes as an escape route.

Set in the hills of Galilee, the Sea of Galilee is nearly seven hundred feet below sea level—one of the world's only freshwater lakes below sea level. It is nearly eight miles across at its widest point and more than twelve miles long from north to south. It's also called: Sea of Chinnereth (Numbers 34:11), Lake Gennesaret (Luke 5:1), Sea of Tiberias (John 6:1, 21:1), and today, *Yam Kinneret*.

In many ways, Galilee's sea road symbolized a faith road. The disciples lived by faith through what they encountered out there. The high hills surrounding the shore brewed sudden storms. Fish eluded the disciples' nets one day and swarmed them the next. Though most were experienced seamen, the disciples always found the sea a mystery.



Quotable

*Life's tests often
come on the back
side of a great
victory, when we're
full and enjoying
life at its best.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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EXPERIENCE THE LAND AND THE BOOK

Releasing Our Burdens Beneath the Waves

Mark 6:40–52



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. Scene One: The Test Begins (Mark 6:40–47)

It had been a busy, busy day. In fact, it was already late when Jesus fed the miracle meal to five thousand men. So, after the people ate and “were satisfied” (Mark 6:42), the disciples picked up the twelve full baskets of bread and fish and prepared to depart (6:43). But Jesus had something else in mind.

As the multitudes returned home, Jesus ushered His Twelve to a waiting boat on the shoreline. He shoved them out to sea alone. Although it was late in the day, He wasn't going with them (yet).

2. Scene Two: The Test Continues (Mark 6:48–52)

The Sea of Galilee is given to sudden storms. Few places are more treacherous or frightening than this dark sea when a storm kicks up. The sea bed is an extinct volcano crater. Its surface is almost seven hundred feet *below* sea level. Its high sides rise to twenty-five hundred feet *above* sea level. Winds whoosh down the hillsides and across the water. Even seasoned sailors can be caught off guard.

Surely the disciples called out to Jesus, right? Wrong. Surely they connected the dots between the miracle they had participated in that afternoon and their present crisis, right? Wrong. They kept fighting the wind and the waves . . . for hours.

Do the math. The “fourth watch of the night” was between 3 and 6 a.m. — the darkest part of the night. It would have been pitch black except for the occasional flash of lightning. They had been “straining at the oars” a long time, but they just couldn't get to the other side (Mark 6:48).

Then, just at the right time, Jesus came down from the mountain and walked out to meet them — on the water.



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EXPERIENCE THE LAND AND THE BOOK

Releasing Our Burdens Beneath the Waves

Mark 6:40–52



LET'S LIVE IT

It all came down to faith for the disciples. The same is true for us today. Will we trust the Lord in our storms? Will we surrender to Him the control of our lives?

This is a wonderful time to reflect—to gain insight—on the blessings and provisions of God, on the storms that have arisen in your life, on the times when Jesus stepped on your boat and brought calm, and on the condition of your heart. What burden do you carry today? Release it to Him.



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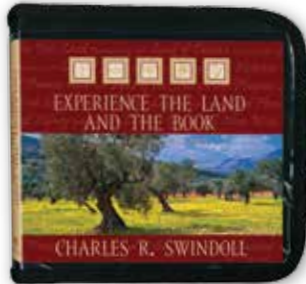
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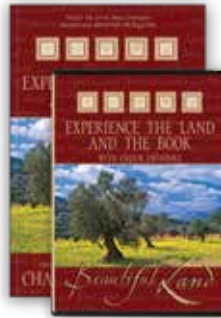
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MM03

EXPERIENCE THE LAND AND THE BOOK

When Jesus Stopped to Pray

John 17



LET'S BEGIN HERE

The hardest work we can do is “knee” work. We’ll find anything else easier to do than pray. Yet Jesus not only told us that we “ought to pray and not to lose heart” (Luke 18:1), He showed us by praying Himself. After the last meal Jesus shared with His disciples but before the soldiers came for Him in Gethsemane, Jesus let us eavesdrop on His talk with the Father. Often called the High Priestly Prayer, John 17 is one of the most remarkable and longest intercessions in all of God’s Word. From it, we can learn how to pray and get a glimpse into Jesus’ great love for us.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. The Southern Steps—the Holy Place Where Jesus Prayed

During their last meal together, Jesus told His disciples that it was time for Him to go, but He encouraged them with the promise that He would return (John 14:1–3). After the meal, they all left the Upper Room.

The streets were deserted as they made their way toward the Kidron ravine en route to Gethsemane, as was often their practice. Somewhere on the way, Jesus paused. Perhaps He leaned up against a building near the temple where the torches burned all night at Passover, or maybe He sat on the southern staircase leading to the Temple Mount; either way, He let His disciples enter with Him into prayer.

2. Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer (John 17)

Jesus’ prayer is a wonderful study in simplicity because it divides nicely into three sections:

- **His prayer for Himself (17:1–5)**

As Jesus began His prayer, He asked God to bring Him glory through what would come in the following hours. He had enjoyed glory with the Father in heaven in eternity past, and He longed to have that same glory again—but He had to get there by way of death. And by His death, both Father and Son were glorified.



Quotable

*Jesus deliberately
chose not to take us
out of the world,
but to protect us
through it.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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EXPERIENCE THE LAND AND THE BOOK

When Jesus Stopped to Pray

John 17

- **His prayer for the disciples (John 17:6–19)**

Jesus spent most of His time praying for the protection and sanctification of His disciples. Jesus entrusted His disciples to His Father's care with several requests:

Jesus asked His Father to *insulate* the disciples (17:15–16): Jesus didn't ask the Father to *remove* the disciples from the world; He wanted the world to observe and be touched by them.

Jesus asked His Father to *sanctify* the disciples (17:17–19): He prayed that they would fulfill the purpose for which they had been set apart.

- **His prayer for all believers (17:20–26)**

Beginning with those first followers of Christ, generation after generation of people have believed in Christ “through [the disciples'] message” (17:20 NIV)—including our own generation.

Jesus asked for *unity of belief* (17:21–23). Jesus asked not for uniformity or unanimity but unity—a unity like God's, the kind of unity that exists between the Father and the Son (17:21–22).

Jesus asked *that we would one day be with Him* (17:24). Heaven is not only a place; it includes a person. We will see our glorious Savior face-to-face (1 Corinthians 13:21).

Jesus prayed for our *relationships* (John 17:25–26). Jesus prayed that His followers would love with the love modeled by His relationship with His Father—love that is demonstrated, reaches out, grows, and is expressed. We love like this through the amazing power of the Holy Spirit.



EXPERIENCE THE LAND AND THE BOOK

When Jesus Stopped to Pray

John 17



LET'S LIVE IT

Jesus' prayer reveals three contrasts. First, on His way to suffer and die, He had us on His mind. Second, though He was leaving the world, He deliberately chose to leave us *in* the world. Third, His plan for the church is not uniformity or unanimity—but unity.

Prayer is easily talked about, wonderful to aspire to, yet often left undone. Today, rather than just discussing the good that prayer does, let's actually do it!



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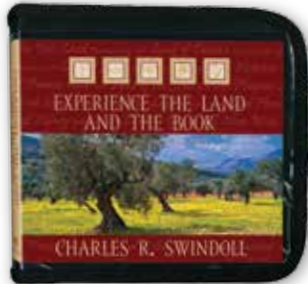
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When Jesus Stopped to Pray

John 17



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EXPERIENCE THE LAND AND THE BOOK

A Place for Pondering and Praise
Isaiah 53:3–6; 1 Corinthians 11:23–30



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Even without that spring weekend two thousand years ago, Jerusalem would be an incredible place. The central narrative of Scripture, both completed and yet to come, revolves around this land and this city. Yet only on one event does history swing on its hinge: the weekend when Jesus Christ suffered, died, and rose again, according to Scripture. And it happened in Jerusalem. It was in Jerusalem that the life of everyone who has turned to God was set apart. It's at the cross of Jesus Christ that life begins. And when we talk about His resurrection, we move from today into eternity. The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ make up the most critical event in history—one worthy of our pause, our pondering, and our praise.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. Pause and Ponder the Death of Christ (Isaiah 53:3–6)

Everything within us urges us to rush past the torturous scene of Jesus' suffering and death. How easy to forget the agony and simply focus on the ecstasy of the resurrection! But let's pause a moment and ponder Jesus' death.

The injustices that pinned Jesus to the cross satisfied, strangely, the justice of God. The cross was the Father's plan for Jesus. Nothing pictures God's heart for His creation more passionately. Nothing. And as God the Father gave His love, Jesus—God's Son—gave His life.

2. Pause and Praise God for the Cross and the Tomb (1 Corinthians 11:23–30)

In first-century culture, death was an intimate part of life. People lived with death. They touched it. They smelled it. They witnessed it. They also knew what to do when it occurred because families prepared their own members for burial. The family and friends of Jesus were His undertakers.



Quotable

*I fear that
we who love
the hope of the
gospel don't
linger long
enough at
the cross.*

—Charles R. Swindoll



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EXPERIENCE THE LAND AND THE BOOK

A Place for Pondering and Praise
Isaiah 53:3–6; 1 Corinthians 11:23–30

The theological term that describes Jesus' sacrifice is *substitutionary atonement*. Think of *substitutionary* as these three words: "IN MY PLACE." And *atonement* as "PAYMENT."

Jesus knew His death would become so central to our faith. The Lord's Table was established to slow us down, to quiet us, to take us back. The Lord's Table helps us remember Jesus' ignoble death and His glorious resurrection.



A CLOSER LOOK

A New Orientation

Synagogues in Jesus' day were built with geography in mind. The foundations of the buildings always faced Jerusalem. Specifically, they were oriented toward the second temple, the one Jesus knew, in remembrance of the place where God's glory once dwelled.

On the southwestern hill of Jerusalem stood a building that housed a meeting spot for Jesus and His disciples. Called the Upper Room, this was where the Last Supper took place (Luke 22:8–13). The Upper Room was also a safe place for the disciples to gather on the weekend following Jesus' crucifixion. The resurrected Jesus appeared to them there behind locked doors that Sunday night, and the disciples returned there after Jesus ascended into heaven (John 20:26; Acts 1:13). They continued to meet there with other followers after Jesus' ascension.

After the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, Jewish Christians built a synagogue on the traditional site of the Last Supper. Today, the building has been rebuilt as the alleged Tomb of David, but within the foundational wall remains a section of that first-century synagogue; that stone holds a fascinating piece of history.

If the structure had been simply a Jewish synagogue, the first-century believers would have made the wall that contained the niche that held the Torah scrolls to be physically in line with the temple. But that section of wall reveals that the earliest Christians chose to orient the niche and their synagogue directly with the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the likely site of Calvary and the empty tomb. In these followers' hearts, the temple's sacredness had been replaced by that of the place where Jesus died, was buried, and rose again. They oriented their new building toward the place where their new understanding of faith began.

The Upper Room you can visit today is called the Cenacle. The room was rebuilt in the tenth century by Crusaders. If ever you have the privilege of visiting, don't leave the site too quickly. Survey the east wall of the outside courtyard and notice the first-century foundation; orient your focus, as did the first-century believers, to the place where Jesus died and rose again.¹



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EXPERIENCE THE LAND AND THE BOOK

A Place for Pondering and Praise
Isaiah 53:3–6; 1 Corinthians 11:23–30

3. Praising God for the Resurrection

Think about it as if you're hearing about it for the first time:

Resurrection.

Jesus came back to life after He died. Jesus, who was dead, breathed . . . never to die again. Amazing!

The precious Lamb of God, chosen to die since the foundation of the world, had been sacrificed (John 1:29; 17:24) and raised from death. God's justice, paid in full. God's mercy, complete.

Old Testament's faith had finally become sight. History's perspective had changed.



LET'S LIVE IT

Pause right where you are and ponder the death of Christ—a death He died to save you from your sin. And then praise Him for His resurrection, which ensures life eternal for all who believe.

Ask yourself: when the time comes for you to die, what will be your only hope of true life beyond the grave?

ENDNOTE

1. For more information, see Bargil Pixner, "Church of the Apostles Found on Mt. Zion," *Biblical Archaeology Review* (May/June 1990): 16–35, 60.



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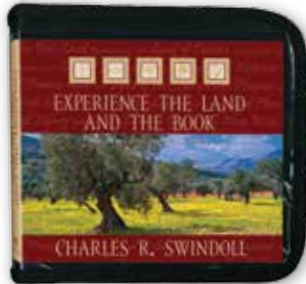
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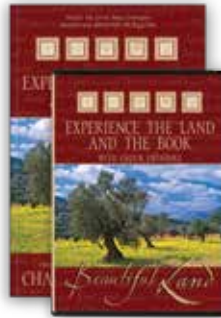
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EXPERIENCE THE LAND AND THE BOOK

A Captive's Call to Freedom

Acts 24–26



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Along the beautiful Mediterranean lies the coastal city of Caesarea. Caesarea was the official seat of government, a busy port, and a naval base for the powerful Romans in the province of Israel. On the grounds of the seaside palace called Herod's Praetorium, the apostle Paul was unjustly imprisoned AD 58–60. Through a curious chain of events, Jerusalem's authorities brought Paul here to appear before the Roman magistrate on three trumped-up charges. Paul modeled for us how a thinking, believing follower of Christ can defend himself or herself against criticism.



A CLOSER LOOK

Caesarea

Stand on the edge of Israel with your toes in the Mediterranean and imagine the history buried underfoot. Caesarea, one of the great archaeological sites in Israel, boasts a long and glorious past.

Herod the Great built Caesarea around 22 BC and named it in honor of Caesar. A city of fine marble and grand monuments, it was the hub of Roman presence in Israel during Jesus' time. Israel had no natural harbor, so Herod built one here—a world-class forty-acre seaport named Sebastos (Greek for “Augustus”) that boosted Israel into international trade. Caesarea sat strategically close to the Via Maris, the trade route between Egypt and regions like Persia, Babylonia, Asia, and the Arabian Peninsula. A towering lighthouse at the harbor entrance could be seen for miles. This new source of enormous trade revenue was later used to fund Herod the Great's other personal projects, like his palaces at Masada and Jericho and the rebuilding of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

Near the Caesarean harbor, Herod also built himself a luxurious palace (the foundation of which can still be seen today) that extended into the Mediterranean on its own peninsula. Not far away stood a grand theater that seated four thousand people—offering strategic entertainment that offended the Jew but promoted the Greek culture. In the nearby hippodrome (horse track) that sat near the theater complex, Herod

Continued on next page



Quotable

*The simple facts
of the gospel
are true and
reasonable. Its
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calls for a
personal decision.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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EXPERIENCE THE LAND AND THE BOOK

A Captive's Call to Freedom

Acts 24–26

Continued from previous page

brought “the games” into Jewish culture. These games were dedicated to pagan gods in an attempt to hellenize his kingdom. Chariot races were the rage, as were gladiatorial contests that included men and animals.

With all of these draws, Caesarea grew to become the largest city in Judea, with an estimated population of 125,000 at the time of Christ.

Until the 1950s and 1960s, all of Caesarea's secrets lay under sand. Archaeologists continue to work today unearthing new discoveries related to this first-century hotspot of Greek culture in a Jewish world.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. A Biblical Survey of Caesarea

Caesarea had a long and storied history in the New Testament. This city was the place of ministry for Philip, one of the original deacons (Acts 8:40). It was the place Peter preached to the Roman centurion Cornelius (10:24). And it was the place where Herod Agrippa I accepted worship from his subjects (12:19–24).

2. Paul's Imprisonment in Caesarea (Acts 24–26)

Paul spent two years as a prisoner of Rome in the Caesarean jail, appearing before the governors Felix and Festus and before King Herod Agrippa II.

From Paul's court appearances, we learn seven important truths about responding to unjust criticism:

- **Paul refused to get caught up in the emotion of the charges.** “Knowing that for many years you have been a judge to this nation, I cheerfully make my defense” (Acts 24:10).
- **Paul stayed with the facts.** In a deliberate, logical manner, Paul reviewed the events to which his accusers referred (24:11–13).



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- **Paul told the truth with a clear conscience.** Paul chose his words carefully to build trust with his hearers.
- **Paul identified the original source of the criticism.** Paul knew who had accused him, but the only ones present were people with secondhand information (Acts 24:17–21).
- **Paul would not surrender and quit.** Paul didn't walk off the scene exasperated by the injustice or fold in fear before Felix. He was not afraid to discuss righteousness and judgement.
- **Paul did not become impatient or bitter.** Two years in prison waiting for a judgement is a long time. Yet we read nothing in Acts 24 that leads us to believe that Paul suffered from any level of depression or regret by his undeserved prison term—even when Felix exited the scene and left Paul sitting in his cell. Amazing!
- **Paul stood firmly on God's promises.** Paul clung to what the Lord had said and took action based on his belief. Frustrated Festus didn't take long to come back with a ruling: "To Caesar you shall go" (Acts 25:12).



LET'S LIVE IT

Paul's imprisonment reveals three truths about the gospel: First, the simple facts of the gospel are true and reasonable. Second, the clear presentation of the gospel calls for a decision. Third, the personal response to the gospel must be left to God.

What was your life like before you surrendered it to Christ? What happened that prompted you to turn to Jesus for salvation? What has your life been like since? What changes do you see in yourself and your situation?



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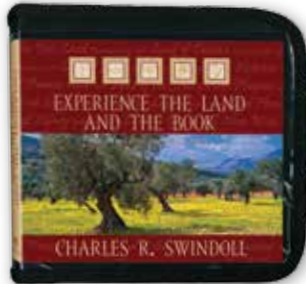
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