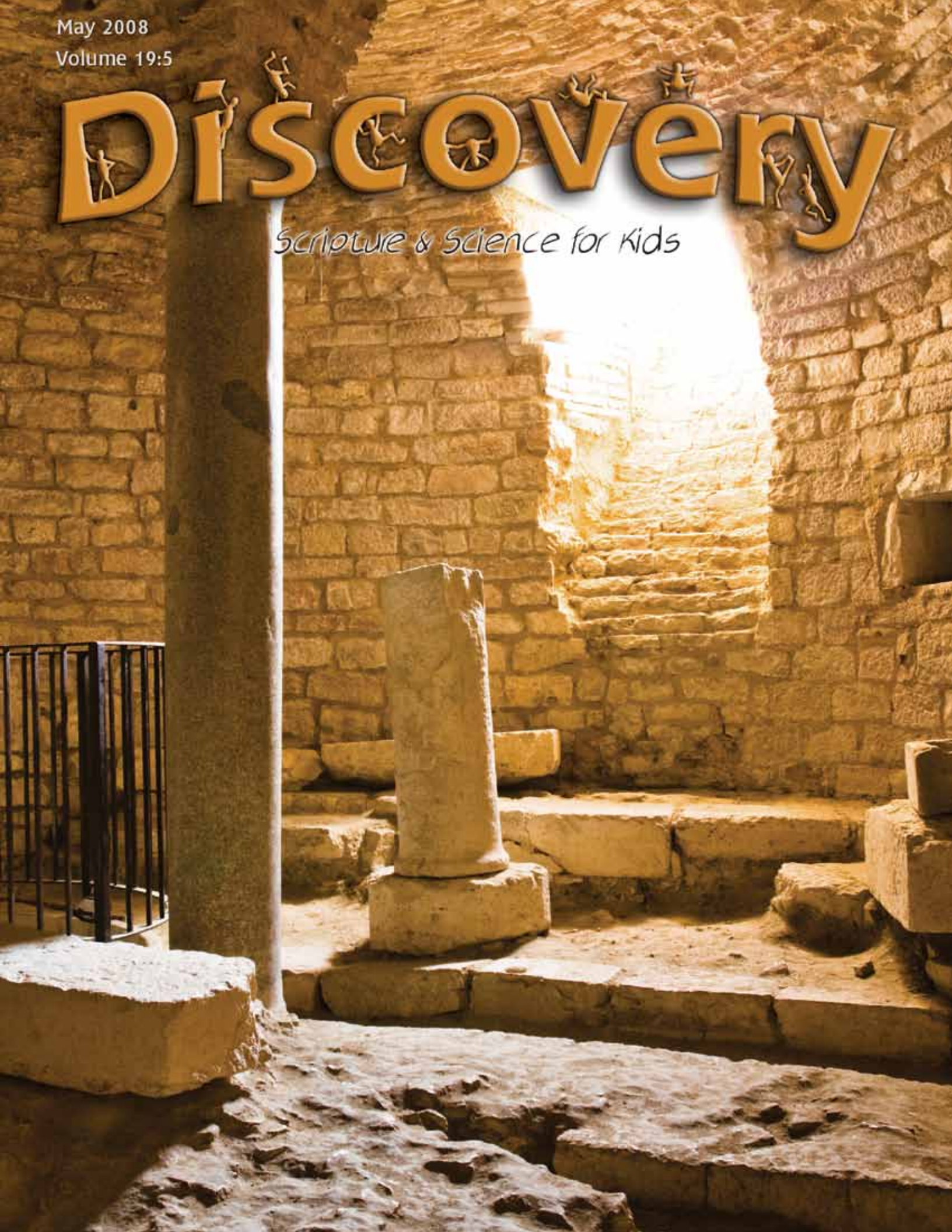


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Discovery

Scripture & Science for Kids



CORINTH: A CHURCH THAT BRAGGED ABOUT SIN

KYLE BUTT

We know that sin is a terrible thing. A person sins when he or she violates a commandment of God. God tells us in the Bible to avoid sin, and if we are sinning, to repent and start doing right. The church at Corinth had a serious problem with sin.

In 1 Corinthians chapter five, we read about a man who was sinning by doing things with his father's wife that he was not supposed to do. The apostle Paul said that his sin was so bad that many non-Christians would not even think about committing such sin. We would have expected the Corinthians to be angry with this man and to reject his sinful lifestyle.

But instead of rejecting the man's sinfulness, the Bible says that the Corinthians were "puffed up" or bragging about the situation. The Bible does not say exactly why the Corinthians were bragging, but it does say they were very wrong in the way they were handling this sinner. In fact, instead of bragging about having this sinner in the church, the apostle Paul told



them to withdraw themselves from him. Paul told them not to treat the sinful man like he was a faithful Christian, but to avoid keeping company with him until he changed. Paul told them they were not even to eat with the man (1 Corinthians 5:11).

The Bible indicates that the Corinthians listened to God's commands and withdrew from the sinner. After they did this, it seems that the man was sorry and begged the church to forgive him. In Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, Paul told the church to forgive the sinner and reaffirm their love for him (2 Corinthians 2:6-10).

If the church at Corinth had continued to accept the man and his sin, the sinful man's soul would most likely have been lost. But because the church obeyed God by withdrawing from the man, he repented and was restored. The Corinthian church teaches us that sin is very bad and that being obedient to God's law is always the best way to live.

Ruined columns of an ancient temple in Corinth



A LESSON FROM LAODICEA: GOD WANTS YOUR VERY BEST!

KYLE BUTT

Suppose you were on a basketball team that was playing in the state championship. You had one problem—your best player decided he did not care if you won or lost. As the game started, he did not hustle, he did not try very hard to make shots, and he did not try to play good defense. After several minutes of very "mediocre" play, the coach called a time out and asked the player, "What's wrong? Why aren't you trying your best?" The player responded, "Hey, coach, give me a break. I'm not doing my worst. I could be going slower. Sure, I'm not doing my best, but I'm not doing my worst!" What do you suppose the coach would do to a player who had this attitude? Of course, the player would be taken out and replaced by someone who was willing to do his best.

Did you know the Bible talks about a group of Christians who were like the lazy basketball player? In the book of Revelation, we read about the church at Laodicea. The Bible does not say that these Christians were doing terrible things like murdering people, stealing, or lying. It simply says that they were lukewarm. What does "lukewarm" mean? Lukewarm basically means room temperature. It is not hot, nor is it cold. Think about eating soup that is lukewarm. Or imagine eating melted ice cream that is room temperature. That does not sound too appetizing, does it?

The Laodiceans were being "half-way" Chris-



tians. They were not totally devoted to Jesus, but they did not hate Him. They "kinda" served Him when it was convenient, and half-heartedly obeyed God. So what did God think about these lukewarm Christians? Was He happy with their effort? Absolutely not! They made God sick. In fact, God said He wished they were either cold or hot, but because they were lukewarm, He was going to vomit them out of His mouth (Revelation 3:16).

With God, it is all or nothing. A "half-way" Christian is just as lost as a non-Christian. God wants your total commitment. He wants you to give your very best effort to serving Him. A coach would not leave a half-hearted basketball player on the court in a championship game, and God will not accept half-hearted effort from His children.



Don't Lose the Love

ERIC LYONS

Millions of men and women every year express their affection for one another by spending time together doing all sorts of things—like talking, walking, eating, and playing games. Over time, the feelings that a man and woman have for one another grow stronger and stronger until it is obvious that they love each other. Many couples often decide to get married, and commit to being with each other “until death.” In the early stages of marriage, their love for each other is strong. But sadly, because a number of men and women do not keep working to make their marriages successful, they begin to lose their “first love.” The love and passion that drove them to get married becomes a distant memory. What they used to “love to do” for each other, eventually becomes a “have to do.”

The New Testament describes the church of Ephesus as being a faithful “bride” of Christ at one time. The Christians who composed that church possessed a dedicated love for Jesus when the church began. The apostle Paul, after having spent three years teaching in Ephesus, wrote a letter to the church in Ephesus, declaring that they were known for their “love for all the saints”

(1:15). He then concluded the letter by extending the grace of God to all those in Ephesus “who love our Lord Jesus Christ” (6:24).

Sadly, not many years after Paul wrote these words, the church at Ephesus began to lose its first love. When the apostle John penned the book of Revelation, he recorded the following words that Jesus wanted the Ephesians to read: “Nevertheless I have this against you, that **you have left your first love**. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works...” (2:4-5). Like the wife who no longer sincerely and passionately loves her husband, as she did earlier in their marriage, the church at Ephesus lost the love for Christ that it had in the beginning.

As Christians, we must examine ourselves daily to make sure that we genuinely love Christ as much as we did when we became a part of His bride—the church. The truth is, the love we have for Christ should become deeper and greater every year as we “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). We should think and talk about Him more and more every day.

Don't ever lose your first love!



GALATIAN CHURCHES: CONFUSED ABOUT GOD'S LAW

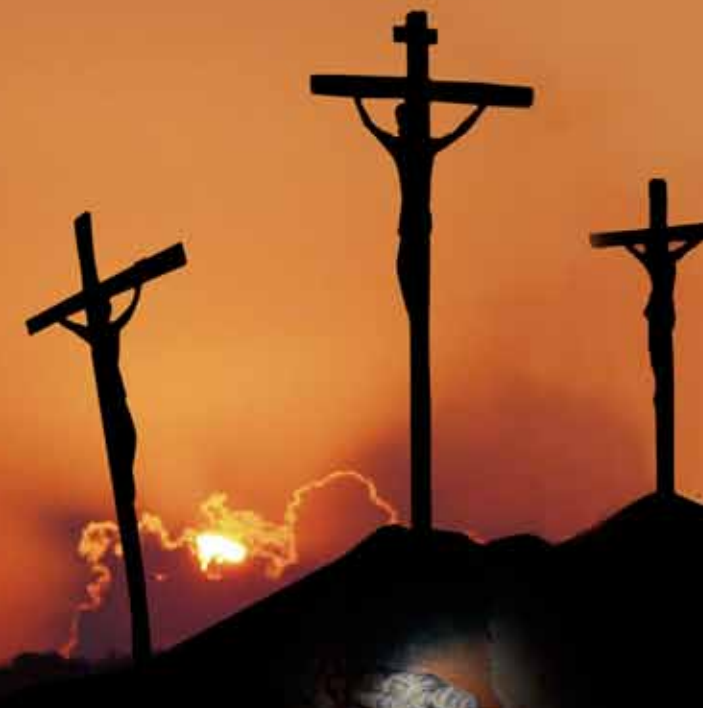
DAVE MILLER

One of the most important things to know before a person can understand the Bible correctly is that the Bible divides history into different parts. At the very beginning of time, Adam and Eve (and their descendants) were subject to the laws that God gave them. This period, which lasted from the Garden all the way to the cross of Christ, is sometimes called the Patriarchal Period of Bible history, since God communicated His will to the heads of families, or patriarchs (like Noah, Job, and Abraham). Around 1500 B.C., God brought the descendants of Abraham out of Egyptian bondage and gave them their own covenant at Mt. Sinai. This period is usually referred to as the Mosaic Period of Bible history, and the law God gave to the Israelites is called the Law of Moses. When Jesus died on the cross, these two systems of law were done away and replaced by the law of Christ. Since that time, everyone is under the same law—the teaching of the New Testament.

When Paul wrote a letter to the Galatian churches, he emphasized that they were to obey the Gospel

and not be diverted to any other (1:6-9). The Gospel that Paul preached came by revelation of Jesus Christ (1:17). He insisted that Christians live under a law that is distinct from the laws that both Jews and Gentiles lived under before Christ came (2:14ff.; 3:17,23,25). Once Christ died on the cross, the covenant given at Mt. Sinai was ended (4:24ff.). In fact, for a Christian to try to be saved by God by obeying the Jewish covenant is to be cut off from Christ and to fall from grace (5:4).

So today, we are to “fulfill the law of Christ” (6:2). That means we must study the New Testament in order to find out how God wants us to live. We should also study our Old Testaments, and learn from the principles there. But we need to remember that the Old Testament laws were given to Jews and Gentiles before Christ came. It is not the same law that Christians are under today.



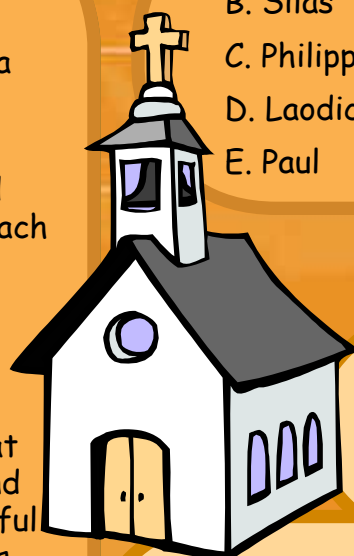
ACTIVITY PAGES

MATCHING

- _____ A phrase used to describe the first division of history
- _____ Law that God gave the Israelites
- _____ The period of history that began at Mt. Sinai
- _____ Paul wrote to these people about the joy of serving Jesus and pressing toward the goal
- _____ The law that replaced both the Patriarchal Law and the Mosaic law
- _____ This church lost its "first love"
- _____ The disciples were called "Christians" for the first time in this city
- _____ Barnabas went with this man on his first major missionary journey
- _____ The apostle Paul took this man with him on his second missionary journey
- _____ These Christians were lukewarm

TRUE OR FALSE

- _____ The letter to the church at Philippi was very negative.
- _____ The church at Ephesus possessed a dedicated love for Jesus when the church began.
- _____ The love we have for Christ should become deeper and greater with each passing day.
- _____ The church at Antioch sent Peter and Barnabas on their first major missionary journey.
- _____ We should imitate the Christians at Antioch by teaching our friends and neighbors, and by supporting faithful missionaries to go to distant places.
- _____ The church of Christ should tolerate Christians who are living in sin.
- _____ The church at Laodicea was fully devoted to Christ.
- _____ A "half-way" Christian is just as lost as a non-Christian.



- | | |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| A. Mosaic Period | F. Antioch of Syria |
| B. Silas | G. Law of Christ |
| C. Philippians | H. Ephesus |
| D. Laodiceans | I. Law of Moses |
| E. Paul | J. Patriarchal Period |

ON A SEPARATE SHEET OF PAPER

1. Explain what it means when the Bible says that the Christians in Ephesus had left their "first love."
2. How should the church treat Christians who are living in sin (remember 1 Corinthians 5)?

FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. The Gospel that Paul preached came by _____ of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:17).
2. For a Christian to try to be saved by God by obeying the Jewish covenant is to be cut off from Christ and to fall from _____ (Galatians 5:4).
3. "Because I have you in my _____, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the _____, you all are partakers with me of grace. For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the _____ of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:8).
4. "I have this against you, that you have left your first _____. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; _____ and do the first works" (Ephesians 2:4-5).
5. A person _____ when he or she violates a commandment of God.

Dear Digger Doug,

Is there anything negative in the letter Paul wrote to the Philippians?

Dear reader,

When Paul wrote to the culturally-diverse Philippian church, he showed his great love for them. Paul thought of them often, was concerned about their spiritual condition, and prayed for them regularly. The theme of Paul's letter is the joy of serving Jesus and pressing toward the goal. In Paul's letter, there is one instance where he helps solve a disagreement between two Christian women (Philippians 4:2-3). This struggle was affecting the whole church, and, without taking sides, Paul encouraged them to be reconciled.

Even though Paul was in prison while writing this letter, he showed his gratitude to the Philippians and his joy in God. Paul took every possible opportunity given to him to spread his delight concerning Christ. Paul's purpose for writing this letter was to encourage and boost confidence among the Christians. Paul wrote: "Because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:8). Other than the one disagreement Paul helped to resolve, the letter to the church at Philippi was very positive. It was a great church.





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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

ANTIOCH: A MISSION-MINDED CHURCH

CALEB COLLEY

The disciples were called “Christians” for the first time at Antioch of Syria, fulfilling Isaiah’s prophecy that God would give His people a new name (Acts 11:26; Isaiah 62:2). The faithful disciples in Antioch lived up to this name by doing several important things. They spoke to Hellenists (Greeks) about salvation through Christ. “And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord” (11:21). They also sent money to poor Christians in Judea. Each Christian at Antioch did what he could to serve God.

The church of Christ at Antioch is best known for its support of three major missionary efforts to teach Gentiles (see Acts 13:1-3). The brethren at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey, which resulted in new congregations in the lands around the Mediterranean Sea. Paul and Barnabas went back to Antioch, reported on their missionary efforts, and remained there and preached for a time.

Then, the church sent Paul and Silas on the second mission campaign, during which they encouraged the new Christians in the places where Paul had worked during the first journey (Acts 15:36-18:22). Paul and Silas (with Timothy and Luke) also established new congregations in Philippi and Corinth

before Paul returned to Antioch. Paul’s third missionary journey from Antioch was his longest. For four or five years, Paul, Timothy, Erastus, and Luke ministered to young congregations and started new ones (19:1-21:14). Paul also dealt with Jewish teachers who were distorting the truth of the Gospel, and wrote letters to address problems in the church. For nearly three years, Paul worked in Ephesus, but was unable to return to Antioch.

We should imitate the Christians at Antioch by teaching our friends and neighbors, and by supporting faithful missionaries to go to distant places. These good people will help lost souls and encourage Christians, just as Paul and his traveling companions did about 2,000 years ago.



ANSWERS

FILL IN THE BLANKS: 1. revelation; 2. grace; 3. heart; gospel; affection; 4. love; repent; 5. sins.
 MATCHING: 1. J (Patarchal Period); 2. I (Patarchal Period); 3. A (Mosaic Period); 4. C (Philippians); 5. G (Law of Christ); 6. H (Ephesians); 7. F (Antioch of Syria); 8. E (Paul); 9. B. (Silas); 10. D (Laodiceans). TRUE OR FALSE: 1-F; 2-T; 3-T; 4-F; 5-T; 6-F; 7-F; 8-T.