

What Others are Saying about
Devotional Treasures from the Holy Land

The Bible was not meant just to be studied; it was meant to be lived. It is the story of an engaging God and is set in real places with real men and women. Pastor DeLancey offers a taste of the stage of the Bible but stays close to the real purposes behind the narrative—not a history lesson of information but a personal exploration of transformation! The concise blend of information and heart-tugging devotional material will make this a “must” resource for those who travel to Israel and want to deepen their walk of faith.

—**Randall Smith, Ph.D.**
Christian Travel Study Programs

Part travelogue, part devotional guide, this intriguing combination will bring the pages of the Bible to life as you’ve never seen them before. Beyond facts and artifacts, Dr. DeLancey weaves a rich tapestry of Biblical history, culture, and faith. With his extensive experience as a guide in the Holy Land, he helps you understand not just the what and where—plenty of other books do that—but also the who, how, and why of Biblical places as few others can. A thoroughly enjoyable—and necessary—book that you’ll want to look at again and again (especially while reading your Bible).

—**Thomas B. Tribelhorn, D.Min., Ph.D.**
Seminary Professor and Author
www.MyProfessorSays.com

Years of teaching in Israel have made John DeLancey’s *Devotional Treasures* a useful guide to the land of the Bible. Site by site, travelers discover the rich history and culture of each place and meditate on the deeper meaning of their experience in the Land.

—**Lois Tverberg, Co-author**
Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus:
How the Jewishness of Jesus Can Transform Your Faith

Pastor DeLancey has gifted us all with this wonderful book that doubles as a biblical sites and spiritual guidebook of Israel. Written from a pastor’s point of view, he provides spiritual and moral teachings for every site and region of biblical and modern-day Israel. The uniqueness of this book makes it a valuable resource for anyone touring the biblical sites in Israel!

Shlomo Ben-Asher, Licensed Israeli Guide

DEVOTIONAL
TREASURES
— FROM THE —
HOLY LAND

*Encountering God through Scripture, Archaeology,
and Historical Geography of Israel*

JOHN DELANCEY



SILVERTON, OR

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For more information about personally visiting Israel
and other lands of the Bible with Dr. DeLancey,
visit **www.biblicalisrael tours.com**.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe my love for Israel to a few people. From the onset, I thank my parents, who traveled frequently to Israel themselves when I was just a kid growing up in a small town in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Whether touring or participating on an archaeological dig, they always came home with a new set of slides that the family would watch together in the living room of our home. I thank my mom and dad for this initial impression of the land of the Bible upon my heart.

I also want to enthusiastically thank Jim Monson, my historical geography professor and all-time favorite professor during my year of study at the *Institute of Holy Land Studies* in Jerusalem (now called *Jerusalem University College*). My love for studying the Bible “in context” blossomed under his contagious excitement for the land. Marking our *Student Map Manuals* in a classroom setting, followed by going out and hiking up many a hill and *tel* (an ancient site), was the best way to learn the history and physical setting of the Bible. The Bible came alive in incredible ways! Field trips were always an adventure with Jim. His enthusiasm in pointing out the uniqueness and intricacies of each region of the land never tired. I appreciated his ability to make the stories of the Bible unfold before our very eyes, marking an added impression upon my life to be a life-long student of the Bible.

As for the writing of this ministry resource, I am thankful to those who encouraged me to pursue this endeavor. There have been many who have traveled with me over the years who have suggested to me that I put some of the insights I share while on tour into the form of a book. I am abundantly thankful to those who served as editors and proofreaders as well. They have donated their time towards this cause; one that I hope will bless many people in their journey of faith and through their own personal interaction with the living Word of God.

Lastly, I want to thank my wife, Sue, and our children, Joel, Hannah, and Rachel, as well as the churches I have served, for permitting me to pursue my “Israel ministry.” Lastly and most importantly, I want to thank my wife, Sue, and our children, Joel, Hannah, and Rachel, as well as the Calvary Covenant Church (Evansville, MN) and the Stoneridge Covenant Church (Allison Park, PA), for permitting (embracing and encouraging) me to pursue my “Israel ministry.”

Ultimately, may we all acknowledge that the God of the Bible longs to be the God of our lives. May this book be used of God to bring the world of the Bible that much closer to you who read it. As a result, may this book bring you one step closer to God and deepen your own faith in Jesus Christ.

FOREWORD

Everyone who has an interest in the history and archaeology of the Bible will welcome this sound, straightforward devotional guide to the ancient sites of the Holy Land. Dr. DeLancey brings to the table careful research and years of first-hand interaction with the land, and experience as a pastor and masterful tour leader. Posters with the words “DeLancey Group” have graced many a bus in Israel, Egypt, and Jordan for nearly two decades. Hence, this is not just another devotional book; *Devotional Treasures from the Holy Land* is a unique devotional guide to be enjoyed by those on tour in Israel – and those who can only take the trip using their mind’s eye.

In the world in which we live, there is a God-ordained correlation between the particulars of the biblical text in reference to the human events of the past, the historical geography of the Bible, archaeology, the transcendent and unchanging God of the Bible, *and you*. For this reason the land of Israel bids you to explore your rich and extensive spiritual heritage. “This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are *heirs together with Israel*, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 3:6)

This book bridges the oft artificially created canyon between biblical historical geography and theology. Pastor John helps his readers embrace both the historical and spiritual aspects of their journey. With a minimum of technical jargon, he uniquely blends detailed sketches of the biblical sites with careful informed analyses, followed by relevant spiritual applications.

Whether you read these treasures on location in Israel or from your armchair at home, I wholeheartedly recommend this book to you.

Tom Tribelhorn, D.Min., Ph.D.
Seminary Professor in Judaeo-Christian Studies

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INTRODUCTION

Knowing the land of Israel offers a unique perspective on Scripture. Understanding the context in which the stories of the Bible take place grants unparalleled insights into the text. Learning the “lay of the land” helps develop a “3-D view” of Scripture itself, bringing the Bible alive and the stories closer to our heart.

Reading the Bible isn’t just about gaining a deeper intellectual understanding of the land or the ancient text. It is also about looking for a spiritual value that touches the heart. When we explore the Scriptures, our walk with God is transformed. We may read a biblical narrative and discover something about the nature of God or uncover a biblical truth or practical lesson we can apply to our walk of faith. Each story in Scripture has the potential to impact our lives in a spiritual way.

There are many helpful informative books written about Israel, its history, and the many archaeological sites that can be visited. It is my hope that this book, with its devotional component, will uniquely engage and inspire a deeper walk with God. To achieve this goal, each of the 68 chapters is written with a devotional thought gleaned directly from the archaeological, historical, and geographical background each site or region has to offer. Each chapter will offer a concise, informational overview of a particular site. But the ultimate focus is the *devotional treasures* to be excavated. By attributing a primary biblical narrative to each site, I hope that this book will offer a spiritually refreshing and transforming experience that will help you apply the living Word of God to your life.

The study of archaeology and historical geography is a necessity for the student of the Bible who wishes to gain a more thorough appreciation of the Scriptures. Having studied archaeology in Israel, as well as having excavated there, I can attest to the undeniable value of uncovering an ancient wall, jar, or inscription that brings a biblical narrative alive. We can thank

those in the archaeological field who spend countless unglamorous hours compiling and sharing the evidence that conveys a clearer understanding of the Bible. Yet, as followers of Christ, there is more to discipleship than simply obtaining knowledge about a particular site or even about the Bible itself. Our walk of faith matures when we reflect on the God of the Bible.

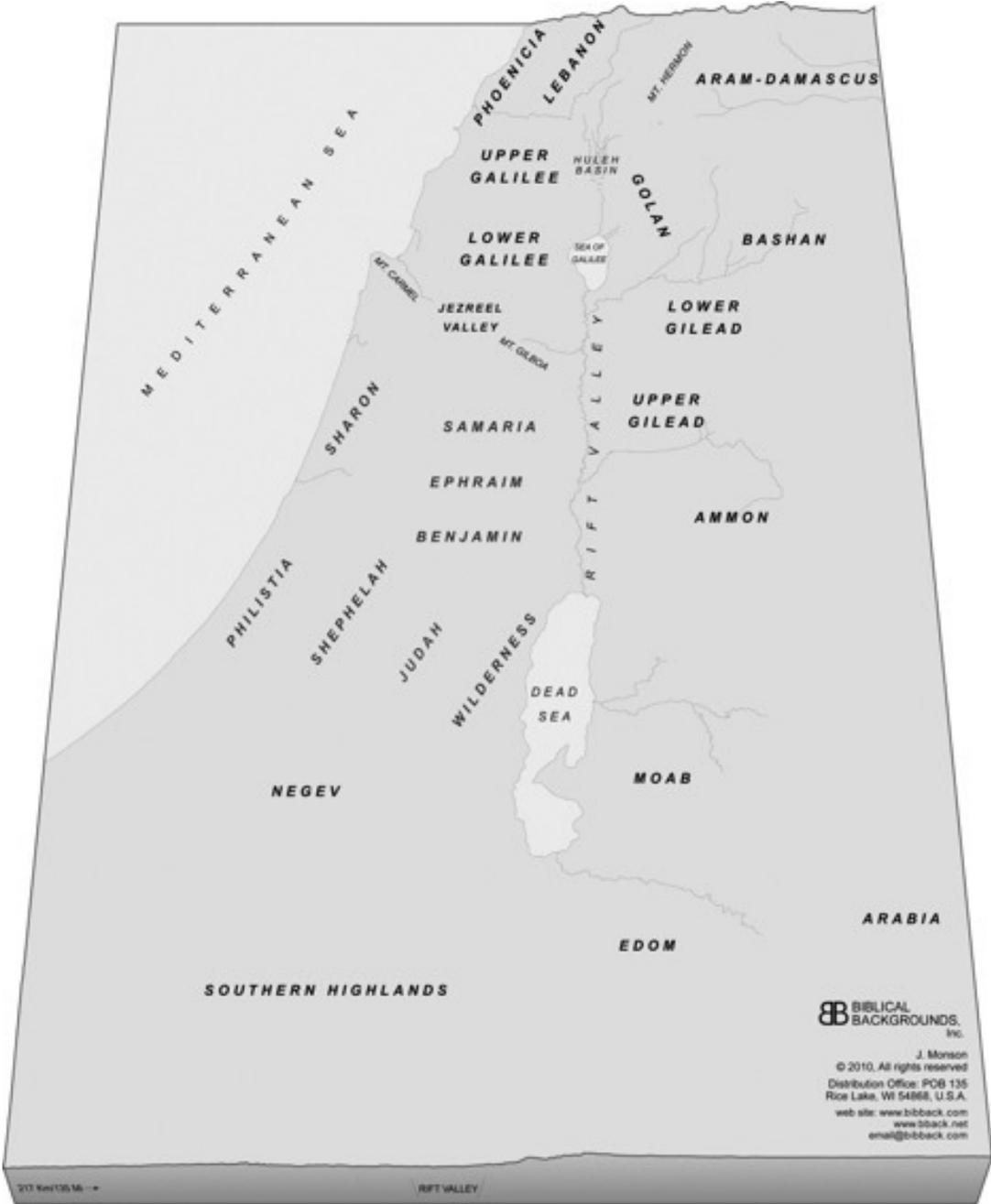
Many of the biblical sites and regions explored in this book are commonly visited by most tours. I have also chosen to feature a number of “off-the-beaten-path” sites that most tours do not include in their itineraries. I have even included a few impressive non-biblical sites. Despite not being mentioned in the Bible, a devotional thought can be gleaned from their exploration.

As a Christian pastor who regularly leads life-changing tours to Israel, I wrote this book unapologetically from a Christian perspective. I trust it provides a wonderful devotional resource for those of you who, at some point in your spiritual journey, have the privilege of traveling to the land of the Bible. I hope you will find this book as the perfect companion as you experience Israel firsthand. While this book will help you become familiar with the archaeological, historical, and geographical background of each site, I pray that the blending of the biblical text with the devotional thought will deeply impact your life as a follower of Christ.

For many followers of Jesus who may never have the privilege of experiencing Israel firsthand, it is my prayer that this book will benefit you as well. May this book provide not only a “distance learning” understanding of the sites of the Bible, but also an inspirational opportunity to grow more deeply in your relationship with Christ.

May you discover the *timeless treasures* of the Bible along the way.

THE LAND OF THE BIBLE



MAP DESCRIPTION

This is a map of Israel. The map lists each region of the land of the Bible. Each region is unique in its topography. It would be useful for you to use this regional map as a reference for each site devotional. This map was produced by Jim Monson, my former historical geography professor in Jerusalem.

For those who would like to continue their ‘exploration’ of this unique land called Israel, I would suggest that you visit *Biblical Backgrounds* (www.bibback.com). The current work being done would no doubt would interest you. There you will find specific study materials in the form of map books and large-format detailed maps. The site also offers free downloadable ‘guides,’ (text documents in a PDF format) which instruct you as the user in map marking, with discussions and references to texts from the Bible and related sources. One study shows how the land of the Bible ‘works’ within the context of the land’s regions, routes and events. Another study concentrates upon the physical settings of the land. Students, pastors and Christian workers around the world use these materials, and I incorporate some of these materials in each of my trips to Israel.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL TIME PERIODS

The following dates are being used in this book to define the various archaeological time periods. Please know that slight variations in the dating of these periods exist in scholarship today. The more traditional “BC” and “AD” are also used instead of the “BCE” and “CE” categories often found in scholarship and secular settings.

4500-3500 BC	Chalcolithic
3500-2000 BC	Early Bronze
2000-1550 BC	Middle Bronze Age
1550-1200 BC	Late Bronze Age
1200-1000 BC	Iron Age I (Early Iron Age)
1000-586 BC	Iron Age II
586-539 BC	Babylonian
539-332 BC	Persian
332-167 BC	Early Hellenistic
167-37 BC	Hasmonean
37 BC-AD 132	Early Roman
AD 132-324	Late Roman
AD 324-638	Byzantine
AD 638-1099	Early Islamic
AD 1099-1291	Crusader
AD 1250-1517	Mamluke
AD 1517-1917	Ottoman (Turkish)
AD 1917-1948	British Mandate of Palestine
1948-present	State of Israel



Acco

A Safe Harbor

Region: Lower Galilee

Scripture: *The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid? When evil men advance against me to devour my flesh, when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall. Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident. One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple. For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock (Psalm 27:1-5).*

Welcome

Harbors are gathering places for boats and ships. Harbors also protect vessels, providing a safe haven for those seeking refuge from stormy waters. In the ancient world, harbors were made of stone and were typically well fortified, providing a port of entry for travelers from afar. Throughout the centuries of biblical history, Israel had several harbors along its coastline that served the sailing vessels of the Mediterranean Sea.

The harbor at this northern shoreline city cannot boast of a rich biblical history, yet it served as the primary ancient port for the region of Galilee. It was used to receive important people such as Alexander the Great, Caesar

Augustus and Vespasian. Today, the harbor's impressive sea walls still stand. Welcome to a Mediterranean coastline city located 15 miles north of Haifa and the Carmel Range. Welcome to a city that was redeveloped by the Crusaders and became the most significant harbor in the region. Welcome to a city inhabited by both Jews and Arabs. Welcome to Acco!

The Context

Acco is mentioned only twice in Scripture. It was a Canaanite city during the days of Joshua's Conquest, and is mentioned in Judges 1:31 as one of the cities the Israelites did not conquer. Acco held great importance on the trade route between Egypt and Syria, eclipsed in significance during Roman times only by Caesarea. During the Divided Kingdom era, the city was politically aligned with the Phoenicians. During the New Testament era, Acco (known now since the Hellenistic Period by its Greek name, Ptolemais) was visited by Paul upon his return from his third missionary journey (Acts 21:7).

Once Caesarea (the Roman port located 30 miles to the south) lost its vitality due to its port filling up with silt in the Seventh Century AD, Acco's harbor regained its significance. In AD 1104, Acco (then known as Acre) was conquered by the Crusaders. It became the most important port city of the Crusader Empire. They used local kurkar sandstone to expand the city with huge walls and towers. Portions of these walls, some 10 feet wide, have been found. The harbor was also redesigned, with the city wall extended southward into the sea, serving as a breakwater. Underground halls (called "Knight Halls") and tunnels have also been discovered. Archaeological excavations have uncovered some 350 rare pieces of marble dating to this time period, attesting to the city's prominence in international trade.

When Jerusalem fell to Saladin in AD 1187, Acco fell too. However, under the leadership of Richard the Lionheart, Acco was retaken four years later. Crusader control of the city continued another 100 years until it succumbed to the Mamluk Conquest in AD 1291. Later, the Turks used the remnants of these earlier Crusader walls as a foundation for reinforcing the city ramparts. Many of the impressive walls that can be seen today date to this Turkish Period. Much of the Crusader city is still underground.

Scriptural Reflection

Today, Acco stands as an impressive walled city. For centuries, this coastal city provided not only an entry point into the land of Israel, but also a refuge to many a weary traveler. People came and went from this port, finding opportunities for rest between voyages.

Given the challenges of finding rest and safety in the midst of the busyness of life, the believer finds shelter and solace in God. One of the joys of walking by faith is discovering the safe haven of God's promises. When we entrust our voyage of life to God's care, He "harbors" us within the protective walls of His precious promises. As a sailing vessel finds safety from the wind and waves of the open sea, the believer finds retreat and rest.

The psalmist's words echo the promise of God in caring for us, "Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge" (Psalm 16:1). Likewise the Book of Proverbs states, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe" (Proverbs 18:10). God delights in serving as a strong tower for those who entrust their lives to his care.

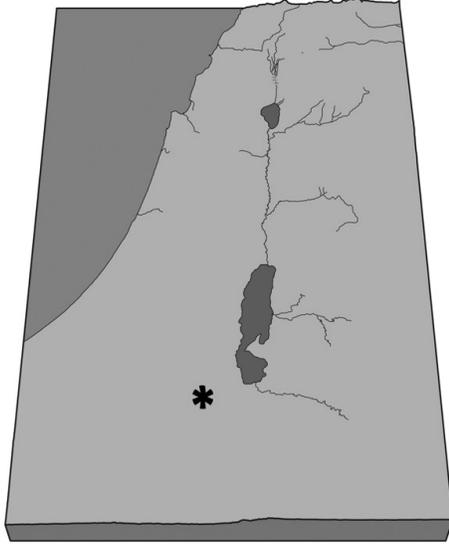
The apostle Paul experienced the loneliness of serving God in a harsh and hostile world. During the course of his missionary journeys, Paul encountered God's personal care in standing by him when everyone else deserted him. He wrote to Timothy,

But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen (2 Timothy 4:17-18).

Paul was encouraged in his ministry by knowing firsthand of the surrounding shelter of God's presence. He found rest and renewed strength because he abided within the safe harbor of God's care, and in the knowledge of His precious promises (2 Peter 1:3-4).

Treasure Thought and Personal Application

Finding safety and rest in God in the midst of trouble requires anchoring our souls in His promises. If the uncertain waves of life are pressing upon you, be sure to discover anew the grace of God that allows you to abide safely in Him. In the day of trouble, God will keep your soul safe. He will be your shelter.



Arad

God's Dramatic Reform

Region: The Negev

Scripture: *Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left. In the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David. In his twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of high places, Asherah poles, carved idols and cast images. Under his direction the altars of the Baals were torn down; he cut to pieces the incense altars that were above them, and smashed the Asherah poles, the idols and the images. These he broke to pieces and scattered over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. He burned the bones of the priests on their altars, and so he purged Judah and Jerusalem. In the towns of Manasseh, Ephraim and Simeon, as far as Naphtali, and in the ruins around them, he tore down the altars and the Asherah poles and crushed the idols to powder and cut to pieces all the incense altars throughout Israel. Then he went back to Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 34:1-7).*

Welcome

When God brings about renewal among His people, He often times does it in dramatic ways. Confronting the sins of people may be one of the most difficult things a spiritual leader does. Because of this, God uses the boldness of His people to accomplish His will.

The southern region of Israel called the Negev has become a developed region of Israel. New techniques in irrigation have been discovered that make it possible for this region to sustain a growing population because this region receives only a few inches of rain a year. Welcome to the region familiar to the Patriarchs of Israel: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Welcome to a city that tells a story of renewal. Welcome to Arad!

The Context

Arad was a city strategically located in this southern region of Israel. The city controlled ancient trade routes. Archaeologists discovered fortification walls and structures. In addition to the impressive fortification that encircled the lower city from earlier periods (Early Bronze Period, 3500–2000 Century BC), dwellings called broad room houses were found in the lower city. These have been called the “Arad House” by archaeologists, setting a standard size and dimension for the style of house found from this time period. Nearly 1,500 years following the initial establishment of Arad, the Israelites developed the upper portion of the city (called The Citadel) in the 11th Century BC.

In 1962 an impressive temple was discovered in this upper city. The temple was built in similar proportions to Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem (about 75 miles north of Arad in the Hill Country of Judah). It paints an accurate picture of the dilemma of disobedience that the people of God were facing. The temple found here was quite complete, with an altar of sacrifice as well as an inner court or Holy of Holies area. The entrance into the inner court of the temple was marked by two standing stones (called *massebot* in Hebrew), with an addition of two incense altars nearby. The names attributed to similar stones were *Jachin* (*Jakin, NIV*) and *Boaz* (1 Kings 7:21 and 2 Chronicles 3:17). Indeed for the Israelites this temple made worship convenient. It avoided the necessary trip to Jerusalem. But oh, how wrong!

Scriptural Encounter

Mosaic Law prohibited any kind of worship center built outside Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 12). Built during the Divided Kingdom, this

temple at Arad probably marked the practice of a corrupt form of worship, possibly even the worship of two deities: *Yahweh* and *Asherah*, a pagan goddess. Not only did God condemn the building of a worship center apart from Jerusalem, but He also condemned the dual worship of these two deities. This certainly crossed the line.

Enter Josiah. Not tolerating this corrupt form of worship, Josiah brought a quick end to this corrupt religious practice. The archaeological evidence suggests this. What Josiah apparently did to prevent any further use of this unlawful southern temple was to construct a separate stone wall right through the middle of the temple, thus bringing an end to this abomination. With this bold decision, Josiah completed the spiritual reform that Hezekiah started in Judah 100 years before.

Josiah knew God's heart. God longed for His people to return to Him with love and devotion. With passion and resolve in seeking God from an early age (2 Chronicles 34:3), Josiah longed for true reform to take root in Judah. Given the remarkable discovery of the Book of the Law (by Hilkiah) in the restoration project of the true Jerusalem temple (2 Chronicles 34:15), the purifying process continued in dramatic form. The scene in Jerusalem must have been unforgettable. The last section of 2 Chronicles 34 records this scene,

He went up to the temple of the LORD with the men of Judah, the people of Jerusalem, the priests and the Levites—all the people from the least to the greatest. He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant, which had been found in the temple of the Lord. The king stood by his pillar and renewed the covenant in the presence of the Lord -to follow the Lord and keep his commands, regulations and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, and to obey the words of the covenant written in this book (2 Chronicles 34:30-31).

When God brings reform to our lives, He often times takes us by the hand and brings about renewal one step at a time. He uses His inspired Word in similar ways. As the Apostle Paul says, ultimately it is the Word of

God that has a way of “*teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness*” (2 Timothy 3:16).

Josiah’s reforms were dramatic in scale. They were initiated quickly and soundly. Purification of hearts was the result. God’s covenant was renewed. Obedience to God returned.

At times, God initiates dramatic change in our lives by the role of His Holy Word and through the His Holy Spirit. As God worked in Josiah’s heart to bring reform to God’s people, He also works in ours. Spiritual renewal comes to us as we learn to yield our will to His. In fact, this yielding of our will is required.

God also has a way of getting our attention quickly. Sometimes it’s with direct revelation that He chooses to clearly reveal to us the areas of our lives that need refinement. It’s as if God takes a black magic marker and draws a line down the middle of the page, and says, “You have a choice to make: “Honor Me or not. Make your choice.” While we are thankful for the times when God works like this, we can be equally grateful for the ever-so-patient ways God displays grace toward us, too. God knows how we often need to take baby steps toward reaching our goal of being like Christ. God does not deal with us legalistically. What He desires from us is a purified heart (2 Corinthians 7:1).

The expression “God isn’t through with me yet” comes into play every time we find a part of our spiritual walk in need of evaluation. Hence, in each of us there is a need for reform. This means changing our ways when the situation calls for us to do so. We need to evaluate, discern, and change our way of life, if necessary, in order to conform to the ways of God.

If we are honest with ourselves, we are all guilty to some extent of setting up our own worship centers. Greed and pride often serve as the standing stones at the entrance of the inner court of our heart. It can lead to idolatry. Paul exhorts us to put to death “*greed, which is idolatry*” (Colossians 3:5). The truth is we are all too inclined, at times, to worship things like our material possessions, or self. We are all prone to get distracted from loving God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30).

Yet God rescues us from this practice by gently tearing down the walls that separate us from an intimate love-relationship with Him.

Treasure Thought and Personal Application

God is delighted when He sees within you a purified heart. It is only when your heart is right with Him that you can truly worship and live your life as a “*living sacrifice*” unto Him (Romans 12:1). Allow God to tear down any wall built within the temple of your heart that does not allow you to honor Him. Strive for purity!