

CHAPTER 9

BIBLE MEASUREMENTS (OF LENGTH, DISTANCE, CAPACITY, WEIGHT, VALUE AND TIME)

Measurements of Length

We all know what an inch is and what a foot and a yard is, but what is a cubit and a span and a handbreadth? We are familiar with a yardstick, a ruler and a tape measure, but people in Bible times did not use these things to measure length.

Did you know that a man's body can be used as a ruler or a yardstick? Let's see how this works:

Handbreadth	<p>This was the width of the four fingers closely pressed together, between three and four inches. See Exodus 37:12. Consider the length of a standard piece of paper (eight and a half inches by eleven inches). How many handbreadths long is this sheet of paper? _____</p> <p>Is the length of my life (all of my days put together) very long (see Psalm 39:5)? _____ Life is very short!</p>
Span	<p>This was the width from the end of the thumb to that of the little finger, when these are extended, which for an adult is about nine inches. See Exodus 28:16 (the breastplate of the priest). The width of a standard piece of paper should be about a half inch less than one span.</p>
Cubit	<p>This was the length of the arm from the point of the elbow to the end of the middle finger, which for an adult is about 18 inches (1½ feet). Measure one of your classmates and see how many cubits tall he (or she) is. How many spans make up one cubit? _____ It is interesting that one span equals half a cubit! How tall was Goliath the giant (1 Samuel 17:4)? _____</p> <p>How big was the bed described in Deuteronomy 3:11? _____</p>
Measuring Reed	<p>This was an actual plant, the calamus or sweet cane which from its shape and length came to be used as a measure. See Ezekiel 40:3,5. In verse 5 the length of this reed is said to be six cubits, each of which was of the length of a cubit and a handbreadth, thus 6 cubits and 6 handbreadths (nearly 11 feet).</p>

How Do You Measure Up?

Suppose the basketball coach were to say, "Only those who are five feet and ten inches or taller can be on the team." Would you measure up or would you come short? Would you be able to be on the team? Or a teacher might say, "Only those who have a 90 average or higher can get an A in this class!" Not all the students would measure up to this high standard and requirement!

God has a very high requirement when it comes to entering heaven. God says, "Only those who are as righteous as My Son, Jesus Christ, may enter My holy heaven!" How many of us are righteous (Romans 3:10)? _____ Do you measure up to God's righteous requirement or do you come short (Romans 3:23)? _____

How can any of us enter into God's holy heaven? God has made a way for us to be just as righteous as His Son: "For He hath made Him (Jesus Christ) to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the _____ of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). In ourselves we are sinful and unrighteous and we would never measure up, but IN CHRIST we are perfectly righteous and God sees us as perfectly righteous! Are you IN CHRIST and saved or are you OUTSIDE OF CHRIST and unsaved (see 2 Corinthians 5:17)?

MEASURES OF DISTANCE

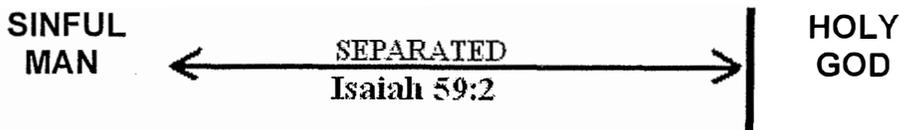
We usually measure distance in terms of miles (one American mile=5280 feet or 1760 yards). In Bible times this was done differently. Here are some examples:

<p>Furlong</p>	<p>(Greek-<i>stadion</i>) This was a distance of about 600 feet (less than one eighth of a mile). How far was Emmaus from Jerusalem (Luke 24:13 and remember that a "score" equals twenty)? _____ About how far had the disciples rowed (John 6:19)? _____</p>
<p>Mile</p>	<p>(Greek-<i>milion</i>) Those living in New Testament times also measured distance by using the "mile" but this mile was 1618 yards (eight furlongs) which is a little less than our American mile (1760 yards). See Matthew 5:41.</p>
<p>Sabbath Day's Journey</p>	<p>This was based on Exodus 16:29 which did not allow excessive travel on the Sabbath day of rest. Jewish legislators determined that the Sabbath day's journey would be 2000 cubits or 5 furlongs (more than 1/2 mile). How far was the mount of Olives from Jerusalem (Acts 1:12)? _____</p>
<p>A Day's Journey</p>	<p>This was the distance a person could normally travel in one day, ordinarily 20 to 30 miles, but when traveling in a large company (with women and children), only ten miles. See Exodus 3:18. How far did Joseph and Mary travel before they realized that Jesus was missing (Luke 2:44)? _____</p>

How Can You Get To God?

You might be separated from your grandparents or other relatives by a great distance. Perhaps they live on the other side of the United States which means that thousands of miles might separate you from them! How can you get to them? You must get in a car, bus, train or plane and travel that great distance.

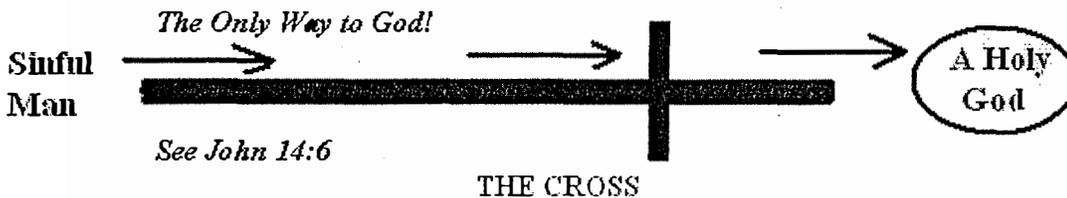
Because of sin, man is separated from God:



How can man get to God? There is no plane or rocket ship that will get him there! How can man and God be brought together?

The Bible says that God is "not _____ from every one of us" (Acts 17:27). God is present everywhere, but how can sinful man get to God? Radio and television waves are always present in a room, but if you do not have a radio or television, you cannot pick these waves up. The radio or television must be plugged in and rightly connected in order to get the sound or the picture. God is not far from any of us, but the problem is that most people are not connected to God in the right way.

There is only one way to get to God: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the _____, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but (except) by _____" (John 14:6).



Only through the Saviour, Jesus Christ, can man be connected to God in the right way!

MEASURES OF CAPACITY

Dry Measures

In America we use bushels, pecks, quarts and pints for dry measures. Here are some of the measures that were used in Bible times:

Handful	This was the natural capacity of the human hand (as when someone passes you a large bag of popcorn and tells you to take a handful!). See Leviticus 2:2.
Omer	An omer was equivalent to 5.1 pints. How much manna did God provide for each man daily (Exodus 16:16)? _____

Ephah	this was equal to 10 omers (see Exodus 16:36) or 3 pecks and 3 pints. How much food was David told to bring for his brothers (1 Samuel 17:17)?
Homer	Originally this term signified an ass load (the amount a donkey could carry), which would be less than eight bushels. About how many bushels of quail did the Israelites gather who gathered the least (Numbers 11:32)? _____
Bushel	Greek-Modius)--about one peck or 1/4 of American bushel. What is one thing that should never be done with a bushel (Matthew 5:15)? _____

Liquid Measures

(American: gallon=4 quarts; a quart=2 pints)

In America we use gallons, quarts and pints for liquid measures. Here are some of the measures that were used in Bible times:

Log	This was less than one half of a pint (see Leviticus 14:10 -- "a log of oil")
Hin	This was nearly six pints (or three quarts). About how much water should the prophet Ezekiel drink (Ezekiel 4:11)? _____
Bath	This was the largest liquid measure used by the Jews in the Old Testament. Its capacity was close to six or eight gallons. How much water filled the "sea" (huge vessel or basin) which Solomon built for the temple (1 Kings 7:26)? _____
Firkin	(Greek-Metretes) This was about nine gallons (perhaps slightly less). About how many gallons did each waterpot contain in John 2:6? _____

Dry and Liquid Measures

In view of what you have just learned about dry and liquid measures used in the Bible, what is the meaning of Isaiah 5:10? _____ Do you think this made the people happy?

How Much Do You Contain?

Do you contain anything valuable? Your body has about ten pints of blood, 200 bones, 600 muscles and much more! But do you contain anything else?

If we are really saved, then the Bible says, "_____ dwelleth in us" (1 John 4:12). Every believer contains the living God! He fills us with Himself! This is amazing when we remember

that even the great temple which Solomon built and even the UNIVERSE cannot contain such a big and such a great God (see 2 Chronicles 6:18)! And yet God is willing to put Himself within every believer and make our heart His home!

How much of God do you contain? Does each believer have just a little piece of God? No, we are not filled with a little part, we are filled with "all the _____ of God" (Ephesians 3:19). We do not have a small part of God; we have ALL OF GOD! Within every believer there is a great treasure (2 Corinthians 4:7) -- the living God Himself!

If the President were going to stay in your house for a week, would that change the way you live? Would you want to be on your best behavior? Would you want him to see you fighting with your brothers and sisters? Would you want to respect your honored guest and please him in every way? God is the honored Guest who has come to live in the heart of every believer! If we really believe this, then this should make a big difference in the way we live (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

MEASURES OF WEIGHT

The Hebrews used weights and measures to weigh valuable metals and other commodities. When we measure weight, we usually talk about ounces or pounds or tons. The Jews in Old Testament times would talk of shekels and talents:

Shekel	The weight of a shekel varied, but it was usually from one third to one half of an ounce. For example, one shekel of silver would be a piece of silver which weighed about 1/3 or 1/2 ounce. According to 2 Chronicles 1:17, how much was an Egyptian Chariot sold for? _____
Talent	This was the largest weight among the Hebrews. One talent was about 3000 shekels (about 90 pounds). As we can see from 2 Kings 5:23, a talent was the full weight that an able man could carry. Read 1 Kings 10:10; if one talent is the full weight that one man could carry, how many men would be needed to carry all of this gold to King Solomon? _____ In Revelation 16:21, what weighed one talent? _____ Would you want to be hit by one of these ice bombs? _____

How Much Do God's Commandments Weigh?

Some people think that God's commandments are too heavy and too burdensome. They say, "If I do what God tells me to do, I'll be a miserable person! What God expects me to do is too much! It's too heavy! It's too much for me to bear!"

This is not true at all. The Bible says the opposite: "His commandments are not _____ (heavy, burdensome)" (1 John 5:3). Jesus said, "My burden is _____" (Matthew 11:30). God has given us His commands, not to crush us, but to bless us: "And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes...for our _____ always" (Deuteronomy 6:24).

The people who are really miserable are the ones who disobey God's commands! It is SIN that puts a heavy load on people. We sing the song, "Once my heart was heavy with a **load of sin**; Jesus took the load and gave me peace within! Now I'm happy and here's the reason why: Jesus took my burden all away!"

MEASURES OF VALUE (MONEY)

We know what nickels, dimes, quarters and dollars are, but let us look at some of the coins mentioned in the Bible:

Farthing	(Greek-kodrantēs) This was the smallest <i>Roman</i> coin in use, equal in value to 1/64 of a denarius. It was also equivalent to two mites (see Mark 12:42). A denarius was the average wage that a worker would receive for a day's work. Suppose a man earned \$128.00 for a day's work. What would be the value of a farthing? _____
Mite	(Greek-lepta) This was the smallest Jewish coin in use and it was only worth half of a farthing (Mark 12:42). How many mites did the poor widow woman have (Mark 12:42)? _____ Was Jesus pleased with her offering? _____ Why?
Farthing	(Greek-assarion)--This is a different Greek word to describe another coin which was also of little value. Read Matthew 10:29 and Luke 12:6 and consider these words by Arthur T. Pierson concerning "the odd sparrow": If few men have ever been permitted so to trace in the smallest matters God's care over His children, it is partly because few have so completely abandoned themselves to that care. We must dare to trust Him, with whom the hairs of our head are all numbered, and who touchingly reminds us that He cares for what has been quaintly called "the odd sparrow." Matthew records (10:29) how 2 sparrows are sold for a farthing, and Luke (12:6) how five sparrows are sold for 2 farthings; and so it would appear that, when 2 farthings were offered, an odd sparrow was thrown in, as of so little value that it could be given away with the other four. And yet we see that even for that one sparrow, not worth taking into account in the bargain, GOD CARES. Not one sparrow is forgotten before God, or falls to the ground without His knowledge and consent: "Fear not, therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows"!
Penny	(Greek-denarion) This was the denarius (a Roman silver coin), which was the ordinary pay or wages for a day's labor (see Matthew 20:2,4,7, etc.). In John 12:5 this valuable ointment was worth 300 pence or denarii, which would be the average wage for 300 days of labor (almost what an average worker would earn in one year). If you think inflation is bad today, read Revelation 6:6 to see what it will be like in the tribulation!

How Valuable Are You?

There may be some people who do not think you are worth very much at all. You might have classmates at school who treat you in the wrong way as if you were worth nothing! People may consider you to be of no value at all.

Read Matthew 10:29-31. According to these verses, you are very valuable to

Usually if we make something, it has value to us. When a girl makes a beautiful sweater or when a boy builds a wooden sailboat, the person does not throw these things away as if they are worth nothing. They are valuable because the boy or girl has made them.

It is also true that if you buy something, it has a certain amount of value to you. If you buy a new bicycle, you would not take it to the dump and consider it of no value. It is valuable to you because you bought it and purchased it. If it had not been valuable to you and worth something to you, then you would not have bought it.

Has God made you (John 1:3)? _____ Has God bought you with a great price (1 Corinthians 6:20)? _____ Are you valuable to God? _____

Am I valuable? God has made a way for me to be just as righteous as His Son! Am I valuable? God has made a way for me (a sinful person) to get to Himself (a holy God)! Am I valuable? God Himself has come to live and dwell in my heart! Am I valuable? God has given me His Word and His Commands for MY GOOD ALWAYS!

MEASURES OF TIME

Year--	<p>The year is based on the changing of the seasons. Obviously in Bible times they did not have a B.C. and A.D. system like we do today. There was once a joke in which a fellow would ask his friend, "What would you do if you found a coin dated 137 B.C.?"</p> <p>In Bible times, years were reckoned in at least two different ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The year would often be reckoned from the beginning of a king's reign. See Luke 3:1 and 1 Kings 14:25; 15:1. 2. The year would often be reckoned from a well-known historical event: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Exodus (see Numbers 33:38; 1 Kings 6:1). b. The Babylonian captivity or exile (Ezekiel 33:21; 40:1). c. Today we reckon time from the birth of Christ: B.C.=before Christ; A.D.=Anno Domini (Latin expression which means "in the year of the Lord")
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Month--	The month is based on the phases of the moon. The names of the months were different than the names which we use today. For example, the first month was called Nisan, and the Passover was always celebrated in this month (see Lev. 23:5).
Week--	<p>The week is defined as the interval between two Sabbaths, and it is based on the original creation week (Genesis 1:1-2:3).</p> <p>The Sabbath was the 7th day of the week (Saturday)--see Genesis 2:1-3. The first day of the week (Luke 24:1) was Sunday. On what day did the early Christians meet together (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2)?</p> <p>_____</p>
Day--	<p>The day is a 24 hour period based on the day-night cycle. The Jews reckoned the day from sunset to sunset, that is, they would begin their new day at sunset ("from _____ to _____" Lev. 23:32). This custom apparently originated from creation: "and the _____ and the morning were the first _____" (Genesis 1:5). Today most Americans begin the new day at midnight.</p>
Hour--	<p>Possibly the hour is based upon a Babylonian method of dividing the daylight period into 12 equal parts. If the Jews began to count their hours at sunrise (6:00 a.m. being the "zero" hour), then when was Christ crucified (Mark 15:25)? _____ During what time was there darkness over all the earth (Matthew 27:45-46)?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>At what times were the different laborers called (Matthew 20:1,3,5,6)?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Note: The Romans counted time as we do today, so in John 19:14 the time described is about 6:00 a.m. (not 9:00 a.m.).</p>

This chapter has discussed only some of the more important measurements that are found in the Bible. There are many others. A Bible dictionary, a good Bible handbook, or even the notes in your own Bible will often give you helpful information on weights and measurements.

“LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am” (Psalm 39:4).

“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Psalm 90:12).