



“ROUTE 66”

This article has been condensed from a series of messages presented by Ralph Woodrow at River of Life Church, Indio, California.

Route 66, stretching from Chicago to Los Angeles, is probably the most famous highway in American history. Though now largely replaced with Interstate 40 and other freeways, segments of old Route 66 remain. Some purposely seek these out, drive on them for the nostalgia, sometimes in old cars of an earlier era.

Route 66 was “The Mother Road” in the classic 1940 movie “Grapes of Wrath” (cf. Rev. 14:18-20) which highlights the ventures of a family going to California to escape the Dust Bowl disaster.

Route 66 has provided the theme for a TV series, a variety of videos, and a hit song: “Get Your Kicks on Route 66.”

Cities and towns along this route where I have had the opportunity to hold meetings include: Darien (Chicago), Tulsa, Amarillo, Sanders (Indian Reservation), Flagstaff, Williams, Barstow, Victorville, San Bernardino, Fontana, Pasadena, and Los Angeles.

In their move from California, Missouri, to Riverside, California, this was the route my grandparents pursued in 1919. The family consisted of Edward (18 years old who drove), Freda, Emily, Alvin, Walter, Florence (my mother, the youngest), and Grandma and Grandpa.

Their car, similar in style to the one in the above drawing, had a windshield, but no rollup side windows, or numerous other features we take for granted today. Much of the road was unpaved, and some portions that were paved were only 9 feet wide. Especially in the long stretches of desert, places to eat, sleep, or use restroom facilities were minimal. My mother, who was only three at the time, remembered her mother telling the children to “find a bush.” It must have been quite an adventure!

But this message is not about a famous historic highway. Our “Route 66” is about a *spiritual* journey through the 66 books of the Bible, beginning, logically with the first book. Our trip will need to be quick, so stops along the way will be brief. *Let’s go!*

GENESIS. The name means “beginnings.” We notice the letters g-e-n in words like *generator* (electricity begins with a generator); *generation* (the beginning of a life, a birth) and even *regeneration* (born again).

Ray, a man I knew years ago, had opened his Bible and was starting to read the book of Genesis when a knock came on the door. With Bible in hand, he opened the door to be greeted by two men, Jehovah’s Witnesses. One of them wore very thick glasses and asked what he was reading. Ray told him it was the Bible. Holding it very close to his eyes, the man read: “In the beginning God. He looked up and said to Ray, “Well, that’s *one* thing we agree on!”

The first verse of Genesis is vibrant with *life*: the creation of heaven and earth; the last verse provides a striking *contrast*: “So Joseph *died*....they embalmed him, and he was put *in a coffin in Egypt*.”

EXODUS. Having long been slaves in Egypt, the “Exodus,” under Moses’ leadership, led the Israelites out of bondage. The *ex* in Exodus means *out from*. We see it used in words like export and exit. The second part, the *od* (as in our word odometer), means *movement away*.

A trivia question: What man broke *all* 10 commandments in one day? The answer is given in Exodus 32:15-19.

LEVITICUS. This title means “concerning the Levites” who were the priests of Israel, so named because they were the descendants of Levi, a son of Jacob and Leah, and grandfather of Moses. Some who attempt to read through the Bible, bog down with Leviticus because of all the rituals and sacrifices. While the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin (Heb. 10:4), these served as a picture of the reality to come: the one perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

NUMBERS. One of my favorite verses: “God is not a man that he should lie....Has he said and shall he not do it? Or has he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” (Num. 23:19). A few verses later, we read the famous words: “What hath God wrought?” “famous because they were the first words to be electronically transmitted by telegraph. This involved a 49-mile line extending from Washington D.C. to Baltimore, in 1844.

DEUTERONOMY. Prior to the Israelites’ entrance into the Promised Land, Deuteronomy (from *deuteros* “second” and *nomos* “law”) provided a refresher course. Major points of the law, such as the Ten Commandments, were repeated (Chapter 5).

JOSHUA. Moses had died; Joshua was now leader. The LORD spoke to him: “Moses my servant is dead....But *as I was with Moses, so shall I be with you*....you will have good *success*” (Josh. 1:2-8). This is the only time “success” appears in the Bible (KJV).

Another word that appears one time is *Ed*, meaning *witness*. A Canadian pastor for whom I spoke numerous times, whose name was Ed, liked to point to Joshua 22:34 (KJV): “[They] called the altar ED: for it shall be a witness between us that the LORD is God.”

JUDGES. This book describes the ups and downs of the Israelites during the period they were ruled by Judges who were usually men. But *women* could also serve: “And Deborah, a prophetess...judged Israel” (Judges 4:4).

Probably the best-known Judge was Samson who ruled Israel for 20 years (Judges 16:31). Though his name means “Sunshine,” Samson had a dark side. The secret of his strength was linked with his *long hair* as a Nazarite. If we ask, “What was the name of the woman that cut off Samson’s hair?” many would answer: “Delilah.” But it was *actually* a MAN who did it (Judges 16:19).

While a Nazarite was usually a man, a *woman* could also take the Nazarite vow: “When either man or WOMAN shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite...” (Num. 6:2).

RUTH. This is one of two biblical books that has a *woman’s* name for a title. Ruth, who lived at the time of the Judges (verse 1), was a Moabite. The Moabites were considered inferior, being descendants of incest between Lot and his daughter (Gen. 19:36, 37). After Ruth married into an Israelite family, her husband died. Her mother-in-law, Naomi, was also widowed. The name Naomi, spelled backwards, is: *IMOAN*.

Ruth and Naomi had a beautiful friendship, so that when Naomi moved from Moab to Bethlehem, Ruth said: “Where you go, I will go; and where you lodge, I will lodge: your people shall be my people, and your God my God” (Ruth 1:16, 17). That decision

eventually resulted in Ruth's marriage to Boaz and the birth of Obed placing her in the fleshly genealogy of Jesus (Matt. 1:5,6).

1st and 2nd SAMUEL. These books cover the transition of leadership from Judges to Kings, the downfall of Saul, and rise of David to power. One of the best-known stories about David is his encounter with the Philistine giant Goliath.

Because of Goliath's threats, the Israelite soldiers were nervous in the service and having hysterics in the barracks! Then one of God's young people came on the scene: David! Using a slingshot he knocked the giant down with a stone and cut off his head using the giant's own sword.

David had gathered *five* smooth stones from a brook (1 Sam. 17:40). Why *five* stones? Did he suppose he would miss on the first shot, and needed backup? Some have *speculated* that because Goliath had *four* sons, who were also giants (2 Sam. 21:22), after killing Goliath, David was ready to get the other four also!

The name "David" appears more times in the Bible than any other (human) name.

1 KINGS. One highlight of this book is when Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal with the words: "The God who answers by fire, let him be God." For many hours those false prophets called on Baal, but there was no answer. At noon Elijah began to taunt them. "Perhaps he is talking to someone, or is out sitting on the toilet, or maybe he is away on a trip, or is asleep and needs to be wakened!" (1 Kings 18:27).

This wording from *The Living Bible* (paraphrase) has been criticized by some—specifically the part about the toilet. However, that wording is not without a distinct argument based on the Hebrew text. Some translations say, "...perhaps he is relieving himself." If so, not only was their "god" unable to hear them, after all this time, he must have been constipated!

2 KINGS. We now transition from the ministry of Elijah to Elisha. The account of Elijah being taken up to heaven in a whirlwind is well-known. A detail that is not as well-known is that it was known ahead of time this was going to happen—it was no *surprise*. "And it came to pass, when the LORD was about to take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind....The sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha, and said, 'Do you know that the LORD will *take away* your master from over you today?' And he said, 'Yes, I know.' At Jericho, the sons of the prophets said the same thing.

Then, having crossed the Jordan on dry ground, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask! What may I do for you, before *I am taken away* from you?" Elisha boldly asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit (2 Kings 2:1-11).

1st and 2nd CHRONICLES. As with the word "chronological," this title implies an account of events given *in the order* of their occurrence. A major event was the building of Solomon's Temple. When it was dedicated, the Lord spoke words which provide a key verse, 2 Chronicles 7:14:

"If my people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will...forgive their sin and heal their land."

Sadly, in the years that followed, many did not turn from their wicked ways, Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed, and the people were taken into captivity in Babylon.

EZRA and NEHEMIAH tell how Cyrus allowed the Israelites to return from Babylon, to again build their city and temple. This was a great victory, but not all was smooth sailing. When they were building the wall, an enemy made fun of them: "Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall" (Neh. 4:3).

Question: What book of the Bible was named after a bartender? Nehemiah. See the circumstances described in Nehemiah 2:1.

ESTHER. It is sometimes pointed out that this book does not mention God. But the word "God" does appear in the Septuagint at Esther 2:20: "...for so Mordecai had charged her to fear GOD." Esther, a young Jewish girl, having won a beauty contest, became Queen of Persia and as a result saved her people from destruction.

JOB. This book, believed to be one of the oldest, if not the oldest book of the Bible, is a story of triumph over tragedy. Questions about life and death are answered. "If a man dies, shall he live again?...I know that my Redeemer lives...and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself and my eyes shall behold" (Job 14:14; 19:25-27).

PSALMS. Considering *chapters* of the Bible that stand out, *Psalm 23* would rank very high. Psalm 117, a Psalm of praise, is the *shortest* chapter in the Bible:

"Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud him, all you peoples! For his merciful kindness is great toward us, and the truth of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD."

Interestingly, the *shortest* chapter is also the *middle* chapter of the Bible (figured by chapters). There are 594 chapters before it, and 594 chapters after it.

PROVERBS. This book opens with the words, "The proverbs of Solomon." *Three thousand* proverbs are attributed to him (1 Kings 4:32). Proverbs 3:5,6 is a favorite.

ECCLESIASTES. Often speaking of earthly things as "vanity," the final chapter says, "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth," followed by a poetic description of *old age*. Grinders cease working because they are few; loss of teeth; those who look through the windows grow dim; loss of eyesight; fear of falling, fear of heights, hearing loss, and "desire shall fail" (Ecc. 12:1-7). The Hebrew word here translated "desire" means *cap-er-berry*, which (along with *mandrakes* Gen. 30:14-16), were used as an aphrodisiac.

SONG OF SOLOMON—Mandrakes are again mentioned in Song 7:13. The erotic symbolism of this book sounds strange to modern ears, but similar usage can be seen in other literature of that time and in that part of the world. "His banner over me was love" (Song 2:4).

ISAIAH. In this book, Chapter 53 is outstanding in that *every single verse* is either quoted or referenced in the New Testament. I am not aware that this is true of any other chapter. (Chart available upon request.)

JEREMIAH. God called Jeremiah in his youth, who replied: "Ah Lord God I cannot speak, I am a child." But speak he did! He saw a vision of an almond tree. The LORD then said to him: "I will *hasten* my word to perform it." The almond tree is called a *hastening tree* because it blossoms before other trees. And so, a play on words: "I see a *shaged* [almond tree]; I will *shagad* [hasten] my word to perform it" (Jer. 1:11,12). Sometimes God says "slow," but here it was "GO!"

Jeremiah's message was repeatedly rejected. At one point, he became discouraged, and decided to quit the ministry! "Then I said, 'I will not mention Him, nor speak anymore in His name.' But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not" (Jer. 20:9). This preacher could not quit preaching even if he wanted to!

LAMENTATIONS. The wording of one of the great old hymns of the church, "Great is Thy Faithfulness," comes from the book of Lamentations. "His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; *great is thy faithfulness*" (Lam. 3:22, 23).

EZEKIEL. Though people of Ezekiel's time came to hear him preach, there was a problem. "They hear your words," God said, "but they will not do them...you are unto them as a very lovely song of one that has a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do them not" (Ezek. 33: 30-32; cf. James 1:22).

DANIEL. When Daniel was delivered from the hungry lion's den, the men who accused him were cast into the den instead, and in accordance with Babylonian custom their wives and children also. The lions tore them apart before they ever reached the bottom (Dan. 6:23, 24). *Gruesome!*

As our spiritual Route 66 journey continues, we now pass through what has been designated as the *Minor Prophets*. It is not that these books are inferior in content, but simply because they are shorter.

The pastor of a church where I spoke a number of times, told me about a man who visited one of his services. Apparently wanting some recognition, he sent his card up to the pulpit. The card included his name and the claim that he was a prophet: "A MAJOR prophet, not a MINOR prophet!"

HOSEA. We usually think of Gomer as a man's name, which it was (Gen. 10:2). Some may recall the comedy television series "Gomer Pyle." But Gomer was also a woman's name. In a very unique situation, Hosea was married to a prostitute by this name, a sad arrangement that pictured Israel as the LORD's unfaithful wife.

JOEL. When the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost, Peter preached: "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel and then quoted Joel 2:28-32.

AMOS. "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel" (Amos 4:12). This verse has commonly been used as a warning that judgment day is coming, that people need to be ready to meet God. But the term here translated "prepare" is a *military phrase*, a challenge to come out to battle. Israel had fallen into apostasy. Numerous disasters had not brought about repentance. So, in order to jar them into reality, God was pictured as challenging them to a fight: "Prepare to meet thy God. Imagine the folly of trying to fight against God!"

OBADIAH. This the *shortest* book of the Old Testament was written about the impending judgment upon Edom. The Edomites were the descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob. The brothers were once very close as twins they were womb

mates (pun intended) but their descendants followed different paths.

I once supposed the day of the LORD always referred to some yet-future, end-time, doom day. But that is not true, as here, for example, the day of the Lord was near back at the time of Obadiah (verse 15). That destruction is long past. Other day of the LORD passages involved Nebuchadnezzar (Ezek. 30:2-11; Jer. 46:1-13), unmistakably placing them in a *historical* context.

JONAH. Disobedient to God's call to go to Nineveh, Jonah chose instead to go to Tarshish. Why *Tarshish*? Jonah supposed he could flee from the presence of the LORD if he went far enough. Tarshish was far away, apparently requiring three years for a round trip from Israel. But notice, also, the *products* for which this land was known. King Solomon sent ships there and every three years came the ships of Tarshish bringing GOLD, SILVER, IVORY, APES, and PEACOCKS (2 Chron. 9:21).

MICAH. There are about 3,294 questions in the Bible. The *first* question in the New Testament was asked by the wise men: "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" The answer is found in Micah 5:2: "But you, Bethlehem...though you are little...yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel" (Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:2-6).

NAHUM. Some suppose Nahum saw into the future and wrote about automobiles and wrecks on modern highways: "The chariots [cars] shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another [wrecks]...they shall seem like torches [headlights], they shall run like lightnings [high speed]" (Nah. 2:4). But Nahum prophesied about the fall of Nineveh (verse 1) which occurred around 612 BC. The chariots mentioned were *not* cars. They were pulled by horses, featuring horsemen with swords and spears (Nah. 3:2,3). When Nineveh was destroyed, it was burned with fire, including the chariots (3:15; 2:13).

Capernaum often mentioned in the gospels means "Town of Nahum," and could have been so named because Nahum lived there.

HABAKKUK. In my early teens, at a church camp, a young man asked the intriguing question: "Where did God come from?" None of us knew how to answer. He supposed he had the answer: "God came from Teman!" (Hab. 3:3).

ZEPHANIAH. "The LORD your God...will rejoice over you with gladness...with his love, He will rejoice over you with sing-

ing" (Zeph. 3:17). We sing unto the LORD, but we do not usually think of Him singing over us! But here it is in Zephaniah!

HAGGAI. "The quick red fox jumps over the lazy brown dog" is a sentence used by those learning to type because it uses all the letters of the alphabet. The first verse of Haggai uses all the letters of the alphabet except the letter Q.

Haggai, along with Zechariah, encouraged those who returned from the Babylonian captivity to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem (Ezra 5:1). Because the books of Haggai and Zechariah are placed with the *Minor Prophets*, the connection with the time of *Ezra* is easily overlooked. In my Bible there are about 345 pages between.

ZECHARIAH. One of my favorite verses: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit," says the LORD of hosts (Zech. 4:6).

MALACHI. "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings" (Mal. 4:2). Jesus, God's S-O-N, was here called the S-U-N. Truly He brings light to a darkened world.

On old Route 66 in New Mexico, at an elevation of 7,295 feet, a sign marks the Continental Divide. Water to the left flows to the Pacific Ocean, water to the right flows to the Atlantic. In our *spiritual* journey we cross a major divide as we continue on from Malachi to Matthew.

MATTHEW. This book begins with numerous "begats" a genealogy which, in itself, may seem unimportant. But it was going somewhere to Jesus the Messiah! Once he came, genealogy, in the sense of a fleshly line, is no longer mentioned. Our spiritual foundation is Christ, with no concern about who the son of Peter or John may have been, or his son, or his son, etc. (Matt. 3:9; 1 Tim. 1:4; Titus 3:9).

The great theme of the Bible is JESUS CHRIST. The Old Testament types and shadows pointed to him. The *first* verse of the New Testament begins by talking about Jesus Christ; the *last* verse ends by mentioning Him. He is at the beginning and the end; He is indeed "alpha and omega, the beginning and the end" (Rev. 1:8).

MARK and LUKE, along with Matthew are called the *Synoptic* Gospels, having similar material. The Gospel of John has a somewhat different approach. One difference is that whereas Matthew, Mark, and Luke always record Jesus as saying, "Verily [one verily] I say unto you..." John always doubles it, "Verily, verily I say unto you,"

and does it 25 times. A notable example would be when Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about being born again.

Today for emphasis we can use **bold** type, *italic* type, underline, or CAPITALIZE. But at the time the Bible was written, emphasis was often obtained by doubling:

Amen, amen; Unclean, unclean; Abraham, Abraham; Jacob, Jacob; Moses, Moses; Samuel, Samuel; Martha, Martha; Simon, Simon; Master, Master; Rabbi, Rabbi; Lord, Lord; Jerusalem, Jerusalem; Crucify him, crucify him; My God, my God; etc.

A couple more doubles somewhat amusing appear in the KJV: *ha ha*, and *ho, ho* (Job 39:25; Zech. 2:6).

ACTS. This is a book of *action* by the power of the Holy Spirit. A key verse: "You shall receive *power* when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me...to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The Greek word that is here translated "power," *dunamus*, provides the basis for our word "dynamite"!

ROMANS. Paul, after writing about such things as tribulation, distress, persecution, and famine, joyfully exclaims: "In *all these things* we are MORE THAN CONQUERORS through Him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37).

1st and 2nd CORINTHIANS. The church at Corinth had problems! Unfortunate in one sense *but*, because of this, we have valuable in-depth teaching provided for us: The Resurrection Chapter, as well as The Love Chapter. We have information about the proper operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that is not found elsewhere.

Paul lists nine gift categories: word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues (1 Cor. 12:8-10). Regarding healing, notice the *plural*: "*gifts* of healing." Some translations have "gifts of *healings*."

In Scripture there is an interesting variety of ways healing came: dipping in Jordan seven times, an angel troubling water, laying on of hands, the prayer of faith, Jesus touching someone, someone touching him, speaking a word, Peter's shadow, Paul's handkerchiefs and aprons, etc.

GALATIANS. While some of the epistles (letters) were addressed to believers in certain *cities* (like Corinth, Ephesus, or Philippi), Galatians is different. It was sent unto the *churches of Galatia* (Gal. 1:2). Galatia was a *country*, not a city. Evidently this letter was circulated among the churches there. With-

out copy machines, printing presses, and modern methods of duplication, back then a letter was read in one church and then passed to another (Col. 4:16).

EPHESIANS. As our "Route 66" journey continues, we would like to spend more time in Ephesians, but for now will only quote one favorite verse: "God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to the *power* that works in us" (Eph. 3:20).

PHILIPPIANS. At Philippi Paul and Silas were publically humiliated, striped of clothing, beaten, and thrown into jail. But they praised the Lord, even there. In a miraculous manner, the jailor was converted and rejoiced, believing with his entire family. So it was quite fitting that *rejoicing* would be a theme of this letter to this man and the church established there. After using the word "rejoice" several times, Paul wrote: "Rejoice in the Lord, always, and again I say rejoice" (Phil. 4:4) a double!

COLOSSIANS. "Do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a *shadow* of the things that were to come; the REALITY is found in Christ" (2:16, 17 NIV).

1st and 2nd THESSALONIANS. Here are *seven* short verses, easily memorized, and loaded with truth:

"Rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks....Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thess. 5:16-22).

1st and 2nd TIMOTHY. I began preaching when I was still in my teens and a favorite text was: "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12).

TITUS. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his *mercy* he saved us" (Titus 3:5). Our works could never merit salvation; it is God's gift because of his mercy!

PHILEMON. The letter of Paul to Philemon contains an interesting play on words regarding a runaway slave with the name Onesimus, meaning "profitable":

"I appeal to you for my son *Onesimus* [profitable], whom I have begotten while in my chains, who once was *unprofitable* [the opposite of what his name meant] to you, but now is *profitable* [the meaning of his name] to you and to me" (Phil. 10,11).

HEBREWS. One of numerous great preaching texts from this book: "God Himself has said, 'I will *never* leave you nor forsake you.' So we may boldly say: 'The LORD is my helper; I will not fear what man can do unto me.'" (Heb. 13:5, 6).

JAMES. "If any of you lacks *wisdom*, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and it will be given to him" (James 1:5).

1st and 2nd PETER. The words of a fine gospel song, "Joy Unspeakable and Full of Glory" are based on the words of Peter. Amazingly, this overwhelming JOY was being experienced in a context of severe trials Christians were facing (1 Peter 1:8).

1st, 2nd, and 3rd JOHN. John, who often wrote about the love of God (John 3:16) comes right out and says: "God is LOVE" (1 John 4:8, 16). What a contrast to pagan gods!

JUDE. We hear people talk about how busy they are. If so, how about reading the book of Jude? It takes about *three minutes and ten seconds* comparable in time to some of the commercial breaks in television programming, but much more edifying! "Contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (verse 3).

REVELATION. Fine people hold differing views concerning the symbolism in Revelation. Thankfully salvation is not dependent on being able to explain all the details of Revelation or the Bible itself! But whether we perfectly understand everything or not, we can read the end of the book and know how it all comes out! Ultimately, good will win out over evil, because of Jesus Christ: **KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS!**



Arlene and Ralph Woodrow with great-grandson William.

Website: www.ralphwoodrow.org

Email: ralphwoodrow@earthlink.net