

NEW LIVING TRANSLATION

NLT
STUDY
BIBLE®



NLT®

TO

FROM

ON

YOUR WORD
IS A LAMP TO GUIDE
MY FEET AND A LIGHT
FOR MY PATH.

PSALM 119:105



DEDICATION

NLT STUDY BIBLE

NLT STUDY BIBLE®



New Living
Translation®
SECOND EDITION

Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.
Carol Stream, Illinois

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NLT STUDY BIBLE INTRODUCTION

All of us at Tyndale House Publishers are pleased to present the *NLT Study Bible*. It brings together the best of scholarship in both the Bible translation and the study notes and features. We think you will find that the biblical text comes to life in a fresh, new way as a result of this Bible.

The creation of a study Bible represents a huge effort by many people. In this instance, a team of sixty scholars, writers, reviewers, editors, and designers worked together to bring you the study notes, introductions, maps, timelines, profiles, and theme notes in this Bible.

The Bible text used in the *NLT Study Bible* is the New Living Translation, second edition. The NLT was first published in 1996, and it quickly became one of the most popular English translations. Readers have especially appreciated the clarity of the language. The second edition text was first published in 2004. The NLT combines the best features of its predecessor, *The Living Bible*, with the world-class scholarship of the ninety scholars who worked on the translation.

The study notes and other features in the *NLT Study Bible* are designed to help today's readers understand the meaning and significance of the Bible in light of the world in which the text was first written. Our approach as writers and editors has been to help people understand the Bible clearly and accurately. We trust the Holy Spirit to be at work, bringing to people's minds and hearts the applications that he has for them. He does this in millions of different ways every day. As the editors of this study Bible, we hope to provide a context within which the Holy Spirit can work.

*The rain and snow come down from the heavens
and stay on the ground to water the earth.*

*They cause the grain to grow,
producing seed for the farmer
and bread for the hungry.*

It is the same with my word.

I send it out, and it always produces fruit.

It will accomplish all I want it to,

and it will prosper everywhere I send it. Isaiah 55:10-11

In the pages that follow, we describe the features of the *NLT Study Bible* and how to make the most use of them. We challenge you to try it. Come, walk through God's word, understand it for yourself, and let it change your life.

Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.

Joshua 1:8

I will study your commandments and reflect on your ways. Psalm 119:15

THE EDITORS

BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

Each book introduction helps readers understand that book as its original readers first understood it in their world. The book introduction discusses the book's setting, gives a summary of its literary structure, discusses historical issues such as authorship and date of writing, and explains the meaning and message of the book for its readers.

OVERVIEW

The Overview helps readers to find out quickly what this book of the Bible is about and why it is important. It gives a thumbnail sketch of the book and its contents and purpose.

SETTING

What is the story behind each book of the Bible? What was the need for each book in its setting? Every book of the Bible was written by flesh-and-blood people living in a particular time and place in history. They faced real challenges and difficulties. They wrote to other real flesh-and-blood people living at their own time in history. They wrote to address specific problems in their world, to help their readers understand God's mind regarding the issues and problems that they faced.

The world of the Bible is very different from our world today, but people are the same everywhere. If we understand the setting in which each book of the Bible was written, we will be in a much better position to understand what problems it addressed, what actions it was prompting, and what message it communicates.

THE BOOK OF

GENESIS

Genesis is the book of beginnings—of the universe and of humanity, of sin and its catastrophic effects, and of God's plan to restore blessing to the world through his chosen people. God began his plan when he called Abraham and made a covenant with him. Genesis traces God's promised blessings from generation to generation, to the time of bondage and the need for redemption from Egypt. It lays the foundation for God's subsequent revelation, and most other books of the Bible draw on its contents. Genesis is a source of instruction, comfort, and edification.

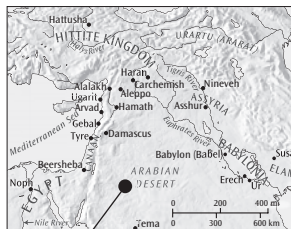
SETTING

When Genesis was written, the children of Israel had been slaves in Egypt for 400 years. They had recently been released from bondage and guided through the desert to meet the Lord at Mount Sinai, where he had established his covenant relationship with them and had given them his law through Moses. Israel was now poised to enter the Promised Land and receive the inheritance that God had promised Abraham.

While enslaved in Egypt, the Israelites had adopted many pagan ideas and customs from their Egyptian masters (e.g., Exod 32:1-4). They were influenced by false concepts of God, the world, and human nature (e.g., Exod 32), and were reduced to being slaves rather than owners and managers of the land. Perhaps they had forgotten the great promises that God had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or perhaps they had concluded that the promises would never be fulfilled.

Before entering the Promised Land, the Israelites needed to understand the nature of God, his world, and their place in it more clearly. They needed to embrace their identity as descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Genesis provided the needed understanding.



◀ The Ancient Near East, about 2100 BC. Humanity spread out from the mountains of Urartu (Ararat) and populated the early centers of civilization. By the time of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), many of the cities were ancient.

ASHUR 2:14; 10:22; 25:3; 25:18
 ASSYRIA 10:11
 BABYLON (BABEL), BABYLONIA 10:9-10; 11:1-9; 14:1, 9
 CANAAN 9:18-27; 10:18-19; 12:5-10
 DAMASCUS 14:15; 15:2
 EGYPT 12:10-13:1; 15:18; 37:28-36; 39:1-50:26
 ERAM 10:22; 14:1, 9
 ERECH 10:10; Ezra 4:9
 HAMATH 10:18; 2 Sam 8:9-10; 2 Kgs 14:28; 23:33
 HARAR 11:26-32; 12:4-5; 27:43; 28:10; 29:4; Acts 7:2-4
 SUSANNA 4:9; Neh 1:1; Esth 1:2; Dan 8:2
 UR 11:28, 31; 15:7; Neh 9:7
 URARTU (ARARAT) 8:4

MAP

The book introductions include maps of the setting to show where the events in each book of the Bible took place and how the places mentioned in that book fit into the world. Each map includes a caption that describes the map and how it relates to the book's setting. Along with a caption, most of these maps include a short index of places mentioned in the book.

FEATURES GUIDE

SUMMARY

What is the structure and flow of ideas in each book of the Bible? The Summary provides just that—a brief summary of the contents of the book. If the book is narrative, the Summary tells its story. If the book is a letter, the Summary explains its contents and the flow of its reasoning. If the book is an anthology, the Summary describes the structure and contents of the collection. If we have in mind the flow of the book, we can better understand each individual passage.

SUMMARY

Genesis traces God's work to overcome with blessing the curse that came on humankind because of sin. The book arranges family traditions, genealogies, historical events, and editorial comments into a single, sustained argument.

Every section but the first has the heading, "This is the account" (or *These are the generations*; Hebrew *toladoth*); each of the *toladoth* sections explains

OUTLINE

1:1–2:3

Creation

2:4–4:26

What Happened to the Creation

5:1–6:8

The Account of Adam's Descendants

6:9–9:29

The Account of Noah's Family

10:1–11:9

The Account of Noah's Sons

11:10–26

The Account of Shem's Descendants

11:27–25:11

The Account of Terah's Descendants

25:12–18

The Account of Ishmael's Descendants

25:19–35:29

The Account of Isaac's Descendants

36:1–37:1

The Account of Esau's Descendants

37:2–50:26

The Account of Jacob's Descendants

the history of a line of descent. In each case, a deterioration of well-being is followed by an increasing focus on God's plan to bless the world. This plan is the basis for God's covenant with his people: as the blessing develops, the covenant is clarified. By the end of the book, the reader is ready for the fulfillment of the promises in Israel's redemption from bondage (see Exodus).

The first section (1:1–2:3) does not have the *toladoth* heading, and logically so—it is the account of creation "in the beginning" (1:1). The work of creation is wrapped in God's approval and blessing as he fulfills his plan.

The next section (2:4–4:26) focuses on the creation of human life (2:4–25) and traces what became of God's creation because of Adam's and Eve's sin (3:1–13), the curse on their sin (3:14–24), and the extension of sin to their descendants (4:1–24). Humanity no longer enjoyed God's rest; instead, they experienced guilt and fear. So they fled from God and developed a proud civilization.

Independence from God resulted in the downward drift of human life (5:1–6:8). The genealogy of 5:1–32 begins by recalling that human beings were made in God's image and were blessed by him (5:1–2). As the genealogy is traced, the death of each generation reminds the reader of the curse, with Enoch providing a ray of hope that the curse is not final. In 6:1–8, we learn that God regretted having made humans and decided to judge the earth. Noah, however, received God's favor and provided a source of hope (5:29; 6:8).

The next section (6:9–9:29) brings the curse of judgment through the flood followed by blessing in a new beginning. A renewed creation began, purged of the abominable evil that had invaded and ruined the human race.

The world's population expanded into various nations (10:1–11:9) whose people were bent on disobedience. The population of the earth by Shem,

TIMELINE

2166 / 1990 bc*

Abraham is born

2091 / 1915 bc

Abraham moves to Canaan

2080 / 1904 bc

Ishmael is born

2066 / 1890 bc

Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed, Isaac is born

2006 / 1830 bc

Jacob and Esau are born

1898 / 1722 bc

Joseph is sold into slavery

1885 / 1709 bc

Joseph begins governing Egypt

1876 / 1661 bc

Jacob moves to Egypt

1446 / 1270 bc

Israel leaves Egypt (the Exodus), moves to Mount Sinai

1406 / 1230 bc

Israel enters Canaan

* The two dates harmonize with the traditional "early" chronology and a more recent "late" chronology of the Exodus. All dates are approximate. Please see "Chronology: Abraham to Joshua," p. 118.

OUTLINE

Each book includes an outline with up to three levels of headings. In the introduction, we provide the first level of the outline to give the reader an overview. The full outline is embedded in the NLT text as running headings. These book outlines follow the literary structure of the book—how the authors themselves thought about the organization and flow of ideas.

TIMELINE

A timeline can be found in the margin of nearly all book introductions. The timelines show when the events in each book of the Bible took place and what was going on at the time. We can refer to the timeline while reading the setting and summary for the book, and again while reading the book, to help clarify and reinforce how the events fit into the flow of history.

Ham, and Japheth seemed fruitful (10:1-32), but the nations were divided by languages and boundaries (10:5, 20, 31). Because of their rebellion, God dispersed them to prevent greater wickedness (11:1-9).

After the chaos of the scattered nations, 11:10-26 brings the focus to Abram, through whom God chose to bring blessing to all. The rest of the book (11:27-50:26) tells of God's blessing Abram and his descendants. God first made a covenant with Abram (11:27-25:11), promising him a great nation, land, and name. As time went on, God made the specific terms of the covenant clearer, and Abram's faith grew deeper.

In each generation, Genesis gives a brief account of the families that are not Israel's ancestors before turning to the line of Israel. After briefly reporting what became of Ishmael (25:12-18), Genesis traces in detail what happened to Isaac and his family (25:19-35:29).

True to the pattern of the book, Esau's line (Edom) is dealt with briefly (36:1-37:1) before the chosen line of Jacob the heir. The final section (37:2-50:26) concerns Jacob's family, centering on the life of Joseph. In the land of Canaan, the family became corrupt under Canaanite influence to the point of beginning to merge with them (ch 38). To preserve the line of blessing, God sent the family into Egypt where they could flourish, remain separate (43:32; 46:34), and become a great nation. The book closes with the promise of the Lord's coming to rescue his people from Egypt (50:24-26).

● *"God rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. And he blessed the seventh day. . . ." And we ourselves will be a "seventh day" when we shall be filled with his blessing and remade by his sanctification. . . . Only when we are remade by God and perfected by a greater grace shall we have the eternal stillness of that rest in which we shall see that he is God.*

ST. AUGUSTINE
City of God, sec. 22.30

● **AUTHORSHIP**

Both Scripture and tradition attribute the Pentateuch (Genesis—Deuteronomy) to Moses. No one was better qualified than Moses to have written this book. Since he was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22), he had the literary skills to collect and edit Israel's traditions and records and to compose this theological treatise. His unique communion with God gave him the spiritual illumination, understanding, and inspiration needed to guide him. He had good reason to write this work—to provide Israel with the theological and historical foundation for the Exodus and the covenant at Sinai, and to establish the new nation in accord with the promises made to their ancestors.

Most scholars, however, do not accept that Moses wrote Genesis. The prevailing critical view, called the *Documentary Hypothesis*, is that Genesis was compiled from various sources by different groups of people. In such approaches, there is seldom a word about divine revelation or inspiration. For those who understand the Bible as God's inspired word, such theories often seem unnecessarily complicated and conjectural. Genesis can be understood much more straightforwardly as the product of Moses' genius under God's inspiration with later editorial adjustments. (See further "Introduction to the Pentateuch: Authorship," p. 12).

● **COMPOSITION**

Biblical scholars of all stripes have always acknowledged that various sources were used in writing Genesis and other historical texts in the Bible (such as Kings and Luke). Moses used collections of family records, oral traditions, ancient accounts of primeval events, and genealogies to write Genesis. Those sources could have been incorporated as received, or the author may have changed their style and wording, stitching them together with additional material for the particular purpose of tracing the foundations of Israelite faith.

Genesis is therefore a unique work. Theology, history, and tradition come together to instruct God's people and prepare them for blessing.

● **MEANING AND MESSAGE**

Israel's most important questions were answered by the Genesis narratives. Life and death, the possession of the land of Canaan, and how Israel ended up in Egypt are explained as God's providential working in history. Israel was part of God's plan in this world. His plan had

AUTHOR, DATE, AND OTHER HISTORICAL ISSUES

What do we know about who wrote this book and when it was written? What are the difficulties in determining the historical facts? Even though these issues might not be familiar ground, they are important. Understanding these things can help us appreciate the complexity of the Bible. Far from undermining confidence in Scripture, the issues discussed here give us a greater appreciation of how magnificent Scripture truly is. At the same time, we learn to be humble in how we interpret God's word.

MEANING AND MESSAGE

What is the message of each book of the Bible? What is its significance now? Here's where the rubber meets the road. Everything in a book's introduction—setting, summary, author, date, genre—is intended to prepare us to understand what that book of the Bible has to say, its message and significance. Reading these paragraphs carefully and reflectively will give us the keys to understanding that book of the Bible.

Genesis also includes passages and expressions that are obviously later editorial glosses. Some sections (such as the list of Edomite kings, 36:31-43) could have been added during the early days of the monarchy. There is no conflict in saying that Genesis was authored by Moses and augmented by subsequent editors whose work was guided by the Holy Spirit. Given these considerations, conservative scholars find it plausible that the biblical material accurately records actual events.

LITERARY CHARACTER

Genesis includes various types of literature. Several suggestions have been made as to the nature of the materials.

Myth. Mythological literature explains the origins of things symbolically through the deeds of gods and supernatural creatures. For ancient peoples, myths were beliefs that explained life and reality. Whole systems of ritual activities were developed to ensure that the forces of fertility, life, and death would continue year by year. Some of these rituals gave rise to cult prostitution (see 38:15, 21-22).

It would be very difficult to classify the material in Genesis as myth. Israel had one God, not a multitude. The nation of Israel had a beginning, a history, and a future hope. They saw God, rather than gods and other supernatural creatures, as the primary actor in the world. Their worship was not cosmic, magical, or superstitious, but a reenactment of their own rescue from Egypt and a celebration of God's factual intervention in history and their hope in his promises.

If Genesis uses elements of mythological language, it is to display a deliberate contrast with pagan concepts and to show that the Lord God is sovereign over such ideas. For example, the ancients worshipped the sun as a god, but in Genesis the sun serves the Creator's wishes (1:14-18). The book of Genesis is a cemetery for lifeless myths and dead gods. Genesis is not myth.

Etiology. A number of scholars describe the Genesis narratives as *etiologies*, stories that explain the causes of factual reality or traditional beliefs. The implication is that such stories were made up for explanatory purposes and do not describe historical events. For example, if one says that the story of Cain and Abel was made up to explain why shepherds and farmers do not get along, the account loses its integrity as factual history.

Etiological elements certainly occur in Genesis, because the book gives the foundation and rationale for almost everything that Israel would later do. For example, the creation account of Gen 2 ends with the explanation, "This explains why a man leaves his father and mother. . . ." The event as it happened explains why marriage was conducted the way it was, but to say that a story explains something is quite different from saying that the story was fabricated to explain it. The stories of Genesis are not fictional tales invented to explain later customs and beliefs.

History. Many scholars object to regarding Genesis as history, for two basic reasons: (1) Genesis explains events as caused by God, and the inclusion of the supernatural is regarded as proof that the material is theological reflection and thus not historically reliable; and (2) the events in Genesis cannot be validated from outside sources; no other records have demonstrated that Abraham existed or that any of his family history occurred.

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over all evil (cp

God's Plan. Genesis begins with the presupposition that God exists and that he has revealed himself in word and deed to Israel's ancestors. It does not argue for the existence of God; it simply begins with God and shows how everything falls into place when the sovereign God works out his plan to establish Israel as the means of restoring blessing to the whole world.

God's Rule. Genesis is the fitting introduction to the founding of theocracy, the rule of God over all creation that was to be established through his chosen people. Genesis lays down the initial revelation of God's sovereignty. He is the Lord of the universe who will move heaven and earth to bring about his plan. He desires to bless people, but he will not tolerate rebellion and unbelief. His promises are great, and he is fully able to bring them to fruition. To participate in his plan has always required faith, for without faith it is impossible to please him (Heb 11:6).

SECTION INTRODUCTIONS

For each major section of the Bible, the section introduction gives an overview of the books in that section and discusses issues that affect the interpretation of those books. (Not shown)

CHRONOLOGY ARTICLES

For each major period of biblical history, the chronology article provides a historical overview and discusses key issues regarding historical context. Each article includes a timeline of events during that period of history. (Not shown)

EPIGRAPHS

Sometimes other authors say insightful things about a book of the Bible, or they make a poignant observation about something that a given book discusses. The editors have gathered some of the best quotations they could find about each book and put them in the margins of the book introductions, to stimulate thinking and to promote meaningful interaction with each book of the Bible.

Genesis is not interested in parading Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as examples of morality. Therefore, it does not moralize on them. [Genesis] is bringing together the promises of God to the patriarchs and the faithfulness of God in keeping those promises.

VICTOR F. HAMILTON
The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17, p. 46

FURTHER READING

- VICTOR P. HAMILTON
The Book of Genesis (1990)
- DEREK KIDNER
Genesis (1967)
- KENNETH A. MATHEWS
Genesis (1996)
- ALLEN P. ROSS
Creation and Blessing (1988)
- Genesis in Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*, vol. 1 (2008)
- GORDON WENHAM
Genesis 1-15 (1987)
- Genesis 16-50* (1994)

FURTHER READING

Where can we learn more about each book of the Bible? The *NLT Study Bible* has plenty of resources for a lifetime journey of reading, studying, and discovering the riches of Scripture. Some readers, however, will want to go even further. At the end of each book introduction, the editors have recommended some of the resources that have helped them the most in studying and understanding that particular book of the Bible. They've chosen materials that are available in the general market—no seminary required! Nearly all of these books are as close as a visit to a local or online Christian retailer.

son of Ner, commander of the army of Israel, and of Amasa son of Jether, commander of the army of Judah. 33May their blood be on Joab and his descendants forever, and may the LORD grant peace forever to David, his descendants, his dynasty, and his throne."

34So Benaiah son of Jehoiada returned to the sacred tent and killed Joab, and he was buried at his home in the wilderness. 35Then the king appointed Benaiah to command the army in place of Joab, and he installed Zadok the priest to take the place of Abiathar.

36The king then sent for Shimei and told him, "Build a house here in Jerusalem and live there. But don't step outside the city to go anywhere else. 37On the day you so much as cross the Kidron Valley, you will surely die; and your blood will be on your own head."

38Shimei replied, "Your sentence is fair; I will do whatever my lord the king commands." So Shimei lived in Jerusalem for a long time.

2 surely die? And you replied, "The sentence is fair; I will do as you say." 43Then why haven't you kept your oath to the LORD and obeyed my command?"

44The king also said to Shimei, "You certainly remember all the wicked things you did to my father, David. May the LORD now bring that evil on your own head. 45But may I, King Solomon, receive the LORD's blessings, and may one of David's descendants always sit on this throne in the presence of the LORD." 46Then, at the king's command, Benaiah son of Jehoiada took Shimei outside and killed him.

So the kingdom was now firmly in Solomon's grip.

Solomon's Great Wisdom (3:1-4:34)
Solomon Asks for Wisdom

3 Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and married one of his daughters. He brought her to live in the City of David until he could finish building his palace and the Temple of the LORD and the wall around the city. 2At that

PARALLEL PASSAGES

The NLT text indicates parallels with passages in other books. For example, the Gospel of Matthew has many parallels in Mark, Luke, and John. Similarly, the books of 2 Samuel through 2 Kings have many parallels to the books of 1-2 Chronicles. The parallel references are useful for making comparisons between different versions of the same events and gaining a deeper, fuller understanding of what was happening.

RUNNING OUTLINES

The NLT text of each book includes a running outline to show how the sections of that book fit together. The numbered top level of the outline matches the short outline in the book introduction. The second- and third-level headings describe the book's structure in greater detail, down to the level of individual passages. These outlines follow the literary structure of the book, so they show what the author of the book thought about how the book was put together.

THEME NOTES

How does the NLT Study Bible explain the themes of the Bible? Theme notes develop the main themes and topics that arise in each book. They are placed alongside particularly relevant passages but go beyond the passage at hand and extend to other books of the Bible. References for further study are included in the margin.

The topics in the theme notes have been chosen based on the major themes that occur in Scripture. They provide the first steps in developing a biblical theology without attempting to formulate a specific doctrinal system (such as reformed, charismatic, or Baptist). Because of this, the theme notes are designed to make us think and will stretch us to consider the teaching of Scripture more fully, whatever our doctrinal background.

GENESIS 1:1

1. CREATION (1:1-2:3)
In the Beginning (1:1-2)

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

Six Days of Creation (1:3-31)
Day One: Light, Darkness

3Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. 4And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. 5God called the light "day" and the darkness "night." And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day.

Day Two: Sky, Waters

6Then God said, "Let there be a space between the waters, to separate the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth." 7And that is what happened. God made this space to separate the waters of the earth from the waters of the heavens. 8God called the space "sky." And evening passed and morning came, marking the second day.

Day Three: Land, Sea, Vegetation

9Then God said, "Let the waters beneath the sky flow together into one place, so dry ground may appear." And that is what happened. 10God called the dry ground "land" and the waters "seas."

1:1 Ps 89:11; 102:25
Isa 45:1; 48:13
John 1:1-2
Rom 8:19-25
* Gen 1:27
* Genesis (8064)
* Gen 9:11
1:2
Isa 45:18
* Isaiah (7307)
* Gen 45:27
1:3
Nah 1:4-7
2 Cor 4:6
1:6
Job 26:10
Ps 136:6
1:9
1 Pet 1:5
1 Pet 2:2
2 Pet 3:5

Ps 33:6-9
Prov 3:19; 8:22-31
Isa 40:26-28; 45:11-12; 48:10
Jer 10:11-16
John 1:1-4
Rom 8:19-25
2 Cor 5:17
Col 1:15-20
Rev 4:11; 21:1-5

The Creation (1:1-2:3)

The creation account in Genesis is foundational to the message of the entire Bible, not just of Genesis or the Pentateuch. Understanding the early chapters of Genesis is thus crucial to forming a biblical worldview.

This part of Genesis deals with fundamental questions: Who created the world, and for what purpose? Why is the world in its present condition? Genesis answers these questions, dispelling the idolatry that Israel had acquired from their pagan masters in Egypt. In the Promised Land, they would also be surrounded by people who believed in many false gods and worshiped created things rather than the Creator. Genesis taught Israel that the one true God created and has absolute authority over all things; he alone is worthy of worship.

Every worldview attempts to explain where the world came from, what is wrong with the world, and how it can be set right again. The creation account in Genesis teaches that as God made the world, it was "very good" (1:31). Through creation, God turned disorder into restful order and emptiness into the fullness of abundant life. In this environment, humans enjoyed unbroken fellowship with their Creator until their rebellion severed that fellowship and implanted evil in human hearts (ch 3; see chs 4-6). The world's evil does not come from some defect in creation; God put the world under a curse because of human rebellion.

Since that first rebellion, humans have been alienated from the Creator and no longer recognize his presence and authority. This alienation results in shame, fractured relationships with God and other humans, estrangement from the rest of creation, and death (3:7-19). Since that time, God has been working purposefully in history to restore humans to fellowship with him, which he is doing through Jesus Christ. Restored humans are a new creation (Gal 6:15); through Jesus, eternal life is open to all and God will one day renew all things (see Isa 65:17-25; Rom 8:19-22). The whole cosmos will be made new (Rev 21:1).

1:1-2:3 These verses introduce the Pentateuch (Genesis—Deuteronomy) and teach Israel that the world was created, ordered, and populated by the one true God and not by the gods of surrounding nations. * God blessed three specific things: animal life (1:22-25), human life (1:27), and the Sabbath day (2:3). This trilogy of blessings highlights the Creator's plan: Humankind was made in God's image to enjoy sovereign dominion over the creatures of the earth and to participate in God's Sabbath rest.

1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (or In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, . . . or When God began to cre-

ate the heavens and the earth, . . .): This statement summarizes the entire creation account (1:3-2:3). Already a key question—Who created the world?—is answered (see also Prov 8:22-31; John 1:1-3). Although the modern naturalistic mindset rejects this question and that of creation's purpose, Genesis affirms God's role and purpose in creation.

* The common name for God (Hebrew *elohim*) emphasizes his grand supremacy. The word *elohim* is plural, but the verb used with it are usually singular, reflecting the consistent scriptural proclamation of a single, all-powerful God. * created (Hebrew *bara'*): In the OT, God is always the agent of creation

expressed by this verb. It describes the making of something fresh and new—notably the cosmos (1:1, 21; 2:3), humankind (1:27), the Israelite nation (Isa 43:1), and the future new creation (Isa 65:17). * The heavens and the earth are the entire ordered cosmos.

1:2 This verse gives the background for the summary in 1:1 and the detailed description in 1:3-2:3. God's created utterances bring order to the chaotic state of the universe: * formless, . . . empty (Hebrew *tohu* . . . *bohu*): This terse idiom means something like "wild and waste." It sets a stark contrast to the final ordered state of the heavens and the earth (1:1). * deep waters

wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything he thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. ⁶So the Lord was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart. ⁷And the Lord said, "I will wipe this human race I have created from the face of the earth. Yes

Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless person living on earth at the time, and he walked in close fellowship with God. ¹⁰Noah was the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. ¹¹Now God saw that the earth had become corrupt and was filled with violence.

Ezek 33:17
6:9
Job 1:1
Ezek 14:14
Lumen 18:29
* Gen 17:1
6:11
Deut 31:29
Judg 2:19
Ezek 8:17

NOAH (6:8-22)

Gen 5:28-10:1
1 Chr 1:4
Isa 54:9
Ezek 14:12-20
Matt 24:37-38
Luke 3:36; 17:26-27
Hab 1:7
1 Pet 3:20-21
2 Pet 2:5

Noah was the son of Lamech, a descendant of Seth (5:3-29). Lamech might have hoped that Noah (whose name means "rest" or "relief") would ease the curse of hardship in working the ground (see note on 5:29). God used Noah to help relieve the world of evil.

God intended to destroy creation because of pervasive human wickedness (6:1-7; see Matt 24:37-39; Luke 17:26-27), but he decided to preserve Noah (6:8). God gave Noah, a righteous and blameless man (6:9), precise instructions for building the ark in which only the eight people of his family would be saved, along with every kind of creature (6:14-8:19). When Noah and his family finally emerged from the ark after the flood, Noah pleased God by building an altar and sacrificing burnt offerings. God promised that he would never again flood the whole earth or disrupt the sequence of the seasons, despite human sin (8:20-9:17).

Noah's sons were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. All the nations of the earth descended from them (9:18-19). When Noah became drunk on wine from his vineyard, his sons and their descendants were cursed or blessed in accord with how they responded to him (9:22-27). Noah lived for 950 years, including 350 years after the flood (9:28-29); he is an example of righteousness, obedience, courage, and faith (see Ezek 14:12-20; Heb 11:7; 2 Pet 2:5).

society and allow human wickedness to run its full course. Others think it means that God would withdraw his life-giving breath from humans at an earlier age (*lulath*, the Hebrew term for "spirit," can also mean "breath"; see 6:17; 7:22; see also Ps 104:29-30). **normal lifespan will be no more than 120 years** (literally his days will be 120 years): It is possible that this was a new restriction on the number of years individuals would generally be allowed to live (so the NLT). However, for generations after the flood, humans lived well beyond 120 years (see, e.g., 11:10-26). An alternative interpretation sees this as a 120-year grace period before the ark of the flood (see Jon 3:4; Matt 24:37-38; 1 Pet 3:20; 2 Pet 2:5).

6:4 giant Nephilites (Hebrew *nephilim*): The term may mean "fallen ones." The context implies that they were the offspring of the "sons of God" and would be destroyed in the flood. Num 13:31-33 uses the same term to describe other giants who were hostile toward God's

people and would also be destroyed (see also Deut 2:11, which connects the Anakite *nephilim* with another group called the *rephaim*).

6:5 everything they thought or imagined (literally *every intention of the thoughts of their hearts*): In the OT, the heart is the core of volition, thought, and morality (see Prov 4:23). Wicked actions stem from a corrupt inner life.

consistently and totally evil: Strong language captures the pervasiveness, depth, and persistence of human wickedness. Human nature continued to be corrupt even after the flood (see 6:21).

6:6 the Lord was sorry: The extent of human wickedness made the Lord regret having created them (see also 6:7; cp. 1 Sam 15:11, 35). **It broke his heart**: The evil in humanity's heart (6:5) pained God greatly. Sending the flood was a heart-wrenching act on God's part.

6:7 wipe . . . from the . . . earth: As Adam and Eve were banished from the garden sanctuary (3:23), all of

humankind would be expunged from God's good creation. ***evil thing**: Human sin had so corrupted the earth that judgment fell on the animals and birds over which they had dominion (see 1:28 and note). The special role of humans in the created order (1:28-30) means that nature is affected by human moral choices (see 8:1; Job 38:41; Hos 4:3; Rom 8:19-22).

6:8 Noah and his godly life stand in stark contrast to the sinfulness of the rest of the people.

6:9 the account: See note on 2:4 **a righteous man, the only blameless person**: The text does not claim that Noah was without sin (see Rom 5:12-14). Noah's righteousness and blamelessness came about because he *walked in close fellowship with God*. See also 7:1; 17:1; Heb 11:7.

6:11-13 See 6:5-7. ***violence** (Hebrew *khamas*): Murder had especially corrupted the line of Cain (4:8, 23-24).

PERSON PROFILES

The *NLT Study Bible* includes person profiles that describe the lives of the individuals who inhabit the pages of Scripture. Each of these people contributes significantly to the story and message of the Bible. Their lives instruct us with examples and counter-examples, and their stories help us better understand the Bible, its world, and its message. Their relationship with God, or lack of it, helps us to understand how we can have a relationship with God.

STUDY NOTES

Sometimes readers look at a note in a study Bible to understand the meaning of a verse and find themselves asking, "So what?" about a seemingly unrelated fact. The notes in the *NLT Study Bible* have been developed with the "So what?" test in mind—the editors' goal is that the study notes will clearly help us as readers to understand the verse or passage better.

The notes focus on the meaning and message of Scripture, not just facts. This means that there are notes on words, phrases, sentences, verses, paragraphs, and whole sections. The editors have included historical and literary notes to help draw us into the world of the Bible and the context in which it was originally read and heard.

Also included in the study notes is the full NLT textual footnote apparatus, which identifies variations in the Hebrew and Greek text as well as providing alternate translation possibilities.

Every excerpt from the NLT text is easily identified in bold italic type.

CROSS-REFERENCE SYSTEM

Some cross-reference systems are based on connections between individual words, without regard to whether there is any connection in meaning between the two verses or passages. With the *NLT Study Bible*, the cross-references relate to the meaning of the whole verse or passage, so the cross-references are always directly applicable.

To compare specific ideas within a verse, the study notes at the bottom of the page often include cross-references for individual words and phrases, along with a brief explanation of the nature of the connection.

In the cross-reference system, parallel lines (/) show that a particular cross-reference is a parallel passage that describes the same events or says much the same thing.

An asterisk (*) is used to indicate where the NT quotes the OT.

WORD STUDY SYSTEM

The *NLT Study Bible* includes a word study system in the cross-reference column. Because the NLT is a dynamic translation, a particular word in Greek or Hebrew is not always translated the same way, but is translated in a manner that is appropriate for the context. This makes word studies richer and more productive, because the range of meaning for a particular Greek or Hebrew word becomes very clear, and it is easier to avoid common misunderstandings about what the word means.

There are word studies for 100 Hebrew words and 100 Greek words. For each word, the editors have included enough occurrences to illustrate the range of meanings for that word. Each occurrence is indicated in the NLT text with a superscript letter (a, b, c, etc.). The same superscript letter occurs in the cross-reference column under that verse. After the superscript letter the Hebrew or Greek word is given, followed by a reference number that matches the glossary at the back and many widely available study tools, such as *Strong's Concordance*. On the next line is a chain-reference link to the next highlighted occurrence of the word. The word study system thus opens up a whole world of Greek and Hebrew word study.

VISUAL AIDS
If a picture is worth a thousand words, the *NLT Study Bible* has tens of thousands of words' worth of visual information. These visual aids include maps, timelines, illustrations, charts, and diagrams.

59

19-13
Gen 18:20
1 Chr 21:15
Jude 1:7
19-14
Exod 9:21
Jer 5:12; 43:1-2
19-17
Gen 13:10; 19:26
Jer 48:6
19-22
Gen 13:10
19-24
Luke 17:29
Jude 1:7
19-25
Deut 29:23
Isa 13:19
Lam 4:6
2 Pet 2:6
19-26
Gen 19:17
Luke 17:32
19-27
Gen 18:22
19-28
Rom 9:2
19-29
Deut 7:8; 9:5
2 Pet 2:7-8
19-30
Gen 13:10

the city?" they asked. "Get them out of place—your sons-in-law, sons, daughter anyone else. ¹⁹For we are about to do this city completely. The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great it has reached the ears of the Lord, and he has sent us to destroy it."

²⁰So Lot rushed out to tell his daughters, "Quick, get out of this city. The Lord is about to destroy it." But the men thought he was only joking. ²¹At dawn the next morning the angels said, "Hurry," they said. "Take your wife and your two daughters who are here. Get out right now, or you will be swept away in the destruction of this city!"

²²When Lot still hesitated, the angels seized his hand and the hands of his two daughters and rushed the safety outside the city, for the Lord was merciful. ²³When they were safely in the city, one of the angels ordered, "Get up, for your lives! And don't look back or anywhere in the valley! Escape to the plains, or you will be swept away!"

²⁴"Oh no, my lord!" Lot begged. "I have been so gracious to me and my wife, and you have shown such grace. But I cannot go to the mountains. Disaster would catch up to me there, and I would soon die. ²⁵See, there is a small village nearby. Please let me go there instead;

1:10
Ps 23:7; 95:5
1:11
Gen 2:9
Ps 104:4
Matt 6:30
1:14
Ps 74:16; 104:19
1:15
Gen 1:5
1:16
Ps 8:3; 19:1-6;
136:9-9
1 Cor 15:41
1:18
Jer 33:20, 25
1:20
Gen 2:19
Ps 146:6
*Hebrew (3:15)
* Gen 2:7
1:21
Ps 104:25-28

And God saw that it was good. ¹¹Then God said, "Let the land sprout with vegetation—every sort of seed-bearing plant, and trees that grow seed-bearing fruit. These seeds will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came." And that is what happened. ¹²The land produced vegetation—all sorts of seed-bearing plants, and trees with seed-bearing fruit. Their seeds produced plants and trees of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. ¹³And evening passed and morning came, marking the third day.

Day Four: Sun, Moon, Stars

¹⁴Then God said, "Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to mark the seasons,

days, and years. ¹⁵Let these lights in the sky shine down on the earth." And that is what happened. ¹⁶God made two great lights—the larger one to govern the day, and the smaller one to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷God set these lights in the sky to light the earth, ¹⁸to govern the day and night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And evening passed and morning came, marking the fourth day.

Day Five: Birds, Fish

²⁰Then God said, "Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind." ²¹So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that scurries and

Formless	CHAOS	Empty
DAY 1 (1:3-5) Light, Dark	HEAVENS	DAY 4 (1:14-19) Sun, Moon, Stars
DAY 2 (1:6-8) Water, sky	WATER & SKY	DAY 5 (1:20-23) Birds, Fish
DAY 3 (1:9-13) Sea, Land	EARTH	DAY 6 (1:24-31) Animals, Humans
Formed	COSMOS	Filled
	DAY 7 (2:2-3) Rest	

4 The Structure of the Creation Account (1:1-2:3). God transformed chaos into the present cosmos. In the first three days, he transformed the formless void into the structured universe—the HEAVENS (outer space), the WATER and SKY, and the EARTH (cp. Exod 20:11; Ps 135:6). In the second three days, he populated each empire realm. The seventh day (2:1-3) stands apart: As God's day of rest, it provides the weekly pattern for human activity (Exod 20:8-11; 31:12-17) and seals the rest that God promised to those who live by faith in him (see Heb 3:7-4:11).

two collections of water (cp. Job 37:18; Ezek 1:22). In the ancient Near East, the cosmos was understood as a three-tier system, they are simply called the larger one and the smaller one. Not including their names may have reminded Israel that they were not gods. ²govern: Cp. 1:26, 28; Ps 136:3. ³the stars: The starry heavens testify to God's creative power as they proclaim his glory (Ps 19:1; 148:3). They do not predict the future, as Israel's neighbors believed (see Jer 10:2).

1:9-10 Let the waters... flow together: Other ancient cultures viewed the sea as a hostile force. Genesis shows God as further restraining chaos (see note on 1:2) by prescribing specific boundaries for the sea. The flood—an act of God's judgment (6:7)—undid these boundaries and returned the earth to chaos (7:1-24).

1:14-31 On days 4-6, God filled the domains that had been formed during days 1-3 (1:3-13).

1:14 Let them... mark the seasons, days, and years: The movement of the heavenly bodies defined Israel's liturgical calendar, whose roots in creation gave a sacred timing to Israel's festivals and celebrations (see Exod 23:15; Lev 23:4).

1:16 In the surrounding pagan cultures, the two great lights were worshipped as deities, but in Genesis they serve God and humanity (see Ps 136:9; Jer 31:35). The sun and moon are not named; they are simply called the larger one and the smaller one. Not including their names may have reminded Israel that they were not gods. ²govern: Cp. 1:26, 28; Ps 136:3. ³the stars: The starry heavens testify to God's creative power as they proclaim his glory (Ps 19:1; 148:3). They do not predict the future, as Israel's neighbors believed (see Jer 10:2).

1:21 Contrary to the pagan idea that the great sea creatures were co-eternal with God, Genesis states that God created them and is sovereign over them. The Hebrew word *tanninim* ("creatures") elsewhere refers to crocodiles (Ezek 29:3), powerful monsters (Jer 51:34), or the sea creature, Leviathan (Isa 27:1; cp. Job 41:1-34).

(Hebrew *tehom*): Some scholars say this alludes to the Mesopotamian goddess Tiamat (representing chaos), but Genesis views *tehom* as inhospitable chaos, not as a deity or goddess that God engaged in cosmic battle. ²the Spirit of God: God directly superintended the creation process.

1:3-13 In the first three days, God formed the chaos into a habitable world.

1:3 Then God said: Nothing in Gen 1 is created apart from God's powerful word (cp. Ps 33:6, 9). ⁴Let there be...: ⁵and there was: God's command enacted his will to create the world. God is not a part of creation or limited by it; he is the supreme ruler over everything (cp. Neh 9:6).

1:4 Light is antithetical to chaotic darkness (1:2); the light is declared good but the darkness is not (cp. John 1:5). God is the source of this light (cp. 1:14-19). God separated the light, as he did water

(cp. 1:6-8), by his creative word. Light is associated with life and blessing (Job 38:19-20; Ps 19:1-6; 97:11; 104:19-20; Isa 60:19-20) and sets a boundary on the darkness that would destroy cosmic order. Darkness often typifies terror, death, and evil (see 15:12; Job 18:6, 18; Ps 88:12; Eph 5:11-12; 1 Jn 1:5).

1:5 God called (or named): To name something is to exercise authority over it (see also 2:19-20). ⁶day: The Hebrew *yom* can refer to daylight (1:5a), to a 24-hour period (1:5b), or to an unspecified time period (2:4b, "When," literally in the day; cp. Exod 20:8-11). ⁷evening morning: The Hebrew day began at sundown, just as the first day began with darkness and brought the first morning light.

1:6-8 The creation account describes the appearance of things from a human perspective. The sky is viewed as a shiny dome that is a buffer between



19:14 Lot's warning words were not taken seriously because of his hypocrisy. It seemed that there would not be even righteous people in the city.

19:15-23 Lot escaped judgment by God's grace, but his heart was still in Sodom. Israel would forever remember Lot as lingering, halting, and being dragged to safety by angels. The Lord

4 The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (18:16-19:38). The two angels apparently traveled, as shown, from Abraham's camp at the Oaks of Mamre to destroy SODOM and GOMORRAH. Lot and his daughters took refuge at Zoar, then moved eastward into the mountains of Moab. Lot fathered two sons by his daughters; the two sons became the nations of Moab (see Num 21:10-20; 22:1-25; Deut 23:3, 6; Judg 3:12-30; Ruth 1:4-6) and AMMON (see Num 21:24; Deut 2:19-37; 23:3; Judg 10:6-12; 1 Sam 10:27-11:11).

mercifully spared Lot for Abraham's sake (18:23; 19:29). Lot deserved judgment for his way of life, but he was a believer at heart and the Lord rescued him (2 Pet 2:7-9). ⁵Lot is not alone in his conflicted lifestyle. Countless believers fall in with a corrupt world rather than flee a doomed society. God's people, living in a pagan world, must remain separate (1 Jn 2:15-17). The corrupt world system awaits God's coming judgment, which will be far greater than the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Matt 11:23-24).

19:18-22 Lot demanded a concession from the angels even after he was

delivered. He wanted to live in the small town of Zoar (little place). **19:23-25** Cp. Luke 17:29. The eruption of Vesuvius and the destruction of Pompeii in 79 AD, as well as recent natural disasters, show how quickly a thorough catastrophe like this could happen.

19:26 looked back: The verb indicates prolonged, intense gazing toward the world she loved, not a curious glance (15:5; Exod 33:8; Num 21:9; 1 Sam 2:32; cp. Exod 3:6). Lot's wife was too attached to Sodom to follow God's call to flee; so she was included in the judgment as she lingered on the valley slopes. Christ's return to judge the world will be as sudden and devastating as the destruction of Sodom (Luke 17:32-37). Those who crave the life of this wicked world will lose this world and the next.

19:29 God honored Abraham's intercession (cf. 18:23-32), but Lot's entire world was gone because he lived by his instinct and desire, not by faith in God. He could no longer live in the good land he selfishly chose for himself (13:10-13; cp. Matt 16:26; 2 Cor 5:7).

19:30-38 The poverty of the cave contrasts with the wealth Lot shared with Abram and the good life he lived

CHARTS

Charts organize textual information into a form that is easy to understand quickly.

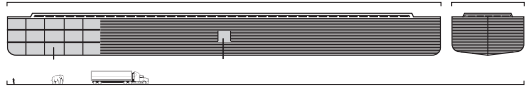
MAPS

Maps throughout the study materials visualize the events and places mentioned in the text of Scripture.

7:4
6:6, 7, 13
Gen 5:32
7:7
Gen 6:18

female—into the boat. To keep you safe during the flood. 20 Pairs of every kind of bird, and every kind of animal, and every kind of small animal that scurries along the ground, will come to you to be kept alive.

So Noah did everything as the Lord commanded him. 6 Noah was 600 years old when the flood covered the earth. 7 He went on board the boat to escape the flood—he and his wife



▲ Noah's Ark (6:14-16). An ark built to the dimensions specified in Genesis would have been immense. Its ratio of length to width (6 to 1) is the most stable known and is used for the design of modern tankers and freight-hauling ships. The ark was able to carry 20,000 tons of cargo; the required number of young adult land animals would have occupied less than half of the available space. The design given was perfect for the ark's function.

6:14 **A large boat:** Traditionally rendered as an ark, this was a long rectangular barge designed for survival, not for navigation. The Hebrew word *tebah* is used again only of the basket in which the baby Moses was floated on the Nile (Exod 2:3, 5). * **Cypress wood:** Or poplar wood. It is not clear what kind of wood this was. It was possibly from a conifer, such as cypress.

with no sail or rudder. God also brought the animals to Noah (6:20). 6:17 **Cover the earth with a flood:** Some propose that the flood might only have covered the ancient Near East as it was known to Noah or Moses. However, the Hebrew's stated purpose—to destroy every living thing that breathes (see also 6:7, 11-13; 7:1, 4, 18-23; 8:21)—and its effect of undoing creation (see notes on 1:9-10, 7:11-12) suggest that the flood

These animals would procreate and repopulate the earth after the flood. 7:2 of each animal I have approved for eating and for sacrifice (literally of each clean animal; similarly in 7:8): In addition to the animals that were to repopulate the earth, these "clean animals" were for food and for Noah's sacrifice after the flood (8:20-21). This passage does not use the precise technical language that is found in the regulations

ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustrations help visualize objects that might be difficult to imagine without a picture. For example, the illustration of Noah's Ark on p. 33 shows just how big that floating storage box was and how much it was able to hold.

6:15 The ark's dimensions: Hebrew 300 cubits [23 m (13.8 met) displaced] 6:16 An opening of low the roof light a door and was the ca

599 1 KINGS 12:3

11:38 2 Sam 2:11, 27
11:40 1 Kgs 14:25
2 Chr 2:2
11:41-43 // 2 Chr 9:29-31
12:1-24 // 2 Chr 10:1-11:4
12:1 Judg 1:6
2 Chr 10:1

the throne of Israel, and you will rule over all that your heart desires. 18 If you listen to what I tell you and follow my ways and do whatever I consider to be right, and if you obey my decrees and commands, as my servant David did, then I will always be with you. I will establish an enduring dynasty for you as I did for David, and I will give Israel to you. 19 Because of Solomon's sin I will punish the descendants of David—though not forever."

40 Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam, but he fled to King Shishak of Egypt and stayed there until Solomon died.

Summary of Solomon's Reign
1 Kgs 11:41-43 // 2 Chr 9:29-31

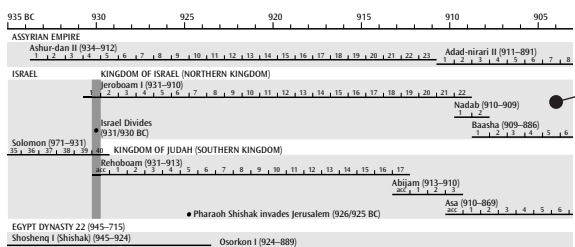
41 The rest of the events in Solomon's reign, including all his deeds and his wisdom, are

recorded in *The Book of the Acts of Solomon*. 42 Solomon ruled in Jerusalem over all Israel for forty years. 43 When he died, he was buried in the City of David, named for his father. Then his son Rehoboam became the next king.

2. THE EARLY DIVIDED KINGDOM (12:1-16:14)

The Division of the Nation (12:1-24)
The Northern Tribes Revolt
1 Kgs 12:1-20 // 2 Chr 10:1-19

12 Rehoboam went to Shechem, where all Israel had gathered to make him king. 2 When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard of this, he returned from Egypt, for he had fled to Egypt to escape from King Solomon. 3 The leaders of Israel summoned him, and Jeroboam and the whole assembly of Israel



▲ Israel and Judah, 935-903 BC (11:41-15:34). Each king's regal years are numbered according to his own system of accounting (see "OT Chronology: Israel's Monarchy," p. 0000). Each king's line on the chart runs from the beginning of the year in which his accession occurred to the end of the year in which he died. * SOLOMON'S fortieth and final regal year began in the fall (the month of Tishri) of 931 BC; his death and the division of the kingdom occurred sometime prior to the spring (the month of Nisan) of 930 BC. * The reign of JEROBAM I started after that of REHOBAM, but Jeroboam's first regal year was counted from the previous spring. * PHARAOH SHISHAK of Egypt invaded JERUSALEM during Rehoboam's fifth regal year (see 14:25-28).

11:38 **An enduring dynasty:** Jeroboam had a great opportunity. God promised that if he was faithful and obedient to the Lord, his kingdom would be strong and long-lasting. However, he departed pending difficulty, **tried to kill Jeroboam.** * **King Shishak of Egypt** later invaded Judah during the reign of Solomon's son Rehoboam (14:25-26). 11:41-43 **The brief closing summary of**

tribes, had been a strategic site and religious center since the pre-Israelite occupation of Canaan (Gen 12:6-7; 33:18-20), and it became important in Israel as a Levitical city and a city of refuge.

TIMELINES

Timelines show when in history various events took place and how they relate to other events in the Bible and in the surrounding world. The Bible is a record of history, and it is fascinating and stimulating to see just how the events of the Bible fit into recorded history as known from the surrounding cultures.

43 GENESIS 12:5

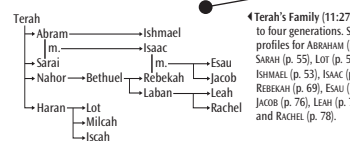
12:1 Gen 15:7 *Abn 7:3 Heb 11:8 (orig) (776) * Gen 13:17
12:2 Gen 13:16; 15:5, 17:4; 18:18; 22:17 Zech 8:13 *Harok (1288) * Gen 49:28
12:3 Gen 22:18; 26:4 Exod 23:22 Acts 2:25 *Gal 3:8
12:4 Gen 11:26, 31

still living. 29 Meanwhile, Abram and Nahor both married. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah. (Milcah and her sister Iscah were daughters of Nahor's brother Haran.) 30 But Sarai was unable to become pregnant and had no children. 31 One day Terah took his son Abram, his daughter-in-law Sarai (his son Abram's wife), and his grandson Lot (his son Haran's child) and moved away from Ur of the Chaldeans. He was headed for the land of Canaan, but they stopped at Haran and settled there. 32 Terah lived for 205 years and died while still in Haran.

The Call of Abram (12:1-9)

12 The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. 2 I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. 3 I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you."

4 So Abram departed as the Lord had instructed, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. 5 He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot,



4 **Terah's Family (11:27-30),** to four generations. See profiles for ABRAHAM (p. 46), SARAH (p. 55), LOT (p. 58), ISHMAEL (p. 53), ISAAC (p. 63), REBEKAH (p. 69), ESAU (p. 71), JACOB (p. 76), LEAH (p. 79), and RACHEL (p. 78).

and be a blessing (see note on 12:2). Each directive is followed by three promises conditioned upon obedience. 12:1 Abram knew that he should leave, but he did not know where he was going. Obedience required faith. 12:2 and you will be a blessing (or so that you will be a blessing): This clause is a command in Hebrew, but it is also a promise conditioned upon Abram's obedience to God's command (12:1): "Go . . . so that you will be a blessing. Be a blessing, so that I can bless and curse others." * **make you famous** (literally **make your name great**): Abram received the fame sought by the builders of

DIAGRAMS

Diagrams organize information visually in order to show relationships. For example, the genealogy of Terah, Abraham's father, on p. 43 helps sort out the relationships among many of the people who play a role in the book of Genesis.

main city of Sumer in Mesopotamia near the mouth of the Persian Gulf. The family had moved there perhaps generations before the call. Their ancestral home ("native country," 12:1) was apparently near Haran, in the region

sovereignty of God, who miraculously gives children to barren women (see also 1 Sam 1:2; 2 S; Ps 113:9; Isa 54:1).

11:31 **Terah took:** The text is clear that Abram's departure from Ur was motivated by his call to leave the

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE WITH THE *NLT STUDY BIBLE*

Devoting yourself to understanding the text of the Bible is one of the greatest things that you can do. In the Bible, you can read about the things that God has done and said in the past. You can hear the stories of people who lived in a very different world from our own, yet whose lives were in so many ways just like ours. Most importantly, through the Bible you can hear God speak, and you can walk in fellowship with him.

The Bible, though, is a complex and very foreign book. It is true that some parts of it are not hard to understand. But other parts are, frankly, almost inscrutable, even when read in a clear, contemporary English translation like the NLT. Many people have set out to read and understand the Bible, only to put it aside in confusion and frustration. How can we “hear God speak” when his words seem so hard to understand?

The *NLT Study Bible* has been created to address this difficulty. The Bible is complex and foreign, but it is not an unscalable mountain or an impassable desert. It is, in fact, a well-traveled road. Having a guide can make the journey an interesting, enjoyable, and deeply rewarding experience. The *NLT Study Bible* has been designed to be your guide on the journey.

MAKING USE OF THE *NLT STUDY BIBLE*

Read the Bible Text. No feature of the *NLT Study Bible* is more important than Scripture, the text of the Bible itself. Read the Bible text as the record of God’s dealings with specific people in the past. The Bible is not simply a set of theological propositions or moral instructions, although it does include them. Instead, it is primarily the record of God revealing himself and his purposes to people, and forming loving and faithful relationships with them. As you read, seek to understand the significance of what he was doing for them and saying to them. God does not change (1 Sam 15:29; Jas 1:17), so who he was in relation to the people of the past is who he is to you and me today, and he will be the same God in the future and for all eternity (Heb 13:8). Read the Bible text with the purpose of knowing God himself.

Read Each Book of the Bible as a Whole. It is best to study a book in its entirety, rather than picking and choosing individual verses. Each book is a unified whole, and each verse is a part of that whole. On your first reading, try to read the entire book in one sitting; for larger books, break it into chunks; you can use the outline in each book’s introduction as a guide in dividing up your reading. During this reading, try to focus exclusively on the Bible text. We recommend that you leave the notes and other features for later. As you read, write down questions and thoughts that come to mind, and then keep going.

Read the Book Introductions, Section Introductions, and Chronology Articles. Each book of Scripture is situated in both literary and historical contexts that have important implications for understanding the book and individual passages. The *NLT Study Bible*

provides articles that will help you understand these contexts, and reading them will prepare you to engage the text with understanding. Our recommendation is that you begin by reading the Introductions to the Old and New Testaments (beginning on pp. 3 and 1557). Then read the introduction for the section of the Bible that you are studying and the book introduction for the book you are studying. Take time to understand what these introductions say—they were written by people who have devoted many years to understanding Scripture and helping others on the journey. Then refer back to these articles from time to time while you read the Bible text.

Read Slowly. After reading through the text of a Bible book quickly and reading the introductions that impact that book, you are ready to begin reading the Bible text and study materials together. We recommend that you take this part of your journey slowly. Give yourself time to read, understand, and ponder the words in the Bible text and the study materials—the notes, articles, and visual aids—that appear alongside it. Our recommendation is that you read and meditate on perhaps one chapter per day, or about one and one-half pages of Bible text and study materials. If you do so five days per week for fifty-two weeks each year, you will finish going through the *NLT Study Bible* one time in five years (the “Reading Plan” on p. 2209 will guide you at this pace). It sounds like a long time, but it will go quickly, and you will have the pleasure of many enjoyable discoveries along the way. Most importantly, you will be giving yourself time to breathe in God’s words and breathe out your response to him in prayer.

Follow the Outline. Notice the outline headings in the text. Consider how each passage fits in the overall structure of the book.

Make Use of the Study Helps. The many study helps (see the “Features Guide,” pp. A8–A15) are designed to help explain what the Bible *meant* to its first readers, and what it therefore *means* to us who read it today. Make use of the study helps to grasp the meaning and significance of what the Bible text says. When you read the Bible in this way, you can begin to hear God’s voice speaking to you, just as he spoke to the people who first heard and read these words.

Keep a Journal. As you travel through the pages of Scripture, keep a journal of your discoveries, insights, epiphanies, questions, prayers, and perplexities. In past centuries, readers often kept a journal called a *commonplace book* containing their notes about the things they had read and discovered. More recently, many people have found it useful to keep a daily journal of their Bible reading, reflections, and prayers. You can use your Bible study journal to write questions as they come to mind, interesting things that you learn, your own thoughts about the passage, what you think God might be saying to you, and your prayers to God about what you have studied.

Mark the Bible Text and Study Materials. It can be helpful to highlight or mark the parts of the Bible text and study materials that answer your questions or speak to you in some way. Some ways of marking the text include underlining, circling, or highlighting words or phrases; putting brackets in the margins or around pieces of text; writing one to three words in the margin to prompt memory about a topic; and writing cross-references to other places in the *NLT Study Bible* or to your Bible journal (perhaps by date).

Develop a Sense of History. As you read the Bible, seek to develop a historical understanding of how the Bible fits together in time and space. We as people are designed to

enjoy and remember good stories. The Bible tells a great story, but sometimes we don't see how the parts of the story fit together. The *NLT Study Bible* includes a large number of timelines, maps, and explanations to help you do so. When we understand how it all fits together in one great story, it is possible to see connections and developments that could not be seen before.

Use the Reference Helps in the Back. The reference helps in the back of the *NLT Study Bible* will enable you to quickly find the key places where a particular person, place, or topic is covered. As you carefully read the notes and features that the index points to, also read the Bible text itself.

Go Further. Please do not treat the *NLT Study Bible* study notes and other features as the full and final word on any topic or passage. The Bible text itself is complete—you are holding a full and complete copy of God's revealed word. But the notes and other features are limited and incomplete. We who have prepared this Bible have packed in as much as we could in the 2200 pages from the beginning of the Old Testament to the end of the New Testament. But it is only a very small fraction of what could be said. Therefore, treat the *NLT Study Bible* notes and features as a very helpful but incomplete guide on your journey. For those who wish to go further with some aspect of study, there are many other resources available. To help point you in the right direction, each book and section introduction includes a list of "Further Reading" materials.

Go Ahead. Finally, don't hold back; jump in! Begin using the *NLT Study Bible* for your daily study, and don't worry about trying to do everything that we have suggested here. You can take small, manageable steps. The most important thing is that you begin your journey on the road of reading, studying, and understanding the Bible. After a while, come back and read this guide again; you might find something else here that will help you along the way.

As you use the *NLT Study Bible*, you will discover even more ways to grow in your understanding of God's word. We invite you to visit us and tell us about your experiences at www.NLTStudyBible.com, or send us an e-mail at NLTStudyBible@tyndale.com.

Come, . . . let us walk in the light of the LORD! Isaiah 2:5

Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path. Psalm 119:105

THE EDITORS

NLT STUDY BIBLE MASTER TIMELINE

How do the stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob relate to history? What was going on in the world at the time of David and Solomon? How do the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah fit together? What was happening during the time between the OT and the NT? How do the events in the life of Jesus and the early church correlate with other things that were happening in the Roman world?

CREATION TO ABRAHAM

Many of the events of Genesis 1–11 predate writing, so it is difficult to assign precise dates to these early events. We can, however, observe a close correlation between the biblical account and what is known from other historical sources. After the Flood, which Noah and his family survived, humanity spread out across the known world, and the ancient civilizations began. By the time of Abraham,

4500~950 BC
(300 years/inch)

See "Chronology of Abraham to Joshua," pp. 118–121

4000 BC

3500

3000

EVENTS IN OT BOOKS: GENESIS 1–11

MESOPOTAMIA

EARLY BRONZE AGE (3300–2000 BC)

*Settlement of Asshur
(around 2800 BC)*

CREATION
(undated)

SUMERIAN CIVILIZATION
(about 3000–1950 BC)

GREAT FLOOD?

CANAAN

EGYPT

PREDYNASTIC PERIOD (4000–3000 BC)

ARCHAIC PERIOD /
DYNASTIES 1–2
(3000–2700 BC)

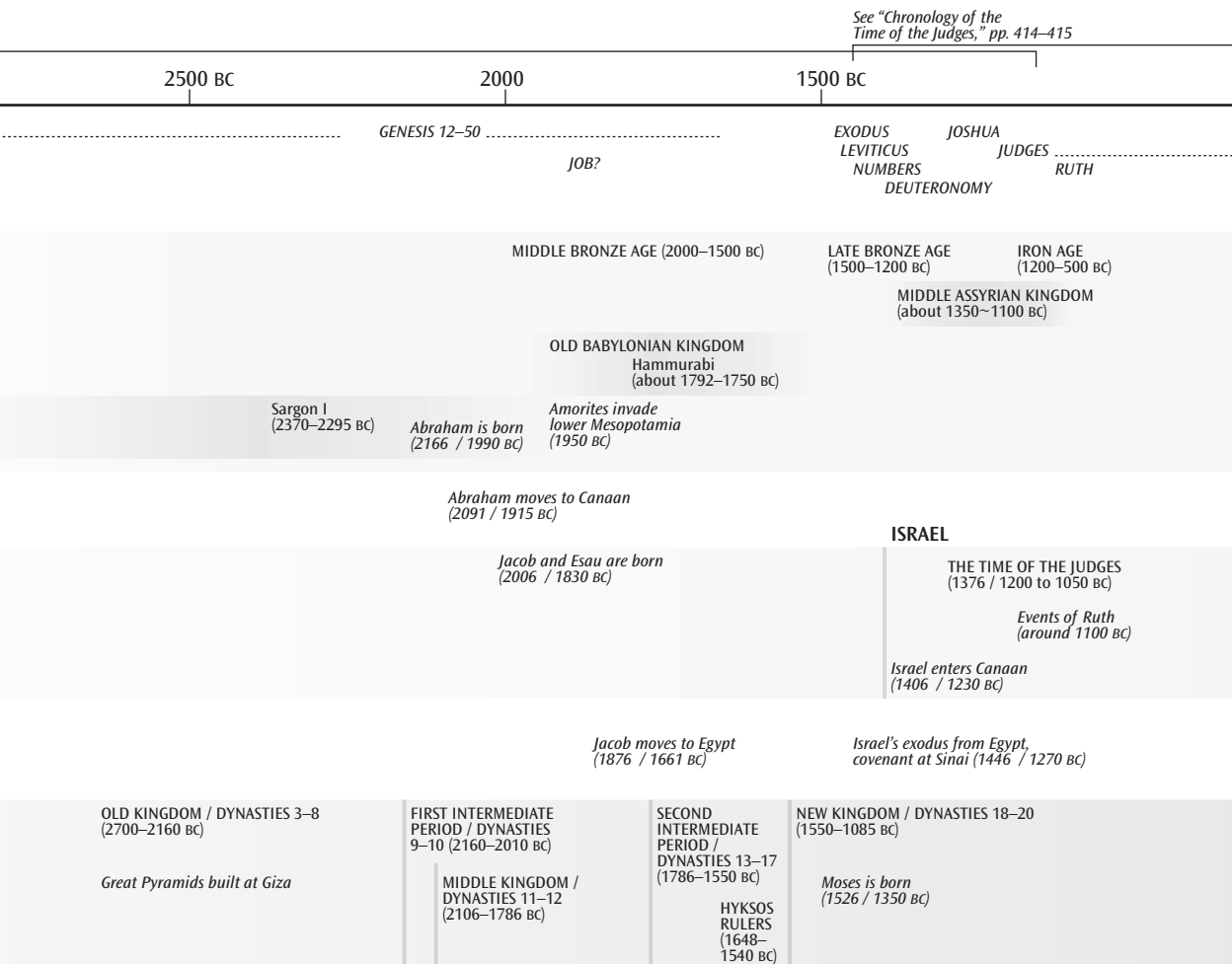
Egypt was well established, while Sumerian civilization in Mesopotamia was coming to a close.

ABRAHAM TO JOSHUA

We know that Abraham lived around 2000 BC, but we are not completely certain about the dates for his life. This uncertainty results from our uncertainty about the date of Israel's exodus from Egypt. Two dates for the Exodus are accepted as possibilities by biblical scholars, 1446 or 1270 BC. The dates for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are simply calculated from the date for the Exodus on the basis of information given in the biblical text. Although there is uncertainty, it is also quite clear that the things Scripture says about these people and their lives fit well with what we know about conditions in Canaan and Egypt during this period of history. For more information, see "Chronology of Abraham to Joshua," pp. 118–121.

THE TIME OF THE JUDGES

After Joshua led Israel's conquest of Canaan and the people of Israel began to settle in the land, a period of growing anarchy ensued. Periodic chaos and oppression were punctuated by rescue through the inspired leadership of the judges. For more information, see "Chronology of the Time of the Judges," pp. 414–415.

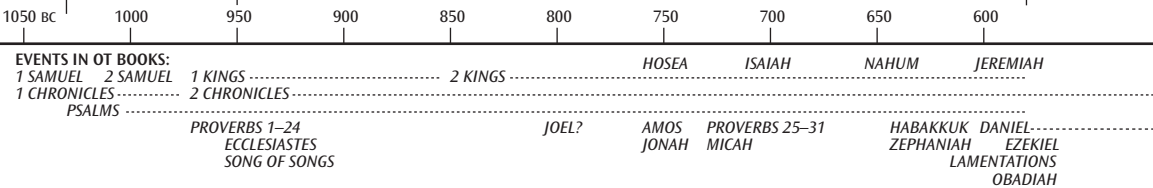


ISRAEL'S MONARCHY

The time of the judges came to a decisive end with the ministry of Samuel and the reigns of King Saul (about 1050~1011 BC) and King David (1011~971 BC). The dates for events from this time forward are much more precise, because we can correlate biblical information with the records of other ancient nations like the Assyrians and Babylonians, and with known astronomical phenomena such as solar eclipses. After the division of Israel into the northern kingdom (Israel) and the southern kingdom (Judah), the chronology becomes very complex, and good timelines are essential for understanding how the reigns of the kings fit together. For more information, see "Chronology of Israel's Monarchy," pp. 562–565. Detailed timelines are also included throughout the books of 1 & 2 Kings.

1050~50 BC
(90 years/inch)

See "Chronology of the Time of the Judges," pp. 414–415
See "Chronology of Israel's Monarchy," pp. 562–565

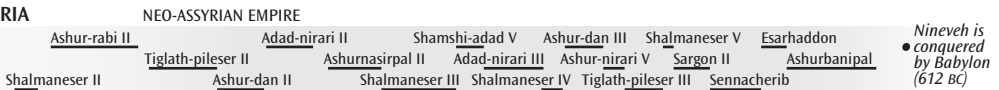


ROME

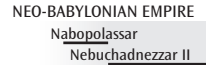
ROMAN KINGDOM
The city of Rome is founded (700s BC)

MACEDONIAN KINGDOM

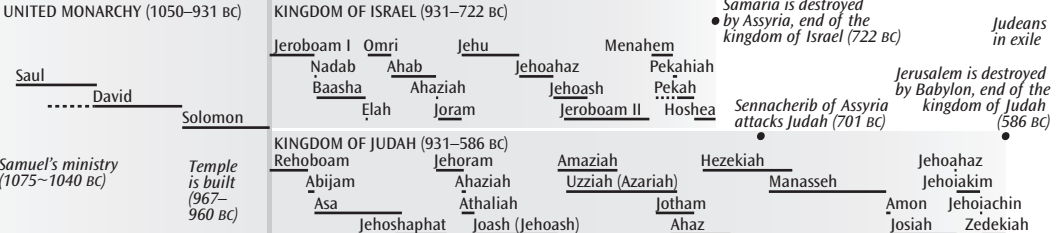
ASSYRIA



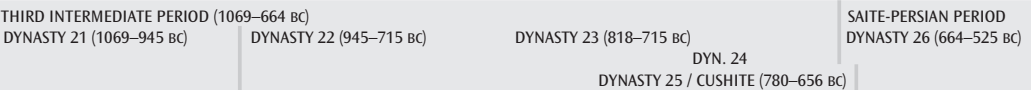
BABYLONIA



ISRAEL



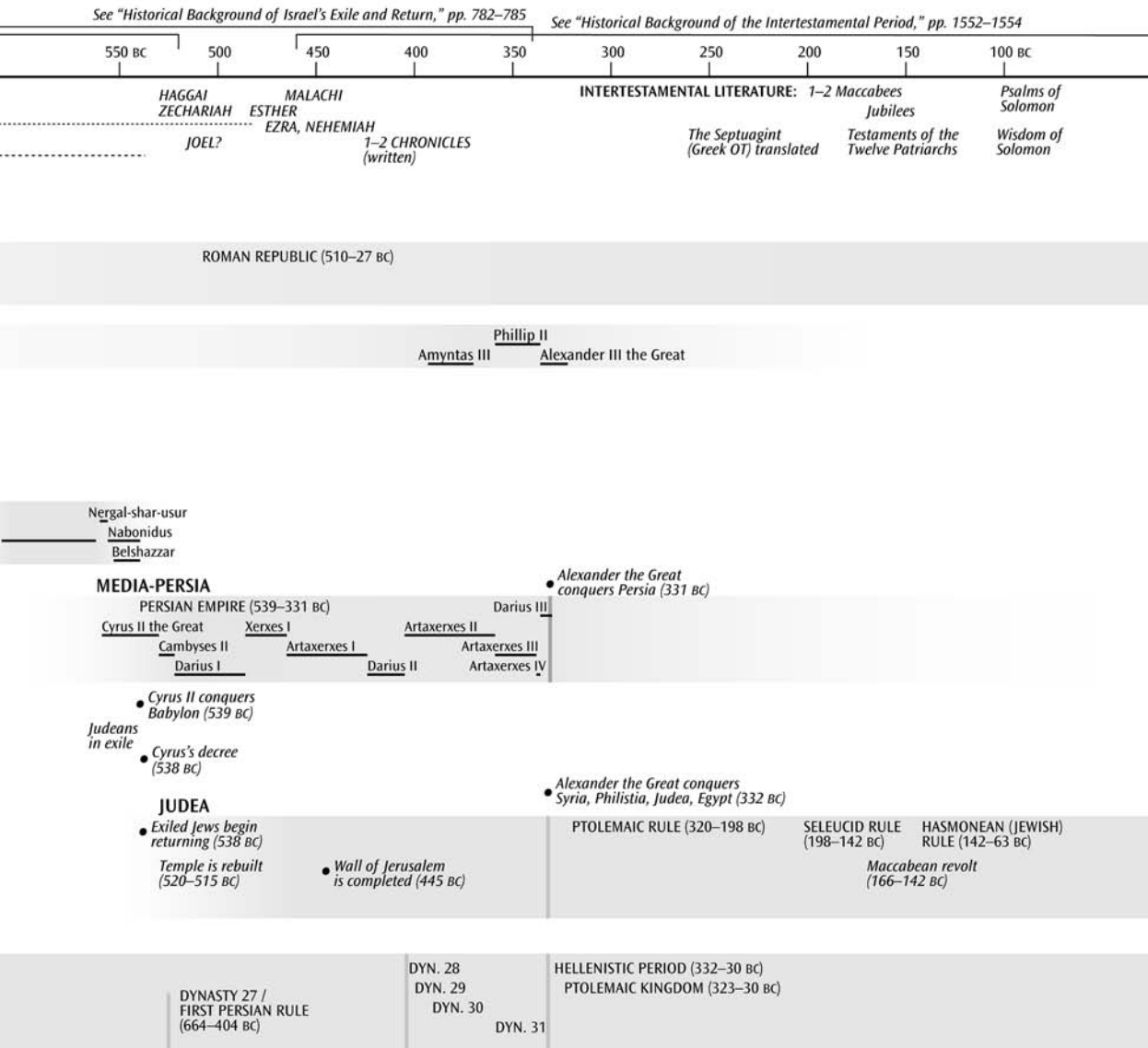
EGYPT



ISRAEL’S EXILE AND RETURN

The records of Israel’s history are much more sparse during the period of the Exile than beforehand. Instead of a comprehensive, orderly account, as with Israel’s monarchy, we have scattered accounts in books such as 2 Chronicles, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Esther.

Nebuchadnezzar was the king in Babylon for much of the time of Israel’s exile. After his death (562 BC), it was less than twenty-five years until Babylon was conquered by Cyrus the Great (539 BC). Cyrus issued a decree allowing Jewish people to return to Judea, and many did. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah narrate some of the events of the postexilic period in Judea, including the rebuilding of the Temple and the wall of Jerusalem. For more information about this period, see “Historical Background of Israel’s Exile and Return,” pp. 782–785.



THE INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD

From the end of the OT to the beginning of the NT there was a period of about 400 years. It was not, however, an empty period or a lull in history. To the contrary, great changes took place. The Persian empire was replaced by Greek dominance, beginning with the conquests of Alexander the Great (332–323 BC). Greek culture began spreading inexorably throughout the Mediterranean world. Rome, too, grew in power and influence, until the Romans became the dominant power in the Mediterranean world in the first century BC. For more information, see “Historical Background of the Intertestamental Period,” pp. 1552–1554.

THE LIFE OF JESUS

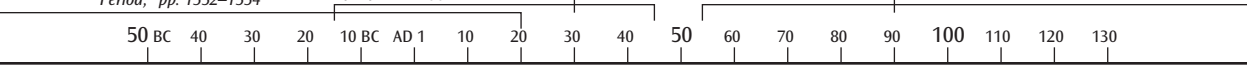
Jesus of Nazareth was born in Judea during the height of Greco-Roman culture and Roman power. Jesus lived a relatively short life in a tumultuous backwater of the Roman empire, and he died the shameful death of a criminal. But then he rose bodily from the dead, demonstrated to his followers that he was alive, and ascended to heaven. For more information, see “Introduction to the Four Gospels,” pp. 1561–1563, and “Chronology of the Life of Jesus,” pp. 1564–1566.

60 BC—AD 335
(36 years/inch)

See “Historical Background of the Intertestamental Period,” pp. 1552–1554

See “Chronology of the Life of Jesus,” pp. 1564–1566

See “Chronology of the Apostolic Age,” pp. 1818–1819



EVENTS IN NT BOOKS:
MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE, JOHN

ACTS-----
JAMES HEBREWS?
1–2 PETER
PAUL’S LETTERS

REVELATION?
JOHN’S LETTERS

POSTAPOSTOLIC WORKS:
1 Clement Ignatius’s Letters
Shepherd of Hermas
The Didache

ROME

ROMAN REPUBLIC
(510–27 BC)

Julius Caesar is assassinated (March 44 BC)

ROMAN EMPIRE
JULIO-CLAUDIAN DYNASTY (27 BC—AD 68)
Octavian Augustus Caesar

Tiberius Caesar

Claudius Caesar

Nero Caesar

FLAVIAN DYN.
Vespasian

Titus

Domitian

ANTONINE DYNASTY (AD 96–192)
Nerva

Trajan

Hadrian

CHRISTIANITY

Paul’s missionary journeys and letters
Council in Jerusalem
James son of Zebedee is executed
Paul’s conversion
James brother of Jesus is stoned to death in Jerusalem
Clement I of Rome
The apostle John dies in Ephesus
Papias of Hierapolis

AD 64–65
Nero persecutes Christians, Peter and Paul are martyred

~AD 95
Domitian persecutes Christians

Jesus’ birth

Jesus’ death and resurrection

John the Baptist’s ministry

JEWISH TERRITORIES

Herod the Great

Pontius Pilate

Felix

Festus

Herod Antipas

Herod Agrippa II

Herod Archelaus

Herod Agrippa I

Hyrcanus II

Annas

Caiaphas

Jerusalem is destroyed (AD 70)

Simon Bar Kokhba’s rebellion against Rome (AD 121–135)

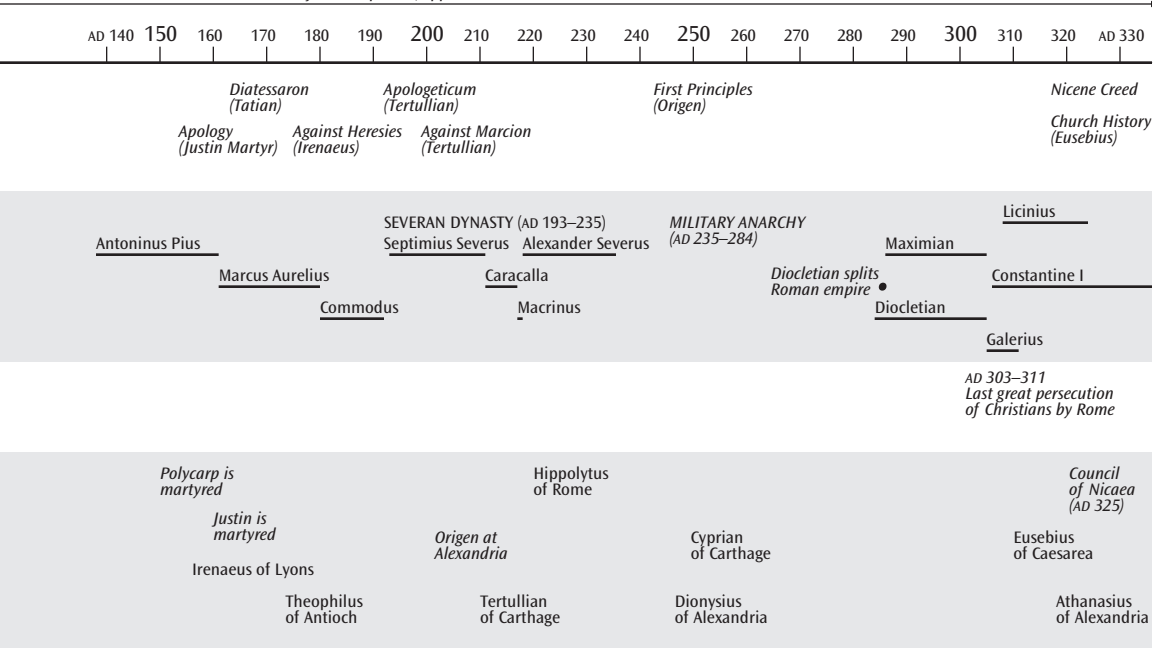
THE APOSTOLIC AGE

After Jesus rose from the dead, his followers quickly began proclaiming the news, and the movement of those who believed the message spread around the Roman world during the first century AD. The book of Acts and the letters of Paul and the other apostles record events in the Christian community during this period. For more information about the chronology of this time, see “Chronology of the Apostolic Age,” pp. 1818–1819.

THE TIME AFTER THE APOSTLES

By the end of the first century, all of the apostles of Jesus had died, but the church continued growing. Those early, postapostolic Christians saw themselves and their communities as being in continuity with the apostles. They maintained the faith that the apostles had given them while experiencing periodic, harsh persecution from their neighbors and from the Roman government. For more information, see “Introduction to the Time after the Apostles,” pp. 2201–2205.

See “Introduction to the Time after the Apostles,” pp. 2201–2205



Jewish people are dispersed from Judea

NLT STUDY BIBLE OVERVIEW MAPS

Where did Abraham live, travel, and obey God's instruction to sacrifice his son (Gen 12–22)? Why did Josiah confront Pharaoh Neco and lose his life (2 Kgs 23:29–30; 2 Chr 35:20–27; Jer 46)? When Jesus was making his final trip to Jerusalem, why did he go through Samaria (John 4:4)? How did Paul follow up with the churches he established during his first missionary



journey (Acts 13–14, 16)? The answers to questions such as these can be understood more readily through the study of the geography of the Bible.

THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN AND THE NEAR EAST

The events in the Bible took place in the lands around the eastern MEDITERRANEAN SEA and in the Near East—the area from EGYPT through CANAAN and ARAM, to MESOPOTAMIA and PERSIA. The ancient Near East is the setting for the earliest events of recorded history, and it is the world in which the nation of Israel was formed and grew. Abraham journeyed from HARAN in upper Mesopotamia to Canaan (Gen 12). His descendants then moved to Egypt (Gen 46) and spent hundreds of years there before returning to Canaan and establishing the nation of Israel (Exod—Josh).



Almost 1,000 years later, after living in the land of Israel (see below), the descendants of Abraham returned to Mesopotamia as exiles (2 Kgs 17, 24–25). The Jewish people later returned to JERUSALEM and JUDEA and reestablished their community (Ezra—Nehemiah). After Jesus’ death and resurrection, the Christian community that began in Jerusalem spread as Paul and the other apostles took the Good News throughout the known world (Acts 2–28).



ISRAEL AND ITS NEIGHBORS

Many of the key events in the history of God’s people took place in and around Canaan, which came to be called the land of Israel (from DAN in the north to BEERSHEBA in the south). Not only did much of Abraham’s life take place in this land, but the nation of Israel lived here (Joshua—Nehemiah). Israel’s neighbors included other descendants of Abraham—namely, the people of EDOM, MOAB, and AMMON (see Gen 19, 25). In addition, the people of ARAM lived to the northeast, the people of PHILISTIA to the west, and the people of PHOENICIA to the north along the coast in and around TYRE and SIDON.

After the Exile, many Jews returned and reestablished the Jewish community in JERUSALEM and JUDEA (Ezra—Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah). Later, Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, grew up in NAZARETH of Galilee, and died in Jerusalem (Matthew—John). He arose from the dead there, and the church had its beginning there (Acts). Even as the Good News about Jesus was spreading throughout the Mediterranean world, Jerusalem and Judea continued to play a role in the life of the Christian community until the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 (e.g., Acts 15).

UNDERSTANDING the geography of these and the other events of the Bible can provide a much clearer picture of what was happening and what it means. For this reason, many maps are included throughout the interior of the *NLT Study Bible*. Most books of the Bible include a map in the book’s introduction. All of the maps and many of the places on them are listed in the Subject Index, pp. 2227–2368.

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*Many thanks to all who have had a
hand in the creation of this study
Bible, and most of all to the Lord of
heaven and earth, who gave us his
word and spirit so generously.*

A NOTE TO READERS

THE *HOLY BIBLE*, NEW LIVING TRANSLATION, was first published in 1996. It quickly became one of the most popular Bible translations in the English-speaking world. While the NLT's influence was rapidly growing, the Bible Translation Committee determined that an additional investment in scholarly review and text refinement could make it even better. So shortly after its initial publication, the committee began an eight-year process with the purpose of increasing the level of the NLT's precision without sacrificing its easy-to-understand quality. This second-generation text was completed in 2004, with minor changes subsequently introduced in 2007.

The goal of any Bible translation is to convey the meaning and content of the ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts as accurately as possible to contemporary readers. The challenge for our translators was to create a text that would communicate as clearly and powerfully to today's readers as the original texts did to readers and listeners in the ancient biblical world. The resulting translation is easy to read and understand, while also accurately communicating the meaning and content of the original biblical texts. The NLT is a general-purpose text especially good for study, devotional reading, and reading aloud in worship services.

We believe that the New Living Translation—which combines the latest biblical scholarship with a clear, dynamic writing style—will communicate God's word powerfully to all who read it. We publish it with the prayer that God will use it to speak his timeless truth to the church and the world in a fresh, new way.

THE PUBLISHERS, *October 2007*

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW LIVING TRANSLATION

Translation Philosophy and Methodology

English Bible translations tend to be governed by one of two general translation theories. The first theory has been called “formal-equivalence,” “literal,” or “word-for-word” translation. According to this theory, the translator attempts to render each word of the original language into English and seeks to preserve the original syntax and sentence structure as much as possible in translation. The second theory has been called “dynamic-equivalence,” “functional-equivalence,” or “thought-for-thought” translation. The goal of this translation theory is to produce in English the closest natural equivalent of the message expressed by the original-language text, both in meaning and in style.

Both of these translation theories have their strengths. A formal-equivalence translation preserves aspects of the original text—including ancient idioms, term consistency, and original-language syntax—that are valuable for scholars and professional study. It allows a reader to trace formal elements of the original-language text through the English translation. A dynamic-equivalence translation, on the other hand, focuses on translating the message of the original-language text. It ensures that the meaning of the text is readily apparent to the contemporary reader. This allows the message to come through with immediacy, without requiring the reader to struggle with foreign idioms and awkward syntax. It also facilitates serious study of the text’s message and clarity in both devotional and public reading.

The pure application of either of these translation philosophies would create translations at oppo-

site ends of the translation spectrum. But in reality, all translations contain a mixture of these two philosophies. A purely formal-equivalence translation would be unintelligible in English, and a purely dynamic-equivalence translation would risk being unfaithful to the original. That is why translations shaped by dynamic-equivalence theory are usually quite literal when the original text is relatively clear, and the translations shaped by formal-equivalence theory are sometimes quite dynamic when the original text is obscure.

The translators of the New Living Translation set out to render the message of the original texts of Scripture into clear, contemporary English. As they did so, they kept the concerns of both formal-equivalence and dynamic-equivalence in mind. On the one hand, they translated as simply and literally as possible when that approach yielded an accurate, clear, and natural English text. Many words and phrases were rendered literally and consistently into English, preserving essential literary and rhetorical devices, ancient metaphors, and word choices that give structure to the text and provide echoes of meaning from one passage to the next.

On the other hand, the translators rendered the message more dynamically when the literal rendering was hard to understand, was misleading, or yielded archaic or foreign wording. They clarified difficult metaphors and terms to aid in the reader’s understanding. The translators first struggled with the meaning of the words and phrases in the ancient context; then they rendered the message into clear, natural English. Their goal was to be both faithful to the ancient texts

and eminently readable. The result is a translation that is both exegetically accurate and idiomatically powerful.

Translation Process and Team

To produce an accurate translation of the Bible into contemporary English, the translation team needed the skills necessary to enter into the thought patterns of the ancient authors and then to render their ideas, connotations, and effects into clear, contemporary English. To begin this process, qualified biblical scholars were needed to interpret the meaning of the original text and to check it against our base English translation. In order to guard against personal and theological biases, the scholars needed to represent a diverse group of evangelicals who would employ the best exegetical tools. Then to work alongside the scholars, skilled English stylists were needed to shape the text into clear, contemporary English.

With these concerns in mind, the Bible Translation Committee recruited teams of scholars that represented a broad spectrum of denominations, theological perspectives, and backgrounds within the worldwide evangelical community. (These scholars are listed at the end of this introduction.) Each book of the Bible was assigned to three different scholars with proven expertise in the book or group of books to be reviewed. Each of these scholars made a thorough review of a base translation and submitted suggested revisions to the appropriate Senior Translator. The Senior Translator then reviewed and summarized these suggestions and proposed a first-draft revision of the base text. This draft served as the basis for several additional phases of exegetical and

stylistic committee review. Then the Bible Translation Committee jointly reviewed and approved every verse of the final translation.

Throughout the translation and editing process, the Senior Translators and their scholar teams were given a chance to review the editing done by the team of stylists. This ensured that exegetical errors would not be introduced late in the process and that the entire Bible Translation Committee was happy with the final result. By choosing a team of qualified scholars and skilled stylists and by setting up a process that allowed their interaction throughout the process, the New Living Translation has been refined to preserve the essential formal elements of the original biblical texts, while also creating a clear, understandable English text.

The New Living Translation was first published in 1996. Shortly after its initial publication, the Bible Translation Committee began a process of further committee review and translation refinement. The purpose of this continued revision was to increase the level of precision without sacrificing the text's easy-to-understand quality. This second-edition text was completed in 2004, and an additional update with minor changes was subsequently introduced in 2007. This printing of the New Living Translation reflects the updated 2007 text.

Written to Be Read Aloud

It is evident in Scripture that the biblical documents were written to be read aloud, often in public worship (see Nehemiah 8; Luke 4:16-20; 1 Timothy 4:13; Revelation 1:3). It is still the case today that more people will hear the Bible read aloud in church than are likely to read it for themselves. Therefore, a new translation must communicate with clarity and power when it is read publicly. Clarity was a primary goal for the NLT translators, not only to facilitate private reading and understanding, but also to ensure that it would be excellent for public reading and make an immediate and powerful impact on any listener.

The Texts behind the New Living Translation

The Old Testament translators used the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew

Bible as represented in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977), with its extensive system of textual notes; this is an update of Rudolf Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* (Stuttgart, 1937). The translators also further compared the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint and other Greek manuscripts, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Syriac Peshitta, the Latin Vulgate, and any other versions or manuscripts that shed light on the meaning of difficult passages.

The New Testament translators used the two standard editions of the Greek New Testament: the *Greek New Testament*, published by the United Bible Societies (UBS, fourth revised edition, 1993), and *Novum Testamentum Graece*, edited by Nestle and Aland (NA, twenty-seventh edition, 1993). These two editions, which have the same text but differ in punctuation and textual notes, represent, for the most part, the best in modern textual scholarship. However, in cases where strong textual or other scholarly evidence supported the decision, the translators sometimes chose to differ from the UBS and NA Greek texts and followed variant readings found in other ancient witnesses. Significant textual variants of this sort are always noted in the textual notes of the New Living Translation.

Translation Issues

The translators have made a conscious effort to provide a text that can be easily understood by the typical reader of modern English. To this end, we sought to use only vocabulary and language structures in common use today. We avoided using language likely to become quickly dated or that reflects only a narrow subdialect of English, with the goal of making the New Living Translation as broadly useful and timeless as possible.

But our concern for readability goes beyond the concerns of vocabulary and sentence structure. We are also concerned about historical and cultural barriers to understanding the Bible, and we have sought to translate terms shrouded in history and culture in ways that can be immediately understood. To this end:

- We have converted ancient weights and measures (for

example, "ephah" [a unit of dry volume] or "cubit" [a unit of length]) to modern English (American) equivalents, since the ancient measures are not generally meaningful to today's readers. Then in the textual footnotes we offer the literal Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek measures, along with modern metric equivalents.

- Instead of translating ancient currency values literally, we have expressed them in common terms that communicate the message. For example, in the Old Testament, "ten shekels of silver" becomes "ten pieces of silver" to convey the intended message. In the New Testament, we have often translated the "denarius" as "the normal daily wage" to facilitate understanding. Then a footnote offers: "Greek a *denarius*, the payment for a full day's wage." In general, we give a clear English rendering and then state the literal Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek in a textual footnote.
- Since the names of Hebrew months are unknown to most contemporary readers, and since the Hebrew lunar calendar fluctuates from year to year in relation to the solar calendar used today, we have looked for clear ways to communicate the time of year the Hebrew months (such as Abib) refer to. When an expanded or interpretive rendering is given in the text, a textual note gives the literal rendering. Where it is possible to define a specific ancient date in terms of our modern calendar, we use modern dates in the text. A textual footnote then gives the literal Hebrew date and states the rationale for our rendering. For example, Ezra 6:15 pinpoints the date when the postexilic Temple was completed in Jerusalem: "the third day of the month Adar." This was during the sixth year of King Darius's reign (that is, 515 B.C.). We have translated that date as March 12, with a footnote giving the Hebrew and identifying the year as 515 B.C.
- Since ancient references to the time of day differ from our modern methods of denoting time, we have used renderings that are instantly understandable to the

modern reader. Accordingly, we have rendered specific times of day by using approximate equivalents in terms of our common “o’clock” system. On occasion, translations such as “at dawn the next morning” or “as the sun was setting” have been used when the biblical reference is more general.

- When the meaning of a proper name (or a wordplay inherent in a proper name) is relevant to the message of the text, its meaning is often illuminated with a textual footnote. For example, in Exodus 2:10 the text reads: “The princess named him Moses, for she explained, ‘I lifted him out of the water.’” The accompanying footnote reads: “*Moses* sounds like a Hebrew term that means ‘to lift out.’”

Sometimes, when the actual meaning of a name is clear, that meaning is included in parentheses within the text itself. For example, the text at Genesis 16:11 reads: “You are to name him Ishmael (*which means ‘God hears’*), for the LORD has heard your cry of distress.” Since the original hearers and readers would have instantly understood the meaning of the name “Ishmael,” we have provided modern readers with the same information so they can experience the text in a similar way.

- Many words and phrases carry a great deal of cultural meaning that was obvious to the original readers but needs explanation in our own culture. For example, the phrase “they beat their breasts” (Luke 23:48) in ancient times meant that people were very upset, often in mourning. In our translation we chose to translate this phrase dynamically for clarity: “They went home *in deep sorrow*.” Then we included a footnote with the literal Greek, which reads: “Greek *went home beating their breasts*.” In other similar cases, however, we have sometimes chosen to illuminate the existing literal expression to make it immediately understandable. For example, here we might have expanded the literal Greek phrase to read: “They went home beating their breasts *in sorrow*.” If we had done this,

we would not have included a textual footnote, since the literal Greek clearly appears in translation.

- Metaphorical language is sometimes difficult for contemporary readers to understand, so at times we have chosen to translate or illuminate the meaning of a metaphor. For example, the ancient poet writes, “Your neck is *like* the tower of David” (Song of Songs 4:4). We have rendered it “Your neck is *as beautiful as* the tower of David” to clarify the intended positive meaning of the simile. Another example comes in Ecclesiastes 12:3, which can be literally rendered: “Remember him . . . when the grinding women cease because they are few, and the women who look through the windows see dimly.” We have rendered it: “Remember him before your teeth—your few remaining servants—stop grinding; and before your eyes—the women looking through the windows—see dimly.” We clarified such metaphors only when we believed a typical reader might be confused by the literal text.
- When the content of the original language text is poetic in character, we have rendered it in English poetic form. We sought to break lines in ways that clarify and highlight the relationships between phrases of the text. Hebrew poetry often uses parallelism, a literary form where a second phrase (or in some instances a third or fourth) echoes the initial phrase in some way. In Hebrew parallelism, the subsequent parallel phrases continue, while also furthering and sharpening, the thought expressed in the initial line or phrase. Whenever possible, we sought to represent these parallel phrases in natural poetic English.
- The Greek term *hoi Ioudaioi* is literally translated “the Jews” in many English translations. In the Gospel of John, however, this term doesn’t always refer to the Jewish people generally. In some contexts, it refers more particularly to the Jewish religious leaders. We have attempted to capture the meaning in these different contexts by using terms such as “the people” (with a

footnote: Greek *the Jewish people*) or “the religious leaders,” where appropriate.

- One challenge we faced was how to translate accurately the ancient biblical text that was originally written in a context where male-oriented terms were used to refer to humanity generally. We needed to respect the nature of the ancient context while also trying to make the translation clear to a modern audience that tends to read male-oriented language as applying only to males. Often the original text, though using masculine nouns and pronouns, clearly intends that the message be applied to both men and women. A typical example is found in the New Testament letters, where the believers are called “brothers” (*adelphoi*). Yet it is clear from the content of these letters that they were addressed to all the believers—male and female. Thus, we have usually translated this Greek word as “brothers and sisters” in order to represent the historical situation more accurately.

We have also been sensitive to passages where the text applies generally to human beings or to the human condition. In some instances we have used plural pronouns (they, them) in place of the masculine singular (he, him). For example, a traditional rendering of Proverbs 22:6 is: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” We have rendered it: “Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it.” At times, we have also replaced third person pronouns with the second person to ensure clarity. A traditional rendering of Proverbs 26:27 is: “He who digs a pit will fall into it, and he who rolls a stone, it will come back on him.” We have rendered it: “If you set a trap for others, you will get caught in it yourself. If you roll a boulder down on others, it will crush you instead.”

We should emphasize, however, that all masculine nouns and pronouns used to represent God (for example, “Father”) have been maintained without

exception. All decisions of this kind have been driven by the concern to reflect accurately the intended meaning of the original texts of Scripture.

Lexical Consistency in Terminology

For the sake of clarity, we have translated certain original-language terms consistently, especially within synoptic passages and for commonly repeated rhetorical phrases, and within certain word categories such as divine names and non-theological technical terminology (e.g., liturgical, legal, cultural, zoological, and botanical terms). For theological terms, we have allowed a greater semantic range of acceptable English words or phrases for a single Hebrew or Greek word. We have avoided some theological terms that are not readily understood by many modern readers. For example, we avoided using words such as “justification” and “sanctification,” which are carryovers from Latin translations. In place of these words, we have provided renderings such as “made right with God” and “made holy.”

The Spelling of Proper Names

Many individuals in the Bible, especially the Old Testament, are known by more than one name (e.g., Uzziah/Azariah). For the sake of clarity, we have tried to use a single spelling for any one individual, footnoting the literal spelling whenever we differ from it. This is especially helpful in delineating the kings of Israel and Judah. King Joash/Jehoash of Israel has been consistently called Jehoash, while King Joash/Jehoash of Judah is called Joash. A similar distinction has been used to distinguish between Joram/Jehoram of Israel and Joram/Jehoram of Judah. All such decisions were made with the goal of clarifying the text for the reader. When the ancient biblical writers clearly had a theological purpose in their choice of a variant name (e.g., Esh-baal/Ishbosheth), the different names have been maintained with an explanatory footnote.

For the names Jacob and Israel, which are used interchangeably for both the individual patriarch and the nation, we generally render it

“Israel” when it refers to the nation and “Jacob” when it refers to the individual. When our rendering of the name differs from the underlying Hebrew text, we provide a textual footnote, which includes this explanation: “The names ‘Jacob’ and ‘Israel’ are often interchanged throughout the Old Testament, referring sometimes to the individual patriarch and sometimes to the nation.”

The Rendering of Divine Names

All appearances of *’el*, *’elohim*, or *’eloah* have been translated “God,” except where the context demands the translation “god(s).” We have generally rendered the tetragrammaton (YHWH) consistently as “the LORD,” utilizing a form with small capitals that is common among English translations. This will distinguish it from the name *’adonai*, which we render “Lord.” When *’adonai* and YHWH appear together, we have rendered it “Sovereign LORD.” This also distinguishes *’adonai* YHWH from cases where YHWH appears with *’elohim*, which is rendered “LORD God.” When YH (the short form of YHWH) and YHWH appear together, we have rendered it “LORD GOD.” When YHWH appears with the term *tseba’oth*, we have rendered it “LORD of Heaven’s Armies” to translate the meaning of the name. In a few cases, we have utilized the transliteration, *Yahweh*, when the personal character of the name is being invoked in contrast to another divine name or the name of some other god (for example, see Exodus 3:15; 6:2-3).

In the New Testament, the Greek word *christos* has been translated as “Messiah” when the context assumes a Jewish audience. When a Gentile audience can be assumed, *christos* has been translated as “Christ.” The Greek word *kurios* is consistently translated “Lord,” except that it is translated “LORD” wherever the New Testament text explicitly quotes from the Old Testament, and the text there has it in small capitals.

Textual Footnotes

The New Living Translation provides several kinds of textual footnotes, all included within the study notes in this edition:

- When for the sake of clarity the NLT renders a difficult or potentially confusing phrase dynamically, we generally give the literal rendering in a textual footnote. This allows the reader to see the literal source of our dynamic rendering and how our translation relates to other more literal translations. These notes are prefaced with “literally.” For example, in Acts 2:42 we translated the literal “breaking of bread” (from the Greek) as “the Lord’s Supper” to clarify that this verse refers to the ceremonial practice of the church rather than just an ordinary meal. Then we attached a footnote to “the Lord’s Supper,” which reads: “Literally *the breaking of bread*.”
- Textual footnotes are also used to show alternative renderings, prefaced with the word “Or.” These normally occur for passages where an aspect of the meaning is debated. On occasion, we also provide notes on words or phrases that represent a departure from long-standing tradition. These notes are prefaced with “Traditionally rendered.” For example, the footnote to the translation “serious skin disease” at Leviticus 13:2 says: “Traditionally rendered *leprosy*. The Hebrew word used throughout this passage is used to describe various skin diseases.”
- When our translators follow a textual variant that differs significantly from our standard Hebrew or Greek texts (listed earlier), we document that difference with a footnote. We also footnote cases when the NLT excludes a passage that is included in the Greek text known as the *Textus Receptus* (and familiar to readers through its translation in the King James Version). In such cases, we offer a translation of the excluded text in a footnote, even though it is generally recognized as a later addition to the Greek text and not part of the original Greek New Testament.
- All Old Testament passages that are quoted in the New Testament are identified by a textual footnote at the New Testament location. When the New Testament clearly quotes from the Greek

translation of the Old Testament, and when it differs significantly in wording from the Hebrew text, we also place a textual footnote at the Old Testament location. This note includes a rendering of the Greek version, along with a cross-reference to the New Testament passage(s) where it is cited (for example, see notes on Psalms 8:2; 53:3; Proverbs 3:12).

- Some textual footnotes provide cultural and historical information on places, things, and people in the Bible that are probably obscure to modern readers. Such notes should aid the reader in understanding the message of the text. For example, in Acts 12:1, "King Herod" is named in this translation as "King Herod Agrippa" and is identified in a footnote as being "the nephew of Herod Antipas and a grandson of Herod the Great."
- When the meaning of a proper name (or a wordplay inherent in a proper name) is relevant to the meaning of the text, it is either illuminated with a textual footnote or included within parentheses in the text itself. For example, the footnote concern-

ing the name "Eve" at Genesis 3:20 reads: "*Eve* sounds like a Hebrew term that means 'to give life.' " This wordplay in the Hebrew illuminates the meaning of the text, which goes on to say that Eve "would be the mother of all who live."

Cross-References

There are a number of different cross-referencing tools that appear in New Living Translation Bibles, and they offer different levels of help in this regard. All straight-text Bibles include the standard set of textual footnotes that include cross-references connecting New Testament texts to their related Old Testament sources. (See more on this above.)

Many NLT Bibles include an additional short cross-reference system that sets key cross-references at the end of paragraphs and then marks the associated verses with a cross symbol. This space-efficient system, while not being obtrusive, offers many important key connections between passages. Larger study editions include a full-column cross-reference system. This system allows space for a more comprehensive listing of cross-references.

AS WE SUBMIT this translation for publication, we recognize that any translation of the Scriptures is subject to limitations and imperfections. Anyone who has attempted to communicate the richness of God's Word into another language will realize it is impossible to make a perfect translation. Recognizing these limitations, we sought God's guidance and wisdom throughout this project. Now we pray that he will accept our efforts and use this translation for the benefit of the church and of all people.

We pray that the New Living Translation will overcome some of the barriers of history, culture, and language that have kept people from reading and understanding God's Word. We hope that readers unfamiliar with the Bible will find the words clear and easy to understand and that readers well versed in the Scriptures will gain a fresh perspective. We pray that readers will gain insight and wisdom for living, but most of all that they will meet the God of the Bible and be forever changed by knowing him.

THE BIBLE TRANSLATION COMMITTEE, October 2007

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TABLE OF ANCIENT WEIGHTS, MEASURES, AND COINS

WEIGHTS	talent (60 minas)	75 pounds	34 kilograms	
	mina (50 shekels)	1.25 pounds	600 grams	
	shekel	0.4 ounces	11.4 grams	
	pim (2/3 shekel)	0.25 ounces	8 grams	
	beka (1/2 shekel)	0.2 ounces	5.7 grams	
	gerah (1/20 shekel)	0.02 ounces	0.6 grams	
	litra	12 ounces	327 grams	
LENGTHS	long cubit	21 inches	53 centimeters	
	cubit	18 inches	45 centimeters	
	span	9 inches	23 centimeters	
	handbreadth	3 inches	8 centimeters	
	fathom	6 feet	1.8 meters	
	rod	10.5 feet	3.2 meters	
	stadion	205 yards	187 meters	
CAPACITIES	<i>Dry Measures</i>			
	cor/homer (10 ephahs)	5 bushels	182 liters	
	lethek (5 ephahs)	2.5 bushels	91 liters	
	ephah	0.5 bushels	18 liters	
	seah (1/3 ephah)	5 quarts	6 liters	
	omer (1/10 ephah)	2 quarts	2 liters	
	cab (1/2 omer)	1 quart	1.3 liters	
	<i>Liquid Measures</i>			
	bath	5.5 gallons	21 liters	
	hin (1/6 bath)	1 gallon	3.8 liters	
	log (1/72 bath)	0.3 quarts	0.3 liters	
	COINS	<i>Roman</i>		
		denarius	1 day's wages (for a laborer)	
as		1/16 denarius		
quadrans		1/64 denarius		
<i>Greek</i>				
drachma		~1 denarius		
didrachma		2 drachmas		
stater		4 drachmas		
<i>Jewish</i>				
lepton		1/2 quadrans		

OLD
TESTAMENT



INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament is God's word to his people through the ages. It describes the creation of the world and humanity, the origin of sin, and the beginning of God's plan of redemption. Through it we gain a much clearer understanding of who God is, what he is doing, and how we should live.

The Old Testament stimulates our imaginations and arouses our emotions. It is made up of gripping stories of real events, stirring poems, and bracing exhortations. It teaches us God's plan, reveals God's will, and helps us make decisions. Reading the Old Testament is like looking into a mirror, for it reveals our soul. It plants a seed that grows, ultimately transforming our character.

Jesus emphasized the importance of understanding the Old Testament (Luke 24:25-27), and Paul was speaking primarily of the Old Testament when he wrote, "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives" (2 Tim 3:16). The Old Testament provides us with a profound knowledge of God, ourselves, and the world.

SETTING

Israel's geography encompasses rugged *wadis* (seasonally dry river beds), agriculturally rich valleys, rolling hills, arid wilderness, and sandy coasts. The Bible describes Israel as a fertile land, one "flowing with milk and honey" (Exod 3:8, 17; Num 13:27). But a lack of rainfall can trigger devastating famines.

The land of Israel was previously called Canaan. Before the people of Israel occupied the land, Canaan was composed of a number of loosely allied city-states, each with its own king. The Canaanite people remained a political threat until the time of King David, who decisively defeated both the Canaanites and the Philistines. The Canaanite worship of Baal and Ashtoreth, however, continued to plague Israel.

Compared to the superpowers of the day (Assyria, Babylon, the Hittites, Egypt, and Persia), Israel was a small but strategically significant nation, located along the main route between Mesopotamia and Egypt.

Various nations controlled Mesopotamia throughout the OT: Assyria to the north, Babylon to the south, and Persia to the east. All three of these powers constantly tried to expand their borders.

Egypt was also a superpower during much of the OT period. The Nile River defined ancient Egypt and was the source of its wealth. During the time between Joseph and the Exodus, Egypt oppressed and enslaved the people of Israel as they grew from a family of seventy

individuals to a great nation. Egypt continued to play a role in the story of Israel. Toward the end of Israel's kingdom period, the last desperate kings hoped that Egypt would save Judah from the Babylonians. Egypt turned out to be "a reed that splinters beneath your weight and pierces your hand" (2 Kgs 18:21).

Directly north of Israel was Aram (Syria), with Damascus as its chief city. Israel experienced frequent conflicts with Aram, beginning during the time of David.

Toward the end of the OT period, the Persian empire gained power. Persia occupied the region just east of Mesopotamia. Persia's rise to power began in the mid-500s BC and included the defeat of Babylon in 539 BC. Judea became a province in the Persian empire and remained so until Alexander the Great defeated Persia in 331 BC.

THE OLD TESTAMENT STORY

The Bible begins with the account of creation (Gen 1-2). God created the heavens, the earth, and the first humans, and he pronounced it all "very good." God provided Eden, a wonderful place for human beings to live. Adam and Eve enjoyed a harmonious and fulfilling relationship with God and with each other.

All this changed quickly. Genesis 3 introduces the serpent, who injected discord into this harmonious world. The serpent taught Eve and Adam to distrust God, and they chose to rebel against God in the belief that they knew bet-

ter than God. This sin placed a barrier between God and humans and brought death to all humanity. God's holy presence became deadly to Adam and Eve, and God ejected them from Eden. Even in the midst of judgment for their sin, however, God remained involved, working for their redemption.

After Eden, the OT describes a split between those who chose to follow God and those who rejected him: for example, Abel and Seth versus Cain, righteous Noah versus his wicked generation, Isaac versus Ishmael, and Jacob versus Esau and Laban.

A crucial transitional point came when God offered great promises to Abraham. He called Abraham to leave Ur (around 2100/1900 BC) and "go to the land that I will show you" (Gen 12:1). Unlike Adam and Eve, Abraham trusted God and responded obediently to him. As a result, God began carrying out his redemptive plan for humanity through Abraham and his descendants. Thus, Abraham became the father of a great nation, with many descendants and much land. Genesis 12—Joshua 24 describes how God multiplied the descendants of Abraham and ultimately brought them into possession of the Promised Land of Canaan.

God desired that Abraham's descendants, the nation of Israel, would obey God and prosper in the land he gave them and that the surrounding nations would turn to the true God. However, like Adam and Eve in Eden before them, the

Israelites were not satisfied with all that God gave them, instead turning to false gods to find happiness. The rest of the OT continues the story of Israel’s persistent sin and God’s unwavering commitment to them. Although God consistently judged their sin, he also remained patiently involved with his people.

Following Israel’s settlement in Canaan, the period of the judges was marked by political fragmentation and spiritual confusion. God then allowed the people to choose a king to rule them. The monarchy began with the anointing of Saul (around 1050 BC), and it reached a high point with David (1011–971 BC) and the early part of Solomon’s reign (971–931 BC). Due to Solomon’s sin, however, God divided Israel into two parts, the northern and southern kingdoms, after Solomon’s death in 931 BC.

From the beginning of the divided monarchy (931 BC) to the end of the OT period (about 400 BC), the prophets called the people of Israel and Judah to return to God, but most trusted the surrounding nations and their false gods. The northern kingdom of Israel, with its capital Samaria, lasted until 722 BC, when Assyria conquered it and deported its people. The southern kingdom of Judah, with its capital Jerusalem, lasted until the Babylonians defeated it in 586 BC, destroying the Temple and taking many of the people of Judah into exile.

The destruction of Jerusalem and the Exile of the Israelites did not end Israel’s story. Even as the prophets had proclaimed devastating judgment on God’s people, they also announced a future hope for the remnant. The Exile lasted until 539 BC, when Persia defeated Babylon and allowed the Jews to return to Judah to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. By 515 BC, the Jews had rebuilt a smaller, second Temple (see Ezra 6:15). Ezra arrived in 458 BC and reestablished God’s law in Judah. In 445 BC, Nehemiah became governor of Judah and rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem. During the period after the Exile, many people of Judea finally worshiped the Lord, the God of Israel, exclusively. They also came to recognize the true significance of the OT records: God

had been giving them a written revelation of his will, his purposes, and his acts in Israel’s history.

The prophecy of Malachi, written a little before 400 BC, closes the OT story. The OT does not end with a strong sense of closure, but with anticipation of even greater things to come. The return to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the Temple was a “down payment” of God’s redemption for his people. However, the prophets understood that these events were not the ultimate realization of hope.

THE CANON OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The text of the OT was written over a period of approximately 1,000 years, beginning with Moses and extending to the Persian period following the Jews’ return to Judah from exile. God used Moses and many others—judges like Samuel, kings like David and Solomon, prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah, priests like Ezra, and other people whose names we don’t even know—to write parts of Israel’s history and literature.

The Order of the Hebrew Bible

The order of books in the Hebrew Bible differs from the order of the books in English Bibles (see charts, below and at right). The Hebrew Bible is divided into three parts: Instruction (*Torah*), Prophets (*Nebi’im*) and Writings (*Ketubim*). Jesus re-

ferred to these divisions as “the law of Moses,” “the prophets,” and “the Psalms” (Luke 24:44). Jewish readers of the Hebrew Bible sometimes refer to their Scripture by taking the first letters of these three parts and forming the word “Tanak.”

The Hebrew Bible combines into twenty-four books the same material that is presented as thirty-nine books in the English OT. In the Hebrew Bible, the first five books constitute the *Torah*. This section, also called the Pentateuch, is unchanged in English Bibles. The second section, the Prophets (*Nebi’im*), has two parts. The Former Prophets, called the historical books in English Bibles, are followed in the Hebrew Bible by the Latter Prophets. The third section, the Writings (*Ketubim*), contains miscellaneous books, including the books of poetry and wisdom.

In later Judaism, the “Five Scrolls” (*Megilloth*) were read at the important feasts and arranged in order of their observance in the holiday calendar (see chart, “Israel’s Festivals,” p. 235): Ruth was read at the Festival of Pentecost, Song of Songs at Passover, Ecclesiastes at the Festival of Shelters, Lamentations at the anniversary of the destruction of Jerusalem (the 9th of Ab), and Esther at Purim.

The Order of the English OT

English Bibles follow the order of the Greek translation of the OT (the

1. Instruction (<i>Torah</i>)	2. Prophets (<i>Nebi’im</i>)	3. Writings (<i>Ketubim</i>)
Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	<i>Former Prophets</i> Joshua Judges Samuel (1 & 2) Kings (1 & 2) <i>Latter Prophets</i> Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel The Twelve: Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi	Psalms Job Proverbs Five Scrolls (<i>Megilloth</i>): Ruth Song of Songs Ecclesiastes Lamentations Esther Daniel Ezra–Nehemiah Chronicles (1 & 2)

Septuagint), which groups books according to genre and places the books within each genre in chronological order. The Greek and English OT begins with the Pentateuch. Next come the historical narratives; then the poetical books, arranged in chronological order according to their setting or traditional date of composition; and finally the prophets, in two parts. The major (largest) prophets appear in chronological order. They are followed by the twelve minor (shorter) prophets, which also follow a general chronological arrangement.

INTERPRETING THE OLD TESTAMENT

Christians sometimes find the OT difficult to read and understand, with content that seems strange and distant. What is the connection between Christianity and animal sacrifices, religious circumcision, strange dietary laws, the curses of the Psalms, and the history of ancient Israel? To understand the OT better, we must realize that it is an ancient book, with the oldest parts written some 3,500 years ago. It also comes from a culture, the ancient Near East, vastly different from ours. Most importantly, the books were written before the coming of Christ.

The following principles can help readers as they study the OT.

Read Each Passage in Context

With the Bible, as with all good literature, gaining a grasp of the whole helps us appreciate and understand the parts. We should

not treat a biblical book as a collection of isolated sayings. Rather, the books contain connected stories, instructions, and poems. The meaning of the individual verses can be discovered only in the flow of the whole literary piece, which occurs by reading large blocks at a time. While this principle does not stop us from turning to the middle of a biblical book to read a few verses, we should also seek to develop an understanding of the message of the whole book. In other words, we should exercise great caution not to distort God’s message when we read small pieces of Scripture. The book introductions in the *NLT Study Bible* help with this process by providing an overview of each book’s contents and message.

Identify the Genre of the Book and Passage

Contemporary readers are familiar with a variety of genres such as biographies, textbooks, and newspaper editorials. The content of the OT can also be grouped into genres. The genres in the OT include history (e.g., Samuel), treaty/covenant (e.g., Exod 19–24), sermon (e.g., Deuteronomy), poetry and prayers (e.g., Psalms), wisdom (e.g., Proverbs), prophecy (e.g., Jeremiah), and apocalyptic (e.g., Dan 7–12). Different genres should trigger different reading strategies. Just as we approach a biography differently than we approach a novel, we should try to understand how to approach the different genres of the OT. The book and section introductions in the *NLT Study Bible* offer help in understanding OT genres.

Consider the Historical and Cultural Background of the Book

The inspired authors of the OT lived and wrote in a time and culture very distant from ours. We should seek to understand what was taking place during the time period the author describes as well as the (often different) time period when the author was writing. For example, the book of Chronicles describes events that took place from the time of David to the Exile (about 1000–600 BC), but it was probably written in Judea following the return from exile (around 400 BC). Knowing the details and setting—both of the events that are described and of the time in which the book was written—will help us understand Chronicles and its message more clearly. The same holds true for other books of the OT.

Read the Old Testament in the Light of Christ’s Coming

Jesus said that the whole OT anticipated his coming, suffering, and glory (Luke 24:25-27). Jesus is the center of biblical revelation. The OT anticipates him, and the NT describes him.

NT authors recognized this, so they frequently cited the OT to explain that the glorious events happening in their day were foreshadowed and foretold by the OT. Christians, too, should read the OT from the perspective of the death and resurrection of Christ. While it is crucial first to interpret each OT passage or book in the context of its original audience, we understand the OT better when we read it in light of its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

MEANING AND MESSAGE

Scripture describes God’s nature and explains his acts in history. By reading the OT, God’s people learn about who God is by observing and participating in what he does.

God’s Nature, Character, and Acts

God’s special name in the OT is *Yahweh*. The name comes from the Hebrew word meaning “to be.” God told Moses that his name means, “I AM WHO I AM” (Exod 3:14). In other words, God defines

Pentateuch	Historical Books	Poetry and Wisdom	Prophets
Genesis	Joshua	Job	Isaiah
Exodus	Judges	Psalms	Jeremiah
Leviticus	Ruth	Proverbs	Lamentations
Numbers	1 Samuel	Ecclesiastes	Ezekiel
Deuteronomy	2 Samuel	Song of Songs	Daniel
	1 Kings		Minor Prophets:
	2 Kings		Hosea
	1 Chronicles		Joel
	2 Chronicles		Amos
	Ezra		Obadiah
	Nehemiah		Jonah
	Esther		Micah
			Nahum
			Habakkuk
			Zephaniah
			Haggai
			Zechariah
			Malachi

himself. Nothing else defines him, but he defines everything. In most English translations, including the NLT, this name for God is usually translated “the LORD” (capitalized).

Most often, the OT describes God by picturing him in relationship. God relates to people as savior, king, shepherd, warrior, husband, and in many other roles. God also reveals who he is by what he does: for example, dividing the Red Sea, causing the walls of Jericho to fall, establishing David as king, allowing the Babylonian army to defeat Jerusalem, and restoring his people to the land after the Exile.

The primary message of the OT is that God saves his people and judges those who resist him. He passionately pursues his sinful people in order to establish a community that is in harmony with him, a kingdom that recognizes and serves its divine King.

There Is One God

The OT launches a sustained attack on the prevailing worldview of the ancient Near East, which was that the heavens and the earth, infused with deities, constitute the sum total of reality. The implications of this false worldview, which continues in much of the world today, are many and far-reaching:

- Because the heavens and the earth contain many diverse parts, many gods exist.
- Because the gods are the cosmos, we can manipulate the gods by manipulating the cosmos.
- Because humans are obsessed with sex, the gods are also.
- Because the universe exists without purpose, the gods have no purpose except survival through the acquisition of power—and so humans must pursue power as well.
- Because the gods are selfish and unmerciful, humans must seek their favor by appeasing their appetites.
- Because there are many gods, humans must seek the protection of their own gods against other people’s gods.

The OT asserts the very opposite of these beliefs and all others that grow out of a pagan worldview:

- The universe is unified as the creation of the one true God.
- He alone is God, in no way comparable to other so-called gods, and he has a completely separate existence from the cosmos.
- God cannot be manipulated through the cosmos because he is not the cosmos.
- God created the world as a universe with his own unified purposes. Human beings have meaning by fulfilling God’s purposes for them.
- Human beings are designed not to appease capricious and power-hungry gods but to worship and obey a loving Creator.
- Ultimate security and peace come from trusting and worshipping the Creator.

From beginning to end, the OT makes these and many related points in order to correct the seductive but incorrect and deadly pagan worldview.

God’s Covenants with His People

The concept of *covenant* is central to the message of the OT. From Genesis onward, the covenant becomes the most persistent metaphor for God’s relationship with his people (see “God’s Covenant Relationships” at Gen 12:1-9, p. 44). A covenant is a relationship that gives promises and imposes obligations. OT covenants were similar to treaties between two nations, where a Great King would enter into a relationship with a vassal nation (see Deuteronomy Introduction, “Literary Form,” p. 314). The term *covenant* describes the relationships God established with humanity and all creation through Noah (Gen 9:1-17), with Abraham and his descendants (Gen 15:1-21), with Israel through Moses (Exod 19:3–24:11), and with David and his offspring (2 Sam 7:8-16). God’s relationship with Adam also had the character of a covenant, complete with commands, promises, and warnings.

Each of God’s covenants builds on the previous ones; new covenants do not replace the old.

Through his covenants, God established special relationships between himself and his people. In the covenants, God made promises, stated obligations, and threatened judgment if his people did not obey him. When they disobeyed, God sent his prophets to warn his disobedient people, urging them to turn from breaking his law and return to faithful obedience. The curses stipulated in the covenant provide the basis for God’s judgment (see Deut 28), which he ultimately brought: Jerusalem was destroyed and most of the Israelites were sent into exile.

Yet God was not finished with his people: He brought some of them back from exile. They had been humbled and were more obedient—they finally stopped worshipping other gods and worshiped the Lord alone. God also promised to make a new covenant with them (Jer 31:31-34). In the context of this new covenant, God would “forgive their wickedness” and “never again remember their sins” (Jer 31:34), causing all Israel finally to know and obey him.

The establishment of the new covenant came with the Messiah. Jesus Christ, God’s promised Savior and King, fulfilled the old covenant (Matt 5:17-20) and initiated the new covenant, a relationship with all who trust in him (John 3:16; Acts 2:38-39) based on his own sacrifice (Luke 22:20). Those who participate in this relationship inherit eternal fellowship with God and all his people (John 3:36; 5:24; Rom 5:21; 1 Jn 2:24-25).

FURTHER READING

- BILL T. ARNOLD AND BRYAN E. BEYER *Encountering the Old Testament: A Christian Survey* (1999)
- CRAIG BARTHOLOMEW AND MICHAEL GOHEEN *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (2004)
- RAYMOND B. DILLARD AND TREMPER LONGMAN III *An Introduction to the Old Testament, 2nd edition* (2006)

ARCHAEOLOGY AND SOURCES FOR OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

In the past two hundred years, archaeology has experienced a huge information explosion in terms of both artifacts and texts from the ancient Near East. Every item must be placed into a large historical context, and, where relevant, must cautiously be placed in a proper relationship to biblical materials. Properly identified and interpreted, archaeological materials may illustrate, illuminate, demonstrate, confirm, or challenge the biblical text. These same artifacts and texts cannot be used at a theological level to “prove” the spiritual, religious, or theological claims of the biblical text. It is obviously impossible for a spade or a trowel to prove or disprove the spiritual revelations and assertions of Scripture. But these materials may confirm and make plausible certain historical perspectives and claims of those texts. It is fair to say that archaeology validates Hebrew history and explains many formerly obscure terms and traditions in both the OT and NT. It thus provides an authentic background for the prophecies culminating in Jesus Christ.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

Modern archaeology in the Middle East began when Napoleon took with him into Egypt (1798) a team of specialists to record the ancient wonders of Egypt. They happened to find the Rosetta Stone (1799), which provided the unexpected key to the decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphics (1819, 1822). The floodgates opened to a heightened interest in the wonders of the ancient Near East and to the light they might shed on the Bible—the ancient Near East’s greatest religious, literary, and historical artifact. In 1845, Akkadian (the language of old Babylon) was deciphered using the Behistun Inscription (518 BC), which, like the Rosetta Stone, was inscribed in three languages. The deciphering of several other languages soon followed.

After that, the archaeology of the ancient Near East prospered and drew worldwide attention. Archaeologists, scholars, and treasure hunters were amazed at the creation and flood stories, legal documents, ancient civilizations and languages, religious and theological systems, sacrificial rituals, tabernacles, temples, palaces, wisdom literature, covenants and covenantal forms and rituals, war stories, birth stories, king lists, pagan prophetic parallels, and much more.

In the beginning, it was treasure hunters who made many of the significant finds, and their methods were often haphazard and caused

destruction of important archaeological sites. The scientific study of ancient tells (strata of dirt and cultural debris compacted together into mounds over the millennia) began in Palestine in 1890, when Flinders Petrie adopted methods used to excavate Troy, systematically unearthing and studying the various strata (layers of occupation) of a city. This approach to archaeology in Palestine flourished as appropriate techniques, tools, and record-keeping developed. Today, a combination of methods is employed, including “surface surveys” and aerial photography used to get information about whole regions.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

Various ancient Near Eastern texts and artifacts have helped scholars paint—both with a broad brush and in some cases with detail—a cultural and historical backdrop of OT eras across the centuries. Ancient texts and artifacts help us see the OT in its larger context and better understand its history, its literary qualities, and even its theological perspectives.

In principle, archaeologists have no particular interest in “proving the truth” of the Scriptures. And in fact, it is sometimes difficult to reconcile interpretations of archaeological data and the evidence of Scripture. Such conflicts are few in number, however, and tend to diminish noticeably as new infor-

mation is forthcoming. The huge cache of ancient Near Eastern material makes the historical reliability of the OT arguably firm.

These archaeological source materials show the people of Israel as fellow participants in the ancient Near East of their day. It is possible to see the men and women of Scripture as real persons, as true children of their age, grappling with life’s problems. And from time to time they catch a vision of God as all powerful and all holy, as guiding the destinies of individuals and nations, and as bringing about his purposes in history. Ancient texts and artifacts show that Israel shared in the social structures and worldviews of the surrounding cultures. But these texts and artifacts also show striking contrasts between the people of Israel and the world in which they lived—for Israel claimed a relationship with the Lord, the one true God, and did not worship many gods as neighboring nations did. The people of Israel’s faith in and experience of the Lord make them unique in the ancient world, a uniqueness that comes into vibrant, colorful relief through the texts and artifacts of the ancient Near East.

PRIMARY SOURCES

[RANE] Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer, *Readings from the Ancient Near East* (2002)

[COS] William W. Hallo, ed., *The Context of Scripture* (2003)

[AEL] Miriam Lichtheim, <i>Ancient Egyptian Literature</i> (1971–1980)	[ATSHB] Kenton L. Sparks, <i>Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible</i> (2005)	Alfred J. Hoerth, <i>Archaeology and the Old Testament</i> (1998)
[OTP] Victor H. Matthews & Don C. Benjamin, eds., <i>Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East</i> (2006)	FURTHER READING	K. A. Kitchen, <i>On the Reliability of the Old Testament</i> (2006)
[ANET] James B. Pritchard, ed., <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> (1969)	Susan Wise Bauer, <i>The History of the Ancient World</i> (2007)	John H. Walton, <i>Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament</i> (2006)
	Richard S. Hess, <i>Israelite Religions: An Archaeological and Biblical Survey</i> (2007)	Michael O. Wise, et al., <i>The Dead Sea Scrolls</i> (2005)

Ancient Texts and Artifacts Relating to the Old Testament. The Old Testament was written in a complex era of history, and many parallels to the OT have been found in ancient artifacts and documents. This chart lists many of these items with their original date and a description. The “Sources” column lists English translations of the texts of these artifacts; the abbreviations are listed under “Primary Sources,” above. The final column lists OT passages that parallel these sources in some manner. In some cases, the ancient source is similar to its OT parallels or provides cultural background; in other cases, the ancient source corroborates specific OT details.

Title	Date	Description	Sources	OT Parallels
Memphite Creation	2700 BC	Egyptian creation account	RANE 63–65; OTP 3–6	Gen 1–2
Famine Stela	2700 BC	Egyptian monumental texts with seven years of famine as a motif	COS 1.53	Gen 12, 41
Sumerian Proverbs	2600–2000 BC	Examples of Sumerian proverbs	COS 1.174–175	Proverbs, Ecclesiastes
Ebla Archives	2500 BC (about)	A huge cache of Sumerian texts that depict the pre-patriarchal world	OTP 240–243	Background of Genesis
Instructions of Ptah Hotep	2500 BC (about)	One of Egypt’s great wise men teaches his son how to succeed in life and vocation	OTP 283–288; RANE 182–184	Prov 2, 6, 23, 25–26; Ecclesiastes
Ra and the Serpent	2400 BC	Egyptian story that pictures the sun and a serpent in opposition	OTP 28–31	Gen 3
Gudea Cylinders	2000s BC	Sumerian instructions to build a temple	ANET 268–269	Exod 25–40; 2 Sam 7–8; 1 Kgs 6
Sargon Legend	2000s BC	An Akkadian legend: Sargon I rescued from a river in a basket	RANE 75–76; OTP 55–58	Exod 2
Dream Interpretation	2000 or 1300 BC	An Egyptian list of how to interpret a dream	COS 1.33	Gen 40–41
Lament over Ur	2000 BC (about)	A Sumerian laments the fall of the city of Ur and abandonment by the gods	RANE 222–225	Lamentations
Prophecies of Neferti	1990 BC (about)	Egyptian prophecies: Neferti “predicts” Pharaoh Amenemhet I (1991–1960 BC)	RANE 210–212; OTP 235–240	1 Kgs 13; Dan 2–6
Epic of Gilgamesh	1900 BC	Sumerian and Akkadian epic: the great flood, death, a “Noah” figure, and the search for eternal life	RANE 66–70; COS 1.132; OTP 11–20	Gen 6–9
Lipit-Ishtar Laws	1800s BC	Collection of Sumerian laws	RANE 106–109	Exod 19–24; Deut 12–26
Travels of Sinuhe	1800–1000 BC	An Egyptian narrative that includes descriptions of Canaan and Syria	RANE 76–82; COS 1.38	Gen 37–50
Code of Hammurabi	1750 BC (about)	Akkadian laws that parallel the laws of Moses	RANE 111–114	Exod 20–24; Lev 16–26; Deut 12–26
Sumerian King Lists	1700s BC	Lists of Sumerian kings, including long life spans before the flood	RANE 150–151; OTP 21–32	Gen 5; Deut 17:14–20; 1 Sam 8; 12
Mari Tablets	1700s BC	Akkadian correspondence between famous kings reflecting conditions during the patriarchal era; mention of “Habiru”	OTP 318–322	Genesis—Numbers
Atrahasis Epic	1700s BC	Sumerian creation and flood stories; “Noah” figure	RANE 21–31; COS 1.130	Gen 1–11
Hittite Laws	1650–1200 BC	Hittite legal texts arranged by topics; scapegoat laws and levirate laws	RANE 115–116; OTP 70–72	Exod 19–24; Deut 12–26; Lev 17–26
Emar Tablets	1550–1200 BC	Akkadian tablets containing important legal, ritual, and religious texts	RANE 127; COS 1.123–126; 2.137	Lev 8:30; 23:1–44; Num 28–29; Deut 16, 31–32

9 ARCHAEOLOGY AND SOURCES FOR OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

Title	Date	Description	Sources	OT Parallels
Amarna Letters and Tell el-Amarna Tablets	1550~1150 BC	Akkadian letters written by Canaanite kings seeking Egypt's help against invading enemies, including "Habiru"	RANE 166–168; OTP 77–80	Joshua (Israel's invasion might be reflected)
Egyptian Love Songs	1400~1000 BC	Egyptian dialogues and monologues using sensual language	RANE 192–193; OTP 297–301	Song of Songs
Nuzi Tablets	1400s BC	Hurrian texts describing various social, religious, legal, and political customs	RANE 72–74; COS 3.121	General OT background; references to Baal cult
Ras Shamra Tablets	1400s BC	Hundreds of tablets that illuminate pagan religion in Ugarit and perhaps in Canaan	COS 1.88, 104; OTP 263–274	Understanding of pagan religious practices; references to Baal cult
Hittite Treaties	1400–1200 BC	Hittite documents that illustrate covenantal forms	RANE 97–100	Exod 19–24; Deuteronomy; Josh 24
Rituals against Reptiles	1350 BC	Ugaritic prayers to render a serpent's venom powerless	COS 1.94	Num 21:4-9; Deut 32:33
Hymn to Aten	1300s BC	An Egyptian poem praising the sun	RANE 196–197	cp. Ps 104
Urim and Thummin	1300, 800s, 600s BC	Hittite, Akkadian, and Egyptian texts related to discovering the gods' will	COS 1.78, 127	Exod 28:30; Lev 8:8; Deut 33:8; Ezra 2:63; Neh 7:65
Tale of Two Brothers	1225 BC	An Egyptian tale: A man rejects his sister-in-law's advances	COS 1.40	Gen 39
Merneptah Stela	1209 BC	Pharaoh Merneptah's monument recording his campaigns; first mention of Israel outside of OT	RANE 160; OTP 81–84; COS 2.6	Joshua
Hittite Proverbs	1200s BC?	Various Hittite proverbs	COS 1.81–82	Proverbs; Jer 31:29
Kherem: A Thing Devoted	1200s BC	A Hittite text that records things "devoted" to a god for destruction	COS 1.72	Lev 27:28-29; Josh 6:17-19, 24; 1 Sam 15:2-3
Annals of Rameses III	1200 BC (about)	Egyptian annals describing battle(s) of Rameses III with the Sea Peoples, including the future Philistines	ANET 262–263; OTP 151–154	Judg 13:1–16:31; 1 Samuel
Neo-Assyrian Laws	1100s BC	Laws of the Neo-Assyrian Empire	RANE 114–115	Exod 19–24; Deut 12–26
Travels of Wenamun	1090 BC	An Egyptian semi-fictional travelogue that includes descriptions of Canaan	RANE 212–215; COS 1.41	Gen 34
Ludlul Bel Nemeqi	1000s BC	The sufferings of a noble Babylonian, somewhat reminiscent of Job	RANE 177–179; COS 1.153	Job
Enuma Elish	1000 BC (about)	Akkadian cosmology and creation	RANE 31–50	Gen 1–2
Babylonian Theodicy	1000~500 BC	A sufferer and a companion dialogue about life and suffering	RANE 179–182	Job, Ecclesiastes
Dialogue of Pessimism	1000~500 BC	A slave and his master discuss the lack of real value in anything	COS 1.155	Job, Ecclesiastes
Inscription of Shoshenq I	920 BC	An inscription by Egyptian pharaoh Shoshenq I (Shishak)	ANET 242–243	1 Kgs 11:40; 14:25-28
Assyrian Eponym Canon	910–612 BC	A list of selected officials for each year along with natural events that facilitate dating with the modern calendar	COS 2.1131	1–2 Kings; see "The Chronology of Israel's Monarchy," p. 562
Gezer Calendar	900 BC	Oldest example of Canaanite (old Hebrew); describes agricultural cycles	RANE 171	
Annals of Shalmaneser III	850~824 BC	Royal annals describing Shalmaneser III's incursion into Syria–Palestine and mentioning Ahab and Hadadzezer	OTP 176–181	1 Kgs 16–22; 2 Kgs 9:1–10:33
Tell Dan Inscription	850 BC (about)	An Aramaic inscription containing the first reference outside the OT to the "house of David"	RANE 165; COS 2.39; OTP 160–161	1 Samuel—2 Kings
Mesha Stela, Moabite Stone	850 BC	Moabite monuments that list Omri, Ahab, King Mesha, and possibly the house of David; concept of <i>kherem</i>	RANE 160–162; OTP 157–159	Deut 7:26; Josh 6:17, 40; 1 Kgs 11:44; 16:21-28; 2 Kgs 3:4; 25:30
Black Obelisk	827 BC	Akkadian monument that describes the successor of Shalmaneser III and mentions Jehu and Ahab	RANE 144–145; OTP 122–124	1 Kgs 19:16; 2 Kgs 8:7-15; 9:1-13; 10:31-36

Title	Date	Description	Sources	OT Parallels
Zakkur Inscription	800 BC	Zakkur, king of Hamath, honors his god, mentions Ben-hadad	RANE 163–165	1 Kgs 15; 19–20; 2 Kgs 6; 8; 13
Babylonian Chronicles	745–120 BC	Yearly records covering a period that included many biblical events, including 722, 605, 597, and 539 BC	RANE 155–159; COS 1.137	1 Kgs 2:10; 11:43; 2 Kgs 17–24; Jer 37:1; Dan 5:30; 6:28
Annals of Tiglath-Pileser IV (Pul)	744–727 BC	Annals of the king who founded the Neo-Assyrian empire; encounters with Israel	RANE 145; OTP 125–126	2 Kgs 15–16; 2 Chr 28:16–21; Isa 7:1–8:10
Annals of Sargon II	722–706 BC	Akkadian king Sargon II describes his conquest of Samaria and destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel	RANE 145–146; COS 2.118A; OTP 127–129	cp. 2 Kgs 17–18; Isa 10:27–32; 14:1–32; 20:1
Siloam Inscription	701 BC	Hebrew inscription describing the completion of Hezekiah's tunnel	RANE 171–172	2 Kgs 20:20; 2 Chr 32:30
Sennacherib Prism	701 BC	Akkadian inscription describing Sennacherib's invasion of Judah and siege of Jerusalem	RANE 146–147; OTP 139–140	2 Kgs 18–20; Isa 36:1–39:8
Balaam Inscription	700 BC	Inscription in Aramaic recording the name of Balaam, a "good prophet" who died as a result of his actions	RANE 225–226; COS 2.27; OTP 124–126	Num 22–24, 26
Wisdom of Ahiqar	700–650 BC	An Assyrian court tale and the instructions of a wise court official	RANE 189–191; OTP 283–288	Gen 37–50; Proverbs, Daniel, Esther
Yavneh Yam Ostracon	600s BC	A short inscription in Hebrew: A fieldworker pleads for his cloak, which his supervisor had unjustly confiscated	RANE 170; COS 3.41; OTP 331–332	Exod 22:25–27; Deut 24:12–17; Prov 14:9; 25:20
Seal of Baruch	600 BC (about)	A clay impression found in Jerusalem with Baruch's name		Jer 36; see "Baruch the Scribe," p. 1283
Instructions for Amenemope	600s–500s BC	Egyptian wisdom teaching: self-control, kindness, altruism, and the ideal man	RANE 187–189; COS 1.47	Prov 22–24
Babylonian Administrative Document	595–568 BC	Documents describe the good fortune of Judah's king Jehoiachin at the court of Babylonian king Evil-merodach	ANET 308	2 Kgs 25:27–30
Lachish Ostraca	589–586 BC	Clay tablets in Hebrew describing royal military administration and the plight of those under siege	RANE 168–169; OTP 134–136	1 Kgs 17:19; 19:7; Jer 26:20–22; 34:6–7
Nabonidus Chronicle	556–539 BC	Nabonidus's chronicle of his stay in Tema and the fall of Babylon	ANET 305–307; COS 1.89	Dan 5 (Belshazzar)
Seal of Temah	538~445 BC	A stone seal used by one of the Levitical families who went into exile	<i>The Jerusalem Post</i> , Jan 17, 2008	Neh 7:55
Cyrus Cylinder	518 BC	Cyrus recorded his conquest of Babylon in 539 BC and gave his theological explanation of the events	RANE 147–149; OTP 193–195	2 Chr 36:22–23; Ezra 1:1–4; 6:1–15; Isa 44:26–28; Dan 5:30; 6:28
Elephantine Papyri	400s BC	These Aramaic papyri describe life among Jews who fled to Egypt after the fall of Jerusalem	ANET 222, 491, 548–549	Jer 42–44
Murashu Tablets	400s BC	Akkadian tablets describing economic transactions between Babylonians and Jews who remained in Babylon	ATSHB 41	Ezra—Esther
Dead Sea Scrolls	300 BC (about)—AD 100	Some of the oldest copies of OT manuscripts and many extracanonical documents	Wise et al., <i>The Dead Sea Scrolls</i>	

INTRODUCTION TO THE PENTATEUCH

*Yahweh! The LORD! The God of compassion and mercy!
I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.
I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations. I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin.
But I do not excuse the guilty.*
EXODUS 34:6b-7a

The Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, tells the story of how sin entered God’s perfect world and how God responded. It introduces Abraham and his descendants as agents of blessing in a world under the curse of sin and death. This collection, Israel’s foundational documents, thus offers a sobering yet inspiring picture of God’s relationship with humankind.

SETTING

To help them remain true to God, the Israelites who had left Egypt needed a written record of their own history and mission. The Pentateuch recounts the story of God’s grace to Israel. God rescued the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt, called them to a special covenant relationship with himself, revealed his will to them, and took care of them as they traveled through the wilderness. Finally, they stood on the verge of entering the land of Canaan, which God had promised to their ancestors.

SUMMARY

The Pentateuch begins with the book of Genesis, which recounts God’s grace in the beginnings of human history and in the lives of Israel’s ancestors. God created humankind in his image and authorized humans to govern the world in his place (cp. Ps 8). When Adam and Eve rebelled against God, he

did not destroy them immediately, but their sin put them and their descendants under the curse of death. Eventually God judged humanity, but mercifully spared righteous Noah and his family. While the curse of sin and death continued to hang over the human race, God called Abraham and his family and established an eternal covenant with them that included a series of generous promises: innumerable descendants, permanent title to the land of Canaan, rule over the land, and blessing to all the nations of the earth. Often, Abraham’s descendants proved themselves faithless and unworthy of the privilege. But God kept his commitment to save and bless the human race.

As the book of Exodus opens, the favored family had been enslaved by the Egyptians, and seventy individuals had grown into the nation of Israel. Then God rescued the Israelites from Egypt (Exod 1–18) so that he could establish them as his covenant people, a holy nation

(Exod 19:4-6). God’s revelation of himself at Sinai (Exod 19–40) is the pivotal event in the Pentateuch.

In the book of Leviticus, God revealed to his people how to maintain a relationship with him, the means of forgiveness for their sin, and how they should live.

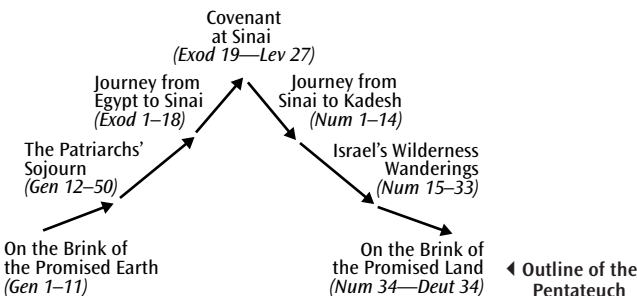
Numbers describes Israel’s journey from Sinai to the plains of Moab. God accompanied and provided for his people on their journey, despite their repeated rebellion.

Finally, Deuteronomy records Moses’ final pastoral addresses to the community of Israel. Moses detailed the significance of God’s covenant and urged the Israelites to stay true to their Redeemer. If the people were to enjoy the blessings of the covenant, they needed to be faithful to God. So Moses challenged them to devote themselves anew to God and God alone as they prepared to cross the Jordan River to enter the Promised Land.

AUTHORSHIP

Jewish and Christian tradition recognize Moses as the author of the Pentateuch, and many scholars continue to believe that Moses wrote much of the Pentateuch and that the entire document bears his stamp and authority.

Yet this view is not universal. Critical scholars since the mid-1800s have argued that the Pentateuch was written no earlier than the 600s BC and is the product of a complex literary evolution. The prevailing critical view, the *Documentary Hypothesis*, is that Genesis—Deuteronomy were



compiled from various sources by different groups of people. This hypothesis uses the different names for God, repeated stories, and theological emphases to propose that the Pentateuch comes from four sources: J (“Jahwist,” from “Yahweh”), E (“Elohist,” from “Elohim”), D (“Deuteronomic,” from Deuteronomy), and P (“Priestly”). It is thought that these sources were written and collected between 850 BC and 445 BC, gradually being combined and edited until around Ezra’s time (400s BC). This theory has prevailed in the scholarly world since Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918) made it popular.

However, advances in literary studies are again pointing back to Moses as the primary author of the Pentateuch. Critical scholars do not agree on the underlying sources for many passages, and additional sources have been invented to cover passages that do not fit the theory. The theory also fails to satisfactorily explain the emergence of Israel’s monotheism in a totally polytheistic world. It assumes that the biblical writers borrowed most of their religious ideas from pagan predecessors. According to the biblical records, however, everything the Israelites borrowed from their neighbors was polytheistic and idolatrous. Israel’s monotheism could not have been borrowed.

Archaeological discoveries have also called into question many of the criteria used in the Documentary Hypothesis. For instance, other writings from the ancient world confirm the use of different names for God, repeated stories, and ideas that were supposedly too advanced for ancient Israel, and the stories about the patriarchs fit their surrounding culture. These discoveries give background to the texts and contradict the assumptions of the Documentary Hypothesis. Archaeological finds continue to erode the rationale for dating the writing or editing of these books to later eras.

In recent years, with increased awareness of archaeology, critical scholars have begun to study the literary forms in the ancient Near East and in the Bible. *Form criticism* proposed that there was an oral tradition that lay behind the later written texts; by comparing these proposed oral forms, we could understand both the meaning and

the function of the text. Other approaches have focused on tracing how the traditions developed, how the traditions were used in religious settings, or how the literary genres functioned.

Such theories often seem unnecessarily complicated and conjectural. Evidence in the Pentateuch itself suggests that Moses did keep records of some of Israel’s experiences during the wilderness wanderings (Exod 17:14; 24:4, 7; 34:27; Num 33:1-2; Deut 31:9, 11). Many features in specific accounts point to a date of composition in the late Bronze Age (1500s–1200s BC, the era of the Exodus). The OT frequently credits Moses with writing the Pentateuch or portions of it (e.g., Josh 1:8; 8:31-32; 1 Kgs 2:3; 2 Kgs 14:6; Ezra 6:18; Neh 13:1; Dan 9:11-13; Mal 4:4), and the New Testament strongly connects the Torah with Moses (Matt 19:8; John 5:46-47; 7:19; Acts 3:22; Rom 10:5).

Do these facts confirm that Moses wrote the Pentateuch as we have it? Not necessarily. Several difficult factors remain. First, following the custom of literary works in the ancient Near East, the Pentateuch nowhere names its author. Second, Moses could not have recorded the account of his own death (Deut 34). Further, he would not have known of a place in northern Israel called Dan (Gen 14:14; cp. Josh 19:47; Judg 18:28-29), and he would not have referred to the conquest of Canaan as a past event (Deut 2:12). Thus, the text itself shows signs that it was updated for completeness (e.g., the death of Moses) or clarification for a later audience (e.g., Gen 14:14; 36:1; Deut 2:10-12). Some suggest that the reason the grammar and syntax of Deuteronomy resemble that of Jeremiah, who lived more than 500 years after Moses, is that later scribes updated the language. Such changes would be similar to updating translations of the Bible by replacing old expressions (“Behold”) with contemporary ones (“Look”).

We can conclude that Moses probably wrote down the speeches he delivered (Deut 31:9-13) and either wrote or arranged for the transcription of the revelation he received on Mount Sinai. It is plausible that he authorized others to write the stories and genealogies of the patriarchs that previously

had been passed on orally. Just as the pieces of the Tabernacle were constructed and woven by skilled craftsmen and then finally assembled by Moses (Exod 35–40), so literary craftsmen might have composed bits and pieces that make up the Pentateuch and submitted them to Moses, who ultimately approved them. We can only speculate when these pieces were finally edited in their present form, although the narrative frame of Deuteronomy suggests it occurred sometime after the death of Moses. But by the time David organized Temple worship, the content of the Pentateuch as we know it was apparently fixed.

Genesis and the other books of the Pentateuch can thus be understood as the product of Moses’ genius under God’s inspiration, with later editorial adjustments. Later writers—including the New Testament authors—spoke of “The Torah of Moses,” or “The Book of the Torah of Moses,” or, as Jesus himself said, “Moses . . . wrote about me” (John 5:45-46). Moses might not have been the only author or editor of the Pentateuch, but the Pentateuch fundamentally and substantially comes from Moses, and the Israelites accepted it as bearing the full force of his authority.

HISTORICAL RELIABILITY

A number of critical scholars view the early chapters of Genesis as mythological *representations* of cosmic and human origins, like similar Babylonian accounts, rather than historical *presentations* of what actually happened. Recently, this same kind of skepticism has characterized views toward the patriarchs, as well as toward Moses and the Exodus. These scholars note that archaeological discoveries do not specifically identify any of the characters or the events in the Pentateuch. However, the issue is not quite so simple. When it comes to archaeological proof, the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. Discoveries during the past century enable us to reconstruct patterns of life and an outline of ancient Near Eastern history in which the events described in the Pentateuch are quite at home.

LITERARY GENRES

We often call the first five books of the Bible the *Pentateuch* (“five

containers"). The New Testament refers to these books as "the law of Moses" (Luke 24:44). This designation comes from the early Greek translators of the Old Testament, who almost always rendered the Hebrew term *torah* as *nomos* ("law"), even though the Hebrew word *torah* actually means "instruction."

It is misleading to refer to the Pentateuch as "the law," because large portions are not law at all. It is, however, fitting to call the whole collection *torah* ("instruction"). The Torah includes inspired narrative (Genesis; Exod 1–20; 32–40; Lev 8–10; Numbers); poems and hymns (Gen 49; Exod 15; Deut 32; 33); genealogies (Gen 5, 10, 11, 36); covenant documents (Exod 19–24; Deuteronomy); civil, ceremonial, and moral laws (Exod 21–23); sermons (Deuteronomy); and prayers (Exod 32; Num 14).

INTERPRETATION

Several principles guide us as we read and interpret the Pentateuch:

1. These texts were originally read aloud, and the reading involved large sections at a time. Chapter and verse divisions were not part of the original and can detract from our understanding. Each verse and paragraph should be read within its larger context.

2. The Pentateuch was written more than 3,000 years ago. It used ancient literary standards and addressed ancient issues. For example, although Genesis 1–2 affects how Christians today respond to theories of evolution, the passage was written to address ancient rather than modern concerns.

3. The differences among genres of text require that we interpret them differently. Therefore, as we read the narratives and delight in the human interest elements, we should recognize that God is the ultimate hero in all the stories. Similarly, as we read the laws of Exodus and Leviticus, we should try to establish the theological significance that these regulations had for OT Israel and reflect on how their message applies to us today.

4. The Pentateuch records only the beginning and the early chapters of the larger story of divine

revelation that ultimately culminates in Jesus Christ. The seeds of promise for a Messiah are found in God's promise to crush the head of the serpent through the offspring of the woman (Gen 3:15); in the offspring of Abraham (Gen 22:17); in the descendants of Judah (Gen 49:10), who received eternal title to the scepter of Israel; and in the star that the pagan prophet Balaam saw on the distant horizon (Num 24:17). These seeds bore fruit later in the biblical record.

MEANING AND MESSAGE

The Pentateuch provided ancient Israel with an awesome picture of God, an image that separated him from the false gods of other nations. Yahweh, the God of Israel, is the only God—no other god exists (Deut 4:32–40). Yahweh, the God of Israel, is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. Yahweh, the God of Israel, is a God of grace; he deals patiently with sinners, saving them and calling them to covenant relationship with himself, revealing his name and his will to them, providing for their needs, and walking with them in fellowship and love.

In the account of creation, the Pentateuch reveals important lessons about the universe. God created the world by speaking it into being. He created a perfect world, characterized by light and life and order. But the devastating effects of sin replaced light with darkness, life with death, and peace and order with confusion and pain. Yet God promised ultimate victory, guaranteeing that the head of the serpent who introduced sin to humankind would be crushed.

The Pentateuch introduces us to God's covenant relationships with human beings. All of God's covenants are gracious. He invites his human partners into a special relationship and calls on them to respond with holy living because of the special role they play in his plan of redemption. By grace, God drew Noah into covenant relationship by saving him from the Flood. By grace, God called Abraham out of the pagan city of Ur in Babylonia to establish a covenant relationship. By grace, God called Israel to

be his people, and at Mount Sinai God confirmed for the nation his covenant with Abraham.

Although the covenants all originated in God's gracious heart, they still called for an obedient response from the human partners. However, God never wanted this obedience to be driven by a mere sense of duty or quid pro quo. Instead, the text of the Pentateuch reveals a consistent pattern of conduct for the Lord's people to follow in loving obedience and grateful response to God's saving work. Because God chose Israel to be his people and bound himself to them in covenant relationship, he desired that they express their faithfulness to him.

Despite the unified message of Scripture that people have never been saved by keeping the law (see Gen 15:6; Deut 7:7–8; Pss 40; 51; Isa 1:10–20; Rom 4:1–17; Gal 3:6–7), many people erroneously think that people in the Old Testament were saved by keeping the law. However, grace has always preceded law. God rescued Israel from their slavery in Egypt *before* he gave them the law. While God required the Israelites to obey the law in order to receive blessing and to fulfill the plan God had for them, the motivation for their obedience should have been gratitude that God had saved Israel and revealed his will to them.

In short, the Pentateuch contains the Torah—the instruction—that God gave Israel at its founding. Priests were to teach it and model it (Deut 33:10; 2 Chr 15:3; 19:8; Mal 2:6, 9; cp. Ezra 7:10; Jer 18:18; Ezek 7:26). Psalmists praised it (e.g., Ps 19:7–14; 119), prophets appealed to it (Isa 1:10; 5:24; 8:20; 30:9; 51:7), faithful kings ruled by it (1 Kgs 2:2–4; 2 Kgs 14:6; 22:11; 23:25), righteous citizens lived by it (Ps 1), and unfaithful Israel was judged by it (Deut 28:15–68; 2 Chr 36:11–21). Only Jesus Christ kept it and completely fulfilled it (Matt 3:15).

FURTHER READING

VICTOR HAMILTON
Handbook on the Pentateuch (2005)

G. HERBERT LIVINGSTON
The Pentateuch in Its Cultural Environment (1974)

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

Genesis is the book of beginnings—of the universe and of humanity, of sin and its catastrophic effects, and of God’s plan to restore blessing to the world through his chosen people. God began his plan when he called Abraham and made a covenant with him. Genesis traces God’s promised blessings from generation to generation, to the time of bondage and the need for redemption from Egypt. It lays the foundation for God’s subsequent revelation, and most other books of the Bible draw on its contents. Genesis is a source of instruction, comfort, and edification.

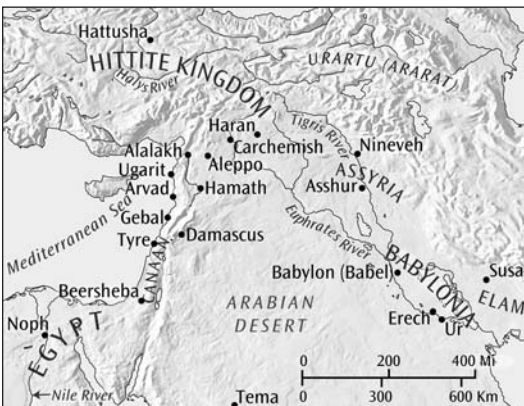
SETTING

When Genesis was written, the children of Israel had been slaves in Egypt for 400 years. They had recently been released from bondage and guided through the desert to meet the Lord at Mount Sinai, where he had established his covenant relationship with them and had given them his law through Moses. Israel was now poised to enter the Promised Land and receive the inheritance that God had promised Abraham.

While enslaved in Egypt, the Israelites had adopted many pagan ideas and customs from their Egyptian masters (e.g., Exod 32:1-4). They were influenced by false concepts of God, the world, and human nature (e.g., Exod 32), and were reduced to being slaves rather than owners and managers of the land. Perhaps they had forgotten the great promises that God had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or perhaps they had concluded that the promises would never be fulfilled.

Before entering the Promised Land, the Israelites needed to understand the nature of God, his world, and their place in it more clearly. They needed to embrace their identity as descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Genesis provided the needed understanding.



◀ **The Ancient Near East, about 2100 BC.** Humanity spread out from the mountains of URARTU (ARARAT) and populated the early centers of civilization. By the time of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), many of the cities were ancient.

ASSHUR 2:14; 10:22; 25:3; 25:18

ASSYRIA 10:11

BABYLON (ABEL), BABYLONIA 10:9-10; 11:1-9; 14:1, 9

CANAAN 9:18-27; 10:18-19; 12:5-10

DAMASCUS 14:15; 15:2

EGYPT 12:10-13:1; 15:18; 37:28-36; 39:1-50:26

ELAM 10:22; 14:1, 9

ERECH 10:10; Ezra 4:9

HAMATH 10:18; 2 Sam 8:9-10; 2 Kgs 14:28; 23:33

HARAN 11:26-32; 12:4-5; 27:43; 28:10; 29:4; Acts 7:2-4

SUSA Ezra 4:9; Neh 1:1; Esth 1:2; Dan 8:2

UR 11:28, 31; 15:7; Neh 9:7

URARTU (ARARAT) 8:4

SUMMARY

Genesis traces God's work to overcome with blessing the curse that came on humankind because of sin. The book arranges family traditions, genealogies, historical events, and editorial comments into a single, sustained argument.

Every section but the first has the heading, "This is the account" (or *These are the generations*; Hebrew *toledoth*); each of the *toledoth* sections explains

OUTLINE

1:1–2:3

Creation

2:4–4:26

What Happened to the Creation

5:1–6:8

The Account of Adam's Descendants

6:9–9:29

The Account of Noah's Family

10:1–11:9

The Account of Noah's Sons

11:10–26

The Account of Shem's Descendants

11:27–25:11

The Account of Terah's Descendants

25:12–18

The Account of Ishmael's Descendants

25:19–35:29

The Account of Isaac's Descendants

36:1–37:1

The Account of Esau's Descendants

37:2–50:26

The Account of Jacob's Descendants

the history of a line of descent. In each case, a deterioration of well-being is followed by an increasing focus on God's plan to bless the world. This plan is the basis for God's covenant with his people; as the blessing develops, the covenant is clarified. By the end of the book, the reader is ready for the fulfillment of the promises in Israel's redemption from bondage (see Exodus).

The first section (1:1–2:3) does not have the *toledoth* heading, and logically so—it is the account of creation "in the beginning" (1:1). The work of creation is wrapped in God's approval and blessing as he fulfills his plan.

The next section (2:4–4:26) focuses on the creation of human life (2:4–25) and traces what became of God's creation because of Adam's and Eve's sin (3:1–13), the curse on their sin (3:14–24), and the extension of sin to their descendants (4:1–24). Humanity no longer enjoyed God's rest; instead, they experienced guilt and fear. So they fled from God and developed a proud civilization.

Independence from God resulted in the downward drift of human life (5:1–6:8). The genealogy of 5:1–32 begins by recalling that human beings were made in God's image and were blessed by him (5:1–2). As the genealogy is traced, the death of each generation reminds the reader of the curse, with Enoch providing a ray of hope that the curse is not final. In 6:1–8, we learn that God regretted having made humans and decided to judge the earth. Noah, however, received God's favor and provided a source of hope (5:29; 6:8).

The next section (6:9–9:29) brings the curse of judgment through the flood followed by

blessing in a new beginning. A renewed creation began, purged of the abominable evil that had invaded and ruined the human race.

The world's population expanded into various nations (10:1–11:9) whose people were bent on disobedience. The population of the earth by Shem,

TIMELINE

2166 / 1990 BC*

Abraham is born

2091 / 1915 BC

Abraham moves to Canaan

2080 / 1904 BC

Ishmael is born

2066 / 1890 BC

Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed, Isaac is born

2006 / 1830 BC

Jacob and Esau are born

1898 / 1722 BC

Joseph is sold into slavery

1885 / 1709 BC

Joseph begins governing Egypt

1876 / 1661 BC

Jacob moves to Egypt

1446 / 1270 BC

Israel leaves Egypt (the Exodus), moves to Mount Sinai

1406 / 1230 BC

Israel enters Canaan

* *The two dates harmonize with the traditional "early" chronology and a more recent "late" chronology of the Exodus. All dates are approximate. Please see "Chronology: Abraham to Joshua," p. 118.*

Ham, and Japheth seemed fruitful (10:1-32), but the nations were divided by languages and boundaries (10:5, 20, 31). Because of their rebellion, God dispersed them to prevent greater wickedness (11:1-9).

After the chaos of the scattered nations, 11:10-26 brings the focus to Abram, through whom God chose to bring blessing to all. The rest of the book (11:27–50:26) tells of God’s blessing Abram and his descendants. God first made a covenant with Abram (11:27–25:11), promising him a great nation, land, and name. As time went on, God made the specific terms of the covenant clearer, and Abram’s faith grew deeper.

In each generation, Genesis gives a brief account of the families that are not Israel’s ancestors before turning to the line of Israel. After briefly reporting what became of Ishmael (25:12-18), Genesis traces in detail what happened to Isaac and his family (25:19–35:29).

True to the pattern of the book, Esau’s line (Edom) is dealt with briefly (36:1–37:1) before the chosen line of Jacob the heir. The final section (37:2–50:26) concerns Jacob’s family, centering on the life of Joseph. In the land of Canaan, the family became corrupt under Canaanite influence to the point of beginning to merge with them (ch 38). To preserve the line of blessing, God sent the family into Egypt where they could flourish, remain separate (43:32; 46:34), and become a great nation. The book closes with the promise of the Lord’s coming to rescue his people from Egypt (50:24-26).

“God rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. And he blessed the seventh day. . . .” And we ourselves will be a “seventh day” when we shall be filled with his blessing and remade by his sanctification. . . . Only when we are remade by God and perfected by a greater grace shall we have the eternal stillness of that rest in which we shall see that he is God.

ST. AUGUSTINE
City of God, sec. 22.30

AUTHORSHIP

Both Scripture and tradition attribute the Pentateuch (Genesis—Deuteronomy) to Moses. No one was better qualified than Moses to have written this book. Since he was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22), he had the literary skills to collect and edit Israel’s traditions and records and to compose this theological treatise. His unique communion with God gave him the spiritual illumination, understanding, and inspiration needed to guide him. He had good reason to write this work—to provide Israel with the theological and historical foundation for the Exodus and the covenant at Sinai, and to establish the new nation in accord with the promises made to their ancestors.

Most scholars, however, do not accept that Moses wrote Genesis. The prevailing critical view, called the *Documentary Hypothesis*, is that Genesis was compiled from various sources by different groups of people. In such approaches, there is seldom a word about divine revelation or inspiration. For those who understand the Bible as God’s inspired word, such theories often seem unnecessarily complicated and conjectural. Genesis can be understood much more straightforwardly as the product of Moses’ genius under God’s inspiration with later editorial adjustments. (See further “Introduction to the Pentateuch: Authorship,” p. 12).

COMPOSITION

Biblical scholars of all stripes have always acknowledged that various sources were used in writing Genesis and other historical texts in the Bible (such as Kings and Luke). Moses used collections of family records, oral traditions, ancient accounts of primeval events, and genealogies to write Genesis. Those sources could have been incorporated as received, or the author may have changed their style and wording, stitching them together with additional material for the particular purpose of tracing the foundations of Israelite faith.

Genesis also includes passages and expressions that are obviously later editorial glosses. Some sections (such as the list of Edomite kings, 36:31-43) could have been added during the early days of the monarchy. There is no conflict in saying that Genesis was authored by Moses and augmented by subsequent editors whose work was guided by the Holy Spirit. Given these considerations, conservative scholars find it plausible that the biblical material accurately records actual events.

LITERARY CHARACTER

Genesis includes various types of literature. Several suggestions have been made as to the nature of the materials.

Myth. Mythological literature explains the origins of things symbolically through the deeds of gods and supernatural creatures. For ancient peoples, myths were beliefs that explained life and reality. Whole systems of ritual activities were developed to ensure that the forces of fertility, life, and death would continue year by year. Some of these rituals gave rise to cult prostitution (see 38:15, 21-22).

It would be very difficult to classify the material in Genesis as myth. Israel had one God, not a multitude. The nation of Israel had a beginning, a history, and a future hope. They saw God, rather than gods and other supernatural creatures, as the primary actor in the world. Their worship was not cosmic, magical, or superstitious, but a reenactment of their own rescue from Egypt and a celebration of God's factual intervention in history and their hope in his promises.

If Genesis uses elements of mythological language, it is to display a deliberate contrast with pagan concepts and to show that the Lord God is sovereign over such ideas. For example, the ancients worshiped the sun as a god, but in Genesis the sun serves the Creator's wishes (1:14-18). The book of Genesis is a cemetery for lifeless myths and dead gods. Genesis is not myth.

Etiology. A number of scholars describe the Genesis narratives as *etiologies*, stories that explain the causes of factual reality or traditional beliefs. The implication is that such stories were made up for explanatory purposes and do not describe historical events. For example, if one says that the story of Cain and Abel was made up to explain why shepherds and farmers do not get along, the account loses its integrity as factual history.

Etiological elements certainly occur in Genesis, because the book gives the foundation and rationale for almost everything that Israel would later do. For example, the creation account of Gen 2 ends with the explanation, "This explains why a man leaves his father and mother. . . ." The event as it happened explains why marriage was conducted the way it was, but to say that a story explains something is quite different from saying that the story was fabricated to explain it. The stories of Genesis are not fictional tales invented to explain later customs and beliefs.

History. Many scholars object to regarding Genesis as history, for two basic reasons: (1) Genesis explains events as caused by God, and the inclusion of the supernatural is regarded as proof that the material is theological reflection and thus not historically reliable; and (2) the events in Genesis cannot be validated from outside sources; no other records have demonstrated that Abraham existed or that any of his family history occurred.

Genesis is not interested in parading Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as examples of morality. Therefore, it does not moralize on them. [Genesis] is bringing together the promises of God to the patriarchs and the faithfulness of God in keeping those promises.

VICTOR P. HAMILTON
The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17, p. 46

Modern philosophies of history exclude the supernatural as an explanation of historical events, but there is no reason to do so arbitrarily. If God exists and is able to act, then he might very well be the ultimate cause of all historical events and the immediate cause of specific historical events. The Israelites were not as distrustful of supernatural events as are modern critics; they experienced such events frequently as God acted among them to fulfill the promises recorded in Genesis.

It is true that no direct evidence of the patriarchs or the events in Genesis has been found, but archaeology confirms the plausibility of Genesis by showing that the historical situation in that era (Middle Bronze I, 2000–1800 BC) corresponds closely to what Genesis portrays. It is unlikely that this would be so if Genesis were not an accurate record of the facts. When all the archaeological and historical data are assembled around the events, they fit perfectly within the setting, and the details of the narratives make perfectly good sense.

Theological Interpretation. Genesis was not intended as a chronicle of the lives of the patriarchs, a history for history’s sake, or a complete biography. It is clearly a theological interpretation of selected records of the nation’s ancestors, but this does not destroy its historicity. Interpretations of an event can differ, but the offering of interpretations is a good witness to the actuality of the events. The author retold the events in his own way, but he did not invent them.

Tradition. What was thus committed to writing is tradition in the reverent care of literary genius. Scholars prefer words such as “traditions” or even “sagas” to describe these narratives. Doing so only makes the claim that the stories preserve the memory of the people of Israel; it makes no claim that the events themselves are historical. The biblical understanding, however, is that these stories were recorded under divine inspiration and are therefore historically true and reliable.

In all probability, Abram brought the primeval accounts and the family genealogies from Mesopotamia, and stories about the family were added to these collections. Joseph could easily have preserved all the traditions, both written and oral, in Egypt with his own records. Moses could then have compiled the works substantially in their present form while adding his editorial comments. Since he worked under God’s inspiration and guidance, the narratives record exactly what God wanted written and correspond precisely to reality.

Instructional Literature. Since Genesis is the first book of the Pentateuch (the “Torah” or Law), it may be best to classify it as “Torah Literature” (Hebrew *torah*, “instruction, law”). Genesis is instructional literature that lays the foundation for the Law. It is theological interpretation of the historical traditions standing behind the covenant at Sinai. In the way it is written, one may discern that Moses was preparing his readers to receive God’s law and the fulfillment of the promises made to their forefathers. Genesis is therefore a unique work. Theology, history, and tradition come together to instruct God’s people and prepare them for blessing.

MEANING AND MESSAGE

Israel’s most important questions were answered by the Genesis narratives. Life and death, the possession of the land of Canaan, and how Israel ended up in Egypt are explained as God’s providential working in history. Israel was part of God’s plan in this world. His plan had

a starting point at creation and will have an end point in the future when the promises are completely fulfilled.

Israel, the Chosen People. The central theme of Genesis is that God made a covenant with Abraham and his descendants. He promised to make them his own people, heirs of the land of Canaan, and a blessing to the world. Genesis gave Israel the theological and historical basis for its existence as God's chosen people.

Israel could trace its ancestry to the patriarch Abraham and its destiny to God's promises (12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-8). Because the promise of a great nation was crucial, much of Genesis is devoted to family concerns of the patriarchs and their wives, their sons and heirs, and their birthrights and blessings. The record shows how God preserved and protected the chosen line through the patriarchs. Israel thus knew that they had become the great nation promised to Abraham. Their future was certainly not in slavery to the Egyptians, but in Canaan, where they would live as a free nation and as the people of the living God, and where they could mediate God's blessings to the people of the world.

Blessing and Curse. The entire message of Genesis turns on the motifs of blessing and cursing. The promised blessing would give the patriarchs innumerable descendants and give the descendants the land of promise; the blessing would make them famous in the earth, enable them to flourish and prosper, and appoint them to bring others into the covenant blessings. The curse, meanwhile, would alienate, deprive, and disinherit people from the blessings. The effects of the curse are felt by the whole race as death and pain and as God's judgment on the world.

These motifs continue throughout the Bible. Prophets and priests spoke of even greater blessings in the future and an even greater curse for those who refuse God's gift of salvation and its blessings. The Bible reminds God's people not to fear human beings, but to fear God, who has the power to bless and to curse.

Good and Evil. In Genesis, that which is good is blessed by God: It produces, enhances, preserves, and harmonizes with life. That which is evil is cursed: It causes pain, diverts from what is good, and impedes or destroys life. Genesis traces the perpetual struggle between good and evil that characterizes our fallen human race. God will bring about the greater good, build the faith of his people, and ultimately triumph over all evil (cp. Rom 8:28).

God's Plan. Genesis begins with the presupposition that God exists and that he has revealed himself in word and deed to Israel's ancestors. It does not argue for the existence of God; it simply begins with God and shows how everything falls into place when the sovereign God works out his plan to establish Israel as the means of restoring blessing to the whole world.

God's Rule. Genesis is the fitting introduction to the founding of theocracy, the rule of God over all creation that was to be established through his chosen people. Genesis lays down the initial revelation of God's sovereignty. He is the Lord of the universe who will move heaven and earth to bring about his plan. He desires to bless people, but he will not tolerate rebellion and unbelief. His promises are great, and he is fully able to bring them to fruition. To participate in his plan has always required faith, for without faith it is impossible to please him (Heb 11:6).

FURTHER READING

VICTOR P. HAMILTON
The Book of Genesis (1990)

DEREK KIDNER
Genesis (1967)

KENNETH A. MATHEWS
Genesis (1996)

ALLEN P. ROSS
Creation and Blessing (1988)
Genesis in Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (2008)

GORDON WENHAM
Genesis 1-15 (1987)
Genesis 16-50 (1994)

1. CREATION (1:1–2:3)
In the Beginning (1:1-2)

1 In the beginning God ^acreated the ^bheavens and the ^cearth. ²The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the ^dSpirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

Six Days of Creation (1:3-31)

Day One: Light, Darkness

³Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light “day” and the darkness “night.”
 And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day.

Day Two: Sky, Waters

⁶Then God said, “Let there be a space between the waters, to separate the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth.” ⁷And that is what happened. God made this space to separate the waters of the earth from the waters of the heavens. ⁸God called the space “sky.”
 And evening passed and morning came, marking the second day.

Day Three: Land, Sea, Vegetation

⁹Then God said, “Let the waters beneath the sky flow together into one place, so dry ground may appear.” And that is what happened. ¹⁰God called the dry ground “land” and the waters “seas.”

1:1
 Ps 89:11; 102:25
 Isa 42:5; 48:13
 John 1:1-2
^a*bara* (1254)
^bGen 1:27
^c*shamayim* (8064)
^dExod 16:4
^e*erets* (0776)
^fGen 9:11

1:2
 Isa 45:18
^g*ruakh* (7307)
^hGen 45:27

1:3
 Isa 45:7
 2 Cor 4:6

1:6
 Job 26:10
 Ps 136:5-6

1:9
 Ps 95:5
 Prov 8:29
 Jer 5:22
 2 Pet 3:5

The Creation (1:1–2:3)

Ps 33:6-9
 Prov 3:19; 8:22-31
 Isa 40:26-28; 45:11-12, 18-19
 Jer 10:11-16
 John 1:1-4
 Rom 8:18-25
 2 Cor 5:17
 Col 1:15-20
 Rev 4:11; 21:1-5

The creation account in Genesis is foundational to the message of the entire Bible, not just of Genesis or the Pentateuch. Understanding the early chapters of Genesis is thus crucial to forming a biblical worldview.

This part of Genesis deals with fundamental questions: Who created the world, and for what purpose? Why is the world in its present condition? Genesis answers these questions, dispelling the idolatry that Israel had acquired from their pagan masters in Egypt. In the Promised Land, they would also be surrounded by people who believed in many false gods and worshiped created things rather than the Creator. Genesis taught Israel that the one true God created and has absolute authority over all things; he alone is worthy of worship.

Every worldview attempts to explain where the world came from, what is wrong with the world, and how it can be set right again. The creation account in Genesis teaches that as God made the world, it was “very good” (1:31). Through creation, God turned disorder into restful order and emptiness into the fullness of abundant life. In this environment, humans enjoyed unbroken fellowship with their Creator until their rebellion severed that fellowship and implanted evil in human hearts (ch 3; see chs 4–6). The world’s evil does not come from some defect in creation; God put the world under a curse because of human rebellion.

Since that first rebellion, humans have been alienated from the Creator and no longer recognize his presence and authority. This alienation results in shame, fractured relationships with God and other humans, estrangement from the rest of creation, and death (3:7-19). Since that time, God has been working purposefully in history to restore humans to fellowship with him, which he is doing through Jesus Christ. Restored humans are a new creation (Gal 6:15); through Jesus, eternal life is open to all and God will one day renew all things (see Isa 65:17-25; Rom 8:19-22). The whole cosmos will be made new (Rev 21:1).

1:1–2:3 These verses introduce the Pentateuch (Genesis—Deuteronomy) and teach Israel that the world was created, ordered, and populated by the one true God and not by the gods of surrounding nations. • God blessed three specific things: animal life (1:22-25), human life (1:27), and the Sabbath day (2:3). This trilogy of blessings highlights the Creator’s plan: Humankind was made in God’s image to enjoy sovereign dominion over the creatures of the earth and to participate in God’s Sabbath rest.

1:1 *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth* (or *In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, . . .* or *When God began to cre-*

ate the heavens and the earth, . . .): This statement summarizes the entire creation account (1:3–2:3). Already a key question—Who created the world?—is answered (see also Prov 8:22-31; John 1:1-3). Although the modern naturalistic mindset rejects this question and that of creation’s purpose, Genesis affirms God’s role and purpose in creation. • The common name for **God** (Hebrew *’elohim*) emphasizes his grand supremacy. The word *’elohim* is plural, but the verbs used with it are usually singular, reflecting the consistent scriptural proclamation of a single, all-powerful God. • **created** (Hebrew *bara*): In the OT, God is always the agent of creation

expressed by this verb. It describes the making of something fresh and new—notably the cosmos (1:1, 2:1, 2:3), humankind (1:27), the Israelite nation (Isa 43:1), and the future new creation (Isa 65:17). • **The heavens and the earth** are the entire ordered cosmos.

1:2 This verse gives the background for the summary in 1:1 and the detailed description in 1:3–2:3. God’s creative utterances bring order to the chaotic state of the universe. • **formless . . . empty** (Hebrew *tohu . . . bohu*): This terse idiom means something like “wild and waste.” It sets a stark contrast to the final ordered state of the heavens and the earth (1:1). • **deep waters**

1:10
Ps 33:7; 95:5
1:11
Gen 2:9
Ps 104:14
Matt 6:30
1:14
Ps 74:16; 104:19
1:15
Gen 1:5
1:16
Ps 8:3; 19:1-6;
136:8-9
1 Cor 15:41
1:18
Jer 33:20, 25
1:20
Gen 2:19
Ps 146:6
*nepesh (5315)
† Gen 2:7
1:21
Ps 104:25-28

And God saw that it was good. ¹¹Then God said, "Let the land sprout with vegetation—every sort of seed-bearing plant, and trees that grow seed-bearing fruit. These seeds will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came." And that is what happened. ¹²The land produced vegetation—all sorts of seed-bearing plants, and trees with seed-bearing fruit. Their seeds produced plants and trees of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. ¹³And evening passed and morning came, marking the third day.

Day Four: Sun, Moon, Stars

¹⁴Then God said, "Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to mark the seasons,

days, and years. ¹⁵Let these lights in the sky shine down on the earth." And that is what happened. ¹⁶God made two great lights—the larger one to govern the day, and the smaller one to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷God set these lights in the sky to light the earth, ¹⁸to govern the day and night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And evening passed and morning came, marking the fourth day.

Day Five: Birds, Fish

²⁰Then God said, "Let the waters swarm with fish and other ^elife. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind." ²¹So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that scurries and

Formless	CHAOS	Empty
DAY 1 (1:3-5) Light, Dark	HEAVENS	DAY 4 (1:14-19) Sun, Moon, Stars
DAY 2 (1:6-8) Water, Sky	WATER & SKY	DAY 5 (1:20-23) Birds, Fish
DAY 3 (1:9-13) Sea, Land	EARTH	DAY 6 (1:24-31) Animals, Humans
Formed	COSMOS	Filled
	DAY 7 (2:2-3) Rest	

◀ **The Structure of the Creation Account** (1:1–2:3). God transformed chaos into the present cosmos. In the first three days, he transformed the formless void into the structured universe—the HEAVENS (outer space), the WATER and SKY, and the EARTH (cp. Exod 20:11; Ps 135:6). In the second three days, he populated each empty realm. The seventh day (2:1-3) stands apart: As God's day of rest, it provides the weekly pattern for human activity (Exod 20:8-11; 31:12-17) and speaks of the rest that God promised to those who live by faith in him (see Heb 3:7-4:11).

two collections of water (cp. Job 37:18; Ezek 1:22). In the ancient Near East, the cosmos was understood as a three-tier system, with rain originating from the outermost tier (see 7:11-12 and note).

1:9-10 *Let the waters . . . flow together:* Other ancient cultures viewed the sea as a hostile force. Genesis shows God as further restraining chaos (see note on 1:2) by prescribing specific boundaries for the sea. The flood—an act of God's judgment (6:7)—undid these boundaries and returned the earth to chaos (7:1-24).

1:14-31 On days 4–6, God filled the domains that had been formed during days 1–3 (1:3-13).

1:14 *Let them . . . mark the seasons, days, and years:* The movement of the heavenly bodies defined Israel's liturgical calendar, whose roots in creation gave a sacred timing to Israel's festivals and celebrations (see Exod 23:15; Lev 23:4).

1:16 In the surrounding pagan cultures, the *two great lights* were worshiped as deities, but in Genesis they serve God and humanity (see Ps 136:7-9; Jer 31:35). The sun and moon are not named; they are simply called *the larger one* and *the smaller one*. Not including their names may have reminded Israel that they were not gods. • *govern:* Cp. 1:26, 28; Ps 136:9. • *the stars:* The starry heavens testify to God's creative power as they proclaim his glory (Ps 19:1; 148:3). They do not predict the future, as Israel's neighbors believed (see Jer 10:2).

1:21 Contrary to the pagan idea that the *great sea creatures* were co-eternal with God, Genesis states that *God created* them and is sovereign over them. The Hebrew word *tanninim* ("creatures") elsewhere refers to crocodiles (Ezek 29:3), powerful monsters (Jer 51:34), or the sea creature, Leviathan (Isa 27:1; cp. Job 41:1-34).

(Hebrew *tehom*): Some scholars say this alludes to the Mesopotamian goddess Tiamat (representing chaos), but Genesis views *tehom* as inhospitable chaos, not as a deity or goddess that God engaged in cosmic battle. • *the Spirit of God:* God directly superintended the creation process.

1:3-13 In the first three days, God formed the chaos into a habitable world.

1:3 *Then God said:* Nothing in Gen 1 is created apart from God's powerful word (cp. Ps 33:6, 9). • *"Let there be . . .,"* and *there was:* God's command enacted his will to create the world. God is not a part of creation or limited by it; he is the supreme ruler over everything (cp. Neh 9:6).

1:4 *Light* is antithetical to chaotic *darkness* (1:2); the light is declared *good* but the darkness is not (cp. John 1:5). God is the source of this light (cp. 1:14-19). God *separated* the light, as he did water

(cp. 1:6-8), by his creative word. Light is associated with life and blessing (Job 38:19-20; Ps 19:1-6; 97:11; 104:19-20; Isa 60:19-20) and sets a boundary on the darkness that would destroy cosmic order. Darkness often typifies terror, death, and evil (see 15:12; Job 18:6, 18; Ps 88:12; Eph 5:11-12; 1 Jn 1:5).

1:5 *God called (or named):* To name something is to exercise authority over it (see also 2:19-20). • *day:* The Hebrew *yom* can refer to daylight (1:5a), to a 24-hour period (1:5b), or to an unspecified time period (2:4b, "When," literally *in the day*; cp. Exod 20:8-11). • *evening . . . morning:* The Hebrew day began at sundown, just as the first day began with darkness and brought the first morning light.

1:6-8 The creation account describes the appearance of things from a human perspective. The *sky* is viewed as a shiny dome that is a buffer between

swarms in the water, and every sort of bird—each producing offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²Then God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply. Let the fish fill the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.”

²³And evening passed and morning came, marking the fifth day.

Day Six: Animals, Humankind

²⁴Then God said, “Let the earth produce every sort of animal, each producing offspring of the same kind—livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals.” And that is what happened. ²⁵God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”

²⁷ So God ^fcreated human beings in his own image.

In the image of God he ^fcreated them;
male and female he ^fcreated them.

²⁸Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”
²⁹Then God said, “Look! I have given you every seed-bearing plant throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food. ³⁰And I have given every green plant as food for all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—everything that has life.” And that is what happened.

³¹Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good! And evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day.

Sabbath Rest (2:1-3)

2 So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. ²On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work. ³And God ^gblessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of ^hcreation.

1:24
Gen 2:19
1:26
Gen 5:1; 9:6
Ps 8:6-8
Acts 17:28-29
1:27
^aMatt 19:4
^bMark 10:6
^cbara' (1254)
• Gen 2:3

1:29
Gen 9:3
Ps 104:13; 136:25

1:30
Ps 104:14; 145:15

1:31
Ps 104:24

2:1
Deut 4:19; 17:3
Ps 104:2
Isa 45:12

2:2
Exod 20:11; 31:17
^aHeb 4:4

2:3
Isa 58:13
^bbarak (1288)
• Gen 12:2
^cbara' (1254)
• Gen 6:7

2:4
Gen 1:3-31
Job 38:4-11

1:22 *God blessed them:* God’s blessing commissions and enables the fulfillment of what God has spoken (see “Blessing” at 48:8-20, p. 113). • *Let the fish . . . let the birds:* These directives define the blessing. The fish and birds are fertile by God’s command, not by pagan ritual, as some of Israel’s neighbors thought.

1:26 *Let us make* is more personal than the remote “Let there be” (e.g., 1:3, 6). • The plural *us* has inspired several explanations: (1) the Trinity; (2) the plural to denote majesty; (3) a plural to show deliberation with the self; and (4) God speaking with his heavenly court of angels. The concept of the Trinity—one true God who exists eternally in three distinct persons—was revealed at a later stage in redemptive history, making it unlikely that the human author intended that here. Hebrew scholars generally dismiss the plural of majesty view because the grammar does not clearly support it (the plural of majesty has not been demonstrated to be communicated purely through a plural verb). The plural of self-deliberation also lacks evidence; the only clear examples refer to Israel as a corporate unity (e.g., 2 Sam 24:14). God’s speaking to the heavenly court, however, is

well-attested in the OT (see 3:22; 11:7; 1 Kgs 22:19-22; Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6; 38:7; Ps 89:5-6; Isa 6:1-8; Dan 10:12-13).

• *human beings:* Or *man*; Hebrew reads *adam*. • The descriptors *in our image* and *like us* are virtually synonymous in Hebrew. Humans enjoy a unique relationship with God. • *They will reign:* Humans represent the Creator as his ambassadors, vice-regents, and administrators on earth.

1:27 The first poetry of Genesis reflectively celebrates God’s climactic feat in creating humankind. • *human beings* (Or *the man*; Hebrew reads *ha-adam*): This term is often used to denote humanity collectively (see 6:1, 5-7; 9:5-6). Though traditionally translated “man,” gender is not at issue here; both *male* and *female* are included.

1:28 *God blessed them:* See note on 1:22; see also 17:16; 48:16; Deut 7:13. • *said:* God’s message to humankind is direct and intimate; we are stewards of his delegated authority. • *govern . . . Reign:* As God’s vice-regents, humans are entrusted with the care and management of the world God created (see also 9:2; Ps 8:5-8).

1:29-30 These verses highlight the extent (*throughout the earth*) and variety (*every seed-bearing plant . . .*

all the fruit trees) of God’s provision for humans, *animals*, and *birds*.

1:31 The Creator declares his work *good* seven times in ch 1; following the creation of human beings, God declares it all *very good*.

2:1-3 Humankind is the high point of God’s creative acts (1:26-31), while day 7 is the climax of the creation week. When God *rested* (or *ceased*), he endorsed all of creation—there was nothing more to do! This seven-day framework structured Israel’s week, with the *seventh day* as the precedent for their weekly Sabbath. The Sabbath was intended to celebrate God’s finished work; the seventh day would be set apart as *holy* and dedicated to the Creator, who also rested (see Exod 20:8-11; 31:12-17; cp. Matt 12:1-8; Rom 14:5-6; Col 2:16-17; Heb 4:1-11).

2:3 The first six days of creation involved separation (light from darkness, day from night, water from dry land). The last act of creation separated what is ordinary from what is *holy*, thus laying the foundation for Israel’s worship. It also anticipated a coming age of rest (Heb 4:1-11; 12:2; 13:14). • The absence of the usual “morning and evening” reflects the Creator’s willingness to enter into unending fellowship with humankind.

2:5
Gen 1:11
2:7
Gen 3:19
Job 33:4
Ps 103:14
Ezek 37:5
Zech 12:1
John 20:22
*1 Cor 15:45
**nepesh* (53:15)
• Deut 12:23

2. WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CREATION (2:4–4:26)

Superscription (2:4a)

⁴This is the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth.

Creation of Man and Woman (2:4b-25) Creation of the Man

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, ⁵neither wild plants nor grains

were growing on the earth. For the LORD God had not yet sent rain to water the earth, and there were no people to cultivate the soil. ⁶Instead, springs came up from the ground and watered all the land. ⁷Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living ⁱperson.

Human Sexuality (1:27-28)

When God created the first human beings in his own image, he created them as sexual beings, male and female (1:27). Through their sexuality, they were to fill and govern the world (1:28) and provide intimate companionship for one another in marriage (2:18-25). Male and female sexuality is central to what it means to be human.

Sexual intimacy united the first man and woman as one being, an effect that sexual intimacy continues to have. Since biblical sexuality is not just physical but has the total person in view, it validates sexual relations only as part of the partners' mutual commitment to each other's ultimate good. The Bible speaks of engaging in sexual intercourse as literally "knowing" another person intimately (see note on 4:1). Since creation, the purpose of sexuality has been to join people in an intimate union of marriage—a permanent and loving heterosexual commitment—that God blesses and calls "very good" (1:27-28, 31). The sexual relationship cements the marriage bond in an intimacy that continues even when reproduction is no longer possible.

Although sexuality was created before sin, it did not emerge unscathed from human rebellion. Sexuality is a powerful force that is easily corrupted if not carefully channeled (see Lev 18; 1 Thes 4:3-8). Sexual intimacy apart from marital commitment perverts the order that God intended for creation. Incest, for example, violates sexual boundaries (see Lev 18:7-14), collapses family structures (see 19:30-38), and fragments the community. Whereas perverted sexuality tears the community down (see 38:1-30; 39:7-9; Judg 19:1–20:48) and exalts the individual (see 2 Sam 13:11-14), biblical sexuality builds up the sexual partners and the community.

Our sexual identity has been damaged through our fall into sin (ch 3), but God has redeemed it through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (see 1 Cor 6:12-20; Eph 5:31-33). He restores sexual wholeness in those who trust his work in their lives by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:9-11, 15-20; 1 Thes 4:1-5). Those who commit their sexuality to Christ can testify to God's love for his people (Eph 5:25-33).

Gen 2:18-25
Lev 18:1-30
Deut 22:13-29
Ruth 4:11-13
2 Sam 11:2-27
Ps 127:3-5
Eccl 2:8-11
Song 1–8
Mal 2:15-16
Matt 19:3-12
1 Cor 6:12–7:40
Eph 5:31-33
1 Thes 4:3-8

2:4–4:26 This account (see note on 2:4) of the heavens and the earth is not a second creation account; rather, it is a theological and historical expansion on 1:1–2:3. The focus is now on what the cosmos produced rather than on its creation. Special attention is given to the first man and woman. As the story progresses, it is colored by contrasts of good and evil, knowledge and ignorance, life and death, harmony and discord.

2:4 *This is the account* (literally *These are the generations*): This or a similar phrase is repeated throughout Genesis, creating an internal outline for the book. In other occurrences, it introduces the genealogy or story of a key personality (5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 37:2). • Some have argued that the first half of 2:4 belongs with 1:1–2:3, but it is more likely the

introduction to the account that follows.

• **LORD God** (Hebrew *Yahweh Elohim*) is the second name used for God in the early chapters of Genesis. *Elohim* (1:1–2:3) describes the all-powerful creator God. *Yahweh Elohim* speaks of the eternal God who formed a lasting covenant with Israel (Exod 3:6, 13-15). Accordingly, 2:4-25 focuses on God as provider more than as creator. The three themes of sexuality, dominion, and food in ch 1 are now addressed in reverse order (food, 2:8-17; dominion, 2:18-20; sexuality, 2:21-25).

2:5 cultivate: Work does not result from sin; it was part of the original structure of creation and is directly tied to human identity and purpose (1:28; 2:15).

2:6 springs (Or *mist*, as traditionally rendered): The word refers to subterranean springs that rose to the surface of the ground.

2:7 In 1:1–2:3, creation happens at a distance, by divine command ("Let there be . . . and that is what happened"). In this account, the creative act is much more intimate (see also 2:8-9, 21-22). • **from the dust of the ground**: In Hebrew, *'adamah* ("ground") forms a wordplay with *'adam* ("man"). The earth remains the definitive reference point for humans, who in death return to dust (3:17-19; 4:11; Job 4:19; 10:8-9; Isa 29:16). • **breathed . . . into the man's nostrils**: God's *breath* is not imparted to other animals; only humans are formed in God's image (1:27) and enjoy dialogue with their Creator (2:16-17; 3:8-13). They alone have spiritual awareness and moral conscience (see Job 32:8).

Creation of the Garden

⁸Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made. ⁹The LORD God made all sorts of trees grow up from the ground—trees that were beautiful and that produced delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰A river flowed from the land of Eden, watering the garden and then dividing into four branches. ¹¹The first branch, called the

Pishon, flowed around the entire land of Havilah, where gold is found. ¹²The gold of that land is exceptionally pure; aromatic resin and onyx stone are also found there. ¹³The second branch, called the Gihon, flowed around the entire land of Cush. ¹⁴The third branch, called the Tigris, flowed east of the land of Asshur. The fourth branch is called the Euphrates.

The First Command

¹⁵The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it.

2:8
Gen 3:23; 13:10
Isa 51:3
Joel 2:3
2:9
Gen 3:22
Prov 3:18; 11:30
Rev 2:7; 22:2, 14
2:10
Rev 22:1, 17
2:14
Gen 15:18
Deut 1:7
Dan 10:4
2:15
Gen 2:8

Biblical Marriage (2:18-25)

Gen 24:65-67
Ps 45:8-15
Is 54:5
Hos 2:19-20
Mal 2:10-16
1 Cor 7:1-40
2 Cor 6:14-16
Eph 5:21-33
Heb 13:4
1 Pet 3:1-7

At the first wedding, God the Father gave the bride away to the groom and witnessed the couple's interaction in his sanctuary-garden (2:18-25). Married love is thus a binding covenant commitment before God. Breaching that covenant (e.g., through adultery) is a crime against persons and against God, who is a divine witness to and guarantor of the marriage covenant (see Mal 2:10-16; cp. Gen 39:6-9; Jer 3:1; 1 Cor 6:9-10; Heb 13:4). Although marriage is exclusive, it is not private. It is legally declared in public, with community recognition, witnesses, and accountability (see Lev 20:10-12; Deut 22:22; Jer 29:20-23).

Marriage is also a metaphor of the Lord's relationship with his people, first with Israel (see Exod 19:3-6; 20:2-6; 34:14; Isa 54:5; Ezek 16:1-63; Hos 2:19-20), and then with the church (see 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:21-33). A marriage points to something greater than itself—God's people (Christ's "bride") await the return of Christ (the "groom"). Married Christians are called to live in unity and dignity as they anticipate the wedding feast of the Lamb (Rev 19:6-9). Christ will live forever with his faithful people in glory (Rev 19:7; 21:2, 9).

2:8-14 Analogous to the sacred time marked out on the seventh day of creation (2:2-3), the sacred space of the *garden in Eden* was separate from the surrounding world. It functioned as a garden-temple or sanctuary because the Lord manifested his presence there in a special way.

2:8 *Eden* was the general location in which the *garden* was placed, not the garden itself. The term could mean "plain," "delight," or "fertility." The description that follows favors the idea of fertility. • *in the east*: The exact location of Eden is left to speculation, but it was east of Canaan, Israel's later home. • God *placed the man* in the garden for divine fellowship and physical blessing (see also 2:15 and note).

2:9 Beauty and bounty characterized humanity's original environment (cp. 13:10). • The *tree of life* represented God's presence and provision. The one who ate of it would have everlasting life (3:22), which made it a rich image for later Israelite and Christian reflection (Prov 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; Rev 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19). The candlestick in Israel's Tabernacle may have been a stylized representation of it (Exod 25:31-35). • Eating the fruit of the *tree of the knowledge of good and evil* enabled humanity's capacity for wisdom (3:6) and moral discernment (3:5, 22; cp.

Deut 1:39, "innocent"). Eating from it represented a human grasp for autonomy and wisdom that were God's alone (cp. Prov 30:1-4). Humans side-stepped God's revelation as the means of moral discernment, flaunting their independence rather than submitting to God's will (cp. Prov 1:7). Choosing human wisdom over God's instruction brings death and destruction (see Ps 19:7-9; Ezek 28:6, 15-17).

2:10-14 This detailed description portrays the eastern region around Eden as a mountain with rivers flowing out to the world. Eden's beauty and fertility enriched the whole earth.

2:10 The *river* that was *watering the garden* was a material blessing (bringing agricultural fertility) and a symbol of God's presence (cp. Ps 46:4; Ezek 47:1-12; Zech 14:8; Rev 22:1-2). • *dividing into four branches* (literally *heads*): The common understanding is that one river had its source in Eden, flowed down through the garden, and then split into the four rivers named.

2:11 *The Pishon* and the Gihon (2:13) cannot be identified with certainty. If *the land of Havilah* was in southeast Arabia or on the African coast, as some biblical data suggest (see 10:7; 25:18; 1 Sam 15:7), then the Pishon was possibly the Nile River. Josephus thought that Havilah and the Pishon were in India

(*Antiquities* 1.1.3). Two other proposals suggest: (1) rivers in the mountains of eastern Turkey where the Tigris and Euphrates (2:14) also flow, and (2) the marshy delta near the Persian Gulf. Current geographical conditions make any theory impossible to prove conclusively.

2:12 The magnificence and fertility of the garden are pictured as spreading to the surrounding regions through the rivers flowing out from it. The four rivers possibly imply that the garden's bounty flowed out to the four corners of the earth. • *Gold* and *onyx* were later used for decorating the Tabernacle, the Temple (Exod 25:3-9; 1 Chr 29:2), and the priests' clothing (Exod 28:9-14, 20). • *Resin* was used in sacred incense (Exod 30:34).

2:13 *Gihon*: Though unknown, proposals have included the Nile (as in the Greek version of Jer 2:18; Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.1.3), the Jordan, or, according to Jewish tradition, a river that formerly ran through the Kidron Valley (1 Kgs 1:33; 2 Chr 33:14). • Although *Cush* is the name of ancient Ethiopia, Mesopotamian regions associated with Babylon seem to be the immediate setting (see 10:8); Cush is possibly the land of the Kassites, a dynasty ruling in Babylonia.

2:14 *Tigris* . . . *Euphrates*: These well-known rivers flow from the mountains of eastern Turkey.

2:16
Gen 3:1-3

2:17
Gen 3:1, 16-17
Deut 30:15, 19-20
Rom 6:23
Jas 1:15

2:18
Gen 3:12
Prov 18:22

2:19
Gen 1:20-25

2:22
1 Cor 11:8-9
1 Tim 2:13

2:23
Gen 29:14
Eph 5:28-30

2:24
*Matt 19:5
*1 Cor 6:16
Eph 5:31

2:25
Gen 3:7, 10-11

16But the LORD God warned him, “You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden—¹⁷except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die.”

Creation of the Woman

18Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.” ¹⁹So the LORD God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would call them, and the man chose a name for each one. ²⁰He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals. But still there was no helper just right for him.

²¹So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the LORD God took out one of the man’s ribs and closed up the opening. ²²Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.

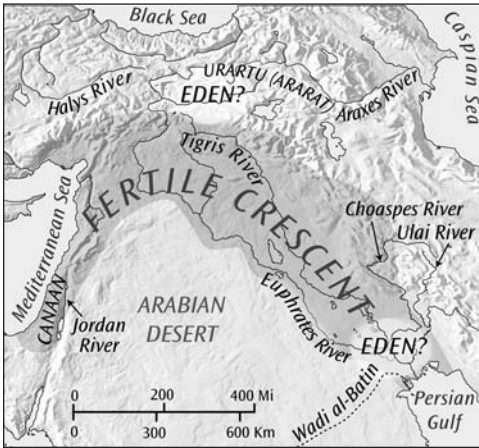
²³“At last!” the man exclaimed.

“This one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh!

She will be called ‘woman,’ because she was taken from ‘man.’”

²⁴This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.

²⁵Now the man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame.



◀ **The Location of Eden (2:8-14).** Eden might have been located in the mountains of Ararat or near the Persian Gulf (see notes on 2:8-14). Possibilities for the four rivers (2:10-14) exist in either location (see note on 2:11). Eden represented God’s presence on earth that was withdrawn at the Fall and re-inaugurated at Sinai (see Exod 3:1-6; 24:9-18; 40:34-38).

distinctions (cp. 29:14). • Adam declares that “*She will be called ‘woman’*” (Hebrew *’ishah*) because *she was taken from ‘man’* (Hebrew *’ish*.” He understood the nature of their connection (see Eph 5:28-29). Adam had earlier assessed the animals without finding the characteristics he needed in a partner. How different this evaluation is!

2:24 Marriage between a man and a woman is not just a human social construct but is rooted in the created order. • *a man leaves . . . and is joined:* Marriage entails a shift of loyalty from parents to spouse. • *the two are united into one:* Marriage and its commitments make it the most fundamental covenant relationship observed among humans. Marriage is a powerful image of Israel’s covenant with God (Hos 2:14-23) and of Christ’s relationship to the church (Eph 5:22-32). Marriage is designed as an inseparable, exclusive relationship between a man and a woman. The family unit it creates is the basic building block of human society.

2:25 both naked: Prior to the Fall (ch 3), nakedness reflected innocence and trust. After the Fall, it denoted vulnerability and *shame* (see 9:22-23; Lev 18:1-23; Isa 47:3). Shame is more than embarrassment; it connotes exploitation and humiliation (see Deut 28:48; Isa 58:7; Jas 2:15-16).

2:15 to tend and watch over: The garden required maintenance and oversight. Tending the *Garden* was humanity’s dignifying work. These roles in God’s garden-sanctuary were later applied to God’s Tabernacle (see Lev 8:35; Num 3:5-10; 4:46-49).

2:17 except (literally *but you must not eat*): This prohibition is given in the same legal format as Israel’s Ten Commandments (see Exod 20:1-17; Deut 5:6-21). The Lord built law and obedience into the fabric of his covenant relationship with humanity. • *the knowledge of good and evil:* See note on 2:9. • *you are sure to die:* The consequences of disobedience would be immediate spiritual death (loss of relationship with God) and eventual physical death (see 3:22-23; Eccl 12:6-7).

2:18-23 As human creation was the climax of ch 1, so human intimacy is the high point of ch 2. God’s concern for mutual human support and companionship finds no parallel in ancient Near Eastern literature.

2:18 It is not good: This is God’s first negative assessment of an otherwise excellent creation (1:31). *The LORD God* is portrayed as a father who obtains a bride for his son (cp. 24:1-67). • The answer to the man’s need is *a helper who is just right for him*; she is his perfect complement, made in the same image of God (1:26-27), given the same commission (1:28; 2:15), and obligated by the same prohibition (2:17). The man cannot fulfill his created purpose alone.

2:19-20 to see what he would call them: Following God’s example (1:5, 8, 10), the man *chose a name for each* of the creatures. In so doing, he was exercising his reign over creation (1:26, 28).

2:19 the man: Or *Adam*, and so throughout the chapter.

2:21 took out one of the man’s ribs (or *took a part of the man’s side*): Cp. 2:23; Eph 5:28.

2:23 Adam recognized the woman as a “helper just right for him” (2:20). His celebration of her in poetry and song observed his unity with her, not their

The Ruin of God's Creation (3:1-24)
Temptation to Sin

3 The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?"

²"Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden," the woman replied. ³"It's only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, 'You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.'"

⁴"You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman. ⁵"God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil."

Man and Woman Rebel against the Creator

⁶The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her hus-

band, who was with her, and he ate it, too. ⁷At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

God Interrogates the Man and Woman

⁸When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the LORD God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees.

⁹Then the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

¹⁰He replied, "I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked."

¹¹"Who told you that you were naked?" the LORD God asked. "Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?"

¹²The man replied, "It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it."

¹³Then the LORD God asked the woman, "What have you done?"

3:1
2 Cor 11:3
Rev 12:9; 20:2

3:2
Gen 2:16

3:3
Gen 2:17
Exod 19:12

3:4
John 8:44
2 Cor 11:3

3:5
Gen 2:17; 3:22
Isa 14:14
Ezek 28:2

3:6
2 Cor 11:3
1 Tim 2:14
Jas 1:14-15
1 Jn 2:16

3:8
Lev 26:12
Deut 23:14
Job 31:33

3:9
Gen 4:9; 18:9

3:10
Deut 5:5

3:12
Prov 28:13

3:13
2 Cor 11:3
1 Tim 2:14

3:1-24 The rebellion of the man and the woman shattered their unity and harmony with earth, animals, each other, and God.

3:1 Genesis describes the deceiver as a *serpent*, one of the animals God created (see also 3:14 and note). He is later identified as Satan, the great enemy of God's people (Rev 12:9; 20:2). His manipulative language and his disguise as a serpent, the *shrewdest of all* creatures, show him as a master deceiver. Satan has various methods for opposing God's people (see 1 Chr 21:1; Zech 3:1-2); deception remains among his key strategies (cp. 2 Cor 11:3, 14). The Hebrew term for shrewd (*arum*) can be positive ("prudent," Prov 14:8) or negative ("cunning," as here; Job 5:12). It forms a wordplay with "naked" (*arummim*) in 2:25. Adam and Eve were naked and vulnerable; the serpent was shrewd and cunning. • Probably the serpent *asked the woman* because the prohibition was given to Adam prior to Eve's creation (see 2:16-17). Adam was probably aware of the serpent's cunning, having assessed and named all the animals before Eve was created (2:19-20, 23). • *Did God really say?* The deceiver began by twisting God's language to cast doubt on God's goodness. God's original prohibition applied to only one tree (2:16-17), not to all (*any*) of them.

3:2-3 The woman attempted to set the record straight; in the process, she belittled the privileges God had given her and her husband in several ways: (1) She reduced God's "freely eat" (2:16) to *may eat*; (2) she downplayed God's emphasis on the availability of fruit

from every tree but one (2:17); (3) she added not touching to God's prohibition against eating (2:17); and (4) she softened the certainty of death (2:17).

3:4-5 *You won't die!* This is the exact negation of God's clear and emphatic words: "you are sure to die" (2:17). The serpent capitalizes on the woman's uncertainty by baldly denying the penalty and quickly diverting her attention to the supposed prize—to *be like God, knowing both good and evil*. The deceiver falsely implies that this would be an unqualified good for them. The term rendered God is *Elohim*; it can also mean "divine beings" (i.e., God and the angels; e.g., Ps 29:1; 89:7).

3:6 *She saw . . . she wanted:* The woman made two grave errors. (1) She assumed the right to decide what was and was not good, though God alone has this right; and (2) she coveted God's wisdom (see Deut 5:21). • *her husband . . . with her:* Although Scripture is clear about the woman's central role in the Fall (cp. 1 Tim 2:14), the man was clearly present and culpable as well. He comes to center stage in the verses that follow and in biblical theology. The consequence of his sin for the entire human race was immense. The Good News is that in Jesus Christ, the "second Adam," God has made salvation universally available (Rom 5:12-21).

3:7 *Shame* is opposite to the naked innocence Adam and Eve enjoyed prior to their rebellion (2:25). Their relationship with one another and with God was fractured. • *sewed fig leaves together:* These covered their physical bodies, but

not their shame. They could not mend their broken relationships (see also 3:21 and note).

3:8 *When the cool evening breezes were blowing:* The Hebrew has traditionally been interpreted as referring to the cool part of the day, most likely the evening. Others think that the language refers to a powerful manifestation of God's presence (a *theophany*; see Exod 19:16-25; 1 Sam 7:10) as a storm. If this view is correct, the man and the woman were hiding from the sound of the Lord appearing in judgment (see 2 Sam 5:24; Ps 29). • *the man:* Or *Adam*, and so throughout the chapter. • *God put trees in the garden* as an environment for humanity to enjoy fellowship with God. Now the man and woman used them to evade the divine presence.

3:9-10 *Where are you?* The true intent of this rhetorical question is revealed in the man's answer (3:10). The real question was, why are you hiding? (cp. 4:9-10). • *I was afraid because I was naked:* Modesty was not the issue. The shame brought on by rebellion drove Adam and his wife to hide. Possibly they also feared punishment (see note on 3:8).

3:12 *It was the woman you gave me:* Rather than confessing, the man became evasive. He blamed the woman for giving him the fruit and God for giving him the woman.

3:13 *What have you done?* is another rhetorical question that is really an exclamation of horror (cp. 4:10). • *The serpent deceived me:* As the man implicated the woman (3:12), the woman accused the serpent. The serpent did play

3:14
Deut 28:15
Isa 65:25

“The serpent deceived me,” she replied.
“That’s why I ate it.”

and between your offspring and her
offspring.

3:15
John 8:44
Rom 16:20
Heb 2:14
^{zera} (2233)
• Gen 12:7

God Indicts and Convicts

¹⁴Then the LORD God said to the serpent,

He will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel.”

3:16
1 Cor 11:3
Eph 5:22
1 Tim 2:15

“Because you have done this, you are
cursed
more than all animals, domestic and
wild.

¹⁶Then he said to the woman,

“I will sharpen the pain of your
pregnancy,
and in pain you will give birth.
And you will desire to control your
husband,
but he will rule over you.”

3:17
Job 5:7
Eccl 1:3
Rom 8:20-22

You will crawl on your belly,
groveling in the dust as long as you live.

¹⁵ And I will cause hostility between you
and the woman,

¹⁷And to the man he said,

ADAM (2:4–3:24)

Gen 1:26-31;
4:25–5:5
Hos 6:6-7
Luke 3:38
Rom 5:12-21
1 Cor 15:22, 45-49
1 Tim 2:13-14

Adam was the first man, the father of the human race. God created the first couple in his image to populate the earth and rule the created order (1:26-31). God made Adam from earth and breathed life into him (2:7); he was to cultivate the garden (2:15), name the animals (2:19-20), and follow God’s instructions (1:28; 2:16-17). God created the woman as a companion and helper for Adam (2:18-22). Eve’s creation from Adam’s rib portrays the unity that God intended for man and woman in marriage (2:23-25).

After the serpent deceived Eve into rejecting God’s rule, Adam also rebelled (3:1-6). Their willful disobedience disrupted their relationship (3:7) and separated them from God. God looked for Adam after his rebellion; he was hiding among the trees, already aware of his alienation (3:8). When God questioned him, Adam blamed Eve and, by implication, God (3:12). Adam’s rebellion brought hardship in governing the earth as well as physical and spiritual death (3:17-19, 22). God provided animal skins to cover Adam and Eve (3:21), and promised that Eve’s offspring would defeat Satan (3:15; see Rom 16:20; Rev 12:1-9; 20:1-10).

Adam was a historical individual (4:25; 5:1-5; 1 Chr 1:1; Hos 6:7; Luke 3:38; Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:22, 45; 1 Tim 2:13-14; Jude 1:14) who represents humanity as a whole. God’s mandates (1:26-30) and curses (3:16-19) affected not only Adam and Eve, but the entire human race. Adam represents the separation from God that all humanity experiences.

The apostle Paul contrasted those represented by Adam, the first man, with those who follow Christ, the “last Adam” (1 Cor 15:45-50; see Rom 5:12-21; 8:5-11, 20-22). Those represented by Adam live only in him; they partake of his sin, his alienation from God and creation, and his spiritual death. Those who follow Christ live by faith in him. They are recreated in Christ’s image and become “new people” who partake of a new creation (see Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 5:17). The barriers Adam raised are removed by Christ (Rom 5:1; 2 Cor 5:19; Gal 3:27-28; 6:15; Eph 2:14-16); Christ restores what Adam lost.

a role and would be punished (3:14), but that did not release the woman or the man from their guilt.

3:14-19 The parties were judged in the order of their transgression—serpent, woman, man. Each received a punishment unique to his or her situation, and each had a key relationship altered. God is principled in judgment, not fickle; each punishment is proportionate to the offense.

3:14 to the serpent: Though later revelation identifies the deceiver as Satan, it is the created animal who was cursed, like the ground (3:17). • *Groveling in the dust* is a posture of humiliation and defeat (Ps 72:9; Mic 7:17).

3:15 hostility: The prophet Isaiah envisions the day when the Messiah’s

kingdom will restore all of creation to a harmonious state like the Garden of Eden before humans sinned (see Isa 11:8). • *her offspring* (literally *her seed*): This collective noun can refer to a single descendant or many. The ancient Near Eastern concept of corporate solidarity (e.g., “you and your descendants,” 28:14) is also behind this description of the ongoing hostility that would exist between humans and snakes. The pattern is set using singular terms (*He . . . you*). Christian interpreters have traditionally understood this verse as a prophecy of Christ, the seed of Abraham and the culmination of the woman’s seed (Gal 3:16; 4:4). • *strike* (Or *bruise*, in both occurrences): The striking of *his heel* is a reference to the suffering of God’s servant (see Isa 53),

while striking the serpent’s *head*—a more definitive blow—is ultimately fulfilled in Christ’s death, resurrection, and final victory over Satan (1 Cor 15:55-57; Rev 12:7-9; 20:7-10).

3:16 Judgment falls on the woman’s unique role of childbearing and on her relationship with her husband. • *And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you* (Or *And though you will have desire for your husband, / he will rule over you*): The marriage relationship now included an element of antagonism rather than just security and fulfillment. New life in Christ allows for the restoration of a man and a woman’s marriage relationship (Eph 5:18-32; cp. Matt 20:25-28).

3:17-19 God highlighted his original

“Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat, the ground is cursed because of you. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it.

- 18 It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains.
- 19 By the sweat of your brow will you have food to eat until you return to the ground from which you were made. For you were made from dust, and to dust you will return.”

Expulsion and Hope

20 Then the man—Adam—named his wife Eve, because she would be the mother of all who live. 21 And the LORD God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.

22 Then the LORD God said, “Look, the human beings have become like us, knowing both good and evil. What if they reach out, take fruit from the tree of life, and eat it? Then they will live ^kforever!” 23 So the LORD God banished them from the Garden of Eden, and he sent Adam out to cultivate

the ground from which he had been made. 24 After sending them out, the LORD God stationed mighty ^acherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden. And he placed a flaming sword that flashed back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

*Results of Rebellion (4:1-24)
Cain and Abel*

4 Now Adam had sexual relations with his wife, Eve, and she became pregnant. When she gave birth to Cain, she said, “With the LORD’s help, I have produced a man!” 2 Later she gave birth to his brother and named him Abel.

When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain cultivated the ground. 3 When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the LORD. 4 Abel also brought a gift—the best of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The LORD accepted Abel and his gift, 5 but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected.

6 “Why are you so angry?” the LORD asked Cain. “Why do you look so dejected? 7 You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to

3:18 Job 31:40
Heb 6:8
3:19 Gen 2:7
Ps 90:3; 104:29
Eccl 12:7
1 Cor 15:47
3:20 2 Cor 11:3
1 Tim 2:13
3:21 2 Cor 5:2-3
3:22 Gen 1:26
^kolam (5769)
^a Gen 9:16
3:24 Ezek 10:1
Rev 2:7; 22:2, 14
^kerub (5742)
^aExod 25:18
4:2 Luke 11:50-51
4:3 Lev 2:1-2
Num 18:12
4:4 Exod 13:12
Heb 11:4
4:6 Jon 4:4
4:7 Rom 6:12, 16
Jas 1:15

command *not to eat* the fruit by speaking of eating several times in 3:17-19. The judgment affected humanity’s ability to get food, and it was proportionate to their offense of eating what had been prohibited. • *the ground is cursed*: The relationship of the man to the ground (see note on 2:7) was now antagonistic as judgment fell on his primary role (2:5, 15). He must labor and toil to work the ground, but with diminished productivity. Human sin has broad effects on creation (see 4:12; 6:7; Lev 26; Deut 11:13-17, 28; Rom 8:22).

3:20-24 Soon after they were judged for their sin, Adam and Eve were banished from the garden.

3:20 *Eve* (Hebrew *khawah*) sounds like a Hebrew term (*khayah*) that means “to give life.” Following God’s pronouncement of Adam’s impending death (3:19), Adam expressed hope by giving Eve a name associated with life. Adam’s naming of Eve in such close proximity to 3:16 may suggest that the narrator views it as Adam’s first act of ruling over the woman after the Fall (see note on 2:19-20).

3:21 God mercifully provided more substantial clothing for Adam and Eve (cp. 3:7) before expelling them into the harsh environment outside the garden.

3:22 *human beings*: Or *the man*; Hebrew reads *ha-adam*. • *like us*: The

plural probably reflects God’s conversation with his angelic court (see note on 1:26). • *the tree of life . . . live forever!* Mercifully, God prevented humankind from eating of the tree of life and having to live forever in a fallen state. Through Jesus Christ, however, eternal life is once again made available (see Rev 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19).

3:23 *So the LORD God banished them from the Garden of Eden*: Before the Fall, the garden was a sanctuary in which humans could move freely in God’s holy presence. Now their sin required expulsion from that environment. This same principle was behind the laws that restricted an Israelite’s access to God’s presence in the Tabernacle or Temple (e.g., Lev 16:1-2; Num 5:3).

3:24 *Cherubim* are a class of angelic beings that guard access to God’s presence (Exod 26:31; Ezek 28:14). • *east . . . of Eden*: In Genesis, movement eastward often implies leaving the presence or blessing of God, whether in judgment (see also 4:16), self-aggrandizement (11:2; 13:11), or estrangement (25:6).

4:1 *Adam*: Or *the man*; also in 4:25. • *had sexual relations* (literally *knew*): In certain contexts, the Hebrew term meaning “to know” is an idiom for sexual knowledge of another person (4:17; 19:33, 35). It is never used of animals, which mate by instinct. • *With the*

LORD’s help: Eve fulfilled her God-given role of procreation despite the negative effects of the Fall (see 3:16, 20). • *I have produced*: Or *I have acquired*. *Cain* (Hebrew *qayin*) sounds like a Hebrew term (*qanah*) that can mean “produce” or “acquire.”

4:2 *his brother . . . Abel*: The name (Hebrew *habel*) means “breath,” “vapor,” or “meaningless,” anticipating his tragically brief life (cp. Eccl 1:2).

4:3 There was nothing wrong with offering grain to the Lord (Lev 2:14; Deut 26:2-4), but Cain brought only a token gift (*some of his crops*), whereas God requires the first and best (Exod 23:16, 19; 34:22, 26). Cain’s heart attitude made his offering inferior to Abel’s (cp. Heb 11:4).

4:4-5 *the best of the firstborn lambs*: Or *the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions*. Abel was giving God the best animals and the richest parts. Abel’s offering, in contrast to Cain’s, was the best he had to offer. True worship is a costly privilege.

4:7 *Sin is crouching at the door . . . you must subdue it*: Sin is pictured as a vicious animal lying in wait to pounce on Cain (cp. note on 3:16). Either sin will dominate Cain, or Cain will resist the temptation to sin. There is no neutral ground in that conflict.

4:8
Matt 23:35
1 Jn 3:12

4:9
Gen 3:9

4:10
Num 35:33
Deut 21:1
Heb 12:24

4:11
Deut 27:15-26

4:12
Deut 28:15-24

4:14
Gen 9:6
Job 15:22

4:17
Ps 49:11

control you. But you must subdue it and be its master.”

⁸One day Cain suggested to his brother, “Let’s go out into the fields.” And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother, Abel, and killed him.

⁹Afterward the LORD asked Cain, “Where is your brother? Where is Abel?”

“I don’t know,” Cain responded. “Am I my brother’s guardian?”

¹⁰But the LORD said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground! ¹¹Now you are cursed and banished from the ground, which has swallowed your brother’s blood.

¹²No longer will the ground yield good crops for you, no matter how hard you

work! From now on you will be a homeless wanderer on the earth.”

¹³Cain replied to the LORD, “My punishment is too great for me to bear! ¹⁴You have banished me from the land and from your presence; you have made me a homeless wanderer. Anyone who finds me will kill me!”

¹⁵The LORD replied, “No, for I will give a sevenfold punishment to anyone who kills you.” Then the LORD put a mark on Cain to warn anyone who might try to kill him. ¹⁶So Cain left the LORD’s presence and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

The Descendants of Cain

¹⁷Cain had sexual relations with his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to

Original Sin (3:1-19)

Genesis 3 describes how human moral innocence collapsed through rebellion (3:11, 17). What God declared as “very good” (1:31) was no longer completely so. Man and woman ate the fruit that promised knowledge of good and evil and thus broke God’s command (2:17). Worse, they tried to become like God (3:5) and thus fell from their sinless state. Alienated from God, one another, and creation, they also became subject to death.

The term “original sin” denotes sin’s complete, universal infiltration into individual lives and human society as a result of human rebellion. When the first man and woman ate the fruit in disobedience to God, they forfeited their own innocence and that of their children, the entire human race (Rom 5:12-14; 1 Cor 15:21-22, 45-49). All humans are “fallen,” born in sin, predisposed to sin (8:21; Job 4:17-21; Ps 51:5; 103:10; 143:2; Prov 20:9), and awaiting death. As people yield to their inherited predisposition to sin, they become responsible for their own wrongdoing (Eccl 7:20; Rom 3:23).

The first man, Adam, introduced sin, but the “second Adam,” Jesus Christ, is sin’s antidote (1 Cor 15:3; 2 Cor 5:21). When Christ died as Redeemer, he made God’s salvation from sin available to all (John 3:16; Rom 1:16).

Gen 8:21
Exod 34:7
Job 4:17-21
Ps 51:5
Prov 22:15
Ezek 36:16-36
John 8:1-11
Rom 1:18–3:20;
5:12-21
1 Cor 15:21-22
Gal 3:22; 5:17-24
Eph 2:1-10
1 Jn 3:14

4:8 The effects of the Fall on human relationships are tragically expressed in the first murder. • The word *brother* is used seven times in 4:2-11, highlighting Cain’s fratricide in the face of familial responsibility. • *Let’s go out into the fields*: As in Samaritan Pentateuch, Greek and Syriac versions, and Latin Vulgate; Masoretic Text lacks this phrase.

4:9 *Where is your brother?* The questions God asked Cain (4:6, 9, 10) recall those that God asked Cain’s parents (3:9-13). In both cases, humans put up evasive answers (cp. 3:12-13). Cain’s answer is shockingly defiant—another clue that the problem with his token offering was the attitude that lay behind it.

4:10 *What have you done?* is more an expression of horror and rebuke than a fact-finding question (cp. 3:13). • Abel’s *blood* is personified as a legal witness that *cries out* against Cain. • *from the ground*: See note on 4:11-12.

4:11-12 As with his father (cp. 3:9-12, 17-19), Cain’s interrogation (4:9-10)

was followed by God’s verdict. Adam’s sin had already caused *the ground* to be cursed. Now Cain was *cursed and banished* from the land he farmed because he had contaminated it with innocent blood. • *homeless wanderer*: Cain was condemned to ceaseless roving in a land that would provide neither sustenance nor security. The effects of sin were escalating.

4:13-14 For Cain, eviction *from the land*—the domain of his vocation as a farmer (see 4:2; cp. 3:23)—amounted to exile from God’s *presence*. The Israelites were warned that unfaithfulness to the Sinai covenant would similarly result in eviction from the Promised Land and from God’s presence in the Temple (see, e.g., Lev 26:27-32).

4:13 *My punishment*: Or *My sin*.

4:15 *Sevenfold punishment* was the full weight of justice. Cain complained that his punishment was too great, but the full sentence that would fall on anyone who committed Cain’s crime against him shows how gracious the Lord

was to Cain. Cain deserved death (see 9:5-6). • The *mark* graciously provided protection following Cain’s judgment (cp. 3:21).

4:16 *Nod* means “wandering.” The name speaks more of Cain’s fate (see 4:12, 14) than of a specific geographical area (the location is unknown). Cain’s sin denied him rest and a sense of belonging. • Cain’s exile *east of Eden* is another point of connection with Adam’s story (cp. 3:24). Cain did not learn from his father’s mistake, so he also suffered estrangement from the ground and exile to the east (see note on 3:24).

4:17–5:32 These back-to-back genealogies do more than list names for the record. They contrast the ways that human culture spread, some in rebellion against God (Cain, 4:17-24) and some in obedience to God (Seth, 4:25–5:32). In Genesis, the history of the rejected branch is generally explained before carrying forward the line that led to Israel. Two points of contrast are especially worth noting: (1) Lamech, the seventh from Adam through the lineage

Enoch. Then Cain founded a city, which he named Enoch, after his son. ¹⁸Enoch had a son named Irad. Irad became the father of Mehujael. Mehujael became the father of Methushael. Methushael became the father of Lamech.

¹⁹Lamech married two women. The first was named Adah, and the second was Zillah. ²⁰Adah gave birth to Jabal, who was the first of those who raise livestock and live in tents. ²¹His brother's name was Jubal, the first of all who play the harp and flute. ²²Lamech's other wife, Zillah, gave birth to a son named Tubal-cain. He became an expert in forging tools of bronze and iron. Tubal-cain had a sister named Naamah. ²³One day Lamech said to his wives,

“Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
listen to me, you wives of Lamech.
I have killed a man who attacked me,
a young man who wounded me.

²⁴If someone who kills Cain is punished seven times,

then the one who kills me will be punished seventy-seven times!”

Epilogue: The Birth of Seth (4:25-26)

²⁵Adam had sexual relations with his wife again, and she gave birth to another son. She named him Seth, for she said, “God has granted me another son in place of Abel, whom Cain killed.” ²⁶When Seth grew up, he had a son and named him Enosh. At that time people first began to worship the LORD by name.

3. THE ACCOUNT OF ADAM'S DESCENDANTS (5:1-6:8)

Human Identity Restated

5This is the written account of the descendants of Adam. When God created human beings, he made them to be like himself. ²He created them male and female, and he blessed them and called them “human.”

Genealogy: Adam to Noah

³When Adam was 130 years old, he became the father of a son who was just

4:23
Lev 19:18
Deut 32:35

4:25
Gen 4:8; 5:3
1 Chr 1:1
Luke 3:38

4:26
Gen 12:8
1 Kgs 18:24
Joel 2:32
Zeph 3:9
Acts 2:21

5:1
Gen 1:26; 6:9
1 Chr 1:1

5:2
Gen 1:27
²Matt 19:4
³Mark 10:6

5:3-32
1 Chr 1:1-3
Luke 3:36-38

5:3
Gen 1:26; 4:25
1 Cor 15:49

of Cain, is the main focus of the first genealogy. Like his ancestor, Lamech took human life and had to live in constant fear of death as a consequence (4:23-24). By contrast, Enoch, the seventh from Adam through the lineage of Seth (see 4:25-5:32), lived in a way that pleased God and avoided death altogether (5:24). (2) Advances in human culture and technology came through Cain's line (the first city, livestock, shelter, metallurgy, music), but the effects of sin still dominated. No technological advances are mentioned in Seth's line; instead, people began “to worship the LORD” (4:26) and to find “favor with the LORD” (see 6:8).

4:17 Cain's *wife* was probably one of his sisters (5:4). Cain's marriage to his sister would not have caused genetic problems so early in the development of the human gene pool. • Cain was condemned to be a wanderer. Perhaps he *founded a city* in rebellion against that verdict, seeking to defend himself by enclosing it in walls. Naming it *after his son* reflects a tendency among those who rebel against God to idolize humanity and its achievements.

4:18 *the father of: Or the ancestor of, and so throughout the verse.* Hebrew genealogies do not necessarily list every single generation.

4:19 Marrying *two women* was contrary to God's ideal pattern for marriage (2:24), and might be another manifestation of the arrogance and rebellion of Cain's descendants.

4:20-22 Technological advancement

masks increasing self-assertion and distance from God (see note on 4:14-5:32).

4:23-24 Lamech's chilling taunt shows the further escalation of sin's effects on humanity. Cain's line had reached a crescendo of violence with Lamech's contempt for life. In his arrogance, he put his deed into poetic verse.

• *punished seventy-seven times!* God warned that anyone who tried to kill Cain would experience the full weight of justice (4:15). Lamech's declaration that anyone who harmed him would receive an even more severe penalty is a claim to be accountable to no one, including God.

4:25-5:32 The story returns to Adam and follows the line of Seth, whose lineage led to Abraham and the Israelite nation.

4:25 *another son . . . in place of Abel:* Cain (4:8-16) and Lamech (4:19-24) illustrate sin's consequences; the birth of Seth brought renewed hope. See also note on 5:1-2. • *Seth* probably means “granted”; the name may also mean “appointed.”

4:26 *Enosh* means “humankind.” In the OT, the term is often used in poetic texts that emphasize human mortality, frailty, and weakness (e.g., Ps 144:3, “mere mortals”). Enosh was born at the time when people began to *worship the LORD by name* (literally *call on the name of the LORD*). In Genesis, that meant calling on the name of the Lord through sacrifice and prayer (similar Hebrew terminology is found in 12:8; 13:4; 21:33; 26:25).

5:1-32 The genealogies of Genesis go beyond simply recording history. By selective information and by structure, they communicate spiritual truth. The genealogies highlight God's blessing, authenticate the family heritage of important individuals, and hold the Genesis narrative together by showing familial continuity. Adam's genealogy through Seth traces ten generations to Noah (see 1 Chr 1:1-4; Luke 3:36-38), with the flood intervening before another ten generations from Noah to Abram. The number ten indicates completeness (ten plagues, Exod 7:8-11:10; Ten Commandments, Exod 20:2-17). Noah closed history before the flood, and Abram inaugurated a new era.

5:1-2 This is the prologue to the second *account* in Genesis (5:1-6:8; see note on 2:4); it connects God's purpose in creation with Seth's line rather than Cain's (4:17-24).

5:1 *written account:* Although the previous account (2:4-4:26) focused on Adam, Eve, and their first children, it was technically “the account of the heavens and the earth.” Genesis 5:1-32 is a more typical genealogy. • *human beings: Or man;* Hebrew reads *'adam*; similarly in 5:2. • *like himself:* See 1:26 and note.

5:2 *male and female . . . “human”* (Hebrew *'adam*): See 1:27 and note. • *blessed them:* See 1:28 and note.

5:3 *just like him—in his very image:* The image and likeness of God (see note on 1:26) is preserved in human beings despite sin. Adam's sinful nature was also carried forward (Rom 5:12-14).

5:5
Gen 2:17
Heb 9:27

5:18
Jude 1:14

5:22
Gen 6:9; 48:15

5:24
2 Kgs 2:1, 11
Ps 73:24
Heb 11:5

5:29
Gen 3:17
Rom 8:20

5:32
Gen 7:6; 9:18

6:1
Gen 1:28

6:2
^bben 'elohim (1121,
0430)
*Job 1:6

6:3
Ps 78:39
1 Pet 3:20

like him—in his very image. He named his son Seth. ⁴After the birth of Seth, Adam lived another 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ⁵Adam lived 930 years, and then he died.

⁶When Seth was 105 years old, he became the father of Enosh. ⁷After the birth of Enosh, Seth lived another 807 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ⁸Seth lived 912 years, and then he died.

⁹When Enosh was 90 years old, he became the father of Kenan. ¹⁰After the birth of Kenan, Enosh lived another 815 years, and he had other sons and daughters.

¹¹Enosh lived 905 years, and then he died. ¹²When Kenan was 70 years old, he became the father of Mahalalel. ¹³After the birth of Mahalalel, Kenan lived another 840 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ¹⁴Kenan lived 910 years, and then he died.

¹⁵When Mahalalel was 65 years old, he became the father of Jared. ¹⁶After the birth of Jared, Mahalalel lived another 830 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ¹⁷Mahalalel lived 895 years, and then he died.

¹⁸When Jared was 162 years old, he became the father of Enoch. ¹⁹After the birth of Enoch, Jared lived another 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ²⁰Jared lived 962 years, and then he died.

²¹When Enoch was 65 years old, he became the father of Methuselah. ²²After the

birth of Methuselah, Enoch lived in close fellowship with God for another 300 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ²³Enoch lived 365 years, ²⁴walking in close fellowship with God. Then one day he disappeared, because God took him.

²⁵When Methuselah was 187 years old, he became the father of Lamech. ²⁶After the birth of Lamech, Methuselah lived another 782 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ²⁷Methuselah lived 969 years, and then he died.

²⁸When Lamech was 182 years old, he became the father of a son. ²⁹Lamech named his son Noah, for he said, "May he bring us relief from our work and the painful labor of farming this ground that the LORD has cursed." ³⁰After the birth of Noah, Lamech lived another 595 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ³¹Lamech lived 777 years, and then he died.

³²By the time Noah was 500 years old, he was the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Corruption of the Human Race

6 Then the people began to multiply on the earth, and daughters were born to them. ²The ^bsons of God saw the beautiful women and took any they wanted as their wives. ³Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not put up with humans for such a long time,

5:5 *he died*: Death indeed came to Adam (see 2:17; 3:18-19) and his descendants (see Rom 5:12-14). Cain's violence is omitted (see 4:8, 15, 23-24) and key figures in Seth's line live in hope (5:29).

5:6 *the father of*: Or *the ancestor of*; also in 5:9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 25. Hebrew genealogies do not necessarily list every single generation.

5:7 *After the birth of*: Or *After the birth of this ancestor of*; also in 5:10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 26 (see note on 5:6).

5:22 *Enoch lived in close fellowship with God* (literally *Enoch walked with God*; also in 5:24): Enoch's position as seventh from Adam in the genealogy strikes a contrast with Lamech, the seventh from Adam in the line of Cain (see note on 4:17-5:32).

5:24 Unlike all other sons of Adam, Enoch did not succumb to death; rather, *he disappeared, because God took him* (cp. 2 Kgs 2:9-12; see also Heb 11:5).

5:27 *969 years*: This statement and the numbers given in 5:25, 28 and 7:6

mean that Methuselah died in the year of the flood.

5:28-29 As with Enoch (5:21-24), the normal genealogical formula is interrupted to highlight important theological information about Noah. *Noah* sounds like a Hebrew term (*nakham*) that can mean "relief" or "comfort," and another term (*nuakh*) that means "rest." As the first person born after Adam's death (see note on 5:5), Noah prompted his father *Lamech* to hope that the curse brought on by Adam's sin (3:17) might be lifted. See 8:21; 2 Cor 1:3-7; 2 Thes 2:16-17.

6:1-8 Human wickedness reached a climax, prompting God to send the flood to destroy all living things. A glimmer of hope appears in God's favor toward Noah (6:8).

6:1-2 *The sons of God* have generally been understood as fallen angels (cp. the same Hebrew phrase in Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Ps 29:1; 89:7). This interpretation is prominent in ancient Jewish and Christian literature (e.g., *1 Enoch* 6:1-7:6; Justin Martyr, *Apology* 2.5) and is apparently supported by

the NT (see 1 Pet 3:18-20; 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 1:6-7). Some interpreters do not believe that God would permit angels to procreate with humans and doubt that the above NT texts should be read in this way. Another possibility is that *sons of God* refers to the righteous descendants of Seth, while the *beautiful women* (6:2, literally *daughters of men*; also in 6:4) were female descendants of Cain's wicked line. This interpretation is in harmony with 4:17-5:32, but is weakened by the language of 6:1-2, which seems to refer to the daughters of humanity in general, not the daughters of Cain specifically. Others believe that *sons of God* refers to tyrannical human kings (possibly demon-possessed) who took Lamech's polygamy (4:19) to a new height of wickedness by seizing the daughters of the righteous. Language reminiscent of 3:6 (*saw . . . took*) shows the rebellious nature of this act.

6:3 *will not put up with* (Greek version reads *will not remain in*): Many think that this is an announcement of God's decision to withdraw the restraining influence of his *Spirit* from human

for they are only mortal flesh. In the future, their normal lifespan will be no more than 120 years.”

⁴In those days, and for some time after, giant Nephilites lived on the earth, for whenever the sons of God had intercourse with women, they gave birth to children who became the heroes and famous warriors of ancient times.

⁵The LORD observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. ⁶So the LORD was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart. ⁷And the LORD said, “I will wipe this human race I have created from the face of the earth. Yes,

and I will destroy every living thing—all the people, the large animals, the small animals that scurry along the ground, and even the birds of the sky. I am sorry I ever made them.”

⁸But Noah found favor with the LORD.

4. THE ACCOUNT OF NOAH’S FAMILY (6:9–9:29)

The Story of Noah

⁹This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless person living on earth at the time, and he walked in close fellowship with God.

¹⁰Noah was the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

¹¹Now God saw that the earth had become corrupt and was filled with violence.

6:4
Num 13:33
Jude 1:6-7

6:5
Ps 14:1-3

6:6
Exod 32:14
Num 23:19
1 Sam 15:11, 35
2 Sam 24:16

6:7
Deut 29:20
‘bara’ (1254)
▶ Ps 51:10

6:8
Exod 33:17

6:9
Job 1:1
Ezek 14:14
‘tamim’ (8549)
▶ Gen 17:1

6:11
Deut 31:29
Judg 2:19
Ezek 8:17

NOAH (6:8-22)

Gen 5:28–10:1
1 Chr 1:4
Isa 54:9
Ezek 14:12-20
Matt 24:37-38
Luke 3:36; 17:26-27
Heb 11:7
1 Pet 3:20-21
2 Pet 2:5

Noah was the son of Lamech, a descendant of Seth (5:3-29). Lamech might have hoped that Noah (whose name means “rest” or “relief”) would ease the curse of hardship in working the ground (see note on 5:29). God used Noah to help relieve the world of evil.

God intended to destroy creation because of pervasive human wickedness (6:1-7; see Matt 24:37-39; Luke 17:26-27), but he decided to preserve Noah (6:8). God gave Noah, a righteous and blameless man (6:9), precise instructions for building the ark in which only the eight people of his family would be saved, along with every kind of creature (6:14–8:19). When Noah and his family finally emerged from the ark after the flood, Noah pleased God by building an altar and sacrificing burnt offerings. God promised that he would never again flood the whole earth or disrupt the sequence of the seasons, despite human sin (8:20–9:17).

Noah’s sons were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. All the nations of the earth descended from them (9:18-19). When Noah became drunk on wine from his vineyard, his sons and their descendants were cursed or blessed in accord with how they responded to him (9:22-27). Noah lived for 950 years, including 350 years after the flood (9:28-29); he is an example of righteousness, obedience, courage, and faith (see Ezek 14:12-20; Heb 11:7; 2 Pet 2:5).

society and allow human wickedness to run its full course. Others think it means that God would withdraw his life-giving breath from humans at an earlier age (*ruakh*, the Hebrew term for “spirit,” can also mean “breath”; see 6:17; 7:22; see also Ps 104:29-30). • **normal lifespan will be no more than 120 years** (literally *his days will be 120 years*): It is possible that this was a new restriction on the number of years individuals would generally be allowed to live (so the NLT). However, for generations after the flood, humans lived well beyond 120 years (see, e.g., 11:10-26). An alternative interpretation sees this as a 120-year grace period before the arrival of the flood (see Jon 3:4; Matt 24:37-38; 1 Pet 3:20; 2 Pet 2:5).

6:4 giant Nephilites (Hebrew *nepilim*): The term may mean “fallen ones.” The context implies that they were the offspring of the “sons of God” and would be destroyed in the flood. Numbers 13:31-33 uses the same term to describe other giants who were hostile toward

God’s people and would also be destroyed (see also Deut 2:11, which connects the Anakite *nepilim* with another group called the *repa’im*).

6:5 everything they thought or imagined (literally *every intention of the thoughts of their hearts*): In the OT, the heart is the core of volition, thought, and morality (see Prov 4:23). Wicked actions stem from a corrupt inner life. • **consistently and totally evil**: Strong language captures the pervasiveness, depth, and persistence of human wickedness. Human nature continued to be corrupt even after the flood (see 8:21).

6:6 the LORD was sorry: The extent of human wickedness made the Lord regret having created them (see also 6:7; cp. 1 Sam 15:11, 35). • **It broke his heart**: The evil in humanity’s heart (6:5) pained God greatly. Sending the flood was a heart-wrenching act on God’s part.

6:7 wipe . . . from the . . . earth: As Adam and Eve were banished from the garden-sanctuary (3:23), all of

humankind would be expunged from God’s good creation. • **every living thing**: Human sin had so corrupted the earth that judgment fell on the animals and birds over which they had dominion (see 1:28 and note). The special role of humans in the created order (1:28-30) means that nature is affected by human moral choices (see 8:1; Job 38:41; Hos 4:3; Rom 8:19-22).

6:8 Noah and his godly life stand in stark contrast to the sinfulness of the rest of the people.

6:9 the account: See note on 2:4 • **a righteous man, the only blameless person**: The text does not claim that Noah was without sin (see Rom 5:12-14). Noah’s righteousness and blamelessness came about because **he walked in close fellowship with God**. See also 7:1; 17:1; Heb 11:7.

6:11-13 See 6:5-7. • **violence** (Hebrew *khamas*): Murder had especially corrupted the line of Cain (4:8, 23-24).

6:12
Ps 14:1-3

6:13
Isa 34:1-4
Ezek 7:2-3

6:14
Exod 2:3
1 Pet 3:20

6:17
Ps 29:10
2 Pet 2:5

6:18
Gen 9:9-16; 17:7;
19:12

6:20
Gen 7:3

6:21
Gen 1:29

6:22
Gen 7:5
Exod 40:16

7:1
Gen 6:18
Matt 24:38
Luke 17:26-27
Heb 11:7
1 Pet 3:20

7:2
Lev 11:1-47
Deut 14:3-20
Ezek 44:23

7:4
Gen 6:7, 13

7:6
Gen 5:32

7:7
Gen 6:18

¹²God observed all this corruption in the world, for everyone on earth was corrupt.

¹³So God said to Noah, "I have decided to destroy all living creatures, for they have filled the earth with violence. Yes, I will wipe them all out along with the earth!

¹⁴"Build a large boat from cypress wood and waterproof it with tar, inside and out. Then construct decks and stalls throughout its interior. ¹⁵Make the boat 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. ¹⁶Leave an 18-inch opening below the roof all the way around the boat. Put the door on the side, and build three decks inside the boat—lower, middle, and upper.

¹⁷"Look! I am about to cover the earth with a flood that will destroy every living thing that breathes. Everything on earth will die. ¹⁸But I will confirm my covenant with you. So enter the boat—you and your wife and your sons and their wives. ¹⁹Bring a pair of every kind of animal—a male and a female—into the boat with you to keep them alive during the flood. ²⁰Pairs of every kind of bird, and every kind of animal, and every kind of small animal that scurries along the ground, will come to you to be kept alive.

²¹And be sure to take on board enough food for your family and for all the animals."

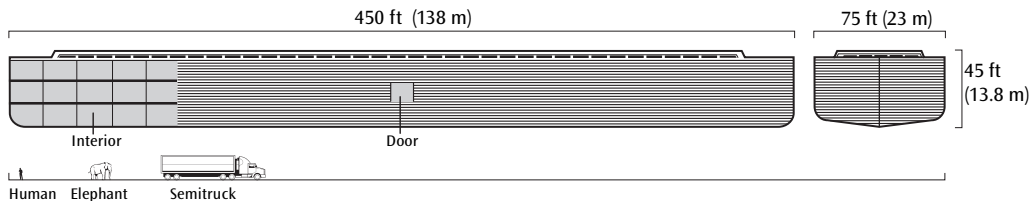
²²So Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him.

The Universal Flood

7 When everything was ready, the LORD said to Noah, "Go into the boat with all your family, for among all the people of the earth, I can see that you alone are righteous. ²Take with you seven pairs—male and female—of each animal I have approved for eating and for sacrifice, and take one pair of each of the others. ³Also take seven pairs of every kind of bird. There must be a male and a female in each pair to ensure that all life will survive on the earth after the flood. ⁴Seven days from now I will make the rains pour down on the earth. And it will rain for forty days and forty nights, until I have wiped from the earth all the living things I have created."

⁵So Noah did everything as the LORD commanded him.

⁶Noah was 600 years old when the flood covered the earth. ⁷He went on board the boat to escape the flood—he and his wife



▲ **Noah's Ark (6:14-16).** An ark built to the dimensions specified in Genesis would have been immense. Its ratio of length to width (6 to 1) is the most stable known and is used for the design of modern tankers and freight-hauling ships. The ark was able to carry 20,000 tons of cargo; the required number of young adult land animals would have occupied less than half of the available space. The design given was perfect for the ark's function.

6:14 a large boat: Traditionally rendered *an ark*, this was a long rectangular barge designed for survival, not for navigation. The Hebrew word *tebah* is used again only of the basket in which the baby Moses was floated on the Nile (Exod 2:3, 5). • **cypress wood:** Or *gopher wood*. It is not clear what kind of wood this was. It was possibly from a conifer, such as cypress.

6:15 The ark's dimensions: Hebrew *300 cubits* [138 meters] long, *50 cubits* [23 meters] wide, and *30 cubits* [13.8 meters] high. This floating barge displaced around 43,300 tons of water.

6:16 An 18-inch opening (Hebrew *an opening of 1 cubit* [46 centimeters]) *below the roof encircled the boat, providing light and air.* • Noah was to build a *door* and God would close it (7:16). God was the captain of this peculiar boat

with no sail or rudder. God also brought the animals to Noah (6:20).

6:17 cover the earth with a flood: Some propose that the flood might only have covered the ancient Near East as it was known to Noah or Moses. However, the flood's stated purpose—to *destroy every living thing that breathes* (see also 6:7, 11-13; 7:1, 4, 18-23; 8:21)—and its effect of undoing creation (see notes on 1:9-10; 7:11-12) suggest that the flood covered the entire planet (see also 1 Pet 3:20; 2 Pet 2:5; 3:6).

6:18 This first explicit mention of a *covenant* in the Bible refers to the unilateral pact that God made with humankind and the world after the flood (see 9:9, 11, 14-17).

6:19-20 God's instructions to Noah repeat the language of creation (*every kind*, cp. 1:24). • **a male and a female:**

These animals would procreate and repopulate the earth after the flood.

7:2 of each animal I have approved for eating and for sacrifice (literally of *each clean animal*; similarly in 7:8): In addition to the animals that were to repopulate the earth, these "clean" animals were for food and for Noah's sacrifice after the flood (8:20-21). This passage does not use the precise technical language that is found in the regulations concerning "clean" and "unclean" given to Israel at Sinai (see Lev 11:1-47; Deut 14:3-12), but the underlying concept is the same (perhaps God revealed it directly to Noah).

7:4 The number *forty* is often associated with affliction, trial, or punishment (see Exod 16:35; Judg 13:1; 1 Kgs 19:8; Ezek 4:6; Jon 3:4; Matt 4:2; Acts 1:3).

7:6 covered the earth: See note on 6:17.

and his sons and their wives. ⁸With them were all the various kinds of animals—those approved for eating and for sacrifice and those that were not—along with all the birds and the small animals that scurry along the ground. ⁹They entered the boat in pairs, male and female, just as God had commanded Noah. ¹⁰After seven days, the waters of the flood came and covered the earth.

¹¹When Noah was 600 years old, on the seventeenth day of the second month, all the underground waters erupted from the earth, and the rain fell in mighty torrents from the sky. ¹²The rain continued to fall for forty days and forty nights.

¹³That very day Noah had gone into the boat with his wife and his sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—and their wives. ¹⁴With them in the boat were pairs of every kind of animal—domestic and wild, large and small—along with birds of every kind. ¹⁵Two by two they came into the boat, representing every living thing that breathes. ¹⁶A male and female of each kind entered, just as God had commanded Noah. Then the LORD closed the door behind them.

¹⁷For forty days the floodwaters grew deeper, covering the ground and lifting the boat high above the earth. ¹⁸As the waters rose higher and higher above the ground, the boat floated safely on the surface. ¹⁹Finally, the water covered even the highest mountains on the earth, ²⁰rising more than twenty-two feet above the highest peaks. ²¹All the living things on earth died—birds,

domestic animals, wild animals, small animals that scurry along the ground, and all the people. ²²Everything that breathed and lived on dry land died. ²³God wiped out every living thing on the earth—people, livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and the birds of the sky. All were destroyed. The only people who survived were Noah and those with him in the boat. ²⁴And the floodwaters covered the earth for 150 days.

The Floodwaters Recede

8 But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and livestock with him in the boat. He sent a wind to blow across the earth, and the floodwaters began to recede. ²The underground waters stopped flowing, and the torrential rains from the sky were stopped. ³So the floodwaters gradually receded from the earth. After 150 days, ⁴exactly five months from the time the flood began, the boat came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. ⁵Two and a half months later, as the waters continued to go down, other mountain peaks became visible.

⁶After another forty days, Noah opened the window he had made in the boat ⁷and released a raven. The bird flew back and forth until the floodwaters on the earth had dried up. ⁸He also released a dove to see if the water had receded and it could find dry ground. ⁹But the dove could find no place to land because the water still covered the ground. So it returned to the boat, and

7:9
Gen 6:22
7:11
Ps 78:23
Ezek 26:19
Mal 3:10
7:13
1 Pet 3:20
2 Pet 2:5
7:15
Gen 6:19; 7:9
7:19
Ps 104:6
7:20
2 Pet 3:6
7:23
Matt 24:38-39
Luke 17:26-27
1 Pet 3:20
2 Pet 2:5
7:24
Gen 8:3
8:1
Gen 19:29; 30:22
Exod 2:24; 14:21
Job 12:15
Isa 44:27
zakar (2142)
Exod 2:24
8:2
Gen 7:4, 12
8:4
Gen 7:20
8:7
Lev 11:15
Deut 14:14
1 Kgs 17:4
Luke 12:24
8:8
Isa 60:8
Hos 11:11
Matt 10:16

7:8 See note on 7:2.

7:11-12 on the seventeenth day of the second month: Such information gives the flood account a certain solemnity; it reminds readers that this was a true historical event. • *underground waters*: See 2:6. • *rain fell*: The flood undid the boundaries established on the second and third days of creation (1:6-13). Elsewhere, the Bible describes God’s judgment as an undoing of creation (see Jer 4:23-26; Amos 7:4). • *forty days and forty nights*: See note on 7:4.

7:16 the LORD closed the door: The sovereign Judge took responsibility for the annihilation of all outside the boat and the protection of those within (see also 6:16 and note).

7:17 floodwaters grew deeper (literally waters multiplied): The same word used for the proliferation of humans and animals during creation (see 1:22, 28) is now used ironically of the water that would annihilate them. • *covering the ground*: The Hebrew word translated

“ground” or “earth” is mentioned eight times in eight verses (7:17-24). The earth is the domain that humankind had polluted and that was now the object of a cleansing deluge.

7:20 more than twenty-two feet: Hebrew 15 cubits [6.9 meters].

7:22 Everything that . . . lived: See note on 6:17.

8:1 But God remembered: This structural and theological center of the flood story does not mean that God had at any point forgotten Noah. This is covenant language reflecting God’s faithfulness to his promise to ensure the safety of his covenant partner (cp. 6:18; 9:15-16; Exod 2:24; Lev 26:42, 45). • *wind*: The same word is translated “Spirit” in 1:2. This and other parallels (see 9:1-2) suggest that the restoration of the earth after the flood was effectively a new creation.

8:2 underground waters . . . torrential rains: See note on 7:11-12.

8:4 exactly five months from the time the flood began: Literally on the seventeenth day of the seventh month; see 7:11. • *mountains of Ararat*: These mountains might be in the region of Ararat (Uartu) southeast of the Black Sea near Lake Van, which touches parts of eastern Turkey, Armenia, and Iran. There is a Mount Ararat (*Agri Dag*) in Turkey, but this verse only identifies the region, not a specific mountain.

8:5 Two and a half months later: Literally On the first day of the tenth month; see 7:11 and note on 8:4. • *the waters continued to go down*: Another parallel with the creation week (see 1:9) suggests that the earth’s restoration was effectively a new creation (see note on 8:1).

8:7 The raven is the largest member of the crow family, and was among Noah’s unclean animals (Lev 11:15; Deut 14:14). As a scavenger and carrion eater, it was able to sustain itself without returning to the boat.

8:13
Gen 5:32

8:16
Gen 7:13

8:17
Gen 1:22

8:20
Gen 4:4; 12:7; 13:18;
22:2

8:21
Gen 3:17
Exod 29:18, 25
Lev 1:9, 13
Isa 54:9

Noah held out his hand and drew the dove back inside. ¹⁰After waiting another seven days, Noah released the dove again. ¹¹This time the dove returned to him in the evening with a fresh olive leaf in its beak. Then Noah knew that the floodwaters were almost gone. ¹²He waited another seven days and then released the dove again. This time it did not come back.

¹³Noah was now 601 years old. On the first day of the new year, ten and a half months after the flood began, the floodwaters had almost dried up from the earth. Noah lifted back the covering of the boat and saw that the surface of the ground was drying. ¹⁴Two more months went by, and at last the earth was dry!

Noah's Worship and God's Promise

¹⁵Then God said to Noah, ¹⁶"Leave the boat, all of you—you and your wife, and your sons and their wives. ¹⁷Release all the animals—the birds, the livestock, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—so they can be fruitful and multiply throughout the earth."

¹⁸So Noah, his wife, and his sons and their wives left the boat. ¹⁹And all of the large and small animals and birds came out of the boat, pair by pair.

²⁰Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and there he sacrificed as burnt offerings the animals and birds that had been approved for that purpose. ²¹And the LORD was pleased with the aroma of the sacrifice

Retribution (6:1–7:24)

God gave humans the commission of procreating and caring for the world (1:28). Instead, murder and violence multiplied with humanity's spiritual wickedness (4:8, 23; 6:11-13), resulting in a corrupt world that required cleansing.

The purpose of the flood was to enact God's global cleansing and retribution against evildoers. *Retribution* means "giving what is due" and usually refers to recompense for wrongdoing. Retribution is motivated by the conviction that moral order is woven into the fabric of the world and must be maintained or restored (see Ps 7:14-16; Prov 11:18; 26:27).

God maintains moral order by meting out justice, punishing wickedness, and rewarding right behavior (Gal 6:7). Since God oversees the world, it is never entirely overwhelmed by moral chaos; God holds people accountable for what they do. The judgment and exile of Adam and Eve (3:8-24), Cain's sentence and blood-revenge (4:10-15), and the worldwide flood and annihilation (chs 6–9) are OT examples of God's retribution. They reveal a sovereign God who exacts just punishment in the context of his good intentions for the world (see also Num 16; Deut 30:15-20; Josh 7; Mic 2:1-3).

Retribution is an application of God's righteousness; it purifies the world for his kingdom of peace. Through retribution, the divine King proclaims his universal rule and exercises his justice on all who reject his rule or defy his commands (Deut 7:10; 1 Sam 24:19; Ps 149; Prov 15:25; Mic 5:15; 1 Cor 16:22; Gal 1:8-9; 2 Thes 1:5-10).

For God's people, retribution is his discipline. It is intended to restore covenant fellowship with him (see Isa 44:22; Jer 3:12-14; Lam 3:19-33; Hos 14:1-2; Joel 2:12-13). When God's people experience his chastening, they can respond in hope because God's truth and righteousness will triumph (Ps 58:10-11) and God will redeem and restore his people who trust in him (Lev 26:40-45; Hos 2:2-23).

Lev 26:14-39
Ps 7:6-17; 57:6;
95:8-11
Prov 6:27-35; 26:27
Mic 2:1-3
Rom 2:5-16
Gal 6:7-8
Heb 10:26-31
12:5-11, 25-29

8:11 Unlike the raven (8:7), the *dove* feeds on vegetation. Since olive trees are not tall, Noah could tell that the water was *almost gone*.

8:13 *On the first day of the new year, ten and a half months after the flood began* (literally *On the first day of the first month*; see 7:11): This was two months after the peaks of the mountains first became visible (8:5).

8:14 *Two more months went by*: Literally *The twenty-seventh day of the second month arrived*; see note on 8:13. • *the earth was dry!* This special word for dry land is uniquely used in connection with the sea to portray God's sov-

ereignty over both domains (see 1:9-10; Exod 14:22, 29; Ps 95:5; Jon 1:9).

8:17 *be fruitful and multiply*: See 9:1.

8:20 This first mention of an *altar* in the Bible (see "Altars" at 35:1-15, p. 91) shows Noah's gratitude for having passed through the judgment. • *sacrificed as burnt offerings*: The same term is used of the whole burnt offering in Leviticus (Lev 1:3-9); however, it can refer to any offering that is burned. Noah gave this offering to thank and worship God, who had delivered him and his family from the flood. • *the animals and birds that had been approved for that purpose*: Literally *every*

clean animal and every clean bird.

8:21 *pleased with the aroma of the sacrifice* (literally *smelled the sweet aroma*): The narrator uses anthropomorphic language (i.e., he describes God's activity in human terms) to show God's acceptance of Noah's offering (see also Exod 29:18; Lev 1:9; Num 15:3). The common ancient Near Eastern notion that the gods ate the sacrifices offered to them is notably absent. • *to himself* (literally *in his heart*): The phrase echoes "broke his heart" (6:6), just as *think or imagine* echoes "everything they thought or imagined" (6:5). God's commitment to a new order replaced

and said to himself, “I will never again curse the ground because of the human race, even though everything they think or imagine is bent toward evil from childhood. I will never again destroy all living things. ²²As long as the earth remains, there will be planting and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night.”

God’s Covenant with All Living Creatures

9 Then God blessed Noah and his sons and told them, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth. ²All the animals of the earth, all the birds of the sky, all the small animals that scurry along the ground, and all the fish in the sea will look on you with fear and terror. I have placed them in your power. ³I have given them to you for food, just as I have given you grain and vegetables. ⁴But you must never eat any meat that still has the ^flifeblood in it.

⁵“And I will require the blood of anyone who takes another person’s life. If a wild animal kills a person, it must die. And anyone who murders a fellow human must die. ⁶If anyone takes a human life, that person’s life will also be taken by human hands. For God made human beings in his own image.

⁷Now be fruitful and multiply, and repopulate the earth.”

⁸Then God told Noah and his sons, ⁹“I hereby confirm my ⁸covenant with you and your descendants, ¹⁰and with all the animals that were on the boat with you—the birds, the livestock, and all the wild animals—every living creature on earth. ¹¹Yes, I am confirming my covenant with you. Never again will floodwaters kill all living creatures; never again will a flood destroy the ^hearth.”

¹²Then God said, “I am giving you a sign of my covenant with you and with all living creatures, for all generations to come. ¹³I have placed my rainbow in the clouds. It is the sign of my covenant with you and with all the earth. ¹⁴When I send clouds over the earth, the rainbow will appear in the clouds, ¹⁵and I will remember my covenant with you and with all living creatures. Never again will the floodwaters destroy all life. ¹⁶When I see the rainbow in the clouds, I will remember the ⁱeternal covenant between God and every living creature on earth.” ¹⁷Then God said to Noah, “Yes, this rainbow is the sign of the covenant I am confirming with all the creatures on earth.”

8:22
Ps 74:17
9:1
Gen 1:22
9:2
Gen 1:26-29
Ps 8:6-8
9:3
Ps 104:14
9:4
Lev 3:17; 7:26; 17:10
Deut 12:16
Acts 15:20, 29
^fdam (1818)
‣ Gen 49:11
9:5
Exod 21:28-32
9:6
Exod 20:13; 21:12
Num 35:33
9:9
ⁱberith (1285)
‣ Gen 15:18
9:11
Isa 24:5
^herets (0776)
‣ Gen 12:1
9:12
Gen 17:11
9:13
Ezek 1:28
9:15
Deut 7:9
9:16
ⁱolam (5769)
‣ Gen 21:33

his grief over the old. • *I will never again curse . . . destroy*: The old curse was not lifted (5:29), but God promised not to add to it, thus establishing new limits for life in a disordered world (cp. Isa 54:9). The flood was to stop violence, not to reform the human heart (6:5). Humankind’s *bent toward evil* would be contained to some degree through accountability to a new law (9:5-6).

8:22 God’s promise to sustain the rhythm of the seasons reaffirmed the created order (1:14; see also Jer 33:20; Zech 14:7).

9:1-7 God’s first post-flood speech opens and closes with blessing (9:1, 7). In it, human and animal relationships are again defined, with some modification of the original created order. The sanctity of life is given special focus.

9:1 *Be fruitful and multiply*: The blessing and mandate first given to Adam (1:28) are now reissued to Noah, the “Adam” of the newly cleansed world in need of repopulation.

9:2-3 There are two modifications to the original created order. (1) Previously, humans reigned over the *animals* (1:28), but now animals would live in *terror* of humans (similar military language is found in Exod 23:27-31; Deut 11:25; 31:8). (2) The animals’ *terror* was related to a change in human diet. Humans were now permitted to eat the meat of animals to supplement their subsis-

tence on grains, fruits, and vegetables (1:29).

9:4 A key restriction is imposed. Since blood was identified with life, it had to be drained from a slain animal before its *meat* could be eaten (see Lev 3:17; 7:26-27; 17:10-14; Deut 12:16, 23). The law of Moses prohibited eating animals that died naturally, since their blood had not been drained (Deut 14:21). God provided animal blood to atone for human sin (Lev 17:11; Heb 9:22).

9:5-6 Violence, including murder, was a major factor in bringing about God’s judgment of the flood (4:8; 6:11, 13). At this new beginning for humans, God affirmed the sanctity of human life and established a system of retributive justice for the taking of human life (see also Ps 9:12; “Retribution” at 6:1-7:24, p. 35). The function of law is to restrain human wickedness and preserve moral order. This law was further developed in the law of Moses (Exod 21:12-14; Lev 24:17-22; Num 35:16-34; Deut 17:6-7; 19:15).

9:6 *For God made human beings in his own image*: The death penalty has a theological basis. God’s image gives humans a unique status and authority within creation (1:26-28). Since murder destroys a person made in God’s image, the ultimate penalty must be imposed on a murderer. See also Exod 21:23-25. We are not to pursue personal revenge

(Rom 12:17-19), but are to uphold the justice of the “governing authorities” that God has established (Rom 13:1-7). • *human beings*: Or *man*; Hebrew reads *ha-’adam*.

9:7 *Now be fruitful and multiply, and repopulate* (literally *swarm and fill*): In contrast to those who would destroy human life (9:5-6), God’s desire is that human life should abound and flourish.

9:8-17 God’s second post-flood speech conveys his promise and plan for preserving creation.

9:9-10 God had promised this *covenant* before the flood (6:18). Its scope extends beyond humanity to include the earth and all animals.

9:11 This promise does not prohibit worldwide judgment, but it restricts the means by which God will do it (see 2 Pet 3:4-13).

9:12 In the Bible, covenants are frequently confirmed by some sort of *sign* (e.g., 17:11; Exod 31:13, 17; Luke 22:20).

9:13-16 God brought cataclysmic judgment through the rainstorm; now, the *rainbow*, a meteorological phenomenon associated with the rainstorm, would be an image of peace for *all the earth* (see 9:17). • “Rainbow” and “bow” are the same term in Hebrew. Since God is sometimes pictured as a warrior who shoots arrows of judgment (see Deut 32:42; Ps 7:12; 18:13-14; Hab 3:9-11),

9:21
Gen 19:35
9:22
Hab 2:15
9:25
Deut 27:16

Noah's Sons; Curse and Blessings

¹⁸The sons of Noah who came out of the boat with their father were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham is the father of Canaan.)

¹⁹From these three sons of Noah came all the people who now populate the earth.

²⁰After the flood, Noah began to cultivate the ground, and he planted a vineyard. ²¹One day he drank some wine he had made, and he became drunk and lay naked inside his tent. ²²Ham, the father of Canaan, saw that his father was naked and went outside and

told his brothers. ²³Then Shem and Japheth took a robe, held it over their shoulders, and backed into the tent to cover their father. As they did this, they looked the other way so they would not see him naked.

²⁴When Noah woke up from his stupor, he learned what Ham, his youngest son, had done. ²⁵Then he cursed Canaan, the son of Ham:

“May Canaan be cursed!
May he be the lowest of servants to
his relatives.”

God's Covenant with Noah (9:1-17)

The first explicit reference to a covenant in Scripture occurs after the flood (9:1-17). *Covenant* (Hebrew *berith*) means “bond”: A covenant is a binding relationship rooted in a commitment that includes promises and obligations. Whether between individuals (e.g., 21:27), whole nations (e.g., Josh 9:15-18), or God and humans, the covenant relationship calls for faithfulness and makes peace and harmony possible.

Here God took the initiative to bind himself again to human beings and to the whole creation despite human faithlessness (see 6:1-7). When God charged Noah to build an ark to escape the impending deluge (6:13-17), he also promised to establish a covenant with him (6:18). The corruption and violence of the human race had provoked God's anger (6:11, 13), but his gracious favor remained with Noah (6:8). Through this covenant, God guaranteed that he would maintain a relationship with one family even as other divine-human relationships were being severed. God's covenant promise to Noah came with his command to build an ark (6:14); Noah's receipt of the covenant blessing depended on his obedience to this divine command (6:22; 7:5).

When Noah made an offering to God after the flood (8:20-22), God elaborated on his covenant with Noah as a universal covenant with humans and with all living creatures (9:8-10). God promised never to send such a flood again as judgment on the world.

This covenant helps us understand God as a covenant-maker. Although human beings deserve punishment because of their wickedness, God withholds ultimate destruction. God's covenant with Noah did not establish an intimate relationship between God and each living being, but it recalibrated moral and ecological life to be as God intended it (9:1-7), leaving open the possibility of a more intimate covenant to come (see 17:1-21). Despite their evil, human beings are allowed to live in God's world and seek a deeper relationship with the world's Creator during their time on earth. God's later covenants with his people made intimacy with him freely available to all (see Acts 2:22-40; 3:17-26).

some think that the imagery in 9:13-17 is of the Divine Warrior hanging up his bow of judgment.

9:18 Ham is the father of Canaan:

See also 9:20-27; 10:6-20. The text emphasizes Canaan's ancestral connection to Ham to show that the Canaanite identity was inseparably linked to Ham's shameful behavior (9:20-27). The citizens of both Egypt (from which Israel escaped slavery) and Canaan (to which Israel was headed) were Ham's descendants (10:6; see Lev 18:3, 24-26; Ps 105:23, 27; 106:22). Later stories in Genesis emphasize the immoral climate of both Egypt (12:10-20) and Canaan (chs 34, 38). See 9:20-27 and 10:6-20.

9:20-27 The story of Noah begins with him walking in righteousness and

obeying the Lord (6:9), but it ends with him lying drunk and naked in his tent and then delivering a curse on Canaan. Even after the great flood, the human race exhibited some of the same sinful characteristics that warranted the judgment in the first place. Special attention is given to the cursed origin of the Canaanites, the corrupt and idolatrous nation Israel would later displace from the Promised Land (see also 15:16 and note; Lev 18:3; 20:23).

9:21 wine . . . became drunk: Wine is a gift from God (Deut 14:26; Ps 104:15; Isa 55:1; see Luke 22:14-20; John 2:1-11). Scripture is clear, however, that excessive consumption of alcohol is a perilous sin (Prov 23:20-21, 29-35; 1 Cor 6:10).

9:22 the father of Canaan: See note on

9:18. • Ham's behavior was shameful. He gazed upon his naked father and, rather than covering him and keeping the matter secret, robbed him of his dignity by announcing it to his brothers (see Exod 21:15, 17; Lam 4:21; Hab 2:15). An ancient Near Eastern tale says that a son is expected to come to his father's aid when he is drunk (*Tale of Aqhat*; cp. Isa 51:17-18). Ham's neglect of familial duty explains why Noah praised Shem and Japheth but cursed Ham (9:24-27).

9:25 Noah's curse foresaw Ham's actions as morally representative of Ham's descendants through Canaan (see 10:6). • **lowest of servants:** Having refused aid to his family, Ham was condemned to base servitude.

Ezek 14:12-23
Matt 24:37-39
Heb 11:7

²⁶Then Noah said,

“May the LORD, the God of Shem, be blessed,
and may Canaan be his servant!
²⁷May God expand the territory of Japheth!
May Japheth share the prosperity of Shem,
and may Canaan be his servant.”

²⁸Noah lived another 350 years after the great flood. ²⁹He lived 950 years, and then he died.

5. THE ACCOUNT OF NOAH’S SONS

(10:1–11:9)

Nations of the Ancient World (10:1-32)
Superscription

10 This is the account of the families of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the three sons of Noah. Many children were born to them after the great flood.

Descendants of Japheth

²The descendants of Japheth were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.

³The descendants of Gomer were Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.

⁴The descendants of Javan were Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim. ⁵Their descendants became the seafaring peoples that spread out to various lands, each identified by its own language, clan, and national identity.

Descendants of Ham

⁶The descendants of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan.

⁷The descendants of Cush were Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The descendants of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.

⁸Cush was also the ancestor of Nimrod, who was the first heroic warrior on earth.

9:26
Gen 14:20

9:27
Gen 10:2-5
Isa 66:19

9:29
Gen 2:17

10:1
Gen 9:18
1 Chr 1:4

10:2
1 Chr 1:5-7
Isa 66:19
Ezek 27:13; 38:2-3, 6

10:3
Jer 51:27
Ezek 27:14

10:4
1 Chr 1:6-7

10:6
1 Chr 1:8-10

10:7
Isa 43:3
Ezek 27:15, 20, 22

9:26 Noah refers to God as *the LORD*, who formed the covenant with Israel. *Shem* was the privileged forefather of the Israelites (see 10:21-32).

9:27 *May Japheth share the prosperity of Shem* (literally *May he live in the tents of Shem*): Japheth’s descendants would live among Shem’s descendants and share Shem’s prosperity (cp. Rom 11:17-18).

10:1–11:9 The fifth *account* (10:1) in Genesis (see note on 2:4) unites the Table of Nations (10:2-32) and the Babel story (11:1-9) around the theme of scattering the nations (10:5, 18; 11:4, 8-9). The Table of Nations precedes the Babel story even though the Babel incident caused the geopolitical situation reflected in the Table of Nations. By reversing the order, Genesis links the repopulation of the earth with the blessing conferred upon Noah and his sons (see 9:1 and note) and shows that Abram’s call (12:1-3) was God’s solution to the problem of human estrangement from God as reflected in the Babel story (11:1-9).

10:1 *Many children were born . . . after the great flood*: This fulfilled the renewed creation mandate (9:1, 9; cp. 1:28).

10:2-32 This section describes the ancestral origin of the nations of the ancient Near East. Ham was at the center (10:6-20), while the descendants of Japheth and Shem spread out to the surrounding regions of Greece, Crete, Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Madai, the Arabian peninsula, and northeast Africa. The list selectively highlights nations relevant to Israel. The total of seventy (seven times ten) names indicates completeness (see 46:27; Deut 32:8) and symbolizes

the totality of the world, which would later be blessed by the descendants of Abraham (18:18). • Although Shem is mentioned first in 10:1, he is addressed last in the Table because of his connection to Abram (10:21-31; 11:10-32; 12:1). Although God established the boundaries of all nations (see Deut 32:8; Amos 9:7; Acts 17:26), Israel was his special creation—a microcosm of seventy people (46:27) used to be a blessing to a world of seventy nations (see 12:3).

10:2 The seven sons of *Japheth* settled in the region of Anatolia (the western plateau lands of Turkey) and spoke Indo-European languages. • *Gomer* was the ancestor of the later Cimmerians who lived north of the Black Sea. • *Magog* was probably the ancestor of those who settled in the region of Lydia (see Ezek 38:2). • The descendants of *Madai* were the later Medes of northwest Iran (see 2 Kgs 17:6; Jer 51:11; Dan 5:28). • The descendants of *Javan* were the later Ionian Greeks. • The descendants of *Tubal* and *Meshech* were sometimes allies in battle (Ezek 38:2). Both were possibly from the coastal regions of Anatolia (see Ezek 27:13). • The descendants of *Tiras* possibly became the Thracians that lived near the Aegean Sea.

10:3 The *descendants of Gomer* came from near the Upper Euphrates region north of the Black Sea (cp. Ezek 38:1-9). • The descendants of *Ashkenaz* were the later Scythians who inhabited the region between the Black and Caspian Seas. • *Riphath* is near Carchemish. • The descendants of *Togarmah* are associated with Til-garimmu, the capital of Kammanu in modern Armenia (see Ezek 38:6).

10:4 *Elishah* is probably Cyprus. • *Tarshish* is possibly southwest Spain

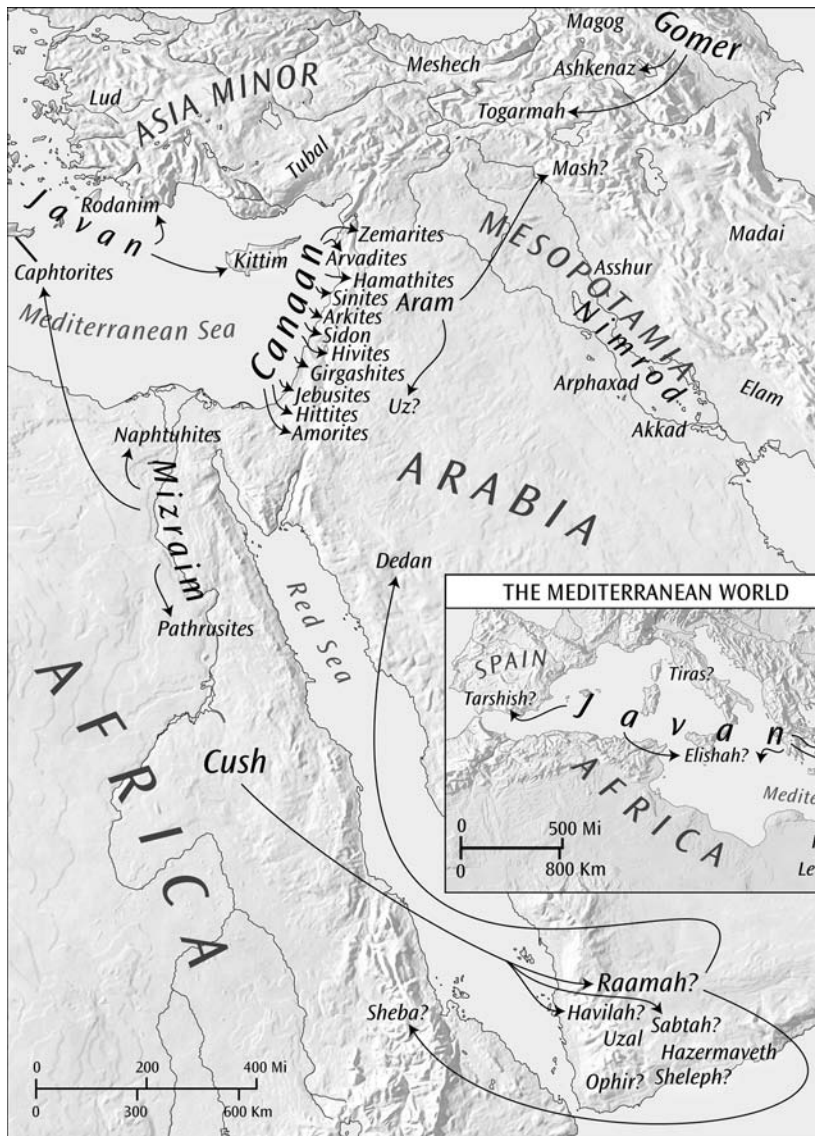
(see note on Jon 1:3). • The *Kittim* were inhabitants of southern Cyprus. • The *Rodanim* (as in some Hebrew manuscripts and Greek version [see also 1 Chr 1:7]; most Hebrew manuscripts read *Dodanim*) were inhabitants of the island of Rhodes, later a territory of Greece.

10:5 *seafaring peoples . . . various lands*: They settled around the Mediterranean and on various islands. • *language*: This occurred after the Tower of Babel episode (11:1-9; see note on 10:1–11:9).

10:6 The peoples descended from Ham’s four sons (Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Canaanites) were Israel’s most hostile neighbors. • *Cush* was possibly in Ethiopia or ancient Nubia (northern Sudan). • *Mizraim* was the ancient name for Egypt (50:11). • *Put* was in Libya. • *Canaan* encompassed southern Syria, Phoenicia, and Palestine west of the Jordan River. In Moses’ time, Egypt and Canaan were provinces of the same empire. Ham’s descendants were excluded from the blessing of Shem’s line (9:20-28).

10:7 The sons of *Cush* and *Raamah* together total seven. • *Seba* was in northern Africa (see Isa 43:3; 45:14). • *Havilah* was in southwest Arabia. • *Sabtah* was in southern Arabia, in ancient Hadramaut, near the Persian Gulf. • *Raamah* was in southwest Arabia near Najran. • *Sabteca* was in ancient Samudake near the Persian Gulf. • *Sheba* was a kingdom in southwest Arabia with commercial colonies (see 1 Kgs 10). • *Dedan* was in northern Arabia.

10:8-12 Special attention is given to the early history of *Babylonia* and *Assyria*, the Mesopotamian empires that would conquer and exile Israel and Judah.



◀ Nations of the Ancient World (10:1–11:9). Noah's descendants (10:1-32) spread out after "the LORD scattered them" (11:1-9), and they became the nations of the ancient world. Over half of the names listed in Gen 10 are identifiable ancient peoples, whose broad areas of settlement are shown. Arrows indicate lines of descent. In general, Japheth's descendants (10:2-5) went to ASIA MINOR and Europe (JAVAN, etc.), Ham's (10:6-20) to AFRICA and southern ARABIA (CUSH, RAAMAH, etc.), and Shem's (10:21-31) to MESOPOTAMIA and



northern ARABIA (ASSHUR, ELAM, ARAM, etc.). The ancients knew a large area of civilization, from SPAIN to Media (MADAI), and from the Caucasus Mountains (east of the BLACK SEA) to southern ARABIA.

Japheth 9:27
 Gomer Ezek 38:6
 Ashkenaz Jer 51:27
 Togarmah Ezek 27:14; 38:6
 Magog Ezek 38:2; 39:6; Rev 20:8
 Madai [Medes] 2 Kgs 17:6; Esth 1:19; Acts 2:9
 Javan
 Elishah Ezek 27:7
 Tarshish Ps 72:10; Isa 23:1; 60:9; 66:19; Jer 10:9; Jon 1:3
 Tubal Isa 66:19; Ezek 27:13; 38:2
 Meshech Ps 120:5; Ezek 32:26; 39:1

Ham 14:5; 1 Chr 4:38-41; Ps 105:27
 Cush 2:13; Num 12:1; 1 Chr 1:10
 Havilah 25:18; 1 Sam 15:7
 Raamah Ezek 27:22

Sheba 1 Kgs 10:1-13; Isa 60:6; Ezek 27:22-23; Matt 12:42
 Dedan 25:3; Jer 25:23; Ezek 25:13; 27:15
 Nimrod 1 Chr 1:10; Mic 5:6
 Mizraim 50:11
 Caphtorites Deut 2:23
 Put Nah 3:9
 Canaan 11:31; 12:5-10
 Sidon Josh 13:4-6; 1 Kgs 5:6; 11:33; 16:31; Ezek 28:21-24; Matt 11:21-22; Luke 6:17; Acts 27:3
 Hittites 23:1-20; Num 13:29; Josh 1:4
 Jebusites Josh 15:63; Judg 19:10-11; 2 Sam 5:6-8; Zech 9:7
 Amorites 14:7, 13; Num 21:21-35; Josh 5:1; 10:1-13

Girgashites 15:21; Deut 7:1; Josh 3:10; 24:11; 1 Chr 1:14; Neh 9:8
 Hivites 34:1-2; 36:2; Deut 20:17; Josh 9:3-7; 11:3
 Arkites Josh 16:2; 2 Sam 15:32
 Arvadites Ezek 27:8, 11
 Zemarites 2 Chr 13:4
 Hamathites 2 Sam 8:9-10; 2 Kgs 14:28; 23:33

Shem
 Elam 14:1-9; Ezra 4:9; Isa 22:6; Jer 49:34-39; Ezek 32:24; Dan 8:2; Acts 2:9
 Asshur 2:14; 25:3; 25:18; Ezek 27:23
 Aram 24:10; 25:20; 28:5-31:21; Num 23:7; Judg 3:8; 2 Sam 8:5-6

⁹Since he was the greatest hunter in the world, his name became proverbial. People would say, "This man is like Nimrod, the greatest hunter in the world."
¹⁰He built his kingdom in the land of Babylonia, with the cities of Babylon, Erech, Akkad, and Calneh. ¹¹From there he expanded his territory to Assyria, building the cities of Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, Calah, ¹²and Resen (the great city located between Nineveh and Calah).
¹³Mizraim was the ancestor of the Ludites, Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites, ¹⁴Pathrusites, Casluhites, and the Caphtorites, from whom the Philistines came.
¹⁵Canaan's oldest son was Sidon, the ancestor of the Sidonians. Canaan was also the

ancestor of the Hittites, ¹⁶Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, ¹⁷Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, ¹⁸Arvadites, Zemarites, and Hamathites. The Canaanite clans eventually spread out, ¹⁹and the territory of Canaan extended from Sidon in the north to Gerar and Gaza in the south, and east as far as Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, near Lasha.
²⁰These were the descendants of Ham, identified by clan, language, territory, and national identity.

10:10
 Gen 11:9
10:11
 Mic 5:6
10:14
 1 Chr 1:12
10:15
 Gen 15:20; 23:3
 1 Chr 1:13
 Jer 47:4
10:16
 Gen 15:18-21
10:19
 Gen 14:2

Descendants of Shem

²¹Sons were also born to Shem, the older brother of Japheth. Shem was the ancestor of all the descendants of Eber.
²²The descendants of Shem were Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram.

10:9 *Nimrod* attained great fame by conquest and terror; his empire extended from Babylonia in the south to Assyria in the north (10:10-12). • *the greatest hunter in the world* (literally *a great hunter before the Lord*): Assyrian monarchs glorified their own power, often depicting themselves as valiant hunter-conquerors.

10:10-12 *Babylonia* (Hebrew *Shinar*) is the area surrounding the Tigris and Euphrates in southern Mesopotamia. This *kingdom* eventually reached into northern Mesopotamia (*Assyria*). • Of the cities mentioned, *Babylon* is most important because of its role in building the Tower of Babel (see 11:4 and note). • *Erech* was ancient Uruk and is now Warka in southern Iraq (see Ezra 4:9-10). • *Akkad* was the ancient Agade north of Babylon, home of the famous ruler Sargon (2370–2295 bc). • The location of *Calneh* is uncertain, though it is presumably one of Nimrod's cities located north of Aram-naharaim in southern Mesopotamia (cp. Amos 6:2). • *building . . . Nineveh*: Like Cain, Nimrod built cities (see 4:17 and comments). Nineveh was an ancient Assyrian city on the east bank of the Tigris River in northern Iraq. • *Rehoboth-ir* was a daughter-city of Nineveh or was located nearby. • *Calah* is modern Tell Nimrud, south of Nineveh. • *Resen* is possibly modern Selamiyeh, northwest of Tell Nimrud.

10:11 *From there he expanded his territory to Assyria*: The Hebrew text can also be translated *From that land Assyria went out*.

10:13-14 The *Ludites* were Lydian tribes west of the Nile delta. • The identity of the *Anamites* is uncertain. They were possibly Egyptians near Cyrene, west of Egypt. • The *Lehabites* were possibly a Libyan tribe. • The *Naphtuhites* inhab-

ited northern Egypt. • The *Pathrusites* inhabited southern Egypt. • *Casluhites, and the Caphtorites, from whom the Philistines came* (Hebrew text reads *Casluhites, from whom the Philistines came, and Caphtorites*; cp. Jer 47:4; Amos 9:7): The *Casluhites* possibly inhabited an Egyptian district also known as Cyrenaica. The *Caphtorites* were Cretans (see Jer 47:4; Amos 9:7). The *Philistines* from Crete were sea people who lived intermittently in southwest Canaan during the period of the Exodus and later (Exod 13:17; Amos 9:7). They were among Israel's most troublesome enemies during the early monarchy (see 1–2 Samuel).

10:15-18 *Sidon* settled in Phoenicia, north of *Canaan*. • *Hittites* (Hebrew *Heth*): The Hittites in Genesis were a coalition of cities within Canaan (see 26:34-35; 27:46; Ezek 16:3). They were probably not the same as the Hittites of Anatolia (Asia Minor), whose empire was one of the great empires of antiquity during the patriarchal period. • The *Jebusites* were ancient inhabitants of Jerusalem (Josh 15:63; Judg 19:10-11; 2 Sam 5:6-9). • The *Amorites* lived throughout the mountains of Palestine in Canaan (see 15:16; 48:22; Num 13:29; Deut 3:8; Josh 10:5; Judg 1:35; 10:8; Ezek 16:3). • Little is known of the *Girgashites*, a Canaanite tribe (15:21; Deut 7:1; Josh 3:10). • The *Hivites* were an uncircumcised Canaanite tribe (34:2, 13-24; Josh 9:1, 7; 11:3; Judg 3:3; 2 Sam 24:7). • The *Arkites* resided in Tell 'Arqa in Lebanon. • The *Sinities* formed a city-state and inhabited Phoenicia. • The *Arvadites* inhabited Ruad in northern Phoenicia, near the El Kebir River. They were known for shipping (cp. Ezek 27:8). • The *Zemarites* inhabited Sumur (modern Sumra), north of Arka on the Phoenician coast. • The *Hamathites* founded what is now Hama on the Orontes River, the northern boundary of Canaan (see Num

34:8; Josh 13:5; 2 Sam 8:9-10; 1 Kgs 8:65; 2 Kgs 14:25-28).

10:19 *The territory of Canaan* is specifically marked off because it would be taken from its inhabitants and given to Israel (see 15:18; Num 34:2-12; Ezek 47:15-20; 48:1-28). • An ancient north-south seacoast highway (the Via Maris) extended from *Sidon . . . to Gerar*, connecting Egypt to Mesopotamia. • Modern *Gaza* is 11 miles northwest of Gerar. • *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* were cities on the border of the land southeast of the Dead Sea. • *Admah* and *Zeboiim* are mentioned 15 times in connection with Sodom and Gomorrah (14:2, 8; Deut 29:23; see Hos 11:8). All four cities were destroyed by God to cleanse the land (see ch 19). • *Lasha* was possibly in the northern region of the Dead Sea.

10:21 *Shem, the older brother of Japheth* (or *Shem, whose older brother was Japheth*), was the father of the Semitic peoples. The descendants listed represent countries east of Israel (modern Iraq, Iran, and Syria). The narrator lists these locations within Mesopotamia since Abram, the father of Israel, originated from this area (see 11:27-32). • *Eber* receives special attention because of his connection with Abram (see note on 10:24).

10:22 The descendants of *Elam* lived in the region of modern southwestern Iran (see 14:1, 9; Ezra 4:9; Isa 11:11). • The descendants of *Asshur* were later Assyrians who lived under Nimrod's jurisdiction (see 10:11). Sumerians descended from Ham were ousted by Mesopotamian Semites. • *Arphaxad* possibly settled northeast of Nineveh; his descendants are further described in 11:12-26. • *Lud* was near the Tigris River; its people were related to the Lydians (see 10:13). • *Aram* was a kingdom of tribes that lived in the Mesopotamian plains.

10:23

Job 1:1

10:24

Luke 3:35

10:32

Gen 9:19; 10:1

11:2

Gen 10:10; 14:1

Isa 11:11

11:3

Gen 14:10

11:4

2 Sam 8:13

11:5

Gen 18:21

Exod 19:11

11:6

Gen 9:19; 11:1

²³The descendants of Aram were Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.

²⁴Arphaxad was the father of Shelah, and Shelah was the father of Eber.

²⁵Eber had two sons. The first was named Peleg (which means “division”), for during his lifetime the people of the world were divided into different language groups. His brother’s name was Joktan.

²⁶Joktan was the ancestor of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, ²⁷Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, ²⁸Obal, Abimael, Sheba, ²⁹Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. All these were descendants of Joktan. ³⁰The territory they occupied extended from Mesha all the way to Sephar in the eastern mountains.

³¹These were the descendants of Shem, identified by clan, language, territory, and national identity.

Conclusion

³²These are the clans that descended from Noah’s sons, arranged by nation according

to their lines of descent. All the nations of the earth descended from these clans after the great flood.

The Dispersion at Babel (11:1-9)

The Tower of Babel

11 At one time all the people of the world spoke the same language and used the same words. ²As the people migrated to the east, they found a plain in the land of Babylonia and settled there.

³They began saying to each other, “Let’s make bricks and harden them with fire.” (In this region bricks were used instead of stone, and tar was used for mortar.) ⁴Then they said, “Come, let’s build a great city for ourselves with a tower that reaches into the sky. This will make us famous and keep us from being scattered all over the world.”

The LORD Disperses the Nations

⁵But the LORD came down to look at the city and the tower the people were building. ⁶“Look!” he said. “The people are united,

10:23 The patriarchs later interacted with *the descendants of Aram* (see 25:20; 31:20; Deut 26:5). • **Uz** was the chief Aramean tribe, possibly located northeast of the Jordan; it was Job’s home (see Job 1:1; see also Lam 4:21). • **Hul** is unknown. He possibly founded Armenia. • **Gether** is unknown; he was possibly the founder of the Syrians. • **Mash** might be associated with Mount Masus in northern Mesopotamia or with a part of the Lebanon Mountains.

10:24 Arphaxad was the father of Shelah: Greek version reads *Arphaxad was the father of Cainan, Cainan was the father of Shelah*. Cp. Luke 3:36. • **Shelah** is unknown, but may be short for Methushelah (cp. 38:5, 11). • **Eber** was the ancestor of Abram the Hebrew (11:10-26); his name is at the root of the term “Hebrew” (see 14:13; 39:14; 40:15; 41:12; Exod 2:11; 3:18).

10:25 Peleg means *division*, anticipating the separation of people into *language groups* after Babel (11:1-9). Peleg’s line led to Abram (see 11:16-26). • **Joktan** was the ancestor of the southern Arabian tribes. The Ishmaelite tribes were in northern Arabia (see 25:13-16).

10:26-32 There were fourteen sons of Shem by Eber through **Joktan**. The placement of the Babel story between the lines of Joktan and Peleg ties Joktan to the judgment of the Babel story (11:1-9) and ties Peleg to Abram (11:27–12:1).

10:26-29 Almodad was an ancestor, region, or tribe in modern Yemen. • **Sheleph** was a tribe of Yemen. • **Hazarmaveth** was related to Hadra-

maut in southern Arabia. • **Jerah** is unknown, but was possibly associated with Mount Barach. • **Hadoram** was an Arabian tribe. • **Uzal** was Sana’a, an old capital of Yemen in pre-Islamic times. • **Diklah** was a southern Arabian oasis in Mina. • **Obal** was between Hodeida and Sana’a in southwest Arabia. • **Abimael** was a Sabaeen. • **Sheba** was in southern Arabia (see 10:7). • **Ophir** was a region of southern Arabia between Sheba and Havilah; it was a source of gold (Isa 13:12). • **Havilah:** See 10:7. • **Jobab** was possibly Jobebitai in southern Arabia.

10:30 Mesha was a region in northern Arabia, south of Hadramaut. • **Sephar** is identified with Isfar, south of Hadramaut in Yemen.

11:1-9 The story of the unfinished tower carries forward themes of language and solidarity from the Table of Nations (ch 10). The builders’ desire for autonomy recalls the rebellion in Eden (ch 3) and establishes the need for Abram’s redemptive faith in the midst of international disorder (ch 12). The scattering of the nations anticipates the warning to Israel that idolatry would result in their being scattered and their cities devastated (see Num 10:35; Lev 26:33; Deut 4:27; 28:64; 30:3). Chronologically, the story is a flashback that explains the rise of the nations during Peleg’s time (see 10:25).

11:1 At one time: The events described in 11:1-9 led to the scattering of nations that is reflected in the genealogies of 10:2-30. The reversal of order has a theological purpose (see note on 10:1–11:9).

11:2 migrated to the east: See note on

3:24. • **Babylonia** (Hebrew *Shinar*) was located in southern Mesopotamia, the region of Nimrod’s later empire and city-building campaign (see 10:10; Isa 11:11; Dan 1:2; Zech 5:11).

11:3 Stone was plentiful in Canaan; in Mesopotamia, stone was scarce and brick technology was developed. • **Tar** was made from bitumen, a natural, cement-like, waterproof asphalt (see 6:14; Exod 2:3).

11:4 Far from the original garden (2:15), the first cities of Genesis represent arrogance (4:17), tyranny (10:8-12), and wickedness (18:20-21). The city on the Babylonian plain was a magnet for human pride and idolatry. • **a tower that reaches into the sky:** This was probably a temple-tower (a ziggurat). Common in ancient Babylonian urban culture, ziggurats were regarded as sacred mountains by which deities descended to earth (Jacob’s dream in 28:12 possibly reflects this idea). • **This will make us famous** (literally *let us make a name for ourselves*): The tower builders sought fame through idolatrous ambition. God promised to give Abram a famous name because of his humble obedience (12:2).

11:5 came down: The tower was a human attempt to ascend to God’s realm (see Deut 26:15; Ps 2:4; 103:19; 115:16). The folly of that attempt was exposed by God’s “coming down” to see their feeble efforts.

11:6 If left unchecked, the tower builders’ solidarity and ambition would allow human wickedness to flourish in unimaginable ways.

and they all speak the same language. After this, nothing they set out to do will be impossible for them! ⁷Come, let's go down and confuse the people with different languages. Then they won't be able to understand each other."

⁸In that way, the LORD scattered them all over the world, and they stopped building the city. ⁹That is why the city was called Babel, because that is where the LORD confused the people with different languages. In this way he scattered them all over the world.

6. THE ACCOUNT OF SHEM'S DESCENDANTS (11:10-26)

¹⁰This is the account of Shem's family.

Two years after the great flood, when Shem was 100 years old, he became the father of Arphaxad. ¹¹After the birth of Arphaxad, Shem lived another 500 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹²When Arphaxad was 35 years old, he became the father of Shelah. ¹³After the birth of Shelah, Arphaxad lived another 403 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁴When Shelah was 30 years old, he became the father of Eber. ¹⁵After the birth of Eber, Shelah lived another 403 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁶When Eber was 34 years old, he became the father of Peleg. ¹⁷After the birth of Peleg, Eber lived another 430 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁸When Peleg was 30 years old, he became the father of Reu. ¹⁹After the birth of Reu, Peleg lived another 209 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁰When Reu was 32 years old, he became the father of Serug. ²¹After the birth of Serug, Reu lived another 207 years and had other sons and daughters.

²²When Serug was 30 years old, he became the father of Nahor. ²³After the birth of Nahor, Serug lived another 200 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁴When Nahor was 29 years old, he became the father of Terah. ²⁵After the birth of Terah, Nahor lived another 119 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁶After Terah was 70 years old, he became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

7. THE ACCOUNT OF TERAH'S DESCENDANTS (11:27-25:11) The Family of Terah (11:27-32)

²⁷This is the account of Terah's family. Terah was the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran was the father of Lot.

²⁸But Haran died in Ur of the Chaldeans, the land of his birth, while his father, Terah, was

11:7 Gen 1:26
 11:8 Gen 9:19
 11:9 Gen 10:10
 11:10 Gen 10:22-25
 Luke 3:36
 11:12 Luke 3:36
 11:13 1 Chr 1:17
 11:14 Luke 3:35
 11:16 Luke 3:35
 11:18 Luke 3:35
 11:20 Luke 3:35
 11:22 Luke 3:34
 11:24 Josh 24:2
 Luke 3:34
 11:26 Gen 22:20
 1 Chr 1:26-27
 Luke 3:34
 11:29 Gen 17:15; 20:11-12; 22:20
 11:30 Gen 16:1; 18:11; 25:21
 1 Sam 1:5
 Luke 1:7
 11:31 Gen 27:43
 Josh 24:2
 Acts 7:4

11:7 *Come, let's go down:* God addresses his angelic court (see 1:26; 3:22; and notes). • *won't be able to understand each other:* Their inability to communicate would curtail their unified sinful ambition. The God-honoring unity of language on the day of Pentecost was a symbolic reversal of the Babel dispersion (Acts 2:5-13; see Zeph 3:9).

11:8 *the LORD scattered them:* Similarly, Adam and Eve's punishment for grasping at autonomy and Cain's punishment for murder involved banishment and dispersion (3:23; 4:12, 14; 9:19; 10:5, 25, 32).

11:9 *Babel:* Or *Babylon*. *Babel* sounds like a Hebrew term that means "confusion." The Babylonians viewed their city as the residence or gateway of the gods. The pun that concludes this account accurately reveals Babylon's spiritual confusion. Babylon achieved prominence under Nimrod (10:10) and in later biblical history (see 2 Kgs 25). Its role as an epicenter of arrogance and idolatry make it a fitting image for the anti-God forces associated with the end of time (e.g., Rev 14:8; 16:19; 18:2). • The tower builders had centralized to ascend into God's realm (11:3-4). God descended and *scattered them all over the world to*

frustrate their idolatrous ambition.

11:10 *This account of Shem's family* resumes the line of Shem from 10:21-32, now with special focus on the line leading to Abram. Only Abram and Israel are heirs to Shem's God (see 9:26-27; Deut 32:8-9). The Babel story vividly depicts the culture that Abram was called to abandon (12:1; 24:6-7). Together with the account of Terah's descendants (11:27-32), this second account of Shem's line forms a bridge from the universal history of chs 1-11 to the national history of Israel that begins in ch 12. Abram is the remnant from Babel's confused world. God called him as an act of grace whereby the fractured world of Babel would be blessed (12:3). • *the father of:* Or *the ancestor of;* also in 11:12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24. Hebrew genealogies do not necessarily list every single generation.

11:11 *After the birth of:* Or *After the birth of this ancestor of;* also in 11:13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25 (see note on 11:10).

11:12-13 Greek version reads ¹²*When Arphaxad was 135 years old, he became the father of Cainan.* ¹³*After the birth of Cainan, Arphaxad lived another 430 years and had other sons and daughters, and then he died. When*

Cainan was 130 years old, he became the father of Shelah. After the birth of Shelah, Cainan lived another 330 years and had other sons and daughters, and then he died. Cp. Luke 3:35-36.

11:18 *Peleg:* See note on 10:25.

11:27-25:11 *This is the account* (Hebrew *toledoth*; see note on 2:4) *of Terah's family:* What follows are the particulars about the family descended from Terah, notably about Abraham and God's covenant with him, and about Isaac, the child of promise, who carried forward the line and the blessing to the next generation.

11:27-32 This brief section provides a complete summary of Terah's life and accounts for his other sons and their marriages; it also introduces Lot, Abram's nephew, who later played a prominent role. The ancestors, including Terah and his family, were idolatrous, worshipping other gods in Mesopotamia (Josh 24:2).

11:27 *Nahor* was the father of Laban, whose daughters later became Jacob's wives (chs 29-31). • *Lot:* See "Lot," 19:1-38, p. 58.

11:28 The call of Abram occurred in *Ur of the Chaldeans* (15:7; Acts 7:2-4), the

12:1
Gen 15:7
*Acts 7:3
Heb 11:8
†erefs (0776)
* Gen 13:17

12:2
Gen 13:16; 15:5; 17:4;
18:18; 22:17
Zech 8:13
*barak (1288)
* Gen 49:28

12:3
Gen 22:18; 26:4
Exod 23:22
Acts 3:25
*Gal 3:8

12:4
Gen 11:26, 31

still living.²⁹ Meanwhile, Abram and Nahor both married. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah. (Milcah and her sister Iscah were daughters of Nahor's brother Haran.)³⁰ But Sarai was unable to become pregnant and had no children.

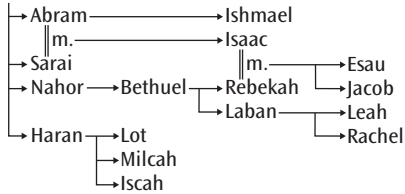
³¹ One day Terah took his son Abram, his daughter-in-law Sarai (his son Abram's wife), and his grandson Lot (his son Haran's child) and moved away from Ur of the Chaldeans. He was headed for the land of Canaan, but they stopped at Haran and settled there.³² Terah lived for 205 years and died while still in Haran.

The Call of Abram (12:1-9)

12 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you."

⁴ So Abram departed as the LORD had instructed, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. ⁵ He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot,

Terah



◀ **Terah's Family (11:27-30)**, to four generations. See profiles for ABRAHAM (p. 46), SARAH (p. 55), LOT (p. 58), ISHMAEL (p. 53), ISAAC (p. 63), REBEKAH (p. 69), ESAU (p. 71), JACOB (p. 76), LEAH (p. 79), and RACHEL (p. 78).

and *be a blessing* (see note on 12:2). Each directive is followed by three promises conditioned upon obedience.

12:1 Abram knew that he should leave, but he did not know where he was going. Obedience required faith.

12:2 *and you will be a blessing* (or so that you will be a blessing): This clause is a command in Hebrew, but it is also a promise conditioned upon Abram's obedience to God's command (12:1): "Go . . . so that you will be a blessing. Be a blessing, so that I can bless and curse others." • *make you famous* (literally *make your name great*): Abram received the fame sought by the builders of Babel (see 11:4 and note).

12:3 Based on Abram's obedience to the command to be a blessing (12:2), God gave him three more promises. • *those who treat you with contempt*: People who disregarded Abram and his covenant were rejecting God's choice and plan. • *All the families on earth will be blessed*: By faith, they could participate in the covenant God was making with Abram. The blessing spread to the whole world through Abraham, Israel, the covenants, the prophets, Scripture, and the Messiah (Gal 3:8, 16; cp. Rom 9:4-5).

12:4-9 Abram's obedience to God's call corresponded to God's commands (see note on 12:1-3). He journeyed to Canaan (12:4-6) and became a blessing (12:5-9).

12:4 Abram was middle-aged, settled, prosperous, aristocratic, and polytheistic (see note on 11:27-32). When *the LORD* spoke to him (12:1-3), he obediently left his old ways in Ur to follow God's plan. Since Abram responded in faith, God's promises (12:2-3) could be confirmed in a binding covenant (15:8-21).

12:5 *The people* (Hebrew *hannepesh*, "the lives") *he had taken into his household* were probably converts; Abram first became a blessing by influencing people in his household to join him in following the Lord.

main city of Sumer in Mesopotamia near the mouth of the Persian Gulf. The family had moved there perhaps generations before the call. Their ancestral home ("native country," 12:1) was apparently near Haran, in the region of the descendants of Shem (11:10-26); thus they settled there when they left Ur (11:31) and were later described as "Aramaeans" (Deut 26:5). • *land of his birth*: The same Hebrew phrase is repeated in 12:1 ("native country"), making Ur, not Haran, the location of Abram's call (see 15:7; Neh 9:7; Acts 7:2).

11:29 *Sarai* means "princess" in Hebrew. No mention is made of Sarai's parentage, perhaps to add suspense to the Abimelech story, which reveals that she was Abram's half sister (20:9-12). Later, the law prohibited such a marriage (Lev 18:9; 20:17; Deut 27:22). • *Nahor's wife was Milcah*: Milcah was Haran's daughter and Nahor's niece (see 11:29). Her son Bethuel was the father of Rebekah, the wife of Abram's son Isaac (24:10, 15, 24). The name Milcah is related to the Hebrew word meaning "queen." In Akkadian, it is a title of the goddess Ishtar, the moon-god's daughter. Terah's name is related to the word for "moon" in Hebrew; his whole family appears to have worshiped Sin, the moon-god (see Josh 24:14).

11:30 *Sarai*, Rebekah (25:21), and Rachel (29:31) all suffered infertility. Sarai's situation in particular highlights the paradox between the apparent reality and God's promise to give many descendants (12:2). The Israelite nation's origin from barren women fixes its identity in the

sovereignty of God, who miraculously gives children to barren women (see also 1 Sam 1:2; 2:5; Ps 113:9; Isa 54:1).

11:31 *Terah took*: The text is clear that Abram's departure from Ur was prompted by God's calling (see note on 11:28), but the event is described from Terah's perspective, in keeping with the patriarchy of ancient Near Eastern culture. This cultural deference to the oldest male is evidently why Abram did not continue on to Canaan by himself at this time (see Acts 7:2-4). • *Haran* was 550 miles northwest of Ur, near the Syrian-Turkish border. Despite the similar name, there is no connection with Terah's son Haran, who had died in Ur (11:28). • *Haran* means "caravan." Ancient commercial routes converged there, making it a key site for trade. • *Haran* was also well-known for the moon worship to which Terah's family was apparently devoted (see note on 11:29).

11:32 *205 years*: Some ancient versions read *145 years*; cp. 11:26 and 12:4.

12:1-9 Through Abram's faith and family, God began restoring the blessing. God called Abram from a pagan world to begin a new nation; his promises to Abram later became a covenant (ch 15). • God's call to Abram later helped convince the Israelites to leave Egypt and go to the land God promised to Abram. It also reminded the Babylonian exiles of their need to return to their own land (e.g., Isa 51).

12:1-3 These verses are structured around two commands to Abram: *Leave*

and all his wealth—his livestock and all the people he had taken into his household at Haran—and headed for the land of Canaan. When they arrived in Canaan, ⁶Abram traveled through the land as far as Shechem. There he set up camp beside the oak of Moreh. At that time, the area was inhabited by Canaanites.

⁷Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “I will give this land to your ^adescendants.” And Abram built an altar there and

dedicated it to the LORD, who had appeared to him. ⁸After that, Abram traveled south and set up camp in the hill country, with Bethel to the west and Ai to the east. There he built another altar and dedicated it to the LORD, and he worshiped the LORD. ⁹Then Abram continued traveling south by stages toward the Negev.

Abram and Sarai in Egypt (12:10-20)

¹⁰At that time a severe famine struck the land of Canaan, forcing Abram to go down

12:6
Gen 33:18; 35:4
Deut 11:30

12:7
Gen 13:15
^aGal 3:16
[†]zera’ (2233)
• Gen 26:3

12:8
Gen 4:26; 8:20; 22:9

12:9
Gen 13:1; 20:1

12:10
Gen 26:1; 42:5

God’s Covenant Relationships (12:1-9)

Gen 9:1-17; 15:1-21;
17:9-14
Exod 6:2-5;
19:1-24; 18
Lev 26:1-46
Deut 7:7-15; 29:2-29
Josh 8:30-35; 24:1-8
2 Sam 7:5-16
Ezra 10:1-17
Isa 59:20-21
Jer 31:31-34; 33:19-26; 34:12-20
Ezek 16:1-63
Luke 22:20
Gal 4:21-31
Eph 2:11-13
Heb 8:6-13; 10:11-18; 12:24

The covenant relationships that God established and developed with his people may be the most important theological theme of the OT. The covenant theme in the OT begins with Noah, through whom God made a covenant with all of creation. God promised to uphold the created order and gave the rainbow as the sign of this commitment (9:1-17).

God later established a covenant relationship with Abraham and his family; the sign of this covenant was circumcision (12:1-9; 15:1-21; 17:9-14). God’s covenant with Abraham promised descendants, land, and rulers; these promises formed the basis for the covenants God later made with his people.

God’s covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai was a national covenant (Exod 19–24) whose sign was the Sabbath; it addressed how Israel would be the chosen descendants of Abraham. This covenant took the form of a suzerain-vassal treaty, an ancient relationship established between a great king and loyal subjects (see note on Exod 20:1–23:33).

The Sinai covenant was renewed in Deuteronomy and Josh 24:1-28. The renewal focused on God’s promise of land and how Israel would conduct itself while inhabiting the land. Through his covenant with Israel, God affirmed that he was their God and they were his people, a relationship that required their complete loyalty (Jer 11:4; 24:7; Ezek 11:20; 14:11). God, the great king, would bless and protect the nation Israel. Israel’s obligation was to keep God’s commands, decrees, and regulations (Exod 19:5, 8; 24:3, 7; Deut 30:15-20).

God later formed a covenant with King David (2 Sam 7:5-16), which provided the line of kings promised to Abraham and Jacob (Gen 17:6, 16; 35:11).

Years later, at a low point in Israel’s history, the prophet Jeremiah foretold a “new covenant” in Israel’s future (Jer 31:31-33), in which the ideals of the covenants with Abraham and Israel would finally be realized. Jeremiah’s prophecy found fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus Christ (see Luke 22:20; Heb 8:6-13; 12:24). This new covenant provides the ultimate fulfillment of the previous promises that were made to God’s people.

God’s covenants were motivated by God’s faithful love (Hebrew *khesed*), which enabled a relationship to continue between God and his people. God initiated this relationship, announced its conditions, and rewarded his people accordingly. These covenants were not rewards but divine gifts. God may exclude people from the covenant relationship (Hos 1:9), but he will not break, revoke, or withdraw his covenants. If broken or annulled by the human parties, the covenant could be renewed only through a reapplication of God’s faithful love (Exod 34:6-9; Jer 31:31-33). God’s love has preserved the relationship, but his grace must not be mocked (Isa 54:7-10; 55:3; 61:8; 1 Cor 6:9-10; Gal 6:7).

12:6-7 *The oak of Moreh* was apparently a Canaanite shrine; fertile groves of trees were sacred to the Canaanites (cp. Isa 1:29), and *Moreh* means “teacher.” Abram proclaimed (Luther: “preached”) the Lord’s name beside a pagan place of worship and instruction (12:8). • **Abram** continued to be a blessing when he **built an altar** to worship God at *Shechem* and east of Bethel (12:8).

12:7 *The LORD appeared to Abram* at Shechem (12:6) to confirm that **this land** was the Promised Land. Israel was to occupy this land, but sharing in God’s promises required their faith (cp. Num 14; Josh 1:6-9). • **to your descendants** (literally *seed*): Abram did not yet possess the land; he lived as a temporary settler.

12:8-9 **Abram** had to keep moving

camp because the Canaanites had the fertile land.

12:8 *he worshiped the LORD* (literally **he made proclamation of the LORD by name**): Proclaiming the name (identity and character) of the Lord is central to worship and witness (cp. 4:26; see Exod 34:5-7). Abram had to distinguish his sacrificial worship from that of the pagan Canaanites.

12:11
Gen 29:17

12:12
Gen 20:11

12:16
Gen 20:14; 24:35

12:17
1 Chr 16:21
Ps 105:14

12:18
Gen 20:9-10

12:19
Gen 20:5; 26:9

13:1
Gen 12:9

13:2
Gen 12:5

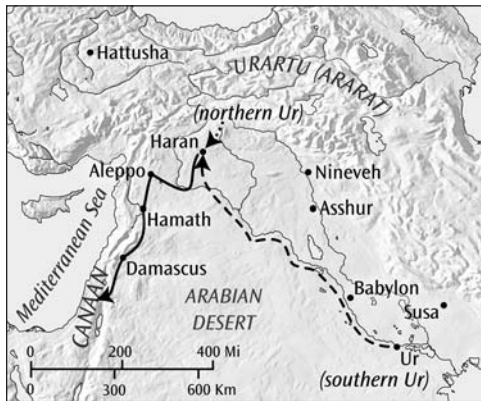
to Egypt, where he lived as a foreigner. ¹¹As he was approaching the border of Egypt, Abram said to his wife, Sarai, "Look, you are a very beautiful woman. ¹²When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife. Let's kill him; then we can have her!' ¹³So please tell them you are my sister. Then they will spare my life and treat me well because of their interest in you."

¹⁴And sure enough, when Abram arrived in Egypt, everyone noticed Sarai's beauty. ¹⁵When the palace officials saw her, they sang her praises to Pharaoh, their king, and Sarai was taken into his palace. ¹⁶Then Pharaoh gave Abram many gifts because of her—sheep, goats, cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.

¹⁷But the LORD sent terrible plagues upon Pharaoh and his household because of Sarai, Abram's wife. ¹⁸So Pharaoh summoned Abram and accused him sharply. "What have you done to me?" he demanded. "Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? ¹⁹Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' and allow me to take her as my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and get out of here!" ²⁰Pharaoh ordered some of his men to escort them, and he sent Abram out of the country, along with his wife and all his possessions.

Abram and Lot Separate (13:1-18)

13 So Abram left Egypt and traveled north into the Negev, along with his wife and Lot and all that they owned. ²(Abram was very rich in livestock, silver,



◀ **Abram's Journey to Canaan (12:1-9).** Traditionally, "Ur of the Chaldeans" (11:28, 31; 15:7) has been identified with UR in Mesopotamia (SOUTHERN UR), a chief city of ancient Sumer. Some scholars have proposed a NORTHERN UR to the north of HARAN, where Abram's extended family settled (see 27:43; 28:10; 29:4; Acts 7:2-4).

about Sarai that he could not prevent. His scheme had resulted in a terrible bind that endangered him, Sarai, and the promise. • Abram appeared to prosper from his deception, but the new possessions also caused crises. Abram and Lot had to separate (ch 13), and Hagar, an Egyptian maiden, became the mother of the Ishmaelites, perennial enemies of Israel (ch 16).

12:14-15 Sarai was 65 years old, but she lived to be 127; she was like a modern childless woman of about 35. She and Abram came from a noble family (see note on 11:29), so she was regal in her person and dress. Pharaoh was attracted by her physical appearance and her political assets.

12:15 Pharaoh was a title, not a personal name (37:36; Exod 1:15).

12:17-19 God's intervention rescued Sarai and preserved the marriage to fulfill the covenant promise. Sarai's restoration to Abram came with a rebuke from Pharaoh on God's behalf (12:18-19).

12:20 No answer to Pharaoh's questions (12:18-19) was needed, because the rebuke was followed by expulsion. Pharaoh's command paralleled God's command to Abram (12:1), but Pharaoh's demand brought shame and disgrace. God was faithful in preserving his promise.

13:1-7 This story is set in conflict amidst God's blessings. In the opening verses, Abram returns to a place where he had built an altar. Previous events are emphasized as Abram's return to the land is described (13:3-4); Abram renewed his worship and again proclaimed the Lord's name (cp. 12:8).

13:2 Abram already had powerful resources (12:5); his Egyptian sojourn augmented his wealth and power (12:16).

12:10-20 This episode shows that God would not allow Abram to jeopardize his promises. Just after Abram's obedience to the call, a famine tested his weak faith. God delivered him and his family, even though Abram foolishly used deception rather than trusting in God to preserve him in Egypt. • This story deliberately parallels Israel's later bondage in Egypt. Because of a famine (12:10 // 47:13), Abram/Israel went to Egypt (12:10 // 47:27); there was an attempt to kill the males and save the females (12:12 // Exod 1:22); God plagued Egypt (12:17 // Exod 7:14–11:10); Abram/Israel plundered Egypt (12:16 // Exod 12:35-36); they were expelled (Hebrew *shalakh*, "send"; 12:19-20 // Exod 12:31-33) and ascended to the Negev (13:1 // Num 13:17, 22). Israel was to believe that God would deliver them from bondage in Egypt through the plagues because their ancestor had already been rescued from bondage in Egypt.

12:10-13 Abram's scheme was rooted in fear that jeopardized his family and God's promises. Abram was not walking

by faith when he went to Egypt. He stopped building altars and his deceptiveness took center stage. Deception would plague his family throughout Genesis (26:1-11; 27:1-29; 29:15-30; 30:34-36; 31:6-11; 37:18-35; 39:7-20).

• Abram's plan was probably based on a social custom whereby a brother arranged the marriage of his sister (cp. 24:29-61). Abram may have thought that any potential suitor would have to deal with him, giving him time to leave with Sarai. He did not count on Pharaoh's acting without negotiation (12:14-16).

12:10 The Nile River provided ample irrigation, so Egypt was often the last region to suffer from *famine*.

12:13 tell them you are my sister: This request occurs three times in Genesis (see also 20:2; 26:7). The text explains that this was Abram's usual strategy (20:13), and his son did likewise. This first occasion was outside the land, the second (ch 20) within, showing that God protected his promise in both regions.

12:14-16 Abram was bound by the king's gift to an unwanted agreement

ABRAHAM (11:26–25:11)

Gen 26:2-5
 Exod 3:15-16; 6:3;
 32:13
 Josh 24:2-3
 1 Chr 1:27-34
 2 Chr 20:7
 Isa 29:22; 41:8;
 51:1-2
 Ezek 33:24
 Matt 1:1-2; 3:9;
 8:11; 22:31-32
 Luke 16:19-31
 John 8:31-58
 Acts 7:2-8
 Rom 4:1-23; 9:5-9;
 11:16-17
 Gal 3:6-29
 Heb 6:13-15; 11:8-
 12; 11:17-19
 Jas 2:21-23

“By faith . . . Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land. . . . He went without knowing where he was going. . . . By faith . . . Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice when God was testing him” (Heb 11:8, 17). These key events in Abraham’s life illustrate the faithful obedience for which he is best known.

God called Abram from the city of Ur to become the patriarch of God’s people. Abram’s family relationships are recorded in Gen 11:26-32. Terah had three sons: Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Terah left Ur with Abram, Abram’s wife Sarai, and Lot, whose father, Haran, had died. On his way to Canaan, Terah settled in the city of Haran (11:31). God had called Abram to a new land while he was still in Ur (Acts 7:2-4); God told Abram, “Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you” (12:1). God blessed Abram by making a covenant with him that included promises of great blessing, numerous descendants, and a new land (12:1-3). These promises later saved Israel from destruction when they repeatedly failed to keep their covenant with God (see Lev 26:40-45).

Abram left Haran at age seventy-five. Entering Canaan, he went first to Shechem, a Canaanite city between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. God appeared to Abram near the oak of Moreh, a Canaanite shrine (see note on 12:6-7). Abram built altars there and near Bethel (12:8), proclaiming the one true God at these centers of false worship. Abram later moved to Hebron by the oaks of Mamre, again building an altar to worship God (13:18).

When God again promised blessings to Abram in a vision (15:1), Abram exclaimed that he was still childless because Sarai was barren (11:30), and that Eliezer of Damascus was his heir (15:2). This obscure statement is clarified by the Nuzi documents. According to Hurrian custom, a childless couple of means could adopt an heir, often a slave who would be responsible for their burial and mourning. A natural son born after the slave-heir’s adoption would supplant him. Apparently Abram had adopted Eliezer in this manner, but God promised that Abram’s own son would be his heir (15:4).

The hallmark of Abram’s life was that he believed the Lord, and the Lord considered him righteous because of his faith (15:6; see Rom 4:3; Gal 3:6; Jas 2:23). Abram’s righteousness was not because he never sinned—on several occasions he failed to do what was right, twice he lied about Sarah out of fear, and he took the provision of a son into his own hands with Hagar rather than praying for God to act (16:1-5; cp. 25:21). But he consistently returned to faith as the fundamental principle of his life before God.

Abram was eighty-six years old when Ishmael was born to Sarai’s servant Hagar. When Abram was ninety-nine, the Lord appeared to him and reaffirmed his covenant promise of a son and of blessing (ch 17), adding circumcision as the mark of the covenant relationship (17:9-14). God also changed Abram’s and Sarai’s names to Abraham and Sarah (17:5, 15). Abraham laughed at the promise of another son (17:17). Shortly afterward, the Lord appeared again to Abraham (ch 18) and again announced the promised son. This time, Sarah was caught laughing in disbelief (18:12-15). Abraham was 100 years old and his wife 90 when the Lord did “exactly what he had promised” (21:1). The long-promised son was born and was fittingly named Isaac (“he laughs!”).

The supreme test of Abraham’s faith came when God commanded him to sacrifice Isaac (ch 22). Abraham obeyed faithfully, trusting that God would not thwart his own purposes (see Heb 11:17-19). Just as the knife was about to fall, the angel of God stopped Abraham and provided a ram for him to sacrifice in Isaac’s place (22:13). Abraham’s faith was complete (22:12).

Christians understand the sacrifice of Isaac as prefiguring God’s provision of his only Son, Jesus Christ, as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. God has fulfilled his covenant with Abraham through Jesus Christ, through whom the blessing of salvation is extended to all who have faith (Rom 4:16-17), and believers become Abraham’s spiritual descendants (Gal 3:29). Abraham’s life shows that God is faithful and worthy of belief and obedience. The full import of God’s promise was realized when the gospel was preached to all nations and people from all families of the earth responded in faith (see Gal 3:6-9).

Abraham was God’s friend (2 Chr 20:7; Jas 2:23). All who live by faith are challenged to live as he did, daily venturing into the unknown with trust in God’s guidance and sustenance. Abraham is one of many great “witnesses” to a life of faith (Heb 12:1; see Heb 11), inspiring believers to persevere in faith because we know God is faithful.

13:3
Gen 12:8-9
13:5
Gen 12:5
13:6
Gen 12:5; 36:7
13:7
Gen 12:6; 26:20
13:8
Prov 15:18; 20:3
13:9
Gen 20:15
13:10
Gen 2:8-10
13:13
Gen 18:20
Num 32:23
Isa 1:10; 3:9
2 Pet 2:8
13:14
Gen 28:14
Deut 3:27; 34:1-4
13:15
Gal 3:16
Gen 12:2, 7; 15:18;
17:7-8
13:16
Num 23:10
13:17
Num 13:17-25
^berets (0776)
• Gen 15:18
13:18
Gen 14:13; 18:1

and gold.)³From the Negev, they continued traveling by stages toward Bethel, and they pitched their tents between Bethel and Ai, where they had camped before. ⁴This was the same place where Abram had built the altar, and there he worshiped the LORD again.

⁵Lot, who was traveling with Abram, had also become very wealthy with flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, and many tents. ⁶But the land could not support both Abram and Lot with all their flocks and herds living so close together. ⁷So disputes broke out between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot. (At that time Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land.)

⁸Finally Abram said to Lot, “Let’s not allow this conflict to come between us or our herdsmen. After all, we are close relatives! ⁹The whole countryside is open to you. Take your choice of any section of the land you want, and we will separate. If you want the land to the left, then I’ll take the land on the right. If you prefer the land on the right, then I’ll go to the left.”

¹⁰Lot took a long look at the fertile plains of the Jordan Valley in the direction of Zoar.

The whole area was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the LORD or the beautiful land of Egypt. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) ¹¹Lot chose for himself the whole Jordan Valley to the east of them. He went there with his flocks and servants and parted company with his uncle Abram. ¹²So Abram settled in the land of Canaan, and Lot moved his tents to a place near Sodom and settled among the cities of the plain. ¹³But the people of this area were extremely wicked and constantly sinned against the LORD.

¹⁴After Lot had gone, the LORD said to Abram, “Look as far as you can see in every direction—north and south, east and west. ¹⁵I am giving all this land, as far as you can see, to you and your descendants as a permanent possession. ¹⁶And I will give you so many descendants that, like the dust of the earth, they cannot be counted! ¹⁷Go and walk through the ^bland in every direction, for I am giving it to you.”

¹⁸So Abram moved his camp to Hebron and settled near the oak grove belonging to Mamre. There he built another altar to the LORD.

Age	Event	Reference
10	Sarai is born	17:17; 20:12
75	Abram leaves Haran, moves to Canaan	12:4-6
85	Abram takes Hagar as a secondary wife	16:1-3
86	Ishmael is born	16:15-16
99	Abram is renamed Abraham, is promised a son through Sarah, is given circumcision	17:1–18:15
100	Isaac is born	21:1-7
~103	Isaac is weaned, Ishmael is sent away	21:8-14
137	Sarah dies	23:1
140	Abraham sends his servant to find a wife for Isaac	24:1-9; 25:20
160	Jacob and Esau are born	25:20, 26
175	Abraham dies	25:7-9

▲ Abraham’s Life (11:26–25:11).

13:5-7 Lot was also *wealthy*, with *flocks and herds*. *Tents* figure prominently in Lot’s story (13:12). • *The Canaanites and Perizzites* (see 34:30; Deut 7:1; Judg 1:4; 3:5) held the well-watered land; the quarrel between Abram’s and Lot’s herdsmen left Abram more vulnerable to attack.

13:8-13 Abram, to whom the land was promised, might have told Lot to find his own place. Abram’s generosity was an act of faith; he knew that even if he gave the whole land away, God would still give it to him and his descendants. Abram did not have to cling to things, whereas Lot’s choices were self-seeking.

13:8 Abram was concerned that there be no *conflict* (Hebrew *meribah*) between them, as they were *close relatives* (literally *brothers*). Moses later reproved Israel over the incident in the wilderness at Meribah (Exod 17:1-7; Num 20:1-13) and instructed them on exercising faith in such situations. Meribah thereafter became a watchword for testing and striving with the Lord in unbelief (see Ps 95).

13:10 What appealed to Lot would be short-lived. In the *garden of the LORD*, Adam and Eve succumbed to their craving for what they saw; Israel was later enslaved in *Egypt*. *Sodom and Gomorrah* are reminders of putting intense desires ahead of obedience to God (3:5-6; see 1 Jn 2:16). • *Zoar* was a small town in the plain to which Lot and his daughters later fled (19:18-22); it was

previously called Bela (14:2).

13:11-18 The narrator makes numerous contrasts between Lot and Abram.

13:11 Lot’s choice was totally selfish, without concern for Abram or faith in the Lord. • The region called *the whole Jordan Valley* (literally *the circle of the Jordan*) is believed to have been near the south end of the Dead Sea, based on descriptions in ancient records that locate cities of the Plain. This area is now very desolate.

13:13 The implication is that Lot would not resist Sodom’s influence because he, too, was living for himself.

13:14-17 Abram could give Lot the choice land because he believed in God’s promise. Abram waited for God to give him the land; Lot just took what he wanted.

13:15 *descendants*: Literally *seed*; also in 13:16.

13:18 *Hebron* was an Anakite city (Num 13:22) originally called Kiriath-arba (“city of Arba”), located in forested highlands just north of the Negev (12:9; Josh 17:15). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all settled there (18:1; 35:27; 37:14), and Sarah, Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Leah were buried there (23:19; 35:27-29; 49:29-32; 50:13). • *Mamre* was an Amorite (14:13; 15:16).

Abram's Encounter with Kings (14:1-24)
Abram Rescues Lot

14 About this time war broke out in the region. King Amraphel of Babylonia, King Arioch of Ellasar, King Kedorlaomer of Elam, and King Tidal of Goiim ²fought against King Bera of Sodom, King Birsha of Gomorrah, King Shinab of Admah, King Shemeber of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (also called Zoar).

³This second group of kings joined forces in Siddim Valley (that is, the valley of the Dead Sea). ⁴For twelve years they had been subject to King Kedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled against him.

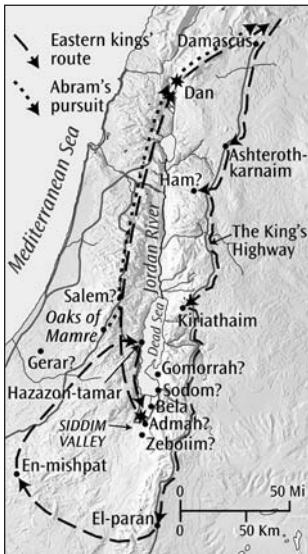
⁵One year later Kedorlaomer and his allies arrived and defeated the Rephaites at Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzites at Ham, the Emites at Shaveh-kiriathaim, ⁶and the Horites at Mount Seir, as far as El-paran at the edge of the wilderness. ⁷Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (now called Kadesh) and conquered all the territory of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites living in Hazazon-tamar.

⁸Then the rebel kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela (also called Zoar) prepared for battle in the valley of the Dead Sea. ⁹They fought against King Kedorlaomer of Elam, King Tidal of Goiim, King Amraphel of Babylonia, and King Arioch of Ellasar—four kings against five. ¹⁰As it happened, the valley of the Dead Sea was filled with tar pits. And as the army of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into the tar pits, while the rest escaped into the mountains. ¹¹The victorious invaders then plundered Sodom and Gomorrah and headed for home, taking with them all the spoils of war and the food supplies. ¹²They also captured Lot—Abram's nephew who lived in Sodom—and carried off everything he owned.

¹³But one of Lot's men escaped and reported everything to Abram the Hebrew, who was living near the oak grove belonging to Mamre the Amorite. Mamre and his relatives, Eshcol and Aner, were Abram's allies.

¹⁴When Abram heard that his nephew

- 14:1**
Gen 10:10; 11:2
- 14:2**
Gen 10:19; 13:10
Deut 29:23
- 14:3**
Num 34:3, 12
Deut 3:17
Josh 3:16
- 14:5**
Gen 15:20
Deut 2:10, 20; 3:11
Josh 13:19
- 14:7**
Gen 16:14; 20:1
Num 13:26
Deut 1:4
2 Chr 20:2
- 14:12**
Gen 11:27
- 14:13**
Gen 10:16; 13:18;
13:14
- 14:14**
Gen 12:5
Deut 34:1



◀ **The Battle at Siddim Valley (14:1-24).** When the kings in the Siddim Valley (the valley of the DEAD SEA) rebelled against King Kedorlaomer of Elam (14:4), Kedorlaomer and his Mesopotamian allies followed the King's Highway (see Num 20:17; 21:22) through Transjordan (the region east of the Jordan), then circled around from EL-PARAN through EN-MISHPAT (=Kadesh, 14:7; Num 13:26) to HAZAZON-TAMAR (=En-gedi, 2 Chr 20:2), conquering as they went. They then attacked the five Canaanite kings near BELA. When Abram heard that Lot had been taken captive, he chased after Kedorlaomer, attacked at DAN (=Laiash, Josh 19:47), and pursued the fleeing armies north of DAMASCUS to Hobah, and he recovered the captives and their goods. On his return, Abram stopped by the Valley of Shaveh near SALEM (=Jerusalem) and was blessed by Melchizedek. • The location of the Siddim Valley is uncertain—it was probably at the south end of the Dead Sea.

an earlier time and put them under tribute for asphalt, olive oil, and copper. *In the thirteenth year* they refused to send it; in the fourteenth year (14:5), the invaders returned to subjugate them again.

14:5-8 The invaders came down the King's Highway on the east side of the Jordan Valley to the Gulf of Aqaba, then circled back to the valley of the Dead Sea (Hebrew *Siddim Valley* [see 14:3]; also in 14:10).

14:8-12 The five cities of the plain were close together at the south end of the Dead Sea. The Mesopotamian kings defeated the frail uprising, looted the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and carried off Lot with the other captives.

14:13 The word *Hebrew* first occurs here in the Bible. It is not equivalent to the later term *Habiru* from Egyptian texts; the *Habiru* were mercenaries that roamed the land in the era of the judges. • *Mamre*: See note on 13:18. • *relatives*: Or *allies*; literally *brothers*.

14:14-16 God could give his people victory over any forces invading the Promised Land. Faithfulness to God was the prerequisite for victory. God promises to bless his people and give them victory over the world. He uses those who respond to his call and can skillfully use weapons of war (cp. Eph 4:8; 6:10-19).

14:14 *Abram . . . mobilized the 318 trained men who had been born into his household*: Abram was a formidable force, an outworking of God's promise to make him great (12:2-3). • *Dan* was a city

14:1-16 In this skirmish typical of ancient politics, powerful kings formed a coalition to subjugate smaller vassal states.

14:1-2 Archaeology has not identified these kings, but similar names from antiquity corroborate the report's accuracy. The Mesopotamian kings were confederates under a suzerain, apparently *Amraphel*, who is mentioned first.

14:1 *Babylonia*: Hebrew *Shinar*; also in 14:9. • *Tidal* apparently ruled a number of city-states (*Goiim*, literally *nations*).

14:3 *Dead Sea*: Literally *Salt Sea*.

14:4-5 This was Kedorlaomer's war. Under the feudal system of tribal affiliations, those in covenant with him had to fight. It was also Abram's battle to rescue Lot, and those under treaty with him had to accompany him.

14:4 *King Kedorlaomer* apparently defeated the Siddim Valley kings at

14:15
Gen 15:2
14:17
2 Sam 18:18
14:18
Ps 76:2; 110:4
Heb 5:6, 10; 7:1
*kohen (3548)
† Exod 18:1
14:19
Gen 27:25; 48:9
Mark 10:16
14:20
Gen 9:26; 24:27
*Heb 7:1-2
† Elyon (5945)
† Num 24:16
† ma'aser (4643)
† Lev 27:30

Lot had been captured, he mobilized the 318 trained men who had been born into his household. Then he pursued Kedorlaomer's army until he caught up with them at Dan. 15 There he divided his men and attacked during the night. Kedorlaomer's army fled, but Abram chased them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. 16 Abram recovered all the goods that had been taken, and he brought back his nephew Lot with his possessions and all the women and other captives.

Melchizedek Blesses Abram

17 After Abram returned from his victory over Kedorlaomer and all his allies, the king of Sodom went out to meet him in the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).

18 And Melchizedek, the king of Salem and a priest of God Most High, brought Abram some bread and wine. 19 Melchizedek blessed Abram with this blessing:

“Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth.
20 And blessed be God Most High, who has defeated your enemies for you.”

Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the goods he had recovered.

Abram Rejects Sodom's Goods (14:21-24)

21 The king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give back my people who were captured. But you may keep for yourself all the goods you have recovered.”



◀ **Abram in Canaan (12:1–25:11).** Abram probably entered CANAAN by following the King's Highway—an ancient and well-traveled route that ran just east of Canaan. Philistines had already begun settling along the coast (PHILISTIA; see 10:14; 21:32-34; 26:1-18). Some Canaanite settlements (JERICHO, MEGIDDO, HAZAZON-TAMAR=En-gedi) were very old by this time. Within Canaan, Abram traveled southward along the central ridge of the hill country, building altars at OAK OF MOREH (= Shechem, 12:6-7; see 33:18-19), BETHEL (12:8; 13:3; see 28:10-22; 35:1-15), MOUNT MORIAH (22:1-19), OAKS OF MAMRE (= HEBRON, 13:18; see 23:2), and BEERSHEBA (21:22-34; see 26:23-25; 46:1-7). Lot unwisely chose his portion in SODOM (13:10-13; see 18:16–19:29).

14:15 Damascus was 40 miles north of Dan. *Hobah* was about 60 miles north of Damascus.

14:17 The valley of *Shaveh* or *King's Valley* was probably the Kidron Valley (see 2 Sam 18:18).

14:18 *Melchizedek* means “king of righteousness,” suggesting that he was a righteous servant of God. He was probably a Jebusite priest and king; later authors regarded him as a type of Christ (Ps 110:4; Heb 7:1-19). • *Salem* is Jerusalem (cp. Ps 76:2). • *God Most High*: Hebrew *El-Elyon*; also in 14:19, 20, 22.

14:19-20 By paying a tithe (*a tenth*) to Melchizedek, Abram acknowledged Melchizedek as a spiritual superior (see Heb 7:4) and affirmed that God had given him victory.

14:21-24 Abram knew that accepting the offer of the *king of Sodom* (see note on 14:1-2) could make him his ally or subject, as Lot had been. This would jeopardize the fulfillment of God's promises. Faith looks beyond the riches of the world to the greater blessings that God has in store.

about 150 miles north of Abram's home in Hebron, then named Laish or Leshem (see Josh 19:47 and note; Judg 18:29). Dan, whose descendants migrated north

in the days of the judges (Judg 18:1-29), had not yet been born (30:6). An editor apparently updated the text so that later readers could identify this city.

²²Abram replied to the king of Sodom, “I solemnly swear to the LORD, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, ²³that I will not take so much as a single thread or sandal thong from what belongs to you. Otherwise you might say, ‘I am the one who made Abram rich.’ ²⁴I will accept only what my young warriors have already eaten, and I request that you give a fair share of the goods to my allies—Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre.”

The Lord’s Covenant Promise to Abram (15:1-21)

15 Some time later, the LORD spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, “Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will ^fprotect you, and your reward will be great.”

²But Abram replied, “O Sovereign LORD, what good are all your blessings when I don’t even have a son? Since you’ve given me no children, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth. ³You have given me no descendants of my own, so one of my servants will be my heir.”

⁴Then the LORD said to him, “No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own who will be your heir.” ⁵Then the LORD took Abram outside and said to him, “Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That’s how many descendants you will have!”

⁶And Abram ^hbelieved the LORD, and the LORD counted him as righteous because of his faith.

14:22
Gen 1:1
14:23
2 Kgs 5:16
15:1
Gen 21:17-18; 26:24
Ps 3:3
^fmagen (4043)
Deut 33:29
15:2
^gadonay Yahweh (0136, 3068)
Deut 3:24
15:4
Gal 4:28
15:5
Gen 12:2; 22:17; 32:12
Rom 4:18
15:6
Ps 106:31
Rom 4:3, 9, 22
Gal 3:6
^haman (0539)
Gen 45:26

MELCHIZEDEK (14:17-24)

Ps 110:4
Heb 5:6-10;
6:20-7:28

Melchizedek is a mysterious biblical personality whose name means “king of righteousness.” He was a Canaanite priest and king; there is no record of his family or of the beginning or end of his life.

Abraham met Melchizedek after defeating four Mesopotamian kings. The Mesopotamians had raided Sodom and Gomorrah and captured Abraham’s nephew Lot (14:1-16). When Abraham returned from battle, Melchizedek, king of Salem (=Jerusalem; see note on Ps 76:2), was with the grateful kings of the Dead Sea confederacy. When Melchizedek gave Abraham bread, wine, and his blessing, he was acting as “a priest of God Most High” (14:18), the true God who created heaven and earth (see Ps 7:17; 47:2; 57:2; 78:56). Melchizedek correctly understood that Abraham worshiped the true God (14:22), and he praised God for giving victory to Abraham. Abraham received Melchizedek’s gifts and gave him his tithe, thus recognizing Melchizedek’s higher spiritual rank as a patriarchal priest (see Heb 7:4-7).

Melchizedek is an unusual figure in Genesis, which gives genealogies for its other characters. Melchizedek appears without any such record, and as quickly disappears. Much later in Israel’s history, King David was perhaps reflecting on this when he said that the Messiah is “a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek” (Ps 110:4; cp. Heb 7:15-25). The book of Hebrews explains this statement, saying that Melchizedek is remembered as “resembling the Son of God” (Heb 7:3), but was not himself the Son of God. His priesthood lasts forever as an archetype that prefigures the Messiah’s priesthood. Like Melchizedek (but unlike the kings of Israel), Jesus is a king who also fulfills priestly functions.

Melchizedek, a royal priest, was superior to Levi, the ancestor of Israel’s priests. In the same way, the Messiah, Jesus Christ, is a better priest than the descendants of Aaron. Jesus provides permanent atonement for sins and direct access to his Father through his name (Heb 7:24-28). He guides his people by the Spirit rather than by law (Heb 8:7-13) and lives forever as priest and king for those who trust in him.

14:22 In the words of this oath, Abram may have been clarifying that his God, *the LORD (Yahweh)*, was the *God Most High* that Melchizedek invoked. Perhaps Melchizedek had never heard the name *Yahweh*.

15:1-21 The Lord made a formal covenant with Abram, solemnly confirming the promises made at his call (12:1-3). There would be a long period of slavery for Abram’s descendants before these promises would be completely fulfilled.

15:1 *Do not be afraid:* Abram lacked a son to be his heir. The Lord addressed Abram’s anxiety about the future with comforting words. • *I will protect you* (literally *I will be your shield*): The Hebrew word for “shield” (*magen*) is from the same root as Melchizedek’s word *defeated* (14:20). The Lord who had defeated Abram’s enemies would continue to protect him. • *your reward will be great:* The promise of offspring (12:2-3; cp. Ps 127:3) was still unfulfilled.

15:2-3 Using a wordplay, *Abram* expressed his concern that *Eliezer of Damascus* (Hebrew *dammeseq*), a man in Abram’s household, would be his *heir* (Hebrew *ben-mesheq*, “son of possession”), as was customary when there was no son.

15:4-6 God affirmed that the promise was for Abram’s own offspring and showed him the stars as a promise of the vast number of descendants that he would have (22:17; 26:4). Paul quotes

15:7
Gen 12:1; 13:17
Acts 7:2-4

15:8
Luke 1:18

15:10
Lev 1:17

15:12
Gen 2:21; 28:11

15:13
Exod 12:40

^aActs 7:6
Gal 3:17

15:14
Exod 6:5

15:15
Gen 25:8

15:16
Exod 12:40

⁷Then the LORD told him, "I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land as your possession."

⁸But Abram replied, "O Sovereign LORD, how can I be sure that I will actually possess it?"

⁹The LORD told him, "Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon."¹⁰So Abram presented all these to him and killed them. Then he cut each animal down the middle and laid the halves side by side; he did not, however, cut the birds in half. ¹¹Some vultures swooped

down to eat the carcasses, but Abram chased them away.

¹²As the sun was going down, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a terrifying darkness came down over him. ¹³Then the LORD said to Abram, "You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, where they will be oppressed as slaves for 400 years. ¹⁴But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and in the end they will come away with great wealth. ¹⁵(As for you, you will die in peace and be buried at a ripe old age.) ¹⁶After four generations your descendants will return here to this land, for

God's Covenant with Abraham (15:1-21)

Gen 12:1-3; 17:1-14;
21:1-2; 22:15-18
Exod 2:24
Deut 1:8
Neh 9:7-8
Ps 105:7-45
Luke 3:7-9
Acts 3:24-26; 7:2-8
Rom 4:11-25; 9:7-8;
11:16-17
Gal 3:6-9; 3:29
Heb 6:13-15

The Lord had already established a relationship with Abraham (12:1-9) before he made a formal covenant with him (ch 15). God took all the initiative: He approached Abraham and spoke to him in a vision. God presented the impossible promise that the old man would have a son through whom his descendants would eventually be as numerous as the stars of heaven. Abraham believed God (15:6), and his faith proved to be an act of righteousness—faith is righteousness, and faith produces righteousness in covenant relationship with God (see Hab 2:4; Rom 1:17; 4:3, 17; Gal 3:6, 11; Heb 10:37-38). The covenant of ch 15 includes a royal grant (15:18-21) in which God, the king, gave land to Abraham, his subject, as a possession and an inheritance. (In the ancient Near East, kings sometimes granted land or other gifts to loyal subjects.) At the end of that day, Abraham knew that his own and his descendants' future was firmly in the hands of the covenant God. Later, the grant would be transferred to his descendants.

God later ratified his covenant with Abraham (17:1-22), giving him circumcision as its sign (17:10) and condition (17:4, 9). The almighty God once again took the initiative (17:1) in granting Abraham an extraordinary privilege. The covenant was not a relationship between equals, yet both partners in the covenant assumed responsibilities. God committed himself voluntarily to Abraham and his descendants, while requiring faithfulness from Abraham (17:1, 9-14). The blessing Abraham received as God's covenant partner was embodied in the new name that God gave him (17:5-6).

God's family covenant with Abraham also applied to his descendants (13:15-16; 15:3-5; 17:6-10). It pointed to blessing in the relatively near future when his descendants would possess the land (15:12-16). Much later, Abraham's faith became a blessing to all through his descendant, Jesus Christ, through whom all the families of the earth can share in God's blessing on Abraham (12:3; see Rom 4:11-25; Gal 3:8-9, 16).

this promise in Rom 4:18 to underscore the strength of Abram's faith.

15:6 *And Abram believed:* God made his covenant with a believer; the statement does not indicate when Abram came to faith. The Hebrew text does not link Abram's belief with the promise of the stars; it just says parenthetically that Abram believed God. Abram already had faith; his departure from Ur was his first great act that demonstrated it (see Heb 11:8-10). • God *counted him as righteous because of his faith:* This central statement about Abram's saving faith is quoted three times in the NT (Rom 4:3, 22-23; Gal 3:6; Jas 2:23) to support the doctrine of righteousness before God by faith.

15:7-21 With a solemn ceremony, God made a binding covenant with Abram that guaranteed the fulfillment of God's promises to him.

15:10 Obeying God's instructions, *Abram* gathered three herd animals for the ceremony and *cut them in half*. Cutting the animals symbolized the oath, indicating that the covenant maker staked his own life on his word (Jer 34:18).

15:11 *Vultures* are unclean birds of prey that symbolize those who unjustly attack Abraham's heirs (15:13-14).

15:13-16 Not even *400 years* of bondage could interfere with God's plan to fulfill the covenant.

15:13 *oppressed:* The same word is used in Exod 1:11-12. Egypt, like predatory

birds (15:11), would try to destroy Israel and hinder the covenant's fulfillment.

• Apparently *400 years* is a round number (also Acts 7:6; cp. Exod 12:40; Gal 3:17). Using the chronology in the Hebrew text, the family moved to Egypt around 1876 BC, and the Exodus occurred around 1446 BC (though many scholars date the Exodus later, around 1270 BC; see "Chronology: Abraham to Joshua," p. 118).

15:16 The reasons for Israel's bondage included God's justice. God would tolerate *the sins of the Amorites* until they fully deserved judgment. • *do not yet warrant their destruction* (literally *are not yet full*): To give the Promised Land to Israel, the Lord would dispossess the land's inhabitants in a way that satisfied

the sins of the Amorites do not yet warrant their destruction.”

¹⁷After the sun went down and darkness fell, Abram saw a smoking firepot and a flaming torch pass between the halves of the carcasses. ¹⁸So the LORD made a ⁱcovenant with Abram that day and said, “I have given this land to your descendants, all the way from the border of Egypt to the great Euphrates River—¹⁹the land now occupied by the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, ²⁰Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, ²¹Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites.”

God Provides the Promised Offspring

(16:1–22:19)

Hagar and Ishmael

16 Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had not been able to bear children for him. But she had an Egyptian servant named

Hagar. ²So Sarai said to Abram, “The LORD has prevented me from having children. Go and sleep with my servant. Perhaps I can have children through her.” And Abram agreed with Sarai’s proposal. ³So Sarai, Abram’s wife, took Hagar the Egyptian servant and gave her to Abram as a wife. (This happened ten years after Abram had settled in the land of Canaan.)

⁴So Abram had sexual relations with Hagar, and she became pregnant. But when Hagar knew she was pregnant, she began to treat her mistress, Sarai, with contempt. ⁵Then Sarai said to Abram, “This is all your fault! I put my servant into your arms, but now that she’s pregnant she treats me with contempt. The LORD will show who’s wrong— you or me!”

⁶Abram replied, “Look, she is your servant,

15:17
Jer 34:18-19

15:18
Num 34:1-15
Deut 1:7-8
berith (1285)
• Gen 17:2
’erets (0776)
• Gen 28:13

15:19
Num 24:21

15:21
Gen 10:15-16

16:1
Gen 11:30
Gal 4:24-25

16:2
Gen 30:3

16:3
Gen 12:4-5

16:4
Gen 16:15

16:5
Gen 31:53

16:7
Gen 21:17; 22:11, 15

HAGAR (16:1-16)

Gen 21:9-21; 25:12
Gal 4:22-31

Hagar was the Egyptian servant of Sarai, Abram’s wife. When God commanded Abram to leave Mesopotamia, he promised him a multitude of descendants who would be given a new land (12:2, 7). After ten childless years in Canaan, Sarai followed the customary Mesopotamian strategy of giving Hagar to Abram as his concubine; any son born of the union of husband and concubine was considered the wife’s child (cp. 30:1-6). Hagar bore a son, Ishmael (16:1-16; 21:9-21).

Hagar was so disrespectful to Sarai during her pregnancy (16:4-6) that Sarai dealt harshly with her and Hagar fled into the desert. The angel of the Lord appeared to her at a desert well, telling her to return to Abram’s house and submit to Sarai.

Ishmael was born when Abram was eighty-six years old. Fourteen years later, God gave Abraham and Sarah their promised son, Isaac. When Isaac was weaned (at about three years), a traditional feast was held. At this event, Ishmael mocked Isaac (21:9), so Sarah insisted that Abraham send Hagar and Ishmael away. God confirmed this (21:12), so Hagar and Ishmael wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. When their water was gone, God miraculously rescued them and assured Hagar that Ishmael would father a great nation (21:17-19).

Paul made an analogy (Gal 4:22-31) in which Hagar “represents Mount Sinai,” where the old covenant was formed, while Sarah “represents the heavenly Jerusalem,” the community of those who receive salvation by faith in Christ. As Isaac was Abraham’s son by faith in the divine promise, Christians who are free of the law are spiritual children of Sarah.

his justice. The fulfillment of promises to Israel also brought retributive judgment on people of the land (though individuals were saved by faith; see Josh 2:1-15; 6:23-25; Heb 11:31; Jas 2:25). Until then, God would send the family to Egypt where Israel could become a great nation. Seeing all this in advance was terrifying (15:12), but it was comforting to know that nothing could interfere with God’s plan.

15:17-18 smoking firepot . . . flaming torch: Fire represented the Lord’s cleansing, consuming zeal and unapproachable holiness (cp. Isa 6:3-7). The holy God *made* (literally *cut*) a unilateral covenant with Abram; its promises were absolutely sure because they did not

depend on what Abram or his descendants might do.

15:18-19 God specified the boundaries of the Promised Land. His clear message to Abram was that despite prospects of death and suffering (enslavement), he and his descendants would eventually receive the promises, for God had sworn an oath (see Heb 6:13-14). Nothing can separate God’s people from his love or the fulfillment of his plans (see Rom 8:18-39; 2 Pet 1:3-4). • **the border of Egypt:** Literally *the river of Egypt*, referring either to an eastern branch of the Nile River or to the Brook of Egypt in the Sinai (see Num 34:5).

16:1-16 While waiting for their prom-

ised son to be born, Abram and Sarai attempted an alternate plan that was not in keeping with faith.

16:1-3 Abram and Sarai faced the tension of her being barren and beyond childbearing years. By custom, a barren woman could give her servant to her husband as a slave-wife; the child born to that union was considered the wife’s child and could be adopted as the heir. Sarai’s suggestion, unobjectionable by custom, set a problematic human plan in motion. God’s promises would be fulfilled by faith.

16:4-6 Perhaps *Hagar* expected to become the favored wife instead of *Sarai* (cp. Prov 30:21-23).

^hmal'ak (4397)

• Gen 19:1

16:8

Gen 3:9; 4:9

16:9

Gen 21:12

Eph 6:5

16:10

Gen 17:20

16:11

Gen 16:15

Exod 3:7-8

16:12

Job 39:5-8

16:13

Gen 32:30

16:14

Gen 14:7

16:15

Gen 21:9; 25:12

16:16

Gen 12:4; 16:3

so deal with her as you see fit." Then Sarai treated Hagar so harshly that she finally ran away.

⁷The ^kangel of the LORD found Hagar beside a spring of water in the wilderness, along the road to Shur. ⁸The angel said to her, "Hagar, Sarai's servant, where have you come from, and where are you going?"

"I'm running away from my mistress, Sarai," she replied.

⁹The angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit to her authority." ¹⁰Then he added, "I will give you more descendants than you can count."

¹¹And the angel also said, "You are now pregnant and will give birth to a son. You are to name him Ishmael (which means

'God hears'), for the LORD has heard your cry of distress. ¹²This son of yours will be a wild man, as untamed as a wild donkey! He will raise his fist against everyone, and everyone will be against him. Yes, he will live in open hostility against all his relatives."

¹³Thereafter, Hagar used another name to refer to the LORD, who had spoken to her. She said, "You are the God who sees me." She also said, "Have I truly seen the One who sees me?" ¹⁴So that well was named Beer-lahai-roi (which means "well of the Living One who sees me"). It can still be found between Kadesh and Bered.

¹⁵So Hagar gave Abram a son, and Abram named him Ishmael. ¹⁶Abram was eighty-six years old when Ishmael was born.

ISHMAEL (16:11-16)

Gen 17:18-26; 21:8-

21; 25:9-18; 28:9

Gal 4:21-31

Ishmael was Abraham's first son, born of Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian servant. The boy was born near Hebron when Abraham was 86 years old (13:18; 16:16). God had promised to make a great nation of the childless Abraham (12:2) and assured him that his son would be his heir (15:4). Ishmael was born in Abraham's attempt to fulfill God's promise by human means (see 16:1-16; Gal 4:23), but God would accomplish this through Sarah (see 17:15-18:15; 21:1-7).

When God announced that Sarah would have a son to fulfill the promise (17:15-16), Abraham asked God to accept Ishmael (17:17-18). Ishmael was not the promised son—the covenant would be established with Isaac (17:19)—but God did bless Ishmael and make him the father of a great nation (17:20-21).

At age thirteen, Ishmael was circumcised in witness to God's covenant with Abraham (17:9-14, 22-27). Then, at Isaac's weaning celebration (when Ishmael was about seventeen), Ishmael made fun of Isaac (21:9), and Abraham sent Ishmael and Hagar away with provisions. The angel of God helped Hagar survive in the wilderness, and Ishmael became a wild game hunter. He settled in the wilderness of Paran and married an Egyptian woman (21:20-21). He assisted in Abraham's burial (25:9-10), gave his daughter Mahalath in marriage to Esau (28:9), and died at age 137 (25:17). His twelve sons are named in 25:13-15.

Paul alluded to Ishmael when urging the Galatians to put their faith in God rather than in the law (see Gal 4:21-31). Those who trust the law will not inherit the kingdom, just as the slave woman's son did not inherit with the son of the free woman (Gal 4:30).

16:7 *The angel of the LORD* was the Lord himself (16:13; 21:17; 22:11-12; 31:11-13; 48:16; Exod 3:2; 32:34; Judg 6:11, 16, 22; 13:22-23; Zech 3:1-2), but was also distinct from the Lord (24:7; 2 Sam 24:16; Zech 1:12). The angel of the LORD was probably a *theophany* (a manifestation of God) or a *Christophany* (an appearance of the pre-incarnate Messiah; see 18:1-2; 19:1; Num 22:22; Judg 2:1-4; 5:23; Zech 12:8), speaking with the authority of the Lord himself.

16:8-12 The angel's rhetorical questions encouraged *Hagar* to pour out her heart to God. When she did, God commanded her to *return* and *submit* (16:9), promising that her son would have innumerable descendants. The angel of the Lord never referred to Hagar as Abram's wife, only as Sarai's servant. She would have Abram's child, but *Ishmael* was not

central to God's covenant with Abram.

16:10-12 Hagar's son would become the father of a great but wild and hostile nation living in the Arabian Desert as perennial enemies of Israel (cp. 25:18). God blessed *Ishmael* as Abram's descendant, but not as the line chosen to carry on the covenant. That blessing was reserved for Abram's chosen heir.

16:11 Names in Genesis often capture the message of a passage and aid the remembrance of the events and their significance in the history of the faith. The name *Ishmael*, which means "*God hears*," commemorates that *the LORD . . . heard Hagar's cry of distress* (see also note on 16:14-15). This name would have greatly comforted Hagar; God listened to her prayers and acknowledged her complaint.

16:13 Hagar responded to God's mes-

sages by faith, in her words and in her obedience. • *the God who sees me* (Hebrew *El-roi*): God knew Hagar's plight and watched over her.

16:14-15 The names *Beer-lahai-roi*, which means "*well of the Living One who sees me*," and *Ishmael* (see 16:11) were a message and a rebuke for Abram and Sarai. God sees affliction and hears the cries of those in need. Sarai and Abram should have prayed rather than taking the fulfillment of the promise into their own hands by following social custom (cp. 25:21). Giving children to the barren woman is God's work (Ps 113:9; cp. 1 Sam 1:1-28; Luke 1:1-25); impossible difficulties cannot be resolved by human intervention. The Lord hears the afflicted, sees them in their need, and will miraculously provide for them.

*The Covenant Confirmed:
Abram Is Named Abraham*

17When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am El-Shaddai—‘God ^aAlmighty.’ Serve me faithfully and live a ^bblameless life. ²I will make a ^ccovenant with you, by which I will guarantee to give you countless descendants.”

³At this, Abram fell face down on the ground. Then God said to him, ⁴“This is

my covenant with you: I will make you the father of a multitude of nations! ⁵What’s more, I am changing your name. It will no longer be Abram. Instead, you will be called Abraham, for you will be the father of many nations. ⁶I will make you extremely fruitful. Your descendants will become many nations, and kings will be among them!

⁷“I will confirm my covenant with you and your descendants after you, from generation to generation. This is the everlasting

17:1
Gen 12:7; 28:3; 35:11; 48:3
Deut 18:13
Matt 5:48
^a*shadday* (7706)
• Gen 28:3
^b*tamim* (8549)
• Exod 12:5
17:2
Gen 12:2; 15:18
^c*berith* (1285)
• Exod 19:5
17:3
Gen 17:17; 18:2

Circumcision (17:9-14)

Gen 17:23-27; 21:4; 34:1-26
Exod 4:24-26; 12:48
Lev 12:3
Josh 5:2-8
Jer 9:25-26
Ezek 44:7-9
Luke 1:59; 2:21
Acts 15:1-31; 16:1-5
Rom 2:25-29
1 Cor 7:17-19
Gal 5:1-6; 5:11-12; 6:12-16
Eph 2:11-18
Phil 3:2-7
Col 2:11; 3:11

Circumcision is the removal of the male foreskin. It was practiced by some cultures in the ancient world (see Jer 9:25-26); the Bible uses it to symbolize the removal of sin and an old identity, accompanied by inclusion in the covenant community.

God chose circumcision as the sign of a covenant that focuses on descendants. God had promised to make Abraham and his descendants into a great nation (17:7, 13, 19) and to use them to redeem the Gentile nations (12:3; 17:4-6; see Gal 3:8-9). Circumcision was God’s signature in flesh; it would identify Abraham and his descendants as God’s own people (17:9-14) and remind them to live in faithfulness to the covenant.

Although circumcision was applied to adult males when they joined the covenant community (17:23-27; Exod 12:48; Josh 5:3-7), it was usually performed on infants (21:4; Lev 12:3), who received God’s promises and membership in the covenant community through their parents. Faith was required in order to receive God’s blessings, however, as can be seen in the differentiation between Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, and Joseph and his brothers. Non-Israelites could also obligate themselves to Israel’s covenant (Exod 12:48; cp. Gen 34:15-24); circumcision marked their inclusion into the worshiping community (e.g., Exod 12:44).

Circumcision would help Israel recognize and remember that they must lay aside natural impurity. God’s people had to be loyal to the covenant, to the family, and to their own marriages. Intermarriage with uncircumcised people who were not of the covenant was a violation of the covenant. Any man who refused to be circumcised (cut physically in this symbolic way) would be cut off from the covenant people because of his disobedience to God’s command (17:14).

Circumcision is a symbol of separation from the world, of purity, and of loyalty to the covenant. It provides the powerful metaphor of “circumcision of the heart,” which designates a heart that is committed to God and is inwardly set apart to God, rather than being stubbornly resistant (Jer 9:26; Lev 26:41; Deut 30:6; Jer 4:4; Eph 2:11). Circumcision of the heart evidences salvation and fellowship with God (see Ezek 18:31-32; 36:25-27; Rom 2:28-29; 4:11).

When Jesus Christ established God’s new covenant, he fulfilled the requirements of the old covenant, so a new sign was given to identify members of the covenant community. Thus baptism replaces circumcision, and it too must be accompanied by faith. It is not necessary for Gentile believers to be circumcised, since they are incorporated into the people of God through faith in Christ (Acts 15:1-29; Rom 2:25-29; Gal 2:1-10; 6:15; Col 2:11-12). One must turn in confidence to God and his promises, lay aside natural strength and the customs of the world, and live a new life by faith (see Jer 31:33-34; Rom 8:1-17; Gal 5:16–6:10).

17:1-27 God now gave the family signs that the promises would be fulfilled. He changed Abram’s name to Abraham (17:1-8), instituted the rite of circumcision as the sign of the covenant (17:9-14, 23-27), and changed Sarai’s name to Sarah (17:15-22).

17:1 *El-Shaddai*: This name for God emphasizes his power (see also 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; 49:25). • *Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life*: Being a bless-

ing to the nations required obedience from Abram; his conduct would be guided by Almighty God.

17:4-5 God guaranteed his promise by changing Abram’s name. *Abram* means “exalted father”; *Abraham* sounds like a Hebrew term that means “father of many” (*ab hamon*). “Abram” referred to his noble lineage, as Terah was the “exalted father” (11:27). His new name was a wordplay on the promise of his

own progeny (see also John 8:31-59; Rom 4:16-17; Gal 3:7, 15-19, 29). Whenever the new name was used, he and his household would remember that a multitude of nations would issue from him.

17:6 *kings will be among them!* This is the first indication that Israel would become a monarchy (see also 35:11; 36:31; Num 24:7; Deut 17:14-18; 28:36).

17:7-8 The land of Canaan was to be an

17:5

Neh 9:7

*Rom 4:17

17:6

Gen 35:11

17:7

Gen 15:18

Lev 11:45; 26:12

Ps 105:8-11

*Gal 3:16

17:9

Exod 19:5

17:10

John 7:22

Acts 7:8

17:11

Exod 12:48

Josh 5:2

17:12

Gen 21:4

Lev 12:3

Luke 1:59; 2:21

17:14

Exod 30:33

Lev 7:20

17:15

Gen 17:5

17:16

Gen 18:10

17:17

Gen 17:3; 18:11-13

covenant: I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you. ⁸And I will give the entire land of Canaan, where you now live as a foreigner, to you and your descendants. It will be their possession forever, and I will be their God."

The Mark of the Covenant

⁹Then God said to Abraham, "Your responsibility is to obey the terms of the covenant. You and all your descendants have this continual responsibility. ¹⁰This is the covenant that you and your descendants must keep: Each male among you must be circumcised. ¹¹You must cut off the flesh of your foreskin as a sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹²From generation to generation, every male child must be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. This applies not only to members of your family but also to the servants born in your household and the foreign-born servants whom you have purchased. ¹³All must be

circumcised. Your bodies will bear the mark of my everlasting covenant. ¹⁴Any male who fails to be circumcised will be cut off from the covenant family for breaking the covenant."

The Promise Affirmed:

Sarai Is Named Sarah

¹⁵Then God said to Abraham, "Regarding Sarai, your wife—her name will no longer be Sarai. From now on her name will be Sarah. ¹⁶And I will bless her and give you a son from her! Yes, I will bless her richly, and she will become the mother of many nations. Kings of nations will be among her descendants."

¹⁷Then Abraham bowed down to the ground, but he laughed to himself in disbelief. "How could I become a father at the age of 100?" he thought. "And how can Sarah have a baby when she is ninety years old?" ¹⁸So Abraham said to God, "May Ishmael live under your special blessing!"

SARAH (17:15-22)

Gen 11:29-31;
12:10-20; 16:1-6;
18:10-15; 21:1-10;
23:1-2
Isa 51:2
Rom 4:19; 9:9
Gal 4:21-31
Heb 11:11-12
1 Pet 3:6

Sarah is among the women in Scripture who were barren but miraculously bore a son (see also 30:22-24; 1 Sam 1:11, 19-20; 2 Kgs 4:14-17; Luke 1:5-25). Because Sarah was ninety years old when this happened (cp. 17:17; 21:1-5), she testifies to God's ability to do what is humanly impossible. She was Abraham's wife and the mother of Isaac, through whom God promised to multiply the Israelite nation (12:2; 17:19). Jesus was born from her descendants. Her name Sarai was changed to Sarah when Isaac's birth was promised (see note on 17:15-16). Sarah is honored for her faithfulness, even though she laughed at the prediction of Isaac's birth (18:10-15), twenty-five years after God's original promise to Abraham.

Sarah was also Abraham's half sister (11:29; 20:12). Sarah accompanied Abraham from Ur to Haran to Canaan (11:31; 12:5). On two occasions, in Egypt (12:10-20) and Gerar (20:1-18), Abraham asked Sarah to say that she was his sister rather than his wife because he was afraid that he would be killed as her husband. In both cases, despite Abraham's lack of faith, God protected Sarah, preserving her as Isaac's mother and preventing any doubt as to who Isaac's father was when he was born (21:1-5) about a year after his birth was promised (17:21; 18:10-14). God thus preserved his chosen line.

Sarah died at age 127 and was buried in the cave that Abraham purchased (ch 23) at Machpelah. She is known as the mother of the nation of Israel (Isa 51:2), just as Abraham is its father. She is a key player in accounts of Abraham's faith (Rom 4:19). She represents the freedom that Christians have, as children of Sarah the free woman, through faith in Christ (see Gal 4:21-31). Peter cites her as an example of holy submission (1 Pet 3:6). Sarah believed in God's ability to keep his promises, and her life shows that he does (Rom 9:6-9; Heb 11:11-12).

everlasting possession for the descendants of Abraham; the Lord would be their *God* forever (see Jer 31:31-40; Zech 8:8; Luke 1:68-79; Rev 21:1-4).

17:7 descendants: Literally *seed*; also in 17:8, 9, 10, 19.

17:9-14 God gave circumcision as a confirming sign that reminded all households of loyalty to *the covenant*.

17:14 will be cut off: This punishment seems to have several applications. A

person could be exiled from society or put to death by the community; most often it warned that a person might die prematurely as God cut him off from the land of the living (see Exod 31:14; Lev 7:20-27; 17:3-4; 20:17-18; 23:28-29; Num 15:30-31; see also Ps 31:22; Ezek 21:4; Rom 9:3; 11:22). Failure to be circumcised was a serious violation (see Exod 4:24-26; cp. Gal 5:2-4).

17:15-16 Sarai and Sarah both mean "princess"; the change in spelling may

reflect the difference in dialect between Ur and Canaan. The new name, fitting for one who would be the mother of kings, was a milestone in Sarah's calling and brought attention to the promise.

17:17-18 Abraham *laughed* (Hebrew *yitskhaq*) because the promise seemed unbelievable; he had begun to believe that his line would come through *Ishmael*. But Abraham and Sarah would have a son of their own.

¹⁹But God replied, “No—Sarah, your wife, will give birth to a son for you. You will name him Isaac, and I will confirm my covenant with him and his descendants as an everlasting covenant. ²⁰As for Ishmael, I will bless him also, just as you have asked. I will make him extremely fruitful and multiply his descendants. He will become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. ²¹But my covenant will be confirmed with Isaac, who will be born to you and Sarah about this time next year.” ²²When God had finished speaking, he left Abraham.

Abraham Accepts the Covenant

²³On that very day Abraham took his son, Ishmael, and every male in his household, including those born there and those he had bought. Then he circumcised them, cutting off their foreskins, just as God had told him. ²⁴Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised, ²⁵and Ishmael, his son, was thirteen. ²⁶Both Abraham and his son, Ishmael, were circumcised on that same day, ²⁷along with all the other men and boys of the household, whether they were born there or bought as servants. All were circumcised with him.

A Son Is Promised to Sarah

18 The LORD appeared again to Abraham near the oak grove belonging to Mamre. One day Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent during the hottest part of the day. ²He looked up and noticed three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he ran to meet them and welcomed them, bowing low to the ground.

³“My lord,” he said, “if it pleases you, stop here for a while. ⁴Rest in the shade of this tree while water is brought to wash your feet. ⁵And since you’ve honored your servant with this visit, let me prepare some food to refresh you before you continue on your journey.”

“All right,” they said. “Do as you have said.”

⁶So Abraham ran back to the tent and said to Sarah, “Hurry! Get three large measures of your best flour, knead it into dough, and bake some bread.” ⁷Then Abraham ran out to the herd and chose a tender calf and gave it to his servant, who quickly prepared it. ⁸When the food was ready, Abraham took some yogurt and milk and the roasted meat, and he served it to the men. As they ate, Abraham waited on them in the shade of the trees.

⁹“Where is Sarah, your wife?” the visitors asked.

“She’s inside the tent,” Abraham replied.

¹⁰Then one of them said, “I will return to you about this time next year, and your wife, Sarah, will have a son!”

Sarah was listening to this conversation from the tent. ¹¹Abraham and Sarah were both very old by this time, and Sarah was long past the age of having children. ¹²So she laughed silently to herself and said, “How could a worn-out woman like me enjoy such pleasure, especially when my master—my husband—is also so old?”

¹³Then the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, ‘Can an old woman like me have a baby?’ ¹⁴Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return

17:19
Gen 21:2; 26:2-5
17:20
Gen 25:12-16
17:21
Gen 18:10, 14
17:22
Gen 18:33; 35:13
17:23
Gen 14:14
17:24
Rom 4:11
17:25
Gen 16:16
18:1
Gen 12:7; 13:18
18:2
Gen 32:24
Josh 5:13
Judg 13:6-11
18:4
Gen 19:2; 24:32
18:5
Judg 6:18-19;
13:15-16
18:10
*Rom 9:9
18:11
Gen 17:17
18:12
1 Pet 3:6
18:14
Gen 18:10
Jer 32:17, 27
*Rom 9:9

17:19 The name *Isaac* means “he laughs” (Hebrew *yitskhaq*); it would constantly recall Abraham’s disbelieving laughter when he heard the promise. It was also a reminder of God’s favor and his pleasure in the birth (cp. 21:6).

17:20-21 *Ishmael* would not be abandoned; his family would prosper (see 25:13-16), but the *covenant* promises were for *Isaac*.

17:23-27 Having received God’s word about Isaac, Abraham immediately complied with God’s instructions. He implemented the rite of circumcision as an act of faith; it signified their participation in the covenant (cp. Rom 4:11-12; Gal 5:2-6, 11; 6:15; Phil 3:2-3; Col 2:11-12; 1 Pet 3:21).

18:1-15 The Lord’s visit to Abraham set the time for Isaac’s birth. The three visitors were probably the Lord and two angels (see note on 16:7). Abraham’s peaceful and generous reception of the

visitors contrasts sharply with the chaos and corruption of Sodom (ch 19). Eating together was important in making or confirming covenants; when God was ready to fulfill the covenant promise, he came in person to share a meal with Abraham. Fellowship with God has always been signified by a communal meal (see Exod 24:9-11; Matt 26:17-30 // Luke 22:7-38; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor 11:20-34). **18:2-8** Abraham received his visitors as very important guests, perhaps realizing that they were messengers from God.

18:3 *My lord*: The Hebrew text uses *’adonay* (“Lord”), the word that is usually reserved for God. In Hebrew tradition, it was spoken in places where the holy name Yahweh (the LORD) was in the text. Perhaps the text uses *’adonay* rather than the more common *’adoni* to show that this was the angel of the Lord—i.e., the Lord himself (see note on 16:7). We don’t know whether Abraham knew his

visitors’ identity at the outset, but by the story’s end Abraham certainly knew he had been talking with God.

18:6 *three large measures*: Hebrew *3 seahs*, about 15 quarts or 14 liters.

18:9 The visitors’ rhetorical question focuses attention on *Sarah*, whom the visitors knew by name.

18:10 *I will return*: The Hebrew verb means “to intervene in someone’s life to change their destiny.” The statement announced a coming dramatic change.

18:13-15 Sarah thought her disbelieving laughter was hidden, but God knows human hearts (see Ps 69:5; Prov 20:27; Mark 4:22; Luke 8:43-48; Heb 4:13), whether they stagger at the promises or step out in faith (see Heb 11:11-12).

18:14 *Is anything too hard for the LORD?* The question is rhetorical. God is able to do marvelous things. Nothing is incredible to those in covenant fellowship

18:16
Gen 18:22; 19:1

18:17
Gen 19:24

18:18
Gen 12:2-3
*Gal 3:18

18:19
Neh 9:7

18:20
Gen 19:13

18:21
Gen 11:5
Exod 3:8

18:22
Gen 18:16; 19:1

18:23
Exod 23:7

18:25
Deut 1:16-17; 32:4
Ps 58:11

^a*shapat* (8199)
↳ Exod 2:14
^b*mishpat* (4941)
↳ Ps 9:16

18:27
Gen 2:7
Job 30:19; 42:6

18:30
Exod 32:32

18:33
Gen 17:22; 35:13

19:1
Gen 18:2
^c*mal'ak* (4397)
↳ Gen 28:12

about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son."

¹⁵Sarah was afraid, so she denied it, saying, "I didn't laugh."

But the LORD said, "No, you did laugh."

Abraham Intercedes for Sodom

¹⁶Then the men got up from their meal and looked out toward Sodom. As they left, Abraham went with them to send them on their way.

¹⁷"Should I hide my plan from Abraham?" the LORD asked. ¹⁸"For Abraham will certainly become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him. ¹⁹I have singled him out so that he will direct his sons and their families to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just. Then I will do for Abraham all that I have promised."

²⁰So the LORD told Abraham, "I have heard a great outcry from Sodom and Gomorrah, because their sin is so flagrant. ²¹I am going down to see if their actions are as wicked as I have heard. If not, I want to know."

²²The other men turned and headed toward Sodom, but the LORD remained with Abraham. ²³Abraham approached him and said, "Will you sweep away both the righteous and the wicked? ²⁴Suppose you find fifty righteous people living there in the city—will you still sweep it away and not spare it for their sakes? ²⁵Surely you wouldn't do such a thing, destroying the righteous along with the wicked. Why, you would be treating the righteous and the wicked exactly the same! Surely you wouldn't do that! Should not the ^dJudge of all the earth do what is ^eright?"

²⁶And the LORD replied, "If I find fifty righteous people in Sodom, I will spare the entire city for their sake."

²⁷Then Abraham spoke again. "Since I have begun, let me speak further to my Lord, even though I am but dust and ashes. ²⁸Suppose there are only forty-five righteous people rather than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?"

And the LORD said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five righteous people there."

²⁹Then Abraham pressed his request further. "Suppose there are only forty?"

And the LORD replied, "I will not destroy it for the sake of the forty."

³⁰"Please don't be angry, my Lord," Abraham pleaded. "Let me speak—suppose only thirty righteous people are found?"

And the LORD replied, "I will not destroy it if I find thirty."

³¹Then Abraham said, "Since I have dared to speak to the Lord, let me continue—suppose there are only twenty?"

And the LORD replied, "Then I will not destroy it for the sake of the twenty."

³²Finally, Abraham said, "Lord, please don't be angry with me if I speak one more time. Suppose only ten are found there?"

And the LORD replied, "Then I will not destroy it for the sake of the ten."

³³When the LORD had finished his conversation with Abraham, he went on his way, and Abraham returned to his tent.

Sodom and Gomorrah Destroyed

19 That evening the two ^aangels came to the entrance of the city of Sodom. Lot was sitting there, and when he saw them,

with the Lord, because nothing is too difficult for him.

18:16-33 God took Abraham into his confidence as his prophet (18:16-21; see 20:7); Abraham, in turn, interceded for Sodom (18:23-32; see Heb 7:23-26). God is able to do whatever he chooses to do; this passage affirms that it will be just and right.

18:17-19 Abraham was responsible for teaching his descendants righteousness and justice so that they might enjoy God's blessings. It was important for Abraham to know how God's righteousness was at work in judgment.

18:20-21 The omniscient God was cautious in his judgment: He knew the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, but this close scrutiny communicated God's justice in human terms—he would not destroy the people of the plain unless he was absolutely sure they were wicked.

18:20 *a great outcry*: See Ezek 16:49-50.

18:22-33 Abraham probably thought there were more righteous people in Sodom and Gomorrah than there were (see note on 19:14). In his concern for them, he *approached* the Lord with a legal appeal based on God's justice. His prayer seems too bold at times, as though he were bargaining with God, but he approached God with genuine humility and reverence. He did not try to talk God into doing something against his will, but prayed for the well-being of others (contrast Lot's prayer, 19:18-23). God is a righteous judge; righteousness exalts a nation (Prov 14:34), and righteous people help to preserve society (cp. Matt 5:13).

19:1-38 The Canaanites were an evil, corrupting people. God judged their morally bankrupt civilization and warned others against becoming like them. It was difficult to get Lot and

his family out of Sodom; it was more difficult to get Sodom out of Lot and his family. This chapter helped later Israelites to understand the moral and spiritual threat of the peoples living in and around the Promised Land, such as the Canaanites and Lot's descendants, the Moabites and the Ammonites (see Num 22-25; Deut 23:3-6; Josh 24:9; Judg 10:7-9; 11:4-5; 1 Sam 10:27; 1 Kgs 11:1-3; 2 Kgs 24:2).

19:1-14 *The two angels* who were with the Lord at Mamre (cp. 18:2, 22) visited *Sodom* reluctantly, knowing what kind of people lived there. Despite Lot's hospitality, they preferred lodging in the square to entering Lot's house.

19:1 No longer living in tents next to Sodom (13:12), Lot had become a citizen and leader in Sodom, *sitting there* at the entrance of the city. Community leaders (elders) usually congregated in the gates, where legal and business

he stood up to meet them. Then he welcomed them and bowed with his face to the ground. ²“My lords,” he said, “come to my home to wash your feet, and be my guests for the night. You may then get up early in the morning and be on your way again.”

“Oh no,” they replied. “We’ll just spend the night out here in the city square.”

³But Lot insisted, so at last they went home with him. Lot prepared a feast for them, complete with fresh bread made without yeast, and they ate. ⁴But before they retired for the night, all the men of Sodom, young and old, came from all over the city and surrounded the house. ⁵They shouted to Lot, “Where are the men who came to spend the night with you? Bring them out to us so we can have sex with them!”

⁶So Lot stepped outside to talk to them,

shutting the door behind him. ⁷“Please, my brothers,” he begged, “don’t do such a wicked thing. ⁸Look, I have two virgin daughters. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do with them as you wish. But please, leave these men alone, for they are my guests and are under my protection.”

⁹“Stand back!” they shouted. “This fellow came to town as an outsider, and now he’s acting like our judge! We’ll treat you far worse than those other men!” And they lunged toward Lot to break down the door.

¹⁰But the two angels reached out, pulled Lot into the house, and bolted the door.

¹¹Then they blinded all the men, young and old, who were at the door of the house, so they gave up trying to get inside.

¹²Meanwhile, the angels questioned Lot. “Do you have any other relatives here in

19:2
Gen 18:4
19:3
Gen 18:6-8
19:4
Gen 13:13; 18:20
19:5
Lev 18:22
Judg 19:22
19:8
Deut 23:17
19:9
Exod 2:14
19:10
Gen 19:1
19:11
Deut 28:28-29
2 Kgs 6:18
Acts 13:11

LOT (19:1-38)

Gen 11:27, 31; 12:4-5; 13:1-14; 14:12-16
Deut 2:9; 17-19
Ps 83:4-8
Luke 17:28-33
2 Pet 2:6-9

Lot was Abraham’s nephew and the ancestor of the Moabites and Ammonites. Like Abraham, Lot was born in Ur and accompanied Terah to Haran (11:27-32). After Terah’s death, he joined Abraham in journeying to Canaan and Egypt.

When Lot and Abraham returned from Egypt to Canaan, their flocks and herds grew too numerous for them to live together. Abraham gave Lot his choice of land on which to settle. Lot chose the fertile plain of the Jordan that was like “the garden of the Lord” (13:10), and eventually he took up residence in Sodom. His increasing involvement with the completely corrupt cities of the plain contaminated Lot and resulted in the loss of all his wealth.

While Lot lived in Sodom, four Mesopotamian kings defeated the kings of five towns in the area; in the subsequent plundering, they carried off Lot, his family, and his possessions (14:1-12). When word of this reached Abraham, he launched a rearguard action against the invaders and recovered the prisoners and property (14:13-16). Later, two angelic visitors called on Lot in Sodom to hasten his departure from the doomed city (ch 19). The homosexual attack on the visitors illustrates the city’s depravity, and Lot’s willingness to sacrifice his daughters shows how corrupt and compromised he had become. Lot was reluctant to leave Sodom. No one but his immediate family accompanied him, and his wife was destroyed when she turned back. His daughters, despairing of finding husbands, got Lot drunk enough to have sexual relations with them. Their two sons, Moab and Ben-ammi, were ancestors of the Moabites and Ammonites (19:30-38), two nations that became inveterate enemies of Israel (see Deut 23:3-6).

Lot was a fool and a hypocrite to the people of the town, and on his journey out of Sodom he was still bargaining with God. His drunkenness and incest with his two daughters also reveals his character. Despite his waywardness, Peter declares that Lot was a “righteous man who was tormented in his soul by the wickedness he saw and heard day after day” (see 2 Pet 2:6-9).

transactions were publicly finalized (cp. 23:18; Job 29:7, 12-17). As a righteous man (2 Pet 2:7-8), Lot tried to modify the townspeople’s wickedness by giving advice on good living (cp. 19:9). Although he denounced gross evil, Lot preferred Sodom’s sumptuous lifestyle to life in the hills (cp. 13:10-11), where there was clean living but no “good life.” As long as the Lord left Lot and his family alone in Sodom, he lived comfort-

ably there and kept his personal belief in God; but finally, he could not hold to both. Sodom would have destroyed Lot if the Lord had not destroyed Sodom.

• This account showed Israel that God is the righteous judge of the whole earth (18:25) who will judge evildoers with justice and equity. In wicked societies, moral and ethical failures lead to social injustice.

19:4-5 The townspeople’s vileness was matched by Lot’s hypocrisy (19:6-9).

19:6-9 Lot opposed homosexuality and rape and rebuked their wicked plans,

but he was hypocritically willing to sacrifice his daughters to fend off the townspeople’s vice. Lot had originally pitched his tent next to Sodom; now Sodom controlled his life.

19:9 The men of the city were enraged by Lot’s attempts to curtail their wickedness. Lot had apparently not condemned them before, since they were amazed that he now judged them.

19:10 angels: Literally *men*; also in 19:12, 16. They first appeared to Abraham as men (18:2); the text identifies two of them as angels (19:1).

19:13

Gen 18:20
1 Chr 21:15
Jude 1:7

19:14

Exod 9:21
Jer 5:12; 43:1-2

19:17

Gen 13:10; 19:26
Jer 48:6

19:22

Gen 13:10

19:24

Luke 17:29
Jude 1:7

19:25

Deut 29:23
Isa 13:19
Lam 4:6
2 Pet 2:6

19:26

Gen 19:17
Luke 17:32

19:27

Gen 18:22

19:28

Rev 9:2

19:29

Deut 7:8; 9:5
2 Pet 2:7-8

19:30

Gen 13:10

the city?" they asked. "Get them out of this place—your sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone else. ¹³For we are about to destroy this city completely. The outcry against this place is so great it has reached the LORD, and he has sent us to destroy it."

¹⁴So Lot rushed out to tell his daughters' fiancés, "Quick, get out of the city! The LORD is about to destroy it." But the young men thought he was only joking.

¹⁵At dawn the next morning the angels became insistent. "Hurry," they said to Lot. "Take your wife and your two daughters who are here. Get out right now, or you will be swept away in the destruction of the city!"

¹⁶When Lot still hesitated, the angels seized his hand and the hands of his wife and two daughters and rushed them to safety outside the city, for the LORD was merciful. ¹⁷When they were safely out of the city, one of the angels ordered, "Run for your lives! And don't look back or stop anywhere in the valley! Escape to the mountains, or you will be swept away!"

¹⁸"Oh no, my lord!" Lot begged. ¹⁹"You have been so gracious to me and saved my life, and you have shown such great kindness. But I cannot go to the mountains. Disaster would catch up to me there, and I would soon die. ²⁰See, there is a small village nearby. Please let me go there instead;

don't you see how small it is? Then my life will be saved."

²¹"All right," the angel said, "I will grant your request. I will not destroy the little village. ²²But hurry! Escape to it, for I can do nothing until you arrive there." (This explains why that village was known as Zoar, which means "little place.")

²³Lot reached the village just as the sun was rising over the horizon. ²⁴Then the LORD rained down fire and burning sulfur from the sky on Sodom and Gomorrah. ²⁵He utterly destroyed them, along with the other cities and villages of the plain, wiping out all the people and every bit of vegetation. ²⁶But Lot's wife looked back as she was following behind him, and she turned into a pillar of salt.

²⁷Abraham got up early that morning and hurried out to the place where he had stood in the LORD's presence. ²⁸He looked out across the plain toward Sodom and Gomorrah and watched as columns of smoke rose from the cities like smoke from a furnace.

²⁹But God had listened to Abraham's request and kept Lot safe, removing him from the disaster that engulfed the cities on the plain.

Lot and His Daughters

³⁰Afterward Lot left Zoar because he was afraid of the people there, and he went to



◀ **The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (18:16–19:38).** The two angels apparently traveled, as shown, from Abraham's camp at the OAKS OF MAMRE to destroy SODOM and GOMORRAH. Lot and his daughters took refuge at ZOAR, then moved eastward into the mountains of MOAB. Lot fathered two sons by his daughters; the two sons became the nations of MOAB (see Num 21:10-20; 22:1–25:3; Deut 23:3, 6; Judg 3:12-30; Ruth 1:1-6) and AMMON (see Num 21:24; Deut 2:19-37; 23:3; Judg 10:6–12:3; 1 Sam 10:27–11:11).

mercifully spared Lot for Abraham's sake (18:23; 19:29). Lot deserved judgment for his way of life, but he was a believer at heart and the Lord rescued him (2 Pet 2:7-8). • Lot is not alone in his conflicted lifestyle. Countless believers fall in with a corrupt world rather than flee a doomed society. God's people, living in a pagan world, must remain separate (1 Jn 2:15-17). The corrupt world system awaits God's coming judgment, which will be far greater than the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Matt 11:23-24).

19:18-22 Lot demanded a concession from the angels even after he was

delivered. He wanted to live in the small town of Zoar (*little place*).

19:23-25 Cp. Luke 17:29. The eruption of Vesuvius and the destruction of Pompeii in 79 AD, as well as recent natural disasters, show how quickly a thorough catastrophe like this could happen.

19:26 looked back: The verb indicates prolonged, intense gazing toward the world she loved, not a curious glance (15:5; Exod 33:8; Num 21:9; 1 Sam 2:32; cp. Exod 3:6). *Lot's wife* was too attached to Sodom to follow God's call of grace, so she was included in the judgment as she lingered on the valley slopes. Christ's return to judge the world will be as sudden and devastating as the destruction of Sodom (Luke 17:32-37). Those who crave the life of this wicked world will lose this world and the next.

19:29 God honored Abraham's intercession (cp. 18:23-32), but Lot's entire world was gone because he lived by instinct and desire, not by faith in God. He could no longer live in the good land he selfishly chose for himself (13:10-13; cp. Matt 16:26; 2 Cor 5:7).

19:30-38 The poverty of the cave contrasts with the wealth Lot shared with Abram and the good life he lived

19:14 Lot's warning words were not taken seriously because of his hypocrisy. It seemed that there would not be even ten righteous people in the city.

19:15-23 Lot escaped judgment by God's grace, but his heart was still in Sodom. Israel would forever remember Lot as lingering, halting, and being dragged to safety by angels. The Lord

live in a cave in the mountains with his two daughters. ³¹One day the older daughter said to her sister, "There are no men left anywhere in this entire area, so we can't get married like everyone else. And our father will soon be too old to have children. ³²Come, let's get him drunk with wine, and then we will have sex with him. That way we will preserve our family line through our father."

³³So that night they got him drunk with wine, and the older daughter went in and had intercourse with her father. He was unaware of her lying down or getting up again.

³⁴The next morning the older daughter said to her younger sister, "I had sex with our father last night. Let's get him drunk with wine again tonight, and you go in and have sex with him. That way we will preserve our family line through our father."

³⁵So that night they got him drunk with wine again, and the younger daughter went in and had intercourse with him. As before, he was unaware of her lying down or getting up again.

³⁶As a result, both of Lot's daughters became pregnant by their own father. ³⁷When the older daughter gave birth to a son, she named him Moab. He became the ancestor of the nation now known as the Moabites. ³⁸When the younger daughter gave birth

to a son, she named him Ben-ammi. He became the ancestor of the nation now known as the Ammonites.

Abraham Deceives Abimelech

20 Abraham moved south to the Negev and lived for a while between Kadesh and Shur, and then he moved on to Gerar. While living there as a foreigner, ²Abraham introduced his wife, Sarah, by saying, "She is my sister." So King Abimelech of Gerar sent for Sarah and had her brought to him at his palace.

³But that night God came to Abimelech in a dream and told him, "You are a dead man, for that woman you have taken is already married!"

⁴But Abimelech had not slept with her yet, so he said, "Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation? ⁵Didn't Abraham tell me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'Yes, he is my brother.' I acted in complete innocence! My hands are clean."

⁶In the dream God responded, "Yes, I know you are innocent. That's why I kept you from sinning against me, and why I did not let you touch her. ⁷Now return the woman to her husband, and he will pray for you, for he is a prophet. Then you will live. But if you don't return her to him, you can be sure that you and all your people will die."

19:33
Gen 9:2-11
19:37
Gen 36:35
Exod 15:15
Num 21:29
Deut 2:9
Ruth 1:1
19:38
Num 21:24
Deut 2:19
20:1
Gen 14:7; 26:1
20:2
Gen 12:13
20:3
Gen 28:12; 31:24;
37:5
20:4
Gen 18:23-25
20:5
Gen 12:19
1 Kgs 9:4
Ps 7:8; 26:6
20:7
1 Sam 7:5
Job 42:8
"nabi" (5030)
• Exod 7:1

in Sodom. Abraham would father a righteous nation (17:1), but Lot and his daughters gave birth to a new Sodom.

19:30-35 The character of Lot's *daughters* was formed by Sodom's culture more than by their father's heritage, so they had no qualms about having children by their drunk father (cp. 9:21-22). They saw no other way to carry on their line.

19:36-38 The daughters' plan worked, and they each *became pregnant by their own father*. From these two incest-born sons came two perennial enemies of Israel, the nations of Moab and Ammon. Their grotesque wickedness was due in part to their origin. • Both daughters chose ambiguous names that hinted at their actions without raising the suspicions of those who did not know the stories. *Moab* sounds like a Hebrew term that means "from father." *Ben-ammi* means "son of my kinsman."

20:1-18 This second "sister story" in Genesis (cp. 12:10-20) occurred shortly before Sarah became pregnant with Isaac (ch 21). On both occasions, God protected Abraham and Sarah's marriage in purity for the sake of the covenant promises. Participation in God's

plan requires separation from worldly corruption. • This story took place in the Promised Land; it showed Israel how God intervened in people's lives to fulfill his plan, how God continued to protect them against threats from other tribes, and how God used his chosen people to mediate his relationship with the nations. • God's preventing the destruction of Abraham's marriage by adultery reminded the Israelites to keep their marriages morally and racially pure (Ezra 9:1-4; Neh 13:23-27; Mal 2:10-17); they should not allow any opportunity for temptation (Exod 20:14, 17; Lev 20:10; 21:13-15). Adultery would eventually destroy the covenant and the covenant people.

20:1 *Gerar* was near the coast in Philistine land, about twelve miles south of Gaza and fifty miles southwest of Hebron.

20:2 *Abraham* told the same lie to Abimelech that he had told to Pharaoh (12:13); Isaac would later do the same (26:1-11), probably having learned this tactic from his father. • *Abimelech* (literally *my father the king*) was probably a title like "Pharaoh" (37:36; Exod 1:15), not a proper name (see note on 26:1).

20:3-7 *God* gave *Abimelech* a stern warning against committing adultery; it was a capital offense (cp. Exod 20:14), viewed throughout the ancient Near East as a "great sin" (20:9).

20:3 *that night God came . . . in a dream*: God urgently intervened to stop *Abimelech* from violating Sarah's purity shortly before God's promise was fulfilled (18:10; 21:1-3).

20:4-5 *Abimelech* was *innocent* (20:6); his conscience was clear. Nonetheless, he was about to commit adultery, and ignorance does not excuse guilt (Lev 4:13-14). • *will you destroy an innocent nation?* Abimelech's appeal to God echoes Abraham's earlier words (cp. 18:23-32) and rebukes Abraham's lack of faith on this occasion.

20:6 Because Abimelech acted with a clear conscience, God *kept him from sinning*. God will graciously help those who try to do what is right. When people act with reverence toward God, God gives them more revelation and draws them into more specific faith (see Acts 10).

20:7 Abraham's prayer saved the king's life and restored his family (20:17-18).

20:9
Gen 12:18
20:11
Gen 12:12; 42:18
20:13
Gen 12:1
20:14
Gen 12:16
20:16
Gen 23:15
20:17
Num 12:13; 21:7
palal (6419)
• Deut 9:26
20:18
Gen 12:17
21:1
Gen 17:16, 21
21:2
Gen 18:10
Gal 4:22
Heb 11:11
21:3
Gen 17:19
21:4
Gen 17:10, 12
21:5
Gen 12:4
Heb 6:15
21:6
Isa 54:1
21:7
Gen 18:13
21:8
1 Sam 1:23
21:9
Gal 4:29
21:10
*Gal 4:30

⁸Abimelech got up early the next morning and quickly called all his servants together. When he told them what had happened, his men were terrified. ⁹Then Abimelech called for Abraham. “What have you done to us?” he demanded. “What crime have I committed that deserves treatment like this, making me and my kingdom guilty of this great sin? No one should ever do what you have done! ¹⁰Whatever possessed you to do such a thing?”

¹¹Abraham replied, “I thought, ‘This is a godless place. They will want my wife and will kill me to get her.’ ¹²And she really is my sister, but we both have the same father, but different mothers. And I married her. ¹³When God called me to leave my father’s home and to travel from place to place, I told her, ‘Do me a favor. Whenever we go, tell the people that I am your brother.’”

¹⁴Then Abimelech took some of his sheep and goats, cattle, and male and female servants, and he presented them to Abraham. He also returned his wife, Sarah, to him. ¹⁵Then Abimelech said, “Look over my land and choose any place where you would like to live.” ¹⁶And he said to Sarah, “Look, I am giving your ‘brother’ 1,000 pieces of silver in the presence of all these witnesses. This is to compensate you for any wrong I may have done to you. This will settle any claim against me, and your reputation is cleared.”

¹⁷Then Abraham ^hprayed to God, and

God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants, so they could have children. ¹⁸For the LORD had caused all the women to be infertile because of what happened with Abraham’s wife, Sarah.

The Birth of Isaac

21 The LORD kept his word and did for Sarah exactly what he had promised. ²She became pregnant, and she gave birth to a son for Abraham in his old age. This happened at just the time God had said it would. ³And Abraham named their son Isaac. ⁴Eight days after Isaac was born, Abraham circumcised him as God had commanded. ⁵Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born.

⁶And Sarah declared, “God has brought me laughter. All who hear about this will laugh with me. ⁷Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse a baby? Yet I have given Abraham a son in his old age!”

Hagar and Ishmael Are Sent Away

⁸When Isaac grew up and was about to be weaned, Abraham prepared a huge feast to celebrate the occasion. ⁹But Sarah saw Ishmael—the son of Abraham and her Egyptian servant Hagar—making fun of her son, Isaac. ¹⁰So she turned to Abraham and demanded, “Get rid of that slave woman and her son. He is not going to share the inheritance with my son, Isaac. I won’t have it!”

¹¹This upset Abraham very much because Ishmael was his son. ¹²But God told

Abimelech learned that Abraham’s God was sovereign, and that Abraham, God’s *prophet*, had received God’s revelation and would intercede for others (see Num 12:13; Deut 9:20), even if he did not always live up to the office.

20:8-10 Abraham had earned rebukes from Abimelech and from God (cp. 12:17-19). Abimelech was angry that Abraham’s deception had made him guilty of *this great sin* (see note on 20:3-7). He knew that taking a married woman into his harem was wrong.

20:11-13 Abraham’s duplicity was not a momentary loss of faith. Despite the rebuke he received in Egypt, he practiced this strategy *wherever* he went (cp. 12:12-13). Living by faith requires perseverance.

20:14-16 Abimelech secured his *reputation* as a good man (see note on 20:4-5) and demonstrated his integrity. He made amends by allowing Abraham to live in the region, and by giving him slaves, livestock (cp. 21:27), and *1,000 pieces of silver* (Hebrew *1,000 [shekels] of silver*, about 25 pounds or 11.4 kilo-

grams in weight) to *compensate . . . for any wrong* done to Sarah.

20:17-18 Sarah’s barrenness suggests that some time had passed. God controls births; he opens and closes wombs (25:21; 29:31; 30:2, 17, 22-23; 1 Sam 1:19-20; Ps 113:9; 127:3; Luke 1:13).

21:1-2 See 18:10.

21:3-4 Abraham responded in faith by naming his *son Isaac* and circumcising him according to the terms of the covenant (see 17:9-14).

21:5 Isaac was born twenty-five years after the promise was first given (cp. 12:4).

21:6-7 Sarah was filled with joy and praise for this amazing event—only God could enable her to have a child.

21:6 The name *Isaac* (Hebrew *yitskhaq*) means “he laughs.” Sarah’s wordplay shows that the laughter of unbelief when the promise was given (18:12) had changed to the laughter of joy at its fulfillment. Isaac’s name could refer to the pleasure of God and of his parents

at his birth. Sarah knew that everyone who heard about this would *laugh with* her and rejoice at the news.

21:8-21 God used the incident of Ishmael’s mocking Isaac to separate Ishmael and Hagar from the family and the child of promise. They would constantly threaten the promised descendant if they remained with the family.

21:8-9 The *feast* for Isaac’s weaning probably occurred when he was three and *Ishmael* about seventeen years old (16:16). Sarah saw Ishmael *making fun of her son, Isaac* (as in Greek version and Latin Vulgate; Hebrew lacks *of her son, Isaac*). The verb *metsakheq* (“making fun of”) is related to the word for “laughter”; this theme (21:6) is given a sour twist by Ishmael’s mockery.

21:10 Earlier, Sarah mistreated Hagar and pressured her to flee (16:6); when Hagar’s son mistreated Isaac, Sarah demanded that *that slave woman and her son* leave.

21:11-13 Abraham was *upset* by Sarah’s demand to oust Hagar and *Ishmael*.

Abraham, "Do not be upset over the boy and your servant. Do whatever Sarah tells you, for Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted. ¹³But I will also make a nation of the descendants of Hagar's son because he is your son, too."

¹⁴So Abraham got up early the next morning, prepared food and a container of water, and strapped them on Hagar's shoulders. Then he sent her away with their son, and she wandered aimlessly in the wilderness of Beersheba.

¹⁵When the water was gone, she put the boy in the shade of a bush. ¹⁶Then she went and sat down by herself about a hundred yards away. "I don't want to watch the boy die," she said, as she burst into tears.

¹⁷But God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, "Hagar, what's wrong? Do not be afraid! God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. ¹⁸Go to him and comfort him, for I will make a great nation from his descendants."

¹⁹Then God opened Hagar's eyes, and she saw a well full of water. She quickly filled her water container and gave the boy a drink.

²⁰And God was with the boy as he grew up in the wilderness. He became a skillful archer, ²¹and he settled in the wilderness of Paran. His mother arranged for him to marry a woman from the land of Egypt.

Abraham's Covenant with Abimelech

²²About this time, Abimelech came with Phicol, his army commander, to visit Abraham. "God is obviously with you, helping you in everything you do," Abimelech said. ²³"Swear to me in God's name that you will never deceive me, my children, or any of my descendants. I have been loyal to you, so now swear that you will be loyal to me and to this country where you are living as a foreigner."

²⁴Abraham replied, "Yes, I swear to it!" ²⁵Then Abraham complained to Abimelech about a well that Abimelech's servants had taken by force from Abraham's servants.

²⁶"This is the first I've heard of it," Abimelech answered. "I have no idea who is responsible. You have never complained about this before."

²⁷Abraham then gave some of his sheep, goats, and cattle to Abimelech, and they made a treaty. ²⁸But Abraham also took seven additional female lambs and set them off by themselves. ²⁹Abimelech asked, "Why have you set these seven apart from the others?"

³⁰Abraham replied, "Please accept these seven lambs to show your agreement that I dug this well." ³¹Then he named the place Beersheba (which means "well of the oath"), because that was where they had sworn the oath.

21:12
^aRom 9:7
^bHeb 11:18
21:13
 Gen 16:10; 21:18;
 25:12-18
21:14
 Gen 16:1
21:16
 Jer 6:26
21:17
 Exod 3:7
 Deut 26:7
 Ps 6:8
21:18
 Gen 26:24
21:20
 Gen 28:15
21:21
 Gen 25:18
21:22
 Gen 26:26
21:23
 Gen 24:3
21:25
 Gen 26:15
21:27
 Gen 26:31
21:30
 Gen 31:44
21:31
 Gen 21:14; 26:33

God told him to comply, assuring Abraham that Ishmael would also have a future as Abraham's offspring.

21:14-21 God again rescued Hagar *in the wilderness* and guaranteed her future (cp. 16:7-14). This passage is similar to ch 16, but the differences are great. Here, Hagar and Ishmael are rescued, but there is no commemorative naming. God's earlier promise to Hagar is reiterated, but this time Hagar is not told to return to Sarah. The repeated motifs on the two occasions confirm God's sovereign plan for Hagar and Ishmael. As Joseph told Pharaoh, the twofold event showed that God confirmed it (41:32). God did not abandon Hagar and Ishmael but met them in their despair (cp. 16:7), provided sustenance for them, and promised again that Ishmael would found a great nation (21:13; cp. 16:11-12). Paul uses this event in his letter to the Galatians to illustrate how God's people must relinquish all that threatens the fulfillment of God's promise (Gal 4:21-31).

21:16 *a hundred yards* (literally *a bow-shot*): This description connects with Ishmael's vocation (21:20).

21:22-34 This passage, at its climax,

explains the name of *Beersheba*, Abraham's home (21:31-34). Beersheba reflected the covenant Abraham made with the residents of the land, which enabled him to dwell there in peace and prosperity. God's promise was coming to fruition (12:7; 13:14-17; 15:7, 18-21; 17:8).

21:22-23 *Abimelech* pressed for the treaty so that *Abraham* would not cheat or *deceive* him. Abimelech knew that God was blessing Abraham even though Abraham was not entirely trustworthy (20:9-10). This sad contradiction made the treaty necessary. By contrast, God's faithful people are exhorted to speak the truth (Eph 4:15, 25), and Jesus warned against manipulating truth by the clever use of oaths (Matt 5:37; Jas 5:12).

21:25 The motif of the *well* appears again (cp. 16:14; 21:19). God provided water (a symbol of blessing) in the barren wilderness, and later even brought water out of a rock for Israel (Exod 15:22-27; 17:1-7; Num 20:1-13).

21:27-31 Abraham's gifts to Abimelech (cp. 20:14) secured his legal right to dwell peaceably in the land and to claim ownership of the well. *Beersheba*

marked one more step toward the fulfillment of God's promise.

21:32 *The Philistines* in Genesis are different from the Philistines of Judges through Kings. The earlier Philistines had Semitic names (e.g., Abimelech) and Canaanite culture. The later Philistines were apparently of Greek origin, with Greek customs and culture. They seem to have arrived in Canaan by sea from the Aegean area around 1200 BC, during the time of the judges. Probably the name of the later Philistines was used here simply to describe the region's earlier inhabitants.

21:33-34 *A tamarisk tree* requires a lot of water; this act indicated Abraham's security in his land rights and his faith that God would provide water in this desert area. He settled *as a foreigner* in the land, but dwelling under his tree was a sign of peaceful security (cp. Zech 3:10). • *there he worshiped the LORD*: See note on 12:8. • *the Eternal God*: Hebrew *El-Olam*.

22:1-2 The greatest test in Abraham's life came after he had received the promised child following a long wait. He had grown to love Isaac and had enjoyed his presence for a number of years.

21:33

1 Sam 22:6; 31:13
Ps 90:2
Isa 9:6; 40:28
‘olam (5769)
• Deut 33:15

22:1

Exod 15:25; 16:4
Deut 8:2, 16

22:2

2 Chr 3:1
John 3:16

22:5

khawah (7812)
• Gen 42:6

³²After making their covenant at Beer-sheba, Abimelech left with Phicol, the commander of his army, and they returned home to the land of the Philistines. ³³Then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beer-sheba, and there he worshiped the LORD, the Eternal God. ³⁴And Abraham lived as a foreigner in Philistine country for a long time.

Abraham's Faith Tested

22 Some time later, God tested Abraham's faith. "Abraham!" God called. "Yes," he replied. "Here I am."

²"Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land

of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you."

³The next morning Abraham got up early. He saddled his donkey and took two of his servants with him, along with his son, Isaac. Then he chopped wood for a fire for a burnt offering and set out for the place God had told him about. ⁴On the third day of their journey, Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵"Stay here with the donkey," Abraham told the servants. "The boy and I will travel a little farther. We will worship there, and then we will come right back."

ISAAC (21:1-12)

Gen 17:19-21;
22:1-19; 24:1-8,
14, 62-67; 25:5-11,
19-28; 26:1-28:9;
31:42; 35:12, 27-28;
48:15-16; 49:31
Exod 3:6
Josh 24:3-4
Rom 9:6-10
Gal 4:21-31
Heb 11:8-9, 17-20

At Isaac's birth, his parents, Abraham and Sarah, were beyond childbearing age. God had promised Abraham a son (15:4-6), but no son had come. Ishmael had been born through Hagar (16:1-16), but he was not the promised son.

Isaac means "he laughs," reflecting the circumstances of his birth. When God promised that Isaac would be born, both Abraham and Sarah first laughed in disbelief (17:15-19; 18:9-15). When he was born, they laughed for joy (21:6-7).

During Isaac's adolescence, God tested Abraham by telling him to sacrifice Isaac (22:1-19). Abraham's faith remained firm; he obeyed, and Isaac submitted to his father. God then intervened to provide a sacrificial ram in Isaac's place. Abraham's faith in God was rewarded with the promise of great blessings (22:15-18).

Isaac married Rebekah and was ready to carry on the chosen line, but Rebekah was unable to bear children (25:21). Rather than take matters into his own hands as his father had done (see 16:1-16), Isaac "pleaded with the LORD" and Rebekah bore twin sons. Isaac favored Esau, the older son, while Rebekah preferred Jacob. Favoritism remained a problem among Isaac's descendants (see notes on 29:30; 33:1-2; 37:4) and led to Isaac's being deceived by his son Jacob when he was old and blind (ch 27).

Isaac followed his father Abraham's example in relating to surrounding nations. When visiting another kingdom during a famine, he fearfully claimed that his wife was his sister (26:1-11; cp. 12:10-20; 20:1-18). Like his father, Isaac became prosperous in that land and was asked to leave (26:12-16; cp. 12:16-20); he experienced conflict over water and land with other herdsmen (26:17-22; cp. 21:25-31); and he made a treaty with the king of the Philistines (26:26-31; cp. 21:22-31). When Isaac worshiped the Lord at Beersheba, he was given the same promise that his father had received (26:2-5, 23-25; cp. 21:32-33; 22:16-18).

Isaac continued God's covenant with Abraham and linked Abraham with Jacob (see Acts 7:8; Heb 11:9-20). As the child of promise, Isaac represents all who are children of Abraham by faith in Christ and are thereby free to live as God's children rather than as slaves (see Gal 4:21-5:1).

22:1 *Some time later:* Abraham had sent Ishmael away and settled in the land. Now *God tested Abraham's faith* by telling him to give up Isaac. This pushed the limits of logic and of Abraham's knowledge of God. Would he still obey when God seemed to be working against him and against the covenant? Would he cling to the boy or surrender him to God (see Exod 13:11-13)? Did he believe that God would still keep his word and bless the world through Abraham's offspring?

22:2 Obedience to God's earlier call (12:1-3) was rewarded with great bless-

ing; now Abraham had the opportunity to show even greater obedience. • *Take your son . . . Isaac, whom you love so much:* By this detailed description of Isaac, God reminded Abraham that the young man was his beloved son, and intensified his awareness of the cost of the sacrifice. • *The name Moriah* is explained by the Chronicler (2 Chr 3:1) as the place of the later Temple Mount in Jerusalem. • *Go:* By wording the command in this way, God helped Abraham to obey by recalling his former call (cp. 12:1-3).

22:3 Abraham's immediate, unques-

tioning obedience is almost as astounding as the test.

22:5 *We will worship there, and then we will come (or We will worship there so that we may come back):* Abraham's amazing statement makes us wonder what he was thinking. Abraham knew that God had planned the future of the covenant around Isaac, and that God wanted him to sacrifice Isaac. He could not reconcile these things in his mind; he could only do what God commanded him to do, and leave the future to God (cp. Heb 11:17-19).

⁶So Abraham placed the wood for the burnt offering on Isaac's shoulders, while he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them walked on together, ⁷Isaac turned to Abraham and said, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

"We have the fire and the wood," the boy said, "but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?"

⁸"God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering, my son," Abraham answered. And they both walked on together.

⁹When they arrived at the place where God had told him to go, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. Then he tied his son, Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. ¹⁰And Abraham picked up the knife to kill his son as a sacrifice. ¹¹At that moment the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Yes," Abraham replied. "Here I am!"

¹²"Don't lay a hand on the boy!" the angel said. "Do not hurt him in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son."

¹³Then Abraham looked up and saw a

ram caught by its horns in a thicket. So he took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering in place of his son. ¹⁴Abraham named the place Yahweh-Yireh (which means "the LORD will provide"). To this day, people still use that name as a proverb: "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

¹⁵Then the angel of the LORD called again to Abraham from heaven. ¹⁶"This is what the LORD says: Because you have obeyed me and have not withheld even your son, your only son, I swear by my own name that ¹⁷I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will conquer the cities of their enemies. ¹⁸And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me."

¹⁹Then they returned to the servants and traveled back to Beersheba, where Abraham continued to live.

Nahor's Family (22:20-24)

²⁰Soon after this, Abraham heard that Milcah, his brother Nahor's wife, had borne Nahor eight sons. ²¹The oldest was named Uz, the next oldest was Buz, followed by

22:6
John 19:17

22:7
Gen 8:20
Exod 29:38-42
John 1:29, 36
Rev 13:8

22:9
Heb 11:17-19
Jas 2:21

22:11
Gen 16:7; 21:17

22:12
Heb 11:17

22:13
Gen 8:20

22:14
Gen 22:7-8

22:16
^aHeb 6:13-14

22:17
Gen 12:2; 15:5; 26:4
^bHeb 6:14

22:18
^cActs 3:25
^dGal 3:8, 16

22:19
Gen 21:14

22:20
Gen 11:29

22:7-8 In response to Isaac's question, *Abraham* again showed his faith in the Lord, saying *God will provide*, although he was not sure how. This theme is central to the entire narrative.

22:9-19 God's intervention was dramatic and instructive, confirming that he never intended for Isaac to be sacrificed. God later made it clear that child sacrifice was an abomination to him (see Lev 18:21; 20:1-5; Deut 18:10; 2 Kgs 16:2-3; Isa 57:5; Jer 32:35). God wanted Abraham to sacrifice his own will and surrender it to God, and when he did, God intervened. This passage sets a pattern for all sacrificial worshippers. Like Abraham, true worshippers of God know that everything belongs to God—it all came from God and must therefore be acknowledged as God's possession. A true worshiper holds nothing back but obediently gives God what he asks, trusting that God will provide for all his needs, and then discovering through experience that God always does so.

22:11 *The angel of the LORD* stopped Abraham just as he was ready to plunge the knife into his son.

22:12 Now God knew that Abraham would hold nothing back from him, that he did *truly fear God*. To fear the Lord means to reverence him as sovereign, trust him implicitly, and obey him without protest. The sacrifice that pleases God is a heart broken of self-will,

surrendered to God (Ps 40:6-8; 51:17) and offering its best to God. • *You have not withheld*: Cp. Rom 8:32, which uses the same verb ("spare") as the Greek OT uses here. If God gave us his dearest possession, he will surely provide all things for us.

22:13 God provided *a ram caught by its horns in a thicket* for the sacrifice. God graciously allowed Abraham to substitute an animal sacrifice *in place of* Isaac. Later, all Israel would offer animals to the Lord, knowing that God's grace had provided this substitution (Exod 29:10; Lev 4:15; 16:20-22). In the NT, God substituted his only son for all humanity; the perfect sacrifice was made once and for all (Isa 53:6, 10; John 1:29; Heb 7:27; 10:1-14; 1 Pet 3:18).

22:14 As with many patriarchal narratives, the heart of the matter is retained through commemorative naming. *Yahweh-Yireh . . . means "the LORD will provide"* (see 22:8). That Abraham used the holy name in this act shows that the patriarchs knew the name *Yahweh* (cp. Exod 6:2-3), but not its full meaning (see note on Exod 6:2-3). • *To this day*: Later Israelites understood this passage as a lesson about their own worship in Jerusalem. Abraham's sacrifice took place *on the mountain of the LORD*, later the location of the Temple in Jerusalem (see note on 22:2). Three times a year, the people of Israel brought their best

to God as a sacrifice, trusting that he would continue to provide for their needs.

22:15-19 After the event, God again confirmed his covenant with Abraham (cp. 15:5, 18-21; 17:3-8). His descendants would be numerous *like the stars in the sky* (cp. 26:4), like *the sand on the seashore* (cp. 32:12), and like the dust of the earth (cp. 13:16; 28:14).

22:16 *by my own name*: There is no higher name by which God can *swear* (Heb 6:13-17).

22:17 *descendants*: Literally *seed*; also in 22:18. • Joshua and OT Israel partially fulfilled the promise that Abraham's descendants would *conquer the cities* (literally *take possession of the gates*) of God's *enemies*; this will be fulfilled fully by the church (cp. Matt 16:18 and note).

22:18–25:11 Abraham passed the test of faith; from this point, his task was to pass the covenant blessings to Isaac. He purchased a burial plot (ch 23), acquired a wife for Isaac (ch 24), and distributed his property (25:1-11).

22:20-24 A report came from the east that Abraham's brother Nahor (see 11:27-29) was flourishing. The actors in the following narrative are introduced here.

22:20 *Milcah*, Nahor's wife, was also his niece (see 11:29).

22:21 *Uz* might have been Job's forefather (Job 1:1).

22:23
Gen 24:15
23:2
Josh 14:15

23:3
Gen 10:15
23:4
Lev 25:23
1 Chr 29:15
Ps 39:12
Heb 11:9

23:6
Gen 14:14-16

23:8-9
Gen 25:9

23:10
Ruth 4:1, 11

23:15
Exod 30:13

23:16
Jer 32:9

23:17-18
Gen 25:9; 49:29-30;
50:13

Kemuel (the ancestor of the Arameans),²²Kesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel.²³(Bethuel became the father of Rebekah.) In addition to these eight sons from Milcah,²⁴Nahor had four other children from his concubine Reumah. Their names were Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

The Burial of Sarah:

Abraham's Land Purchase (23:1-20)

23 When Sarah was 127 years old,²she died at Kiriath-arba (now called Hebron) in the land of Canaan. There Abraham mourned and wept for her.

³Then, leaving her body, he said to the Hittite elders,⁴"Here I am, a stranger and a foreigner among you. Please sell me a piece of land so I can give my wife a proper burial."

⁵The Hittites replied to Abraham,⁶"Listen, my lord, you are an honored prince among us. Choose the finest of our tombs and bury her there. No one here will refuse to help you in this way."

⁷Then Abraham bowed low before the Hittites⁸ and said, "Since you are willing to help me in this way, be so kind as to ask Ephron son of Zohar⁹ to let me buy his cave at Machpelah, down at the end of his field. I will pay the full price in the presence of witnesses, so I will have a permanent burial place for my family."

¹⁰Ephron was sitting there among the others, and he answered Abraham as the

others listened, speaking publicly before all the Hittite elders of the town. ¹¹"No, my lord," he said to Abraham, "please listen to me. I will give you the field and the cave. Here in the presence of my people, I give it to you. Go and bury your dead."

¹²Abraham again bowed low before the citizens of the land,¹³and he replied to Ephron as everyone listened. "No, listen to me. I will buy it from you. Let me pay the full price for the field so I can bury my dead there."

¹⁴Ephron answered Abraham,¹⁵"My lord, please listen to me. The land is worth 400 pieces of silver, but what is that between friends? Go ahead and bury your dead."

¹⁶So Abraham agreed to Ephron's price and paid the amount he had suggested—400 pieces of silver, weighed according to the market standard. The Hittite elders witnessed the transaction.

¹⁷So Abraham bought the plot of land belonging to Ephron at Machpelah, near Mamre. This included the field itself, the cave that was in it, and all the surrounding trees. ¹⁸It was transferred to Abraham as his permanent possession in the presence of the Hittite elders at the city gate. ¹⁹Then Abraham buried his wife, Sarah, there in Canaan, in the cave of Machpelah, near Mamre (also called Hebron). ²⁰So the field and the cave were transferred from the Hittites to Abraham for use as a permanent burial place.

22:22-23 *Bethuel* was the youngest of Nahor's eight sons by Milcah; he was *the father of Rebekah*, Isaac's future wife (see 24:15, 67). Rebekah would follow Sarah as matriarch of the clan (23:1-2).

23:1-20 When *Sarah . . . died*, Abraham acquired a parcel of land for a burial place. This transaction was the first sign that a permanent transition had taken place, as people were normally buried in their ancestral homeland (cp. 49:29–50:13). In burying Sarah, Abraham detached from his just-mentioned ancestral home (where his relatives still lived, 22:20-24); his future would be in Canaan, where his descendants would realize the promise.

23:1 *Sarah was 127 years old*: Isaac was 37 at this time (cp. 17:17). • *Hebron*: See note on 13:18.

23:3-4 Abraham bargained with local *Hittite elders* for a *piece of land* for a burial site. These Hittites had apparently migrated south to Canaan from the great Hittite empire in eastern Asia Minor (modern Turkey; cp. 10:15). • Abraham was a *stranger and a foreigner* among these people; his hope

was in God's promise that he would eventually possess the land.

23:5-6 *my lord, you are an honored prince*: Either Abraham was highly regarded by these people, or they were politely appealing to his generosity. • *Choose the finest. . . . No one here will refuse*: They were willing to accommodate his request, especially if they could legally obligate him to themselves (23:11).

23:7-16 Abraham wanted to *buy* Ephron's *cave at Machpelah*, but *Ephron* wanted him to buy the entire field.

23:9 This would be a *permanent burial place* for Abraham's *family*. The site was near Mamre (23:19), where Abraham lived (see 13:18; 14:13; 18:1). Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Leah would all be buried in this cave (23:19; 25:9; 35:27-29; 49:29-31; 50:13), their permanent place in the Promised Land.

23:11 Ephron did not intend to *give* the cave to Abraham; Abraham was expected to "give" the full price in return. Ephron wanted to sell as much as he could to avoid responsibility for caring

for the cave and to receive as high a price as possible.

23:12-13 Abraham didn't want the whole field, but he was willing to take it to get the cave.

23:15 *400 pieces* (Hebrew *400 shekels*, about 10 pounds or 4.6 kilograms in weight; also in 23:16) *of silver* was a very high price. Ephron's politeness was typical of the bargaining process.

23:16-20 Abraham *paid the amount* and finalized the transaction, avoiding indebtedness by accepting no gifts from the people (cp. 14:21-24). The *Hittite elders witnessed the transaction*, ensuring that no one could challenge Abraham's full ownership of the land. The transaction took place *at the city gate*, where public legal and business dealings were conducted (cp. 19:1). The land became Abraham's *permanent possession*, a down payment on God's promise to give him the land. Abraham knew that God's promise was not fulfilled (12:7) by this acquisition, so he planned for the future. By buying land for his dead, he declared that God's promises do not end with this life. This is the hope of all who die in faith.

A Wife for Isaac from Nahor's Family
(24:1-67)

Commission to Find a Wife

24 Abraham was now a very old man, and the LORD had blessed him in every way. ²One day Abraham said to his oldest servant, the man in charge of his household, "Take an oath by putting your hand under my thigh. ³Swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and earth, that you will not allow my son to marry one of these local Canaanite women. ⁴Go instead to my homeland, to my relatives, and find a wife there for my son Isaac."

⁵The servant asked, "But what if I can't find a young woman who is willing to travel so far from home? Should I then take Isaac there to live among your relatives in the land you came from?"

⁶"No!" Abraham responded. "Be careful never to take my son there. ⁷For the LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and my native land, solemnly promised to give this land to my descendants. He will send his angel ahead of you, and he will see to it that you find a wife there for my son. ⁸If she is unwilling to come back with you, then you are free from this oath of mine. But under no circumstances are you to take my son there."

Dependence on God's Leading

⁹So the servant took an oath by putting his hand under the thigh of his master, Abraham. He swore to follow Abraham's instructions. ¹⁰Then he loaded ten of Abraham's camels with all kinds of expensive gifts from his master, and he traveled to distant Aram-naharaim. There he went to the town where Abraham's brother Nahor

had settled. ¹¹He made the camels kneel beside a well just outside the town. It was evening, and the women were coming out to draw water.

¹²"O LORD, God of my master, Abraham," he prayed. "Please give me success today, and show unfailing love to my master, Abraham. ¹³See, I am standing here beside this spring, and the young women of the town are coming out to draw water. ¹⁴This is my request. I will ask one of them, 'Please give me a drink from your jug.' If she says, 'Yes, have a drink, and I will water your camels, too!'—let her be the one you have selected as Isaac's wife. This is how I will know that you have shown unfailing love to my master."

¹⁵Before he had finished praying, he saw a young woman named Rebekah coming out with her water jug on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel, who was the son of Abraham's brother Nahor and his wife, Milcah. ¹⁶Rebekah was very beautiful and old enough to be married, but she was still a virgin. She went down to the spring, filled her jug, and came up again. ¹⁷Running over to her, the servant said, "Please give me a little drink of water from your jug."

¹⁸"Yes, my lord," she answered, "have a drink." And she quickly lowered her jug from her shoulder and gave him a drink. ¹⁹When she had given him a drink, she said, "I'll draw water for your camels, too, until they have had enough to drink." ²⁰So she quickly emptied her jug into the watering trough and ran back to the well to draw water for all his camels.

²¹The servant watched her in silence, wondering whether or not the LORD had given him success in his mission. ²²Then at last, when the camels had finished drinking, he

24:1
Gen 12:2; 24:35

24:2
Gen 47:29

24:3
Gen 14:19

24:4
Gen 12:1

24:5
Gen 24:39

24:7
Gen 12:1, 7; 16:7;
22:11
Rom 4:13
Gal 3:16

24:10
Gen 11:29
Deut 23:4

24:11
Gen 24:42

24:12
Gen 24:27, 48

24:14
Judg 6:17
1 Sam 14:10

24:15
Gen 22:20-24

24:16
Gen 12:11; 29:17

24:17
1 Kgs 17:10
John 4:7

24:19
Gen 24:14

24:22
Gen 24:47

24:1-67 Isaac's marriage to Rebekah ensured that God's plan would continue into the next generation. God showed covenant faithfulness by working through his faithful people (24:12, 27, 49).

24:1-9 Confident in the Lord's promise, Abraham had his chief servant (probably Eliezer, 15:2) *swear to find a wife among Abraham's relatives in his homeland*, some 450 miles away. Abraham was faithful to the covenant by preparing for Isaac's future.

24:2 Putting his *hand under Abraham's thigh* (cp. 47:29), the servant took a very solemn oath, assuming the burden of completing this mission.

24:3 Isaac knew how wicked and threatening the *local Canaanite* people were, so he maintained separation from them (cp. 26:34-35; 27:46; 28:8-9).

24:6-8 *Under no circumstances* was the servant to take Isaac from the Promised Land to seek a wife. Abraham ensured Isaac's safety and secured God's promises in the land of blessing.

24:7 *descendants*: Literally *seed*; also in 24:60.

24:10-60 The servant faithfully carried out the mission, and he glorified God for displaying faithful covenant love for Abraham's family by bringing all the details together. God sovereignly worked behind the scenes to accomplish his will through the circumstances of those acting responsibly in faith.

24:10-27 The servant obeyed his master's instructions and trusted God to lead him to the right woman.

24:10 *Aram-naharaim* ("Aram of the two rivers") was also called *Paddan-*

aram ("the field of Aram," cp. 25:20). It was a two-week journey in each direction, so the servant had *ten . . . camels* for provisions and *gifts* (24:22, 53).

24:14 Abraham's future daughter-in-law manifested hospitality and industry like Abraham's (see 18:1-8). Ten thirsty camels could drink 250 gallons of water, so a woman who would work that hard for a stranger was certainly not lazy, but generous and hospitable.

24:15-22 The servant received a precise, immediate answer to his prayer for guidance.

24:22 The servant showed his gratitude by giving the girl expensive jewelry. • *a gold ring for her nose and two large gold bracelets*: Hebrew *a gold nose-ring weighing a half shekel* [0.2 ounces or 6 grams] and *two gold bracelets weighing 10 shekels* [4 ounces or 114 grams].

24:24
Gen 24:15

24:26
Exod 4:31

24:27
Gen 14:20; 24:12, 48

24:28
Gen 29:12

24:29
Gen 25:20; 29:5

24:30
Gen 24:10

24:31
Gen 26:29

24:34
Gen 15:2; 24:2

24:35
Gen 12:2

24:36
Gen 21:1-7; 25:5

24:37
Gen 24:2-4

24:40
Gen 24:7

took out a gold ring for her nose and two large gold bracelets for her wrists.

²³“Whose daughter are you?” he asked. “And please tell me, would your father have any room to put us up for the night?”

²⁴“I am the daughter of Bethuel,” she replied. “My grandparents are Nahor and Milcah. ²⁵Yes, we have plenty of straw and feed for the camels, and we have room for guests.”

²⁶The man bowed low and worshiped the LORD. ²⁷“Praise the LORD, the God of my master, Abraham,” he said. “The LORD has shown unflinching love and faithfulness to my master, for he has led me straight to my master’s relatives.”

The Success of the Mission

²⁸The young woman ran home to tell her family everything that had happened. ²⁹Now Rebekah had a brother named Laban, who ran out to meet the man at the spring. ³⁰He had seen the nose-ring and the bracelets on his sister’s wrists, and had heard Rebekah tell what the man had said. So he rushed out to the spring, where the man was still standing beside his camels. ³¹Laban said to him, “Come and stay with us, you who are blessed by the LORD! Why are you standing here outside the town when I have a room all ready for you and a place prepared for the camels?”

³²So the man went home with Laban, and Laban unloaded the camels, gave him straw for their bedding, fed them, and provided water for the man and the camel drivers to wash their feet. ³³Then food was served. But Abraham’s servant said, “I don’t want to eat until I have told you why I have come.”

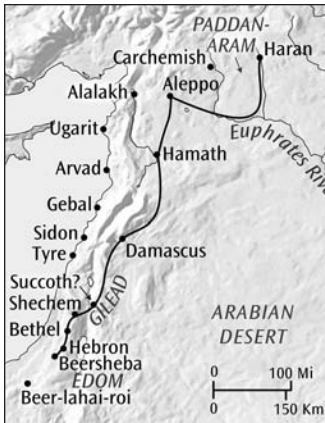
“All right,” Laban said, “tell us.”

³⁴“I am Abraham’s servant,” he explained. ³⁵“And the LORD has greatly blessed my master; he has become a wealthy man. The LORD has given him flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, a fortune in silver and gold, and many male and female servants and camels and donkeys.

³⁶“When Sarah, my master’s wife, was very old, she gave birth to my master’s son, and my master has given him everything he owns. ³⁷And my master made me take an oath. He said, ‘Do not allow my son to marry one of these local Canaanite women. ³⁸Go instead to my father’s house, to my relatives, and find a wife there for my son.’

³⁹“But I said to my master, ‘What if I can’t find a young woman who is willing to go back with me?’ ⁴⁰He responded, ‘The LORD, in whose presence I have lived, will send his angel with you and will make your mission successful. Yes, you must find a wife for my son from among my relatives, from my father’s family. ⁴¹Then you will have fulfilled your obligation. But if you go to my relatives and they refuse to let her go with you, you will be free from my oath.’

⁴²“So today when I came to the spring, I prayed this prayer: ‘O LORD, God of my master, Abraham, please give me success on this mission. ⁴³See, I am standing here beside this spring. This is my request. When a young woman comes to draw water, I will say to her, “Please give me a little drink of water from your jug.” ⁴⁴If she says, “Yes, have a drink, and I will draw water for your camels, too,” let her be the one you have selected to be the wife of my master’s son.’



◀ **Journeys to Paddan-aram (24:1-67; 28:1-29:14; 31:1-33:20).** When Abraham’s servant traveled to PADDAN-ARAM (=Aram-naharaim? cp. 24:10; 25:20) to find a wife for Isaac, he probably followed the same route that he had previously traveled from Haran (11:28-12:9). Jacob later made the same trip to and from Haran (28:1-29:14; 31:1-33:20; see “Jacob’s Family in Canaan” at 32:1-38:30, p. 87).

24:25 Rebekah again showed kindness by offering lodging for the servant and food for his camels.

24:26 The servant *bowed* to the ground and *worshiped the LORD* for his loyal love and faithfulness in guiding him to the exact family he sought.

24:27 *The LORD has shown unflinching love and faithfulness to my master:*

These words express this chapter’s message (cp. 24:48). Believers can trust the Lord’s leading because he is sovereign in all things. He never leaves his people to their own resources in carrying out his covenant work.

24:29-31 *Laban . . . ran:* He was not going to miss the chance to marry his sister off and receive more gifts. Laban’s response to the servant’s wealth foreshadows his avaricious character (see 24:54-56 and note; 29:21-27; 30:27-36; 31:1-13).

24:33-48 *The servant* was not diverted from his mission; he insisted on telling his story before he would eat. He recounted his mission and acknowledged God’s providence in directing him to Rebekah before attending to his personal needs. The servant wanted everyone to know that this was God’s work, not a chance or humanly arranged meeting.

24:23-24 God led the servant to Abraham’s family.

45“Before I had finished praying in my heart, I saw Rebekah coming out with her water jug on her shoulder. She went down to the spring and drew water. So I said to her, ‘Please give me a drink.’ 46She quickly lowered her jug from her shoulder and said, ‘Yes, have a drink, and I will water your camels, too!’ So I drank, and then she watered the camels.

47“Then I asked, ‘Whose daughter are you?’ She replied, ‘I am the daughter of Bethuel, and my grandparents are Nahor and Milcah.’ So I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her wrists.

48“Then I bowed low and worshiped the LORD. I praised the LORD, the God of my master, Abraham, because he had led me straight to my master’s niece to be his son’s wife. 49So tell me—will you or won’t you show unfailing love and faithfulness to my master? Please tell me yes or no, and then I’ll know what to do next.”

50Then Laban and Bethuel replied, “The LORD has obviously brought you here, so there is nothing we can say. 51Here is Rebekah; take her and go. Yes, let her be the wife of your master’s son, as the LORD has directed.”

52When Abraham’s servant heard their answer, he bowed down to the ground and worshiped the LORD. 53Then he brought out silver and gold jewelry and clothing and presented them to Rebekah. He also gave expensive presents to her brother and mother. 54Then they ate their meal, and the servant and the men with him stayed there overnight.

But early the next morning, Abraham’s servant said, “Send me back to my master.”

55“But we want Rebekah to stay with us at least ten days,” her brother and mother said. “Then she can go.”

56But he said, “Don’t delay me. The LORD has made my mission successful; now send me back so I can return to my master.”

57“‘Well,’ they said, ‘we’ll call Rebekah and ask her what she thinks.’ 58So they called Rebekah. “Are you willing to go with this man?” they asked her.

And she replied, “Yes, I will go.”

59So they said good-bye to Rebekah and sent her away with Abraham’s servant and his men. The woman who had been Rebekah’s childhood nurse went along with her.

60They gave her this blessing as she parted:

“Our sister, may you become
the mother of many millions!
May your descendants be strong
and conquer the cities of their
enemies.”

61Then Rebekah and her servant girls mounted the camels and followed the man. So Abraham’s servant took Rebekah and went on his way.

The Marriage of Isaac and Rebekah

62Meanwhile, Isaac, whose home was in the Negev, had returned from Beer-lahai-roi.

63One evening as he was walking and meditating in the fields, he looked up and saw the camels coming. 64When Rebekah looked up and saw Isaac, she quickly dismounted from her camel. 65“Who is that man walking through the fields to meet us?” she asked the servant.

And he replied, “It is my master.” So Rebekah covered her face with her veil. 66Then the servant told Isaac everything he had done.

67And Isaac brought Rebekah into his mother Sarah’s tent, and she became his wife. He loved her deeply, and she was a special comfort to him after the death of his mother.

24:45
1 Sam 1:12

24:47
Gen 24:23-24

24:49
Gen 47:29

24:50
Ps 118:23

24:52
Gen 24:26

24:54
Gen 30:25

24:55
Judg 19:4

24:59
Gen 35:8

24:60
Gen 17:16; 22:17

24:62
Gen 16:14

24:63
Ps 119:15, 27, 48

24:67
Gen 23:1-2; 25:20;
29:18

24:48 The way that God directed this event from behind the scenes is different than in most of Genesis, but it is true to how the life of faith normally works. Faith, expressed in personal prayer and obedience, looks for evidence of God’s working. Believers usually have to make wise choices and remain faithful to the covenant, trusting that God will guide them through the circumstances of life to accomplish his will.

24:50-51 Following his testimony about God’s guidance, the servant secured the family’s blessing and permission to take *Rebekah* to his master’s son, Isaac.

24:53 The servant gave expensive gifts to *Rebekah*, her *mother*, and her *brother*

to conclude the arrangements.

24:54-56 It was hard for Rebekah’s family to let her go so suddenly, and Laban may have hoped to gain more wealth. However, the servant had sworn an oath and would not rest until it was completed. There was no reason for him to stay.

24:57-58 Rebekah’s decision to leave immediately to be with her new husband settled the impasse. *Rebekah* submitted to the Lord’s obvious leading. Young women were normally eager to marry (not to marry as a catastrophe), and later accounts of Laban suggest why Rebekah preferred to leave (cp. 31:14-15). Rebekah displayed faithful love to the servant, Abraham’s family, and Isaac

by going to be Isaac’s wife.

24:60 At Rebekah’s departure, her family invoked the blessing that she would be a *mother of many millions* and that her descendants would *conquer* . . . *their enemies*. Rebekah’s marriage to Isaac was part of God’s plan to bless all humankind (12:1-3).

24:62 *Isaac* lived *in the Negev*, in the southern part of Canaan.

24:67 *Isaac* was 40 years old when he married *Rebekah* (25:20), so Abraham was 140 (21:5).

25:1-11 Though Abraham had sons by another wife, he safeguarded Isaac’s inheritance and blessing.

25:1-4
//1 Chr 1:32-33

25:5
Gen 24:35-36

25:7
Gen 12:4

25:8
Gen 15:15; 25:17;
35:29; 49:29, 33

25:9-10
Gen 23:17-18; 49:29;
50:13

25:11
Gen 12:2; 24:62

25:12-16
//1 Chr 1:29-31

Abraham's Final Days (25:1-11)

Abraham's Family with Keturah

25 Abraham married another wife, whose name was Keturah. ²She gave birth to Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. ³Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan. Dedan's descendants were the Asshurites, Letushites, and Leummites. ⁴Midian's sons were Ephah, Ephher, Hanoah, Abida, and Eldaah. These were all descendants of Abraham through Keturah.

Isaac Receives the Inheritance

⁵Abraham gave everything he owned to his son Isaac. ⁶But before he died, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them off to a land in the east, away from Isaac.

The Death of Abraham

⁷Abraham lived for 175 years, ⁸and he died at a ripe old age, having lived a long and satisfying life. He breathed his last and joined his

ancestors in death. ⁹His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite. ¹⁰This was the field Abraham had purchased from the Hittites and where he had buried his wife Sarah. ¹¹After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac, who settled near Beer-lahai-roi in the Negev.

8. THE ACCOUNT OF ISHMAEL'S DESCENDANTS (25:12-18)

¹²This is the account of the family of Ishmael, the son of Abraham through Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian servant. ¹³Here is a list, by their names and clans, of Ishmael's descendants: The oldest was Nebaioth, followed by Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, ¹⁴Mishma, Dumah, Massa, ¹⁵Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. ¹⁶These twelve sons of Ishmael became the founders of twelve tribes

REBEKAH (24:12-67)

Gen 22:23; 25:20-28; 26:7-8, 35; 27:5-17, 42-46; 29:12; 35:8; 49:31
Rom 9:10-13

Genesis 24 describes the mission of Abraham's servant to find a wife for Isaac. At Abraham's command, he went to Haran in Aram-naharaim (northwest Mesopotamia), to Abraham's relatives, because Abraham did not want Isaac to marry a local Canaanite. The servant prayed that the young woman God had selected to be Isaac's wife would answer his request for a drink by immediately giving it and watering his camels as well (24:12-14). Such a young woman would readily exercise hospitality and be willing to work hard (see note on 24:14). God abundantly answered his prayer with Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel (22:23; 25:20), the son of Abraham's brother Nahor (11:27-32).

When Abraham's servant described how God had led him (24:34-49), Rebekah's father and brother recognized it as God's hand, but they were reluctant to let her go immediately (24:50-56). Rebekah, however, demonstrated faith in God's plan; she was willing to leave her family without delay to marry Isaac (24:57-58). Rebekah's faith was richly rewarded; the blessing her womenfolk gave her in parting (24:59-60) came true when she bore to Isaac the next generation of God's chosen line.

Rebekah bore twins, Esau and Jacob (25:20-26). She preferred Jacob, the younger, whom God had told her would be the stronger and the leader of the two (25:23). Rebekah helped Jacob seize the blessing of the firstborn by deceiving Isaac (27:1-40). Afterward, she arranged for Jacob to be sent to Haran to get away from his brother's anger over the stolen blessing (27:41-28:5). Rebekah's deceptive scheme created a lasting schism in the family, and she apparently never saw her favorite son again. She was, however, buried beside her husband in the family burial site (49:31), and she fulfilled God's plan as the mother of Jacob, the founding father of Israel.

25:1 Exactly when *Abraham married* . . . *Keturah* is unknown. It was probably, but not necessarily, after Sarah's death.

25:2-4 The birth of these nations from Abraham partially fulfilled God's promise to him (12:2; 17:4).

25:3 *Sheba and Dedan*: Cp. 10:7. Abraham's descendants probably settled in these regions and became identified by their names, along with people of other lineage.

25:5-6 *Abraham* loved all his sons, so

before he died, he *gave* them *gifts and sent them* away as he had sent Ishmael (21:8-14). In this way, he preserved Isaac's position as his heir.

25:7-8 Abraham's death is recorded before the births of Jacob and Esau, but he lived until they were fifteen years old (25:19-26; cp. 21:5; 25:26). This literary arrangement closes Abraham's story before focusing on Isaac's family.

25:11 God's blessing transferred to Isaac; Abraham's other sons had been

sent away. Isaac lived *near Beer-lahai-roi*—a special place where God had answered prayer (16:14) and where Isaac waited on the Lord (24:62).

25:12-18 This record lists Ishmael's descendants before tracing Isaac's (25:19-35:29), which is in keeping with the literary arrangement of Genesis (see Introduction to Genesis: "Summary," p. 15).

25:16 Ishmael's *twelve sons* fulfilled God's promise of blessing (17:20).

named after them, listed according to the places they settled and camped. ¹⁷Ishmael lived for 137 years. Then he breathed his last and joined his ancestors in death. ¹⁸Ishmael's descendants occupied the region from Havilah to Shur, which is east of Egypt in the direction of Asshur. There they lived in open hostility toward all their relatives.

9. THE ACCOUNT OF ISAAC'S DESCENDANTS (25:19–35:29)

The Births of Esau and Jacob (25:19-26)

¹⁹This is the account of the family of Isaac, the son of Abraham. ²⁰When Isaac was forty years old, he married Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan-aram and the sister of Laban the Aramean.

²¹Isaac pleaded with the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was unable to have children. The LORD answered Isaac's prayer, and Rebekah became pregnant with twins. ²²But the two children struggled with each other in her womb. So she went to ask the LORD about it. "Why is this happening to me?" she asked.

²³And the LORD told her, "The sons in your womb will become two nations. From the very beginning, the two nations will be rivals. One nation will be stronger than the other; and your older son will serve your younger son."

²⁴And when the time came to give birth, Rebekah discovered that she did indeed have twins! ²⁵The first one was very red at

25:17
Gen 25:8
25:18
Gen 16:12; 20:1
25:21
Gen 21:2
25:23
Gen 17:2-4; 27:29; 48:19
Num 20:14
Deut 2:4, 8
¹⁹Rom 9:11-12
25:25
Gen 27:11

Infertility (25:21)

Gen 16:1-6; 17:15-21; 20:17-18; 29:31; 30:1-2; 30:22-24
Exod 23:25-26
Deut 7:12-15
Judg 13:2-5
1 Sam 1:2-28; 2:5-7
Ps 113:5-9
Isa 54:1-3
Luke 1:5-25
Rom 4:19-22
Gal 4:24-28
Heb 11:11-12

With the possible exception of Leah, each of the patriarchs' wives suffered infertility for a time before having children (11:30; 25:21; 29:31; see also 1 Sam 1:1-18). Children continued the family line, helped protect the tribe, and provided labor. They ensured that hereditary property would stay within the family, guaranteed assistance in old age, and enacted the proper funeral rites. Infertility was therefore a crushing stigma for a woman (Ps 113:9; Prov 30:15-16; Isa 54:1), who understood herself to be created as a vessel of life (1:28; 3:20). It was considered a denial of blessing, design, and desire (1:28), and it brought shame (1 Sam 1:7), ridicule (16:4), and vicious jealousy (30:1).

In the OT, childlessness is a theological issue. Fertility is controlled by the Creator (20:17-18; 30:2, 23; 1 Sam 1:6, 27), who causes fertility and infertility according to his purpose and his promises (17:19; 30:2; Ps 113:9; Luke 1:11-20; Rom 4:19). God often chose infertility as a precursor to the birth of a promised or unique child, marking the birth as God's own work. Childlessness is thus a trial of patience that prompts prayer and faith (25:21; 1 Sam 1:11). Abraham learned to nurture faith in God's promise long before his child arrived (15:4-6; 17:15-21; Rom 4:20-22). When a couple has been infertile, a child's arrival is marked as a special display of God's faithfulness and creative authority.

God's delays are not necessarily denials, but they remind longing parents to use trials for growth and to see children as a gift that cannot be taken for granted. A childless home can be filled with devotion as human expectations submit to future glory (see, e.g., Luke 2:36-37).

25:18 *Havilah* was a region in north-central Arabia. • *Shur* was a region between Beersheba and Egypt. • *in open hostility toward all their relatives*: The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain, but the wording is close to that of 16:12.

25:19–35:29 This *account of the family of Isaac*, the chosen son of Abraham, mostly recounts Jacob's struggle for the blessing (25:27-34; chs 27–33).

25:19-26 Jacob's struggle for supremacy began before the twins were born (see Hos 12:3).

25:19-20 *Isaac . . . married Rebekah*: Isaac's marriage tied him and his family even more closely to Abraham's ancestors. Had he married a Canaanite, the covenant faith would have been imperiled by this corrupt, syncretistic people.

25:21 For twenty years, Rebekah was

barren (cp. 25:20, 26), like Sarah (see 16:1). This condition tested their faith (see note on 16:1-3). How could they be childless when God promised that nations would issue from them? • *Isaac pleaded with the LORD and the LORD answered Isaac's prayer*. Isaac apparently learned from his father's mistake and responded in faith.

25:22 When the pregnancy was difficult, Rebekah went to ask the LORD about it, probably by visiting a prophet—perhaps Abraham (20:7; see note on 25:7-8).

25:23 *rivals*: Jacob and Esau fought in the womb, and their descendants (Israel and Edom) fought continuously throughout their history. In their many conflicts, Israel achieved supremacy over Edom. • *your older son will serve your younger son*: God's choice of the

younger son over the elder ran against natural order (cp. 48:12-14; see Mal 1:1-3; Rom 9:11-16).

25:24-26 When the twins were born, the unusual circumstances inspired each boy's name and hinted at what would happen to him in the future.

25:25 Two wordplays anticipate Esau's later life. *Esau* sounds like a Hebrew term that means "hair" (Hebrew *se'ar*); Esau's later homeland, Edom, was known as *Seir* ("hairy") because it was wooded (as though covered with hair). • *red* (Hebrew *admoni*) sounds like Esau's other name, Edom (25:27-34); Edom had red soil. • Esau's *hair* was like the *fur coat* of an animal, foreshadowing his unspiritual character (25:34; Heb 12:16; cp. Lev 26:22; Deut 7:22; 1 Cor 15:32). The description of the child uses words that highlight the Edomites' nature.

25:26

Hos 12:3

25:30

Gen 36:1, 8

25:31

Deut 21:16-17

1 Chr 5:1-2

25:33

Gen 27:36

Heb 12:16

birth and covered with thick hair like a fur coat. So they named him Esau. ²⁶Then the other twin was born with his hand grasping Esau's heel. So they named him Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when the twins were born.

Esau Sells His Birthright (25:27-34)

²⁷As the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter. He was an outdoorsman, but Jacob had a quiet temperament, preferring to stay at home. ²⁸Isaac loved Esau because he enjoyed eating the wild game Esau brought home, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

²⁹One day when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau arrived home from the wilderness exhausted and hungry. ³⁰Esau said to Jacob, "I'm starved! Give me some of that red stew!" (This is how Esau got his other name, Edom, which means "red.")

³¹"All right," Jacob replied, "but trade me your rights as the firstborn son."

³²"Look, I'm dying of starvation!" said Esau. "What good is my birthright to me now?"

³³But Jacob said, "First you must swear that your birthright is mine." So Esau swore

ESAU (25:21-34)

Esau, the son of Isaac and Rebekah, was Jacob's older twin brother (25:24-26), so named because his body was hairy at birth. His descendants were called Edom ("red") on account of his reddish color at birth, the red lentil soup he received from Jacob (25:30), and the reddish color of the land in which he settled (see note on 25:25).

Esau was a proficient hunter who brought tasty wild meat to his father. Isaac enjoyed its strong flavor more than the mild meat Jacob provided from the family flocks. One day Esau returned home very hungry from an unsuccessful hunt, and Jacob persuaded Esau to surrender his birthright in exchange for food (25:29-34). Esau had little regard for his birthright and was controlled by his carnal desires (see Heb 12:16). He also married two local women who were not Abraham's descendants (26:34-35), which may be why Rebekah coached Jacob in obtaining the patriarchal blessing that would normally have belonged to the elder brother (ch 27). Esau's anger on discovering his brother's deception prompted Jacob to flee for Haran. The brothers were reunited 20 years later because of Esau's gracious forgiveness (33:1-16).

Jacob was born grasping Esau's heel; this omen was interpreted to mean that Esau's Edomite descendants would be subject to Jacob's offspring. The subservient relationship between the Edomites and the Israelites in David's time (2 Sam 8:11-15; 1 Chr 18:13) continued until the reign of Jehoram (2 Kgs 8:20-22; 2 Chr 21:8-10). Following a rebellion in 845 BC, the Edomites briefly gained their independence but were conquered again by Amaziah (796–767 BC). They regained their freedom in 735 BC and then remained independent of Judah.

In the NT, Esau represents the line of Abraham's descendants who lacked the gift of faith and were rejected by God as recipients of his promised blessings (see Rom 9:6-24).

Gen 26:34-35; 27:1-42; 28:6-9; 32:3-20; 33:1-16; 35:28-29; 36:1-43
Deut 2:1-8, 12, 22, 29
Josh 24:4
Mal 1:2-5
Rom 9:6-13
Heb 11:20; 12:16-17

25:26 The name *Jacob* (Hebrew *ya'aqob*) sounds like the Hebrew words for "heel" and "deceiver" (from Hebrew *'aqeb*). The name was originally positive, meaning "protect" (like a rear guard), but it took on the negative meaning of "heel grabber" or "deceiver" in the context of Jacob's deceptive, grasping, usurping character (see 27:36).

25:27-34 Jacob and Esau each developed in accord with his initial characteristics (25:24-26). Esau, the reddish, hairy man, cared about physical things rather than spiritual things (see Heb 12:16); he was finally overcome by physical appetites and sold his birthright. Jacob, the heel grabber, knew the birthright's value and drove a ruthless bargain to gain it presumptuously from his brother.

25:27 *Esau* was a *skillful hunter and an outdoorsman*—a wild man who loved wild country. Jacob had a *quiet* (or *even*)

temperament and preferred to stay at home (literally *dwelling in tents*)—i.e., he was civilized.

25:28 The parents each practiced favoritism. • *because*: Isaac's love for Esau was conditioned upon his son's performance. Rebekah's love for Jacob was constant and unconditional.

25:29 Ironically, *Jacob* proved the more cunning hunter. The word *cooking* (Hebrew *wayyazed*, "boiling") sounds like the word for "hunter" (Hebrew *sayid*). While boiling stew, Jacob was laying a trap for the hairy red animal. He may have waited a long time for this opportunity. This word for "boil" was also used for presumptuous action (like water boiling over the rim of the pot). Jacob overstepped his boundaries when he seized the promise for himself. By contrast, Abraham knew the promise was his and was secure in giving the land away (see note on 13:8-13). • *Esau*

was *exhausted and hungry*, but his life was not in danger (25:32; see note on 25:33-34).

25:30 *Esau* was preoccupied with his appetite. Being driven by one's appetites leaves no place for spiritual values. The text emphasizes this by using a Hebrew word (translated *give*) that was normally used for feeding animals. • *Edom, which means "red"*: See note on 25:25.

25:31-33 *Jacob* was the better hunter on this occasion, but great danger lay in exercising such strong ambition. God's people should desire the things of God, but they must not seek them "in the flesh" (see Zech 4:6; Gal 5:16-17; Eph 6:10-12). The Lord dealt severely with Jacob to purge him of carnal methods. He later received the promise not as crafty Jacob the usurper, but as Israel (meaning, "God fights"), with God fighting on his behalf (32:28).

an oath, thereby selling all his rights as the firstborn to his brother, Jacob.

³⁴Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and lentil stew. Esau ate the meal, then got up and left. He showed contempt for his rights as the firstborn.

Isaac and Abimelech (26:1-35)

Isaac Deceives Abimelech

26 A severe famine now struck the land, as had happened before in Abraham's time. So Isaac moved to Gerar, where Abimelech, king of the Philistines, lived.

²The LORD appeared to Isaac and said, "Do not go down to Egypt, but do as I tell you. ³Live here as a foreigner in this land, and I will be with you and bless you. I hereby confirm that I will give all these lands to you and your ^kdescendants, just as I solemnly promised Abraham, your father. ⁴I will cause your descendants to become as numerous as the stars of the sky, and I will give them all these lands. And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed. ⁵I will do this because Abraham listened to me and obeyed all my requirements, commands, decrees, and instructions." ⁶So Isaac stayed in Gerar.

⁷When the men who lived there asked Isaac about his wife, Rebekah, he said, "She is my sister." He was afraid to say, "She is my wife." He thought, "They will kill me to get

her, because she is so beautiful." ⁸But some time later, Abimelech, king of the Philistines, looked out his window and saw Isaac caressing Rebekah.

⁹Immediately, Abimelech called for Isaac and exclaimed, "She is obviously your wife! Why did you say, 'She is my sister'?"

"Because I was afraid someone would kill me to get her from me," Isaac replied.

¹⁰"How could you do this to us?" Abimelech exclaimed. "One of my people might easily have taken your wife and slept with her, and you would have made us guilty of great sin."

¹¹Then Abimelech issued a public proclamation: "Anyone who touches this man or his wife will be put to death!"

Conflict over Water Rights

¹²When Isaac planted his crops that year, he harvested a hundred times more grain than he planted, for the LORD blessed him. ¹³He became a very rich man, and his wealth continued to grow. ¹⁴He acquired so many flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, and servants that the Philistines became jealous of him. ¹⁵So the Philistines filled up all of Isaac's wells with dirt. These were the wells that had been dug by the servants of his father, Abraham.

¹⁶Finally, Abimelech ordered Isaac to leave the country. "Go somewhere else," he

26:1
Gen 12:10; 20:1-2

26:2
Gen 12:1, 7

26:3
Gen 12:7
^kzera' (2233)
^k Gen 35:12

26:4
Gen 15:5; 22:17
Exod 32:13
^kActs 3:25
^kGal 3:8

26:7
Gen 12:11-13;
20:2, 12

26:10
Gen 20:7-10

26:12
Gen 26:3

26:13
Gen 24:35; 25:5

26:15
Gen 21:25

26:16
Exod 1:9

25:33-34 *Esau* eagerly took Jacob's bait and fell into the trap. He ate and left too quickly to have been near death (25:32). The final comment on the passage explains that Esau *showed contempt* for his birthright, considering it worthless (Heb 12:16). It is foolish to sacrifice spiritual blessings to satisfy physical appetites (cp. 3:6).

26:1-35 In this digression from Jacob's story, Isaac's prosperity (ch 26) shows that the blessing had passed to him (cp. 25:11) despite his failures of faith.

26:1 This *Abimelech* is probably not the man in ch 20, for these events could have been 90 years apart. Possibly Abimelech was a dynastic name or title (a later King Achish, 1 Sam 21:10, was also called Abimelech, Ps 34:TITLE).

26:2-5 The Lord assured Isaac that the covenant promises (cp. 12:2-3; 15:5-8; 17:3-8; 22:15-18; 28:13-14) would pass to him because Abraham faithfully *listened* to God and *obeyed all his requirements, commands, decrees, and instructions*. These terms were later used in Deuteronomy to describe God's full legal covenant with Israel. An Israelite reader would immediately think of the complete Torah when hearing these words and be prompted to obey God's

law as Abraham did, though Abraham had only a few commands from the Lord. Through these words, the text emphasizes that Abraham would have obeyed the later commands if he had had them, because he was an obedient servant of the Lord.

26:3 *descendants*: Literally *seed*; also in 26:4, 24.

26:6-11 While staying in Gerar, Isaac, like his father, deceived people into believing that his wife was his sister. Some suppose that this story duplicates the stories of Abraham's deception (12:10-20; 20:1-18), but the differences are greater than the similarities, and the son's repetition of his father's lie is natural. Through numerous parallels with Abraham, ch 26 shows how God's plan continued with Isaac. Even when Isaac jeopardized the covenant as his father had, God prevented disaster and preserved the marriage. Abraham's descendants would be blessed because of Abraham, but they had to exercise their own faith to enjoy the blessings. Genuine faith in God's promises engenders a fearless walk with him; cowering in fear endangers the blessing and mocks the faith.

26:8 *Abimelech . . . saw Isaac caressing*

Rebekah: The word for "caressing" (Hebrew *metsakheg*) is the same as the word used for Ishmael's "making fun of" Isaac (21:9); the word is related to the name "Isaac" (Hebrew *yitskhaq*). It is as though Isaac's lapse of faith made fun of Abimelech and made a mockery of Rebekah and the great promise embodied in Isaac's name.

26:10-11 Isaac, like his father, was rebuked by *Abimelech* (see note on 20:1-18). This legal wording would remind Israel of how important it was to preserve marital purity. Abimelech recognized the danger to his own people. Though his decree preserved his own society, it was also a word from God that preserved the sanctity of Isaac's and Israel's marriages. If Isaac's marriage had ended here, there would have been no Israelite society.

26:12-13 *Isaac* lived in the land as a temporary settler, enjoying abundant prosperity because of God's blessing; *his crops* flourished and he became *very rich*.

26:14-16 *The Philistines* envied Isaac's prosperity and *filled his wells with dirt*. The king then *ordered Isaac to leave* that region because he was *too powerful* for them (cp. 21:22-23).

26:19
John 4:10-11

26:22
Ps 4:1; 18:19
Isa 54:2

26:23
Gen 22:19

26:24
Gen 17:7; 22:17
Exod 3:6

26:25
Gen 12:7-8; 13:4

26:26
Gen 21:22

26:27
Gen 26:16

26:28
Gen 21:22-23

26:30
Gen 31:54

26:31
Gen 21:31

26:33
Gen 21:31

26:34
Gen 28:8

26:35
Gen 27:46

27:1
Gen 25:25; 48:10

27:2
Gen 47:29

27:3
Gen 25:27

27:4
Gen 24:60; 27:19;
48:9

said, "for you have become too powerful for us."

¹⁷So Isaac moved away to the Gerar Valley, where he set up their tents and settled down. ¹⁸He reopened the wells his father had dug, which the Philistines had filled in after Abraham's death. Isaac also restored the names Abraham had given them.

¹⁹Isaac's servants also dug in the Gerar Valley and discovered a well of fresh water. ²⁰But then the shepherds from Gerar came and claimed the spring. "This is our water," they said, and they argued over it with Isaac's herdsmen. So Isaac named the well Esek (which means "argument"). ²¹Isaac's men then dug another well, but again there was a dispute over it. So Isaac named it Sitnah (which means "hostility"). ²²Abandoning that one, Isaac moved on and dug another well. This time there was no dispute over it, so Isaac named the place Rehoboth (which means "open space"), for he said, "At last the LORD has created enough space for us to prosper in this land."

²³From there Isaac moved to Beersheba, ²⁴where the LORD appeared to him on the night of his arrival. "I am the God of your father, Abraham," he said. "Do not be afraid, for I am with you and will bless you. I will multiply your descendants, and they will become a great nation. I will do this because of my promise to Abraham, my servant." ²⁵Then Isaac built an altar there and worshiped the LORD. He set up his camp at that place, and his servants dug another well.

Isaac's Covenant with Abimelech

²⁶One day King Abimelech came from Gerar with his adviser, Ahuzzath, and also Phicol, his army commander. ²⁷"Why have you come here?" Isaac asked. "You obviously hate me, since you kicked me off your land."

²⁸They replied, "We can plainly see that the LORD is with you. So we want to enter into a sworn treaty with you. Let's make a covenant. ²⁹Swear that you will not harm us, just as we have never troubled you. We have always treated you well, and we sent you away from us in peace. And now look how the LORD has blessed you!"

³⁰So Isaac prepared a covenant feast to celebrate the treaty, and they ate and drank together. ³¹Early the next morning, they each took a solemn oath not to interfere with each other. Then Isaac sent them home again, and they left him in peace.

³²That very day Isaac's servants came and told him about a new well they had dug. "We've found water!" they exclaimed. ³³So Isaac named the well Shibah (which means "oath"). And to this day the town that grew up there is called Beersheba (which means "well of the oath").

Esau's Hittite Wives (26:34-35)

³⁴At the age of forty, Esau married two Hittite wives: Judith, the daughter of Beeri, and Basemath, the daughter of Elon. ³⁵But Esau's wives made life miserable for Isaac and Rebekah.

Jacob Steals Esau's Blessing (27:1-40)

27 One day when Isaac was old and turning blind, he called for Esau, his older son, and said, "My son."

"Yes, Father?" Esau replied.

²"I am an old man now," Isaac said, "and I don't know when I may die. ³Take your bow and a quiver full of arrows, and go out into the open country to hunt some wild game for me. ⁴Prepare my favorite dish, and bring it here for me to eat. Then I will pronounce the blessing that belongs to you, my firstborn son, before I die."

26:17-22 Isaac moved . . . to the Gerar Valley (away from the city of Gerar itself, 26:6, but probably still within ten miles) and *reopened* his father's wells. Isaac was also opposed there, but chose not to fight back; he relinquished one well after another until God's blessing outdid the opposition. Whenever Isaac reopened a well, and regardless of how often enemies caused them to cave in, he found water. God was blessing Isaac and that blessing could not be hindered. Finally, the Philistines left Isaac alone.

26:23-25 At Beersheba, . . . the LORD appeared to Isaac to confirm his covenant (cp. 21:31-33). Isaac responded in faith as his father had done by building *an altar* to the Lord and proclaiming the

Lord's identity and nature (see note on 12:8; 21:33).

26:26-33 This *treaty* is similar to the one an earlier king had made with Abraham (cp. 21:22-31). This king acknowledged that God was blessing Isaac and realized that a treaty with Isaac would benefit him. No opposition can hinder God's blessing—it will flourish, and other nations will see it and seek peace with God's people to share in the blessing.

26:33 Since the earlier treaty was renewed with Isaac, the name of the well was also renewed by the oath.

26:34-35 Esau's marriages illustrate how unfit he was to lead the covenant people into God's blessings, and how foolish was Isaac's later attempt to bless

Esau (27:1-40). Esau later married a third wife in a vain attempt to do the right thing (28:6-9).

27:1-40 Jacob got his father Isaac's blessing through deception. In this story, an entire family tries to carry out their responsibilities by physical means rather than by faith. Faith would have provided Rebekah and Jacob a more honorable solution to the crisis.

27:1-4 The first scene sets up the chapter's crisis. Isaac knew of God's oracle (25:22-23), yet he thwarted or ignored it by trying to bless Esau. • *Isaac was old and turning blind*: He was losing his senses, both physically and spiritually.

27:3-4 Like Esau, Isaac allowed his palate to govern his heart (cp. 25:28-34).

⁵But Rebekah overheard what Isaac had said to his son Esau. So when Esau left to hunt for the wild game, ⁶she said to her son Jacob, "Listen. I overheard your father say to Esau, ⁷'Bring me some wild game and prepare me a delicious meal. Then I will bless you in the LORD's presence before I die.' ⁸Now, my son, listen to me. Do exactly as I tell you. ⁹Go out to the flocks, and bring me two fine young goats. I'll use them to prepare your father's favorite dish. ¹⁰Then take the food to your father so he can eat it and bless you before he dies."

¹¹"But look," Jacob replied to Rebekah, "my brother, Esau, is a hairy man, and my skin is smooth. ¹²What if my father touches me? He'll see that I'm trying to trick him, and then he'll curse me instead of blessing me."

¹³But his mother replied, "Then let the curse fall on me, my son! Just do what I tell you. Go out and get the goats for me!"

¹⁴So Jacob went out and got the young goats for his mother. Rebekah took them and prepared a delicious meal, just the way Isaac liked it. ¹⁵Then she took Esau's favorite clothes, which were there in the house, and gave them to her younger son, Jacob. ¹⁶She covered his arms and the smooth part of his neck with the skin of the young goats. ¹⁷Then she gave Jacob the delicious meal, including freshly baked bread.

¹⁸So Jacob took the food to his father. "My father?" he said.

"Yes, my son," Isaac answered. "Who are you—Esau or Jacob?"

¹⁹Jacob replied, "It's Esau, your firstborn son. I've done as you told me. Here is the wild game. Now sit up and eat it so you can give me your blessing."

²⁰Isaac asked, "How did you find it so quickly, my son?"

"The LORD your God put it in my path!" Jacob replied.

²¹Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Come closer so I can touch you and make sure that you really are Esau." ²²So Jacob went closer to his father, and Isaac touched him. "The voice is Jacob's, but the hands are Esau's," Isaac said.

²³But he did not recognize Jacob, because Jacob's hands felt hairy just like Esau's. So Isaac prepared to bless Jacob. ²⁴"But are you really my son Esau?" he asked.

"Yes, I am," Jacob replied.

²⁵Then Isaac said, "Now, my son, bring me the wild game. Let me eat it, and then I will give you my blessing." So Jacob took the food to his father, and Isaac ate it. He also drank the wine that Jacob served him. ²⁶Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come a little closer and kiss me, my son."

²⁷So Jacob went over and kissed him. And when Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he was finally convinced, and he blessed his son. He said, "Ah! The smell of my son is like the smell of the outdoors, which the LORD has blessed!"

²⁸ "From the dew of heaven
and the richness of the earth,
may God always give you abundant
harvests of grain
and bountiful new wine.

²⁹ May many nations become your
servants,
and may they bow down to you.
May you be the master over your
brothers,
and may your mother's sons bow
down to you.
All who curse you will be cursed,
and all who bless you will be blessed."

³⁰As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and almost before Jacob had left his father, Esau returned from his hunt. ³¹Esau prepared a delicious meal and brought it to his father. Then he said, "Sit up, my father, and eat my wild game so you can give me your blessing."

³²But Isaac asked him, "Who are you?"

Esau replied, "It's your son, your firstborn son, Esau."

³³Isaac began to tremble uncontrollably and said, "Then who just served me wild game? I have already eaten it, and I blessed him just before you came. And yes, that blessing must stand!"

27:5-6
Gen 25:27-28

27:8
Gen 27:13, 43

27:11
Gen 25:25

27:12
Gen 9:25; 27:21-22

27:13
Gen 27:8

27:15
Gen 27:27

27:19
Gen 27:31

27:21
Gen 27:12

27:23
Gen 27:16

27:25
Gen 27:4

27:27
Ps 65:10
Heb 11:20

27:28
Deut 7:13; 33:13, 28
Zech 8:12

27:29
Gen 9:25-27; 12:3
Isa 45:14

27:31
Gen 27:4

27:32
Gen 27:18

27:33
Gen 27:35

27:5-17 The blessing seemed to be in jeopardy. In scene two, Rebekah and Jacob sought to achieve God's blessing by deception, without faith or love. Rebekah planned to deceive the old man into thinking that he was blessing Esau when he was actually blessing Jacob.

27:5 *Esau* agreed to Isaac's plan, thus breaking the oath he had sworn to Jacob (25:33).

27:11-12 *Jacob* had no qualms about this deception; he only feared that it might not work and that he would be cursed for trying.

27:18-29 In scene three, Jacob deceives his father and receives the blessing.

27:18-20 *Jacob* lied about his identity, and then came close to blasphemy by lying about *God*.

27:20-27 *Isaac* voiced his suspicion

three times, but was finally deceived by his senses, which were not functioning well (see note on 27:1-4).

27:30-40 In scene four, everything is discovered and the family becomes even more divided.

27:33 When he realized what had happened, *Isaac began to tremble uncontrollably*; he had been tampering with God's plan, and God had overruled him.

27:34
Heb 12:17

27:35
Gen 27:19

27:36
Gen 25:26

27:37
Gen 27:28-29

27:38
Heb 12:17

27:39
Heb 11:20

27:40
2 Kgs 8:20-22

27:41
Gen 32:3-11; 37:4

27:43
Gen 27:8

27:44
Gen 31:41

27:46
Gen 26:34-35

28:1
Gen 24:3

28:2
Gen 25:20

28:3
Gen 17:16; 35:11
**shadday* (7706)
* Gen 35:11
**qahal* (6951)
* Gen 35:11

28:4
Gen 12:1-3; 15:7;
35:11

³⁴When Esau heard his father's words, he let out a loud and bitter cry. "Oh my father, what about me? Bless me, too!" he begged.

³⁵But Isaac said, "Your brother was here, and he tricked me. He has taken away your blessing."

³⁶Esau exclaimed, "No wonder his name is Jacob, for now he has cheated me twice. First he took my rights as the firstborn, and now he has stolen my blessing. Oh, haven't you saved even one blessing for me?"

³⁷Isaac said to Esau, "I have made Jacob your master and have declared that all his brothers will be his servants. I have guaranteed him an abundance of grain and wine—what is left for me to give you, my son?"

³⁸Esau pleaded, "But do you have only one blessing? Oh my father, bless me, too!" Then Esau broke down and wept.

³⁹Finally, his father, Isaac, said to him,

"You will live away from the richness of the earth,
and away from the dew of the heaven above.

⁴⁰You will live by your sword,
and you will serve your brother.
But when you decide to break free,
you will shake his yoke from your neck."

Jacob Flees to Paddan-Aram (27:41–28:5)

⁴¹From that time on, Esau hated Jacob because their father had given Jacob the blessing. And Esau began to scheme: "I will

soon be mourning my father's death. Then I will kill my brother, Jacob."

⁴²But Rebekah heard about Esau's plans. So she sent for Jacob and told him, "Listen, Esau is consoling himself by plotting to kill you. ⁴³So listen carefully, my son. Get ready and flee to my brother, Laban, in Haran. ⁴⁴Stay there with him until your brother cools off. ⁴⁵When he calms down and forgets what you have done to him, I will send for you to come back. Why should I lose both of you in one day?"

⁴⁶Then Rebekah said to Isaac, "I'm sick and tired of these local Hittite women! I would rather die than see Jacob marry one of them."

28 So Isaac called for Jacob, blessed him, and said, "You must not marry any of these Canaanite women. ²Instead, go at once to Paddan-aram, to the house of your grandfather Bethuel, and marry one of your uncle Laban's daughters. ³May God ^aAlmighty bless you and give you many children. And may your descendants multiply and become ^bmany nations! ⁴May God pass on to you and your descendants the blessings he promised to Abraham. May you own this land where you are now living as a foreigner, for God gave this land to Abraham."

⁵So Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Paddan-aram to stay with his uncle Laban, his mother's brother, the son of Bethuel the Aramean.

27:34-35 Esau was very *bitter*, and angry enough to kill (27:41).

27:36 Esau began to realize Jacob's true nature, saying *he has cheated me* (or *tripped me up*, or *deceived me*) *twice*, by taking the birthright (the right of inheritance, Hebrew *bekorah*; 25:27-34) and by deceiving their father to receive the *blessing* (the spoken pronouncement of the inheritance, Hebrew *berakah*). • *Jacob* sounds like the Hebrew words for "heel" and "deceiver." Esau's assessment of Jacob was correct, but he failed to see his own ungodliness in these transactions (see note on 27:5; Heb 12:16).

27:37 There was no going back. *Isaac* had declared an oracle from God, who had *made Jacob* to be Esau's *master* (see Rom 9:11-13).

27:39-40 All that remained for Esau was a promise of hardship and struggle (cp. 3:17-19; 16:11-12).

27:41-45 Rebekah and Jacob got the blessing but reaped hatred from Esau

and separation from one another; there is no indication that Rebekah and Jacob ever saw each other again. They gained nothing that God was not already going to give them, and their methods were costly. Jacob fled from home to escape Esau's vengeance.

27:42–33:17 Jacob met the Lord on a route that Abraham had taken 125 years earlier. The story follows a chiasmic structure that centers on Jacob's exile:

A: Jacob flees Esau (27:42–28:9)

B: Angels of God meet Jacob at Bethel (28:10-22)

C: Jacob is exiled in Paddan-aram (29:1–31:55)

B': Angels of God meet Jacob at Mahanaim (32:1-2)

A': Jacob is reconciled to Esau (32:3–33:17)

27:46 *Rebekah* manipulated *Isaac* into sending *Jacob* away. Like Isaac, Jacob took a wife from among his relatives in the east.

28:1-2 *Isaac* remained in the land, but *Jacob* had to leave it. God would deal

with Jacob under the hand of *Laban*, his *uncle* (see note on 29:1–31:55).

• Believers in any age must remain spiritually pure by marrying other believers (2 Cor 6:14-18). The Canaanite people incorporated dozens of groups and clans into their society and religion by wars, treaties, and marriages (see 34:20-23). Abraham's family was to resist such mixing (cp. 24:3; ch 34); they were to marry within their clan to maintain the purity of the line and of the faith that identified them as the chosen seed. The surest way to lose their distinctiveness was to intermarry with people of other tribal backgrounds and beliefs (see Ezra 9–10; Neh 13:23-29).

28:3-5 Before Jacob departed, Isaac gave him a pure, legitimate blessing. He did not hold back, because he now knew what God wanted him to do. Isaac clearly passed on the blessing *God Almighty* (Hebrew *El-Shaddai*; see 17:1) had given to Abraham and to him regarding prosperity and the land (cp. 15:5, 18-20).

28:4 *descendants*: Literally *seed*; also in 28:13, 14.

JACOB (27:1–35:29)

Gen 25:19-34;
 37:1-35; 42:1-4,
 29-38; 43:1-13;
 45:25–50-14
 Exod 1:1-5
 Num 23:7-10, 20-23;
 24:5-9, 17-19
 Deut 26:5
 Josh 24:4, 32
 Hos 12:2-14
 Mal 1:2
 John 4:5-6, 12
 Acts 7:8-16
 Rom 9:10-13
 Heb 11:8-9, 20-21

Jacob, younger twin son of Isaac and Rebekah, struggled with his twin brother Esau in the womb and was born grasping his heel (25:24-26). God told Rebekah that the boys represented two nations and that the older son would serve the younger (25:23).

Isaac favored Esau, an outdoorsman; Rebekah preferred Jacob, who was happier at home. Once, Esau returned famished from hunting and Jacob bought his birthright with some red stew he had cooked (25:27-34; see Heb 12:16). Later, Isaac asked Esau to prepare wild game so he could eat and bless him (27:1-4; cp. 25:28). Rebekah sent Jacob to deceive Isaac into blessing him instead, and her ploy was successful (27:5-29). Jacob's ruse was soon discovered (27:30-35), but legally valid blessings were irrevocable promises (27:33). So Isaac gave Esau a lesser blessing (27:36-40), and Esau plotted to kill Jacob (27:41). Rebekah convinced Isaac to send Jacob away to her brother Laban so that Jacob would marry among relatives (27:46).

So Isaac transferred the covenant promises to Jacob and sent him to Haran (28:1-5). Along the way, God appeared to Jacob in a dream and affirmed the promises of land and descendants that he had given to Abraham and Isaac (28:10-15). Jacob worshiped the Lord and named the place Bethel ("house of God").

At Haran, Jacob began to serve his uncle Laban (chs 29–31). Jacob loved Laban's daughter Rachel and worked seven years to marry her, but Laban deceived him by substituting his older daughter Leah on Jacob's wedding night. Jacob worked seven more years for Rachel and an additional six years to acquire flocks for himself (30:25-43; see also 31:38-42). Despite many hardships, he had thirteen children and became very prosperous.

After twenty years, God told Jacob to return to Canaan (31:3). Fearing reprisals from Laban and his sons (31:1-2), Jacob organized his caravan and left while Laban was away (31:4-21). Laban gave chase, but God prevented him from harming Jacob (31:22-24, 29). Laban instead upbraided Jacob for leaving stealthily and for stealing his idols (31:25-30; see also 31:19). Jacob let Laban search his tents, but the idols were not found (31:33-35), and Jacob became angry (31:36-42). Though their conflict remained unresolved (31:43), the two men made a peace covenant (31:44-54); the location formed the lasting boundary between Israel and Aram.

Jacob now faced Esau and God. When Esau came to meet him with 400 men, Jacob sought God's protection and sent gifts to pacify his estranged brother (32:3-21). During a night that symbolized his whole life, Jacob wrestled alone with a man who dislocated his hip and gave him the blessing he sought (32:22-32). God changed his name to Israel ("God fights").

Jacob met Esau and the two were reconciled (33:1-11); Esau was gracious and forgiving, and Jacob shared some of his blessing. Esau then returned to Seir while Jacob continued to Canaan. In Shechem, Jacob bought land and built an altar (33:16-20), then moved to Bethel and expelled all foreign idols from his household (35:1-8). God reaffirmed Jacob's new name, Israel, and renewed his promises of land and descendants (35:9-15).

Jacob's favoritism for Rachel extended to her son Joseph, whom Jacob intended to anoint as the firstborn and heir (37:1-4), a plan that God confirmed through dreams (37:5-11). But then Joseph's brothers sold him as a slave (Gen 37:9-28) and for over twenty years Jacob believed he was dead. Only after letting Benjamin go to Egypt in Judah's care did Jacob learn that Joseph was alive and would be the source of famine relief for his family (43:1-14; 45:24-28). Jacob's spirits revived. He moved to Egypt and joyously reunited with his favorite son at Goshen (Gen 46:28-30), where he prospered for seventeen more years.

When Jacob approached death at age 147, he arranged for the future of his family. He made Joseph swear to bury him in Canaan (47:29-31; 49:29-32). He gave Joseph's sons his prime blessing (48:1-20) and put Ephraim, the younger son, first. He gave assurance that the family would return to Canaan (48:21-22), then blessed each of his sons and prophesied the future of their descendants (49:1-28). He died (49:33) and was buried at the cave of Machpelah, accompanied by his sons and a large Egyptian procession. His death marked the end of the patriarchal age and the beginning of Israel's growth as a nation in Egypt until they returned to live again in the Promised Land (see Exodus—Joshua).

The name "Jacob" became synonymous with the nation of Israel (see Num 23:7, 21; 24:5; Hos 12:2). God called the nation to serve him as their forefathers had done (Hos 12:3-13). He promised Israel the same love that he had shown toward Jacob (Mal 1:2). And he promised that a conquering ruler would come from Jacob's descendants (Gen 49:8-12; Num 24:17-19).



28:6

Gen 28:1

28:8

Gen 26:35

28:9

Gen 36:2

28:10

Gen 26:23

28:12

Gen 20:3

Num 12:6

*John 1:51

*mal'ak (4397)

* Gen 48:16

28:13

*erets (0776)

* Num 13:27

28:14

Gen 12:2; 13:14;

22:17

28:15

Gen 48:21

Deut 7:9; 31:6, 8

28:17

Exod 3:5

Ps 68:35

28:18

Gen 35:14

28:19

Gen 12:8; 35:6; 48:3

28:21

Exod 15:2

Esau's Ishmaelite Wives (28:6-9)

⁶Esau knew that his father, Isaac, had blessed Jacob and sent him to Paddan-aram to find a wife, and that he had warned Jacob, "You must not marry a Canaanite woman."⁷ He also knew that Jacob had obeyed his parents and gone to Paddan-aram.⁸ It was now very clear to Esau that his father did not like the local Canaanite women.⁹ So Esau visited his uncle Ishmael's family and married one of Ishmael's daughters, in addition to the wives he already had. His new wife's name was Mahalath. She was the sister of Nebaioth and the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son.

Jacob's Dream at Bethel:**The Blessing Confirmed (28:10-22)**

¹⁰Meanwhile, Jacob left Beersheba and traveled toward Haran.¹¹ At sundown he arrived at a good place to set up camp and stopped there for the night. Jacob found a stone to rest his head against and lay down to sleep.¹² As he slept, he dreamed of a stairway that reached from the earth up to heaven. And he saw the angels of God going up and down the stairway.

¹³At the top of the stairway stood the LORD, and he said, "I am the LORD, the God of your grandfather Abraham, and the God of your father, Isaac. The ground you are

lying on belongs to you. I am giving it to you and your descendants.¹⁴ Your descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth! They will spread out in all directions—to the west and the east, to the north and the south. And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants.¹⁵ What's more, I am with you, and I will protect you wherever you go. One day I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have finished giving you everything I have promised you."

¹⁶Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I wasn't even aware of it!"¹⁷ But he was also afraid and said, "What an awesome place this is! It is none other than the house of God, the very gateway to heaven!"

¹⁸The next morning Jacob got up very early. He took the stone he had rested his head against, and he set it upright as a memorial pillar. Then he poured olive oil over it.¹⁹ He named that place Bethel (which means "house of God"), although it was previously called Luz.

²⁰Then Jacob made this vow: "If God will indeed be with me and protect me on this journey, and if he will provide me with food and clothing,²¹ and if I return safely to my

Age	Event	Reference
15	Abraham dies	21:5; 25:7, 26
91	Joseph is born	See "Joseph's Life," p. 99
108	Joseph is sold into slavery	37:2
120	Isaac dies	25:26; 35:28
130	Jacob moves to Egypt	47:7-9
147	Jacob dies, is buried in Canaan	47:28

▲ **Jacob's Life (27:1–35:29).**

28:6-9 *Esau*, the unchosen son still trying to please *his father*, married a woman from the unchosen line of *Ishmael*, which he thought would be more acceptable. He did not understand the uniqueness of the covenant family.

28:10-22 Despite Jacob's previous means of securing the blessing, God assured him of protection and provision. The God of Abraham and Isaac was also the God of Jacob. The revelation dramatically changed Jacob's outlook and brought faith into clearer focus.

28:11 *The good place* where Jacob set up camp was apparently a protected area at the foot of a hill. The *stone to rest his head against* was probably large, more for protection than for a pillow.

28:12-15 The point of the vision was that God and his angels were with Jacob on his journey. God reiterated to Jacob the covenant promises made to Abraham and Isaac, promising him land, descendants numerous as the dust (cp. 13:16; 22:17), and universal blessing through him (cp. 12:2-3; 15:5, 18; 17:3-8; 22:15-18; 35:11-12). God also promised to be with Jacob and watch over him until he returned.

28:12-13 *stairway* (traditionally *ladder*): This word occurs nowhere else in Scripture. The imagery probably reminded readers of a staircase or ramp up the front of a ziggurat that signified communication between heaven and earth (see note on 11:4). God initiated a divine communication between heaven and earth to guide and protect Jacob, the steward of his covenant (28:13-15; see Ps 91:11-15). • Jesus said that he himself is the stairway between heaven and earth (John 1:51).

28:14 Jacob inherited Abraham's entire covenant (see 22:17), which confirmed Isaac's blessing (28:3-4) and stipulated a temporary exile (28:15; see 15:12-16).

28:15 *I am with you*: The promise of God's presence meant that God would protect and provide for Jacob in a special way. God's promise to be with his people is repeated throughout Scripture (see also 26:24), prompting a response of worship and confidence in those who have faith (28:16-22).

28:16-22 The second half of the passage gives Jacob's response to the revelation. He felt reverential fear and awe in the Lord's presence, and his acts of devotion became archetypes of Israel's worship. When God graciously visits his people and promises to be with them and make them a blessing to the world, his people respond in faith with reverential fear, worship, offerings, and vows. They preserve their faith in memory for future worshippers.

28:18 Anointing with *oil* became a way of setting something apart for divine use in Israel's worship (Exod 29:1-7; 40:9; Lev 2:1; 1 Sam 10:1).

28:19 *Bethel* later became a holy site for Israel (see Judg 20:18-27; 1 Sam 7:16; 10:3; 1 Kgs 12:26–13:10; 2 Kgs 2:2-3).

28:20-22 In view of what God would do for him, Jacob vowed to do certain things for God. He believed the Lord's words and responded in gratitude. Jacob's *vow* influenced Israel's way of making commitments to God in worship.

father's home, then the LORD will certainly be my God. ²²And this memorial pillar I have set up will become a place for worshipping God, and I will present to God a tenth of everything he gives me."

*Jacob in Paddan-Aram (29:1–31:55)
Jacob Meets Rachel and Laban*

29 Then Jacob hurried on, finally arriving in the land of the east. ²He saw a well in the distance. Three flocks of sheep and goats lay in an open field beside it, waiting to be watered. But a heavy stone covered the mouth of the well.

³It was the custom there to wait for all the flocks to arrive before removing the stone and watering the animals. Afterward the stone would be placed back over the mouth of the well. ⁴Jacob went over to the shepherds and asked, "Where are you from, my friends?"

"We are from Haran," they answered.

⁵"Do you know a man there named Laban, the grandson of Nahor?" he asked.

"Yes, we do," they replied.

⁶"Is he doing well?" Jacob asked.

"Yes, he's well," they answered. "Look, here comes his daughter Rachel with the flock now."

⁷Jacob said, "Look, it's still broad daylight—too early to round up the animals. Why don't you water the sheep and goats so they can get back out to pasture?"

⁸"We can't water the animals until all the flocks have arrived," they replied. "Then the shepherds move the stone from the mouth of the well, and we water all the sheep and goats."

⁹Jacob was still talking with them when Rachel arrived with her father's flock, for she was a shepherd. ¹⁰And because Rachel was his cousin—the daughter of Laban, his mother's brother—and because the sheep and goats belonged to his uncle Laban, Jacob went over to the well and moved the stone from its mouth and watered his uncle's flock. ¹¹Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and he wept aloud. ¹²He explained to Rachel that

28:22
Gen 14:20; 35:7
Deut 14:22
29:1
Judg 6:3, 33
29:2
Gen 24:10-11
29:4
Gen 28:10
29:5
Gen 11:29
29:6
Exod 2:16
29:9
*ro'ah (7462)
* Gen 48:15
29:10
Exod 2:17
29:11
Gen 33:4
29:12
Gen 28:5

RACHEL (29:6–30:24)

Gen 31:4-19, 31-35;
33:1-7; 35:16-20;
46:19-22; 48:7
Ruth 4:11
1 Sam 10:2
Jer 31:15
Matt 2:18

Rachel, Laban's beautiful younger daughter, was Jacob's favorite wife. He first met her as he arrived at Paddan-aram in Haran, when he helped Rachel remove the stone from the well and watered her father's sheep (29:10). Jacob agreed to work seven years for Laban in order to have Rachel as his wife, and the time seemed like only a few days because of his great love for her.

Laban deceptively required Jacob to marry Leah, his older, less attractive daughter, before finally giving him Rachel. Unlike Leah, Rachel was barren in the early years of her marriage to Jacob (30:1). She gave her servant Bilhah to Jacob in order to have children, and Dan and Naphtali were born (30:3-8). In time, Rachel conceived and bore Joseph (30:22-25), and Jacob took his wives, children, and possessions away from Haran.

Somewhere between Bethel and Bethlehem, Rachel died while giving birth to Benjamin (35:16-20). Jacob set up a pillar over her tomb that was a landmark even in Saul's time (1 Sam 10:2). Rachel and Leah are highly regarded for having built up the house of Israel (Ruth 4:11). In Jer 31:15, Rachel is pictured as crying for her children being carried off into captivity, and Matthew recalls Jeremiah's words at Herod's slaughter of the male infants (Matt 2:18).

28:22 *I will present to God a tenth:* By paying a tithe (*a tenth*) as an act of worship, a person acknowledges that everything is a gift from God and belongs to God (see 14:19-20; Num 18:21-32; Deut 14:22-29; 2 Chr 31:5-6; Mal 3:7-12; Matt 23:23).

29:1–31:55 These chapters tell how God kept his promise by abundantly blessing Jacob with family and possessions. God also disciplined Jacob, leaving him to struggle with Laban for many years. Laban was Jacob's match in deception, and thus a means of correction. • The story of Jacob and Laban parallels Israel's later sojourn in Egypt. Jacob struggled while serving his uncle, but finally emerged with a large family

(the founders of the twelve tribes) and great wealth. In Egypt, the Israelites suffered under their oppressors, but they also flourished, becoming a great nation of twelve large tribes and escaping with great riches.

29:1 *Jacob hurried on:* The Hebrew text says that he "picked up his feet" as if he felt the wind at his back; he continued his journey with fresh enthusiasm. His changed outlook was the direct result of the vision he received at Bethel, a marvelous revelation that God was going to protect and bless him. He now sought the fulfillment of God's promises to him, not just an escape from Esau. Jacob's attitude had become positive and magnanimous to the point

of being naive and vulnerable.

29:2-12 Jacob's meeting Rachel at the well was providentially timed by the sovereign God who was leading Jacob to fulfillment of the promises (cp. 24:12-20). The well was a reminder of God's blessing (cp. 16:13-14; 21:19; 26:19-25, 33).

29:10 In contrast to the lazy, unhelpful shepherds (29:7-8), Jacob is portrayed as generous, industrious, and energetic.

• *Jacob . . . watered his uncle's flock:* Laban's flocks would flourish under Jacob's care.

29:11 *Jacob kissed Rachel:* Kissing relatives was a proper greeting (29:13; cp. Song 8:1).

29:14
Judg 9:2
2 Sam 5:1

29:15
Gen 30:28; 31:7, 41

29:16
Gen 29:25-26

29:17
Gen 12:11

29:18
Gen 24:67
Hos 12:12

29:20
Song 8:7

29:22
Judg 14:10

29:23
Gen 24:65; 38:14

29:24
Gen 30:9

29:25
Gen 12:18

he was her cousin on her father's side—the son of her aunt Rebekah. So Rachel quickly ran and told her father, Laban.

¹³As soon as Laban heard that his nephew Jacob had arrived, he ran out to meet him. He embraced and kissed him and brought him home. When Jacob had told him his story, ¹⁴Laban exclaimed, "You really are my own flesh and blood!"

Jacob Marries Leah and Rachel

After Jacob had stayed with Laban for about a month, ¹⁵Laban said to him, "You shouldn't work for me without pay just because we are relatives. Tell me how much your wages should be."

¹⁶Now Laban had two daughters. The older daughter was named Leah, and the younger one was Rachel. ¹⁷There was no sparkle in Leah's eyes, but Rachel had a beautiful figure and a lovely face. ¹⁸Since

Jacob was in love with Rachel, he told her father, "I'll work for you for seven years if you'll give me Rachel, your younger daughter, as my wife."

¹⁹"Agreed!" Laban replied. "I'd rather give her to you than to anyone else. Stay and work with me." ²⁰So Jacob worked seven years to pay for Rachel. But his love for her was so strong that it seemed to him but a few days.

²¹Finally, the time came for him to marry her. "I have fulfilled my agreement," Jacob said to Laban. "Now give me my wife so I can sleep with her."

²²So Laban invited everyone in the neighborhood and prepared a wedding feast. ²³But that night, when it was dark, Laban took Leah to Jacob, and he slept with her. ²⁴(Laban had given Leah a servant, Zilpah, to be her maid.)

²⁵But when Jacob woke up in the morning—it was Leah! "What have you done to me?"

LEAH (29:14-35)

Gen 30:9-21; 31:4-16; 33:1-7; 34:1; 46:8-15; 49:31
Ruth 4:11

Leah was Laban's first daughter, Jacob's unloved first wife, and Rachel's older sister.

After Jacob deceived his father Isaac into giving him the blessing intended for Esau (27:1-40), Jacob went to his uncle Laban in Mesopotamia to find a wife (27:46–28:2) and escape Esau's revenge (27:41-42). He fell in love with his cousin Rachel and arranged with her father to marry her after seven years of work (29:17-18). At the wedding feast, Laban deceived Jacob by giving him Leah instead of Rachel (29:21-25), claiming that custom required the older daughter to marry first (29:26). Leah's eyes were not beautiful, but Rachel "had a beautiful figure and a lovely face" (29:17).

Jacob's love for Rachel (29:20) induced him to work another seven years to marry her. In the intense rivalry between the two sisters, Jacob favored Rachel, so the Lord blessed Leah with six sons and a daughter (Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Dinah) before Rachel was given any children (29:31–30:22). This barrenness became a great burden for Rachel. At one point she bargained with Leah for mandrakes, a plant believed to ensure conception, in exchange for conjugal rights. This increased her sister's advantage, because Leah conceived and bore her fifth son (30:14-17).

Leah was the mother of two tribes that played significant roles in Israelite history. The tribe of Levi was the tribe of the priesthood, and the tribe of Judah became the tribe of royalty through which the promised seed (3:15; 12:2-3; 2 Sam 7:16; Matt 1:1) came in the person of Jesus Christ.

29:14a *You really are my own flesh and blood!* Laban welcomed Jacob into his house and treated him much like a son.

29:14b-30 Jacob's joyful prospect of marriage to the lovely Rachel became an occasion for Laban's shrewdness and Jacob's discipline. Jacob and his mother had deceived his father and brother to gain the blessing; now his mother's brother deceived him. Jacob received a dose of his own duplicity through twenty years of labor, affliction, and deception in Laban's service (31:38). In God's justice, people harvest what they plant (Gal 6:7). Laban's deception was perfectly designed to make Jacob aware

of his own craftiness. God often brings people into the lives of believers to discipline them. But Jacob was tenacious, and God blessed him abundantly with a large family and many possessions (30:25-43) during this time of service.

29:17 *There was no sparkle in Leah's eyes: Or Leah had dull eyes, or Leah had soft eyes.* The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.

29:18 *Seven years* of service was a high bride-price in the ancient world, but Rachel was beautiful (like Sarah and Rebekah), and *Jacob was in love* with her.

29:23-26 Like Isaac, Jacob was plied with food and wine (cp. 27:25), deprived

of sight in the darkness (cp. 27:1), baffled by clothing (cp. 27:15), and misled by touch (cp. 27:23). The marriage had been consummated (29:23; see 2:24), so Jacob was bound to Leah, but Jacob only acknowledged Rachel as his wife (44:27) and her children as his own (42:38). • *It's not our custom here to marry off a younger daughter ahead of the firstborn:* Laban's words are a reminder of what Jacob did when he, the younger son, pretended to be his older brother to gain the blessing (ch 27). Now Leah, the older sister, pretended to be the younger sister to get a husband. God gave the deceiver a dose of his own deception as a discipline in his life.

Jacob raged at Laban. “I worked seven years for Rachel! Why have you tricked me?”

²⁶“It’s not our custom here to marry off a younger daughter ahead of the firstborn,” Laban replied. ²⁷“But wait until the bridal week is over, then we’ll give you Rachel, too—provided you promise to work another seven years for me.”

²⁸So Jacob agreed to work seven more years. A week after Jacob had married Leah, Laban gave him Rachel, too. ²⁹(Laban gave Rachel a servant, Bilhah, to be her maid.) ³⁰So Jacob slept with Rachel, too, and he loved her much more than Leah. He then stayed and worked for Laban the additional seven years.

Children Born to Leah and Rachel

³¹When the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, he enabled her to have children, but Rachel could not conceive. ³²So Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben, for she said, “The LORD has noticed my misery, and now my husband will love me.”

³³She soon became pregnant again and gave birth to another son. She named him Simeon, for she said, “The LORD heard that I was unloved and has given me another son.”

³⁴Then she became pregnant a third time and gave birth to another son. She named

him Levi, for she said, “Surely this time my husband will feel affection for me, since I have given him three sons!”

³⁵Once again Leah became pregnant and gave birth to another son. She named him Judah, for she said, “Now I will praise the LORD!” And then she stopped having children.

30 When Rachel saw that she wasn’t having any children for Jacob, she became jealous of her sister. She pleaded with Jacob, “Give me children, or I’ll die!”

²Then Jacob became furious with Rachel. “Am I God?” he asked. “He’s the one who has kept you from having children!”

³Then Rachel told him, “Take my maid, Bilhah, and sleep with her. She will bear children for me, and through her I can have a family, too.” ⁴So Rachel gave her servant, Bilhah, to Jacob as a wife, and he slept with her. ⁵Bilhah became pregnant and presented him with a son. ⁶Rachel named him Dan, for she said, “God has vindicated me! He has heard my request and given me a son.”

⁷Then Bilhah became pregnant again and gave Jacob a second son. ⁸Rachel named him Naphtali, for she said, “I have struggled hard with my sister, and I’m winning!”

⁹Meanwhile, Leah realized that she wasn’t getting pregnant anymore, so she took her

29:27
Judg 14:12

29:29
Gen 30:3

29:30
Gen 29:16

29:31
Deut 21:15-17

29:32
Gen 30:23; 37:21; 46:8

29:33
Deut 21:15

29:34
Gen 49:5

29:35
Gen 49:8
Matt 1:2-3

30:1
1 Sam 1:5-6

30:2
Gen 20:18; 29:31

30:3-4
Gen 16:2-4

30:6
Gen 30:23

30:8
Gen 32:28

29:28-30 After the bridal week ended (29:27), Jacob also received Rachel as his wife, though he then would have to work an *additional seven years* (cp. 31:41). Laban seemed to have gained the upper hand.

29:30 Jacob *loved Rachel much more than Leah*: Favoritism was an ongoing cause of dysfunction in Jacob’s family (cp. 25:28; 37:3). Jacob’s favoritism had lasting effects: his family was never together, and their descendants, the tribes of Israel, were rarely unified.

29:31–30:24 The rivalry between these sisters explains much of the later rivalry among their sons, and then among the tribes, just as the rivalry between Jacob and Laban foreshadowed conflict between Israel and the Arameans of Damascus (2 Sam 8:5-6; 10:8-19; 1 Kgs 20:1-34; 2 Kgs 5-8; 13; Isa 7:1-9). • God champions the cause of the poor and oppressed; he exalted Leah, the despised first wife, as the first to become a mother. Judah’s kingly tribe and Levi’s priestly line came through her despite Jacob’s favoritism for Rachel and her children. Despite the tension and jealousy resulting from Laban’s treachery and Jacob’s favoritism, God still built Jacob’s family and brought about the births of the tribal ancestors.

29:31-35 Leah’s first four sons were born in rapid succession, but *Rachel could not conceive*. She was barren, like Sarah and Rebekah (cp. 16:1; 25:21; see also 1 Sam 1:1-28; Luke 1:5-25). • Each name is a memorable wordplay on Leah’s experience and hopes.

29:32 *Reuben* (Hebrew *re’uben*) means “Look, a son!” It also sounds like the Hebrew for “He has seen my misery” (*ra’ah be’onyi*). His birth gave Leah consolation from God and hope for Jacob’s love. Jacob seems not to have seen her misery, but God did (cp. 16:14; 24:62; 25:11). The name was a reminder of God’s intervention.

29:33 Leah named her second son *Simeon*. *Simeon* probably means “one who hears.” *The LORD heard that Leah was unloved*. The name suggests that she had cried out to the Lord (cp. 16:11).

29:34 *Levi* sounds like a Hebrew term that means “being attached” or “feeling affection for.” Leah named her third son Levi, hoping that her *husband* would become attached to her since she had *given him three sons*. This hope was not fulfilled.

29:35 Leah reconciled herself to the reality that nothing would turn Jacob’s affections toward her. She named her fourth son *Judah* with the sentiment,

“*I will praise the LORD*” (*Judah* is related to the Hebrew term for “praise”). She seems to have given up on Jacob, taking her consolation from the Lord.

30:1-8 Rachel’s naming of sons through Bilhah does not reflect faith as Leah’s namings had. Rachel felt wronged over the marriage and her barrenness. The names of Bilhah’s sons reflect Rachel’s bitter struggle with her sister and her feeling of some victory.

30:1-2 In that culture, it was like death for a woman not to have children (cp. 1 Sam 1); only God could open Rachel’s womb.

30:3-4 Rachel’s decision to have children through her servant, and Jacob’s compliance, recall Sarai’s use of Hagar (16:1-4). • *bear children for me*: Literally *bear children on my knees*.

30:5-6 *Dan* means “he judged” or “he vindicated.” Rachel felt *vindicated* (Hebrew *dananni*) by Dan’s birth.

30:7-8 *Naphtali* means “my struggle”; it is related to the clause *I have struggled hard* (Hebrew *naptule’ elohim niptalti*, “I have struggled the struggles of God”). This word for God expresses the superlative.

30:9 When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing children, she coun-

30:11
Gen 35:26; 46:16;
49:19

30:14
Song 7:13

30:17
Gen 25:21

30:18
Gen 49:14

30:22
1 Sam 1:19-20

30:23
Luke 1:25

30:24
Gen 35:17

30:26
Gen 29:18
Hos 12:12

30:27
Gen 39:2-5

30:28
Gen 29:15; 31:7

30:32
Gen 31:8, 12

servant, Zilpah, and gave her to Jacob as a wife. ¹⁰Soon Zilpah presented him with a son. ¹¹Leah named him Gad, for she said, "How fortunate I am!" ¹²Then Zilpah gave Jacob a second son. ¹³And Leah named him Asher, for she said, "What joy is mine! Now the other women will celebrate with me."

¹⁴One day during the wheat harvest, Reuben found some mandrakes growing in a field and brought them to his mother, Leah. Rachel begged Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes."

¹⁵But Leah angrily replied, "Wasn't it enough that you stole my husband? Now will you steal my son's mandrakes, too?"

Rachel answered, "I will let Jacob sleep with you tonight if you give me some of the mandrakes."

¹⁶So that evening, as Jacob was coming home from the fields, Leah went out to meet him. "You must come and sleep with me tonight!" she said. "I have paid for you with some mandrakes that my son found." So that night he slept with Leah. ¹⁷And God answered Leah's prayers. She became pregnant again and gave birth to a fifth son for Jacob. ¹⁸She named him Issachar, for she said, "God has rewarded me for giving my servant to my husband as a wife." ¹⁹Then Leah became pregnant again and gave birth to a sixth son for Jacob. ²⁰She named him Zebulun, for she said, "God has given me a good reward. Now my husband will treat me with respect, for I have given him six sons." ²¹Later she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah.

²²Then God remembered Rachel's plight and answered her prayers by enabling her

to have children. ²³She became pregnant and gave birth to a son. "God has removed my disgrace," she said. ²⁴And she named him Joseph, for she said, "May the LORD add yet another son to my family."

Jacob's Wealth Increases

²⁵Soon after Rachel had given birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Please release me so I can go home to my own country. ²⁶Let me take my wives and children, for I have earned them by serving you, and let me be on my way. You certainly know how hard I have worked for you."

²⁷"Please listen to me," Laban replied. "I have become wealthy, for the LORD has blessed me because of you. ²⁸Tell me how much I owe you. Whatever it is, I'll pay it."

²⁹Jacob replied, "You know how hard I've worked for you, and how your flocks and herds have grown under my care. ³⁰You had little indeed before I came, but your wealth has increased enormously. The LORD has blessed you through everything I've done. But now, what about me? When can I start providing for my own family?"

³¹"What wages do you want?" Laban asked again.

Jacob replied, "Don't give me anything. Just do this one thing, and I'll continue to tend and watch over your flocks. ³²Let me inspect your flocks today and remove all the sheep and goats that are speckled or spotted, along with all the black sheep. Give these to me as my wages. ³³In the future, when you check on the animals you have given me as my wages, you'll see that I have been honest. If you find in my flock

tered Rachel's effort by giving *her servant . . . to Jacob as a wife* even though she already had four sons.

30:10-13 *Gad* means "good fortune" and was the name of a god of fortune. *Asher* means "happy" and was the name of a god of luck. These names reflect Leah's pagan background, but there is no indication that she believed in these gods.

30:14-17 *Mandrakes* were considered an aphrodisiac and aid to procreation (see Song 7:13). Rachel thought they would help her get pregnant and so traded Jacob for a night to get them. In the process, Leah got pregnant, not Rachel.

30:18 *Issachar* sounds like a Hebrew term that means "reward." The name captures the sense of Jacob's being hired (30:16) and of the Lord's rewarding Leah (Hebrew *sekari*, "my hire").

30:19-20 *Zebulun* probably means "honor"; it also means "gift," as in a

dowry or tribute. Leah thought that God gave her Zebulun so that her husband would honor her. This hope never fully left her.

30:21 *Dinah* was Jacob's only daughter. See ch 34.

30:22-24 Rachel finally *gave birth* to her own *son*, Joseph. His birth was brought about by God's intervention, not by superstitious practices (30:14-16) or the social custom of giving servants as wives. • *Removed* (Hebrew *'asap*, "take away") sounds similar to *Joseph* (Hebrew *yosep*). *Joseph* means "may he add." Rachel rejoiced over Joseph's birth, yet she prayed that the Lord would *add yet another son to her family*.

30:25-34 After his fourteen years of service, Jacob asked Laban for permission to go home. The two bedouin leaders negotiated politely but remained cautiously on guard. Laban wanted to get more out of Jacob. Jacob wanted to gain

his wages by selective breeding.

30:27 *I have become wealthy, for (or I have learned by divination that)*: God had prospered Laban through Jacob's presence (see 22:18). Laban may have looked for omens, or simply have perceived what was happening. Since dark-colored sheep (30:32) were rare, a large number of them was considered an omen of God's blessing.

30:30-33 Jacob agreed that God had blessed Laban through him, so he made a plan to gain something for himself. He proposed for his wages the rare black and multicolored goats and the speckled and spotted sheep that were born.

30:32 As Abraham had done with Lot (13:9), Jacob gave Laban what he valued most. White sheep were more common and more valuable than dark or multicolored sheep; as a man of faith, Jacob was willing to take the rejects (cp. 1 Cor 1:26).

any goats without speckles or spots, or any sheep that are not black, you will know that I have stolen them from you.”

³⁴“All right,” Laban replied. “It will be as you say.” ³⁵But that very day Laban went out and removed the male goats that were streaked and spotted, all the female goats that were speckled and spotted or had white patches, and all the black sheep. He placed them in the care of his own sons, ³⁶who took them a three-days’ journey from where Jacob was. Meanwhile, Jacob stayed and cared for the rest of Laban’s flock.

³⁷Then Jacob took some fresh branches from poplar, almond, and plane trees and peeled off strips of bark, making white streaks on them. ³⁸Then he placed these peeled branches in the watering troughs where the flocks came to drink, for that was where they mated. ³⁹And when they mated in front of the white-streaked branches, they gave birth to young that were streaked, speckled, and spotted. ⁴⁰Jacob separated those lambs from Laban’s flock. And at mating time he turned the flock to face Laban’s animals that were streaked or black. This is how he built his own flock instead of increasing Laban’s.

⁴¹Whenever the stronger females were ready to mate, Jacob would place the peeled branches in the watering troughs in front of them. Then they would mate in front of the branches. ⁴²But he didn’t do this with the weaker ones, so the weaker lambs belonged to Laban, and the stronger ones were Jacob’s. ⁴³As a result, Jacob became

very wealthy, with large flocks of sheep and goats, female and male servants, and many camels and donkeys.

Jacob Flees from Laban

31 But Jacob soon learned that Laban’s sons were grumbling about him. “Jacob has robbed our father of everything!” they said. “He has gained all his wealth at our father’s expense.” ²And Jacob began to notice a change in Laban’s attitude toward him.

³Then the LORD said to Jacob, “Return to the land of your father and grandfather and to your relatives there, and I will be with you.”

⁴So Jacob called Rachel and Leah out to the field where he was watching his flock. ⁵He said to them, “I have noticed that your father’s attitude toward me has changed. But the God of my father has been with me. ⁶You know how hard I have worked for your father, ⁷but he has cheated me, changing my wages ten times. But God has not allowed him to do me any harm. ⁸For if he said, ‘The speckled animals will be your wages,’ the whole flock began to produce speckled young. And when he changed his mind and said, ‘The striped animals will be your wages,’ then the whole flock produced striped young. ⁹In this way, God has taken your father’s animals and given them to me.

¹⁰“One time during the mating season, I had a dream and saw that the male goats mating with the females were streaked, speckled, and spotted. ¹¹Then in my dream,

30:43
Gen 13:2; 24:35; 26:13

31:1
Kabod (3519)
• Exod 16:10

31:3
Gen 28:15; 32:9

31:6
Gen 30:29

31:7
Gen 29:25; 31:41

31:8
Gen 30:32

31:11
Gen 16:7-11; 22:11, 15

30:34-36 *Laban* verbally agreed with Jacob’s plan, but he tried to prevent Jacob from accruing wealth by removing animals from the flock that would fulfill the agreement. • *Laban’s* deception with his *goats* reminds us of Jacob’s deception of Esau (cp. 27:9; see note on 29:14b-30).

30:37-43 God blessed Jacob despite Laban’s duplicity. Not to be outwitted, Jacob used selective breeding to acquire a flock, following the traditional belief that peeled sticks influenced the kind of animal that would be born. The peeled branches seemingly made his animals produce streaked and spotted young; Jacob later acknowledged that God had prospered him (31:7-12). Jacob gained *stronger* animals for himself and *weaker ones* for Laban (30:41-42).

30:37 *making white streaks*: A clever wordplay captures the meaning of this whole section. When Jacob exposed the white (Hebrew *laban*) streaks of

wood underneath, he played the “white” game (the *Laban* game) and won. As he outwitted Laban (“Whitey”), Jacob’s flocks flourished and Jacob prospered.

30:42 Laban now received due recompense for his treatment of Jacob. Laban’s attempt to defraud Jacob resulted in Jacob’s coming out ahead, because God was at work in his life.

30:43 *Jacob became very wealthy*, in fulfillment of God’s promises to him (27:28; 28:13-15).

31:1-21 Jacob’s return journey precipitated a confrontation with Laban that set a permanent boundary between Israel (Jacob) and Aram (Laban). God kept his word to Jacob by prospering him in Paddan-aram and protecting him on his journey home.

31:1-2 The animosity of *Laban’s sons* against *Jacob* grew because his flocks were multiplying faster than Laban’s. They were jealous of God’s blessing on Jacob and afraid that he would completely overrun them.

31:3 *The land of your father and grandfather* was the land of Canaan, to which Abraham had previously been called (12:1-7; 17:8). • *Return . . . I will be with you*: See notes on 26:2-5; 28:12-15. God protected Jacob (“Israel,” 32:28) as he brought his family back to the land that was promised to them. God later brought Israel back to Canaan after long years of service in Egypt. That great return had many elements similar to this passage: God defeated foreign gods and beliefs, used dreams for rescue and protection, gave victory over those who threatened them, and established boundaries between nations and tribes (see Deut 32:8).

31:4-13 Jacob explained to his wives how God had blessed him despite Laban’s opposition. He was not sure they would want to leave Laban and go to Canaan. He wanted to take a willing family, so he had to make an effective appeal. He rehearsed God’s leading and provision over the years, and then told them that he had to keep the vow he had made at Bethel (28:20-22).

31:12
Gen 30:32
Exod 3:7

31:13
Gen 28:10-22

31:15
Gen 29:20, 27

31:18
Gen 25:20

31:19
Judg 17:5

31:20
Gen 31:27

31:21
Gen 37:25
Num 32:1

31:22
Gen 30:36

31:24
Gen 25:20

31:28
Gen 31:55

31:31
Gen 20:11

31:32
Gen 44:9

the angel of God said to me, 'Jacob!' And I replied, 'Yes, here I am.'

¹²"The angel said, 'Look up, and you will see that only the streaked, speckled, and spotted males are mating with the females of your flock. For I have seen how Laban has treated you. ¹³I am the God who appeared to you at Bethel, the place where you anointed the pillar of stone and made your vow to me. Now get ready and leave this country and return to the land of your birth.'"

¹⁴Rachel and Leah responded, "That's fine with us! We won't inherit any of our father's wealth anyway. ¹⁵He has reduced our rights to those of foreign women. And after he sold us, he wasted the money you paid him for us. ¹⁶All the wealth God has given you from our father legally belongs to us and our children. So go ahead and do whatever God has told you."

¹⁷So Jacob put his wives and children on camels, ¹⁸and he drove all his livestock in front of him. He packed all the belongings he had acquired in Paddan-aram and set out for the land of Canaan, where his father, Isaac, lived. ¹⁹At the time they left, Laban was some distance away, shearing his sheep. Rachel stole her father's household idols and took them with her. ²⁰Jacob outwitted Laban the Aramean, for they set out secretly and never told Laban they were leaving. ²¹So Jacob took all his possessions with him and crossed the Euphrates River, heading for the hill country of Gilead.

Dispute between Laban and Jacob

²²Three days later, Laban was told that Jacob had fled. ²³So he gathered a group of

his relatives and set out in hot pursuit. He caught up with Jacob seven days later in the hill country of Gilead. ²⁴But the previous night God had appeared to Laban the Aramean in a dream and told him, "I'm warning you—leave Jacob alone!"

²⁵Laban caught up with Jacob as he was camped in the hill country of Gilead, and he set up his camp not far from Jacob's. ²⁶"What do you mean by deceiving me like this?" Laban demanded. "How dare you drag my daughters away like prisoners of war? ²⁷Why did you slip away secretly? Why did you deceive me? And why didn't you say you wanted to leave? I would have given you a farewell feast, with singing and music, accompanied by tambourines and harps. ²⁸Why didn't you let me kiss my daughters and grandchildren and tell them good-bye? You have acted very foolishly! ²⁹I could destroy you, but the God of your father appeared to me last night and warned me, 'Leave Jacob alone!' ³⁰I can understand your feeling that you must go, and your intense longing for your father's home. But why have you stolen my gods?"

³¹"I rushed away because I was afraid," Jacob answered. "I thought you would take your daughters from me by force. ³²But as for your gods, see if you can find them, and let the person who has taken them die! And if you find anything else that belongs to you, identify it before all these relatives of ours, and I will give it back!" But Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the household idols.

³³Laban went first into Jacob's tent to search there, then into Leah's, and then

31:13 *the God who appeared to you at Bethel:* As in Greek version and an Aramaic Targum; Hebrew reads *the God of Bethel*.

31:14-16 The women responded immediately that they would go with Jacob because God had blessed him. They were very willing to leave Laban, who had squandered their wealth (the property that would have provided for them). They knew that what God had given to Jacob would also be theirs.

31:17-21 Jacob left Laban secretly out of fear of reprisal (31:31).

31:19-20 *Rachel stole her father's household idols:* Rachel probably wanted to regain some of the assets Laban had squandered; possibly she also worshiped idols (cp. 35:2-4). To have the idols may have signified claiming the family inheritance, as customs in subsequent periods indicate. Laban apparently felt vulnerable without them.

Whatever her reasons, Rachel's theft almost brought disaster on the fleeing family when Laban caught up with them. • A wordplay shows that Rachel and Jacob were very much alike—Rachel *stole* (Hebrew *wattignob*) Laban's household gods, and Jacob *outwitted* (Hebrew *wayyignob*, "stole the heart of, deceived") *Laban*.

31:21 The journey took the family from Haran southwest to the land of *Gilead*, just east of the Jordan River in the north of today's kingdom of Jordan. • *the Euphrates River:* Literally *the river*.

31:22-23 The theft of the idols (31:19) was probably the main reason that Laban and his men chased Jacob. It was one thing for Jacob to take his family and flocks—Laban probably still believed they were all his—but another matter entirely to take his household gods. Laban may have feared that Jacob would return someday to claim all of

Laban's estate. When he failed to find the gods, he asked for a treaty to keep Jacob away (31:43-53). • It took Laban *seven days* to catch up with Jacob.

31:24 *leave Jacob alone!* (literally *Do not speak to Jacob either good or evil*): God commanded Laban not to take justice into his own hands. When we try to enact our own sense of good and evil apart from God's command, we always do evil (see note on 2:9).

31:25-30 The dispute between the two men used the language of legal controversies and lawsuits (see also 31:36). In his first argument, Laban presented himself as a wounded party that Jacob had robbed.

31:32 Jacob, so convinced that he didn't have the gods, used an oath that unwittingly put Rachel under a death sentence.

31:33-35 *Laban* searched for the idols but *found nothing*. Laban never

the tents of the two servant wives—but he found nothing. Finally, he went into Rachel’s tent. ³⁴But Rachel had taken the household idols and hidden them in her camel saddle, and now she was sitting on them. When Laban had thoroughly searched her tent without finding them, ³⁵she said to her father, “Please, sir, forgive me if I don’t get up for you. I’m having my monthly period.” So Laban continued his search, but he could not find the household idols.

³⁶Then Jacob became very angry, and he challenged Laban. “What’s my crime?” he demanded. “What have I done wrong to make you chase after me as though I were a criminal? ³⁷You have rummaged through everything I own. Now show me what you found that belongs to you! Set it out here in front of us, before our relatives, for all to see. Let them judge between us!

³⁸“For twenty years I have been with you, caring for your flocks. In all that time your sheep and goats never miscarried. In all those years I never used a single ram of yours for food. ³⁹If any were attacked and killed by wild animals, I never showed you the carcass and asked you to reduce the count of your flock. No, I took the loss myself! You made me pay for every stolen animal, whether it was taken in broad daylight or in the dark of night.

⁴⁰“I worked for you through the scorching heat of the day and through cold and sleepless nights. ⁴¹Yes, for twenty years I slaved in your house! I worked for fourteen years earning your two daughters, and then six more years for your flock. And you changed my wages ten times! ⁴²In fact, if the God of my father had not been on my side—the God of Abraham and the fearsome God of Isaac—you would have sent me away empty-handed. But God has seen your abuse and

my hard work. That is why he appeared to you last night and rebuked you!”

Jacob’s Treaty with Laban

⁴³Then Laban replied to Jacob, “These women are my daughters, these children are my grandchildren, and these flocks are my flocks—in fact, everything you see is mine. But what can I do now about my daughters and their children? ⁴⁴So come, let’s make a covenant, you and I, and it will be a witness to our commitment.”

⁴⁵So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a monument. ⁴⁶Then he told his family members, “Gather some stones.” So they gathered stones and piled them in a heap. Then Jacob and Laban sat down beside the pile of stones to eat a covenant meal. ⁴⁷To commemorate the event, Laban called the place Jegar-sahadutha (which means “witness pile” in Aramaic), and Jacob called it Galeed (which means “witness pile” in Hebrew).

⁴⁸Then Laban declared, “This pile of stones will stand as a witness to remind us of the covenant we have made today.” This explains why it was called Galeed—“Witness Pile.” ⁴⁹But it was also called Mizpah (which means “watchtower”), for Laban said, “May the LORD keep watch between us to make sure that we keep this covenant when we are out of each other’s sight. ⁵⁰If you mistreat my daughters or if you marry other wives, God will see it even if no one else does. He is a witness to this covenant between us.

⁵¹“See this pile of stones,” Laban continued, “and see this monument I have set between us. ⁵²They stand between us as witnesses of our vows. I will never pass this pile of stones to harm you, and you must never pass these stones or this monument to harm me. ⁵³I call on the God of our ancestors—the God of your grandfather Abraham and the

31:37
Gen 31:33
31:38
Gen 27:44
31:39
Exod 22:10-13
31:41
Gen 29:30
31:42
Gen 29:32
31:44
Gen 21:27, 30
31:45
Gen 28:18
Josh 24:26-27
31:48
Gen 21:30
31:49
Judg 10:17; 11:29
31:50
Judg 11:10
1 Sam 12:5
Jer 29:23; 42:5
31:52
Gen 31:29, 42
31:53
Gen 24:12

dreamed that a woman having her *monthly period* would desecrate the idols by *sitting on them* (cp. Lev 15:19-24).

31:36-42 Jacob retaliated by accusing Laban of false charges and humiliation. Laban now became the defendant, for his charges were demeaning and apparently groundless.

31:40 Jacob, who preferred domestic life (25:27), had for twenty years endured the rigors of the outdoors that Esau had loved.

31:42 on my side . . . and the fearsome God of Isaac (or and the Fear of Isaac): The God that Isaac feared was with Jacob (31:3), had seen his *hard work*

and faithfulness despite Laban’s *abuse*, and had rewarded Jacob. Laban’s dream only proved to Jacob that he was in the right.

31:43-44 Laban pushed for a treaty to settle the dispute—he felt vulnerable, so he wanted to secure the borders. Jacob did not need a treaty, since God had provided for him and protected him.

31:45-48 The *stone* and the *heap* of stones were a *monument* to the border treaty between the two men, as a witness to future generations. Each man named the monument *witness pile* in his native language. It remained the perpetual border between Israel and the kingdom of Aram (Syria), two nations often at war.

31:49 The witness pile was also called *watchtower*. God would watch over Jacob and Laban and keep them apart, for they could not trust each other.

31:50-53 Laban added some face-saving stipulations to the treaty, using many words to cover up his own untrustworthiness and portray Jacob as the unethical party. He even took credit for the monument Jacob had erected (*this monument I have set*, 31:51). The women and children would be much safer and better cared for with Jacob than they ever were with Laban.

31:53 the fearsome God of his father, Isaac: Or the Fear of his father, Isaac. See note on 31:42.

31:54
Exod 18:12

31:55
Gen 31:28

32:1
Gen 16:11
2 Kgs 6:16-17

32:2
Josh 13:26; 21:38
2 Sam 2:8

32:3
Gen 27:41-42

32:4
Gen 31:41

32:7
Gen 33:1

32:9
Gen 28:13-15; 31:13

32:10
Gen 24:27

32:11
Gen 27:41

32:12
Gen 28:14

32:18
Gen 32:13

32:20
1 Sam 25:19

God of my grandfather Nahor—to serve as a judge between us.”

So Jacob took an oath before the fearsome God of his father, Isaac, to respect the boundary line. ⁵⁴Then Jacob offered a sacrifice to God there on the mountain and invited everyone to a covenant feast. After they had eaten, they spent the night on the mountain.

⁵⁵Laban got up early the next morning, and he kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them. Then he left and returned home.

Jacob Returns Home (32:1–33:20)

Angels Meet Jacob

32 As Jacob started on his way again, angels of God came to meet him. ²When Jacob saw them, he exclaimed, “This is God’s camp!” So he named the place Mahanaim.

Jacob Sends Gifts to Esau

³Then Jacob sent messengers ahead to his brother, Esau, who was living in the region of Seir in the land of Edom. ⁴He told them, “Give this message to my master Esau: ‘Humble greetings from your servant Jacob. Until now I have been living with Uncle Laban, ⁵and now I own cattle, donkeys, flocks of sheep and goats, and many servants, both men and women. I have sent these messengers to inform my lord of my coming, hoping that you will be friendly to me.’”

Jacob Prepares to Meet Esau

⁶After delivering the message, the messengers returned to Jacob and reported, “We met your brother, Esau, and he is already on his way to meet you—with an army of 400 men!” ⁷Jacob was terrified at the news. He divided his household, along with the flocks and herds and camels, into two groups. ⁸He thought, “If Esau meets one group and attacks it, perhaps the other group can escape.”

⁹Then Jacob prayed, “O God of my grandfather Abraham, and God of my father, Isaac—O LORD, you told me, ‘Return to your own land and to your relatives.’ And you promised me, ‘I will treat you kindly.’ ¹⁰I am not worthy of all the unfailing love and faithfulness you have shown to me, your servant. When I left home and crossed the Jordan River, I owned nothing except a walking stick. Now my household fills two large camps! ¹¹O LORD, please rescue me from the hand of my brother, Esau. I am afraid that he is coming to attack me, along with my wives and children. ¹²But you promised me, ‘I will surely treat you kindly, and I will multiply your descendants until they become as numerous as the sands along the seashore—too many to count.’”

¹³Jacob stayed where he was for the night. Then he selected these gifts from his possessions to present to his brother, Esau: ¹⁴200 female goats, 20 male goats, 200 ewes, 20 rams, ¹⁵30 female camels with their young, 40 cows, 10 bulls, 20 female donkeys, and 10 male donkeys. ¹⁶He divided these animals into herds and assigned each to different servants. Then he told his servants, “Go ahead of me with the animals, but keep some distance between the herds.”

¹⁷He gave these instructions to the men leading the first group: “When my brother, Esau, meets you, he will ask, ‘Whose servants are you? Where are you going? Who owns these animals?’ ¹⁸You must reply, ‘They belong to your servant Jacob, but they are a gift for his master Esau. Look, he is coming right behind us.’”

¹⁹Jacob gave the same instructions to the second and third herdsmen and to all who followed behind the herds: “You must say the same thing to Esau when you meet him. ²⁰And be sure to say, ‘Look, your servant Jacob is right behind us.’”

Jacob thought, “I will try to appease him by sending gifts ahead of me. When I see

31:55 Verse 31:55 is numbered 32:1 in Hebrew text.

32:1-32 Verses 32:1-32 are numbered 32:2-33 in Hebrew text.

32:1 God assured *Jacob* of his protection at a time when Jacob most needed such consolation. His journey was both a physical return to his homeland and a spiritual return to the land of God’s promised blessing. God protects his people and fulfills his plan.

32:2 *This is God’s camp!* Jacob must have seen the *angels* that revealed God’s presence as a sign of protec-

tion, as with the earlier vision when he was departing the land (28:10-22).

• *Mahanaim* means “two camps.” Jacob’s company and the company of angels were together in one place.

32:3-5 Apparently inspired by the vision of angels (32:1, Hebrew *mal’akim*), *Jacob sent messengers (mal’akim)* into Edom to meet Esau.

32:7-8 Jacob *divided* his company into two groups or camps (Hebrew *makhanoth*, related to “Mahanaim” in 32:2) because he was afraid, remembering Esau’s character and his threat to kill Jacob (see 25:25; 27:41).

32:9-12 Jacob’s prayer is a wonderful example of how to address God. He based his appeal on God’s will, reminding God of his relationship with him, his command for him to return to the land, and his promise (32:9). He had a correct attitude of genuine humility and total dependence on God (32:10). Finally, he asked that God *rescue* him from his brother, and he repeated God’s promises (see 22:17).

32:13-21 Taking a large portion of the wealth God had blessed him with (some 550 animals), Jacob prepared a gift to appease Esau’s anger and gain his favor.

him in person, perhaps he will be friendly to me.”²¹ So the gifts were sent on ahead, while Jacob himself spent that night in the camp.

Jacob Wrestles with God and Becomes Israel

²² During the night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two servant wives, and his eleven sons and crossed the Jabbok River with them. ²³ After taking them to the other side, he sent over all his possessions.

²⁴ This left Jacob all alone in the camp, and a man came and wrestled with him until the dawn began to break. ²⁵ When the man saw that he would not win the match, he touched Jacob's hip and wrenched it out of its socket. ²⁶ Then the man said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking!"

But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

²⁷ "What is your name?" the man asked. He replied, "Jacob."

²⁸ "Your name will no longer be Jacob," the man told him. "From now on you will be called Israel, because you have fought with God and with men and have won."

²⁹ "Please tell me your name," Jacob said. "Why do you want to know my name?" the man replied. Then he blessed Jacob there.

³⁰ Jacob named the place Peniel (which means "face of God"), for he said, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been spared."³¹ The sun was rising as Jacob left Peniel, and he was limping because of the injury to his hip. ³² (Even today the people of Israel don't eat the tendon near the hip socket because of what happened that night when the man strained the tendon of Jacob's hip.)

Jacob and Esau Make Peace

33 Then Jacob looked up and saw Esau coming with his 400 men. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and

32:22
Deut 3:16
Josh 12:2

32:24
Gen 18:2

32:26
Hos 12:3-4

32:28
Gen 35:10
1 Kgs 18:31

32:29
Exod 3:13
Judg 13:17

32:30
Gen 16:13
Exod 24:10; 33:2
Num 12:8
Deut 5:24; 34:10
Judg 6:22
John 1:18

32:31
Judg 8:8-9

33:1
Gen 32:6-7

32:22-32 Before Jacob returned to the land God had promised him, God met him, crippled him, and blessed him, changing his name to Israel. This episode was a significant turning point for him.

32:22-24 *The Jabbok River* flows westward to the Jordan Valley, dividing the region of Bashan on the north from Gilead on the south. Wordplays on Jacob's name and character preserve the memory of this encounter. *Jacob* (Hebrew *ya'aqob*), while at *Jabbok* (Hebrew *yabboq*), *wrestled* (Hebrew *wayye'abeq*). Through his fight with an adversary to receive the blessing, Jacob's name would be changed, and his deceptive striving would partially give way to faith as his way of life.

32:24 *a man came*: The narrative unfolds as the event did for Jacob. No details are given about the assailant, who later refused to identify himself (32:29). • *until the dawn*: The darkness fit Jacob's situation and increased the fear and uncertainty that seized him. In the darkness he had no idea who it was—it might have been one of Esau's men, or Laban's.

32:25 *he touched Jacob's hip and wrenched it out of its socket*: Jacob, the deceitful fighter, could fight no more. When his assailant fought him as man to man, Jacob could hold his own. But like so many of his own rivals, he had now more than met his match.

32:26 At daybreak, the significance of this fight began to dawn on Jacob. He realized who his assailant was, and since it was futile to fight, he held on to obtain God's blessing.

32:27 *What is your name?* The Lord's

question was really about Jacob's character, not his identity (cp. 3:9; 4:9). By giving his name, *Jacob* confessed his nature, his way of doing things as "Heel-grabber, Deceiver, Usurper." Before God would bless him, he had to acknowledge who he was, and then God would change his identity.

32:28 *Jacob* sounds like the Hebrew words for "heel" and "deceiver." *Israel* means "God fights." God first had to fight with him, but now God would fight for him. Jacob's name was thus full of promise for Jacob and his descendants. • *you have fought with God and with men*: Through his entire life, Jacob had been seizing God's blessing by his own abilities and by any means possible. Jacob knew the importance of the blessing, but he was too self-sufficient and proud to let the blessing be given to him. He had been fighting God long before this encounter. • *and have won*: He had prevailed in his struggles with Esau and with Laban; now he prevailed in obtaining God's blessing.

32:29 *Jacob* knew who was with him (32:30); the request was his attempt to regain some control. God would not reveal his *name*, which cannot be had on demand.

32:30 *Peniel (which means "face of God")*: The name shows that Jacob recognized the man as a manifestation of God (a *theophany*). • *yet my life has been spared (or and I have been rescued)*: The saying probably meant that Jacob realized that his prayer to be rescued from Esau (32:11) had been answered, for if he could meet God like this and walk away, he had nothing to fear from Esau. The saying may also

reflect an ancient understanding that no one could see God and live (see Exod 33:20).

32:31 *Peniel*: Hebrew *Penuel*, a variant spelling of Peniel. • *he was limping*: God injured Jacob's hip, thus curtailing his proud self-sufficiency. Since the Lord had restricted his natural strength, Jacob would have to rely on the Lord with greater faith. He had thought that returning to his land would be a matter of outwitting his brother once again (32:3-21), but here at the land's threshold he met its true proprietor. He would get the land, but only if God fought for him. Self-sufficiency—trying to achieve the blessing by our own strength or by the ways of the world—will not suffice. If we persist, God may have to cripple our self-sufficiency to make us trust him more.

32:32 The story includes a dietary restriction for Israel that became a custom but was not put into law. This custom helped preserve the memory of the story. Observant Jews still refuse to eat the tendons of an animal's hindquarters.

33:1-17 Jacob's long-anticipated meeting with his brother Esau turned out far better than he had feared. Esau's changed heart is an example of how "God fights" (32:28). Earlier, he had cared little about the birthright (25:32-34); now he cared little for old grudges. Jacob recognized that God had intervened.

33:1-2 Jacob's identity had been changed (32:27-28), but he had not yet learned to live up to the new name; he still showed the favoritism that divides families. He lined up his family and his possessions in the order of their

33:3
Gen 18:2; 42:6
33:4
Gen 45:14-15
33:5
Gen 48:9
33:8
Gen 32:14-16

his two servant wives. ²He put the servant wives and their children at the front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last. ³Then Jacob went on ahead. As he approached his brother, he bowed to the ground seven times before him. ⁴Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him. And they both wept.

⁵Then Esau looked at the women and children and asked, "Who are these people with you?"

"These are the children God has graciously given to me, your servant," Jacob replied. ⁶Then the servant wives came forward with their children and bowed before him. ⁷Next came Leah with her children,

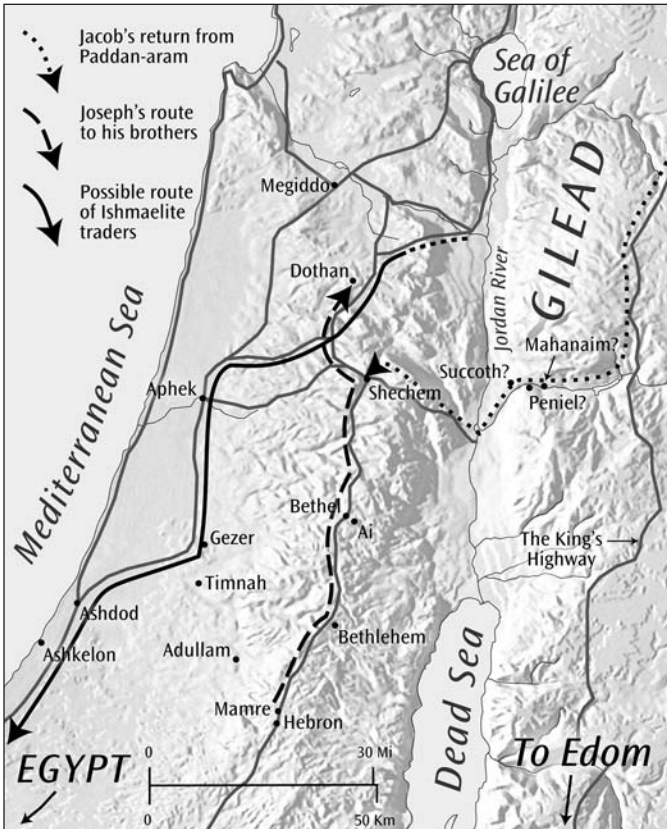
and they bowed before him. Finally, Joseph and Rachel came forward and bowed before him.

⁸"And what were all the flocks and herds I met as I came?" Esau asked.

Jacob replied, "They are a gift, my lord, to ensure your friendship."

⁹"My brother, I have plenty," Esau answered. "Keep what you have for yourself."

¹⁰But Jacob insisted, "No, if I have found favor with you, please accept this gift from me. And what a relief to see your friendly smile. It is like seeing the face of God!" ¹¹Please take this gift I have brought you, for God has been very gracious to me. I have more than enough." And because Jacob insisted, Esau finally accepted the gift.



◀ **Jacob's Family in Canaan (32:1–38:30).** When Jacob returned to Canaan from Haran, after making a treaty with Laban at Mizpah (31:48-49), he met angels at MAHANAIM (32:1-2) and wrestled with God at PENIEL (32:22-32). After making peace with Esau (33:1-16), Jacob traveled to SUCCOTH (33:17) and then SHECHEM (33:18-20; cp. 12:6-7). After the conflict with the people of Shechem (ch 34), at God's instruction Jacob moved to BETHEL (35:1-15; cp. 12:8; 13:1-4; 28:10-22). After Jacob left Bethel, Rachel died in childbirth on the way to Ephrath (=BETHLEHEM, 35:16-20; cp. 1 Sam 10:2; Jer 31:15). Jacob continued to HEBRON (35:27), where he was reunited with his father. There he settled, and from there Joseph later went to find his brothers (37:14). Joseph's route to SHECHEM and then DOTHAN is shown (37:14-17), as is the possible route of the Ishmaelite traders from GILEAD to EGYPT (37:25-36). ADULLAM, where Judah moved (38:1), is also shown.

and to Esau as his lord (33:8, 13-15); Esau called Jacob "my brother" (33:9). Jacob was cautiously warding off any possible retaliation by reversing the words of the oracle (25:23).

33:7 Among Jacob's sons, only *Joseph* is named; he was Jacob's favorite son and the recipient of the blessing.

33:10 Jacob knew that Esau's friendly greeting was God's work, secured at Peniel when he saw God face to face.

33:11 *this gift I have brought you* (literally *my blessing*): Jacob perceived Esau as a threat and tried to appease him with a gift (cp. 2 Kgs 17:3-4; 18:7, 14; 2 Chr 28:21), perhaps in a guilty attempt to undo the past. Jacob would not take no for an answer.

importance to him, with the slave wives and their children in front (to face danger first), Leah's group behind them, and Rachel and Joseph in the back, where it was safest.

33:3-13 Even though Jacob had nothing to fear, he was afraid and tried to appease his brother. He assumed the role of a servant before royalty by bowing

(33:3), using an honorific title (33:8, 13), making introductions (33:6-7), and presenting gifts (33:8).

33:4 Esau's friendly greeting was an answer to prayer (32:11). God had rescued Jacob from Esau's revenge.

33:5 *your servant*: In talking with his brother, Jacob continued to refer to himself as Esau's servant (also 33:14)

12“Well,” Esau said, “let’s be going. I will lead the way.”

13But Jacob replied, “You can see, my lord, that some of the children are very young, and the flocks and herds have their young, too. If they are driven too hard, even for one day, all the animals could die. 14Please, my lord, go ahead of your servant. We will follow slowly, at a pace that is comfortable for the livestock and the children. I will meet you at Seir.”

15“All right,” Esau said, “but at least let me assign some of my men to guide and protect you.”

Jacob responded, “That’s not necessary. It’s enough that you’ve received me warmly, my lord!”

16So Esau turned around and started back to Seir that same day. 17Jacob, on the other hand, traveled on to Succoth. There he built himself a house and made shelters for his livestock. That is why the place was named Succoth (which means “shelters”).

Jacob Moves to Shechem

18Later, having traveled all the way from Paddan-aram, Jacob arrived safely at the town of Shechem, in the land of Canaan. There he set up camp outside the town. 19Jacob bought the plot of land where he camped from the family of Hamor, the fa-

ther of Shechem, for 100 pieces of silver. 20And there he built an altar and named it El-Elohe-Israel.

*The Danger of Inter-marriage (34:1-31)
Dinah Is Defiled*

34 One day Dinah, the daughter of Jacob and Leah, went to visit some of the young women who lived in the area. 2But when the local prince, Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, saw Dinah, he seized her and raped her. 3But then he fell in love with her, and he tried to win her affection with tender words. 4He said to his father, Hamor, “Get me this young girl. I want to marry her.”

5Soon Jacob heard that Shechem had defiled his daughter, Dinah. But since his sons were out in the fields herding his livestock, he said nothing until they returned. 6Hamor, Shechem’s father, came to discuss the matter with Jacob. 7Meanwhile, Jacob’s sons had come in from the field as soon as they heard what had happened. They were shocked and furious that their sister had been raped. Shechem had done a disgraceful thing against Jacob’s family, something that should never be done.

Inter-marriage with Shechem Negotiated

8Hamor tried to speak with Jacob and his sons. “My son Shechem is truly in love with

33:14
Gen 32:3
33:17
Judg 8:5, 14
Ps 60:6
33:18
Gen 12:6; 25:20
33:19
Josh 24:32
John 4:5
34:1
Gen 30:21
34:2
Deut 21:14
2 Sam 13:14
34:4
Gen 21:21
34:7
2 Sam 13:12

33:12-15 Despite Esau’s apparent magnanimity, Jacob was wary and cleverly avoided traveling with his brother. • *I will meet you at Seir:* Jacob’s lie manifests his old character, living by deception rather than by faith.

33:16-17 Instead of following Esau south to Seir as promised, Jacob again deceived his brother, then headed in the opposite direction to Succoth, east of the Jordan River and north of the Jabbok.

33:18-20 These verses form an epilogue to Jacob’s adventures outside the land. He returned in peace with a large family and many possessions. • *Jacob*, like Abraham, *built an altar at Shechem* (see 12:6-8) and purchased land *from the family of Hamor*.

33:19 *100 pieces of silver:* Hebrew *100 kesitahs*; the value or weight of the kesitah is no longer known.

33:20 *El-Elohe-Israel* means “God, the God of Israel.” The name of the altar commemorated Jacob’s relationship with God. Jacob publicly proclaimed that God was his God, and that God had led him back to the land he would inherit.

34:1-31 Once Jacob and his family settled in the land, the Canaanite pres-

ence became a threat. This account is a stern warning to the Israelites about the possibility of their being defiled by the Canaanites. The nation of Israel was later commanded not to intermarry or make treaties with them, for they were a corrupt and corrupting people. This chapter implicitly warns against becoming familiar with the way they lived (34:1-2). It also taught Israel that in dealing with the Canaanites, they were to keep their integrity and not use the holy things of the covenant for deception and slaughter (34:13); Israel’s reputation was at stake in the land (34:30). For their ruthless violence, Simeon and Levi were passed over in the birthright blessing (49:5-7).

34:1-2 As far as we know, *Dinah* was Jacob’s only daughter (30:21). Her seemingly innocent but unguarded *visit to some of the young women who lived in the area* was actually naive and foolish, because the local Hivites were very corrupt, not safe or trustworthy. • *Shechem . . . seized her and raped her:* Shechem violated and debased Dinah, so she had no chance for a proper marriage.

34:3-4 While Shechem’s intense feelings for Dinah made him willing to undergo significant hardship (34:11-12, 17-18, 24), the way he showed his “love” for her was selfish, impetuous, and in viola-

tion of customary decency (cp. Judg 14:2; see 1 Cor 13:4-7; 1 Jn 4:10). His character illustrated why Israel needed to remain separate from the Canaanites.

34:5-7 Jacob’s response to this crime is surprising. When he *heard* that Dinah had been *defiled*, he said nothing about it until *his sons* came home. Because Jacob did not act, his sons did, though without the wisdom and integrity necessary for justice. Dinah’s full brothers *were shocked and furious* that Shechem had done such a *disgraceful thing against Jacob’s family* (literally *a disgraceful thing in Israel*; this is the first use of the name *Israel* to describe the family). This sexual crime was an outrage against the community of God’s people and deserved punishment, but the leader of the clan did nothing.

34:8-10 Hamor proposed an alliance of intermarriage with the prospect of mutual economic benefit, but God had already promised Jacob everything, including the land (34:10; see 14:21-24). Hamor wanted to gain control of Israel’s wealth (34:23); no good could come of trusting the defiling Canaanites. For some of these reasons, intermarriage with Canaanites was not allowed under the law (see Exod 23:27-33; Deut 7:1-5)—unless, of course, they came to faith (see Josh 2:1-15; 6:23-25; Matt 1:5).

34:10
Gen 33:19

34:12
Exod 22:16

34:13
Gen 27:36

34:14
Gen 17:14

34:19
Gen 29:20

34:22
Gen 34:15

34:25
Gen 49:5-7
Josh 5:8

34:28
Gen 43:18

34:30
Gen 13:7; 49:5-7
Exod 5:21
2 Sam 10:6
1 Chr 16:19

35:1
Gen 12:8; 28:19

your daughter," he said. "Please let him marry her. ⁹In fact, let's arrange other marriages, too. You give us your daughters for our sons, and we will give you our daughters for your sons. ¹⁰And you may live among us; the land is open to you! Settle here and trade with us. And feel free to buy property in the area."

¹¹Then Shechem himself spoke to Dinah's father and brothers. "Please be kind to me, and let me marry her," he begged. "I will give you whatever you ask. ¹²No matter what dowry or gift you demand, I will gladly pay it—just give me the girl as my wife."

¹³But since Shechem had defiled their sister, Dinah, Jacob's sons responded deceitfully to Shechem and his father, Hamor. ¹⁴They said to them, "We couldn't possibly allow this, because you're not circumcised. It would be a disgrace for our sister to marry a man like you! ¹⁵But here is a solution. If every man among you will be circumcised like we are, ¹⁶then we will give you our daughters, and we'll take your daughters for ourselves. We will live among you and become one people. ¹⁷But if you don't agree to be circumcised, we will take her and be on our way."

¹⁸Hamor and his son Shechem agreed to their proposal. ¹⁹Shechem wasted no time in acting on this request, for he wanted Jacob's daughter desperately. Shechem was a highly respected member of his family, ²⁰and he went with his father, Hamor, to present this proposal to the leaders at the town gate.

²¹"These men are our friends," they said. "Let's invite them to live here among us and trade freely. Look, the land is large enough to hold them. We can take their daughters as wives and let them marry ours. ²²But they will consider staying here and becoming one people with us only if all of our men are circumcised, just as they are. ²³But if we do

this, all their livestock and possessions will eventually be ours. Come, let's agree to their terms and let them settle here among us."

Jacob's Sons Destroy Shechem

²⁴So all the men in the town council agreed with Hamor and Shechem, and every male in the town was circumcised. ²⁵But three days later, when their wounds were still sore, two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, who were Dinah's full brothers, took their swords and entered the town without opposition. Then they slaughtered every male there, ²⁶including Hamor and his son Shechem. They killed them with their swords, then took Dinah from Shechem's house and returned to their camp.

²⁷Meanwhile, the rest of Jacob's sons arrived. Finding the men slaughtered, they plundered the town because their sister had been defiled there. ²⁸They seized all the flocks and herds and donkeys—everything they could lay their hands on, both inside the town and outside in the fields. ²⁹They looted all their wealth and plundered their houses. They also took all their little children and wives and led them away as captives.

³⁰Afterward Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have ruined me! You've made me stink among all the people of this land—among all the Canaanites and Perizzites. We are so few that they will join forces and crush us. I will be ruined, and my entire household will be wiped out!"

³¹"But why should we let him treat our sister like a prostitute?" they retorted angrily.

Jacob's Return to Bethel (35:1-15)

35 Then God said to Jacob, "Get ready and move to Bethel and settle there. Build an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother, Esau."

34:13-17 Dinah's brothers *responded* to the proposal without waiting for Jacob to respond, and they acted *deceitfully*. They may not have thought that *Shechem* and his people would ever agree to the rite of circumcision, but they knew what they would do if the Canaanites accepted (34:25).

34:18-24 The Canaanites accepted the stipulation and *every male in the town was circumcised*. This was not just to allow Shechem to marry Dinah, but to give them the opportunity to acquire everything that Jacob possessed (34:23).

34:25-29 When *Simeon and Levi* used

circumcision to deceive and slaughter the Canaanites, they showed disdain for the sign of the covenant. Their slaughter of all the males and their plunder of the city was not justice, but brutal and excessive revenge. In their moral outrage and desire to right the wrong, they should have demanded compensation (see Exod 22:16-17; Deut 22:28-29). Instead, their passionate act of rage cost them their birthright blessing (49:5-7).

34:30 *Jacob* responded again out of fear of what would happen to him, but God caused *the people of this land* to fear him instead (35:5).

35:1-29 This chapter highlights God's promises, Jacob's vow, and the transition to Jacob's sons' carrying on the covenant. Deborah, Rachel, and Isaac all died, marking the end of an era and of the account of Isaac's family (25:19–35:29). • Idols were removed (35:1-4) and pure worship was established (35:6-7). During this transition, the faith had to be revitalized so that the covenant could be carried forward by Jacob's sons.

35:1-7 *Jacob* returned to *Bethel*, about fifteen miles south of Shechem, to complete the vows he had made at Bethel (28:20-22).

²So Jacob told everyone in his household, “Get rid of all your pagan idols, purify yourselves, and put on clean clothing. ³We are now going to Bethel, where I will build an altar to the God who answered my prayers when I was in distress. He has been with me wherever I have gone.”

⁴So they gave Jacob all their pagan idols and earrings, and he buried them under the great tree near Shechem. ⁵As they set out, a terror from God spread over the people in all the towns of that area, so no one attacked Jacob’s family.

⁶Eventually, Jacob and his household arrived at Luz (also called Bethel) in Canaan. ⁷Jacob built an altar there and named the place El-bethel (which means “God of Bethel”), because God had appeared to him there when he was fleeing from his brother, Esau.

⁸Soon after this, Rebekah’s old nurse, Deborah, died. She was buried beneath the oak tree in the valley below Bethel. Ever since, the tree has been called Allon-bacuth (which means “oak of weeping”).

⁹Now that Jacob had returned from Paddan-aram, God appeared to him again at Bethel. God blessed him, ¹⁰saying, “Your name is Jacob, but you will not be called Jacob any longer. From now on your name will be Israel.” So God renamed him Israel.

¹¹Then God said, “I am El-Shaddai—‘God Almighty.’ Be fruitful and multiply. You will become a great nation, even ^hmany nations. Kings will be among your descendants! ¹²And I will give you the land I once

gave to Abraham and Isaac. Yes, I will give it to you and your ‘descendants after you.’” ¹³Then God went up from the place where he had spoken to Jacob.

¹⁴Jacob set up a stone pillar to mark the place where God had spoken to him. Then he poured wine over it as an offering to God and anointed the pillar with olive oil. ¹⁵And Jacob named the place Bethel (which means “house of God”), because God had spoken to him there.

***Jacob Moves to Mamre (35:16-29)
Rachel Dies in Childbirth***

¹⁶Leaving Bethel, Jacob and his clan moved on toward Ephrath. But Rachel went into labor while they were still some distance away. Her labor pains were intense. ¹⁷After a very hard delivery, the midwife finally exclaimed, “Don’t be afraid—you have another son!” ¹⁸Rachel was about to die, but with her last breath she named the baby Benoni (which means “son of my sorrow”). The baby’s father, however, called him Benjamin (which means “son of my right hand”). ¹⁹So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). ²⁰Jacob set up a stone monument over Rachel’s grave, and it can be seen there to this day.

Reuben’s Transgression

²¹Then Jacob traveled on and camped beyond Migdal-eder. ²²While he was living there, Reuben had intercourse with Bilhah, his father’s concubine, and Jacob soon heard about it.

35:2
Gen 31:19
35:3
Gen 28:15-22
35:4
Exod 32:3
Judg 8:24
Hos 2:13
35:5
Exod 15:16
35:6
Gen 28:19
35:7
Gen 28:19
35:8
Gen 24:59
35:9
Gen 28:13
Gen 32:28
35:10
Gen 32:28
35:11
Gen 12:2; 17:1, 6
ʾshadday (7706)
• Gen 48:3
ʾqahal (6951)
• Deut 23:2
35:12
Gen 13:15; 28:13
ʾzeraʾ (2233)
• Gen 48:4
35:13
Judg 6:21; 13:20
35:14
Gen 28:18-19
35:16
Ruth 4:11
35:17
Gen 30:22-24
35:18
Gen 49:27
35:19
Gen 48:7
35:22
Gen 49:4
Lev 18:8
1 Chr 5:1

35:2-4 Jacob had vowed wholehearted devotion to the Lord (28:20-22); establishing this required that his family remove all *pagan idols* and cease their devotion to other gods. God permits no rivals; only the Lord was to be their God (cp. Josh 5:1-9).

35:3 *He has been with me wherever I have gone:* God had fulfilled his promises (28:15; 31:3), so Jacob must fulfill his vow.

35:5 *a terror from God:* People had heard about the massacre of Shechem (34:25-30).

35:6-7 Jacob *built an altar at Bethel* as God had instructed (35:1; cp. 12:8).

35:9-15 *At Bethel,* God confirmed the promise he had made there earlier; he reiterated Jacob’s change of *name from Jacob to Israel* as proof that the blessing had been given.

35:10 Jacob’s name change is reiterated and confirmed (cp. 41:32). • *Jacob* sounds like the Hebrew words for “heel” and “deceiver.” *Israel* means “God fights.”

35:11-12 God’s reference to himself as *God Almighty* assured Jacob that his promise could and would be fulfilled. At Bethel, God had promised that Jacob would have descendants in the land (cp. 28:13-14); here he added that his descendants would include *kings* (see 17:6).

35:14-15 In fulfilling his vow (28:20-22), Jacob’s actions were almost identical to his actions in the earlier experience at Bethel (cp. 28:16-19).

35:16-20 Benjamin’s birth completed the family, but it was a sorrowful event because *Rachel died* in childbirth (see note on 31:32).

35:18 *Rachel* found the name *son of my sorrow* appropriate to the situation, but Jacob did not want such a sad name for his son, so he changed it to *son of my right hand*. Jacob thus turned the day of sorrow into a day of hope that gave his son the prospect of success.

35:19 Jacob did not carry Rachel’s body to the family tomb at Machpelah

(23:1-20; 25:9; 49:30; 50:13), but buried her in the territory that would be Benjamin’s (see Josh 18:21-28; 1 Sam 10:2).

35:20 *it can be seen there to this day:* This seems to be a later editorial comment by someone who was living in the land after the conquest and giving directions to the tomb (see Introduction to Genesis: “Composition,” p. 16).

35:21 *Jacob:* Hebrew *Israel*; also in 35:22a. The names “Jacob” and “Israel” are often interchanged throughout the Old Testament, referring sometimes to the individual patriarch and sometimes to the nation.

35:22 *Reuben had intercourse with Bilhah,* thus defiling his father’s marriage bed. Perhaps Reuben, as the oldest son, was trying to replace his father as head of the clan by a pagan procedure (cp. 2 Sam 16:15-22), but by this action he lost his birthright (see 49:3-4). • *Jacob soon heard about it,* but he again delayed his response (see 49:3-4; cp. 34:5).

35:23-26
//1 Chr 2:1-2

35:23
Gen 29:31-35;
30:18-20

35:24
Gen 30:24

35:25
Gen 30:5-8

35:26
Gen 30:10-13

35:27
Gen 13:18; 23:2

35:28
Gen 25:7-8, 20

36:1
Gen 25:30

36:2
Gen 26:34
1 Chr 1:40

36:3
Gen 25:13

The Twelve Sons of Jacob

These are the names of the twelve sons of Jacob:

²³The sons of Leah were Reuben (Jacob's oldest son), Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun.

²⁴The sons of Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin.

²⁵The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's servant, were Dan and Naphtali.

²⁶The sons of Zilpah, Leah's servant, were Gad and Asher.

These are the names of the sons who were born to Jacob at Paddan-aram.

Jacob Returns to Isaac; Isaac's Death

²⁷So Jacob returned to his father, Isaac, in Mamre, which is near Kiriath-arba (now

called Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had both lived as foreigners. ²⁸Isaac lived for 180 years. ²⁹Then he breathed his last and died at a ripe old age, joining his ancestors in death. And his sons, Esau and Jacob, buried him.

10. THE ACCOUNT OF ESAU'S DESCENDANTS (36:1–37:1)

Esau's Life

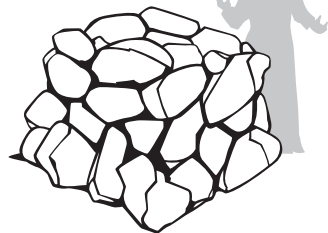
36 This is the account of the descendants of Esau (also known as Edom). ²Esau married two young women from Canaan: Adah, the daughter of Elon the Hittite; and Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah and granddaughter of Zibeon the Hivite. ³He also married his cousin Basemath, who was the daughter of Ishmael and the

Altars (35:1-15)

Gen 8:20-21; 12:7-8;
22:9-14; 26:25;
33:20
Exod 20:24-26; 24:4-
5; 27:1-8
Josh 22:10-34
1 Kgs 18:20-40
2 Kgs 23:10-20
Hos 8:11
Matt 5:23-24
Heb 13:10-14
Rev 6:9; 8:3-5

The first recorded altar was built by Noah (8:20-21), though Cain and Abel gave the first offerings (4:3-4). The patriarchs built numerous altars (see 8:20-21; 12:7-8; 13:4, 18; 22:9; 26:25; 33:20; 35:1, 14-15). These altars designated sacred sites of divine revelation and personal land claims in the Promised Land, both north (in Shechem) and south (in Beersheba). Altars were made of stone, earth, brick, or metal and wood. Their table-like form allowed smoke to rise unhindered. Intended as memorials or places for sacrifice, an altar was the most common image of worship in the OT and in the wider ancient world. The typical altar was on a raised platform accessed by a ramp or stairway; this elevated the sacrificial worship toward heaven. The four horns on the corners of the altar marked off the sacred space of meeting between divine and human realms. Through sacrifice and burning, the offering was transferred from the visible to the invisible world. Altars were both religious monuments and places of refuge where fugitives could find asylum (see Exod 21:14).

Jesus unites the various aspects of the altar imagery in himself as high priest, sacrificial lamb, and altar (see Heb 4:14-15; 7:24, 27; 9:14, 26; 10:10; 13:10, 12). Jesus anticipated his own sacrifice in his reference to the blood of martyrs (see Matt 23:35; Luke 11:51). The enthroned Lamb in Revelation removes the need for temple and altar (Rev 21:22). The cross is the final altar; Jesus' death is the new covenant memorial and his body is the place of sanctuary (Heb 13:10).



◀ **Altars of the Patriarchs** (35:1-15). Several of the patriarchs built altars, including Noah (8:20), Abraham (12:7, 8; 13:18; 22:9), Isaac (26:25), and Jacob (33:20; 35:7). These altars were probably made of piles of uncut stone, as God later instructed Israel (Exod 20:25; Deut 27:5-6; cp. Josh 8:30-31).

35:23-26 The twelve sons became leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel. Their names are the firstfruits of the nation.

35:27-29 *Esau and Jacob* (listed here in ordinary birth order) came together—probably for the first time since they had reconciled (33:16-17)—to bury *Isaac* in *Hebron* (see 13:18; 23:1-2, 17-19).

36:1-43 The book turns to the accounts of Isaac's sons, concluding the unchosen line of Esau (ch 36) before proceeding with the chosen line of Jacob (ch 37).

36:1-8 The *account of Esau* stresses

two points. First, Esau's sons were *born . . . in the land of Canaan* (36:5) before he moved to *Seir* (36:8). Jacob's children, by contrast, were almost all born outside the land but then moved into it. God was giving the land to Jacob and his descendants and so made room for them by providing for Esau in a different place. Second, Esau's other name was *Edom*. Israel often struggled with the Edomites (see 1 Sam 21:7; 22:9-22; Obad 1:1-21; see also "Herod the Great" at Matt 2:1-20, p. 1578).

36:2-3 Esau's three wives—*Adah*, *Oholibamah*, and *Basemath*—are listed. Two of these wives' names are different from those listed earlier (26:34; 28:9). Perhaps the others died, or Esau favored these three among a total of six, or these were just different names for the same three. There is not enough information to decide.

36:2 *Oholibamah* was a great-granddaughter of Seir the Horite, whose descendants lived in Edom when Esau went to live there (36:20, 25).

sister of Nebaioth. ⁴Adah gave birth to a son named Eliphaz for Esau. Basemath gave birth to a son named Reuel. ⁵Oholibamah gave birth to sons named Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. All these sons were born to Esau in the land of Canaan.

⁶Esau took his wives, his children, and his entire household, along with his livestock and cattle—all the wealth he had acquired in the land of Canaan—and moved away from his brother, Jacob. ⁷There was not enough land to support them both because of all the livestock and possessions they had acquired. ⁸So Esau (also known as Edom) settled in the hill country of Seir.

Esau's Descendants

⁹This is the account of Esau's descendants, the Edomites, who lived in the hill country of Seir.

¹⁰These are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz, the son of Esau's wife Adah; and Reuel, the son of Esau's wife Basemath.

¹¹The descendants of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz.

¹²Timna, the concubine of Esau's son Eliphaz, gave birth to a son named Amalek. These are the descendants of Esau's wife Adah.

¹³The descendants of Reuel were Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. These are the descendants of Esau's wife Basemath.

¹⁴Esau also had sons through Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah and granddaughter of Zibeon. Their names were Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.

¹⁵These are the descendants of Esau who became the leaders of various clans:

The descendants of Esau's oldest son, Eliphaz, became the leaders of the clans of Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz, ¹⁶Korah, Gatam, and Amalek. These are the clan leaders in the land of Edom who descended from Eliphaz. All these were descendants of Esau's wife Adah.

¹⁷The descendants of Esau's son Reuel became the leaders of the clans of Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. These are

the clan leaders in the land of Edom who descended from Reuel. All these were descendants of Esau's wife Basemath.

¹⁸The descendants of Esau and his wife Oholibamah became the leaders of the clans of Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. These are the clan leaders who descended from Esau's wife Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah.

¹⁹These are the clans descended from Esau (also known as Edom), identified by their clan leaders.

Original Peoples of Edom

²⁰These are the names of the tribes that descended from Seir the Horite. They lived in the land of Edom: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, ²¹Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. These were the Horite clan leaders, the descendants of Seir, who lived in the land of Edom.

²²The descendants of Lotan were Hori and Hemam. Lotan's sister was named Timna.

²³The descendants of Shobal were Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam.

²⁴The descendants of Zibeon were Aiah and Anah. (This is the Anah who discovered the hot springs in the wilderness while he was grazing his father's donkeys.)

²⁵The descendants of Anah were his son, Dishon, and his daughter, Oholibamah.

²⁶The descendants of Dishon were Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Keran.

²⁷The descendants of Ezer were Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan.

²⁸The descendants of Dishan were Uz and Aran.

²⁹So these were the leaders of the Horite clans: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, ³⁰Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. The Horite clans are named after their clan leaders, who lived in the land of Seir.

Rulers of Edom

³¹These are the kings who ruled in the land of Edom before any king ruled over the Israelites:

36:4
1 Chr 1:35

36:5
Gen 36:18

36:7
Gen 13:6

36:8
Gen 14:6; 25:30

36:9
Gen 36:43

36:10-14
//1 Chr 1:35-37

36:19
1 Chr 1:35

36:20-28
//1 Chr 1:38-42

36:20
Gen 14:6
Deut 2:12, 22

36:25
Gen 36:2, 5, 14, 18
1 Chr 1:41

36:27
1 Chr 1:38, 42

36:29-30
Gen 36:20

36:31-43
//1 Chr 1:43-54

36:7-8 *Esau*, like Lot, left for the eastern land (cp. 13:5-6).

36:9-43 This passage begins a second *account of Esau's descendants* (36:1); it traces the family to subsequent generations and alliances.

36:9-14 The *descendants* of Esau's five sons are named.

36:15-19 Thirteen of Esau's descen-

dants had positions as *leaders of various clans*. A picture begins to emerge of Esau as a grand overlord of tribes (cp. 36:40-43).

36:20-30 *Seir the Horite* was an early inhabitant of the land; his descendants populated the region until Esau moved in and displaced them (Deut 2:12).

36:26 Hebrew *Dishan*, a variant spelling of Dishon; cp. 36:21, 28.

36:31-39 It is not clear how these *kings of Edom* were related to Esau. The clans in Edom followed the same pattern of organization as the later tribes of Israel. They eventually chose a king from one of their tribes and carried on a line of succession from him.

36:31 *before any king ruled over the Israelites* (Or *before an Israelite king ruled over them*): This editorial note was

37:1
Gen 17:8; 28:4

37:2
Gen 35:22-26; 41:46

37:3
Gen 37:23, 32; 44:20

37:4
Gen 27:41

37:5
Gen 28:12
Num 12:6
Dan 2:1

- ³²Bela son of Beor, who ruled in Edom from his city of Dinhabah.
- ³³When Bela died, Jobab son of Zerah from Bozrah became king in his place.
- ³⁴When Jobab died, Husham from the land of the Temanites became king in his place.
- ³⁵When Husham died, Hadad son of Bedad became king in his place and ruled from the city of Avith. He was the one who defeated the Midianites in the land of Moab.
- ³⁶When Hadad died, Samlah from the city of Masrekah became king in his place.
- ³⁷When Samlah died, Shaul from the city of Rehoboth-on-the-River became king in his place.
- ³⁸When Shaul died, Baal-hanan son of Acbor became king in his place.
- ³⁹When Baal-hanan son of Acbor died, Hadad became king in his place and ruled from the city of Pau. His wife was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred and granddaughter of Me-zahab.

⁴⁰These are the names of the leaders of the clans descended from Esau, who lived in the places named for them: Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, ⁴¹Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, ⁴²Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, ⁴³Magdiel, and Iram. These are the leaders of the clans of Edom,

listed according to their settlements in the land they occupied. They all descended from Esau, the ancestor of the Edomites.

Recapitulation and Contrast with Jacob

37 So Jacob settled again in the land of Canaan, where his father had lived as a foreigner.

11. THE ACCOUNT OF JACOB'S DESCENDANTS (37:2–50:26)

Joseph's Dreams of Prominence (37:2-11)

²This is the account of Jacob and his family. When Joseph was seventeen years old, he often tended his father's flocks. He worked for his half brothers, the sons of his father's wives Bilhah and Zilpah. But Joseph reported to his father some of the bad things his brothers were doing.

³Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other children because Joseph had been born to him in his old age. So one day Jacob had a special gift made for Joseph—a beautiful robe. ⁴But his brothers hated Joseph because their father loved him more than the rest of them. They couldn't say a kind word to him.

⁵One night Joseph had a dream, and when he told his brothers about it, they hated him more than ever. ⁶"Listen to this dream," he

probably inserted into the text during Israel's monarchy (see note on 35:20).

36:39 Hadad: As in some Hebrew manuscripts, Samaritan Pentateuch, and Syriac version (see also 1 Chr 1:50); most Hebrew manuscripts read *Hadar*.

36:40-43 These chiefs descended from Esau, who was a great and powerful overlord. As father of the Edomites, he ruled over clans and regions, with eleven chiefs descended from him. By separating from Jacob, Esau was beginning to shake Jacob's yoke from his neck (27:39-40).

37:1 In ch 36, Esau was well on his way to power and prosperity; by contrast, *Jacob*, still waiting for the promise, *settled* in the land as a *foreigner*, like *his father*. He was still a temporary resident with a single family. Worldly greatness often comes more swiftly than spiritual greatness. Waiting for the promised spiritual blessing while others prosper is a test of patience, faith, and perseverance.

37:2–50:26 The story of Joseph and his brothers comprises a separate unit in Genesis, distinct in tone and emphasis from the preceding material. It traces one continuous series of episodes with Joseph at their center. • Cycles of repeated motifs structure the entire Joseph account. The themes are closely

related to those found in wisdom books such as Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Daniel. Wisdom literature assures the faithful that God brings good out of evil and joy out of pain—if not in this life, then certainly in the life to come. Though the wicked may prosper for a time, the righteous should hold fast to their integrity because a higher, more enduring principle of life is realized through obedience to God. Everyone who aspires to leadership in God's plan should observe how wisdom led to Joseph's success. Christ Jesus embodied the life of wisdom portrayed here as no one else could, for he is the wisdom of God. • Judah is also an important character in the story. He began as irresponsible and mean-spirited as his brothers; but he truly repented, put his life on the line to ransom a child for his father, and received a very important inheritance.

37:2 *The account of Jacob and his family* tells of *Joseph* and his brothers. Jacob is still prominent, but the focus is on Joseph, who is introduced as an obedient seventeen-year-old son. • *Joseph reported . . . the bad things his brothers were doing:* Bringing a bad report has never been popular, but it was the right thing to do and shows that Joseph was faithful from the beginning. As the story

progresses, we see more of his brothers' wickedness displayed until, like Cain, they tried to eliminate the brother who pleased God.

37:3 *Jacob:* Hebrew *Israel*; also in 37:13. See note on 35:21. • *Jacob loved Joseph more* because *Joseph had been born to him in his old age* and because he was the first son of his favorite wife, Rachel. • *A beautiful robe* (traditionally rendered a *coat of many colors*; the exact meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain): Jacob gave Joseph this robe to demonstrate that he intended to grant him the largest portion of the inheritance.

37:4 Jacob's favoritism toward Joseph inflamed his other sons' hatred of their brother. Just as Isaac's and Rebekah's favoritism had separated their family, Jacob's favoritism would separate him from his son Joseph.

37:5-11 God confirmed his choice of this faithful son as the eventual leader of the whole family through two symbolic dreams. This is the first of three *dream* sequences in chs 37–50 (see 40:1–41:36; cp. 15:13; 20:3; 28:12-15; 31:24). Dreams carried weight as a form of divine communication, especially if the dream revelation was given twice. Everyone would have taken Joseph's dreams seriously.

said. ⁷“We were out in the field, tying up bundles of grain. Suddenly my bundle stood up, and your bundles all gathered around and bowed low before mine!”

⁸His brothers responded, “So you think you will be our king, do you? Do you actually think you will reign over us?” And they hated him all the more because of his dreams and the way he talked about them.

⁹Soon Joseph had another dream, and again he told his brothers about it. “Listen, I have had another dream,” he said. “The sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed low before me!”

¹⁰This time he told the dream to his father as well as to his brothers, but his father scolded him. “What kind of dream is that?” he asked. “Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow to the ground before you?” ¹¹But while his brothers were jealous of Joseph, his father wondered what the dreams meant.

Joseph Sold into Slavery in Egypt (37:12-36)

¹²Soon after this, Joseph’s brothers went to pasture their father’s flocks at Shechem. ¹³When they had been gone for some time, Jacob said to Joseph, “Your brothers are pasturing the sheep at Shechem. Get ready, and I will send you to them.”

“I’m ready to go,” Joseph replied.

¹⁴“Go and see how your brothers and the flocks are getting along,” Jacob said. “Then come back and bring me a report.” So Jacob sent him on his way, and Joseph traveled to

Shechem from their home in the valley of Hebron.

¹⁵When he arrived there, a man from the area noticed him wandering around the countryside. “What are you looking for?” he asked.

¹⁶“I’m looking for my brothers,” Joseph replied. “Do you know where they are pasturing their sheep?”

¹⁷“Yes,” the man told him. “They have moved on from here, but I heard them say, ‘Let’s go on to Dothan.’” So Joseph followed his brothers to Dothan and found them there.

¹⁸When Joseph’s brothers saw him coming, they recognized him in the distance. As he approached, they made plans to kill him. ¹⁹“Here comes the dreamer!” they said. ²⁰“Come on, let’s kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns. We can tell our father, ‘A wild animal has eaten him.’ Then we’ll see what becomes of his dreams!”

²¹But when Reuben heard of their scheme, he came to Joseph’s rescue. “Let’s not kill him,” he said. ²²“Why should we shed any blood? Let’s just throw him into this empty cistern here in the wilderness. Then he’ll die without our laying a hand on him.” Reuben was secretly planning to rescue Joseph and return him to his father.

²³So when Joseph arrived, his brothers ripped off the beautiful robe he was wearing. ²⁴Then they grabbed him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it. ²⁵Then,

37:7
Gen 42:6, 9; 43:26
37:8
Deut 33:16
37:10
Gen 27:29
37:11
Luke 2:19, 51
Acts 7:9
‘qana’ (7065)
•Exod 20:5
37:13
Gen 33:19
37:14
Gen 35:27
37:17
2 Kgs 6:13
37:20
Gen 37:33
37:21
Gen 42:22
37:22
Gen 37:29
37:23
Gen 37:3
37:24
Jer 38:6; 41:7
37:25
Gen 31:21; 37:28
Jer 8:22; 46:11

37:7 The *bundles of grain* hint at how Joseph’s authority over his family would be achieved (see 42:1-3).

37:8 The brothers’ angry response to the revelation, in contrast to Joseph’s honesty and faithfulness, clearly demonstrates why they were not chosen for leadership: Leaders in God’s plan cannot be consumed with jealousy and hatred. In their anger, they missed an important part of the revelation—they too would be rulers (stars, 37:9) who would productively bind their sheaves (37:7).

37:9 *The sun, moon, and eleven stars*: Astrological symbols often represent rulers. The dream predicted Joseph’s elevation to a position of authority over the whole clan of Israel.

37:10 *your mother and I*: Joseph’s birth mother, Rachel, was dead (35:19). Leah was now the matriarch of the clan.

37:11 *His brothers* hated Joseph because they were *jealous* of him. Rather than recognize the hand of God, the brothers tried to prevent the dream

from being fulfilled (37:18-36). These actions show that they were not fit to lead the household of faith. God’s sovereign choice of a leader, especially if the one chosen is young or appears unqualified, often brings out the true colors of those who have to submit to that leader’s authority. The brothers represent people throughout history who have been driven by envy and malice because they were not committed to doing the Lord’s will. • Jacob *wondered what the dreams meant* because he knew that God would choose the next leader, that God could choose the younger son to rule over the older sons, and that God could reveal all this in dreams.

37:12-13 It was foolish for *Jacob* to send Joseph on such a mission, knowing how the brothers felt about him. *Joseph* obeyed his father by going to find his brothers despite their hatred for him.

37:14-17 The *brothers* ranged far and wide. *Shechem* was about fifty miles from *Hebron*, and *Dothan* another fifteen miles beyond Shechem.

37:18-20 *When Joseph’s brothers saw him coming*, they devised a plot to *kill . . . the dreamer* and end *his dreams*. Earlier, they had unjustly killed the men of Shechem to avenge their sister (ch 34); in the region of Shechem, they now plotted unjustly to kill their own brother out of envy.

37:21-24 *Reuben* was perhaps trying to get back into his father’s good graces (35:22) by exercising the leadership of the firstborn (cp. 42:22). Reuben succeeded in saving Joseph’s life, but he failed to earn his father’s favor (37:29-30).

37:23 The recurring motif of changed clothes signifies changes in status, position, and authority (see 37:3, 23; 38:14, 19; 39:15-18; 41:14, 42).

37:25-28 The *Ishmaelite traders* were descendants of the slave child who was cast out for mocking Isaac. Now they would enslave Joseph. When he was sold for *twenty pieces of silver* and carried to *Egypt*, he was at least preserved alive.

37:28
Gen 39:1; 45:4-5
Lev 27:5
Judg 8:22-24
Acts 7:9

37:29
Gen 37:34; 44:13
Num 14:6

37:30
Gen 42:13, 36

37:32
Luke 15:22

37:33
Gen 37:20; 44:28

37:34
Gen 37:29
**abal* (0056)
*Exod 33:4

37:35
Gen 44:29
2 Sam 12:17
Ps 77:2
**she'ol* (7585)
* Num 16:30

37:36
Gen 39:1; 40:3

38:1
Josh 15:35
1 Sam 22:1

38:2
Gen 24:3; 34:2; 38:12

38:3
Gen 46:12
Num 26:19

38:6
Matt 1:3

38:7
Gen 6:5; 13:13; 19:13;
38:10
1 Chr 2:3

38:8
Num 36:8
Deut 25:5-10
*Matt 22:24
*Mark 12:19

just as they were sitting down to eat, they looked up and saw a caravan of camels in the distance coming toward them. It was a group of Ishmaelite traders taking a load of gum, balm, and aromatic resin from Gilead down to Egypt.

²⁶Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain by killing our brother? We'd have to cover up the crime. ²⁷Instead of hurting him, let's sell him to those Ishmaelite traders. After all, he is our brother—our own flesh and blood!" And his brothers agreed. ²⁸So when the Ishmaelites, who were Midianite traders, came by, Joseph's brothers pulled him out of the cistern and sold him to them for twenty pieces of silver. And the traders took him to Egypt.

²⁹Some time later, Reuben returned to get Joseph out of the cistern. When he discovered that Joseph was missing, he tore his clothes in grief. ³⁰Then he went back to his brothers and lamented, "The boy is gone! What will I do now?"

³¹Then the brothers killed a young goat and dipped Joseph's robe in its blood. ³²They sent the beautiful robe to their father with this message: "Look at what we found. Doesn't this robe belong to your son?"

³³Their father recognized it immediately. "Yes," he said, "it is my son's robe. A wild animal must have eaten him. Joseph has clearly been torn to pieces!" ³⁴Then Jacob tore his clothes and dressed himself in burlap. He

mourned deeply for his son for a long time. ³⁵His family all tried to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. "I will go to my ^agrave mourning for my son," he would say, and then he would weep.

³⁶Meanwhile, the Midianite traders arrived in Egypt, where they sold Joseph to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Potiphar was captain of the palace guard.

Judah, Tamar, and the Birth of Judah's Offspring (38:1-30)

38 About this time, Judah left home and moved to Adullam, where he stayed with a man named Hirah. ²There he saw a Canaanite woman, the daughter of Shua, and he married her. When he slept with her, ³she became pregnant and gave birth to a son, and he named the boy Er. ⁴Then she became pregnant again and gave birth to another son, and she named him Onan. ⁵And when she gave birth to a third son, she named him Shelah. At the time of Shelah's birth, they were living at Kezib.

⁶In the course of time, Judah arranged for his firstborn son, Er, to marry a young woman named Tamar. ⁷But Er was a wicked man in the LORD's sight, so the LORD took his life. ⁸Then Judah said to Er's brother Onan, "Go and marry Tamar, as our law requires of the brother of a man who has died. You must produce an heir for your brother."

37:26 *Judah* began to exercise leadership that he would continue to develop as events unfolded (see 43:8-10). • *cover up the crime*: Literally *cover his blood*.

37:28 *the Ishmaelites, who were Midianite traders* (literally *the Midianite traders*): Ishmaelites were descendants of Abraham through Hagar (16:5), while Midianites were descendants of Abraham through Keturah (25:1-2). The term *Ishmaelite* may have described bedouin tribes generally. The Midianites might also have been traveling with a separate caravan of *Ishmaelite traders* (37:27). • *Twenty pieces*: Hebrew *20 shekels*, about 8 ounces or 228 grams in weight. • Kidnapping (see 40:15) was a capital offense (see Exod 21:16).

37:29-30 When *Reuben returned*, he *tore his clothes in grief*. His attempt to restore his relationship with his father by saving Joseph had gone awry.

37:31-35 The old family propensity for deception seized the brothers' imagination. Jacob had *killed a young goat* to deceive Isaac (27:5-17); now Jacob's sons deceived him with a goat (see note on 30:34-36).

37:32 *your son*: In their cold hatred, the brothers did not refer to Joseph by name or acknowledge him as their brother (see 21:10).

37:33 *recognized*: Cp. 27:23.

37:34-35 *Jacob tore his clothes and dressed himself in burlap*: These were signs of great distress and mourning (see 44:13; Job 1:20; 16:15). Jacob was devastated and *refused to be comforted*. The treachery thus affected everyone in his family. • *go to my grave*: Hebrew *go down to Sheol*.

37:36 *the Midianite traders*: As in the Greek version; Hebrew reads *the Med-anites*. The relationship between the Midianites and Medanites is unclear; cp. 37:28. See also 25:2. • *sold Joseph to Potiphar*: Joseph found himself in a place of service that seemed congruent with his rise to authority, yet he still faced more testing.

38:1-30 The story of *Judah and Tamar* is a carefully placed interlude; it reports what was happening in the family of Judah, who would later rise to prominence, and it shows the beginnings of assimilation with the people of the land

to help explain why God sent the family to Egypt (chs 39–47). The Egyptians were strict separatists (43:32); the Israelites would retain their unique identity better in Egypt than in Canaan.

38:7-10 In this story, *the LORD* is mentioned as the sovereign judge who took the lives of Judah's *evil* sons.

38:7 That *Er was a wicked man* is not surprising, since his mother was a Canaanite and his father a wayward Israelite.

38:8 *as our law requires. . . . You must produce an heir for your brother*: The custom that informs this episode is the law for levirate marriage (Latin *levir*, "husband's brother"). By this custom, which was later incorporated into God's law for Israel (Deut 25:5-10), if a man died childless, his brother or nearest relative would marry his widow to produce a child who would carry on the family name of the deceased and inherit his property. Apparently, the near kinsman had a right to refuse, but he would be disgraced in the family for refusing to perpetuate his brother's name.

⁹But Onan was not willing to have a child who would not be his own heir. So whenever he had intercourse with his brother's wife, he spilled the semen on the ground. This prevented her from having a child who would belong to his brother. ¹⁰But the LORD considered it evil for Onan to deny a child to his dead brother. So the LORD took Onan's life, too.

¹¹Then Judah said to Tamar, his daughter-in-law, "Go back to your parents' home and remain a widow until my son Shelah is old enough to marry you." (But Judah didn't really intend to do this because he was afraid Shelah would also die, like his two brothers.) So Tamar went back to live in her father's home.

¹²Some years later Judah's wife died. After the time of mourning was over, Judah and his friend Hirah the Adullamite went up to Timnah to supervise the shearing of his sheep. ¹³Someone told Tamar, "Look, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep."

¹⁴Tamar was aware that Shelah had grown up, but no arrangements had been made for her to come and marry him. So she changed out of her widow's clothing and covered herself with a veil to disguise herself. Then she sat beside the road at the entrance to the village of Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. ¹⁵Judah noticed her and thought she was a prostitute, since she had covered her face. ¹⁶So he stopped and propositioned her. "Let me have sex with you," he said, not realizing that she was his own daughter-in-law.

"How much will you pay to have sex with me?" Tamar asked.

¹⁷"I'll send you a young goat from my flock," Judah promised.

"But what will you give me to guarantee that you will send the goat?" she asked.

¹⁸"What kind of guarantee do you want?" he replied.

She answered, "Leave me your identification seal and its cord and the walking stick you are carrying." So Judah gave them to her. Then he had intercourse with her, and she became pregnant. ¹⁹Afterward she went back home, took off her veil, and put on her widow's clothing as usual.

²⁰Later Judah asked his friend Hirah the Adullamite to take the young goat to the woman and to pick up the things he had given her as his guarantee. But Hirah couldn't find her. ²¹So he asked the men who lived there, "Where can I find the shrine prostitute who was sitting beside the road at the entrance to Enaim?"

"We've never had a shrine prostitute here," they replied.

²²So Hirah returned to Judah and told him, "I couldn't find her anywhere, and the men of the village claim they've never had a shrine prostitute there."

²³"Then let her keep the things I gave her," Judah said. "I sent the young goat as we agreed, but you couldn't find her. We'd be the laughingstock of the village if we went back again to look for her."

²⁴About three months later, Judah was told, "Tamar, your daughter-in-law, has acted like a prostitute. And now, because of this, she's pregnant."

"Bring her out, and let her be burned!" Judah demanded.

²⁵But as they were taking her out to kill her, she sent this message to her father-in-law: "The man who owns these things made me pregnant. Look closely. Whose seal and cord and walking stick are these?"

²⁶Judah recognized them immediately and said, "She is more righteous than I am, because I didn't arrange for her to marry

38:11
Ruth 1:13
38:12
Gen 31:19
Josh 15:10, 57
38:16
Lev 18:15
2 Sam 13:11
38:17
Gen 38:20
38:18
Gen 41:42
38:24
Lev 20:10; 21:9
38:26
1 Sam 24:17

38:9-10 *Onan* married Tamar, but was *not willing* to provide an *heir* for his brother. He would have sex with Tamar but not fulfill his responsibility to his dead brother (38:8).

38:11 *Judah* is now presented as the model for his sons' behavior—he, too, was unfaithful to his levirate responsibility to Tamar as next kinsman (see note on 38:8). Judah and his sons were far too Canaanite in their ways (see note on 38:27-30; contrast Boaz, Ruth 3–4).

38:12-13 Without a marriage, the family's future was in jeopardy.
• *Judah's wife died*: This made Judah available to fulfill the responsibility of providing an heir.

38:14-19 *Tamar* realized that she

would have to take matters into her own hands if the family were to have a future. Tamar acted in keeping with the levirate custom (see note on 38:8) out of loyalty to her deceased husband. She had a legal right to an heir by Judah's son or by Judah, so she lured her father-in-law into having sex with her. Jacob's family was deceived again, this time by a Canaanite daughter-in-law.

38:17 It would be normal for Tamar to ask for a pledge if the man did not have the money to pay. A woman in such a position would not trust anyone to send the money.

38:18 *identification seal*: A stone or metal cylinder was engraved with

distinctive designs and was usually worn around the neck on a *cord*; when rolled onto clay or wax, it left a distinct impression.

38:20-23 *Judah* had gone in to Tamar as a regular prostitute (Hebrew *zonah*, 38:15), whereas *Hirah* was mistakenly looking for a *shrine prostitute* (Hebrew *qedeshah*), of which there were none.

38:24-26 *Judah* played the hypocrite when he condemned *Tamar* to death for adultery. When she produced the *seal and cord and walking stick* that identified him as the father, he withdrew the condemnation.

38:26 *She is more righteous than I am*: Judah acknowledged that he had shirked his responsibility to provide an

38:27
Gen 25:24

38:29
Gen 46:12
Num 26:20-21
Ruth 4:12
1 Chr 2:4
Matt 1:3
Luke 3:33

39:1
Gen 37:25

39:2
Acts 7:9

39:4
Gen 40:4
Prov 22:29

39:5
Deut 28:3-4, 11

39:6
1 Sam 16:12, 18
Acts 7:20

39:7
Prov 7:15-20

39:8
Gen 39:4-5
Prov 6:23-24

39:9
khata' (2398)
• Exod 10:16

39:10
1 Thes 5:22

39:12
Prov 7:13
2 Tim 2:22

39:17
Exod 20:16; 23:1
Ps 55:3

my son Shelah." And Judah never slept with Tamar again.

²⁷When the time came for Tamar to give birth, it was discovered that she was carrying twins. ²⁸While she was in labor, one of the babies reached out his hand. The midwife grabbed it and tied a scarlet string around the child's wrist, announcing, "This one came out first." ²⁹But then he pulled back his hand, and out came his brother! "What!" the midwife exclaimed. "How did you break out first?" So he was named Perez. ³⁰Then the baby with the scarlet string on his wrist was born, and he was named Zerah.

Joseph's Rise to Power in Egypt (39:1-41:57) *Joseph's Rise in Potiphar's House*

39 When Joseph was taken to Egypt by the Ishmaelite traders, he was purchased by Potiphar, an Egyptian officer. Potiphar was captain of the guard for Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.

²The LORD was with Joseph, so he succeeded in everything he did as he served in the home of his Egyptian master. ³Potiphar noticed this and realized that the LORD was with Joseph, giving him success in everything he did. ⁴This pleased Potiphar, so he soon made Joseph his personal attendant. He put him in charge of his entire household and everything he owned. ⁵From the day Joseph was put in charge of his master's household and property, the LORD began to bless Potiphar's household for Joseph's sake. All his household affairs ran smoothly, and his crops and livestock flourished. ⁶So Potiphar gave Joseph complete administrative responsibility over everything he owned. With Joseph there,

he didn't worry about a thing—except what kind of food to eat!

Potiphar's Wife

Joseph was a very handsome and well-built young man, ⁷and Potiphar's wife soon began to look at him lustfully. "Come and sleep with me," she demanded.

⁸But Joseph refused. "Look," he told her, "my master trusts me with everything in his entire household. ⁹No one here has more authority than I do. He has held back nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How could I do such a wicked thing? It would be a great ^bsin against God."

¹⁰She kept putting pressure on Joseph day after day, but he refused to sleep with her, and he kept out of her way as much as possible. ¹¹One day, however, no one else was around when he went in to do his work. ¹²She came and grabbed him by his cloak, demanding, "Come on, sleep with me!" Joseph tore himself away, but he left his cloak in her hand as he ran from the house.

¹³When she saw that she was holding his cloak and he had fled, ¹⁴she called out to her servants. Soon all the men came running. "Look!" she said. "My husband has brought this Hebrew slave here to make fools of us! He came into my room to rape me, but I screamed. ¹⁵When he heard me scream, he ran outside and got away, but he left his cloak behind with me."

¹⁶She kept the cloak with her until her husband came home. ¹⁷Then she told him her story. "That Hebrew slave you've brought into our house tried to come in and fool around with me," she said. ¹⁸"But when I screamed, he ran outside, leaving his cloak with me!"

heir. It was sinful for Judah to go to a prostitute, but Tamar had a legal right to be the mother of Judah's child and had acted on that right. In the book of Ruth, the elders analogously blessed the marriage of Boaz and Ruth, praying that God would make Ruth like Tamar (Ruth 4:12; cp. Matt 1:3, 5).

38:27-30 Judah's line continued because of Tamar. The *twins* replaced Judah's two slain sons (38:7, 10); their birth was similar to the birth of Jacob and Esau (25:21-26) in that the "red" one was born first, but the other son pushed past him in later life. Jacob's gaining the right to rule over his older brother (27:29) seemed to be relived in Judah's line. The line was carried on through Perez and not through the elder son Shelah, whom he had gone to such lengths to protect (38:11; see 1 Chr 4:21), nor through the elder twin Zerah

(see Ruth 4:13-22; Matt 1:3).

38:29-30 *Perez* means "breaking out." He pushed past his brother, just as Joseph would soon do in relation to his brothers (chs 39-47). • *Zerah* means "scarlet" or "brightness."

39:1-47:31 Joseph began as a slave, alienated from his brothers and separated from his father; he ended as Pharaoh's viceroy. Through the trips to Egypt, the covenant family went from the brink of apostasy, divided by jealousy and deception, to being reconciled and united by Judah's intercession and Joseph's forgiveness. • God is mentioned for the first time (apart from 38:7-10) since Jacob built his altar in Bethel (35:1-15); his covenant name, "the LORD," is used for the first time since Jacob left Laban (31:49).

39:1-23 Joseph's integrity in Potiphar's service contrasts with Judah's moral

failure (ch 38). God was with Joseph (39:2-3, 21, 23) and enabled him to prosper and be a blessing (see notes on 12:1-9; 28:16-22) despite his slavery and imprisonment.

39:5 God *began to bless* Egypt through Joseph (see 22:18).

39:6-10 One of the major motifs of wisdom literature (see note on 37:2-50:26) is to warn young people that immorality will lead them to disaster (cp. Prov 5-7). Joseph was able to resist temptation because he had godly wisdom—he was guided by the fear of the Lord (Prov 1:7; 9:10).

39:14 Though Potiphar's wife was addressing slaves, she appealed to them as fellow Egyptians (*us*) to enlist them as witnesses against the despised *Hebrew* (see 43:32) who had won Potiphar's trust.

Joseph Put in Prison

¹⁹Potiphar was furious when he heard his wife's story about how Joseph had treated her. ²⁰So he took Joseph and threw him into the prison where the king's prisoners were held, and there he remained. ²¹But the LORD was with Joseph in the prison and showed him his faithful love. And the LORD made Joseph a favorite with the prison warden. ²²Before long, the warden put Joseph in charge of all the other prisoners and over everything that happened in the prison. ²³The warden had no more worries, because Joseph took care of everything. The LORD was with him and caused everything he did to succeed.

Joseph Interprets Two Prisoners' Dreams

40 Some time later, Pharaoh's chief cup-bearer and chief baker offended their royal master. ²Pharaoh became angry with these two officials, ³and he put them in the prison where Joseph was, in the palace of the captain of the guard. ⁴They remained in prison for quite some time, and the captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, who looked after them.

⁵While they were in prison, Pharaoh's cup-bearer and baker each had a dream one night, and each dream had its own meaning. ⁶When Joseph saw them the next morning, he noticed that they both looked upset. ⁷"Why do you look so worried today?" he asked them.

⁸And they replied, "We both had dreams last night, but no one can tell us what they mean."

"Interpreting dreams is God's business," Joseph replied. "Go ahead and tell me your dreams."

⁹So the chief cup-bearer told Joseph his dream first. "In my dream," he said, "I saw

a grapevine in front of me. ¹⁰The vine had three branches that began to bud and blossom, and soon it produced clusters of ripe grapes. ¹¹I was holding Pharaoh's wine cup in my hand, so I took a cluster of grapes and squeezed the juice into the cup. Then I placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand."

¹²"This is what the dream means," Joseph said. "The three branches represent three days. ¹³Within three days Pharaoh will lift you up and restore you to your position as his chief cup-bearer. ¹⁴And please remember me and do me a favor when things go well for you. Mention me to Pharaoh, so he might let me out of this place. ¹⁵For I was kidnapped from my homeland, the land of the Hebrews, and now I'm here in prison, but I did nothing to deserve it."

¹⁶When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given the first dream such a positive interpretation, he said to Joseph, "I had a dream, too. In my dream there were three baskets of white pastries stacked on my head. ¹⁷The top basket contained all kinds of pastries for Pharaoh, but the birds came and ate them from the basket on my head."

¹⁸"This is what the dream means," Joseph told him. "The three baskets also represent three days. ¹⁹Three days from now Pharaoh will lift you up and impale your body on a pole. Then birds will come and peck away at your flesh."

²⁰Pharaoh's birthday came three days later, and he prepared a banquet for all his officials and staff. He summoned his chief cup-bearer and chief baker to join the other officials. ²¹He then restored the chief cup-bearer to his former position, so he could again hand Pharaoh his cup. ²²But Pharaoh impaled the chief baker, just as Joseph had predicted when he interpreted his dream.

39:20
Gen 40:1-3, 15; 41:10
Ps 105:18
39:21
Ps 105:19
Acts 7:9
39:22
Gen 39:4
39:23
Gen 39:3
40:1
Neh 1:11
40:4
Gen 37:36; 39:4
40:5
Gen 20:3; 41:11
40:8
Gen 41:15-16
Dan 2:27-28
40:12
Gen 41:12
40:13
Gen 40:19-20
40:14
1 Sam 20:14
40:15
Gen 37:26-28; 39:20
40:18
Gen 40:12
40:19
Deut 21:22-23
40:22
Gen 40:19

39:19-20 This was the second time that *Joseph*, while faithfully doing the right thing, was thrown into bondage with his clothing used deceptively as evidence (cp. 37:23-24, 31-33).

39:21-23 *Joseph* thrived in *prison* because God was with him. Each time *Joseph* prospered, he was put in *charge* of something.

40:1-23 *Joseph* did not lose faith in God's promises, as evidenced by his readiness to interpret the dreams of two prisoners. He was still convinced that God's revelation in his own two dreams (37:5-11) was true, and he had not abandoned hope that they would be fulfilled. When the fellow prisoners' dreams were fulfilled exactly as *Joseph* said, this

confirmed that his previous dreams were from God.

40:1-4 *Joseph* was so faithful and trustworthy that *the captain of the guard* trusted him with the care of two of Pharaoh's *chief . . . officials*.

40:5-8 *Pharaoh's cup-bearer and baker* looked *worried* because they knew that their futures were somehow bound up in these ominous and disturbing dreams that they could not understand. • *Joseph* still had faith that *interpreting dreams is God's business*, and that he would understand them with God's help. He knew he had not misinterpreted his own dreams.

40:9-19 *Joseph* listened to the dreams and offered their interpretations.

These dreams were not trivial; they were ominous warnings from God about what everyone was going to face. These two dreams prepared for Pharaoh's two dreams, which revealed the periods of life and death that the nation would soon experience.

40:14-15 Because he knew that the chief cup-bearer was going back into Pharaoh's personal service, *Joseph* saw an opportunity to seek his own release from prison.

40:20-22 The interpretations *Joseph* gave the prisoners proved true. The death of the *chief baker* speaks of the harsh realities of life in ancient Egypt, with a king whose word was his land's highest law. • *He summoned*: Literally *He lifted up the head of*.

40:23
Gen 40:14
41:5
2 Kgs 4:42
41:6
Ezek 19:12

²³Pharaoh's chief cup-bearer, however, forgot all about Joseph, never giving him another thought.

Pharaoh's Dreams

41 Two full years later, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing on the bank of the Nile River. ²In his dream he saw seven fat, healthy cows come up out of the river and begin grazing in the marsh grass. ³Then he saw seven more cows come

up behind them from the Nile, but these were scrawny and thin. These cows stood beside the fat cows on the riverbank. ⁴Then the scrawny, thin cows ate the seven healthy, fat cows! At this point in the dream, Pharaoh woke up.

⁵But he fell asleep again and had a second dream. This time he saw seven heads of grain, plump and beautiful, growing on a single stalk. ⁶Then seven more heads of grain appeared, but these were shriveled

JOSEPH (39:1–45:28)

Gen 30:22-24;
37:2-36; 48:1-22;
49:22-26; 50:1-26
Exod 13:19
Deut 33:13-17
Josh 24:32
Ps 105:16-22
Acts 7:9-14

Joseph is known for his dreams and for the beautiful coat his father Jacob gave him. He is an example of faith, prudence, and administrative ability. Despite overwhelming difficulties, Joseph saved Canaan, Egypt, and his own family from starvation during seven years of drought.

Joseph was Jacob's eleventh son, the first child of Jacob's favorite wife, Rachel. Joseph's name means "may he add," expressing Rachel's desire that God give her another son (30:24). Rachel later died at the birth of Benjamin, Joseph's only full brother.

Joseph's brothers resented him because of his dreams. They sold him to a passing caravan and led Jacob to believe an animal had killed him. In Egypt, Joseph quickly became prominent until he was jailed when his master's wife falsely accused him. Having correctly interpreted dreams for fellow inmates, he was summoned when Pharaoh couldn't understand his dreams. Joseph said they predicted seven good years followed by seven lean years, and Pharaoh directed him to prepare for famine. When Joseph's family had to buy grain in Egypt, Joseph eventually disclosed his identity. The family was reconciled and reunited when Jacob came to live in Egypt.

Because Jacob blessed Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, and took them as his own (48:5-20), each was considered a separate tribe later in Israel. Ephraim, whom Jacob put first and to whom he gave the birthright (48:17-20), became one of the strongest tribes of Israel and the leading tribe in the northern kingdom after the division during Rehoboam's reign (see 1 Kgs 11:26–12:33). Several of the prophets refer to the northern kingdom under the names Ephraim (e.g., Ezek 37:15-19; Hos 5:3-5) and Joseph (e.g., Obad 1:18).

Age	Event	Reference
17	Joseph is sold into slavery	37:2, 18-36
30	Joseph begins serving Pharaoh	41:46
39	Joseph is reunited with his brothers, Jacob moves to Egypt	45:3-6
56	Jacob dies, is buried in Canaan	47:28
110	Joseph dies in Egypt	50:26

▲ Joseph's Life (39:1–45:28).

Joseph's dying wish (which Moses later honored) was that his bones be buried in Canaan (Exod 13:19; Josh 24:32). Joseph's story dramatizes the life of a man of faith and godly character who fulfilled God's plan. His name is mentioned frequently in Scripture, showing that he was highly regarded by later Israelites. His story is summarized in the Psalms (Ps 105:16-22) and in Stephen's speech just prior to his martyrdom (Acts 7:9-14).

Joseph's life confirms God's control of the long course of history even when bad things happen (50:20). God expresses his sovereign power through his provident, faithful love for his people. Joseph also models for us a firm faith in the sovereign God and personal integrity in the face of adversity.

40:23 The *cup-bearer* . . . *forgot all about Joseph*, but God did not forget him. Joseph's faith was about to be rewarded (ch 41).

41:1-46 God had used two dreams to identify Joseph as a leader among his brothers (37:5-11). He used two dreams to test Joseph's faith in prison (40:5-14). Now he would use two dreams to

elevate Joseph from prison to preeminence. Joseph had repeatedly proven faithful in small matters; now he would be put in charge of great things.

41:1-4 Pharaoh's first dream was about *cows*. Cows liked to stand half-submerged among the reeds in the Nile River to take refuge from the heat and flies. They would come out of the water to find pas-

ture. The second cows disturbed Pharaoh because they were scrawny yet able to swallow the *fat cows*.

41:5-7 Pharaoh's *second dream* carried a similar message. Seven *plump heads of grain on a single stalk* were *swallowed up* by seven *shriveled and withered* heads that sprouted after them.

and withered by the east wind. ⁷And these thin heads swallowed up the seven plump, well-formed heads! Then Pharaoh woke up again and realized it was a dream.

⁸The next morning Pharaoh was very disturbed by the dreams. So he called for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. When Pharaoh told them his dreams, not one of them could tell him what they meant.

⁹Finally, the king's chief cup-bearer spoke up. "Today I have been reminded of my failure," he told Pharaoh. ¹⁰"Some time ago, you were angry with the chief baker and me, and you imprisoned us in the palace of the captain of the guard. ¹¹One night the chief baker and I each had a dream, and each dream had its own meaning. ¹²There was a young Hebrew man with us in the prison who was a slave of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he told us what each of our dreams meant. ¹³And everything happened just as he had predicted. I was restored to my position as cup-bearer, and the chief baker was executed and impaled on a pole."

Joseph's Interpretation and Counsel

¹⁴Pharaoh sent for Joseph at once, and he was quickly brought from the prison. After he shaved and changed his clothes, he went in and stood before Pharaoh. ¹⁵Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream last night, and no one here can tell me what it means. But I have heard that when you hear about a dream you can interpret it."

¹⁶"It is beyond my power to do this," Joseph replied. "But God can tell you what it means and set you at ease."

¹⁷So Pharaoh told Joseph his dream. "In my dream," he said, "I was standing on the bank of the Nile River, ¹⁸and I saw seven fat, healthy cows come up out of the river and begin grazing in the marsh grass. ¹⁹But then I saw seven sick-looking cows, scrawny and

thin, come up after them. I've never seen such sorry-looking animals in all the land of Egypt. ²⁰These thin, scrawny cows ate the seven fat cows. ²¹But afterward you wouldn't have known it, for they were still as thin and scrawny as before! Then I woke up.

²²"Then I fell asleep again, and I had another dream. This time I saw seven heads of grain, full and beautiful, growing on a single stalk. ²³Then seven more heads of grain appeared, but these were blighted, shriveled, and withered by the east wind. ²⁴And the shriveled heads swallowed the seven healthy heads. I told these dreams to the magicians, but no one could tell me what they mean."

²⁵Joseph responded, "Both of Pharaoh's dreams mean the same thing. God is telling Pharaoh in advance what he is about to do. ²⁶The seven healthy cows and the seven healthy heads of grain both represent seven years of prosperity. ²⁷The seven thin, scrawny cows that came up later and the seven thin heads of grain, withered by the east wind, represent seven years of famine.

²⁸"This will happen just as I have described it, for God has revealed to Pharaoh in advance what he is about to do. ²⁹The next seven years will be a period of great prosperity throughout the land of Egypt. ³⁰But afterward there will be seven years of famine so great that all the prosperity will be forgotten in Egypt. Famine will destroy the land. ³¹This famine will be so severe that even the memory of the good years will be erased. ³²As for having two similar dreams, it means that these events have been decreed by God, and he will soon make them happen.

³³"Therefore, Pharaoh should find an intelligent and wise man and put him in charge of the entire land of Egypt. ³⁴Then

41:8
Exod 7:11-12
Dan 2:1-3; 4:5-7

41:9
Gen 40:14

41:10
Gen 40:2

41:11
Gen 40:5

41:12
Gen 40:12

41:13
Gen 40:22

41:14
Ps 105:20

41:15
Dan 2:25

41:16
Gen 40:8

41:17
Gen 41:1

41:27
2 Kgs 8:1

41:29
Gen 41:47

41:30
Gen 47:13

41:33
Gen 41:39

41:8 *The magicians and wise men* belonged to a guild of supposed experts in spiritual matters, including dreams and visions (cp. Exod 8:18-19; Dan 2:10-11), but they could not interpret these dreams. God used an Israelite slave to confound the wisdom of the world (cp. Dan 2). However powerful a nation becomes, it is still under God's sovereign control (Dan 2:20-23).

41:9-13 The *chief cup-bearer* finally remembered Joseph and testified that his interpretations were true.

41:14-15 *Pharaoh* immediately summoned *Joseph* from prison to interpret his dreams. • *he shaved*: As was the Egyptian custom.

41:16 *Joseph* knew that only *God* could tell what Pharaoh's dreams meant (cp. 40:8), and he was confident that God would do so, because he had given the dreams for a purpose (41:25, 28).

41:17-24 *Pharaoh* recounted his dreams and testified that no human wisdom could interpret them.

41:25-32 Both dreams predicted that *seven years* of abundant crops would be followed by *seven years* of severe *famine*.

41:32 The *two similar dreams* confirmed that the message was *decreed by God* and would *soon . . . happen*, just as the dreams of the two prisoners were

quickly fulfilled (40:5-23). Joseph's own two dreams (37:5-11) were about to come true as well (41:37-46; 42:6-9).

41:33-36 God's revelation demanded a response—it was not given just to satisfy curiosity about the future. Joseph's advice about planning and preparing showed that he was the kind of *intelligent and wise man* that Pharaoh needed (41:37-40). • Joseph instituted central planning and control with a supervisor, local managers, a 20 percent tax on grain, and a rationing system. Later wisdom literature (see note on 37:2–50:26) teaches the principle of planning ahead rather than living just for the moment (see Prov 6:6-8; 27:12).

41:36
Gen 47:14

41:38
Dan 4:8, 18; 5:11, 14

41:39
Gen 41:33

41:40
Gen 39:9
Ps 105:21
Acts 7:10

41:41
Esth 8:2
Dan 6:3

41:42
Esth 3:10; 6:8

41:44
Gen 45:8
Ps 105:22

41:45
Ezek 37:17

41:46
Gen 37:2

41:51
Gen 48:1
Deut 33:17

41:52
Gen 17:6

41:54
Gen 41:30
Ps 105:16
Acts 7:11

41:55
Gen 41:41

Pharaoh should appoint supervisors over the land and let them collect one-fifth of all the crops during the seven good years. ³⁵Have them gather all the food produced in the good years that are just ahead and bring it to Pharaoh's storehouses. Store it away, and guard it so there will be food in the cities. ³⁶That way there will be enough to eat when the seven years of famine come to the land of Egypt. Otherwise this famine will destroy the land."

Pharaoh Promotes Joseph to Power

³⁷Joseph's suggestions were well received by Pharaoh and his officials. ³⁸So Pharaoh asked his officials, "Can we find anyone else like this man so obviously filled with the spirit of God?" ³⁹Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has revealed the meaning of the dreams to you, clearly no one else is as intelligent or wise as you are. ⁴⁰You will be in charge of my court, and all my people will take orders from you. Only I, sitting on my throne, will have a rank higher than yours."

⁴¹Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the entire land of Egypt."

⁴²Then Pharaoh removed his signet ring from his hand and placed it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in fine linen clothing and hung a gold chain around his neck. ⁴³Then he had Joseph ride in the chariot reserved for his second-in-command. And wherever Joseph went, the command was shouted, "Kneel down!" So Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of all Egypt. ⁴⁴And Pharaoh said to him, "I am Pharaoh, but no one will lift a hand or foot in the entire land of Egypt without your approval."

⁴⁵Then Pharaoh gave Joseph a new Egyptian name, Zaphenath-paneah. He also gave

him a wife, whose name was Asenath. She was the daughter of Potiphera, the priest of On. So Joseph took charge of the entire land of Egypt. ⁴⁶He was thirty years old when he began serving in the court of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. And when Joseph left Pharaoh's presence, he inspected the entire land of Egypt.

God Provides through Joseph and for Joseph

⁴⁷As predicted, for seven years the land produced bumper crops. ⁴⁸During those years, Joseph gathered all the crops grown in Egypt and stored the grain from the surrounding fields in the cities. ⁴⁹He piled up huge amounts of grain like sand on the seashore. Finally, he stopped keeping records because there was too much to measure.

⁵⁰During this time, before the first of the famine years, two sons were born to Joseph and his wife, Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, the priest of On. ⁵¹Joseph named his older son Manasseh, for he said, "God has made me forget all my troubles and everyone in my father's family." ⁵²Joseph named his second son Ephraim, for he said, "God has made me fruitful in this land of my grief."

The Beginning of the Famine

⁵³At last the seven years of bumper crops throughout the land of Egypt came to an end. ⁵⁴Then the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had predicted. The famine also struck all the surrounding countries, but throughout Egypt there was plenty of food. ⁵⁵Eventually, however, the famine spread throughout the land of Egypt as well. And when the people cried out to Pharaoh for food, he told them, "Go to Joseph, and do whatever he tells you." ⁵⁶So with severe famine everywhere, Joseph opened up

41:37-40 Pharaoh recognized that Joseph was the man for the job; he had the *spirit of God* and was *intelligent and wise*. God showed his sovereign rule in Egypt; Israelites who later read the account could be confident that God would save them as he had promised.

41:41-46 Joseph was made the acting ruler or manager of Egypt.

41:42 Pharaoh's *signet ring* had a seal used for signing documents. The seal was impressed in soft clay, which hardened and left a permanent impression of the ruler's signature, which carried his authority. Numerous seals of this type have been found in archaeological digs. • The *linen clothing and gold chain* signified Joseph's new status as ruler.

41:43-44 Pharaoh made Joseph *second-in-command*; all the people had to

submit to him. Cp. Ps 105:16-22.

41:45 As token of Joseph's new status, *Pharaoh gave him an Egyptian name and a wife* from a high-ranking family. • *Zaphenath-paneah* probably means "God speaks and lives." • *On*: Greek version reads *Heliopolis*; also in 41:50. On was a center for sun worship that came to be known as Heliopolis ("sun city").

41:46 *He was thirty years old*: It had been approximately thirteen years since his brothers had sold Joseph into slavery (37:2). • *he inspected the entire land of Egypt*: As a wise manager, his first priority was to learn the scope of his responsibilities.

41:47-57 Pharaoh's dreams were fulfilled in keeping with Joseph's interpretation.

41:50-52 In spite of his position and authority, *Joseph* never abandoned his heritage; he gave Hebrew names to his *two sons*. • *Manasseh* sounds like a Hebrew term that means "causing to forget." Joseph's prosperity and success made him forget the misery of separation from his family. • *Ephraim* sounds like a Hebrew term that means "fruitful." In so naming him, Joseph proclaimed his gratitude to God for the fruitfulness he was experiencing in Egypt.

41:53-57 Joseph's wisdom paid off, for the seven years of plenty were followed by seven years of severe famine, *but throughout Egypt there was plenty of food*. Joseph had grain to sell to the Egyptians and to people from other countries as well.

the storehouses and distributed grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout the land of Egypt. ⁵⁷And people from all around came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph because the famine was severe throughout the world.

Israel Moves to Egypt (42:1–47:31)

Joseph's Brothers Go to Egypt

42 When Jacob heard that grain was available in Egypt, he said to his sons, “Why are you standing around looking at one another? ²I have heard there is grain in Egypt. Go down there, and buy enough grain to keep us alive. Otherwise we’ll die.”

³So Joseph’s ten older brothers went down to Egypt to buy grain. ⁴But Jacob wouldn’t let Joseph’s younger brother, Benjamin, go with them, for fear some harm might come to him. ⁵So Jacob’s sons arrived in Egypt along with others to buy food, for the famine was in Canaan as well.

⁶Since Joseph was governor of all Egypt and in charge of selling grain to all the people, it was to him that his brothers came. When they arrived, they ^cbowed before him with their faces to the ground. ⁷Joseph recognized his brothers instantly, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. “Where are you from?” he demanded.

“From the land of Canaan,” they replied. “We have come to buy food.”

Joseph Accuses His Brothers to Have Benjamin Brought

⁸Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they didn’t recognize him. ⁹And he remembered the dreams he’d had about them many years before. He said to them, “You are spies! You have come to see how vulnerable our land has become.”

¹⁰“No, my lord!” they exclaimed. “Your servants have simply come to buy food. ¹¹We are all brothers—members of the same family. We are honest men, sir! We are not spies!”

¹²“Yes, you are!” Joseph insisted. “You have come to see how vulnerable our land has become.”

¹³“Sir,” they said, “there are actually twelve of us. We, your servants, are all brothers, sons of a man living in the land of Canaan. Our youngest brother is back there with our father right now, and one of our brothers is no longer with us.”

¹⁴But Joseph insisted, “As I said, you are spies! ¹⁵This is how I will test your story. I swear by the life of Pharaoh that you will never leave Egypt unless your youngest brother comes here! ¹⁶One of you must go and get your brother. I’ll keep the rest of you here in prison. Then we’ll find out whether or not your story is true. By the life of Pharaoh, if it turns out that you don’t have a younger brother, then I’ll know you are spies.”

¹⁷So Joseph put them all in prison for three days. ¹⁸On the third day Joseph said to them, “I am a God-fearing man. If you do as I say, you will live. ¹⁹If you really are honest men, choose one of your brothers to remain in prison. The rest of you may go home with grain for your starving families. ²⁰But you must bring your youngest brother back to me. This will prove that you are telling the truth, and you will not die.” To this they agreed.

²¹Speaking among themselves, they said, “Clearly we are being punished because of what we did to Joseph long ago. We saw his anguish when he pleaded for his life, but we wouldn’t listen. That’s why we’re in this trouble.”

²²“Didn’t I tell you not to sin against the boy?” Reuben asked. “But you wouldn’t

41:57
Gen 42:5; 47:15
Ps 105:16

42:1
Acts 7:12

42:2
Gen 43:2, 4

42:3
Gen 43:20

42:4
Gen 35:24

42:5
Gen 41:57
Acts 7:11

42:6
Ps 105:16-21
‘khawah (7812)
Exod 4:31

42:7
Gen 42:30

42:8
Gen 37:2

42:9
Gen 42:16, 30-34

42:10
Gen 37:6-9

42:11
Gen 42:19, 31-34

42:13
Gen 37:30-33; 44:20;
46:31

42:14
Gen 42:9

42:17
Gen 40:4

42:18
Gen 20:11
Lev 25:43

42:20
Gen 42:34; 43:15

42:21
Gen 37:23-28; 45:3-5

42:22
Gen 9:5-6; 37:21-22

42:1–47:31 God used the famine to bring Israel to Egypt under Joseph’s rule, thus fulfilling two prophecies (15:13; 37:7-11).

42:1–44:34 Joseph did several unusual things to his brothers when they came looking for grain. The last time Joseph had been with them, they were filled with jealousy, hatred, and anger; they attempted to destroy their brother, and they deceived their father. Joseph put them through various tests, similar to the trying situations they had put him through, to see if they had changed.

42:4 *Jacob* may have believed that *Benjamin* would not be safe with his brothers.

42:5 *Jacob’s*: Hebrew *Israel’s*. See note on 35:21.

42:6-7 Joseph’s first dream (37:5-11) was partially fulfilled when his brothers *bowed* down to him without recognizing him (see also 43:26; 44:14). It was totally fulfilled in 50:18. Joseph recognized his brothers immediately, but he could not reveal himself because he did not yet trust them to be the honest men they claimed to be (42:10).

42:8 *they didn’t recognize him*: Joseph was a grown man, not a boy. He was not wearing a beard, was dressed in Egyptian clothes, and was in an unexpected position, speaking to them through an interpreter (42:23).

42:9 *You are spies!* The brothers had considered Joseph a spy for their father and had treated him roughly (37:2, 14, 18-28). Joseph was putting them in a

similar situation to see how they would respond.

42:11 Joseph knew that they had not always been the *honest men* they claimed to be.

42:15-17 Joseph put the brothers in jail for three days to see if they had a conscience functioning about what they had done (42:21-23). The brothers had similarly thrown Joseph into a cistern-prison while they decided what to do with him (37:24).

42:18-20 Rather than keep all but one, Joseph would release all but one to take *grain* home to their *starving families*.

42:21-23 *Clearly we are being punished*: The brothers sensed that having to bring Benjamin back to Egypt against their

42:24
Gen 43:14, 23

42:25
Gen 44:1

42:28
Gen 43:23
⁹leb (3820)
Exod 15:8

42:30
Gen 42:7

42:31
Gen 42:11

42:32
Gen 42:13

listen. And now we have to answer for his blood!"

²³Of course, they didn't know that Joseph understood them, for he had been speaking to them through an interpreter. ²⁴Now he turned away from them and began to weep. When he regained his composure, he spoke to them again. Then he chose Simeon from among them and had him tied up right before their eyes.

²⁵Joseph then ordered his servants to fill the men's sacks with grain, but he also gave secret instructions to return each brother's payment at the top of his sack. He also gave them supplies for their journey home. ²⁶So the brothers loaded their donkeys with the grain and headed for home.

²⁷But when they stopped for the night and one of them opened his sack to get grain for his donkey, he found his money in the top of his sack. ²⁸"Look!" he exclaimed to his brothers. "My money has been returned; it's here in my sack!" Then their ^dhearts sank. Trembling, they said to each other, "What has God done to us?"

The Brothers Report to Jacob

²⁹When the brothers came to their father, Jacob, in the land of Canaan, they told him everything that had happened to them. ³⁰"The man who is governor of the land spoke very harshly to us," they told him. "He accused us of being spies scouting the land. ³¹But we said, 'We are honest men, not spies. ³²We are twelve brothers, sons of

Famine (41:56-57)

Gen 12:10; 26:1;
41:33-36; 45:6-7
Lev 26:19-20
Deut 8:3;
11:16-17
Ruth 1:1
2 Sam 21:1
1 Kgs 18:1-2
2 Kgs 8:1-2
Jer 14:11-16
Ezek 34:29-31;
36:28-32
Joel 1:1-20
Amos 8:11-14
Hag 1:1-11
Luke 6:21
John 6:32-35
Acts 11:28-30
Rev 7:16

Famine occurred early in the lives of Abraham (12:10) and Isaac (26:1). When famine afflicted Jacob's family (41:56-57), God had already placed Joseph in Egypt to provide for his people through the disaster (45:5, 7). This famine was particularly severe, but famines were not uncommon in the ancient world (see 12:10; 26:1; see also Ruth 1:1; 2 Sam 21:1; 1 Kgs 18:1-2; Hag 1:1-11; Acts 11:28). Dependence on rainfall caused some people to stockpile food against possible famine. In Egypt, Joseph implemented a grain ration that saved the people, supplied seed, and filled Pharaoh's royal storehouses (41:33-36; 47:23-24). Israel's temple also contained storerooms (1 Chr 26:15; 2 Chr 31:11; Neh 10:37-39).

Famine was a devastating catastrophe in an agrarian society. Caused by drought, crop failure, or siege (Ruth 1:1-2; 2 Kgs 25), it was often accompanied by disease or war that brought adversity at many levels of society (Jer 14:12), even for animals (Job 38:41; Joel 1:20). Famines had far-reaching results in price inflation, robbery, social exploitation, agricultural collapse, migration, and even cannibalism (12:10; 26:1; 2 Kgs 6:24-29; Neh 5:1-3; Jer 19:9; Lam 2:20-21; 4:8-10). Therefore, faithfulness to God was a particularly vivid need (Ps 33:18-19; 37:19), and God's blessings on the nation included protection from famine (Ezek 34:29; 36:29-30). God sometimes used famine as divine judgment on the Israelites (Lev 26:14-20; Deut 11:16-17; 28:33; Jer 29:17-18).

Jesus relived Israel's experience in his own wilderness testing and refused to make bread just for himself (Matt 4:3-4; cp. Deut 8:3). His success showed that scarcity and hunger can develop humility and trust in divine providence (Matt 4:2), something that Israel did not learn very well. Jesus fed 5,000 to draw them to himself as the bread of life, God's true manna (John 6:32-35), but the crowds followed Jesus more for the food than for himself (John 6:26-27). Without ignoring physical food, Jesus highlighted spiritual hunger and thirst (Luke 6:21; John 4:34). Eating provides both a context and a metaphor for fellowship (43:34; Luke 22:15-16; Rev 19:9). Heaven will remove the desperation of hunger altogether (Rev 7:16).

father's wishes was God's punishment for their having sold Joseph to the traders. The sense of divine retribution began to awaken feelings of remorse that Joseph's cries for mercy and their father's tears (37:34-35) had failed to arouse.

42:22 *you wouldn't listen*: Reuben had lost the reins of leadership (see notes on 42:37; 49:3-4).

42:24 *Joseph turned away from them and began to weep* (cp. 43:30; 45:2, 14; 50:1, 17); perhaps he was hearing part of the story that he had never known

(Reuben's attempt to save him, 37:21-22, 29), or his brothers' remorse moved him to forgiveness.

42:25-28 Joseph cared for his brothers' needs; he had forgiven them (see note on 42:24) and was fulfilling his role to provide for them. God used Joseph's care to convict the brothers even more fully of their sin.

42:25 *return each brother's payment*: He was now testing them to awaken their conscience and make them face their past guilt; once again, they were

going home with silver instead of a brother (37:28-35).

42:28 *What has God done to us?* They knew that God was behind everything that had been happening, so they faced a day of reckoning for their sins.

42:29-34 The brothers' account focused on the accusation that they were spies and on the need to take Benjamin back to Egypt with them. They omitted their growing realization of divine retribution for their crime against Joseph.

one father. One brother is no longer with us, and the youngest is at home with our father in the land of Canaan.’

³³“Then the man who is governor of the land told us, ‘This is how I will find out if you are honest men. Leave one of your brothers here with me, and take grain for your starving families and go on home. ³⁴But you must bring your youngest brother back to me. Then I will know you are honest men and not spies. Then I will give you back your brother, and you may trade freely in the land.’”

³⁵As they emptied out their sacks, there in each man’s sack was the bag of money he had paid for the grain! The brothers and their father were terrified when they saw the bags of money. ³⁶Jacob exclaimed, “You are robbing me of my children! Joseph is gone! Simeon is gone! And now you want to take Benjamin, too. Everything is going against me!”

³⁷Then Reuben said to his father, “You may kill my two sons if I don’t bring Benjamin back to you. I’ll be responsible for him, and I promise to bring him back.”

³⁸But Jacob replied, “My son will not go down with you. His brother Joseph is dead, and he is all I have left. If anything should happen to him on your journey, you would send this grieving, white-haired man to his grave.”

The Brothers Return to Egypt with Benjamin

43 But the famine continued to ravage the land of Canaan. ²When the grain they had brought from Egypt was almost gone, Jacob said to his sons, “Go back and buy us a little more food.”

³But Judah said, “The man was serious when he warned us, ‘You won’t see my face again unless your brother is with you.’ ⁴If you send Benjamin with us, we will go down

and buy more food. ⁵But if you don’t let Benjamin go, we won’t go either. Remember, the man said, ‘You won’t see my face again unless your brother is with you.’”

⁶“Why were you so cruel to me?” Jacob moaned. “Why did you tell him you had another brother?”

⁷“The man kept asking us questions about our family,” they replied. “He asked, ‘Is your father still alive? Do you have another brother?’ So we answered his questions. How could we know he would say, ‘Bring your brother down here?’”

⁸Judah said to his father, “Send the boy with me, and we will be on our way. Otherwise we will all die of starvation—and not only we, but you and our little ones. ⁹I personally guarantee his safety. You may hold me responsible if I don’t bring him back to you. Then let me bear the blame forever. ¹⁰If we hadn’t wasted all this time, we could have gone and returned twice by now.”

¹¹So their father, Jacob, finally said to them, “If it can’t be avoided, then at least do this. Pack your bags with the best products of this land. Take them down to the man as gifts—balm, honey, gum, aromatic resin, pistachio nuts, and almonds. ¹²Also take double the money that was put back in your sacks, as it was probably someone’s mistake. ¹³Then take your brother, and go back to the man. ¹⁴May God Almighty give you mercy as you go before the man, so that he will release Simeon and let Benjamin return. But if I must lose my children, so be it.”

¹⁵So the men packed Jacob’s gifts and double the money and headed off with Benjamin. They finally arrived in Egypt and presented themselves to Joseph. ¹⁶When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the manager of his household, “These

42:34
Gen 34:10
42:35
Gen 43:12, 15, 18
42:36
Gen 43:14; 44:20-22
42:37
Gen 43:9; 44:32
42:38
Gen 37:35; 44:29, 34
43:1
Gen 41:56-57
43:2
Gen 42:25
43:3
Gen 42:15; 44:23
43:7
Gen 42:13; 43:27
43:8
Gen 42:2
43:9
Gen 42:37
Phlm 1:18-19
43:11
Gen 32:13; 37:25
43:12
Gen 42:25, 35
43:13
Gen 43:3
43:14
Gen 42:24
Ps 106:46
43:16
Gen 44:1

42:36 Filled with grief over two sons lost already, Jacob feared that he would also lose Benjamin if he went to Egypt. • *You are robbing me of my children!* He did not realize the full truth of his words, but they must have stung his sons’ guilty consciences.

42:37 *Reuben* tried to take the lead; perhaps he thought he could get back into his father’s good favor (see 35:22), first by rescuing Joseph from certain death (37:21-22, 29-30) and now by keeping *Benjamin* safe.

42:38 *Jacob* was resolute in his favoritism toward Rachel’s remaining son. Benjamin would not go to Egypt even if it meant that Leah’s son Simeon

never returned. Jacob’s grief apparently weighed heavily on the brothers’ conscience (44:18-34). • *to his grave:* Hebrew to *Sheol*.

43:1-7 As *the famine continued*, Jacob’s family needed more grain, but they could not return to Egypt without Benjamin (42:16, 20). Jacob realized that he was in a bind; he needed *more food*, but was loath to lose *Benjamin*.

43:6 *Jacob:* Hebrew *Israel*; also in 43:11. See note on 35:21.

43:8-10 *Judah* broke the deadlock by taking responsibility for Benjamin’s well-being, thus succeeding where Reuben failed. His action was fitting, since it had been his idea to sell Joseph to the

Ishmaelites (37:26-27) instead of killing him. Now he would secure Benjamin’s safety with his own life (see 44:18-34).

43:11-13 *Jacob* provided everything he could to ensure a favorable reception from the Egyptian governor (*the man*; cp. 32:13-21).

43:13-14 Jacob finally entrusted his family’s future to *God Almighty* (Hebrew *El-Shaddai*), the divine title that stresses God’s power (see also 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 48:3; 1 Kgs 19:10, 14; Rev 21:22).

43:16 *When Joseph saw Benjamin with them:* Joseph now knew that Benjamin was well (see note on 42:1-44:34). The feast was both a celebration and a test.

43:18
Gen 42:28, 35
43:21
Gen 42:25, 35; 43:12
43:22
Gen 42:28
43:23
Gen 42:24
43:24
Gen 18:4; 24:32
43:27
Gen 43:7; 45:3
43:28
Exod 18:7
43:29
Num 6:25
Ps 67:1
43:30
Gen 42:24; 45:2, 14-15; 46:29
43:31
Gen 45:1
43:32
Gen 46:34
Exod 8:26
43:33
Gen 44:12
44:1
Gen 42:25; 43:16
44:4
Prov 17:13

men will eat with me this noon. Take them inside the palace. Then go slaughter an animal, and prepare a big feast.”¹⁷So the man did as Joseph told him and took them into Joseph’s palace.

¹⁸The brothers were terrified when they saw that they were being taken into Joseph’s house. “It’s because of the money someone put in our sacks last time we were here,” they said. “He plans to pretend that we stole it. Then he will seize us, make us slaves, and take our donkeys.”

A Feast at Joseph’s Palace

¹⁹The brothers approached the manager of Joseph’s household and spoke to him at the entrance to the palace. ²⁰“Sir,” they said, “we came to Egypt once before to buy food. ²¹But as we were returning home, we stopped for the night and opened our sacks. Then we discovered that each man’s money—the exact amount paid—was in the top of his sack! Here it is; we have brought it back with us. ²²We also have additional money to buy more food. We have no idea who put our money in our sacks.”

²³“Relax. Don’t be afraid,” the household manager told them. “Your God, the God of your father, must have put this treasure into your sacks. I know I received your payment.” Then he released Simeon and brought him out to them.

²⁴The manager then led the men into Joseph’s palace. He gave them water to wash their feet and provided food for their donkeys. ²⁵They were told they would be eating there, so they prepared their gifts for Joseph’s arrival at noon.

²⁶When Joseph came home, they gave him the gifts they had brought him, then bowed low to the ground before him. ²⁷After greeting them, he asked, “How is your father, the old man you spoke about? Is he still alive?”

²⁸“Yes,” they replied. “Our father, your

servant, is alive and well.” And they bowed low again.

²⁹Then Joseph looked at his brother Benjamin, the son of his own mother. “Is this your youngest brother, the one you told me about?” Joseph asked. “May God be gracious to you, my son.” ³⁰Then Joseph hurried from the room because he was overcome with emotion for his brother. He went into his private room, where he broke down and wept. ³¹After washing his face, he came back out, keeping himself under control. Then he ordered, “Bring out the food!”

³²The waiters served Joseph at his own table, and his brothers were served at a separate table. The Egyptians who ate with Joseph sat at their own table, because Egyptians despise Hebrews and refuse to eat with them. ³³Joseph told each of his brothers where to sit, and to their amazement, he seated them according to age, from oldest to youngest. ³⁴And Joseph filled their plates with food from his own table, giving Benjamin five times as much as he gave the others. So they feasted and drank freely with him.

Joseph’s Silver Cup in Benjamin’s Sack

44 When his brothers were ready to leave, Joseph gave these instructions to his palace manager: “Fill each of their sacks with as much grain as they can carry, and put each man’s money back into his sack. ²Then put my personal silver cup at the top of the youngest brother’s sack, along with the money for his grain.” So the manager did as Joseph instructed him.

³The brothers were up at dawn and were sent on their journey with their loaded donkeys. ⁴But when they had gone only a short distance and were barely out of the city, Joseph said to his palace manager, “Chase after them and stop them. When you catch up

43:18 *The brothers were terrified:* Cp. 32:6-12. Their guilt would not let them see that something good might happen.

43:19-22 *The brothers,* completely vulnerable and feeling the weight of God’s judgment on their consciences, *approached the manager* in desperation.

43:24 Joseph no longer treated his brothers harshly, but provided kind hospitality.

43:26 For the second time, the brothers *bowed . . . before* Joseph in fulfillment of his first dream (37:7; see 42:6-7; cp. 33:3).

43:29 *May God be gracious to you, my*

son: Joseph’s blessing to his full brother fulfilled Jacob’s prayer (43:14).

43:30 *he was overcome with emotion for his brother:* Cp. 42:24. Joseph’s tears were of painful memories and years of lost fellowship, as well as of joy and thanksgiving to see his brother again.

• *He went into his private room:* He did not yet plan to reveal his identity.

43:33 *to their amazement:* This ruler knew more about the brothers than seemed possible (cp. 44:15).

43:34 The brothers were confronted with generous and gracious dealings from God through Joseph, who tested

their tolerance by reenacting the favoritism toward Rachel’s son that had galvanized their earlier hostility.

44:1-34 The brothers appeared to have changed; they had shown remorse over what they had done to Joseph, and they showed integrity in returning the money and in bringing Benjamin. Given a chance to get rid of Rachel’s other son, Benjamin, would they do it?

44:2 Joseph was giving his brothers the chance to abandon Benjamin if they wanted to. Joseph was testing them to see if they were loyal to the family and faithful to their father.

with them, ask them, ‘Why have you repaid my kindness with such evil?’ ⁵Why have you stolen my master’s silver cup, which he uses to predict the future? What a wicked thing you have done!’”

⁶When the palace manager caught up with the men, he spoke to them as he had been instructed.

⁷“What are you talking about?” the brothers responded. “We are your servants and would never do such a thing! ⁸Didn’t we return the money we found in our sacks? We brought it back all the way from the land of Canaan. Why would we steal silver or gold from your master’s house? ⁹If you find his cup with any one of us, let that man die. And all the rest of us, my lord, will be your slaves.”

¹⁰“That’s fair,” the man replied. “But only the one who stole the cup will be my slave. The rest of you may go free.”

¹¹They all quickly took their sacks from the backs of their donkeys and opened them. ¹²The palace manager searched the brothers’ sacks, from the oldest to the youngest. And the cup was found in Benjamin’s sack! ¹³When the brothers saw this, they tore their clothing in despair. Then they loaded their donkeys again and returned to the city.

¹⁴Joseph was still in his palace when Judah and his brothers arrived, and they fell to the ground before him. ¹⁵“What have you done?” Joseph demanded. “Don’t you know that a man like me can predict the future?”

¹⁶Judah answered, “Oh, my lord, what can we say to you? How can we explain this? How can we prove our innocence? God is punishing us for our sins. My lord, we have all

returned to be your slaves—all of us, not just our brother who had your cup in his sack.”

¹⁷“No,” Joseph said. “I would never do such a thing! Only the man who stole the cup will be my slave. The rest of you may go back to your father in peace.”

Judah Intercedes for Benjamin

¹⁸Then Judah stepped forward and said, “Please, my lord, let your servant say just one word to you. Please, do not be angry with me, even though you are as powerful as Pharaoh himself.

¹⁹“My lord, previously you asked us, your servants, ‘Do you have a father or a brother?’ ²⁰And we responded, ‘Yes, my lord, we have a father who is an old man, and his youngest son is a child of his old age. His full brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother’s children, and his father loves him very much.’

²¹“And you said to us, ‘Bring him here so I can see him with my own eyes.’ ²²But we said to you, ‘My lord, the boy cannot leave his father, for his father would die.’ ²³But you told us, ‘Unless your youngest brother comes with you, you will never see my face again.’

²⁴“So we returned to your servant, our father, and told him what you had said. ²⁵Later, when he said, ‘Go back again and buy us more food,’ ²⁶we replied, ‘We can’t go unless you let our youngest brother go with us. We’ll never get to see the man’s face unless our youngest brother is with us.’

²⁷“Then my father said to us, ‘As you know, my wife had two sons, ²⁸and one of them went away and never returned. Doubtless he was torn to pieces by some wild animal. I have never seen him since. ²⁹Now if you take his brother away from

44:5
Gen 30:27
Deut 18:10-14

44:8
Gen 43:21

44:9
Gen 31:32

44:12
Gen 44:2

44:13
Gen 37:29, 34

44:15
Gen 44:5

44:16
Gen 42:11; 43:18

44:18
Gen 37:7-8; 41:40-44

44:19
Gen 42:11; 43:7

44:21
Gen 42:11, 15

44:23
Gen 43:3

44:24
Gen 42:29-34

44:25
Gen 42:2

44:26
Gen 43:5

44:27
Gen 46:19

44:28
Gen 37:33

44:29
Gen 42:38

44:5 This description would make the brothers understand that the ruler knew things that others could not. • *silver cup*: As in Greek version; Hebrew lacks this phrase. *Hydromancy* (pouring water into oil) and *oenomancy* (pouring wine into other liquids) were methods of divination used in the ancient Near East that would have required such a cup. Joseph was continuing his ruse (see 42:7; cp. 30:27; see also Lev 19:26; Num 23:23; Deut 18:10-11)—he knew that only God grants revelation (see 37:5-9; 40:8; 41:16).

44:9-10 The punishment that the brothers proposed was harsher than necessary; it was normal in antiquity to stake your life on what you said. The palace manager was agreeable but enforced a punishment that matched Joseph’s intentions (44:17).

44:11-12 The *palace manager* knew

where the cup was, but he created more anxiety by beginning with the oldest.

44:13 *they tore their clothing in despair*: They knew what it would do to Jacob to lose Benjamin (42:38).

44:14 This time, the brothers did not bow politely (see 42:6-7; 43:26); they *fell to the ground* in desperation, fulfilling Joseph’s first dream for the third time (see 37:10).

44:16 *Judah* again spoke for the group. • *God is punishing us for our sins*: God was completing the work of repentance in their hearts. Judah again proposed that they all be punished. Benjamin was seemingly guilty of this theft, but all of the others were guilty of sin against Joseph. They preferred not returning to Jacob at all versus seeing his grief at the loss of Benjamin (44:34).

44:18-34 *Judah* made good on his

promise to pay for Benjamin’s safety (43:8-10). His lengthy plea to be imprisoned in place of the lad (44:33) is one of the most moving acts of intercession in Scripture. It demonstrated Judah’s concern for their father and his willingness to give up everything for the sake of his brother. With this kind of integrity (see John 15:13), Judah showed himself to be a true leader, qualified to receive the blessing of the firstborn, through whom the kings of Israel would come (see 49:10). • The brothers had fully repented, as expressed by Judah’s intercession. Because of their change, Joseph could make himself known to them (45:1-15) and arrange for the family to join him in Egypt where there was food (45:16; 47:12).

44:29 *to his grave*: Hebrew *to Sheol*; also in 44:31.

44:30
1 Sam 18:1
44:32
Gen 43:9
45:1
Gen 43:31
45:3
Gen 43:7
45:4
Gen 37:28
45:5
Gen 50:20
45:6
Gen 41:30
45:8
Gen 41:41
Judg 17:10
45:9
Acts 7:14

me, and any harm comes to him, you will send this grieving, white-haired man to his grave.’

³⁰“And now, my lord, I cannot go back to my father without the boy. Our father’s life is bound up in the boy’s life. ³¹If he sees that the boy is not with us, our father will die. We, your servants, will indeed be responsible for sending that grieving, white-haired man to his grave. ³²My lord, I guaranteed to my father that I would take care of the boy. I told him, ‘If I don’t bring him back to you, I will bear the blame forever.’

³³“So please, my lord, let me stay here as a slave instead of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. ³⁴For how can I return to my father if the boy is not with me? I couldn’t bear to see the anguish this would cause my father!”

Joseph Reveals His Identity and God’s Plan

45 Joseph could stand it no longer. There were many people in the room, and he said to his attendants, “Out, all of you!” So he was alone with his brothers when he told them who he was. ²Then he broke down and wept. He wept so loudly

the Egyptians could hear him, and word of it quickly carried to Pharaoh’s palace.

³“I am Joseph!” he said to his brothers. “Is my father still alive?” But his brothers were speechless! They were stunned to realize that Joseph was standing there in front of them. ⁴“Please, come closer,” he said to them. So they came closer. And he said again, “I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into slavery in Egypt. ⁵But don’t be upset, and don’t be angry with yourselves for selling me to this place. It was God who sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives. ⁶This famine that has ravaged the land for two years will last five more years, and there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. ⁷God has sent me ahead of you to keep you and your families alive and to preserve many survivors. ⁸So it was God who sent me here, not you! And he is the one who made me an adviser to Pharaoh—the manager of his entire palace and the governor of all Egypt.

⁹“Now hurry back to my father and tell him, ‘This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me master over all the land of Egypt. So come down to me immediately!’

JUDAH (44:14-34)

Gen 29:35; 37:26-27; 38:1-30; 43:1-10; 46:28; 49:8-12
Ruth 4:12
1 Chr 2:3-4; 5:2
Ps 108:8

Judah is remembered most often as the ancestor of King David and of Jesus Christ. Despite his indiscretions and his birth as a middle child, God chose Judah to carry the line of King David (1 Chr 2:1-16; 3:1-24) and of the Messiah (49:8-12; Matt 1:2-3; Luke 3:33).

Judah was the fourth of Jacob’s twelve sons (35:23; 1 Chr 2:1). Leah, overjoyed to have borne her fourth son, named him Judah, meaning “praise” (29:35). Judah fathered five sons: Er, Onan, and Shelah by Bathshua, a woman from Canaan (38:3-5; 1 Chr 2:3); and the twins, Perez and Zerah, by his daughter-in-law Tamar (38:29-30; 1 Chr 2:4). God killed his first two sons, Er and Onan, in Canaan for disobedience (46:12). Judah eventually settled his family in Egypt with his father and brothers (Exod 1:2).

Though reckless in his behavior with Tamar (38:6-30), Judah took personal responsibility for Benjamin’s safety in Egypt and interceded with Joseph for his brothers (44:14-18). When Jacob gave his dying blessing, he granted Judah the position of leadership; the future kings of Israel would come through Judah’s offspring (see note on 49:10).

44:32-34 Judah was willing to give up his family, his future, and his freedom for others.

45:1-15 In one of the most dramatic scenes of the book, *Joseph* revealed his identity to his brothers, bringing the process of reconciling with them to a climax (see also 50:14-21).

45:2 This is the third of five times in the story that Joseph *wept* over his brothers (see also 42:24; 43:30; 45:14; 50:17; cp. 50:1).

45:3 The brothers were *stunned* at the news, unable to speak from amazement and fear (45:5; cp. 50:15).

45:5-8 *God . . . sent me* is the central message of the account of Jacob’s family (37:2). As the Lord had told Abraham, he was leading the Israelites into Egypt (15:13). God had sent Joseph to Egypt to prepare for his family’s rescue during the famine. In what has become a classic statement of God’s sovereignty, Joseph explained that God had been working through all of the circumstances and human acts to bring about his plan. The certainty of God’s will is the basis for forgiveness and reconciliation with those who do wrong, cause hurt, or bring harm. If people do not believe that God is sovereign, then they will blame others and retaliate. Those

who are spiritual will trust that God is at work even through human wickedness (see also Rom 8:28-30).

45:7 *to preserve many survivors: Or and to save you with an extraordinary rescue.* The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.

45:8 *an adviser: Literally a father.*

45:9-13 Joseph instructed his brothers to inform Jacob. The whole family was to move to *Egypt* and live in *Goshen*, a fertile region in the Nile delta (see 47:1-12). If they did not come to Egypt, they would not survive the *five years of famine ahead*.

¹⁰You can live in the region of Goshen, where you can be near me with all your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and everything you own. ¹¹I will take care of you there, for there are still five years of famine ahead of us. Otherwise you, your household, and all your animals will starve.”

¹²Then Joseph added, “Look! You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that I really am Joseph! ¹³Go tell my father of my honored position here in Egypt. Describe for him everything you have seen, and then bring my father here quickly.” ¹⁴Weeping with joy, he embraced Benjamin, and Benjamin did the same. ¹⁵Then Joseph kissed each of his brothers and wept over them, and after that they began talking freely with him.

Pharaoh Invites Jacob to Egypt

¹⁶The news soon reached Pharaoh’s palace: “Joseph’s brothers have arrived!” Pharaoh and his officials were all delighted to hear this.

¹⁷Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Tell your brothers, ‘This is what you must do: Load your pack animals, and hurry back to the land of Canaan. ¹⁸Then get your father and all of your families, and return here to me. I will give you the very best land in Egypt, and you will eat from the best that the land produces.’”

¹⁹Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Tell your brothers, ‘Take wagons from the land of Egypt to carry your little children and your

wives, and bring your father here. ²⁰Don’t worry about your personal belongings, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.’”

²¹So the sons of Jacob did as they were told. Joseph provided them with wagons, as Pharaoh had commanded, and he gave them supplies for the journey. ²²And he gave each of them new clothes—but to Benjamin he gave five changes of clothes and 300 pieces of silver. ²³He also sent his father ten male donkeys loaded with the finest products of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and other supplies he would need on his journey.

²⁴So Joseph sent his brothers off, and as they left, he called after them, “Don’t quarrel about all this along the way!” ²⁵And they left Egypt and returned to their father, Jacob, in the land of Canaan.

²⁶“Joseph is still alive!” they told him. “And he is governor of all the land of Egypt!” Jacob was stunned at the news—he couldn’t believe it. ²⁷But when they repeated to Jacob everything Joseph had told them, and when he saw the wagons Joseph had sent to carry him, their father’s spirits revived.

²⁸Then Jacob exclaimed, “It must be true! My son Joseph is alive! I must go and see him before I die.”

Jacob and His Family Move to Egypt

46 So Jacob set out for Egypt with all his possessions. And when he came to Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the

45:10
Gen 46:28, 34

45:11
Gen 47:12

45:13
Acts 7:14

45:14
Gen 45:2

45:16
Acts 7:13

45:17
Gen 42:26

45:18
Gen 27:28

45:19
Gen 45:27; 46:5

45:20
Gen 46:6

45:22
Gen 24:53
2 Kgs 5:5

45:23
Gen 43:11

45:24
Gen 42:21-22

45:26
Gen 37:31-35
*aman (0539)
‣ Exod 14:31

45:27
Gen 45:19
*ruakh (7307)
‣ Exod 31:3

45:28
Gen 44:28

46:1
Gen 21:14; 26:24;
28:13; 31:42
*zabakh (2076)
‣ Exod 22:20

45:10 *The region of Goshen* was in the northeast corner of Egypt, only a few days’ walk from Canaan. Jacob’s family stayed there because there was food and water for themselves and their flocks; later, they were kept there by Egyptians who put them to slave labor.

45:14-15 Joseph was reunited with his brothers—first with Benjamin and then with the rest. Their previous hatred and jealousy of Joseph (37:4-11) had come to an end. The brothers experienced forgiveness from God and from Joseph. Far from commanding his brothers to bow down to him (see 42:6-7), Joseph welcomed them. Joseph held no grudge because he accepted what had happened as God’s work and saw the good that had resulted (see 50:14-21). This is how wisdom rules: The wise leader will forgive and restore (see note on 37:2–50:26).

45:16–47:12 This section is transitional, as the family moved from Canaan to Goshen, where they would live for the next four centuries.

45:16-25 Joseph sent his brothers with

instructions to bring Jacob and the entire family to Egypt. Out of gratitude for Joseph’s having saved all of Egypt (45:18; see 47:20), Pharaoh promised the *best of all the land of Egypt*, and Joseph gave them *the finest products of Egypt*.

45:21 *Jacob*: Hebrew *Israel*; also in 45:28. See note on 35:21.

45:22 *300 pieces*: Hebrew *300 shekels*, about 7.5 pounds or 3.4 kilograms in weight.

45:24 *Don’t quarrel about all this along the way!* When they were away from Joseph, they might begin to accuse one another about the past or argue about how to explain what had happened to Jacob. It was now time to put the past behind them and enjoy the reunion.

45:26-28 As might be expected, *Jacob was stunned* when he heard that his son *Joseph was still alive* and ruling *all the land of Egypt*. As he heard the details of their story and saw all that *Joseph had sent* him, he was convinced that it was *true*. He immediately prepared to move to Egypt and reunite with his

son Joseph, whom he had not seen for twenty-two years.

45:27 *their father’s spirits revived*: This royal invitation to Jacob, an old man near the end of hope, and to the ten brothers burdened with guilty fears, was a turning point in their lives. It was also a fulfillment of God’s prediction (15:13-16) that they would go into seclusion in a foreign country and there become a great nation without losing their identity. The joyful news about Joseph changed the lives of everyone in this family for the good.

46:1-4 God reassured Jacob about his move to Egypt.

46:1 *Jacob* (Hebrew *Israel*; also in 46:29, 30; see note on 35:21) *set out for Egypt*: A little over 200 years earlier, Abraham had similarly gone down into Egypt during a famine in Canaan (12:10), and God had protected him there. • Jacob’s first stop was at *Beersheba*, where Abraham had sacrificed to the Lord and worshiped him after settling his land and water rights with the Philistines (21:31-33). This was where Isaac had

46:2
Gen 22:11; 31:11
Num 12:6

46:3
Gen 17:1; 26:2

46:4
Gen 28:13
Exod 3:8

46:5
Gen 45:19

46:6
Num 20:15
Deut 26:5
Acts 7:15

46:8
Gen 29:32; 35:23

46:9
1 Chr 5:3

46:10
1 Chr 4:24

46:11
1 Chr 6:16

46:12
1 Chr 2:3

46:13
1 Chr 7:1

46:14
Gen 30:20

46:15
Gen 30:21

46:16
Gen 30:11
Num 26:15

46:17
Gen 30:13

God of his father, Isaac. ²During the night God spoke to him in a vision. "Jacob! Jacob!" he called.

"Here I am," Jacob replied.

³"I am God, the God of your father," the voice said. "Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make your family into a great nation. ⁴I will go with you down to Egypt, and I will bring you back again. You will die in Egypt, but Joseph will be with you to close your eyes."

⁵So Jacob left Beersheba, and his sons took him to Egypt. They carried him and their little ones and their wives in the wagons Pharaoh had provided for them. ⁶They also took all their livestock and all the personal belongings they had acquired in the land of Canaan. So Jacob and his entire family went to Egypt—sons and grandsons, daughters and granddaughters—all his descendants.

⁸These are the names of the descendants of Israel—the sons of Jacob—who went to Egypt:

Reuben was Jacob's oldest son. ⁹The sons of Reuben were Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi.

¹⁰The sons of Simeon were Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar, and Shaul. (Shaul's mother was a Canaanite woman.)

¹¹The sons of Levi were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

¹²The sons of Judah were Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah (though Er and Onan had died in the land of Canaan). The sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul.

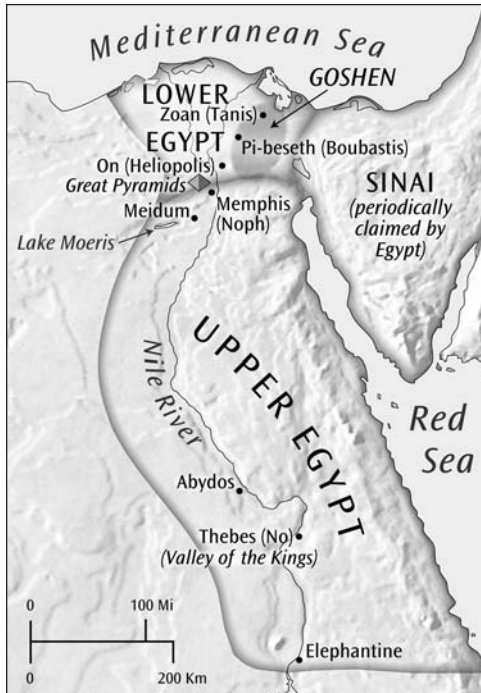
¹³The sons of Issachar were Tola, Puah, Jashub, and Shimron.

¹⁴The sons of Zebulun were Sered, Elon, and Jahleel.

¹⁵These were the sons of Leah and Jacob who were born in Paddan-aram, in addition to their daughter, Dinah. The number of Jacob's descendants (male and female) through Leah was thirty-three.

¹⁶The sons of Gad were Zephon, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli.

¹⁷The sons of Asher were Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, and Beriah. Their sister was Serah. Beriah's sons were Heber and Malkiel.



◀ **Egypt, about 1700 BC (39:1–50:26).** Egypt was already a great and ancient civilization when Joseph rose to power (chs 39–41) and Jacob's family traveled there for food (chs 42–46; cp. 12:10–20). As the breadbasket of the region, Egypt was synonymous with abundance. It was protected from enemies by natural barriers: the harborless MEDITERRANEAN SEA to the north, the rugged SINAI peninsula to the east, and a great desert to the west. ON (HELIOPOLIS) was the religious center (see 41:45, 50). Egypt was divided into two regions—LOWER EGYPT (the NILE delta region) and UPPER EGYPT (from the delta to the first cataract of the NILE at ELEPHANTINE). ZOAN and MEMPHIS were administrative centers (see Num 13:22; Ps 78:12, 43; Isa 19:11–13; 30:4; Ezek 30:14). THEBES, the chief city of Upper Egypt, was later conquered by the Assyrians (Nah 3:8–10; cp. Ezek 30:14–16). GOSHEN is also shown, the region where the Israelites settled (45:10; 46:28–47:6, 28–29; see Exod 8:22; 9:26).

46:3 I am God: Hebrew *I am El*.

46:4 you will die: He would have a peaceful death, surrounded by his family and many blessings from God (49:33).

46:8–27 This genealogy of the *sons of Jacob* shows that all the tribes of *Israel* went together to the land of Egypt; they would all leave together as well (see the book of Exodus).

46:13 Puah: As in Syriac version and Samaritan Pentateuch (see also 1 Chr 7:1); Hebrew reads *Puvah*. • **Jashub:** As in some Greek manuscripts and Samaritan Pentateuch (see also Num 26:24; 1 Chr 7:1); Hebrew reads *Iob*.

46:16 Zephon: As in Greek version and Samaritan Pentateuch (see also Num 26:15); Hebrew reads *Ziphion*.

lived, and where Jacob had lived before he fled from Esau's anger (28:10). • *all his possessions:* See 46:5–7.

46:2–4 In a night vision, the Lord repeated his promise to go with Jacob

and make his family into a great nation in Egypt. The same God who led the family into Egypt promised to bring them out of Egypt to live once again in the land of Canaan.

¹⁸These were the sons of Zilpah, the servant given to Leah by her father, Laban. The number of Jacob's descendants through Zilpah was sixteen.

¹⁹The sons of Jacob's wife Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin.

²⁰Joseph's sons, born in the land of Egypt, were Manasseh and Ephraim. Their mother was Asenath, daughter of Potiphera, the priest of On.

²¹Benjamin's sons were Bela, Beker, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard.

²²These were the sons of Rachel and Jacob. The number of Jacob's descendants through Rachel was fourteen.

²³The son of Dan was Hushim.

²⁴The sons of Naphtali were Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem.

²⁵These were the sons of Bilhah, the servant given to Rachel by her father, Laban. The number of Jacob's descendants through Bilhah was seven.

²⁶The total number of Jacob's direct descendants who went with him to Egypt, not counting his sons' wives, was sixty-six. ²⁷In addition, Joseph had two sons who were born in Egypt. So altogether, there were seventy members of Jacob's family in the land of Egypt.

Jacob's Family Arrives in Goshen

²⁸As they neared their destination, Jacob sent Judah ahead to meet Joseph and get directions to the region of Goshen. And when they finally arrived there, ²⁹Joseph prepared his chariot and traveled to Goshen to meet his father, Jacob. When Joseph arrived, he embraced his father and wept, holding him for a long time. ³⁰Finally, Jacob said to Joseph,

"Now I am ready to die, since I have seen your face again and know you are still alive."

³¹And Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's entire family, "I will go to Pharaoh and tell him, 'My brothers and my father's entire family have come to me from the land of Canaan. ³²These men are shepherds, and they raise livestock. They have brought with them their flocks and herds and everything they own.'"

³³Then he said, "When Pharaoh calls for you and asks you about your occupation, ³⁴you must tell him, 'We, your servants, have raised livestock all our lives, as our ancestors have always done.' When you tell him this, he will let you live here in the region of Goshen, for the Egyptians despise shepherds."

Jacob Blesses Pharaoh and Settles in Goshen

47 Then Joseph went to see Pharaoh and told him, "My father and my brothers have arrived from the land of Canaan. They have come with all their flocks and herds and possessions, and they are now in the region of Goshen."

²Joseph took five of his brothers with him and presented them to Pharaoh. ³And Pharaoh asked the brothers, "What is your occupation?"

They replied, "We, your servants, are shepherds, just like our ancestors. ⁴We have come to live here in Egypt for a while, for there is no pasture for our flocks in Canaan. The famine is very severe there. So please, we request permission to live in the region of Goshen."

⁵Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Now that your father and brothers have joined you here, ⁶choose any place in the entire land of Egypt for them to live. Give them the best land of Egypt. Let them live in the region

46:19
Gen 44:27

46:20
Gen 41:45, 50-52

46:21
Num 26:38-41
1 Chr 7:6-12

46:22
Gen 35:24

46:23
Gen 30:6
Num 26:42

46:24
Gen 30:8

46:25
Gen 35:25

46:27
Exod 1:5
Deut 10:22
Acts 7:14

46:28
Gen 43:3; 45:10

46:29
Gen 45:14-15

46:30
Gen 44:28

46:31
Gen 47:1

46:32
Gen 37:2; 47:3

46:33
Gen 47:3

46:34
Gen 13:7; 26:20; 37:2

47:1
Gen 46:31

47:2
Gen 43:15

47:3
Gen 46:32-33

47:4
Gen 46:34

47:6
Gen 45:18
Exod 18:21, 25

46:20 On: Greek version reads of *Heliopolis* (see note on 41:45).

46:26 The total number . . . was sixty-six: This is the number of those who traveled with Jacob to Egypt, excluding *his sons' wives*, the servants, and others attached to the household. It also omits Joseph, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Jacob.

46:27 two sons: Greek version reads *nine sons*, probably including Joseph's grandsons through Ephraim and Manasseh (see 1 Chr 7:14-20). • *seventy* (Greek version reads *seventy-five*; see note on Exod 1:5): This number includes Joseph, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Jacob. Seventy is also a symbolic number for perfection or completion (see "Symbolic Numbers" at Rev 4:4, p. 2173). From these seventy (i.e., all Israel) would grow the nation of Israel that would bless the

seventy nations (i.e., all the nations) of the world (see note on 10:2-32; cp. 12:3).

46:28-34 Jacob finally saw his son Joseph again; their reunion was overwhelmingly joyful.

46:29 Joseph . . . embraced his father and wept: Joseph was seventeen when he had last seen his father (37:2); now he was thirty-nine.

46:30 Jacob was satisfied just to see his beloved son *alive*—the firstborn of his chosen wife Rachel and the designated family leader (see note on 48:5-7; see also 1 Chr 5:1-2). More than just a family reunion, this was confirmation that God's plan was intact.

46:34 In contrast to the syncretistic Canaanites, who would have absorbed the Israelites had they stayed in Canaan,

Egyptians detested Semitic shepherds out of a sense of ethnic superiority and observed a strict segregation (see 43:32). When Jacob's family settled in Egypt, this separation would allow the people to grow into a great nation without losing their identity.

47:1-6 Pharaoh responded as Joseph hoped by giving Jacob's family the best part of the land; he even gave some of the brothers oversight of his own livestock (47:6).

47:1 Goshen (see note on 45:10) is not referred to in ancient Egyptian texts; the name it bore in later Egyptian writings was "the region of Rameses" (47:11; see Exod 1:11). It was fertile and near to Joseph at court, which suggests that it was on the eastern side of the Nile delta.

47:7
Gen 47:10
2 Sam 14:22
1 Kgs 8:66

47:10
Gen 14:19

47:11
Exod 1:11; 12:37

47:12
Gen 45:11; 47:24

47:13
Gen 41:30
Acts 7:11

47:14
Gen 41:56

47:15
Gen 47:18-19

47:17
Exod 14:9

47:19
Neh 5:2
Job 2:4
Lam 1:11

47:22
Deut 14:28-29

47:24
Gen 41:34

47:25
Gen 32:5

47:26
Gen 47:22

47:27
Exod 1:7

47:29
Gen 24:2; 50:24-25

of Goshen. And if any of them have special skills, put them in charge of my livestock, too."

⁷Then Joseph brought in his father, Jacob, and presented him to Pharaoh. And Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

⁸"How old are you?" Pharaoh asked him.

⁹Jacob replied, "I have traveled this earth for 130 hard years. But my life has been short compared to the lives of my ancestors." ¹⁰Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh again before leaving his court.

¹¹So Joseph assigned the best land of Egypt—the region of Rameses—to his father and his brothers, and he settled them there, just as Pharaoh had commanded.

¹²And Joseph provided food for his father and his brothers in amounts appropriate to the number of their dependents, including the smallest children.

Joseph's Leadership in the Famine

¹³Meanwhile, the famine became so severe that all the food was used up, and people were starving throughout the lands of Egypt and Canaan. ¹⁴By selling grain to the people, Joseph eventually collected all the money in Egypt and Canaan, and he put the money in Pharaoh's treasury. ¹⁵When the people of Egypt and Canaan ran out of money, all the Egyptians came to Joseph. "Our money is gone!" they cried. "But please give us food, or we will die before your very eyes!"

¹⁶Joseph replied, "Since your money is gone, bring me your livestock. I will give you food in exchange for your livestock."

¹⁷So they brought their livestock to Joseph in exchange for food. In exchange for their horses, flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, and donkeys, Joseph provided them with food for another year.

¹⁸But that year ended, and the next year they came again and said, "We cannot hide the truth from you, my lord. Our money is

gone, and all our livestock and cattle are yours. We have nothing left to give but our bodies and our land. ¹⁹Why should we die before your very eyes? Buy us and our land in exchange for food; we offer our land and ourselves as slaves for Pharaoh. Just give us grain so we may live and not die, and so the land does not become empty and desolate."

²⁰So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh. All the Egyptians sold him their fields because the famine was so severe, and soon all the land belonged to Pharaoh. ²¹As for the people, he made them all slaves, from one end of Egypt to the other. ²²The only land he did not buy was the land belonging to the priests. They received an allotment of food directly from Pharaoh, so they didn't need to sell their land.

²³Then Joseph said to the people, "Look, today I have bought you and your land for Pharaoh. I will provide you with seed so you can plant the fields. ²⁴Then when you harvest it, one-fifth of your crop will belong to Pharaoh. You may keep the remaining four-fifths as seed for your fields and as food for you, your households, and your little ones."

²⁵"You have saved our lives!" they exclaimed. "May it please you, my lord, to let us be Pharaoh's servants." ²⁶Joseph then issued a decree still in effect in the land of Egypt, that Pharaoh should receive one-fifth of all the crops grown on his land. Only the land belonging to the priests was not given to Pharaoh.

²⁷Meanwhile, the people of Israel settled in the region of Goshen in Egypt. There they acquired property, and they were fruitful, and their population grew rapidly. ²⁸Jacob lived for seventeen years after his arrival in Egypt, so he lived 147 years in all.

Joseph Promises to Bury Jacob in Canaan

²⁹As the time of his death drew near, Jacob called for his son Joseph and said to him,

47:7-10 When *Jacob* entered Pharaoh's court and when he left, he *blessed Pharaoh*, an indication of Jacob's position as God's representative (see Heb 7:7). God had promised that he would bless those who blessed Abraham's family (12:2-3), so he now blessed Pharaoh and Egypt.

47:13-26 The Lord blessed Pharaoh because Pharaoh was blessing Abraham's descendants (12:3). Through Joseph's wise administration in Egypt, the Lord saved the people from starvation and prospered Pharaoh. In selling food to the Egyptians during the years of famine, Joseph accepted money, livestock, and finally land as payment, until al-

most all of Egypt belonged to Pharaoh. Meanwhile, God provided Israel with some of the best land in Egypt where they could live, work, and multiply.

47:21 *he made them all slaves*: As in Greek version and Samaritan Pentateuch; Hebrew reads *he moved them all into the towns*, where the food was. In Hebrew script, the difference is very slight between *slaves* (Hebrew *'abadim*) and *towns* (Hebrew *'arim*). Moving the people into the towns doesn't fit the context very well, so most translations select *slaves* as the reading that makes the most sense (cp. 47:20).

47:27 God blessed his people according

to his promise to Abraham that his descendants would be innumerable (15:5; 22:17). They had to wait for the fulfillment of the second promise, that they would own the land of Canaan (17:8).

47:29-31 *bury me with my ancestors*: Cp. 49:29-33. Jacob wanted to be buried with Abraham and Isaac in the cave of Machpelah (see note on 49:29-33; see 23:1-20; 25:7-10; 35:27-29). • *Put your hand under my thigh*: This custom (cp. 24:1-9 and note on 24:2) was a serious oath to carry on the covenant, which had as its main promise innumerable descendants in the Promised Land.

• *Jacob*: Hebrew *Israel*; also in 47:31b. See note on 35:21.

“Please do me this favor. Put your hand under my thigh and swear that you will treat me with unyielding love by honoring this last request: Do not bury me in Egypt. ³⁰When I die, please take my body out of Egypt and bury me with my ancestors.”

So Joseph promised, “I will do as you ask.”

³¹“Swear that you will do it,” Jacob insisted. So Joseph gave his oath, and Jacob bowed humbly at the head of his bed.

Jacob Blesses His Children (48:1–50:26)
Jacob Blesses Manasseh and Ephraim

48 One day not long after this, word came to Joseph, “Your father is failing rapidly.” So Joseph went to visit his father, and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

²When Joseph arrived, Jacob was told, “Your son Joseph has come to see you.” So Jacob gathered his strength and sat up in his bed.

³Jacob said to Joseph, “God ^hAlmighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me. ⁴He said to me, ‘I will make you fruitful, and I will multiply your descendants. I will make you a multitude of nations. And I will give this land of Canaan to your ⁱdescendants after you as an everlasting possession.’

⁵“Now I am claiming as my own sons these two boys of yours, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born here in the land of Egypt before I arrived. They will be my sons, just as Reuben and Simeon are. ⁶But any children born to you in the future will be your own, and they will inherit land within the territories of their brothers Ephraim and Manasseh.

⁷“Long ago, as I was returning from Paddan-aram, Rachel died in the land of Canaan. We were still on the way, some distance from Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). So with great sorrow I buried her there beside the road to Ephrath.”

⁸Then Jacob looked over at the two boys. “Are these your sons?” he asked.

⁹“Yes,” Joseph told him, “these are the sons God has given me here in Egypt.”

And Jacob said, “Bring them closer to me, so I can bless them.”

¹⁰Jacob was half blind because of his age and could hardly see. So Joseph brought the boys close to him, and Jacob kissed and embraced them. ¹¹Then Jacob said to Joseph, “I never thought I would see your face again, but now God has let me see your children, too!”

¹²Joseph moved the boys, who were at their grandfather’s knees, and he bowed with his face to the ground. ¹³Then he positioned the boys in front of Jacob. With his right hand he directed Ephraim toward Jacob’s left hand, and with his left hand he put Manasseh at Jacob’s right hand. ¹⁴But Jacob crossed his arms as he reached out to lay his hands on the boys’ heads. He put his right hand on the head of Ephraim, though he was the younger boy, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, though he was the firstborn. ¹⁵Then he blessed Joseph and said,

“May the God before whom my grandfather Abraham and my father, Isaac, walked—the God who has been my shepherd all my life, to this very day,

47:30
 Gen 23:17-20; 25:9; 49:29
 Acts 7:15-16

47:31
 Heb 11:21

48:1
 Gen 41:51-52
 Heb 11:21

48:3
 Gen 28:13-19; 35:9-12
^h*shaddai* (7706)
 • Gen 49:25

48:4
^z*zera'* (2233)
 • Exod 32:13

48:5
 Gen 29:32-33

48:7
 Gen 35:19

48:9
 Gen 33:5

48:10
 Gen 27:1

48:11
 Gen 44:28

48:12
 Gen 33:3; 42:6

48:14
 Gen 41:51-52

48:15
 Gen 17:1; 49:24
^{ro}*eh* (7462)
 • Gen 49:24

47:31 When the oath was taken, Jacob *bowed humbly* in worship *at the head of his bed*: Greek version reads *and Israel bowed in worship as he leaned on his staff*; cp. Heb 11:21. Jacob thanked the Lord for ensuring that he would be buried with his ancestors in the land of promise (cp. 1 Kgs 1:47).

48:1-22 In blessing Ephraim and Manasseh, Jacob reached out by faith for the promise to be continued, having learned that God’s ways are not always the ways of men. Out of Jacob’s long life, the writer to the Hebrews selected the blessing of Joseph’s sons as his great act of faith (Heb 11:21). As Jacob acted in light of God’s will, the primary blessing was again given to the younger instead of the older son, but without scheming and its bitter results.

48:2 Jacob: Hebrew *Israel*; also in 48:8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 21. See note on 35:21.

48:3-4 Jacob rehearsed how *God Almighty* (Hebrew *El-Shaddai*) had *appeared* to him and had promised him Abraham’s blessing—innumerable *descendants* dwelling in the *land . . . as an everlasting possession* (cp. 28:10-22). • *descendants*: Literally *seed*; also in 48:19.

48:5-7 Jacob, prompted by his memory of Rachel (see 35:16-20), blessed Joseph by elevating his two sons as coheirs with his other sons—the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh would have shares along with the other tribes that came from Jacob (see Josh 16–17). Jacob also gave Ephraim, Joseph’s younger son, the birthright (see 1 Chr 5:1-2). As a result of this blessing, Ephraim and Manasseh became large and powerful tribes (see Josh 17:14-18).

48:10 As Isaac his father had done, Jacob now gave the blessing when his

eyesight was failing (cp. 27:1).

48:14 The *right hand* was for the head of the firstborn, and Jacob was deliberately giving that position to the younger son. That pattern was followed for four consecutive generations: Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, Joseph over Reuben, and Ephraim over Manasseh. Many years later, Ephraim became the leading tribe in the northern kingdom, superior to the tribe of Manasseh. The entire northern kingdom of Israel was occasionally called Ephraim (see notes on 2 Chr 28:12; Isa 11:13; Ezek 37:16-19; Hos 6:4; Zech 9:10).

48:15-16 In his blessing on Joseph, Jacob used a threefold invocation to describe the God in whom he trusted: (1) *the God* who was in covenant with his fathers *Abraham* and *Isaac* (28:13; 31:5, 42; 32:9; 46:3); (2) *the God* who had been his *shepherd* (cp. 49:24;

48:16

Gen 22:11; 28:13-15;
31:11

³Heb 11:21
⁴mal'ak (4397)
▪ Exod 3:2

48:19

Gen 28:14; 46:3

48:20

Ruth 4:11

48:21

Gen 28:15; 46:4;
50:24

48:22

Josh 24:32
John 4:5

49:1

Num 24:14

16 the ^kAngel who has redeemed me from all harm—
may he bless these boys.
May they preserve my name
and the names of Abraham and Isaac.
And may their descendants multiply
greatly
throughout the earth.”

17But Joseph was upset when he saw that his father placed his right hand on Ephraim's head. So Joseph lifted it to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. 18“*No, my father,*” he said. “This one is the firstborn. Put your right hand on his head.”

19But his father refused. “I know, my son; I know,” he replied. “Manasseh will also become a great people, but his younger brother will become even greater. And his descendants will become a multitude of nations.”

20So Jacob blessed the boys that day with this blessing: “The people of Israel will use your names when they give a blessing. They will say, ‘May God make you as prosperous as Ephraim and Manasseh.’” In this way, Jacob put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh.

21Then Jacob said to Joseph, “Look, I am about to die, but God will be with you and will take you back to Canaan, the land of your ancestors. 22And beyond what I have given your brothers, I am giving you an extra portion of the land that I took from the Amorites with my sword and bow.”

Jacob Blesses His Sons

49 Then Jacob called together all his sons and said, “Gather around me, and I will tell you what will happen to each of you in the days to come.

Blessing (48:8-20)

Gen 1:22, 28;
9:26-27; 12:2-3;
14:19-20; 24:59-60;
27:1-41; 28:1-4;
32:24-30; 49:1-28
Lev 26:3-13
Num 6:22-27
Deut 7:12-15; 10:8;
28:1-14; 33:1-29
1 Sam 2:20-21
Ps 128:1-6
Matt 5:3-12
Luke 6:27-28
Rom 12:14
Gal 3:13-14
Eph 1:3
Heb 7:6-7
1 Pet 3:9

Jacob adopted Joseph's sons and blessed them (48:3-7), just as his father Isaac had blessed him (27:27-29). Blessing enables, enhances, and enriches life, whereas a curse diminishes it (Lev 26:14-39). Blessing is issued publicly by a benefactor and provides power for prosperity and success. Blessing is essential to covenant relationships in that it guides and motivates the parties to obey the covenant's stipulations (Lev 26:3-13; Deut 28:1-14). Obedience leads to blessing, whereas rebellion brings a curse.

The initial realm of blessing is creation, in which God as Creator is the ultimate granter of blessing for animals (1:22) and humans (1:28; see Ps 104; 128:3-4). Humans also serve as channels of divine blessing. Abraham was called to be a blessing to the nations (12:2-3). The institutions of family (27:27-29), government (1 Kgs 8:14, 44, 52, 66), and religion (14:19; Lev 9:22) are nurtured, commissioned, and purified through blessing. Israel's priests mediated God's blessing to Israel (Num 6:24-26; Deut 10:8).

Three basic characteristics can be observed in OT blessings: (1) They are conveyed from a greater party to a lesser one (32:26; Heb 7:6-7); (2) They are signs of favor that result in well-being and productivity (Deut 28:3-7); and (3) They acknowledge that all power and blessing stems from the Creator. All blessings have their source in God's love (Deut 7:7-8, 12-15).

God's blessings in Genesis are in striking contrast with the pagan religions of antiquity. For pagan religions, fortunes and fertility of flock, family, and fields came about through sympathetic magic in cultic observances at their shrines—profane customs that were designed to induce the deities to act on their behalf so that the cycle of life could be maintained. In Genesis, all of life, fertility, and blessing came by God's decree, for he is the only true and living God.

In the NT, the emphasis of blessing shifts from the material to the spiritual, from the nation to the church, and from the temporal to the eternal (Matt 6:25; Eph 1:3; 1 Pet 3:9). In his death, Jesus bore the consequences of sin's curse (Gal 3:13), established God's kingdom (Matt 3:2; 5:3-20; John 3:3-5), and blessed its citizens with forgiveness of sin (Rom 4:6-25). Now believers are called to bless the world (Luke 6:27-28; Rom 12:14; see also Isa 19:24; Zech 8:13).

Exod 6:6; Ps 23:1; Isa 59:20); and (3) *the Angel who rescued him from all harm*. He prayed the same blessings for Joseph's sons.

48:17-19 *Joseph was upset*: He expected God to act according to convention, but faith recognizes that God's ways are not man's ways, and God's thoughts are not man's thoughts. It took Jacob a lifetime

to learn this lesson, but he did learn it, and here he acted on it.

48:22 *an extra portion of the land*: Or *an extra ridge of land*. The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. Joseph was later buried at Shechem (Josh 24:32) as a sign that he possessed this bequeathed portion (Hebrew *shekem*) of land. Jacob had apparently conquered this area though

the occasion is not mentioned elsewhere.

49:1-28 Jacob, by faith and as God's spokesman, looked forward to Israel's settlement in the land, and beyond that to the glorious future. Here at the end of the patriarchal age, he foretold what would happen to each tribe as he evaluated his sons one by one, just as Noah had done at the end of the primeval era

2 "Come and listen, you sons of Jacob;
listen to Israel, your father.

3 "Reuben, you are my firstborn, my strength,
the child of my vigorous youth.
You are first in rank and first in power.

4 But you are as unruly as a flood,
and you will be first no longer.
For you went to bed with my wife;
you defiled my marriage couch.

5 "Simeon and Levi are two of a kind;
their weapons are instruments of
violence.

6 May I never join in their meetings;
may I never be a party to their plans.
For in their anger they murdered men,
and they crippled oxen just for sport.

7 A curse on their anger, for it is fierce;
a curse on their wrath, for it is cruel.
I will scatter them among the descen-
dants of Jacob;
I will disperse them throughout Israel.

8 "Judah, your brothers will praise you.
You will grasp your enemies by the
neck.
All your relatives will bow before you.

9 Judah, my son, is a young lion
that has finished eating its prey.
Like a lion he crouches and lies down;

like a lioness—who dares to rouse
him?

10 The scepter will not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler's staff from his
descendants,
until the coming of the one to whom it
belongs,
the one whom all nations will honor.

11 He ties his foal to a grapevine,
the colt of his donkey to a choice vine.
He washes his clothes in wine,
his robes in the ^ablood of grapes.

12 His eyes are darker than wine,
and his teeth are whiter than milk.

13 "Zebulun will settle by the seashore
and will be a harbor for ships;
his borders will extend to Sidon.

14 "Issachar is a sturdy donkey,
resting between two saddlepacks.

15 When he sees how good the
countryside is
and how pleasant the land,
he will bend his shoulder to the load
and submit himself to hard labor.

16 "Dan will govern his people,
like any other tribe in Israel.

17 Dan will be a snake beside the road,
a poisonous viper along the path

49:3
Num 26:5
Deut 21:17
Ps 78:51; 105:36

49:4
Gen 35:22
Deut 27:20

49:5
Gen 29:33-34;
34:25-30

49:6
Gen 34:26

49:7
Josh 19:1, 9; 21:1-42

49:8
1 Chr 5:2
Heb 7:14

49:9
Num 24:9
Mic 5:8

49:10
Num 24:17
Ps 2:6-9; 60:7

49:11
Deut 8:7-8
2 Kgs 18:32
^adam (1818)
↳ Lev 3:17

49:13
Deut 33:18-19

49:15
Josh 19:17-23

49:16
Deut 33:22
Judg 18:26-27

49:19
Deut 33:20

49:20
Deut 33:24-25

(cp. 9:25-27). The character and acts of each ancestor affected the lives of his descendants (Exod 20:5-6; 34:6-7; Num 14:18; Jer 32:18).

49:1-2 Jacob's words were deliberately chosen prophetic oracles. The *days to come* refer to the conquest and settlement of the Promised Land, and beyond that to the messianic age. They would all share in the blessing; all the tribes would enter the land with Joshua, but they would not all participate equally.

49:3-4 As firstborn, *Reuben* was entitled to be head of the family, but because he had the ungoverned impulses of boiling or turbulent waters (35:22), Jacob prophesied that Reuben would fail in leadership (see 37:21-22, 29; 42:22, 37-38; cp. Judg 5:15-16; 1 Chr 5:1-2).

49:5-7 *Simeon and Levi* were violent and lawless; instead of serving justice, they indulged their uncontrolled anger and disregarded life (34:24-29). • *I will scatter them*: Simeon's land was largely absorbed into Judah's (Josh 19:1, 9); Levi was given a more honorable future because the Levites became the priestly tribe (see Exod 32:25-29), but they had no region of their own (Josh 21).

49:8-12 The blessing on *Judah* commands the most attention. In this

oracle, Jacob predicted the fierce, *lion*-like dominance of Judah over his enemies and over his brothers, who would *praise* him (cp. 29:35; see, e.g., Ruth 4:11-12; 1 Sam 18:6-7; Pss 2, 45, 72; Isa 11:1-13).

49:10 This verse anticipates the kingship in *Judah* (cp. 17:6, 16; 35:11). Although the birthright blessing went to Joseph, Judah would provide Israel's rulers (see 1 Chr 5:1-2). A long line of kings from Judah would retain *the scepter*, the symbol of rule; the last king would be *the one to whom it belongs*, the promised Messiah (see 2 Sam 7:4-16; Pss 2, 45, 60; Isa 11; Ezek 21:26-27; Zech 9:9; Rev 5:5). • *from his descendants*: Literally *from between his feet*, taking *between his feet* as a poetic euphemism for reproductive organs. • *until the coming of the one to whom it belongs* (Or *until tribute is brought to him and the peoples obey*; traditionally rendered *until Shiloh comes*): These differences arise from ambiguities in the Hebrew text. Rule of Israel *belongs* to Judah's descendant through David's line (2 Sam 7:8-16), and he will eventually rule all nations, as signified by the bringing of *tribute* (see Ps 68:29; 72:8-11; Isa 2:2-4; Eph 4:8-10).

49:11-12 These descriptions envision the abundance of the Messiah's kingdom (see Isa 61:6-7; 65:21-25;

Zech 3:10). When the Messiah comes, there will be paradise-like splendor and abundance on the earth. • *He ties his foal to a grapevine*: Grapevines will be so abundant that they will be used for hitching posts, and *wine* will be as abundant as fresh water (see Amos 9:13-14; Zech 3:10). • The coming one will have *eyes . . . darker than wine and teeth . . . whiter than milk*: He will be vigorous and healthy, as will be the era of his rule. Jesus' miracle of changing water into wine (John 2:1-12), his first sign, was an announcement that the Messiah had come; it was a foretaste of even better things to come.

49:13 The oracle said *Zebulun* would dwell by the sea and be a safe harbor, but in the actual settlement they spread inland (see Josh 19:10-16). The oracle did not give specific borders for the tribes.

49:14-15 Like *a sturdy donkey*, the tribe of *Issachar* would be forced to work for others. Issachar was often subjugated by invading armies. • *saddlepacks*: Or *sheepfolds*, or *hearths*. The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.

49:16-17 *Dan* was called to provide justice (*Dan* means "judge"), but the tribe would choose treachery, like *a snake beside the road* (see Judg 18).

49:21
Deut 33:23

49:22
Deut 33:13-17

49:23
Gen 37:24

49:24
Ps 132:2, 5
Isa 41:10; 49:26
ʾroʾeh (7462)
• Exod 3:1

49:25
Gen 28:13
ʾshadday (7706)
• Exod 6:3

that bites the horse's hooves
so its rider is thrown off.

18 I trust in you for salvation, O LORD!

19 "Gad will be attacked by marauding bands,
but he will attack them when they
retreat.

20 "Asher will dine on rich foods
and produce food fit for kings.

21 "Naphtali is a doe set free
that bears beautiful fawns.

22 "Joseph is the foal of a wild donkey,
the foal of a wild donkey at a spring—
one of the wild donkeys on the ridge.

23 Archers attacked him savagely;
they shot at him and harassed him.

24 But his bow remained taut,
and his arms were strengthened
by the hands of the Mighty One of
Jacob,
by the ^bShepherd, the Rock of Israel.

25 May the God of your father help you;
may the ^cAlmighty bless you

Death (49:29-33)

Gen 2:15-17; 3:19;
6:17; 9:5-6
Exod 21:12-17, 28-
29; 23:7; 31:14-15
Lev 24:16
Deut 32:39
Job 10:18-22;
19:25-27
Ps 90:1-12; 94:17
Prov 14:32
Eccl 12:1-7
Isa 25:6-9; 26:19;
40:6-8
Dan 12:2-3
Mark 12:26-27
Rom 5:12-17
1 Cor 15:20-26,
51-58
Rev 20:4-6, 11-15;
21:3-8

As Jacob lay dying in Egypt, he considered two promises regarding his death: that he would die peacefully (46:4) and that he would join his ancestors (49:29, 33). Humans are mortal, and death is the natural end of earthly life (Ps 90:1-6). Human identity began with the earth's dust being animated by the breath of God (2:7). This passive state returns at death as God withdraws his breath and the human body collapses again into dust (3:19; Job 4:19-21; Isa 40:6-8). Human life depends entirely and continuously on the Creator of life—his breath is a gift that sustains us in life for as long as he grants it (Ps 104:29).

Death entered the human race by sin and brought ruin to it; death comes suddenly, bringing mourning and an apparent end to hopes and dreams. Death is the severest penalty in human justice. In the OT, the death penalty was a punishment for murder (9:6; Exod 21:12) or blasphemy (Lev 24:16; John 10:30-31)—violations that threatened the living community.

In the OT, the opposite of "the land of the living" (Ps 27:13) was *Sheol*, the realm of the dead that was shrouded in darkness and silence (Job 10:21-22; Ps 94:17; Jon 2:6). Yet even in death, believers cannot be separated from God's presence (Ps 17:15; 49:15; Prov 14:32). God is sovereign and rules over death (Deut 32:39).

The OT mentions the fact of resurrection (see Job 19:25-27; Isa 25:6-9; 26:19; Dan 12:2). Eventually, God's redeemed people will triumph over death (1 Cor 15:54-55), the last enemy to be destroyed (1 Cor 15:26). Death results from sin (Rom 5:12), and sinners will be punished in the lake of fire, called the second death (Rev 21:8). Christ's death defeated death, making his resurrection the paradigm for all believers (Col 1:18). He is the Lord of the living and of the dead (Rom 14:9).

In Gen 49:29-33, death is joined with hope by faith. In life, the patriarchs were sojourners; in death, they were heirs of the promise and the occupied land. The patriarchs died without having received the promises (Heb 11:39-40), but that was not the end of the story. God's promises to people are not exhausted in this life, for God makes promises that necessitate a resurrection (see Matt 22:21-32 // Mark 12:26-27). The time of death—when the natural inclination is to mourn—should also be the time of the greatest demonstration of faith, for the recipient of God's promises has a hope beyond the grave.

49:18 At this point, Jacob interjected an expression of hope. He may have been indirectly reminding his sons of their need for dependence on the Lord or expressing his hope in the Messiah's reign, when he and his descendants would be rescued from all trouble, grief, and human treachery.

49:19 Three of the six Hebrew words in this verse are wordplays on the name *Gad* ("attack"). *Gad* will be *attacked* by *marauding bands* (attackers), but he will *attack*. The tribes that settled east of the Jordan River frequently experienced border raids (see Josh 13; 2 Kgs 10:32-33; 1 Chr 5:18-19).

49:20 *Asher* would be fertile and productive, providing *rich foods*. That tribe settled along the rich northern coast of Canaan.

49:21 *Naphtali*, like *a doe*, would be a *free* mountain people (cp. Judg 5:18). The tribe settled in the hilly region northwest of the Sea of Galilee.

49:22-26 This oracle treats *Joseph* more expansively than any of the others, for here the main blessing lay (see 1 Chr 5:1-2). Jacob lavished promises of victory and prosperity on Joseph's two tribes. Ephraimites recorded as victorious in battle include Joshua (Josh 6, 8, 10, 12) and Deborah (Judg 4). Victorious

descendants of Manasseh include Gideon (Judg 6-8) and Jephthah (Judg 11:1-12:7).

49:22 Or *Joseph is a fruitful tree, / a fruitful tree beside a spring. / His branches reach over the wall*. The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.

49:24-26 Five names for God introduce five blessings; God is the giver of all good things.

49:25 The *blessings of the heavens above* meant rain for crops. • The *blessings of the watery depths* were streams and wells of water. • The *blessings of the breasts and womb* were abundant offspring.

with the blessings of the heavens above,
and blessings of the watery depths
below,
and blessings of the breasts and
womb.

26 May the blessings of your father
surpass the blessings of the ancient
mountains,
reaching to the heights of the eternal
hills.

May these blessings rest on the head of
Joseph,
who is a prince among his brothers.

27 “Benjamin is a ravenous wolf,
devouring his enemies in the morning
and dividing his plunder in the evening.”

28 These are the twelve tribes of Israel,
and this is what their father said as he told
his sons good-bye. He ^dblessed each one
with an appropriate message.

Jacob's Death and Burial

29 Then Jacob instructed them, “Soon I will
die and join my ancestors. Bury me with my
father and grandfather in the cave in the
field of Ephron the Hittite. ³⁰This is the cave
in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre in
Canaan, that Abraham bought from Ephron
the Hittite as a permanent burial site.
³¹There Abraham and his wife Sarah are
buried. There Isaac and his wife, Rebekah,
are buried. And there I buried Leah. ³²It is
the plot of land and the cave that my grand-
father Abraham bought from the Hittites.”

³³When Jacob had finished this charge
to his sons, he drew his feet into the bed,
breathed his last, and joined his ancestors
in death.

50 Joseph threw himself on his fa-
ther and wept over him and kissed
him. ²Then Joseph told the physicians who
served him to embalm his father's body;
so Jacob was embalmed. ³The embalming
process took the usual forty days. And the
Egyptians mourned his death for seventy
days.

⁴When the period of mourning was over,
Joseph approached Pharaoh's advisers and
said, “Please do me this favor and speak to
Pharaoh on my behalf. ⁵Tell him that my
father made me swear an oath. He said to
me, ‘Listen, I am about to die. Take my body
back to the land of Canaan, and bury me in
the tomb I prepared for myself.’ So please
allow me to go and bury my father. After his
burial, I will return without delay.”

⁶Pharaoh agreed to Joseph's request. “Go
and bury your father, as he made you prom-
ise,” he said. ⁷So Joseph went up to bury his
father. He was accompanied by all of Pha-
raoh's officials, all the senior members of
Pharaoh's household, and all the senior offi-
cers of Egypt. ⁸Joseph also took his entire
household and his brothers and their house-
holds. But they left their little children and
flocks and herds in the land of Goshen. ⁹A
great number of chariots and charioteers
accompanied Joseph.

¹⁰When they arrived at the threshing
floor of Atad, near the Jordan River, they
held a very great and solemn memorial ser-
vice, with a seven-day period of mourning
for Joseph's father. ¹¹The local residents,
the Canaanites, watched them mourning at
the threshing floor of Atad. Then they re-
named that place (which is near the Jordan)
Abel-mizraim, for they said, “This is a place
of deep mourning for these Egyptians.”

49:26
Deut 33:15-16
49:27
Deut 33:12
49:28
^dbarak (1288)
• Num 6:23
49:29
Gen 23:16-20; 25:8-9
49:31
Gen 23:19; 25:9;
35:29
49:33
Gen 25:8
Acts 7:15
50:1
Gen 46:4
50:2
Gen 50:26
50:3
Num 20:29
Deut 34:8
50:5
Gen 47:29-31
50:8
Gen 45:10
50:9
Gen 41:43

49:26 of the ancient mountains: Or of my ancestors. • Joseph . . . is a prince among his brothers: A reflection of both his character and his position.

49:27 The oracle about Benjamin describes a violent tribe (see Judg 20; 1 Sam 9:1-2; 19:10; 22:17).

49:28 These prophecies are broad in scope, foretelling the future of the different tribes in general terms. Individuals, by faith and obedience, could find great blessing from God regardless of what happened to their clan.

49:29-33 Bury me with my father: This grave in the land of Canaan represented hope for the future (cp. 47:29-30). Others buried at the cave of Machpelah near Hebron were Sarah (23:19), Abraham (25:7-9), Isaac (35:27-29), Rebekah, and Leah.

49:33 Jacob died at the age of 147 (47:28), bringing his life of struggle and sorrow to an end. Jacob had always had an unquenchable desire for God's blessing. He had a deep piety that habitually relied on God despite all else. In the end, he died a man of genuine faith. He learned where real blessings come from, and through his faith would be able to hand these on to his sons (Heb 11:21).

50:1-6 As with his father and grand-father, Jacob's death brought the end of an era.

50:2 Jacob: Hebrew *Israel*; see note on 35:21. His body was *embalmed* for burial in typical Egyptian fashion.

50:3 The Egyptians mourned for Jacob for seventy days, just two days short of the mourning period for a pharaoh.

This showed the great respect that the Egyptians had for Joseph.

50:4-6 Joseph needed Pharaoh's permission to leave his post temporarily to *bury his father in Canaan*. Pharaoh readily granted this freedom to the former slave.

50:7-9 This was Joseph's first return to his homeland in thirty-nine years. The trip was temporary. Centuries later, the family of Israel would permanently leave Egypt, taking Joseph's bones with them for burial in the land of promise (see 50:25).

50:10-13 This journey into Canaan was made in sorrow to bury a man; the next journey into the land would be to live there. • *Abel-mizraim* means “mourning of the Egyptians.”

50:12
Gen 49:29
50:13
Gen 23:16-18
50:15
Gen 42:21-22
50:16
Gen 49:29
50:17
Gen 45:5, 7
Matt 6:14
Luke 6:27
Rom 12:19
‘nasa’ (5375)
• Exod 10:17
‘pasha’ (6588)
• Exod 34:7
50:18
Gen 37:7-10
50:19
Gen 30:2
50:20
Gen 37:26-27
50:21
Gen 45:11
50:24
Gen 13:15; 28:13
50:25
Exod 13:19
Josh 24:32
Heb 11:22
50:26
Exod 1:6
‘aron’ (0727)
• Exod 25:22

¹²So Jacob’s sons did as he had commanded them. ¹³They carried his body to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre. This is the cave that Abraham had bought as a permanent burial site from Ephron the Hittite.

Joseph Reassures His Brothers

¹⁴After burying Jacob, Joseph returned to Egypt with his brothers and all who had accompanied him to his father’s burial. ¹⁵But now that their father was dead, Joseph’s brothers became fearful. “Now Joseph will show his anger and pay us back for all the wrong we did to him,” they said.

¹⁶So they sent this message to Joseph: “Before your father died, he instructed us ¹⁷to say to you: ‘Please forgive your brothers for the great wrong they did to you—for their sin in treating you so cruelly.’ So we, the servants of the God of your father, beg you to forgive our sin.” When Joseph received the message, he broke down and wept. ¹⁸Then his brothers came and threw themselves down before Joseph. “Look, we are your slaves!” they said.

¹⁹But Joseph replied, “Don’t be afraid of me. Am I God, that I can punish you? ²⁰You

intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people. ²¹No, don’t be afraid. I will continue to take care of you and your children.” So he reassured them by speaking kindly to them.

The Death of Joseph

²²So Joseph and his brothers and their families continued to live in Egypt. Joseph lived to the age of 110. ²³He lived to see three generations of descendants of his son Ephraim, and he lived to see the birth of the children of Manasseh’s son Makir, whom he claimed as his own.

²⁴“Soon I will die,” Joseph told his brothers, “but God will surely come to help you and lead you out of this land of Egypt. He will bring you back to the land he solemnly promised to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.”

²⁵Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath, and he said, “When God comes to help you and lead you back, you must take my bones with you.” ²⁶So Joseph died at the age of 110. The Egyptians embalmed him, and his body was placed in a coffin in Egypt.

50:15-18 The *brothers* pleaded for Joseph’s forgiveness, referring to themselves as Joseph’s *slaves* (cp. 37:7; 44:16, 33). The brothers were afraid that Joseph’s earlier reconciliation with them had been motivated only by his desire to see his father again. With neither Jacob nor Pharaoh to restrain him, they feared that he might now take revenge on them. But *Joseph . . . wept* because they still feared reprisal.
50:19-21 Joseph reassured his brothers that God planned to fulfill the promised blessing (cp. 45:5, 7-9), and he promised kindness and provision (cp. 45:11).
50:22-23 Joseph lived to see his great-grandchildren by Ephraim, and his great-grandchildren by Manasseh—

a sign of God’s blessing (see Ps 128:6; Prov 17:6; Isa 53:10).
50:23 *whom he claimed as his own* (literally *who were born on Joseph’s knees*): Placing them on his knees at their birth was a symbolic act signifying that they came from him and belonged to him (cp. Job 3:12).
50:24-25 *God will surely come to help you* (literally *visit you*): These words of Joseph, given twice, summarize the hope expressed throughout both the OT and NT. God’s visitation in the person of the Messiah, the offspring of Abraham, would bring the curse to an end and establish the long-awaited blessing of God in a new creation. The company of the faithful would wait in expectation

for that to happen. • Like his father before him, Joseph made his brothers promise that his bones would be taken out of Egypt when God would come to take them (*to help you and lead you . . . back*) to Canaan (see Exod 13:19; Josh 24:32; Heb 11:22).
50:26 Joseph’s death signified the end of his generation (see notes on 25:7-8; 35:1-29; 35:27-29) and of the patriarchal age. From this point forward, God dealt with Israel as a nation. • Joseph’s body was kept in Egypt as a pledge of hope for slaves awaiting the Promised Land (see Exod 13:19; Heb 11:39-40). He was eventually buried in Shechem (see Josh 24:32), where Jacob had originally sent him (37:13).

THE BOOK OF PSALMS

The Lord Jesus and the apostles loved the book of Psalms and quoted from it; beyond that, they lived out of it. These ancient prayers and praises of Israel are also God's inspired word. The psalms provide a bridge to cross between the Old and New Testaments, and the themes addressed in the psalms find further development in the NT. Jesus connects with the dynasty of David in its mission, its disappointments, and its failures. Where David's dynasty has failed, Jesus gives hope. His sinlessness, his identification with the suffering of the members of David's dynasty, his perfect obedience, and his exaltation open up new perspectives on the many questions raised in the Psalter. Yet we are still living by faith; the hope of the book of Psalms, that God's people will completely fulfill his purposes and that all nations will submit to the Messiah, still remains for the future (see 1 Cor 15:25-27).

BACKGROUND

The psalms, like all Scripture, are inspired and given by God (2 Tim 3:16). And yet, each psalm originated with a human author as a prayer or praise to the Lord. The psalms are diverse, composed as the responses of God's people to him. The psalms include laments, psalms of praise, wisdom, thanksgiving, reflections on God's mighty acts, celebrations of God's revelation, and worship.

The book of Psalms reflects a long process of collection. For a thousand years, poets wrote these poems while people recited and collected them. The Temple liturgy encouraged both the collection and the writing of psalms. Gradually editors incorporated smaller collections into larger collections, shaping five collections into the one book of Psalms.

SUMMARY

The first two psalms serve as an introduction to the entire Psalter (the book of Psalms). Psalm 1 introduces the Lord's instruction in wisdom, while Ps 2 introduces God's rule over a rebellious, sinful world. In Ps 1, the person of God's choice is godly and wise, delights in God, lives by divine instruction, and is not influenced by evildoers. Psalm 2 speaks of the rebellion of the nations and of the wicked, the judgment of rebellious nations, and the protection of the godly.

Reading Ps 1 in the context of the entire Psalter raises three questions: (1) Is there forgiveness for sins? (2) Why do the godly suffer? and (3) Why do the wicked prosper? Reading Ps 2 in the context of the Psalter raises two similar questions: (1) Why do the nations prosper? and (2) Why were the

kings of David's line not victorious? The psalmists wrestle with these questions and offer different perspectives. Some of the poets quietly accept their problems, while others wrestle with God, question him, or become exasperated. New questions and issues develop out of their dialogues with God.

THE COMPOSITION OF THE PSALMS

The process of editing the Psalter into one book took place over time and was completed following the exile to Babylon. There are several markers of editorial activity:

1. The editors placed Pss 1 and 2 as an introduction to the whole book of Psalms. Both psalms give an idealized portrayal: Psalm 1 is a portrayal of the ideal godly person who lives by God's instruction. Psalm 2 portrays the Messiah, the ideal king of Israel. The rest of the Psalter develops and deepens these portrayals, while at the same

OUTLINE

Pss 1–41
Book One

Pss 42–72
Book Two

Pss 73–89
Book Three

Pss 90–106
Book Four

Pss 107–150
Book Five

time expressing how neither the people of God nor their king were able to fulfill God's ideals and bring about the happiness and peace of God's kingdom. The Psalter therefore testifies to Jesus as the ideal godly man and king of Israel, the Messiah who alone has pleased God and by whom alone redemption, happiness, and peace are secure.

2. Individual psalms were collected in units. The editors arranged these smaller groupings of psalms into five larger collections: Book One (Pss 1–41, with a doxology and double Amen in 41:13), Book Two (Pss 42–72, with a doxology and double Amen in 72:19), Book Three (Pss 73–89, with a doxology and double Amen in 89:52), Book Four (Pss 90–106, with a doxology and Amen in 106:48), and Book Five (Pss 107–150, without a doxology).

3. Books One (Pss 1–41) and Two (Pss 42–72) form the first stage of the collection. The shift from David (Pss 3–32, 34–41) in Book One to collections of psalms in Book Two (the sons of Korah, Pss 42–49; Asaph, Ps 50; David, Pss 51–65, 68–70; Solomon, Ps 72) reveals a thematic shift from David as the sole model and teacher to other perspectives opened by these psalms. At the end of Book Two, the editor comments, "This ends the prayers of David son of Jesse" (72:20). This comment remained in place even when Books Three, Four, and Five (with additional psalms of David) were added to the collection.

4. The addition of Book Three (Pss 73–89) marks the second stage. Book Three shares with Book Two its preference of the name *Elohim* for God (Pss 42–83) and its diversity of collections (Asaph, Pss 73–83; sons of Korah, Pss 84–85, 87–88; David, Ps 86). Psalm 73 breaks the spell cast by the magnificent vision of the messianic kingdom in Ps 72, as it questions God's justice and power. This issue comes to a head again in Ps 89, the last psalm of Book Three.

TIMELINE

2091 / 1915 BC
Abraham moves to Canaan

1876 / 1661 BC
Jacob moves to Egypt

1446 / 1270 BC
*Israel leaves Egypt (the Exodus)
The covenant at Sinai*

1406 / 1230 BC
Israel enters Canaan

1011–971 BC
David as king of Israel

971–931 BC
Solomon as king of Israel

931 BC
The kingdom is divided

722 BC
End of the Northern Kingdom of Israel

586 BC
End of the Southern Kingdom of Judah

538 BC
Cyrus's edict of return, exiles return to Judea

Oct 537 BC
Temple rebuilding begins

515 BC
Temple rebuilding is completed

250~200 BC
The OT is translated into Greek

5. The psalms of Book Four (Pss 90–106) wrestle with questions raised at the time of the Exile, when it seemed that God’s covenant with David had been dissolved (see Ps 89). Several psalms encourage individual growth in character and godliness (Pss 91–92) in response to the crisis. Most psalms in this collection present God as the true and faithful king whose kingdom extends to every part of creation (Pss 93–100). He still loves the people, the flock of his pasture (Ps 100), but they have to listen to him (Pss 95, 100). He is the source of forgiveness, and his compassion assures the exilic community that the Lord still cares for his people. The review of redemptive history from creation to the Exile (Pss 104–106) explains both God’s wisdom and Israel’s folly as a framework for understanding the Exile. The benediction of Ps 106:48 is included in 1 Chr 16:36 and might indicate that Book Four was completed in the postexilic era (when Chronicles was compiled).

6. Book Five (Pss 107–150) was then added to the Psalter. It includes a number of smaller collections: the *Egyptian Hallel* (Pss 111–118, including three hallelujah hymns, Pss 111–113, and the *Great Hallel*, Pss 114–118), the *Torah psalm* (Ps 119), the *Songs of Ascents* (Pss 120–134), eight psalms of David (Pss 138–145), and five concluding hallelujah hymns (Pss 146–150). Book Five sets out the thematic progression of affliction, lament, God’s rescue, and praise. The opening psalm (Ps 107) begins this pattern, and its final verse (107:43) points to the importance of wisdom in discerning God’s ways. Psalm 119, the longest psalm, celebrates the wisdom of God and the word of God. The Lord’s historic care for Israel in the wilderness (Pss 114–118, 135–136) prepares exilic and postexilic Israel to read David’s final prayers (Pss 138–145) in a new way: David looks forward to the full coming of God’s kingdom (Ps 145). The hallelujah psalms affirm the truthfulness of this hope (Ps 146–150).

7. Additions appear to have been made to already-existing psalms. This may explain the prayer for the restoration of Zion (51:18-19) and for God’s blessing on Jerusalem (69:34-36). Changes in the circumstances of God’s people may have occasioned the addition of new lines in each case.

8. The available manuscripts reveal some flexibility in the organization and titles of the psalms. Both the Hebrew and Greek editions of the Psalter contain 150 psalms, but with differing divisions and numbering as well as differences regarding which psalms have titles. The Greek text combines both Pss 9–10 and Pss 114–115 into one psalm each, but it splits both Pss 116 and 147 into two. Differences between the Hebrew and English numbering are indicated in the notes.

By the time of Jesus Christ, the Psalter was well known as the book of Psalms (Luke 20:42; Acts 1:20). It was part of the third section of the Hebrew canon, called the Writings (Luke 24:44; see Old Testament Introduction, “The Canon of the Old Testament,” p. 4).

AUTHORS

Many of the psalms are associated with David, but not all of them; less than half (seventy-three of them) are connected with him. Others are connected with Asaph (Pss 50, 73–83), the sons of Korah (Pss 42–49, 84–85, 87), Solomon (Pss 72, 127), Heman (Ps 88), Ethan (Ps 89), and Moses (Ps 90).

The Psalter, taken on its own terms, is not so much a liturgical library, storing up standard literature for cultic requirements, as a hospitable house, well lived in, where most things can be found and borrowed after some searching, and whose first occupants have left on it everywhere the imprint of their experiences and the stamp of their characters.

Of the 116 psalms with a title (see “Psalm Titles,” below), most identify a person. The person named may be the author, but not necessarily. The Hebrew preposition *le* before the name (often translated “of”) can mean “for,” “dedicated to,” “concerning,” “to,” or “by.” So, *ledawid* (often translated “of David”) could be interpreted as “for David,” “dedicated to David,” “concerning David,” or “by David.” While many psalms “of David” may have been written by him, there are several reasons for caution. The titles occasionally have two names, such as David and Jeduthun or Asaph (Pss 39, 62, 77). It is possible that the other individual was the actual author of the psalm. Furthermore, the psalms whose titles connect them with an episode of David’s life (Pss 3, 7, 18, 34, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 63, 142) provide little or no specific connection with those episodes. For example, the title in Ps 51 connects the psalm with David’s sin and Nathan’s rebuke. The psalm speaks of sin, forgiveness, and a broken spirit, but any mention of the specifics of the sin is notoriously absent. In addition, several psalms “of David” seem to assume the existence of the Temple, which was not constructed until after David’s death (see Ps 5:7; 122:TITLE; 138:2). Similarly, the title of Ps 30 connects David with the dedication of the Temple, and Ps 69 does not seem to fit with what is known of David’s life. Finally, some textual traditions vary in the mention of David in the heading (e.g., Pss 122, 124). It is possible, therefore, that *ledawid* should be understood in many cases as meaning “for/dedicated to/concerning David” rather than “by David.” Such psalms evoke his persona as the chief representative of the dynasty of David without implying that he himself was the author of the psalm. Still, there are many psalms that could have been authored by David himself.

LITERARY ISSUES

The title *Psalms* for the collection comes from the Greek word *psalmos* (“song”; see Luke 24:44; 20:42), which translates the Hebrew *mizmor*, a word frequently found in the titles of individual psalms (e.g., see Ps 3:TITLE, “psalm”). The word *mizmor* is related to a verb meaning “to play a stringed instrument.” The psalms were originally accompanied by instruments and were part of the oral tradition of Israel before they were collected into groupings. The Hebrew title of the Psalter is *tehillim* (“praises”), a word that is related to the expression *hallelujah* (“praise Yahweh”).

Psalms Titles. The psalm titles, or short superscriptions accompanying most of the psalms, give information such as the author (see above), the type of psalm (e.g., song, prayer), a musical notation, a notation on the use of the psalm, a historical context, or a dedication. Much of the information is not well understood. As a result, many scholars do not place much emphasis on the psalm titles in the interpretation of the psalms.

In the Hebrew text, the psalm titles are typically numbered as verse 1. As a result, the verse numbers through the entire psalm differ from the numbers in the NLT and most English translations.

Interlude (Hebrew Selah). This word is found seventy-one times in the book of Psalms. The meaning of the word is uncertain, though it is probably a musical or literary term. In the NLT it is consistently rendered *Interlude*.

The theological richness of the psalms emerges out of a profound knowledge of God rooted in relationship.

PETER C. CRAIGIE
Psalms 1–50, p. 40

Groupings of the Psalms. The psalms can be grouped in a number of ways:

- By the names they use for God: *Yahweh* (“the LORD,” Pss 1–41) and *Elohim* (“God,” Pss 42–72).
- By the names in the titles: David (Pss 3–32, 34–41, etc.), the sons of Korah (Pss 42–49, 84–85, 87–88), and Asaph (Pss 50, 73–83).
- By genre (see below).
- Many of the psalms are in collections within the Psalter: e.g., the Songs of Ascents (Pss 120–134). Other collections were recognized in Jewish tradition, such as the Egyptian Hallel (Pss 113–118) and the hallelujah hymns (Pss 146–150).
- By thematic connections, such as God’s kingship (Pss 93–100), or the storyline from creation to the Exile (Pss 104–106).

Genres of the Psalms. The psalm titles often designate the genre of a psalm. The most frequent genre designation in a psalm’s title is “psalm” (Hebrew *mizmor*), a song originally accompanied by stringed instruments. Less frequent are the words *maskil* (“psalm, a chant”: Pss 32, 42, 44–45, 52–55, 74, 88, 89), *miktam* (“psalm, a chant”: Pss 16, 56–60), *shir* (“song”: Pss 45, 120–135), *shiggayon* (“psalm,” a generic or musical term: Ps 7), *tepillah* (“prayer”: Pss 17, 86, 90) and *tehillah* (“psalm of praise”: Ps 145), *higgayon* (“meditation,” meaning unknown: Ps 9:16), and *todah* (psalm of thanksgiving: Ps 100).

In addition to the genre identifications that are found in the Hebrew text, the psalms may also be divided into three main categories:

1. Wisdom or instructional psalms (Pss 1, 15, 24, 33, 34, 37, 73, 90, 107);
2. Psalms of lament (most psalms in books I–III), which can be subdivided into individual laments and community laments;
3. Hymns of praise or thanksgiving (Pss 8, 19, 29, 65, 67, 114), which can similarly be divided into individual and community hymns.

The psalms of praise include several subgenres, including “royal” psalms about the king (Pss 2, 45, 72, 89, 110); psalms ascribing kingship to the Lord (Pss 93, 95–99); hymns about creation (Pss 19, 29, 104); and hymns about Zion (Pss 46, 48, 84, 87).

Another way of reading the psalms is based on the movement in many psalms from instruction to a problem and from a problem to a renewal in commitment and character. The Psalter as a collection of five books is largely instructional in nature. It is “instruction” (*torah*, “law,” 1:2) and has the purpose of teaching God’s people how to live.

THE PSALMS IN ISRAEL’S WORSHIP

The collection of 150 lyric poems known as the Psalter contains much information on music-making in ancient Israel. The majority of psalms are songs of praise, thanksgiving, prayer, and repentance. There are also historic odes that relate great national events (for example, Ps 30, “a song at the dedication of the Temple,” and Ps 137, which portrays the sufferings of the Jews in captivity). Such psalms played a role in the life of the community; however, the exact nature of that role is uncertain.

MEANING AND MESSAGE

The psalms provide windows into the souls of the ancient saints who wrote them. Their theological reflections are not easy or simple-

The Psalter . . . promises Christ’s death and resurrection so clearly—and pictures his kingdom and the condition and nature of all Christendom—that it might well be called a little Bible. In it is comprehended most beautifully and briefly everything that is in the entire Bible.

MARTIN LUTHER
Word and Sacrament

minded, but the psalmists' faith, when tried, is purified. The psalms model depth of character, wisdom, honesty, and authenticity. They prepare God's people for the coming of Jesus Christ as the perfect Adam (human) and as the king, the descendant of David who has absolute integrity.

The prayers in the Psalter are more than models to be imitated: They are God's instructions for righteous living, part of his *torah* ("instruction"; see Pss 1, 19, 119). God teaches who he is, what he has done, and what he expects from his people. The psalms are God-centered, instructing God's people to be like God, to receive his correction, and to discern error in themselves. Through the psalms, God encourages his people individually and as communities to worship him vibrantly. The psalms and their musical accompaniments bear witness about God to the world.

The psalmists reflected on the transitory nature of life, on suffering, and on the many kinds of adversity that human beings experience. As the psalmists faced alienation and pain, they longed for God's presence, provision, and protection (e.g., Ps 23), and for a lasting glory. Even the psalms connected with David often reveal a humble, rather than a victorious, David—a humiliated David more often than a glorious and royal David. The psalmists lived in a world full of alienation, and they longed for redemption. They experienced shame, and they trusted in the Lord to vindicate them with his glorious presence.

The Psalter illustrates the failures of Israel and of David's dynasty. The best of the godly Israelites and of the Davidic kings were unable to bring in the condition of happiness and peace that Pss 1 and 2 speak of (see also Ps 72). The psalms are God's exhortation to each person to cultivate wisdom, to trust in him, to live by grace, and to have hope in the coming one who would bring God's blessings to a needy world.

Jesus and the apostles understood Jesus' life and ministry in light of the psalms (see Matt 13:34-35; 21:16, 42; 23:39; John 2:17; 15:25; 19:24, 28, 36; Acts 2:22-35; 4:11; 13:32-38; Rom 15:3; 1 Cor 15:25-27; Eph 4:7-10; 1 Pet 2:7). Jesus entered the world of humans and lived out the patterns found in the psalms, including humiliation, suffering, death, vindication, and glory. He is the only human being who has completely pleased God (Ps 1). He is the Messiah and King (Ps 2) who has become our means of redemption, happiness, and peace.

FURTHER READING

- LESLIE C. ALLEN
Psalms 101–150 (2002)
- JAMES MONTGOMERY BOICE
Psalms (1994)
- PETER C. CRAIGIE
Psalms 1–50 (1983)
- MARK D. FUTATO
Psalms in Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, vol. 7 (2009)
- DEREK KIDNER
Psalms 1–72, 73–150 (1973, 1975)
- MARVIN E. TATE
Psalms 51–100 (1990)
- GERALD H. WILSON
Psalms, Volume 1 (2002)

1. BOOK ONE (PSS 1–41)

PSALM 1

- ¹ Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers.
- ² But they delight in the law of the LORD, meditating on it day and night.
- ³ They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do.
- ⁴ But not the wicked! They are like worthless chaff, scattered by the wind.

⁵ They will be condemned at the time of judgment.
Sinners will have no place among the godly.

⁶ For the LORD watches over the path of the godly, but the path of the wicked leads to destruction.

PSALM 2

- ¹ Why are the nations so angry? Why do they waste their time with futile plans?
- ² The kings of the earth prepare for battle; the rulers plot together against the LORD and against his anointed one.

1:1
Ps 26:5
Prov 4:14
^aashrey (0835)
• Ps 32:1

1:2
Ps 25:5; 119:13-16
^btorah (8451)
• Ps 19:7
^chagah (1897)
• Ps 35:28

1:3
Jer 17:7-8

1:4
Ps 35:4-5
Isa 17:12-13

1:5
Ps 5:5; 9:7-8; 89:5, 7

1:6
Ps 9:5-6; 11:6
2 Tim 2:19

2:1
Ps 21:11; 46:6
Acts 4:25-26

Book One (Pss 1–41) Book One reveals God's purpose in the world, God's order in creation, and the significance of wisdom. It issues an invitation to dwell on the mountain of the Lord and gives insights into the psalmist's life and struggles.

Pss 1–8 Psalms 1 and 8 form an *inclusio* (set of literary bookends) that describes what God expects of the ideal person (cp. Pss 19, 33, 104, 145), contrasts the godly person with the wicked, and extols the godly person's dignity. Jesus the Messiah (Ps 2)—the sovereign Lord (Heb 2:6-8; see 1 Cor 15:27) and perfection of humanity—embodies this ideal.

Pss 1–2 The first two psalms are an introduction to the entire Psalter. Psalm 1 introduces the Lord's instruction in wisdom, while Ps 2 introduces God's rule over a rebellious, sinful world. Together, these psalms invite people to leave the way of folly that leads to destruction and to enter the way of God that leads to wisdom and salvation. The NT affirms that God will rule the nations through Jesus Christ, his appointed agent (Heb 1:5; Rev 12:5; 19:15).

Ps 1 This wisdom psalm sets the tone for the whole Psalter. The psalmist strongly contrasts the happiness of the godly with the condemnation of the wicked; in the end, the way of wisdom will triumph. This idealization of the godly person (as in Ps 8) highlights the Lord's expectations of his people and especially of the coming Messiah (Ps 2). The people of Israel did not live up to this ideal, and neither did the kings of David's dynasty. Not even the best of them could bring in the triumph of righteousness described in Pss 1, 2, and 72. In the NT, the apostles' use of the Psalter to describe the life and ministry of Jesus the Messiah confirms that Jesus alone fulfills the ideal of the godly person presented in the psalms. Only Jesus could please God and secure redemption, happiness, and peace. Psalm

1 introduces the hopeful anticipation of the final hallelujah (Ps 150), when the Lord will remove all evil from his creation and prosper his children.

1:1-2 The Lord gives true happiness to all who reject evil and delight in him.

1:1 Oh, the joys: This Hebrew term (*ashrey*) is used twenty-six times in Psalms. Some translations render it as "blessed," but a different term (*barak*) is used in contexts of blessing (5:12; 45:2; 107:38). • The godly do not permit themselves to live under the influence of sinners. Those who do not fear the Lord are *wicked* (36:1); they are the enemies of those who love God, those who do right, and the poor and oppressed (see 10:2-13; 37:14). The wicked might appear pious (50:16) and sometimes enjoy temporary prosperity (37:35), but sorrow (32:10) and destruction (1:4-6) await them when their deeds catch up with them (9:16). • Those who go astray (25:8) in rebellion against the Lord (78:17) are *sinners*; they commit heinous crimes such as adultery and murder (cp. Ps 51). • *join in with:* This expression (literally *sit in the seat of*) depicts a life in bondage to sin (cp. 1:2; 26:3-7; Deut 6:7). • *Mockers* hate the Lord, scorn his wisdom, and insult anyone who attempts to correct them (Prov 9:7-8). They seek only the "wisdom" that justifies their actions. These brash people have little regard for the Lord, his plans, or his children (see 86:14; 119:51, 69, 78, 85, 122). These three terms (wicked, sinners, mockers) apply to all kinds of ungodly people.

1:2 The law (Hebrew *torah*) of the LORD is the full revelation of God's instructions (see note on Deut 4:44). • *Meditation* is a process of inner reflection that can be positive (1:2; 63:6; 77:12; 143:5) or negative (see 2:1; 38:12). The Lord's word is the object of godly meditation (119:48). • *Day and night* includes all times, whether one is walking, standing, sitting, or sleeping (see Deut 6:7).

1:3-5 The future belongs to the godly.

1:3 Well-watered *trees* endure and bear abundant fruit (cp. Jer 17:8).

1:4 The coming time of judgment (1:5) will carry off *the wicked* and their deeds (35:5; 83:13; Isa 17:13; see note on Jer 13:24).

1:5 The wicked cannot abide the scrutiny of the Lord's *judgment*; they are already *condemned* (see 5:5; 7:6; 101:7).

1:6 The Lord's care for the righteous and the demise of the wicked both demonstrate the Lord's principle of retribution (see Gal 6:7-10). The brief and futile lives of the wicked will end, whereas the Lord and his saints will triumph (see 9:5, 6, 18; 10:16; 37:20; 73:27; 92:9; cp. 142:4; Isa 57:1). • The godly (see 5:12; 14:5) are joyful (1:1) because *the LORD* protects and cares for them, hears them when they cry out for justice, and secures their future (see 121:3-4). • A person's *path* is his life and character.

Ps 2 This royal psalm pertains to the Lord's appointment of a king descended from David. It celebrates the mission of all the kings in David's line, and it introduces the hope of an ideal ruler who will accomplish the Lord's goal of bringing all nations into submission (2:11) or to destruction (2:9). The NT identifies Jesus as this descendant (see Acts 13:33; 1 Cor 15:25-27; Heb 1:5; 5:5; Rev 19:15).

2:1-3 Their futile paths lead to death (1:4, 6), but fallen human beings unite in opposing the true God and his Messiah.

2:1 plans: The Hebrew verb rendered "meditate" in 1:2 here suggests an attitude of opposing the Lord in speech (Isa 59:13) or in thought (38:12; Prov 24:2).

2:2 The kings hate the Lord's established order in the world, so they desire to be independent of him (see 36:4). They scheme about dominating the Lord's people (31:13; see 83:1-4). Their goal is to subvert the Lord's rule in the world by overthrowing *his anointed*

2:2
Ps 48:4-6; 74:18, 23
^amelek (4428)
• Ps 5:2

2:5
Ps 76:7; 78:49-50

2:6
Ps 3:4; 45:6; 48:1-2

2:7
^aActs 13:32-33
^bHeb 1:5-6; 5:5

2:9
Rev 2:26-27; 12:5;
19:15

3 "Let us break their chains," they cry,
"and free ourselves from slavery to
God."

4 But the one who rules in heaven laughs.
The Lord scoffs at them.

5 Then in anger he rebukes them,
terrifying them with his fierce fury.

6 For the Lord declares, "I have placed my
chosen king on the throne
in Jerusalem, on my holy mountain."

7 The king proclaims the LORD's decree:
"The LORD said to me, 'You are my son.
Today I have become your Father.

8 Only ask, and I will give you the nations
as your inheritance,
the whole earth as your possession.

9 You will break them with an iron rod
and smash them like clay pots.' "

10 Now then, you kings, act wisely!
Be warned, you rulers of the earth!

Royal Psalms (Ps 2)

Pss 18, 20, 21, 45,
61, 72, 89, 101, 110,
132, 144

The *royal psalms* all have some reference to the king, the nature of his rule, and his relationship to God. Psalms 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 61, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132, and 144 are usually regarded as the royal psalms. Belief in God's kingship is the foundation of the royal psalms (Ps 2). Each king in David's dynasty served as messianic agent—i.e., he represented God's kingship. As God's representative, the Davidic king was expected to uphold the qualities of justice, righteousness, faithfulness, and peace (72:1-3).

The royal psalms express the hope and aspirations of the dynasty of David. But with its corruption and failure, the dynasty came to an apparent end (89:38-45). Yet hope remained alive for the future of a king descended from David who would serve as God's agent. The royal psalms maintain this hope for a king whose perfect obedience would guarantee the continuity of David's dynasty and the perpetual benefits of his reign. In this sense, the royal psalms may also be called *messianic psalms* in that they express hope in messianic agent, an ideal king descended from David. Jesus stated that the psalmists wrote of him (Luke 24:44), and other NT writers affirmed the identification of Jesus as the Messiah. Some of the most significant links are as follows:

- Psalm 2 is associated with Israel's king, the descendant of David. Nevertheless, it speaks of a universal vindication and rule that far transcends even David's or Solomon's reigns (see Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5; 5:5).
- Psalm 45 is a marriage psalm for one of the Davidic kings, possibly Solomon, yet it speaks of a permanent rule (45:6).
- Psalm 110 is the most frequently quoted messianic psalm (see Matt 22:43-45; Acts 2:34-35; Heb 1:13; 5:5-10; 6:20; 7:21). It speaks of the privileges, universal victory, and continuing priesthood of David and his successors. Such language would be hyperbole, and possibly misleading, except for its fulfillment in Jesus. In contrast to the angels who are privileged to stand in God's presence (Luke 1:19), Christ the Son sits in the place of power and authority over all things at God's right hand (Heb 1:13).

one (or his messiah); the Lord chose the kings of David's dynasty to establish his kingdom throughout the earth. The NT confirms that Jesus, the appointed and anointed Son of God (Acts 4:26; 13:33; Heb 1:5; 5:5), fulfills the role in which these earlier kings failed.

2:3 break their chains: These kings believe that acknowledging the true God and his chosen ruler will result in their enslavement (Isa 28:22; 52:2; cp. Lam 3:7; Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 7:22; Titus 1:1).

2:4-6 The Lord finds the human threat insignificant. He provided a solution long before their rebellion. He will end their agitation through the appointment of a human agent, a descendant of David's line who will rule the nations.

2:4 rules in heaven: The Lord's place in the universe is so certain that he *scoffs*

at humans who boast that they can rebel against his power and authority (see 37:13; 59:8).

2:6 my chosen king: The Lord establishes his anointed ruler. • *in Jerusalem:* Hebrew *on Zion*. See "Mount Zion, the City of God" at Ps 48, p. 947.

2:7-9 The Lord adopted *the king of David's* dynasty to conquer rebellious *nations* by force (see 89:26-27).

2:7 my son (or Son). Today I have become your Father (or Today I reveal you as my son): People in the ancient Near East commonly accepted a father-son relationship between gods and kings. In Israel, the Lord adopted kings as his sons. God set David apart as his most excellent and exalted son (89:27). All descendants of David were the Lord's representatives or agents. As an eternal

member of the Godhead (John 1:1) and a descendant of David (Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5; 5:5), Jesus is the true Son of God.

2:8 In an example of the suzerain-vassal relationship between the Lord and Israel's king (see Deuteronomy Introduction, "Literary Form," p. 314), the Lord invites the king to *ask* for favors (see 21:2, 4). • All nations will be subject to David's descendant, the Messiah.

2:9 The Lord gives his anointed ruler the power to conquer the nations as his inheritance (Isa 11:4; Rev 2:27; 12:5; 19:15), breaking their rebellion, resistance, and independence. • *break:* Greek version reads *rule*. Cp. Rev 2:27.

2:10 It pleases the Lord when his people submit to him and seek his protection. The wise accept the Lord's rebuke and desire to repent.

11 Serve the LORD with reverent fear,
and rejoice with trembling.
12 Submit to God's royal son, or he will
become angry,
and you will be destroyed in the midst
of all your activities—
for his anger flares up in an instant.
But what joy for all who take refuge
in him!

PSALM 3

*A psalm of David, regarding the time
David fled from his son Absalom.*

1 O LORD, I have so many enemies;
so many are against me.
2 So many are saying,
"God will never rescue him!"
Interlude
3 But you, O LORD, are a "shield
around me;
you are my glory, the one who holds
my head high.
4 I cried out to the LORD,
and he answered me from his holy
mountain."
Interlude
5 I lay down and slept,
yet I woke up in safety,
for the LORD was watching over me.
6 I am not afraid of ten thousand
enemies
who surround me on every side.

7 Arise, O LORD!
Rescue me, my God!
Slap all my enemies in the face!
Shatter the teeth of the wicked!
8 Victory comes from you, O LORD.
May you bless your people.

Interlude

PSALM 4

*For the choir director: A psalm of David, to
be accompanied by stringed instruments.*

1 Answer me when I call to you,
O God who declares me innocent.
Free me from my troubles.
Have mercy on me and hear my prayer.
2 How long will you people ruin my
reputation?
How long will you make groundless
accusations?
How long will you continue your lies?
Interlude
3 You can be sure of this:
The LORD set apart the godly for
himself.
The LORD will answer when I call to
him.
4 Don't sin by letting anger control you.
Think about it overnight and remain
silent.
Interlude
5 Offer sacrifices in the right spirit,
and trust the LORD.

2:11
Ps 5:7; 119:119-120
Heb 12:28
2:12
Ps 5:11; 34:8; 34:22
Rev 6:15-17
3:1
Ps 69:4
3:2
Ps 22:7-8; 71:11
3:3
Ps 27:5-6; 28:7; 62:7
"magen" (4043)
Ps 7:10
3:4
Ps 4:3; 34:4; 99:9
3:5
Lev 26:6
Prov 3:24-26
3:6
Ps 27:3; 118:10-13
3:8
Isa 43:11
4:1
Ps 3:4; 17:6; 18:6,
18-19; 25:16
4:2
Ps 31:6, 18; 69:7-10,
19-20
"kabod" (3519)
Ps 24:7
4:3
Ps 6:8-9; 17:6; 31:23;
50:5; 135:4
4:4
Ps 77:6
Eph 4:26
4:5
Ps 37:3, 5; 50:14
"szabakh" (2076)
Ps 51:17
4:6
Num 6:25-26
Job 7:7; 9:25
Ps 80:3, 7, 19

2:11-12 *rejoice*: Rulers must welcome the Son as their true and only King. • *Submit to God's royal son* (or *Submit to God's royal Son, or kiss the son*; the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain): Kissing was an expression of submission (Hos 13:2). • The Lord gives joy to all who fear him (1:1-2) and trust him (18:30; 34:22; 119:1-3).

Ps 3-7 This group of psalms moves readers from the orderly world of Ps 1-2 to a disoriented one. The Lord's anointed cries out while facing enemies, ferocious opposition, evil schemes, and the Lord's apparent distance.

Ps 3 This psalm laments that the expectations raised by Ps 1-2 have not been met. But even when beset by enemies, godly people need not question the Lord's just dealings. Rather, they can confidently trust his goodness and expect God to rescue them.

3: TITLE This sad episode in David's life (see 2 Sam 15-18) helps readers keep the promises of Ps 2 in perspective. The Lord granted victory to his anointed king (Ps 2), but the manner and timing of this victory remained in God's hands.

3:1-2 The psalmist's many enemies speak brashly (4:6; 40:15; see notes on 2:3; 12:4) and question the Lord's ability to rescue (10:11; 22:7-8; 71:10).

Their words haunt him because it seems that the Lord will not answer his prayer. • These enemies wield great power (cp. 2:1-3); unlike Ps 2, this psalm does not resolve the crisis.

3:2 *Interlude*: Hebrew *Selah*. The meaning of this word is uncertain, though it is probably a musical or literary term. It is rendered *Interlude* throughout the Psalms.

3:3-4 The psalmist's eyes turn from his enemies to the Lord.

3:3 The psalmist contrasts the contention of his enemies (3:2) with the Lord's provision. The Lord is a shield for his people; he turns their defeat and shame into victory and glory (see notes on 4:2; 27:6; 140:7).

3:5 By refocusing on the Lord (3:3-4) in the midst of his crisis, the psalmist can rest, confident of his safety (see note on 4:8). The Lord cares for his servant; he protects him and keeps his mind and heart from fear (37:17; 54:4; 119:116; 145:14; see note on 121:4).

3:6 The psalmist's peaceful confidence in the Lord's protection and care shields him from evil and gives him a new sense of reality (23:4; 27:1, 3; 46:1; 56:4, 11; 91:5-6; 118:6).

3:7-8 The psalmist does not seek revenge; instead, he waits for the Lord's vengeance (see note on Ps 94). • *Arise*: The psalmist calls upon the Lord to take action now.

Ps 4 This individual lament includes a prayer for rescue (4:1), a rebuke of the adversary (4:2-3), an exhortation to the godly (4:4-5), and an expression of confidence (4:6-8).

4:1 Waiting for the Lord's answer allows for growth in patience and for the refinement of living faith (38:15).

4:2 The opponents of the godly place their hope in delusions, treachery, and idolatry. • *my reputation* (or *my glory*): The honor of the psalmist, or possibly of the Lord, is at stake.

4:4 Angry feelings are not sinful, but letting anger control you leads to sin (see 37:7-8; cp. Eph 4:26-27, 31-32). • Instead of acting on their emotions, the godly think about their circumstances overnight. They might be disturbed as they sleep, but silence opens their hearts to trust in the Lord (4:5).

4:5 Offer sacrifices in the right spirit: Redirecting emotions toward the Lord prevents a godly individual from doing too much self-reflection (40:6-8; 51:17).

4:7
Ps 97:11-12
Acts 14:17
4:8
Lev 25:18
Deut 12:10
Job 11:19
Ps 3:5; 16:9
shalom (7965)
▶ Ps 29:11

5:1
Ps 54:2

5:2
Ps 84:3
melek (4428)
▶ Ps 24:9

5:3
Ps 88:13; 130:5

5:4
Ps 11:5; 34:16; 92:15

5:5
Ps 1:5; 11:5; 45:7;
75:4

5:6
Ps 52:4-5; 55:23

5:7
Ps 69:13; 115:11, 13

5:8
Ps 27:11; 31:1, 3

5:9
*Rom 3:13
Luke 11:44

- 6 Many people say, "Who will show us better times?"
Let your face smile on us, LORD.
7 You have given me greater joy than those who have abundant harvests of grain and new wine.
8 In ^hpeace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, O LORD, will keep me safe.

PSALM 5
For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be accompanied by the flute.

- 1 O LORD, hear me as I pray; pay attention to my groaning.
2 Listen to my cry for help, my ¹King and my God, for I pray to no one but you.
3 Listen to my voice in the morning, LORD. Each morning I bring my requests to you and wait expectantly.
4 O God, you take no pleasure in wickedness;

- you cannot tolerate the sins of the wicked.
5 Therefore, the proud may not stand in your presence, for you hate all who do evil.
6 You will destroy those who tell lies. The LORD detests murderers and deceivers.
7 Because of your unfailing love, I can enter your house; I will worship at your Temple with deepest awe.
8 Lead me in the right path, O LORD, or my enemies will conquer me. Make your way plain for me to follow.
9 My enemies cannot speak a truthful word. Their deepest desire is to destroy others. Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave. Their tongues are filled with flattery.

Title of the Messiah	Reference in Psalms	Applied to Jesus
Messiah (Anointed One)	2:2	Matt 16:16; Acts 4:24-30; 13:33
Son of God	2:7, 12	Matt 3:17; 17:5; Acts 13:33; Rom 1:4; Heb 1:5; 5:5
Sovereign King	8:4-6	1 Cor 15:27; Heb 2:8
Suffering Servant	22:1-31	Matt 27:35, 46; Mark 15:34; John 19:24
Faithful Servant	40:6-8; 69:1-36	John 2:17; Rom 15:3; Heb 10:7
Victorious King	68:18	Eph 4:8
Exalted Lord	110:1	Matt 22:41-45; Acts 2:32-36; Heb 1:10-13
Royal High Priest	110:4	Heb 5:6; 7:17, 21
Precious Stone	118:22	Matt 21:42; Mark 12:10-11; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet 2:7
Blessed King	118:26	Matt 21:9; 23:39; Mark 11:9; Luke 13:35; 19:38; John 12:13

▲ **Messiah in the Psalms** (2:2). In the NT, the writers of the Gospels, Acts, the Letters, and the book of Revelation strongly connect Jesus with the Psalter. Jesus completes David's dynasty. Although the earlier kings failed, there is now hope. Jesus' sinlessness, his identification with Israel's kings, his perfect obedience, and his exaltation open up new perspectives on the many questions raised in the Psalter. We are still living by faith. The hope of the Psalter is that all nations will submit to God's king, the Messiah (cp. 1 Cor 15:25-27).

4:6 your face (or *the light of your face*): The psalmist seeks God's favor and peace (Num 6:25-26), which can transform darkness into light (see 27:1). Confident trust in the Lord is an antidote to anger, resentment, jealousy, and materialism.

4:8 Peace comes from God's blessing and protection (4:6; see 37:11).

Ps 5 This morning prayer (5:3) expresses unwavering confidence in the Lord's

help and protection. The psalmist asks for and awaits God's response (5:1-3). He describes the schemes of the wicked in detail but does not get lost in his circumstances. The psalmist also knows that the wicked cannot coexist with God (5:4-6, 9; see 1:5). He keeps returning to the Lord (5:7-8, 10; see 5:1-3), and then he prays for the godly community (5:10-12; see 3:8b).

5:1-2 The request *hear me* appears in several prayers as a call for God's

attention during a time of trouble (39:12; 84:8; 143:1), as does *pay attention* (17:1; 54:2; 130:2). The needy ask their God, "Are you listening?"

5:3 The psalmist begins and ends each day with prayer, awaiting new expressions of God's fidelity and goodness (143:8). • *wait expectantly*: The psalmist does not demand God's grace but places hope in it (see Mic 7:7; Hab 2:1).

5:5 the proud: Mockers (see note on 1:1), the wicked (73:3; 75:4), and the arrogant (10:2) use their mouths to twist truth and challenge the faith of the godly. • The Lord allows only the godly into his *presence* (see 1:5). His holiness and justice do not tolerate oppression or those *who do evil*. • *you hate*: The Lord rejects proud sinners (see also 11:5).

5:7 God promises his *unfailing love*—his covenant goodness and faithfulness—to his people (see 25:6; 69:16; Lam 3:32). • *your house*: The godly long to come into God's presence with reverence and awe (see Heb 12:28).

5:8 God guides those who are obedient, submissive, and patient in waiting for him to *lead*, provide, and protect them (27:11; 43:3; 143:10), not those who expect God simply to endorse their own decisions. • Following *the right path* of wisdom leads to the Lord (27:11; 61:2; 139:24).

5:9-10 The psalmist again describes the vile acts of the wicked, who cannot stand in God's presence.

5:9 with flattery: Greek version reads *with lies*. Cp. Rom 3:13, where Paul quotes from this verse in his description of the depravity of all people.

10 O God, declare them guilty.
 Let them be caught in their own
 traps.
 Drive them away because of their many
 sins,
 for they have rebelled against you.

11 But let all who take refuge in you
 rejoice;
 let them sing joyful praises forever.
 Spread your protection over them,
 that all who love your name may be
 filled with joy.

12 For you bless the godly, O LORD;
 you surround them with your shield
 of love.

PSALM 6

*For the choir director: A psalm of David,
 to be accompanied by an eight-stringed
 instrument.*

1 O LORD, don't rebuke me in your ^langer
 or discipline me in your rage.

2 Have compassion on me, LORD, for I am
 weak.
 Heal me, LORD, for my bones are in
 agony.

3 I am sick at ^kheart.
 How long, O LORD, until you
 restore me?

4 Return, O LORD, and rescue me.
^aSave me because of your unfailing
 love.

5 For the dead do not remember you.
 Who can praise you from the grave?

6 I am worn out from sobbing.
 All night I flood my bed with weeping,
 drenching it with my tears.

7 My vision is blurred by grief;
 my eyes are worn out because of all
 my enemies.

8 Go away, all you who do evil,
 for the LORD has heard my weeping.

9 The LORD has heard my ^bplea;
 the LORD will answer my prayer.

10 May all my enemies be disgraced and
 terrified.
 May they suddenly turn back in shame.

PSALM 7

*A psalm of David, which he sang to the
 LORD concerning Cush of the tribe of
 Benjamin.*

1 I come to you for protection, O LORD my
 God.
 Save me from my persecutors—
 rescue me!

2 If you don't, they will maul me like a lion,
 tearing me to pieces with no one to
 rescue me.

3 O LORD my God, if I have done wrong
 or am guilty of injustice,
 4 if I have betrayed a friend
 or plundered my enemy without
 cause,

5:10
 Ps 9:16; 36:12

5:11
 Ps 2:12; 12:7; 64:10
 Isa 65:13

5:12
 Ps 29:11; 32:7, 10

6:1
 Ps 2:5; 38:1
^lap (0639)
 • Prov 27:4

6:2
 Ps 22:14

6:3
 Ps 38:8; 90:13
 John 12:27
^lnepesh (5315)
 • Ps 19:7
^lyasha' (3467)
 • Ps 34:18

6:4
 Ps 17:13

6:5
 Ps 30:9
 Isa 38:18

6:6
 Ps 42:3; 69:3

6:7
 Ps 31:9

6:9
^ltekhinnah (8467)
 • Ps 55:1

6:10
 Ps 71:24; 73:19

7:1
 Ps 11:1; 31:1, 14-15

7:2
 Ps 17:12; 57:4

7:3
 1 Sam 24:11

7:4
 1 Sam 24:7; 26:9

7:6
 Ps 138:7

7:8
 Ps 18:20; 35:24; 96:13

5:10 The psalmist prays for the justice and retribution that God promised against the wicked (1:6)—those who have *rebelled against* the Lord. • The wicked lay *traps* to kill (38:12) or deceive (140:4-5).

5:11 A blessing rests on *all who take refuge in* God (see 18:30). • Joy and praise make good companions. The godly *rejoice* when they see evidence of God's rescue. They *sing joyful praises* as a new song (see 33:3). When the Lord restores peace to this world, puts down evil, and rewards the righteous, they will have lasting *joy* (9:2-4; 53:6; 90:14-15; 118:24). • The children of God, who find refuge in him, *love his name*. To love his name is to love his very character.

5:12 The psalmist extends his concern beyond himself to all the *godly*. • A *shield*, here an image of God's protection, deflects spears and arrows from its bearer.

Ps 6 The occasion for this lament might have been sickness or a mental or spiritual depression from which the psalmist sought healing.

6:TITLE *to be accompanied by an eight-stringed instrument*: Literally *with stringed instruments*; according to the *sheminith*.

6:1-3 The psalmist asks for God's favor and restoration at a difficult time.

6:1 *don't rebuke me . . . or discipline me*: The psalmist does not explicitly connect God's discipline with sin here (cp. 39:8-11), but it might be implied.

6:2-3 In his longing for God's response to his prayer, the psalmist grew physically *weak* (6:6; see 77:3; 119:81; 142:1-3; see also Ps 101). Fasting might have played a part in his *agony*, but this is not mentioned.

6:4-5 The experience was so painful that the psalmist might as well have been *dead*, or perhaps he feared for his life.

6:5 *from the grave?* Hebrew *from Sheol*? In the OT, Sheol is the abode of the dead. It is not necessarily associated with punishment.

6:6-7 The psalmist is exhausted to the depths of his being from the anguish of his spiritual distance from the Lord (31:9; 22:1; 31:10; 102:5). • When *eyes*

dim, the body is failing (see 13:3; 31:9; 38:10; Matt 6:22).

6:8-10 In a closing note of triumph, the psalmist reasserts his confidence in the Lord.

Ps 7 This psalm consists of a lament (7:1-2), an oath of innocence (7:3-5), an appeal to God's justice (7:6-9), an affirmation of God's just kingship (7:10-16), and a concluding hymn of praise (7:17).

7:TITLE *Cush*, an unknown person of the *tribe of Benjamin*, remained hostile to David.

7:1 *Persecutors* (a common term for "enemies") intentionally seek out people in order to destroy them (31:15; 56:1-2; 71:11; 143:3).

7:2 *Like a lion*, a wicked enemy relentlessly and violently pursues its prey (10:9; 17:12; 22:13, 21; 35:17; 57:4), but God promises victory (91:13).

7:3-5 The psalmist swears to his innocence, making himself vulnerable to scrutiny (7:9).

7:3 The psalmist does not claim to be without sin, but he knows that he does not deserve the brutal attacks of his opponents (see 35:7).

7:9
Ps 11:4-5; 94:23
Jer 11:20
Rev 2:23
*Leb (3820)
*Ps 28:7

7:10
Ps 97:10-11; 125:4
*magen (4043)
*Ps 28:7

7:11
Ps 50:6; 90:9
*shapat (8199)
*Ps 9:4

7:12
Deut 32:41
Ezek 33:9

7:13
Ps 18:14; 45:5; 64:7

7:14
Job 15:34-35
Isa 59:4
Jas 1:15

7:15
Ps 57:6

7:16
Esth 9:24-25
Ps 140:9, 11

7:17
Ps 9:2; 66:1-2, 4;
71:15-16
*yadah (3034)
*Ps 30:12
*elyan (5945)
*Ps 46:4

8:1
Ps 57:5; 113:4; 148:13

5 then let my enemies capture me.
Let them trample me into the ground
and drag my honor in the dust.

Interlude

6 Arise, O LORD, in anger!
Stand up against the fury of my
enemies!

7 Gather the nations before you.
Rule over them from on high.

8 The LORD judges the nations.
Declare me righteous, O LORD,
for I am innocent, O Most High!

9 End the evil of those who are wicked,
and defend the righteous.
For you look deep within the mind and
heart,
O righteous God.

10 God is my shield,
saving those whose hearts are true
and right.

11 God is an honest judge.
He is angry with the wicked every day.

12 If a person does not repent,
God will sharpen his sword;
he will bend and string his bow.
13 He will prepare his deadly weapons
and shoot his flaming arrows.

14 The wicked conceive evil;
they are pregnant with trouble
and give birth to lies.

15 They dig a deep pit to trap others,
then fall into it themselves.

16 The trouble they make for others
backfires on them.
The violence they plan falls on their
own heads.

17 I will thank the LORD because he is just;
I will sing praise to the name of the
LORD Most High.

PSALM 8

*For the choir director: A psalm of David, to
be accompanied by a stringed instrument.*

1 O LORD, our Lord, your majestic name
fills the earth!
Your glory is higher than the heavens.

Notation	References*
Interlude (<i>Selah</i>)	3:2, 4, 8; etc.
Accompanied by stringed instruments	Pss 4, 6, 54, 55, 61, 67, 76
Accompanied by the flute	Ps 5
An eight-stringed instrument	Pss 6, 12
Accompanied by a stringed instrument	Pss 8, 81, 84
Sung to the tune "Death of the Son"	Ps 9
Sung to the tune "Doe of the Dawn"	Ps 22
Sung to the tune "Lilies"	Pss 45, 69
Sung by soprano voices (<i>alamoth</i>)	Ps 46
Sung to the tune "Dove on Distant Oaks"	Ps 56
Sung to the tune "Do Not Destroy!"	Pss 57–59, 75
Sung to the tune "Lily of the Testimony"	Ps 60
Sung to the tune "Lilies of the Covenant"	Ps 80
Sung to the tune "The Suffering of Affliction"	Ps 88

* All full-psalm listings refer to Psalm titles

▲ **Musical Notations in the Psalms (Ps 5).** These musical notations are not well understood.

7:5 trample: Cp. 44:5; 60:12; 91:13; 108:13. • *into the ground . . . in the dust:* Disgrace and shame can lead to death and the grave (143:3; see 13:3-4).

7:6-9 With this appeal to God for justice in the world, the psalmist also submits to God's examination.

7:6 God's judgment brings *justice*, despite the chaos created by adversaries (see 7:11).

7:8 The judgment is against the defendants (the nations) and in favor of the *righteous* plaintiff (the psalmist; see

43:1). • Although not *innocent* of all sin, the psalmist is a person of authentic integrity (see 15:2; 25:21; 41:12; 78:72; cp. Job 1:1, 8; 9:20, 22).

7:9 God examines the *mind and heart* of each person (see 11:3-4; 26:2; 139:1, 23).

7:10-13 The psalmist moves from his own situation (7:1-9) to speak for all the godly who long for redemption (7:10-16). He depicts God as the righteous King who vindicates his subjects when they cry out for rescue.

7:11 The *honest* Lord cannot be bought

or bribed, nor does he abuse his power (9:4; cp. 82:1-8).

7:12-13 sword . . . bow . . . deadly weapons . . . flaming arrows: As the Divine Warrior, *God* (literally *he*) takes the offensive on behalf of himself and his people.

7:14 Evil begins with small words or steps, and gives *birth* to increasingly worse deeds as time goes on (see Isa 59:4-5).

7:17 I will thank . . . sing praise: The laments in Pss 3-7 usually move from lament to praise, as does the Psalter as a whole. • **Most High:** This is an ancient designation for God (see note on 91:1). • God is *just* and reliable, so his order prevails in this world.

Ps 8 Psalm 8 opens the second segment of Book One (Pss 8-14). The psalmist celebrates God's creation and the dignity of the ideal human being (see Ps 1). Instead of the world of enemies, wicked people, and distorted justice that is presented in Pss 3-7, this psalm promotes an image of the world as God originally created it. A weary person can envision a place of dignity in God's world.

8:TITLE to be accompanied by a stringed instrument: Hebrew *according to the gittith*.

8:1 The *LORD* (Hebrew *Yahweh*), the covenant God of Israel (Exod 3:15), also holds the title of *Lord* (Hebrew *'adonay*), the king of the earth. • The word translated *majestic* (sometimes translated "mighty") can describe kings (136:18), heroes (16:3), mountains (76:4), or waves breaking on the seashore (93:4).

2 You have taught children and infants to tell of your strength, silencing your enemies and all who oppose you.

3 When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—the moon and the stars you set in place—

4 what are mere mortals that you should think about them, ^hhuman beings that you should care for them?

5 Yet you made them only a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor.

6 You gave them charge of everything you made, putting all things under their authority—

7 the flocks and the herds and all the wild animals,

8 the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea, and everything that swims the ocean currents.

9 O LORD, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth!

PSALM 9

For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be sung to the tune “Death of the Son.”

1 I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart; I will tell of all the marvelous things you have done.

2 I will be filled with joy because of you. I will sing praises to your name, O Most High.

3 My enemies retreated; they staggered and died when you appeared.

4 For you have judged in my favor; from your throne you have judged with fairness.

8:2 Matt 21:16
 8:3 Ps 89:11; 136:9
 8:4 Job 7:17; Ps 144:3; Heb 2:6-8; ^hben 'adam (1121, 0120) [†]Ps 80:17
 8:5 Ps 21:5; 82:6; 103:4
 8:6 Gen 1:26, 28; [†]1 Cor 15:27
 9:1 Ps 26:7; 86:12
 9:2 Ps 66:2, 4; 92:1; 104:34
 9:3 Ps 27:2; 56:9
 9:4 Ps 47:8; 140:12; 1 Pet 2:23; ^hshapat (8199) [†]Ps 75:7
 9:5 Ps 69:28; 119:21
 9:6 Ps 34:16; 40:15

While all are awe-inspiring and mighty, the created order pales in comparison with the Lord. • A person's *name* embodies his reputation. • *The earth* and *the heavens* reveal the Lord's splendor. All creation worships and praises the Lord (66:4; 113:3; 145:21).

8:2 to tell of your strength: Greek version reads *to give you praise*. Cp. Matt 21:16. • **silencing:** The loud noise of the oppressors contrasts with the praise of God. In the end, the praise of God will overwhelm the sound of evil (31:18; 63:11; 101:5; 143:12). • Those who *oppose* God seethe with vindictive anger (2:1-3; 44:16; cp. 149:6-7).

8:3-5 In light of God's awesome glory, it might seem that people would be insignificant to him. However, he has *crowned them with glory and honor* and placed them over all creation.

8:3 The nations around Israel worshiped heavenly objects as deities. The sun, *moon*, and *stars* are indeed immense and glorious, but they are merely *the work of your fingers*, a reason to praise the Almighty.

8:4 what are mere mortals that you should think about them, / human beings that you should care for them? Literally *what is man that you should think of him, / the son of man (or son of Adam) that you should care for him?* See also 144:3. • **human beings** (literally *son of Adam*): The Hebrew idiom *son of man* (or *son of Adam*) means a human being. Through the influence of Dan 7:13-14, it became a title with divine overtones in the NT. See Heb 2:6-8, where this passage is quoted.

8:5 Yet you made them only a little

lower than God: Or *Yet you made them only a little lower than the angels*; Hebrew reads *Yet you made him* [i.e., man] *a little lower than Elohim*. Humans bear God's image; the Lord has endowed humans with dignity and charged them to rule (Gen 1:26-27). Hebrews 2:6-8 applies these words to Jesus Christ, the ideal human who fully realized God's purposes. • **them:** Literally *him* (i.e., man).

8:6 gave them (literally *him*, i.e., man) **charge of everything:** The psalmist is still referring to humans in general. Paul applies these words to Jesus as the perfect man who has made the created order—even death (1 Cor 15:25-27)—subject to God and his glory. The NT connects these themes of creation and salvation with Jesus Christ (John 1:1-2, 14; Col 1:16).

8:7-8 Wild animals, including *birds* and *fish*, remind readers of God's creation of the animal world in Gen 1. Contrary to beliefs among Israel's neighbors in the ancient Near East, animals are not sacred.

Pss 9–10 This hymn celebrates the Lord's kingship and victory over evil. It might also serve as a response to the laments of Pss 3–7. Some believe that Pss 9 and 10 should be read together as one psalm in two parts because Ps 9 includes a title and Ps 10 does not, and although several letters are missing or inverted, the two psalms connect as an acrostic of the Hebrew alphabet (see note on Ps 25; other such alphabetic acrostics are Pss 25, 34, 37, 111–112, 119, 145). The ancient Greek and Latin translations treat Pss 9 and 10 as one.

9:TITLE This psalm was originally *sung to the tune “Death of the Son,”* but that tune is no longer known. So also with the tunes mentioned in Pss 22, 45, 56–60, 69, 75, and 80.

9:1 The verb translated *praise* is translated “thank” in 7:17, suggesting a close connection between Pss 7 and 9 (see 7:17; 8:1-2). **With all my heart** expresses the psalmist's deep devotion and commitment (86:12; 111:1; 119:10; 138:1). • **I will tell:** These stories educate the next generation (78:4; 145:4); when they are not remembered, a generation might easily depart from the Lord (78:11, 32). • **The marvelous things** include the Lord's judgments on the enemies of his people (9:4) and his care for the oppressed (9:9). The wonders in creation, in redemption, and in revelation reveal his character and show his power (89:5; 111:4; 119:18, 27). His powerful manifestations evoke public praise (9:1; 26:7; 75:1).

9:2 filled with joy . . . sing praises: The psalmist often connects joy with praises, as one leads to the other (5:11-12; 32:11; 67:4; 90:14; 92:4). • **Most High:** See note on 91:1.

9:3-6 The psalmist celebrates God's judgment of the wicked, which is a testimony to the Lord's reliable promise to establish his kingdom on earth (1:6; Ps 2).

9:3 retreated . . . staggered: The Lord overpowers even powerful *enemies* (see 27:2). Israel also experienced judgment when it resisted the Lord (107:12).

9:4 The *throne* represents the Lord's royal authority.

9:7
Ps 10:16; 89:14-15

9:8
Ps 96:13
ʾisdeq (6664)
▶ Ps 23:3

9:9
Ps 18:2; 37:39; 59:9,
16-17

9:10
Ps 37:28; 91:14; 94:14
ʾazab (5800)
▶ Ps 22:1

9:11
Ps 76:2; 105:1

9:12
Gen 9:5-6
Ps 72:14

9:13
Ps 30:3; 38:19; 86:13

9:14
Ps 13:5; 20:5; 35:9;
51:12; 106:2

9:15
Ps 7:15; 35:8

9:16
ʾmishpat (4941)
▶ Ps 33:5

9:17
Ps 49:14; 50:22

9:18
Ps 9:12; 62:5; 71:5

9:19
Num 10:35
2 Chr 14:11

9:20
Ps 62:9

10:1
Ps 13:1; 22:1; 55:1

10:2
Ps 7:15; 9:16; 73:6, 8

- 5 You have rebuked the nations and destroyed the wicked; you have erased their names forever.
- 6 The enemy is finished, in endless ruins; the cities you uprooted are now forgotten.
- 7 But the LORD reigns forever, executing judgment from his throne.
- 8 He will judge the world with justice and rule the nations with fairness.
- 9 The LORD is a shelter for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.
- 10 Those who know your name trust in you, for you, O LORD, do not abandon those who search for you.
- 11 Sing praises to the LORD who reigns in Jerusalem.
Tell the world about his unforgettable deeds.
- 12 For he who avenges murder cares for the helpless.
He does not ignore the cries of those who suffer.
- 13 LORD, have mercy on me.
See how my enemies torment me.
Snatch me back from the jaws of death.
- 14 Save me so I can praise you publicly at Jerusalem's gates,

so I can rejoice that you have rescued me.

- 15 The nations have fallen into the pit they dug for others.
Their own feet have been caught in the trap they set.
- 16 The LORD is known for his justice.
The wicked are trapped by their own deeds. *Quiet Interlude*
- 17 The wicked will go down to the grave.
This is the fate of all the nations who ignore God.
- 18 But the needy will not be ignored forever;
the hopes of the poor will not always be crushed.
- 19 Arise, O LORD!
Do not let mere mortals defy you!
Judge the nations!
- 20 Make them tremble in fear, O LORD.
Let the nations know they are merely human. *Interlude*

PSALM 10

- 1 O LORD, why do you stand so far away?
Why do you hide when I am in trouble?
- 2 The wicked arrogantly hunt down the poor.

9:5 God created the heavens and the earth with a word (Gen 1), and he can bring *nations* to an end with a word (see 2:5). Evil and those who do evil will come to an absolute end (109:13; Rev 21:4; see note on 69:28).

9:7-10 The godly do not put their hope in corruptible human government but in God's everlasting rule of *justice* and *fairness* (see Pss 96-100).

9:9 The Lord provides *shelter* in dangerous circumstances and *refuge* from powerful and oppressive people. The Psalter includes many similar images of the Lord, such as fortress (18:2; 31:2), refuge (59:16-17), rock (18:2; 42:9), strength (18:1), and strong tower (144:2). These images occur frequently in the royal prayers (see 9:9; 18:30). • Even *oppressed*, afflicted, and marginalized people (10:17; 74:21) can enjoy divine protection. • *The times of trouble* (10:1; 20:1) stand in contrast with appointed times when the Lord openly bestows his favor upon the afflicted (69:13; 102:13; see 107:6).

9:10 Alienation from the Lord might be part of an individual's experience (22:1; 42:9; 119:8), yet the psalms affirm that the Lord will not *abandon* his people (16:10; 37:25, 28).

9:11-12 Recognition that the Lord's

judgment falls on some of the wicked (9:3-6) and that God promises to judge all evil (9:7-10) motivates praise. The psalmist calls on the godly community to join him.

9:11 The psalm writers often connect the idea that God *reigns* (or *sits*, or *is enthroned*) with a place, such as heaven (2:4; see 47:9), *Jerusalem* (Hebrew *Zion*; also in 9:14), "between the cherubim" (80:1; 99:1), "on high" (113:5), or "at the right hand" (110:1). Since the Lord rules the *world*, all people must know of *his unforgettable deeds* of salvation (see 9:1; 64:9; 66:16; 105:1).

9:12 The Lord *avenges* and saves his servants (18:46) by righteously judging his enemies on earth (58:11). The godly do not seek revenge; they wait for the Lord to vindicate them (94:1-2; Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19).

9:13 The psalmist returns from a vision of the glorious future to the reality of facing his *enemies* (9:3). • *The jaws* (literally *gates*) are a vivid image of the powerful grip of *death* (see 13:3-4).

9:14 *Jerusalem's gates* provide an intentional contrast to "the gates of death" (see note on 9:13).

9:16 *Quiet Interlude*: Hebrew *Higgayon Selah*. The meaning of this phrase is uncertain.

9:17 *to the grave*: Hebrew *to Sheol*. See note on 6:5.

9:18 Hope requires waiting for the Lord's rescue or justice (25:3, 5, 21). The godly find hope, rest, and quietness as they await the Lord (see 1:6; 27:14).

9:19-20 The psalmist ends his lament with a prayer for the Lord's intervention and divine vengeance. • *mere mortals* . . . *merely human*: Humans who have received authority and glory sometimes become oppressive and assume glory for themselves (see 8:4; 10:18).

Ps 10 The lament of Ps 9:13-20 continues in Ps 10 (see note on Pss 9-10), but the mood changes from confident assertion to anguished questioning. The psalmist prays for rescue, believing that the Lord, as a just king, takes care of the needy.

10:1 The opening questions set the mood. The Lord does not seem to hear the prayers of his people (22:1, 19; see 2 Kgs 4:27; Isa 1:15).

10:2-11 Wicked and oppressive people might prosper, leaving ugly consequences. Evil can be as dramatic as the psalmist portrays it here, or it could be more subtle.

10:2 *The wicked* brazenly defy God with their acts and speech (17:10; 31:18;

Let them be caught in the evil they plan for others.
 3 For they brag about their evil desires; they praise the greedy and curse the LORD.
 4 The wicked are too proud to seek God. They seem to think that God is dead.
 5 Yet they succeed in everything they do. They do not see your punishment awaiting them. They sneer at all their enemies.
 6 They think, "Nothing bad will ever happen to us! We will be free of trouble forever!"
 7 Their mouths are full of cursing, lies, and threats. Trouble and evil are on the tips of their tongues.
 8 They lurk in ambush in the villages, waiting to murder innocent people. They are always searching for helpless victims.
 9 Like lions crouched in hiding, they wait to pounce on the helpless. Like hunters they capture the helpless and drag them away in nets.
 10 Their helpless victims are crushed; they fall beneath the strength of the wicked.
 11 The wicked think, "God isn't watching us! He has closed his eyes and won't even see what we do!"
 12 Arise, O LORD! Punish the wicked, O God! Do not ignore the helpless!
 13 Why do the wicked get away with despoiling God?

They think, "God will never call us to account."
 14 But you see the trouble and grief they cause. You take note of it and punish them. The helpless put their trust in you. You defend the orphans.
 15 Break the arms of these wicked, evil people! Go after them until the last one is destroyed.
 16 The LORD is king forever and ever! The godless nations will vanish from the land.
 17 LORD, you know the hopes of the helpless. Surely you will hear their cries and comfort them.
 18 You will bring justice to the orphans and the oppressed, so mere people can no longer terrify them.

PSALM 11
For the choir director: A psalm of David.

1 I trust in the LORD for protection. So why do you say to me, "Fly like a bird to the mountains for safety!"
 2 The wicked are stringing their bows and fitting their arrows on the bowstrings. They shoot from the shadows at those whose hearts are right.
 3 The foundations of law and order have collapsed. What can the righteous do?"
 4 But the LORD is in his holy Temple; the LORD still rules from heaven.

10:3
 Ps 49:6; 94:3-4
10:4
 Ps 14:1; 36:1-2
10:5
 Ps 28:5; 52:7
10:6
 Ps 30:6-7; 49:11
10:7
 Ps 59:12; 73:8; 140:3
 *Rom 3:14
10:8
 Ps 11:2; 94:6-7
10:9
 Ps 10:2; 17:12; 59:3; 140:5
10:11
 Ps 10:4
10:12
 Ps 9:12; 17:7
10:14
 Ps 9:12; 22:9-11; 37:5
10:15
 Ps 37:17; 140:11
10:16
 Deut 8:20
 Ps 29:10
 **olam* (5769)
 * Ps 30:12
10:17
 Ps 9:18; 34:15; 145:19
10:18
 Ps 9:9; 74:21; 146:9
 Isa 29:20
11:1
 Ps 121:1-2
11:2
 Ps 7:12; 64:3-4
11:3
 Ps 82:5
11:4
 Ps 34:15-16; 103:19
 **shamayim* (8064)
 * Ps 19:1

59:12; 73:8; 123:4). Although the Lord will deal with them (31:23), they disturb the righteous (see 5:4-6) prior to their condemnation and judgment.

10:3 Unlike those who have *evil desires*, the godly wait for justice (10:17).

10:4 *God is dead*: See 10:11; 14:1.

10:6-7 Despite their evil ways (5:9; 28:3; Rom 3:14), the wicked expect a future *free of trouble* such as the righteous will enjoy. • *cursing, lies, and threats*: Greek version reads *cursing and bitterness*. Cp. Rom 3:14.

10:8 The wicked rely on outright violence (11:5; 37:32) and deception (Prov 12:6; 23:27-28).

10:12-15 With confidence that the wicked will be held responsible for their deeds and that the Lord will care for the helpless, the psalmist prays intensely for rescue from evil.

10:14 Because the Lord cares for the afflicted, he will *take note* and *punish* evildoers (see 72:14; 116:15).

10:15 The psalmist strongly invokes a curse as he prays (see "Prayers for Vengeance" at Ps 137, p. 1017). • *Arms* represent an ability to wage war (18:34; 44:3).

10:16 As the true and just *king*, God will bring the wicked to an end, as he promises (1:6).

10:17-18 The psalmist expresses his confidence in the Lord.

10:18 *Mere people* (see note on 8:4) misuse their power and enslave the very people God wants them to serve (see 9:19-20; Luke 22:25-26).

Ps 11 The psalmist affirms his faith in the righteous God. Even though the world appears hopelessly chaotic, both the godly and the wicked can count on

God's justice. The godly can depend on him as a refuge and shelter.

11:1 God provides *protection* (or *refuge*; see 5:11; 9:9; 25:20) when the foundations of justice collapse. • The *mountains* provide another place of refuge (see 121:1; see note on 30:6-7).

11:2-3 In the inevitable battle between the evil and the godly, the wicked cannot tolerate the righteous, so they victimize them. This seems to leave the godly with nothing but questions.

11:2 The *wicked* live in the *shadows* and create gloom for the godly (82:5; 139:11; 143:3; Prov 4:19).

11:3 The wicked create a world of darkness (see 82:5).

11:4 The righteous King *rules from heaven*, where his throne is untouched by human corruption (see

11:5

Gen 22:1
Ps 5:5

11:6

Jer 4:11-12
Ezek 38:22

11:7

Ps 7:9-11; 17:15; 33:5

12:1

Mic 7:1-2

12:2

Ps 28:3; 41:6

Jer 9:8

Rom 16:18

12:3

Ps 55:21; 73:8-9

12:5

Ps 3:7; 34:6; 35:10

12:6

Ps 19:8-10; 119:140
Prov 30:5

12:7

Ps 37:28; 97:10

12:8

Ps 55:10-11

13:1

Job 13:24
Ps 44:24; 89:46

13:2

Ps 42:4-5, 9

He watches everyone closely,
examining every person on earth.

5 The LORD examines both the righteous
and the wicked.

He hates those who love violence.

6 He will rain down blazing coals and
burning sulfur on the wicked,
punishing them with scorching
winds.

7 For the righteous LORD loves justice.
The virtuous will see his face.

PSALM 12

*For the choir director: A psalm of David,
to be accompanied by an eight-stringed
instrument.*

1 Help, O LORD, for the godly are fast
disappearing!

The faithful have vanished from the
earth!

2 Neighbors lie to each other,
speaking with flattering lips and
deceitful hearts.

3 May the LORD cut off their flattering lips
and silence their boastful tongues.

4 They say, "We will lie to our hearts'
content.

Our lips are our own—who can stop us?"

5 The LORD replies, "I have seen violence
done to the helpless,
and I have heard the groans of the poor.
Now I will rise up to rescue them,
as they have longed for me to do."

6 The LORD's promises are pure,
like silver refined in a furnace,
purified seven times over.

7 Therefore, LORD, we know you will
protect the oppressed,
preserving them forever from this
lying generation,

8 even though the wicked strut about,
and evil is praised throughout the land.

PSALM 13

For the choir director: A psalm of David.

1 O LORD, how long will you forget me?
Forever?

How long will you look the other way?

2 How long must I struggle with anguish
in my soul,

The Poor and Needy (Ps 10)

Ps 9:18; 10:2; 12:5;
22:1-31; 34:1-22;
35:10; 37:14; 40:17;
41:1; 49:2; 68:10;
69:33; 70:5; 72:2-4,
12-13; 74:21; 82:3-
4; 107:41; 109:16,
22, 31; 132:15;
140:12

The poor and needy are oppressed, persecuted people. They hunger and thirst for righteousness, but are deprived of it by the structures of society or the rapacious people around them (14:6; 37:14; 109:16). In their distress, they take refuge in the Lord (see 107:4-9), and they cry out to the Lord (25:16-18; 74:19; 76:9), who has promised to care for them (1:6). They have faith in him and wait hopefully for the Lord to appear and bring justice (1:18; 70:5).

One psalmist confessed that he had cried out to the Lord all his life (88:15). Much of life might be lived in anguish (90:15; see Ps 102). Affliction might be a form of discipline that gives training in righteousness (119:71, 75). The psalms testify that the Lord hears the cry of the poor (10:17-18; 12:5; 22:24; 34:6; 35:10; 74:21-23; 82:4; 86:1; 107:41; 109:22, 31; 113:5-7; 140:12) and that they will be satisfied (22:26; 132:15). Then the godly will rejoice (34:2; 69:32).

Like the Lord, the messianic king brings justice to his afflicted people (72:2, 4, 12), yet he confesses that he, too, is needy (40:17). The Davidic kings before Christ did not bring ultimate justice. Jesus identifies with our human situation (Isa 53:4, 7); he is the hope of those who recognize their poverty and their need (see Matt 5:3-12).

2:4). He examines everyone and sees everything that happens on earth (see 14:2-3).

11:5 *hates*: See 5:4-6; Prov 6:16-18. • Wicked deeds result in destruction and *violence* (58:2; 73:6; 74:20).

11:6 God rained *blazing coals* and *burning sulfur* on Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19) as symbols of judgment (18:8; 120:4; 140:10).

11:7 The godly are assured of the Lord's favorable presence when they *see his face* (see 23:6).

Ps 12 This community lament seeks the Lord's help against the prevalence of evil. Because of the Lord's answer, the

godly can face the future knowing that God protects them.

12:1 *TITLE to be accompanied by an eight-stringed instrument*: Hebrew according to the *sheminith*.

12:1-4 Evil becomes so pervasive that the godly pray for rescue (Isa 57:1; Mic 7:2; cp. 1:6; 37:20; 58:7; 104:35).

12:3 *May the LORD cut off*: See "Prayers for Vengeance" at Ps 137, p. 1017.

12:4 The words *they say* reveal the character of the wicked. They deceive and overpower the godly and arrogantly question the Lord's purposes.

12:6 The godly can rely on the *LORD's promises*, but not on the lies of the

wicked (12:2-4). • *Seven times* means totally or completely.

12:7-8 The godly know that the Lord cares, even though the wicked continue to oppress them. The Lord sees the corrupt and foolish people who praise evildoers (see 9:19-20; 14:2-6).

Ps 13 The psalmist's piercing cry for help becomes a confident song of hope.

13:1-2 *how long?* The fourfold repetition expresses agitation and deep anguish (79:5).

13:2 A sense of *anguish* and *sorrow* closes off any perspective of hope (6:3). Unless the Lord answers the psalmist's prayers (22:1), death seems inescapable,

with sorrow in my heart every day?
How long will my enemy have the
upper hand?

- 3 Turn and answer me, O LORD my God!
Restore the sparkle to my eyes, or I
will die.
- 4 Don't let my enemies gloat, saying, "We
have defeated him!"
Don't let them rejoice at my downfall.
- 5 But I trust in your unfailing love.
I will rejoice because you have
rescued me.
- 6 I will sing to the LORD
because he is good to me.

PSALM 14

Ps 14:1-7 // Ps 53:1-6

For the choir director: A psalm of David.

- 1 Only fools say in their hearts,
"There is no God."
They are corrupt, and their actions are
evil;
not one of them does good!
- 2 The LORD looks down from heaven
on the entire human race;
he looks to see if anyone is truly wise,
if anyone seeks God.
- 3 But no, all have turned away;
all have become corrupt.
No one does good,
not a single one!
- 4 Will those who do evil never learn?
They eat up my people like bread

and wouldn't think of praying to the
LORD.

- 5 Terror will grip them,
for God is with those who obey him.
- 6 The wicked frustrate the plans of the
oppressed,
but the LORD will protect his people.
- 7 Who will come from Mount Zion to
rescue Israel?
When the LORD restores his people,
Jacob will shout with joy, and Israel
will rejoice.

PSALM 15

A psalm of David.

- 1 Who may worship in your sanctuary,
LORD?
Who may enter your presence on your
holy hill?
- 2 Those who lead ^dblameless lives and do
what is right,
speaking the truth from sincere hearts.
- 3 Those who refuse to gossip
or harm their neighbors
or speak evil of their friends.
- 4 Those who despise flagrant sinners,
and honor the faithful followers of
the LORD,
and keep their promises even when
it hurts.
- 5 Those who lend money without charging
interest,
and who cannot be bribed to lie about
the innocent.
Such people will stand firm forever.

13:3
Ezra 9:8
Job 33:29-30
Ps 5:1

13:4
Ps 25:2; 38:16

13:5
Ps 9:14; 52:8

13:6
Ps 116:7

14:1-7
//Ps 53:1-6

14:1
Ps 10:4; 53:1
*Rom 3:10-12

14:2
Ps 33:13-15; 102:19

14:3
Ps 58:3; 143:2

14:4
Isa 64:7

14:6
Ps 9:9; 40:17

14:7
Job 42:10
Ps 53:6; 85:1-2

15:1
Ps 24:3; 27:5-6

15:2
Ps 24:4
Eph 4:25
**tamim* (8549)
* Ps 18:25

15:3
Exod 23:1
Ps 28:3

15:4
Judg 11:35
Acts 28:10

15:5
Exod 22:25; 23:8
Deut 16:19

torturous, and slow (6:6; 32:3; 55:4; 61:2; 102:5; 116:3). The psalmist hardly knows how to pray; he longs for God's redemption (25:17-18; 31:10; 38:8; 39:2).

13:3-4 Only the Lord can bring enlightenment and relief. The psalmist longs for the Lord's vindication so that his foes will not rejoice.

13:3 The psalmist's affliction feels like death (22:15; 55:4; 88:15; 94:17; 116:3).

13:5-6 The psalmist no longer hears the ridicule of his foes. Instead, because of his trust in the Lord, he is full of joy.

Ps 14 This wisdom psalm contains some characteristics of lament and prophetic speech. The ideals of Ps 8 have run aground on the reality of foolish human attitudes and sinful actions. With the exception of vv 5-6, this psalm parallels Ps 53.

14:1-3 Paul uses phrases from the Greek translation of this passage in his description of the depravity of all people (Rom 3:10-12).

14:1 Also known as *fools*, the wicked

speak to themselves, think, scheme (10:4, 6, 11), and make claims; however, because they do not heed God's revelation, they possess no understanding (14:1; 39:8; 53:1; 74:18; 74:22).

14:2-3 From *heaven* (33:13; 80:14; 102:19), the Lord sees the wicked, who stand out as vile sinners (11:3-5). The *entire human race* lacks wisdom and fails to live up to the glory originally given to them (10:4-11; see Rom 1-3).

14:3 have become corrupt: Greek version reads *have become useless*. Cp. Rom 3:12.

14:4 The evil live at the expense of others (27:2; 44:11; 53:4; see Isa 5:8) and have no reverence or knowledge of God (79:6).

14:5 Though the wicked perish (1:5-6), *God is with* the godly.

14:7 The psalmist prays for the renewal of God's relationship with his people. • *Jacob* is a synonym for *Israel* (see Gen 35:9-10).

Pss 15-19 The psalms in this section affirm integrity and purity (17:15; 18:20-26; 19:13-14). They refer to people as

dwelling in God's presence (16:9-11; 17:15) and as not being shaken (15:5; 16:8).

Ps 15 In this wisdom poem, the psalmist contrasts the lifestyle of the godly with the actions of fools (Ps 14). The questions in this psalm invite readers to examine themselves and to look away from problems with the wicked. The question of who dwells in God's presence leads into a description of godly character qualities (cp. 24:3-6; Isa 33:14-16).

15:1 Only the godly may reside in the Lord's *presence* (5:4). As his guests, they experience his hospitality and protection. • *sanctuary* (or *tent*): In David's time, God's sanctuary was a tent (the Tabernacle; see 1 Sam 21:6; 2 Sam 6:17; 7:6; 12:20; 1 Chr 6:32).

15:2 The godly speak truthfully and act faithfully in their relationships. Unlike the wicked, they are open and transparent (12:2-4).

15:5 The Lord prohibited Israel from *charging interest* to people in need (Exod 22:25-27). • The assurance of

16:1
Ps 7:1; 17:8
e^l (0410)
• Ps 17:6

16:2
Ps 73:25

16:3
Ps 101:6; 119:63

16:4
Exod 23:13
Josh 23:7
Ps 32:10; 106:37-38

16:6
Ps 78:55
Jer 3:19

16:7
Ps 73:24; 77:6

16:8
Ps 27:8; 73:23; 110:5;
123:1-2

16:10
Ps 49:15; 86:13
*Acts 2:25-28; 13:35
s^{he}ol (7585)
• Ps 49:14

16:11
Ps 36:7-8
s^{imk}ah (8057)
• Ps 30:11

17:1
Ps 61:1; 88:2; 142:6

17:2
Ps 98:8-9; 99:4; 103:6

17:3
Job 23:10
Ps 26:1-2; 39:1; 66:10
Jer 50:20

17:4
Ps 10:5-11; 119:9, 101

17:5
Ps 18:36; 37:30-31;
44:18

17:6
e^l (0410)
• Ps 36:7

PSALM 16

A psalm of David.

- 1 Keep me safe, O ^eGod,
for I have come to you for refuge.
- 2 I said to the LORD, "You are my Master!
Every good thing I have comes from
you."
- 3 The godly people in the land
are my true heroes!
I take pleasure in them!
- 4 Troubles multiply for those who chase
after other gods.
I will not take part in their sacrifices
of blood
or even speak the names of their gods.
- 5 LORD, you alone are my inheritance, my
cup of blessing.
You guard all that is mine.
- 6 The land you have given me is a pleasant
land.
What a wonderful inheritance!
- 7 I will bless the LORD who guides me;
even at night my heart instructs me.
- 8 I know the LORD is always with me.
I will not be shaken, for he is right
beside me.
- 9 No wonder my heart is glad, and I
rejoice.
My body rests in safety.
- 10 For you will not leave my soul among the
^fdead

or allow your holy one to rot in the
grave.

- 11 You will show me the way of life,
granting me the ^sjoy of your presence
and the pleasures of living with you
forever.

PSALM 17

A prayer of David.

- 1 O LORD, hear my plea for justice.
Listen to my cry for help.
Pay attention to my prayer,
for it comes from honest lips.
- 2 Declare me innocent,
for you see those who do right.
- 3 You have tested my thoughts and
examined my heart in the night.
You have scrutinized me and found
nothing wrong.
I am determined not to sin in what I
say.
- 4 I have followed your commands,
which keep me from following cruel
and evil people.
- 5 My steps have stayed on your path;
I have not wavered from following
you.
- 6 I am praying to you because I know you
will answer, O ^hGod.
Bend down and listen as I pray.
- 7 Show me your unfailing love in
wonderful ways.

God's presence keeps the godly from destruction (16:8; 46:5; 125:1). Their circumstances might shake them temporarily, but they ultimately *stand firm* (30:6; 94:18; 112:6).

Ps 16 In this psalm of confidence, the poet moves quickly from a short petition (16:1), to expressions of passionate commitment to God and his people (16:2-6), to a conclusion of confident praise (16:7-11).

16:1 *TITLE A psalm:* Hebrew *miktam*. This may be a literary or musical term.

16:1 The psalmist feels *safe* because the Lord alone offers security (16:5-6), guidance (16:7-8), and the joy of his presence (16:9-11).

16:2 *I said to the LORD:* The various writers of the psalms pray, lament, and praise the Lord throughout the Psalter, and the Lord answers them (see 12:5-6).

16:4 The psalmist dissociates himself from ungodly worship, rituals, and words (see 15:3-5).

16:5 The *cup of blessing* represents God's provision for all the psalmist's needs (23:5; see 116:13; cp. 75:8; Isa 51:17).

16:6 The *land* is God's gift for his people (Deut 18:8).

16:7-8 God's instruction brings life (16:11; see 5:8; 23:1-3; 32:8; 73:24).
• The psalmist so deeply depends on the Lord for strength and joy that he senses that God is *right beside* him (16:11; see 73:23; 109:31; 110:1, 5; 121:5). • Peter quoted 16:8-11 in his sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:25-28).

16:9-11 Knowing that not even death can separate him from the Lord strengthens the psalmist's confidence. He fears a separation (see 13:3-4), but he remains confident of seeing the Lord (see 11:7).

16:9 and I rejoice: Greek version reads *and my tongue shouts his praises*. Cp. Acts 2:26.

16:10 The psalmist expresses his confidence that life continues beyond death. The apostles applied this text to the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:25-33; 13:35). • *among the dead:* Hebrew *in Sheol*. See note on 6:5. • *your holy one:* Or *your Holy One*; see 86:2.

16:11 *You will show me the way of life,*

/ granting me the joy of your presence: Greek version reads *You have shown me the way of life, / and you will fill me with the joy of your presence*. Cp. Acts 2:28. • *with you:* See 16:7-8; 110:1.

Ps 17 The psalmist pleads for God's protection and vindication, affirms his own integrity, and prays that the Lord will prevail against his fierce enemies.

17:1 *comes from honest lips:* Deception characterizes the wicked. The godly reject such deceit as a failure of character and pray for rescue from such people (5:6; 43:1; 120:2). They love honesty, truth, and integrity (15:2-3; 24:4; 101:7).

17:3-5 The psalmist declares his innocence (17:1) and commits himself to integrity by being open to God's examination.

17:3 Though he is not perfect, the psalmist commits himself to the Lord. He does not want to *sin* through deception, flattery, or gossip (see 10:7; 15:2-3; 17:1).

17:6-9 This prayer for God's care returns to the petition begun in 17:1-2 for redemption from evil.

By your mighty power you rescue
those who seek refuge from their
enemies.

8 Guard me as you would guard your own
eyes.

Hide me in the shadow of your
wings.

9 Protect me from wicked people who
attack me,
from murderous enemies who
surround me.

10 They are without pity.
Listen to their boasting!

11 They track me down and
surround me,
watching for the chance to throw me
to the ground.

12 They are like hungry lions, eager to tear
me apart—
like young lions hiding in ambush.

13 Arise, O LORD!
Stand against them, and bring them
to their knees!
Rescue me from the wicked with your
sword!

14 By the power of your hand, O LORD,
destroy those who look to this world
for their reward.
But satisfy the hunger of your treasured
ones.
May their children have plenty,
leaving an inheritance for their
descendants.

15 Because I am righteous, I will see you.
When I awake, I will see you face to
face and be satisfied.

PSALM 18

Ps 18:1-50 // 2 Sam 22:1-51

*For the choir director: A psalm of David, the
servant of the LORD. He sang this song to the
LORD on the day the LORD rescued him from
all his enemies and from Saul. He sang:*

1 I love you, LORD;
you are my strength.

2 The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and
my savior;
my God is my rock, in whom I find
protection.

He is my shield, the power that saves me,
and my place of safety.

3 I called on the LORD, who is worthy of
praise,
and he saved me from my enemies.

4 The ropes of death entangled me;
floods of ¹destruction swept over me.

5 The grave wrapped its ropes around me;
death laid a trap in my path.

6 But in my distress I cried out to the LORD;
yes, I prayed to my God for help.
He heard me from his sanctuary;
my cry to him reached his ears.

7 Then the earth quaked and trembled.
The foundations of the mountains
shook;
they quaked because of his anger.

8 Smoke poured from his nostrils;
fierce flames leaped from his mouth.
Glowing coals blazed forth from him.

9 He opened the heavens and came down;
dark storm clouds were beneath his
feet.

17:8
Deut 32:10
Ruth 2:12
Ps 36:7; 91:1, 4

17:10
1 Sam 2:3
Ps 31:18; 73:7-8

17:11
Ps 37:14; 88:17

17:12
Ps 7:2; 10:9

17:13
Ps 22:20

17:14
Ps 73:3-7

17:15
Ps 4:6-7; 16:11;
140:13

18:TITLE
//2 Sam 22:1-51

18:1
Ps 59:17

18:2
1 Sam 2:2
Ps 19:14; 28:1; 59:9,
11; 71:3; 75:10; 144:2

18:3
Num 10:9
Ps 34:6; 96:4

18:4
Ps 69:1-2; 116:3;
124:2-5
¹*beliya'al* (1100)
+Ps 101:3

18:5
Ps 116:3

18:6
Ps 3:4; 34:15

18:7
Ps 114:4, 6-7

18:9
Exod 20:21
Ps 97:2; 144:5

17:8 as you would guard your own eyes (literally as the pupil of your eye): This metaphor expresses God's care and affection for the psalmist (see Deut 32:10). • The shadow of God's wings is a place of his protection from enemies and adversity (36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:4).

17:13-14 The psalmist confidently prays for the Lord's victory, knowing that God possesses more power than the evildoers. The psalmist finds his joy in the Lord's inheritance (16:5), whereas the wicked search for joy in this world.

17:15 see you face to face: The psalmist does not allow temporary concerns raised by adversaries to stand in the way of his experiencing a real and lasting relationship with the Lord.

Ps 18 This royal drama of divine rescue (also found with minor variations in 2 Sam 22) encourages readers who are following the laments and requests for

rescue in Pss 16 and 17. The psalmist describes the dramatic nature of God's rescue in three different ways (18:7-15, 16-19, 30-36). The psalm also extends hope that a future Son of David will be totally victorious over evil (18:43-50; cp. Ps 2).

18:TITLE David was a faithful servant of the LORD, charged with the responsibility of establishing God's kingdom on earth (see 78:70; 132:10; 144:10). • The Lord rescued David from all his enemies when he enabled David to conquer them (see 2 Sam 8:1-14).

18:2 A shield is an image of protection, salvation, and victory (7:10; 18:2, 30, 35; 84:11; 91:4; 115:9, 10, 11; 119:114; 144:2). It evokes a response of trust, waiting, and godly confidence.

18:3 God deserves praise for his greatness and faithfulness (48:1; 96:4; 145:3).

18:5 The grave: Hebrew *Sheol*. See note on 6:5.

18:6 God dwells in his sanctuary, the

heavenly temple (102:19; see 14:2-3). He knows everything, sees everyone, and will vindicate the godly (see 113:7).

18:7-15 The psalmist depicts the Lord's descent from heaven to earth with phenomena such as earthquakes, flames, smoke, darkness, and rain. Creation shudders at God's marvelous coming as the Divine Warrior (see 97:2-5) and Judge (see 50:1-6).

18:7 The destabilization of the whole earth will be a means of God's judgment (77:17-18; 96:9; 97:4; 99:1; 104:32; Isa 29:6; Mic 1:3-4; Nah 1:2-6; Hag 2:7, 21).

18:8 his nostrils . . . his mouth: The psalmist likens God to an angry person or a fierce creature (see Job 41:12-22). • The terrifying images of smoke, flames, and glowing coals express God's wrath against sin.

18:9-11 The Lord's sovereignty extends over all of nature (see 104:2-4; 148:5-6).

18:10
Ps 80:1; 99:1

18:12
Ps 97:2; 104:1-2

18:13
Ps 29:3; 104:7-8

18:14
Ps 144:6

18:15
Exod 15:8
Ps 106:9

18:16
Ps 144:7

18:17
Ps 35:10

18:18
Ps 16:8; 59:16

18:19
Ps 31:8; 37:23; 41:1,
11; 118:5

18:20
Ps 7:8; 24:4

18:21
2 Chr 34:33
Ps 37:34; 119:33,
102-103

10 Mounted on a mighty angelic being, he
flew,
soaring on the wings of the wind.

11 He shrouded himself in darkness,
veiling his approach with dark rain
clouds.

12 Thick clouds shielded the brightness
around him
and rained down hail and burning
coals.

13 The LORD thundered from heaven;
the voice of the Most High
resounded
amid the hail and burning coals.

14 He shot his arrows and scattered his
enemies;
his lightning flashed, and they were
greatly confused.

15 Then at your command, O LORD,
at the blast of your breath,
the bottom of the sea could be seen,
and the foundations of the earth were
laid bare.

16 He reached down from heaven and
rescued me;

he drew me out of deep waters.

17 He rescued me from my powerful enemies,
from those who hated me and were
too strong for me.

18 They attacked me at a moment when I
was in distress,
but the LORD supported me.

19 He led me to a place of safety;
he rescued me because he delights
in me.

20 The LORD rewarded me for doing right;
he restored me because of my
innocence.

21 For I have kept the ways of the LORD;
I have not turned from my God to
follow evil.

22 I have followed all his regulations;
I have never abandoned his decrees.

23 I am blameless before God;
I have kept myself from sin.

24 The LORD rewarded me for doing right.
He has seen my innocence.

Salvation in the Psalms (Ps 18)

Ps 3:7-8; 6:4; 7:10;
14:7; 16:9-11; 17:7;
18:17-20, 27-28,
46-48; 20:6; 22:4-5;
25:4-14; 27:1; 31:1-
2, 15-16; 32:1-5;
33:18-19; 34:6-7,
17-19; 40:16-17;
43:5; 46:1-11; 62:1-
8; 70:4-5; 72:12-14;
80:1-19; 91:1-16;
98:1-3; 107:1-43;
121:1-8; 149:4

The psalmists experienced God's salvation (see 32:1-5) as rescue from evil in the world. They were well acquainted with grief (69:18). It seemed to them that God had abandoned them and that the wicked took advantage of the apparent injustice to ridicule the godly (3:2; 71:11).

While waiting for rescue, the psalmists had faith that the Lord was with them, keeping guard over them (Pss 46, 121), and would not abandon them (16:10; 94:14; see also 7:10; 31:2; 62:6-7; 144:2). The psalmists cried out for rescue, knowing that they were completely dependent on the Lord (31:15; 35:17; 69:13).

God graciously rescues his needy servants and answers their prayers (20:6, 9; 28:8; 34:6, 18; 40:13; 76:9; 107; 145:19; 149:4). When the Lord rescues his people, he receives glory through their thanksgiving, praise, and testimony (50:15; 79:9; 85:9). God's mighty acts are recorded in Scripture so that his people will praise him for what he has done and trust him to rescue them.

The Psalter encourages the godly to identify themselves with these stories of salvation. For example, in Ps 18 the psalmist describes his anguish, his lament, and the Lord's salvation (18:17, 19, 20, 43, 48) in such a manner that all the humble are invited to look to the Lord in hope (72:12). The Lord has rescued the psalmist, and the Lord will save his people again.

Salvation excludes the wicked (69:27; 119:155), who ridicule those whose hope is in the Lord's rescue (22:8). They may call to the Lord in their hour of judgment, but he will not rescue them (18:27; 50:22; 78:22). Hope in God's salvation requires a life of faith (119:123) and love of the Lord (60:5; 108:6). Such faith casts out fear (34:4) because the Lord does what is right (71:2).

The Lord Jesus came to save sinners. He ministered to the needy and the marginalized, though he died under oppression. He rescues people from themselves, from Satan, from death, and from adversity. He has the power to vindicate the faithful, judge sinners, and completely save all of God's children. He will renew all things, while excluding the wicked from his everlasting salvation.

18:10 *a mighty angelic being* (Hebrew *a cherub*): See notes on 1 Chr 28:18; 2 Chr 3:10-13.

18:12 *and burning coals: Or and lightning bolts*; also in 18:13.

18:19 Because God loves and *delights in*

the psalmist (see 18:1), he will save him (37:23; 41:11; 91:14-16).

18:20-24 The psalmist affirms that loyalty is rewarded. He puts his trust in the Lord (see 16:1) and commits himself to living with integrity (see Ps 1, 15, 24; see also 19:12-14).

18:21 *kept the ways of the LORD*: The psalmist faithfully obeys God's instructions (see 25:8-10). • *not turned . . . to follow evil*: The psalmist rejects the way of folly (see Pss 1, 14) and chooses the way of wisdom (see Pss 1, 15).

25 To the faithful you show yourself faithful;
to those with integrity you show integrity.

26 To the pure you show yourself pure, but to the wicked you show yourself hostile.

27 You rescue the humble, but you humiliate the proud.

28 You light a lamp for me. The LORD, my God, lights up my darkness.

29 In your strength I can crush an army; with my God I can scale any wall.

30 God's way is perfect. All the LORD's promises prove true. He is a shield for all who look to him for protection.

31 For who is God except the LORD? Who but our God is a solid rock?

32 God arms me with strength, and he makes my way perfect.

33 He makes me as surefooted as a deer, enabling me to stand on mountain heights.

34 He trains my hands for battle; he strengthens my arm to draw a bronze bow.

35 You have given me your shield of victory. Your right hand supports me; your help has made me great.

36 You have made a wide path for my feet to keep them from slipping.

37 I chased my enemies and caught them; I did not stop until they were conquered.

38 I struck them down so they could not get up; they fell beneath my feet.

39 You have armed me with strength for the battle; you have subdued my enemies under my feet.

40 You placed my foot on their necks. I have destroyed all who hated me.

41 They called for help, but no one came to their rescue. They even cried to the LORD, but he refused to answer.

42 I ground them as fine as dust in the wind. I swept them into the gutter like dirt.

43 You gave me victory over my accusers. You appointed me ruler over nations; people I don't even know now serve me.

44 As soon as they hear of me, they submit; foreign nations cringe before me.

45 They all lose their courage and come trembling from their strongholds.

46 The LORD lives! Praise to my Rock! May the God of my salvation be exalted!

47 He is the God who pays back those who harm me; he subdues the nations under me and rescues me from my enemies.

48 You hold me safe beyond the reach of my enemies; you save me from violent opponents.

49 For this, O LORD, I will praise you among the nations; I will sing praises to your name.

50 You give great victories to your king; you show unfailing love to your anointed, to David and all his descendants forever.

18:25
Ps 62:12
Matt 5:7
tamim (8549)
• Ps 19:7

18:27
Ps 72:12; 101:5
Prov 6:16-19

18:28
Job 18:6
Ps 27:1

18:29
Ps 118:10-12
2 Cor 12:9

18:30
Ps 12:6; 19:7

18:31
Deut 32:31, 39
Ps 62:2; 86:8-10

18:32
Isa 45:5

18:33
Deut 32:13
Hab 3:19

18:35
Ps 33:20; 63:8;
119:117

18:36
Ps 31:8; 66:9

18:37
Ps 44:5

18:38
Ps 36:12; 47:3

18:40
Ps 21:12; 94:23

18:41
Ps 50:22

18:42
Ps 83:13

18:43
2 Sam 3:1
Ps 89:27
Isa 55:5

18:44
Ps 66:3

18:46
tsur (6697)
• Ps 27:5

18:47
Ps 47:3; 94:1-2; 144:2

18:48
Ps 3:7; 27:5-6

18:49
Ps 108:1
*Rom 15:9

18:50
Ps 21:1; 28:8; 89:4

18:25-29 The *faithful* God remains true to his character. He loves faithfulness, blamelessness, and purity, and he hates the perverse (see 1:6).

18:26 The *pure* have clean hands (see 18:20-24). • *to the wicked you show yourself hostile*: The Lord knows each person's character, and he justly responds to them in kind.

18:27 *proud*: The Lord hates pride (101:5; 131:1; see Prov 6:16-17; 21:4; 30:13).

18:28 *light a lamp*: The Lord renews the psalmist's life, helping him overcome the *darkness* of adversity (see 112:4; 119:105).

18:29 *scale any wall*: God helps his servants fight their battles.

18:30-36 The psalmist experiences God's rescue and provision of victory.

18:30 *perfect*: God's character has integrity (see 18:26). • *God promises* to protect his people, and he does so. • *Seeking God's protection* entails trust and faith. Regardless of his feelings or external circumstances, the psalmist makes a deep commitment to the Lord. He experiences joy (5:11; 64:10) as he awaits the Lord's rescue (57:1).

18:32-34 The psalmist's victories come from the Lord. He completely depends on God.

18:36 A *wide path* represents freedom and safety (see 4:8; 119:35).

18:37-42 With help from the Divine Warrior, the psalmist experienced victory over his enemies.

18:40 Placing a *foot* on the *necks* of the enemy represents total victory (see Josh 10:23-26).

18:43-45 With God's victorious help, the psalmist achieved military and political success, thus fulfilling the history of David's dynasty (Ps 2). The previous laments find some resolution in this psalm.

18:46-50 The psalmist again reflects on the Lord's victories. God's marvelous rescue and the king's victory are cause for celebration.

18:47 God vindicates his servant and so fulfills his mission (Ps 2; see 47:3; 144:2).

18:49 The psalmist's vision of *praise . . . among the nations* motivated Paul in his mission to the Gentiles (Rom 15:9).

18:50 God appointed David, his *anointed* ruler, to bring order into God's world (see Ps 2). Both *David* and *his descendants* received this responsibility.

19:1

Gen 1:6-8
Rom 1:19-20
shamayim (8064)
▶ Ps 50:6

19:2

Ps 74:16

19:4

*Rom 10:18

19:6

Ps 113:3

19:7

Ps 23:3; 36:9; 111:7;
119:98-100, 142, 160

t Torah (8451)

▶ Ps 40:8

tamim (8549)

▶ Ps 119:1

nepesh (5315)

▶ Ps 23:3

19:8

Ps 12:6; 119:128

19:9

Ps 119:138, 142

19:10

Ps 119:127

19:11

Ps 17:4
Prov 29:18-19

19:12

Ps 51:1-2; 90:8;
139:23-24

19:13

Ps 25:11; 32:2

19:14

Ps 18:2; 104:34

go'el (1350)

▶ Isa 41:14

20:1

Ps 46:7, 11

20:2

Ps 3:4; 110:2

20:3

Ps 51:19

Acts 10:4

PSALM 19

For the choir director: A psalm of David.

- 1 The ^aheavens proclaim the glory of God.
The skies display his craftsmanship.
 - 2 Day after day they continue to speak;
night after night they make him known.
 - 3 They speak without a sound or word;
their voice is never heard.
 - 4 Yet their message has gone throughout
the earth,
and their words to all the world.
- God has made a home in the heavens for
the sun.
- 5 It bursts forth like a radiant bridegroom
after his wedding.
It rejoices like a great athlete eager to
run the race.
 - 6 The sun rises at one end of the heavens
and follows its course to the other end.
Nothing can hide from its heat.

- 7 The ^binstructions of the LORD are ^cperfect,
reviving the ^dsoul.
The decrees of the LORD are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.
- 8 The commandments of the LORD are
right,
bringing joy to the heart.
The commands of the LORD are clear,
giving insight for living.
- 9 Reverence for the LORD is pure,
lasting forever.

- The laws of the LORD are true;
each one is fair.
- 10 They are more desirable than gold,
even the finest gold.
They are sweeter than honey,
even honey dripping from the comb.
 - 11 They are a warning to your servant,
a great reward for those who obey
them.
 - 12 How can I know all the sins lurking in
my heart?
Cleanse me from these hidden faults.
 - 13 Keep your servant from deliberate sins!
Don't let them control me.
Then I will be free of guilt
and innocent of great sin.
 - 14 May the words of my mouth
and the meditation of my heart
be pleasing to you,
O LORD, my rock and my ^eredeemer.

PSALM 20

For the choir director: A psalm of David.

- 1 In times of trouble, may the LORD answer
your cry.
May the name of the God of Jacob
keep you safe from all harm.
- 2 May he send you help from his sanctuary
and strengthen you from Jerusalem.
- 3 May he remember all your gifts
and look favorably on your burnt
offerings. *Interlude*

Ps 19 God's wisdom is manifest in heaven (19:1-4), in nature (19:4-6), in his instruction (19:7-11), and in the life of the psalmist (19:12-14). Like Ps 8, this hymn uses creation to motivate reflection—it is a peaceful oasis after the drama of the lament and victory psalms. The psalm begins with creation as a source of wisdom, then moves to God's word as the perfect source of wisdom, and ends with the human need for redemption.

19:1-4 The created order is an arena of God's wisdom, and the heavens are the place of God's dwelling (2:4; see 8:1; 57:5; 89:6; 115:3). From heaven, God observes humanity (11:4; 14:2; 33:13; 53:2; 80:14; 102:19) and comes to the rescue of his servants (18:6-8, 13; 20:6; 57:3; 76:8; 144:5). The heavens remain unaffected by human failures and rebellions (see 2:1-4). They display God's qualities of fidelity, righteousness (36:5; 50:6; 57:10; 85:11; 89:2, 5; 97:6; 108:4), and wisdom (136:5; see 119:89-90). The heavens reveal the Lord's glory (see 19:1) and give evidence of his presence and handiwork.

19:1 The *glory of God* refers to the splendor or manifest presence of the

Creator (113:4). • *God* (Hebrew *'el*): *El* is an ancient designation for God that signifies his creative power (see note on Gen 1:1).

19:3-4 God's wisdom does not need to be spoken. Through creation, it is seen, felt, and experienced. Paul applied this text to condemn Israel for its lack of receptivity to Jesus Christ (Rom 10:18). • *They speak without a sound or word; their voice is never heard*: Or *There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard*. The Hebrew can be translated either way. • The *sun* is part of God's creation, but it is not a deity, as people of other nations in the ancient Near East commonly believed.

19:7-11 God's *instructions* to humans reveal his character and wisdom. God's instruction is precious and pleasant (119:103). It nourishes the person (Prov 16:24; 24:14) and is of more value than objects of human worth (81:13-16).

19:12-14 The psalmist knows his faults, so he prays to remain faithful and commits himself to the Lord.

19:13 An individual who commits *deliberate sins* does so with an insolent (86:14) or arrogant (119:21, 69) attitude.

• The *great sin* is rebellion (see 32:1).

19:14 words of my mouth . . . meditation of my heart: The psalmist desires to please God in everything he says and thinks (see Luke 6:45; Rom 12:1-2).

Pss 20–24 This sequence of psalms expresses the experience of moving from confidence and commitment (Pss 20–21), through anguish and abandonment (Ps 22), and finally to comfort, insight, and hope (Pss 23–24).

Ps 20 This royal prayer for God's victory (20:1-5) leads to confidence in God's rescue (20:6-8) and a communal request for God's response (20:9).

20:1-5 The community prays for the king's protection and victory.

20:1 The term *God of Jacob* affectionately expresses God's ancient relationship with his people (see 24:6; 46:7, 11; 75:9; 76:6; 81:1, 4; 84:8; 94:7; 114:7; 146:5). • *keep you safe from all harm*: See 59:1-2.

20:2 Jerusalem: Hebrew *Zion*. See "Mount Zion, the City of God" at Ps 48, p. 947.

20:3 Gifts and burnt offerings express submission to the Lord (cp. 40:6).

4 May he grant your heart's desires
and make all your plans succeed.
5 May we shout for joy when we hear of
your victory
and raise a victory banner in the name
of our God.
May the LORD answer all your prayers.
6 Now I know that the LORD rescues his
anointed king.
He will answer him from his holy
heaven
and rescue him by his great power.
7 Some nations boast of their chariots and
horses,
but we boast in the name of the LORD
our God.
8 Those nations will fall down and collapse,
but we will rise up and stand firm.
9 Give victory to our king, O LORD!
Answer our cry for help.

PSALM 21

For the choir director: A psalm of David.

1 How the king rejoices in your strength,
O LORD!
He shouts with joy because you give
him victory.
2 For you have given him his heart's
desire;
you have withheld nothing he
requested. *Interlude*
3 You welcomed him back with success
and prosperity.
You placed a crown of finest gold on
his head.
4 He asked you to preserve his life,
and you granted his request.

The days of his life stretch on
forever.
5 Your victory brings him great honor,
and you have clothed him with
splendor and majesty.
6 You have endowed him with eternal
blessings
and given him the joy of your
presence.
7 For the king trusts in the LORD.
The unfailing love of the Most High
will keep him from stumbling.
8 You will capture all your enemies.
Your strong right hand will seize all
who hate you.
9 You will throw them in a flaming
furnace
when you appear.
The LORD will consume them in his
anger;
fire will devour them.
10 You will wipe their children from the
face of the earth;
they will never have descendants.
11 Although they plot against you,
their evil schemes will never succeed.
12 For they will turn and run
when they see your arrows aimed at
them.
13 Rise up, O LORD, in all your power.
With music and singing we celebrate
your mighty acts.

PSALM 22

For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be sung to the tune "Doe of the Dawn."

1 My God, my God, why have you
abandoned me?

20:4
Ps 21:2; 145:19
20:5
1 Sam 1:17
Ps 9:14; 60:4
20:6
Ps 28:8; 41:11
Isa 58:9
20:7
2 Chr 32:8
Ps 33:16-17
20:9
Ps 17:6
21:1
Ps 59:16-17
21:2
Ps 37:4
21:4
Ps 61:6; 91:16; 133:3
21:5
Ps 8:5; 96:6
21:7
Ps 112:6; 125:1
21:8
Isa 10:10
21:9
Lam 2:2
Mal 4:1
21:11
Ps 2:1-3
21:12
Ps 7:12-13; 18:40
21:13
Ps 59:16; 81:1
zamar (2167)
Ps 27:6
22:1
*Matt 27:46
*Mark 15:34
*azab (5800)
Ps 27:10

20:4-5 *make all your plans succeed* . . . *answer all your prayers*: These requests could be those stated in 21:3-6 (cp. 27:4).

20:5 Troops carried a *victory banner* to battle, under which they gathered and roused one another to action (see Isa 11:10, 12).

20:6-8 An individual member of the community (20:1-5) responds with a word of assurance and confidence in God's help.

20:6 God chose *his anointed king* to be his ruler (see 2:7).

20:7 *chariots and horses*: These were instruments of war (see 33:16-17; 76:6; 147:10; Isa 30:16; 31:1-3).

Ps 21 God's people thank him for giving victory to the king.

21:2 The king has experienced *his heart's desire*—God's protection and

blessing (see 20:5; see also 2:8).

21:3-6 The king returned victorious from battle and received honor from the people. His greatest honor came from God, who gave him blessings, life, and his presence.

21:3 *success and prosperity*: See Prov 10:6.

21:4 God offers a rich quality of *life* (61:6-7; 91:14-16; 128:4-6) characterized by his presence (16:11; 23:6; 27:4; 36:9), joy (16:11), goodness (23:6; 34:14-15), and protection (41:2; 61:7).

21:6 God's *eternal blessings* also bring fullness of life in the present (see Ps 133).

21:7 The king enjoyed victory not because of his strength or intrinsic goodness but because God honored his faith.

21:8-12 As long as even a single enemy

opposed the king's authority, God's kingdom was not fully present. This prayer requests victory over all evil in the world.

21:9 The *flaming furnace* and *fire* portray the severity of God's judgment on the wicked. In the OT, this image often refers to hell (11:6; 18:8; 50:3; 68:2; 78:21; 79:5; 80:16; 89:46; 97:3; 104:4; 140:10; see Isa 66:24).

21:10 *children* . . . *descendants*: Evil will end when God destroys all opposition to himself (109:13; cp. 18:50; 22:30-31; 25:13; 102:28).

21:13 *Rise up* (or *be exalted*), as in 57:5, 11; 108:5) expresses communal praise and joy in God's greatness and *power*.

Ps 22 All previous laments pale in comparison with this outcry against the enemy and God's abandonment. The psalm contains two main sections: the lament (22:1-21) and praise for

22:2
Ps 42:3; 88:1

22:3
Ps 99:9; 148:14

22:6
Job 25:6
Ps 31:11
Isa 41:14; 49:7

22:7
Isa 53:3
Matt 27:39
Mark 15:29-30

22:8
Matt 27:43

22:9
Ps 71:5-6

22:10
Isa 46:3

22:11
Ps 72:12

22:13
Ps 17:12

22:14
Job 30:16
Ps 31:9-10

22:15
Ps 38:10; 104:29
*John 19:28

Why are you so far away when I groan
for help?

² Every day I call to you, my God, but you
do not answer.

Every night you hear my voice, but I
find no relief.

³ Yet you are holy,
enthroned on the praises of Israel.

⁴ Our ancestors trusted in you,
and you rescued them.

⁵ They cried out to you and were saved.
They trusted in you and were never
disgraced.

⁶ But I am a worm and not a man.
I am scorned and despised by all!

⁷ Everyone who sees me mocks me.

They sneer and shake their heads,
saying,

⁸ "Is this the one who relies on the LORD?
Then let the LORD save him!
If the LORD loves him so much,
let the LORD rescue him!"

⁹ Yet you brought me safely from my
mother's womb

and led me to trust you at my mother's
breast.

¹⁰ I was thrust into your arms at my birth.
You have been my God from the
moment I was born.

¹¹ Do not stay so far from me,
for trouble is near,
and no one else can help me.

¹² My enemies surround me like a herd of
bulls;
fierce bulls of Bashan have hemmed
me in!

¹³ Like lions they open their jaws
against me,
roaring and tearing into their prey.

¹⁴ My life is poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint.
My heart is like wax,
melting within me.

¹⁵ My strength has dried up like sunbaked
clay.
My tongue sticks to the roof of my
mouth.
You have laid me in the dust and left
me for dead.

Psalms of Suffering (Ps 22)

Pss 16, 40, 69, 102,
109
Isa 42:1-9;
Ps 13-53:12
Matt 27:46
Luke 23:34
Heb 10:5-10

The four psalms of suffering (also called "Passion Psalms"; Pss 16, 22, 40, 69) address the deep distress experienced by God's servant.

Psalm 22 is the most remarkable of the psalms of suffering. In this psalm, God's servant suffers though he is righteous. There is no suggestion of any sin, so the psalmist's suffering appears completely unjustified. There is no prayer for vengeance (see Ps 137) despite bitter persecution, like the sinless Christ (2 Cor 5:21) who even prayed for his executioners (Luke 23:34). Jesus recited part of Ps 22 when he was on the cross (22:1; see Matt 27:46), and the psalm has other noteworthy connections with the crucifixion (e.g., 22:6-8, 14-18).

The other psalms of suffering are also associated with Jesus Christ. Psalm 16:10 anticipates Christ's triumph over death (cp. Acts 2:24-31). Psalm 40:6-8 foreshadows the self-giving, redemptive work of Christ (Heb 10:5-10). Psalm 60 refers to isolation as resulting from commitment to God's cause (69:8-9). It anticipates the part Judas played in what was fundamentally God's work in Christ (69:25-26; 109:8; Isa 53:10; Acts 1:20).

redemption (22:22-31), which leads naturally to Ps 23. The apostles saw in this psalm an expression of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, who ultimately fulfilled the purpose of David's humiliation, rejection by people, and divine abandonment (Matt 27:35, 39, 43, 46; Mark 15:34; John 19:23-24, 28; Heb 2:12).

22:1-21 The psalmist alternates between reflections on his present dire circumstances and memories of the Lord's past faithfulness; he ends with a prayer for rescue.

22:1-2 A deep sense of alienation from God overwhelms the psalmist (see 10:1).

22:3 God, the *holy* King, is set apart from all his creation, but he chooses to

reveal himself to Israel. • God greatly desires that his people offer *praises* to him.

22:6-8 Both the Lord and people reject the psalmist. He vividly describes his anguish (22:1-2); he lives like a lowly animal.

22:7 Everyone *mocks* the psalmist's confidence in the Lord (see 3:2; Matt 27:43), which shames him (44:13-14; 74:10; 89:50; 109:25).

22:9-11 The psalmist reflects on his past relationship with God (see 22:3-5). The Lord has been his very life.

22:9 The Lord took care of the psalmist before he could do anything for himself (see 71:6; 139:13).

22:12-18 The psalmist returns to expressing his anguish and suffering (see 22:1-2, 6-8). His trouble comes from human beings who act like beasts.

22:12 *Bashan*, a region known for its herds and vegetation, produced strong *bulls* (68:30).

22:14 The psalmist's sense of being *poured out like water* expresses a meaningless, transitory existence that leaves him depleted.

22:15 Facing adversity is as horrible as dying of thirst (see 137:6). • Jesus may have had this verse in mind when he said, "I am thirsty" (John 19:28).

16 My enemies surround me like a pack of dogs;
 an evil gang closes in on me.
 They have pierced my hands and feet.
 17 I can count all my bones.
 My enemies stare at me and gloat.
 18 They divide my garments among themselves
 and throw dice for my clothing.
 19 O LORD, do not stay far away!
 You are my strength; come quickly to my aid!
 20 Save me from the sword;
 spare my precious life from these dogs.
 21 Snatch me from the lion's jaws
 and from the horns of these wild oxen.
 22 I will proclaim your name to my brothers
 and sisters.
 I will ^hpraise you among your
 assembled people.
 23 Praise the LORD, all you who fear him!
 Honor him, all you descendants of Jacob!
 Show him reverence, all you
 descendants of Israel!
 24 For he has not ignored or belittled the
 suffering of the needy.
 He has not turned his back on them,
 but has listened to their cries for help.

25 I will praise you in the great assembly.
 I will fulfill my vows in the presence
 of those who worship you.
 26 The poor will eat and be satisfied.
 All who seek the LORD will praise
 him.
 Their hearts will rejoice with
 everlasting joy.
 27 The whole earth will ^kacknowledge the
 LORD and ^return to him.
 All the families of the nations will
 bow down before him.
 28 For royal power belongs to the LORD.
 He rules all the nations.
 29 Let the rich of the earth feast and
 worship.
 Bow before him, all who are mortal,
 all whose lives will end as dust.
 30 Our children will also serve him.
 Future generations will hear about
 the wonders of the Lord.
 31 His righteous acts will be told to those
 not yet born.
 They will hear about everything he
 has done.

PSALM 23
A psalm of David.

1 The LORD is my ^bshepherd;
 I have all that I need.

22:16
 Ps 59:6-7
 John 20:25
22:18
^hMatt 27:35
^lMark 15:24
^lLuke 23:34
^lJohn 19:23-24
22:19
 Ps 22:11; 70:5
22:20
 Ps 35:17; 37:14
22:21
 Ps 34:4; 118:5; 120:1
22:22
^hHeb 2:12
^hhalal (1984)
 • Ps 109:30
 qahal (6951)
 • Ps 22:25
22:23
 Ps 33:8; 86:12
22:24
 Ps 27:9; 31:22
22:25
 Ps 35:18; 40:9-10
 qahal (6951)
 • Ps 26:5
22:26
 Ps 40:16; 69:32; 107:9
22:27
^zzakar (2142)
 • Ps 115:12
^sshub (7725)
 • Isa 55:7
22:28
 Ps 47:6-8
22:30
 Ps 102:18, 28
23:1
 John 10:11
^{ro'eh} (7462)
 • Ps 78:72

22:16 The wild *pack of dogs* represents fierce and unscrupulous people.

22:17-18 I can count all my bones: The psalmist's enemies have utterly shamed him by taking his garments (see 6:2). Jesus also suffered this disgrace (see Matt 27:35). • *stare at me and gloat*: Enemies make the psalmist the object of their scorn (see 35:24, 26; 38:16; 55:3; cp. 59:10). • *throw dice*: Literally *cast lots*. The casting of lots was sometimes a way for godly people to find God's direction (Lev 16:8; Num 27:21; Acts 1:24-26). Here, the lots are thrown simply as a game of chance. The soldiers threw dice for Jesus' clothing after the crucifixion (Matt 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34; John 19:24).

22:19-21 The psalmist faces his troubles by praying for God's rescue. Only the Lord has the strength to ward off *dogs, lions, and oxen*.

22:20 The *sword* makes evident the lethal intent of the enemy.

22:22-24 The psalmist praises the Lord and calls for the godly to join him. He tells of God's goodness to the needy, including himself.

22:22 I will proclaim your name: The writer to the Hebrews ascribes these words to Jesus (Heb 2:12). • *my brothers and sisters*: The literal reading in the Hebrew is *my brothers*. In the NT quotation,

the Greek translation picks up the broader meaning as "my brothers and sisters."

22:23 The godly respond with awe (see 22:25).

22:24 Unlike his response to the wicked (see 21:8-12), God cares about the needy and hears their prayers (51:17; 69:33; 102:17).

22:25-31 The psalmist vows to praise the Lord, the great King of the earth (22:27-28) who cares for the needy. God alone deserves praise.

22:25 The *great assembly* might include all nations (22:27; 26:12; 35:18).

22:26 God knows his people's needs and addresses them (63:5; 81:16; 103:5; 107:9; 132:15; 145:16; 147:14).

22:27 families of the nations: All clans and tribes of humanity (see Gen 12:3; Rev 5:9-10) will live in submission to the Lord (96:1-3; see note on 2:8; see also Pss 2; 72; Isa 2:2-4; 1 Cor 15:25-27).

22:28 The universal kingdom belongs to God alone (Obad 1:21).

22:29 The Lord invites all people, *rich and poor* (22:26), to the banquet as long as they *worship* him.

22:30 *Future generations* will join those from the past who praised the Lord (22:3-5). The descendants of the godly

will receive blessings (22:30-31), unlike the offspring of the wicked (21:10).

22:31 The Lord's *acts of redemption* (40:9; 50:6; 71:15, 16, 24; 97:6) demonstrate that he is *righteous* (see 4:1). His righteousness provides the character required for rule, judicial decisions, and relationships. This virtue leads to harmony and order (see 50:6).

Pss 23-28 These psalms develop the importance of integrity (25:4-7, 12-14, 21; 26:6, 11; 27:7-12), God's shepherd-ing care (23:1; 28:9), God's guidance (23:2-3; 25:5; 27:11), God's goodness (23:6; 25:7-8; 27:13), and living in his house (23:6; 26:8; 27:4, 8).

Ps 23 This psalm of trust and confidence in the Lord has been a favorite of God's people for generations. It expresses assurance of God's presence in the midst of adversity. It evokes images of the Good Shepherd (23:1-3; see Ezek 34:12; John 10:11) and of the messianic banquet (23:5-6; see Isa 25:6; Rev 19:9).

23:1-3 People in the ancient Near East commonly viewed their rulers as shepherds.

23:1 The Lord promises to take care of his children (34:9-10; Isa 51:14). He demonstrated this ability to Israel in the wilderness (Deut 2:7) and in the Promised Land (Deut 8:9).

23:2Ps 46:4
Ezek 34:14
Rev 7:17**23:3**Ps 5:8; 19:7; 85:13
^{nepesh} (5315)
• Ps 25:1
^{tsedaq} (6664)
• Ps 35:28**23:4**

Ps 27:1; 107:14

23:5

Ps 16:5; 78:19; 92:10

23:6

Ps 25:6-7; 10; 27:4-6

24:1Ps 89:11
*1 Cor 10:26
^{erets} (0776)
• Ps 47:2**24:3**

Ps 15:1; 65:4

² He lets me rest in green meadows;
he leads me beside peaceful
streams.

³ He renews my ^cstrength.
He guides me along ^dright paths,
bringing honor to his name.

⁴ Even when I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will not be afraid,
for you are close beside me.

Your rod and your staff
protect and comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a feast for me
in the presence of my enemies.
You honor me by anointing my head
with oil.
My cup overflows with blessings.

⁶ Surely your goodness and unfailing love
will pursue me
all the days of my life,
and I will live in the house of the LORD
forever.

PSALM 24*A psalm of David.*

- ¹ The ^eearth is the LORD's, and everything
in it.
The world and all its people belong
to him.
- ² For he laid the earth's foundation on the
seas
and built it on the ocean depths.
- ³ Who may climb the mountain of the
LORD?

God's Presence (Ps 24:3-6)Ps 4:6; 13:1; 21:6;
27:9; 44:3, 24; 67:1;
69:17; 88:14; 89:46;
102:2; 104:29; 143:7

Scripture writers often express the desire to experience God's close presence. In the experience of intimacy, God's rich goodness and love (21:6; 44:3) are all that people need (4:6). The absence of God's presence is distressing and damaging.

The poets of Israel often spoke of God's face as a way of expressing his presence or absence. They sought his face (24:6; 27:8; 105:4; 119:58). When his face shone or was turned toward his people, they experienced his presence in blessing, provision, and protection (67:1). God's hiding his face from his people was a picture of divine abandonment (13:1; 27:9; 44:24; 69:17; 88:14; 89:46; 102:2; 104:29; 143:7), as if God were not seeing or hearing them (10:11; 11:1; 42:3). The absence of God creates dismay, shame, and chaos, and may cause death (30:7; 44:24; 104:29).

The psalmists prayed for God's presence as they requested a change in their circumstances (31:16; 67:1; 69:17; 80:3, 7, 19) or as they reflected on answers to prayer (see 44:3). The godly long to be invited into God's presence (11:7; 16:9-11; 17:15). His presence alone satisfies their deepest longing (17:15; see Prov 16:15) and gives them lasting pleasure (1:2; 111:2; see also 22:8; 37:4; 40:6, 8; 43:4; 73:25). Everything about God delights them.

God's favor and goodness are experienced in his presence (23:6). God is the true good of the godly (16:2; 73:1), and he protects them (84:11). Hence, God's goodness and his Temple are closely linked (65:4). God shows his goodness by manifesting his presence (27:13; 31:19; 34:8, 10; 86:17; 103:5), and he satisfies his needy people (107:9; 116:7, 12). Goodness may be synonymous with God's unfailing love (23:6; 25:7; 69:16). In connection with the land or crops, goodness is understood as blessing, abundance, and prosperity (4:6; 21:3; 65:11; 68:10; 85:12; 106:5; 122:9; 128:2). God's goodness and presence promote health and vitality in his people (34:12-22).

23:2 Sheep *rest* after they have eaten their fill (Zeph 3:13; see Isa 11:7; cp. Isa 13:20; 27:10). • The Lord *leads* the sheep for their own benefit (see 5:8). • Sheep only drink from still water, so the shepherd seeks out *peaceful streams* for his flock.

23:3 Cp. 19:7; the Lord's word *renews my strength*. • The Lord *guides* by rescuing his people from evil (23:4-5; see 31:3), bringing them back to himself (5:8; 61:2), caring (48:14; 139:10), ruling (67:4), counseling (73:24), protecting (78:53; 107:30; 143:11), and instructing them in wisdom (27:11; see Prov 4:11). • The Lord's *name* guarantees the relationship; he guards his reputation against any accusation of his abandoning his people or allowing them to sin

(see 25:11; 31:3; 106:8; 143:11).

23:4 *darkest valley*: Or *dark valley of death*. • The shepherd used his *rod and staff* to fend off danger.

23:5 A *feast* demonstrates the Lord's care and mercy toward his people (see 22:26, 29). Although *enemies* can watch, they cannot trouble the guests. • The ritual of *anointing the head with oil* showed guests *honor* (92:9-11), hospitality, and refreshment (104:15; 133:2).

23:6 The Lord expresses his *unfailing love* through the *goodness* of his presence and other benefits that he alone provides (69:16; 86:17; 109:21; see 18:6; 61:4). He actively bestows care that is greater than the temporary trials

imposed by enemies (7:1).

Ps 24 The shepherd of Ps 23, who is also the King of the whole world, takes possession of Zion.

24:1-2 The kingdom belongs to the Creator, the Great King (cp. 22:27).

24:1 The Lord created and now rules the *earth and everything in it* (see 1 Cor 10:25-26). He sees *all its people* (33:14), regardless of their status (49:1-2).

24:2 God created everything in an orderly and stable manner (see 89:11; 102:25; 104:5).

24:3-6 The citizens of the King's realm include all who seek him. The Lord invites them to enter his presence.

Who may stand in his holy place?
 4 Only those whose hands and hearts are pure,
 who do not worship idols and never tell lies.
 5 They will receive the LORD's blessing and have a right relationship with God their savior.
 6 Such people may seek you and worship in your presence, O God of Jacob. *Interlude*
 7 Open up, ancient gates!
 Open up, ancient doors,
 and let the King of glory enter.
 8 Who is the King of glory?
 The LORD, strong and mighty;
 the LORD, invincible in battle.
 9 Open up, ancient gates!
 Open up, ancient doors,
 and let the King of glory enter.
 10 Who is the King of glory?
 The LORD of Heaven's Armies—
 he is the King of glory. *Interlude*

4 Show me the right path, O LORD;
 point out the road for me to follow.
 5 Lead me by your truth and teach me,
 for you are the God who saves me.
 All day long I put my hope in you.
 6 Remember, O LORD, your compassion
 and unfailing love,
 which you have shown from long ages
 past.
 7 Do not remember the rebellious sins of
 my youth.
 Remember me in the light of your
 unfailing love,
 for you are merciful, O LORD.
 8 The LORD is good and does what is right;
 he shows the proper path to those
 who go astray.
 9 He leads the humble in doing right,
 teaching them his way.
 10 The LORD leads with unfailing love and
 faithfulness
 all who keep his covenant and obey
 his demands.
 11 For the honor of your name, O LORD,
 forgive my many, many sins.
 12 Who are those who fear the LORD?
 He will show them the path they
 should choose.
 13 They will live in prosperity,
 and their children will inherit the
 land.
 14 The LORD is a friend to those who fear
 him.
 He teaches them his covenant.

24:4
 Matt 5:8
 24:5
 Deut 11:26-27
 24:6
 Ps 27:8
 24:7
^k*kabod* (3519)
 • Ps 145:5
 24:8
 Exod 15:3, 6
 24:9
 Matt 21:5
^m*melek* (4428)
 • Ps 33:16
 24:10
^t*tsaba'* (6635)
 • Ps 80:19
 25:1
ⁿ*nepesh* (5315)
 • Ps 34:2
 25:3
 Isa 49:22-23
 25:4
 Ps 5:8; 86:11
 25:5
 Ps 24:5; 40:1
^e*emeth* (0571)
 • Ps 26:3
 25:6
 Ps 103:17
^k*khesed* (2617)
 • Ps 51:1
 25:7
 Job 13:26
 Ps 51:1
 25:8
 Ps 86:5
 25:9
 Ps 23:3; 32:8
^a*anaw* (6035)
 • Ps 37:11
 25:10
 Ps 40:11; 103:17-18
 25:11
 Ps 79:9
 25:13
 Ps 37:11; 69:36

PSALM 25
A psalm of David.

1 O LORD, I give my life to you.
 2 I trust in you, my God!
 Do not let me be disgraced,
 or let my enemies rejoice in my defeat.
 3 No one who trusts in you will ever be
 disgraced,
 but disgrace comes to those who try
 to deceive others.

11 For the honor of your name, O LORD,
 forgive my many, many sins.
 12 Who are those who fear the LORD?
 He will show them the path they
 should choose.
 13 They will live in prosperity,
 and their children will inherit the
 land.
 14 The LORD is a friend to those who fear
 him.
 He teaches them his covenant.

24:3 These questions invite readers to look away from their problems with the wicked and to examine themselves (see 15:1). • God's *holy place* is the holy *mountain*, a reference both to Jerusalem and to heaven.
 24:4 Those with pure *hands* have not shed blood or injured relationships between people (see 9:12; 15:2-5). • Those with pure *hearts* commit themselves fully to the Lord, as evidenced in strength of character, transparency, and selflessness (51:10; 73:1; see Matt 5:8).
 24:10 *The LORD of Heaven's Armies* reigns from his home, the Temple in Jerusalem (84:3-5). He excludes sin and sinners (24:3-6) but protects all who dwell in Zion.
 Ps 25 This psalm is a Hebrew acrostic poem; each verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This individual lament includes instruction in wisdom and a community lament; it begins and ends with an affirmation of trust in the Lord (25:1-3, 15-22). The psalmist prays for guidance (25:4-7) and encourages the godly to practice a life-

style of wisdom (25:12-14). In addition to the enemies who trouble him, the psalmist confesses his sins (25:7, 11, 18) as part of his anguish. Trust develops with understanding God's character: He is compassionate, faithful, and good (25:8-10).
 25:1-3 The psalmist expresses confidence that the godly will be vindicated and his enemies will not succeed (see 25:15-22).
 25:1 The psalmist commits himself to the Lord instead of to idols (see 24:3-4).
 25:2 Enemies would *rejoice* by singing a victory song.
 25:4-7 In this prayer for guidance, compassion, and forgiveness, the psalmist turns to the Lord for instruction in wisdom. He confesses his past failures and acknowledges that his hope lies with his merciful Savior.
 25:4-6 *The right path*, the path of wisdom (see 5:8), means being open to instruction that leads to life (27:11; 43:3; 73:24; 119:12).

25:5 Biblical *hope* does not mean wishing for an event to turn out favorably. Hope trusts the Lord's will and gives the courage to face disappointments (33:22; 130:5).
 25:6 *compassion*: See also 51:1; 57:1; 103:8.
 25:8-10 The Lord keeps his people close to himself.
 25:11 The psalmist again asks forgiveness for his *many sins* (25:7; 32:1-5). The sins of Israel's kings demonstrated the weaknesses inherent in David's dynasty and the reasons for its failure in OT Israel (see Ps 89).
 25:12-15 Those who fear the Lord will receive further instruction and experience God's presence (25:14) and blessing (25:13).
 25:13 *prosperity*: See 23:6. • *inherit the land*: Unlike the wicked, who will perish (1:6), the godly have a secure future. In the end, God will bless them, and their blessings will endure (see 37:9, 11, 22, 29, 34; Isa 57:13; Matt 5:5).

25:15
Ps 31:4; 123:2; 141:8

25:16
Ps 69:16

25:17
Ps 40:12; 107:6

25:18
Ps 31:7; 103:3

25:19
Ps 3:1; 9:13

25:20
Ps 25:2; 86:2

25:21
Ps 25:3; 41:12

26:1
Ps 7:8; 13:5
Heb 10:23

26:2
Ps 7:9; 139:23

26:3
Ps 1:2; 48:9
^a*emeth* (0571)
→ Ps 86:11

26:4
Ps 1:1

26:5
Ps 1:1; 31:6; 139:21
^a*qahal* (6951)
→ Ps 89:5

26:6
Ps 43:3-4

26:7
Ps 9:1
^a*tadah* (8426)
→ Ps 42:4

26:8
Ps 27:4
^a*mishkan* (4908)
→ Ps 43:3

26:9
Ps 28:3

26:11
Ps 26:1; 69:18

26:12
Ps 22:22; 27:11; 40:2

27:1
Ps 18:28; 118:6, 14

27:3
Ps 3:6-7

15 My eyes are always on the LORD,
for he rescues me from the traps of
my enemies.

16 Turn to me and have mercy,
for I am alone and in deep distress.

17 My problems go from bad to worse.
Oh, save me from them all!

18 Feel my pain and see my trouble.
Forgive all my sins.

19 See how many enemies I have
and how viciously they hate me!

20 Protect me! Rescue my life from them!
Do not let me be disgraced, for in you
I take refuge.

21 May integrity and honesty protect me,
for I put my hope in you.

22 O God, ransom Israel
from all its troubles.

PSALM 26

A psalm of David.

1 Declare me innocent, O LORD,
for I have acted with integrity;
I have trusted in the LORD without
wavering.

2 Put me on trial, LORD, and
cross-examine me.

Test my motives and my heart.

3 For I am always aware of your unflinching
love,
and I have lived according to your
^btruth.

4 I do not spend time with liars
or go along with hypocrites.

5 I hate the ^cgatherings of those who do
evil,
and I refuse to join in with the wicked.

6 I wash my hands to declare my
innocence.

I come to your altar, O LORD,

7 singing a song of ^dthanksgiving
and telling of all your wonders.

8 I love your sanctuary, LORD,
the place where your glorious
presence ^edwells.

9 Don't let me suffer the fate of sinners.
Don't condemn me along with
murderers.

10 Their hands are dirty with evil schemes,
and they constantly take bribes.

11 But I am not like that; I live with integrity.
So redeem me and show me mercy.

12 Now I stand on solid ground,
and I will publicly praise the LORD.

PSALM 27

A psalm of David.

1 The LORD is my light and my salvation—
so why should I be afraid?

The LORD is my fortress, protecting me
from danger,
so why should I tremble?

2 When evil people come to devour me,
when my enemies and foes attack me,
they will stumble and fall.

3 Though a mighty army surrounds me,
my heart will not be afraid.

Even if I am attacked,
I will remain confident.

25:15-22 The psalmist expresses confidence in the Lord, commits to a life of integrity, and prays for rescue.

25:15 *the traps of my enemies*: See 5:9-10; 31:4; 140:5; Prov 3:26.

25:17-18 The psalmist can find no relief (see 4:1; 13:1-2) as his *problems go from bad to worse*. He associates his anguish with sin, but he does not elaborate on the nature of his sin (see 25:7, 11).

25:19-20 Knowing that the Lord hates violent people (see 11:5), the psalmist pleads with God to deal with these *enemies*.

25:21 Just as it opened, the psalm closes with a commitment of trust and *hope* (see 9:18; 25:5).

Ps 26 In this individual lament, the psalmist prays for redemption on the basis of his own innocence and the Lord's justice.

26:1-3 The psalmist opens himself to divine examination of his life, espe-

cially in the areas of his character and devotion.

26:3 For God's *truth* to become part of one's character requires a habitual commitment.

26:4-5 Because of his devotion to the Lord (26:1-3), the psalmist dissociates himself from evil people (see 1:1).

26:6-8 The psalmist demonstrates his loyalty to the Lord through pious rituals, praise, and acknowledgment of the Lord's presence in the Temple.

26:6 Ritual purity required the worshiper to *wash his hands*, symbolic of separation from evil and evildoers (see 73:13). • The *altar* symbolizes God's presence (43:4).

26:8 The *sanctuary* symbolized the manifest *presence* of the Lord (see 18:6).

26:9 *Don't let me suffer*: The end of the godly cannot be the same as that of the wicked.

26:12 The psalmist's footing on *solid ground* represents salvation (cp. 143:10).

• *publicly*: Or in the great assembly at the Temple (26:6-8; 22:25).

Ps 27 This psalm mixes two genres—a psalm of confidence (27:1-6) and an individual lament (27:7-14)—held together by the theme of longing for the Lord's presence. The psalmist focuses on the Lord; his circumstances are secondary. The strength of the psalmist's faith is expressed in his openness to the Lord's instruction, timing, and priorities.

27:1-3 The psalmist acknowledges the Lord at the center of his life (27:1). Because of God's presence, he engages his adversaries with confidence. They cannot intimidate him or penetrate his inner security.

27:1 *Light* expresses the Lord's goodness (27:13; see 4:6; 23:6; 31:19; 38:10; 43:3; 56:13).

27:2 The psalmist's enemies seek to *devour* him by living at his expense (see note on 14:4).

27:3 *remain confident*: See 25:2; 26:1.

4 The one thing I ask of the LORD—
the thing I seek most—
is to live in the house of the LORD all the
days of my life,
delighting in the LORD's perfections
and meditating in his Temple.

5 For he will conceal me there when
troubles come;
he will hide me in his sanctuary.
He will place me out of reach on a
high ^frock.

6 Then I will hold my head high
above my enemies who surround me.
At his sanctuary I will offer sacrifices
with shouts of joy,
singing and ^gpraising the LORD with
music.

7 Hear me as I pray, O LORD.
Be merciful and answer me!

8 My heart has heard you say, "Come and
talk with me."
And my heart responds, "LORD, I am
coming."

9 Do not turn your back on me.
Do not reject your servant in anger.
You have always been my helper.
Don't leave me now; don't abandon me,
O God of my salvation!

10 Even if my father and mother
^habandon me,
the LORD will hold me close.

11 Teach me how to live, O LORD.
Lead me along the right path,
for my enemies are waiting for me.

12 Do not let me fall into their hands.
For they accuse me of things I've
never done;
with every breath they threaten me
with violence.

13 Yet I am confident I will see the LORD's
goodness
while I am here in the land of the
living.

14 Wait patiently for the LORD.
Be brave and courageous.
Yes, wait patiently for the LORD.

PSALM 28
A psalm of David.

1 I pray to you, O LORD, my rock.
Do not turn a deaf ear to me.
For if you are silent,
I might as well give up and die.

2 Listen to my prayer for mercy
as I cry out to you for help,
as I lift my hands toward your holy
sanctuary.

3 Do not drag me away with the
wicked—
with those who do evil—
those who speak friendly words to their
neighbors
while planning evil in their hearts.

4 Give them the punishment they so richly
deserve!
Measure it out in proportion to their
wickedness.
Pay them back for all their evil deeds!
Give them a taste of what they have
done to others.

5 They care nothing for what the LORD has
done
or for what his hands have made.
So he will tear them down,
and they will never be rebuilt!

6 Praise the LORD!
For he has heard my cry for mercy.

27:4
Ps 23:6; 26:8

27:5
Ps 17:8; 31:20
^ftsur (6697)
• Ps 31:2

27:6
Ps 13:6; 107:22
^gzamar (2167)
• Ps 30:12

27:7
Ps 13:3

27:8
Ps 105:4

27:9
Ps 6:1; 40:17; 69:17;
94:14

27:10
Isa 40:11; 49:15
^hazab (5800)
• Prov 4:6

27:11
Ps 5:8; 25:4; 86:11

27:12
Ps 35:11
Matt 26:60
Acts 9:1

27:13
Ps 116:9; 142:5
Isa 38:11

27:14
Ps 31:24; 37:34

28:1
Ps 18:2; 35:22; 83:1;
88:4-5

28:2
Ps 141:2
Lam 2:19
1 Tim 2:8

28:3
Ps 26:9-10; 55:21;
62:4
Jer 9:8

28:4
Ps 62:12
2 Tim 4:14
Rev 18:6

28:5
Isa 5:12

28:6
Ps 116:1

27:4-6 Searching for and enjoying the Lord's presence provides the psalmist's foundation for confidence and security. He lives in the assurance of God's protection and looks forward to offering sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise (see 18:6).

27:5 *sanctuary* (or *tabernacle*): This early shrine was the Israelites' place of worship before the Temple was constructed.

27:6 *hold my head high*: A sign of victory. • The granting of the request of 27:4 prompts *sacrifices with shouts of joy*.

27:7-12 The psalmist requests the Lord's mercy, presence, and instruction. God is the psalmist's greatest good; enemies and other circumstances are peripheral.

27:7-8 Unlike the wicked (10:4), who only want a temporary advantage (78:34-36), the godly search for the Lord as a thirsty person searches for water in the desert (63:1; 105:4; 119:2, 10; Matt 6:33). They act wisely (34:10, 14) while waiting for the Lord to resolve their crisis (34:4; 69:6; 77:2; 119:58).

27:13-14 The psalmist expresses confidence and hope in the Lord's presence. To live in faith means to *wait patiently* in recognition of the Lord's goodness. Such a life is not always pleasant for the godly (42:2-3, 43:5), but their future is secure (37:9; 130:7; see 9:18).

Ps 28 In this individual lament, the psalmist pleads for justice and mercy. He expresses confidence in the Lord's strength and faithfulness, and he intercedes for the Lord's people.

28:1-2 The psalmist urges the Lord to

listen; his urgency flows out of the tension between his deep relationship with the Lord and the adversity he faces.

28:1 *if you are silent*: The psalmist appeals to the Lord to take action (35:22; 50:3; 83:1; 109:1).

28:2 It was common to *lift up one's hands* in a gesture of devoted prayer (63:4; 134:2).

28:3-5 The psalmist curses his enemies, asking God for retribution and vindication.

28:5 The wicked do not acknowledge the difference between the sacred and the common, so they have no respect for the Lord's creation, redemption, or revelation.

28:6-8 The psalmist anticipates rescue because of his confidence in the Lord's justice.

28:7
Ps 13:5-6; 16:9; 40:3;
59:17
magen (4043)
• Ps 84:9
leb (3820)
• Ps 86:12

28:8
Ps 20:6

28:9
Deut 9:29; 32:9
Ps 33:12; 80:1
Isa 40:11

29:1
1 Chr 16:28-29
Ps 96:7-9
ben 'el (1121, 0410)
• Ps 89:6

29:2
khawah (7812)
• Isa 46:6

29:4
Ps 68:33

29:5
Isa 2:13

29:6
Deut 3:9
Ps 114:4

29:8
Num 13:26

29:10
Gen 6:17
Ps 10:16

29:11
Ps 28:8; 37:11; 68:35
Isa 40:29
shalom (7965)
• Ps 34:14

30:1
Ps 25:2; 35:19, 24;
118:28; 145:1
rum (7311)
• Ps 34:3

30:2
Ps 6:2; 88:13

30:3
Ps 28:1; 86:13

30:4
Ps 97:12; 149:1

- ⁷ The LORD is my strength and ⁱshield.
I trust him with all my ^jheart.
He helps me, and my ^jheart is filled with
joy.
I burst out in songs of thanksgiving.
- ⁸ The LORD gives his people strength.
He is a safe fortress for his anointed
king.
- ⁹ Save your people!
Bless Israel, your special possession.
Lead them like a shepherd,
and carry them in your arms forever.

PSALM 29

A psalm of David.

- ¹ Honor the LORD, you ^kheavenly beings;
honor the LORD for his glory and
strength.
- ² Honor the LORD for the glory of his
name.
^aWorship the LORD in the splendor of
his holiness.
- ³ The voice of the LORD echoes above the
sea.
The God of glory thunders.
The LORD thunders over the mighty
sea.
- ⁴ The voice of the LORD is powerful;
the voice of the LORD is majestic.
- ⁵ The voice of the LORD splits the mighty
cedars;
the LORD shatters the cedars of
Lebanon.

- ⁶ He makes Lebanon's mountains skip like
a calf;
he makes Mount Hermon leap like a
young wild ox.
- ⁷ The voice of the LORD strikes
with bolts of lightning.
- ⁸ The voice of the LORD makes the barren
wilderness quake;
the LORD shakes the wilderness of
Kadesh.
- ⁹ The voice of the LORD twists mighty oaks
and strips the forests bare.
In his Temple everyone shouts, "Glory!"
- ¹⁰ The LORD rules over the floodwaters.
The LORD reigns as king forever.
- ¹¹ The LORD gives his people strength.
The LORD blesses them with ^bpeace.

PSALM 30

*A psalm of David. A song for the
dedication of the Temple.*

- ¹ I will ^cexalt you, LORD, for you
rescued me.
You refused to let my enemies
triumph over me.
- ² O LORD my God, I cried to you for help,
and you restored my health.
- ³ You brought me up from the grave,
O LORD.
You kept me from falling into the pit
of death.
- ⁴ Sing to the LORD, all you godly ones!
Praise his holy name.

28:7 *my strength and shield*: The Lord protects the psalmist (see 59:9, 17).

28:9 The poem closes with intercession for the Lord's people. • *Bless Israel, your special possession*: Literally *Bless your inheritance*. See 29:11; 133:3.

Ps 29 This nature hymn in praise of the Creator declares that the Lord holds all power over nature. God uses the same unsurpassed strength to care for his people.

29:1-2 The psalmist issues a call to *honor* the Lord for his power (cp. 96:7-8). • *you heavenly beings* (literally *you sons of God*): Angels or deities who, some believed, held special powers. The psalmist did not believe in other deities but called on people who thought they were real to look to the Lord as the only God.

29:3-9 The word translated *voice* (Hebrew *qol*) can also mean "noise" (1 Kgs 1:45) or "thunder" (Joel 3:16). The Lord's voice is awe-inspiring, and it dominates whatever rumblings people might attribute to other deities.

29:3 *God* (Hebrew *'el*): See note on 19:1.

29:5 The *cedars of Lebanon* were known for their size and quality (see Isa 2:13).

29:6 *Lebanon's mountains* and *Hermon* are high mountains to the north of Israel. • The Lord can cause even immense *mountains* to shake at his command (see 114:4). • *Mount Hermon*: Hebrew *Sirion*, another name for Mount Hermon.

29:8 The *wilderness of Kadesh* was located south of Judah. God's voice can be heard throughout the land, from the north (29:6) to the south.

29:9 *twists mighty oaks*: Or *causes the deer to writhe in labor*. The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.

29:10 The image of powerful *floodwaters* connects with the Genesis flood (Gen 6:17). The Lord *reigns as king* over the whole created order; no one contests his kingdom.

29:11 The ruler of nature *blesses* his people *with peace* (see 28:8-9; 37:11; 133:3).

Ps 30 This individual thanksgiving

psalm opens in praise to the Lord for his salvation (30:1-3), then contrasts God's favor with his anger (30:4-7), and ends with a transformation from mourning to dancing (30:8-12).

30:1 Perhaps *David* wrote this psalm in advance *for the dedication of the Temple*, making his own experience representative of the nation's.

30:1-3 The psalmist praises God for his triumph over adversity, which he likens to salvation from the grave.

30:1 *I will exalt you* is a call to lift up the Lord's name in praise and thanksgiving (34:3; 81:1; 99:5, 9; 107:32; 118:28; 145:1; see Exod 15:1; Isa 25:1). • *you rescued me*: God pulled the psalmist from death (30:3). • In his justice and care, God *refused to let* the psalmist's *enemies triumph* (see 26:9; 27:12; 28:3; 31:8).

30:3 *from the grave*: Hebrew *from Sheol*. See note on 6:5.

30:4 The godly should celebrate the Lord's acts of rescue with song and *praise* (33:21; 97:12; 103:1; 105:3; 145:21).

5 For his anger lasts only a moment,
but his favor lasts a lifetime!
Weeping may last through the night,
but joy comes with the morning.

6 When I was prosperous, I said,
"Nothing can stop me now!"

7 Your favor, O LORD, made me as secure
as a mountain.
Then you turned away from me, and I
was shattered.

8 I cried out to you, O LORD.
I begged the Lord for mercy, saying,
9 "What will you gain if I die,
if I sink into the grave?
Can my dust praise you?
Can it tell of your faithfulness?"

10 Hear me, LORD, and have mercy on me.
Help me, O LORD."

11 You have turned my mourning into
joyful dancing.
You have taken away my clothes of
mourning and clothed me with joy,
12 that I might sing praises to you and not
be silent.
O LORD my God, I will give you thanks
forever!

PSALM 31

For the choir director: A psalm of David.

1 O LORD, I have come to you for
protection;
don't let me be disgraced.
Save me, for you do what is right.

2 Turn your ear to listen to me;
rescue me quickly.
Be my rock of protection,
a fortress where I will be safe.

3 You are my rock and my fortress.
For the honor of your name, lead me
out of this danger.

4 Pull me from the trap my enemies set
for me,
for I find protection in you alone.

5 I entrust my spirit into your hand.
Rescue me, LORD, for you are a
faithful God.

6 I hate those who worship worthless
idols.
I trust in the LORD.

7 I will be glad and rejoice in your
unfailing love,
for you have seen my troubles,
and you care about the anguish of my
soul.

8 You have not handed me over to my
enemies
but have set me in a safe place.

9 Have mercy on me, LORD, for I am in
distress.
Tears blur my eyes.
My body and soul are withering away.

10 I am dying from grief;
my years are shortened by sadness.
Sin has drained my strength;
I am wasting away from within.

11 I am scorned by all my enemies
and despised by my neighbors—
even my friends are afraid to come
near me.
When they see me on the street,
they run the other way.

12 I am ignored as if I were dead,
as if I were a broken pot.

13 I have heard the many rumors
about me,
and I am surrounded by terror.
My enemies conspire against me,
plotting to take my life.

14 But I am trusting you, O LORD,
saying, "You are my God!"

30:5
Ps 103:9; 118:1

30:6
Ps 10:6

30:7
Ps 104:29

30:9
Ps 6:5

30:10
Ps 4:1; 27:7, 9

30:11
Jer 31:4, 13
simk'ah (8057)
Ps 51:8

30:12
Ps 44:8; 57:8; 108:1
zamar (2167)
Ps 33:2
yadah (3034)
Ps 32:5
olam (5769)
Ps 44:8

31:1-4
//Ps 71:1-3

31:1
Ps 25:2; 143:1

31:2
Ps 71:3; 86:1; 102:2
tsur (6697)
Ps 61:2

31:3
Ps 18:2; 23:2-3

31:4
Ps 25:15

31:5
Luke 23:46
Acts 7:59

31:6
Jon 2:8-9

31:7
Ps 10:14; 90:14

31:8
Deut 32:30

31:9
Ps 32:3; 38:3-4; 102:4

31:10
Ps 13:2

31:11
Ps 38:11; 88:8, 18
Isa 53:3

31:12
Ps 88:5

31:13
Jer 20:10
Matt 27:1

31:14
Ps 140:6; 143:9

30:6-7 *Nothing can stop me now!* The psalmist confesses his presumptuous attitude (cp. 32:3-4). • *secure as a mountain*: In the psalms, this phrase creates a powerful image of stability and of God's control (see 11:1; 18:7; 36:6; 46:2; 72:3; 76:4; 83:14; 97:5; 114:4, 6; 125:2). • *I was shattered*: The absence of God's favor destroys the security of the proud (cp. 104:27-30).

30:8-12 The psalmist faced death (also in 30:1-3)—perhaps literally, perhaps figuratively. But when he turned to the Lord, the Lord rescued him and turned his *mourning into joyful dancing*. Only God's favor can permanently and powerfully overcome human failure and the depths of despair.

Ps 31 The psalmist encourages the

godly to find refuge in the Lord and wait for his salvation. Despite having had a death-like experience, he testifies to the Lord's faithfulness. This psalm foreshadows the suffering of Jesus (Luke 23:46).

31:1-5 The Lord offers refuge to anyone who comes to him for protection. The psalmist trusts in and submits to the Lord. See also 71:1-3.

31:2 The psalmist issues an urgent call for the Lord to pay attention to his desperate situation (71:2; 88:2; 102:2).

31:5 *I entrust my spirit into your hand*: Whether he lives or dies, the psalmist will trust his Lord. Jesus uttered these words on the cross just before he died (Luke 23:46).

31:6-8 Trust in the Lord requires con-

fidence that he has our best interests at heart.

31:8 A *safe place* literally means a broad place, in contrast to a "narrow" or constricted place of distress (see 18:19).

31:9-13 In this prayer for mercy, the psalmist wedges a description of the intensity of suffering and the pain of rejection between two affirmations of trust (31:6, 14).

31:10 *wasting away from within*: This is a powerful description of how despair takes a toll on our physical well-being.

31:14-18 Hope does not confide in frail and changeable human beings but only in the Lord. The sufferer entrusts himself to God while waiting for the Lord's justice.

31:15

Ps 143:9

31:16

Num 6:24-26

31:17

Ps 25:2-3, 20

31:18

1 Sam 2:3

31:20

Job 5:21

Ps 27:5; 31:13

31:21

Ps 17:7

31:22

Ps 145:19

Lam 3:54-56

31:23

Deut 32:40-41

Ps 37:28

31:24

Ps 27:14

32:1

^a*ashrey* (0835)^bPs 34:8^c*pesha'* (6588)^dPs 32:5^e*nasa'* (5375)^fPs 32:5

32:2

Ps 85:2

^gRom 4:7-8^h*ruakh* (7307)ⁱPs 51:11

32:3

Ps 31:10; 39:2

32:4

Ps 22:15; 39:10

32:5

Lev 26:40

Ps 38:18

1 Jn 1:9

^j*yadah* (3034)^kPs 49:18^l*pesha'* (6588)^mPs 51:3ⁿ*nasa'* (5375)^oPs 85:2

32:6

Ps 69:13

Isa 43:2

^p*palal* (6419)^qPs 72:15

32:7

Ps 31:20; 40:3; 121:7

32:8

Ps 25:8; 33:18-19

- 15 My future is in your hands.
Rescue me from those who hunt me
down relentlessly.
- 16 Let your favor shine on your servant.
In your unfailing love, rescue me.
- 17 Don't let me be disgraced, O LORD,
for I call out to you for help.
Let the wicked be disgraced;
let them lie silent in the grave.
- 18 Silence their lying lips—
those proud and arrogant lips that
accuse the godly.
- 19 How great is the goodness
you have stored up for those who fear
you.
You lavish it on those who come to you
for protection,
blessing them before the watching
world.
- 20 You hide them in the shelter of your
presence,
safe from those who conspire against
them.
You shelter them in your presence,
far from accusing tongues.
- 21 Praise the LORD,
for he has shown me the wonders of
his unfailing love.
He kept me safe when my city was
under attack.
- 22 In panic I cried out,
"I am cut off from the LORD!"
But you heard my cry for mercy
and answered my call for help.
- 23 Love the LORD, all you godly ones!
For the LORD protects those who are
loyal to him,
but he harshly punishes the arrogant.

- 24 So be strong and courageous,
all you who put your hope in the LORD!

PSALM 32

A psalm of David.

- 1 Oh, what joy for those
whose disobedience is forgiven,
whose sin is put out of sight!
- 2 Yes, what joy for those
whose record the LORD has cleared
of guilt,
whose lives are lived in complete
honesty!
- 3 When I refused to confess my sin,
my body wasted away,
and I groaned all day long.
- 4 Day and night your hand of discipline
was heavy on me.
My strength evaporated like water in
the summer heat. *Interlude*
- 5 Finally, I confessed all my sins to you
and stopped trying to hide my guilt.
I said to myself, "I will confess my
rebellion to the LORD."
And you forgave me! All my guilt is
gone. *Interlude*
- 6 Therefore, let all the godly pray to you
while there is still time,
that they may not drown in the
floodwaters of judgment.
- 7 For you are my hiding place;
you protect me from trouble.
You surround me with songs of
victory. *Interlude*
- 8 The LORD says, "I will guide you along
the best pathway for your life.
I will advise you and watch over you.

31:15 *My future is in your hands:* To relinquish control of timing is one way to express submission.

31:17 The psalmist, who did not deserve to be *disgraced*, invokes the principle of retribution (see note on 1:6). • *in the grave:* Hebrew in *Sheol*.

31:19-24 The psalmist thanks the Lord for answering his prayer (31:1-18) and rescuing him.

31:19-20 Since the godly are under the Lord's protection and shelter, evil has no power over them.

31:21-22 *Praise the LORD:* The psalmist expresses his joy at the experience of God's goodness and love. Throughout his ordeal, the Lord has cared for him.

31:23-24 Out of his own pain and renewed awareness of the Lord's goodness, the psalmist turns to others who suffer. He holds out the promise of

God's loving care for those who persevere in hoping for the Lord.

Ps 32 This wisdom psalm of confession and thanksgiving encourages and exhorts the godly to learn from the psalmist's experience of sin, denial, confession, and forgiveness. This psalm was one of the seven psalms of penitence used in the early church (also Ps 6, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143).

32: TITLE psalm: Hebrew *maskil*. This may be a literary or musical term.

32:1-2 The Lord's forgiveness restores people to fellowship with him, clears them of *guilt*, and gives them great *joy*. Paul quoted this text when explaining justification by faith alone (Rom 4:4-8).

32:2 of guilt: Greek version reads *of sin*. Cp. Rom 4:7.

32:3-5 The psalmist acknowledges his own sin (see 19:12-13; 25:7, 11, 15-22) and his resistance to confessing sin.

The Lord pressed him hard until he confessed his guilt.

32:4 The psalmist attributes his suffering directly to the Lord's *hand of discipline* (cp. 38:2; 39:10).

32:5 God has forgiven the *guilt* and *rebellion* of 32:1. The Lord's nature is to reconcile and forgive (78:38; 85:2; 130:4), but he requires confession and repentance.

32:6 The *godly* will learn from the psalmist's experience to pray for forgiveness before it is too late.

32:7 The Lord promises to be his people's *hiding place* (31:20). Instead of being overwhelmed by terror (31:13), the psalmist is surrounded by *songs of victory*.

32:8 God interrupts the psalmist's teaching with a message that invites the godly to receive the Lord's wisdom (see 5:8; 23:3; 25:4-6).

9 Do not be like a senseless horse or mule that needs a bit and bridle to keep it under control.”
 10 Many sorrows come to the wicked, but unending love surrounds those who trust the LORD.
 11 So rejoice in the LORD and be glad, all you who obey him!
 Shout for joy, all you whose hearts are pure!

PSALM 33

1 Let the godly sing for joy to the LORD; it is fitting for the pure to praise him.
 2 Praise the LORD with melodies on the lyre;
 make music for him on the ten-stringed harp.
 3 Sing a new song of praise to him; play skillfully on the harp, and sing with joy.
 4 For the word of the LORD holds true, and we can trust everything he does.
 5 He loves whatever is just and good; the unending love of the LORD fills the earth.
 6 The LORD merely spoke, and the heavens were created. He breathed the word, and all the stars were born.
 7 He assigned the sea its boundaries and locked the oceans in vast reservoirs.
 8 Let the whole world fear the LORD, and let everyone stand in awe of him.
 9 For when he spoke, the world began! It appeared at his command.

10 The LORD frustrates the plans of the nations and thwarts all their schemes.
 11 But the LORD’s plans stand firm forever; his intentions can never be shaken.
 12 What joy for the nation whose God is the LORD, whose people he has chosen as his inheritance.
 13 The LORD looks down from heaven and sees the whole human race.
 14 From his throne he observes all who live on the earth.
 15 He made their hearts, so he understands everything they do.
 16 The best-equipped army cannot save a king, nor is great strength enough to save a warrior.
 17 Don’t count on your warhorse to give you victory—for all its strength, it cannot save you.
 18 But the LORD watches over those who fear him, those who rely on his unending love.
 19 He rescues them from death and keeps them alive in times of famine.
 20 We put our hope in the LORD. He is our help and our shield.
 21 In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name.
 22 Let your unending love surround us, LORD, for our hope is in you alone.

32:10
 Ps 16:4
 Prov 16:20
 Rom 2:9-10
33:1
 Ps 32:11; 147:1
33:2
 Ps 92:3
 zamar (2167)
 Ps 47:7
33:3
 Ps 96:1; 98:1
 Rev 5:9
33:4
 Ps 19:8
33:5
 Ps 11:7; 119:64
 mishpat (4941)
 Ps 37:30
33:6
 Gen 1:6-7
 Ps 148:5
 Heb 11:3
33:7
 Exod 15:8
 Job 38:8-11
33:8
 Ps 67:7; 96:9
33:9
 Gen 1:3
 Ps 148:5
33:10
 Ps 2:1-4
 Isa 8:9-10; 19:3
33:12
 Exod 19:5
 Ps 144:15
33:16
 Ps 44:6; 147:10
 melek (4428)
 Ps 47:2
33:17
 Ps 20:7
 Prov 21:31
33:18
 Ps 34:15
 yakhal (3176)
 Ps 42:11
33:19
 Ps 37:19
33:20
 Ps 115:9
 Isa 8:17

32:9 The *senseless* person is not wise. Rejecting the Lord’s counsel ruins life and makes one like an animal (see Isa 1:3; Jas 3:3).
32:10 Difficulties common to all of life will ensnare the wicked, whereas the Lord promises to protect the godly with his care.
Ps 33 This hymn of creation (see also Pss 8, 19, 104, 145) might be a continuation of Ps 32. It exhorts readers to praise God (33:1-3), to recognize the power of his word in creation (33:4-7), and to fear the Creator (33:8-11). It offers hope to forgiven sinners (Ps 32) that they can live a new life in the fear of the Lord and under divine protection.
33:1-3 The psalmist exhorts the godly to praise the Lord with melodies, with a new song, and with skillfully-played music.
33:4-7 God’s word displays his character and his power.

33:7 The nations surrounding Israel thought that the sea had divine power, but it is under God’s control, within boundaries that he set (see 104:8-10).
33:8-11 Fear of the Lord begins with awe for God and for his powerful word. His word created everything and continues to order and sustain creation. He frustrates the plans of people who oppose his plans.
33:8 The power of the Lord extends to all the nations (see Ps 2; 96:1-3).
33:10 The plans and schemes of the mighty will not prevail, except by God’s will (see Isa 8:9-10).
33:11 God’s word still orders creation and will do so forever. • God’s intentions are marvelous (40:5; 92:5).
33:12 People who fear God are chosen as his inheritance (see 33:13-19); this excludes rebellious people (78:62).

33:13-19 From the heavens, the Lord searches out and cares for anyone who fears him (see 14:2-3).
33:16-17 army . . . great strength . . . warhorse: Even military might is under God’s control (see 33:10-11; Eccl 9:11). • strength: See note on 33:22.
33:18 God watches over all who live by his counsel (32:8). He protects, rescues, and remains close to them (34:15-22).
33:20-22 The godly respond to this magnificent vision of God’s power in creation and in the affairs of the world with an affirmation of trust, commitment, joy, and hope as they pray and wait for God’s rescue.
33:22 Using a play on words, the psalmist contrasts his people’s sure hope (Hebrew yakhal) in the Lord with the supposed strength (33:17; Hebrew khayil) of the horses of the wicked.

34:1

Ps 71:6
Eph 5:20

34:2

Jer 9:24
inepesh (5315)
• Ps 35:9

34:3

rum (7311)
• Ps 57:5

34:5

Ps 36:9

34:7

Dan 6:22
malak (4397)
• Ps 78:49

34:8

1 Pet 2:3
ashrey (0835)
• Ps 41:1

34:9

Ps 23:1; 31:23

34:10

Ps 84:11

34:11

Ps 111:10

34:12

1 Pet 3:10-12

34:13

Jas 1:26
1 Pet 2:22

34:14

Ps 37:27
Rom 14:18-19
Heb 12:14
shalom (7965)
• Ps 119:165

34:15

Job 36:7
Ps 33:18-19

34:16

Ps 9:6; 109:15

34:18

Ps 51:17; 145:18
Isa 57:15
yasha' (3467)
• Ps 67:2

34:19

Ps 71:20
Prov 24:16

34:21

Ps 94:23

34:22

Ps 71:23

PSALM 34

A psalm of David, regarding the time he pretended to be insane in front of Abimelech, who sent him away.

- 1 I will praise the LORD at all times.
I will constantly speak his praises.
- 2 I will boast only in the LORD;
let all who are helpless take heart.
- 3 Come, let us tell of the LORD's
greatness;
let us ^kexalt his name together.
- 4 I prayed to the LORD, and he
answered me.
He freed me from all my fears.
- 5 Those who look to him for help will be
radiant with joy;
no shadow of shame will darken their
faces.
- 6 In my desperation I prayed, and the
LORD listened;
he saved me from all my troubles.
- 7 For the ^aangel of the LORD is a guard;
he surrounds and defends all who
fear him.
- 8 Taste and see that the LORD is good.
Oh, the ^bjoys of those who take refuge
in him!
- 9 Fear the LORD, you his godly people,
for those who fear him will have all
they need.
- 10 Even strong young lions sometimes go
hungry,
but those who trust in the LORD will
lack no good thing.
- 11 Come, my children, and listen to me,
and I will teach you to fear the LORD.
- 12 Does anyone want to live a life
that is long and prosperous?
- 13 Then keep your tongue from speaking
evil
and your lips from telling lies!
- 14 Turn away from evil and do good.
Search for ^cpeace, and work to
maintain it.
- 15 The eyes of the LORD watch over those
who do right;
his ears are open to their cries for help.
- 16 But the LORD turns his face against those
who do evil;
he will erase their memory from the
earth.
- 17 The LORD hears his people when they
call to him for help.
He rescues them from all their
troubles.
- 18 The LORD is close to the brokenhearted;
he ^drescues those whose spirits are
crushed.
- 19 The righteous person faces many
troubles,
but the LORD comes to the rescue
each time.
- 20 For the LORD protects the bones of the
righteous;
not one of them is broken!
- 21 Calamity will surely overtake the wicked,
and those who hate the righteous will
be punished.
- 22 But the LORD will redeem those who
serve him.
No one who takes refuge in him will
be condemned.

Ps 34 This psalm is a Hebrew acrostic poem; each verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The acrostic is missing one letter (*waw*) and has an additional verse at the end (34:22). This wisdom psalm includes a thanksgiving hymn (34:1-7) that celebrates the Lord's care for and protection of godly sufferers. It also includes an invitation to wisdom (34:8-14) and an exposition of wisdom concerning the Lord's care for the needy and the suffering of the wicked (34:15-22).

34:1 **TITLE** *Abimelech* is another name for Achish (see 1 Sam 21:10-15). The body of the psalm makes no explicit connection to this event.

34:1-3 The psalmist exhorts the *helpless* to join him in praise.

34:5-6 The psalmist narrates his experiences of answered prayer.

34:7 The *angel of the LORD* represented the Lord's presence during the wilder-

ness journey. He protected Israel from the forces of Egypt (Exod 14:19-20), and he will guard all the godly (91:11).

34:8-14 The godly encourage everyone to seek wisdom, to fear the Lord, and to place themselves under the protection of the Lord's angel.

34:9-10 Fear of the Lord includes reverence and respect, and it motivates a life of wisdom (see Prov 1:7; 9:10).

34:11-13 Wisdom contains three components: fearing the Lord (34:11), doing good (34:14), and rejecting evil (34:13).

34:11 Anyone who listens, even *children*, can become wise followers of God.

34:12-16 Peter quotes this passage in his instructions for peaceful living (1 Pet 3:10-12).

34:13 Godly people control their words; *speaking evil* and *telling lies* are foolish (see 10:7; cp. 17:1).

34:14 The way of *peace* leads to har-

mony and order, whereas *evil* destroys them (see 37:11).

34:15-16 The Lord distinguishes between wise and foolish people; he shows his concern for the wise by rescuing them from trouble (34:15, 17-20), but he destroys the foolish (34:16, 21).

34:18 Those who are *brokenhearted* possess a spirit of deep contrition and dependence on the Lord. God accepts this spirit as a proper sacrifice (51:17). The wicked hate the brokenhearted (109:16), but the Lord heals them (147:3; see Isa 57:15; 61:1).

34:19-22 The godly might suffer, but the Lord will reward them in the end. Similarly, the wicked might prosper for a time, but ultimately they will perish (1:6; 34:15-16).

34:20 *Bones* represent a person's entire being (see 6:2). • *not one of them is broken*: John applied this statement to Jesus at the crucifixion (John 19:36).

PSALM 35

A psalm of David.

- 1 O LORD, oppose those who oppose me.
Fight those who fight against me.
- 2 Put on your armor, and take up your shield.
Prepare for battle, and come to my aid.
- 3 Lift up your spear and javelin against those who pursue me.
Let me hear you say,
"I will give you victory!"
- 4 Bring shame and disgrace on those trying to kill me;
turn them back and humiliate those who want to harm me.
- 5 Blow them away like chaff in the wind—a wind sent by the angel of the LORD.
- 6 Make their path dark and slippery, with the angel of the LORD pursuing them.
- 7 I did them no wrong, but they laid a trap for me.
I did them no wrong, but they dug a pit to catch me.
- 8 So let sudden ruin come upon them!
Let them be caught in the trap they set for me!
Let them be destroyed in the pit they dug for me.
- 9 Then I will rejoice in the LORD.
I will be glad because he rescues me.
- 10 With every bone in my body I will praise him:
"LORD, who can compare with you?
Who else rescues the helpless from the strong?
Who else protects the helpless and poor from those who rob them?"
- 11 Malicious witnesses testify against me.
They accuse me of crimes I know nothing about.
- 12 They repay me evil for good.
I am sick with despair.
- 13 Yet when they were ill, I grieved for them.
I denied myself by fasting for them, but my prayers returned unanswered.
- 14 I was sad, as though they were my friends or family,
as if I were grieving for my own mother.
- 15 But they are glad now that I am in trouble;
they gleefully join together against me.
I am attacked by people I don't even know;
they slander me constantly.
- 16 They mock me and call me names;
they snarl at me.
- 17 How long, O Lord, will you look on and do nothing?
Rescue me from their fierce attacks.
Protect my life from these lions!
- 18 Then I will thank you in front of the great assembly.
I will praise you before all the people.
- 19 Don't let my treacherous enemies rejoice over my defeat.
Don't let those who hate me without cause gloat over my sorrow.
- 20 They don't talk of peace;
they plot against innocent people who mind their own business.
- 21 They shout, "Aha! Aha!
With our own eyes we saw him do it!"
- 22 O LORD, you know all about this.
Do not stay silent.
Do not abandon me now, O Lord.
- 23 Wake up! Rise to my defense!
Take up my case, my God and my Lord.
- 24 Declare me not guilty, O LORD my God,
for you give justice.
Don't let my enemies laugh about me in my troubles.
- 25 Don't let them say, "Look, we got what we wanted!
Now we will eat him alive!"

35:1

Ps 56:1-2
Isa 49:25

35:2

Ps 91:4

35:3

Ps 62:2

35:4

Ps 40:14; 70:2-3

35:5

Job 21:18

Ps 1:4; 83:13

Isa 29:5

35:6

Ps 73:18

Jer 23:12

35:7

Ps 69:4; 109:3

35:8

Ps 9:15

Isa 47:11

1 Thes 5:3

35:9

Isa 61:10

Luke 1:47

**nepesh* (5315)

* Ps 42:1

35:10

Exod 15:11-12

Ps 18:17; 37:14

35:11

Ps 27:12

35:12

Ps 38:20

John 10:32

35:13

Job 30:25

Ps 69:10

35:16

Lam 2:16

35:17

Ps 13:1; 22:20-21

Hab 1:13

35:18

Ps 22:23; 25

35:19

Ps 13:4; 38:16, 19;

69:4

*John 15:25

35:21

Ps 22:13; 40:15

35:22

Exod 3:7

Ps 10:14

35:24

Ps 9:4; 43:1

35:25

Ps 56:1

Lam 2:16

Ps 35 In this lament, the Lord's troubled servant calls for God to see his circumstances and vindicate him.

35:4-10 The psalmist longs for the Lord's salvation. The language seems vindictive, but it arises from a desire for justice and for the Lord to care for the needy and oppressed.

35:6 A *path* that is *dark and slippery* suggests instability and untimely doom under the Lord's judgment (see 69:23; 73:18; 82:5; 107:10; 143:3). • The *angel of the LORD* is an agent of judgment as well as salvation.

35:10 Nothing in the universe can *compare* with the Lord (see 86:8; 89:6, 8; Isa 40:18, 25).

35:11-18 The psalmist presents the Lord with the reasons for his suffering. Evil has many faces. He is tired and worn out, and he knows that only the Lord can help him.

35:11 *Malicious witnesses* want nothing but violence (see 11:4-6; 54:3).

35:16 The psalmist's attackers *snarl* to express their bitter envy.

35:19-25 In this prayer for vindication,

the psalmist's crisis looms so large that a resolution must be found in the Lord. The psalmist has taken the high road, believing that vengeance belongs to the Lord. God's patience hardens the hearts of the wicked and gives them reasons to justify their evil lifestyle.

35:19 John applied this claim of innocence (see also 69:4) to Jesus (John 15:25).

35:21, 25 *Aha!* . . . *Look!* Both words translate the same expression of glee (Hebrew *he'akh*).

35:26
Ps 38:16; 40:14
35:27
Ps 40:16; 70:4;
149:4-5
35:28
Ps 51:14-15
hagah (1897)
• Ps 37:30
tsedeq (6664)
• Ps 45:7

36:1
*Rom 3:18
36:3
Ps 10:7
Jer 4:22

36:4
Prov 4:16
Isa 65:2
Mic 2:1

36:5
Ps 57:10; 103:11;
108:4

36:6
Ps 104:14-15;
145:16-17
Rom 11:33

36:7
Ruth 2:12
Ps 91:4; 139:17-18
elohim (0430)
• Ps 40:17

36:8
Isa 25:6
Rev 22:1

36:9
1 Pet 2:9

36:12
Ps 140:10

37:1
Ps 73:3
Prov 3:31

37:2
Job 14:2
Ps 90:5-6

37:3
Deut 30:20
Ps 62:8
Isa 40:11

- 26 May those who rejoice at my troubles
be humiliated and disgraced.
May those who triumph over me
be covered with shame and dishonor.
- 27 But give great joy to those who came to
my defense.
Let them continually say, "Great is the
LORD,
who delights in blessing his servant
with peace!"
- 28 Then I will ^fproclaim your ^gjustice,
and I will praise you all day long.

PSALM 36
*For the choir director: A psalm of David,
the servant of the LORD.*

- 1 Sin whispers to the wicked, deep within
their hearts.
They have no fear of God at all.
- 2 In their blind conceit,
they cannot see how wicked they
really are.
- 3 Everything they say is crooked and
deceitful.
They refuse to act wisely or do good.
- 4 They lie awake at night, hatching sinful
plots.
Their actions are never good.
They make no attempt to turn from
evil.
- 5 Your unfailing love, O LORD, is as vast as
the heavens;
your faithfulness reaches beyond the
clouds.

- 6 Your righteousness is like the mighty
mountains,
your justice like the ocean depths.
You care for people and animals alike,
O LORD.
- 7 How precious is your unfailing love,
O ^hGod!
All humanity finds shelter
in the shadow of your wings.
- 8 You feed them from the abundance of
your own house,
letting them drink from your river of
delights.
- 9 For you are the fountain of life,
the light by which we see.
- 10 Pour out your unfailing love on those
who love you;
give justice to those with honest hearts.
- 11 Don't let the proud trample me
or the wicked push me around.
- 12 Look! Those who do evil have fallen!
They are thrown down, never to rise
again.

PSALM 37
A psalm of David.

- 1 Don't worry about the wicked
or envy those who do wrong.
- 2 For like grass, they soon fade away.
Like spring flowers, they soon wither.
- 3 Trust in the LORD and do good.
Then you will live safely in the land
and prosper.

35:26-28 The psalmist calls on the Lord to judge the wicked and to rescue the godly and bring them joy.

Ps 36 This lament contrasts the world of folly devised by the wicked with the world of wisdom created and sustained by the Lord. The wicked care only about themselves, whereas the Lord cares for all of creation. He will intervene to bring about justice in his world. The righteous will enjoy his protection, but the wicked will perish.

36:1-4 Fools despise what is wise and good as they pursue evil.

36:1 no fear of God: Paul includes this phrase in his description of the depravity of all people (Rom 3:18).

36:5-9 As the source of wisdom, the Lord is reliable and incomparable. His faithful care extends to all parts of the created order.

36:5-6 God's all-encompassing goodness surpasses that of the created order. God graciously meets his people's practical needs.

36:6-9 All creatures live by God's grace (1 Tim 4:10).

36:7-8 God invites *all humanity* to the banquet in his *house* (cp. Prov 9:1-6).

36:9 Light represents salvation and celebration (18:25-29; 27:1; cp. 35:6).

36:10-11 Since God's wisdom extends to all of creation, it protects the godly.

36:12 The psalmist remains confident that the disorder caused by the wicked (36:1-4) will end when they meet their demise.

Ps 37 This psalm is a Hebrew acrostic poem; each stanza begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It elaborates on the problems posed in Ps 36: How should the godly respond to the reality of evil? When will the Lord bring justice? Why does he permit the wicked to destroy his created order? Psalm 37 offers clear responses that reduce the tensions of life (37:1-9, 34) and promise that the meek will have a future (37:10-11, 39-40). The alternating contrast between the godly and the wicked emphasizes the futility of folly (37:12-24, 27-33). The personal observations of the psalmist add a human touch (37:25-26, 35-38). He encourages

viewing the inheritance of the land from a long-range perspective: The earth belongs to the Lord, who will give it to those he blesses—the lowly and godly who trust in him, put their hope in him, and follow him (see 37:9, 11, 22, 29, 34; see also Isa 57:13; Matt 5:5).

37:1-9 The wise respond to evil by trusting in the Lord. Trust includes five dimensions: (1) renouncing irritability and envy (37:1-2); (2) delighting in the Lord (37:3-4); (3) submitting to the Lord (37:5-6); (4) practicing patience in hope (37:7); and (5) avoiding anger (37:8-9).

37:1 envy: The jealous desire to have what others enjoy leads to further sin (73:3; Prov 3:31; Jas 1:14-15; 4:1-2).

37:2 Finite existence is part of the human condition (see 90:5-6; 92:7; 102:4, 11; 103:15; 129:6; Isa 40:7-8).

37:3-4 The antidote to irritability and envy (37:1) is trust in the Lord.

37:3 To do good means cultivating a devotion to wisdom (see 34:14; Prov 3:5-7).

4 Take delight in the LORD,
and he will give you your heart's
desires.

5 Commit everything you do to the LORD.
Trust him, and he will help you.

6 He will make your innocence radiate like
the dawn,
and the justice of your cause will
shine like the noonday sun.

7 Be still in the presence of the LORD,
and wait patiently for him to act.
Don't worry about evil people who
prosper
or fret about their wicked schemes.

8 Stop being angry!
Turn from your rage!
Do not lose your temper—
it only leads to harm.

9 For the wicked will be destroyed,
but those who trust in the LORD will
possess the land.

10 Soon the wicked will disappear.
Though you look for them, they will
be gone.

11 The lowly will possess the land
and will live in peace and prosperity.

12 The wicked plot against the godly;
they snarl at them in defiance.

13 But the Lord just laughs,
for he sees their day of judgment
coming.

14 The wicked draw their swords
and string their bows
to kill the poor and the oppressed,
to slaughter those who do right.

15 But their swords will stab their own
hearts,
and their bows will be broken.

16 It is better to be godly and have little
than to be evil and rich.

17 For the strength of the wicked will be
shattered,
but the LORD takes care of the godly.

18 Day by day the LORD takes care of the
innocent,
and they will receive an inheritance
that lasts forever.

19 They will not be disgraced in hard times;
even in famine they will have more
than enough.

20 But the wicked will die.
The LORD's enemies are like flowers
in a field—
they will disappear like smoke.

21 The wicked borrow and never repay,
but the godly are generous givers.

22 Those the LORD blesses will possess the
land,
but those he curses will die.

23 The LORD directs the steps of the godly.
He delights in every detail of their lives.

24 Though they stumble, they will never fall,
for the LORD holds them by the hand.

25 Once I was young, and now I am old.
Yet I have never seen the godly
abandoned
or their children begging for bread.

26 The godly always give generous loans to
others,
and their children are a blessing.

27 Turn from evil and do good,
and you will live in the land forever.

28 For the LORD loves justice,
and he will never abandon the godly.
He will keep them safe forever,
but the children of the wicked will die.

37:4
Ps 145:19
Isa 58:14

37:5
Ps 55:22
Prov 16:3
1 Pet 5:7

37:6
Isa 58:8, 10
Mic 7:9

37:7
Ps 40:1; 62:5
Jer 12:1

37:8
Eph 4:31
Col 3:8

37:9
Ps 25:13
Isa 60:21

37:10
Job 24:24

37:11
Matt 5:3, 5
'*anaw* (6035)
• Ps 147:6

37:12
Ps 35:16

37:13
Ps 2:4

37:14
Ps 11:2; 35:10

37:15
Ps 9:16; 46:9

37:16
Prov 15:16; 16:8

37:17
Job 38:15
Ps 10:15

37:19
Job 5:20
Ps 33:18-19

37:20
Ps 68:2; 73:27; 102:3

37:22
Job 5:3
Prov 3:33

37:23
1 Sam 2:9
Ps 40:2; 147:11

37:24
Ps 145:14; 147:6
Prov 24:15-16

37:25
Isa 41:17
Heb 13:5

37:26
Ps 37:21

37:27
Ps 34:14

37:4 To *take delight in the LORD* means aligning with the Lord's way in order to enjoy him.

37:6 *Justice* occurs when the Lord's will triumphs and the godly experience his rescue (Isa 45:8; 51:5-6; 58:8, 10-11).

37:7 *Be still*: We should let the Lord be God rather than taking matters into our own hands.

37:8 Irritability and anger quickly corrode character.

37:9-11 The wicked will not *possess the land*; those who *trust in the LORD* will. The Lord promises an inheritance because he is committed to caring for his people.

37:11 The Lord is the author of *peace*

(85:10)—he brings peace to a chaotic world (29:11; 37:11; 85:8; 147:14). His wisdom guides *the lowly* into the way of peace (119:165; Matt 5:5).

37:12-17 *The wicked* seek to destroy the Lord's order, but he defeats them.

37:12-13 The wicked *snarl* to express their bitter envy. They plot to bring an end to the godly, but the Lord derides them because they cannot succeed (2:4).

37:14-15 The weapons of the wicked will turn against them (cp. 7:12-13).

37:16 Being wise with modest means is *better* than having prosperity and power (Prov 15:16; 16:8, 19; 17:1; 28:6) and being wicked.

37:18-20 The Lord cares for the blame-

less in this life and for eternity, but the wicked will perish.

37:20 *Smoke* depicts the temporary nature of life (68:2; 102:3).

37:21 To *borrow and never repay* is a behavior of a crooked lifestyle. • *Generous givers* freely share what they freely receive from the Lord (see 111:5; 112:5).

37:23-24 The rectitude and strength of a godly person's life comes from the Lord (see Prov 4:12; 14:15; 16:9; 20:24).

37:25-26 The Lord does not abandon his children or their descendants.

37:27-33 The *godly* are wise; they do good and reject evil. The Lord cares for them, protecting them and ensuring

37:28
Ps 11:7; 21:10

37:29
Ps 37:9, 18

37:30
hagah (1897)
• Ps 38:12
mishpat (4941)
• Ps 48:11

37:31
Ps 40:8
Isa 51:7

37:32
Ps 10:8; 37:14

37:33
2 Pet 2:9

37:34
Ps 27:14; 37:9

37:35
Job 5:3

37:38
Ps 1:1; 73:19

37:39
Ps 3:8; 9:9

- 29 The godly will possess the land
and will live there forever.
- 30 The godly offer good counsel;
they teach ^Rright from wrong.
- 31 They have made God's law their own,
so they will never slip from his path.
- 32 The wicked wait in ambush for the godly,
looking for an excuse to kill them.
- 33 But the LORD will not let the wicked
succeed
or let the godly be condemned when
they are put on trial.
- 34 Put your hope in the LORD.
Travel steadily along his path.
He will honor you by giving you the land.
You will see the wicked destroyed.

- 35 I have seen wicked and ruthless people
flourishing like a tree in its native soil.
- 36 But when I looked again, they were gone!
Though I searched for them, I could
not find them!
- 37 Look at those who are honest and good,
for a wonderful future awaits those
who love peace.
- 38 But the rebellious will be destroyed;
they have no future.
- 39 The LORD rescues the godly;
he is their fortress in times of trouble.
- 40 The LORD helps them,
rescuing them from the wicked.
He saves them,
and they find shelter in him.

Wisdom Psalms (Ps 37)

Pss 1, 14, 25, 34, 39,
49, 73, 78, 90–91,
111–112, 127–128,
131, 133, 139

Some psalms are called wisdom psalms because they make a case for the primary importance of wisdom or instruct readers in dealing with questions, issues, and doubts that arise in life (see Pss 1, 14, 25, 34, 37, 39, 49, 73, 78, 90, 91, 111, 112, 127, 128, 131, 133, 139). Many other psalms contain elements of wisdom teaching (see Pss 18, 27, 31, 32, 40, 62, 92, 94, 107, 144, 146).

In the ancient Near East, wisdom had to do with ordering life and society, pleasing God and other people, and carefully observing life, society, and nature. In Israel, wisdom shares these concerns but is distinct in the centrality it gives to fear of the Lord. God alone is the center and focus of life (76:7), and proper fear of him opens the path of wisdom (111:10). Fear of the Lord is a disposition of absolute submission to and trust in the Lord (40:3; 112:7; 115:11), which leads to purity of life (19:9). Psalm 34 defines the fear of the Lord as a search for abundant life (34:12) that begins with seeking the Lord (34:4).

The way of wisdom is the way of godliness. Psalm 1 invites all readers of the Psalter to delight in God, his revelation, and the lifestyle that results from his care for the wise. The lives of the godly demonstrate inner consistency, growth, and beauty as they increasingly reflect God's righteousness and justice, love and fidelity, compassion and grace. They practice godliness from the heart—from the inside out.

Wisdom enlarges a person's perspective on life. A wise person desires to see life from God's point of view. This search means living in submission and trust under the sovereign King who maintains the order and harmony of creation. Seeking God encourages an orderly and peaceful life (104:24; 139:14) and motivates obedience (19:7; 25:12; 51:6; 112:1; 119:98). The wise imitate God, and their lives are full of joy even when they are suffering hardship. They praise the Lord amidst all circumstances of life (22:23, 25). They face life confidently because the Lord is with them (23:4; 27:1, 3; 33:18; 49:5; 91:1-16).

In contrast to the way of the wise is the way of the fool, or the wicked. Such people perceive themselves as powerful and continually boast of their accomplishments. They do not accept limitations. They brag, oppress, steal, and deprive others of their happiness. They have no fear of the Lord (36:1; 55:19). The poets of Israel repeatedly warned the people to be wary of the path of folly, lest God's judgment overtake the foolish (2:10-11; 33:8; 64:9; 94:8).

Jesus Christ came into the world as God in the flesh. He embodies all the qualities of wisdom. Through him, we can walk in the way of wisdom since he suffered for our sins (Col 2:2-3).

that they receive their rightful portion of *the land* as their inheritance. The *wicked* might try to *ambush* the *godly*, but they will not succeed.

37:30 The *godly* base their *counsel* on the Lord's wisdom.

37:31 *They have made God's law their own*: The godly internalize God's wisdom and instructions (see 119:11; Jer 24:7; 31:31-34).

37:35-36 The *wicked* might appear to be *flourishing like a tree* (cp. 52:8;

92:12-13), but they eventually die and are forgotten (37:2).

37:39-40 The Lord provides strength for his people.

PSALM 38

A psalm of David, asking God to remember him.

- 1 O LORD, don't rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your rage!
- 2 Your arrows have struck deep, and your blows are crushing me.
- 3 Because of your anger, my whole body is sick; my health is broken because of my sins.
- 4 My guilt overwhelms me—it is a burden too heavy to bear.
- 5 My wounds fester and stink because of my foolish sins.
- 6 I am bent over and racked with pain. All day long I walk around filled with grief.
- 7 A raging fever burns within me, and my health is broken.
- 8 I am exhausted and completely crushed. My groans come from an anguished heart.
- 9 You know what I long for, Lord; you hear my every sigh.
- 10 My heart beats wildly, my strength fails, and I am going blind.
- 11 My loved ones and friends stay away, fearing my disease. Even my own family stands at a distance.
- 12 Meanwhile, my enemies lay traps to kill me. Those who wish me harm make plans to ruin me. All day long they ^aplan their treachery.
- 13 But I am deaf to all their threats.

- I am silent before them as one who cannot speak.
- 14 I choose to hear nothing, and I make no reply.
- 15 For I am waiting for you, O LORD. You must answer for me, O Lord my God.
- 16 I prayed, "Don't let my enemies gloat over me or rejoice at my downfall."
- 17 I am on the verge of collapse, facing constant pain.
- 18 But I confess my sins; I am deeply sorry for what I have done.
- 19 I have many aggressive enemies; they hate me without reason.
- 20 They repay me evil for good and oppose me for pursuing good.
- 21 Do not abandon me, O LORD. Do not stand at a distance, my God.
- 22 Come quickly to help me, O Lord my savior.

PSALM 39

For Jeduthun, the choir director: A psalm of David.

- 1 I said to myself, "I will watch what I do and not sin in what I say. I will hold my tongue when the ungodly are around me."
- 2 But as I stood there in silence—not even speaking of good things—the turmoil within me grew worse.
- 3 The more I thought about it, the hotter I got, igniting a fire of words:
- 4 "LORD, remind me how brief my time on earth will be.

38:1
Ps 6:1
38:2
Job 6:4
Ps 32:4
38:3
Ps 6:2; 31:9-10
Isa 1:5-6
38:4
Ezra 9:6
38:5
Ps 69:5
38:6
Ps 35:14
38:7
Ps 102:3-4
38:8
Job 3:24
Ps 22:1
38:9
Ps 10:17
38:10
Ps 6:7; 31:10
38:12
Ps 35:20; 54:3; 140:5
^a*hagah* (1897)
Ps 63:6
38:15
Ps 17:6
38:16
Ps 13:4; 35:26
38:17
Ps 13:2
38:18
2 Cor 7:9-10
38:19
Ps 18:17; 35:19
38:20
Ps 35:12
1 Jn 3:12
38:21
Ps 22:19; 35:22
38:22
Ps 22:19; 40:13, 17
39:1
Ps 34:13; 141:3
Jas 3:2, 5-12
39:4
Ps 78:39; 90:12; 103:14-15

Ps 38 This lament and prayer for healing is an acrostic that uses the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The psalmist's suffering is associated with his unconfessed sin. He confesses his sin and entrusts his case to the Lord.

38:TITLE *asking God to remember him:* The meaning of this phrase is uncertain (also in 70:TITLE).

38:1-17 These verses form a prelude to the psalmist's confession (38:18) and describe his woeful condition.

38:1-4 The psalmist's *sins* had triggered the Lord's *anger* and *rage*, resulting in the *arrows* and *blows of discipline* and *rebuke*; as a result, his *whole body is sick*.

38:3 Sin can lead to sickness and even death (1 Cor 11:30). Whether the psalmist actually felt physically ill or his sickness was a metaphor for emotional turmoil, he knew that it came from God

and threatened his life (see 32:3; 39:10).

38:4 The psalmist's *burden* results from sin (see 40:12; 41:4; cp. Gen 4:13).

38:5-8 The severity of God's punishment brings anguish that affects every part of the psalmist's being.

38:9-12 The psalmist longs for a restored relationship with God, but he feels alienated. He finds himself lost and alone as his friends disappear.

38:13 The psalmist suffers quietly before his opponents (see Isa 53:7).

38:15 The Lord alone will resolve the conflict (9:18; 27:14; 37:9, 34).

38:17-20 No longer able to endure his suffering and teetering *on the verge of collapse* (cp. 15:5), the psalmist confesses his sin (see 32:5).

38:19 That the psalmist's enemies hate him *without reason* compounds his pain.

38:22 Asking the Lord to act quickly in times of great need is common in the Psalter (22:19; 31:2; 40:13; 69:17; 70:1; 71:12; 79:8; 102:2; 141:1; 143:7). However, wisdom and experience teach that God's people must often wait for him to act (27:14; 37:7; Isa 8:17; 40:31).

Ps 39 This prayer for rescue reflects the psalmist's discouragement, which comes from having a limited perspective on his situation.

39:TITLE *Jeduthun* was a levitical singer appointed by David along with Asaph (1 Chr 9:16; 16:38; 25:1).

39:1-3 Suffering in *silence* only intensifies the psalmist's anguish, pain, and inner *turmoil*.

39:4-6 Because of his suffering and sin, the psalmist concludes that life is meaningless and fleeting (see Job 7:7-10; Isa 40:6-8). He had expected a wicked life to have those qualities (see

39:5
 Job 14:2
 Ps 62:9; 89:47; 144:4
^b*hebel* (1892)
 • Ps 39:6

39:6
 Ps 127:2
 Luke 12:20
 1 Pet 1:24
^c*hebel* (1892)
 • Eccl 1:2

39:8
 Ps 51:9; 79:4, 9

39:9
 Job 2:10

39:10
 Job 9:34
 Ps 32:4

39:11
 Job 13:27-28
 Ps 90:7
 2 Pet 2:16

39:12
 Ps 102:1
 Heb 11:13
 1 Pet 2:11

39:13
 Job 10:20; 14:6

40:1
 Ps 27:14; 34:15

40:2
 Ps 27:5; 69:1-2
 Jer 38:6

40:3
 Ps 32:7; 33:3; 64:9

40:4
 Ps 84:12

40:5
 Job 5:9
 Ps 136:4; 139:17-18
 Isa 55:8

40:6-8
 1 Sam 15:22
 Jer 7:22-23
 Mic 6:6-8
^aHeb 10:5-7

40:8
 Ps 37:31
 John 4:34
 Rom 7:22
^a*torah* (8451)
 • Ps 119:1

40:9
 Ps 22:25; 119:13

40:10
 Ps 89:1
 Acts 20:20, 27

Remind me that my days are
 numbered—
 how fleeting my life is.

⁵ You have made my life no longer than
 the width of my hand.

My entire lifetime is just a moment
 to you;

at best, each of us is but a ^bbreath.”

Interlude

⁶ We are merely moving shadows,
 and all our busy rushing ends in
 “nothing.

We heap up wealth,
 not knowing who will spend it.

⁷ And so, Lord, where do I put my hope?
 My only hope is in you.

⁸ Rescue me from my rebellion.
 Do not let fools mock me.

⁹ I am silent before you; I won’t say a word,
 for my punishment is from you.

¹⁰ But please stop striking me!
 I am exhausted by the blows from
 your hand.

¹¹ When you discipline us for our sins,
 you consume like a moth what is
 precious to us.
 Each of us is but a breath.

Interlude

¹² Hear my prayer, O LORD!
 Listen to my cries for help!
 Don’t ignore my tears.

For I am your guest—
 a traveler passing through,
 as my ancestors were before me.

¹³ Leave me alone so I can smile again
 before I am gone and exist no more.

PSALM 40
For the choir director: A psalm of David.

¹ I waited patiently for the LORD to help me,
 and he turned to me and heard my cry.

² He lifted me out of the pit of despair,
 out of the mud and the mire.

He set my feet on solid ground
 and steadied me as I walked along.

³ He has given me a new song to sing,
 a hymn of praise to our God.
 Many will see what he has done and be
 amazed.
 They will put their trust in the LORD.

⁴ Oh, the joys of those who trust the LORD,
 who have no confidence in the proud
 or in those who worship idols.

⁵ O LORD my God, you have performed
 many wonders for us.
 Your plans for us are too numerous
 to list.
 You have no equal.

If I tried to recite all your wonderful
 deeds,
 I would never come to the end of them.

⁶ You take no delight in sacrifices or
 offerings.
 Now that you have made me listen, I
 finally understand—
 you don’t require burnt offerings or
 sin offerings.

⁷ Then I said, “Look, I have come.
 As is written about me in the
 Scriptures:

⁸ I take joy in doing your will, my God,
 for your ^dinstructions are written on
 my heart.”

⁹ I have told all your people about your
 justice.
 I have not been afraid to speak out,
 as you, O LORD, well know.

¹⁰ I have not kept the good news of your
 justice hidden in my heart;
 I have talked about your faithfulness
 and saving power.

37:2, 20; 103:15-16), but now whether
 a person is godly or not seems to be
 irrelevant.

39:4-5 *how fleeting my life is:* This
 perspective comes out of suffering (see
 78:39; 89:47-48; 90:3-10). The human
lifetime is but a *moment* to God (90:4),
 as temporary as a *breath* (see 39:11;
 144:4).

39:8 The idea that *rebellion* brings on
 suffering is a common thread in Pss
 32, 38–41.

39:9-11 The psalmist links suffering
 with God’s *discipline*, assuming that it is
punishment for his sin.

39:11 The Lord uses *discipline* to cor-
 rect his children (38:1, 3, 7; 40:12; see
 Prov 3:11-12; Heb 12:5-6).

39:12 A *guest* (or *foreigner*) had no
 rights of land ownership (see Lev 25:23).
 The patriarchs had lived as guests in
 Canaan (105:23).

39:13 Unlike the psalmist’s earlier
 request that God stay close to him
 (38:21-22), his present desire for God to
leave him alone echoes Job’s disposition
 (Job 7:17-19).

Ps 40 This psalm includes a thanks-
 giving song (40:1-10) followed by a
 lament (40:11-17). The thanksgiving
 song includes the reason for the
 thanksgiving (40:1-5), an affirmation
 of commitment (40:6-8), and a public
 testimony of God’s character (40:7-10).
 The lament concerns the psalmist’s
 troubles because of his sins (40:11-12)
 and is followed by two prayers for

vindication (40:13-15, 17).

40:1-5 The psalmist thanks the Lord for
 his rescue and testifies that God can be
 trusted.

40:6 The Lord delights in the attitude
 and character of the person making
 an offering more than in the offering
 itself. • *Now that you have made me
 listen, I finally understand:* Greek text
 reads *You have given me a body*. In Heb
 10:5-7, the writer quotes from the Greek
 version of 40:6-8. He casts the words as
 something Jesus said as he left heaven
 and came into the world.

40:7 *As is written about me in the
 Scriptures:* Moses had recorded God’s
 requirements for Israel’s kings in Deut
 17:14-15.

I have told everyone in the great assembly of your unfailing love and faithfulness.

¹¹ LORD, don't hold back your tender mercies from me. Let your unfailing love and faithfulness always protect me.

¹² For troubles surround me—too many to count! My sins pile up so high I can't see my way out. They outnumber the hairs on my head. I have lost all courage.

¹³ Please, LORD, rescue me! Come quickly, LORD, and help me.

¹⁴ May those who try to destroy me be humiliated and put to shame. May those who take delight in my trouble be turned back in disgrace.

¹⁵ Let them be horrified by their shame, for they said, "Aha! We've got him now!"

¹⁶ But may all who search for you be filled with joy and gladness in you. May those who love your salvation repeatedly shout, "The LORD is great!"

¹⁷ As for me, since I am poor and needy, let the Lord keep me in his thoughts. You are my helper and my savior. O my ^eGod, do not delay.

PSALM 41

For the choir director: A psalm of David.

¹ Oh, the ^fjoys of those who are kind to the poor! The LORD rescues them when they are in trouble.

² The LORD protects them and keeps them alive. He gives them prosperity in the land and rescues them from their enemies.

³ The LORD nurses them when they are sick and restores them to health.

⁴ "O LORD," I prayed, "have mercy on me. Heal me, for I have ^asinned against you."

⁵ But my enemies say nothing but evil about me. "How soon will he die and be forgotten?" they ask.

⁶ They visit me as if they were my friends, but all the while they gather gossip, and when they leave, they spread it everywhere.

⁷ All who hate me whisper about me, imagining the worst.

⁸ "He has some fatal disease," they say. "He will never get out of that bed!"

⁹ Even my best friend, the one I trusted completely, the one who shared my food, has turned against me.

¹⁰ LORD, have mercy on me. Make me well again, so I can pay them back!

¹¹ I know you are pleased with me, for you have not let my enemies triumph over me.

¹² You have preserved my life because I am innocent; you have brought me into your presence forever.

¹³ Praise the LORD, the God of Israel, who lives from everlasting to everlasting. ^hAmen and ^hamen!

40:11
Ps 61:7

40:12
Ps 18:5; 38:4; 73:26; 116:3

40:13-17
//Ps 70:1-5

40:14
Ps 35:4, 26; 70:2-3

40:16
Ps 35:27; 70:4

40:17
Ps 70:5
^eelohim (0430)
• Ps 85:4

41:1
Ps 37:19; 82:3-4
Prov 14:21
^aashrey (0835)
• Ps 84:5

41:2
Ps 37:22, 28

41:4
Ps 6:2; 51:4; 103:3
^hkhata' (2398)
• Ps 119:11

41:5
Ps 38:12

41:6
Ps 12:2

41:7
Ps 56:5

41:9
Job 19:19
Ps 55:12-13, 20
Jer 20:10
^aMark 14:18
^hJohn 13:18

41:10
Ps 9:13

41:11
Ps 25:2; 37:23-24; 147:11

41:12
Job 36:7
Ps 21:6; 37:17

41:13
Ps 72:18-19; 106:48
^hamen (0543)
• Isa 65:16

40:11 The psalmist prays that the Lord will be true to his character when answering this plea for mercy.

40:12-17 The psalmist is troubled both by his adversities and his own *sins* and prays for rescue. • This passage is repeated almost verbatim as Ps 70.

Ps 41 In this wisdom psalm, the psalmist prays for healing (41:4, 10), laments his distress (41:5-9), and expresses confidence in the Lord's blessing (41:1-3, 11-12).

41:1 The *poor* who suffer hardship have special protection under God's law (Lev 14:21; 19:10); they receive God's justice and godly rule (72:13; 82:3-4). The word translated *poor* is often a synonym for the godly (113:7; see Zeph 3:12).

41:3 *when they are sick*: This illness might be physical or spiritual (see 6:2; Ps 38).

41:4 The psalmist applies the blessing to himself (41:12). Apparently he has taken care of the poor (41:1), but he has sinned against the Lord in other ways. Out of his pain, he cries for healing while confessing his sin. The Lord alone can grant the restoration that brings true joy (30:2; 107:20-21).

41:5-9 The psalmist's enemies disguise themselves as friends, while his friends openly become his enemies.

41:5 *How soon will he die?* The psalmist's opponents regard his suffering as a divine judgment (cp. 1:6).

41:9 *the one who shared my food*:

Eating together was a sign of unity (Acts 2:42). Refusing to eat with someone indicated hostility (1 Cor 5:11). Jesus experienced the same kind of betrayal (John 13:1, 18).

41:11-12 The psalmist knows that the Lord has forgiven him and will bless him.

41:13 This doxology closes Book One (Pss 1-41). Cp. 106:48.

Book Two (Pss 42-72) Book Two includes psalms by many authors: eighteen psalms of David (Ps 51-65, 68-70), eight psalms of the descendants of Korah (Pss 42-49), one psalm ascribed to Asaph (Ps 50), one to Solomon (Ps 72), and several with no author credited. See Psalms Introduction, "The Composition of the Psalms," p. 901.

42:1
Ps 63:1
'nepesh (5315)
• Ps 57:1

42:2
Ps 43:4; 84:2; 143:6
Jer 10:10
Rom 9:26

42:3
Ps 79:10; 80:5
Joel 2:17

42:4
Job 30:16
Ps 100:4
Isa 30:29
'todah (8426)
• Ps 50:23

42:5
Ps 38:6; 77:3
Lam 3:24

42:6
Ps 61:2
*Mark 14:34

42:7
Ps 88:7
Jon 2:3

2. BOOK TWO (PSS 42–72)

PSALM 42

For the choir director: A psalm of the descendants of Korah.

- 1 As the deer longs for streams of water,
so I long for you, O God.
- 2 I thirst for God, the living God.
When can I go and stand before him?
- 3 Day and night I have only tears for food,
while my enemies continually taunt
me, saying,
“Where is this God of yours?”
- 4 My heart is breaking
as I remember how it used to be:
I walked among the crowds of
worshippers,

leading a great procession to the
house of God,
singing for joy and giving thanks
amid the sound of a great celebration!

- 5 Why am I discouraged?
Why is my heart so sad?
I will put my hope in God!
I will praise him again—
my Savior and my God!
- Now I am deeply discouraged,
but I will remember you—
even from distant Mount Hermon, the
source of the Jordan,
from the land of Mount Mizar.
- 7 I hear the tumult of the raging seas
as your waves and surging tides sweep
over me.

Questions and Doubt (Pss 42–43)

Ps 2:1; 4:2; 6:3;
10:1; 11:3; 13:1-6;
22:1; 35:17; 44:23-
24; 53:6; 60:9-10;
68:16; 73-74;
77:8-9; 79:5; 80:4,
12; 82:2; 83:2; 85:5-
6; 88:14; 89:1-52;
90:11, 13; 94:3-4,
16, 20; 101:2;
108:10-11; 114:5-6;
119:82, 84; 137:4;
147:17

The psalmists are not afraid to ask questions and express doubts. These questions clarify life issues. The intensity of the mood or the significance of an issue can be judged by the number of questions asked. For example, the psalmist of 4:2 asks three questions of his adversaries, and there are five questions in 13:1-2. The psalms with the greatest number of questions raise some of the most significant issues, such as God's perceived abandonment (Pss 42–43, 74, 89) and the prosperity of the wicked (Ps 73).

Questions about God ask whether the Lord is the true God (94:9-10; 121:1) and why he seems to have abandoned the godly (77:7). Questions call attention to the success of the wicked (10:13), the impotence of the godly (11:3), the election of Zion (68:16), the power of God (114:5-6; 147:17), the folly of the nations (2:1), and the issue of injustice (82:2). The psalmists question, examine, challenge, doubt, and occasionally despair over God's seeming lack of concern.

Questions may also lead to praise and worship: “Who can list the glorious miracles of the LORD? Who can ever praise him enough?” (106:2). The question, “Who will come from Mount Zion to rescue Israel?” (53:6) calls attention to the answer: The Lord rescues his people. For many questions, the implied answer brings praise to the Lord: “Whom have I in heaven but you? I desire you more than anything on earth” (73:25; 89:8). Questions may also express wonder at God's grace (8:4; 130:3; 144:3). Asking good questions can be the beginning of a dialogue with the Lord that leads us along the path of wisdom and results in worship and praise.

Pss 42–43 These psalms, like Pss 9 and 10, form a unit comprising a lament with a bittersweet refrain of hope (42:5, 11; 43:5). In many Hebrew manuscripts these two psalms are combined as one. The historical context is uncertain; these psalms might be the voice of God's people in exile, confessing their loyalty to God as he punishes them for their prevailing apostasy. The psalmist longs for such fellowship with God as he enjoyed in Jerusalem (42:4); his memories only make him more discouraged. As the psalmist cries out to God, he recalls God's love and faithfulness (42:8), which moves him to plead for vindication (43:1-4).

42:1 TITLE psalm: Hebrew *maskil*. This may be a literary or musical term. • *The descendants of Korah* were members of a Levitical choir appointed by David

to serve as Temple singers (see 1 Chr 6:22-38; 9:19-34; 2 Chr 20:19). Their ancestor Korah was the apostate who had rebelled against Moses and whom the earth swallowed up (Exod 6:24; Num 16).

42:1-4 The psalmist's longing for God comes from being geographically distant from the Temple as he remembers the past. • The verb translated *longs* is found only here and in Joel 1:20 (“cry out”); in both cases it refers to extreme *thirst* in a waterless desert (see 63:1; 143:6; see also 84:2).

42:3 Having *tears for food* speaks of great grief (80:5; 102:9; see 6:6; 56:8; 126:5; 119:136). • The wicked try to hold God to their timetable and deny his power to intervene.

42:4 The psalmist recalls *leading a great procession* as a member of the

Levitical choir, possibly during the high holy days.

42:5-6 The psalmist encourages himself with questions and answers.

42:5 The psalmist feels depressed, but it does not incapacitate him. He remembers that the living God is his *Savior*. This verse is repeated in 42:11 and 43:5.

42:6 *Mount Hermon* is a high mountain range northeast of Israel. The *source of the Jordan* is by Dan at the foot of Mount Hermon. • *Mount Mizar* might be a peak in the Mount Hermon range.

42:7 The *raging seas, waves, and surging tides* conjure images of God's wrath (see 88:7).

8 But each day the LORD pours his unfailing love upon me, and through each night I sing his songs, praying to God who gives me life.

9 "O God my rock," I cry, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I wander around in grief, oppressed by my enemies?"

10 Their taunts break my bones. They scoff, "Where is this God of yours?"

11 Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will ^kput my hope in God! I will praise him again—my Savior and my God!

PSALM 43

1 Declare me innocent, O God! Defend me against these ungodly people. Rescue me from these unjust liars.

2 For you are God, my only safe haven. Why have you tossed me aside? Why must I wander around in grief, oppressed by my enemies?

3 Send out your light and your truth; let them guide me. Let them lead me to your holy mountain, to the ^hplace where you live.

4 There I will go to the altar of God, to God—the source of all my joy. I will praise you with my harp, O God, my God!

5 Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again—my Savior and my God!

PSALM 44

For the choir director: A psalm of the descendants of Korah.

1 O God, we have heard it with our own ears—our ancestors have told us of all you did in their day, in days long ago:

2 You drove out the pagan nations by your power and gave all the land to our ancestors. You crushed their enemies and set our ancestors free.

3 They did not conquer the land with their swords; it was not their own strong arm that gave them victory. It was your right hand and strong arm and the blinding light from your face that helped them, for you loved them.

4 You are my King and my God. You command victories for Israel.

5 Only by your power can we push back our enemies; only in your name can we trample our foes.

6 I do not trust in my bow; I do not count on my sword to save me.

7 You are the one who gives us victory over our enemies; you disgrace those who hate us.

8 O God, we give glory to you all day long and ^bconstantly praise your name.

Interlude

9 But now you have tossed us aside in dishonor. You no longer lead our armies to battle.

42:8 Job 35:10; Ps 16:7; 57:3; 77:6; 149:4-5

42:9 Ps 17:9; 38:6

42:11 ^hyakhal (3176) • Ps 119:43

43:1 1 Sam 24:15; Ps 26:1; 35:24

43:2 Ps 42:9; 44:9

43:3 Ps 36:9; 84:1 ^hmishkan (4908) • Ps 46:4

43:4 Ps 26:6; 33:2

44:1 Exod 12:26-27

44:2 Ps 78:55; 80:8

44:3 Deut 4:37; Josh 24:12; Ps 77:15

44:4 Ps 74:12

44:5 Ps 60:12

44:7 Ps 53:5; 136:24

44:8 Ps 30:12; 34:2 ^halam (5769) • Ps 90:2

44:9 Ps 43:2; 60:10; 74:1

42:8 The psalmist sees rays of hope. A life oriented to God includes *songs* of joy and *praying* for justice and vindication (42:9-10; 43:1-4).

42:9-10 The psalmist brings his many doubts, discouragements, and questions directly to God.

43:1-4 The psalmist turns to the Lord for rescue from his troubles, for guidance, for restoration, and for vindication.

43:2 *tossed me aside*: Other psalms similarly ask whether God has rejected his people (44:9, 23; 60:1, 10; 74:1; 77:7; 88:14; 89:38; 108:11).

43:3 In this prayer for God's redemption, *light* and *truth* are viewed as guides (see 18:25-29; 27:1; 85:10-13; 89:14-18; see also 119:105; John 3:19; Eph 5:8; 1 Thes 5:5-7). • The Temple on the *mountain* in Jerusalem symbolized

God's *holy* presence among his people (15:1; 43:3; 99:5, 9; 132:7).

43:5 This verse is repeated in 42:5, 11.

Ps 44 This national lament after defeat in battle continues the tone of the previous two psalms, including reflecting on an unspecified moment in Israel's history and calling on God for salvation. The people recite God's past acts of rescue (44:1-3), acknowledge God's power to save (44:4-8), describe their humiliation in exile (44:9-16), claim their innocence and lament the injustice of their current situation (44:17-22), and cry for vindication (44:23-26).

44: *TITLE psalm*: Hebrew *maskil*. This may be a literary or musical term.

44:1 *we have heard . . . of all you did*: The story of redemption encompasses the story of God's favor and power in

his past acts of rescue (see 78:1-4; see also Pss 105-106).

44:2 God *drove out the pagan nations* during the conquests recorded in Joshua.

44:3 Though the Israelites used *swords* and other weapons (44:6), they would have lost their battles without the *light* of the Lord's favor (see 18:25-29; 27:1; 89:15).

44:4-8 God's people feel confident about his mighty acts; he was with them in the past, and he is their king in the present.

44:4 *Israel*: Literally *for Jacob*. The names "Jacob" and "Israel" are often interchanged throughout the Old Testament, referring sometimes to the individual patriarch and sometimes to the nation.

44:9-16 The people have experienced defeat (44:9-12), so they understand suffering and disgrace (44:13-16).

44:10
Josh 7:8, 12
Ps 89:41

44:11
Deut 4:27; 28:64
Ps 106:27
Ezek 20:23-24

44:12
Isa 52:3-4

44:13
Ps 79:4; 80:6

44:14
Ps 109:25
Jer 24:9

44:17
Ps 119:61, 83, 109,
141, 153, 176

44:18
Job 23:11
Ps 119:51, 157

44:19
Job 3:5
Ps 51:8

44:20
Ps 81:9

44:22
Isa 53:7
*Rom 8:36

44:23
Ps 7:6; 77:7; 78:65

44:24
Job 13:24
Ps 42:9; 88:14

44:25
Ps 119:25

45:2
Ps 21:6
Luke 4:22

45:4
Rev 6:2

45:5
Ps 120:4
Isa 5:28

45:6
Ps 93:2; 98:8-9
*Heb 1:8-9

45:7
Ps 11:7; 21:6; 33:5
**tsedeq* (6664)

• Ps 97:2
**mashakh* (4886)

• Ps 89:20
45:8
Song 1:3; 4:13-14

- 10 You make us retreat from our enemies
and allow those who hate us to
plunder our land.
- 11 You have butchered us like sheep
and scattered us among the nations.
- 12 You sold your precious people for a
pittance,
making nothing on the sale.
- 13 You let our neighbors mock us.
We are an object of scorn and derision
to those around us.
- 14 You have made us the butt of their jokes;
they shake their heads at us in scorn.
- 15 We can't escape the constant humiliation;
shame is written across our faces.
- 16 All we hear are the taunts of our
mockers.
All we see are our vengeful enemies.
- 17 All this has happened though we have
not forgotten you.
We have not violated your covenant.
- 18 Our hearts have not deserted you.
We have not strayed from your path.
- 19 Yet you have crushed us in the jackal's
desert home.
You have covered us with darkness
and death.
- 20 If we had forgotten the name of our God
or spread our hands in prayer to
foreign gods,
- 21 God would surely have known it,
for he knows the secrets of every
heart.
- 22 But for your sake we are killed every day;
we are being slaughtered like sheep.
- 23 Wake up, O Lord! Why do you sleep?
Get up! Do not reject us forever.
- 24 Why do you look the other way?
Why do you ignore our suffering and
oppression?

- 25 We collapse in the dust,
lying face down in the dirt.
- 26 Rise up! Help us!
Ransom us because of your unfailing
love.

PSALM 45

*For the choir director: A love song to be
sung to the tune "Lilies." A psalm of the
descendants of Korah.*

- 1 Beautiful words stir my heart.
I will recite a lovely poem about the
king,
for my tongue is like the pen of a
skillful poet.
- 2 You are the most handsome of all.
Gracious words stream from your
lips.
God himself has blessed you forever.
- 3 Put on your sword, O mighty warrior!
You are so glorious, so majestic!
- 4 In your majesty, ride out to victory,
defending truth, humility, and justice.
Go forth to perform awe-inspiring
deeds!
- 5 Your arrows are sharp, piercing your
enemies' hearts.
The nations fall beneath your feet.
- 6 Your throne, O God, endures forever and
ever.
You rule with a scepter of justice.
- 7 You love justice and hate evil.
Therefore God, your God, has
^danointed you,
pouring out the oil of joy on you more
than on anyone else.
- 8 Myrrh, aloes, and cassia perfume your
robes.
In ivory palaces the music of strings
entertains you.

44:11 *scattered us among the nations:*
This probably refers to the Exile (see
51:18-19; 89:38-51; 106:40-47; 137).

44:22 Paul quotes this verse as a
parenthetical aside in his list of things
that cannot separate us from Christ's
love (Rom 8:36).

44:23-26 In the end, God's people
can turn to the Lord and trust him for
rescue. Their petition for God to remedy
their situation is as strong as their la-
ment about God's rejection.

44:23 *Wake up:* Biblical authors often
call for God's attention in a crisis (35:23;
44:23; 73:20; 80:2; Mark 4:38).

Ps 45 This psalm celebrates a royal
wedding; it might have been sung on
many occasions and not just at one
wedding. As God's representative, the

king carried the responsibility of dis-
pensing justice and maintaining order
in God's world (see Ps 2).

45:TITLE The tune "*Lilies*" is no longer
known (see also Ps 69). • *psalm:* Hebrew
maskil. This may be a literary or musi-
cal term.

45:2 This general description of the
king's symbolic status anticipates his
permanent legacy (45:16). That the Lord
has *blessed* him and charged him to
bear God's attributes is symbolized by
his *handsome* appearance and *gracious*
words.

45:3-5 The psalmist expounds on the
royal splendor the king showed when
fighting his enemies.

45:3 Glory and majesty belong to the
Lord (96:6; 111:3).

45:4 As God's agent of *truth, humility,*
and justice (see 72:1-2, 4, 7), the king can
carry out *awe-inspiring deeds* (65:5;
96:4).

45:6-9 The king is like a god among
humans; he is anointed by God, he
has received a mighty throne, and he
dispenses justice as he rules forever.
• The writer to the Hebrews applies
45:6-7 to Jesus as he argues that the Son is
greater than the angels (Heb 1:8-9).

45:6 *Your throne, O God:* Or *Your divine*
throne. • *Justice* characterizes God's
rule, as it should characterize the king's
administration.

45:8 Fine spices mixed with oil create
distinctive perfumes. • The king's
palaces were wood paneled with ivory
inlays (cp. Amos 3:15; 6:4).

- ⁹ Kings' daughters are among your noble women.
At your right side stands the queen,
wearing jewelry of finest gold from Ophir!
- ¹⁰ Listen to me, O royal daughter; take to heart what I say.
Forget your people and your family far away.
- ¹¹ For your royal husband delights in your beauty;
honor him, for he is your lord.
- ¹² The princess of Tyre will shower you with gifts.
The wealthy will beg your favor.
- ¹³ The bride, a princess, looks glorious in her golden gown.
- ¹⁴ In her beautiful robes, she is led to the king,
accompanied by her bridesmaids.
- ¹⁵ What a joyful and enthusiastic procession as they enter the king's palace!
- ¹⁶ Your sons will become kings like their father.
You will make them rulers over many lands.
- ¹⁷ I will bring honor to your name in every generation.
Therefore, the nations will praise you forever and ever.

PSALM 46

For the choir director: A song of the descendants of Korah, to be sung by soprano voices.

- ¹ God is our refuge and strength,
always ready to help in times of trouble.

- ² So we will not fear when earthquakes come
and the mountains crumble into the sea.
- ³ Let the oceans roar and foam.
Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge! *Interlude*
- ⁴ A river brings joy to the city of our God,
the sacred^e home of the Most High.
- ⁵ God dwells in that city; it cannot be destroyed.
From the very break of day, God will protect it.
- ⁶ The nations are in chaos,
and their kingdoms crumble!
God's voice thunders,
and the earth melts!
- ⁷ The LORD of Heaven's Armies is here among us;
the God of Israel is our fortress. *Interlude*
- ⁸ Come, see the glorious works of the LORD:
See how he brings destruction upon the world.
- ⁹ He causes wars to end throughout the earth.
He breaks the bow and snaps the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.
- ¹⁰ "Be still, and know that I am God!
I will be honored by every nation.
I will be honored throughout the world."
- ¹¹ The LORD of Heaven's Armies is here among us;
the God of Israel is our fortress. *Interlude*

45:9
1 Kgs 2:19; 9:28
Song 6:8
Isa 13:12

45:10
Deut 21:13

45:12
Ps 72:10-11

45:13
Isa 61:10

45:14
Esth 2:13
Song 1:4
Ezek 16:9-13

45:17
Ps 138:4
Mal 1:11

46:1
Deut 4:7
Ps 9:9; 14:6; 62:7-8;
145:18

46:2
Ps 18:7; 23:4; 82:5

46:4
Ps 87:3
Rev 3:12; 22:1
^e*mishkan* (4908)
‣ Ps 74:7
^e*elyon* (5945)
‣ Ps 47:2

46:5
Isa 12:6; 41:14
Ezek 43:7
Luke 1:54

46:6
Ps 2:1
Mic 1:4

46:7
Num 14:9
2 Chr 13:12
Ps 9:9

46:8
Ps 66:5
Isa 61:4
Jer 51:43

46:9
Isa 2:4; 9:5
Mic 4:3

46:10
Ps 100:3
Isa 2:11, 17

47:1
Ps 98:8-9; 106:47

45:9 Marriages often sealed diplomatic connections between kings; the *women* became part of the harem (see 1 Kgs 11:1-3).

45:10-12 The bride is a representative of the king. Powerful people and nations try to gain her favor in order to get close to the king. This is a great honor, and she is encouraged to give herself fully to her new position.

45:12 *The princess of Tyre:* Literally *The daughter of Tyre*. Israel traded with Tyre, a powerful city-state. The noblest woman of the city bears a wedding gift to her counterpart, the new queen, who represents an honored kingdom.

Ps 46 This psalm of Zion celebrates God's special presence in Jerusalem (see also Pss 48, 76, 87, 122), inviting confidence in the Lord because the citizens of Zion enjoy his protection.

46: *TITLE sung by soprano voices:* Hebrew according to 'alamoth ("maidens"; see

also note on 1 Chr 15:20). In worship, a choir or a group of instrumentalists performed this hymn.

46:1-3 Even when faced with natural disasters, the citizens of Zion express no fear.

46:4-6 The strong city where *God dwells* protects its inhabitants. They enjoy the *river* flowing inside the city. This river contrasts with the turbulent waters (the powers of the nations) outside the city.

46:4 Like the streams flowing through Eden, this *river* brings the water of life, restoration, and healing (36:8-9; see Gen 2:10; Ezek 47; Rev 22:2).

46:5 *From the very break of day:* In the ancient Near East, enemies attacked cities during the day; even during the most dangerous times, the Lord *will protect* the place where his name dwells.

46:6 People and *nations* live *in chaos*, characterized by opportunism (83:2),

busyness (39:6), and noise. Psalmists also used this word to describe the snarling of dogs (59:6, 14) and the groaning of the needy (77:3). These people shake, totter, and *crumble*, unlike the city of God (cp. 15:5). In contrast, when the godly feel disturbed, they cry out for God's help (42:5, 11; 43:5; 55:17).

46:7 This refrain reminds readers of the identity of the God of Zion. • *among us:* Hebrew *immanu*, part of the name Immanuel, "God with us" (Isa 7:14; 8:8; Matt 1:23). • *God of Israel:* Literally of *Jacob*; also in 46:11. See note on 44:4.

46:8-9 This invitation to trust in the Lord offers a perspective on God's interactions with human powers.

46:8 Israel saw the Lord's *glorious works* in the wilderness (107:24; 111:2), but the wicked, who have no concern for them (28:5), are left desolate (73:19).

46:10 A message directly from the Lord confirms the authenticity of the

47:2

Deut 7:21
^aelyon (5945)
 • Ps 50:14
^bmelek (4428)
 • Prov 16:12
^cerets (0776)
 • Ps 97:5

47:3

Ps 18:47

47:4

1 Pet 1:4

47:5

Ps 68:18, 25, 33; 98:6

47:6

Ps 68:4

47:7

^zamar (2167)

• Ps 66:2

47:8

1 Chr 16:31

47:9

Ps 72:11; 89:18; 97:9

Isa 49:7; 23

Rom 4:11-12

48:1

1 Chr 16:25

Ps 87:1; 96:4; 145:3

Zech 8:3

48:2

Ps 50:2

Lam 2:15

Matt 5:35

48:3

Ps 46:7

48:4

2 Sam 10:6-19

48:5

Exod 15:15

48:6

Isa 13:8

48:8

Ps 87:5

48:9

Ps 26:3; 40:10

48:10

Josh 7:9

Isa 41:10

Mal 1:11

48:11

Ps 97:8

^mishpat (4941)

• Ps 103:6

PSALM 47

For the choir director: A psalm of the descendants of Korah.

- 1 Come, everyone! Clap your hands!
Shout to God with joyful praise!
- 2 For the LORD ^aMost High is awesome.
He is the great ^bKing of all the ^cearth.
- 3 He subdues the nations before us,
putting our enemies beneath our feet.
- 4 He chose the Promised Land as our inheritance,
the proud possession of Jacob's descendants, whom he loves.

Interlude

- 5 God has ascended with a mighty shout.
The LORD has ascended with trumpets blaring.
- 6 Sing praises to God, sing praises;
sing praises to our King, sing praises!
- 7 For God is the King over all the earth.
^dPraise him with a psalm.
- 8 God reigns above the nations,
sitting on his holy throne.
- 9 The rulers of the world have gathered together
with the people of the God of Abraham.
For all the kings of the earth belong to God.
He is highly honored everywhere.

PSALM 48

A song. A psalm of the descendants of Korah.

- 1 How great is the LORD,
how deserving of praise,

in the city of our God,
which sits on his holy mountain!

- 2 It is high and magnificent;
the whole earth rejoices to see it!
Mount Zion, the holy mountain,
is the city of the great King!
- 3 God himself is in Jerusalem's towers,
revealing himself as its defender.
- 4 The kings of the earth joined forces
and advanced against the city.
- 5 But when they saw it, they were stunned;
they were terrified and ran away.
- 6 They were gripped with terror
and writhed in pain like a woman in labor.
- 7 You destroyed them like the mighty ships of Tarshish
shattered by a powerful east wind.
- 8 We had heard of the city's glory,
but now we have seen it ourselves—
the city of the LORD of Heaven's Armies.
It is the city of our God;
he will make it safe forever.

Interlude

- 9 O God, we meditate on your unfailing love
as we worship in your Temple.
- 10 As your name deserves, O God,
you will be praised to the ends of the earth.
Your strong right hand is filled with victory.
- 11 Let the people on Mount Zion rejoice.
Let all the towns of Judah be glad
because of your ^ejustice.

psalmist's vision (see also 12:5-6; 32:8).
 • **know that I am God:** The Lord will do what he promises (Isa 45:3; 49:23; 60:16). • God will be exalted (Ps 47; Isa 6:1); he will judge the nations and rescue his people (see 57:11; 89:13; 108:5-6; 118:16).

Ps 47 This psalm celebrates God's kingship over all the earth; it tells of God's victory in dealing with Israel and the nations. Both Israel (47:3-4) and the nations (47:9) participate in God's kingdom.

47:1-2 As the sovereign king over the nations, God requires praise.

47:1 People *clap* their *hands* in praise and recognition of marvelous deeds (47:3-4; see 98:8; Isa 55:12; cp. Nah 3:19).

47:3-4 The Lord made Israel victorious, especially under David (see 18:40-50). God's mighty deeds of redemption manifest his love for Israel.

47:4 *Jacob's descendants:* Jacob was the father of all Israelites (Gen 32:28); the name Jacob often represents the nation of Israel. • God *loves* and commits himself to Jacob (see 78:68; 127:2; see Rom 11:28).

47:5-6 The psalmist portrays the Lord as returning to heaven, having accomplished his victories. For a portrayal of his descent, see 18:9-16.

47:5 *trumpets:* Or *ram's horns* (see 81:3). At times, ram's horns were sounded in celebration (98:5-6; 2 Kgs 11:14; 1 Chr 15:28).

47:7 People from *all the earth* (see 96:1-3) will worship God. • *psalm:* Hebrew *maskil*. This may be a literary or musical term.

Ps 48 This song of Zion (see also Pss 46, 76, 87, 122) explicitly views Jerusalem (Zion) as the city of the Great King where the godly find protection (48:1-3). God rules from Zion in faithfulness,

righteousness, and justice, and he inspires his subjects with confidence and joy (48:9-11). They commit themselves to seeing the glory of Zion for themselves so that they can tell the next generation about it (48:8, 12-14).

48:2 *Mount Zion, the holy mountain:* Or *Mount Zion, in the far north;* Hebrew reads *Mount Zion, the heights of Zaphon*. The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.

48:3 God dwells in Zion to protect it from all enemies (see 46:5).

48:7 The *ships of Tarshish*, built for long voyages, represent human accomplishment (see also 2 Chr 9:21; Isa 2:16). Their destruction might be the event mentioned in 1 Kgs 22:48.

48:9-11 The psalmist joyfully celebrates the Lord's presence in the midst of the community, reflecting on the faithfulness, righteousness, and justice of God's rule.

12 Go, inspect the city of Jerusalem.
Walk around and count the many towers.
13 Take note of the fortified walls, and tour all the citadels, that you may describe them to future generations.
14 For that is what God is like. He is our God forever and ever, and he will guide us until we die.

PSALM 49

For the choir director: A psalm of the descendants of Korah.

1 Listen to this, all you people!
Pay attention, everyone in the world!
2 High and low, rich and poor—listen!
3 For my words are wise, and my thoughts are filled with insight.
4 I listen carefully to many proverbs and solve riddles with inspiration from a harp.
5 Why should I fear when trouble comes, when enemies surround me?
6 They trust in their wealth and boast of great riches.
7 Yet they cannot redeem themselves from death by paying a ransom to God.
8 Redemption does not come so easily, for no one can ever pay enough
9 to live forever and never see the grave.
10 Those who are wise must finally die, just like the foolish and senseless, leaving all their wealth behind.
11 The grave is their eternal home, where they will stay forever.

They may name their estates after themselves,
12 but their fame will not last. They will die, just like animals.
13 This is the fate of fools, though they are remembered as being wise. *Interlude*
14 Like sheep, they are led to the ^agrave, where death will be their shepherd. In the morning the godly will rule over them. Their bodies will rot in the ^agrave, far from their grand estates.
15 But as for me, God will redeem my life. He will snatch me from the power of the grave. *Interlude*
16 So don't be dismayed when the wicked grow rich and their homes become ever more splendid.
17 For when they die, they take nothing with them. Their wealth will not follow them into the grave.
18 In this life they consider themselves fortunate and are ^bapplauded for their success.
19 But they will die like all before them and never again see the light of day.
20 People who boast of their wealth don't understand; they will die, just like animals.

PSALM 50

A psalm of Asaph.

1 The LORD, the Mighty One, is God, and he has spoken; he has summoned all humanity from where the sun rises to where it sets.

48:13 Ps 78:5-7
48:14 Ps 23:4 Isa 58:11
49:1 Ps 33:8; 78:1
49:3 Ps 37:30; 119:130
49:4 Num 12:8 2 Kgs 3:15 Ps 78:2
49:5 Ps 23:4; 27:1
49:6 Ps 52:7 Mark 10:24-25
49:7 Job 36:18
49:8 Matt 16:26
49:9 Ps 22:29; 89:48
49:10 Ps 39:6 Luke 12:20-21
49:11 Deut 3:14 Ps 10:6
49:13 Jer 17:11
49:14 Ps 9:17 Dan 7:18 Mal 4:3 1 Cor 6:2 Rev 2:26 ^aShe'ol (7585) ^bPs 89:48
49:15 Ps 16:10-11
49:16 Ps 37:7
49:17 Ps 17:14 1 Tim 6:7
49:18 Ps 10:3 Luke 12:19 ^byadah (3034) ^cPs 86:12
49:19 Job 33:29-30
49:20 Ps 49:12
50:1 Josh 22:22 Ps 113:3

48:12-13 *Jerusalem*: Hebrew *Zion*. • *towers* . . . *fortified walls* . . . *citadels*: These structures provide a visual tour of Zion's strength.

48:14 No one is like God (35:10; 71:19; 86:8; 89:6, 8; 113:5; see Isa 40:18, 25). He is the shepherd King (95:7) who *will guide* (see 5:8; 23:2) the sheep of his flock (77:20).

Ps 49 In this wisdom psalm, a wise teacher warns against enemies, whom he portrays as living a rich lifestyle and caring only for themselves (49:5-9). They cannot keep anyone alive, least of all themselves, even in their memories (49:10-12). Like fattened animals, they are led to slaughter (49:14-20).

49:1-4 The wisdom teacher invites everyone to the hall of wisdom; he promises to instruct with a proverb and a riddle.

49:2 Anyone who will *listen* can gain wisdom (Prov 1:5, 8, 33).

49:4 The teacher used both *proverbs* and *ridcles* for instruction in wisdom (see Prov 1:5-6).

49:5-8 If enemies who live for material rewards cannot sustain themselves, how can they give life to others?

49:7 *they cannot redeem themselves from death*: Or *no one can redeem the life of another*. The Hebrew can be translated either way.

49:11-12 The teacher brings wisdom through irony. Everyone dies, and even those with *estates* named after them will be forgotten.

49:13-15 The teachers of false wisdom cannot rescue themselves from death. Only God has that power.

49:13 *though they are remembered as being wise*: The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.

49:14 The teachers of false wisdom will go *to the grave* (Hebrew *Sheol*; also in 49:15) and *to death* in the underworld. See note on 6:5.

49:16-20 The *wicked* might have rich, luxurious lives, but they forget that they cannot avoid death.

Ps 50 God appears as judge to remind the godly and the ungodly in turn that outward performance of sacrificial rituals and recitation of the law are worthless without thankfulness, repentance, and justice.

50:1-3 The whole universe must pay attention when *God approaches* to bring justice into the world.

50:2

Deut 33:2
Ps 48:2; 80:1

50:3

Ps 18; 12-13
Dan 7:10

50:4

Deut 4:26; 32:1
Isa 1:2

50:5

Exod 24:7

50:6

Ps 75:7; 96:13; 97:6
shamayim (8064)
• Ps 108:4

50:8

Ps 40:6

50:9

Ps 69:31

50:10

Ps 104:24

50:12

Exod 19:5

50:13

Hos 6:6

50:14

Deut 23:21

Hos 14:2

Rom 12:1

Heb 13:15

elyon (5945)

• Ps 78:35

2 From Mount Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God shines in glorious radiance.

3 Our God approaches,
and he is not silent.

Fire devours everything in his way,
and a great storm rages around him.

4 He calls on the heavens above and earth below
to witness the judgment of his people.

5 "Bring my faithful people to me—
those who made a covenant with me
by giving sacrifices."

6 Then let the heavens proclaim his justice,
for God himself will be the judge.

Interlude

7 "O my people, listen as I speak.
Here are my charges against you,
O Israel:
I am God, your God!

8 I have no complaint about your sacrifices
or the burnt offerings you constantly offer.

9 But I do not need the bulls from your barns
or the goats from your pens.

10 For all the animals of the forest are mine,
and I own the cattle on a thousand hills.

11 I know every bird on the mountains,
and all the animals of the field are mine.

12 If I were hungry, I would not tell you,
for all the world is mine and
everything in it.

13 Do I eat the meat of bulls?
Do I drink the blood of goats?

14 Make thankfulness your sacrifice to God,
and keep the vows you made to the
Most High.

15 Then call on me when you are in trouble,
and I will rescue you,
and you will give me glory."

Mount Zion, the City of God (Ps 48)

Ps 14:7; 50:2; 51:18;
53:6; 65:1; 68:16;
76:2; 78:68; 87:2, 5;
102:21; 125:1;
128:5; 132:13;
133:3; 135:21;
147:12
2 Sam 5:7
1 Kgs 8:1
Isa 1:27; 2:3;
3:16-17, 26; 4:3-5;
8:18; 10:12, 24, 32;
16:1; 24:23; 29:8;
30:19; 31:4, 9;
33:20; 37:22, 32;
40:9; 41:27; 52:1-2;
60:14; 62:1; 64:10
Jer 26:18; 51:35
Lam 2:13
Joel 2:32; 3:16-17
Amos 1:2
Obad 1:21
Mic 3:12; 4:2
Zeph 3:14, 16
Zech 1:14, 17; 2:7;
8:2-3; 9:9
Heb 12:22
Rev 14:1

Zion is the Hebrew name for the mountain in Jerusalem where the Temple was located (see 2 Sam 5:7; see also 2 Chr 3:1). On the one hand, Zion is synonymous with Jerusalem, and the NLT often translates *Zion* as "Jerusalem" (69:35; 87:2; 97:8; 132:13). Zion is the actual city of Jerusalem that was destroyed in 586 BC (see 79:1; 102:13; 126:1; 137:1) and again in AD 70.

On the other hand, Zion is the city of God that transcends geographical location. Zion is God's universal kingdom, pictured as the city in which he dwells (74:2; 76:2; 84:7; 135:21; see Isa 26). The prophets and poets of Israel speak of the city of God as being more extensive than the physical city. The citizens of this city come from Judah, Israel, and the nations (see 87:5-6; Heb 12:22-24). It is on a high mountain (48:2) at the center of God's kingdom on earth (99:2; 132:13), and his throne is in Zion (see note on 9:11). Therefore, godly prayers and praise focus on Zion (53:6; 65:1; 137:1; 147:12; 149:2) and redemption is sought there (14:7; 20:2; 50:2; 53:6; 133:3).

Zion is also symbolic of God's protection and blessings (51:18; 128:5; 134:3; see Pss 46; 48). Anyone who trusts in the Lord is as secure as Mount Zion (125:1), but those who reject the Lord also reject Zion and have no future (129:5-8). Zion is the mother of all the nations (87:4-6). Members of the Davidic dynasty are the legitimate heirs who rule over Zion as agents to establish God's universal kingdom (2:6; 110:2).

The NT likewise speaks of a heavenly Jerusalem, the spiritual home of those from all nations who have been reborn through faith in Jesus Christ (Gal 4:24-26; Heb 12:22-24; Rev 3:12; 21:2-4). The book of Hebrews speaks of Zion as the mother city. Abraham sought it in faith (Heb 11:10), and all men and women of faith are its citizens (Heb 12:22-24). Because the Lord knows no geographical limitations (1 Kgs 8:27), the true Zion he inhabits is in the hearts of all who worship him (22:3).

50:4-6 The Lord is coming to bring righteousness. This hope encourages his *faithful people*, but those who have been unfaithful will not experience blessing when *the heavens above and the earth below* testify against them (cp. Deut 30:19; 31:28; 32:1; Isa 1:2). The Lord comes to restore order to the world (5:8; 22:31; 33:5; 40:9; 50:6; 71:16; 97:6).

50:7-13 The psalmist delivers a message against those who regard the sacrificial rituals as more important than having a proper heart attitude.

50:9 Unlike pagan gods, God does *not need* food; instead, he wants his people to serve him with a right heart (50:14-15).

50:10 *I own the cattle on a thousand*

hills: God has no needs; he possesses everything.

50:14 *Thankfulness* means looking beyond self-interest to express gratitude for God's blessings (see 51:15-17; 54:6).

• True *sacrifice* requires offering one's self to the glory of God (50:23; Rom 12:1-2).

50:15 God's response to his people's cry is to *rescue* them.

16 But God says to the wicked:
 “Why bother reciting my decrees
 and pretending to obey my covenant?
 17 For you refuse my discipline
 and treat my words like trash.
 18 When you see thieves, you approve of
 them,
 and you spend your time with
 adulterers.
 19 Your mouth is filled with wickedness,
 and your tongue is full of lies.
 20 You sit around and slander your brother—
 your own mother’s son.
 21 While you did all this, I remained silent,
 and you thought I didn’t care.
 But now I will rebuke you,
 listing all my charges against you.
 22 Repent, all of you who forget me,
 or I will tear you apart,
 and no one will help you.
 23 But giving thanks is a sacrifice that
 truly honors me.
 If you keep to my path,
 I will reveal to you the salvation of God.”

PSALM 51

For the choir director: A psalm of David, regarding the time Nathan the prophet came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.

1 Have mercy on me, O God,
 because of your unfailing love.

Because of your great compassion,
 blot out the stain of my sins.
 2 Wash me clean from my guilt.
 Purify me from my sin.
 3 For I recognize my rebellion;
 it haunts me day and night.
 4 Against you, and you alone, have I
 sinned;
 I have done what is evil in your sight.
 You will be proved right in what you say,
 and your judgment against me is
 just.
 5 For I was born a sinner—
 yes, from the moment my mother
 conceived me.
 6 But you desire honesty from the womb,
 teaching me wisdom even there.
 7 Purify me from my sins, and I will be
 clean;
 wash me, and I will be whiter than
 snow.
 8 Oh, give me back my joy again;
 you have broken me—
 now let me rejoice.
 9 Don’t keep looking at my sins.
 Remove the stain of my guilt.
 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God.
 Renew a loyal spirit within me.
 11 Do not banish me from your presence,
 and don’t take your Holy Spirit
 from me.

50:16
 Isa 29:13
 50:17
 Neh 9:26
 50:18
 Rom 1:32
 50:21
 Eccl 8:11
 50:22
 Ps 9:17
 50:23
 **todah* (8426)
 • Ps 100:4
 51: TITLE
 **nabi* (5030)
 • Ps 74:9
 51:1
 **khased* (2617)
 • Ps 57:10
 51:2
 Jer 33:8
 1 Jn 1:7-9
 51:3
 Isa 59:12
 **pesha* (6588)
 • Ps 103:12
 51:4
 *Rom 3:4
 51:5
 Eph 2:1-3
 51:7
 Isa 1:18
 51:8
 **simkhal* (8057)
 • Ps 97:11
 51:10
 **bara* (1254)
 • Ps 148:5
 **khadash* (2318)
 • Ps 103:5
 51:11
 Eph 4:30
 **ruakh* (7307)
 • Ps 104:30

50:16-21 This message is against the wicked, who only pretend to listen to God.

50:17 *my discipline . . . my words:* The wicked may observe rituals, but they reject more important matters such as justice, mercy, and faithfulness (cp. Matt 23:23-24).

50:21 Because he is patient, God remained silent.

50:22-23 The wicked will experience God’s justice, while the godly will see God’s everlasting salvation.

50:22 God will tear the wicked apart like a lion tearing its prey (Isa 5:29; 31:4; Ezek 19:3; cp. Ps 7:2; 22:13).

Pss 51–65 These psalms of David share a common thread in their reflection on the experience of evil. In Ps 51, the psalmist confesses the evil he has done and asks God’s forgiveness. Psalms 52–64 lament specific evils that David experienced. A song of praise (Ps 65) brings David’s laments to an end.

Ps 51 This moving prayer for restoration asks for God’s favor, mercy, forgiveness, and cleansing. Out of a broken spirit, the psalmist confesses and accepts responsibility for his sin (51:3-6), then petitions God to remove his guilt and renew him inwardly (51:7-12). The

psalmist then recommit himself to a lifestyle of wisdom and joy in the service of God and others (51:13-17).

51: TITLE regarding the time Nathan . . . Bathsheba: See 2 Sam 11:1-27. The text of the psalm contains no explicit reference to this event.

51:1-2 The repentant offender has nothing to offer God. He needs God’s favor, mercy, forgiveness, and blessing before he can experience renewal and restoration.

51:1 A prayer for God’s mercy and kindness is part of the genre of lament. Sometimes the plea comes from the psalmist’s acknowledgment of his weakness and sin, as here (see also 6:2; 9:13; 25:16; 31:9; 41:4, 10). At other times, it arises from the psalmist’s commitment to the Lord (see 26:11; 27:7; 119:29, 58, 132). In each case, God’s mercy brings an inner renewal.

51:2 *Wash me . . . Purify me:* The psalmist prays for cleansing and release from the guilt of his sin (51:7; see 26:6; Isa 1:16, 18; 4:4).

51:3-6 The psalmist accepts the consequences of his sin against God. He knows that there is nothing good in him unless God renews his life.

51:4 *Against . . . you alone:* This is hyperbole—the psalmist knows he also

sinned against human beings (2 Sam 11:2-4, 15-17), but his offense against God is more important. He expects God to rebuke him and will accept whatever verdict God renders (see Rom 3:4). • *and your judgment against me is just:* Greek version reads *and you will win your case in court*. Cp. Rom 3:4, where Paul quotes the Greek translation of this verse.

51:5 *I was born a sinner:* The psalmist is not making excuses but is acknowledging the depth of his sinfulness. From the time we are conceived, we all share in the human condition of sinfulness.

51:6 *from the womb: Or from the heart;* Hebrew reads in the inward parts.

51:7 *Purify me from my sins* (literally *Purify me with the hyssop branch*; see Exod 12:22; Lev 14:4; John 19:29; Heb 9:19): The psalmist depends on God to purify and renew him (see Isa 1:18).

51:8 Regaining joy is a gracious gift from God. • *you have broken me:* The psalmist’s whole being feels broken (6:2; cp. 34:20).

51:10-12 God’s Spirit renews and recreates the human spirit.

51:10 *A loyal spirit* yields the inner qualities of constancy and perseverance.

51:13

Ps 22:27

51:14

2 Sam 12:9

Ps 9:14; 25:5; 71:15

51:16

1 Sam 15:22

Ps 40:6

51:17

Ps 34:18

ʾzebakh (2077)

• Prov 21:27

51:18

Isa 51:3

51:19

Ps 4:5; 66:13, 15

52:1

Ps 94:4

52:2

Ps 5:9; 57:4; 59:7

52:3

Ps 36:4; 58:3

Jer 9:4-5

52:4

Ps 120:3

52:5

Prov 2:22

Isa 22:18-19

52:6

Job 22:19

Ps 40:3

52:8

Ps 13:5; 128:3

Jer 11:16

52:9

Ps 30:12; 54:6

53:1-6

//Ps 14:1-7

12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and make me willing to obey you.

13 Then I will teach your ways to rebels,
and they will return to you.

14 Forgive me for shedding blood, O God
who saves;
then I will joyfully sing of your
forgiveness.

15 Unseal my lips, O Lord,
that my mouth may praise you.

16 You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would
offer one.

You do not want a burnt offering.

17 The ^bsacrifice you desire is a broken spirit.
You will not reject a broken and
repentant heart, O God.

18 Look with favor on Zion and help her;
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

19 Then you will be pleased with sacrifices
offered in the right spirit—
with burnt offerings and whole burnt
offerings.

Then bulls will again be sacrificed on
your altar.

PSALM 52

*For the choir director: A psalm of David,
regarding the time Doeg the Edomite said
to Saul, "David has gone to see Ahimelech."*

1 Why do you boast about your crimes,
great warrior?

Don't you realize God's justice
continues forever?

2 All day long you plot destruction.
Your tongue cuts like a sharp razor;
you're an expert at telling lies.

3 You love evil more than good
and lies more than truth. *Interlude*

4 You love to destroy others with your
words,
you liar!

5 But God will strike you down once and
for all.

He will pull you from your home
and uproot you from the land of the
living. *Interlude*

6 The righteous will see it and be amazed.
They will laugh and say,

7 "Look what happens to mighty warriors
who do not trust in God.

They trust their wealth instead
and grow more and more bold in their
wickedness."

8 But I am like an olive tree, thriving in the
house of God.

I will always trust in God's unfailing
love.

9 I will praise you forever, O God,
for what you have done.

I will trust in your good name
in the presence of your faithful people.

PSALM 53

Ps 53:1-6 //Ps 14:1-7

*For the choir director: A meditation; a
psalm of David.*

1 Only fools say in their hearts,
"There is no God."

They are corrupt, and their actions are evil;
not one of them does good!

51:11 *your Holy Spirit: Or your spirit of holiness.* Only the power of the Holy Spirit can change the human will to make it "loyal" (51:10) and "willing to obey" (51:12).

51:13 As he learns from his sin and its consequences, the psalmist wants to *teach* others.

51:14 *shedding blood:* This idiom includes any injustice, not just homicide (9:12; 58:10; see 2 Sam 11:14-26; cp. Isa 1:15-17).

51:18-19 *rebuild the walls of Jerusalem:* These verses were probably added as a prayer for national restoration after the Exile (see Pss 42-43); the entire community in exile identified with the spirit of the psalm.

51:19 *Sacrifices offered in the right spirit* come from a heart that is right with God and with others (see 15:2-5; 24:3-6; 50:14; Matt 5:23-24).

Ps 52 Wicked people use words to destroy relationships and communities. They foolishly think that they can be

heroes by their words (52:1-4), but their fate suddenly overtakes them (52:5-7). In contrast, the godly renew their commitment to the Lord (52:8-9) and find their future secure in him.

52: *TITLE psalm:* Hebrew *maskil*. This may be a literary or musical term. • This psalm refers to an incident in 1 Sam 21:1-10; 22:9-10. The accuser, *Doeg the Edomite*, is a paradigm of evil.

52:1-4 Liars foolishly deceive themselves by thinking that they can be heroes by their words. They believe themselves innocent of any charges of evildoing, though they love evil and cause destruction. Those who speak curses, sarcasm, bitterness, arrogant boasting, and deceptions (31:18; 34:13; 59:7, 12; 120:2-3; 140:3, 9) bring about chaos, alienation, and destruction (Jas 3:5). Their sharp words cut like swords and daggers (55:21; 57:4; 64:3), the fangs of a snake (140:3), or a *razor*.

52:3 Deceptive speech changes one's character.

52:5-7 God's judgment on the wicked will come suddenly and forcibly. The godly rejoice in God's justice, not in the misfortunes of the wicked.

52:5 God *will strike* the wicked *down* like a pagan altar, idol, or unclean vessel (Exod 34:13; Lev 11:35; 2 Kgs 10:27).

52:6 In Hebrew, the verbs here translated *see* and *be amazed* sound almost alike.

52:8-9 The psalmist commits himself to a life of trust in the Lord. • *An olive tree* lives a long time when cared for (1:3; 128:3). The psalmist desires to be close to the Lord, his Savior and the source of his blessing (18:6; 23:6).

Ps 53 This psalm parallels Ps 14, differing only in verse 5.

53: *TITLE A meditation; a psalm:* Hebrew according to *makkhalath; a maskil*. These may be literary or musical terms.

53:1-3 Paul uses the Greek translation of this passage in his description of the depravity of all people (Rom 3:10-12).

- 2 God looks down from heaven
on the entire human race;
he looks to see if anyone is truly wise,
if anyone seeks God.
- 3 But no, all have turned away;
all have become corrupt.
No one does good,
not a single one!
- 4 Will those who do evil never learn?
They eat up my people like bread
and wouldn't think of praying to God.
- 5 Terror will grip them,
terror like they have never known
before.
God will scatter the bones of your
enemies.
You will put them to shame, for God
has rejected them.
- 6 Who will come from Mount Zion to
rescue Israel?
When God restores his people,
Jacob will shout with joy, and Israel
will rejoice.

PSALM 54

For the choir director: A psalm of David, regarding the time the Ziphites came and said to Saul, "We know where David is hiding." To be accompanied by stringed instruments.

- 1 Come with great power, O God, and
rescue me!
Defend me with your might.
- 2 Listen to my prayer, O God.
Pay attention to my plea.
- 3 For strangers are attacking me;
violent people are trying to kill me.
They care nothing for God.

Interlude

- 4 But God is my helper.
The Lord keeps me alive!

- 5 May the evil plans of my enemies be
turned against them.
Do as you promised and put an end
to them.
- 6 I will sacrifice a voluntary offering to
you;
I will praise your name, O LORD,
for it is good.
- 7 For you have rescued me from my
troubles
and helped me to triumph over my
enemies.

PSALM 55

For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be accompanied by stringed instruments.

- 1 Listen to my prayer, O God.
Do not ignore my cry for help!
- 2 Please listen and answer me,
for I am overwhelmed by my
troubles.
- 3 My enemies shout at me,
making loud and wicked threats.
They bring trouble on me
and angrily hunt me down.
- 4 My heart pounds in my chest.
The terror of death assaults me.
- 5 Fear and trembling overwhelm me,
and I can't stop shaking.
- 6 Oh, that I had wings like a dove;
then I would fly away and rest!
- 7 I would fly far away
to the quiet of the wilderness.

Interlude

- 8 How quickly I would escape—
far from this wild storm of hatred.
- 9 Confuse them, Lord, and frustrate their
plans,
for I see violence and conflict in the
city.

53:2
Ps 33:13-15
53:3
Rom 3:10, 12
53:5
Lev 26:17, 36
Ps 44:7
Jer 6:30; 8:1-2
Ezek 6:5
53:6
Ps 14:7
54:1
2 Chr 20:6
Ps 20:1
54:3
1 Sam 20:1
Ps 36:1; 40:14; 86:14;
140:1, 4
54:4
Ps 37:24, 40
54:6
Ps 50:14
54:7
Ps 34:6; 59:10
55:1
Ps 27:9; 61:1
'tekhinnah (8467)
• Ps 119:170
55:2
1 Sam 1:16
Ps 77:3; 86:6-7
Isa 38:14
55:3
2 Sam 16:7-8
Ps 17:9; 71:11
55:4
Ps 116:3
55:5
Job 21:6
55:6
Job 3:13
55:8
Isa 4:6
55:9
Jer 6:7

53:3 *have become corrupt*: Greek version reads *have become useless*. Cp. Rom 3:12.

53:5 *scatter the bones*: Israel's *enemies* would suffer shameful defeat and lack the peaceful rest of a decent burial (see note on Gen 49:29-33; cp. Ps 141:7; 2 Kgs 9:10; Jer 8:1-2; Ezek 6:5).

Ps 54 In this individual lament, occasioned by violent and godless people (54:3), the psalmist turns to God in prayer and maintains his focus on God's help (54:4). He prays for God to save him from evil and to judge his enemies (54:5, 7).

54: **TITLE psalm**: Hebrew *maskil*. This may be a literary or musical term. • The psalm refers to the account of 1 Sam 23:19-20, when the *Ziphites* were bent on violence.

54:3 The *strangers* were alienated from the covenant community (see 109:11; Prov 5:10). • *Proud and violent people* hold no regard for God or for other people (see 35:11, 25; 86:14; Prov 11:16).

54:6-7 In anticipation of God's response, the mood of the psalm changes from gloom to thanksgiving.

54:6 A *voluntary offering* is a sacrifice of praise (see "Grain Offering" and "Peace Offering" in chart, "Israel's Sacrifices," p. 197). Sacrifices of praise are the kind of offering God most desires (see 50:14-15, 23).

Ps 55 The psalmist is faced with adversaries whose leader is a former friend (55:12-14), and he is overwhelmed with anguish. He turns to the

Lord in prayer and commits himself to the Lord for redress (55:22-23). Jesus experienced similar suffering when his friend (Judas) betrayed him. He also experienced the answer to the psalmist's prayer: (1) by taking the place of the wicked and receiving their judgment (Isa 53:7-9), and (2) by committing himself to the Father, who rescued (Luke 23:46) and rewarded him (Isa 53:10-12).

55: **TITLE psalm**: Hebrew *maskil*. This may be a literary or musical term.

55:1-3 The occasion for this prayer is an attack by an enemy.

55:4-8 In the experience of deep anguish, the psalmist confesses that his adversity has become unbearable and he seeks an escape.

55:11
Ps 5:9; 10:7

55:12-13
Ps 41:9

55:14
Ps 42:4

55:15
Num 16:30, 33
Ps 64:7

55:16
Ps 57:2-3

55:17
Ps 5:3; 88:13; 141:2
Dan 6:10
Acts 3:1

55:18
Ps 103:4

55:19
Ps 36:1; 93:2

55:20
Num 30:2
Ps 7:3-4; 89:34

55:21
Ps 12:2; 28:3
Prov 5:3-4

55:22
Ps 37:5; 112:6
1 Pet 5:7

55:23
Ps 5:6; 56:3-4; 73:18

56:1
Ps 17:9; 35:1, 25

56:3
Ps 11:1; 56:10-11

56:4
Ps 118:6
Heb 13:6

56:5
Ps 41:7
2 Pet 3:15-16

56:6
Ps 17:11; 59:3

56:7
Ps 36:12; 55:23

56:8
Ps 39:12; 139:3
Mal 3:16

56:9
Ps 41:11; 118:6
Rom 8:31

10 Its walls are patrolled day and night
against invaders,
but the real danger is wickedness
within the city.

11 Everything is falling apart;
threats and cheating are rampant in
the streets.

12 It is not an enemy who taunts me—
I could bear that.

It is not my foes who so arrogantly
insult me—
I could have hidden from them.

13 Instead, it is you—my equal,
my companion and close friend.

14 What good fellowship we once enjoyed
as we walked together to the house
of God.

15 Let death stalk my enemies;
let the grave swallow them alive,
for evil makes its home within them.

16 But I will call on God,
and the LORD will rescue me.

17 Morning, noon, and night
I cry out in my distress,
and the LORD hears my voice.

18 He ransoms me and keeps me safe
from the battle waged against me,
though many still oppose me.

19 God, who has ruled forever,
will hear me and humble them.

Interlude

For my enemies refuse to change their
ways;
they do not fear God.

20 As for my companion, he betrayed his
friends;
he broke his promises.

21 His words are as smooth as butter,
but in his heart is war.
His words are as soothing as lotion,
but underneath are daggers!

22 Give your burdens to the LORD,
and he will take care of you.
He will not permit the godly to slip
and fall.

23 But you, O God, will send the wicked
down to the pit of destruction.
Murderers and liars will die young,
but I am trusting you to save me.

PSALM 56

*For the choir director: A psalm of David,
regarding the time the Philistines seized
him in Gath. To be sung to the tune "Dove
on Distant Oaks."*

1 O God, have mercy on me,
for people are hounding me.
My foes attack me all day long.

2 I am constantly hounded by those who
slander me,
and many are boldly attacking me.

3 But when I am afraid,
I will put my trust in you.

4 I praise God for what he has promised.
I trust in God, so why should I be
afraid?
What can mere mortals do to me?

5 They are always twisting what I say;
they spend their days plotting to
harm me.

6 They come together to spy on me—
watching my every step, eager to
kill me.

7 Don't let them get away with their
wickedness;
in your anger, O God, bring them
down.

8 You keep track of all my sorrows.
You have collected all my tears in your
bottle.
You have recorded each one in your
book.

9 My enemies will retreat when I call to
you for help.
This I know: God is on my side!

10 I praise God for what he has promised;
yes, I praise the LORD for what he has
promised.

11 I trust in God, so why should I be afraid?
What can mere mortals do to me?

55:12-20 The psalmist's enemy was once a *friend*; memories of that close relationship bring him pain (see 31:11).

55:15 *let the grave*: Hebrew *let Sheol* (see note on 6:5). See "Prayers for Vengeance" at Ps 137, p. 1017.

55:19-21 God is good and faithful, but the psalmist's enemies and so-called friend are deceitful and wicked.

55:22-23 The psalmist commits all his cares *to the LORD*.

55:23 *To die young* means that one fails

to experience God's full blessing (cp. Prov 3:2, 16).

Ps 56 This individual lament moves from petition to confidence two times (56:1-4, 5-13).

56: TITLE *A psalm*: Hebrew *miktam*. This may be a literary or musical term. • David was *seized by Philistines* concerned about his loyalties and brought before King Achish (1 Sam 21:10-15).

56:4 *mere mortals*: Or *mere flesh*, in contrast to the immortal and infinitely more powerful God (see Isa 2:22).

56:5-7 The psalmist specifies his charge against his attackers as he prays for their evil to cease.

56:8 The psalmist makes a play on the Hebrew words translated *sorrows* (Hebrew *nod*) and *bottle* (Hebrew *no'd*). The word translated "sorrows" can also be translated "wanderings."

56:11 *mere mortals* (Hebrew *'adam*): The psalm also uses two other words for man: *'enosh* ("people," 56:1) and *basar* ("mere mortals," 56:4). All express the ideas of mortality and finitude.

- 12 I will fulfill my vows to you, O God,
and will offer a sacrifice of thanks for
your help.
- 13 For you have rescued me from death;
you have kept my feet from slipping.
So now I can walk in your presence,
O God,
in your life-giving light.

PSALM 57

*For the choir director: A psalm of David,
regarding the time he fled from Saul and
went into the cave. To be sung to the tune
"Do Not Destroy!"*

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy!
4 I look to you for protection.
I will hide beneath the shadow of your
wings
until the danger passes by.
- 2 I cry out to God Most High,
to God who will fulfill his purpose
for me.
- 3 He will send help from heaven to
rescue me,
disgracing those who hound me.

Interlude

My God will send forth his unfailing love
and faithfulness.

- 4 I am surrounded by fierce lions
who greedily devour human prey—
whose teeth pierce like spears and
arrows,
and whose tongues cut like swords.
- 5 Be exalted, O God, above the highest
heavens!
May your glory shine over all the
earth.

- 6 My enemies have set a trap for me.
I am weary from distress.
They have dug a deep pit in my path,
but they themselves have fallen into it.

Interlude

- 7 My heart is confident in you, O God;
my heart is confident.
No wonder I can sing your praises!
- 8 Wake up, my heart!
Wake up, O lyre and harp!
I will wake the dawn with my song.
- 9 I will thank you, Lord, among all the
people.
I will sing your praises among the
nations.
- 10 For your unfailing love is as high as the
heavens.
Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.
- 11 Be exalted, O God, above the highest
heavens.
May your glory shine over all the earth.

PSALM 58

*For the choir director: A psalm of David, to
be sung to the tune "Do Not Destroy!"*

- 1 Justice—do you rulers know the meaning
of the word?
Do you judge the people fairly?
- 2 No! You plot injustice in your hearts.
You spread violence throughout the
land.
- 3 These wicked people are born sinners;
even from birth they have lied and
gone their own way.
- 4 They spit venom like deadly snakes;
they are like cobras that refuse to
listen,

56:12
Ps 50:14-15

56:13
Job 33:30
Ps 33:19; 86:13;
116:8-9

57:1
Ruth 2:12
Ps 36:7; 91:4
Isa 26:20
^anepesh (5315)
• Ps 62:1

57:2
Ps 138:8

57:3
Ps 18:16; 25:10; 56:2;
144:5, 7

57:4
Ps 58:6; 64:3
Prov 30:13-14

57:5
Ps 108:5
^rum (7311)
• Ps 89:16

57:6
Ps 10:9; 35:7; 140:5
Prov 26:27

57:7-11
//Ps 108:1-5

57:8
Ps 16:9; 30:12; 150:3

57:10
Ps 36:5
^khesed (2617)
• Ps 103:4

58:1
Ps 82:2

58:2
Ps 94:20

58:3
Ps 53:3
Isa 48:8

58:4
Deut 32:33
Ps 81:11; 140:3

56:13 The *light* of God's goodness and salvation will replace the darkness of *death* (see 18:25-29; 27:1).

Ps 57 The psalmist's cry for mercy and protection quickly turns into an affirmation of trust and confidence in the Lord (57:1-4). When the wicked fall into their own traps (57:6), the psalmist will praise the Lord (57:7-10).

57:TITLE *A psalm*: Hebrew *miktam*. This may be a literary or musical term.
• *David . . . fled from Saul and went into the cave*: See 1 Sam 22:1 or 24:1-8.

57:1 *shadow of your wings*: As a bird protects its young, God protects the one who trusts in him (see 17:8).

57:2 *God Most High* (Hebrew *'elohim-elyon*) is a generic title for God, who is more powerful than all real or imagined supernatural beings (see 91:1; 97:9; Gen 14:18-22). • *who will fulfill his purpose*: Or *who will end my [trouble], or who deals kindly with me*.

57:3-4 These verses are a prayer for rescue from powerful enemies. The metaphor of *fierce lions* describes human enemies; the psalmist feels unable to escape them without God's intervention (see also 35:11-21; 124:6).

57:5 This verse is repeated in 57:11 and 108:5. • God's *glory*—his manifest presence that excludes all evil (8:1; 19:1-4; 24:7)—will fill the whole created order (Isa 6:3).

57:7-11 This section is repeated with a few modifications in 108:1-5.

57:7-8 The poet is *confident* that God will end the night of evil (cp. 56:13).

57:10-11 God's glory extends to the whole universe, as will praise for his *unfailing love* and *faithfulness*.

Ps 58 The administration of justice is a mark of good government. God expects nothing less from his people. The psalmist condemns Israel's leaders for abusing

their power, and he calls on the Lord to rain down his curses upon the wicked. The demonstration of divine justice will reassure the godly that God is just.

58:TITLE *A psalm*: Hebrew *miktam*. This may be a literary or musical term.

58:1-5 The administrators of justice were furthering their own interests rather than those of the needy. The absence of justice gradually resulted in a violent society.

58:1 *rulers* (or *gods*): This designation was used for high officials and administrators of *justice* (82:1, 6). Elsewhere, it might refer to angelic creatures (89:7) or to the gods of the nations (82:1; Dan 11:36).

58:3 All human beings are *born sinners* (see 51:5); however, whereas the *wicked* indulge their sinful nature, the godly fight against it (Rom 7:19-23; Jas 4:1-10).

58:4 *Venom* here means poisonous speech (see 140:3).

58:6

Job 4:10
Ps 3:7

58:7

Josh 7:5
Ps 64:3; 112:10

58:8

Job 3:16

58:9

Job 27:21
Ps 118:12
Prov 10:25

58:10

Ps 32:11; 64:10;
68:22-23; 91:8

58:11

Ps 9:8; 18:20
Luke 6:23, 35

59:1

Ps 20:1; 143:9

59:2

Ps 14:4; 28:3; 94:16;
139:19

59:3

Ps 7:3-4; 56:6; 69:4

59:4

Ps 35:19, 23

59:5

Ps 9:5; 84:8
Jer 18:23

59:7

Job 22:13
Ps 10:11; 73:11;
94:4-7

59:8

Ps 2:4; 37:13

59:9

Ps 9:9

59:10

Ps 54:7

59:11

Deut 4:9
Ps 106:27; 144:6

59:12

Ps 10:7
Prov 12:13
Zeph 3:11

59:13

Ps 83:18; 104:35

59:14

Ps 59:6

- 5 ignoring the tunes of the snake charmers,
no matter how skillfully they play.
- 6 Break off their fangs, O God!
Smash the jaws of these lions, O LORD!
- 7 May they disappear like water into thirsty ground.
Make their weapons useless in their hands.
- 8 May they be like snails that dissolve into slime,
like a stillborn child who will never see the sun.
- 9 God will sweep them away, both young and old,
faster than a pot heats over burning thorns.
- 10 The godly will rejoice when they see injustice avenged.
They will wash their feet in the blood of the wicked.
- 11 Then at last everyone will say,
"There truly is a reward for those who live for God;
surely there is a God who judges justly here on earth."

PSALM 59

For the choir director: A psalm of David, regarding the time Saul sent soldiers to watch David's house in order to kill him. To be sung to the tune "Do Not Destroy!"

- 1 Rescue me from my enemies, O God.
Protect me from those who have come to destroy me.
- 2 Rescue me from these criminals;
save me from these murderers.
- 3 They have set an ambush for me.
Fierce enemies are out there waiting,
LORD,
though I have not sinned or offended them.
- 4 I have done nothing wrong,
yet they prepare to attack me.

Wake up! See what is happening and help me!

- 5 O LORD God of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel,
wake up and punish those hostile nations.
Show no mercy to wicked traitors.
- Interlude*
- 6 They come out at night,
snarling like vicious dogs as they prowl the streets.
- 7 Listen to the filth that comes from their mouths;
their words cut like swords.
"After all, who can hear us?" they sneer.
- 8 But LORD, you laugh at them.
You scoff at all the hostile nations.
- 9 You are my strength; I wait for you to rescue me,
for you, O God, are my fortress.
- 10 In his unfailing love, my God will stand with me.
He will let me look down in triumph on all my enemies.
- 11 Don't kill them, for my people soon forget such lessons;
stagger them with your power, and bring them to their knees,
O Lord our shield.
- 12 Because of the sinful things they say,
because of the evil that is on their lips,
let them be captured by their pride,
their curses, and their lies.
- 13 Destroy them in your anger!
Wipe them out completely!
Then the whole world will know that God reigns in Israel.
- Interlude*
- 14 My enemies come out at night,
snarling like vicious dogs as they prowl the streets.
- 15 They scavenge for food
but go to sleep unsatisfied.

58:6 The psalmist calls on God to *break* the destructive power of the wicked.

58:7 *Make their weapons useless in their hands: Or Let them be trodden down and wither like grass.* The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.

58:8 When moving over dry ground, *snails* dry up.

58:9-10 God's judgment will come suddenly. The certainty of vindication brings joy to the godly.

58:11 Vindication is the reward of *those who live for God*.

Ps 59 The psalmist laments the power of enemies who conspire with other nations.

59:TITLE A psalm: Hebrew *miktam*. This may be a literary or musical term. • *the time Saul sent soldiers to watch David's house:* See 1 Sam 19:11-18.

59:1-2 *Protect me (or place me on high):* When surrounded by evil, the godly pray for God to set them apart for himself and protect them.

59:4-5 The psalmist asks God to show the treacherous, deceptive, and *wicked traitors* no mercy (see 25:2).

59:6-8 The wicked threaten like *vicious dogs*, but the Lord responds with scorn.

59:11-13 The psalmist prays that the wicked will be forced to endure the same agonizing pain they have caused.

59:13 in Israel: Literally *in Jacob*. See note on 44:4.

59:14-16 The wicked will go *unsatisfied*, but the psalmist will praise the Lord's *power and unfailing love*.

59:15 *but go to sleep unsatisfied: Or and growl if they don't get enough.* The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.

16 But as for me, I will sing about your power.
 Each morning I will sing with joy about your unfailing love.
 For you have been my refuge, a place of safety when I am in distress.

17 O my Strength, to you I sing praises, for you, O God, are my refuge, the God who shows me unfailing love.

PSALM 60

For the choir director: A psalm of David useful for teaching, regarding the time David fought Aram-naharaim and Aram-zobah, and Joab returned and killed 12,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt. To be sung to the tune "Lily of the Testimony."

1 You have rejected us, O God, and broken our defenses.
 You have been angry with us; now restore us to your favor.

2 You have shaken our land and split it open.
 Seal the cracks, for the land trembles.

3 You have been very hard on us, making us drink wine that sent us reeling.

4 But you have raised a banner for those who fear you—
 a rallying point in the face of attack.

Interlude

5 Now rescue your beloved people.
 Answer and save us by your power.

6 God has promised this by his holiness:
 "I will divide up Shechem with joy.
 I will measure out the valley of Succoth.

7 Gilead is mine,
 and Manasseh, too.
 Ephraim, my helmet, will produce my warriors,
 and Judah, my scepter, will produce my kings.

8 But Moab, my washbasin, will become my servant,
 and I will wipe my feet on Edom and shout in triumph over Philistia."

9 Who will bring me into the fortified city?
 Who will bring me victory over Edom?

10 Who you rejected us, O God?
 Will you no longer march with our armies?

11 Oh, please help us against our enemies,
 for all human help is useless.

12 With God's help we will do mighty things,
 for he will trample down our foes.

PSALM 61

For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be accompanied by stringed instruments.

1 O God, listen to my cry!
 Hear my prayer!

2 From the ends of the earth,
 I cry to you for help
 when my heart is overwhelmed.
 Lead me to the towering rock of safety,
 for you are my safe refuge,
 a fortress where my enemies cannot reach me.

4 Let me live forever in your sanctuary,
 safe beneath the shelter of your wings!

Interlude

59:16
 Ps 21:13; 46:1; 101:1

59:17
 Ps 59:9-10

60:1
 Ps 44:9; 79:5; 80:3

60:2
 2 Chr 7:14
 Ps 18:7

60:3
 Ps 66:12

60:5-12
 //Ps 108:6-13

60:6
 Gen 33:17
 Josh 17:7
 Ps 89:35

60:7
 Gen 49:10
 Deut 33:17
 Josh 13:31

60:8
 2 Sam 8:1-2, 14

60:9
 Ps 44:9

60:10
 Ps 60:1

60:11
 Ps 146:3

60:12
 Num 24:15-19
 Ps 44:5; 118:16

61:1
 Ps 64:1; 86:6

61:2
 Ps 18:2; 77:3
 **tsur* (6697)
 ▶ Ps 62:7

61:3
 Ps 62:7
 Prov 18:10

61:4
 Ps 17:8; 23:6; 27:4;
 91:4

Ps 60 The psalmist laments a national defeat and cries out to God for rescue.

60: TITLE *A psalm:* Hebrew *miktam*. This may be a literary or musical term. • *useful for teaching:* This psalm was taught to young people as part of their education. • *regarding the time:* See 2 Sam 8:13-14. • *Aram-naharaim* and *Aram-zobah* refer to the Arameans of northwest Mesopotamia and Syria (see note on Gen 24:10). • *The tune "Lily of the Testimony"* is unknown today.

60:1-4 When God's people experience his discipline, they affirm their loyalty and await God's answer.

60:3 *wine* (Hebrew *yayin*) that sent us reeling: *Yayin*, the generic Hebrew term meaning "wine," is often associated with drunkenness (2 Sam 13:28; Isa 5:11; 28:7-8; cp. Ps 104:15; Deut 14:26; Isa 55:1); it symbolized God's judgment of the wicked (75:8; Jer 51:7).

60:4 God raised a banner over his people to serve as a rallying point and

as a source of pride and confidence. • The *fear* of God that leads to wisdom (111:10) is not weakness; it provides the perspective and strength required to do what is right.

60:5-12 This section is repeated verbatim in 108:6-13.

60:5 The psalmist prays for rescue based on the special relationship between God and his people.

60:6-8 The Lord responds with a message of promise. He shares his land with his people as spoils of war.

60:6 by his holiness: Or in his sanctuary. • *Shechem* and *Succoth* represent Israel's heartland.

60:9 Destroying a defeated invader's capital (*the fortified city*) would help to ensure that they would not attack again. The capital of *Edom* was Bozrah, located to the southeast of Israel. Only God could grant *victory*.

Pss 61-63 In these royal prayers, the

psalmist longs for God's presence. All three psalms concern themselves with the king's security.

Ps 61 The lamenting psalmist petitions God to protect him and lead him into his presence (61:4-5). He prays for God to extend and protect the king's rule and makes vows to praise God.

61:2 the ends of the earth: This expression has the connotation of a cry that comes from a place far away from God. • The psalmist's *heart is overwhelmed* with deep anguish.

61:4 The poet longs for God's presence and seeks entrance into God's home on earth for divine protection and care. To be received into God's *sanctuary* (literally *tent*) is the greatest good (see 15:1; 23:6; 24:3-6). The Hebrew word translated *sanctuary* recalls the Tabernacle and the tent that David built for the Ark (1 Chr 15:1). See also note on John 1:14. • The *shelter of your wings* symbolizes God's protection and care (see 9:9; 17:8).

61:5

Ps 56:12
Mal 2:5; 4:2

61:7

Ps 40:11; 41:12

61:8

Ps 30:4; 65:1; 71:22

62:1

Ps 33:20
ḥnephesh (5315)
• Ps 63:5

62:2

Ps 37:39; 59:17; 89:26

62:3

Isa 30:13

62:4

Ps 4:2; 28:3

62:7

Ps 46:1
ṭsur (6697)
• Ps 73:26

62:8

Ps 42:4
Lam 2:19

62:9

Isa 40:15

62:10

Ps 49:6
Isa 61:8
Mark 10:25
Luke 12:15
1 Tim 6:10

5 For you have heard my vows, O God.
You have given me an inheritance
reserved for those who fear your
name.

6 Add many years to the life of the king!
May his years span the generations!

7 May he reign under God's protection
forever.

May your unfailing love and
faithfulness watch over him.

8 Then I will sing praises to your name
forever
as I fulfill my vows each day.

PSALM 62

For Jeduthun, the choir director: A psalm
of David.

1^b I wait quietly before God,
for my victory comes from him.

2 He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress where I will never be
shaken.

3 So many enemies against one man—
all of them trying to kill me.
To them I'm just a broken-down wall
or a tottering fence.

4 They plan to topple me from my high
position.

They delight in telling lies about me.

They praise me to my face
but curse me in their hearts.

Interlude

5 Let all that I am wait quietly before God,
for my hope is in him.

6 He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress where I will not be shaken.

7 My victory and honor come from God
alone.

He is my refuge, a rock where no
enemy can reach me.

8 O my people, trust in him at all times.
Pour out your heart to him,
for God is our refuge.

Interlude

9 Common people are as worthless as a
puff of wind,
and the powerful are not what they
appear to be.

If you weigh them on the scales,
together they are lighter than a breath
of air.

10 Don't make your living by extortion
or put your hope in stealing.

And if your wealth increases,
don't make it the center of your life.

11 God has spoken plainly,
and I have heard it many times:

Trust in the Lord (Ps 62)

Ps 5:11; 7:1; 9:9;
11:1; 18:30-36;
22:4-5; 8-9; 25:1-3,
20; 26:1; 28:7;
31:1-6, 19; 34:8-10,
22; 37:3-9, 34, 40;
40:1-4; 46:1; 55:23;
56:3-4, 11; 57:1;
59:16; 62:8; 64:10;
78:7; 84:12; 86:2;
112:7; 115:9-11;
119:42; 125:1;
130:5-6; 141:8
Prov 3:5; 22:19
Isa 26:4; 40:31
Jer 17:7
Heb 10:35

The Lord's loving character leads people to trust in him (13:5; 21:7; 32:10; 52:8; 143:8; 17:7; 36:7). His name and reputation also encourage people's trust (9:10; 20:7; 33:21). The godly reject idolatry and any commitment that detracts from their absolute trust in the Lord (31:6, 14; 44:6; 49:6, 13; 52:7).

For the godly, every adversity in life is an occasion for growth in trust (9:9; 25:2; 46:1; 55:23; 57:1; 59:16; 62:8; 78:7). They are not afraid of life (56:3-4, 11; 112:7) but grow more confident (112:7; 119:42; 125:1). David confides that he trusted in the Lord when he was still a nursing child (22:9-10). Trust in the Lord is a form of wisdom that focuses on the Lord (141:8), the rejection of folly and evil, and the pursuit of the Lord's way (31:19; 37:3, 5; 115:11).

The Lord rescues, cares for, and rewards his people who trust in him (7:1; 16:1; 25:20; 26:1; 31:1-2, 4, 19; 34:22; 37:40; 86:2). They are blessed (2:12; 22:4-5, 8; 34:8; 40:4; 84:12) as they long for God's redemption (37:7, 34; 38:15; 40:1; 119:84, 166; 130:5-6). Faith in the Lord gives reason to rejoice and praise the Lord (5:11; 18:30-36; 28:7; 40:3; 56:4; 64:10).

61:5 *you have heard my vows*: The psalmist's vows might also be a part of ceremonial sacrifices (66:13-15; 76:11; 116:14, 18). He praises and thanks God for his rescue. • The *inheritance* refers to the promise of the land (see Ps 60), the sacredness of the Temple, the joy of God's presence (119:111), or any similar reward (16:6; 37:9, 11, 18, 22, 29, 34; 127:3).

Ps 62 This psalm expresses confidence in the king and offers prayer for him. The king rests in God despite his difficulties. Although his deceptive

and powerful adversaries push hard against him, he remains undaunted. He encourages himself and his people to trust in God and to see their human adversaries from God's perspective, where they appear frail, fleeting, and deceptive (62:9).

62: TITLE *Jeduthun*: See 1 Chr 25:1; also in Pss 39 and 77.

62:3-4 The enemies desire to topple the king with lies and cunning.

62:4 *My high position* refers to the royal throne.

62:5-8 The psalmist encourages himself and others to place their hope in God.

62:9-12 Unlike God, humans are transient beings. Even when they thrive, their prosperity is fleeting.

62:9 *not what they appear to be*: People often try to look stronger and better than they are.

62:10 The crime of *extortion* means using intimidation and threats to make others give up what is theirs, while *stealing* is taking what belongs to others.

Power, O God, belongs to you;
 12 unfailing love, O Lord, is yours.
 Surely you repay all people
 according to what they have done.

PSALM 63

A psalm of David, regarding a time when David was in the wilderness of Judah.

1 O God, you are my God;
 I earnestly search for you.
 My soul thirsts for you;
 my whole body longs for you
 in this parched and weary land
 where there is no water.
 2 I have seen you in your sanctuary
 and gazed upon your power and glory.
 3 Your unfailing love is better than life
 itself;
 how I praise you!
 4 I will praise you as long as I live,
 lifting up my hands to you in prayer.
 5 You satisfy me more than the richest
 feast.
 I will praise you with songs of joy.
 6 I lie awake thinking of you,
^bmeditating on you through the night.
 7 Because you are my helper,
 I sing for joy in the shadow of your
 wings.
 8 I cling to you;
 your strong right hand holds me
 securely.
 9 But those plotting to destroy me will
 come to ruin.
 They will go down into the depths of
 the earth.

10 They will die by the sword
 and become the food of jackals.
 11 But the king will rejoice in God.
 All who trust in him will praise him,
 while liars will be silenced.

PSALM 64

For the choir director: A psalm of David.

1 O God, listen to my complaint.
 Protect my life from my enemies'
 threats.
 2 Hide me from the plots of this evil mob,
 from this gang of wrongdoers.
 3 They sharpen their tongues like swords
 and aim their bitter words like arrows.
 4 They shoot from ambush at the innocent,
 attacking suddenly and fearlessly.
 5 They encourage each other to do evil
 and plan how to set their traps in
 secret.
 "Who will ever notice?" they ask.
 6 As they plot their crimes, they say,
 "We have devised the perfect plan!"
 Yes, the human heart and mind are
 cunning.
 7 But God himself will shoot them with
 his arrows,
 suddenly striking them down.
 8 Their own tongues will ruin them,
 and all who see them will shake their
 heads in scorn.
 9 Then everyone will be afraid;
 they will proclaim the mighty acts of
 God
 and realize all the amazing things he
 does.

62:12

Job 34:11

Matt 16:27

*Rom 2:6

63:1

Ps 42:2; 84:2

63:2

Ps 27:4

63:3

Ps 69:16

63:4

Ps 28:2; 104:33

63:5

Ps 36:8; 71:23

^a*nepesh* (5315)

*Ps 86:4

63:6

Ps 4:4; 16:7; 42:8

^b*hagah* (1897)

*Ps 77:12

63:8

Ps 18:35

63:9

Ps 40:14; 55:15

63:11

Deut 6:13

Isa 45:23

64:2

Ps 56:6; 59:2

64:3

Ps 140:3

64:4

Ps 10:8; 11:2

64:5

Ps 140:5

64:7

Ps 7:12-13; 9:3

64:8

Prov 18:6-7

62:11-12 Strength and *unfailing love* remain in balance only in God. He cares for his people by ridding the world of evildoers (see 1:6).

Ps 63 The king longs for God's presence so vividly that he eats, drinks, and sees God's goodness. Though worn out and harassed by the wicked, the king sees God, and this animates him with praise. God becomes his life (63:3), while the wicked perish (63:9).

63:1 Together, *soul* and *whole body* refer to a person's entire being. • *parched and weary land*: When David was living in the desert, he also found himself in a spiritual wasteland, separated from God's people and the sanctuary.

63:2 The psalmist remembers that he had found God to be present in his *sanctuary* (see 18:6; 61:4; 62:5, 11-12).

63:3 *better than life itself*: The highest quality of life is found in relationship with God (see 4:7; 63:5; Prov 16:8).

63:6-8 The psalmist reflects and meditates on God's presence *through the night*. In the absence of light, God is the light. The quietness of the night and the longing for dawn provide time to focus on the true significance of life with the Lord.

63:6 *Meditating* on God requires focused awareness, concentration, thought, and reflection (see 1:2).

63:9 The wicked were *plotting to destroy* the psalmist's life through deception and lies, but they would meet their end. • The *depths of the earth* refers to the place of the dead.

63:10 Wild *jackals* are associated with desolation and abandonment (Isa 13:20-22; 34:10-15; Jer 9:11; 49:33; 51:37; Lam 5:18; Mal 1:3). The wicked will not receive honor in death; their bodies will be left to scavenging animals (Eccl 6:3; Jer 22:18-19; 36:29-30).

63:11 Those who truly *trust in* God are loyal to him.

Ps 64 This lament decries the destructive plots and arrogant attitude of the wicked (64:1-6). The psalmist turns to God in prayer and takes heart in God's justice because whatever the wicked do will be undone by the righteous judge. The godly will rejoice and grow in wisdom as they reflect on God's mighty acts.

64:1-6 These verses form a prayer for rescue from bold and powerful liars.

64:3 *their tongues . . . bitter words*: Liars use their speech to kill. This description might also refer to practicing magic.

64:6 The enemies create a *perfect plan* to harm the innocent without getting caught. • Human beings will sink to unthinkable depths with evil words, acts, or plans (83:3; see Jer 17:9).

64:7-10 What God does is righteous. God undoes what is wicked and pays the wicked back with what they planned for others.

64:10
Ps 11:1; 25:20; 32:11

65:1
Ps 86:9; 116:18

65:2
Isa 66:23

65:3
Ps 40:12
Heb 9:14
**kapor* (3722)
• Ps 78:38

65:4
Ps 4:3; 33:12; 36:8

65:5
Ps 45:4; 48:10

65:6
Ps 93:1; 95:4

65:7
Ps 89:9
Isa 17:12-13
Matt 8:26

65:8
Ps 139:9-10

65:9
Ps 104:13-14, 24

65:12
Job 38:26-27

65:13
Ps 98:8; 144:13
Isa 30:23; 55:12

66:2
**zamar* (2167)
• Ps 71:22

66:3
Ps 18:44; 47:2

66:4
Ps 22:27; 67:4

66:5
Ps 46:8

66:6
Exod 14:21
Ps 105:43

- ¹⁰ The godly will rejoice in the LORD
and find shelter in him.
And those who do what is right
will praise him.

PSALM 65

For the choir director: A song. A psalm of David.

- ¹ What mighty praise, O God,
belongs to you in Zion.
We will fulfill our vows to you,
for you answer our prayers.
² All of us must come to you.
³ Though we are overwhelmed by our sins,
you ^aforgive them all.
⁴ What joy for those you choose to bring
near,
those who live in your holy courts.
What festivities await us
inside your holy Temple.
⁵ You faithfully answer our prayers with
awesome deeds,
O God our savior.
You are the hope of everyone on earth,
even those who sail on distant seas.
⁶ You formed the mountains by your power
and armed yourself with mighty
strength.
⁷ You quieted the raging oceans
with their pounding waves
and silenced the shouting of the
nations.
⁸ Those who live at the ends of the earth
stand in awe of your wonders.
From where the sun rises to where it sets,
you inspire shouts of joy.
⁹ You take care of the earth and water it,
making it rich and fertile.

- The river of God has plenty of water;
it provides a bountiful harvest of grain,
for you have ordered it so.
¹⁰ You drench the plowed ground with rain,
melting the clods and leveling the
ridges.
You soften the earth with showers
and bless its abundant crops.
¹¹ You crown the year with a bountiful
harvest;
even the hard pathways overflow with
abundance.
¹² The grasslands of the wilderness
become a lush pasture,
and the hillsides blossom with joy.
¹³ The meadows are clothed with flocks of
sheep,
and the valleys are carpeted with grain.
They all shout and sing for joy!

PSALM 66

For the choir director: A song. A psalm.

- ¹ Shout joyful praises to God, all the earth!
² ^bSing about the glory of his name!
Tell the world how glorious he is.
³ Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!
Your enemies cringe before your
mighty power.
⁴ Everything on earth will worship you;
they will sing your praises,
shouting your name in glorious songs."
Interlude
⁵ Come and see what our God has done,
what awesome miracles he performs
for people!
⁶ He made a dry path through the Red Sea,
and his people went across on foot.
There we rejoiced in him.

Ps 65 This psalm recounts the reasons why all people should praise and revere God for his almighty power and merciful care for his universe.

65:1-3 Praise is the appropriate response to God's majestic deeds in redemption (65:3-5) and in nature (65:5-13).

65:1 God alone deserves *praise* and is worthy to have *vows* made to him.

65:2 *All of us* means all humans.

65:3 *you forgive*: God graciously removes the guilt of sin (see 32:5).

65:4 *those you choose to bring near*: This includes people from Israel and from other nations. • Only those whom God sees as blameless *live in his holy courts* (Pss 15, 24). • At the *Temple*, God's earthly palace, all nations can gather to experience God's holy presence. No structure can separate humans

from God (see Rev 21:22).

65:6-7 God brought order to *the mountains*, the *raging oceans*, and the *pounding waves* (see 95:4-5; 104:6-9). • The psalmist compares the chaotic forces of nature with the rebellion of the *nations* (see Ps 2; 33:6-11; 46:6).

65:8 All over the world (Job 38:13; see Ps 50:1-3 and note), people should *stand in awe* of the Lord.

65:9-13 The created order provides clear evidence of God's power (65:6-8). He shows his love by maintaining nature. Everything praises the Lord as all the parts fit together harmoniously.

65:9 The *river of God* and all rivers demonstrate God's victorious power and goodness through the order in nature and the regularity of the harvests (see 1:3; 36:8; 46:4; Ezek 47:6-12; Zech 14:8; Rev 22:1).

65:13 Nature bursts out in praise of the Creator (see 79:13; 96:11-13; 148:3-5, 7-12; Isa 55:12-13).

Ps 66 This anonymous psalm includes two hymns (66:1-12, 13-20) that praise God for his redemption.

66:1-4 The psalmist exhorts nature to join in a mighty chorus to praise God's glory, name, and power.

66:2 *The glory of his name* represents the perfection of God's character.

66:3 God conquers his *enemies* (see 18:44; 59:11; 81:15).

66:5-7 The story of the Exodus and God's victory over the sea evokes responses of astonishment (66:5) and worship (66:6). God works *miracles* . . . *for people* in order to redeem them for himself.

66:6 *Red Sea*: Literally *the sea*.

7 For by his great power he rules forever.
He watches every movement of the
nations;
let no rebel rise in defiance.

Interlude

8 Let the whole world bless our God
and loudly sing his praises.
9 Our lives are in his hands,
and he keeps our feet from stumbling.
10 You have tested us, O God;
you have purified us like silver.
11 You captured us in your net
and laid the burden of slavery on our
backs.
12 Then you put a leader over us.
We went through fire and flood,
but you brought us to a place of great
abundance.

13 Now I come to your Temple with burnt
offerings
to fulfill the vows I made to you—
14 yes, the sacred vows that I made
when I was in deep trouble.
15 That is why I am sacrificing burnt
offerings to you—
the best of my rams as a pleasing
aroma,
and a sacrifice of bulls and male goats.

Interlude

16 Come and listen, all you who fear God,
and I will tell you what he did for me.
17 For I cried out to him for help,
praising him as I spoke.
18 If I had not confessed the sin in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened.
19 But God did listen!
He paid attention to my prayer.

20 Praise God, who did not ignore my
prayer
or withdraw his unfailing love
from me.

PSALM 67

*For the choir director: A song. A psalm, to
be accompanied by stringed instruments.*

1 May God be merciful and bless us.
May his face smile with favor on us.

Interlude

2 May your ways be known throughout the
earth,
your ^csaving power among people
everywhere.
3 May the nations praise you, O God.
Yes, may all the nations praise you.
4 Let the whole world sing for joy,
because you govern the nations with
justice
and guide the people of the whole
world.

Interlude

5 May the nations praise you, O God.
Yes, may all the nations praise you.
6 Then the earth will yield its harvests,
and God, our God, will richly bless us.
7 Yes, God will bless us,
and people all over the world will fear
him.

PSALM 68

*For the choir director: A song. A psalm of
David.*

1 Rise up, O God, and scatter your
enemies.
Let those who hate God run for their
lives.

66:7
Ps 11:4; 140:8; 145:13
66:9
Ps 30:3
66:10
Ps 17:3
Zech 13:9
1 Pet 1:6-7
66:11
Lam 1:13
66:12
Ps 18:19
Isa 43:2; 51:23
66:13
Ps 22:25
Eccl 5:4
66:14
Ps 18:6
66:15
Num 6:14
Ps 51:19
66:16
Ps 34:11; 71:15, 24
66:18
Job 36:21
Ps 18:41
Isa 1:15
Jas 4:3
66:19
Ps 116:1-2
66:20
Ps 22:24
67:1
Num 6:25
Ps 4:6; 80:3, 7, 19
67:2
Acts 18:25
Titus 2:11
^ayeshu'ah (3444)
^bPs 74:12
67:3
Ps 66:4
67:4
Ps 96:10, 13
67:5
Ps 22:27
67:6
Lev 26:4
Ezek 34:27
67:7
Ps 33:8
68:1
Num 10:35

66:7 God's *power* brings redemption. The same word occurs in 65:6 for God's power in creation (see also 80:2).
66:8-10 The orderly lives of the redeemed reflect the order of God's world. The Lord protects them from evil and purifies them.
66:9 God guides his people into wisdom and away from folly (17:5; 37:31; 121:3).
66:10 *You have tested us, O God:* As the silversmith heats *silver* to remove the dross, God's discipline removes sin from his people (see 12:6).
66:11 God decrees and permits the many trying circumstances his people experience.
66:12 *Then you put a leader over us: Or You made people ride over our heads.* This expression possibly refers to a foreign ruler who kept the Israelites in submission.

66:15 Vows often included sacrifices of thanksgiving, including *burnt offerings* (see 20:3; 40:6; 50:8; 51:19).
66:16-20 The private testimony in the conclusion of the psalm parallels the public praise of its opening (66:1-4).
66:18 Confession leads to restoration (see 32:5).
Ps 67 In this anonymous prayer for God's blessing, the psalmist addresses the knowledge and worship of God among the nations (cp. 64:9; 65:8). The prayer requests that God's name be kept holy and that his kingdom come (cp. Matt 6:9-13).
67:1-2 This prayer is based on the priestly blessing found in Num 6:24-26. God's goodness to Israel affects his reputation among the nations (see 96:1-3).
67:3 God's international reputation leads to his praise among the *nations*

(see 138:4), whose turmoil and rebelliousness will cease when they join Israel in praise of God. • One God rules over all, and the nations will give thanks for God's just rule (see 67:4).
67:4 God brings the ultimate *justice* that human beings desire (96:10; 98:9).
67:6-7 Bountiful *harvests* are evidence of God's blessing (Gen 26:12; Isa 30:23). • *all over the world:* See 2:8; 96:1-3. • *All will fear him,* joining with Israel to acknowledge the God of Israel.
Ps 68 This prayer for God's victorious rule traces God's march from Sinai to Zion (68:7, 16-18, 24). He rescued the nation of Israel from Egypt, guided it through the wilderness, brought it into the Promised Land, and established his kingdom. He is a caring and victorious God, whose nature is unchanging. Therefore, the godly hope and rejoice in the prospect of God's universal dominion.

68:2
Ps 37:20
Isa 9:18
Hos 13:3
Mic 1:4

68:4
Ps 40:3; 68:33

68:5
Deut 10:18; 26:15

68:7
Exod 13:21

68:8
Exod 19:18
Judg 5:4-5

68:9
Deut 11:11

68:11
Exod 15:20

68:13
Gen 49:14

68:14
Josh 10:10
^a*Shaddai* (7706)
• Ps 91:1

68:15
Ps 36:6

68:17
Deut 33:2
Dan 7:10

68:18
^aEph 4:8

- 2 Blow them away like smoke.
Melt them like wax in a fire.
Let the wicked perish in the presence
of God.
- 3 But let the godly rejoice.
Let them be glad in God's presence.
Let them be filled with joy.
- 4 Sing praises to God and to his name!
Sing loud praises to him who rides
the clouds.
His name is the LORD—
rejoice in his presence!
- 5 Father to the fatherless, defender of
widows—
this is God, whose dwelling is holy.
- 6 God places the lonely in families;
he sets the prisoners free and gives
them joy.
But he makes the rebellious live in a
sun-scorched land.
- 7 O God, when you led your people out
from Egypt,
when you marched through the dry
wasteland, *Interlude*
- 8 the earth trembled, and the heavens
poured down rain
before you, the God of Sinai,
before God, the God of Israel.
- 9 You sent abundant rain, O God,
to refresh the weary land.
- 10 There your people finally settled,
and with a bountiful harvest, O God,
you provided for your needy
people.

- 11 The Lord gives the word,
and a great army brings the good
news.
- 12 Enemy kings and their armies flee,
while the women of Israel divide the
plunder.
- 13 Even those who lived among the
sheepfolds found treasures—
doves with wings of silver
and feathers of gold.
- 14 The ^dAlmighty scattered the enemy
kings
like a blowing snowstorm on Mount
Zalmon.
- 15 The mountains of Bashan are majestic,
with many peaks stretching high into
the sky.
- 16 Why do you look with envy, O rugged
mountains,
at Mount Zion, where God has chosen
to live,
where the LORD himself will live
forever?
- 17 Surrounded by unnumbered thousands
of chariots,
the Lord came from Mount Sinai into
his sanctuary.
- 18 When you ascended to the heights,
you led a crowd of captives.
You received gifts from the people,
even from those who rebelled against
you.
Now the LORD God will live among us
there.

68:1-3 These verses form a prayer for God to *rise up* and *scatter* his *enemies*, as he did when Israel entered the Promised Land (cp. Num 10:35-36; Josh 6-12).

68:2 Both *smoke* and *wax* represent a transitory existence (22:12-18; 37:20; 102:3).

68:3 The lot of *the godly* contrasts with that of the wicked (see 1:6).

68:4-6 The psalmist praises God's powerful and compassionate reign.

68:4 *him who rides the clouds*: This is an ancient description of Baal, a Canaanite deity. The psalmist applies it to *the LORD* as the true "Rider of the Clouds" (see 68:33; 104:3). God wields power over the clouds and the rain.

68:5 God, the *father* of all marginalized and needy people, shows them compassion and protects their rights (see 10:14, 18; 69:33; 82:3). • Like his *dwelling*, the Lord is *holy*. The supreme example of the holy God coming down to rescue humanity is Jesus Christ.

68:6 God released Israel from slavery in Egypt (Exod 20:2; see Ps 69:33), and he still *sets the prisoners free*. • *The sun-scorched* desert represents alienation from God and separation from blessing.

68:8-10 *The earth trembled* as in an earthquake (see Exod 19:18). • *the heavens poured down rain*: Wells in the desert and rain showers in Canaan supplied an abundance of water.

68:11 *a great army* (or *a host of women*) *brings*: The Hebrew suggests women singers caroling *the good news* of victory (see 68:25; Exod 15:20).

68:13 The seminomadic pastoral people *who lived among the sheepfolds* were surprised to receive *silver and gold* carvings from the battle.

68:14 *The Almighty* (Hebrew *Shaddai*) is an ancient designation for God (see 91:1; Gen 17:1). • The identification of *Mount Zalmon* is uncertain; it was possibly a mountain in Bashan (see 68:15).

68:15 *Bashan* is a plateau northeast of

Jerusalem and east of the Sea of Galilee that was known for its woods and pastureland (see 22:12; Isa 2:13). The *mountains* might have included Mount Hermon to the north of the plateau or Mount Zalmon, which might be Jebel ed-Druze on the east.

68:16 *Why do you look with envy?* Bashan is physically much more impressive than the mountains around Jerusalem, but it was not the home of the Lord. Only Mount Zion enjoyed the privilege of providing God's dwelling place.

68:17 *Chariots*, the ultimate weapon of the armed forces in the psalmist's day, are an image of the Lord's power to grant victory (20:7; 44:3).

68:18 *When you ascended to the heights*: The Most High established his reign victoriously in Zion. • *a crowd of captives* . . . *gifts*: This is an image of a victorious ruler leading the victory march after battle. Paul applied this image to Jesus Christ (Eph 4:8-13).

19 Praise the Lord; praise God our savior!
For each day he carries us in his arms.

Interlude

20 Our God is a God who saves!
The Sovereign LORD rescues us from death.

21 But God will smash the heads of his enemies,
crushing the skulls of those who love their guilty ways.

22 The Lord says, "I will bring my enemies down from Bashan;
I will bring them up from the depths of the sea.

23 You, my people, will wash your feet in their blood,
and even your dogs will get their share!"

24 Your procession has come into view,
O God—
the procession of my God and King as he goes into the sanctuary.

25 Singers are in front, musicians behind;
between them are young women playing tambourines.

26 Praise God, all you people of Israel;
praise the LORD, the source of Israel's life.

27 Look, the little tribe of Benjamin leads the way.
Then comes a great throng of rulers from Judah
and all the rulers of Zebulun and Naphtali.

28 Summon your might, O God.
Display your power, O God, as you have in the past.

29 The kings of the earth are bringing tribute

to your Temple in Jerusalem.

30 Rebuke these enemy nations—
these wild animals lurking in the reeds,
this herd of bulls among the weaker calves.

Make them bring bars of silver in humble tribute.

Scatter the nations that delight in war.

31 Let Egypt come with gifts of precious metals;
let Ethiopia bow in submission to God.

32 Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth.
Sing praises to the Lord.

Interlude

33 Sing to the one who rides across the ancient heavens,
his mighty voice thundering from the sky.

34 Tell everyone about God's power.
His majesty shines down on Israel;
his strength is mighty in the heavens.

35 God is awesome in his sanctuary.
The God of Israel gives power and strength to his people.

Praise be to God!

PSALM 69

For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be sung to the tune "Lilies."

1 Save me, O God,
for the floodwaters are up to my neck.

2 Deeper and deeper I sink into the mire;
I can't find a foothold.

I am in deep water,
and the floods overwhelm me.

3 I am exhausted from crying for help;
my throat is parched.

My eyes are swollen with weeping,
waiting for my God to help me.

68:19
Ps 55:22; 65:5
Isa 46:4

68:20
Ps 56:13

68:21
Ps 110:6
Hab 3:13

68:22
Amos 9:1-3

68:23
1 Kgs 21:19
Ps 58:10
Jer 15:3

68:24
Ps 63:2

68:25
Exod 15:20
Judg 11:34
1 Chr 13:8

68:26
Deut 33:28
Ps 22:22-23; 26:12

68:28
Ps 29:11; 44:4

68:29
Ps 72:10

68:30
Ps 89:10

68:31
Isa 19:19-21; 45:14

68:32
Ps 102:21-22

68:33
Ps 18:10; 29:4

68:35
Deut 10:17
Ps 29:11; 47:2

69:2
Jon 2:3

69:3
Ps 6:6; 119:82, 123
Isa 38:14

68:19-20 The Divine Warrior cares for his people like a shepherd; the people praise him.

68:19 Like a caring father or a shepherd, God *carries* his people *in his arms* (see 55:22; 68:5-6).

68:21 God will smash the heads of his enemies: Cp. Gen 3:15.

68:22 God will deal with all *enemies*, whether from high places (represented by *Bashan*) or low (*the depths of the sea*).

68:24-27 A great company joins together in the pilgrimage to Zion.

68:28-31 The people pray for God's success and for victory over the enemy nations (68:1-3).

68:29 The conquered *kings* will bring gifts to the Lord.

68:30 Hostile and rebellious people delight in warfare and insurrection (see 2:1-3).

68:31 of precious metals: Or of rich cloth. • *Ethiopia:* Hebrew *Cush*.

68:32-35 The psalmist calls for the people to praise God, who is victorious over his enemies.

68:32 The term *kingdoms of the earth* includes all nations and power structures.

68:34 When the Lord demonstrates his *power, majesty, and strength* against the nations, he strengthens his people (see 68:28; 96:4-6).

Pss 69-72 These last four psalms of Book Two contrast with the psalms

describing God's mighty acts in creation and in redemption, capped by God's march to Zion (Pss 65-68). Psalms 69-71 portray the king's anguish, and Ps 72 responds with a prayer for God to bless the king.

Ps 69 In this individual lament, the poet expresses his vulnerability, humiliation, and overwhelming pain, asking God to vindicate him for the sake of the righteous.

69:TITLE to the tune "Lilies": Psalm 45 also notes this tune, but Ps 45 celebrates the glory of kingship, whereas Ps 69 is the cry of a tired king who feels abandoned by the Lord.

69:1-2 The psalmist sees himself as almost drowning but still surviving chaotic forces and alienation from God (see 42:7; 69:14, 15; Isa 8:8).

69:4
Ps 35:11; 59:3
*John 15:25

69:5
Ps 44:21
**iwweleth* (0200)
*Prov 12:23

69:6
2 Sam 12:14

69:8
Ps 31:11; 38:11

69:9
*John 2:17
*Rom 15:3

69:12
Job 30:9

69:13
Ps 32:6
Isa 49:8
2 Cor 6:2

69:14
Ps 144:7

69:15
Num 16:33
Ps 124:4-5

69:16
Ps 25:16; 51:1; 63:3

69:18
Ps 49:15; 119:134

69:19
Ps 22:6-7
Isa 53:3

69:21
*Matt 27:48
*John 19:29

69:23
*Rom 11:9-10

69:25
Matt 23:38
Luke 13:35
*Acts 1:20

69:26
2 Chr 28:9
Isa 53:4

4 Those who hate me without cause
outnumber the hairs on my head.
Many enemies try to destroy me with
lies,
demanding that I give back what I
didn't steal.

5 O God, you know how foolish I am;
my sins cannot be hidden from you.

6 Don't let those who trust in you be
ashamed because of me,
O Sovereign LORD of Heaven's Armies.
Don't let me cause them to be
humiliated,
O God of Israel.

7 For I endure insults for your sake;
humiliation is written all over my face.

8 Even my own brothers pretend they
don't know me;
they treat me like a stranger.

9 Passion for your house has
consumed me,
and the insults of those who insult
you have fallen on me.

10 When I weep and fast,
they scoff at me.

11 When I dress in burlap to show sorrow,
they make fun of me.

12 I am the favorite topic of town gossip,
and all the drunks sing about me.

13 But I keep praying to you, LORD,
hoping this time you will show me
favor.

In your unfailing love, O God,
answer my prayer with your sure
salvation.

14 Rescue me from the mud;
don't let me sink any deeper!
Save me from those who hate me,
and pull me from these deep waters.

15 Don't let the floods overwhelm me,
or the deep waters swallow me,
or the pit of death devour me.

16 Answer my prayers, O LORD,
for your unfailing love is wonderful.
Take care of me,
for your mercy is so plentiful.

17 Don't hide from your servant;
answer me quickly, for I am in deep
trouble!

18 Come and redeem me;
free me from my enemies.

19 You know of my shame, scorn, and
disgrace.
You see all that my enemies are doing.

20 Their insults have broken my heart,
and I am in despair.
If only one person would show some
pity;
if only one would turn and comfort me.

21 But instead, they give me poison for
food;
they offer me sour wine for my thirst.

22 Let the bountiful table set before them
become a snare
and their prosperity become a trap.

23 Let their eyes go blind so they cannot
see,
and make their bodies shake
continually.

24 Pour out your fury on them;
consume them with your burning
anger.

25 Let their homes become desolate
and their tents be deserted.

26 To the one you have punished, they add
insult to injury;
they add to the pain of those you have
hurt.

69:4 John applied this lament to Jesus (John 15:25).

69:5-6 The psalmist confesses his *sins* and prays that God's response to him will encourage others in similar conditions to place their hope in the Lord.

69:7-12 Mistreated and abandoned by family, friends, and community, the psalmist turns to the Lord for comfort, relief (69:13-18), and redress (69:22-28).

69:9 Though the psalmist concerns himself with God and all that is holy, *insults* have been his earthly reward. This verse was later applied to Jesus' anger at the Temple's money changers (John 2:17) and to his undeserved suffering (Rom 15:3).

69:10-12 When the psalmist denies

himself normal comforts to seek God in prayer, the wicked ridicule him.

69:13-18 The psalmist's only recourse is to pray for rescue and relief from his enemies.

69:19-21 Alone and misunderstood, the psalmist confesses that he cannot bear his doubts. His heart has been broken by his problems.

69:21 *poison*: Or *gall*, a bitter substance. • *sour wine for my thirst*: This description applies to Jesus' suffering (Matt 27:34, 48; Luke 23:36; John 19:28-29).

69:22-28 See "Prayers for Vengeance" at Ps 137, p. 1017.

69:22-23 The psalmist wants God to transfer his suffering (69:3) to his enemies. Paul applied these words to

the unbelieving Jews of his day (Rom 11:9-10).

69:22 *Let the bountiful table set before them become a snare /and their prosperity become a trap*: Greek version reads *Let their bountiful table set before them become a snare, / a trap that makes them think all is well. / Let their blessings cause them to stumble, / and let them get what they deserve*. Cp. Rom 11:9, where Paul quotes from the Greek translation of this verse.

69:23 *and make their bodies shake continually*: Greek version reads *and let their backs be bent forever*. Cp. Rom 11:10, where Paul quotes from the Greek translation.

69:25 Peter quoted this verse after the death of Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:20).

27 Pile their sins up high,
and don't let them go free.
28 Erase their names from the Book of Life;
don't let them be counted among the
righteous.
29 I am suffering and in pain.
Rescue me, O God, by your saving
power.
30 Then I will praise God's name with
singing,
and I will honor him with
thanksgiving.
31 For this will please the LORD more than
sacrificing cattle,
more than presenting a bull with its
horns and hooves.
32 The humble will see their God at work
and be glad.
Let all who seek God's help be
encouraged.
33 For the LORD hears the cries of the
needy;
he does not despise his imprisoned
people.
34 Praise him, O heaven and earth,
the seas and all that move in them.
35 For God will save Jerusalem
and rebuild the towns of Judah.
His people will live there
and settle in their own land.
36 The descendants of those who obey him
will inherit the land,
and those who love him will live there
in safety.

PSALM 70

*For the choir director: A psalm of David,
asking God to remember him.*

1 Please, God, rescue me!
Come quickly, LORD, and help me.
2 May those who try to kill me
be humiliated and put to shame.

May those who take delight in my
trouble
be turned back in disgrace.
3 Let them be horrified by their shame,
for they said, "Aha! We've got him
now!"
4 But may all who search for you
be filled with joy and gladness in you.
May those who love your salvation
repeatedly shout, "God is great!"
5 But as for me, I am poor and needy;
please hurry to my aid, O God.
You are my helper and my savior;
O LORD, do not delay.

PSALM 71

1 O LORD, I have come to you for
protection;
don't let me be disgraced.
2 Save me and rescue me,
for you do what is right.
Turn your ear to listen to me,
and set me free.
3 Be my rock of safety
where I can always hide.
Give the order to save me,
for you are my rock and my fortress.
4 My God, rescue me from the power of
the wicked,
from the clutches of cruel oppressors.
5 O Lord, you alone are my hope.
I've trusted you, O LORD, from
childhood.
6 Yes, you have been with me from birth;
from my mother's womb you have
cared for me.
No wonder I am always praising you!
7 My life is an example to many,
because you have been my strength
and protection.
8 That is why I can never stop praising
you;
I declare your glory all day long.

69:28
Exod 32:32-33
Luke 10:20
Rev 3:5; 13:8; 20:15
69:30
Ps 28:7; 50:14-15
69:31
Ps 50:13-14
69:32
Ps 22:26; 34:2
69:34
Ps 148:1-13
69:35
Ps 147:2
Isa 44:26
69:36
Ps 25:13
70:1-5
//Ps 40:13-17
70:2
Ps 35:4, 26
71:1
Ps 25:2-3; 31:1-3
71:2
Ps 17:6; 31:1
71:3
Deut 33:27
Ps 18:2
71:5
Ps 22:9-11
Jer 17:7, 17
71:6
Ps 22:9-10; 34:1
Isa 46:3
71:7
Ps 61:3

69:28 Erase their names from the Book of Life: Cp. 1:5-6; 9:5; Rev 3:5; 20:15; 21:22-27.

69:29-33 The psalmist prays that his pain will turn to praise.

69:31 Making a vow often included a sacrifice (20:3; 51:19; cp. 50:13-14; 51:16).

69:32-33 despise: See 22:24; cp. Matt 25:36; Heb 13:3.

69:34-36 The psalmist prays for Zion, offering a new petition from a new circumstance. He applies the prayer (69:1-33) to the desperate condition of Judah (see 51:18-19).

69:35 Jerusalem: Hebrew Zion. See "Mount Zion, the City of God" at Ps 48, p. 947.

69:36 God's people will inherit the land because the wicked will perish (see 37:8-9).

Ps 70 This psalm, nearly identical to 40:13-17, contains an urgency (70:1, 5) that fits with the surrounding psalms (cp. 69:17; 71:12).

70:TITLE asking God to remember him: The meaning of this phrase is unknown (also found in 38:TITLE).

Ps 71 This untitled lament by an aging believer is more of a confession of confidence and hope than the cry

of someone abandoned by God. The psalmist experienced God's power and protection in his youth (71:5-8) and now prays for rescue from the adversaries who stalk him in his old age (71:9-13). Even in the midst of his peril, he continues to tell of God's past faithfulness and looks forward with hope to a time when he can testify to the next generation that God is faithful and righteous.

71:1-4 The poet has learned to acknowledge God as the reliable rock who will do what is right toward him and his oppressors. See also 31:1-3.

71:5-6 The psalmist has trusted God throughout his life (see 22:9).

71:9
Ps 92:14

71:10
Matt 27:1

71:11
Ps 3:2; 7:2

71:12
Ps 22:9-11

71:13
Ps 35:4, 26

71:15
Ps 35:28; 40:5

71:16
Ps 106:2

71:18
Ps 22:31; 78:4, 6

71:19
Deut 3:24
Ps 35:10; 57:10
Luke 1:49

71:20
Ps 23:4; 60:3-4;
119:25
Hos 6:2

71:22
Ps 33:2; 89:18; 147:7
zamar (2167)
• Ps 92:1

9 And now, in my old age, don't set me
aside.
Don't abandon me when my strength
is failing.

10 For my enemies are whispering
against me.
They are plotting together to kill me.

11 They say, "God has abandoned him.
Let's go and get him,
for no one will help him now."

12 O God, don't stay away.
My God, please hurry to help me.

13 Bring disgrace and destruction on my
accusers.
Humiliate and shame those who want
to harm me.

14 But I will keep on hoping for your help;
I will praise you more and more.

15 I will tell everyone about your
righteousness.
All day long I will proclaim your
saving power,
though I am not skilled with words.

16 I will praise your mighty deeds,
O Sovereign LORD.
I will tell everyone that you alone are
just.

17 O God, you have taught me from my
earliest childhood,
and I constantly tell others about the
wonderful things you do.

18 Now that I am old and gray,
do not abandon me, O God.
Let me proclaim your power to this new
generation,
your mighty miracles to all who come
after me.

19 Your righteousness, O God, reaches to
the highest heavens.
You have done such wonderful things.
Who can compare with you, O God?

20 You have allowed me to suffer much
hardship,
but you will restore me to life again
and lift me up from the depths of the
earth.

21 You will restore me to even greater honor
and comfort me once again.

22 Then I will praise you with music on the
harp,
because you are faithful to your
promises, O my God.

I will sing praises to you with a lyre,
O Holy One of Israel.

Music in Ancient Israel (Ps 71:22-23)

Gen 4:21
Exod 28:34-35
2 Sam 6:5
2 Chr 7:6

The earliest nomadic peoples made music. The first musician mentioned in the Bible is "Jubal . . . the first of all who play the harp and flute" (Gen 4:21). Music and sound were significant from the beginning of Israel's worship in the Tabernacle. In Exodus 28:34-35, Aaron's robe is described as having bells attached to the lower hem that sounded as he entered the Holy Place. In the OT, the first liturgical music mentioned is in the narrative of the transfer of the Ark—David and the Israelites sang, played instruments, and danced to the glory of the Lord (2 Sam 6:5).

This music bore little resemblance to the stately ceremony of Solomon's Temple that is described later (2 Chr 7:1-6). Singers and musicians for the Temple worship were chosen from the tribe of Levi (1 Chr 25:1, 7). They rotated their participation in the weekday, Sabbath, and high holy day services.

David is recognized as inventing the musical instruments used in the Temple (2 Chr 7:6). In the postexilic era, the Levitical singers that are mentioned were the descendants of Asaph, the singing-master appointed by David (Ezr 2:41; Neh 7:44; 11:22-23). From passages such as these, we understand that liturgical music and organization originated in David's time.

71:9-18 The aging believer turns to the Lord for hope. As questions from his adversaries get under his skin and his own strength fails, he asks God to answer his prayers. He does not seek answers to prayer for himself but so that he can tell the story to the next generation.

71:9 The poet prays for continued fellowship with God (see 9:10; 51:11). In his weakness, he needs the Lord's strength even more (see 143:7).

71:10 In their *plotting*, the psalmist's enemies take counsel and scheme to-

gether (2:2; 21:11; 31:13; 35:4; 63:9-10).

71:14 The psalmist contrasts his own goodness with his enemies' evil; he centers his life in the Lord, even during hard times (see 9:17-18; 27:13-14).

71:15 *though I am not skilled with words: Or though I cannot count it.* The Hebrew can be translated either way.

71:19-21 God's righteous character provides encouragement and strength in the midst of suffering. The wounded psalmist confesses faith in God's ability

to transform his misery and weakness into abundant life.

71:20 *lift me up from the depths:* The psalmist hopes for the renewal of an abundant earthly *life*. This later became grounds for belief in the resurrection of the dead.

71:21 Being assured of God's *comfort* also assures the poet of God's presence, care, and goodness (23:4, 6; 86:17). God's comfort enhances the psalmist's sense of being alive (see 119:50).

23 I will shout for joy and sing your praises,
for you have ransomed me.
24 I will tell about your righteous deeds all day long,
for everyone who tried to hurt me has been shamed and humiliated.

PSALM 72

A psalm of Solomon.

1 Give your love of justice to the king,
O God,
and righteousness to the king's son.
2 Help him judge your people in the right way;
let the poor always be treated fairly.
3 May the mountains yield prosperity for all,
and may the hills be fruitful.
4 Help him to defend the poor,
to rescue the children of the needy,
and to crush their oppressors.
5 May they fear you as long as the sun shines,
as long as the moon remains in the sky.
Yes, forever!
6 May the king's rule be refreshing like spring rain on freshly cut grass,
like the showers that water the earth.

7 May all the godly flourish during his reign.
May there be abundant prosperity until the moon is no more.
8 May he reign from sea to sea,
and from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth.
9 Desert nomads will bow before him;
his enemies will fall before him in the dust.
10 The western kings of Tarshish and other distant lands
will bring him tribute.
The eastern kings of Sheba and Seba will bring him gifts.
11 All kings will bow before him,
and all nations will serve him.
12 He will rescue the poor when they cry to him;
he will help the oppressed, who have no one to defend them.
13 He feels pity for the weak and the needy,
and he will rescue them.
14 He will redeem them from oppression and violence,
for their lives are precious to him.
15 Long live the king!
May the gold of Sheba be given to him.
May the people always pray for him
and bless him all day long.

71:23
Ps 5:11; 103:4
71:24
Ps 35:28; 71:13
72:1
1 Kgs 3:9
72:2
Ps 82:3
Isa 9:7; 11:2-5
72:3
Isa 9:5-6
Mic 4:3-4
Zech 9:10
72:4
Isa 11:4
72:5
Ps 89:36-37
72:6
Deut 32:2
Ps 65:10
Hos 6:3
72:7
Ps 92:12
72:8
Exod 23:31
Zech 9:10
72:9
Isa 49:23
Mic 7:17
72:10
Ps 45:12; 68:29
Isa 42:4, 10; 60:6
72:11
Ps 86:9; 138:4
Isa 49:23
72:12
Job 29:12
72:14
Ps 116:15
72:15
Isa 60:6
*psalm (64:19)
† Isa 45:20

71:22-24 As he awaits God's rescue, the psalmist prepares himself to declare with instruments and voice that God is faithful and righteous.

Ps 72 This royal psalm closes Book Two, with 72:18-20 functioning as an epilogue to all of Book Two. The psalmist reflects on the prospects of David's royal line and on Zion (see Pss 46, 48). He prays that Israel's kings will be good and prosperous, extending the Lord's blessing on his people throughout the whole earth. The surpassing righteousness and dominion sought in this prayer foreshadow the coming of Jesus, the Son of David.

72:1-7 The blessings of justice create a balance in nature, resulting in harmony, prosperity, and fertility.

72:1 *love of justice . . . righteousness:* Kings in the ancient Near East were expected to represent justice; the standard for Israel's kings was much higher because the Lord was their model.

72:3 The administration of justice transforms the earth into fruitfulness, abundance, harmony, and goodness (see Isa 32:16-17).

72:4 A just ruler will *defend the poor* against injustice, *rescue* them from violence, and bring *their oppressors* to account for their wrongdoing.

72:5 *May they fear you:* In Hebrew, this clause seems to be a response to the enforcement of justice. The Greek version reads *May they endure*, which makes this a prayer for longevity (21:4; 72:15, 17).

72:6-7 The administration of justice is *refreshing like spring rain*, enabling the *godly to flourish* (see Isa 45:8) like flowers. • *until the moon is no more:* This phrase means forever (see 89:36-37).

72:8-11 The anointed king will rule over the whole world. Even hostile nations will submit to him. In the ancient Near East, bearing gifts to the king acknowledged his success and his reputation (see 1 Kgs 10).

72:8-9 *from sea to sea:* This phrase represents the whole world. • Solomon's kingdom extended *from the Euphrates River* (literally *the river*) in the east to the Philistine territory in the west (1 Kgs 4:21; see Ps 80:8-11; 89:19-25), where the Mediterranean Sea appeared to be at the *ends of the earth* (see 2:8). Everyone *will bow before* this king, including the *desert nomads* (72:9), *his enemies*, and all the kings of the world (see Mic 7:17).

72:10 *The western kings of Tarshish* came from a major colony in the western basin of the Mediterranean.

The eastern kings of Sheba came from an area in southern Arabia, home of the queen of Sheba (1 Kgs 10). • *Seba* was probably located somewhere south of Egypt, perhaps on the western shore of the Red Sea across from Sheba. • The *gifts* offered to the king represented a tribute and a token of submission.

72:11 *All kings* and *all nations* must submit to the messianic king. The hope expressed in Ps 2:10-11 will be realized (see 96:1-3; 1 Cor 15:25) when other leaders and peoples *bow before* and *serve* this king.

72:12-14 The anointed king will rescue the needy. He is not only the judge but also a father to the poor (10:14, 17; 68:5).

72:12 *To rescue the poor* means to bring an end to the rule of their oppressors.

72:13 Like a father, the king *feels pity* for those in need (see Mal 3:17).

72:15-17 The just kingdom will be long-lasting and universal. The summary combines the themes of abundance of crops, longevity, tribute of the nations, and the prayer of the nations.

72:15 *The people* will *bless him*, fulfilling God's promise to Abraham (Gen 12:3; see Ps 133:3).

72:16

Job 5:25

72:17

Gen 12:3; 22:18

Ps 89:36

72:18

Exod 15:11

Ps 41:13; 77:14

72:19

Num 14:20-21

Neh 9:5

73:1

Ps 24:3-4; 51:10

Matt 5:8

73:2

Ps 94:18

73:3

Ps 37:1, 7

Jer 12:1

73:5

Job 21:9-10

73:6

Ps 109:18

73:7

Job 15:27-28

Ps 17:10

73:8

Ps 1:1; 17:10

Jude 1:16

73:11

Job 22:13

73:12

Ps 49:6

73:13

Job 21:15; 34:9

Ps 26:6

16 May there be abundant grain throughout the land,
flourishing even on the hilltops.
May the fruit trees flourish like the trees of Lebanon,
and may the people thrive like grass in a field.

17 May the king's name endure forever;
may it continue as long as the sun shines.
May all nations be blessed through him and bring him praise.

18 Praise the LORD God, the God of Israel,
who alone does such wonderful things.

19 Praise his glorious name forever!
Let the whole earth be filled with his glory.
Amen and amen!

20 (This ends the prayers of David son of Jesse.)

3. BOOK THREE (PSS 73–89)

PSALM 73

A psalm of Asaph.

1 Truly God is good to Israel,
to those whose hearts are pure.

2 But as for me, I almost lost my footing.
My feet were slipping, and I was almost gone.

3 For I envied the proud
when I saw them prosper despite their wickedness.

4 They seem to live such painless lives;
their bodies are so healthy and strong.

5 They don't have troubles like other people;
they're not plagued with problems like everyone else.

6 They wear pride like a jeweled necklace
and clothe themselves with cruelty.

7 These fat cats have everything
their hearts could ever wish for!

8 They scoff and speak only evil;
in their pride they seek to crush others.

9 They boast against the very heavens,
and their words strut throughout the earth.

10 And so the people are dismayed and confused,
drinking in all their words.

11 "What does God know?" they ask.
"Does the Most High even know what's happening?"

12 Look at these wicked people—
enjoying a life of ease while their riches multiply.

13 Did I keep my heart pure for nothing?
Did I keep myself innocent for no reason?

72:16 *the trees of Lebanon:* Lebanon was renowned for its lumber (see note on 2 Chr 2:8).

72:18-19 This doxology concludes Book Two of the Psalter.

72:20 This parenthetical note ends Book Two, which consists mostly of *prayers of David*. Books Three to Five were probably compiled after Book Two; they include additional psalms of David (Pss 86, 101, 103, 108–110, 122, 124, 131, 133, 138–145).

Book Three (Pss 73–89) Book Three begins with the problem of inequity in the world: The wicked enjoy prosperity while the righteous suffer. Psalm 73 also prepares readers to contemplate the collapse of David's dynasty, which forms the context for the end of Book Three (Ps 89). • Book Three consists of two collections: (1) psalms by Asaph that focus on the restoration of God's people and the judgment of his enemies (Pss 73–83); and (2) psalms by the "Sons of Korah" (Pss 84–89).

Pss 73–75 The apparent prosperity of the wicked (Ps 73) and God's apparent rejection of his people (Ps 74) raise questions about his justice. God is sovereign

over the whole world, and he determines the time for judgment (Ps 75).

Ps 73 This wisdom psalm (see "Wisdom Psalms" at Ps 37, p. 937) examines the injustice of the prosperity of the wicked. The psalmist affirms that God is good to the godly but his own experience differs (73:2-12). Nearly overcome by his doubts (73:13-16), the psalmist meets the Lord in the sanctuary and gains a perspective that stretches beyond his life and renews his confidence in God (73:17-26). His disturbing doubts stir a greater passion for truth. He knows that he can trust God and that God will rescue him (73:27-28).

73:1 *TITLE Asaph* was a Levitical singer appointed by David (1 Chr 6:39); his descendants were singers and instrumentalists (1 Chr 15:16-17). Many of the psalms of Asaph (Pss 50, 73–83) were probably written by Asaph's descendants at a later time in Israel's history (e.g., Ps 74).

73:1 People *whose hearts are pure* are renewed by God's Spirit (51:10), commit themselves to lives of godliness, keep away from anything that is sinful, and enjoy God's presence (see 24:3-4 and notes).

73:2-3 The poet sees the prosperity of the wicked as unfair (see 72:7) and resents it. • The psalmist's *feet were slipping* from the way of wisdom and godliness (see 17:5; 37:31), but God kept him from falling off the trail entirely (38:16; 66:9; 94:18; 121:3). • *when I saw them prosper:* Cp. 72:3, 7.

73:4-12 The psalmist presents a caricature of the bliss of the wicked (cp. Ps 1).

73:6 The proud adorn themselves with *pride and cruelty* rather than wisdom (Prov 1:9).

73:9 The proud *boast*, claiming that they own everything and are not subject to anyone (see 2:1-3).

73:13-17 Recognizing the ramifications of his discouragement and doubt, the psalmist turns to the Lord and receives special insight.

73:13-14 These rhetorical questions expect a discouraging "yes" for an answer. The psalmist wonders if godliness has become a meaningless ritual (see Mal 3:14-15). • *My heart* refers to his whole being. • The psalmist's *pain* comes from discipline and rebuke (39:11; Prov 1:23, 25; 12:1).

14 I get nothing but trouble all day long;
every morning brings me pain.

15 If I had really spoken this way to others,
I would have been a traitor to your
people.

16 So I tried to understand why the wicked
prosper.
But what a difficult task it is!

17 Then I went into your sanctuary, O God,
and I finally understood the destiny of
the wicked.

18 Truly, you put them on a slippery path
and send them sliding over the cliff to
destruction.

19 In an instant they are destroyed,
completely swept away by terrors.

20 When you arise, O Lord,
you will laugh at their silly ideas
as a person laughs at dreams in the
morning.

21 Then I realized that my heart was
bitter,
and I was all torn up inside.

22 I was so foolish and ignorant—
I must have seemed like a senseless
animal to you.

23 Yet I still belong to you;
you hold my right hand.

24 You guide me with your counsel,
leading me to a glorious destiny.

25 Whom have I in heaven but you?
I desire you more than anything on
earth.

26 My health may fail, and my spirit may
grow weak,
but God remains the ^hstrength of my
heart;
he is mine forever.

27 Those who desert him will perish,
for you destroy those who abandon
you.

28 But as for me, how good it is to be near
God!
I have made the ⁱSovereign LORD my
shelter,
and I will tell everyone about the
wonderful things you do.

PSALM 74
A psalm of Asaph.

1 O God, why have you rejected us so long?
Why is your anger so intense against
the sheep of your own pasture?

2 Remember that we are the people you
chose long ago,
the tribe you redeemed as your own
special possession!
And remember Jerusalem, your home
here on earth.

3 Walk through the awful ruins of the
city;
see how the enemy has destroyed
your sanctuary.

4 There your enemies shouted their
victorious battle cries;
there they set up their battle
standards.

5 They swung their axes
like woodcutters in a forest.

6 With axes and picks,
they smashed the carved paneling.

7 They burned your sanctuary to the
ground.
They defiled the ^jplace that bears your
name.

8 Then they thought, "Let's destroy
everything!"
So they burned down all the places
where God was worshiped.

9 We no longer see your miraculous signs.
All the ^kprophets are gone,
and no one can tell us when it will
end.

73:14
Ps 38:5-6; 118:18

73:16
Ecc 7:15; 8:16-17

73:17
Ps 27:4

73:19
Num 16:21
Isa 47:11

73:22
Ecc 3:18

73:24
Ps 32:8; 48:14

73:26
Ps 16:5; 38:10
^{tsur} (6697)
• Ps 78:35

73:27
Ps 37:20

73:28
Ps 40:5; 71:7
Heb 10:22
^{Yahweh} (0136, 3068)
• Isa 61:1

74:1
Deut 29:20
Ps 44:9; 89:46

74:2
Deut 32:6, 9
Ps 68:16

74:3
Ps 79:1
Isa 61:4

74:5
Jer 46:22

74:7
2 Kgs 25:9
^{imishkan} (4908)
• Ps 78:60

74:8
Ps 83:4

74:9
Lev 24:16
Ps 78:43
^{nabi} (5030)
• Isa 8:3

73:15-16 If the psalmist had verbalized his suspicions about the futility of godly living, he would have discouraged God's people and given God's enemies an opportunity to blaspheme (cp. John 13:20). Instead, the psalmist internalizes the problem and reflects on it.

73:17-20 At this time, God's *sanctuary* was the Temple in Jerusalem. There, in God's presence, the psalmist receives special insight (cp. 18:6). • God deals with the *wicked* over the long term. He waits patiently and gives them time to repent (Ezek 33:11; 2 Pet 3:9); those who do not repent will get what they deserve.

73:21-22 The psalmist's feelings about

the prosperity of the wicked had given him a *bitter* spirit.

73:24 The Lord leads the godly through their troubles and changes their misery into splendor.

73:25-26 Nothing *in heaven* or *on earth* is better than being near God.

Ps 74 The psalmist laments the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (586 BC) with vivid imagery, questions, fresh memories, and a direct appeal for the Lord to act (74:19-23).

74:TITLE psalm: Hebrew *maskil*. This may be a literary or musical term.

74:1-2 In the aftermath of Jerusalem's fall, it seemed that God had forgotten

his special covenant relationship with his people.

74:1 God *rejected* his people because their sin aroused his anger (106:34-46). • Like a tender shepherd, God cares for his people, *the sheep of his pasture* (Ps 23; 100:3).

74:2 The Lord *chose* and *redeemed* Israel from Egypt in the Exodus (cp. Exod 15:13). • *your own special possession:* This is another expression for "your people" (28:9; 78:62; 94:14; 106:40). • *Jerusalem:* Hebrew *Mount Zion*. See "Mount Zion, the City of God" at Ps 48, p. 947.

74:3-8 Like a guide, the psalmist points out to the Lord what took place during the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC.

74:10
Ps 44:16

74:11
Ps 59:13

74:12
Ps 44:4
ʾyeshuʾah (3444)
• Isa 30:15

74:13
Exod 14:21

74:15
Exod 14:21-22; 17:5-6

74:16
Gen 1:14-18
Ps 136:7-8

74:17
Gen 8:22
Acts 17:26

74:18
Deut 32:6
Ps 39:8; 74:10

74:20
Gen 17:7
Ps 106:45

74:21
Ps 35:10
Isa 41:17

74:22
Ps 43:1

74:23
Ps 65:7

75:1
Ps 44:1; 71:17

75:3
1 Sam 2:8
Ps 46:6

75:5
Ps 94:4

75:7
1 Sam 2:7
ʾshapat (8199)
• Ps 82:1

75:9
Ps 40:10

75:10
Ps 89:17; 148:14

- 10 How long, O God, will you allow our enemies to insult you?
Will you let them dishonor your name forever?
- 11 Why do you hold back your strong right hand?
Unleash your powerful fist and destroy them.
- 12 You, O God, are my king from ages past, bringing ^asalvation to the earth.
- 13 You split the sea by your strength and smashed the heads of the sea monsters.
- 14 You crushed the heads of Leviathan and let the desert animals eat him.
- 15 You caused the springs and streams to gush forth,
and you dried up rivers that never run dry.
- 16 Both day and night belong to you;
you made the starlight and the sun.
- 17 You set the boundaries of the earth,
and you made both summer and winter.
- 18 See how these enemies insult you,
LORD.
A foolish nation has dishonored your name.
- 19 Don't let these wild beasts destroy your turtles.
- Don't forget your suffering people forever.
- 20 Remember your covenant promises,
for the land is full of darkness and violence!
- 21 Don't let the downtrodden be humiliated again.
Instead, let the poor and needy praise your name.
- 22 Arise, O God, and defend your cause.
Remember how these fools insult you all day long.

- 23 Don't overlook what your enemies have said
or their growing uproar.

PSALM 75

For the choir director: A psalm of Asaph. A song to be sung to the tune "Do Not Destroy!"

- 1 We thank you, O God!
We give thanks because you are near.
People everywhere tell of your wonderful deeds.
- 2 God says, "At the time I have planned,
I will bring justice against the wicked.
- 3 When the earth quakes and its people live in turmoil,
I am the one who keeps its foundations firm. *Interlude*
- 4 "I warned the proud, 'Stop your boasting!'
I told the wicked, 'Don't raise your fists!'
- 5 Don't raise your fists in defiance at the heavens
or speak with such arrogance.' "
- 6 For no one on earth—from east or west,
or even from the wilderness—
should raise a defiant fist.
- 7 It is God alone who ^bjudges;
he decides who will rise and who will fall.
- 8 For the LORD holds a cup in his hand
that is full of foaming wine mixed with spices.
He pours out the wine in judgment,
and all the wicked must drink it,
draining it to the dregs.
- 9 But as for me, I will always proclaim
what God has done;
I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.
- 10 For God says, "I will break the strength of the wicked,
but I will increase the power of the godly."

74:12 *my king from ages past*: The psalmist acknowledges God's power and his historical bond with Israel (5:2; 44:4; 84:3).

74:14 The identification of *Leviathan* is disputed, ranging from an earthly creature to a mythical sea monster in ancient literature (see 104:26; Job 3:8; 41:1, 12, 22, 31; Isa 27:1). Here, its multiple *heads* point to the mythical monster.

74:15 *springs and streams to gush forth*: God provided water in the desert for his people (see 68:8-9; Exod 17:6); he *dried up* the Red Sea (Exod 14:21) and the Jordan River (Josh 3:17).

74:16 *starlight*: Or *moon*; Hebrew reads *light*.

74:19-23 The poet urges God to act.

Ps 75 This hymn of thanksgiving includes two direct messages from God that provide assurance of his justice (75:2-3, 10). The Lord rebukes arrogant people who defy him, promising to forcibly humble them (75:4-8). Together, the community and the psalmist respond with thanksgiving for God's character (75:1, 9).

75:2-8 The Lord will bring justice in his own time.

75:4-5 *The wicked* arrogantly defy *the*

heavens—the dwelling place of God. Through their *boasting* they insist that they are wiser than God.

75:6 No creature has the right to rebel against its Creator. • *should raise a defiant fist*: Literally *should lift*.

75:7-8 The Lord alone is the Judge, with the power to exalt and humble (see 1 Sam 2:7; Luke 1:52).

PSALM 76

For the choir director: A psalm of Asaph. A song to be accompanied by stringed instruments.

- 1 God is honored in Judah;
his name is great in Israel.
- 2 Jerusalem is where he lives;
Mount Zion is his home.
- 3 There he has broken the fiery arrows of
the enemy,
the shields and swords and weapons
of war. *Interlude*
- 4 You are glorious and more majestic
than the everlasting mountains.
- 5 Our boldest enemies have been
plundered.
They lie before us in the sleep of
death.
No warrior could lift a hand
against us.
- 6 At the blast of your breath, O God of
Jacob,
their horses and chariots lay still.
- 7 No wonder you are greatly feared!
Who can stand before you when your
anger explodes?
- 8 From heaven you sentenced your
enemies;
the earth trembled and stood silent
before you.
- 9 You stand up to judge those who do evil,
O God,
and to rescue the oppressed of the
earth. *Interlude*
- 10 Human defiance only enhances your
glory,
for you use it as a weapon.

- 11 Make vows to the LORD your God, and
keep them.
Let everyone bring tribute to the
Awesome One.
- 12 For he breaks the pride of princes,
and the kings of the earth fear him.

PSALM 77

For Jeduthun, the choir director: A psalm of Asaph.

- 1 I cry out to God; yes, I shout.
Oh, that God would listen to me!
- 2 When I was in deep trouble,
I searched for the Lord.
All night long I prayed, with hands lifted
toward heaven,
but my soul was not comforted.
- 3 I think of God, and I moan,
overwhelmed with longing for his
help. *Interlude*
- 4 You don't let me sleep.
I am too distressed even to pray!
- 5 I think of the good old days,
long since ended,
6 when my nights were filled with joyful
songs.
I search my soul and ponder the
difference now.
- 7 Has the Lord rejected me forever?
Will he never again be kind to me?
- 8 Is his unfailing love gone forever?
Have his promises permanently
failed?
- 9 Has God forgotten to be gracious?
Has he slammed the door on his
compassion? *Interlude*
- 10 And I said, "This is my fate;

76:2
Ps 48:2-3; 132:13;
135:21
76:3
Ps 46:9
76:5
Isa 10:12
76:6
Exod 15:1, 21
76:7
Ps 89:7
Nah 1:6
Rev 6:17
76:8
1 Chr 16:30
76:9
Ps 9:7-9; 72:4
76:10
Exod 9:16
Rom 9:17
77:2
Job 11:13
Ps 50:15; 88:9
Isa 26:9, 16
77:3
Ps 43:5; 61:2; 142:2-3
77:5
Ps 143:5
77:6
Ps 42:8
77:8
Ps 89:49
77:9
Ps 25:6

Ps 76 This psalm appears to celebrate a victory. The victory might have been recent, such as over the Assyrians (see note on 76:TITLE; see also Isa 37); or the psalm might be recalling God's great acts of rescue in the past.

76:TITLE *to be accompanied by stringed instruments:* Greek version reads *for the Assyrian*.

76:1-3 God's victory over Zion's enemies foreshadows his worldwide victory over all his enemies.

76:2 *Jerusalem:* Hebrew *Salem*, another name for Jerusalem (see Gen 14:18).

76:3 God brings an end to the attacks of his enemies (see 46:9).

76:4-6 The psalmist praises God for his achievement and for his *glorious* majesty.

76:4 The victorious king's splendor, glory, and majesty are greater than

anything in the created order (8:1; 29:4; 111:3). • *than the everlasting mountains:* As in Greek version; Hebrew reads *than mountains filled with beasts of prey*.

76:7-9 The needy await their victorious God, while the wicked stand in fear of him.

76:7 The word translated *feared* (Hebrew *nora*) is a wordplay on the word translated "glorious" in 76:4 (Hebrew *na'or*).

76:10 *for you use it as a weapon:* The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.

Ps 77 The psalmist laments that God has turned away from him, even though he feels innocent. He reflects on his situation (77:3, 6, 12) and finds hope (see 25:5) in remembering God's past deeds (77:11).

77:1-3 The *night* provides a special

opportunity for prayer and meditation (77:6, 11; see 6:6; 16:7; 17:3; 30:5; 63:6; 119:55, 62, 148).

77:3 *I think of God:* God's people inevitably face difficult times, but recalling his mighty acts at the beginning of their relationship assures them of God's commitment. • Feeling *overwhelmed*, the psalmist is unable to deal with the crisis (142:3; 143:4).

77:4-6 As the psalmist meditates at night, he feels so disturbed that he cannot sleep or speak. He has pleasant memories of the past, but he cannot look beyond the present moment into the future.

77:7-9 The psalmist questions his status before God.

77:7 Feeling *rejected* (see 43:2), the psalmist asks if the situation is permanent.

77:11
Exod 15:11
Ps 86:8

77:12
ʿhagah (1897)
• Ps 143:5

77:13
Exod 15:11
Ps 86:8

77:15
Exod 6:6
Deut 9:29
ʿgaʿal (1350)
• Ps 103:4

77:16
Exod 14:21

77:17
Ps 68:33

77:18
Judg 5:4

77:19
Hab 3:15

77:20
Exod 6:26; 13:21
Ps 78:52
Isa 63:11-13

78:2
*Matt 13:34-35
ʿmashal (4912)
• Prov 1:1

78:3
Ps 44:1

78:4
Deut 11:19
Ps 22:30

78:5
Deut 6:4-9

78:6
Deut 11:19
Ps 102:18

78:7
Deut 4:2, 9
Josh 22:5

78:8
Exod 32:9
Ezek 20:18

78:10
2 Kgs 18:12

78:11
Ps 106:13

78:12
Num 13:22
Isa 19:11

the Most High has turned his hand
against me.”

11 But then I recall all you have done,
O LORD;
I remember your wonderful deeds of
long ago.

12 They are constantly in my ^cthoughts.
I cannot stop thinking about your
mighty works.

13 O God, your ways are holy.
Is there any god as mighty as you?

14 You are the God of great wonders!
You demonstrate your awesome
power among the nations.

15 By your strong arm, you ^dredeemed your
people,
the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.

Interlude

16 When the Red Sea saw you, O God,
its waters looked and trembled!
The sea quaked to its very depths.

17 The clouds poured down rain;
the thunder rumbled in the sky.
Your arrows of lightning flashed.

18 Your thunder roared from the
whirlwind;
the lightning lit up the world!
The earth trembled and shook.

19 Your road led through the sea,
your pathway through the mighty
waters—
a pathway no one knew was there!

20 You led your people along that road like
a flock of sheep,
with Moses and Aaron as their
shepherds.

PSALM 78

A psalm of Asaph.

1 O my people, listen to my instructions.
Open your ears to what I am saying,

2 for I will speak to you in a ^eparable.
I will teach you hidden lessons from our
past—

3 stories we have heard and known,
stories our ancestors handed down
to us.

4 We will not hide these truths from our
children;
we will tell the next generation
about the glorious deeds of the LORD,
about his power and his mighty
wonders.

5 For he issued his laws to Jacob;
he gave his instructions to Israel.

He commanded our ancestors
to teach them to their children,

6 so the next generation might know
them—
even the children not yet born—
and they in turn will teach their own
children.

7 So each generation should set its hope
anew on God,
not forgetting his glorious miracles
and obeying his commands.

8 Then they will not be like their
ancestors—
stubborn, rebellious, and unfaithful,
refusing to give their hearts to God.

9 The warriors of Ephraim, though armed
with bows,
turned their backs and fled on the
day of battle.

10 They did not keep God's covenant
and refused to live by his instructions.

11 They forgot what he had done—
the great wonders he had shown
them,

12 the miracles he did for their ancestors
on the plain of Zoan in the land of
Egypt.

77:10-12 The memories of God's
mighty works in the past fill the
psalmist's mind.

77:10 The psalmist fears that God's
hand of protection (44:3; 77:15; Exod
6:6) and favor (16:7-8; 110:1) is now
against him for no apparent reason.

77:13-15 This central section of the
poem reflects on God as the holy and
powerful redeemer.

77:16 *the Red Sea*: Literally *the waters*.
The Canaanites attributed divine power
to the sea, but God is the one who
made the sea and uses it for his own
purposes.

Ps 78 This wisdom psalm exhorts the
people to learn wisdom and faithfully
pass it on.

78:TITLE *psalm*: Hebrew *maskil*. This
may be a literary or musical term.

78:1-8 The prologue is an invitation to
learn wisdom.

78:2 The psalmist recites Israel's story
(78:5-72) *in a parable* in order to teach
wisdom and insight. • Jesus quoted
this verse to explain why he taught in
parables (Matt 13:35).

78:3-4 This story of what God has done
should be told from generation to gen-
eration (see Deut 6:20-25; Prov 4:1-4).

78:5-6 The telling of the story should
motivate God's people to obey what he
commanded (Deut 6:4-9).

78:7-8 God holds *each generation*
responsible for its own response, which
should be to maintain faith and *hope*

(see 9:18; 27:14) and avoid being *stub-
born, rebellious, and unfaithful* (see
Deut 9:6-7; 10:16; 30:6; 31:27).

78:9-11 *Ephraim*, the second son of
Joseph, received a special blessing from
Jacob (Gen 48:15-20; 49:22-26; Deut
33:13-17). The land that his descen-
dants received included fertile valleys
and strategic roads (Judg 8:2). However,
the people of Ephraim did not live in
obedience to God's gracious covenant.

78:12-16 The focus shifts from Ephraim
(78:9-11) to Israel as a whole as the
psalmist reflects on God's power in
Egypt (see 81:4-7) and in the wilderness.

78:12 *The miracles* are the ten plagues
against Egypt that God performed dur-
ing Israel's captivity (Exod 7-12).

13 For he divided the sea and led them through,
 making the water stand up like walls!
 14 In the daytime he led them by a cloud,
 and all night by a pillar of fire.
 15 He split open the rocks in the wilderness
 to give them water, as from a gushing
 spring.
 16 He made streams pour from the rock,
 making the waters flow down like a
 river!
 17 Yet they kept on sinning against him,
 rebelling against the Most High in the
 desert.
 18 They stubbornly tested God in their
 hearts,
 demanding the foods they craved.
 19 They even spoke against God himself,
 saying,
 “God can’t give us food in the
 wilderness.
 20 Yes, he can strike a rock so water gushes
 out,
 but he can’t give his people bread and
 meat.”
 21 When the LORD heard them, he was
 furious.
 The fire of his wrath burned against
 Jacob.
 Yes, his anger rose against Israel,
 22 for they did not believe God
 or trust him to care for them.
 23 But he commanded the skies to open;
 he opened the doors of heaven.
 24 He rained down ^fmanna for them to eat;
 he gave them bread from heaven.
 25 They ate the food of angels!
 God gave them all they could hold.
 26 He released the east wind in the heavens
 and guided the south wind by his
 mighty power.
 27 He rained down meat as thick as dust—
 birds as plentiful as the sand on the
 seashore!
 28 He caused the birds to fall within their
 camp
 and all around their tents.

29 The people ate their fill.
 He gave them what they craved.
 30 But before they satisfied their craving,
 while the meat was yet in their
 mouths,
 31 the anger of God rose against them,
 and he killed their strongest men.
 He struck down the finest of Israel’s
 young men.
 32 But in spite of this, the people kept
 sinning.
 Despite his wonders, they refused to
 trust him.
 33 So he ended their lives in failure,
 their years in terror.
 34 When God began killing them,
 they finally sought him.
 They repented and took God
 seriously.
 35 Then they remembered that God was
 their ^grock,
 that God ^hMost High was their
 redeemer.
 36 But all they gave him was lip service;
 they lied to him with their tongues.
 37 Their hearts were not loyal to him.
 They did not keep his covenant.
 38 Yet he was merciful and ⁱforgave their
 sins
 and did not destroy them all.
 Many times he held back his anger
 and did not unleash his fury!
 39 For he remembered that they were
 merely mortal,
 gone like a breath of wind that never
 returns.
 40 Oh, how often they rebelled against him
 in the wilderness
 and grieved his heart in that dry
 wasteland.
 41 Again and again they tested God’s
 patience
 and provoked the Holy One of Israel.
 42 They did not remember his power
 and how he rescued them from their
 enemies.

78:13
 Exod 14:21; 15:8
78:14
 Exod 13:21
78:15
 Exod 17:5-6
 *1 Cor 10:4
78:16
 Num 20:8, 10-11
78:17
 Heb 3:16
78:18
 Num 11:4-5
 *1 Cor 10:9-10
78:19
 Exod 16:3
 Num 21:5
78:20
 Num 20:11
78:21
 Num 11:1
78:22-23
 Heb 3:19
78:23
 Mal 3:10
78:24
 Exod 16:4
 *John 6:30-31
 *man (4478)
 * Exod 16:15
78:26
 Num 11:31
78:27
 Exod 16:13
 Ps 105:40
78:29
 Num 11:19-20
78:31
 Num 11:33-34
78:32
 Num 14:11
78:33
 Num 14:29, 34-35
78:34
 Hos 5:15
78:35
 Deut 9:26; 32:4
 *tsur (6697)
 * Ps 89:26
 *elyon (5945)
 * Ps 82:6
78:36
 Exod 32:7-8
 Ezek 33:31
78:38
 Exod 34:5-6
 Num 14:18-20
 *kappar (3722)
 *Ps 79:9
78:39
 Job 7:16-17
 Jas 4:14
78:41
 2 Kgs 19:22
78:42
 Judg 8:34

78:13 God *divided the sea* when Israel crossed through the Red Sea (see Exod 14–15).
78:14 God used a *cloud* and a *pillar of fire* to guide and protect Israel in the wilderness (Exod 13:21-22).
78:17-31 Israel rebelled in the wilderness despite God’s abundant provision.
78:23-25 Abundance comes through *the doors of heaven* (Gen 8:2; 2 Kgs 7:2; Mal 3:10). • Israel ate *manna* for forty years in the wilderness (Exod 16:31-36; John 6:31).

78:26-31 God powerfully satisfied the people’s desires, but they did not respond with gratitude or faith. Therefore, God exercised his justice.
78:32-39 Israel’s rebellion resulted in God’s judgment, but even their short-lived and insincere repentance motivated God to exercise forbearance.
78:33 An entire generation died in the wilderness (Num 14:22-23, 28-35).
78:34-39 Israel’s continued existence, in spite of the people’s rebellion and

unbelief (78:7-8), was due to God’s compassion.
78:34 *They repented*: This demonstration of zeal was not sincere.
78:35-39 The Israelites *remembered* the right doctrine (9:9; 91:1), but they did not allow God to change their *hearts* (Lev 26:41). • **God Most High**: Hebrew *’el-’elyon*.
78:40-55 The Israelites *rebelled* even though the Lord had rescued them from powerful plagues.

78:43

Exod 7:3

78:44

Exod 7:20

Ps 105:29

78:45

Exod 8:6, 24

Ps 105:30-31

78:46

Exod 10:14

¹arbeh (0697)

• Prov 30:27

78:47

Exod 9:23-25

Ps 105:32

78:48

Exod 9:19

78:49

Exod 15:7

¹mal'ak (4397)

• Ps 91:11

78:51

Exod 12:29-30

Ps 105:36

78:52

Ps 77:20

78:53

Exod 14:19-20, 27-28

78:54

Exod 15:17

78:55

Josh 23:4-5

Ps 44:1-2; 105:10-11

78:58

Lev 26:1

Deut 32:16, 21

78:59

Lev 26:30

Deut 32:19

78:60

1 Sam 4:11

¹mishkan (4908)

• Exod 25:9

43 They did not remember his miraculous signs in Egypt,

his wonders on the plain of Zoan.

44 For he turned their rivers into blood, so no one could drink from the streams.

45 He sent vast swarms of flies to consume them and hordes of frogs to ruin them.

46 He gave their crops to caterpillars; their harvest was consumed by locusts.

47 He destroyed their grapevines with hail and shattered their sycamore-figs with sleet.

48 He abandoned their cattle to the hail, their livestock to bolts of lightning.

49 He loosed on them his fierce anger—all his fury, rage, and hostility.

He dispatched against them

a band of destroying ¹angels.

50 He turned his anger against them; he did not spare the Egyptians' lives but ravaged them with the plague.

51 He killed the oldest son in each Egyptian family,

the flower of youth throughout the land of Egypt.

52 But he led his own people like a flock of sheep,

guiding them safely through the wilderness.

53 He kept them safe so they were not afraid;

but the sea covered their enemies.

54 He brought them to the border of his holy land, to this land of hills he had won for them.

55 He drove out the nations before them; he gave them their inheritance by lot. He settled the tribes of Israel into their homes.

56 But they kept testing and rebelling against God Most High.

They did not obey his laws.

57 They turned back and were as faithless as their parents.

They were as undependable as a crooked bow.

58 They angered God by building shrines to other gods;

they made him jealous with their idols.

59 When God heard them, he was very angry,

and he completely rejected Israel.

60 Then he abandoned his ²dwelling at Shiloh,

God's Anger (Ps 78:18-64)

Ps 2:5-9, 12; 6:1; 7:6, 11-13; 21:9; 27:9; 30:5; 38:1-10; 74:1; 79:5-6; 80:4; 85:2-7; 86:15; 90:9-11; 95:8-11; 102:10-11; 103:8-9; 106:21-43; 110:5-7; 145:8
Isa 64:9-12
Lam 5:19-22
Rom 2:5-11
Eph 5:6
Rev 6:15-17; 11:18; 19:11-16

The psalmists understood Israel's exodus from Egypt as an object lesson about God's anger (78:18-64). God expressed his anger against the Egyptians while sparing his people (78:49-50). But Israel became the object of his wrath during the wilderness journey, when the people provoked the Lord to anger through their rebelliousness (78:31; 106:29, 32; see Rom 2:5). God took an oath that that rebellious generation would not enter his place of rest (95:8-11), and they died in the wilderness. But he restrained his wrath (78:38) and did not destroy Israel as it deserved.

The Lord is just and righteous in his judgment (7:11); he is patient and slow to anger (86:15; 103:8; 145:8). The wicked have stirred up God's wrath and deserve his judgment (see 2:5, 12; 21:9; 56:7; 59:13; 69:24; 79:6; see also Rom 1:18). The purpose of his wrath is to remove evildoers and extend his kingdom. Evil must come to an end, and the wicked must perish for the godly to inherit the earth (Ps 37).

God's people experience his wrath when they sin. The experience, though painful, is brief in comparison to their joy in God's mercy and goodness (30:5). He will not be angry forever (103:9). God's wrath brings death (106:23), but his forgiveness and mercy restore his people (see 85:2-7).

God is love, and he loves people with justice and holiness. In love for us, he poured out his anger on Jesus Christ (Rom 3:25; 5:9). Jesus received the full brunt of God's wrath so that he could atone for our sins and reconcile us to God. He saves his people (1 Jn 2:2) and rules from heaven at God's right hand (Heb 2:17). Jesus is now the agent of God's wrath against the wicked (2:5-9; 110:5-7; Eph 5:6; Rev 6:15-17; 11:18; 19:11-16).

78:51 throughout the land of Egypt:

Literally *in the tents of Ham*.

78:56-64 Israel's rebellion desecrated

the Promised Land. The people built *shrines* to false gods and worshiped *idols* (78:58) during the period of the judges (e.g., Judg 2:11; 3:7; 17-18).

78:60 God *abandoned his dwelling at Shiloh* because of the people's idol worship (1 Sam 4:11; Jer 7:12).

the Tabernacle where he had lived
among the people.

- 61 He allowed the Ark of his might to be captured;
he surrendered his glory into enemy hands.
- 62 He gave his people over to be butchered by the sword,
because he was so angry with his own people—his special possession.
- 63 Their young men were killed by fire;
their young women died before singing their wedding songs.
- 64 Their priests were slaughtered,
and their widows could not mourn their deaths.
- 65 Then the Lord rose up as though waking from sleep,
like a warrior aroused from a drunken stupor.
- 66 He routed his enemies
and sent them to eternal shame.
- 67 But he rejected Joseph's descendants;
he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim.
- 68 He ^bchose instead the tribe of Judah,
and Mount Zion, which he loved.
- 69 There he built his sanctuary as high as the heavens,
as solid and enduring as the earth.
- 70 He chose his servant David,
calling him from the sheep pens.
- 71 He took David from tending the ewes and lambs
and made him the shepherd of Jacob's descendants—
God's own people, Israel.
- 72 He ^ccared for them with a true heart
and led them with skillful hands.

PSALM 79

A psalm of Asaph.

- 1 O God, pagan nations have conquered your land,
your special possession.
They have defiled your holy Temple
and made Jerusalem a heap of ruins.
- 2 They have left the bodies of your servants
as food for the birds of heaven.
The flesh of your godly ones
has become food for the wild animals.
- 3 Blood has flowed like water all around Jerusalem;
no one is left to bury the dead.
- 4 We are mocked by our neighbors,
an object of scorn and derision to those around us.
- 5 O LORD, how long will you be angry with us? Forever?
How long will your jealousy burn like fire?
- 6 Pour out your wrath on the nations that refuse to acknowledge you—
on kingdoms that do not call upon your name.
- 7 For they have devoured your people Israel,
making the land a desolate wilderness.
- 8 Do not hold us guilty for the sins of our ancestors!
Let your compassion quickly meet our needs,
for we are on the brink of despair.
- 9 Help us, O God of our salvation!
Help us for the glory of your name.
Save us and ^dforgive our sins
for the honor of your name.
- 10 Why should pagan nations be allowed to scoff,
asking, "Where is their God?"
Show us your vengeance against the nations,

78:61

1 Sam 4:17

78:62

Judg 20:21

1 Sam 4:10

78:63

Num 11:1

Jer 7:34; 16:9

78:64

1 Sam 22:18

78:65

Isa 42:13

78:66

1 Sam 5:6

78:68

Ps 87:1-2

^b*bakhar* (0977)

• Ps 135:4

78:69

1 Kgs 6:1-38

78:70

1 Sam 16:10-12

78:71

2 Sam 5:2; 7:8

1 Chr 11:2

78:72

1 Kgs 9:4

^c*ra'ah* (7462)

• Isa 40:11

79:1

Ps 74:2-7

Jer 26:18

Lam 1:10

79:2

Deut 28:26

Jer 7:33; 16:4

79:3

Jer 14:16

79:4

Ps 44:13

79:5

Ps 74:1, 9-10

Zeph 3:8

79:6

Jer 10:25

2 Thes 1:8

79:7

Ps 53:4

79:8

Ps 106:6; 142:6

Isa 26:5; 64:9

79:9

2 Chr 14:11

Jer 14:7

^d*kapar* (3722)

• Prov 16:6

79:10

Ps 115:2

78:67 *The tribe of Ephraim* was not completely *rejected*, but God favored Judah (78:68).

78:68-69 In the choice of *Mount Zion* instead of Shiloh as God's *sanctuary* on earth, God moved from the north to the south (see Ps 69).

78:70-72 The God who had turned against his *own people* (78:62) chose *David*, a shepherd (Gen 46:34; 1 Sam 16:10-11), to become their *shepherd* (78:52; cp. 23:1).

Ps 79 This lament describes the occasion of Jerusalem's fall in 586 BC. The early history of Israel's rebellions described in Ps 78 provoked God's wrath, resulting in the desolation of Zion described here as the defilement

of the Temple and the disgraced bodies that littered the landscape. The psalmist then prays for forgiveness and rescue (79:8-9), as well as for God to pay back the nation's enemies (79:12-13). Other psalms lamenting the Exile include Ps 42-44, 102, 107, 126, 137.

79:1-4 The poet laments the desecration of the Temple and the success of the enemy.

79:1 *your special possession*: This phrase might refer to the *land*, the *Temple* (see 61:5), or the people (see 79:2; 78:71).

79:5-8 The intensity of God's judgment surprises the people; they cry out in despair for compassion, forgiveness, and relief. Verses 6-7 are repeated almost

verbatim in Jer 10:25.

79:6 The repentant among God's people ask him not to vent his anger on them but on their wicked and unrepentant enemies.

79:7 *devoured your people Israel*: Literally *devoured Jacob*. See note on 44:4.

79:8 The people's accumulation of past *sins* contributed to the Exile (2 Kgs 17:7-23; 24:3-4); however, the people perished because of their own sins (Jer 31:30; Ezek 18:20).

79:9-11 The people ask God to rescue them. Although Israel's sins caused the tragedy, the *pagan nations* must also be held responsible for the bloodshed.

79:12
Gen 4:15
Ps 74:10, 18, 22

79:13
Ps 74:1, 95:7; 100:3
Isa 43:21

80:1
Exod 25:22
Ps 23:1; 77:20

80:2
Ps 35:23

80:3
Num 6:24-26
Ps 31:16; 60:1
Lam 5:21

80:4
Ps 79:5; 84:8

80:5
Ps 42:3; 102:9

80:6
Ps 44:13; 79:4

80:8
2 Chr 20:7
Ps 44:2
Isa 5:2, 7
Jer 2:21; 11:17
Ezek 17:6, 23
Amos 9:15

80:9
Exod 23:28
Isa 5:2
Hos 14:5

80:11
Ps 72:8

80:12
Ps 89:40
Isa 5:5

80:13
Jer 5:6

80:16
2 Chr 36:19
Ps 39:11
Jer 52:13

80:17
Ps 89:21
**ben 'adam* (1121,
0120)
† Ps 90:3

for they have spilled the blood of your servants.

11 Listen to the moaning of the prisoners.
Demonstrate your great power by saving those condemned to die.

12 O Lord, pay back our neighbors seven times
for the scorn they have hurled at you.

13 Then we your people, the sheep of your pasture,
will thank you forever and ever,
praising your greatness from generation to generation.

PSALM 80

For the choir director: A psalm of Asaph, to be sung to the tune "Lilies of the Covenant."

1 Please listen, O Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph's descendants like a flock.

O God, enthroned above the cherubim,
display your radiant glory

2 to Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh.
Show us your mighty power.

Come to rescue us!

3 Turn us again to yourself, O God.
Make your face shine down upon us.
Only then will we be saved.

4 O LORD God of Heaven's Armies,
how long will you be angry with our prayers?

5 You have fed us with sorrow
and made us drink tears by the bucketful.

6 You have made us the scorn of
neighboring nations.

Our enemies treat us as a joke.

7 Turn us again to yourself, O God of Heaven's Armies.

Make your face shine down upon us.
Only then will we be saved.

8 You brought us from Egypt like a grapevine;
you drove away the pagan nations and transplanted us into your land.

9 You cleared the ground for us,
and we took root and filled the land.

10 Our shade covered the mountains;
our branches covered the mighty cedars.

11 We spread our branches west to the Mediterranean Sea;
our shoots spread east to the Euphrates River.

12 But now, why have you broken down our walls
so that all who pass by may steal our fruit?

13 The wild boar from the forest devours it,
and the wild animals feed on it.

14 Come back, we beg you, O God of Heaven's Armies.
Look down from heaven and see our plight.

Take care of this grapevine
15 that you yourself have planted,
this son you have raised for yourself.

16 For we are chopped up and burned by our enemies.
May they perish at the sight of your frown.

17 Strengthen the man you love,
the ^eson of your choice.

79:12 The Exile resulted in national suffering and in individual searching for the Lord. • *pay back*: See 1:6; 94:2; Jer 32:18. • The expression *seven times* signifies something complete. • Israel's *neighbors* included Edom, Moab, and Ammon (see 137:7; 2 Kgs 24:2; Obad 1:1-21).

Ps 80 This psalm of lament might originate with the remnant of the northern kingdom after its fall in 722 BC. The people call on God as their Shepherd and as the God of Heaven's Armies in the hope that he will return to them and restore them. They remember the Exodus and their special relationship with the Lord and conclude with an expression of renewed commitment to him (80:18).

80:TITLE *The tune "Lilies of the Covenant"* is unknown today.

80:1-3 The psalmist urgently calls upon the Lord to act.

80:1-2 God is the *Shepherd of Israel*: See also 23:1; 28:9; 78:52-53. • *radiant glory* . . . *power*: These expressions (145:11) refer to God's manifest presence.

80:3 This verse is repeated (with an increasing crescendo) in 80:7, 19.

80:4-7 The people cry out for rescue from the shame of their recent defeat. The enemy's victory is less devastating, however, than the knowledge that they themselves are objects of God's wrath.

80:6 *the scorn*: As in Syriac version; Hebrew reads *the strife*.

80:8-11 Israel has a glorious past, beginning with its redemption from Egypt.

80:8-9 Israel had been a prosperous *grapevine* (Gen 1:28; Gal 5:22-23) that God *transplanted* into the land of Canaan at the time of the conquest. However, the people forgot the source of their prosperity and chose to do evil (Isa 5:1-7; Hos 10:1).

80:10-11 Solomon's kingdom had extended *west to the Mediterranean Sea* and *east to the Euphrates River* (literally *west to the sea*, . . . *east to the river*; see 72:8-9; 89:25; 1 Kgs 4:21).

80:12 *broken down our walls*: God no longer defended Israel (Isa 5:5).

80:13 The surrounding nations were ceremonially unclean, like a *wild boar* or vicious *wild animals*.

80:15 Israel was the *son* that God had brought out of Egypt (see Hos 11:1) and *planted* in the Holy Land.

80:16-19 The community prays for God to change their desperate situation and restore them. They are still the Lord's chosen people.

80:17 The *son of your choice* was probably the northern kingdom of Israel, although it might allude to the king of David's dynasty (110:1).

18 Then we will never abandon you again.
Revive us so we can call on your name
once more.

19 Turn us again to yourself, O LORD God of
Heaven's Armies.
Make your face shine down upon us.
Only then will we be saved.

PSALM 81

For the choir director: A psalm of Asaph, to be accompanied by a stringed instrument.

1 Sing praises to God, our strength.
Sing to the God of Jacob.

2 Sing! Beat the tambourine.
Play the sweet lyre and the harp.

3 Blow the ram's horn at new moon,
and again at full moon to call a
festival!

4 For this is required by the decrees of
Israel;
it is a regulation of the God of Jacob.

5 He made it a law for Israel
when he attacked Egypt to set us
free.

I heard an unknown voice say,
6 "Now I will take the load from your
shoulders;
I will free your hands from their
heavy tasks.

7 You cried to me in trouble, and I saved
you;
I answered out of the thundercloud
and tested your faith when there was
no water at Meribah. *Interlude*

8 "Listen to me, O my people, while I give
you stern warnings.
O Israel, if you would only listen
to me!

9 You must never have a foreign god;
you must not bow down before a false
god.

10 For it was I, the LORD your God,
who rescued you from the land of
Egypt.
Open your mouth wide, and I will fill
it with good things.

11 "But no, my people wouldn't listen.
Israel did not want me around.

12 So I let them follow their own stubborn
desires,
living according to their own ideas.

13 Oh, that my people would listen to me!
Oh, that Israel would follow me,
walking in my paths!

14 How quickly I would then subdue their
enemies!
How soon my hands would be upon
their foes!

15 Those who hate the LORD would cringe
before him;
they would be doomed forever.

16 But I would feed you with the finest
wheat.
I would satisfy you with wild honey
from the rock."

PSALM 82

A psalm of Asaph.

1 God presides over heaven's court;
he pronounces judgment on the
heavenly beings:

2 "How long will you hand down unjust
decisions
by favoring the wicked? *Interlude*

3 "Give justice to the poor and the orphan;
uphold the rights of the oppressed
and the destitute.

80:18
Ps 71:20
Isa 50:5

80:19
'tsaba' (6635)
• Ps 103:21

81:1
Ps 46:1; 59:16; 66:1;
95:1-2

81:2
Ps 108:2; 144:9; 149:3

81:3
Lev 23:24
Num 10:10
*khag (2282)
• Isa 30:29

81:5
Exod 11:4

81:6
Isa 9:4; 10:27

81:7
Exod 2:23; 17:5-7;
19:19
Ps 50:15; 95:8

81:8
Ps 50:7

81:9
Exod 20:3
Isa 43:12

81:10
Exod 20:2
Ps 78:25; 103:5

81:11
Exod 32:1

81:12
Acts 7:42
Rom 1:24, 26

81:13
Deut 5:29
Isa 48:18
Jer 7:23

81:14
Ps 47:3
Amos 1:8

81:16
Deut 32:13-14

82:1
Ps 58:11
Isa 3:13
*shapat (8199)
• Prov 31:9

82:2
Deut 1:17
Ps 58:1-2
Prov 18:5

82:3
Deut 24:17

Ps 81 This warning message invites Israel to worship only the Lord and to enjoy the fullness of his blessing.

81:1 **TITLE** *to be accompanied by a stringed instrument*: Hebrew according to the *gittith*.

81:1-3 As a prelude to the message of warning, the psalmist invites Israel to contemplate their God in song and dance.

81:2 An Israelite *tambourine* was a hand drum—a round frame covered with a skin, used as a percussion instrument during festivities, often to accompany dancing (68:25; 149:3; 150:4). • The *sweet lyre* and *the harp*, both stringed instruments, are the instruments most frequently mentioned in the psalms (e.g., 33:2; 57:8; 71:22; 150:3).

81:3 The *ram's horn* mustered armies

and announced special holy days (47:5; 98:6). • *new moon*: The first day of the lunar month marked *a festival*.

81:4-5 The festival, a time to celebrate and listen to the Lord, took place at God's appointed time.

81:5 *for Israel*: Literally *for Joseph*. The tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh (the sons of Joseph) are used here to refer to the entire nation of Israel.

81:6-7 The Lord heard Israel's cry in Egypt and rescued them from oppressive slavery.

81:8-10 God pleads with his people to remember the covenant and the Ten Commandments.

81:10 God emphasizes that he and no one else *rescued* Israel. • The nation should *open its mouth wide* to take in God's word (cp. Deut 8:3; Ezek 3:1).

81:11-16 The Lord helps Israel to understand that their failure was not because of his weakness.

81:13-14 God wants to give his children his goodness, but only if they *listen* (Isa 1:18-19; 28:12; 48:18-19; see Deut 6:3). • God promises to *subdue the enemies* (Deut 9:3) of those who walk the *paths* of obedience and loyalty. He will also richly feed his people (Isa 1:19).

Ps 82 God condemns those who mistreat the helpless.

82:1 *God presides* and stands ready to render *judgment* (see Isa 3:13). • *heaven's court*: See Job 1:6. • *heavenly beings*: See notes on 29:1-2; 58:1.

82:2 Since justice marks God's reign (89:4), he opposes *favoring the wicked*. So the psalmist is perplexed and cries out to God for justice (82:3-4, 8).

82:4
Job 29:12

82:6
John 10:34
Elyon (594:5)
Ps 91:1

82:7
Ps 49:12; 83:11

82:8
Ps 2:8; 12:5
Rev 11:15

83:1
Ps 28:1; 109:1

83:2
Ps 2:1; 81:15
Isa 17:12

83:3
Ps 31:20

83:4
Esth 3:5-6

83:5
Ps 2:2

83:6
Gen 25:12-16
2 Chr 20:1, 10
Ps 137:7

83:7
1 Sam 4:1; 15:2
2 Chr 20:10
Ezek 27:2-3, 9

83:9
Judg 4:22-23

83:11
Judg 7:25; 8:21

83:12
2 Chr 20:11

83:14
Deut 32:22
Isa 9:18

83:15
Job 9:17
Ps 58:9

83:16
Ps 109:29

83:18
Ps 59:13
Isa 45:21

- 4 Rescue the poor and helpless;
deliver them from the grasp of evil
people.
- 5 But these oppressors know nothing;
they are so ignorant!
They wander about in darkness,
while the whole world is shaken to
the core.
- 6 I say, 'You are gods;
you are all children of the Most High.
- 7 But you will die like mere mortals
and fall like every other ruler.' "
- 8 Rise up, O God, and judge the earth,
for all the nations belong to you.

PSALM 83
A song. A psalm of Asaph.

- 1 O God, do not be silent!
Do not be deaf.
Do not be quiet, O God.
- 2 Don't you hear the uproar of your
enemies?
Don't you see that your arrogant
enemies are rising up?
- 3 They devise crafty schemes against your
people;
they conspire against your precious
ones.
- 4 "Come," they say, "let us wipe out Israel
as a nation.
We will destroy the very memory of
its existence."
- 5 Yes, this was their unanimous decision.
They signed a treaty as allies against
you—

- 6 these Edomites and Ishmaelites;
Moabites and Hagrites;
- 7 Gebalites, Ammonites, and Amalekites;
and people from Philistia and Tyre.
- 8 Assyria has joined them, too,
and is allied with the descendants of
Lot. *Interlude*
- 9 Do to them as you did to the Midianites
and as you did to Sisera and Jabin at
the Kishon River.
- 10 They were destroyed at Endor,
and their decaying corpses fertilized
the soil.
- 11 Let their mighty nobles die as Oreb and
Zeeb did.
Let all their princes die like Zebah and
Zalmunna,
- 12 for they said, "Let us seize for our own use
these pasturelands of God!"
- 13 O my God, scatter them like tumbleweed,
like chaff before the wind!
- 14 As a fire burns a forest
and as a flame sets mountains ablaze,
15 chase them with your fierce storm;
terrify them with your tempest.
- 16 Utterly disgrace them
until they submit to your name,
O LORD.
- 17 Let them be ashamed and terrified
forever.
Let them die in disgrace.
- 18 Then they will learn that you alone are
called the LORD,
that you alone are the Most High,
supreme over all the earth.

82:5 The unjust *oppressors* cannot bring or restore order. *They wander about in darkness*, unmoved by circumstances even when the whole world order falls apart around them (cp. 11:3).

82:6-7 The *gods* (see notes on 29:1-2; 58:1), like *mere mortals*, cannot escape the judgment common to human rulers. Jesus quoted from this passage in John 10:34.

82:8 The *nations belong to God*; he will take over the realms formerly ruled by local deities and give them to his people, just as he did with the Promised Land.

Ps 83 This community lament asks God for rescue and victory. The terse poetry suggests difficult times. A powerful coalition desires to destroy Israel (83:1-4) and allies itself against God (83:5-8). Recalling the fate of others who came against Israel (83:9-12), the psalmist prays that the same will happen to these enemies (83:13-16) so that God will receive honor among them (83:17-18). It is unclear whether this

psalm arose out of a specific historical instance of opposition by these nations, or if it is a poetic collage of nations representing Israel's enemies.

83:1-4 The enemy has successfully intimidated God's people, so the poet prays that the Lord will hear and act.

83:5-8 *signed a treaty*: The *allies* agreed to fight against God and his people. The nations that are named in the alliance were situated around Israel and Judah.

83:6-7 The *Edomites*, descendants of Esau, were located to the southeast of Judah (see Gen 25:30; 32:3; 36:1-8). • *Ishmaelites* were desert-dwelling descendants of Hagar. • *Moabites* and *Ammonites* descended from Lot; both were located to the east of Israel and Judah. • The *Hagrites* were possibly located north of the Ammonites (1 Chr 5:10).

83:7 The *Gebalites* probably came from Gebal/Byblos on the coast of Lebanon. • The *Amalekites* were located south of Israel in the Negev. • *Philistia* was southwest of Judah, by the Mediterranean Sea.

• *Tyre* was a port city on the Mediterranean, northwest of Israel.

83:8 *Assyria* was northeast of Israel and north of the Persian Gulf. • The *descendants of Lot* were the Moabites and the Ammonites (83:6-7).

83:9-11 The *Midianites*, ruled by *Zebah* and *Zalmunna* and led by *Oreb* and *Zeeb*, were Israel's enemy in the days of Gideon (Judg 7:1-8:5). Barak's coalition defeated *Sisera* and *Jabin* (Judg 4).

83:12 The coalition's motivation for wiping out Israel was to acquire the land (see Jer 3:19).

83:13 *tumbleweed . . . chaff*: This dry plant material easily blows away (see Isa 17:13).

83:14-15 *fire . . . fierce storm . . . tempest*: These are images of God's manifestation in judgment (see note on 18:7-15; Isa 29:6).

PSALM 84

For the choir director: A psalm of the descendants of Korah, to be accompanied by a stringed instrument.

- 1 How lovely is your dwelling place,
O LORD of Heaven's Armies.
- 2 I long, yes, I faint with longing
to enter the courts of the LORD.
With my whole being, body and soul,
I will shout joyfully to the living God.
- 3 Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow builds her nest and
raises her young
at a place near your altar,
O LORD of Heaven's Armies, my King
and my God!
- 4 What joy for those who can live in your
house,
always singing your praises.

Interlude

- 5 What joy for those whose strength
comes from the LORD,
who have set their minds on a
pilgrimage to Jerusalem.
- 6 When they walk through the Valley of
Weeping,
it will become a place of refreshing
springs.
The autumn rains will clothe it with
blessings.
- 7 They will continue to grow stronger,
and each of them will appear before
God in Jerusalem.

- 8 O LORD God of Heaven's Armies, hear my
prayer.
Listen, O God of Jacob. *Interlude*
- 9 O God, look with favor upon the king,
our ^kshield!
Show favor to the one you have
anointed.
- 10 A single day in your courts
is better than a thousand anywhere
else!
I would rather be a gatekeeper in the
house of my God
than live the good life in the homes of
the wicked.
- 11 For the LORD God is our sun and our
^ashield.
He gives us grace and glory.
The LORD will withhold no good thing
from those who do what is right.
- 12 O LORD of Heaven's Armies,
what joy for those who trust in you.

PSALM 85

For the choir director: A psalm of the descendants of Korah.

- 1 LORD, you poured out blessings on your
land!
You restored the fortunes of Israel.
 - 2 You ^cforgave the guilt of your people—
yes, you covered all their sins.
- Interlude*
- 3 You held back your fury.
You kept back your blazing anger.

84:1
Ps 27:4
84:2
Ps 42:1-2; 63:1
84:3
Ps 43:4
84:4
Ps 65:4
84:5
Ps 81:1
^lashrey (0835)
• Ps 84:12
84:6
Ps 107:35
84:7
Isa 40:31
84:9
Ps 115:9-11
^mmagen (4043)
• Ps 84:11
84:10
Ps 27:4
84:11
Ps 2:12
^mmagen (4043)
• Ps 89:18
84:12
Ps 28:7
^aashrey (0835)
• Ps 94:12
85:1
Jer 30:18
85:2
Ps 32:1
Jer 31:33-34
ⁿnasa' (5375)
• Ps 99:8
85:3
Ps 78:38

Ps 84 The psalmist expresses his deep spiritual longing for God's presence. He faints with longing as he reflects on the Temple and on pilgrims making the journey to Jerusalem (84:1-7). He prays for himself and for the community (84:8-9). The conclusion of the psalm (84:10-12) clarifies that the Temple represents God—the psalmist truly longs for God's presence. He knows that God's goodness is greater than life and that only God can give his people favor and honor (84:10-11).

84:TITLE *to be accompanied by a stringed instrument:* Hebrew *according to the gittith*.

84:1-4 The psalmist is far from the Temple. He turns toward it in hopeful reflection.

84:3 The poet envies the birds that have nesting places in and around the Temple.

84:4 The priests and Temple personnel lived in the Temple.

84:5-7 The pilgrimage to Jerusalem reenacted the Exodus, when God marvelously provided for his people

(see 78:15-16; 105:41). The psalmist imagines the pains of travel turning to the joy of arrival.

84:5 Travelers needed *strength* to meet the challenges of *pilgrimage* by foot along unpaved paths, in all kinds of weather and with the possibility of assaults.

84:6 The *Valley of Weeping* (or *Valley of Poplars*; Hebrew reads *valley of Baca*) probably refers to the anguish that lonely pilgrims endured (see 23:4), rather than to an actual location.

• *refreshing springs . . . autumn rains:* Even when pilgrims feel totally exhausted, the prospect of drawing near to the Lord renews their spirits (cp. Isa 35:6-10; 41:18-20; 43:17-20; 49:10).

84:7 *Jerusalem:* Hebrew *Zion*. See "Mount Zion, the City of God" at Ps 48, p. 947.

84:9 Both kings and priests were *anointed* to dedicate them for service (see 132:17; Exod 28:41; 1 Sam 9:16; 16:1-13; cp. Isa 61:1; Acts 10:38).

84:10 The psalmist viewed being in

God's presence as much *better than* being *anywhere else*.

84:11 Some people worshiped the *sun* as a god, but the true God provides all that anyone needs.

Ps 85 The psalmist leads the postexilic community in lament and prayer for full redemption. He ponders God's past rescue of Israel from exile (85:1-3), longs for greater evidence of God's goodness, and leads the community in prayer for full restoration (85:4-7). God responds with a message of peace (85:8-9), and the psalm concludes with a lyrical outburst at the grandeur of God's salvation (85:10-13).

85:1-5 Though the psalmist gratefully acknowledges God's goodness, he also asks God whether his wrath will last forever.

85:1 God *restored the fortunes* of Israel by bringing the nation back from exile (see 14:7; 126:1). • *of Israel:* Literally *of Jacob*. See note on 44:4.

85:2 When God *forgave the guilt of their sins*, he gave the people the possibility of fellowship with him (see 32:5).

85:4
Ps 80:3, 7
^a*elohim* (0430)
• Ps 85:8

85:5
Ps 74:1; 79:5; 80:4

85:8
^c*el* (0410)
• Isa 42:5

85:9
John 1:14

85:10
Prov 3:3
Isa 32:17

85:12
Ps 84:11
Jas 1:17

86:2
Ps 4:3; 25:20

86:4
ⁱ*nepesh* (5315)
• Ps 103:1

86:5
Ps 103:8; 130:4

86:6
Ps 55:1

86:7
Ps 50:14-15

86:8
Exod 15:11
Deut 3:24

86:9
Isa 66:23
Rev 15:3-4

86:10
Deut 32:39
Isa 44:6, 8
Mark 12:29
1 Cor 8:4

86:11
Ps 25:5
Jer 32:39
^e*meth* (0571)
• Ps 119:142
^y*are*' (3372)
• Ps 112:1

86:12
Ps 111:1
^l*ebab* (3824)
• Ps 141:4
^y*adah* (3034)
• Ps 100:4

86:13
Ps 30:3

86:14
Ps 54:3

4 Now restore us again, O ^dGod of our salvation.

Put aside your anger against us once more.

5 Will you be angry with us always?
Will you prolong your wrath to all generations?

6 Won't you revive us again,
so your people can rejoice in you?

7 Show us your unfailing love, O LORD,
and grant us your salvation.

8 I listen carefully to what ^eGod the LORD is saying,
for he speaks peace to his faithful people.

But let them not return to their foolish ways.

9 Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him,
so our land will be filled with his glory.

10 Unfailing love and truth have met together.

Righteousness and peace have kissed!

11 Truth springs up from the earth,
and righteousness smiles down from heaven.

12 Yes, the LORD pours down his blessings.
Our land will yield its bountiful harvest.

13 Righteousness goes as a herald before him,
preparing the way for his steps.

PSALM 86

A prayer of David.

1 Bend down, O LORD, and hear my prayer;
answer me, for I need your help.

2 Protect me, for I am devoted to you.
Save me, for I serve you and trust you.
You are my God.

3 Be merciful to me, O Lord,
for I am calling on you constantly.

4 Give ^fme happiness, O Lord,
for I give myself to you.

5 O Lord, you are so good, so ready to forgive,
so full of unfailing love for all who ask
for your help.

6 Listen closely to my prayer, O LORD;
hear my urgent cry.

7 I will call to you whenever I'm in trouble,
and you will answer me.

8 No pagan god is like you, O Lord.
None can do what you do!

9 All the nations you made
will come and bow before you, Lord;
they will praise your holy name.

10 For you are great and perform
wonderful deeds.
You alone are God.

11 Teach me your ways, O LORD,
that I may live according to your
^gtruth!

Grant me purity of heart,
so that I may ^hhonor you.

12 With all my ⁱheart I will ^jpraise you,
O Lord my God.

I will give glory to your name forever,
13 for your love for me is very great.
You have rescued me from the depths
of death.

14 O God, insolent people rise up
against me;
a violent gang is trying to kill me.
You mean nothing to them.

85:6-7 This prayer for renewal is based on God's *unfailing love* for his people.

85:8-9 When *God the LORD* speaks, *his faithful people* listen. He promises them *peace*, meaning wholeness and well-being (see 37:11). They fear the Lord and know that he and *his salvation* are *near* to them. • The Lord does not tolerate *foolish ways*, such as those that resulted in the Exile.

85:10-13 In the glorious world of renewal and salvation, all the qualities of God's care—*love, truth, righteousness, and peace*—come together and transform the created order into something new (see Isa 32:15-20).

85:13 *Righteousness* is like a messenger preparing the world for God's coming in response to the prayers of his people (85:4-7; 89:14).

Ps 86 The psalmist invokes God's help

and praises his character in a lament prompted by the presence of evil (86:14, 17). All people will worship the gracious and almighty God (86:8-10). To this end, the poet commits himself to a lifestyle of ethical integrity (86:11) and praising the Lord (86:12-13). The last stanza contrasts the qualities of evil people with those of the Lord (86:14-17).

86:TITLE This is the only psalm connected with *David* in Book Three.

86:1-4 God's devoted servant prays for mercy. The psalmist sees himself as a member of the covenant community and as a citizen of the world.

86:5-7 The psalmist appeals to God to remain true to his character, which is the basis for hope.

86:5 The psalmist recounts the catalog of divine perfections (Exod 34:6-7),

especially God's willingness to forgive sin (see 32:5; 85:2; 145:7-10).

86:8-10 *All the nations* must submit themselves to the Lord and worship him (45:17; 117:1; 148:7-11).

86:11 The poet responds to the Lord by seeking faithful instruction in the *truth*. • An individual with *purity of heart* has integrity and wholeness (see 73:1).

86:12-13 In anticipation of God's rescue, the psalmist praises him and trusts in his goodness.

86:13 of death: Hebrew of *Sheol*. See note on 6:5.

86:14-17 The arrogant exist both inside and outside the community. The psalmist asks for a vision of God's character; God is so great that just a glimpse of his goodness will shut the mouths of the wicked.

15 But you, O Lord,
 are a God of compassion and mercy,
^kslow to get angry
 and filled with unfailing love and
 faithfulness.
 16 Look down and have mercy on me.
 Give your strength to your servant;
 save me, the son of your servant.
 17 Send me a sign of your favor.
 Then those who hate me will be put
 to shame,
 for you, O LORD, help and comfort me.

PSALM 87

A song of the descendants of Korah.

1 On the holy mountain
 stands the city founded by the LORD.
 2 He loves the city of Jerusalem
 more than any other city in Israel.
 3 O city of God,
 what glorious things are said of you!
Interlude
 4 I will count ^aEgypt and Babylon among
 those who know me—
 also Philistia and Tyre, and even
 distant Ethiopia.
 They have all become citizens of
 Jerusalem!
 5 Regarding Jerusalem it will be said,
 “Everyone enjoys the rights of
 citizenship there.”
 And the Most High will personally
 bless this city.
 6 When the LORD registers the nations, he
 will say,
 “They have all become citizens of
 Jerusalem.” *Interlude*

7 The people will play flutes and sing,
 “The source of my life springs from
 Jerusalem!”

PSALM 88

For the choir director: A psalm of the descendants of Korah. A song to be sung to the tune “The Suffering of Affliction.” A psalm of Heman the Ezrahite.

1 O LORD, God of my salvation,
 I cry out to you by day.
 I come to you at night.
 2 Now hear my prayer;
 listen to my cry.
 3 For my life is full of troubles,
 and death draws near.
 4 I am as good as dead,
 like a strong man with no strength
 left.
 5 They have left me among the dead,
 and I lie like a corpse in a grave.
 I am forgotten,
 cut off from your care.
 6 You have thrown me into the lowest pit,
 into the darkest depths.
 7 Your anger weighs me down;
 with wave after wave you have
 engulfed me. *Interlude*
 8 You have driven my friends away
 by making me repulsive to them.
 I am in a trap with no way of escape.
 9 My eyes are blinded by my tears.
 Each day I beg for your help, O LORD;
 I lift my hands to you for mercy.
 10 Are your wonderful deeds of any use to
 the dead?
 Do the dead rise up and praise you?
Interlude

86:15
^varek 'appayim (0750, 0639)
 ▶ Ps 103:8
86:16
 Ps 68:35
86:17
 Ps 112:10; 118:13;
 119:122
87:1
 Ps 78:68-69
 Isa 28:16
87:2
 Ps 78:67-68
87:3
 Ps 46:4; 48:8
 Isa 60:1
87:4
 Ps 45:12; 68:31
 Isa 19:23-25
^rahab (7293)
 ▶ Ps 89:10
87:5
 Ps 48:8
87:6
 Isa 4:2-4
87:7
 Ps 36:9
88:1
 Ps 22:2
 Luke 18:7
88:2
 Ps 18:6; 86:1
88:3
 Ps 107:18; 116:3
88:4
 Ps 28:1
88:5
 Ps 31:12
 Isa 53:8
88:6
 Ps 32:4; 69:15; 143:3
 Lam 3:55
88:7
 Ps 42:7
88:8
 Job 19:19; 30:10
 Ps 31:11
88:9
 Job 11:13;
 Ps 6:7; 22:2
88:10
 Ps 6:5

86:15 God has *mercy* on his people (51:1); he is gracious (25:6), *slow to get angry* (103:8; 145:8), and *filled with unfailing love and faithfulness* (Hebrew *khesed* and *emeth*; 143:1). This verse repeats a theme first expressed in Exod 34:7; Num 14:18 (cp. 103:8; 145:8; Neh 9:17; Joel 2:13; Jon 4:2).

Ps 87 This psalm envisions Jerusalem as the city of God where all the nations are citizens.

87:1 Jerusalem was Israel's capital and the location of the Temple, God's earthly palace (see Ps 84).

87:2 This verse reads literally *He loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob*. See note on 44:4.

87:4 As great as Zion is, it will be even greater when it becomes an international city where believers from all the nations have citizenship. • **Egypt:** Hebrew *Rahab*, the name of a mythical

sea monster that represents chaos in ancient literature. The name is used here as a poetic name for Egypt (Isa 30:7). In other passages Rahab refers to the sea monsters themselves (89:10; see Job 9:13). • **God** keeps a record of all who confess him as their Lord (Dan 7:10; Rev 13:8). • **Ethiopia:** Hebrew *Cush*.

87:5-6 Jerusalem (Hebrew *Zion*) becomes the international city where all God's children are *citizens*.

87:7 will play flutes: Or will dance.

Ps 88 In this lament, the psalmist sees himself as cast out from God's presence. At first, he calls on the Lord. When he finds no relief from his suffering, he presents three charges against God (88:6-7, 8-12, 13-17).

88: TITLE psalm: Hebrew *maskil*. This may be a literary or musical term. • **Heman the Ezrahite** might be a sage

from Solomon's time (1 Kgs 4:31), a descendant of Judah (1 Chr 2:6), or a member of the Levitical family charged with singing at the Temple (1 Chr 15:17; 2 Chr 5:12).

88:1-5 The psalmist calls on the **LORD** for *salvation*.

88:3 death: Hebrew *Sheol*, the place of the dead.

88:6-7 In his first charge, the psalmist blames the Lord for his demise. God's overpowering anger did not make sense. • The phrase *the darkest depths* implies the place of the dead (143:3; see Lam 3:6) or the depths of the sea (68:22; 69:1-2).

88:8-12 In his second charge, the psalmist claims that God has isolated him and caused his loneliness (cp. 31:11; 38:11). Loneliness was a curse in a culture where relationships were more important than personal achievement.

88:12
Job 10:20-21

88:13
Ps 5:3; 119:147

88:14
Job 13:24
Ps 13:1

88:15
Job 6:4

88:17
Ps 22:12, 16

88:18
Job 19:13
Ps 31:11; 38:11

89:1
Ps 40:10; 59:16

89:2
Ps 36:5

89:3
Ps 132:11
Isa 9:7
Luke 1:31-33

89:4
2 Sam 7:16
Isa 9:7
Luke 1:33
^bzera' (2233)
→ Isa 53:10

89:5
^aqahal (6951)
→ Ps 149:1

89:6
Ps 29:1; 96:4
^bben 'el (1121, 0410)
→ Hos 1:10

89:7
Ps 47:2; 96:4

- 11 Can those in the grave declare your unfailing love?
Can they proclaim your faithfulness in the place of destruction?
- 12 Can the darkness speak of your wonderful deeds?
Can anyone in the land of forgetfulness talk about your righteousness?
- 13 O LORD, I cry out to you.
I will keep on pleading day by day.
- 14 O LORD, why do you reject me?
Why do you turn your face from me?
- 15 I have been sick and close to death since my youth.
I stand helpless and desperate before your terrors.
- 16 Your fierce anger has overwhelmed me.
Your terrors have paralyzed me.
- 17 They swirl around me like floodwaters all day long.
They have engulfed me completely.
- 18 You have taken away my companions and loved ones.
Darkness is my closest friend.

PSALM 89

A psalm of Ethan the Ezrahite.

- 1 I will sing of the LORD's unfailing love forever!
Young and old will hear of your faithfulness.
- 2 Your unfailing love will last forever.
Your faithfulness is as enduring as the heavens.
- 3 The LORD said, "I have made a covenant with David, my chosen servant.
I have sworn this oath to him:
4 I will establish your ^bdescendants as kings forever;
they will sit on your throne from now until eternity.'" *Interlude*
- 5 All heaven will praise your great wonders, LORD;
^cmyriads of angels will praise you for your faithfulness.
- 6 For who in all of heaven can compare with the LORD?
What ^dmightiest angel is anything like the LORD?
- 7 The highest angelic powers stand in awe of God.

The Exile in the Psalms (Ps 89)

Ps 107:1-22; 126:1-6
Lev 26:27-45
Deut 28:36-37, 63-68; 30:1-5
2 Kgs 17:5-23;
24:1-25:21
Ezra 5:12
Isa 5:13; 27:13;
52:1-12; 59:10
Jer 2:37; 3:18; 4:13
Ezek 6:9; 20:41;
37:1-14
Amos 5:11
Mic 6:14-15

Israel's kings repeatedly rebelled against God, and the people of Israel sinned and broke their covenant with him. God therefore declared that he would bring the curses of the covenant upon them and their nation (see Deut 28:15-68; cp., e.g., Isa 59:10; Jer 4:13; Amos 5:11; Mic 6:14-15). In his wrath, God sent the Assyrian and Babylonian armies to execute this sentence, and all but a few of the Israelites were taken into exile (see 2 Kgs 24:1-25:21).

The Exile shaped many of the psalms; we see its impact working behind the scenes in their images and themes. The grief, anguish, and confusion of the Exile are distilled into several questions that the psalmist addresses: How long will God's wrath last (89:46)? Does God understand human frailty (89:47-48)? Is God true to his nature (89:49)? Is God just in not avenging his people (89:50-51)? Has God abandoned David's royal line (89:38-39)?

These questions were on the minds of God's people during and after the Exile. Some of their doubts raise questions concerning God's ability to rule. Rather than dismissing these questions, wise readers listen, reflect, and study the answers that Scripture gives. The definitive answer came in the Lord Jesus Christ (see Isa 52:1-54:17; Luke 1:46-55, 67-79; 4:18-19; Rom 6:6, 16-22; Heb 12:22-24). However, those who experienced the Exile could only dimly foresee his coming. They asked these hard questions and lived without clear answers.

88:11 *in the place of destruction?*
Hebrew *in Abaddon?*

88:13-17 In his third charge, the psalmist accuses the Lord of rejecting him. The force and apparent cruelty of the psalmist's suffering overwhelm him.

88:18 The psalmist restates his second and first charges.

Ps 89 Book Three (Pss 73-89) begins and ends with weighty questions. Though Ps 89 begins with a praise-filled account of how the Lord exalted the

throne of David (89:1-37), the psalmist protests the Lord's apparent rejection of his covenant with David (89:38-51; see 2 Sam 7:8-16).

89:TITLE psalm: Hebrew *maskil*. This may be a literary or musical term.
• *Ethan the Ezrahite* was a wise man (see 88:TITLE and note; 1 Kgs 4:31).

89:1 God's *unfailing love* gives reason to celebrate *forever*.

89:3-4 The psalmist restates God's covenant with David (see also 89:19-37).

89:3 The Lord has *sworn* by his own holiness (89:35; see 110:4).

89:5-8 God is the absolute standard of *faithfulness*, commitment, and order. The angelic beings and the heavens testify to his constancy.

89:5 Praise for God's greatness (see 8:1) comes from the inhabitants of *heaven* who witness his *faithfulness*.

89:6 *mightiest angel:* Literally *son of God* (see note on 29:1-2).

- He is far more awesome than all who surround his throne.
- ⁸ O LORD God of Heaven's Armies!
Where is there anyone as mighty as you, O LORD?
You are entirely faithful.
- ⁹ You rule the oceans.
You subdue their storm-tossed waves.
- ¹⁰ You crushed the great sea monster.
You scattered your enemies with your mighty arm.
- ¹¹ The heavens are yours, and the earth is yours;
everything in the world is yours—you created it all.
- ¹² You created north and south.
Mount Tabor and Mount Hermon praise your name.
- ¹³ Powerful is your arm!
Strong is your hand!
Your right hand is lifted high in glorious strength.
- ¹⁴ Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne.
Unfailing love and truth walk before you as attendants.
- ¹⁵ Happy are those who hear the joyful call to worship,
for they will walk in the light of your presence, LORD.
- ¹⁶ They rejoice all day long in your wonderful reputation.
They exult in your righteousness.
- ¹⁷ You are their glorious strength.
It pleases you to make us strong.
- ¹⁸ Yes, our protection comes from the LORD,
and he, the Holy One of Israel, has given us our king.
- ¹⁹ Long ago you spoke in a vision to your faithful people.
- You said, "I have raised up a warrior.
I have selected him from the common people to be king.
- ²⁰ I have found my servant David.
I have anointed him with my holy oil.
- ²¹ I will steady him with my hand;
with my powerful arm I will make him strong.
- ²² His enemies will not defeat him,
nor will the wicked overpower him.
- ²³ I will beat down his adversaries before him
and destroy those who hate him.
- ²⁴ My faithfulness and unfailing love will be with him,
and by my authority he will grow in power.
- ²⁵ I will extend his rule over the sea,
his dominion over the rivers.
- ²⁶ And he will call out to me, 'You are my Father,
my God, and the Rock of my salvation.'
- ²⁷ I will make him my firstborn son,
the mightiest king on earth.
- ²⁸ I will love him and be kind to him forever;
my covenant with him will never end.
- ²⁹ I will preserve an heir for him;
his throne will be as endless as the days of heaven.
- ³⁰ But if his descendants forsake my instructions
and fail to obey my regulations,
if they do not obey my decrees
and fail to keep my commands,
then I will punish their sin with the rod,
and their disobedience with beating.
- ³¹ But I will never stop loving him
nor fail to keep my promise to him.
- ³² No, I will not break my covenant;
I will not take back a single word I said.

89:8
Ps 35:10; 71:19

89:9
Ps 65:7; 107:29

89:10
Ps 18:14
*rahab (7293)
*Isa 30:7

89:11
Gen 1:1
1 Chr 29:11
Ps 24:1

89:12
Josh 12:1; 19:22

89:13
Ps 118:16

89:14
Ps 97:2

89:15
Num 10:10

89:16
*rum (7311)
*Ps 99:2

89:17
Ps 44:3; 75:10; 148:14

89:18
Ps 47:9
*magen (4043)
*Prov 2:7

89:19
2 Sam 17:10
1 Kgs 11:34

89:20
1 Sam 16:13
*Acts 13:22
*mashakh (4886)
*Isa 61:1

89:22
2 Sam 7:10-11

89:23
2 Sam 7:9

89:26
2 Sam 7:14
1 Chr 22:10
*tsur (6697)
*Ps 92:15

89:27
Ps 2:7; 72:11
Rev 19:16

89:29
Isa 9:7
Jer 33:17

89:30
2 Sam 7:14

89:33
2 Sam 7:15

89:9-13 In this hymn, the psalmist celebrates God's comprehensive and powerful sovereignty over nature.

89:9-10 *the great sea monster*: The Hebrew term *Rahab* refers to a mythical sea monster that represents chaos in ancient literature (see 87:4 and note). The Lord rules over all parts of the created order, including evil. • *You scattered your enemies*: The Lord will crush (Luke 1:51) evil powers that oppose him (2:1-3). • *with your mighty arm*: This phrase represents God's strength (89:13).

89:12 *Mount Tabor* was in northern Israel. *Mount Hermon* formed the extreme northern border of the nation.

89:14-18 God rules wisely over creation. The qualities of *righteousness*, *justice*, and *faithfulness* fit the profile of a wise

ruler. The *happy* people who live under his rule enjoy his *protection*.

89:15-16 Those who are wise *worship* God, *walk* in his *light*, *rejoice* in their relationship with him, and *exult* in his character.

89:17-18 The Lord protects his people with the same power by which he established the created order.

89:19-37 The Lord chose David as his son and as king of Israel (see 2:4-6; 2 Sam 7:8-16) to provide protection for his people.

89:20 *I have anointed him*: This is the verb from which *anointed one* (Hebrew *messiah*) is derived.

89:26-29 The Lord adopted David as his *son*, appointed him as his commander over the nations, and promised to

support him *forever*. Verse 26 recalls a verse from David's song of praise (2 Sam 22:47).

89:27 David would be the most eminent of earthly kings. The Hebrew word translated *mightiest* is the same as the designation for God as "Most High" (*elyon*).

89:29 The Lord writes his faithfulness in *heaven*, on the canvas of his universe (see 89:2). He records his commitment to the dynasty of David in the same way.

89:30-37 The Lord disciplines but does not reject his erring children. He foresees violation of trust and subsequent punishment, but he commits himself to uphold the covenant. His fidelity to David corresponds to his faithfulness to the created order.

89:34
Num 23:19
Jer 33:20-21

89:36
Ps 72:5

89:38
1 Chr 28:9

89:39
Ps 78:59

89:40
Lam 2:2, 5

89:42
Ps 13:2; 80:6

89:43
Ps 44:10

89:44
Ezek 28:7

89:45
Ps 44:15-16

89:46
Ps 13:1; 79:5

89:47
Ps 39:5-6

89:48
she'ol (7585)
→ Ps 116:3

89:49
2 Sam 7:15

89:51
Ps 74:9-10, 18, 22

89:52
Ps 41:13; 106:48

90:1
Deut 33:27
Rev 21:3

90:2
Ps 102:24-25, 27
olam (5769)
→ Ps 92:8

90:3
Job 34:14-15
ben 'adam (1121,
0120)
→ Isa 56:2

90:4
Ps 39:5
2 Pet 3:8

90:5
Isa 40:6

90:6
Ps 92:7

35 I have sworn an oath to David,
and in my holiness I cannot lie:

36 His dynasty will go on forever;
his kingdom will endure as the sun.

37 It will be as eternal as the moon,
my faithful witness in the sky!"

Interlude

38 But now you have rejected him and cast
him off.

You are angry with your anointed king.

39 You have renounced your covenant with
him;

you have thrown his crown in the
dust.

40 You have broken down the walls
protecting him
and ruined every fort defending him.

41 Everyone who comes along has robbed
him,
and he has become a joke to his
neighbors.

42 You have strengthened his enemies
and made them all rejoice.

43 You have made his sword useless
and refused to help him in battle.

44 You have ended his splendor
and overturned his throne.

45 You have made him old before his time
and publicly disgraced him.

Interlude

46 O LORD, how long will this go on?

Will you hide yourself forever?

How long will your anger burn like
fire?

47 Remember how short my life is,
how empty and futile this human
existence!

48 No one can live forever; all will die.
No one can escape the power of the
grave. *Interlude*

49 Lord, where is your unfailing love?
You promised it to David with a
faithful pledge.

50 Consider, Lord, how your servants are
disgraced!

I carry in my heart the insults of so
many people.

51 Your enemies have mocked me, O LORD;
they mock your anointed king
wherever he goes.

52 Praise the LORD forever!
Amen and amen!

4. BOOK FOUR (PSS 90–106)

PSALM 90

A prayer of Moses, the man of God.

1 Lord, through all the generations
you have been our home!

2 Before the mountains were born,
before you gave birth to the earth and
the world,
from ^kbeginning to ^kend, you are God.

3 You turn people back to dust, saying,
"Return to dust, you ^amortals!"

4 For you, a thousand years are as a
passing day,
as brief as a few night hours.

5 You sweep people away like dreams that
disappear.

They are like grass that springs up in
the morning.

6 In the morning it blooms and flourishes,
but by evening it is dry and withered.

89:35 holiness: The Lord is wholly distinct from the created order (22:3); his character is totally pure. He does as he pleases (115:3), and he chooses to be faithful (89:1; 115:1); therefore, he *cannot lie*.

89:38 You are angry: The harshness of God's wrath perplexes the psalmist.

89:40 broken down the walls: The Lord's people are completely vulnerable.

89:42 Although the Lord promised to strengthen David, he secretly *strengthened* David's *enemies*.

89:46-47 The psalmist wonders if he will live to see the end of the Lord's *anger*. Our lifetimes are *short*, like a day in the Lord's sight (90:4, 10).

89:48 of the grave: Hebrew *of Sheol*. See note on 6:5.

89:50 The phrase *your servants* refers to the community loyal to the Lord.

89:52 This doxology concludes all of Book Three (Pss 73–89); it is not intended to be read as part of Ps 89. It stands in stark contrast to the anguish and questioning of Ps 89. Cp. 41:13; 106:48.

Book Four (Pss 90–106) Book Four can be understood as a poetic response to the problem of the Exile and the apparent suspension of David's royal line (see Ps 89). The response is that the Lord rules over the created order; his kingdom overcomes all chaos, anarchy, and confusion.

Ps 90 Although the Lord's people have made their home in him for generations, their sin widens the gap between them and their infinite Lord. The Lord's wrath against a person's sin might last a lifetime and yet be only a taste of his displeasure with sin. This lamentable situation calls the community to seek the Lord's light. Taking the first step

means seeking restoration with the Lord on the basis of his compassion and love (90:13-14). He alone makes his servants glad and blesses their future generations (90:16-17).

90: TITLE *Moses* led God's people from slavery in Egypt to Mount Sinai, where he received the law and established God's covenant with Israel. • *the man of God:* Moses enjoyed a special relationship with God (Deut 33:1).

90:1-2 The Lord becomes the *home* of the godly; he has provided shelter for countless *generations*. The word translated *home* is not used frequently in the Psalter. It describes a place of safety where the Lord meets his needy people and cares for them (68:5; 71:3).

90:2 The Lord is the eternal God. • The Lord *gave birth to the earth* by creating it.

90:3-6 Unlike God, humans are mortal and transitory.

- 7 We wither beneath your anger;
we are overwhelmed by your fury.
- 8 You spread out our sins before you—
our secret sins—and you see them all.
- 9 We live our lives beneath your wrath,
ending our years with a groan.
- 10 Seventy years are given to us!
Some even live to eighty.
But even the best years are filled with
pain and trouble;
soon they disappear, and we fly away.
- 11 Who can comprehend the power of your
anger?
Your wrath is as awesome as the fear
you deserve.
- 12 Teach us to realize the brevity of life,
so that we may grow in wisdom.
- 13 O LORD, come back to us!
How long will you delay?
Take pity on your servants!
- 14 Satisfy us each morning with your
unfailing love,
so we may sing for joy to the end of
our lives.
- 15 Give us gladness in proportion to our
former misery!
Replace the evil years with good.
- 16 Let us, your servants, see you work
again;
let our children see your glory.
- 17 And may the Lord our God show us his
approval
and make our efforts successful.
Yes, make our efforts successful!
- will find rest in the shadow of the
Almighty.
- 2 This I declare about the LORD:
He alone is my refuge, my place of safety;
he is my God, and I trust him.
- 3 For he will rescue you from every trap
and protect you from deadly disease.
- 4 He will cover you with his feathers.
He will shelter you with his wings.
His faithful promises are your armor
and protection.
- 5 Do not be afraid of the terrors of the
night,
nor the arrow that flies in the day.
- 6 Do not dread the disease that stalks in
darkness,
nor the disaster that strikes at midday.
- 7 Though a thousand fall at your side,
though ten thousand are dying
around you,
these evils will not touch you.
- 8 Just open your eyes,
and see how the wicked are punished.
- 9 If you make the LORD your refuge,
if you make the Most High your shelter,
- 10 no evil will conquer you;
no plague will come near your home.
- 11 For he will order his angels
to protect you wherever you go.
- 12 They will hold you up with their hands
so you won't even hurt your foot on a
stone.
- 13 You will trample upon lions and cobras;
you will crush fierce lions and
serpents under your feet!
- 14 The LORD says, "I will rescue those who
love me.
- 90:9
Ps 78:33
- 90:10
Ps 78:39
Ecc 12:2-7
- 90:11
Ps 76:7
- 90:12
Ps 39:4
- 90:13
Deut 32:36
- 90:14
Ps 36:8; 103:5
Jer 31:14
- 90:15
Ps 31:10; 86:4
- 90:16
Ps 44:1
- 90:17
Ps 27:4
Isa 26:12
- 91:1
Isa 25:4; 32:2
**elyon* (5945)
* Ps 97:9
**shadday* (7706)
* Joel 1:15
- 91:2
Ps 18:2; 142:5
Jer 16:19
- 91:3
2 Chr 20:9
Ps 124:7
- 91:4
Ps 35:2; 57:1; 63:7
- 91:5
Job 5:19-23
Ps 23:4
- 91:6
Job 5:22
- 91:8
Ps 37:34
- 91:10
Prov 12:21
- 91:11
Ps 34:7
*Matt 4:6
*Luke 4:9-11
**mal'ak* (4397)
* Ps 103:20
- 91:13
Judg 14:6
Luke 10:19

PSALM 91

- 1 Those who live in the shelter of the
Most High

90:7-10 Sinners cannot escape God's wrath because the Lord sees their *sins*. Their fleeting *lives* are filled with afflictions.

90:9-10 A *groan* of sorrow (Ezek 2:10) sums up a life spent in facing the consequences of sin. • Humans cause *trouble* (see 10:6) and receive *pain* in return.

90:11-12 In the search for wisdom, no one can *comprehend* the Lord (see Isa 40:13). The appropriate human response to the Lord is godly *fear* (see 60:4). The Lord alone can *teach* humans to follow the path of *wisdom* (25:4-6).

90:13-17 The psalmist prays for the Lord's favor and restoration.

90:13 The phrase *your servants* refers to the community of those loyal to the Lord.

90:15 The psalmist calls upon the Lord to *give* the people *gladness* to replace their mourning (see 92:4-5).

90:16 The *children* represent future

generations in contrast to the generations past (90:1).

90:17 Humans waste their *efforts* unless the Lord makes them *successful* (44:3).

Ps 91 This wisdom psalm expresses confidence in the Almighty God, who provides a shelter for those who take refuge in him. They receive redemption, life, and glory from the Lord, who loves and cares for those who seek him.

91:1-2 The Lord is an ancient *shelter* (see 90:1), open to those who seek *refuge* in him.

91:1 The *Most High* is an ancient title that expresses the Lord's exalted status (Gen 14:19) as the ruler and protector of the godly.

91:3-4 The psalmist invites the godly to trust in the Lord and find protection in him.

91:3 God protects the godly from *deadly disease* and even a destructive word.

91:4 The *armor* might refer to a body shield, while *protection* refers to a small shield worn on the arm. • *wings*: See note on 17:8.

91:5-8 The godly should *not be afraid*, because the Lord watches over them. These promises do not guarantee an escape from trouble, but they create an expectation of the Lord's goodness.

91:6 The reference to *disease* represents any kind of affliction.

91:9-13 The poet again invites the godly to seek refuge in the Lord and enjoy the benefits of divine protection.

91:11 *he will order his angels*: Satan cited these words when he tempted Jesus (Matt 4:6; Luke 4:10-11), but God makes this promise for those who obey him (91:14), not for those who arrogantly test him (Matt 4:4, 7).

91:14-16 The godly can trust the Lord's protection and provision.

91:15

1 Sam 2:30
Ps 50:15
John 12:26

92:1

^{zamar} (2167)
• Ps 138:1

92:3

1 Sam 10:5
1 Chr 13:8
Neh 12:27

92:5

Ps 40:5; 139:17
Rom 11:33

92:6

Ps 73:22

92:7

Ps 37:38

92:9

Ps 37:20; 68:1

92:8

^{olam} (5769)
• Ps 100:5

92:10

Ps 23:5; 75:10

92:11

Ps 54:7

92:14

Isa 37:31
John 15:2

92:15

Rom 9:14
^{tsur} (6697)
• Ps 144:1

93:1

Ps 65:6; 96:10; 97:1;
99:1; 104:1
Isa 51:9

I will protect those who trust in my name.

- 15 When they call on me, I will answer;
I will be with them in trouble.
I will rescue and honor them.
- 16 I will reward them with a long life
and give them my salvation."

PSALM 92

A psalm. A song to be sung on the Sabbath Day.

- 1 It is good to give thanks to the LORD,
to ^esing praises to the Most High.
- 2 It is good to proclaim your unending love
in the morning,
your faithfulness in the evening,
3 accompanied by the ten-stringed harp
and the melody of the lyre.
- 4 You thrill me, LORD, with all you have
done for me!
I sing for joy because of what you
have done.
- 5 O LORD, what great works you do!
And how deep are your thoughts.
- 6 Only a simpleton would not know,
and only a fool would not understand
this:
- 7 Though the wicked sprout like weeds
and evildoers flourish,
they will be destroyed forever.

8 But you, O LORD, will be exalted ^fforever.

- 9 Your enemies, LORD, will surely perish;
all evildoers will be scattered.
- 10 But you have made me as strong as a
wild ox.
You have anointed me with the finest
oil.
- 11 My eyes have seen the downfall of my
enemies;
my ears have heard the defeat of my
wicked opponents.
- 12 But the godly will flourish like palm
trees
and grow strong like the cedars of
Lebanon.
- 13 For they are transplanted to the LORD's
own house.
They flourish in the courts of our God.
- 14 Even in old age they will still produce
fruit;
they will remain vital and green.
- 15 They will declare, "The LORD is just!
He is my ^grock!
There is no evil in him!"

PSALM 93

- 1 The LORD is king! He is robed in majesty.
Indeed, the LORD is robed in majesty
and armed with strength.
The world stands firm
and cannot be shaken.

91:14 Those who *love* the Lord will obey him (Deut 30:20; 1 Jn 5:3) and seek his protection (91:1; 145:18).

91:15 The Lord promises to *answer* the prayers of his people. • The Psalter often speaks of people honoring the Lord (50:15); here, God promises to *honor* the godly who risk everything for his sake (62:7; 71:21; 84:11).

91:16 A *long life* on earth represents just a small part of the Lord's goodness and eternal friendship (23:6).

Ps 92 Thanksgiving and praise open this psalm. The Lord—the Most High—is faithful and just in discerning between the godly and the wicked. The godly will enjoy a glorious, vigorous future, while the wicked will perish. The wise see and understand the Lord's works as they reveal his justice (92:6-7, 11, 15). The wicked, like grass, are quickly destroyed (92:7-10).

92:TITLE *on the Sabbath Day*: Jewish tradition assigned one psalm to each day of the week: Sunday (Ps 24), Monday (Ps 48), Tuesday (Ps 82), Wednesday (Ps 94), Thursday (Ps 81), Friday (Ps 93), and the Sabbath (Ps 92). This is the only psalm that indicates this use in its title.

92:1-3 The psalmist offers praise and

thanksgiving for God's unending love and faithfulness.

92:4-7 Fools perish because they do not understand the Lord's marvelous works and eternal plans.

92:4-5 The Lord acts and the psalmist responds in praise (92:4). God's acts spring from his thoughts (92:5).

92:5-6 The Lord's *thoughts* do not make sense to the *simpleton* or the *fool*, the immoral person who desires no wisdom (Prov 1:22; 10:23).

92:7 Even when the ungodly seem to grow luxuriantly (73:3-5), they have no future (92:9; see 1:6; 90:5-6; Isa 40:6-8).

92:8-10 The glory of the Lord provides the reason for the poet's renewed strength and glory, and for the imminent defeat of the enemy.

92:8 The transcendent Lord stays above the world of human experience. From this *exalted* place, he rules and judges (7:7), celebrates his victories (68:18; see Ps 47), comes to rescue the needy (102:19), brings an end to the wicked (92:7-8), and receives praise (148:1).

92:10 *as strong as a wild ox*: The Lord allows the psalmist to share his exaltation (92:8), thus ensuring victory.

92:11-15 The psalmist understands

the Lord's mighty acts. He shares in the glory of the wise of heart.

92:12 Carvings of *palm trees* (1 Kgs 6:29, 32, 35; 7:36) adorned the Temple, and builders made rich use of *cedars* (1 Kgs 5:6). The trees represent the godly, who are planted in the very courts of the Temple.

92:13 The Temple area consisted of *the LORD's own house* and the *courts* that surrounded it.

92:15 *There is no evil in him!* The Lord is consistently just; he rightly judges everyone (see Zeph 3:5).

Pss 93-100 These psalms challenge the doubts created by the Exile (see Ps 89) and answer the questions asked in Ps 90:11, 13. The Lord has established a kingdom (Ps 93) that is characterized by the punishment of the wicked (Ps 94), reverent obedience among his people (Ps 95), justice for the poor (Ps 96), celebration in Zion (Ps 97), salvation for Israel (Ps 98), holiness (Ps 99), and praise (Ps 100).

Ps 93 The everlasting Lord gloriously establishes his kingship (cp. Pss 47, 99-100).

93:1 *robed in majesty*: The Lord stands victorious both before and after battle (see 45:3).

2 Your throne, O LORD, has stood from time immemorial.
You yourself are from the everlasting past.

3 The floods have risen up, O LORD.
The floods have roared like thunder;
the floods have lifted their pounding waves.

4 But mightier than the violent raging of the seas,
mightier than the breakers on the shore—
the LORD above is mightier than these!

5 Your royal laws cannot be changed.
Your reign, O LORD, is holy forever and ever.

PSALM 94

1 O LORD, the God of vengeance,
O God of vengeance, let your glorious justice shine forth!

2 Arise, O judge of the earth.
Give the proud what they deserve.

3 How long, O LORD?
How long will the wicked be allowed to gloat?
How long will they speak with arrogance?
How long will these evil people boast?

5 They crush your people, LORD,
hurting those you claim as your own.

6 They kill widows and foreigners
and murder orphans.

7 “The LORD isn’t looking,” they say,
“and besides, the God of Israel doesn’t care.”

8 Think again, you fools!
When will you finally catch on?

9 Is he deaf—the one who made your ears?
Is he blind—the one who formed your eyes?

10 He punishes the nations—won’t he also punish you?
He knows everything—doesn’t he also know what you are doing?

11 The LORD knows people’s thoughts;
he knows they are worthless!

12 Joyful are those you discipline, LORD,
those you teach with your instructions.

13 You give them relief from troubled times
until a pit is dug to capture the wicked.

14 The LORD will not reject his people;
he will not abandon his special possession.

15 Judgment will again be founded on justice,
and those with virtuous hearts will pursue it.

16 Who will protect me from the wicked?
Who will stand up for me against evildoers?

17 Unless the LORD had helped me,
I would soon have settled in the silence of the grave.

18 I cried out, “I am slipping!”
but your unfailing love, O LORD,
supported me.

19 When doubts filled my mind,
your comfort gave me renewed hope
and cheer.

93:2
Lam 5:19
“kisse” (3678)
• Ps 103:19

93:3
Ps 98:7-8

93:4
Ps 65:7

93:5
Ps 19:7
1 Cor 3:17

94:1
Deut 32:35
Isa 35:4
Nah 1:2
Rom 12:19

94:4
Ps 31:18; 52:1

94:6
Isa 10:2

94:9
Exod 4:11
Prov 20:12

94:10
Ps 44:2

94:11
*1 Cor 3:20

94:12
Deut 8:5
Heb 12:5-6
*ashrey (0835)
• Ps 106:3

94:14
1 Sam 12:22
Rom 11:2

94:15
Isa 42:3
Mic 7:9

94:16
Num 10:35
Isa 33:10

94:17
Ps 124:1-2

94:19
Isa 57:18; 66:13

93:3-4 God’s victory over natural chaos gives the psalmist confidence that the Lord will also defeat his present enemies (cp. Jer 46:8; 47:2).

93:5 Through his stable rule and royal laws, the Lord orders the world. • *Your reign* (literally *your house*): The house from which God reigns might be the Lord’s heavenly palace or the earthly Temple.

Ps 94 This plea for the Lord’s justice includes both communal and individual expressions of lament (94:1-7, 16-23). The psalmist gives voice to the pain and suffering caused by the wicked, but he also depicts the comfort and stability of the Lord’s protection. He calls on the Lord to avenge the needy against the arrogant and foolish, he rebukes such people for their folly (94:8-11), and he pronounces a blessing on the wise (94:12-15).

94:1-7 After the community falls victim to the wicked (94:5-7), they pray that the Lord will render justice (see 7:11; 9:12).

94:2 Just as the Lord’s enemies rise up against him and his people (3:7; 93:3), he must *arise* and make retribution against the enemy (see 79:12; Isa 65:6).

94:6 *widows . . . foreigners . . . orphans*: The Lord’s law protects needy people (Deut 24:17; 27:19), but they remain vulnerable in society.

94:7 The wicked think that they can get away with their vile acts and speech, foolishly assuming that God *isn’t looking or doesn’t care*. • *of Israel*: Literally *of Jacob*. See note on 44:4.

94:8-11 The psalmist rebukes human folly.

94:9 It is preposterous that those with ears and eyes would imagine their Creator to be *deaf* and *blind*.

94:10 *punishes*: This word also carries the idea of “warns” (2:10), “disciplines” (6:1; 94:12), or “instructs” (16:7). The Lord disciplines his people to purify their character (Prov 3:11-12; Heb 12:6-11). He punishes his enemies by

giving them what they deserve (1:6; Rom 6:23).

94:11 While the Lord’s thoughts are deep, *people’s thoughts* are *worthless* (cp. 92:5; 1 Cor 3:20).

94:12-15 True to his nature, the Lord rewards those who live by his wise instruction (see note on 1:2) and makes them happy according to his promises.

94:13 God’s *relief* includes his comfort and rescue.

94:14 Even when it seems that he has, *the LORD will not reject his people*.

94:16-23 The psalmist’s prayer resumes (see 94:1-7) with a desperate cry for the Lord’s justice; it concludes with the hopeful expectation that evil will end.

94:16 Only God has the power to *stand up* to the wicked (see 2:2).

94:18-19 The psalmist’s experience of *slipping* contrasts with God’s promise to stand with him (94:12-13; see 15:5; 93:1).

94:20

Ps 58:2

94:21

Exod 23:7

Matt 27:4

dam (1818)

• Ezek 33:4

94:22

Ps 59:9; 71:7

94:23

Ps 7:16; 140:9, 11

95:2

Mic 6:6-8

95:4

Ps 135:5-6

95:5

Gen 1:9-10

95:7-11

^aHeb 3:7-11, 15; 4:7

95:8

Exod 17:7

Num 20:13

Deut 6:16

95:9

Num 14:22

95:10

Acts 7:36; 13:18

Heb 3:10, 17

95:11

Deut 1:35

^aHeb 4:3, 5

20 Can unjust leaders claim that God is on their side—

leaders whose decrees permit injustice?

21 They gang up against the righteous and condemn the innocent to death.

22 But the LORD is my fortress; my God is the mighty rock where I hide.

23 God will turn the sins of evil people back on them.

He will destroy them for their sins. The LORD our God will destroy them.

PSALM 95

1 Come, let us sing to the LORD!

Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.

2 Let us come to him with thanksgiving. Let us sing psalms of praise to him.

3 For the LORD is a great God, a great King above all gods.

4 He holds in his hands the depths of the earth and the mightiest mountains.

5 The sea belongs to him, for he made it. His hands formed the dry land, too.

6 Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the LORD our maker, for he is our God.

We are the people he watches over, the flock under his care.

If only you would listen to his voice today!

8 The LORD says, "Don't harden your hearts as Israel did at Meribah, as they did at Massah in the wilderness.

9 For there your ancestors tested and tried my patience, even though they saw everything I did.

10 For forty years I was angry with them, and I said,

"They are a people whose hearts turn away from me.

They refuse to do what I tell them."

11 So in my anger I took an oath:

"They will never enter my place of rest."

The Creator-King (Pss 93–100)

Pss 8, 19, 28–29, 33, 89, 104

Gen 1:1–2:4

Ecc 12:1-7, 13-14

Isa 40:25-28; 43:15;

44:24; 51:13

Jer 10:16

Acts 4:23-31

Col 3:10

The Psalter portrays Israel's view of God as the Creator, the great King over the world of nature and nations. God created and established the world, and he rules over it (95:4-5; 96:10; see 24:2; 78:69). The whole of creation is his handiwork. The Creator governs and cares for all that he made.

Several psalms celebrate the manifestation of God's glory in creation (Pss 8, 19, 29, 33, 89, and 104). Psalm 8 centers on God's endowing human beings with splendor and vesting them as his rulers in creation. Psalm 19 encourages reflection on creation in order to cultivate wisdom. Psalm 29 reveals God's power in the world and the stability of his creation. Psalm 33 exalts God's governance, order, and wisdom in creation and fosters the importance of wisdom. Psalm 89 lays the foundation of God's covenant with David on his commitment to creation (89:9-18).

Psalms 93–100 anticipate the worldwide dominion of God. When he comes into the world, he brings harmony and peace. The earth already belongs to him, and the Creator has demonstrated his power in history. Psalm 104 is a creation hymn that reworks the six days of creation into a marvelous lyric in praise of God's wisdom.

The psalms call upon all nations to acknowledge and praise God and to show their acceptance of his sovereign rule over all nations (see 9:11; 47:1-2, 7-9; 66:8; 67; 117:1).

Ps 95 This call to worship urges the people to respond to the Lord, the Shepherd, and to follow him faithfully. The previous generation, who refused to obey, did not receive the blessings of the Promised Land.

95:3-5 The Lord is the *great King* over the whole universe.

95:3 *above all gods*: The psalmist refutes idolatry and paganism (96:4-6; 135:15-18; see also Isa 46:5-7).

95:4-5 The whole created order owes its existence to the sovereign Lord alone—not to various gods.

95:6-7 The great King cares for his

people as a shepherd cares for his *flock* (Isa 40:11). • *The LORD our maker*, the Creator of heaven and earth, also made a people for himself (Isa 45:9-12; 51:12-16).

95:8-11 If people want to enter into the Lord's rest, they need to respond immediately (see Heb 3:7–4:11).

95:8 To *harden your hearts* means to be stubborn and resist the Lord's grace (see Num 20:2-13; see also Matt 13:3-23; John 12:37-43; Eph 4:17-32; Heb 3:6-19; 4:6-11).

95:9 Israel's *ancestors* . . . *saw* the wonders of the Lord, but they foolishly

did not try to grasp their significance (see 92:5-6).

95:11 The generation of Israel that wandered in the wilderness for forty years failed to enter the *place of rest* that Israel enjoyed after the conquest of the land (1 Kgs 8:56; see Deut 12:9). The Lord promised them the land and gave it to them (Isa 28:12), but they did not obey him (Isa 28:1). The warning reminds every generation of the need to obey in faith. • The rest that God provides includes peace, provision, and protection (132:14-18). The author of Hebrews challenged a new generation to enter the rest provided by Jesus Christ (Heb 3:7–4:13).

PSALM 96

Ps 96:1-13 // 1 Chr 16:23-33

- 1 Sing a new song to the LORD!
Let the whole earth sing to the LORD!
- 2 Sing to the LORD; praise his name.
Each day proclaim the good news that he saves.
- 3 Publish his glorious deeds among the nations.
Tell everyone about the amazing things he does.
- 4 Great is the LORD! He is most worthy of praise!
He is to be feared above all gods.
- 5 The gods of other nations are mere idols, but the LORD made the heavens!
- 6 Honor and majesty surround him; strength and beauty fill his sanctuary.
- 7 O nations of the world, recognize the LORD;
recognize that the LORD is glorious and strong.
- 8 Give to the LORD the glory he deserves!
Bring your offering and come into his courts.
- 9 Worship the LORD in all his holy splendor.
Let all the earth tremble before him.
- 10 Tell all the nations, "The LORD reigns!"
The world stands firm and cannot be shaken.
He will judge all peoples fairly.

- 11 Let the heavens be glad, and the earth rejoice!
Let the sea and everything in it shout his praise!
- 12 Let the fields and their crops burst out with joy!
Let the trees of the forest rustle with praise
- 13 before the LORD, for he is coming!
He is coming to judge the earth.
He will judge the world with justice, and the nations with his truth.

PSALM 97

- 1 The LORD is king!
Let the earth rejoice!
Let the farthest coastlands be glad.
- 2 Dark clouds surround him.
Righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.
- 3 Fire spreads ahead of him and burns up all his foes.
- 4 His lightning flashes out across the world.
The earth sees and trembles.
- 5 The mountains melt like wax before the LORD,
before the Lord of all the earth.
- 6 The heavens proclaim his righteousness;
every nation sees his glory.
- 7 Those who worship idols are disgraced—

96:1-13 //1 Chr 16:23-33
96:2 Ps 71:15
96:3 Ps 145:12
96:5 1 Chr 16:26
Isa 42:5
96:6 Ps 104:1
96:8 Ps 115:1
96:9 1 Chr 16:29
2 Chr 20:21
96:10 Ps 58:11; 67:4; 93:1
96:11 Ps 97:1; 83:7
Isa 49:13
96:12 Isa 35:1; 44:23;
55:12-13
97:1 Ps 96:10-11
97:2 Exod 19:9
Deut 4:11
1 Kgs 8:12
Ps 18:11; 89:14
tsedeq (6664)
Ps 119:75
97:3 Heb 12:29
97:5 Josh 3:11
Amos 9:5
erets (0776)
Isa 65:17
97:6 Ps 50:6

Ps 96 This psalm establishes the Lord's universal kingship (see Ps 93) and prepares for the coming of the Lord to bring justice and righteousness into the world. The psalmist invites everyone to worship the Lord (96:1-3), the glorious Creator of all the earth (96:4-6), because worship is due to him alone (96:7-9). The universe joins in praise as the righteous Judge establishes a new order (96:10-13). • This psalm (along with 105:1-15; 106:1, 47-48) is included in David's song of praise recorded in 1 Chr 16.

96:1 Three psalms open with the exhortation to *sing a new song* (Pss 96, 98, 149); the song celebrates the Lord's universal kingship (see 33:3).

96:4-6 The gods of the nations are as nothing before the glorious and majestic Creator of the earth.

96:4 *Great is the LORD! . . . most worthy of praise:* With this refrain, the poet exalts the Lord over all the gods (95:3) and nations (99:2). He inspires awe more than anyone or anything else (76:7, 12; 89:7; 99:3; 111:9). He is beyond human possession or comprehension. The story of what he does to redeem his people causes them to praise him.

96:5 The *LORD made the heavens*, an

even greater task than creating the earth. The *idols*, made by human hands (115:4), created nothing.

96:6 *Honor and majesty:* The Lord is glorious (96:6; 104:1; 148:13), and so are his works in nature (8:1) and in redemption (111:3; 145:5).

96:7 *nations of the world* (literally *families of the nations*): Families and clans represent subdivisions of the nations (see Gen 12:3). • The nations must respond to the Lord's glory (8:1; 19:1-4; 24:7).

96:8 The *courts* of God's sanctuary were usually off-limits to non-Jewish people. In this psalm the nations of the world—the non-Jews—are invited in (65:4; 84:2, 10; 100:4; 116:19; 135:2; Isa 1:12).

96:9 Worshipers should *tremble* in awe (96:4; see 18:7-15; 97:4) at the *splendor* of the Lord's majesty and holiness (Heb 12:25).

96:10 The Lord's coming means the end of injustice. He rules fairly (9:8; 96:13; 98:9) and inaugurates an era of harmony and order not experienced since Eden. • The Lord's reign over *the world* is founded on "the strong pillars of righteousness and justice" (89:14), so

it *cannot be shaken* (cp. 11:3).

96:11-13 The psalmist exhorts the created order to respond with joy to the news of the Lord's coming. Cp. a similar theme in 98:7-9.

96:12 All of nature will experience renewal in God's presence (65:13; 72:6, 16; Isa 44:23; 55:12; Rom 8:21-22).

Ps 97 God is greatly exalted over the gods and over all the earth. Awe-inspiring phenomena accompany his coming. Even the created order is visibly affected and the wicked perish, but the people of Zion love his coming and rejoice.

97:1 The *farthest coastlands* represent the most remote parts of the world.

97:2-4 *Dark clouds . . . Fire . . . lightning:* This language shows that the Lord is coming in judgment (see note on 18:7-15).

97:5-7 The created order stirs at the coming of its King. He alone deserves worship.

97:6 As the Lord enters the world, the testimony of his righteousness resounds from above (50:6). • *Every nation* will view the open display of the Lord's *glory* (see 8:1; 19:1-4a; 24:7; Isa 40:5).

97:7
Jer 10:14
*Heb 1:6
97:8
Zeph 3:14
97:9
Exod 18:11
Ps 83:18; 95:3
**elyon* (5945)
*Isa 14:14

97:10
Dan 3:28
Rom 12:9
97:11
Job 22:28
**simkiah* (8057)
*Prov 10:28

97:12
Ps 32:11
98:1
Exod 15:6
Isa 52:10
98:3
Luke 1:54, 72

98:4
Ps 100:1
98:6
Num 10:10
2 Chr 15:14

98:7
Ps 24:1; 96:11

98:9
Ps 96:10, 13

99:1
Exod 25:22
1 Sam 4:4

99:2
**rum* (7311)
*Ps 99:5

99:3
Deut 28:58
Josh 24:19
1 Sam 2:2

99:4
Ps 17:2

99:5
**rum* (7311)
*Ps 118:28

99:6
Exod 15:25
1 Sam 7:9

- all who brag about their worthless gods—
for every god must bow to him.
8 Jerusalem has heard and rejoiced,
and all the towns of Judah are glad
because of your justice, O LORD!
9 For you, O LORD, are ^bsupreme over all
the earth;
you are exalted far above all gods.
10 You who love the LORD, hate evil!
He protects the lives of his godly
people
and rescues them from the power of
the wicked.
11 Light shines on the godly,
and ^cjoy on those whose hearts are
right.
12 May all who are godly rejoice in the LORD
and praise his holy name!

PSALM 98

A psalm.

- 1 Sing a new song to the LORD,
for he has done wonderful deeds.
His right hand has won a mighty victory;
his holy arm has shown his saving
power!
2 The LORD has announced his victory
and has revealed his righteousness to
every nation!
3 He has remembered his promise to love
and be faithful to Israel.
The ends of the earth have seen the
victory of our God.
4 Shout to the LORD, all the earth;
break out in praise and sing for joy!

- 5 Sing your praise to the LORD with the
harp,
with the harp and melodious song,
6 with trumpets and the sound of the
ram's horn.
Make a joyful symphony before the
LORD, the King!
7 Let the sea and everything in it shout his
praise!
Let the earth and all living things join in.
8 Let the rivers clap their hands in glee!
Let the hills sing out their songs of joy
9 before the LORD.
For the LORD is coming to judge the
earth.
He will judge the world with justice,
and the nations with fairness.

PSALM 99

- 1 The LORD is king!
Let the nations tremble!
He sits on his throne between the
cherubim.
Let the whole earth quake!
2 The LORD sits in majesty in Jerusalem,
^eexalted above all the nations.
3 Let them praise your great and awesome
name.
Your name is holy!
4 Mighty King, lover of justice,
you have established fairness.
You have acted with justice
and righteousness throughout Israel.
5 ^eExalt the LORD our God!
Bow low before his feet, for he is holy!
6 Moses and Aaron were among his priests;
Samuel also called on his name.

97:7 At the Lord's coming, when *every god must bow* to him, those who worship other gods will face their own folly (see 95:3-5).

97:8-12 *Jerusalem* (Hebrew *Zion*) rejoices at the news of the Lord's coming, for he brings justice and rescues the upright of heart.

97:11 The godly people of integrity (see Prov 2:7, 21; 3:32; 11:6, 11; 14:2), *whose hearts are right*, maintain a relationship with the Lord and with others (94:15; 125:4). The wicked plan the downfall of the godly (11:2), but the Lord rescues them (11:1; 36:10). Then the sorrows of the godly turn to joy and praise (32:11; 64:10; 111:1; 119:7).

Ps 98 This psalm celebrates the Lord's kingship. The Lord is Israel's true King, its champion and savior. His people sing a new song celebrating his victorious power and faithfulness to them. The Lord displays his righteous rule to all the nations throughout the earth,

which will culminate in a worldwide kingdom of justice (98:2, 9). Consequently, all the earth must worship and rejoice together because the Lord is coming (98:4-6).

98:2-3 The Lord makes known his righteousness and faithfulness (see also Isa 52:10).

98:4-6 The psalmist invites the whole earth to worship the King (see 96:1).

98:6 The Temple musicians used *trumpets* to call people together for meetings (cp. 81:3).

98:7-9 The created order is personified as rejoicing at the coming of the righteous Judge (see 93:3-4; 96:11-13).

Ps 99 The psalmist calls the nations to worship the Lord, the king of the earth who rules from Zion (see note on Ps 93).

99:1-5 The Lord is the holy and righteous King (Isa 6:1-5). Mount Zion, the location of the Lord's Temple, metaphorically stands as the highest point

on earth (113:4; Isa 2:2; 6:1). From this summit, the Great King (47:2) can see, rule over, and receive praise from all nations and peoples.

99:1 It is fitting to *tremble* and *quake* in response to the Lord's holiness (see 96:9). • *The throne between the cherubim* refers to the cover of the Ark of the Covenant (Exod 25:17-22).

99:2 *Jerusalem*: Hebrew *Zion*. See "Mount Zion, the City of God" at Ps 48, p. 947.

99:4 The qualities of the Lord's rule include strength, *justice*, love, *fairness*, and *righteousness* (see 93:4; 97:2, 6-7, 12; 98:2-3, 9; 138:6). • *Israel*: Literally *Jacob*. See note on 44:4.

99:6-8 God showed favor by responding to his people in the past, while holding sinners accountable.

99:6 *Moses* and *Samuel* were great models and leaders who had prayed on behalf of the Lord's people (Exod 32:31-32; 1 Sam 12:23).

They cried to the LORD for help,
and he answered them.

⁷ He spoke to Israel from the pillar of cloud,
and they followed the laws and
decrees he gave them.

⁸ O LORD our God, you answered them.
You were a ^fforgiving God to them,
but you punished them when they
went wrong.

⁹ Exalt the LORD our God,
and worship at his holy mountain in
Jerusalem,
for the LORD our God is holy!

PSALM 100

A psalm of thanksgiving.

¹ Shout with joy to the LORD, all the earth!

² Worship the LORD with gladness.
Come before him, singing with joy.

³ Acknowledge that the LORD is God!
He made us, and we are his.
We are his people, the sheep of his
pasture.

⁴ Enter his gates with ^sthanksgiving;
go into his courts with praise.

^b Give thanks to him and praise his
name.

⁵ For the LORD is good.
His unfailing love continues ^fforever,
and his faithfulness continues to each
generation.

PSALM 101

A psalm of David.

¹ I will sing of your love and justice, LORD.
I will praise you with songs.

² I will be careful to live a blameless life—
when will you come to help me?
I will lead a life of integrity
in my own home.

³ I will refuse to look at
anything ^vile and vulgar.

I hate all who deal crookedly;
I will have nothing to do with them.

⁴ I will reject perverse ideas
and stay away from every evil.

⁵ I will not tolerate people who slander
their neighbors.
I will not endure conceit and pride.

⁶ I will search for faithful people
to be my companions.
Only those who are above reproach
will be allowed to serve me.

⁷ I will not allow deceivers to serve in my
house,
and liars will not stay in my presence.

⁸ My daily task will be to ferret out the
wicked
and free the city of the LORD from
their grip.

PSALM 102

*A prayer of one overwhelmed with
trouble, pouring out problems before the
LORD.*

¹ LORD, hear my prayer!
Listen to my plea!

² Don't turn away from me
in my time of distress.
Bend down to listen,
and answer me quickly when I call
to you.

³ For my days disappear like smoke,
and my bones burn like red-hot coals.

⁴ My heart is sick, withered like grass,
and I have lost my appetite.

⁵ Because of my groaning,
I am reduced to skin and bones.

⁶ I am like an owl in the desert,
like a little owl in a far-off wilderness.

99:7
Exod 33:9
Num 12:5

99:8
Num 14:20
^fnasa' (5375)
• Hos 14:2

100:1
Ps 98:4

100:2
Deut 28:47

100:3
1 Kgs 18:39
Ezek 34:30-31
Mark 14:27
John 10:11

100:4
Ps 95:2; 96:2
^stodah (8426)
• Ps 107:22
^yadah (3034)
• Ps 109:30

100:5
Ps 25:8; 119:90
^olam (5769)
• Ps 110:4

101:1
Ps 89:1; 145:7

101:3
^beliya'al (1100)
• Prov 6:12

101:4
Prov 11:20

101:5
Ps 50:20
Prov 6:16-19

101:6
Ps 119:1

101:8
Ps 46:4; 75:10;
118:10-12

102:1
Exod 2:23
1 Sam 9:16

102:2
Ps 69:17

102:3
Job 30:30
Jas 4:14

102:5
Lam 4:8

99:7 The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron from *the pillar of cloud* (Exod 33:9; Num 12:5-6), and for a time, the people responded to the revelation.

Ps 100 This psalm calls all nations to come to Jerusalem to worship the Lord and acknowledge his goodness to Israel.

100:3 and we are his: As in an alternate reading in the Masoretic Text; the other alternate and some ancient versions read *and not we ourselves*. **The LORD** is the one who determines who *his people* are. • *the sheep of his pasture:* God will guide and protect his people (23:1, 4).

100:4 Gates and courts were part of the Temple in Jerusalem.

Ps 101 This hymn expresses a commitment to live with integrity and to avoid evil. Jesus meets this ideal.

101:2 in my own home (literally *in my house*): This commitment to *integrity* might refer to private life at home. Some interpreters view *my house* as referring to the king's palace; the commitment would then refer to the policies of his administration. • *Leading a life of integrity* means choosing a wise lifestyle.

101:4-5 The psalmist hates what the Lord hates (Prov 6:16-19; see Ps 5:5; 11:4-5). • *Perverse ideas* come from corrupt human hearts (18:26).

101:6 The psalmist surrounds himself with people who are also committed to integrity (101:2).

101:7-8 The psalmist commits himself to ridding his *house* and *the city of the LORD*—representing the entire kingdom—of all evil.

Ps 102 A frail and afflicted human being prays for the Lord's compassion on Jerusalem and for his presence with its inhabitants.

102:1-2 The psalmist appeals to the Lord not to *turn away* (or *hide your face*). Israel experienced his turning his face away during their exile.

102:3 Smoke is an image of transitory life (37:20; 68:2). • The psalmist's *bones* represent his whole being (see 6:2; 34:19-22).

102:4 Like dried grass, the psalmist senses his life ebbing away.

102:5 skin and bones: The psalmist has wasted away because of his anguish (see 102:9; 109:24).

102:6 The owl was associated with ruin and desolation (Isa 34:11, 15).

102:7
Ps 77:4

102:8
2 Sam 16:5
Isa 65:15
Luke 23:11
Acts 26:11

102:12
Exod 3:15
Lam 5:19

102:13
Isa 60:10
Zech 1:12

102:15
1 Kgs 8:41-42

102:16
Isa 60:1-2

102:17
Neh 1:6

102:18
Deut 31:19
1 Cor 10:11

102:19
Deut 26:15

102:21
Zech 8:20-23

102:22
Ps 86:9

102:24
Isa 38:10

102:25-27
Gen 1:1
*Heb 1:10-12

102:26
Matt 24:35
2 Pet 3:10
Rev 20:11

102:27
Mal 3:6
Jas 1:17

103:1
Ps 33:21; 104:1
^hnepesh (5315)
• Ps 119:20

- 7 I lie awake,
 lonely as a solitary bird on the roof.
- 8 My enemies taunt me day after day.
 They mock and curse me.
- 9 I eat ashes for food.
 My tears run down into my drink
- 10 because of your anger and wrath.
 For you have picked me up and
 thrown me out.
- 11 My life passes as swiftly as the evening
 shadows.
 I am withering away like grass.
- 12 But you, O LORD, will sit on your throne
 forever.
 Your fame will endure to every
 generation.
- 13 You will arise and have mercy on
 Jerusalem—
 and now is the time to pity her,
 now is the time you promised to help.
- 14 For your people love every stone in her
 walls
 and cherish even the dust in her streets.
- 15 Then the nations will tremble before the
 LORD.
 The kings of the earth will tremble
 before his glory.
- 16 For the LORD will rebuild Jerusalem.
 He will appear in his glory.
- 17 He will listen to the prayers of the
 destitute.
 He will not reject their pleas.
- 18 Let this be recorded for future
 generations,
 so that a people not yet born will
 praise the LORD.

- 19 Tell them the LORD looked down
 from his heavenly sanctuary.
 He looked down to earth from heaven
- 20 to hear the groans of the prisoners,
 to release those condemned to die.
- 21 And so the LORD's fame will be
 celebrated in Zion,
 his praises in Jerusalem,
- 22 when multitudes gather together
 and kingdoms come to worship the
 LORD.
- 23 He broke my strength in midlife,
 cutting short my days.
- 24 But I cried to him, "O my God, who lives
 forever,
 don't take my life while I am so
 young!"
- 25 Long ago you laid the foundation of the
 earth
 and made the heavens with your
 hands.
- 26 They will perish, but you remain forever;
 they will wear out like old clothing.
 You will change them like a garment
 and discard them.
- 27 But you are always the same;
 you will live forever.
- 28 The children of your people
 will live in security.
 Their children's children
 will thrive in your presence."

PSALM 103

A psalm of David.

- ¹ Let all that ^kI am praise the LORD;
 with my whole heart, I will praise his
 holy name.

102:7-8 The psalmist cannot sleep (see 63:6-8). Like a *bird on the roof*, he feels isolated from both friends (see 88:8) and *enemies*.

102:10 The psalmist blames the Lord for his troubles.

102:11 The psalmist's existence seems empty and transitory (102:4; 109:23; 144:4).

102:12-17 The topic changes from the psalmist's miseries to the Lord's glory. A vision of the Lord's compassionate kingship gives him confidence in Zion's future.

102:12 forever . . . to every generation: The frailty of humans (102:3-11) contrasts with the permanence of the Lord.

102:13 Jerusalem: Hebrew *Zion*; also in 102:16. • *Now is the time* for the Lord to restore Jerusalem from exile (see 75:2; Jer 29:10; Dan 9:1-19).

102:15-16 When the Lord arises (102:13), *the nations will tremble* with

fear because they will see *his glory* (see 8:1; 19:1-4a; 24:7). The rebuilding of Zion and the Temple portray God's glory and fulfill this promise. An even greater fulfillment will come with the New Jerusalem (Rev 21).

102:17 The people of Israel were *destitute* (or *naked*) during the Exile.

102:18-22 The Lord will have mercy; Jews and Gentiles alike will worship him.

102:18 *Let this be recorded:* The written record stands as a memorial to the Lord's goodness.

102:19 The *heavenly sanctuary* refers to God's holy place on high (see 92:8-10).

102:22 The *multitudes*—both Jews and Gentiles—will join in the worship of the Lord (see 96:7, 9; 106:48; Isa 2:2-4; 43:10-13; 57:15; 60:3-7).

102:23-28 Although the psalmist suffers in the present, he bases his hope for the future on the Lord's past faithfulness.

102:24 The psalmist draws a contrast between his days (102:23) and God's years (cp. 90:4).

102:25-27 In contrast with the permanence of the Creator, the created order *will wear out like* a piece of *clothing* (see Isa 40:28). • The writer to the Hebrews describes this passage as having been addressed to Jesus, the Son (Heb 1:10-12).

102:28 The Lord's *presence* provides the basis for the security and happiness of his *people* (23:6).

Ps 103 This psalm celebrates the Lord's perfection, compassion, forgiveness, and goodness. The structure of the psalm is an acrostic poem, with one verse for each letter in the Hebrew alphabet (see also Pss 9-10, 25, 34, 37, 38, 111, 112, 119, 145).

103:1-6 The psalmist offers praise for the Lord's goodness.

2 Let all that I am praise the LORD;
 may I never forget the good things he
 does for me.
 3 He forgives all my sins
 and heals all my diseases.
 4 He ^aredeems me from death
 and crowns me with ^blove and tender
 mercies.
 5 He fills my life with good things.
 My youth is ^crenewed like the eagle's!
 6 The LORD gives righteousness
 and ^djustice to all who are treated
 unfairly.
 7 He revealed his character to Moses
 and his deeds to the people of Israel.
 8 The LORD is compassionate and merciful,
^eslow to get angry and filled with
 unfailing love.
 9 He will not constantly accuse us,
 nor remain angry forever.
 10 He does not punish us for all our sins;
 he does not deal harshly with us, as
 we deserve.
 11 For his unfailing love toward those who
 fear him
 is as great as the height of the heavens
 above the earth.
 12 He has removed our ^fsins as far from us
 as the east is from the west.
 13 The LORD is like a father to his children,
 tender and ^gcompassionate to those
 who fear him.
 14 For he knows how weak we are;
 he remembers we are only dust.
 15 Our days on earth are like grass;
 like wildflowers, we bloom and die.

16 The wind blows, and we are gone—
 as though we had never been here.
 17 But the love of the LORD remains forever
 with those who fear him.
 His salvation extends to the children's
 children
 18 of those who are faithful to his
 covenant,
 of those who obey his
 commandments!
 19 The LORD has made the heavens his
^hthrone;
 from there he rules over everything.
 20 Praise the LORD, you ⁱangels,
 you mighty ones who carry out his
 plans,
 listening for each of his commands.
 21 Yes, praise the LORD, you ^jarmies of
 angels
 who ^kserve him and do his will!
 22 Praise the LORD, everything he has
 created,
 everything in all his kingdom.
 Let all that I am praise the LORD.

103:3
 Exod 34:7
103:4
 Ps 49:15
^a*ga'al* (1350)
 • Ps 107:2
^b*kheshed* (2617)
 • Prov 3:3
103:5
 Isa 40:31
^c*khadash* (2318)
 • Ps 104:30
103:6
^d*mishpat* (4941)
 • Ps 106:3
103:7
 Exod 33:13
103:8
 Num 14:18
 Jon 3:10–4:10
^e*arek' appayim* (0750,
 0639)
 • Ps 145:8
103:9
 Ps 30:5
 Isa 57:16
103:10
 Lam 3:22
103:11
 Ps 36:5
103:12
^f*pesha'* (6588)
 • Prov 10:12
103:13
 Mal 3:17
^g*rakham* (7355)
 • Ps 116:5
103:14
 Gen 3:19
 Isa 40:6-8
103:15
 Jas 1:10-11
103:18
 Deut 7:9
103:19
^h*kisse'* (3678)
 • Prov 16:12
103:20
ⁱ*mal'ak* (4397)
 • Ps 148:2
103:21
^j*tsaba'* (6635)
 • Isa 6:5
^k*sharath* (8334)
 • Isa 61:6

PSALM 104

1 Let all that I am praise the LORD.
 O LORD my God, how great you are!
 You are robed with honor and majesty.
 2 You are dressed in a robe of light.
 You stretch out the starry curtain of the
 heavens;
 3 you lay out the rafters of your home in
 the rain clouds.
 You make the clouds your chariot;
 you ride upon the wings of the wind.

103:1-2 *Let all that I am praise the LORD:* Psalms 103 and 104 each open and close with this commitment (103:1-2, 22; 104:1, 35; see also 146:1).
103:7-8 The Lord *revealed* himself to Moses in distinctive ways that ensured his relationship with his people (see Exod 34:6-7; Num 14:18).
103:9 If the Lord were to *constantly accuse* or *remain angry forever*, no one would be left (see Isa 54:7-8; 57:16).
103:11-12 The Lord's *love* and *forgiveness* are infinite and complete.
103:13 *The LORD is like a father to his children:* This analogy forms the basis for Jesus' teaching about God's fatherhood (see Matt 5:43-48; 6:1; 10:19-20; 12:50; Luke 6:36; 12:29-32; John 8:31-59; 15:1-8; see also 2 Sam 7:14; Jer 3:19; 31:9; Mal 1:6; 2 Cor 6:16-18).
103:14-16 The Lord compassionately cares for frail humans (see 37:2; 90:5; 92:7; 102:4; Isa 40:6-8).

103:17-19 *the love of the LORD remains forever:* The Lord's kingdom is everlasting, so he commits himself to his people across many generations.
103:18 To *obey* God means to be *faithful* and loyal to him.
103:20-21 The psalmist exhorts the Lord's angels, his servants and messengers, to praise the Lord.
103:22 God's *kingdom* extends over all things, so all things are called to praise the Lord. • The concluding phrase takes us back to 103:1-2.
Ps 104 This creation hymn (see also Pss 8, 33, 145) exalts God's goodness and majesty. The psalmist reflects on the present world, the original creation, and a future new creation. He sees both creations as marvelously and wisely made (cp. 139:14), as the work of the Lord's Spirit (104:30; Gen 1:2; 2 Cor 3:6).
104:1 *Let all that I am praise the LORD:* Pss 103 and 104 each open and close

with this commitment to praise (103:1-2, 22; 104:1, 35). • *how great you are!* This acclamation expresses praise for rescue (see also 35:27; 40:16; 70:4).
104:2-4 The psalmist interacts with two of the days of creation (see Gen 1:1-8), when God created the heavens and light.
104:3 This poetic portrayal envisions *the clouds* as beams that support heaven.
104:4 *The winds are your messengers; / flames of fire are your servants:* Greek version reads *He sends his angels like the winds, / his servants like flames of fire.* Cp. Heb 1:7, where the Greek version is quoted. • Wind and lightning are seen as divine *messengers*. The Lord uses weather phenomena as he desires (77:17-18; 78:26; 135:7; 148:5-6). • The psalmist interacts with day three of creation (Gen 1:9-13). The Lord is master of water and earth.

104:2

Dan 7:9

104:3

Ps 18:10

Amos 9:6

104:4³Heb 1:7**104:5**

Job 38:4

104:6

Gen 1:2

104:7

Ps 18:15; 29:3

104:9

Job 38:10-11

Jer 5:22

104:10

Isa 41:18

104:12

Matt 8:20

104:14

Gen 1:29-30

104:15

Judg 9:13

Prov 31:6

Eccl 10:19

Luke 7:46

104:17

Lev 11:19

104:18

Lev 11:5

Prov 30:26

104:19

Gen 1:14

- 4 The winds are your messengers;
flames of fire are your servants.
- 5 You placed the world on its foundation
so it would never be moved.
- 6 You clothed the earth with floods of
water,
water that covered even the
mountains.
- 7 At your command, the water fled;
at the sound of your thunder, it
hurried away.
- 8 Mountains rose and valleys sank
to the levels you decreed.
- 9 Then you set a firm boundary for the
seas,
so they would never again cover the
earth.
- 10 You make springs pour water into the
ravines,
so streams gush down from the
mountains.
- 11 They provide water for all the animals,
and the wild donkeys quench their
thirst.

- 12 The birds nest beside the streams
and sing among the branches of the
trees.
- 13 You send rain on the mountains from
your heavenly home,
and you fill the earth with the fruit of
your labor.
- 14 You cause grass to grow for the livestock
and plants for people to use.
You allow them to produce food from
the earth—
- 15 wine to make them glad,
olive oil to soothe their skin,
and bread to give them strength.
- 16 The trees of the LORD are well cared for—
the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.
- 17 There the birds make their nests,
and the storks make their homes in
the cypresses.
- 18 High in the mountains live the wild
goats,
and the rocks form a refuge for the
hyraxes.
- 19 You made the moon to mark the seasons,
and the sun knows when to set.

Praise Psalms (Ps 103)

Pss 9, 18, 32, 34,
46-48, 93, 96-99,
113, 116, 124, 129,
136, 138

The Hebrew title of the book of Psalms means “Praises,” and that title accurately defines a large number of the psalms. God is praised for his nature and for his great acts in creation and history. Praise psalms were written for individual use and for the community.

Individual praise (Pss 9, 18, 32, 34, 116, 138). It was customary in Temple worship to give verbal thanks before the whole assembly whenever a vow-offering or a thank-offering was made (see, e.g., 22:22-26; 66:13-20; 116:17-19). Such opportunities for personal praise and testimony must have added warmth and significance to worship. Each act of rescue and every experience of God’s mercy became part of the cumulative, ongoing story of salvation. Worship was not simply a recital of God’s deeds in earlier centuries.

Communal praise (Pss 103, 113, 124, 129, 136). When the community gathered, they praised the Lord in song for his acts in history (Ps 103) or for a specific recent manifestation of his mercy (Pss 124, 129). In Ps 103, the psalmist praises God for his mercy to each individual (103:1-5) and to the whole community (103:6-14). The frailty of humanity contrasts with God’s constancy (103:15-18); his universal and absolute rule merits universal praise (103:19-22).

104:6 At first, *water* covered the earth.

104:7 The Lord created dry ground on day three of creation (Gen 1:9-13).

104:8 The earth originates in God’s will.

104:9-10 The Lord reigns over all bodies of water, including those on land. He replaced chaotic waters with order and abundance, and the earth became a splendid place for animals and humans, with water refreshing the ground, the birds, and the animals.

104:9 The Lord *set a firm boundary for the seas* to protect the land. God’s sovereignty over sea and land was an argument against the existence of Baal, whom the Canaanites celebrated as

victorious over the waters (see Ps 29).

104:11-18 The psalmist celebrates animal, plant, and human life, as well as the Lord’s abundant provision for all of it (Gen 1:9-30).

104:14 *people to use*: People are the managers of the created order, and they receive nourishment from the work of their hands.

104:15 While both can be misused (cp. Prov 21:17), the Lord provides *wine* and *olive oil* as gifts to enhance life. Life is sustained by basic food, represented by *bread*.

104:17-18 The *storks* migrated from northern Europe and resided in Pal-

estine during the winter. • *hyraxes* (or *conies*, or *rock badgers*): These animals are about the size of a rabbit and live in rocky places.

104:19-23 The psalmist rejoices in the order of night and day, marking day four of creation (Gen 1:14-19). This cycle gives all creatures an opportunity to live.

104:19 *the moon to mark the seasons*: Ancient Israel based its calendar on the cycles of the moon (see chart, p. 145). • *the sun knows when to set*: This is a poetic description from the perspective of normal observation. The sun goes down at a regular time every evening.

20 You send the darkness, and it becomes night,
when all the forest animals prowls about.

21 Then the young lions roar for their prey,
stalking the food provided by God.

22 At dawn they slink back into their dens to rest.

23 Then people go off to their work,
where they labor until evening.

24 O LORD, what a variety of things you have made!
In wisdom you have made them all.
The earth is full of your creatures.

25 Here is the ocean, vast and wide,
teeming with life of every kind,
both large and small.

26 See the ships sailing along,
and Leviathan, which you made to play in the sea.

27 They all depend on you to give them food as they need it.

28 When you supply it, they gather it.
You open your hand to feed them,
and they are richly satisfied.

29 But if you turn away from them, they panic.
When you take away their breath,
they die and turn again to dust.

30 When you give them your ^abreath, life is created,
and you ^brenew the face of the earth.

31 May the glory of the LORD continue forever!
The LORD takes pleasure in all he has made!

32 The earth trembles at his glance;
the mountains smoke at his touch.

33 I will sing to the LORD as long as I live.
I will praise my God to my last breath!

34 May all my thoughts be pleasing to him,
for I rejoice in the LORD.

35 Let all sinners vanish from the face of the earth;
let the wicked disappear forever.

Let all that I am praise the LORD.
Praise the LORD!

PSALM 105

Ps 105:1-15 // 1 Chr 16:8-22

1 Give thanks to the LORD and proclaim his greatness.
Let the whole world know what he has done.

2 Sing to him; yes, sing his praises.
Tell everyone about his wonderful deeds.

3 Exult in his holy name;
rejoice, you who worship the LORD.

4 Search for the LORD and for his strength;
continually seek him.

5 Remember the wonders he has performed,
his miracles, and the rulings he has given,

104:20
Isa 45:7; 56:9

104:22
Job 37:8

104:23
Gen 3:19

104:24
Ps 40:5; 65:9
Jer 10:12; 51:15

104:26
Job 41:1

104:27
Ps 136:25

104:29
Gen 3:19

104:30
Ezek 37:9
ruakh (7307)
• Eccl 12:7
khadash (2318)
• Isa 61:4

104:31
Gen 1:31

104:32
Exod 19:18
Judg 5:5

104:35
Ps 37:10; 59:13

105:1-15
// 1 Chr 16:8-22

105:2
Ps 98:5

105:3
Ps 33:21

105:4
Ps 27:8

104:20-23 Cycles of *darkness* and *dawn* mark the days on earth. • Some creatures live nocturnally, while others become active during the day.

104:24-26 The Lord's works testify to his wisdom. All parts fit together—land and sea, night and day, land creatures and sea creatures. The Lord's wisdom makes life orderly and wonderful.

104:25 The *ocean*, . . . *teeming with life of every kind* (see Gen 1:20-21), exemplifies the Lord's creative activities.

104:26 *ships sailing*: Commercial vessels engaged in sea trade were one of the wonders of the ancient Near East (see Isa 2:16; 23:1, 3). • The identification of *Leviathan* is disputed, ranging from an earthly creature to a mythical sea monster in ancient literature. The psalmist says that this feared creature is nothing but the Lord's pet.

104:27-30 All life depends on the gracious sustenance of the Lord of life and death (cp. Matt 6:11).

104:29-30 *When you give them your breath: Or When you send your Spirit.* Life on earth is only possible as the Lord's gift, symbolized by his breath (Hebrew *ruakh*, "breath, wind, spirit"). The Lord's Spirit is the agent of renewal (Isa 32:15-20).

104:31-35 The psalmist moves from describing the known creation to anticipating the new creation, when the Lord will renew the created order into a world without sinners.

104:31 The Lord reveals his presence in the created order (see 8:1; 19:1-4; 24:7) and takes *pleasure* in his new creation (see Isa 65:19).

104:32 The trembling *earth* and the smoking *mountains* represent the Lord's coming in judgment against sinners and salvation for his faithful people (see 18:7-15).

104:35 The Lord will remove all forms of evil that defile his creation. • The concluding phrase takes us back to

104:1 (see also 103:1-2, 22; 146:1).

Ps 105 This hymn praises the Lord's faithfulness to Abraham and his descendants in all their journeys—from Ur to Canaan (105:12), to Egypt (105:17, 23), through the wilderness (105:37, 41), and back to Canaan (105:44). All of this fulfilled the Lord's promise to Abraham (105:9, 42), which was the basis for Israel's very existence. Joseph, whose suffering was changed into glory, is a paradigm of encouragement for Israel (105:16-25). • Verses 1-15 (along with 96:1-13; 106:1, 47-48) are included in David's song of praise recorded in 1 Chr 16.

105:1-5 The poet begins with the exhortation, *Give thanks* (see also 106:1; 107:1; 118:1; 136:1). The other psalms continue with the refrain, "for he is good!" The rest of Ps 105 tells of God's goodness.

105:6-11 The story of Israel is based on the Lord's commitment to Abraham. Even when a question arises about the future of God's covenant with David (Ps 89), God's covenant with Abraham stands, as does the spiritual bond

105:7

Isa 26:9

105:8

Gen 22:16-18

Deut 7:9

Luke 1:72

105:10

Gen 28:13-15

Josh 23:4

105:11

Gen 13:15; 15:18

105:12

Gen 23:4; 34:30

Heb 11:9

105:14

Gen 12:17; 35:5

105:16

Lev 26:26

Isa 3:1

Ezek 4:16

105:17

Gen 37:28, 36

Acts 7:9

105:19

Ps 66:10

105:20

Gen 41:14

105:22

zaqen (2205)

Ps 107:32

105:24

Exod 1:7, 9

105:25

Exod 1:8

Acts 7:19

105:26

Exod 3:10

Num 16:5

105:27

Ps 78:43-51

105:28

Exod 10:22

105:29

Exod 7:20-21

105:30

Exod 8:6

105:31

Exod 8:16, 21

105:32

Exod 9:23

105:36

Exod 12:29-30

105:37

Exod 12:33, 35-36

6 you children of his servant Abraham,
you descendants of Jacob, his chosen
ones.

7 He is the LORD our God.
His justice is seen throughout the
land.

8 He always stands by his covenant—
the commitment he made to a
thousand generations.

9 This is the covenant he made with
Abraham
and the oath he swore to Isaac.

10 He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree,
and to the people of Israel as a never-
ending covenant:

11 "I will give you the land of Canaan
as your special possession."

12 He said this when they were few in
number,
a tiny group of strangers in Canaan.

13 They wandered from nation to nation,
from one kingdom to another.

14 Yet he did not let anyone oppress them.
He warned kings on their behalf:

15 "Do not touch my chosen people,
and do not hurt my prophets."

16 He called for a famine on the land of
Canaan,
cutting off its food supply.

17 Then he sent someone to Egypt ahead of
them—
Joseph, who was sold as a slave.

18 They bruised his feet with fetters
and placed his neck in an iron collar.

19 Until the time came to fulfill his dreams,
the LORD tested Joseph's character.

20 Then Pharaoh sent for him and set him
free;
the ruler of the nation opened his
prison door.

21 Joseph was put in charge of all the king's
household;
he became ruler over all the king's
possessions.

22 He could instruct the king's aides as he
pleased
and teach the king's advisers.

23 Then Israel arrived in Egypt;
Jacob lived as a foreigner in the land
of Ham.

24 And the LORD multiplied the people of
Israel
until they became too mighty for their
enemies.

25 Then he turned the Egyptians against
the Israelites,
and they plotted against the LORD's
servants.

26 But the LORD sent his servant Moses,
along with Aaron, whom he had
chosen.

27 They performed miraculous signs
among the Egyptians,
and wonders in the land of Ham.

28 The LORD blanketed Egypt in darkness,
for they had defied his commands to
let his people go.

29 He turned their water into blood,
poisoning all the fish.

30 Then frogs overran the land
and even invaded the king's
bedrooms.

31 When the LORD spoke, flies descended
on the Egyptians,
and gnats swarmed across Egypt.

32 He sent them hail instead of rain,
and lightning flashed over the land.

33 He ruined their grapevines and fig trees
and shattered all the trees.

34 He spoke, and hordes of locusts came—
young locusts beyond number.

35 They ate up everything green in the land,
destroying all the crops in their fields.

36 Then he killed the oldest son in each
Egyptian home,
the pride and joy of each family.

37 The LORD brought his people out of
Egypt, loaded with silver and gold;

between God and Israel, Abraham's
descendants.

105:8 The *covenant* is the Lord's irrevocable oath to be the Father of Abraham and his descendants (see Gen 12:1-9; 15:1-21).

105:11 God promised *the land of Canaan* to Abraham's descendants as their *special possession*, where they could live as God's people (105:44-45; Gen 12:7; 15:7-21).

105:12-15 The Lord protected Israel's patriarchs.

105:15 Abraham was one of the nation's *prophets* (Gen 20:7).

105:16-22 These verses tell the story of Joseph (see Gen 37-41).

105:19 his dreams: Literally *his word*. • *tested Joseph's character:* See Gen 39:6-12.

105:23-25 These verses tell the story of Israel's affliction in Egypt (see Exod 1:1-14).

105:23 Egypt (Hebrew *mitsrayim*) was in *the land of Ham* (see map, p. 39).

105:26-36 The psalmist recounts the

story of Moses and the plagues in Egypt (Exod 7:20-12:30).

105:37-45 The Exodus and the conquest of Canaan fulfilled God's promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (105:9-10). Unlike Ps 78, the poet recites the Lord's goodness without commenting on Israel's history of rebellion (cp. Ps 106).

105:37 not one . . . stumbled: The Lord protected all of his people (cp. 9:3).

and not one among the tribes of Israel even stumbled.
 38 Egypt was glad when they were gone, for they feared them greatly.
 39 The LORD spread a cloud above them as a covering and gave them a great fire to light the darkness.
 40 They asked for meat, and he sent them quail; he satisfied their hunger with manna—bread from heaven.
 41 He split open a rock, and water gushed out to form a river through the dry wasteland.
 42 For he remembered his sacred promise to his servant Abraham.
 43 So he brought his people out of Egypt with joy, his chosen ones with rejoicing.
 44 He gave his people the lands of pagan nations, and they harvested crops that others had planted.
 45 All this happened so they would follow his decrees and obey his instructions.

Praise the LORD!

PSALM 106

Ps 106:1, 47-48 // 1 Chr 16:34-36

1 Praise the LORD!

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good!
 His faithful love endures forever.

2 Who can list the glorious miracles of the LORD?

Who can ever praise him enough?

3 There is joy for those who deal justly with others and always do what is right.

4 Remember me, LORD, when you show favor to your people; come near and rescue me.
 5 Let me share in the prosperity of your chosen ones.
 Let me rejoice in the joy of your people; let me praise you with those who are your heritage.
 6 Like our ancestors, we have sinned. We have done wrong! We have acted wickedly!
 7 Our ancestors in Egypt were not impressed by the LORD's miraculous deeds.
 They soon forgot his many acts of kindness to them.
 Instead, they rebelled against him at the Red Sea.
 8 Even so, he saved them—to defend the honor of his name and to demonstrate his mighty power.
 9 He commanded the Red Sea to dry up. He led Israel across the sea as if it were a desert.
 10 So he rescued them from their enemies and redeemed them from their foes.
 11 Then the water returned and covered their enemies; not one of them survived.
 12 Then his people believed his promises. Then they sang his praise.
 13 Yet how quickly they forgot what he had done!
 They wouldn't wait for his counsel!
 14 In the wilderness their desires ran wild, testing God's patience in that dry wasteland.

105:39
 Neh 9:12
 Isa 4:5
105:40
 Num 11:31
 John 6:31
105:41
 Exod 17:6
 Ps 78:15
 1 Cor 10:4
105:43
 Exod 15:1
105:44
 Deut 6:10-11
 Josh 13:7
105:45
 Deut 4:40
106:1
 1 Chr 16:34, 41
 Ps 100:4-5; 105:1
106:3
 Ps 15:2
^a*ashrey* (0835)
 • Prov 3:13
^b*mishpat* (4941)
 • Prov 12:5
106:4
 Ps 44:3
106:5
 Ps 1:3; 118:15
106:6
 2 Chr 30:7
 Ezra 9:7
 Neh 1:7
 Zech 1:4
106:7
 Judg 3:7
106:8
 Ezek 20:9
106:9
 Exod 14:21
 Isa 63:11-13
106:11
 Exod 15:5
106:12
^c*aman* (0539)
 • Ps 119:66
106:14
 Num 11:4

105:39 The Lord's presence was as evident to all as a *fire* in the *darkness* (Exod 13:22).

105:42-45 The story of redemption is also the story of the Lord's faithfulness.

105:44 Canaan was a land of *pagan nations* (see 111:6). The psalmist might also be reflecting on God's promise to Abraham (Gen 24:60) regarding the lands given to Isaac (Gen 26:3).

105:45 The Lord planned for Israel to testify about him by obeying him; Israel was to be his model people.

Ps 106 The Israelite community in exile confessed the Lord's goodness and justice and their own historic sinfulness. From the humble state of exile, they pleaded for redemption and restoration, asking to be gathered back from all the

places the Lord had scattered them in his wrath. The psalm does not end in despair but with the memory of the Lord's former mercy and the hope that his mercy will be renewed (106:44-48). Israel failed, but the Lord is constant. • Verses 1, 47-48 (along with 96:1-13; 105:1-15) are included in David's song of praise recorded in 1 Chr 16.

106:1 Praise the LORD! This refrain (Hebrew *haleluyah*) characterizes four small subgroups in the psalms: 104-106, 111-113, 115-117, 146-150.

106:2-3 Wise people who practice justice and righteousness receive encouragement to proclaim the Lord's great acts.

106:4-5 The poet prays individually for the Lord's favor before leading the community confession that follows.

106:6-13 The community joins together to confess their sins and their ancestors' many acts of unbelief.

106:6 The story of Israel's redemption encompasses their sinful response from the days of the *ancestors* to the present (106:43). The themes of sin and divine wrath both open and close Book Four (90:1-9; 106:6, 23, 43).

106:7 at the Red Sea: Literally *at the sea, the sea of reeds*. See note on Exod 13:18.

106:9 Red Sea: Literally *sea of reeds*; also in 106:22. See Exod 14:15-31.

106:13 They wouldn't wait: God's impatient people did not trust him to work according to his will (e.g., see Exod 15:24; 16:2-3; 17:1-3; Num 14:26-45; 21:4-9).

106:15
Ps 78:29-31

106:16
Num 16:1-3

106:17
Deut 11:6

106:18
Num 16:35

106:19
Acts 7:41

106:20
Jer 2:11
Rom 1:23

106:21
Deut 10:21

106:22
Ps 105:27

106:23
Exod 32:10-14

106:24
Num 13:31-14:3
Jer 3:19

106:26
Num 14:29
Heb 3:11

106:28
Num 25:1-3
Hos 9:10

106:30
Num 25:7-13

106:32
Exod 17:7
Num 20:13
Ps 78:40

106:34
Judg 1:21, 27-36

106:37
2 Kgs 17:17

106:39
Hos 4:12

106:40
Judg 2:12-14

- 15 So he gave them what they asked for,
but he sent a plague along with it.
- 16 The people in the camp were jealous of
Moses
and envious of Aaron, the LORD's holy
priest.
- 17 Because of this, the earth opened up;
it swallowed Dathan
and buried Abiram and the other
rebels.
- 18 Fire fell upon their followers;
a flame consumed the wicked.
- 19 The people made a calf at Mount Sinai;
they bowed before an image made
of gold.
- 20 They traded their glorious God
for a statue of a grass-eating bull.
- 21 They forgot God, their savior,
who had done such great things in
Egypt—
- 22 such wonderful things in the land of
Ham,
such awesome deeds at the Red Sea.
- 23 So he declared he would destroy them.
But Moses, his chosen one, stepped
between the LORD and the people.
He begged him to turn from his anger
and not destroy them.
- 24 The people refused to enter the pleasant
land,
for they wouldn't believe his promise
to care for them.
- 25 Instead, they grumbled in their tents
and refused to obey the LORD.
- 26 Therefore, he solemnly swore
that he would kill them in the
wilderness,
- 27 that he would scatter their descendants
among the nations,
exiling them to distant lands.

- 28 Then our ancestors joined in the
worship of Baal at Peor;
they even ate sacrifices offered to the
dead!
- 29 They angered the LORD with all these
things,
so a plague broke out among them.
- 30 But Phinehas had the courage to
intervene,
and the plague was stopped.
- 31 So he has been regarded as a righteous
man
ever since that time.
- 32 At Meribah, too, they angered the LORD,
causing Moses serious trouble.
- 33 They made Moses angry,
and he spoke foolishly.
- 34 Israel failed to destroy the nations in the
land,
as the LORD had commanded them.
- 35 Instead, they mingled among the pagans
and adopted their evil customs.
- 36 They worshiped their idols,
which led to their downfall.
- 37 They even sacrificed their sons
and their daughters to the demons.
- 38 They shed innocent blood,
the blood of their sons and daughters.
By sacrificing them to the idols of
Canaan,
they polluted the land with murder.
- 39 They defiled themselves by their evil
deeds,
and their love of idols was adultery in
the LORD's sight.
- 40 That is why the LORD's anger burned
against his people,
and he abhorred his own special
possession.

106:15 *he sent a plague*: See Exod 32:35; Num 11:33.

106:16-18 The people became *jealous* because they presumed to have the same privileges as God's appointed priests (see Num 16:1-35). • *the earth opened up*: See Num 16:28-33.

106:19-23 *they bowed before an image*: The people forgot their Savior and committed the sin of idolatry (see Exod 32:1-6).

106:19 *at Mount Sinai*: Hebrew *at Horeb*, another name for Sinai.

106:22 *The land of Ham* is Egypt.

106:24-25 The people disobeyed God's command when they *refused to enter the pleasant land* (the Promised Land; see Jer 3:19). • *they wouldn't believe his promise*: See Num 13:25-14:12.

106:26-27 God's judgment when Israel refused to obey was death and exile (Num 14:26-30). The occasion for these severe judgments seems to have been disobeying God's word (106:24-25) and provoking the Lord's wrath (106:28-46).

106:28-39 Israel's idolatry outside of the land came with them into their land. Their nature did not change; they continued to provoke the Lord to anger by their actions.

106:28 *the worship of Baal at Peor*: See Num 25:3; Deut 4:3.

106:30-33 *Phinehas*, who executed a flagrantly apostate Israelite man (Num 25:3-8), is an even better model of *a righteous man* than *Moses*, who failed *at Meribah* (Num 20:11-13).

106:33 *They made Moses angry*:

Literally *They embittered his spirit*. As a result, *he spoke foolishly* and disobeyed the Lord (see Num 20:12).

106:34 Israel continued to disobey the word of the Lord while living in the Promised Land. Rather than destroying the nations, Israel accepted them and their ways (see Judg 2:1-3, 11-15; 3:5-6).

106:37 Pagan gods were *demons* (see Deut 32:17).

106:39 Idolatry, like *adultery*, defiles God's people (see Lev 18:24; Hos 5:3).

106:40-46 The psalmist returns to the Babylonian exile (106:26-27). The Lord judged Israel severely, but he also restrained his wrath, remembering the covenant he had made with Abraham.

106:40 God *abhorred* Israel's sin, as he does all sin.

41 He handed them over to pagan nations,
and they were ruled by those who
hated them.
42 Their enemies crushed them
and brought them under their cruel
power.
43 Again and again he rescued them,
but they chose to rebel against him,
and they were finally destroyed by
their sin.
44 Even so, he pitied them in their distress
and listened to their cries.
45 He remembered his covenant with them
and relented because of his unfailing
love.
46 He even caused their captors
to treat them with kindness.
47 Save us, O LORD our God!
Gather us back from among the nations,
so we can thank your holy name
and rejoice and praise you.
48 Praise the LORD, the God of Israel,
who lives from everlasting to
everlasting!
Let all the people say, "Amen!"
Praise the LORD!

5. BOOK FIVE (PSS 107–150)

PSALM 107

1 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good!
His faithful love endures forever.

2 Has the LORD redeemed you? Then
speak out!
Tell others he has redeemed you
from your enemies.
3 For he has gathered the exiles from
many lands,
from east and west,
from north and south.
4 Some wandered in the wilderness,
lost and homeless.
5 Hungry and thirsty,
they nearly died.
6 "LORD, help!" they cried in their trouble,
and he rescued them from their
distress.
7 He led them straight to safety,
to a city where they could live.
8 Let them praise the LORD for his great
love
and for the wonderful things he has
done for them.
9 For he satisfies the thirsty
and fills the hungry with good things.
10 Some sat in darkness and deepest gloom,
imprisoned in iron chains of misery.
11 They rebelled against the words of God,
scorning the counsel of the Most
High.
12 That is why he broke them with hard
labor;
they fell, and no one was there to help
them.

106:41
Neh 9:27
106:43
Judg 6:6
Ps 81:12
106:45
Lev 26:42
106:46
2 Chr 30:9
Ezra 9:9
106:47-48
//1 Chr 16:35-36
107:1
Ps 106:1
107:2
Isa 35:9-10
*ga'al (1350)
* Isa 43:1
107:3
Neh 1:9
Ps 106:47
Ezek 20:34
107:4
Josh 5:6
107:7
Jer 31:9
107:9
Matt 5:6
Luke 1:53
107:10
Mic 7:8-9
Luke 1:79
107:11
Num 15:31

106:43-44 When Israel was *finally destroyed*, the destruction was not complete. The Lord *pitied them*, so he left a remnant.
106:45 *He remembered . . . and relented:* Unlike Israel, the Lord is faithful to his *covenant* (105:8).
106:46 As harsh as the Exile was, the Lord still protected his people (see 2 Kgs 25:27-29).
106:47 *Gather us back:* The community prays for restoration from exile (see 102:19-22; 107:3; see also Isa 11:12; 40:11; 43:5; 54:7; 56:8; 66:18).
106:48 This doxology concludes Book Four (cp. 41:13; 89:52). • *from everlasting to everlasting!* The reference to God's eternal nature links to the opening of Book Four (Ps 90:1-2). • *Let all the people say, "Amen!"*: The Hebrew word *amen* means "It is true." The godly accept the Lord's will in exile and his promise to be their God.
Book Five (Pss 107–150) This final book of the Psalter was shaped in the context of Israel's return from exile in Babylon. God's sovereign power and loving faithfulness to his covenant people were

demonstrated as he restored and exalted them. The uncertainty in Book Four about the future of David's royal line (see 89:38) finds positive resolution in Book Five. The psalms of David occur in greater number in this final book than they do in Books Three and Four, and David is remembered for the covenant he received and for his devotion to the Lord (e.g., Ps 132). Thus, there remains the prospect of a coming King. Book Five contains two early liturgical collections: the "Egyptian Hallel" (Pss 113–118) and the "Great Hallel" (Pss 120–136; *hallel* means "praise"). The Great Hallel is largely made up of a collection known as the "Songs of Ascents" or "Pilgrim Psalms" (Pss 120–134). The Psalter then returns to its roots with a collection of David's psalms dominated by lament (Pss 138–145), followed by a section of praise to conclude the whole book of Psalms (Pss 146–150).
Ps 107 This psalm is a hymn of praise to God the Redeemer. After an introduction exhorting the redeemed to praise God for his goodness (107:1-3), the poet brings together four case studies of people whom the Lord redeemed from adversity (107:4-32). He then sums up the Lord's sovereignty (107:33-42) and concludes

with an invitation to discern God's unfailing love in all areas of life (107:43).
107:2 The *redeemed* might be all who came out of exile.
107:3 *exiles:* People came from all nations where the people of Israel and Judah had been scattered.
107:4-9 Those who were lost in the *wilderness* thank God for his rescue. The wilderness might be a metaphor for leaving the path of wisdom (1:1; Prov 4:10-15).
107:6 The psalmist does not specify the occasion of his *trouble* and *distress*. The generic nature of the adversity permits readers in a variety of circumstances to identify with the laments.
107:7-8 God *led them* like a shepherd (see 23:1). • Verse 8 is a refrain that is repeated in 107:15, 21, 31.
107:10-16 The psalmist calls for thanksgiving and praise from people in despair over the consequences of their rebellion.
107:11 God's *counsel* includes his instruction and will.
107:12 Exhausted by their *hard labor* (Lam 5:13), the people *fell*. While this

107:14
Ps 116:16
Acts 12:7

107:16
Isa 45:1-2

107:17
Isa 65:6-7
Ezek 24:23

107:18
Job 33:19-22
Ps 9:13; 88:3

107:20
2 Kgs 20:5
Matt 8:8

107:22
Lev 7:12
Ps 9:11; 50:14; 73:28;
118:17

107:25
ṭōdah (8426)
Jer 30:19

107:25
Ps 93:3-4

107:29
Matt 8:26
Luke 8:24

107:32
Ps 22:22, 25
Isa 25:1
ʿzaqen (2205)
Ps 119:100

107:34
Gen 19:24-25

107:35
Isa 35:6-7; 41:18

107:37
2 Kgs 19:29
Amos 9:14

107:38
Gen 12:2
Exod 1:7

107:42
Job 22:19
Ps 52:6
Rom 3:19

107:43
Ps 64:9
Jer 9:12
Hos 14:9

13 "LORD, help!" they cried in their trouble,
and he saved them from their distress.

14 He led them from the darkness and
deepest gloom;
he snapped their chains.

15 Let them praise the LORD for his great love
and for the wonderful things he has
done for them.

16 For he broke down their prison gates of
bronze;
he cut apart their bars of iron.

17 Some were fools; they rebelled
and suffered for their sins.

18 They couldn't stand the thought of food,
and they were knocking on death's
door.

19 "LORD, help!" they cried in their trouble,
and he saved them from their distress.

20 He sent out his word and healed them,
snatching them from the door of death.

21 Let them praise the LORD for his great
love
and for the wonderful things he has
done for them.

22 Let them offer sacrifices of ^hthanksgiving
and sing joyfully about his glorious acts.

23 Some went off to sea in ships,
plying the trade routes of the world.

24 They, too, observed the LORD's power in
action,
his impressive works on the deepest
seas.

25 He spoke, and the winds rose,
stirring up the waves.

26 Their ships were tossed to the heavens
and plunged again to the depths;
the sailors cringed in terror.

27 They reeled and staggered like
drunkards
and were at their wits' end.

28 "LORD, help!" they cried in their trouble,
and he saved them from their distress.

29 He calmed the storm to a whisper
and stilled the waves.

30 What a blessing was that stillness
as he brought them safely into harbor!

31 Let them praise the LORD for his great
love
and for the wonderful things he has
done for them.

32 Let them exalt him publicly before the
congregation
and before the ^lleaders of the nation.

33 He changes rivers into deserts,
and springs of water into dry, thirsty
land.

34 He turns the fruitful land into salty
wastelands,
because of the wickedness of those
who live there.

35 But he also turns deserts into pools of
water,
the dry land into springs of water.

36 He brings the hungry to settle there
and to build their cities.

37 They sow their fields, plant their
vineyards,
and harvest their bumper crops.

38 How he blesses them!
They raise large families there,
and their herds of livestock increase.

39 When they decrease in number and
become impoverished
through oppression, trouble, and
sorrow,

40 the LORD pours contempt on their princes,
causing them to wander in trackless
wastelands.

41 But he rescues the poor from trouble
and increases their families like
flocks of sheep.

42 The godly will see these things and be
glad,
while the wicked are struck silent.

43 Those who are wise will take all this to
heart;
they will see in our history the
faithful love of the LORD.

might be expected of the wicked (9:3; 27:2), it was unlike the Israelites' flight from Egypt (105:37).

107:17-22 Fools who received what they deserved but were rescued from death offer thanksgiving to the Lord.

107:20 The Lord creates (Gen 1:3) and sustains the universe (Heb 1:3) simply by speaking (147:18); when he speaks, people are also *healed* (Matt 8:8).

107:23-32 Sailors give thanks to the Lord when he saves them from the chaos and peril of the sea.

107:25-29 The same God who speaks

and brings about the sailors' distress can also calm the storm with just a word (cp. Jon 1:4; Matt 8:26).

107:32 This call for public praise expands the refrains in 107:21-22 and 107:31.

107:33-42 These two sections (107:33-38, 39-42) expand the theme of the Lord's sovereignty over things that humans cannot control.

107:33-35 The Lord can choose to make the earth fertile or barren (74:15; Isa 35:6-7).

107:38 God's presence can be seen in

the abundance of his people's *families* and *herds* (127:3; 133:3; cp. 109:8).

107:39 People often *become impoverished* when their rulers practice *oppression*.

107:40 In his *contempt* for human rulers, the Lord rectifies their corruption on earth.

107:41 The large *families of the poor* are evidence of God's blessing.

107:42-43 Justice prevails in God's world (1:6), and Israel's history demonstrates God's faithful love.

PSALM 108*A song. A psalm of David.*

- 1 My heart is confident in you, O God;
no wonder I can sing your praises
with all my heart!
- 2 Wake up, lyre and harp!
I will wake the dawn with my song.
- 3 I will thank you, LORD, among all the
people.
I will sing your praises among the
nations.
- 4 For your unfailing love is higher than the
heavens.
Your faithfulness reaches to the
clouds.
- 5 Be exalted, O God, above the highest
heavens.
May your glory shine over all the
earth.
- 6 Now rescue your beloved people.
Answer and save us by your power.
- 7 God has promised this by his holiness:
"I will divide up Shechem with joy.
I will measure out the valley of
Succoth.
- 8 Gilead is mine,
and Manasseh, too.
Ephraim, my helmet, will produce my
warriors,
and Judah, my scepter, will produce
my kings.
- 9 But Moab, my washbasin, will become
my servant,
and I will wipe my feet on Edom
and shout in triumph over Philistia."
- 10 Who will bring me into the fortified
city?
Who will bring me victory over
Edom?
- 11 Have you rejected us, O God?
Will you no longer march with our
armies?
- 12 Oh, please help us against our enemies,
for all human help is useless.
- 13 With God's help we will do mighty
things,
for he will trample down our foes.

PSALM 109*For the choir director: A psalm of David.*

- 1 O God, whom I praise,
don't stand silent and aloof
- 2 while the wicked slander me
and tell lies about me.
- 3 They surround me with hateful words
and fight against me for no reason.
- 4 I love them, but they try to destroy me
with accusations
even as I am praying for them!
- 5 They repay evil for good,
and hatred for my love.
- 6 They say, "Get an evil person to turn
against him.
Send an accuser to bring him to trial.
- 7 When his case comes up for judgment,
let him be pronounced guilty.
Count his prayers as sins.
- 8 Let his years be few;
let someone else take his position.
- 9 May his children become fatherless,
and his wife a widow.
- 10 May his children wander as beggars
and be driven from their ruined
homes.
- 11 May creditors seize his entire estate,
and strangers take all he has earned.
- 12 Let no one be kind to him;
let no one pity his fatherless children.
- 13 May all his offspring die.
May his family name be blotted out in
a single generation.
- 14 May the LORD never forget the sins of his
fathers;
may his mother's sins never be erased
from the record.
- 15 May the LORD always remember these
sins,
and may his name disappear from
human memory.

108:1-5
//Ps 57:7-11**108:4**
Ps 113:4
shamayim (8064)
* Isa 14:12**108:6-13**
//Ps 60:5-12**108:11**
Ps 44:9**109:1**
Ps 83:1**109:2**
Ps 52:4; 120:2**109:3**
Ps 69:4**109:4**
Ps 38:20**109:5**
John 7:7**109:6**
Zech 3:1
satan (7854)
* Zech 3:1**109:7**
Prov 28:9**109:8**
*Acts 1:20**109:9**
Exod 22:24**109:11**
Isa 1:7**109:12**
Isa 9:17**109:14**
Neh 4:5
Isa 65:6-7**109:15**
Jer 16:17**Ps 108** This psalm combines two excerpts from David's other psalms (cp. 57:5, 7-11; 60:5-12).**108:7** *by his holiness: Or in his sanctuary.***Ps 109** The psalmist begins this lament with a general charge against his accusers: They do evil in return for good (109:1-5). At the end of the psalm, he turns to the Lord in prayer, asking for his protection (109:21-25) and vengeance (109:26-31).**109:1** The psalmist sees no evidence that God cares (see 28:1).**109:4-5** The psalmist's acts of kindness and godliness (see 35:12-14) have only met with stubborn opposition and expressions of hatred.**109:6-19** The NLT translates these verses as the words of the psalmist's accusers; Hebrew lacks *They say*, which makes it unclear who is speaking.**109:8-11** Family members of those guilty of capital crimes often died with the perpetrator (Num 16:1-33; Josh 7:1-25) or had their property confiscated (1 Kgs 21:13-16).**109:8** The wicked person apparently held a *position* of leadership. Peter referred to this psalm in regard to Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:20-26).**109:13** If one's *family name* was *blotted out*, it meant there was no *offspring* to carry on the family name or remember its history (see Prov 10:7).**109:14** Children inherit the sinful nature of their parents (51:5; Exod 20:5; Eph 2:3). The speaker wants the Lord to punish the perpetrator for the guilt of family members who went before him (cp. Matt 23:35-36).

109:16

Ps 37:32

109:17

Matt 7:2

109:18

Ps 73:6

109:19

Ezek 7:27

109:20

Isa 3:11

2 Tim 4:14

109:21

Ps 25:11

Ezek 36:22

109:22

Ps 40:17

Prov 18:14

109:24

Heb 12:12

109:26

Ps 119:86

109:28

2 Sam 16:11-12

109:29

Job 8:22

Ps 35:26

109:30

Ps 35:18

**yadah* (3034)

*Ps 136:1

**halal* (1984)

*Ps 113:1

109:31

Ps 16:8; 37:33

110:1

*Matt 22:44

*Mark 12:36; 14:62

*Luke 20:42

*Acts 2:34

*Heb 1:13

110:2

Ps 45:6

Dan 7:13-14

110:3

Judg 5:2

Ps 96:9

16 For he refused all kindness to others;
he persecuted the poor and needy,
and he hounded the brokenhearted
to death.

17 He loved to curse others;
now you curse him.

He never blessed others;
now don't you bless him.

18 Cursing is as natural to him as his
clothing,
or the water he drinks,
or the rich food he eats.

19 Now may his curses return and cling to
him like clothing;
may they be tied around him like a
belt."

20 May those curses become the LORD's
punishment
for my accusers who speak evil of me.

21 But deal well with me, O Sovereign LORD,
for the sake of your own reputation!

Rescue me
because you are so faithful and good.

22 For I am poor and needy,
and my heart is full of pain.

23 I am fading like a shadow at dusk;
I am brushed off like a locust.

24 My knees are weak from fasting,
and I am skin and bones.

25 I am a joke to people everywhere;
when they see me, they shake their
heads in scorn.

26 Help me, O LORD my God!
Save me because of your unfailing
love.

27 Let them see that this is your doing,
that you yourself have done it, LORD.

28 Then let them curse me if they like,
but you will bless me!

When they attack me, they will be
disgraced!

But I, your servant, will go right on
rejoicing!

29 May my accusers be clothed with
disgrace;
may their humiliation cover them like
a cloak.

30 But I will ^agive repeated thanks to the
LORD,
^bpraising him to everyone.

31 For he stands beside the needy,
ready to save them from those who
condemn them.

PSALM 110

A psalm of David.

1 The LORD said to my Lord,
"Sit in the place of honor at my right
hand
until I humble your enemies,
making them a footstool under your
feet."

2 The LORD will extend your powerful
kingdom from Jerusalem;
you will rule over your enemies.

3 When you go to war,
your people will serve you willingly.
You are arrayed in holy garments,
and your strength will be renewed
each day like the morning dew.

109:16 The defendant committed capital crimes and did not exercise even basic decency.

109:18 *Cursing* is the accused person's whole way of life.

109:20 The psalmist appeals to the principle of retribution (see 94:23).

109:21-25 Vulnerable and miserable, the psalmist appeals to his Lord for help. The accusations have killed his inner spirit and even his physical stamina.

109:21 The Lord's *reputation* is at stake. If the wicked triumph, others could think that the Lord is also wicked and be drawn to that wickedness (1:1).

109:23 A *shadow at dusk* suggests a transitory, empty existence (102:11; 144:4); a single *locust* could easily be *brushed off* one's clothing.

109:26-31 These verses form a prayer for God's presence and for vindication. The psalmist wants everyone to see that

he is vindicated by the Lord, not by any human agent.

109:28 The Lord's *servant* demonstrates loyalty and obedience.

109:29 The psalmist had been accused of being clothed with curses (109:18); now he asks that his accusers be *clothed with disgrace* and *humiliation*.

Ps 110 Jesus and the apostles cite this psalm to explain Jesus' unique ministry and status as the Messiah (Matt 22:43-45; Acts 2:32-36). It reaffirms God's covenant with David and gives hope for the future (see 2 Sam 7:8-16).

110:1 The king of Israel had the great privilege of being the Lord's adopted son (Ps 2; 1 Chr 22:10), but he fell (Ps 89). This decree restores and heightens his position. • *The LORD*: Hebrew *Yahweh*, the name of God (see Exod 3:6-14; 6:2-8; 20:2). • *My Lord* (Hebrew *'adoni*) means "my master" or "my superior." The psalmist viewed God's messianic ruler as his superior. The NT frequently

cites this psalm to validate Jesus' claim to be the Messiah (Matt 22:44-45; Mark 12:36-37; Luke 20:42-44; Acts 2:34-35; Heb 1:13). • The Lord's *right hand* represents his authority, strength, presence, and benefits. The Lord chose the descendant of David and raised him up to be close to him (80:17). Jesus claimed this position for himself (Matt 26:64; Mark 14:62; 16:19; Luke 22:69), and the apostles announced that Jesus, having ascended to heaven, sits at the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:33; 5:31; 7:55-56; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2). • Ancient Near Eastern kings were sometimes portrayed as placing their feet on the backs of their conquered *enemies* as on a *footstool* (see Heb 10:12-13).

110:2-3 The *kingdom* will expand and increase, beginning from Jerusalem, until all enemies are conquered. • *Jerusalem*: Hebrew *Zion*. See "Mount Zion, the City of God" at Ps 48, p. 947.

4 The LORD has taken an oath and will not break his vow:
 “You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.”

5 The Lord stands at your right hand to protect you.
 He will strike down many kings when his anger erupts.

6 He will punish the nations and fill their lands with corpses; he will shatter heads over the whole earth.

7 But he himself will be refreshed from brooks along the way.
 He will be victorious.

5 He gives food to those who fear him; he always remembers his covenant.

6 He has shown his great power to his people by giving them the lands of other nations.

7 All he does is just and good, and all his commandments are trustworthy.

8 They are forever true, to be obeyed faithfully and with integrity.

9 He has paid a full ransom for his people. He has guaranteed his covenant with them forever.
 What a holy, awe-inspiring name he has!

110:4
^aHeb 5:6; 7:17, 21
^calam (5769)
 • Ps 119:44

110:5
 Ps 2:5, 12; 16:8
 Rom 2:5
 Rev 6:17

111:1
 Ps 138:1

111:2
 Ps 92:5

111:3
 Ps 96:6; 145:5

111:4
 Ps 86:15; 103:8

111:5
 Matt 6:31-33

111:7
 Ps 19:7-9
 Rev 15:3-4

111:8
 Isa 40:8
 Matt 5:18

111:9
 Ps 99:3
 Luke 1:68

111:10
 Prov 1:7, 9; 3:4-5; 9:10
^kkhokmah (2451)
 • Prov 13:10

112:1
 Ps 119:16
^yyare' (3372)
 • Jon 1:9

112:2
 Ps 25:13

112:3
 Prov 3:16-17; 8:18

112:4
 Job 11:17
 Ps 97:11

10 Fear of the LORD is the foundation of true wisdom.
 All who obey his commandments will grow in wisdom.
 Praise him forever!

PSALM 111

1 Praise the LORD!
 I will thank the LORD with all my heart as I meet with his godly people.

2 How amazing are the deeds of the LORD! All who delight in him should ponder them.

3 Everything he does reveals his glory and majesty.
 His righteousness never fails.

4 He causes us to remember his wonderful works.
 How gracious and merciful is our LORD!

PSALM 112

1 Praise the LORD!
 How joyful are those who fear the LORD and delight in obeying his commands.

2 Their children will be successful everywhere;

110:4 The Lord had made an unbreakable *oath* and covenant, so his apparent rejection of David’s dynasty (89:38) in the Exile had led to a crisis. The placement of Ps 110 in Book Five reaffirms the future of the dynasty: David’s descendant must conform to God’s standard of integrity (Ps 101). His ministry will be transformed as he serves under God’s kingship (Pss 93–100). • *You are a priest forever*: The role of God’s messianic ruler changes. The priestly kingship of David and his descendants extended to serving as patrons of the Temple. David had the Ark brought to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6:15) and arranged for the Temple service (1 Chr 6:31-48; 15:11-26; 16:4-42; 23:4-32; 25:1). Solomon supervised the Temple construction (1 Kgs 5–7). Even so, Israel’s kingship was separate from its priesthood. In the messianic kingdom, the king would also minister as priest, as *Melchizedek*, king of Salem (Gen 14:18), had done. The NT develops the ministry of Jesus Christ as a fulfillment of this new order (see Heb 5:6-10; 6:20–7:25).

110:5-7 The new priestly role of David’s descendant does not rescind his old role as conquering ruler. He must still bring the nations under his rule (110:2-3; see Ps 2).

110:5-6 at your right hand: This position brings help and protection (see 16:7-8;

108:13). • The Lord *will strike down* rebellious *kings*. Rebellion against the Lord is a capital offense (Ps 2; Rom 6:23).

110:7 God’s messianic ruler obtains victory as a vigorous person, as if he had received nourishment *from brooks along the way* (110:3).

Pss 111–117 The refrain *Praise the LORD!* (Hebrew *halelu yah*) characterizes this group of psalms.

Ps 111 This psalm is a Hebrew acrostic poem; after the introductory note of praise, each line begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. • This wisdom psalm contains many references to the works of the Lord that reveal his character. God is righteous, gracious, compassionate, faithful, just, trustworthy, upright, holy, and awe-inspiring (111:3, 4, 7, 8, 9). God’s character gives hope in the covenant relationship (111:5). He rescued Israel from Egypt (111:9), gave them the land (111:6), and provides for his people (111:5). However, God demands that the beneficiaries of this relationship also be people of righteousness and integrity.

111:1-5 The godly praise God and delight themselves in his great works. His mighty acts reflect his righteousness, grace, and compassion (see 116:5-7). All who submit themselves to him experience his glory.

111:5 God takes care of his people’s needs,

even providing *food*. He *remembers his covenant* with Abraham (see 105:8-11).

111:6-8 Giving Israel *the lands of other nations was just and good* because the Lord was executing his justice on those he dispossessed and showing grace to the Israelites. However, if the Israelites do not live *faithfully and with integrity*, they will also be dispossessed. The Lord’s people must reflect his character.

111:9 The people of the Exodus generation went free because of God’s grace.

111:10 *True wisdom* is the source of life (Prov 3:18; 9:11; Eccl 7:12); it begins with the *fear of the LORD* (Prov 9:10).

Ps 112 This psalm is a Hebrew acrostic poem; after the introductory note of praise, each line begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. • The psalm reiterates the themes of wisdom and the fear of the Lord (Ps 111). The wise have reason to be happy (112:1-5) and vigorous (112:6-10).

112:1-5 The fear of the Lord leads to a life of wisdom that honors God and blesses the family and community. The godly joyfully imitate God; their obedience is not slavish.

112:2-3 *successful*: All will know the *children of godly people* (see 127:4) because the godly leave a legacy for their children (see 1:3; cp. Matt 6:20).

112:5
Ps 37:21, 26

112:6
Ps 15:5; 55:22

112:7
Ps 56:4

112:8
Ps 56:10-11

112:9
Ps 148:14
*2 Cor 9:9

112:10
Matt 8:12
Luke 13:28

113:1
Ps 135:1
halal (1984)
* Ps 119:164

113:2
Dan 2:20

113:3
Ps 50:1

113:4
Ps 8:1; 97:9; 99:2

113:5
Ps 89:6; 103:19

113:6
Ps 11:4
Isa 57:15

113:7
1 Sam 2:8

113:8
Job 36:7

113:9
1 Sam 2:5
Ps 68:6
Isa 54:1

114:1
Exod 13:3

114:2
Exod 19:6; 29:45-46
Ps 78:68-69

114:3
Exod 14:21
Josh 3:13-14, 16

- an entire generation of godly people will be blessed.
- 3 They themselves will be wealthy, and their good deeds will last forever.
- 4 Light shines in the darkness for the godly. They are generous, compassionate, and righteous.
- 5 Good comes to those who lend money generously and conduct their business fairly.
- 6 Such people will not be overcome by evil. Those who are righteous will be long remembered.
- 7 They do not fear bad news; they confidently trust the LORD to care for them.
- 8 They are confident and fearless and can face their foes triumphantly.
- 9 They share freely and give generously to those in need. Their good deeds will be remembered forever.
- 10 The wicked will see this and be infuriated. They will grind their teeth in anger; they will slink away, their hopes thwarted.

PSALM 113

¹ Praise the LORD!

Yes, ^fgive praise, O servants of the LORD.
^fPraise the name of the LORD!

- ² Blessed be the name of the LORD now and forever.
- ³ Everywhere—from east to west—praise the name of the LORD.
- ⁴ For the LORD is high above the nations; his glory is higher than the heavens.
- ⁵ Who can be compared with the LORD our God, who is enthroned on high?
- ⁶ He stoops to look down on heaven and on earth.
- ⁷ He lifts the poor from the dust and the needy from the garbage dump.
- ⁸ He sets them among princes, even the princes of his own people!
- ⁹ He gives the childless woman a family, making her a happy mother.

Praise the LORD!

PSALM 114

- ¹ When the Israelites escaped from Egypt—when the family of Jacob left that foreign land—
- ² the land of Judah became God's sanctuary, and Israel became his kingdom.
- ³ The Red Sea saw them coming and hurried out of their way!
The water of the Jordan River turned away.

112:4-5 The godly imitate God by being *generous, compassionate, and righteous* (51:1; 111:1-10; 2 Cor 9:9). They *lend money* to the poor without charging interest (15:5; 112:9; Exod 22:25).

112:6 The honesty and compassion of the wise keeps them from stumbling (15:5; 37:23-24), ensuring that they *will be long remembered* (Prov 10:7).

112:8 Because the godly joyfully expect God to prevail and rescue them, they *face their foes triumphantly* (59:10; 112:4; 118:7).

112:9 Paul quotes this verse in his instructions about generous giving (2 Cor 9:9).

112:10 The *wicked . . . grind their teeth in anger* out of their bitter envy (35:16; 37:12). The vigor and reputation of the godly cause conflict with those who want them dead. • The wicked *will slink away* out of fear and shame.

Pss 113–118 These psalms form what is known as the “Egyptian Hallel” (*hallel* means “praise”) because Jews use the collection in the celebration of Passover, which was instituted at the beginning of the exodus from Egypt. Psalms

113–114 are recited before the Passover meal and Pss 115–118 afterward.

Ps 113 This hymn of praise exalts the greatness of the Lord's name and glory. God is greatly exalted and glorious in heaven (113:4); he also stoops down to take care of the lowly and needy on earth (113:5-9).

113:1-3 *The name of the LORD* (Hebrew *Yahweh*; see Exod 3:15) reveals his being, character, and reputation. He is exalted in time (*now and forever*) and in space (*from east to west*).

113:4 The Lord's glory reaches to the *heavens* (57:5, 11; 99:2; 108:5; 138:6; Isa 6:1; 57:15) and throughout the world of human relationships.

113:5-9 The incomparable Lord intimately involves himself in caring for people on earth.

113:6 The Lord *stoops* to the world's level to be directly involved with his people (see 138:6; Phil 2:6-8).

113:7-8a These phrases are a quotation from Hannah's prayer of praise (1 Sam 2:8-9a).

113:9 A *childless woman* was customarily treated with disdain (Gen 16:4);

the Lord has the power to make her a *happy mother*, as he made Sarah (Gen 21:2), Rebekah (Gen 25:21), Rachel (Gen 30:23), and Hannah (1 Sam 1:20). • God's greatness and goodness provide ample reason to *praise* him.

Ps 114 This lyrical celebration of the Lord's power in nature recalls Israel's beginning as a nation at the Exodus (114:1-2) and upon their entry to the Promised Land (114:3-6). It promotes reverence for the God of Jacob (114:7-8).

114:1-2 At the time of Israel's exodus from Egypt and their entrance into the Promised Land, Israel was one holy *kingdom* (Exod 19:5-6). • The separate references to *the land of Judah* and *Israel* indicate that the psalm was composed after the kingdom was divided (1 Kgs 12:16-17; cp. 1 Sam 11:8; 1 Kgs 1:35), and probably after the Exile. *The land of Judah became God's sanctuary* because the people worshiped God; his Tabernacle and later his Temple were located there.

114:3-4 *The Red Sea*: Literally *the sea*; also in 114:5. • *hurried out of their way!* The waters divided for Israel to escape Egypt (77:17-18; Exod 14). • *The Jordan River turned away* when Israel arrived

4 The mountains skipped like rams,
the hills like lambs!
5 What's wrong, Red Sea, that made you
hurry out of their way?
What happened, Jordan River, that
you turned away?
6 Why, mountains, did you skip like rams?
Why, hills, like lambs?
7 Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the
Lord,
at the presence of the God of Jacob.
8 He turned the rock into a pool of
water;
yes, a spring of water flowed from
solid rock.

PSALM 115

1 Not to us, O LORD, not to us,
but to your name goes all the glory
for your unfailing love and
faithfulness.
2 Why let the nations say,
"Where is their God?"
3 Our God is in the heavens,
and he does as he wishes.
4 Their idols are merely things of silver
and gold,
shaped by human hands.
5 They have mouths but cannot speak,
and eyes but cannot see.
6 They have ears but cannot hear,
and noses but cannot smell.
7 They have hands but cannot feel,
and feet but cannot walk,
and throats but cannot make a
sound.

8 And those who make idols are just like
them,
as are all who trust in them.
9 O Israel, trust the LORD!
He is your helper and your shield.
10 O priests, descendants of Aaron, trust
the LORD!
He is your helper and your shield.
11 All you who fear the LORD, trust the LORD!
He is your helper and your shield.
12 The LORD ^gremembers us and will
bless us.
He will bless the people of Israel
and bless the priests, the descendants
of Aaron.
13 He will bless those who fear the LORD,
both great and lowly.
14 May the LORD richly bless
both you and your children.
15 May you be blessed by the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.
16 The heavens belong to the LORD,
but he has given the earth to all
humanity.
17 The dead cannot sing praises to the
LORD,
for they have gone into the silence of
the grave.
18 But we can praise the LORD
both now and forever!
Praise the LORD!

PSALM 116

1 I love the LORD because he hears my voice
and my prayer for mercy.

114:4
Ps 29:5-6
Hab 3:6
114:5
Hab 3:8
114:7
Ps 96:9
114:8
Exod 17:5-6
Deut 8:15
115:1
Ps 29:2
Isa 48:11
Ezek 36:22, 32
115:2
Ps 42:3; 79:10
115:3
Ps 103:19; 135:6
Dan 4:35
115:4-11
//Ps 135:15-20
115:5
Jer 10:5
115:8
Ps 135:18
115:9
Ps 33:20; 62:8
115:11
Ps 103:11; 135:20
115:12
Ps 98:3
^gzakar (2142)
↳ Ps 119:55
115:13
Ps 128:1, 4
115:14
Deut 1:11
115:15
Gen 1:1; 14:19
115:16
Ps 8:6; 89:11
115:17
Ps 6:5; 31:17
115:18
Ps 113:2
116:1
Ps 18:1; 66:19

to cross over (see Josh 3). • *skipped like rams*: God's presence caused the mountains to quake (Exod 19:16-20).

114:8 The Lord miraculously provided for his people in hard times after the Exile, just as he had done in the wilderness after the Exodus.

Ps 115 In this hymn of thanksgiving for God's blessings, the community ascribes all glory to the name of the Lord, who is the true source of hope and blessing. Meanwhile, those who trust in idols are greatly disappointed. The blessing of the Creator of heaven and earth extends to future generations (115:14), and especially to the priesthood (115:12).

115:1-3 The community confesses their faith that God will rescue them for the glory of his name.

115:2-3 *Where is their God?* People deny God's presence or power when he does not act as they think he should (cp. 14:1; 42:3, 10). However, *God is in the heavens*—he has all power, authority,

and knowledge. He *does as he wishes*, not what people think he should do. He works out his plans in accord with his will (Eph 1:11) and acts in his own time and in ways he chooses.

115:4-11 This entire section is repeated in 135:15-20. • Unlike the Lord (95:3-5), *idols* cannot do anything; they are good for nothing.

115:8 Worshiping idols leads one astray and corrupts those *who trust in them* (Isa 44:20).

115:9-11 *Israel . . . priests . . . you who fear the LORD*: The psalmist calls on all those in the God-fearing community to commit their ways to the living God. The threefold address assures them that the Lord is their true *helper* and *shield* (cp. 118:2-4).

115:12-13 The groups named in 115:9-11 receive assurance of the Lord's blessing, regardless of their social status (see 113:8).

115:14-15 The psalmist blesses (107:37-38, 41) all who trust in and fear the Lord. The Creator will care for the

families of those who fear him. • *who made heaven and earth*: This statement speaks of the Lord's all-encompassing power in creation.

115:16-18 *The heavens belong to the LORD*: God's exaltation begins in heaven (113:4), far above the gods of the nations. Of course, the earth also belongs to him (47:9; 95:4). • *The dead* cannot participate in God's blessings. The living *praise* God in thanksgiving for his blessings (79:13).

Ps 116 This hymn of thanksgiving rejoices in God's character and in rescue from death (116:1-11). It gives an assurance of God's protection in life and reminds the godly that the Lord watches over them even at death. The psalmist commits to living as God's servant and resolves to honor him publicly (116:12-19).

116:1-4 The psalmist praises the Lord for answering his prayers and rescuing him from death.

116:1 *I love the LORD*: This unique opening expresses affection for and commit-

116:2
Ps 17:6; 31:2

116:3
Ps 18:4-6
ʾshe ol (7585)
• Ps 139:8

116:4
Ps 22:20; 118:5

116:5
Exod 34:6
rakham (7355)
• Isa 30:18

116:6
Ps 142:6

116:7
Ps 13:6
Matt 11:29

116:8
Ps 49:15; 56:13

116:10
*2 Cor 4:13

116:12
2 Chr 32:25
1 Thes 3:9

116:14
Ps 22:25; 50:14

116:15
Ps 72:14

116:16
ʾebed (5650)
• Ps 119:65

117:1
*Rom 15:11

117:2
Ps 100:5

118:1
Ps 136:1-26

118:2
Ps 115:9

118:5
Ps 18:19; 120:1

118:6
Job 19:27
*Heb 13:6

118:7
Ps 54:7

2 Because he bends down to listen,
I will pray as long as I have breath!
3 Death wrapped its ropes around me;
the terrors of the ^hgrave overtook me.
I saw only trouble and sorrow.

4 Then I called on the name of the LORD:
"Please, LORD, save me!"

5 How kind the LORD is! How good he is!
So ⁱmerciful, this God of ours!

6 The LORD protects those of childlike faith;
I was facing death, and he saved me.

7 Let my soul be at rest again,
for the LORD has been good to me.

8 He has saved me from death,
my eyes from tears,
my feet from stumbling.

9 And so I walk in the LORD's presence
as I live here on earth!

10 I believed in you, so I said,
"I am deeply troubled, LORD."

11 In my anxiety I cried out to you,
"These people are all liars!"

12 What can I offer the LORD
for all he has done for me?

13 I will lift up the cup of salvation
and praise the LORD's name for
saving me.

14 I will keep my promises to the LORD
in the presence of all his people.

15 The LORD cares deeply
when his loved ones die.

16 O LORD, I am your ^servant;
yes, I am your ^servant, born into your
household;
you have freed me from my chains.

17 I will offer you a sacrifice of
thanksgiving
and call on the name of the LORD.

18 I will fulfill my vows to the LORD
in the presence of all his people—

19 in the house of the LORD
in the heart of Jerusalem.

Praise the LORD!

PSALM 117

1 Praise the LORD, all you nations.

Praise him, all you people of the earth.

2 For he loves us with unfailing love;
the LORD's faithfulness endures
forever.

Praise the LORD!

PSALM 118

1 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good!
His faithful love endures forever.

2 Let all Israel repeat:
"His faithful love endures forever."

3 Let Aaron's descendants, the priests,
repeat:

"His faithful love endures forever."

4 Let all who fear the LORD repeat:
"His faithful love endures forever."

5 In my distress I prayed to the LORD,
and the LORD answered me and set
me free.

6 The LORD is for me, so I will have no fear.
What can mere people do to me?

7 Yes, the LORD is for me; he will help me.
I will look in triumph at those who
hate me.

ment to the Lord (see 18:1; Deut 6:5) on
the basis of what the Lord has done.

116:2 Because the Lord responds to the
cry of his people (107:41; 113:6-8), the
psalmist now strongly believes in prayer.

116:3 of the grave: Hebrew of *Sheol*.
See note on 6:5. • It isn't clear if the
psalmist's crisis was a literal near-death
experience or if he was using the term
figuratively.

116:4 This is the first of three times
that the psalmist calls on the Lord's
name (i.e., reputation).

116:5-7 The gracious, righteous, and
compassionate Lord (see 111:1-5) res-
cued and gave rest to the psalmist.

116:6 People with *childlike faith* readily
receive his wisdom and instruction
(19:7-11; Matt 18:3-4).

116:8-11 The psalmist's near-death cri-
sis made him more aware of life and of
walking before the Lord. Though he had
been in anguish, the Lord was faithful.
However, *people are all liars*.

116:9 I walk in the Lord's presence: The
psalmist already lived with integrity,
but since his experience of deep
distress, he now enjoys open fellowship
with the Lord (see 56:13; cp. Job 42:5).

116:10 I believed in you: Paul quotes
this phrase in 2 Cor 4:13.

116:12-14 The Lord's gracious gifts are
so great that the psalmist can do noth-
ing to repay his debt. Keeping his prom-
ises publicly demonstrates his gratitude.
• *All he has done* for the psalmist
includes answers to prayer, rescue, and
life. • The *cup of salvation* overflows
with God's blessings (23:5), unlike the
cup of judgment (75:8). • The psalmist
makes *promises* ("vows," 116:18) to
praise the Lord publicly (116:17-18).

116:15-19 No one lives or dies outside
of God's will. Having been given a
second chance at life, the poet readily
commits himself to the Lord with
renewed acts of public devotion.

Ps 117 This psalm, the shortest in the
Psalter, invites *all . . . people of the*

earth to praise the LORD because of his
unfailing love and enduring *faithful-
ness*.

117:1 Paul quotes this verse to show
that Gentiles would eventually praise
the God of Israel (Rom 15:11).

Ps 118 With an exultant testimony, the
psalmist gives thanks for the Lord's
goodness and encourages others to
trust in his faithful love (118:1-4, 29).
This poem is the last of the Egyptian
Hallel (Pss 113-118).

**118:2-4 Israel . . . Aaron's descendants
. . . all who fear the LORD:** These three
groups represent the whole of the
covenant community (cp. 115:9-11;
135:19-20).

118:5-9 The Lord alone is the psalmist's
helper.

118:6-7 The LORD is for me: Cp. Rom
8:31; Heb 13:6. • God's presence cancels
out the need to fear *mere people*
(56:11). The psalmist joyfully expects
God's rescue (59:10; 112:8).

8 It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in people.

9 It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes.

10 Though hostile nations surrounded me, I destroyed them all with the authority of the LORD.

11 Yes, they surrounded and attacked me, but I destroyed them all with the authority of the LORD.

12 They swarmed around me like bees; they blazed against me like a crackling fire.

But I destroyed them all with the authority of the LORD.

13 My enemies did their best to kill me, but the LORD rescued me.

14 The LORD is my strength and my song; he has given me victory.

15 Songs of joy and victory are sung in the camp of the godly.

The strong right arm of the LORD has done glorious things!

16 The strong right arm of the LORD is raised in triumph.

The strong right arm of the LORD has done glorious things!

17 I will not die; instead, I will live to tell what the LORD has done.

18 The LORD has punished me severely, but he did not let me die.

19 Open for me the gates where the righteous enter, and I will go in and thank the LORD.

20 These gates lead to the presence of the LORD,

and the godly enter there.

21 I thank you for answering my prayer and giving me victory!

22 The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone.

23 This is the LORD's doing, and it is wonderful to see.

24 This is the day the LORD has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.

25 Please, LORD, please save us.

Please, LORD, please give us success.

26 Bless the one who comes in the name of the LORD.

We bless you from the house of the LORD.

27 The LORD is God, shining upon us.

Take the sacrifice and bind it with cords on the altar.

28 You are my God, and I will praise you!

You are my God, and I will ^kexalt you!

29 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever.

PSALM 119

Aleph (ש)

1 Joyful are people of ^aintegrity, who follow the ⁱnstructions of the LORD.

2 Joyful are those who obey his laws and search for him with all their hearts.

3 They do not compromise with evil, and they walk only in his paths.

118:8
2 Chr 32:7-8
Isa 57:13

118:10
Ps 18:40

118:12
Deut 1:44

118:14
Exod 15:2
Isa 12:2

118:15
Ps 89:13
Luke 1:51

118:18
Jer 31:18
1 Cor 11:32
2 Cor 6:9

118:19
Isa 26:2

118:22
^{*}Matt 21:42
^{*}Mark 12:10-11
^{*}Luke 20:17
^{*}Acts 4:11
^{*1} Pet 2:7

118:23
^{*}Matt 21:42
^{*}Mark 12:11

118:26
^{*}Matt 21:9
^{*}Mark 11:9

^{*}Luke 13:35; 19:38
^{*}John 12:13

118:27
1 Pet 2:9

118:28
Exod 15:2
Isa 25:1
^rum (7311)
► Prov 14:34

119:1
Prov 11:20; 13:6
^{*}tamim (8549)
► Ps 119:80
^{*}torah (8451)
► Ps 119:18

119:2
Deut 4:29; 10:12;
11:13; 30:2

118:8-9 Trusting in the Lord is better than placing confidence in even the most powerful human leaders (118:6; 146:3).

118:10-12 Strength comes in the name of the Lord, declared by the threefold mention of the attackers, the Lord's name, and victory. • Even when hostile people *blazed . . . like a crackling fire*, the Lord caused them to subside like burning thorns (see Isa 9:18; 10:17).

118:14-18 The psalmist celebrates the victory of the Lord's *strong right arm*, which kept him from death.

118:17-21 God has restored the psalmist from death to life, so he praises the Lord publicly (cp. 116:6, 12-19).

118:22-24 The psalmist sees his own salvation as the beginning of a new day in which the Lord will do great things.

118:22 The *cornerstone* (or *keystone*) of a building or an arch gives the structure its shape and foundation. It is the most important of all the stones. The Lord chooses and places this stone for his

sanctuary (Isa 28:16). Jesus referred to himself as this cornerstone (Matt 21:42; Mark 12:10-11; Luke 20:17; see Acts 4:11; Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:6-7).

118:24 *This is the day the LORD has made*: The day of the Lord's victory has already arrived, although its completion awaits another day (118:25).

118:25-29 The psalmist concludes with prayer and thanksgiving, anticipating an even greater revelation of God's victory and rescue.

118:26 *The one who comes in the name of the LORD* brings the Lord's complete victory (see 118:10-12). • During Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, the crowds called out various blessings, including phrases taken from this verse (Matt 21:9; Mark 11:9; Luke 19:38; John 12:13). Jesus himself quoted this passage as he wept over Jerusalem (Matt 23:39; Luke 13:35).

Ps 119 This psalm is a Hebrew acrostic poem; there are twenty-two stanzas, one for each successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Each of the eight

verses within each stanza begins with the Hebrew letter named in its heading. Psalm 119 combines elements of wisdom, lament, praise, thanksgiving, and confession. Eight Hebrew words are used frequently, translated as "instructions," "laws," "words," "regulations," "statutes," "commands," "decrees," "commandments," and "promises." Together, these words encourage love for and obedience to God's instructions, as found in the Scriptures (see 2 Tim 3:14-17). The expression of deep commitment to these instructions unifies the psalm.

119:1-8 *Aleph* (ש): God, the author of these *instructions*, commands that his followers live by them. The psalmist prays to be given the grace to live by that revelation.

119:1-4 The wise are happy. They are *people of integrity* (see 84:11) who *follow* the path of divine instruction. They *obey* God's revelation and *search* for it *with all their hearts* (see 27:7; 119:10, 45, 94, 155), but they reject all forms of evil. Cp. 1:1-2.

119:4
Deut 4:13

119:5
2 Chr 7:17
Prov 4:26

119:8
Ps 71:9, 18

119:9
1 Kgs 8:25
2 Chr 6:16

119:11
Luke 2:19, 51
'*khata*' (2398)
• Isa 1:4

119:13
Ps 40:9

119:15
Isa 58:2

119:18
'*torah*' (8451)
• Ps 119:34

119:19
1 Chr 29:15
Heb 11:8-9, 13

119:20
Ps 42:1-2
'*nepesh*' (5315)
• Prov 13:4

119:21
Deut 27:26
Ps 37:22

119:25
Ps 44:25

119:28
Ps 22:14
1 Pet 5:10

119:31
Deut 11:22

119:33
1 Chr 22:12
Ezek 44:24

119:34
'*torah*' (8451)
• Ps 119:97

119:35
Ps 25:4; 112:1

- 4 You have charged us
to keep your commandments carefully.
5 Oh, that my actions would consistently
reflect your decrees!
6 Then I will not be ashamed
when I compare my life with your
commandments.
7 As I learn your righteous regulations,
I will thank you by living as I should!
8 I will obey your decrees.
Please don't give up on me!

Beth (בֵּת)

- 9 How can a young person stay pure?
By obeying your word.
10 I have tried hard to find you—
don't let me wander from your
commandments.
11 I have hidden your word in my heart,
that I might not ^csin against you.
12 I praise you, O LORD;
teach me your decrees.
13 I have recited aloud
all the regulations you have given us.
14 I have rejoiced in your laws
as much as in riches.
15 I will study your commandments
and reflect on your ways.
16 I will delight in your decrees
and not forget your word.

Gimel (גִּמֵּל)

- 17 Be good to your servant,
that I may live and obey your word.
18 Open my eyes to see
the wonderful truths in your
^dinstructions.
19 I am only a foreigner in the land.
Don't hide your commands from me!
20 ^eI am always overwhelmed
with a desire for your regulations.

- 21 You rebuke the arrogant;
those who wander from your
commands are cursed.
22 Don't let them scorn and insult me,
for I have obeyed your laws.
23 Even princes sit and speak against me,
but I will meditate on your decrees.
24 Your laws please me;
they give me wise advice.
Daleth (דָּלֵת)
- 25 I lie in the dust;
revive me by your word.
26 I told you my plans, and you answered.
Now teach me your decrees.
27 Help me understand the meaning of
your commandments,
and I will meditate on your wonderful
deeds.
28 I weep with sorrow;
encourage me by your word.
29 Keep me from lying to myself;
give me the privilege of knowing your
instructions.
30 I have chosen to be faithful;
I have determined to live by your
regulations.
31 I cling to your laws.
LORD, don't let me be put to shame!
32 I will pursue your commands,
for you expand my understanding.

He (הֵא)

- 33 Teach me your decrees, O LORD;
I will keep them to the end.
34 Give me understanding and I will obey
your ^finstructions;
I will put them into practice with all
my heart.
35 Make me walk along the path of your
commands,

119:4 To *keep* God's *commandments* means to guard them by obeying them.

119:9-16 *Beth* (בֵּת): The psalmist is determined to pursue purity and encourages the cultivation of wisdom through God's principles (119:9) and instructions (119:10-16).

119:9 A *young person* tends toward foolishness (Prov 22:15) and can easily make mistakes that destroy his life (Prov 7:6-23). Youth is also the best time to develop personal discipline and pursue wisdom (see 34:11; Prov 1:4). • To *stay pure* means to remain uncorrupted by wickedness and sin and to develop the integrity of life defined in Ps 15.

119:10 The student asks God the teacher to discipline him so that he will not *wander*.

119:14 God's wisdom is far greater than

any *riches* humans seek (119:72, 127; Prov 3:14-15).

119:15 The way of wisdom includes meditating on God's *ways* (see 119:1, 3). The wise reflect on the implications of God's word.

119:17-24 *Gimel* (גִּמֵּל): Like a *foreigner* in hostile territory, God's *servant* needs God's guidance.

119:17-18 The psalmist seeks to please the Lord with a full and obedient life of praise (118:17; 119:25, 77, 116, 144, 175). Only the Lord can remove his adversaries and enable him to *see* the wonderful truths found in God's instructions.

119:20-21 The *arrogant* are probably those who mock the psalmist (119:22-23).

119:23-24 Those who *meditate* on

God's instructions receive *wise advice* from them.

119:25-32 *Daleth* (דָּלֵת): Though the poet feels anguish and sorrow, he entreats the Lord to revive him because he wants to obey the Lord. Suffering and death may result from the Lord's chastening (118:17-18; 119:67, 71, 75), but his instruction revives the weary soul (see 119:12).

119:29 *Lying to myself*: Self-deception is a fruit of sinful human nature (Jer 17:9); it leads to folly. • Access to God's word is a *privilege*, not a right.

119:33-40 *He* (הֵא): As a student, the poet asks his teacher, God, to renew life and to transform disgrace into righteousness.

for that is where my happiness is found.
 36 Give me an eagerness for your laws rather than a love for money!
 37 Turn my eyes from worthless things, and give me life through your word.
 38 Reassure me of your promise, made to those who fear you.
 39 Help me abandon my shameful ways; for your regulations are good.
 40 I long to obey your commandments! Renew my life with your goodness.

Waw (ו)

41 LORD, give me your unfailing love, the salvation that you promised me.
 42 Then I can answer those who taunt me, for I trust in your word.
 43 Do not snatch your word of truth from me, for your regulations are my only hope.
 44 I will keep on obeying your instructions forever and ever.
 45 I will walk in freedom, for I have devoted myself to your commandments.
 46 I will speak to kings about your laws, and I will not be ashamed.
 47 How I delight in your commands! How I love them!
 48 I honor and love your commands. I meditate on your decrees.

Zayin (ז)

49 Remember your promise to me; it is my only hope.
 50 Your promise revives me; it comforts me in all my troubles.
 51 The proud hold me in utter contempt, but I do not turn away from your instructions.
 52 I meditate on your age-old regulations; O LORD, they comfort me.
 53 I become furious with the wicked, because they reject your instructions.

54 Your decrees have been the theme of my songs wherever I have lived.
 55 I reflect at night on who you are, O LORD; therefore, I obey your instructions.
 56 This is how I spend my life: obeying your commandments.

Heth (ח)

57 LORD, you are mine! I promise to obey your words!
 58 With all my heart I want your blessings. Be merciful as you promised.
 59 I pondered the direction of my life, and I turned to follow your laws.
 60 I will hurry, without delay, to obey your commands.
 61 Evil people try to drag me into sin, but I am firmly anchored to your instructions.
 62 I rise at midnight to thank you for your just regulations.
 63 I am a friend to anyone who fears you—anyone who obeys your commandments.
 64 O LORD, your unfailing love fills the earth; teach me your decrees.

Teth (ט)

65 You have done many good things for me, LORD, just as you promised.
 66 I believe in your commands; now teach me good judgment and knowledge.
 67 I used to wander off until you disciplined me; but now I closely follow your word.
 68 You are good and do only good; teach me your decrees.
 69 Arrogant people smear me with lies, but in truth I obey your commandments with all my heart.

119:36 Luke 12:15; Heb 13:5
119:37 Ps 71:20; Isa 33:15
119:38 2 Sam 7:25
119:43 *syakhal* (3176) • Ps 119:114
119:44 *olam* (5769) • Ps 119:89
119:45 John 8:32
119:46 Matt 10:18; Acts 26:1-2
119:48 Josh 1:8
119:50 Rom 15:4
119:51 Job 23:11; Jer 20:7
119:52 Ps 103:18
119:53 Exod 32:19; Neh 13:25; Matt 21:12-13
119:55 Ps 42:8; 63:6; 92:2; Acts 16:25; *zakar* (2142) • Ps 137:1
119:57 Deut 33:9; Ps 16:5
119:58 Ps 41:4
119:59 Mark 14:72; Luke 15:17
119:61 Ps 140:5
119:63 Ps 101:6
119:64 Ps 33:5
119:65 *ebed* (5650) • Ps 119:124
119:66 Phil 1:9
119:68 *aman* (0539) • Prov 14:15
119:67 Jer 31:18-19; Heb 12:5-11
119:68 Ps 86:5; 125:4

119:36 The *love for money* can lead to sin (cp. Exod 18:21; 1 Tim 3:1-5; 6:10).

119:37 *through your word*: Some manuscripts read *in your ways*.

119:41-48 *Waw* (ו): The psalmist prays that God's word would continue to be the source of his *love* and *salvation*.

119:41-43 The psalmist asks to be saved from enemies who speak harshly (see 42:10; 44:16; 89:50-51; 102:8).

119:44-46 The psalmist is determined to obey the Lord.

119:47-48 The psalmist finds *delight* in God's word in spite of pain (119:92, 143).

119:49-56 *Zayin* (ז): The psalmist asks God to *remember* his word as the psalmist also remembers God's word and his name. Remembrance expresses devotion.

119:52 The *age-old regulations* are the Torah (God's "instructions" or "law"), a term that refers to the books of Genesis—Deuteronomy. See Introduction to the Pentateuch, "Literary Genres," p. 12.

119:57-64 *Heth* (ח): The psalmist seeks God's favor and *unfailing love*. Although surrounded by evildoers, he remains a loyal servant of the Lord.

119:61 *Evil people try to drag him into sin*, but the psalmist's memory of God's

word keeps him standing firm (see 119:16).

119:64 God's goodness *fills the earth*; the whole created order provides evidence of his goodness (see Isa 6:3; 11:9).

119:65-72 *Teth* (ט): The psalmist describes himself as a penitent sinner who gratefully accepts the Lord's discipline.

119:65-68 *Good judgment and knowledge* come from wisdom (111:10). • The psalmist admits that he *used to wander off* like a stray sheep (119:176). • *You are disciplined me*: See 119:25-29. • *You are good and do only good*: God's character is perfect (97:2; Jas 1:17; 1 Jn 1:5).

119:70

Ps 17:10
Isa 6:10
Jer 5:28

119:72

Prov 8:10-11, 19

119:73

Job 31:15
Ps 139:15-16

119:74

Ps 35:27

119:75

Heb 12:10
^a*tsedeq* (6664)
‡ Ps 119:123

119:78

Jer 50:32

119:80

^b*tamim* (8549)
‡ Prov 11:20

119:82

Isa 38:14
Lam 2:11

119:84

Rev 6:10

119:85

Ps 35:19; 57:6
Jer 18:22

119:89

Isa 40:8
Matt 24:35
1 Pet 1:25^c*olam* (5769)
‡ Ps 119:142

119:90

Ps 89:1-2; 148:6

119:91

Jer 31:35

119:95

Ps 40:14
Isa 32:7

119:97

^d*torah* (8451)
‡ Ps 119:113

119:98

Deut 4:6

119:100

Job 32:7-9
^e*zaqen* (2205)
‡ Prov 31:2370 Their hearts are dull and stupid,
but I delight in your instructions.71 My suffering was good for me,
for it taught me to pay attention to
your decrees.72 Your instructions are more valuable to me
than millions in gold and silver.*Yodh* (י)73 You made me; you created me.
Now give me the sense to follow your
commands.74 May all who fear you find in me a cause
for joy,
for I have put my hope in your word.75 I know, O LORD, that your regulations are
^afair;
you disciplined me because I
needed it.76 Now let your unfailing love comfort me,
just as you promised me, your servant.77 Surround me with your tender mercies
so I may live,
for your instructions are my delight.78 Bring disgrace upon the arrogant people
who lied about me;
meanwhile, I will concentrate on your
commandments.79 Let me be united with all who fear you,
with those who know your laws.80 May I be ^bblameless in keeping your
decrees;
then I will never be ashamed.*Kaph* (כ)81 I am worn out waiting for your rescue,
but I have put my hope in your word.82 My eyes are straining to see your
promises come true.
When will you comfort me?83 I am shriveled like a wineskin in the
smoke,
but I have not forgotten to obey your
decrees.84 How long must I wait?
When will you punish those who
persecute me?85 These arrogant people who hate your
instructions

have dug deep pits to trap me.

86 All your commands are trustworthy.
Protect me from those who hunt me
down without cause.87 They almost finished me off,
but I refused to abandon your
commandments.88 In your unfailing love, spare my life;
then I can continue to obey your laws.*Lamedh* (ל)89 Your ^ceternal word, O LORD,
stands firm in heaven.90 Your faithfulness extends to every
generation,
as enduring as the earth you created.91 Your regulations remain true to this
day,
for everything serves your plans.92 If your instructions hadn't sustained
me with joy,
I would have died in my misery.93 I will never forget your commandments,
for by them you give me life.94 I am yours; rescue me!
For I have worked hard at obeying
your commandments.95 Though the wicked hide along the way
to kill me,
I will quietly keep my mind on your
laws.96 Even perfection has its limits,
but your commands have no limit.*Mem* (מ)97 Oh, how I love your ^dinstructions!
I think about them all day long.98 Your commands make me wiser than
my enemies,
for they are my constant guide.99 Yes, I have more insight than my
teachers,
for I am always thinking of your laws.100 I am even wiser than my ^eelders,
for I have kept your commandments.

119:73-80 *Yodh* (י): In this prayer for comfort and compassion, the psalmist commits himself to his Creator, who has afflicted him. He wants God to pay back his enemies for the wrongs they have done. He also prays to receive the gift of life. He not only prays for himself but also considers the whole community of the godly, asking that God's answers to prayer would encourage them.

119:73-76 As God's child, the psalmist asks for divine wisdom.

119:81-88 *Kaph* (כ): The psalmist is **worn out** from **waiting** for the Lord, but his **hope** is in God's future **rescue**.

119:85-88 God's word is **trustworthy**, in contrast to the deceptions of the enemies **who hunt** the psalmist **down without cause** (see 119:78).

119:89-96 *Lamedh* (ל): The stability of God's wisdom gives understanding. God's word provides order and a framework for living, even when under pressure from adversaries.

119:95 The **wicked** intended to **kill** the psalmist, but destruction (1:6) was their own fate.

119:96 *Even perfection has its limits:* Humans cannot fully understand God's ways (see Eccl 3:11).

119:97-104 *Mem* (מ): The instruction and wisdom of God through his word are far superior to the best that human teachers can offer.

119:97-102 *make me wiser:* God's word provides wisdom and perspective. God is the true source of wisdom.

101 I have refused to walk on any evil path,
so that I may remain obedient to your
word.

102 I haven't turned away from your
regulations,
for you have taught me well.

103 How sweet your words taste to me;
they are sweeter than honey.

104 Your commandments give me
understanding;
no wonder I hate every false way of
life.

Nun (נ)

105 Your word is a lamp to guide my feet
and a light for my path.

106 I've promised it once, and I'll promise it
again:

I will obey your righteous regulations.

107 I have suffered much, O LORD;
restore my life again as you promised.

108 LORD, accept my offering of praise,
and teach me your regulations.

109 My life constantly hangs in the balance,
but I will not stop obeying your
instructions.

110 The wicked have set their traps for me,
but I will not turn from your
commandments.

111 Your laws are my treasure;
they are my heart's delight.

112 I am determined to keep your decrees
to the very end.

Samekh (ס)

113 I hate those with divided loyalties,
but I love your instructions.

114 You are my refuge and my shield;
your word is my source of hope.

115 Get out of my life, you evil-minded people,
for I intend to obey the commands of
my God.

116 LORD, sustain me as you promised, that
I may live!

Do not let my hope be crushed.

117 Sustain me, and I will be rescued;
then I will meditate continually on
your decrees.

118 But you have rejected all who stray
from your decrees.

They are only fooling themselves.

119 You skim off the wicked of the earth
like scum;

no wonder I love to obey your laws!

120 I tremble in fear of you;
I stand in awe of your regulations.

Ayin (א)

121 Don't leave me to the mercy of my
enemies,
for I have done what is just and
right.

122 Please guarantee a blessing for me.
Don't let the arrogant oppress me!

123 My eyes strain to see your rescue,
to see the truth of your promise
fulfilled.

124 I am your servant; deal with me in
unfailing love,
and teach me your decrees.

125 Give discernment to me, your servant;
then I will understand your laws.

126 LORD, it is time for you to act,
for these evil people have violated
your instructions.

127 Truly, I love your commands
more than gold, even the finest gold.

128 Each of your commandments is right.
That is why I hate every false way.

Pe (פ)

129 Your laws are wonderful.
No wonder I obey them!

130 The teaching of your word gives light,
so even the simple can understand.

131 I pant with expectation,
longing for your commands.

132 Come and show me your mercy,
as you do for all who love your name.

133 Guide my steps by your word,
so I will not be overcome by evil.

134 Ransom me from the oppression of evil
people;
then I can obey your commandments.

135 Look upon me with love;
teach me your decrees.

119:102
Deut 17:20
Josh 23:6

119:103
Ps 19:10

119:105
Prov 3:6; 6:23

119:108
Hos 14:2
Heb 13:15

119:110
Ps 91:3; 140:5

119:111
Deut 33:4
Matt 6:21
Luke 12:34

119:113
1 Kgs 18:21
Jas 1:8; 4:8
Torah (8451)
• Ps 119:174

119:114
Ps 31:20; 61:4
Yakhal (3176)
• Ps 130:7

119:115
Ps 6:8; 139:19
Matt 7:23

119:116
Ps 25:2, 20; 31:1, 17
Rom 5:5; 9:33
Phil 1:20

119:117
Ps 12:5
Prov 29:25

119:119
Isa 1:22, 25
Ezek 22:18-19

119:120
Job 4:14
Hab 3:16

119:121
2 Sam 8:15
Job 29:14

119:123
Tsedeq (6664)
• Isa 11:4

119:124
Ps 51:1; 106:45;
109:26

Ebed (5650)
• Prov 11:29

119:126
Jer 18:23
Ezek 31:11

119:128
Ps 19:8

119:130
Prov 6:23

119:131
Ps 42:1

119:133
Ps 19:13

119:134
Ps 142:6

119:135
Num 6:25
Ps 67:1

119:103-104 Wisdom is preferable
to even the finest food (19:10; 81:16).
• The psalmist had already rejected the
delusion offered by the way of folly (see
119:18, 78, 86, 163).

119:105-112 *Nun* (נ): The psalmist's
devotion to God's word comes from
within his being (119:112) and guides
his external life.

119:105-106 The Lord's *word is a
lamp* that provides perspective, hope,

and guidance in darkness (18:25-29;
119:130). Even more, this *light* gives life
(Prov 6:23).

119:108-112 *offering of praise*: This
Hebrew expression is unique in the OT
(cp. 50:23). • The psalmist is vulnerable
to his opponents because of his com-
mitment to a wise life.

119:113-120 *Samekh* (ס): The psalmist
declares his hatred of evil and his love
for God and his ways.

119:113 The godly hate the wicked and

their deeds (5:4-6; cp. Ezek 33:11).

119:121-128 *Ayin* (א): The servant of
the Lord strains to endure the evil
around him. He boldly petitions the
Lord to rescue him immediately!

119:125 Simply possessing God's law
does not provide any benefits. The
psalmist knows that only as the Lord
gives *discernment* will he *understand* it.

119:129-136 *Pe* (פ): The psalmist prays
earnestly for God to speak to him as he
suffers from his adversities.

119:136
Jer 9:1, 18; 14:17
Lam 3:48

119:137
Ezra 9:15
Jer 12:1,
Dan 9:7, 14

119:139
Ps 69:9

119:140
Ps 12:6

119:141
Ps 22:6

119:142
ʾolam (5769)
• Eccl 3:11
ʾemeth (0571)
• Ps 119:151

119:144
Ps 19:9

119:146
Ps 3:7

119:147
Ps 108:2

119:151
Ps 34:18
Isa 50:8
ʾemeth (0571)
• Ps 119:160

119:152
Luke 21:33

119:154
Ps 35:1
Mic 7:9

119:156
2 Sam 24:14

119:158
Ps 139:21

119:160
ʾemeth (0571)
• Prov 16:6

119:162
1 Sam 30:16
Isa 9:3

119:163
Ps 31:6
Prov 13:5

119:164
ʾhalal (1984)
• Ps 135:3

119:165
Prov 3:23
1 Jn 2:10
ʾshalom (7965)
• Ps 122:6

119:166
Gen 49:18

136 Rivers of tears gush from my eyes
because people disobey your
instructions.

Tsadhe (צ)

- 137 O LORD, you are righteous,
and your regulations are fair.
138 Your laws are perfect
and completely trustworthy.
139 I am overwhelmed with indignation,
for my enemies have disregarded your
words.
140 Your promises have been thoroughly
tested;
that is why I love them so much.
141 I am insignificant and despised,
but I don't forget your
commandments.
142 Your justice is ^leternal,
and your instructions are ^kperfectly
true.
143 As pressure and stress bear down on
me,
I find joy in your commands.
144 Your laws are always right;
help me to understand them so I may
live.

Qoph (ק)

- 145 I pray with all my heart; answer me,
LORD!
I will obey your decrees.
146 I cry out to you; rescue me,
that I may obey your laws.
147 I rise early, before the sun is up;
I cry out for help and put my hope in
your words.
148 I stay awake through the night,
thinking about your promise.
149 In your faithful love, O LORD, hear my
cry;
let me be revived by following your
regulations.
150 Lawless people are coming to
attack me;
they live far from your instructions.
151 But you are near, O LORD,
and all your commands are ^atrue.

152 I have known from my earliest days
that your laws will last forever.

Resh (ר)

- 153 Look upon my suffering and rescue me,
for I have not forgotten your
instructions.
154 Argue my case; take my side!
Protect my life as you promised.
155 The wicked are far from rescue,
for they do not bother with your
decrees.
156 LORD, how great is your mercy;
let me be revived by following your
regulations.
157 Many persecute and trouble me,
yet I have not swerved from your laws.
158 Seeing these traitors makes me sick at
heart,
because they care nothing for your
word.
159 See how I love your commandments,
LORD.
Give back my life because of your
unfailing love.
160 The very essence of your words is ^btruth;
all your just regulations will stand
forever.

Shin (ש)

- 161 Powerful people harass me without
cause,
but my heart trembles only at your
word.
162 I rejoice in your word
like one who discovers a great
treasure.
163 I hate and abhor all falsehood,
but I love your instructions.
164 I will ^cpraise you seven times a day
because all your regulations are just.
165 Those who love your instructions have
great ^dpeace
and do not stumble.
166 I long for your rescue, LORD,
so I have obeyed your commands.
167 I have obeyed your laws,
for I love them very much.

119:137-144 *Tsadhe* (צ): God is righteous, and his word is right and just, especially in contrast to the deceptions of the wicked.

119:139 The psalmist's *indignation* (cp. 69:9) comes from seeing the wicked disregard God's word.

119:141 The psalmist is greatly troubled by his oppressors (see 119:143; cp. Isa 53).

119:145-152 *Qoph* (ק): The psalmist

prays to the Lord at night. Although God appears to be distant, he is nearby.

119:145-148 *I pray* and *I cry out* translate the same Hebrew verb. • *I rise early* and *I stay awake* translate the same Hebrew verb.

119:150-151 *Coming to attack me* (or *are coming near to me*) is a Hebrew wordplay on *but you are near*. The wicked remain far from God's instructions, whereas the psalmist stays near, so he does not need to fear.

119:153-160 *Resh* (ר): This petition for *life* can be found throughout Ps 119, but it is concentrated in this stanza.

119:161-168 *Shin* (ש): The psalmist looks beyond his adversaries to the peace of God. This perspective allows him to praise God throughout the day.

119:161-164 *My heart trembles* . . . *I rejoice*: Fear, trembling, and joy mark the psalmist's devotion to God. • God's word is a *treasure*. • In the OT, *seven* signifies wholeness.

168 Yes, I obey your commandments and laws because you know everything I do.

Taw (ט)

169 O LORD, listen to my cry; give me the discerning mind you promised.

170 Listen to my prayer; rescue me as you promised.

171 Let praise flow from my lips, for you have taught me your decrees.

172 Let my tongue sing about your word, for all your commands are right.

173 Give me a helping hand, for I have chosen to follow your commandments.

174 O LORD, I have longed for your rescue, and your instructions are my delight.

175 Let me live so I can praise you, and may your regulations help me.

176 I have wandered away like a lost sheep; come and find me, for I have not forgotten your commands.

PSALM 120

A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem.

1 I took my troubles to the LORD; I cried out to him, and he answered my prayer.

2 Rescue me, O LORD, from liars and from all deceitful people.

3 O deceptive tongue, what will God do to you?

How will he increase your punishment?

4 You will be pierced with sharp arrows and burned with glowing coals.

5 How I suffer in far-off Meshech. It pains me to live in distant Kedar.

6 I am tired of living among people who hate peace.

7 I search for peace; but when I speak of peace, they want war!

PSALM 121

A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem.

1 I look up to the mountains— does my help come from there?

2 My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth!

3 He will not let you stumble; the one who watches over you will not slumber.

4 Indeed, he who watches over Israel never slumbers or sleeps.

5 The LORD himself watches over you! The LORD stands beside you as your protective shade.

6 The sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon at night.

7 The LORD keeps you from all harm and watches over your life.

8 The LORD keeps watch over you as you come and go, both now and forever.

119:168
Ps 139:3
Prov 5:21

119:169
Ps 18:6

119:170
Ps 22:20; 31:2; 140:6
*tekhinnah (8467)
• Jer 36:7

119:171
Isa 2:3
Mic 4:2

119:172
Ps 51:14

119:173
Josh 24:22
Ps 37:24

119:174
*torah (8451)
• Isa 5:24

119:175
Isa 55:3

119:176
Isa 53:6
Luke 15:4

120:1
Ps 18:6; 102:2

120:2
Ps 52:4
Prov 12:22

120:4
Ps 140:10

120:5
Gen 10:2; 25:13
Jer 2:10; 49:28

120:7
Ps 55:21; 109:4

121:2
Ps 115:15; 124:8

121:3
Ps 66:9; 127:1

121:5
Ps 91:4

121:6
Isa 49:10
Rev 7:16

121:7
Ps 91:10-12

119:169-176 *Taw* (ט): God's servant petitions the Lord one final time; he still feels like a lost sheep.

119:176 God, the Great Shepherd, seeks out his *lost sheep* (23:1; Luke 15:4-6).

Pss 120–134 These short, appealing songs were sung during pilgrims' journeys to Jerusalem for the national festivals three times per year (Deut 16:16). The title of these psalms includes the Hebrew word for stairs, which some take to mean "ascending to Jerusalem." These psalms (sometimes called the Songs of Ascents) take the reader on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to praise God for his goodness to Israel throughout history.

Ps 120 This short, individual lament expresses the psalmist's trust that the Lord will deal with deceptive evildoers. It also laments living as a stranger among hateful liars. The psalmist's picture of his life in a foreign land might have been a reality as he set out for Jerusalem, or it might depict his feelings and concerns as he begins his pilgrimage. Overwhelmed with injustice, he trusts

God and looks forward to arriving in the Lord's presence.

120:1-2 The psalmist is surrounded by *liars*, so he makes his lament *to the LORD*, the only one who can help him.

120:3-4 The psalmist dialogues with the liars who surround him. He feels reassured that the Lord will judge them. • The Divine Warrior (see 7:12-13; 11:4-6) will throw *sharp arrows* and *glowing coals* on the liars.

120:5-7 The psalmist feels the anguish of alienation, isolation, and perpetual conflict.

120:5 *Meshech* was a Japhethite territory far to the north of Canaan. *Kedar* was an Ishmaelite territory in Arabia. Violent people lived in both locations. Meshech was the home of a famous slave trade (Ezek 27:13; cp. Exod 21:16) and Kedar of renowned warriors (Isa 21:16-17). These places can be understood as representative of the apostate, violent land where the psalmist suffered.

120:6-7 *peace*: See 37:11; 122:6-9; 125:5; 128:6.

Ps 121 The leader of the group of pilgrims uses word pictures to assure the group of the Lord's presence during the journey.

121:1 *The mountains* were known for their idolatrous worship (Deut 12:2), and Israel was enticed to the hilltop shrines (Hos 4:13). This verse can be understood as a rhetorical question expecting a negative answer: The gods of the hilltop shrines cannot rescue anyone. Others understand the mountains to be a symbol of the Lord's strength (95:4). In that case, the question would be interpreted literally (*Where does my help come from?*), with the answer given in the next verse.

121:4-6 The Creator (121:2) is the guardian of Israel. • God *stands beside* Israel, supporting and caring for the godly (see 16:7-8). • Both the *sun* and the *moon* were regarded as deities in the ancient Near East, but the Creator limits their power. They, too, praise the Lord (148:3).

121:4 God *watches over* his own, even and especially when they face many troubles (12:5, 7; 69:29; 91:14; 146:9).

122:1
Isa 2:3
Zech 8:21

122:3
Ps 48:13

122:4
Deut 16:16

122:5
Deut 17:8
2 Chr 19:8

122:6
Ps 102:14
^sshalom (7965)
• Prov 3:17

122:7
Isa 62:6

122:8
Ps 133:1

123:1
Ps 11:4; 141:8

123:2
Mal 1:6

123:3
Neh 4:4
Ps 4:1; 51:1; 79:4;
119:22

123:4
Ps 79:4

124:1
Ps 94:17; 129:1

124:3
Ps 56:1; 57:3

124:4
Ps 18:16; 69:2

124:7
Ps 91:3; 141:10
Prov 6:5

124:8
Gen 1:1
Ps 121:2

125:1
Ps 46:5

PSALM 122

*A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem.
A psalm of David.*

- 1 I was glad when they said to me,
"Let us go to the house of the LORD."
- 2 And now here we are,
standing inside your gates, O Jerusalem.
- 3 Jerusalem is a well-built city;
its seamless walls cannot be breached.
- 4 All the tribes of Israel—the LORD's people—
make their pilgrimage here.
They come to give thanks to the name of
the LORD,
as the law requires of Israel.
- 5 Here stand the thrones where judgment
is given,
the thrones of the dynasty of David.
- 6 Pray for ^speace in Jerusalem.
May all who love this city prosper.
- 7 O Jerusalem, may there be peace within
your walls
and prosperity in your palaces.
- 8 For the sake of my family and friends,
I will say,
"May you have peace."
- 9 For the sake of the house of the LORD
our God,
I will seek what is best for you,
O Jerusalem.

PSALM 123

A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem.

- 1 I lift my eyes to you,
O God, enthroned in heaven.
- 2 We keep looking to the LORD our God for
his mercy,
just as servants keep their eyes on
their master,

as a slave girl watches her mistress for
the slightest signal.

- 3 Have mercy on us, LORD, have mercy,
for we have had our fill of contempt.
- 4 We have had more than our fill of the
scoffing of the proud
and the contempt of the arrogant.

PSALM 124

*A song for pilgrims ascending to
Jerusalem. A psalm of David.*

- 1 What if the LORD had not been on our
side?
Let all Israel repeat:
- 2 What if the LORD had not been on our
side
when people attacked us?
- 3 They would have swallowed us alive
in their burning anger.
- 4 The waters would have engulfed us;
a torrent would have overwhelmed us.
- 5 Yes, the raging waters of their fury
would have overwhelmed our very
lives.
- 6 Praise the LORD,
who did not let their teeth tear us
apart!
- 7 We escaped like a bird from a hunter's
trap.
The trap is broken, and we are free!
- 8 Our help is from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.

PSALM 125

A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem.

- 1 Those who trust in the LORD are as
secure as Mount Zion;
they will not be defeated but will
endure forever.

Ps 122 Jerusalem is here idealized as the city of God, the city of David, and the city of faith. A group of people on a pilgrimage joyfully arrive in the city (122:1-2). The poet sings an ode to Jerusalem (122:3-5) and prays for the city's peace (122:6-9).

122:1 The central sanctuary was the *house of the LORD*. This phrase originally referred to the Tabernacle (Exod 23:19; 34:26).

122:2 Several psalms celebrate or look forward to being *inside the gates* of the city (9:14; 87:2; 100:4; 118:19).

122:3-5 Jerusalem is a metaphor for God's heavenly dwelling. David was the archetype for God's chosen rulers.

122:3 In the time of David and Solomon, *Jerusalem* was renowned as a place of security (1 Kgs 10:6-7).

122:4 Each of the people of *Israel*

belonged to one of the tribes, and all of the *tribes* belonged to the Lord. • To *give thanks* is to present an offering acceptable to the Lord (50:14, 23; 100:4; 118:19). • *as the law requires of Israel*: See Exod 23:17; Deut 16:16.

122:5 the thrones where judgment is given: In the eras of *David* and Solomon (1 Kgs 3:28), Jerusalem was the home of wisdom and justice; it would be so again (Isa 9:7).

122:6-9 Prayers for the *peace* of Jerusalem are motivated by love of family and God's sanctuary.

Ps 123 This lament on the psalmist's lowly position expresses vivid trust in the Lord (123:1-2). The psalmist prays for God's favor on the community, as the reality of evil surrounds them (123:3-4). The poet looks beyond Jerusalem (Ps 122) to God's throne *in heaven*.

Ps 124 This thanksgiving song describes what might happen if the Lord were not present with his people.

124:1-2 The negative rhetorical questions emphasize the positive idea that the *LORD* was indeed on their side.

124:4-5 the raging waters of their fury: The enemies could have *overwhelmed* the Israelites and wiped them out if the Lord had not been with his people (cp. 69:15; Jer 46:8).

124:6-8 The enemies of God's people, like lions or bears who *tear* their prey with their *teeth* (see 57:4; Prov 28:15), had their mouths shut by the Lord (Dan 6:22).

Ps 125 The psalmist expresses the community's confidence in the Lord's protection (125:1-2) and prays for peace (125:3-5).

- ² Just as the mountains surround
Jerusalem,
so the LORD surrounds his people,
both now and forever.
- ³ The wicked will not rule the land of the
godly,
for then the godly might be tempted
to do wrong.
- ⁴ O LORD, do good to those who are good,
whose hearts are in tune with you.
- ⁵ But banish those who turn to crooked
ways, O LORD.
Take them away with those who do
evil.

May Israel have peace!

PSALM 126

A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem.

- ¹ When the LORD brought back his exiles
to Jerusalem,
it was like a dream!
- ² We were filled with laughter,
and we sang for joy.
And the other nations said,
“What amazing things the LORD has
done for them.”
- ³ Yes, the LORD has done amazing things
for us!
What joy!
- ⁴ Restore our fortunes, LORD,
as streams renew the desert.
- ⁵ Those who plant in tears
will harvest with shouts of joy.
- ⁶ They weep as they go to plant their seed,
but they sing as they return with the
harvest.

PSALM 127

*A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem.
A psalm of Solomon.*

- ¹ Unless the LORD builds a house,
the work of the builders is wasted.
Unless the LORD protects a city,
guarding it with sentries will do no
good.
- ² It is useless for you to work so hard
from early morning until late at
night,
anxiously working for food to eat;
for God gives rest to his loved ones.
- ³ Children are a gift from the LORD;
they are a reward from him.
- ⁴ Children born to a warrior's hands
are like arrows in a warrior's hands.
- ⁵ How joyful is the man whose quiver is
full of them!
He will not be put to shame when he
confronts his accusers at the city
gates.

PSALM 128

A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem.

- ¹ How joyful are those who fear the LORD—
all who follow his ways!
- ² You will enjoy the fruit of your labor.
How joyful and prosperous you will
be!
- ³ Your wife will be like a fruitful
grapevine,
flourishing within your home.
Your children will be like vigorous young
olive trees
as they sit around your table.

125:2

Ps 121:8
Zech 2:5

125:3

1 Sam 24:10
Prov 22:8
Isa 14:5

125:4

Ps 7:10; 94:15; 119:68

125:5

Gal 6:16

126:1

Jer 29:14

126:2

Job 8:21
Ps 51:14

126:3

Isa 25:9

126:4

Isa 35:6; 43:19

126:5

Ps 80:5

Gal 6:9

127:1

Ps 78:69

127:2

Gen 3:17

Job 11:18-19

Ecc 5:12

127:3

Deut 28:4

128:1

Ps 112:1; 119:3

128:2

Ecc 8:12

128:3

Ps 52:8

125:2 *surrounds*: God guards and protects like a wall of fire (Zech 2:5).

125:3 The *godly might be tempted* through peer pressure and cultural domination.

125:4-5 People who reject the straight path of the upright are fools (Prov 2:12-15). God pours out his goodness on the godly (see 122:6-9).

Ps 126 This hymn celebrates Israel's return from exile (126:1-3). The psalmist prays for full restoration (126:4-6).

126:1-3 The Lord brought about Israel's restoration from exile, just as he had brought Israel out of Egypt (114:1). The restoration transformed the weeping of the Lord's people into *laughter* and showed the Lord's character to the *nations* (9:11; 64:9; Isa 12:4). • *Jerusalem*: Hebrew *Zion* (see “Mount Zion, the City of God” at Ps 48, p. 947).

126:4-6 The prophets had spoken of the restoration as a time when the wilderness would change into the

Garden of Eden (Isa 51:3; Ezek 47); the reality fell far short of paradise. Here the restoration community prays for full redemption (see Hag 2:19). • *as streams renew the desert*: The seasonal rains filled the dry river beds (*wadis*), and the land turned green again. The prayer looks for a similar transformation of Israel's *fortunes*, a fulfillment of the imagery of the “Second Exodus” in Isaiah (see “The Second Exodus” at Isa 52:11-12, p. 1185). • The *harvest* represents God's full restoration.

Ps 127 Blessing and protection come from God. Without his presence, there is no success (127:1-2). This is particularly true for children, who are God's gift (127:3-5).

127:1-2 *Unless*: These conditional sentences emphasize the positive idea that the Lord will protect the city (cp. 124:1-2). • Human effort is futile unless the Lord blesses it (see 44:3). • *from early morning until late at night*: This depicts an aggressive and competitive lifestyle.

• God's *loved ones* enjoy a quiet night's sleep (3:5; 4:8).

127:3-5 *Children* are one of God's blessings. The words translated “children” (Hebrew *banim*) and “builders” (*bonim*, 127:1) form a wordplay. Having children builds a family.

127:4-5 *like arrows*: God uses children to protect the reputation of his people against the wicked (cp. 120:4; 7:12-13).

Ps 128 The godly, who fear the Lord, will know true happiness (128:1-2). The Lord is with them (see 127:1-2), building their home life (128:3-4) and blessing them across the generations (128:5-6).

128:1-2 Enjoying *the fruit* of one's *labor* means gaining benefit from whatever work one does.

128:3 Like *vigorous young olive trees*, children are saplings filled with potential. Olive oil symbolizes God's blessing (104:15; Num 18:12; Jer 31:12; Hag 2:19).

128:5
Ps 122:9; 134:3

128:6
Gen 48:11

129:1
Exod 1:11

129:2
Jer 15:20
Matt 16:18

129:5
Ps 71:13
Mic 4:11

129:6
2 Kgs 19:26
Ps 37:2

129:8
Ruth 2:4
Ps 118:26

130:1
Ps 42:7; 69:2

130:2
2 Chr 6:40
Ps 28:2; 64:1

130:3
Ps 76:7; 86:5

130:4
Exod 34:7

130:5
Ps 40:1
Isa 8:17

130:6
Ps 63:6

130:7
Ps 103:4; 131:3
lykhal (3176)
• Ps 131:3

130:8
Luke 1:68

131:1
Rom 12:16

131:2
Ps 62:1

4 That is the LORD's blessing
for those who fear him.

5 May the LORD continually bless you from
Zion.

May you see Jerusalem prosper as
long as you live.

6 May you live to enjoy your
grandchildren.
May Israel have peace!

PSALM 129

A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem.

1 From my earliest youth my enemies have
persecuted me.

Let all Israel repeat this:

2 From my earliest youth my enemies have
persecuted me,
but they have never defeated me.

3 My back is covered with cuts,
as if a farmer had plowed long
furrows.

4 But the LORD is good;
he has cut me free from the ropes of
the ungody.

5 May all who hate Jerusalem
be turned back in shameful defeat.

6 May they be as useless as grass on a
rooftop,
turning yellow when only half
grown,

7 ignored by the harvester,
despised by the binder.

8 And may those who pass by
refuse to give them this blessing:
"The LORD bless you;
we bless you in the LORD's name."

PSALM 130

A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem.

1 From the depths of despair, O LORD,
I call for your help.

2 Hear my cry, O Lord.
Pay attention to my prayer.

3 LORD, if you kept a record of our sins,
who, O Lord, could ever survive?

4 But you offer forgiveness,
that we might learn to fear you.

5 I am counting on the LORD;
yes, I am counting on him.
I have put my hope in his word.

6 I long for the LORD
more than sentries long for the dawn,
yes, more than sentries long for the
dawn.

7 O Israel, ^hhope in the LORD;
for with the LORD there is unfailing
love.

His redemption overflows.

8 He himself will redeem Israel
from every kind of sin.

PSALM 131

*A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem.
A psalm of David.*

1 LORD, my heart is not proud;
my eyes are not haughty.

I don't concern myself with matters too
great

or too awesome for me to grasp.

2 Instead, I have calmed and quieted myself,
like a weaned child who no longer
cries for its mother's milk.

128:4-6 God will *continually bless* all who fear him (133:3) from his dwelling in *Zion* (20:2; 50:2; 110:2), no matter where they live. • *grandchildren*: God's blessings extend from generation to generation for the faithful (79:12-13; 89:1; 100:4-5; 103:17-19).

Ps 129 The psalmist briefly reviews Israel's history of trouble (129:1-2) and redemption (129:3-4). He concludes with curses against the enemies and blessings on the godly (129:5-6).

129:1-2 Israel's *earliest youth* as a nation was during its sojourn in Egypt.

129:3-4 *the LORD is good*: He rescued Israel from Egypt, from many enemy attacks, and from the Babylonian exile.

129:5 *Jerusalem*: Hebrew *Zion* (see "Mount Zion, the City of God" at Ps 48, p. 947).

129:6-8 *Grass on a rooftop* had shallow roots and would scorch easily. A crop was *ignored by the harvester* when the

yield was low. The enemies who had sown hurt among God's people would gain little.

Ps 130 Beginning with himself as a representative of the community, the psalmist cries for God's mercy (130:1-3) out of deep distress. He places his hope in the Lord (130:4-6), knowing that the Lord will rescue when and as he chooses. Based on this confidence, the psalmist invites Israel to wait for the Lord (130:7-8).

130:1-3 *A cry from the depths* is from a place of deep distress (cp. 69:2, 14; Isa 51:10; Ezek 27:34). Out of the frailty of his being, the psalmist prays for divine favor.

130:3 The psalmist knows that his *sins* make him guilty and deserving of God's judgment.

130:4-6 The good news comes in God's readiness to forgive sinners. His grace encourages people to fear him and hope in him.

130:5 God's *word* imparts *hope* (119:42-43, 49; 147:11).

130:7-8 *Israel* is invited to *hope in the LORD* (9:18; 27:14; 131:3) because the Lord pays the costly price for *redemption* and covers whatever *sin* separates humans from him (see also 111:9; Exod 6:6-8; 2 Sam 7:23-24; Isa 43:1-4; Titus 2:14; Heb 9:12; 1 Pet 1:18).

Ps 131 Out of his contentment in the Lord, the psalmist invites Israel to seek their rest in God (131:3).

131:1 The *heart* represents the whole being (see 27:8). • God hates arrogance, which is a foolish way of life (Prov 6:16-19). • The psalmist does not trouble himself with matters that properly belong to the Lord.

131:2 The psalmist *calmed and quieted* himself, surrendering his ambitions and taming his ego (Gal 2:20). • *like a weaned child*: The psalmist sees himself as a contented child.

Yes, like a weaned child is my soul within me.

³ O Israel, put your hope in the LORD—now and always.

PSALM 132

A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem.

- ¹ LORD, remember David and all that he suffered.
- ² He made a solemn promise to the LORD. He vowed to the Mighty One of Israel,
- ³ "I will not go home; I will not let myself rest.
- ⁴ I will not let my eyes sleep nor close my eyelids in slumber
- ⁵ until I find a place to build a house for the LORD, a sanctuary for the Mighty One of Israel."
- ⁶ We heard that the Ark was in Ephrathah; then we found it in the distant countryside of Jaar.
- ⁷ Let us go to the sanctuary of the LORD; let us worship at the footstool of his throne.
- ⁸ Arise, O LORD, and enter your resting place, along with the Ark, the symbol of your power.
- ⁹ May your priests be clothed in godliness; may your loyal servants sing for joy.
- ¹⁰ For the sake of your servant David, do not reject the king you have anointed.
- ¹¹ The LORD swore an oath to David with a promise he will never take back: "I will place one of your descendants on your throne.

¹² If your descendants obey the terms of my covenant and the laws that I teach them, then your royal line will continue forever and ever."

- ¹³ For the LORD has chosen Jerusalem; he has desired it for his home.
- ¹⁴ "This is my resting place forever," he said. "I will live here, for this is the home I desired.
- ¹⁵ I will bless this city and make it prosperous; I will satisfy its poor with food.
- ¹⁶ I will clothe its priests with godliness; its faithful servants will sing for joy.
- ¹⁷ Here I will increase the power of David; my anointed one will be a light for my people.
- ¹⁸ I will clothe his enemies with shame, but he will be a glorious king."

PSALM 133

A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem. A psalm of David.

- ¹ How wonderful and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony!
- ² For harmony is as precious as the anointing oil that was poured over Aaron's head, that ran down his beard and onto the border of his robe.
- ³ Harmony is as refreshing as the dew from Mount Hermon that falls on the mountains of Zion. And there the LORD has pronounced his blessing, even life everlasting.

131:3
Ps 130:7
yakhal (3176)
• Isa 51:5

132:2
Gen 49:24
Isa 49:26

132:4
Prov 6:4

132:5
Acts 7:46

132:6
Gen 35:19
1 Sam 7:1; 17:12

132:7
1 Chr 28:2
Ps 5:7; 99:5

132:8-10
//2 Chr 6:41-42

132:8
Num 10:35
Ps 78:61
Aaron (0727)
• Jer 3:16

132:9
Ps 149:5

132:11
2 Sam 7:12-16
2 Chr 6:16
*Acts 2:30

132:12
Luke 1:32

132:13
Ps 78:68

132:14
Matt 23:21

132:15
Ps 107:9

133:2
Exod 30:25, 30
Lev 8:12

133:3
Deut 4:48

Ps 132 This psalm celebrates the Lord's faithfulness to David. When David wanted to bring the Ark into Jerusalem (132:1-5), the Lord granted the request and made Jerusalem his earthly home (132:6-10). The choice of Jerusalem marked God's election of David's line (132:11-13), of Zion (132:14-17), and of the priesthood (132:9, 16).

132:2 *the Mighty One of Israel*: Literally of *Jacob*; also in 132:5. See note on 44:4.

132:6-10 These verses form a recollection of David's moving the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6:1-15) and of the Lord's oath to David (2 Sam 7:4-16).

132:6 *Ephrathah* is Bethlehem (Gen 35:19; 48:7). • *Jaar* is the singular form of the plural "Jearim." The Ark was at Kiriath-jearim for twenty years in Samuel's time (1 Sam 7:1-2).

132:8-10 These verses are a quotation from Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple (2 Chr 6:41-42).

132:9 The *priests* were to exhibit righteousness in their lives (132:16; Mal 2:6).

132:11-12 The *LORD swore an oath to David* (2 Sam 7:4-16): God's *promise* is unconditional, but the covenant is not (*If . . . then*). Those who break God's covenant can expect the discipline of God's judgment (see 89:30-37).

132:13-17 The psalmist recounts the selection of Jerusalem and of the priests.

132:13 *Jerusalem*: Hebrew *Zion* (see "Mount Zion, the City of God" at Ps 48, p. 947).

132:17 *anointed one*: The ruler God chose and established (see Pss 1-8) would never cease to provide *light for* the Lord's *people*. This light would burn continually (see 1 Kgs 11:36; 2 Kgs 8:19).

132:18 The adversaries will be humiliated, in contrast to the *glorious king* (132:9, 16).

Ps 133 In this wisdom psalm (see Ps 1), peaceful and harmonious relationships manifest the presence of God.

133:1-2 The psalmist tells of the joy of consecrated relationships.

133:1 *Brothers* are related by blood, by profession, or by commitment.

133:2 The *anointing oil* was the oil used to ordain and consecrate Aaron for service in his office (see Exod 29:7). • *head . . . beard . . . border of his robe*: The oil consecrated Aaron completely.

133:3 The *dew* represents the richness of divine blessings; in Jerusalem, it comes from moist winds from the Mediterranean Sea. *Mount Hermon*, which is capped with snow, is a place of abundant moisture. • *A blessing* is God's life-giving power, a guarantee of his

134:1

Deut 10:8
1 Chr 9:33
2 Chr 29:11

134:2

Ps 28:2
1 Tim 2:8

134:3

Ps 124:8; 128:5

135:2

Ps 116:19

135:3

Ps 68:4; 100:5
^a*halal* (1984)
• Ps 147:12

135:4

Exod 19:5
Deut 7:6; 10:15
1 Pet 2:9^a*bakhar* (0977)

• Isa 40:20

135:5

Ps 48:1; 97:9

135:6

Ps 115:3

135:7

Job 38:25-26
Jer 51:16
Zech 10:1

135:8

Ps 78:51

135:9

Deut 6:22

135:10

Ps 136:17-21

135:11

Num 21:33-35
Josh 12:7-24

135:12

Ps 78:55

135:13

Exod 3:15
Ps 102:12

135:14

Deut 32:36
Ps 106:45

135:15-20

//Ps 115:4-11

135:20

Ps 118:4

PSALM 134

A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem.

- 1 Oh, praise the LORD, all you servants of the LORD,
you who serve at night in the house of the LORD.
- 2 Lift up holy hands in prayer,
and praise the LORD.
- 3 May the LORD, who made heaven and earth,
bless you from Jerusalem.

PSALM 135

1 Praise the LORD!

Praise the name of the LORD!

Praise him, you who serve the LORD,

2 you who serve in the house of the LORD,
in the courts of the house of our God.3 ^kPraise the LORD, for the LORD is good;
celebrate his lovely name with music.4 For the LORD has ^achosen Jacob for himself,
Israel for his own special treasure.5 I know the greatness of the LORD—
that our Lord is greater than any other god.6 The LORD does whatever pleases him
throughout all heaven and earth,
and on the seas and in their depths.7 He causes the clouds to rise over the
whole earth.
He sends the lightning with the rain
and releases the wind from his
storehouses.8 He destroyed the firstborn in each
Egyptian home,
both people and animals.9 He performed miraculous signs and
wonders in Egypt
against Pharaoh and all his people.10 He struck down great nations
and slaughtered mighty kings—11 Sihon king of the Amorites,
Og king of Bashan,
and all the kings of Canaan.12 He gave their land as an inheritance,
a special possession to his people
Israel.13 Your name, O LORD, endures forever;
your fame, O LORD, is known to every
generation.14 For the LORD will give justice to his
people
and have compassion on his
servants.15 The idols of the nations are merely
things of silver and gold,
shaped by human hands.16 They have mouths but cannot speak,
and eyes but cannot see.17 They have ears but cannot hear,
and noses but cannot smell.18 And those who make idols are just like
them,
as are all who trust in them.19 O Israel, praise the LORD!
O priests—descendants of Aaron—
praise the LORD!20 O Levites, praise the LORD!
All you who fear the LORD, praise the
LORD!21 The LORD be praised from Zion,
for he lives here in Jerusalem.

Praise the LORD!

provision and protection (5:12; 41:2),
secured by his presence (21:6; 67:1).
Even the other nations will ultimately
be blessed (Ps 67; 72:17). Zion is the
focal point of God's blessing (134:3;
147:13). • God gives *life everlasting* to
human beings.

Ps 134 In the last of the pilgrims' songs
(Pss 120–134), the travelers call the
Temple workers to praise the Lord. In
return, they will receive a much-
anticipated blessing.

134:1-2 Those *who serve at night* were
the priests and Levites (see also 135:2).

134:3 Jerusalem: Hebrew *Zion* (see
“Mount Zion, the City of God” at Ps 48,
p. 947).

Ps 135 God, the Creator and the Lord
of history, “made heaven and earth”
(134:3). He deserves praise because,

unlike idols, he redeems his people.

135:4 The synonyms *Jacob* and *Israel*
include all twelve tribes. The Lord
cherishes his chosen people. They are
his *treasure* out of all the kingdoms of
the world (Exod 19:5-6).

135:5 The Lord is superior to any real
or imagined supernatural being (see
95:3-5; 115:4-8).

135:6 God is sovereign over the whole
created order—he *does whatever
pleases him*. • The phrase *heaven and
earth* refers to all of creation.

135:7 The psalmist tells of God's sover-
eignty over the weather (Ps 29; 77:17-
18; 78:26; 104:4; 147:8-9; 148:5-6).

135:8-12 The Lord was sovereign over
the Exodus and the conquest of the
Promised Land.

135:8-11 In the tenth and culminating
plague against Egypt, God *destroyed
the firstborn* of each family. • The *mi-
raculous signs and wonders* are the ten
plagues (see Exod 7–11; Deut 4:34; Neh
9:10).

135:13-18 The Lord's name and charac-
ter stand in contrast to idols.

135:15-20 This entire section is re-
peated in 115:4-11.

135:15-18 Idols corrupt the thinking
because they are *merely things* made by
humans; they cannot *speak, see, hear,*
or *smell* (Isa 41:22-24; 44:9, 18; Rom
1:21-23).

135:19-21 The groups named here
comprised the covenant community
(see 115:9-11).

PSALM 136

- 1^b Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good!
His faithful love endures forever.
- 2 Give thanks to the God of gods.
His faithful love endures forever.
- 3 Give thanks to the Lord of lords.
His faithful love endures forever.
- 4 Give thanks to him who alone does
mighty miracles.
His faithful love endures forever.
- 5 Give thanks to him who made the
heavens so skillfully.
His faithful love endures forever.
- 6 Give thanks to him who placed the earth
among the waters.
His faithful love endures forever.
- 7 Give thanks to him who made the
heavenly lights—
His faithful love endures forever.
- 8 the sun to rule the day,
His faithful love endures forever.
- 9 and the moon and stars to rule the night.
His faithful love endures forever.
- 10 Give thanks to him who killed the
firstborn of Egypt.
His faithful love endures forever.
- 11 He brought Israel out of Egypt.
His faithful love endures forever.
- 12 He acted with a strong hand and
powerful arm.
His faithful love endures forever.
- 13 Give thanks to him who parted the Red
Sea.
His faithful love endures forever.
- 14 He led Israel safely through,
His faithful love endures forever.
- 15 but he hurled Pharaoh and his army into
the Red Sea.
His faithful love endures forever.
- 16 Give thanks to him who led his people
through the wilderness.
His faithful love endures forever.

- 17 Give thanks to him who struck down
mighty kings.
His faithful love endures forever.
- 18 He killed powerful kings—
His faithful love endures forever.
- 19 Sihon king of the Amorites,
His faithful love endures forever.
- 20 and Og king of Bashan.
His faithful love endures forever.
- 21 God gave the land of these kings as an
inheritance—
His faithful love endures forever.
- 22 a special possession to his servant Israel.
His faithful love endures forever.
- 23 He remembered us in our weakness.
His faithful love endures forever.
- 24 He saved us from our enemies.
His faithful love endures forever.
- 25 He gives food to every living thing.
His faithful love endures forever.
- 26 Give thanks to the God of heaven.
His faithful love endures forever.

PSALM 137

- 1 Beside the rivers of Babylon, we sat and
wept
as we^c thought of Jerusalem.
- 2 We put away our harps,
hanging them on the branches of
poplar trees.
- 3 For our captors demanded a song from us.
Our tormentors insisted on a joyful
hymn:
“Sing us one of those songs of
Jerusalem!”
- 4 But how can we sing the songs of the LORD
while in a pagan land?
- 5 If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
let my right hand forget how to play
the harp.
- 6 May my tongue stick to the roof of my
mouth

136:1
1 Chr 16:41
2 Chr 20:21
Ps 107:1
^{yadah} (3034)
Dan 9:4

136:2
Deut 10:17

136:4
Ps 72:18

136:5
Prov 3:19

136:6
Ps 24:2

136:7
Ps 74:16

136:8
Gen 1:16

136:10
Exod 12:29
Ps 78:51

136:11
Exod 12:51; 13:3
Deut 9:29

136:12
Deut 4:34
Ps 44:3

136:13
Exod 14:21
Ps 78:13

136:14
Ps 106:9

136:16
Exod 13:18
Deut 8:15

136:17
Ps 135:10-12

136:21
Josh 12:1

136:22
Isa 41:8; 45:4

136:23
Ps 9:12; 106:45

136:24
Judg 6:9

136:25
Ps 104:27; 145:15

136:26
2 Chr 36:23
Ezra 3:11

137:1
Neh 1:4
Ezek 1:1, 3
^{zakar} (2142)
Isa 64:9

137:2
Ezek 26:13

137:3
2 Chr 29:27
Neh 12:46

Ps 136 This is the last of the Great Hallel psalms (Pss 120–136; see note on Book Five at Ps 107). It distinctively repeats the refrain *His faithful love endures forever* in every verse. The hymn is framed by a call to praise (136:1-3, 26). It proclaims the Lord as the Creator of all and the Redeemer of Israel, both in the distant (136:10-22) and in the recent past (136:23-24).

136:1-3 The psalmist invites the community to praise the Lord, who is good and full of love, the true Lord of humanity. Verse 1 alludes to the poetic expression in 2 Chr 5:13.

136:10-22 The psalmist recounts the early history of Israel's redemption.

136:13 Red Sea: Literally *sea of reeds*;

also in 136:15. See note on Exod 13:18.

136:23-24 The psalmist relates the recent history of Israel's redemption, although the circumstances are not specified.

136:25 The Lord provides for all of his creatures.

136:26 The phrase *God of heaven* is an exilic and postexilic designation for the Lord; it is found in Ezra (Ezra 1:2; 5:11, 12; 6:9, 10; 7:12; etc.), Nehemiah (Neh 1:5; 2:4, 20; etc.), and Daniel (Dan 2:18, 19, 37, 44).

Ps 137 In response to the pain of exile (137:1-4), the psalmist resolves to remember Jerusalem even though the memories cause him pain (137:4-6). He

also writes an astounding imprecation, or prayer for vengeance (137:7-9).

137:1 Jerusalem: Hebrew *Zion*; also in 137:3 (see “Mount Zion, the City of God” at Ps 48, p. 947).

137:2-4 Because the music of Jerusalem was tied to the joys of life in the Promised Land, the Exile removed any occasion for singing joyous songs. The Babylonians wanted the Judeans to sing and dance for them, but the exiles' grief made doing so either distasteful or impossible. The songs celebrating the Lord speak of his power and goodness, but his people were filled with doubts and questions. They hung their harps in trees, perhaps signifying the death of their joy under God's curse (Deut 21:23).

137:6
Ezek 3:26

137:7
Jer 49:7-22
Ezek 25:12-14
Obad 1:10-14

137:8
Isa 13:1-22; 47:1-15
Jer 50:1-46; 51:1-64

138:1
Ps 95:3; 96:4; 111:1
**zamar* (2167)
• Ps 146:2

138:2

Ps 5:7

138:3

Ps 28:7; 46:1; 118:5

if I fail to remember you,
if I don't make Jerusalem my greatest
joy.

⁷ O LORD, remember what the Edomites did
on the day the armies of Babylon
captured Jerusalem.

"Destroy it!" they yelled.
"Level it to the ground!"

⁸ O Babylon, you will be destroyed.
Happy is the one who pays you back
for what you have done to us.

⁹ Happy is the one who takes your babies
and smashes them against the
rocks!

PSALM 138

A psalm of David.

- ¹ I give you thanks, O LORD, with all my
heart;
I will ^dsing your praises before the gods.
² I bow before your holy Temple as I
worship.
I praise your name for your unflinching
love and faithfulness;
for your promises are backed
by all the honor of your name.
³ As soon as I pray, you answer me;
you encourage me by giving me
strength.

Prayers for Vengeance (Ps 137)

Ps 3:7; 9:19-20;
10:15; 12:3; 41:10;
55:15; 69:22-28;
79:6; 109:6-20;
110:5-6
2 Chr 24:22
Neh 4:5
Isa 61:2
Jer 11:20-23; 18:19-
23; 51:35
Lam 1:22; 3:64-66
Luke 4:19
Acts 1:20
Rom 11:9-10
Rev 6:10

The psalmists sometimes asked the Lord to execute vengeance against their adversaries. It was not unusual for a psalmist to pray for the violent destruction of his enemies as a manifestation of divine justice.

How does one defend this kind of prayer? Is this a form of Jewish or Christian *jihad* (an Arabic word meaning "striving," sometimes meaning "holy war")? In contrast with *jihad*, the psalmist called on God, not humans, to act.

Divine justice is defined in Ps 1:6: The Lord loves the righteous and destroys the wicked. The wicked are subversive, corrupt, and thoroughly committed to evil; they live in opposition to God and to everything that God does. The wicked shake the foundations of God's kingdom, of ethics, and of society.

Prayers for termination of the wicked arose out of the psalmists' concern with justice and righteousness and out of their confidence in God. They argued that evil is inconsistent with God's nature and that the removal of evil is the only way for his kingdom to thrive. The poets of Israel did not simply invoke God's judgment on anyone with whom they could not get along. God charges the gods and their followers with the evil of injustice in Ps 82 and holds all humans accountable to his divine standard of justice and righteousness. These were also the standards that guided the psalmists.

The psalmists were intimately acquainted with grief. They had suffered and been oppressed and marginalized by bullies, leaders, and kings from inside and outside of Israel. Their prayers were full of faith and hope, asking how long the Lord would tolerate their suffering and confessing that the Lord alone could rescue them from evil. They expressed deep longing for his redemption. Through these prayers for justice and vindication, the godly may rest in peace as they await God's rescue. By the principle of retribution, they asked the Lord to inflict upon the wicked the suffering that they had endured (5:10; 6:10; 7:9; 8:2; 9:19-20; 28:4; 37:8-10, 36; 56:7; 104:35; 137:9; 139:19).

Prayers for the end of evil are appropriate as long as God is recognized as arbiter, judge, and executor. Do we truly see evil as evil, or do we perceive it merely as an inconvenience? The prayer for the coming of God's kingdom implies the removal of evil. The cruelty inflicted on the wicked has been transformed through the cruel crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Jesus will judge and bring an end to evil (see Rev 19:11-21). Christians are to love as Christ loved (John 13:34), pray for their enemies, and forgive them (Matt 5:38-48; Col 3:13).

137:5-6 The psalmist pledges his loyalty to *Jerusalem*, the city at the center of God's reign and the location of fellowship with him.

137:7-9 The poet witnessed the betrayal of God's people from Judah by *the Edomites*, so he curses Edom. The long rivalry between Edom and Judah came to a head during Judah's last

days, when the Edomites handed the Judeans over to the Babylonians (Obad 1:10-11) and rejoiced in Jerusalem's fall. • This prayer for vengeance is shocking (see "Prayers for Vengeance," above).

Pss 138-145 In this final collection of psalms of David, praise and wisdom psalms (Pss 138-139, 145) form a

frame around five poems of lament (Pss 140-144).

Ps 138 In this wisdom psalm, the Lord is presented as the God of gods. He rescued his people and has a perfect plan for them as individuals. The nations will join Israel in glorifying God.

138:1-3 The Lord receives praise before the gods of the nations.

4 Every king in all the earth will thank you,
 LORD,
 for all of them will hear your words.
 5 Yes, they will sing about the LORD's ways,
 for the glory of the LORD is very great.
 6 Though the LORD is great, he cares for
 the humble,
 but he keeps his distance from the
 proud.
 7 Though I am surrounded by troubles,
 you will protect me from the anger of
 my enemies.
 You reach out your hand,
 and the power of your right hand
 saves me.
 8 The LORD will work out his plans for my
 life—
 for your faithful love, O LORD, endures
 forever.
 Don't abandon me, for you made me.

7 I can never escape from your Spirit!
 I can never get away from your
 presence!
 8 If I go up to heaven, you are there;
 if I go down to the ^egrave, you are there.
 9 If I ride the wings of the morning,
 if I dwell by the farthest oceans,
 10 even there your hand will guide me,
 and your strength will support me.
 11 I could ask the darkness to hide me
 and the light around me to become
 night—
 12 but even in darkness I cannot hide
 from you.
 To you the night shines as bright as day.
 Darkness and light are the same to
 you.
 13 You made all the delicate, inner parts of
 my body
 and knit me together in my mother's
 womb.
 14 Thank you for making me so
 wonderfully complex!
 Your workmanship is marvelous—how
 well I know it.
 15 You watched me as I was being formed
 in utter seclusion,
 as I was woven together in the dark of
 the womb.
 16 You saw me before I was born.
 Every day of my life was recorded in
 your book.
 Every moment was laid out
 before a single day had passed.
 17 How precious are your thoughts about
 me, O God.
 They cannot be numbered!

138:4
 Ps 102:15
138:6
 Ps 101:5; 113:4-7
 Prov 3:34
 Jas 4:6
138:7
 Exod 15:12
 Ezra 9:8-9
 Ps 20:6; 23:4; 71:20
138:8
 Job 10:3
 Ps 27:9; 71:9
 Phil 1:6
139:1
 Ps 44:21
139:2
 Ps 94:11
139:3
 Job 14:16
139:4
 Heb 4:13
139:5
 Ps 34:7
139:6
 Job 42:3
 Rom 11:33
139:7
 Jer 23:24
139:8
 Prov 15:11
 Amos 9:2-4
^eshe'ol (7585)
 ▸ Prov 5:5
139:10
 Ps 23:2-3
139:11
 Job 22:13
139:12
 Job 34:22
 Dan 2:22
 1 Jn 1:5
139:13
 Ps 119:73
139:15
 Job 10:8-10
 Eccl 11:5
139:16
 Job 14:5
 Ps 56:8
139:17
 Ps 40:5

PSALM 139

For the choir director: A psalm of David.

1 O LORD, you have examined my heart
 and know everything about me.
 2 You know when I sit down or stand up.
 You know my thoughts even when I'm
 far away.
 3 You see me when I travel
 and when I rest at home.
 You know everything I do.
 4 You know what I am going to say
 even before I say it, LORD.
 5 You go before me and follow me.
 You place your hand of blessing on
 my head.
 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
 too great for me to understand!

138:4-5 As the Lord's *glory* fills the earth, the world's population must willingly submit to him. *Every king* (cp. Ps 2) will join the community of praise as they hear *the LORD's ways* of truth and love.
138:6-8 The exalted God takes care of the humble (138:6), especially his servant the psalmist (138:7-8).
138:6 God's holiness and excellence are *great*, beyond the scope of humanity (see 99:2; 113:4; Isa 6:1; 57:15).
138:8 The psalmist expresses confidence in the Lord's *plans*, which are perfect, and prays for God's continued involvement. The psalmist sees himself as part of God's plans (see 9:10; 139:14).
Ps 139 In this wisdom psalm, the psalmist opens every aspect of his being, character, behavior, and speech to God's examination. As hard as life is, he wants to ensure his own growth in wisdom so that he does not come under

God's judgment of the wicked (141:5; 142:3; 143:8, 10; 144:3-4). Further, the poet recognizes that he cannot escape from the Lord. His sense of stress disappears when he considers the Lord's loving care for him, even before birth (139:13-18). He then invites the Lord to continue examining him as he walks in the path of wisdom (139:23-24).
139:1-6 The Lord knows the psalmist well; God has examined him thoroughly, in an inescapable examination that is painful at times (Job 7:17-19).
139:2 The phrase *sit down or stand up* refers to daily activities (cp. Deut 6:6-9).
139:3-6 The Lord's omniscience and omnipotence provide comfort to the godly, but they imprison the hearts of the wicked (2:3).
139:6 The Lord's *wonderful* understanding lies beyond the psalmist's ability to comprehend (see Judg 13:18).

139:7-12 The psalmist expresses his awe at the Lord's omnipresence.
139:8 down to the grave (Hebrew *to Sheol*): God has total access to his entire creation—even the most hard-to-reach places. See note on 6:5.
139:9 ride the wings of the morning: This poetic expression describes traveling eastward, as far as the sunrise, if that were possible. • *the farthest oceans*: This expression takes the traveler in the opposite direction, far to the west.
139:13 The delicate, inner parts of the body include a person's very being. • Even when hidden in his *mother's womb*, the psalmist was guided by the Lord.
139:17 How precious are your thoughts about me (or *How precious to me are your thoughts*): God's investigation reveals loving care. Fellowship with the Lord provides riches beyond description.

139:19

Isa 11:4

139:20

Exod 20:7

Deut 5:11

139:23

Ps 26:2

139:24

Ps 5:8; 16:11; 143:10

140:1

Ps 17:13

140:2

Ps 56:6

Prov 6:14

Isa 59:4

140:3

Rom 3:13

Jas 3:8

140:4

Ps 71:4

140:5

Job 18:9

Ps 35:7; 57:6

140:7

Ps 28:8; 144:10

- 18 I can't even count them;
they outnumber the grains of sand!
And when I wake up,
you are still with me!
- 19 O God, if only you would destroy the
wicked!
Get out of my life, you murderers!
- 20 They blaspheme you;
your enemies misuse your name.
- 21 O LORD, shouldn't I hate those who hate
you?
Shouldn't I despise those who oppose
you?
- 22 Yes, I hate them with total hatred,
for your enemies are my enemies.
- 23 Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious
thoughts.
- 24 Point out anything in me that offends you,
and lead me along the path of
everlasting life.

PSALM 140

For the choir director: A psalm of David.

- 1 O LORD, rescue me from evil people.
Protect me from those who are violent,
2 those who plot evil in their hearts
and stir up trouble all day long.
- 3 Their tongues sting like a snake;
the venom of a viper drips from their
lips. *Interlude*
- 4 O LORD, keep me out of the hands of the
wicked.
Protect me from those who are violent,
for they are plotting against me.
- 5 The proud have set a trap to catch me;
they have stretched out a net;
they have placed traps all along the
way. *Interlude*
- 6 I said to the LORD, "You are my God!"
Listen, O LORD, to my cries for mercy!
- 7 O Sovereign LORD, the strong one who
rescued me,

The Heart (Ps 139)

Ps 7:9; 9:1; 13:2;
14:1; 16:7-9; 17:3;
19:8; 20:4; 21:2;
22:14, 26; 24:4;
26:2; 27:3, 14; 28:3;
7; 33:21; 34:17-18;
37:4; 38:8, 10;
51:10, 17; 55:4,
21; 57:7; 58:2;
61:2; 62:4, 8-10;
64:6; 69:20; 73:1,
7, 13, 21, 26; 78:8,
37; 81:12; 84:2;
86:12; 89:50; 95:8,
10; 102:4; 108:1;
109:22; 111:1;
119:70, 111, 145;
131:1; 138:1; 140:2;
147:3

The Hebrew words *leb* and *lebab* (both meaning "heart") are hard to translate because they rarely refer to the physical human heart. Rather, the heart is the center of one's being, an image for a person's thought life, reflections, and will. The story of the heart reveals a person's commitment and direction in life.

The hearts of the wicked are cunning and scheming (58:2; 64:6; 140:2). They are deceptive, hypocritical (28:3; 41:6; 55:21; 62:4), lacking in integrity, greedy, and jealous (10:3; 62:10; 141:4). As time goes on, they become more arrogant (14:1; 101:5; 131:1), callous, and stubborn (17:10; 73:7; 78:8; 81:12; 95:8, 10; 119:70). Their only commitment is to themselves (78:37); their destructive way of life (5:9; 101:4) leads to their own destruction.

The psalmists openly confess their sorrow, trouble, anguish, and despair (13:2; 22:14; 25:17; 38:8, 10; 40:12; 55:4; 61:2; 69:20; 73:21, 26; 109:22; 143:4; 147:3). Through their pain, their hearts grow. They pray intensely (62:8; 119:80, 145), long for God (84:2), trust in him (28:7), and open their hearts to God's examination (7:9; 17:3; 26:2; 139:1-6, 23). Their commitment does not waver, and their lives are pure (24:4; 51:10; 73:1, 13) and contented (131:1), even when broken.

As their broken hearts (34:17-18; 51:17) are healed by the Lord (147:3), they become strong, confident (27:3, 14; 31:24; 57:7; 108:1; 112:7-8; 138:3), and vital (22:26; 69:32; 119:32). In the end, the Lord gives them the desires of their hearts (20:4; 21:2; 37:4) and then satisfies them. This fills the godly with joy and praise (4:7; 9:1; 13:5; 16:7, 9; 19:8; 30:12; 33:21; 86:12; 89:50; 102:4; 104:15; 105:3; 111:1; 119:7, 111; 138:1).

139:19-24 The psalmist's sense of awe leads him to consider the wicked and to reflect on himself. The Lord, as the examiner of all people, judges the wicked for their destructive acts and speech; thus, the psalmist prays that he will not be among them.

139:21 *I hate:* Rejection of evil is a mark of wisdom (see 1:1; 5:4-6).

139:23-24 The psalmist's prayer against the wicked leads him also to reflect on himself; he does not presume that he is righteous. This prayer has been repeated by believers over the centuries.

139:24 The *path* of wisdom leads to *everlasting life* (see 1:6; Prov 4:18; 6:23).

Ps 140 In this individual lament, the psalmist artistically sketches God's enemies with all their evil intents. He prays for the Lord's protection and rescue with confidence in God's strength and justice. He foresees the evil as being judged by fire (140:9-11) and himself as being vindicated and dwelling in the Lord's presence (140:13).

140:1-3 The psalmist prays for the Lord to rescue him from wicked people.

140:3 *sting like a snake . . . a viper:* These creatures depict the wicked as very corrupt people (see Prov 23:32; Isa 14:29; Rom 3:13).

140:4-5 The psalmist asks for divine protection (see Ps 121), praying that the Lord will keep him safe from the many schemes of the wicked.

140:7 The expression *Sovereign LORD* comes from combining the name *Yahweh* with the title *Adonai* (Master). See also 68:20; 69:6; 71:16; 73:28; 109:21; 140:7; 141:8.

you protected me on the day of
battle.

⁸ LORD, do not let evil people have their
way.

Do not let their evil schemes succeed,
or they will become proud.

Interlude

⁹ Let my enemies be destroyed
by the very evil they have planned
for me.

¹⁰ Let burning coals fall down on their heads.
Let them be thrown into the fire
or into watery pits from which they
can't escape.

¹¹ Don't let liars prosper here in our land.
Cause great disasters to fall on the
violent.

¹² But I know the LORD will help those they
persecute;
he will give justice to the poor.

¹³ Surely righteous people are praising your
name;
the godly will live in your presence.

PSALM 141

A psalm of David.

¹ O LORD, I am calling to you. Please hurry!
Listen when I cry to you for help!

² Accept my prayer as incense offered to
you,
and my upraised hands as an evening
offering.

³ Take control of what I say, O LORD,
and guard my lips.

⁴ Don't let me drift toward evil
or take part in acts of wickedness.
Don't let me share in the delicacies
of those who do wrong.

⁵ Let the godly strike me!
It will be a kindness!

If they correct me, it is soothing medicine.
Don't let me refuse it.

But I pray constantly
against the wicked and their deeds.

⁶ When their leaders are thrown down
from a cliff,
the wicked will listen to my words and
find them true.

⁷ Like rocks brought up by a plow,
the bones of the wicked will lie
scattered without burial.

⁸ I look to you for help, O Sovereign LORD.
You are my refuge; don't let them
kill me.

⁹ Keep me from the traps they have set
for me,
from the snares of those who do wrong.

¹⁰ Let the wicked fall into their own nets,
but let me escape.

PSALM 142

*A psalm of David, regarding his
experience in the cave. A prayer.*

¹ I cry out to the LORD;
I plead for the LORD's mercy.

² I pour out my complaints before him
and tell him all my troubles.

³ When I am overwhelmed,
you alone know the way I should turn.
Wherever I go,
my enemies have set traps for me.

⁴ I look for someone to come and help me,
but no one gives me a passing thought!
No one will help me;
no one cares a bit what happens to me.

⁵ Then I pray to you, O LORD.
I say, "You are my place of refuge.
You are all I really want in life.

⁶ Hear my cry,
for I am very low.
Rescue me from my persecutors,
for they are too strong for me.

140:8
Ps 112:10

140:9
Esth 9:25
Ps 7:16

140:10
Ps 11:6; 21:9
Matt 3:10

140:11
Ps 34:21

140:12
Ps 9:4; 35:10

140:13
Ps 16:11; 17:15; 97:12

141:1
Ps 70:5

141:2
Exod 29:41; 30:8
Rev 5:8; 8:3-4

141:3
Ps 39:1
Prov 13:3; 21:23

141:4
Ps 119:36
Prov 23:6
Mal 3:15
leb (3820)
• Prov 21:4

141:5
Ps 23:5
Prov 9:8; 19:25; 27:6
Gal 6:1

141:7
Ps 53:5

141:8
Ps 11:1

141:9
Ps 91:3

141:10
Ps 35:8

142:1
Ps 30:8; 77:1

142:3
Ps 140:5

142:4
Ps 88:8
Jer 30:17

142:5
Ps 91:2, 9

142:6
Ps 18:17; 79:8

140:9-11 The psalmist prays for God's judgment on the wicked.

140:10 The poet wants *fire* to descend on his enemies, and he wants them thrown into *pits* so they can never attack again. The language foreshadows the NT teaching on hell (Matt 5:22, 29-30; 10:28; 18:9; Mark 9:43-47; Luke 12:5; Jas 3:6; 2 Pet 2:4).

Ps 141 The psalmist prays for rescue and wisdom, and he envisions the end of evil. The principle of retribution (141:10) unifies the psalm.

141:1-2 The psalmist prays urgently for rescue. He does not have at hand either *incense* or an *evening offering* (Exod 29:38-39), but his prayers and devotion are the reality that those elements rep-

resent (cp. Isa 1:13; Rev 5:8). • *Upraised hands* are a posture of prayer (28:2; 88:9; 143:6; Exod 9:29; 1 Tim 2:8).

141:3-5 Wisdom sometimes requires protection from oneself. One could say or think things that lead to the evil path (Prov 13:3; 21:23). • Wisdom opens itself to correction from *godly* people (see Prov 3:11; 9:8; 15:31; 19:25).

141:7 scattered without burial: Literally *scattered at the mouth of Sheol*. See note on 6:5.

Ps 142 The psalmist faces severe persecution, so he cries to the Lord, and the Lord will rescue him.

142:TITLE psalm: Hebrew *maskil*. This may be a literary or musical term.

• *regarding his experience in the cave:* See note on 57:TITLE.

142:1-3 Though *overwhelmed* by his persecutors (142:6), the psalmist looks to the Lord for wisdom.

142:3-4 The psalmist reaches a point of despair (see 77:3), and the Lord cares for him in his distress. The psalmist commits himself to the Lord's wisdom (see Ps 139) but laments his entrapment by the wicked (5:9-10; 140:5; 141:9; 142:3).

142:5 Though he is alone, the psalmist's trust remains in the Lord, who is his *life* (see 9:9; 16:5; 27:13).

142:6-7 Though overwhelmed by loneliness and trouble, the psalmist focuses on the Lord's goodness and protection.

142:7

Ps 13:6

143:1

Ps 140:6

143:2

Job 14:3; 22:4

143:3

Lam 3:6

143:4

Lam 3:11

143:5

Ps 77:5, 10-11

^h*hagah* (1897)

• Josh 1:8

143:6

Ps 63:1

143:7

Ps 69:17; 88:4

143:8

Ps 32:8

143:9

Ps 59:1

143:10

Neh 9:20

Ps 23:3; 119:12

143:12

Ps 54:5; 116:16

144:1

Ps 18:2

^h*tsur* (6697)

• Isa 26:4

144:3

Ps 8:4

144:4

Job 8:9; 14:2

Ps 39:11; 109:23

144:5

Ps 18:9

Isa 64:1

144:6

Hab 3:11

Zech 9:14

144:7

Ps 18:44; 69:1, 14

144:8

Deut 32:40

Ps 12:2; 41:6

Isa 44:20

- 7 Bring me out of prison
so I can thank you.
The godly will crowd around me,
for you are good to me."

PSALM 143

A *psalm of David*.

- 1 Hear my prayer, O LORD;
listen to my plea!
Answer me because you are faithful
and righteous.
- 2 Don't put your servant on trial,
for no one is innocent before you.
- 3 My enemy has chased me.
He has knocked me to the ground
and forces me to live in darkness like
those in the grave.
- 4 I am losing all hope;
I am paralyzed with fear.
- 5 I remember the days of old.
I ^gponder all your great works
and think about what you have done.
- 6 I lift my hands to you in prayer.
I thirst for you as parched land thirsts
for rain. *Interlude*
- 7 Come quickly, LORD, and answer me,
for my depression deepens.
Don't turn away from me,
or I will die.
- 8 Let me hear of your unfailing love each
morning,
for I am trusting you.
Show me where to walk,
for I give myself to you.
- 9 Rescue me from my enemies, LORD;
I run to you to hide me.
- 10 Teach me to do your will,
for you are my God.

- May your gracious Spirit lead me forward
on a firm footing.
- 11 For the glory of your name, O LORD,
preserve my life.
Because of your faithfulness, bring
me out of this distress.
- 12 In your unfailing love, silence all my
enemies
and destroy all my foes,
for I am your servant.

PSALM 144

A *psalm of David*.

- 1 Praise the LORD, who is my ^hrock.
He trains my hands for war
and gives my fingers skill for battle.
- 2 He is my loving ally and my fortress,
my tower of safety, my rescuer.
He is my shield, and I take refuge in him.
He makes the nations submit to me.
- 3 O LORD, what are human beings that you
should notice them,
mere mortals that you should think
about them?
- 4 For they are like a breath of air;
their days are like a passing shadow.
- 5 Open the heavens, LORD, and come down.
Touch the mountains so they billow
smoke.
- 6 Hurl your lightning bolts and scatter
your enemies!
Shoot your arrows and confuse them!
- 7 Reach down from heaven and rescue me;
rescue me from deep waters,
from the power of my enemies.
- 8 Their mouths are full of lies;
they swear to tell the truth, but they
lie instead.

He knows that the Lord alone is his Redeemer, so he offers his praise.

142:7 His experience of confinement and duress is like being in *prison* (see 107:10).

Ps 143 In this lament, the psalmist feels overwhelmed by constant harassment from his foes, so he turns to the Lord's love, righteousness, and faithfulness. He remembers God's acts in the past and yearns for the renewal of the Lord's love. He opens himself to God's wisdom because he knows that instruction will lead to life.

143:1-2 The psalmist prays for God's love and mercy.

143:2 All people are guilty before God (Rom 3:20-24).

143:3-4 *I am losing all hope*: The psalmist confesses his desperation as his life slips away under oppressive and ruthless foes.

143:5-6 Remembering God's acts from the past reassures the psalmist of God's faithfulness (42:4; 63:6; 77:3, 6; 119:55).

143:6 The psalmist's *thirst* is a deep longing for God's redemption (see 42:1-2).

143:7-10 The psalmist petitions the Lord for a renewal of his love.

143:7 The psalmist experiences *depression*. He feels that he is dying from anguish (31:10; 119:87), exhausted (39:10; 71:9; 119:81), fainting with longing (84:2), and overwhelmed by the weariness of life (90:7, 9).

143:8-10 The psalmist prays for wisdom (see 5:8; 25:4-6; Ps 138; 143:10). • *your gracious Spirit*: The Spirit brings God's goodness (see 23:6).

143:11 To *preserve* means in this case to restore from despair (80:19; 85:6; 138:7).

143:12 A prayer for vindication and renewal of life concludes the psalm.

Ps 144 This lament begins with an

exclamation of love for the Lord. The community then reflects on the transitory nature of life (144:3-4). The psalmist prays for divine intervention and anticipates victory (144:5-11). A new song (144:9-10) and a prayer for rescue (144:11) open up the theme of the Lord's blessing through his provisions and protection (144:12-15).

144:1-2 The psalmist's descriptive names for the Lord reveal his deep love for him.

144:2 *the nations*: Some manuscripts read *my people*.

144:3-4 *what are human beings?* The same question in 8:4-6 elicits the answer that humans are mere mortals but are also glorious rulers. The psalmist depicts humans as having a transitory, empty existence (see 90:3, 7-10; 102:11; 109:23; 146:4).

144:5-8 The psalmist prays for God's intervention against his *enemies* (cp. 18:7-19).

- 9 I will sing a new song to you, O God!
I will sing your praises with a
ten-stringed harp.
- 10 For you grant victory to kings!
You rescued your servant David from
the fatal sword.
- 11 Save me!
Rescue me from the power of my
enemies.
Their mouths are full of lies;
they swear to tell the truth, but they
lie instead.
- 12 May our sons flourish in their youth
like well-nurtured plants.
May our daughters be like graceful pillars,
carved to beautify a palace.
- 13 May our barns be filled
with crops of every kind.
May the flocks in our fields multiply by
the thousands,
even tens of thousands,
14 and may our oxen be loaded down
with produce.
May there be no enemy breaking
through our walls,
no going into captivity,
no cries of alarm in our town squares.
- 15 Yes, joyful are those who live like this!
Joyful indeed are those whose God is
the LORD.

PSALM 145

A psalm of praise of David.

- 1 I will exalt you, my God and King,
and praise your name forever and ever.
- 2 I will praise you every day;
yes, I will praise you forever.
- 3 Great is the LORD! He is most worthy of
praise!
No one can measure his greatness.
- 4 Let each generation tell its children of
your mighty acts;
let them proclaim your power.
- 5 I will meditate on your majestic,
glorious splendor
- and your wonderful miracles.
- 6 Your awe-inspiring deeds will be on
every tongue;
I will proclaim your greatness.
- 7 Everyone will share the story of your
wonderful goodness;
they will sing with joy about your
righteousness.
- 8 The LORD is merciful and compassionate,
slow to get angry and filled with
unfailing love.
- 9 The LORD is good to everyone.
He showers compassion on all his
creation.
- 10 All of your works will thank you, LORD,
and your faithful followers will praise
you.
- 11 They will speak of the glory of your
kingdom;
they will give examples of your power.
- 12 They will tell about your mighty deeds
and about the majesty and glory of
your reign.
- 13 For your kingdom is an everlasting
kingdom.
You rule throughout all generations.
- The LORD always keeps his promises;
he is gracious in all he does.
- 14 The LORD helps the fallen
and lifts those bent beneath their loads.
- 15 The eyes of all look to you in hope;
you give them their food as they need it.
- 16 When you open your hand,
you satisfy the hunger and thirst of
every living thing.
- 17 The LORD is righteous in everything he
does;
he is filled with kindness.
- 18 The LORD is close to all who call on him,
yes, to all who call on him in truth.
- 19 He grants the desires of those who fear
him;
he hears their cries for help and
rescues them.

144:9

Ps 40:3

144:10

2 Sam 18:7

Ps 140:7

144:11

Ps 12:2

Isa 44:20

144:12

Ps 92:12-14

Prov 3:9-10

Song 4:4; 7:4

144:14

2 Kgs 25:11

Isa 24:11

Jer 14:2

145:3

Rom 11:33

145:4

Isa 38:19

145:5

Ps 119:27

kabad (3519)

Prov 11:16

145:6

Deut 10:21; 32:3

145:7

Ps 51:14

Isa 63:7

145:8

Exod 34:6

arek 'appayim (0750,

0639)

Prov 14:29

145:9

Ps 100:5

Nah 1:7

Matt 19:17

Mark 10:18

145:10

Ps 19:1; 68:26

145:12

Ps 105:1

Isa 2:10, 19, 21

145:13

2 Pet 1:11

145:15

Ps 104:27

145:18

Deut 4:7

John 4:24

145:19

Ps 10:17

Prov 15:29

144:12-15 This prayer for the Lord's blessing brings the laments of Pss 140-144 to a close. It offers a vision of God's provision and protection (see Ps 127), not only for the psalmist, but for his descendants and those of all the godly.

144:12 The psalmist compares *sons* and *daughters* to plants and pillars, which are images of strength and beauty.

144:13-14 *no enemy . . . no cries of alarm*: These images depict peace and security.

Ps 145 This psalm is a Hebrew acrostic

poem; each verse (including 13b) begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This hymn of praise is the last in this collection of the psalms of David (Pss 138-145). Praise continues in the last five psalms (Pss 146-150). This psalm celebrates the Lord as King of all (145:1-3, 10-13). God's actions reveal his royal qualities (145:4-7). He cares for all creatures (145:14-17) and for those who fear him (145:18-20).

145:1-3 Praise to God, the Great King who reigns over all other rulers (see 47:2).

145:4-7 This litany praises God's character and mighty deeds. *Each generation*

will continue to testify to God's power (22:30).

145:5 *I will meditate*: Some manuscripts read *They will speak*.

145:8-9 God consistently demonstrates his character toward *all his creation* (see 136:25).

145:10-13 These verses form a description of the Lord's kingdom.

145:13 The last two lines of 145:13 are not found in many of the ancient manuscripts.

145:14-20 The Lord cares for his creatures.

145:20
Ps 31:23; 37:38

145:21
Ps 71:8; 150:6

146:1
Ps 103:1

146:2
Ps 63:4; 104:33
^z*zamar* (2167)
• Ps 147:1

146:3
Ps 60:11

146:4
Ps 33:10; 104:29
Eccl 12:7

146:5
Ps 71:5

146:6
Acts 14:15

146:7
Ps 68:6

146:8
Matt 9:30
John 9:7

146:9
Exod 22:21
Lev 19:34
Deut 10:18

146:10
Ps 10:16

147:1
Ps 33:1; 135:3
^z*zamar* (2167)
• Ps 149:3

147:2
Isa 11:12; 56:8
Ezek 39:28

147:4
Gen 15:5
Isa 40:26

147:5
Ps 98:1
Isa 40:28

147:6
^a*anaw* (6035)
• Ps 149:4

147:8
Job 5:10; 26:8; 38:26

147:9
Job 38:41
Ps 104:27

147:10
1 Sam 16:7
Ps 33:17

147:12
^h*halal* (1984)
• Ps 150:1

²⁰ The LORD protects all those who love him,
but he destroys the wicked.

²¹ I will praise the LORD,
and may everyone on earth bless his holy name
forever and ever.

PSALM 146

¹ Praise the LORD!

Let all that I am praise the LORD.

² I will praise the LORD as long as I live.
I will ^asing praises to my God with my
dying breath.

³ Don't put your confidence in powerful
people;
there is no help for you there.

⁴ When they breathe their last, they
return to the earth,
and all their plans die with them.

⁵ But joyful are those who have the God of
Israel as their helper,
whose hope is in the LORD their God.

⁶ He made heaven and earth,
the sea, and everything in them.
He keeps every promise forever.

⁷ He gives justice to the oppressed
and food to the hungry.
The LORD frees the prisoners.

⁸ The LORD opens the eyes of the blind.
The LORD lifts up those who are weighed
down.

The LORD loves the godly.

⁹ The LORD protects the foreigners
among us.

He cares for the orphans and
widows,

but he frustrates the plans of the
wicked.

¹⁰ The LORD will reign forever.
He will be your God, O Jerusalem,
throughout the generations.

Praise the LORD!

PSALM 147

¹ Praise the LORD!

How good to ^asing praises to our God!
How delightful and how fitting!

² The LORD is rebuilding Jerusalem
and bringing the exiles back to Israel.

³ He heals the brokenhearted
and bandages their wounds.

⁴ He counts the stars
and calls them all by name.

⁵ How great is our Lord! His power is
absolute!
His understanding is beyond
comprehension!

⁶ The LORD supports the ^bhumble,
but he brings the wicked down into
the dust.

⁷ Sing out your thanks to the LORD;
sing praises to our God with a harp.

⁸ He covers the heavens with clouds,
provides rain for the earth,
and makes the grass grow in
mountain pastures.

⁹ He gives food to the wild animals
and feeds the young ravens when they
cry.

¹⁰ He takes no pleasure in the strength of a
horse
or in human might.

¹¹ No, the LORD's delight is in those who
fear him,
those who put their hope in his
unfailing love.

¹² Glorify the LORD, O Jerusalem!
^cPraise your God, O Zion!

145:20 The Lord cares for those *who love him* and fear him. God-fearers love the Lord and find refuge in him (5:11); they seek him as their only true Savior (40:16; 70:4). They will experience a grand future (69:36), as well as God's peace (119:165).

Pss 146–150 The Psalter ends with five hallelujah psalms, so named because each begins and ends with *Praise the LORD!* (Hebrew *halelu-yah*).

Ps 146 The call to praise (146:1-2) leads into a warning against folly and false confidence (146:3-4). The psalm concludes with a blessing for all who place their hope in the Lord (146:5-7).

146:1 This verse is reminiscent of 103:1, 2, 22; 104:1, 35.

146:5-7 *the God of Israel*: Literally of

Jacob. See note on 44:4; see also 20:1.

146:8-9 The fourfold repetition of the name of *the LORD* emphasizes that only he heals, unburdens, loves, and protects.

146:10 *Jerusalem*: Hebrew *Zion* (see "Mount Zion, the City of God" at Ps 48, p. 947).

Ps 147 The psalmist calls for the Lord to be praised for restoring and blessing Zion, caring for the poor, displaying his power over nature, and revealing himself to his people.

147:1 This verse is a call to worship.

147:2-6 The psalmist recalls the restoration of Jerusalem and the Lord's afflicted exiles.

147:4-5 The Lord created the heavens.

• **He counts the stars**: God's people can feel secure in knowing that the Lord attends to every detail of his creation; he knows all that belongs to him.

147:6 God measures out his justice on the poor and on the wicked (55:22; 140:12; 145:14; 146:7).

147:7-11 Human achievements fail to impress the God who commands nature; rather, he takes pleasure in those who fear him.

147:8 God holds sovereign power over the weather (77:17-18; 78:26; 104:4; 148:5-6).

147:10-11 *human might*: Any physical or intellectual achievement is a gift from the Lord, just like the *strength of a horse*. These gifts are a reason to praise the Lord, not to boast (Jer 9:23-24).

13 For he has strengthened the bars of your gates
and blessed your children within your walls.

14 He sends peace across your nation
and satisfies your hunger with the finest wheat.

15 He sends his orders to the world—
how swiftly his word flies!

16 He sends the snow like white wool;
he scatters frost upon the ground like ashes.

17 He hurls the hail like stones.
Who can stand against his freezing cold?

18 Then, at his command, it all melts.
He sends his winds, and the ice thaws.

19 He has revealed his words to Jacob,
his decrees and regulations to Israel.

20 He has not done this for any other nation;
they do not know his regulations.

Praise the LORD!

PSALM 148

1 Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD from the heavens!
Praise him from the skies!

2 Praise him, all his ^aangels!
Praise him, all the armies of heaven!

3 Praise him, sun and moon!
Praise him, all you twinkling stars!

4 Praise him, skies above!
Praise him, vapors high above the clouds!

5 Let every ^ccreated thing give praise to the LORD,
for he issued his command, and they came into being.

6 He set them in place forever and ever.
His decree will never be revoked.

7 Praise the LORD from the earth,
you creatures of the ocean depths,

8 fire and hail, snow and clouds,
wind and weather that obey him,

9 mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars,

10 wild animals and all livestock,
small scurrying animals and birds,

11 kings of the earth and all people,
rulers and judges of the earth,

12 young men and young women,
old men and children.

13 Let them all praise the name of the LORD.
For his name is very great;
his glory towers over the earth and heaven!

14 He has made his people strong,
honoring his faithful ones—
the people of Israel who are close to him.

Praise the LORD!

PSALM 149

1 Praise the LORD!

Sing to the LORD a new song.
Sing his praises in the ^aassembly of the faithful.

2 O Israel, rejoice in your Maker.
O people of Jerusalem, exult in your King.

3 Praise his name with dancing,
^baccompanied by tambourine and harp.

4 For the LORD delights in his people;
he crowns the ^bhumble with victory.

5 Let the faithful rejoice that he honors them.
Let them sing for joy as they lie on their beds.

6 Let the praises of God be in their mouths,
and a sharp sword in their hands—

7 to execute vengeance on the nations
and punishment on the peoples,

147:13
Neh 3:3; 7:3

147:14
Deut 32:14

147:15
Job 37:12

147:19
Deut 33:3-4
Mal 4:4

147:20
Deut 4:7-8
Ps 79:6

148:1
Ps 102:19

148:2
Ps 103:20-21

^amal'ak (4397)
▶ Zech 3:1

148:4
Gen 1:7
Deut 10:14

148:5
Gen 1:1

^bbara' (1254)
▶ Eccl 12:1

148:6
Job 38:33

148:7
Gen 1:21
Ps 74:13
Hab 3:10

148:9
Isa 44:23; 49:13;
55:12

148:13
Ps 8:1; 113:4
Rev 5:12

148:14
Deut 10:21
1 Sam 2:1
Eph 2:17

149:1
Ps 33:3; 89:5

^aqahal (6951)
▶ Joel 2:16

149:2
Judg 8:23
Ps 47:6

149:3
Exod 15:20
^bzamar (2167)
▶ 1 Chr 16:9

149:4
Ps 35:27

^canaw (6035)
▶ Prov 3:34

149:5
Job 35:10

147:13 The *bars* of the city *gates* symbolize defenses against enemies. • God *blessed* his people by empowering them with safety, prosperity, peace, and provisions (see 133:3).

147:15-18 Simply by speaking *his command*, the Lord can change the season from unbearable winter to refreshing spring (see 147:8; 148:5-6).

147:17 *like stones*: Literally *like bread crumbs*.

147:19-20 *words . . . decrees . . . regulations*: The Lord gave powerful words to Israel so that they might obey him (105:45).

Ps 148 This psalm calls for the whole created order to praise the Lord because he has honored his faithful people.

148:1 During Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, the crowds called out various blessings, including a phrase taken from this verse (Matt 21:9; Mark 11:10; Luke 19:38).

148:6 The created order is stable because of the Lord's word (see 33:9).

148:8 In the ancient Near East, people viewed different gods as having control over separate aspects of nature. The Lord, however, reigns sovereign over all natural phenomena; all the parts of creation are his servants, bringing praise to him through their obedience (77:17-18; 104:4; 135:7; 147:8, 15-18; Num 11:31). • *clouds*: Or *mist*, or *smoke*.

148:11-12 The psalmist calls all humans to offer praise to God, regardless of status, age, or gender.

148:13-14 Universal praise of the Lord is fitting because he is glorious, and he has blessed his people (see 147:13; Isa 46:13; Eph 3:10). • *His faithful ones* are his trusting and devoted servants (86:2).

Ps 149 This hymn of praise celebrates the Lord's victory. He is the *Maker* of Israel (149:1-2) and the victorious *King* who shares his glory with his faithful ones (149:3-9).

149:2 *Jerusalem*: Hebrew *Zion* (see "Mount Zion, the City of God" at Ps 48, p. 947).

149:4 God's people, whom the world ignores and despises, will be vindicated (Matt 19:30). The *humble* will experience *victory* over their oppressors and persecutors (see Isa 61:3).

149:6
Ps 66:17
150:1
halal (1984)
• Prov 27:2
150:2
Deut 3:24
150:3
Ps 98:6
150:4
Isa 38:20
150:5
1 Chr 13:8; 15:16
150:6
Ps 145:21

8 to bind their kings with shackles
and their leaders with iron chains,
9 to execute the judgment written against
them.
This is the glorious privilege of his
faithful ones.

Praise the LORD!

PSALM 150

1 Praise the LORD!

Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty heaven!

2 Praise him for his mighty works;
praise his unequalled greatness!
3 Praise him with a blast of the ram's horn;
praise him with the lyre and harp!
4 Praise him with the tambourine and
dancing;
praise him with strings and flutes!
5 Praise him with a clash of cymbals;
praise him with loud clanging cymbals.
6 Let everything that breathes sing praises
to the LORD!

Praise the LORD!

Instrument	References	Explanation
Stringed Instruments (minnim, Ps 150:4)		
Harp or Lyre (<i>kinnor</i>)	Ps 81:2; 1 Sam 10:5; 16:16, 23; 2 Sam 6:5; Isa 5:12	The <i>kinnor</i> , the most frequently mentioned musical instrument in the Bible, was a hand-held harp or lyre. The strings were made of sheep gut, and the sounding box was at the bottom of the instrument.
Harp (<i>nebel</i>)	Ps 57:8; 2 Sam 6:5; 1 Kgs 10:12; Neh 12:27; Amos 5:23	The <i>nebel</i> was a larger and louder instrument than the <i>kinnor</i> . It was probably shaped like a bottle, with the belly-shaped sounding box on the bottom.
Ten-stringed Harp (<i>nebel 'asor</i>)	Ps 33:2; 92:3; 144:9	The <i>nebel 'asor</i> is often identified with the Phoenician zither, which had ten strings.
Wind Instruments		
Ram's horn (<i>shofar</i>)	Ps 98:6; 150:3; 2 Sam 6:15; 15:10; 1 Kgs 1:34; 2 Kgs 9:13; 1 Chr 15:28; 2 Chr 15:14	The <i>shofar</i> , mentioned in the Bible more than any other Hebrew instrument, is the only instrument of ancient Israel that survives and is still used in Jewish liturgy. The early <i>shofar</i> was simply a hollowed ram's horn. Later shofars might have mouthpieces added, and some are straightened with a bend near the bell of the horn. The <i>shofar</i> was used for signaling important events, not for playing music.
Flute (<i>'ugab</i>)	Ps 150:4; Gen 4:21; Job 21:12; 30:31	The <i>'ugab</i> was a type of flute. Its only sacred use is recorded in Ps 150:4.
Trumpet (<i>khatotsirah</i>)	Ps 98:6; Num 10:1-10; 1 Chr 15:28; 2 Chr 15:14; Hos 5:8	The <i>khatotsirah</i> was a sort of trumpet. Similar instruments were known in Egypt, Assyria, the Hittite Empire, and Greece. The <i>khatotsirah</i> became an important part of the Temple service.
Flute or Oboe (<i>khalil</i>)	Jer 48:36; 1 Sam 10:5; Isa 5:12	The <i>khalil</i> was similar to the Greek <i>aulos</i> , a primitive oboe (see Matt 9:23; 1 Cor 14:7; Rev 18:22). The <i>khalil</i> had a double-reed mouthpiece and probably produced a shrill, penetrating sound.
Percussion Instruments		
Castanet (<i>mena'an'im</i>)	2 Sam 6:5	The <i>mena'an'im</i> was probably a form of the Egyptian <i>sistrum</i> , a loud metal rattle, made from rods and loose rings that rattled.
Bells (<i>pa'amonim</i>)	Exod 28:33-34; 39:25- 26	The <i>pa'amonim</i> were bells attached to the hem of the priest's garment.
Tambourine or Hand Drum (<i>tof</i>)	Ps 81:2; Exod 15:20; 1 Sam 10:5; 2 Sam 6:5	The <i>tof</i> was a loud hand drum used in merrymaking. A wooden or metal hoop was covered with the skin of a ram or goat and was played with the hand.
Cymbals (<i>tseltselim</i> and <i>metsiltayim</i>)	Ps 150:5; 2 Sam 6:5; 1 Chr 13:8; 15:19	The <i>tseltselim</i> and <i>metsiltayim</i> were cymbals, probably played in a pair by one musician. The cymbals were used as signals for the singing to begin and between the sections of the psalms.
Cymbal (<i>shalish</i>)	1 Sam 18:6	The <i>shalish</i> might have been a type of cymbal or rattle.

Source: Tyndale Bible Dictionary, "Musical Instruments" (Tyndale House Publishers, 2001). Used by permission.

▲ Musical Instruments in Israel (Ps 150).

149:6-9 Vengeance is the Lord's business (see 2:3; 94:1; 102:20; 142:7; 146:7).

Ps 150 Everything that breathes is commanded to *praise* the Lord as he deserves. The whole Psalter describes the greatness of the Lord, so this psalm is a fitting conclusion.

150:1 The phrase *mighty heaven* alludes to Gen 1 and to God's glorious work in filling the emptiness.

150:3-5 The psalmist calls all people to praise God with instruments and dancing. • *flutes*: These wind instruments are not mentioned as being used in Temple

worship. • *clanging cymbals*: Temple musicians clapped two bronze bowls together as percussion instruments.

150:6 Praise the LORD: This refrain is a fitting conclusion to the entire book of Psalms.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

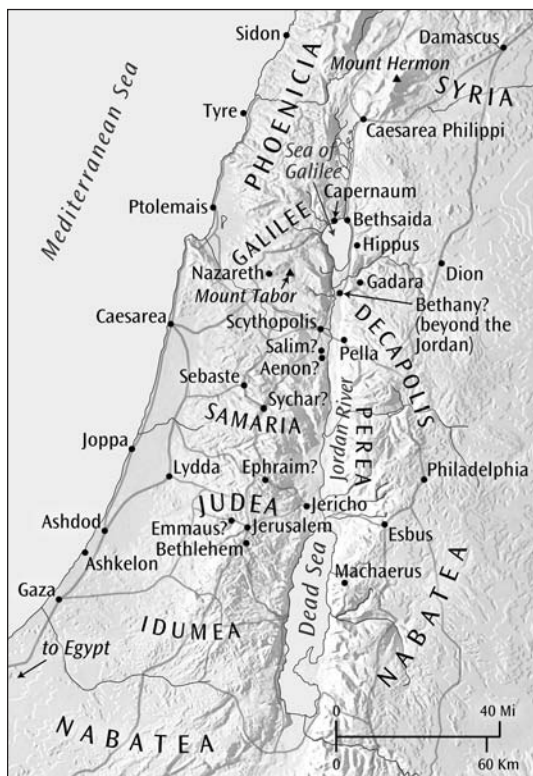
John wrote his Gospel to inspire faith. John knew Jesus intimately, and John's Gospel provides an intimate portrait of the Lord. John referred to himself as "the disciple Jesus loved." His Gospel has become the "beloved Gospel" of the church. Here we meet Nicodemus, doubting Thomas, Lazarus, and the Samaritan woman at the well. John records for us Jesus' most memorable sayings, his longest sermons, and his most profound miracles. Here we meet God face to face.

SETTING

A small community of Christians lived in ancient Ephesus during the late first century AD. They had learned the remarkable story of Jesus from the apostles Paul and John. This early church became strong in faith under the leadership of these men. While many stories circulated about Jesus, the apostle John had his own recollections and insights. In the later years of his life, John wrote these stories down, providing his followers—and us—with the fourth Gospel.

As an evangelist, pastor, and theologian, John's desire above all was for his followers to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (20:31). He realized that they had not had the privilege of seeing Jesus' many signs and miracles as he had (20:29). John's authority and deep experience with Jesus ring out from every story he told. As a valued eyewitness to Jesus' life (19:35), John was the source of many stories from faraway Galilee and Judea. John had heard, seen, and touched the Word of life (see 1 Jn 1:1-4). He told about Nicodemus and rebirth, described Jesus' miracle at Cana, and recorded many other episodes.

As the Christians of Ephesus told their fellow citizens about Jesus, they quickly found themselves debating about Jesus with rabbis in the local synagogues. Was Jesus truly the Son of God? How could he



◀ **Key Places in the Gospel of John.** The book of John describes Jesus' ministry in GALILEE (2:1-12; 4:43-54; 6:1-7:9), JERUSALEM (2:13-3:21; 5:1-47; 7:10-10:42; 12:12-50), JUDEA (3:22; 11:1-44; 12:1-11), and SAMARIA (4:4-42). The book includes a full account Jesus' death and resurrection in JERUSALEM (13:1-20:31) and his post-resurrection appearance to his disciples beside the SEA OF GALILEE (21:1-23).

be the Messiah? Can Christians legitimately claim to be “children of Abraham”? Could anyone prove that Jesus’ claim of being sent from God was true? Guided by the Holy Spirit in his teaching and writing, John brilliantly led his Christian readers through these debates.

Tensions grew. As more Jews converted, small churches grew up alongside synagogues and began converting their members. Opposition to the Christian believers was inevitable. However, John stood by the church during terrible persecution and conflict. When it seemed that the fledgling church’s struggle with the prestigious synagogue community would overwhelm them, John courageously gave witness to the ministry of Jesus Christ. When false teachers later brought internal controversy and conflict to the church, John again gave the community strength. Writing letters to encourage and exhort (see 1, 2, and 3 John), John became the heroic pastor–theologian of Asia Minor.

John’s writing is as beloved today as it was in the earliest years of the church. Few books of the Bible have influenced Christian life and thought like John’s profound and dynamic Gospel. By combining intimacy of expression with penetrating insight, John provides a deeply satisfying portrait of Christ.

OUTLINE

1:1-18

Prologue: Christ, the Eternal Word

1:19–12:50

*The Book of Signs:
The Word Displays His Glory*

13:1–20:31

*The Book of Glory:
The Word Is Glorified*

21:1-25

*Epilogue: The Word
Commissions His Followers*

SUMMARY

John divided his Gospel into two main sections: chs 1–12 and chs 13–21. The first section, which has been called “The Book of Signs,” tells about Jesus’ public ministry of revealing himself to the Jewish world. The second section, sometimes called “The Book of Glory,” records Jesus’ private words to his disciples and tells of his death and resurrection.

Chapters 1–12. The Gospel prologue (1:1-18) artfully summarizes the entrance of God’s Word into the world. Jesus was baptized and called his earliest followers (1:19-51). Then a series of remarkable events (chs 2–4) highlights Jesus’ revelation of himself to the Jews. At a wedding in Cana, Jesus turned water into wine. In Jerusalem, he used a whip to drive corruption and money-dealing out of the Temple. He debated the meaning of spiritual rebirth with a rabbi named Nicodemus. At a well in Samaria, he met a woman with a checkered marital history and offered her “living water,” which no well can ever duplicate. In each of these events, Jesus unveiled his identity.

In the following section (chs 5–10), Jesus appears at a number of Jewish festivals, using ancient OT symbols and practices to reveal himself to God’s people. On the Sabbath, Jesus worked by healing a lame man. On Passover, Jesus provided bread for 5,000. In the symbolic light of the Festival of Shelters, Jesus healed a blind man, reinforcing his own identity as the light

TIMELINE

about 6~4 BC
Birth of Jesus

AD 18~36
Caiaphas as high priest

AD 26~36
Pontius Pilate as governor of Judea

AD 28~29
Jesus clears the Temple

Passover, AD 30 or 33
Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection

AD 65~70
Mark writes the Gospel of Mark

AD 65~80
Matthew writes the Gospel of Matthew, Luke writes the Gospel of Luke

before AD 90
▶ *John writes the Gospel of John
John writes 1–3 John*

AD 60s or 90s
John writes Revelation

of the world. John's clear message is that Jesus came to fulfill what Judaism had promised since OT times.

Then Jesus began to prepare for his death and resurrection. John describes Jesus' arrival in Bethany, a town just east of Jerusalem (ch 11). His friend Lazarus had died, and Jesus raised him to life. Following this event (ch 12), Jesus made his final public appeal to the world to believe in him and his mission.

Chapters 13–21. John turns to Jesus' death and resurrection, reminding readers that the cross is not a sign of despair but a picture of glory and wonder. Jesus was returning to the Father and needed to prepare his disciples for his departure. At his final Passover meal (chs 13–17), Jesus disclosed to his disciples the things nearest to his heart. He told them candidly about his death and departure to the Father. He reassured them that he would not abandon them, but that he would return and turn their sorrow into joy. He promised them the gift of the Holy Spirit. Finally, Jesus prayed for them.

Following this Passover meal, Jesus led his followers east of the city and across a valley to an olive grove called Gethsemane (ch 18). Judas soon appeared with a large contingent of Roman soldiers and Temple guards. Following his arrest, Jesus stood before the Jewish high council to be interrogated, first by Annas and then by Caiaphas, the reigning high priest. By morning, the Jewish leaders took Jesus to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, who asked probing questions about Jesus' identity. Pilate, coaxed by the Jewish leaders, decided to crucify Jesus (ch 19).

The climax of John's Gospel is Jesus' resurrection from the dead (ch 20). This event begins a series of dramatic stories in which Jesus appeared to his followers and encouraged them. He gave them the Holy Spirit and commissioned them to represent him to the world. Jesus then gave his disciples their marching orders (ch 21). He reminded them of his power (21:1-14), reinstated Peter (21:15-17), and instructed him to follow him in his mission (21:18-23).

AUTHOR AND DATE

As with the other Gospels, John provides no explicit evidence as to its author, although the enigmatic figure of the "beloved disciple" provides clear clues (see 13:23; 19:26-27; 20:2-10; 21:7, 20-24). The Gospel of John must be connected with this person, for he is identified as the eyewitness source of this record of Jesus' life (19:35; 21:24).

Who was this beloved disciple? Leaders in the early church, beginning in AD 125, wrote that it was the apostle John, the son of Zebedee (see, e.g., Eusebius, *Church History* 3.23). This traditional view is sound and fully defensible. John was one of the Twelve and, along with James (his brother) and Peter, formed an inner circle around Jesus (Mark 3:17; Acts 1:13). The Gospel reflects this close perspective as it highlights Peter and John. Most scholars believe that John completed writing his Gospel by AD 90.

RECIPIENTS

John most likely wrote his Gospel for Jewish Christians living abroad in the Mediterranean world; with their grasp of Hebrew slipping, these believers were caught between the Jewish and Greek cultures.

*The truth which this
Gospel enshrines—
the truth that Jesus
Christ is the very
Word Incarnate—
[is] the one study
which alone can
fitly prepare us for
a joyful immortality
hereafter.*

J. B. LIGHTFOOT,
Biblical Essays

John's knowledge of Palestine and Judaism is reflected throughout his Gospel.

John assumed that his audience was unfamiliar with some particulars of Jesus' world. For example, he explained that *rabbi* is a Hebrew word meaning "teacher" (1:38), and he gave an alternate name for the Sea of Galilee (6:1). At the same time, John assumed that his readers were familiar with Jewish traditions, concepts, and festivals. They probably were also familiar with the basic story presented in Mark's Gospel. For example, John refers to John the Baptist's imprisonment (3:24) without ever telling the complete story.

MEANING AND MESSAGE

Revelation and Redemption. "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it" (1:5). The light of God has inhabited the world: Christ reveals the Father (14:9). In Christ we see the glory of God in a human being. Even though Jesus was persecuted, tried, and crucified, the light cannot be extinguished. Jesus' purpose in revealing God is to redeem people: "The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone" (1:4). Those who embrace Christ's revelation and redemption with faith will gain eternal life.

Worship and the Spirit. Worship must take place "in spirit and in truth" (4:24), energized and formed by the Spirit of God. Nicodemus had to be born of "water and Spirit" to enter the Kingdom of God (3:5). In Galilee, after feeding the 5,000, Jesus told the crowd that living bread is available in his body, which was to be sacrificed. He instructed them to consume his body and blood, symbolic of the Lord's Supper (6:51-59). Yet worship focusing only on the individual elements and not accompanied by the Spirit of God is worth nothing (6:63).

Jesus Christ. John recorded Jesus' descriptions about his nature, origin, and relationship to the Father. Jesus affirmed his oneness with the Father (10:30; 14:9-10) and their unity of purpose (5:17; 8:42), as well as their personal distinctiveness (14:28; 17:1-5). Jesus even used the very title ("I AM") that God used for himself in the OT, thus affirming his own deity (8:58; 18:5; Exod 3:14).

The Holy Spirit. John's Gospel underscores the Holy Spirit as a central feature of Jesus' human experience (chs 4, 7) and of our lives (ch 3). The transforming power of God's Spirit is a hallmark of true discipleship.

The Mission of the Church. God sent Jesus into the world (8:18) to proclaim his glory and to testify to the Good News of redemption. In his departure, the Son passed this mission on to the Spirit (16:5-11), who in turn would fill the church and empower believers to fulfill the mission of Jesus in the world (20:20-23; Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:7-8).

The End Times. Early Christians anticipated the return of Christ, and John affirms this anticipation. Yet in the meantime, believers can experience Jesus' longed-for presence in the Holy Spirit. Jesus' announcement of the Spirit's coming echoes the language of his own second coming (see 14:15-23). In a vital way, Jesus is already with us in the Spirit as we continue to look forward to Christ's personal return at the end of history.

I like the comparison of John's Gospel to a pool in which a child may wade and an elephant can swim. It is both simple and profound. It is for the beginner in the faith and for the mature Christian. Its appeal is immediate and never failing.

LEON MORRIS,
The Gospel according to John

FURTHER READING

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Opening John's Gospel and Epistles (2009)

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John in Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, vol. 13 (2007)

RODNEY A. WHITACRE
John (1999)

1. PROLOGUE: CHRIST, THE ETERNAL WORD (1:1-18)

1 ¹In the beginning the ^aWord already existed.
 The ^aWord was with God, and the ^aWord was God.
² He existed in the beginning with God.
³ God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him.
⁴ The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone.
⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.
⁶ God sent a man, John the Baptist, ⁷to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. ⁸John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light. ⁹The one who

is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. ¹¹He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. ¹²But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. ¹³They are reborn—not via a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

¹⁴So the ^bWord became ^chuman and made his home among us. He was full of un-failing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his ^dglory, the ^dglory of the Father's ^eone and only Son.

¹⁵John testified about him when he shouted to the crowds, "This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'Someone is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.'"

¹⁶From his abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another.

1:1
 Gen 1:1
 Col 1:15
^alogos (3056)
^aJohn 1:14

1:3
 1 Cor 8:6
 Col 1:16-17
 Heb 1:2

1:4
 John 8:12; 11:25; 14:6
 1 Jn 5:12, 20

1:5
 John 3:19; 9:5

1:9
 1 Jn 2:8

1:12
 Rom 8:15-16, 29

1:14
 Rom 8:3
 Gal 4:4-7
 Phil 2:6-8
 1 Tim 3:16
 1 Jn 1:1; 4:2-3
^blogos (3056)
^bActs 6:2
^csarx (4561)
^cJohn 3:6
^ddoxa (1391)
^dRom 3:23
^emonogenēs (3439)
^eJohn 1:18

1:1-18 The beginning of this prologue (1:1-5) might be a poem or hymn sung by the earliest Christians. The prologue's themes—the coming of the light into the world, the rejection of the light, and its gift of new life to believers—prepares readers for the story that follows.

1:1 Echoing Gen 1:1, John's Gospel introduces Jesus Christ, through whom God created everything (1:3); Jesus also creates new life in those who believe (1:12-13). The Gospel opens with its central affirmation, that Jesus Christ, *the Word* (Greek *logos*), not only revealed God but *was God*. In Greek thought, the *logos* was the rational principle guiding the universe and making life coherent. For Jewish people, the *logos* was the word of the Lord, an expression of God's wisdom and creative power. By Jesus' time, the *logos* was viewed as coming from God and having his personality (see Ps 33:6; 9; Prov 8:22-31); John affirmed this understanding (1:14).

1:3-4 *and nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created:* Or *and nothing that was created was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything.* The Greek grammar allows either possibility.

1:3 God is the *logos* (1:1-2); all that God does, the *logos* likewise does. Throughout his Gospel, John rightly viewed Jesus' actions as divine activity.

1:4-5 God created *light* and dispelled the *darkness* (Gen 1:2-5). The darkness resists God (3:19-21; 12:35; Matt 6:23; Acts 26:17-18; Eph 4:17-19; 5:7-14; 2 Pet 1:19; 1 Jn 1:5-7; 2:9-11).

1:4 *The Word gave life:* Life was God's original gift to his creatures (Gen 1:20-28; 2:7). Now the *logos* would give these creatures the possibility of new life through rebirth (1:13). • As one of his first creative acts, God *brought light* (Gen 1:3). Now, in the re-creation of humanity through Jesus Christ, God offered light and life anew. Light is a key theme in John's Gospel.

1:5 *the darkness can never extinguish it: Or the darkness has not understood it; literally the darkness cannot grasp it.* The Greek word *katalambanō* ("grasp") can mean either "understand" or "be hostile"; in John's Gospel, it means hostility. The darkness would try to destroy Jesus (the light), but it would fail. The light would successfully bring salvation to the world.

1:6-9 *God sent a man, John the Baptist (literally a man named John) to herald Jesus' coming and to prepare God's people to receive Jesus as God's Son and Messiah (see 1:19-37; Luke 1:5-25, 57-80; 3:1-22; see also Isa 40:3; Mal 4:5-6).*

1:8 Some Jews speculated that John the Baptist was the Messiah; some of his followers were even reluctant to follow Jesus (3:22-30). However, John the Baptist *was not the light*; his role was to announce Jesus (1:19-34).

1:10 *The world cannot recognize the true light even when it encounters its Creator.* The world lives in rebellion, loving darkness more than light (3:19; see "The World" at 17:5-26, p. 1807).

1:12 Only through divine renewal can people follow the light and enter God's family (3:1-17). • Individuals must

believe in Christ *to become children of God* (12:35-36).

1:13 *a birth that comes from God:* People can escape the darkness only by God's grace (8:12; 12:35-36, 44-46).

1:14 The idea that *the Word became human* (literally *became flesh*) stunned both Greeks and Jews. Greeks separated the sphere of God from the mundane world of humanity, which they called *flesh* (Greek *sarx*). John wrote that God himself became *flesh* in Christ (cp. 1:1). Jesus' humanity and divinity were complete, not partial. The two ideas—Jesus as 100-percent divine and 100-percent human—form the bedrock of a Christian understanding of Christ. • *the Word . . . made his home* (Greek *skēnōō*, "pitched his tent") *among us:* This Greek word is related to the word used for the OT Tabernacle (Greek *skēnē*, "tent, tabernacle"), the tent in the wilderness where the Lord's glory resided and where Israel came to worship (Exod 25:8-9). The Father's glory in the Tabernacle (Exod 40:34-38) was now present in Jesus Christ (2:11; 12:23-28, 41; 17:1-5). • *Jesus offered God's un-failing love and faithfulness* (or *grace and truth*). Despite the world's hostile darkness, Jesus entered the world to save it (3:15-17).

1:15 *he existed long before me:* In a society where age was respected and honored (Lev 19:32; contrast Isa 3:5), John the Baptist emphasized Jesus' honor by pointing to his existence even before creation (1:1-3).

1:16 *received one gracious blessing after another:* Or *received the grace of Christ rather than the grace of the law;* a literal translation is *received grace upon grace*.

1:17
Exod 31:18; 34:28
¹christos (5547)
• John 1:41

1:18
Col 1:15
⁹monogenēs (3439)
• John 3:16

1:19-28
Matt 3:1-12
Mark 1:2-8
Luke 3:1-16

1:20
Luke 3:15
John 3:28

1:21
Deut 18:15
Mal 4:5
Matt 11:14

1:23
⁹Isa 40:3
Mal 3:1

1:26
Matt 3:11
Mark 1:8
Luke 3:16

17For the law was given through Moses, but God's unfailing love and faithfulness came through Jesus ¹Christ. 18No one has ever seen God. But the ⁸unique One, who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us.

2. THE BOOK OF SIGNS: THE WORD DISPLAYS HIS GLORY (1:19–12:50) *Jesus and John the Baptist (1:19-51)*

The Testimony of John the Baptist

John 1:23 // Matt 3:1-3 // Mark 1:2-3 // Luke 3:2b-6
John 1:24-28 // Matt 3:11-12 // Mark 1:7-8 //

Luke 3:15-18

19This was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders sent priests and Temple assistants from Jerusalem to ask John, "Who are you?" 20He came right out and said, "I am not the Messiah."

21"Well then, who are you?" they asked. "Are you Elijah?"

"No," he replied.

"Are you the Prophet we are expecting?"

"No."

22"Then who are you? We need an answer for those who sent us. What do you have to say about yourself?"

23John replied in the words of the prophet Isaiah:

"I am a voice shouting in the wilderness, 'Clear the way for the LORD's coming!'"

24Then the Pharisees who had been sent 25asked him, "If you aren't the Messiah or Elijah or the Prophet, what right do you have to baptize?"

26John told them, "I baptize with water, but right here in the crowd is someone you

The Word (1:1-18)

John raises the curtain on his Gospel with a stunning description of Jesus Christ as "the Word" (Greek *logos*, 1:1). Both Greek and Jewish listeners in the first century would immediately recognize the profound meaning of this title. Greeks would have thought of the seminal forces that sustain the universe. Jewish minds would have thought back to God creating the world with his word (Gen 1:3-28). In Jesus' day, the word of God took on creative personal attributes (Ps 33:6, 9). Jews viewed God's word as personifying divine wisdom. Through Wisdom, God extended himself into the cosmos, creating the world (Prov 8:22-31).

In John's drama, Jesus shares the same essence as God; the Son existed before time, and he was the agent of all creation. John anchors the divinity of Jesus in this ancient Jewish concept of Wisdom. The divine Wisdom that has existed from before time with God can now be known in Jesus Christ. In perhaps the most outrageous verse penned by an apostle, John writes that this Logos, this Wisdom, became flesh and lived among us as a human (1:14). What God is, the Logos is. The Logos is Jesus Christ.

Gen 1:3-28
Ps 33:6, 9
Prov 8:22-31
Isa 40:8
1 Jn 1:1
Rev 19:13

1:17 the law: That is, the Torah, the first five books of the Bible (Genesis through Deuteronomy). • Although *God's unfailing love and faithfulness (or grace and truth)* are in the Torah, these qualities are fully revealed in Christ (3:16; 13:1).

1:18 Moses was denied his desire to see God directly (Exod 33:18-20). Only Jesus has seen the Father, so he alone completely knows him and can tell us about him (3:32-35; 14:9-10). • *But the unique One, who is himself God* (some manuscripts read *But the one and only Son*): The Son, who sees the Father, *is himself God*—not simply a messenger who knows something about God. John explicitly affirms Christ's deity. Jesus shares the substance of God's being.

1:19–12:50 Jesus reveals himself to the world through his miraculous signs and sermons. Audiences were divided: Some wanted to believe in him; others opposed him. This division intensifies as the book unfolds. Jesus ended his public ministry with a final appeal for

people to believe in him (12:44-50).

1:19-51 John's Gospel gives limited attention to John the Baptist compared to the synoptic Gospels (Matt 3:1-6; Mark 1:2-6; Luke 1:1-24, 57-80; 3:1-13). Yet the apostle John wants us to see that John the Baptist correctly identified and exalted Jesus. John the Baptist's disciples leave him and follow Jesus; Jesus took over the ministry John began, increasing as John decreased (3:30).

1:19 Jewish leaders: See "The Jewish Leaders" at 5:9-18, p. 1779. • *and Temple assistants:* Literally *and Levites*.

1:20 The Jews expected the *Messiah* (the Hebrew form of the Greek word *Christ*) to bring spiritual leadership and political redemption to Israel (see Deut 18:15; see also the Jewish intertestamental book *Psalms of Solomon*).

1:21 Elijah was to be the Messiah's forerunner (Mal 4:5). John the Baptist fulfilled the forerunner's role, though he denied being the prophet Elijah (see Matt 11:14; Luke 1:17). • *Are you the*

Prophet we are expecting? Literally *Are you the Prophet?* See Deut 18:15, 18; Mal 4:5-6; see also John 6:14; 7:40-41.

1:22-23 *Then who are you?* John the Baptist simply wanted to be known as *a voice shouting in the wilderness* (see Isa 40:3).

1:24 The *Pharisees* were deeply devoted to the Scriptures and earnestly desired a righteous life (see "Pharisees" at Matt 3:7, p. 1581). They also believed in the coming Messiah, which explains their inquiries here. Some Pharisees became believers in Jesus (Acts 15:5), including the apostle Paul (Acts 26:5; Phil 3:5).

1:25-26 Jewish baptisms were ritual washings for becoming ceremonially pure following contact with impurity (Lev 8:6; Num 19:7). • John's announcement of the Messiah's arrival required that participants confess their sins and be baptized (Matt 3:6). Baptism later became the symbol of membership in Jesus' kingdom (Acts 2:38; see also John 4:1-2). • *with:* Or *in*; also in 1:31, 33.

do not recognize. ²⁷Though his ministry follows mine, I'm not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandal."

²⁸This encounter took place in Bethany, an area east of the Jordan River, where John was baptizing.

Jesus, the Lamb of God

John 1:29-34 // Matt 3:13-17 // Mark 1:9-11 // Luke 3:21-22

²⁹The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! The ^hLamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰He is the one I was talking about when I said, 'A man is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.' ³¹I did not recognize him as the Messiah, but I have been baptizing with water so that he might be revealed to Israel."

³²Then John testified, "I saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove from heaven and resting upon him. ³³I didn't know he was the one, but when God sent me to baptize with water, he told me, 'The one on whom you see the Spirit descend and rest is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴I saw this happen to Jesus, so I testify that he is the Chosen One of God."

The First Disciples

³⁵The following day John was again standing with two of his disciples. ³⁶As Jesus walked by, John looked at him and declared, "Look! There is the ^hLamb of God!" ³⁷When John's two disciples heard this, they followed Jesus.

³⁸Jesus looked around and saw them following. "What do you want?" he asked them.

They replied, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?"

³⁹"Come and see," he said. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when they went with him to the place where he was staying, and they remained with him the rest of the day.

⁴⁰Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of these men who heard what John said and then followed Jesus. ⁴¹Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, "We have found the ^hMessiah" (which means "Christ").

⁴²Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus. Looking intently at Simon, Jesus said, "Your name is Simon, son of John—but you will be called Cephas" (which means "Peter").

⁴³The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Come, follow me." ⁴⁴Philip was from Bethsaida, Andrew and Peter's hometown.

⁴⁵Philip went to look for Nathanael and told him, "We have found the very person Moses and the prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth."

⁴⁶"Nazareth!" exclaimed Nathanael. "Can anything good come from Nazareth?"

"Come and see for yourself," Philip replied.

⁴⁷As they approached, Jesus said, "Now here is a genuine son of Israel—a man of complete integrity."

⁴⁸"How do you know about me?" Nathanael asked.

Jesus replied, "I could see you under the fig tree before Philip found you."

1:27
Mark 1:7
John 1:15
Acts 13:25

1:28
John 3:26; 10:40

1:29
Isa 53:7
1 Cor 5:7
1 Pet 1:19
^hamnos (0286)
• John 1:36

1:30
John 1:15, 27

1:32
Matt 3:16
Mark 1:10
Luke 3:22

1:33
Luke 3:16
Acts 1:5

1:34
John 1:49; 10:36;
11:27; 20:30-31

1:36
^hamnos (0286)
• Acts 8:32

1:38
^hrhabbi (4461)
• John 1:49

1:40
Matt 4:18-22
Mark 1:16
Luke 5:2-11

1:41
Ps 2:2
John 4:25
^hmessias (3323)
• John 4:25

1:42
Matt 16:18
1 Cor 15:5
1 Pet 2:5
^hpetros (4074)
• 1 Cor 10:4

1:43
John 6:5-6; 12:20-22

1:45
Luke 24:25-27

1:27 A menial task such as removing a *sandal* was reserved for a *slave*; these tasks were never performed by a disciple.

1:29 The phrase *Lamb of God* might refer to the Passover sacrifice of a lamb (see "The Cross and Passover" at 19:17-36, p. 1812) or to the daily sacrifice in the Temple (Exod 29:38-46; Heb 10). See also Rev 5.

1:32 John the Baptist's second testimony (see 1:19-23) told what happened when Jesus was baptized. • In the OT, kings and prophets were anointed with the *Holy Spirit*, but these anointings were temporary and tied to a particular office or occasion. By contrast, with the Spirit's *resting* on him, Jesus' anointing was permanent (see 3:34).

1:34 *the Chosen One of God*: Some manuscripts read *the Son of God*. See also Isa 42:1.

1:35-51 This section introduces the template for discipleship in John's Gospel. Disciples desired to *come and*

see Jesus (1:39), and when they encountered him, they *remained* with him (see "Disciples of Jesus" at 9:1-41, p. 1789).

1:40-42 Simon is well known in the Gospels, not for his courage and faith, but for his failings (see 18:15-18, 25-27). Jesus named him *Cephas* ("the rock"; see 1:42 and note), referring to the great church leader he would later become (see Acts 1-5, 8-12, 15).

1:41 *Messiah* (a Hebrew term) and *Christ* (a Greek term) both mean "the Anointed One."

1:42 The names *Cephas* (from Aramaic) and *Peter* (from Greek) both mean "rock."

1:43-44 *Galilee* was the region of north-east Israel around the Sea of Galilee. • *Bethsaida* ("house of fishing") was a village on Galilee's north shore and the home of Peter, Andrew, Nathanael, and Philip. Later, Peter and Andrew moved to Capernaum, a village west of Bethsaida (Mark 1:21, 29).

1:45 *Philip*, a Greek name, and

Nathanael, a Hebrew name, represent the mix of cultures in Galilee. Jesus' message there addressed both audiences. When Greeks wanted to see Jesus in Jerusalem, they approached Philip (12:20-22). • *Moses*: Literally *Moses in the law*. • Jesus grew up in *Nazareth*, a mountain village southwest of the Sea of Galilee.

1:46 *Can anything good come from Nazareth?* This village was not considered famous enough to be the hometown for a great leader (cp. Matt 13:53-58).

1:47 Jesus referred to Nathanael as *a man of complete integrity*, contrasting him with Jacob, the scheming, deceitful patriarch whom God renamed *Israel* (see Gen 25:27-34; 27:1-36; 32:22-32). It is as though Nathanael embodied God's ideal for Israel.

1:48-49 Jesus captured Nathanael's attention by knowing his character (1:47), then he captured his worship by supernaturally knowing his previous actions. Nathanael witnessed a miracle and took a remarkable step of faith.

1:49
2 Sam 7:14
Ps 2:2
John 1:34; 20:13
^brhabbi (4461)
• John 3:2
1:51
Gen 28:12

⁴⁹Then Nathanael exclaimed, “^bRabbi, you are the Son of God—the King of Israel!”

⁵⁰Jesus asked him, “Do you believe this just because I told you I had seen you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this.” ⁵¹Then he said, “I tell you the truth, you will all see heaven open and the angels of God going up and down on the Son of Man, the one who is the stairway between heaven and earth.”

*Jesus and Jewish Institutions (2:1–4:54)
The Wedding at Cana: Purification Water
Turned to Wine*

2The next day there was a wedding celebration in the village of Cana in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there, ²and Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the celebration. ³The wine supply ran out during the festivities, so Jesus’ mother told him, “They have no more wine.”

JOHN THE BAPTIST (1:19-37)

John 3:23-36; 4:1-3;
10:40-42
Matt 3:1-15; 4:12;
9:14; 11:2-19; 14:1-12;
16:14; 17:10-13;
21:24-27; 31-32
Mark 1:1-9; 14;
2:18; 6:14-29; 8:28;
9:11-13; 11:29-33
Luke 1:13-17; 36;
39-43; 57-66; 76-80;
3:1-21; 5:33; 7:18-35;
9:7-9; 19; 11:1;
16:16; 20:3-8
Acts 1:5; 10:37;
11:16; 18:25-26;
19:1-7

John the Baptist was a fiery open-air preacher who called people to repent and be baptized, to prepare for the coming of the Messiah. John acted in the role of Elijah, to prepare people for “the great and dreadful day of the LORD” (Mal 4:4-5; see Matt 11:14; 17:12; Mark 9:13).

John’s birth, like that of Jesus, was miraculous. His parents had been unable to have children and were elderly (Luke 1:5-25). His mother, Elizabeth, was a relative of Mary, the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:36), so John was related to Jesus. The two miraculous births near the same time signaled the beginning of God’s redeeming work.

John was filled with the Holy Spirit from birth and devoted his life to preparing people for the coming of the Lord (Luke 1:15-17). Living in the desert (Luke 1:80), he began preaching when he was about thirty years old. Dressed like a prophet and subsisting on desert food (locusts and wild honey, Matt 3:4; Mark 1:6), he called everyone to repent and be baptized (Matt 3:1-2; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:1-3). He even castigated the religious leaders who came to hear him (Matt 3:7).

Though John reluctantly baptized Jesus (Matt 3:13-17; Luke 3:21), he considered Jesus his superior, the one who would “baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (1:33; Matt 3:11; Mark 1:7-8; Luke 3:16; cp. 3:23-30). He encouraged his followers to become Jesus’ disciples—and many did, including Andrew and possibly John (1:35-40), as well as Apollos (Acts 18:24-26) and the twelve disciples at Ephesus (Acts 19:1-7).

Herod Antipas received harsh judgment from John because of Herod’s unlawful marriage to Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife. To please Herodias, Herod imprisoned John and then beheaded him (Matt 14:3-12; Mark 6:17-29; Luke 3:19-20). John’s imprisonment marked the beginning of Jesus’ public preaching (Matt 4:12; Mark 1:14).

Shortly before his death, John seemed to be confused about Jesus and sent messengers from prison to ask him if he really was the Messiah. Jesus did not do what most people anticipated the Messiah to do. Rather than bringing judgment and a visible kingdom, he brought forgiveness, healing, and a spiritual kingdom. To reassure John, Jesus spoke of the miraculous things God was doing through him (Luke 7:18-23).

John remained faithful to his calling throughout his life, consistently preaching repentance and the judgment of God, even to people who had no desire to hear it. Jesus referred to John as one of the greatest servants of God who had ever lived (Matt 11:2-19; Luke 7:18-35), the end of a long line of prophets anticipating the coming of the Kingdom of God (Luke 16:16). John stood on the threshold of the new age, proclaiming its coming to all who would hear.

1:51 *I tell you the truth* (Greek *amēn amēn*): Jesus often used this expression to emphasize what he was about to say. In John’s Gospel, the Greek word *amēn* is always doubled. • *you will all see heaven open*: Jesus made the comparison with Jacob explicit (see note on 1:47; see Gen 28:10-22). Like Jacob, Nathanael would see God at work. Jesus himself is the new Bethel (“house of God,” Gen 28:19), the place where God lives. • *going up and down on the Son of Man, the one who is the stairway between heaven and earth*: Literally *going up and down on the Son of Man*;

see Gen 28:10-17. “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself (see note on 9:35; see also Dan 7:13-14; Mark 8:31). • John the apostle used several names for Jesus (Son of God, Son of Man, Messiah). Knowing Jesus’ true identity is necessary to fully understanding and following him.

2:1–10:42 Jesus illustrated his identity and work through the institutions and festivals of Judaism (see 2:1; 5:1).

2:1-25 Jesus appeared at two symbolic Jewish ceremonies. At a wedding in Cana (2:1-12), he replaced the ritual cleansing

water with his own superior wine. Later he cleansed the Temple (2:13-25).

2:1 *The next day*: Literally *On the third day*; see 1:35, 43. • The ceremonies surrounding a *wedding celebration* could last as long as a week; weddings often included dramatic processions in which the groom would bring the bride to his home for the festivities (Matt 25:1-13).

2:3 When the *wine supply ran out*, the host’s family would face embarrassment for failure to plan properly. Perhaps Jesus arrived unexpectedly (cp. Matt 25:1-13), bringing his circle of

⁴“Dear woman, that’s not our problem,” Jesus replied. “My time has not yet come.”

⁵But his mother told the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

⁶Standing nearby were six stone water jars, used for Jewish ceremonial washing. Each could hold twenty to thirty gallons. ⁷Jesus told the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” When the jars had been filled, ⁸he said, “Now dip some out, and take it to the master of ceremonies.” So the servants followed his instructions.

⁹When the master of ceremonies tasted the water that was now wine, not knowing where it had come from (though, of course, the servants knew), he called the bridegroom over. ¹⁰“A host always serves the best wine first,” he said. “Then, when everyone has had a lot to drink, he brings out the less

expensive wine. But you have kept the best until now!”

¹¹This miraculous sign at Cana in Galilee was the first time Jesus revealed his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

¹²After the wedding he went to Capernaum for a few days with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples.

The Jerusalem Temple Is Cleansed

John 2:13-16; cp. Matt 21:12-13 // Mark 11:15-17 // Luke 19:45-46

¹³It was nearly time for the Jewish Passover celebration, so Jesus went to Jerusalem.

¹⁴In the Temple area he saw merchants selling cattle, sheep, and doves for sacrifices; he also saw dealers at tables exchanging foreign money. ¹⁵Jesus made a whip from some ropes and chased them all out of the Temple. He drove out the sheep and cattle,

2:4
John 7:30; 8:20

2:6
Mark 7:3-4
John 3:25

2:9
John 4:46

2:11
John 2:23; 3:2; 4:54;
6:14; 11:47; 12:37

2:12
Matt 12:46-50

2:13-22
//Matt 21:12-17
//Mark 11:15-19
//Luke 19:45-48

2:13
Deut 16:1-6
John 6:4; 11:55

Miraculous Signs (2:1-11)

John 2:18, 23; 3:2; 4:48, 54; 6:2, 14, 26, 30; 7:31; 9:16; 10:41; 11:47; 12:18, 37; 15:24; 20:30
Exod 4:8-31; 7:3
Num 14:11, 22
Deut 4:34
Ps 74:9; 78:43
Matt 12:38-39
Acts 2:43; 4:16, 22, 30; 5:12; 8:6; 14:3; 15:12
Rom 15:19

The Gospels use three words to describe Jesus’ miraculous works. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the Greek word *dunamis* (“power”) describes an act of raw force that amazes observers and leads to the inevitable conclusion that God must be at work in Jesus (see Mark 6:2).

In John, however, this response of amazement is absent. John does not use the popular term *dunamis*. Instead, he labels each of Jesus’ miracles as a “sign” (Greek *sēmeion*), an event that has a deeper meaning. John also describes Jesus’ miracles as “works” (Greek *erga*, see 10:25; see 7:3, “miracles”; 9:3, “power”). Christ’s miracles were part of the work that God gave him to do (17:4), revealing the Father to the world.

John selectively records seven miraculous signs that occurred during Jesus’ ministry: (1) changing water to wine (2:1-11); (2) healing the official’s son (4:46-54); (3) healing a paralyzed man (5:1-17); (4) feeding 5,000 (6:1-15); (5) walking on water (6:16-21); (6) healing a blind man (9:1-41); and (7) raising Lazarus from the dead (11:38-44). John also records the miraculous catch of fish after Jesus’ resurrection (21:4-14). Most of the seven signs were met with belief (2:11; 4:48, 53; 11:45-48). However, the sign itself was not Jesus’ purpose. Instead, the message behind the sign is always in view, so the signs are usually matched to a discourse by Jesus. Jesus fed the 5,000, for example, not just to meet their needs, but so that people would see him as the bread of life (6:35), given for them when he died on the cross (6:51).

disciples, which might explain why his *mother* brought the problem to him.

• A wedding banquet was a primary celebration in Jewish village life, and this episode also symbolized the joy of the Messiah’s arrival.

2:4 Jesus initially distanced himself from the *problem*. His mission and its timing could not be set by a human agenda. • Jesus’ *time* (literally *hour*) would come in the future when he was glorified as he was lifted up on the cross (12:23; 17:1).

2:6 Carved from solid rock, the *stone water jars* were used for religious washing ceremonies (see Mark 7:1-4). Jesus was about to fill Jewish ceremony with new content. • *twenty to thirty gallons*: Greek 2 or 3 *measures* [75 to 113 liters].

2:9-10 The *master of ceremonies* cited

a proverb. The *best wine* was always served *first* when palates were most sensitive; yet this miraculous wine, served last, was the very best imaginable. Good wine symbolized God’s blessing (Amos 9:13-14). The Messiah, God’s greatest blessing, had arrived at last.

2:11 Jesus had offered his first *miraculous sign* (see “Miraculous Signs” at 2:1-11, above). In it, he revealed the glory of God (see also 1:14; 11:4, 40).

2:13 *Passover*, an annual spring festival, commemorated Israel’s rescue from slavery in Egypt (Exod 12). Jews traveled to *Jerusalem* to participate in the festival (Deut 16:1-16). Because John refers to three Passover Festivals (2:13; 6:4; 11:55), many experts conclude that Jesus had a three-year public ministry.

2:14-17 Those who came for Passover needed to have approved sacrifices for worship. From this need grew a considerable industry for selling animals and exchanging money, but this business was being conducted in the Temple. Jesus, like a prophet, demanded that God’s house be returned to its intended uses—worship, prayer, instruction, and sacrifice. This put Jesus at odds with the Temple leadership. • The synoptic Gospels place the clearing of the Temple near the end of Jesus’ ministry (Matt 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-17; Luke 19:45-46). John might have placed his account of the event here to emphasize a connection with the miracle that transformed the water in purification jars into wine (2:1-11). The Temple and the stone jars were both instruments of purification in Judaism. Stone jars filled with water for ritual washing

2:16
Luke 2:49

2:17
*Ps 69:9

2:19
Matt 26:61; 27:40
Mark 14:58
Acts 6:14

2:21
John 10:38; 14:2, 10;
17:21
1 Cor 3:16; 6:19

2:22
Luke 24:6-8
John 12:16; 14:26

2:23
John 7:31; 11:47-48

3:1-2
John 7:50; 19:39

3:2
Matt 22:16
Acts 2:22; 10:38
**rhabbi* (4461)
* John 11:8

3:3
John 1:13
**anōthen gennaō*
(0509, 1080)
* John 3:7

scattered the money changers' coins over the floor, and turned over their tables. ¹⁶Then, going over to the people who sold doves, he told them, "**Get these things out of here. Stop turning my Father's house into a marketplace!**"

¹⁷Then his disciples remembered this prophecy from the Scriptures: "Passion for God's house will consume me."

¹⁸But the Jewish leaders demanded, "What are you doing? If God gave you authority to do this, show us a miraculous sign to prove it."

¹⁹"**All right,**" Jesus replied. "**Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.**"

²⁰"What!" they exclaimed. "It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple, and you can rebuild it in three days?" ²¹But when Jesus said "this temple," he meant his own body. ²²After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered he had said this,

and they believed both the Scriptures and what Jesus had said.

Nicodemus: A Religious Leader Visits Jesus

²³Because of the miraculous signs Jesus did in Jerusalem at the Passover celebration, many began to trust in him. ²⁴But Jesus didn't trust them, because he knew human nature. ²⁵No one needed to tell him what mankind is really like.

3 There was a man named Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader who was a Pharisee. ²After dark one evening, he came to speak with Jesus. "cRabbi," he said, "we all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are evidence that God is with you."

³Jesus replied, "**I tell you the truth, unless you are ^dborn again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God.**"

NICODEMUS (3:1-9)

John 7:50; 19:39-42

Nicodemus was a highly respected Jewish Pharisee (3:1), one of the prominent members of the high council, who appears to have become a convert of Jesus. He is mentioned only in the Gospel of John.

Intrigued by the authority of Jesus and the miracles he was doing, Nicodemus went to see him secretly, at night, in a serious attempt to discover who he really was. Jesus challenged him with the need to be born again, if he wished to be in the Kingdom of God (3:1-8). The Gospel does not give us Nicodemus's response.

Later, however, in opposition to his colleagues on the Jewish high council, he strongly argued that Jesus should be given a fair trial (7:50). After Jesus was crucified, he bought seventy-five pounds of expensive perfumed ointment for his burial, took it to the tomb, and assisted Joseph of Arimathea in burying him (19:39-42). Thus, Nicodemus appears to be an example of a Jewish Pharisee who came to believe in Jesus and was willing to express that commitment publicly after his death.

now contained Jesus' wine, and a stone Temple dedicated to sacrificial purification would be replaced by Christ himself (2:19-21). Another view is that Jesus cleared the Temple at the beginning and again at the end of his ministry.

2:17 *Passion for God's house will consume me:* Or "Concern for God's house will be my undoing." See Ps 69:9.

2:19 *Destroy this temple:* Herod the Great began reconstructing the Temple's magnificent structure in 20 BC, and work on it continued until AD 64. This explains why Jesus' audience was amazed when he claimed he could destroy and rebuild it in a few days. However, Jesus spoke figuratively of his body as the temple where God was present (see 1:14; 1:51)—his body was destroyed and restored in three days through the resurrection, rendering the Jerusalem Temple and its services obsolete. Later, at his trial, Jesus' symbolic

reference to destroying the Temple was used as evidence of blasphemy (Mark 14:58).

2:22 *they believed:* Witnessing a miracle from God can inspire belief, but it is not the deepest faith possible (20:29).

2:24 *Jesus didn't trust them:* John uses a play on words here. Because of his signs, many people trusted in Jesus (2:23), but Jesus *didn't trust them*. This did not refer to specific people Jesus met in Jerusalem, but to his knowledge of all humanity.

3:1 John links 2:25 and 3:1 by referring to humanity as a whole ("mankind," 2:25) and then to one specific *man* using the same Greek word (*anthrōpos*) in both verses. • *Nicodemus* was saturated in religious knowledge and had witnessed Jesus' work (2:13-24), but he had not experienced spiritual rebirth. • *a Pharisee:* See note on 1:24. He was elite, proud of his

spiritual purity, and well educated in Jewish law.

3:2 *After dark:* Nicodemus might have feared public association with Jesus. Night also symbolizes the realm of evil, untruth, and unbelief (9:4; 11:10; 13:30).

3:3 *born again:* Or *born from above*; also in 3:7. John's expression "from above" (3:31; 19:11) means "from God." To experience spiritual rebirth, a person must be completely renewed through God's power. • Nicodemus interpreted Jesus' words physically; he demonstrated that those in darkness, who do not have spiritual rebirth, cannot understand Jesus or other "heavenly things" (3:12). Jesus sometimes used ironic misunderstanding as a teaching strategy (see "Misunderstanding" at 7:32-36, p. 1785).

4“What do you mean?” exclaimed Nicodemus. “How can an old man go back into his mother’s womb and be born again?”

5Jesus replied, “I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. 6eHumans can reproduce only ehuman life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. 7So don’t be surprised when I say, ‘You must be fborn again.’ 8The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can’t tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can’t explain how people are born of the Spirit.”

9“How are these things possible?” Nicodemus asked.

10Jesus replied, “You are a respected Jewish teacher, and yet you don’t understand these things? 11I assure you, we tell you what we know and have seen, and yet you won’t believe our testimony. 12But if you don’t believe me when I tell you about earthly things, how can you possibly believe if I tell you about heavenly things? 13No one has ever gone to heaven and returned. But the Son of Man has come down from heaven. 14And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, 15so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life.

16“**For God loved the world so much that he gave his gone and only Son, so that every-**

one who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. 17God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

18“**There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God’s hone and only Son. 19And the judgment is based on this fact: God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. 20All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. 21But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants.”**

John the Baptist Exalts Jesus

22Then Jesus and his disciples left Jerusalem and went into the Judean countryside. Jesus spent some time with them there, baptizing people.

23At this time John the Baptist was baptizing at Aenon, near Salim, because there was plenty of water there; and people kept coming to him for baptism. 24(This was before John was thrown into prison.) 25A debate broke out between John’s disciples and a certain Jew over ceremonial cleansing. 26So John’s disciples came to him and said, “Rabbi, the man you met on the other side of the Jordan River, the one you identified as the

3:5
Ezek 36:26-27
Titus 3:5
2 Pet 1:11

3:6
John 1:13
Rom 8:15-16
1 Cor 15:50
Gal 4:6
sarx (4561)
• Rom 8:4

3:7
anōthen gennaō
(0509, 1080)
• John 3:31

3:8
Ecc1 11:5

3:13
John 6:38, 42
Eph 4:8-10

3:14
Num 21:8-9
John 8:28; 12:34

3:15
John 20:31
1 Jn 5:11-12

3:16
Rom 5:8; 8:32
1 Jn 4:9-10; 5:13
monogenēs (3439)
• John 3:18

3:17
John 12:47

3:18
John 5:24
monogenēs (3439)
• Heb 11:17

3:19
John 1:5, 9; 8:12; 9:5;
12:46

3:20
Eph 5:11-13

3:21
1 Jn 1:6

3:22
John 3:26; 4:1-2

3:5 water and the Spirit (or *and spirit*; the Greek word *Spirit* can also be translated *wind*; see note on 3:8): John the Baptist baptized with water; Jesus baptizes with the Spirit (1:33).

3:6 the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life: Literally *what is born of the Spirit is spirit*.

3:7 The Greek word translated *You* is plural; also in 3:12.

3:8 Wind translates the same word in Greek as *spirit* (Greek *pneuma*). The wind is an apt image for *the Spirit*, who is sent from heaven and cannot be contained or controlled.

3:13 There is great distance between this world and *heaven* (see 1:51; 3:31; 6:38, 42). Jesus bridged that distance, validating his divine status by defeating death and returning to heaven (16:5-11). • **Son of Man:** Some manuscripts add *who lives in heaven*. “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself.

3:14-15 Jesus was *lifted up* on the cross so that all people could understand the way of salvation, look to him in faith, and *have eternal life*.

3:15 everyone who believes in him will have eternal life: Or *everyone*

who believes will have eternal life in him. The Greek syntax allows for either interpretation.

3:16-21 Because there are no quotation marks around Jesus’ speech in Greek, translators debate where Jesus’ speech ends and John’s commentary begins; 3:16-21 might be John’s commentary.

3:16 The truth that *God loved the world* is basic to Christian understanding (1 Jn 4:9-10). God’s love extends beyond the limits of race and nation, even to those who oppose him (see “The World” at 17:5-26, p. 1807). • The *Son* came to save—not condemn (3:17)—men and women who habitually embrace the darkness (3:19-21).

3:18 As light penetrates and exposes the world’s darkness, God’s *judgment* on the world *has already* begun. Those who see this light and recognize the tragedy of their own situation have the responsibility of *believing in God’s . . . Son* (3:16-17).

3:19-20 When *people* live in spiritual *darkness*, they do not desire to be enlightened by Jesus, “the light of the world” (8:12; 9:5). Evil and darkness do not ignore the light; they wage war

against it, trying to bring it down. But the darkness cannot extinguish the light (1:5). Those who refuse to believe live in darkness (cp. 13:30) and stumble because they cannot see (11:10). In the end, however, *their sins will be exposed* (5:28-30; Rev 20:11-15).

3:21 can see that they are doing what God wants: Or *can see God at work in what he is doing*. The Greek syntax allows for either interpretation.

3:22-36 John the Baptist identifies Jesus as the one who is truly from above (3:31); this requires John’s followers to shift their allegiance to Jesus.

3:22 Jesus spent some time . . . baptizing: See 4:2, which clarifies that Jesus’ disciples did the baptizing.

3:24 Before John was thrown into prison (see Matt 14:1-12; Mark 1:14; 6:14-29; Luke 3:19-20), he and Jesus worked together at the Jordan River. Once John was arrested, Jesus moved north into Galilee (Mark 1:14).

3:25 a certain Jew: Some manuscripts read *some Jews*.

3:26 everybody is going to him: Jesus’ popularity made some of John’s followers envious.

3:24
Matt 4:12

3:26
John 1:7, 34

3:27
John 19:11
1 Cor 4:7
Heb 5:4

3:28
Mal 3:1
John 1:20, 23

3:29
Matt 9:15
2 Cor 11:2
Rev 21:9

3:31
1 Jn 4:5
anōthen (0509)
• 1 Pet 1:3

3:33
1 Jn 5:10

3:34
Luke 4:18

3:35
Matt 28:18

3:36
1 Jn 5:12-13
orgē (3709)
• Rom 1:18

4:5-6
Gen 33:19
Josh 24:32

Messiah, is also baptizing people. And everybody is going to him instead of coming to us.”

²⁷John replied, “No one can receive anything unless God gives it from heaven. ²⁸You yourselves know how plainly I told you, ‘I am not the Messiah. I am only here to prepare the way for him.’ ²⁹It is the bridegroom who marries the bride, and the best man is simply glad to stand with him and hear his vows. Therefore, I am filled with joy at his success. ³⁰He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less.

³¹“He has come from above and is greater than anyone else. We are of the earth, and we speak of earthly things, but he has come from heaven and is greater than anyone else. ³²He testifies about what he has seen and heard, but how few believe what he tells them! ³³Anyone who accepts his testimony can affirm that God is true. ³⁴For he is sent by God. He speaks God’s words, for God gives him the Spirit without limit. ³⁵The Father loves his Son and has put everything

into his hands. ³⁶And anyone who believes in God’s Son has eternal life. Anyone who doesn’t obey the Son will never experience eternal life but remains under God’s angry judgment.”

The Samaritan Woman at the Well

4 Jesus knew the Pharisees had heard that he was baptizing and making more disciples than John ²(though Jesus himself didn’t baptize them—his disciples did). ³So he left Judea and returned to Galilee.

⁴He had to go through Samaria on the way. ⁵Eventually he came to the Samaritan village of Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob’s well was there; and Jesus, tired from the long walk, sat wearily beside the well about noontime. ⁷Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Please give me a drink.” ⁸He was alone at the time because his disciples had gone into the village to buy some food.

Believing (3:10-18)

Believing occupies a central place in John’s Gospel. John does not use the noun *faith* that appears frequently elsewhere in the NT (e.g., see Matt 8:8-10; Mark 11:22-24; Acts 20:21; Rom 1:17; 3:27-31; 4:3-5; Heb 11:1-39; Jas 2:14-24; 1 Pet 1:5-7). John prefers the verb *believe* to underscore that faith is not static like a doctrine or a dogma, but dynamic, requiring action. In John’s Gospel, “believing” in Jesus is the trait of all true disciples.

In the Gospel of John, the verb translated “believe” is often followed by the Greek preposition *eis* (“into”). No parallel exists for this in ancient Greek usage. For John, faith is not a status, but an investment in the person of Jesus. Faith means accepting who Jesus is and what he claims to be. Faith constitutes a commitment to let his call change the way we live. Faith is the work God wants from us (6:29) as we abide in Jesus’ word, as we love him, and as we obey his commands (8:31; 15:1-17; see 1 Jn 5:10).

John 1:12-13; 3:36;
4:39, 42; 5:24;
6:35-36; 7:38-39;
9:35-38; 11:25-27;
12:37; 20:25-31
Gen 15:6
2 Kgs 17:14
Isa 28:16
Mark 1:15; 9:23-24
Acts 10:43; 13:39
Rom 1:5, 16-17;
3:25; 10:9-10
Gal 3:5-7
Heb 4:3
1 Jn 3:23; 5:10, 13

3:27-35 John the Baptist’s speech was inspired by two issues: (1) Some had questioned the legitimacy of his baptism (see 1:26); and (2) his disciples were concerned that people were beginning to follow Jesus instead of John (3:26).

3:29 John the Baptist saw Jesus as the *bridegroom* and himself as *the best man*. His response deflected glory from himself and elevated Jesus’ stature.

3:31 Jesus had *come from above*, so he was uniquely able to reveal the Father (1:18; 3:13). • Some manuscripts do not include *and is greater than anyone else*.

3:34-35 The Father *gives the Son the Spirit without limit* as a sign of his profound love (3:35). It also illustrates Jesus’ divinity. John presents the one God as three persons (cp. 1 Jn 5:5-12).

3:36 God gave the gift of *eternal life*, promising new life and intimacy in a present experience with God. • Those

who reject the Son will not see life. The world in its darkness stands under *God’s angry judgment* (Rom 1–3).

4:1-42 At a historic well in Samaria, Jesus offered himself as living water. Jesus engaged and confronted people with the revelation of God, and they either followed or fell away. • The *Samaritan woman* contrasted with Nicodemus at every turn: a woman (not a man), a Samaritan (not a Jew), a sinner (not righteous), and an outcast (not one of Israel’s rabbis). While Nicodemus fell silent and never responded to Jesus’ challenges (3:1-21), this woman acknowledged Jesus as Lord, remained in the light, and exhibited signs of discipleship (see 1:35-51).

4:1 Some manuscripts read *The Lord*.

4:2 *Jesus himself didn’t baptize* anyone, but left water baptism to *his disciples*. After his glorification on the cross (7:37-

39), Jesus baptized in the Holy Spirit (1:33; Acts 2:4).

4:3 After John the Baptist had been imprisoned (see Mark 6:14-29), Jesus *left Judea* (cp. Mark 1:14).

4:4-6 In going north to Galilee, Jesus took the less-preferred route through *Samaria*. Samaria had a long history of tension with Judea (see 2 Kgs 17:24-41; Ezra 4:1-5; Neh 4:1-23; 6:1-19). In Jesus’ day, harsh racial and cultural conflict existed between Jews and Samaritans. Jews normally avoided Samaria by first going east to Jericho, then following the Jordan Valley north. • *Sychar* was probably in the region of Shechem. Jesus had come to *Jacob’s well*; Jacob had owned land near Shechem (Gen 33:18-19).

4:7 Due to the heat, it was customary for the women to *draw water* in early morning or evening. However, this woman lived in isolation, separated from her community. Jesus was compassionate toward outcasts.

⁹The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, “You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?”

¹⁰Jesus replied, “If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water.”

¹¹“But sir, you don’t have a rope or a bucket,” she said, “and this well is very deep. Where would you get this living water? ¹²And besides, do you think you’re greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well? How can you offer better water than he and his sons and his animals enjoyed?”

¹³Jesus replied, “Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. ¹⁴But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life.”

¹⁵“Please, sir,” the woman said, “give me this water! Then I’ll never be thirsty again, and I won’t have to come here to get water.”

¹⁶“Go and get your husband,” Jesus told her.

¹⁷“I don’t have a husband,” the woman replied.

Jesus said, “You’re right! You don’t have a husband—¹⁸for you have had five husbands, and you aren’t even married to the man

you’re living with now. You certainly spoke the truth!”

¹⁹“Sir,” the woman said, “you must be a prophet. ²⁰So tell me, why is it that you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place of worship, while we Samaritans claim it is here at Mount Gerizim, where our ancestors worshiped?”

²¹Jesus replied, “Believe me, dear woman, the time is coming when it will no longer matter whether you worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem. ²²You Samaritans know very little about the one you worship, while we Jews know all about him, for salvation comes through the Jews. ²³But the time is coming—indeed it’s here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way. ²⁴For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.”

²⁵The woman said, “I know the ^kMessiah is coming—the one who is called Christ. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

²⁶Then Jesus told her, “I AM the Messiah!”

²⁷Just then his disciples came back. They were shocked to find him talking to a woman, but none of them had the nerve to ask, “What do you want with her?” or “Why are you talking to her?” ²⁸The woman left

4:9
Ezra 4:1-3; 9-10
Matt 10:5
Luke 9:52-53
John 8:48
Acts 10:45
1 Cor 12:13

4:10
Isa 12:3; 44:3
Jer 2:13; 17:13
John 7:37-39
Rev 7:17; 21:6; 22:17

4:14
John 6:35; 7:38

4:15
John 6:34

4:19
Matt 21:46
John 7:40; 9:17

4:20
Deut 11:29; 12:5-14
Josh 8:33

4:21
Mal 1:11
1 Tim 2:8

4:22
2 Kgs 17:28-41
Isa 2:3
Rom 3:1-2; 9:4-5

4:23-24
2 Cor 3:17-18
Phil 3:3

4:25
Deut 18:15
^kmessias (3323)
*Acts 2:31

4:26
Mark 14:61-62
John 9:37

4:9 *The woman was surprised* because social taboos would keep a Jewish teacher like Jesus from speaking to her (4:18). However, Jesus did not let social taboos constrain him from giving her what she truly needed. • Some manuscripts do not include the first sentence of this verse.

4:10 Shechem had no rivers and thus no *living water* (see “Living Water,” facing page). However, Jesus was speaking symbolically: This gift from God was the Holy Spirit (7:37-39).

4:11 Jacob’s *well* was more than 100 feet (30 meters) deep, and required a long *rope* for drawing water. The woman misunderstood Jesus’ words because she was still in darkness (see “Misunderstanding” at 7:32-36, p. 1785).

4:12 *our ancestor Jacob*: The Samaritan woman appealed with reverence to the sacred traditions attached to the well rather than to the presence of God before her.

4:14 The notion of a *fresh, bubbling spring* was a powerful image in the dry climate of Israel. Those who come to God will neither hunger nor thirst (see Isa 49:10; 55:1-3; Jer 2:13).

4:15 The woman asked Jesus for *this water*, but she did not grasp the spiritual implications of his words. To overcome the spiritual barrier, Jesus addressed her sin (4:16-18).

4:16-18 Immorality blocked the woman’s understanding. Her marital affairs, including having *five husbands*, underscored her sinful life.

4:19-20 The woman dodged Jesus’ moral probing and brought up the historical ethnic division between Jews and Samaritans.

4:19 *a prophet*: Jesus revealed knowledge about the woman (4:16-18) that was inaccessible to the average person (cp. 1:48). • As the woman’s understanding of Jesus unfolded, her names for him became increasingly well informed. Earlier she recognized him as *a Jew* (4:9) and called him *sir* (4:11, 15, 19). Later she thought he might be *the Messiah* (4:29). Finally, the people of the village recognized him as *Savior of the world* (4:42). Her growing understanding of Jesus’ identity is a testimony to John’s readers (see 20:31).

4:20 The Samaritans worshiped *at Mount Gerizim* (literally *on this moun-*

tain), which towered above Shechem. Both were important OT locations (see Gen 12:6-7; 33:19; Deut 11:29; Josh 8:33; 24:1, 25, 32).

4:21-22 Jesus affirmed that the *Jews* had preserved the right understanding of *the one you worship*. • *salvation comes through the Jews*: God gave the Jews a special relationship with him, and the Messiah was to be a Jew (see also Rom 9:4-5).

4:24 *in spirit and in truth*: One Greek preposition governs both words (literally *in spirit and truth*) and makes them a single concept. True worship occurs as God’s Spirit reveals God’s truth and reality to the worshiper. Jesus Christ is the Truth (14:6; cp. 14:17; 15:26).

4:26 *I Am the Messiah* (or “*The ‘I Am’ is here*”; or “*I am the LORD*”; Greek reads “*I am, the one speaking to you*”; see Exod 3:14); Jesus’ phrase was unusual and emphatic, and it suggests identity with God (see 8:58; Exod 3:14).

4:27-30 *The woman* was tentative about Jesus’ identity (4:29), yet she ran to *the village* and told *everyone to come and see*. Testifying to others is a mark of discipleship (see 1:39, 46).

4:29
John 7:26

4:34
John 5:30, 36; 6:38;
17:4

4:35
Matt 9:37
Luke 10:2

4:37
Job 31:8
Mic 6:15
1 Cor 3:26

4:42
Luke 2:11
1 Jn 4:14
סֹדֵיִר (4990)
• Acts 5:31

4:43-54
//Matt 8:5-13
//Luke 7:1-10

4:44
Matt 13:57
Luke 4:24

4:45
John 2:23

4:46
John 2:1-11

her water jar beside the well and ran back to the village, telling everyone, ²⁹“Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could he possibly be the Messiah?” ³⁰So the people came streaming from the village to see him.

³¹Meanwhile, the disciples were urging Jesus, “Rabbi, eat something.”

³²But Jesus replied, **“I have a kind of food you know nothing about.”**

³³“Did someone bring him food while we were gone?” the disciples asked each other.

³⁴Then Jesus explained: **“My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work.**

³⁵**You know the saying, ‘Four months between planting and harvest.’ But I say, wake up and look around. The fields are already ripe for harvest. ³⁶The harvesters are paid good wages, and the fruit they harvest is people brought to eternal life. What joy awaits both the planter and the harvester alike! ³⁷You know the saying, ‘One plants and another harvests.’ And it’s true. ³⁸I sent you to harvest where you didn’t plant; others had already done the work, and now you will get to gather the harvest.”**

Many Samaritans Believe

³⁹Many Samaritans from the village believed in Jesus because the woman had said, “He told me everything I ever did!” ⁴⁰When they came out to see him, they begged him to stay in their village. So he stayed for two days, ⁴¹long enough for many more to hear his message and believe. ⁴²Then they said to the woman, “Now we believe, not just because of what you told us, but because we have heard him ourselves. Now we know that he is indeed the ^aSavior of the world.”

Jesus Heals a Government Official’s Son

⁴³At the end of the two days, Jesus went on to Galilee. ⁴⁴He himself had said that a prophet is not honored in his own hometown. ⁴⁵Yet the Galileans welcomed him, for they had been in Jerusalem at the Passover celebration and had seen everything he did there.

⁴⁶As he traveled through Galilee, he came to Cana, where he had turned the water into wine. There was a government official in nearby Capernaum whose son was very sick. ⁴⁷When he heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went and begged

Living Water (4:10-14)

John 7:38-39
Lev 14:5-6, 50-51;
15:13
Num 19:17-19
Song 4:15
Jer 2:13; 17:13
Jas 3:11-12

In Israel, a land that frequently experienced drought, people were keenly aware of water sources and water quality. Springs and rivers that ran all year were few, so the land relied on cisterns to catch and store the winter rains and wells to tap underground water tables. In Jewish culture, “dead water” referred to standing and stored water. “Living water” referred to moving water, as in rivers, springs, and rainfall. Such water was precious because it was fresh. Because it came directly from God, it was used for ritual washings (see Lev 14:5-6, 50-51; 15:13; Num 19:17-19).

The distinction between “dead” and “living” water explains why the woman of Samaria was so perplexed when Jesus offered her living water (4:12). Samaria has no river. If Jacob had to dig a well there, how could Jesus offer superior water?

Jesus mentioned living water again in Jerusalem at the autumn Festival of Shelters (7:37-39). The festival, which fell during a dry time of year, included an emphasis on water. In this setting, Jesus stepped forward and made an extravagant claim: Anyone looking for living water should come to him and drink. Jesus is the source of living water; he came directly from God and brought divine renewal.

4:32-34 While Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman, the disciples were gone buying food (4:8); now they urged Jesus to eat. Jesus continued to speak symbolically, but they did not understand him (4:33). Later, when the disciples received the Spirit, they understood (2:22). Jesus received his nourishment from doing what his Father told him to do (see 5:30; 6:38; 7:18; 8:50; 9:4; 10:37-38; 12:49-50).

4:35 *Four months between planting and harvest:* Jesus cited a local parable to contrast the natural harvest with his

own. It was harvest time in Samaria, and the fields were *ripe* (literally *white*). Jesus, however, had planted seed at the well and now was *already* reaping the *harvest* of belief among the Samaritans (4:39-42).

4:38 *others:* Jesus might have meant John the Baptist, or he might have been referring to the work he had just done with the Samaritan woman.

4:39-40 *Many Samaritans:* The religiously sophisticated “chosen people” in Jerusalem did not respond to Jesus with faith (ch 3). By contrast, many *believed*

in Jesus because of the testimony of this outcast woman.

4:42 The Samaritans had experienced for themselves that Jesus was true. Their name for Jesus, *Savior of the world* (also used in 1 Jn 4:14), demonstrated that the Samaritans were keenly aware of their distance from Judaism. Jesus’ ministry was not simply for Jews, but for all people (1:4-12; cp. 12:20-26).

4:44-45 Unlike Jesus’ fellow Jews, *the Galileans welcomed him*, but their welcome was based on awe of Jesus’ miracles (cp. 2:23-25), not true faith.

Jesus to come to Capernaum to heal his son, who was about to die.

⁴⁸Jesus asked, “Will you never believe in me unless you see miraculous signs and wonders?”

⁴⁹The official pleaded, “Lord, please come now before my little boy dies.”

⁵⁰Then Jesus told him, “Go back home. Your son will live!” And the man believed what Jesus said and started home.

⁵¹While the man was on his way, some of his servants met him with the news that his son was alive and well. ⁵²He asked them when the boy had begun to get better, and they replied, “Yesterday afternoon at one o’clock his fever suddenly disappeared!” ⁵³Then the father realized that that was the very time Jesus had told him, “Your son will live.” And he and his entire household believed in Jesus. ⁵⁴This was the second miraculous sign Jesus did in Galilee after coming from Judea.

Jesus and the Sabbath (5:1-47)
Jesus Heals a Man on the Sabbath

5 Afterward Jesus returned to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish holy days. ²Inside the city, near the Sheep Gate, was the pool of Bethesda, with five covered porches. ³Crowds of sick people—blind, lame, or paralyzed—lay on the porches. ⁵One of the men lying there had been sick for thirty-

eight years. ⁶When Jesus saw him and knew he had been ill for a long time, he asked him, “Would you like to get well?”

⁷“I can’t, sir,” the sick man said, “for I have no one to put me into the pool when the water bubbles up. Someone else always gets there ahead of me.”

⁸Jesus told him, “Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk!”

⁹Instantly, the man was healed! He rolled up his sleeping mat and began walking! But this miracle happened on the Sabbath, ¹⁰so the Jewish leaders objected. They said to the man who was cured, “You can’t work on the Sabbath! The law doesn’t allow you to carry that sleeping mat!”

¹¹But he replied, “The man who healed me told me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’”

¹²“Who said such a thing as that?” they demanded.

¹³The man didn’t know, for Jesus had disappeared into the crowd. ¹⁴But afterward Jesus found him in the Temple and told him, “Now you are well; so stop sinning, or something even worse may happen to you.”

¹⁵Then the man went and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had healed him.

Jesus Claims to Be the Son of God

¹⁶So the Jewish leaders began harassing Jesus for breaking the Sabbath rules. ¹⁷But

4:48

1 Cor 1:22

4:50

Matt 8:13

Mark 7:29

4:53

Acts 11:14; 16:14-15

4:54

John 2:11

5:1

Lev 23:1-2

Deut 16:1

John 2:13

5:2

Neh 3:1; 12:39

5:8

Matt 9:6

Mark 2:11

Luke 5:24

5:10

Neh 13:15-20

Jer 17:21

Matt 12:2

5:14

John 8:11

5:17

John 9:4; 14:10

5:18

John 1:1, 18; 10:30,

33; 20:28

Phil 2:6

Titus 2:13

2 Pet 1:1

1 Jn 5:21

4:48 Jesus sharply criticized the Galileans who desired *miraculous signs and wonders* before they would believe (see “Miraculous Signs” at 2:1-11, p. 1772; see also 6:30).

4:50 *Your son will live!* Jesus also healed the centurion’s slave (Matt 8:5-13) and the Phoenician woman’s daughter (Matt 15:21-28) from a distance.

4:53 Just like many others (2:23; 4:39), the official and his *household believed in Jesus* because of the miracle.

4:54 *second miraculous sign . . . in Galilee:* Two miracles at Cana (2:11; 4:46) frame this section of John’s Gospel.

5:1–10:42 In this section Jesus appears at a series of Jewish festivals and uses their imagery to reveal more profound truths about himself. He appears at Sabbath (ch 5), Passover (ch 6), the Festival of Shelters (chs 7–9), and Hanukkah (ch 10). In each case, Jesus himself replaces some vital element in the ceremonies of the festival.

5:1-40 This chapter reads like a courtroom drama, with a description of the crime (5:1-15), followed by a decision to prosecute (5:16), a description of

the charges (5:18), and Jesus’ defense (5:17, 19-40).

5:1 *one of the Jewish holy days:* Because Jesus *returned to Jerusalem* for the celebration, it was probably one of the three pilgrimage festivals of Judaism (see Exod 23:14-17; Deut 16:16). These festivals lasted one week.

5:2 Greek copyists who had never been to Jerusalem had difficulty interpreting and spelling the name *Bethesda*: Other manuscripts read *Beth-zatha*; still others read *Bethsaida*. The best choice is *Beth-esda* (“house of flowing”).

5:3 The pool of Bethesda had become a healing sanctuary for *crowds of sick people* who believed miraculous cures were possible. • Some manuscripts add an expanded conclusion to verse 3 and all of verse 4: *waiting for a certain movement of the water, for an angel of the Lord came from time to time and stirred up the water. And the first person to step in after the water was stirred was healed of whatever disease he had.* Most scholars believe this was not part of John’s original text, but it represents an ancient tradition that provided helpful background information.

5:5 No social program helped this man,

who had been ill for *thirty-eight years*. Hygiene and mobility were impossible, and he likely begged for a living from people who came to use the pool (see 5:7). His situation seemed hopeless.

5:8-9 Jesus healed the sick man *instantly*, only asking for his obedience. As proof of healing, Jesus told him to *pick up his mat and walk*. • Jesus worked this miracle *on the Sabbath*, a weekly day of rest on which all work was prohibited (based on Gen 2:2; Exod 20:8). Jewish tradition outlined thirty-nine categories of work that were not allowed (*Mishnah Shabbat* 7:2). Carrying something such as a *sleeping mat* from one place to another was banned (5:10). Therefore, the healed man broke the tradition by obeying Jesus’ command.

5:12 *Who said such a thing?* The story ominously turns from a miraculous wonder to a Sabbath crime requiring the identity of the healer who breached tradition.

5:14 *stop sinning:* Though the man had been healed physically, he still needed to learn obedience to the Lord. The man’s next action (5:15) might indicate that he didn’t listen.

5:16 *harassing:* Or *persecuting*.

5:19
John 8:28; 12:49;
14:10

5:21
John 11:25
^zzoopoieō (2227)
* John 6:63

5:22
John 3:17; 5:27

5:23
1 Jn 2:23

5:24
John 3:15; 20:30-31
1 Jn 3:14; 5:13

5:25
John 4:21; 6:63, 68

5:26
John 1:4; 6:57
1 Jn 5:11-12

5:27
John 9:39
Acts 10:42; 17:31

5:29
Dan 12:2
Matt 25:46
Acts 24:15
^aanastasis (0386)
* John 11:24

5:30
John 5:19; 6:38

5:31
John 8:13-14

5:32
John 8:18

Jesus replied, “My Father is always working, and so am I.”¹⁸ So the Jewish leaders tried all the harder to find a way to kill him. For he not only broke the Sabbath, he called God his Father, thereby making himself equal with God.

¹⁹ So Jesus explained, “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does.²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he is doing. In fact, the Father will show him how to do even greater works than healing this man. Then you will truly be astonished.²¹ For just as the Father ^bgives life to those he raises from the dead, so the Son ^bgives life to anyone he wants.²² In addition, the Father judges no one. Instead, he has given the Son absolute authority to judge,²³ so that everyone will honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Anyone who does not honor the Son is certainly not honoring the Father who sent him.

²⁴ “I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be con-

demned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life.

²⁵ “And I assure you that the time is coming, indeed it’s here now, when the dead will hear my voice—the voice of the Son of God. And those who listen will live.²⁶ The Father has life in himself, and he has granted that same life-giving power to his Son.²⁷ And he has given him authority to judge everyone because he is the Son of Man.²⁸ Don’t be so surprised! Indeed, the time is coming when all the dead in their graves will hear the voice of God’s Son,²⁹ and they will rise again. Those who have done good will ^crise to experience eternal life, and those who have continued in evil will ^crise to experience judgment.³⁰ I can do nothing on my own. I judge as God tells me. Therefore, my judgment is just, because I carry out the will of the one who sent me, not my own will.

Witnesses to Jesus

³¹ “If I were to testify on my own behalf, my testimony would not be valid.³² But someone else is also testifying about me, and I assure you that everything he says about me is true.³³ In fact, you sent investigators

The Jewish Leaders (5:9-18)

John 1:19-24;
2:18-20; 7:1, 10-13,
35-36; 9:13-34;
11:45-54; 12:41-43;
18:28-36; 19:6-8, 12-
16, 31, 38; 20:19
Acts 6:10-12; 7:54-
58; 12:11; 21:11;
25:1-3, 7; 26:1-11;
28:17-24
2 Cor 11:24

Jesus experienced numerous conflicts with Jewish leaders throughout his public ministry. These opponents viewed themselves as defending the Temple and its sacrifices or the synagogue and its teachings. In Jesus’ final week in Jerusalem, these debates intensified (Matt 23) and contributed to the case against him.

When John wrote his Gospel, Christians were being persecuted by local Jewish synagogues, and the language of their debate spilled over into John’s Gospel (see Acts 14:19; 1 Thes 2:14; cp. Gal 1:13-14). The Greek term translated “the Jewish leaders” could be literally translated “the Jews.” This word took on a technical meaning: It refers to the Temple leadership who confronted Jesus, judged him, and orchestrated his crucifixion (see 1:19; 2:18; 5:9-18; 9:18-22).

This is important because the NT—and particularly John’s Gospel—has often been seen as anti-Semitic. But the truth is that Jesus, who was himself a Jew, did not wrestle with “Jews” in general. His antagonists were the “Jewish leaders”—the brokers of religious power in first-century Jerusalem.

5:17 *My Father is always working, and so am I:* Although work was prohibited on the Sabbath, even rabbis agreed that God worked on the Sabbath in giving life (births) and in taking life (deaths). The heart of Jesus’ defense was to compare himself to God; the Jewish leaders objected to this claim of divine privilege.

5:19-30 Jesus claimed that his work on the Sabbath was the same as God’s work on the Sabbath. Jesus claimed to be equal with God, doing the things God does. Yet he submitted to God’s will, doing *only what . . . the Father* willed.

5:21 Most Jews firmly believed in resurrection but viewed it as something God

alone could accomplish. Jesus claimed that he *gives life*.

5:22 In addition to giving life, Jesus claimed the *absolute authority to judge*, which belongs to God alone.

5:23 *the Father . . . sent him:* In the ancient world, a person could send an authorized representative to seal a contract or make an authoritative decision. Jesus claimed to be God’s representative, so obeying him is the same as obeying God, and dishonoring Jesus is dishonoring God.

5:24 Jesus is the giver of *life* as well as the judge (see 5:21-22), but he never works independently of the Father.

5:27 *Son of Man* is a title Jesus used for himself.

5:31-40 God’s law requires more than one witness in a trial (Deut 17:6), so Jesus acknowledged that his own testimony was admissible only when confirmed by other witnesses. Thus, he introduced a series of witnesses for his defense.

5:32 The first witness for Jesus’ defense was God himself. Jesus might have had in mind God’s voice at his baptism (Mark 1:11) or the presence of God that enabled Jesus to perform miracles.

to listen to John the Baptist, and his testimony about me was true. ³⁴Of course, I have no need of human witnesses, but I say these things so you might be saved. ³⁵John was like a burning and shining lamp, and you were excited for a while about his message. ³⁶But I have a greater witness than John—my teachings and my miracles. The Father gave me these works to accomplish, and they prove that he sent me. ³⁷And the Father who sent me has testified about me himself. You have never heard his voice or seen him face to face, ³⁸and you do not have his message in your hearts, because you do not believe me—the one he sent to you.

³⁹“You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! ⁴⁰Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life.

⁴¹“Your approval means nothing to me, ⁴²because I know you don’t have God’s ^dlove within you. ⁴³For I have come to you in my Father’s name, and you have rejected me. Yet if others come in their own name, you gladly welcome them. ⁴⁴No wonder you can’t believe! For you gladly honor each other, but you don’t care about the honor that comes from the one who alone is God.

⁴⁵“Yet it isn’t I who will accuse you before the Father. Moses will accuse you! Yes, Moses, in whom you put your hopes. ⁴⁶If you really believed Moses, you would believe me, because he wrote about me. ⁴⁷But since you don’t believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?”

Jesus and Passover (6:1-71)

Jesus Feeds Five Thousand

John 6:1-15 // Matt 14:13-21 // Mark 6:32-44 // Luke 9:10b-17

6 After this, Jesus crossed over to the far side of the Sea of Galilee, also known as the Sea of Tiberias. ²A huge crowd kept following him wherever he went, because they saw his miraculous signs as he healed the sick. ³Then Jesus climbed a hill and sat down with his disciples around him. ⁴(It was nearly time for the Jewish Passover celebration.) ⁵Jesus soon saw a huge crowd of people coming to look for him. Turning to Philip, he asked, “Where can we buy bread to feed all these people?” ⁶He was testing Philip, for he already knew what he was going to do.

⁷Philip replied, “Even if we worked for months, we wouldn’t have enough money to feed them!”

⁸Then Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up. ⁹“There’s a young boy here with five barley loaves and two fish. But what good is that with this huge crowd?”

¹⁰“Tell everyone to sit down,” Jesus said. So they all sat down on the grassy slopes. (The men alone numbered about 5,000.)

¹¹Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks to God, and distributed them to the people. Afterward he did the same with the fish. And they all ate as much as they wanted. ¹²After everyone was full, Jesus told his disciples, “Now gather the leftovers, so that nothing is wasted.” ¹³So they picked up the pieces and filled twelve baskets with scraps left by the

5:36

John 10:25, 38; 14:11;

15:24

1 Jn 5:9

5:37

Deut 4:12

John 1:18; 8:18

1 Tim 1:17

5:38

1 Jn 2:14

5:39

Luke 24:27, 44

Acts 13:27

Rom 2:17-20

5:41

John 12:43

5:42

^aagapē (0026)

• John 15:9

5:45

John 9:28

Rom 2:17

5:46

Gen 3:15

Deut 18:15, 18

Luke 24:27, 44

Acts 26:22-23

5:47

Luke 16:31

6:1-13

//Matt 14:13-21

//Mark 6:32-44

//Luke 9:10-17

6:4

John 11:55

6:5

John 1:43

6:8

John 1:40

6:9

2 Kgs 4:43

John 21:9, 13

5:33-35 Jesus’ second witness was *John the Baptist*, who pointed to Jesus as Messiah (1:29-34).

5:36 Jesus’ third witness, his *teachings* and *miracles*, were signs that unveiled his true identity and pointed to the Father who sent him.

5:39-40 Jesus’ fourth witness was *the Scriptures*. The OT pointed to the Messiah, and Jesus fulfilled its prophecies (see Luke 24:25-27).

5:41-47 Jewish trials sought to discover the truth. Falsely accused defendants could not only prove their innocence but also prosecute their accusers, which Jesus did here.

5:42 Jesus charged that the Jewish leaders did not *have God’s love within* them. Without God’s love, it was impossible for them to understand the things he was doing.

5:44 The Jewish leaders pursued *honor* and prestige from *each other*. They loved religious life, but they had forgotten to love God. This hypocrisy

made them liable to judgment (5:45-46). • *from the one who alone is God*: Some manuscripts read *from the only One*.

5:45-46 Jesus’ fifth and final witness was *Moses*, the founding father of Judaism. John had already compared Jesus with Moses (1:17; see also 6:14-15). The Jewish leaders were ignoring Moses’ clear words about the Messiah (e.g., Deut 18:15).

6:1-71 Each story in this chapter uses the setting of the Passover Festival (6:4) to communicate a deeper meaning.

6:1-15 Jesus’ feeding the 5,000 recalls the great OT miracle of bread when Israel was in the wilderness (Exod 16:1-36). The rabbis of Jesus’ day expected the coming Messiah to “rain down food from heaven” once again (Exod 16:4), and he did.

6:5 *Where can we buy bread*: When the Israelites left Egypt following the first Passover and entered the desert,

finding food and water was also their first concern (Exod 15:22–16:3).

6:7 *Even if we worked for months, we wouldn’t have enough money*: Literally *200 denarii would not be enough*. A denarius was equivalent to a laborer’s full day’s wage.

6:9 *Barley* was the grain of the poor. The *loaves* were similar to pita bread. The *two fish* would have been salted, and with the *five loaves* of bread would make one meal.

6:10 The headcount of *about 5,000* reflected the *men alone* (Matt 14:21), as social custom dictated. With women and children included, the total number was far greater.

6:11 The modest meal provided the crowd with *as much as they wanted*, echoing the miraculous provision of manna in the wilderness (Exod 16:35). Moses had first supplied Israel with heavenly bread; Jesus was the new supplier (see note on 6:1-15).

6:14
Deut 18:15, 18
Acts 3:22; 7:37

6:16-23
//Matt 14:23-33
//Mark 6:47-51

6:19
Job 9:8

6:20
Matt 14:27

6:23
John 6:11

6:27
Matt 3:17; 17:5
Mark 1:11; 9:7
Luke 3:22
John 1:33; 4:14; 6:50-
51, 54, 58
Acts 2:22
Rom 6:23

6:29
1 Jn 3:23

6:31
Exod 16:15
Num 11:7-9
Neh 9:15
*Ps 78:24; 105:40

6:33
John 6:41, 50

6:35
John 4:14; 6:48;
7:37-38

people who had eaten from the five barley loaves.

¹⁴When the people saw him do this miraculous sign, they exclaimed, "Surely, he is the Prophet we have been expecting!" ¹⁵When Jesus saw that they were ready to force him to be their king, he slipped away into the hills by himself.

Jesus Walks on Water

John 6:16-21 // Matt 14:22-33 // Mark 6:45-52

¹⁶That evening Jesus' disciples went down to the shore to wait for him. ¹⁷But as darkness fell and Jesus still hadn't come back, they got into the boat and headed across the lake toward Capernaum. ¹⁸Soon a gale swept down upon them, and the sea grew very rough. ¹⁹They had rowed three or four miles when suddenly they saw Jesus walking on the water toward the boat. They were terrified, ²⁰but he called out to them, "**Don't be afraid. I am here!**" ²¹Then they were eager to let him in the boat, and immediately they arrived at their destination!

Jesus, the Bread of Life

²²The next day the crowd that had stayed on the far shore saw that the disciples had taken the only boat, and they realized Jesus had not gone with them. ²³Several boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the Lord had blessed the bread and the people had eaten. ²⁴So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went across to

Capernaum to look for him. ²⁵They found him on the other side of the lake and asked, "Rabbi, when did you get here?"

²⁶Jesus replied, "**I tell you the truth, you want to be with me because I fed you, not because you understood the miraculous signs.** ²⁷**But don't be so concerned about perishable things like food. Spend your energy seeking the eternal life that the Son of Man can give you. For God the Father has given me the seal of his approval.**"

²⁸They replied, "We want to perform God's works, too. What should we do?"

²⁹Jesus told them, "**This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent.**"

³⁰They answered, "Show us a miraculous sign if you want us to believe in you. What can you do? ³¹After all, our ancestors ate manna while they journeyed through the wilderness! The Scriptures say, 'Moses gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

³²Jesus said, "**I tell you the truth, Moses didn't give you bread from heaven. My Father did. And now he offers you the true bread from heaven.** ³³**The true bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.**"

³⁴"Sir," they said, "give us that bread every day."

³⁵Jesus replied, "**I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.** ³⁶**But you haven't believed in me**

6:14 him: Some manuscripts read *Jesus*. • **he is the Prophet we have been expecting!** The crowd understood the miracle as a fulfillment of OT promises (see Deut 18:15, 18; Mal 4:5-6).

6:15 The people *were ready to force* Jesus to become *their king*. To avoid this role, Jesus fled the crowd and commanded his disciples to go back across the lake (Mark 6:45-46).

6:18 East-west winds blowing down over the eastern cliffs of the Sea of Galilee late in the day commonly caused *very rough* waters and turbulent storms.

6:19 three or four miles: Greek *25 or 30 stadia* [4.6 or 5.5 kilometers]. • The disciples' fear of the storm was now surpassed by their fear of *Jesus*, who came *walking on the water* to help them. This act recalled Moses, who led Israel through the water (Exod 14; see Ps 77:19-20).

6:20 I am here (or *The 'I AM' is here*; Greek reads *I am*; see Exod 3:14): Jesus identified himself by the name God had revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai (see also 4:26; 6:35).

6:21 immediately they arrived at their destination: The immediacy was yet another of Jesus' miracles.

6:24 The *crowd* sailed north to *Capernaum* to search for Jesus because he had made Capernaum his home in Galilee (Mark 2:1).

6:26-59 This dialogue took place in the synagogue at Capernaum (6:59) shortly before Passover (6:4), when Jews read the account of the exodus from Egypt (see Exod 1-15).

6:26 The crowd, which had concluded that Jesus was a prophet and wanted to take advantage of him politically (see note on 6:15), failed to see the meaning of the miracle, which Jesus then explained (6:27-59).

6:27 Jesus' most profound gift was not physical bread, but eternal life, which the Father authorized him to give. Physical bread is *perishable*; the gift of Jesus, who is himself the bread of life (6:35), will last forever. • *Son of Man* is a title Jesus used for himself.

6:30 The crowd demanded *a miraculous sign* to demonstrate Jesus' status as

Messiah. Jews believed that when the Messiah appeared, he would duplicate the great miracle of Moses. Manna would once again fall, and everyone would consider it a second exodus.

6:31 Moses gave them bread from heaven to eat: Exod 16:4; Ps 78:24.

6:32-33 Jesus corrected the people's argument: God, not Moses, fed Israel in the wilderness. The most important quest is to find and consume *the true bread of God*, who gives eternal life.

6:34 Sir, . . . give us that bread: This request parallels the request of the Samaritan woman (4:15). Spiritual awakening begins with a request for God's gift.

6:35 Jesus' *I am* statements in John depict Jesus' identity and ministry (see also 4:26; 8:12; 9:5; 10:7-9, 11-14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1-5). Jesus purposefully used a phrase that would make his listeners think of the OT name for God (Exod 3:14). • **I am the bread of life:** Jesus is the true manna that descended from God (6:38). He satisfies the spiritual hunger of those who believe in him (cp. 4:10-13).

even though you have seen me. ³⁷However, those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them. ³⁸For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do my own will. ³⁹And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them up at the last day. ⁴⁰For it is my Father's will that all who see his Son and believe in him should have eternal life. I will raise them up at the last day."

⁴¹Then the people began to murmur in disagreement because he had said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven."

⁴²They said, "Isn't this Jesus, the son of Joseph? We know his father and mother. How can he say, 'I came down from heaven?'"

⁴³But Jesus replied, "Stop complaining about what I said. ⁴⁴For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them up. ⁴⁵As it is written in the Scriptures, 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. ⁴⁶(Not that anyone has ever seen the Father; only I, who was sent from God, have seen him.)

⁴⁷"I tell you the truth, anyone who believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸Yes, I am the bread of life! ⁴⁹Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, but they all died. ⁵⁰Anyone who eats the bread from heaven, however, will never die. ⁵¹I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and this bread, which I will offer so the world may live, is my flesh."

⁵²Then the people began arguing with

each other about what he meant. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" they asked.

⁵³So Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you cannot have eternal life within you. ⁵⁴But anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise that person at the last day. ⁵⁵For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. ⁵⁷I live because of the living Father who sent me; in the same way, anyone who feeds on me will live because of me. ⁵⁸I am the true bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will not die as your ancestors did (even though they ate the manna) but will live forever."

⁵⁹He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

Many Disciples Desert Jesus

⁶⁰Many of his disciples said, "This is very hard to understand. How can anyone accept it?"

⁶¹Jesus was aware that his disciples were complaining, so he said to them, "Does this offend you? ⁶²Then what will you think if you see the Son of Man ascend to heaven again? ⁶³The Spirit alone gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ⁶⁴But some of you do not believe me." (For Jesus knew from the beginning which ones didn't believe, and he knew who would betray him.) ⁶⁵Then he said, "That is why I said that people can't come to me unless the Father gives them to me."

6:37
John 10:28-29; 17:2, 24
6:38
John 4:34; 5:30
6:39
John 10:28-29; 17:12; 18:9
6:40
John 12:45
6:41
John 6:33, 35, 51, 58
6:42
Luke 4:22
John 7:27-28
6:44
Jer 31:3
John 6:65; 12:32
6:45
Isa 54:13
Jer 31:33-34
1 Thes 4:9
Heb 8:10-11
6:46
John 1:18; 5:37; 7:29
6:47
John 3:15-16, 36
6:48
John 6:35, 41, 51, 58
6:51
John 10:10-11
Heb 10:10
6:54
John 6:39-40, 44
6:56
John 14:20; 15:4-7; 17:21-23
1 Jn 2:24; 3:24
6:57
John 5:26
6:58
John 6:31
6:62
John 3:13; 17:5
Acts 1:9-11
Eph 4:8
6:63
John 3:34
Rom 8:2
1 Cor 15:45
2 Cor 3:6
1 Pet 3:18
"ζωοποιεῖ" (2227)
Rom 4:17
6:64
Matt 26:23
John 13:11

6:37-40 Jesus' mission in the world is sure to succeed. God sent Jesus (6:38) and calls people to follow him (6:37, 44). Those who come to him are secure in Jesus' promise that he will not reject them or lose them (6:39).

6:37 *those the Father has given:* God moves in people's hearts, bringing them to Jesus.

6:41-42 When Jesus identified himself as the true bread . . . from heaven, the crowd faced a decision. • *people:* Literally *Jewish people*; also in 6:52. • *Isn't this . . . the son of Joseph?* They stumbled because their familiarity with Jesus made his claims seem outlandish.

6:43-51 *Stop complaining:* Rather than defending himself against their complaint (6:42), Jesus turns to the problem of their spiritual receptivity. Those who love the Father and listen to him will believe in Jesus.

6:45 *in the Scriptures:* Literally *in the prophets*. Isa 54:13.

6:49-50 Jesus connected the *manna* of the Exodus with himself, then pointed out a major difference: The Israelites remained mortal and *they all died*, whereas *the bread from heaven* (Jesus himself) provides eternal life (6:47, 51, 58).

6:51 *this bread . . . is my flesh:* The gift that brings life is now unveiled. On the cross, Jesus offered his flesh for the life of the world.

6:53-58 *eat the flesh . . . drink his blood:* Jesus answered the question the people asked (6:52). His words hinted at the Lord's Supper yet to come (see Luke 22:19). Since "flesh and blood" was a Jewish idiom for the whole person, Jesus might have been calling people to consume him fully by completely believing in him. Some Christian traditions see the bread as Christ's literal

flesh broken for us and the wine as his literal blood poured out for us. Receiving communion means no less than embracing Jesus' life-giving sacrifice.

6:60-61 Jesus' language (6:53-58) was shocking, offensive (see Gen 9:4-5), and *hard to understand* for his disciples, just as it was to the crowd. Were they to take him literally? How would they eat his flesh? Jesus' answer is in 6:63.

6:63 The essence of Jesus' gift is found in the *Holy Spirit alone*, not in *human effort* (literally *the flesh*). Life and understanding come through the gift of the Spirit (see 14:15-20; 20:21-22). True life can be found only when the Holy Spirit infuses human life. To "eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood" (6:53) involves a spiritual rather than a physical act (see note on 6:53-58).

6:65 *people can't come to me unless the Father gives them to me* (see 6:44): Only

6:65
John 6:44
6:68
John 6:63
6:69
Matt 16:16
Mark 1:24; 8:29
Luke 9:20
1 Jn 2:20
6:70-71
Matt 10:4; 26:14
John 13:27
7:1
John 5:18; 7:19;
8:37, 40
7:2
Lev 23:34
Deut 16:16
7:3
Matt 12:46
7:6
John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20
7:7
John 15:18
7:11
John 11:56
7:12
John 7:40-43
7:13
John 9:22-23
7:15
Matt 13:54
Luke 2:47
Acts 4:13
7:16
John 8:28; 12:49;
14:10
7:18
John 5:41, 44;
8:50, 54
7:19
John 1:17; 7:1, 25;
8:37-40
7:20
John 8:48, 52; 10:20
7:21-22
Gen 17:10-13
Lev 12:3
7:23
John 5:8-10, 16
Acts 7:8

⁶⁶At this point many of his disciples turned away and deserted him. ⁶⁷Then Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked, “**Are you also going to leave?**”

⁶⁸Simon Peter replied, “Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words that give eternal life. ⁶⁹We believe, and we know you are the Holy One of God.”

⁷⁰Then Jesus said, “**I chose the twelve of you, but one is a devil.**” ⁷¹He was speaking of Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, one of the Twelve, who would later betray him.

*Jesus and the Festival of Shelters (7:1–8:59)
Jesus and His Brothers*

7 After this, Jesus traveled around Galilee. He wanted to stay out of Judea, where the Jewish leaders were plotting his death. ²But soon it was time for the Jewish Festival of Shelters, ³and Jesus’ brothers said to him, “Leave here and go to Judea, where your followers can see your miracles! ⁴You can’t become famous if you hide like this! If you can do such wonderful things, show yourself to the world!” ⁵For even his brothers didn’t believe in him.

⁶Jesus replied, “**Now is not the right time for me to go, but you can go anytime.** ⁷The world can’t hate you, but it does hate me because I accuse it of doing evil. ⁸You go on. I’m not going to this festival, because my time has not yet come.” ⁹After saying these things, Jesus remained in Galilee.

Jesus Teaches Openly at the Temple

¹⁰But after his brothers left for the festival, Jesus also went, though secretly, staying out of public view. ¹¹The Jewish leaders tried

to find him at the festival and kept asking if anyone had seen him. ¹²There was a lot of grumbling about him among the crowds. Some argued, “He’s a good man,” but others said, “He’s nothing but a fraud who deceives the people.” ¹³But no one had the courage to speak favorably about him in public, for they were afraid of getting in trouble with the Jewish leaders.

¹⁴Then, midway through the festival, Jesus went up to the Temple and began to teach. ¹⁵The people were surprised when they heard him. “How does he know so much when he hasn’t been trained?” they asked.

¹⁶So Jesus told them, “**My message is not my own; it comes from God who sent me.** ¹⁷Anyone who wants to do the will of God will know whether my teaching is from God or is merely my own. ¹⁸Those who speak for themselves want glory only for themselves, but a person who seeks to honor the one who sent him speaks truth, not lies. ¹⁹Moses gave you the law, but none of you obeys it! In fact, you are trying to kill me.”

²⁰The crowd replied, “You’re demon possessed! Who’s trying to kill you?”

²¹Jesus replied, “**I did one miracle on the Sabbath, and you were amazed.** ²²But you work on the Sabbath, too, when you obey Moses’ law of circumcision. (Actually, this tradition of circumcision began with the patriarchs, long before the law of Moses.) ²³For if the correct time for circumcising your son falls on the Sabbath, you go ahead and do it so as not to break the law of Moses. So why should you be angry with me for healing

God’s light can penetrate the profound darkness of the world.

6:68-69 *Simon Peter* often served as spokesman for the Twelve (see also Matt 14:28-29; 16:16; 17:4; 18:21; 19:27; 26:33-35). • *you are the Holy One of God*: Other manuscripts read *you are the Christ, the Holy One of God*; still others read *you are the Christ, the Son of God*; and still others read *you are the Christ, the Son of the living God*. See Mark 1:24.

6:70-71 Once again Jesus demonstrated supernatural knowledge (see 1:47-49; 4:16-19). *Judas* would work for evil and *betray* Jesus to the authorities (12:4; 13:2; Matt 26:14-16). • *Iscariot* means “man from Kerioth,” the home village of Judas’s family.

7:1-52 This chapter is another account of Jesus during a Jewish festival, the Festival of Shelters. Jesus used elements of the festival to reveal his true identity to his Jewish compatriots and to show that he had fulfilled the festival’s

essential meaning (see 7:37-39; 8:12).

7:2 Jewish men were required to come to the Temple for the *Festival of Shelters* (Exod 23:14-17; Deut 16:16), an annual seven-day autumn harvest festival in Jerusalem six months after Passover (6:4). People lived in temporary shelters for the seven days as a reminder of the tents Israel used for forty years in the wilderness.

7:3-5 *Jesus’ brothers* (see also Mark 3:31) reminded him of his religious obligation to celebrate the festival. Their words were cynical because at this time they didn’t *believe in him* (7:5).

7:6-8 Jesus said that it was *not the right time* for him to go publicly to Jerusalem, although he later went secretly (12:1-19; see note on 12:23).

7:8 *not going*: Some manuscripts read *not yet going*.

7:15 *people*: Literally *Jewish people*. • The leaders wanted Jesus to show his

credentials. Jesus had not *been trained* under a rabbi but was taught by his heavenly Father (cp. Peter and John, Acts 4:13; contrast Paul, Acts 22:3).

7:17 Those who truly want to *do the will of God* receive and accept Jesus and his *teaching* (see also 5:42-47). Those who focus on the world, by contrast, are not receptive to Christ.

7:19 *Moses gave you the law, but none of you obeys it!* The Jewish leaders were proud of the law of Moses, but ironically, in *trying to kill* Jesus, they were breaking the law (Exod 20:13).

7:20 *You’re demon possessed!* See also 8:48-52; 10:20-21.

7:22 The law required *circumcision* on the eighth day (Lev 12:3) and permitted a boy to be circumcised even if that day fell on *the Sabbath*. Jesus argued as a rabbi would, from “the lesser to the greater,” using circumcision as a precedent for healing, both of which are religious works.

a man on the Sabbath? ²⁴Look beneath the surface so you can judge correctly."

Is Jesus the Messiah?

²⁵Some of the people who lived in Jerusalem started to ask each other, "Isn't this the man they are trying to kill?" ²⁶But here he is, speaking in public, and they say nothing to him. Could our leaders possibly believe that he is the Messiah? ²⁷But how could he be? For we know where this man comes from. When the Messiah comes, he will simply appear; no one will know where he comes from."

²⁸While Jesus was teaching in the Temple, he called out, "Yes, you know me, and you know where I come from. But I'm not here on my own. The one who sent me is true, and you don't know him. ²⁹But I know him because I come from him, and he sent me to you." ³⁰Then the leaders tried to arrest him; but no one laid a hand on him, because his time had not yet come.

³¹Many among the crowds at the Temple believed in him. "After all," they said, "would you expect the Messiah to do more miraculous signs than this man has done?"

³²When the Pharisees heard that the crowds were whispering such things, they and the leading priests sent Temple guards to arrest Jesus. ³³But Jesus told them, "I will be with you only a little longer. Then I will return to the one who sent me. ³⁴You will search for me but not find me. And you cannot go where I am going."

³⁵The Jewish leaders were puzzled by this statement. "Where is he planning to go?" they asked. "Is he thinking of leaving the country and going to the Jews in other lands? Maybe he will even teach the Greeks! ³⁶What does he mean when he says, 'You will search for me but not find me,' and 'You cannot go where I am going'?"

Jesus Promises Living Water

³⁷On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, "Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! ³⁸Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.'"
³⁹(When he said "living water," he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him. But the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory.)

⁴⁰When the crowds heard him say this, some of them declared, "Surely this man is the Prophet we've been expecting." ⁴¹Others said, "He is the Messiah." Still others said, "But he can't be! Will the Messiah come from Galilee?" ⁴²For the Scriptures clearly state that the Messiah will be born of the royal line of David, in Bethlehem, the village where King David was born." ⁴³So the crowd was divided about him. ⁴⁴Some even wanted him arrested, but no one laid a hand on him.

⁴⁵When the Temple guards returned without having arrested Jesus, the leading

7:24
Isa 11:3-4
John 8:15

7:27
John 9:29

7:28-29
John 8:26, 55; 17:25

7:30
John 8:20

7:31
John 2:23; 8:30;
10:42; 11:45; 12:11,
42

7:33
John 13:33; 16:5, 10,
16-18

7:34
John 8:21; 13:33

7:37
Isa 55:1
John 4:10, 14; 6:35
Rev 22:17

7:38
Prov 18:4
Isa 58:11
Ezek 47:1-10
Joel 3:18

7:39
John 14:17-18; 16:7;
20:22
Rom 8:9
1 Cor 15:45
2 Cor 3:17

7:40
Deut 18:15
John 6:14

7:41
John 1:46

7:42
2 Sam 7:12
Ps 89:3-4
Mic 5:2
Matt 1:1; 2:5-10
Luke 2:4
John 7:52

7:43
John 9:16; 10:19

7:44
John 7:30

7:27 Some of the crowd thought that since they could trace Jesus' earthly origins, he could not be the Messiah. They believed that the Messiah would simply appear.

7:29 I come from him: Jesus sidestepped the speculation (7:27, 40-44) about his earthly origins and focused on his heavenly origins. His astounding claim provoked the religious leaders to try to arrest him for blasphemy (7:30; cp. 10:30-33).

7:30 Jesus' opponents failed to arrest him because in God's sovereign plan, his time (literally his hour), when he would be glorified on the cross, had not yet come (see note on 12:23; see also 10:17-18; 18:6-8). All four arrest scenes in chs 7-8 stress that Jesus was in control, not the Jewish leaders.

7:32-36 Jesus announced his return to the one who sent him, the Father in heaven (17:1-7). However, the Pharisees misunderstood, thinking he was leaving Judea to go among Gentiles (whom Pharisees would never visit). • The leaders would not find Jesus after his

ascension. • you cannot go where I am going: These Pharisees, still in darkness, could not enter heaven, so Jesus would be beyond their reach there.

7:35 the Jews in other lands? Or the Jews who live among the Greeks?

7:37-38 living water: See "Living Water" at 4:10-14, p. 1777. A water ceremony was held each day during the Festival of Shelters, with prayer for God to send rain in the late autumn. The final day, called "the great day," was the climax of the festival, when the ceremony was repeated seven times. Water was poured over the altar as Levites sang Isa 12:3 (see Zech 14:8; see also Mishnah Sukkah ch 4). • Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! Jesus fulfilled an essential element in the Festival of Shelters. He himself is the source of living water, available to anyone who believes. • Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! ³⁸Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from his heart': Or "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink." ³⁸For

the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from the heart of anyone who believes in me.' " The syntax of the Greek allows for either interpretation.

7:39 In Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, his life and the Spirit were poured out (see 19:34; 20:22). • But the Spirit had not yet been given: Some manuscripts read *But as yet there was no Spirit*. Still others read *But as yet there was no Holy Spirit*.

7:40 Surely this man is the Prophet we've been expecting: See Deut 18:15, 18; Mal 4:5-6.

7:41-42 These Jews, different from the crowd (7:25-27) who thought the Messiah would appear mysteriously, believed the prophecy that the Messiah would be from Bethlehem of Judea (see Mic 5:2). However, they stumbled over the fact that Jesus seemed to be from Galilee, where he grew up.

7:45-52 The story concludes with the Jewish leaders frustrated and the world divided over Jesus (cp. 7:25-27, 31-32). • guards returned: See 7:32.

7:46
Matt 7:28

7:48
John 12:42

7:50
John 3:1-2; 19:39

7:51
Deut 1:16

7:52
Isa 9:1-2
Matt 4:14-16
John 1:46

8:2
Matt 26:55

8:5
Lev 20:10
Deut 22:22-24
Job 31:11

8:6
Matt 22:15

8:7
Deut 17:7

8:11
John 5:14

priests and Pharisees demanded, "Why didn't you bring him in?"

⁴⁶"We have never heard anyone speak like this!" the guards responded.

⁴⁷"Have you been led astray, too?" the Pharisees mocked. ⁴⁸"Is there a single one of us rulers or Pharisees who believes in him? ⁴⁹This foolish crowd follows him, but they are ignorant of the law. God's curse is on them!"

⁵⁰Then Nicodemus, the leader who had met with Jesus earlier, spoke up. ⁵¹"Is it legal to convict a man before he is given a hearing?" he asked.

⁵²They replied, "Are you from Galilee, too? Search the Scriptures and see for yourself—no prophet ever comes from Galilee!"

[The most ancient Greek manuscripts do not include John 7:53–8:11.]

⁵³Then the meeting broke up, and everybody went home.

A Woman Caught in Adultery

8 Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives, ²but early the next morning he was back again at the Temple. A crowd soon

gathered, and he sat down and taught them.

³As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd.

⁴"Teacher," they said to Jesus, "this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?"

⁶They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. ⁷They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, "**All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!**" ⁸Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust.

⁹When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. ¹⁰Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, "**Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?**"

¹¹"No, Lord," she said.

And Jesus said, "**Neither do I. Go and sin no more.**"

Misunderstanding (7:32-36)

John 1:10-11; 3:19-20; 9:40-41; 12:40
Isa 6:8-13; 56:10-11
Matt 13:11-17
Acts 26:18; 28:26-27
Rom 1:21
2 Cor 3:13-18; 4:3-4
Eph 4:17-19
Heb 5:2
2 Pet 2:12
1 Jn 2:9-11
Jude 1:10
Rev 3:17

Throughout John's Gospel, people encountering Jesus misunderstood him (see 3:4; 4:11, 33; 7:35; 11:12, 50). Jesus' hearers were divided over the question of Jesus' identity. When they perceived what he was really saying, some wanted to arrest him while others wanted to become his followers (7:43-44). Only later, when Jesus' disciples had received the Spirit (16:12-13), did they really understand his significance.

The world still lives in darkness and it cannot understand the realities of life or of God (1:5). Divine revelation is inaccessible to the world. In fact, when the light of God penetrates the darkness, exposing the ugliness of the world's life, many people flee deeper into the darkness because they prefer it to the light (3:19-20). Only the transforming power of God's Spirit can provide understanding and help people see clearly as children of God (3:21; 8:12; 12:35-36, 46).

7:49-51 *Nicodemus* (ch 3) was probably in the process of coming to faith (see 19:39). Contrary to the implication of 7:48, some of the Pharisees—not just the ignorant crowd—believed in Jesus.

7:52 *no prophet ever comes* (some manuscripts read *the prophet does not come*) *from Galilee!* The Jewish leaders were apparently unaware that Jesus had been born in Bethlehem of Judea, not in Galilee (see Matt 2:1; Luke 2:1-7).

7:53-8:11 This story, a later addition to the Gospel of John, does not appear in the earliest Greek manuscripts. However, it is likely an authentic story from Jesus' life.

8:3 The *teachers of religious law* were Jewish scholars who specialized in knowing the OT law and the oral

traditions that interpreted the law.

8:4 The form of the Greek sentence emphasizes the legal claim against the woman. She had been caught while committing the sin *of adultery*. The law required two witnesses and carefully outlined what evidence was needed.

8:5 The requirement of the *law . . . to stone her* indicates that the woman was engaged or married (Lev 20:10; Deut 22:23-24). The law also stated that her lover should be killed with her, but these religious leaders apparently ignored their obligation to that part of the statute. • These men could have dealt with the woman privately and kept her from public shame, but Jesus was their real target as they demanded, *What do you say?* Would he neglect the law since he had a reputation for mercy? Or

would he ignore the woman's tragedy?

8:6 It is impossible to know what *Jesus . . . wrote in the dust*. It has been suggested that he wrote the sins of the accusers.

8:7 Jesus' answer did not mean that an accuser had to be morally perfect to make legal accusations. His reference to *the one who has never sinned* points to the motives of the accusers.

8:9 The jury crumbled as *they slipped away*. One accuser departed, followed by another, and then a succession of bystanders.

8:11 *Neither do I:* Jesus' words of assurance did not suggest that the woman was innocent. Jesus views sin and judgment seriously, yet he looks graciously and forgivingly on those caught in sin's grip.

Jesus, the Light of the World

¹²Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, “I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.”

¹³The Pharisees replied, “You are making those claims about yourself! Such testimony is not valid.”

¹⁴Jesus told them, “These claims are valid even though I make them about myself. For I know where I came from and where I am going, but you don’t know this about me. ¹⁵You judge me by human standards, but I do not judge anyone. ¹⁶And if I did, my judgment would be correct in every respect because I am not alone. The Father who sent me is with me. ¹⁷Your own law says that if two people agree about something, their witness is accepted as fact. ¹⁸I am one witness, and my Father who sent me is the other.”

¹⁹“Where is your father?” they asked.

Jesus answered, “Since you don’t know who I am, you don’t know who my Father is. If you knew me, you would also know my Father.” ²⁰Jesus made these statements while he was teaching in the section of the

Temple known as the Treasury. But he was not arrested, because his time had not yet come.

The Unbelieving People Warned

²¹Later Jesus said to them again, “I am going away. You will search for me but will die in your sin. You cannot come where I am going.”

²²The people asked, “Is he planning to commit suicide? What does he mean, ‘You cannot come where I am going?’”

²³Jesus continued, “You are from below; I am from above. You belong to this world; I do not. ²⁴That is why I said that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I AM who I claim to be, you will die in your sins.”

²⁵“Who are you?” they demanded.

Jesus replied, “The one I have always claimed to be. ²⁶I have much to say about you and much to condemn, but I won’t. For I say only what I have heard from the one who sent me, and he is completely truthful.” ²⁷But they still didn’t understand that he was talking about his Father.

²⁸So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man on the cross, then you will understand that I AM he. I do nothing on my

8:12

Isa 9:1-2
John 1:4-5, 9; 3:19;
9:5; 12:35-36, 46
2 Cor 4:6

8:14

John 7:28; 9:29

8:16

John 5:30

8:17-18

Deut 17:6; 19:15
John 5:37
1 Jn 5:7-9

8:19

John 14:7, 9

8:20

Mark 12:41
John 7:30

8:21

John 7:34, 36; 13:33

8:22

John 7:35

8:23

John 3:31; 17:14

8:24

Exod 3:14-15
John 4:26; 8:28, 58;
13:19

8:26

John 3:32-34; 12:49

8:28

John 3:14; 5:19; 8:24;
12:32

8:12-59 The debate about whether or not Jesus is the Messiah continues from 7:52. Jesus was still at the Festival of Shelters in Jerusalem. During the festival, the conflicts Jesus had endured in ch 7 continued and intensified.

8:12 During the Festival of Shelters, sixteen gold bowls in the inner courts of the Temple were filled with oil and lighted. Jesus stood beneath these lights in the Temple (8:20) and said that he was now the source of *the light*. Jesus’ light brings salvation not only to Israel but to *the world*, regardless of race or locale.

8:13 The Pharisees charged that Jesus’ *claims* were *not valid* because Jewish law (Deut 19:15) requires more than one witness (cp. 5:31-32; see 8:17).

8:14-15 Jesus answered the Pharisees’ charges, saying that he could make such *claims* about himself because he knew both his origin (heaven) and his destination (heaven). He then pointed to the most vital witness for his case, his Father who sent him (8:16).

8:16 *The Father*: Some manuscripts read *The One*.

8:17 *if two people agree about something, their witness is accepted as fact*: See Deut 19:15.

8:19 Throughout the festival, Jesus’ audience proved they were in the darkness as they misunderstood him (see “Misunderstanding” at 7:32-36, p. 1785). They wanted to meet Jesus’ *father*, who is God. Since they did not truly know God, they were unable to understand Jesus.

8:20 The *Treasury* was located in the section of the Temple called the Court of the Women. Jesus often taught there so that both men and women could hear him (Mark 12:41). • *his time*: Literally *his hour*. See notes on 2:4; 12:23.

8:21 In the earlier debate at the festival, Jesus’ origins were at issue (7:27). Here, Jesus mentioned *going away* to the place he came from, meaning heaven. However, once again, his words were misunderstood.

8:22 *people*: Literally *Jewish people*; also in 8:31, 48, 52, 57.

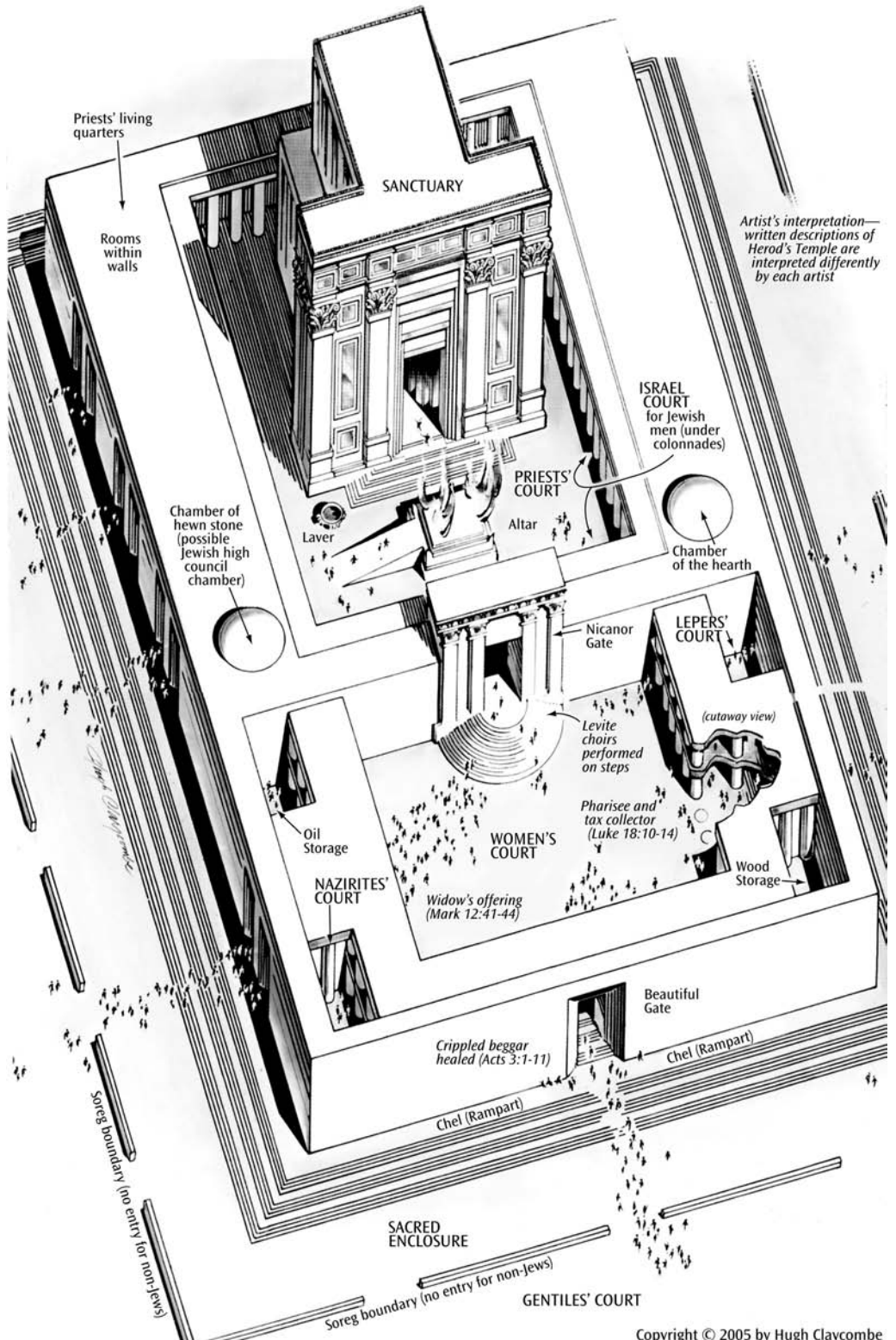
8:23 Jesus’ listeners were *from below*; they could not comprehend Jesus’ meaning because he was *from above* (3:31; see note on 3:3).

8:24 *unless you believe that I AM who I claim to be*: Literally *unless you believe that I am*. Jesus used God’s divine name (see 4:26; Exod 3:14), but the listeners missed the nuance (8:25). • *die in your sins*: Jesus’ presence in the world, as the light penetrating the darkness, is the world’s only chance for salvation.

8:25 *Who are you?* Later they understood and tried to stone Jesus for blasphemy (8:59). • *The one I have always claimed to be*: Or *Why do I speak to you at all?* The Greek text can be interpreted either way.

8:28 *When you have lifted up the Son of Man on the cross, then you will understand that I AM he*: Literally *When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am*. “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself. See note

► **Herod’s Temple (John 8:20)**. Herod the Great, king of Judea at the time of Jesus’ birth (37–4 BC), rebuilt the Temple in Jerusalem. The new structure replaced and expanded on the Second Temple that had been built during the time of Haggai, after the Jews returned from exile in Babylon (see Ezra 1–6). Herod’s massive project began in 20 BC, and the core of the new structure was finished in a decade, but the work was not fully completed until AD 64. This Temple was destroyed in AD 70, just six years after its completion. Many events of Jesus’ life and ministry took place within the Temple compound (see also 1:19; 2:14-15, 19-21; 5:14; 7:14, 28-32; 8:2, 59; 10:23; 11:56; Matt 4:5; 21:12-15, 23; 24:1-2; 27:5-6, 51; Mark 11:11, 15-17, 27; 12:35, 41; 13:1-2; 15:38; Luke 1:8, 23; 2:27, 36-37, 46; 4:9; 10:32; 19:45-47; 20:1; 21:1, 5, 37-38; 23:45; 24:53; Acts 2:46; 3:1-8; 4:1; 5:12, 20-26, 42; 21:23-30).



own but say only what the Father taught me. ²⁹And the one who sent me is with me—he has not deserted me. For I always do what pleases him.” ³⁰Then many who heard him say these things believed in him.

Jesus and Abraham: True Freedom

³¹Jesus said to the people who believed in him, “You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. ³²And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

³³“But we are descendants of Abraham,” they said. “We have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean, ‘You will be set free?’”

³⁴Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave of sin. ³⁵A slave is not a permanent member of the family, but a son is part of the family forever. ³⁶So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free. ³⁷Yes, I realize that you are descendants of Abraham. And yet some of you are trying to kill me because there’s no room in your hearts for my message. ³⁸I am telling you what I saw when I was with my Father. But you are following the advice of your father.”

³⁹“Our father is Abraham!” they declared. “No,” Jesus replied, “for if you were really the children of Abraham, you would follow his example. ⁴⁰Instead, you are trying to kill me because I told you the truth, which I heard from God. Abraham never did such a thing. ⁴¹No, you are imitating your real father.”

They replied, “We aren’t illegitimate children! God himself is our true Father.”

⁴²Jesus told them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, because I have come to you from God. I am not here on my own, but he sent me. ⁴³Why can’t you understand what I am saying? It’s because you can’t even hear me! ⁴⁴For you are the children of your father the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵So when I tell the truth, you just naturally don’t believe me! ⁴⁶Which of you can truthfully accuse me of sin? And since I am telling you the truth, why don’t you believe me? ⁴⁷Anyone who belongs to God listens gladly to the words of God. But you don’t listen because you don’t belong to God.”

⁴⁸The people retorted, “You Samaritan devil! Didn’t we say all along that you were possessed by a demon?”

⁴⁹“No,” Jesus said, “I have no demon in me. For I honor my Father—and you dishonor me. ⁵⁰And though I have no wish to glorify myself, God is going to glorify me. He is the true judge. ⁵¹I tell you the truth, anyone who obeys my teaching will never die!”

⁵²The people said, “Now we know you are possessed by a demon. Even Abraham and the prophets died, but you say, ‘Anyone who obeys my teaching will never die!’ ⁵³Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died,

8:29
John 4:34; 6:38; 8:16; 14:10; 16:32

8:30
John 7:31
† *pisteuō* (4100)
† John 12:11

8:31
John 15:7
2 Jn 1:9

8:32
Rom 8:2
2 Cor 3:17
Gal 5:1, 13

8:33
Matt 3:9
Luke 3:8

8:34
Rom 6:16, 20
2 Pet 2:19

8:35
Gen 21:10
Gal 4:30

8:39
Matt 3:9
John 8:33
Gal 3:7, 14, 29

8:41
Deut 32:6
Isa 63:16; 64:8
Mal 1:6

8:42
1 Jn 5:1

8:44
Gen 3:4; 4:9
1 Jn 3:8
† *diabolos* (1228)
† Eph 4:27

8:45
John 18:37

8:47
1 Jn 4:6

8:50
John 5:41

8:51
John 5:24; 11:25-26

8:53
John 4:12

on 1:51. • The synoptic Gospels describe Jesus as predicting his death three times (e.g., Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34). John parallels this (3:14; 8:28; 12:33-34), showing that *the Father* governs his Son’s fate.

8:30 Once again, the festival audience was divided. Earlier, the debate concluded with plans to arrest Jesus (8:20). Now *many . . . believed in him*, convinced that he was telling the truth. However, once Jesus’ full identity was disclosed their faith was sorely challenged (8:31-59).

8:31-32 Discipleship is more than knowing who Jesus is. It is also about obeying his *teachings* (3:36; 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10). • Because Jesus is *the truth* (14:6), knowing him brings discernment of what is true and what is false. • *set you free*: The truth brings freedom from darkness, falsehood, and sin.

8:33 Jesus challenged a widely held assumption about Israel’s status as God’s chosen people. Their heritage as *descendants of Abraham* had inspired feelings of privilege and immunity rather than obligation and responsibility (cp. Amos

3:1-15). • The people misunderstood what it meant to be *set free*. Jesus was not referring to freedom from human slavery; he meant spiritual bondage to sin (8:34). Truth, not their religious heritage, would free them (8:32; Rom 6:17; 8:2; 1 Jn 3:4, 8, 9).

8:35 Jesus unfolded the logic of his argument: If Israel is a spiritual *slave*, it has the same insecurity as any slave in a household. Members of a *family* are secure, slaves are not. Only Jesus can change the status of slaves and make them free and secure.

8:37-41 The leaders’ plot to kill Jesus (5:18) unmasked their true identity. They belonged to a different household, and their *father* was not Jesus’ *Father*. They were relying on the fact that their ancestral father was Abraham, but Jesus challenged their spiritual pedigree. The climax of his challenge comes in 8:44.

8:39 if you were really the children of Abraham, you would follow his example: Some manuscripts read *if you are really the children of Abraham, follow his example*.

8:41 your real father: Jesus knew who controlled them. • *We aren’t illegitimate children!* This was both a defense and an attack. In Greek, the pronoun *we* is emphatic: “*We* [in contrast to *you*] are not illegitimate,” implying that Jesus was illegitimate (see Matt 1:18-25).

8:44 Since the unbelieving people did not love Jesus (8:42; 1 Jn 5:1), they were not *children* of the Father in heaven who sent his beloved Son (8:47). Their true spiritual ancestry was revealed in their desire to kill God’s Son. This was the work of *the devil*, who brought death to the world (see Gen 3:1-20; Rom 5:12-14).

8:48-49 By calling Jesus a *Samaritan devil*, his opponents turned his charges back on him with a racial slur (see note on 4:4-6). Their statement that Jesus was demon possessed (also 7:20; 8:52; 10:20) countered his claim that they were linked to Satan (8:44). Jesus rightly replied that these words were a profound *dishonor*. In fact, it was a serious and unforgivable offense (Mark 3:22-29).

8:54
John 16:14; 17:5

8:55
John 7:28-29; 15:10

8:56
Gen 18:18; 22:17-18
Matt 13:17
Heb 11:13

8:58
Exod 3:14
Isa 43:10, 13
John 1:1; 8:24, 28

9:2
Exod 20:5
Ezek 18:20
Luke 13:2
John 9:34

9:3
John 11:4

9:4
John 5:17; 11:9; 12:35

9:5
Isa 49:6
John 1:4-5, 9; 8:12; 12:46

9:6
Mark 8:23

9:7
2 Kgs 5:10
Isa 35:5

9:8
Acts 3:10

and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?"

⁵⁴Jesus answered, "If I want glory for myself, it doesn't count. But it is my Father who will glorify me. You say, 'He is our God,'⁵⁵ but you don't even know him. I know him. If I said otherwise, I would be as great a liar as you! But I do know him and obey him.⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced as he looked forward to my coming. He saw it and was glad."

⁵⁷The people said, "You aren't even fifty years old. How can you say you have seen Abraham?"

⁵⁸Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I AM!"⁵⁹ At that point they picked up stones to throw at him. But Jesus was hidden from them and left the Temple.

Jesus Brings Light to the Blind

9 As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth.

"Rabbi," his disciples asked him, "why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents' sins?"

³"It was not because of his sins or his parents' sins," Jesus answered. "This happened so the power of God could be seen in him.⁴ We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent us. The night is coming, and then no one can work.⁵ But while I am here in the world, I am the light of the world."

⁶Then he spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva, and spread the mud over the blind man's eyes.⁷ He told him, "Go wash yourself in the pool of Siloam" (Siloam means "sent"). So the man went and washed and came back seeing!

⁸His neighbors and others who knew him as a blind beggar asked each other, "Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?"⁹ Some said he was, and others said, "No, he just looks like him!"

Disciples of Jesus (9:1-41)

John 8:31-32; 12:25-26; 13:35; 18:36
Matt 5:11; 9:9-10; 10:16-22; 13:52; 16:24-28; 24:9; 27:57-58
Mark 15:40-41
Luke 14:26-33
Acts 9:2
Rom 15:5
1 Cor 3:4-11
Eph 1:1

In the first half of John's Gospel, he introduces a variety of people who model true discipleship (see 1:19-51; 4:1-42; 9:1-41). Taken together, John provides a profile of the mature follower, or "disciple," of Christ.

What is this profile of a disciple? (1) *Disciples know who Jesus is.* In each story, titles for Jesus identify him correctly (see, e.g., 1:25, 34, 36, 38, 41; 4:19, 25, 31; 9:2, 17, 22). (2) *Disciples believe in Jesus.* They see Jesus' mighty works, listen to his profound words, and believe (see 1:50; 4:39-41; 9:35-38; see also 20:8, 25-31). (3) *Jesus' disciples understand that they must follow him if their discipleship is to be successful* (1:37-43; 8:12; 10:4-5, 27; 12:26; 21:19-22). Following implies genuine devotion, leaving what we have to embrace the journey with Jesus.

8:53 *Who do you think you are?* This question was antagonistic and aggressive. However, if Jesus is immortal, ruling over life and death, then he is greater than *Abraham, the prophets*, or any of the greatest people in Israel's history (8:58).

8:54 *our God:* Some manuscripts read *your God*.

8:56 Like his opponents, Jesus appealed to *Abraham*. Rabbis taught that God had given Abraham prophetic insight, teaching him about the coming age of the Messiah.

8:57 *How can you say you have seen Abraham?* (Some manuscripts read *How can you say Abraham has seen you?*): The Jewish leaders misunderstood Jesus: He was talking about his divine pre-existence, not his physical age.

8:58 *before Abraham was even born, I AM!* (Or *before Abraham was even born, I have always been alive*; Greek reads *before Abraham was, I am.*) Jesus' life spans the past from before creation (1:1-2) and sweeps beyond the present into

eternity. • *I AM:* This title is reminiscent of God's name given on Mount Sinai (Exod 3:14; cp. John 4:26; Isa 43:11-13; 48:12).

8:59 Jesus' audience finally understood his claim to divinity (8:58), and they were furious. They believed they had heard blasphemy and *picked up stones to throw at him*, which was the proper legal response (Lev 24:16). • *Jesus was hidden from them* because God had appointed a different time for his death (see note on 12:23; see also 7:30, 44; Luke 4:29-30).

9:1-41 At the Festival of Shelters (chs 7-8), Jesus claimed to be the light of the world (8:12). Now John tells about Jesus giving light, both physically and spiritually, to a blind man who lived in darkness (see 9:5). The story ends with a splendid reversal of roles: The blind man who was assumed to be in spiritual darkness could see God's light, whereas the Pharisees, who could see physically and were thought to be enlightened, were shown to be spiritually blind.

9:2 The *disciples* assumed that someone's sin—the man's or *his parents'*—had caused him to be *born blind*. Jesus corrected this common belief (9:3).

9:4 *We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent us:* Other manuscripts read *I must quickly carry out the tasks assigned me by the one who sent me*; still others read *We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent me*.

9:5 *I am the light of the world:* See note on 8:12.

9:6 During the NT era, *saliva* was used for medical purposes (see Mark 7:32-35; 8:22-25).

9:7 *Siloam*, a pool at the south end of the city of Jerusalem, was the source of water for the ceremonies at the Festival of Shelters. • *Siloam means "sent"*: This phrase contained a double meaning: Jesus, who has been sent by God (4:34; 5:23, 37; 7:28; 8:26; 12:44; 14:24), told the blind man to wash in the pool called "sent."

But the beggar kept saying, “Yes, I am the same one!”

¹⁰They asked, “Who healed you? What happened?”

¹¹He told them, “The man they call Jesus made mud and spread it over my eyes and told me, ‘Go to the pool of Siloam and wash yourself.’ So I went and washed, and now I can see!”

¹²“Where is he now?” they asked.

“I don’t know,” he replied.

¹³Then they took the man who had been blind to the Pharisees, ¹⁴because it was on the Sabbath that Jesus had made the mud and healed him. ¹⁵The Pharisees asked the man all about it. So he told them, “He put the mud over my eyes, and when I washed it away, I could see!”

¹⁶Some of the Pharisees said, “This man Jesus is not from God, for he is working on the Sabbath.” Others said, “But how could an ordinary sinner do such miraculous signs?” So there was a deep division of opinion among them.

¹⁷Then the Pharisees again questioned the man who had been blind and demanded, “What’s your opinion about this man who healed you?”

The man replied, “I think he must be a prophet.”

¹⁸The Jewish leaders still refused to believe the man had been blind and could now see, so they called in his parents. ¹⁹They asked them, “Is this your son? Was he born blind? If so, how can he now see?”

²⁰His parents replied, “We know this is our son and that he was born blind, ²¹but we don’t know how he can see or who healed him. Ask him. He is old enough to speak for himself.” ²²His parents said this

because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who had announced that anyone saying Jesus was the Messiah would be expelled from the synagogue. ²³That’s why they said, “He is old enough. Ask him.”

²⁴So for the second time they called in the man who had been blind and told him, “God should get the glory for this, because we know this man Jesus is a sinner.”

²⁵“I don’t know whether he is a sinner,” the man replied. “But I know this: I was blind, and now I can see!”

²⁶“But what did he do?” they asked. “How did he heal you?”

²⁷“Look!” the man exclaimed. “I told you once. Didn’t you listen? Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?”

²⁸Then they cursed him and said, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses! ²⁹We know God spoke to Moses, but we don’t even know where this man comes from.”

³⁰“Why, that’s very strange!” the man replied. “He healed my eyes, and yet you don’t know where he comes from? ³¹We know that God doesn’t listen to sinners, but he is ready to hear those who worship him and do his will. ³²Ever since the world began, no one has been able to open the eyes of someone born blind. ³³If this man were not from God, he couldn’t have done it.”

³⁴“You were born a total sinner!” they answered. “Are you trying to teach us?” And they threw him out of the synagogue.

Spiritual Blindness

³⁵When Jesus heard what had happened, he found the man and asked, “**Do you believe in the Son of Man?**”

9:14
Luke 13:14
John 5:9

9:16
John 3:2; 7:43

9:17
Matt 21:11

9:22
Luke 6:22
John 7:13; 12:42;
16:2; 19:38
Acts 5:13

9:24
Josh 7:19

9:28
John 5:45

9:29
John 8:14

9:31
Job 27:8-9
Ps 34:15; 66:18;
145:19
Prov 15:29
Isa 1:15
Jer 11:11; 14:12
Mic 3:4
Zech 7:13

9:33
John 3:2

9:34
John 9:2

9:37
John 4:26

9:39
Luke 4:18

9:40
Rom 2:19

9:11 The blind man identified *Jesus* and testified strongly about him. The man was healed of his physical infirmity, gained increasing spiritual insight (9:17, 33), and became Jesus’ disciple (9:38; cp. 5:11-15).

9:13 The *Pharisees* (see 1:24) were arbiters of legal interpretation, so the community looked to them to explain this miracle. Rather than celebrate the healing, these religious leaders interrogated the man because Jesus had performed the miracle on the Sabbath (see 5:16-18).

9:17 The man had already identified his healer (9:11, 16). Now he made his own spiritual judgment, calling Jesus *a prophet*.

9:18 The Pharisees wanted to discount the miracle and hoped the man’s *parents* would deny the healing.

9:20-22 *His parents* confirmed that their son had been *born blind*, but they hesitated to judge how he could see because they were *afraid* of the social consequences.

9:24 *God should get the glory for this:* Or *Give glory to God, not to Jesus*; Greek reads *Give glory to God*. Cp. Josh 7:19.

9:28-29 The Pharisees could not defeat the logic of the miraculous sign (9:24-25, 30-33), so they turned from reason and *cursed him* (see 9:34). • The harsh division between Jesus and the religious leaders was clear. They considered those who followed Jesus to have rejected *Moses* and Judaism.

9:30 The Jewish leaders did not *know where Jesus* came from. The man’s astonishment was understandable—a healing like this was unprecedented. Jesus’ works confirmed his origin as

from God. Once his true identity was known, belief and discipleship should have followed, but the Jewish leaders were willfully blind.

9:32-33 Only God could do something such as *open the eyes of someone born blind*. By healing the man, Jesus offered the Jewish leaders an unquestionable sign that he was *from God* and was the Messiah (cp. Ps 146:8; Isa 35:5; 42:7).

9:34 Discipline such as being thrown *out of the synagogue* was not uncommon. It brought social isolation that might require the man’s departure from the village. Such serious persecution was precisely what Jesus predicted for his followers (15:18-27; 16:2).

9:35-38 Jesus pressed the man who had been blind to understand the miracle and the identity of his healer. Immediately, the man expressed faith and gave

9:41
John 15:22

10:2
Acts 20:28

10:4
Ps 80:1
John 10:27

10:6
John 16:25

10:7
John 14:6

10:8
Jer 23:1-2
Ezek 34:2-3

10:9
Ps 118:20
John 14:6

10:10
John 5:40
Acts 20:29
2 Pet 2:1

10:11
Isa 40:11
Ezek 34:11-16, 23
Heb 13:20
1 Pet 2:25
1 Jn 3:16
Rev 7:17
⁹poimēn (4166)
• John 10:12

³⁶The man answered, "Who is he, sir? I want to believe in him."

³⁷"You have seen him," Jesus said, "and he is speaking to you!"

³⁸"Yes, Lord, I believe!" the man said. And he worshiped Jesus.

³⁹Then Jesus told him, "I entered this world to render judgment—to give sight to the blind and to show those who think they see that they are blind."

⁴⁰Some Pharisees who were standing nearby heard him and asked, "Are you saying we're blind?"

⁴¹"If you were blind, you wouldn't be guilty," Jesus replied. "But you remain guilty because you claim you can see."

Jesus and the Festival of Dedication (10:1-42) The Good Shepherd and His Sheep

10 "I tell you the truth, anyone who sneaks over the wall of a sheepfold, rather than going through the gate, must surely be a thief and a robber! ²But the one who enters through the gate is the shepherd

of the sheep. ³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice. ⁵They won't follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don't know his voice."

⁶Those who heard Jesus use this illustration didn't understand what he meant, ⁷so he explained it to them: "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who came before me were thieves and robbers. But the true sheep did not listen to them. ⁹Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures. ¹⁰The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

¹¹"I am the good ¹²shepherd. The good ¹³shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep. ¹⁴A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf

Jesus reverence due only to God (9:38; cp. 20:28).

9:35 Son of Man: Some manuscripts read *the Son of God*. "Son of Man" is a title Jesus used for himself (1:51; 3:13, 14; 5:27; 6:27, 53, 62; 8:28). The Greek translates a Hebrew and Aramaic phrase meaning "human being." People were not completely sure what Jesus meant by it (see 12:34). However, it signifies Jesus' identity as both human and as the Messiah (cp. Dan 7:13-14).

9:38-39 Some manuscripts do not include "Yes, Lord, I believe!" *the man said. And he worshiped Jesus. Then Jesus told him.*

9:39 *those who think they see:* Literally *those who see*.

9:40-41 *Are you saying we're blind?* Jesus answered that those who claim to hold all religious truth will discover that they are *blind*, while those who recognize their spiritual poverty will find true sight. In the story, the blind man and his family frequently confessed that they did not know, while the Pharisees repeatedly stated their confidence and remained *guilty* because of their religious pride. If they had confessed their ignorance and admitted their spiritual blindness, they would be guiltless. Instead, their conscious and willful rejection of Jesus established their guilt.

10:1-42 Chapter 10 continues the series of festival sermons (see note on 5:1-10:42). Jesus now moves to Hanukkah (the Festival of Dedication), the timing of which is crucial to understanding the story (see note on 10:22).

10:1-21 This illustration of a shepherd and his sheep assumes a Middle Eastern understanding of shepherding and draws on OT tradition deeply embedded in first-century Jewish culture. God was the shepherd of Israel (Gen 49:24; Ps 23; 78:52-53; Isa 40:10-11). Spiritual and political leaders of Israel were also shepherds of God's people, the flock of God (Isa 56:9-12; Jer 23:1-4; Ezek 34). Jesus' sermon builds on the occasion of Hanukkah (see 10:22) to address the theme of shepherds, using this festival as an opportunity to reflect on Israel's leaders ("shepherds") in light of Ezek 34. Jesus presents himself as the only good shepherd (10:11-14).

10:1 A wilderness shepherd would build a *sheepfold*, a pen with low stone walls topped by thorny branches to hold his sheep at night and protect them from danger. • The pen had one *gate* (or opening in the wall) that was closed with branches. Any invasion of the pen was a threat to the flock. • A bad shepherd was like *a thief and a robber*. He exploited the sheep for his own interests and did not care for or nurture them. Bad shepherds took the sheep's milk and wool for themselves and butchered the sheep without providing for the animal's safety (Ezek 34:3; see Isa 56:11; Jer 23:1-4). This was Jesus' most stinging indictment of the Jewish leaders.

10:3 *the sheep recognize his voice:* The Middle Eastern shepherd is well known for having intimate knowledge of the sheep. Sheep are led with flute tunes, songs, or verbal commands.

10:4 A good shepherd always leads his sheep; he never drives them. When they recognize his voice, they trust his leadership and *follow him*.

10:7 *I am:* See note on 6:35. A good shepherd is known for guarding the sheep at *the gate* as a sentry.

10:8 Some manuscripts do not include *before me*.

10:9 *will be saved (or will find safety):* As gatekeeper, Jesus keeps away those who might harm his sheep, keeping his sheep inside the pen where they are safe.

10:10 Jesus' followers must be wary of bad shepherds who desire *to steal and kill and destroy*. As the Hanukkah story was told to the Jewish people (see note on 10:22), they were reminded about false religious leaders whose failures had led to the loss of God's Temple in Jerusalem.

10:11-14 *I am:* See note on 6:35. The *good shepherd* leads his sheep, finds food and water, and locates paths in the wilderness (see Ps 23). The good shepherd stands between his sheep and danger (10:11) and fights to protect them. The OT describes God as Israel's shepherd (Ps 23; 80:1; Isa 40:10-11). The leaders of God's people should shepherd their flock as God does (Ezek 34:23). However, the leaders of Israel in Jesus' time were bad shepherds.

10:11-13 Small villages often created communal flocks and employed a *hired hand* to tend the sheep. However, an employee lacked the commitment of a true shepherd. The wilderness of Judea

coming. He will abandon the sheep because they don't belong to him and he isn't their shepherd. And so the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock. ¹³The hired hand runs away because he's working only for the money and doesn't really care about the sheep.

¹⁴"I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, ¹⁵just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep. ¹⁶I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd.

¹⁷"The Father loves me because I sacrifice my life so I may take it back again. ¹⁸No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded."

¹⁹When he said these things, the people were again divided in their opinions about him. ²⁰Some said, "He's demon possessed and out of his mind. Why listen to a man

like that?" ²¹Others said, "This doesn't sound like a man possessed by a demon! Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

Jesus at Hanukkah

²²It was now winter, and Jesus was in Jerusalem at the time of Hanukkah, the Festival of Dedication. ²³He was in the Temple, walking through the section known as Solomon's Colonnade. ²⁴The people surrounded him and asked, "How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly."

²⁵Jesus replied, "I have already told you, and you don't believe me. The proof is the work I do in my Father's name. ²⁶But you don't believe me because you are not my sheep. ²⁷My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me, ²⁹for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father's hand. ³⁰The Father and I are one."

³¹Once again the people picked up

10:12
poimēn (4166)
• John 21:16

10:14
2 Tim 2:19

10:15
Matt 11:27

10:16
Isa 56:8
Ezek 37:24
John 11:52
Eph 2:14-18

10:17-18
Phil 2:8-9
Heb 5:8; 7:16

10:23
Acts 3:11; 5:12

10:24
Luke 22:67

10:25
John 5:36; 10:38;
14:11

10:26
John 8:47

10:28
John 6:37, 39; 17:12

10:29
John 14:28
17:2, 6, 24

10:30
John 1:1; 10:38; 14:8-11; 17:21-24

had many predators. When a wolf or other predators attacked, the hired hand would run rather than defend the sheep. Jesus will never do this; he will always stand between his sheep and danger.

10:14-17 I sacrifice my life for the sheep: Jesus was alluding to his crucifixion (ch 19).

10:15 The Father and the Son share a profound intimacy, which Jesus shares with his sheep through the Holy Spirit (14:23-31; 15:1-11).

10:16 other sheep: Believers outside Judaism would one day join Jesus' sheepfold (see 11:52). In Jesus' vision for his people, Jewish and Gentile believers from diverse cultures would become one flock with one shepherd (17:20-23).

10:18 No one can take my life from me: The Son's death was voluntary. Jesus was not a martyr or a victim. His decision to die was freely given in obedience and intimate relationship with his Father (see Acts 2:23-24). • Jesus' resurrection was not an afterthought in which God rescued his Son from tragedy. God could not be contained by a tomb, and since Jesus and the Father are one, Jesus possessed the authority to rise from death.

10:19-21 Jesus divided his audience yet again (see also 6:66-69; 7:43; 9:16), inspiring either opposition or faith. • He's demon possessed: Cp. 7:20; 8:48-49, 52. • people: Literally Jewish people; also in 10:24, 31.

10:22 Hanukkah was a winter festival that commemorated the rededication of the Temple after it had been defiled by Antiochus IV (175–163 BC). Two hundred years before Christ, Greek soldiers captured and pillaged the Jerusalem Temple, took its treasures and artifacts, and made it unusable for worship. In the winter of 165–164 BC, a Jewish army led by Judas Maccabeus reclaimed the Temple and rededicated it to the Lord. The Festival of Hanukkah ("dedication") marked this dedication (see 1 Maccabees 3–4; 2 Maccabees 8:1–10:8). During the festival, priests examined their commitment to service, using Ezek 34 as their principal text for reflection (also Jer 23:1-4; 25:32-38; Zech 11). At this Hanukkah celebration, Jesus used the shepherd theme from Ezek 34 to distinguish between himself as the good shepherd (10:11) and Israel's current religious leaders as bad shepherds (10:10, 12-13).

10:23 Massive covered colonnades surrounded the four sides of the central courtyard of the Temple. Solomon's Colonnade, on the east, provided shelter from winter weather.

10:24 The people who surrounded Jesus might have been seeking clarity, or they might have been hostile. In Luke 21:20 and Heb 11:30, the same word describes how Jerusalem and Jericho were surrounded before being destroyed; in Acts 14:20 it refers to Paul's disciples rallying around him after he was injured.

10:25-42 In Jesus' final public presentation of evidence about himself in this Gospel, he gives an exhaustive statement of his identity (10:30).

10:25 Jesus had already provided the Jewish people and their religious leaders with sufficient proof that he is the Son of God. The problem was not lack of information, but their unwillingness to believe him.

10:27-29 As the good shepherd, Jesus would die for his sheep and secure them from all predators and thieves (10:1, 8, 11; cp. Ezek 34:22-23). • The power of the Father, appearing in Christ, keeps his sheep safe. Believers cannot be taken from Jesus because no one is more powerful than he is. Their security is not sustained by their own efforts, but by Christ. • The word snatch implies violence (as in 6:15).

10:29 for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else: Other manuscripts read for what my Father has given me is more powerful than anything; still others read for regarding that which my Father has given me, he is greater than all.

10:30 The Father and the Son are two separate persons with one purpose and nature (1:1, 14; 14:9; 20:28). This is the basis of Jesus' power to protect God's flock (10:28-29) and a stunning expression of Jesus' divinity.

10:31-33 The people realized Jesus' meaning (see 10:33) and wanted to

10:33

Lev 24:16

Matt 26:63-66

John 1:1, 18; 5:18;

20:28

Rom 9:5

Phil 2:6

Titus 2:13

2 Pet 1:1

1 Jn 5:20

^bblasphemia (0988)

• Eph 4:31

10:34

*Ps 82:6

10:36

John 5:17-20

10:42

John 2:23; 7:31; 8:30;

11:45; 12:11, 42

11:1

Matt 21:17

Luke 10:38

11:2

John 12:3

11:4

John 9:3

11:8

John 8:59; 10:31

^rrabbi (4461)

• John 20:16

11:9

John 9:4

11:10

John 12:35

11:11

Dan 12:2

Matt 9:24; 27:52

Mark 5:39

Luke 8:52

stones to kill him. ³²Jesus said, “At my Father’s direction I have done many good works. For which one are you going to stone me?”

³³They replied, “We’re stoning you not for any good work, but for ^bblasphemy! You, a mere man, claim to be God.”

³⁴Jesus replied, “It is written in your own Scriptures that God said to certain leaders of the people, ‘I say, you are gods!’ ³⁵And you know that the Scriptures cannot be altered. So if those people who received God’s message were called ‘gods,’ ³⁶why do you call it blasphemy when I say, ‘I am the Son of God’? After all, the Father set me apart and sent me into the world. ³⁷Don’t believe me unless I carry out my Father’s work. ³⁸But if I do his work, believe in the evidence of the miraculous works I have done, even if you don’t believe me. Then you will know and understand that the Father is in me, and I am in the Father.”

³⁹Once again they tried to arrest him, but he got away and left them. ⁴⁰He went beyond the Jordan River near the place where John was first baptizing and stayed there awhile. ⁴¹And many followed him. “John didn’t perform miraculous signs,” they remarked to one another, “but everything he said about this man has come true.” ⁴²And many who were there believed in Jesus.

Foreshadowing Jesus’ Death and Resurrection (11:1–12:50)

Lazarus: A Model of Jesus’ Resurrection

11 A man named Lazarus was sick. He lived in Bethany with his sisters, Mary and Martha. ²This is the Mary who later poured the expensive perfume on the Lord’s feet and wiped them with her hair. Her brother, Lazarus, was sick. ³So the two sisters sent a message to Jesus telling him, “Lord, your dear friend is very sick.”

⁴But when Jesus heard about it he said, “Lazarus’s sickness will not end in death. No, it happened for the glory of God so that the Son of God will receive glory from this.” ⁵So although Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, ⁶he stayed where he was for the next two days. ⁷Finally, he said to his disciples, “Let’s go back to Judea.”

⁸But his disciples objected. “^kRabbi,” they said, “only a few days ago the people in Judea were trying to stone you. Are you going there again?”

⁹Jesus replied, “There are twelve hours of daylight every day. During the day people can walk safely. They can see because they have the light of this world. ¹⁰But at night there is danger of stumbling because they have no light.” ¹¹Then he said, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but now I will go and wake him up.”

kill him. The problem was not Jesus’ good works, but his claim to divinity (see 6:42, 60; 7:29-30). Committing blasphemy was punishable by stoning (Lev 24:23; see John 8:59).

10:34-36 your own Scriptures: Literally *your own law*. See Ps 82:6. • *I say, you are gods!* If the word *god* could be applied to people other than the Lord, then Jesus was not breaking the law by referring to himself in this way. Yet Jesus is not just any son of God; he is the *Son of God* who was sent . . . into the world.

10:38 Jesus’ miraculous works should help true believers *know and understand* that the full reality of God dwells in Jesus.

10:40 His revelation to the Jewish leaders now complete, Jesus retired to the region *beyond the Jordan River* where John the Baptist had once worked and where Jesus was baptized.

10:41 everything he said about this man has come true: See 1:19-51; 3:22-36. The fulfillment of John the Baptist’s predictions confirms both that he was a prophet and that what he said about Jesus was true.

10:42 This is a note of irony. While

Jesus found little faith among the religious leaders in the holy city of Jerusalem, in the desert he found *many who . . . believed*.

11:1-57 The raising of Lazarus foreshadows Jesus’ own coming death and resurrection. Even the description of Lazarus’ grave (11:38, 44) prefigures Jesus’ grave (20:1, 7). Shortly after this event, Jesus was anointed for burial (12:3) and the hour of his glorification began (12:23).

11:1 In Hebrew, *Lazarus* is a shortened form of *Eleazar* (“God helps”). Among Jews in the first century, it was the fourth-most-common name for a man (see also Luke 16:19-31). • *Bethany* was a small village east of Jerusalem just over the Mount of Olives (11:18), where Jesus often stayed when he was in Jerusalem. Jesus would have traveled through Bethany on the way to Jerusalem because most Jews used a route going east from Jerusalem, down to Jericho, and north to Galilee. • *Mary and Martha* were sisters (Luke 10:38-42). Martha was probably older; she was the host in Luke’s story and here represented the family. Mary later anointed Jesus with perfume (12:1-8).

11:2 Mary who later poured the expensive perfume on the Lord’s feet and wiped them with her hair: This incident is recorded in ch 12.

11:3 The two sisters had a dilemma. They knew Jesus’ power as a healer, but they also realized that his return to Judea would entail personal risk (11:8).

11:4 Jesus’ response paralleled his words about the man born blind (9:1-5). Jesus already knew that Lazarus was dead (11:14); he was talking about Lazarus’ resurrection (11:43), which would bring *glory to God*.

11:6 The trip from where Jesus was staying (see 10:40) to Jerusalem would have taken only one day, but Jesus followed his own sense of timing (2:4; 7:5-9) and would not be compelled by others.

11:8 The disciples were rightly worried about the risk (7:25; 8:37, 44, 59; 10:31, 39). • *people:* Literally *Jewish people*; also in 11:19, 31, 33, 36, 45, 54.

¹²The disciples said, “Lord, if he is sleeping, he will soon get better!” ¹³They thought Jesus meant Lazarus was simply sleeping, but Jesus meant Lazarus had died.

¹⁴So he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵And for your sakes, I’m glad I wasn’t there, for now you will really believe. Come, let’s go see him.”

¹⁶Thomas, nicknamed the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let’s go, too—and die with Jesus.”

¹⁷When Jesus arrived at Bethany, he was told that Lazarus had already been in his grave for four days. ¹⁸Bethany was only a few miles down the road from Jerusalem, ¹⁹and many of the people had come to console Martha and Mary in their loss. ²⁰When Martha got word that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him. But Mary stayed in the house. ²¹Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²²But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask.”

²³Jesus told her, “Your brother will rise again.”

²⁴“Yes,” Martha said, “he will rise when everyone else rises, at the last day.”

²⁵Jesus told her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. ²⁶Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this, Martha?”

²⁷“Yes, Lord,” she told him. “I have always

believed you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who has come into the world from God.” ²⁸Then she returned to Mary. She called Mary aside from the mourners and told her, “The Teacher is here and wants to see you.” ²⁹So Mary immediately went to him.

³⁰Jesus had stayed outside the village, at the place where Martha met him. ³¹When the people who were at the house consoling Mary saw her leave so hastily, they assumed she was going to Lazarus’s grave to weep. So they followed her there. ³²When Mary arrived and saw Jesus, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

³³When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, a deep anger welled up within him, and he was deeply troubled. ³⁴“Where have you put him?” he asked them.

They told him, “Lord, come and see.” ³⁵Then Jesus wept. ³⁶The people who were standing nearby said, “See how much he loved him!” ³⁷But some said, “This man healed a blind man. Couldn’t he have kept Lazarus from dying?”

³⁸Jesus was still angry as he arrived at the tomb, a cave with a stone rolled across its entrance. ³⁹“Roll the stone aside,” Jesus told them.

But Martha, the dead man’s sister, protested, “Lord, he has been dead for four days. The smell will be terrible.”

11:16
Matt 10:3
John 14:5; 20:24-28;
21:2
Acts 1:13

11:17
John 11:39

11:20
Luke 10:38-42

11:22
John 16:30

11:23-24
Dan 12:2
John 5:28-29
Acts 24:15
Phil 3:21
1 Thes 4:14

11:24
*anastasis (0386)
* Acts 1:22

11:25
John 1:4; 3:36; 5:21;
6:39-40; 14:6
Col 1:18; 3:4
1 Jn 1:1-2; 5:10-11
Rev 1:17-18

11:26
John 8:51

11:27
Matt 16:16
John 6:14

11:35
Luke 19:41

11:37
John 9:6-7

11:39
John 11:17

11:16 *Thomas, nicknamed the Twin* (literally *Thomas, who was called Didymus*): See also 14:5; 20:24; 21:2; Mark 3:18. • *Let’s go, too—and die*: Thomas knew that previous visits to Judea had been dangerous (5:18; 10:31, 39). Traveling to Jerusalem now would probably mean death for Jesus (cp. 11:49-50).

11:17 People were buried on the same day as their death. John noted that Lazarus had *been in his grave for four days*, so the miracle could not be construed as resuscitation.

11:18 *was only a few miles*: Greek *was about 15 stadia* [about 2.8 kilometers].

11:19 Life in NT times was lived publicly. Lazarus’s large extended family, as well as the villagers, had arrived for a seven-day mourning period. To *console* the sisters *in their loss*, there was great wailing and crying (see 11:33 and note).

11:21 *Lord, if only you had been here*: Mary later repeated Martha’s words (11:32), because both sisters knew Jesus’ reputation as a healer. They concluded that Jesus would have healed Lazarus, but they did not imagine that Jesus would restore him from death.

11:22 *whatever you ask*: Martha thought that Jesus could still intervene in some way. Despite this, she objected when Jesus wanted to open the tomb (11:39); she wasn’t thinking that Jesus would raise her brother from the dead.

11:24 *when everyone else rises, at the last day*: Martha misunderstood (cp. 11:11-13), thinking that Jesus was referring to the general resurrection of the dead at the end of time.

11:25 Jesus helped Martha to believe in him not simply as a healer, but as one who vanquishes death. • *I am the resurrection and the life* (some manuscripts do not include *and the life*): Victory over death is an aspect of living in association with Jesus. Although his followers are still mortal, they will enjoy eternal life after death. Regarding Jesus’ *I am* statements, see the note on 6:35.

11:26-27 *Do you believe this?* Jesus was not asking if Martha believed he could bring Lazarus from the grave. Rather, did she believe that life itself is linked to Jesus? • “*Yes, Lord*”: Even though the full implications were beyond her comprehension, she acknowledged that Jesus was indeed *the Messiah*. Yet she

was surprised at the power he held.

11:28-32 Mary now joined the scene on the edge of the village, repeating her sister’s plaintive cry. She fell at Jesus’ feet, not in worship but in desperate grief.

11:33 The loud *weeping* and *wailing* typified public displays of grief in this culture (Mark 5:38), as did beating one’s chest (Luke 18:13). • *a deep anger welled up within him* (or *he was angry in his spirit*), *and he was deeply troubled*: The Greek word expresses human outrage, fury, and anger. Jesus was furious, not at Martha or Mary, but at the futility of this scene and the people’s unbelief in light of the reality of the resurrection.

11:39 Lazarus was buried in a tomb cut from the rocky hillside; such tombs were common. The tomb was closed and opened for further burials with a rolling *stone* that covered the entrance. A central door led to a cave room where burial benches were carved in stone along the inner wall. Horizontal burial chambers were cut along the top edge of the benches. See the illustration on p. 1813.

11:41
Matt 11:25

11:42
John 12:30

11:43
Luke 7:14

11:47
Matt 26:3-5

11:49
Matt 26:3

11:50
John 18:13-14

11:51
Exod 28:30
Num 27:21

11:52
Isa 49:6
Luke 2:32
John 10:16
1 Jn 2:2

11:53
Matt 26:4

11:55
Exod 12:13
2 Chr 30:17-19
Matt 26:1-2
Mark 14:1

⁴⁰Jesus responded, “Didn’t I tell you that you would see God’s glory if you believe?”

⁴¹So they rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, “Father, thank you for hearing me. ⁴²You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so that they will believe you sent me.” ⁴³Then Jesus shouted, “Lazarus, come out!” ⁴⁴And the dead man came out, his hands and feet bound in graveclothes, his face wrapped in a headcloth. Jesus told them, “Unwrap him and let him go!”

The Plot to Kill Jesus

⁴⁵Many of the people who were with Mary believed in Jesus when they saw this happen. ⁴⁶But some went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. ⁴⁷Then the leading priests and Pharisees called the high council together. “What are we going to do?” they asked each other. “This man certainly performs many miraculous signs. ⁴⁸If we allow him to go on like this, soon everyone will believe in him. Then the Roman army will come and destroy both our Temple and our nation.”

⁴⁹Caiaphas, who was high priest at that time, said, “You don’t know what you’re talking about! ⁵⁰You don’t realize that it’s better for you that one man should die for the people than for the whole nation to be destroyed.”

⁵¹He did not say this on his own; as high priest at that time he was led to prophesy that Jesus would die for the entire nation. ⁵²And not only for that nation, but to bring together and unite all the children of God scattered around the world.

⁵³So from that time on, the Jewish leaders began to plot Jesus’ death. ⁵⁴As a result, Jesus stopped his public ministry among the people and left Jerusalem. He went to a place near the wilderness, to the village of Ephraim, and stayed there with his disciples.

⁵⁵It was now almost time for the Jewish Passover celebration, and many people from all over the country arrived in Jerusalem several days early so they could go through the purification ceremony before Passover began. ⁵⁶They kept looking for Jesus, but as they stood around in the



◀ **Jesus’ Ministry in Judea (11:1–12:19).** Judea was a Roman prefecture under Pontius Pilate (see profile, p. 1691). John records much of Jesus’ ministry in JERUSALEM (2:13–3:21; 5:1-47; 7:10–10:42; 12:12-50) and JUDEA (3:22; 11:1-44; 12:1-11). When the time came for Jesus’ death, Jesus embarked on his final trip from Galilee to Jerusalem (see map, p. 1747). The events of 11:1–20:31 took place during Jesus’ final period in and around Jerusalem.

11:50-51 *it’s better . . . that one man should die:* Caiaphas’s words were ironic. He meant that it was better for a revolutionary to die than to have the Romans crush the entire Jewish nation. But Caiaphas was correct in a way that he could not perceive. The salvation that Judaism needed had little to do with Rome; it would come through the cross of Christ. John notes that Caiaphas’s inspiration was not *his own*, but came from God.

11:52 Christ’s death was not for Israel only, but for all, including people of other cultures *scattered around the world* (10:16; 12:32).

11:53-54 *When the Jewish leaders began to plot Jesus’ death,* Jesus made a judicious political move in response (11:54). • **Ephraim** was a village about twelve miles north of Jerusalem, where Jesus was safe from the Sanhedrin but close enough to walk to the upcoming Passover festival (11:55).

11:55-57 As crowds arrived in Jerusalem on pilgrimage for *Passover* (see 2:13), the city was buzzing with talk about Jesus and his miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead. People wondered if Jesus would be obedient to the law and come to the city to celebrate or play it safe in the countryside. The *priests and Pharisees* knew that Jesus was faithful to the law and would attend the festival, so they tried to make the city a trap for him.

11:45-46 As news of the miracle spread rapidly into the city of Jerusalem (12:9, 17), public opinion was again divided (6:66-69; 7:43; 9:16; 10:19; 11:37). Jesus’ reputation as a healer and as one who could raise the dead was known in Galilee (see Matt 9:24-26; 10:8; 11:5). Now he had brought this power to Judea.

11:47 *the high council:* Greek *the Sanhedrin*.

11:48 The council’s deliberations unveiled their fears that *everyone* would believe in him. If people believed that

the Messiah had come, the political implications would be threatening. The Romans viewed Jewish messiahs with suspicion, and the movement surrounding Jesus might inspire them to invade and destroy Jerusalem and its Temple.

• **our Temple:** Or *our position*; Greek reads *our place*.

11:49 **Caiaphas** was the ruler of the high council from AD 18–36. He worked for ten years alongside Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea (AD 26–36; see 18:29), keeping the peace with Rome. • **at that time:** Literally *that year*; also in 11:51.

Temple, they said to each other, “What do you think? He won’t come for Passover, will he?”⁵⁷ Meanwhile, the leading priests and Pharisees had publicly ordered that anyone seeing Jesus must report it immediately so they could arrest him.

Jesus Anointed at Bethany

John 12:1-11; cp. Matt 26:6-13 // Mark 14:3-9; cp. Luke 7:36-50

12 Six days before the Passover celebration began, Jesus arrived in Bethany, the home of Lazarus—the man he had raised from the dead.² A dinner was prepared in Jesus’ honor. Martha served, and Lazarus was among those who ate with him.³ Then Mary took a twelve-ounce jar of expensive perfume made from essence of nard, and she^banointed Jesus’ feet with it, wiping his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance.

⁴But Judas Iscariot, the disciple who would soon betray him, said,⁵“That perfume was worth a year’s wages. It should have been sold and the money given to the poor.”⁶Not that he cared for the poor—he was a thief, and since he was in charge of the disciples’ money, he often stole some for himself.

⁷Jesus replied, “Leave her alone. She did this in preparation for my burial.⁸You will

always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.”

⁹When all the people heard of Jesus’ arrival, they flocked to see him and also to see Lazarus, the man Jesus had raised from the dead.¹⁰Then the leading priests decided to kill Lazarus, too,¹¹for it was because of him that many of the people had deserted them and^cbelieved in Jesus.

Jesus’ Messianic Entry into Jerusalem

John 12:12-19 // Matt 21:1-11 // Mark 11:1-11 // Luke 19:28-40

¹²The next day, the news that Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem swept through the city. A large crowd of Passover visitors¹³took palm branches and went down the road to meet him. They shouted,

“Praise God!

Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the LORD!

Hail to the King of Israel!”

¹⁴Jesus found a young donkey and rode on it, fulfilling the prophecy that said:

¹⁵“Don’t be afraid, people of Jerusalem. Look, your King is coming, riding on a donkey’s colt.”

¹⁶His disciples didn’t understand at the time that this was a fulfillment of prophecy.

12:1-8
//Matt 26:6-13
//Mark 14:3-9

12:1
John 11:1

12:2
Luke 10:38-42

12:3
Luke 7:37-38
*aleiphō (0218)
*Jas 5:14

12:4
John 6:71

12:6
John 13:29

12:7
John 19:40

12:8
Deut 15:11

12:10
Luke 16:31

12:11
*pisteuō (4100)
*Acts 5:14

12:12-19
//Matt 21:1-11
//Mark 11:1-11
//Luke 19:28-38

12:13
Lev 23:40
*Ps 118:25-26
Zeph 3:15

12:15
Isa 35:4
*Zech 9:9

12:16
John 2:22; 7:39

12:1-50 Two stories build simultaneously. A growing number of people are praising Jesus (this climaxes in 12:12), and the authorities are increasingly determined to arrest him and put him to death. • John records three events that occurred just days prior to Passover (12:1-11, 12-19, 20-36). Then he explains why most of the people refused to believe and details Jesus’ final public appeal (12:37-50).

12:1 Pilgrims from throughout Israel began arriving in Jerusalem the week before the Passover. The festival was on Thursday that year; Jesus arrived late the preceding Friday, just before the Sabbath.

12:2 *who ate*: Or *who reclined*. The typical posture for eating was to recline at a low table.

12:3 *Mary . . . anointed Jesus’ feet*: Doing so was not awkward, because Jews reclined at formal meals, but it was certainly a dramatic gesture (cp. Matt 26:6-16; Mark 14:3-9). • *a twelve-ounce jar*: Greek 1 *litra* [327 grams]. • *Nard*, a precious spice imported from North India, was sweet, red, and smelled like gladiola perfume. Twelve ounces of nard cost a year’s wages (12:5). According to Mark, Mary also anointed Jesus’ head (Mark 14:3), and the perfume

ran down and scented his garments (Mark 14:8). • *her hair*: Women never unveiled their hair in public (see Luke 7:38). Mary was acting with extravagant abandon and devotion.

12:5 *a year’s wages*: Greek 300 *denarii*. A denarius was equivalent to a laborer’s full day’s wage. Judas may have been exaggerating, but Mary’s sacrifice was certainly very costly.

12:7 *Leave her alone*: Jesus’ defense of Mary interpreted her deed. The nard was a *burial* spice for his death. Jesus was readied for burial as he moved toward the hour of glorification and death (see note on 12:23).

12:8 Jesus would never neglect *the poor*, but this opportunity to serve him was unparalleled.

12:9 *people*: Literally *Jewish people*; also in 12:11.

12:11 *had deserted them*: Or *had deserted their traditions*; literally *had deserted*.

12:12 *The next day* was Sunday (see 12:1). • *A large crowd* of pilgrims (many from Galilee) camped in this region. As Jesus followed the road to Jerusalem, they cheered him. This triumphal entry appears in all four Gospels (Matt 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-38).

12:13-14 *palm branches*: The date palm was a celebratory symbol of Jewish nationalism. • *meet him*: The Greek word commonly describes crowds greeting a returning, triumphant king. • *Praise God*: Greek *Hosanna*, an exclamation of praise adapted from a Hebrew expression that means “save now.” • *Blessings on the one*: The crowd quoted Ps 118:25-26, with a greeting for those who came to Jerusalem. The phrase *Hail to the King of Israel* is not in the psalm (but see Zeph 3:15). Although the people saw Jesus as a national political liberator, he rejected this role (6:15).

12:14 By choosing *a young donkey* rather than a warhorse, Jesus calmed the frenzied crowd that was passionate for his kingship. He also fulfilled OT predictions regarding the Messiah (see Zech 9:9) and showed that his kingship was not that of a warrior. His gift is life, not conquest.

12:15 This verse is a quotation of Zech 9:9 • *people of Jerusalem*: Literally *daughter of Zion*.

12:16 The crowds and even the *disciples didn’t understand Jesus’* true significance. When the disciples received the Holy Spirit following Jesus’ glorification, they fully comprehended who Jesus was (see 2:22).

12:17
John 11:43-44
12:18
John 12:11; 19:37
12:21
John 1:43-44
12:23
John 13:32; 17:1
12:24
1 Cor 15:36
12:25
Matt 10:39
Luke 9:24; 17:33
12:26
John 14:3; 17:24
12:27
Ps 6:3
Matt 26:38
Mark 14:34
12:28
Matt 3:17; 17:5
Mark 1:11; 9:7
Luke 3:22; 9:35
2 Pet 1:17-18
12:31
John 14:30; 16:11
Eph 2:2
12:32
John 3:14; 6:44
12:34
Ps 89:4, 36; 110:4
Isa 9:7
Ezek 37:25
Dan 7:14

But after Jesus entered into his glory, they remembered what had happened and realized that these things had been written about him.

¹⁷Many in the crowd had seen Jesus call Lazarus from the tomb, raising him from the dead, and they were telling others about it. ¹⁸That was the reason so many went out to meet him—because they had heard about this miraculous sign. ¹⁹Then the Pharisees said to each other, “There’s nothing we can do. Look, everyone has gone after him!”

Jesus Predicts His Death

²⁰Some Greeks who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration ²¹paid a visit to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee. They said, “Sir, we want to meet Jesus.” ²²Philip told Andrew about it, and they went together to ask Jesus.

²³Jesus replied, “Now the time has come for the Son of Man to enter into his glory. ²⁴I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat is planted in the soil and dies, it remains alone. But its death will produce many new kernels—a plentiful harvest of new lives. ²⁵Those who love their life in this world will

lose it. Those who care nothing for their life in this world will keep it for eternity. ²⁶Anyone who wants to be my disciple must follow me, because my servants must be where I am. And the Father will honor anyone who serves me.

²⁷“Now my soul is deeply troubled. Should I pray, ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But this is the very reason I came! ²⁸Father, bring glory to your name.”

Then a voice spoke from heaven, saying, “I have already brought glory to my name, and I will do so again.” ²⁹When the crowd heard the voice, some thought it was thunder, while others declared an angel had spoken to him.

³⁰Then Jesus told them, “The voice was for your benefit, not mine. ³¹The time for judging this world has come, when Satan, the ruler of this world, will be cast out. ³²And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself.” ³³He said this to indicate how he was going to die.

³⁴The crowd responded, “We understood from Scripture that the Messiah would live forever. How can you say the Son of Man

12:17-19 This scene describes the apex of Jesus’ popularity.

12:17 *were telling others*: Literally *were testifying*.

12:19 *everyone*: Literally *the world*. The Pharisees’ words were more significant than they realized. Jesus came to reach the world (3:17), and the Pharisees said that Jesus had accomplished his task.

12:20 Among the people drawn to Jesus (12:19) were *some Greeks*, God-fearing Gentiles who had come to Passover to worship. Jesus’ mission was not simply to Israel but encompassed the entire world (10:16; 11:52). Following Jesus’ resurrection, the church’s mission was to go beyond Judea to Samaria, and ultimately to the ends of the earth (Matt 28:19; Acts 1:8).

12:21 The Greeks approached *Philip* because he had a Greek name and was no doubt Greek.

12:23 Jesus often said that *the time* (literally *the hour*) had not yet *come* (2:4; 7:30; 8:20), but now it had. The coming of the Greeks also marked the beginning of the key moment in Jesus’ ministry—the time of his glorification. This occurred when Jesus’ sacrificial work on the cross was completed (19:30), he rose from the dead (ch 20), he gave the Spirit (20:22), and he returned to his place of glory in heaven (17:5, 11). The connection with the Greeks who had come to Jerusalem (12:20) was significant: Jesus’ ministry among the

Jews alone was finished and he now belonged to the wider world. • *Son of Man* is a title Jesus used for himself.

12:24 The central event of Jesus’ glorification (12:23) was the cross. As with a *kernel . . . planted in the soil*, Jesus’ *death* would bring abundant life.

12:25 For disciples, sacrifice and self-effacement are means of gaining the fullness of life provided by Jesus’ sacrifice. Those who renounce the *world* will join Jesus in *eternity* and be honored by God just as Jesus is.

12:27 *my soul is deeply troubled*: John used the same term (Greek *tarassō*) to describe Jesus’ strong emotion of agony before Lazarus’ tomb (11:33; also 13:21). When Jesus stood before death, he could not be impassive. Jesus experienced genuine anguish, yet he remained strong in obedience to the Father’s will (5:19-23; 6:37; 8:29, 38; 14:31).

12:28 *a voice spoke from heaven*: Cp. Matt 3:17; 17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:7; Luke 3:22; 9:35. • *God had already brought glory* to himself when Christ entered the world (1:14) and through Jesus’ work, which showed God’s power to the world. • *I will do so again*: The final display of glory would come at the cross (see 12:23; 17:1). In John, the cross is an event of *glory* as Christ was “lifted up” (12:32) and glorified there. Jesus was prepared for crucifixion like a king coming to his coronation; the cross was like a throne (see 19:19-22), and he was

buried like royalty. Jesus’ time of glorification included the entire sequence from arrest through resurrection.

12:29 It was impossible for people to comprehend what was happening with Jesus, and many of his signs led to confusion and division in *the crowd*. Only later did his disciples understand (2:22; 12:16), when Jesus was glorified and the Spirit was given. Still, God’s voice symbolized his validation of his Son before the world.

12:31-33 *The time for judging* does not occur only on Judgment Day; it began when the light penetrated the darkness and unmasked it (3:19; 5:24; 9:39). • *Satan, the ruler of this world*, is the architect of darkness, corrupter of the world, and promoter of death. Although Satan’s final demise lies in the future, the work of Christ unraveled Satan’s domain (see Luke 10:17-18; Mark 3:27). Christ is now enthroned as ruler in heaven (Acts 7:55-56; Eph 1:19-22).

12:32-34 *when I am lifted up from the earth* (see 3:14; 8:28): The crowd did not understand what Jesus meant. The Greek verb refers to being exalted (Matt 23:12) or honored (Luke 10:15). In John, the cross was not a place of shame and disgrace for Jesus, but the place where Jesus’ true glory was shown.

12:34 *from Scripture*: Literally *from the law*. • Popular Judaism believed that *the Messiah would live forever* and triumph over his foes. Jesus’ point of view seemed incomprehensible.

will die? Just who is this Son of Man, anyway?"

³⁵Jesus replied, "My light will shine for you just a little longer. Walk in the light while you can, so the darkness will not overtake you. Those who walk in the darkness cannot see where they are going. ³⁶Put your trust in the light while there is still time; then you will become children of the light."

After saying these things, Jesus went away and was hidden from them.

The Unbelief of the People

³⁷But despite all the miraculous signs Jesus had done, most of the people still did not believe in him. ³⁸This is exactly what Isaiah the prophet had predicted:

"LORD, who has believed our message? To whom has the LORD revealed his powerful arm?"

³⁹But the people couldn't believe, for as Isaiah also said,

⁴⁰"The Lord has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts— so that their eyes cannot see, and their hearts cannot understand, and they cannot turn to me and have me heal them."

⁴¹Isaiah was referring to Jesus when he said this, because he saw the future and spoke of the Messiah's glory. ⁴²Many people did believe in him, however, including some of the Jewish leaders. But they wouldn't admit

it for fear that the Pharisees would expel them from the synagogue. ⁴³For they loved human praise more than the praise of God.

⁴⁴Jesus shouted to the crowds, "If you trust me, you are trusting not only me, but also God who sent me. ⁴⁵For when you see me, you are seeing the one who sent me. ⁴⁶I have come as a light to shine in this dark world, so that all who put their trust in me will no longer remain in the dark. ⁴⁷I will not judge those who hear me but don't obey me, for I have come to save the world and not to judge it. ⁴⁸But all who reject me and my message will be judged on the day of judgment by the truth I have spoken. ⁴⁹I don't speak on my own authority. The Father who sent me has commanded me what to say and how to say it. ⁵⁰And I know his commands lead to eternal life; so I say whatever the Father tells me to say."

3. THE BOOK OF GLORY: THE WORD IS GLORIFIED (13:1–20:31)

*The Passover Meal (13:1-30)
Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet*

13 Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them to the very end. ²It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. ³Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from

12:35
John 8:12; 9:4; 12:46
12:36
John 8:59
Eph 5:8
1 Thes 5:5
12:38
⁹Isa 53:1
Rom 10:16
12:40
⁹Isa 6:10
Matt 13:14
12:41
Isa 6:1
12:42
John 7:13, 48; 9:22-23; 12:11
12:43
John 5:44
12:45
John 14:9
12:46
John 1:4; 3:19; 8:12; 9:5
12:47
John 3:17; 8:15
13:1
John 16:28; 17:1
13:2
Luke 22:3
John 6:70-71

• *who is this Son of Man, anyway?* The Jews did not understand what sort of Messiah planned to die.

12:36 Jesus was *the light* (1:4, 7-9; 3:19-21; 8:12), and he urged the crowd to quickly make the choice to believe in him before it was too late. • They had the choice of becoming *children of the light* by rebirth through the power of God (1:12-13). • *Jesus . . . was hidden from them:* Jesus withdrew first from Judea (11:54) and then from this audience (12:36), and soon he would withdraw from the world (17:11).

12:37-38 Jesus' work was finished, yet *most of the people . . . did not believe in him.* His sermons before the world were complete and the signs had been displayed, but he was rejected (1:11). • The quotation is from Isa 53:1.

12:39-40 *The people couldn't believe:* John quotes Isa 6:10 to explain Israel's unbelief (see Matt 13:13-15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; Acts 28:26-27). When revelation comes, we must believe. If we refuse, the light disappears (12:35-

36). When God's light departs from the world, the darkness closes over unbelieving hearts.

12:41 *Isaiah* had glimpsed *the Messiah's glory* and how the world would respond (see Isa 6:10).

12:42-43 *Many people did believe in him,* but they *wouldn't admit it.* However, to follow Jesus involves telling others about him despite the social consequences (1:35-51; 4:1-42).

12:44-50 Jesus makes a final appeal for belief. These verses summarize chs 1–12. Jesus was sent by the Father, the sole source of his ministry. Jesus is the light shining in darkness to bring salvation and eternal life to all who believe in him.

12:49-50 The greatest error is for people to see the light and reject it, thinking it has no connection with the *Father who sent the light.*

13:1–20:31 This section focuses on the sign of the cross, the great climax of Jesus' life, as well as the time Jesus spent preparing his disciples for it

(chs 13–17). Jesus is glorified through each event of these momentous days. Jesus' arrest, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection all evoke responses of awe. On the cross, Jesus is elevated in glory before the world (12:32).

13:1-38 The setting is Jesus' final Passover meal on Thursday evening, when Judas Iscariot betrays Jesus. John does not record the meal itself as the synoptic Gospels do (Matt 26:17-29; Mark 14:12-25; Luke 22:7-20; see also 1 Cor 11:23-26). John emphasizes other activities at the event, such as the foot washing (13:1-17), Judas's betrayal (13:18-30), and the prediction of Peter's denials (13:31-38).

13:1 *he loved them to the very end: Or he showed them the full extent of his love.*

13:2 *Judas . . . Iscariot,* who had refused to believe, was engulfed by darkness and had become Satan's pawn (see note on 12:39-40). • *the devil had already prompted Judas: Or the devil had already intended for Judas.*

13:4
Luke 12:37; 22:27

13:5
Luke 7:44
John 12:3

13:8
Ezek 36:25
1 Cor 6:11
Eph 5:26
Titus 3:5

13:10
John 15:3

13:11
John 6:64, 70-71; 13:2

13:13
1 Cor 12:3

13:14
Luke 22:27
1 Tim 5:10
1 Pet 5:5

13:15
Phil 2:5-7
1 Pet 5:3-5
1 Jn 2:6; 3:16

13:16
“doulos” (1401)
• John 15:15

13:17
Jas 1:25

13:18
“Ps” 41:9

13:20
Matt 10:40
Luke 10:16

13:21-30
//Matt 26:21-25
//Mark 14:18-21
//Luke 22:21-23

13:23
John 19:26

13:25
John 21:20

God and would return to God. ⁴So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, ⁵and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.

⁶When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”

⁷Jesus replied, “You don't understand now what I am doing, but someday you will.”

⁸“No,” Peter protested, “you will never ever wash my feet!”

Jesus replied, “Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me.”

⁹Simon Peter exclaimed, “Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!”

¹⁰Jesus replied, “A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash, except for the feet, to be entirely clean. And you disciples are clean, but not all of you.” ¹¹For Jesus knew who would betray him. That is what he meant when he said, “Not all of you are clean.”

¹²After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, “Do you understand what I was doing? ¹³You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and you are right, because that's what I am. ¹⁴And since

I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. ¹⁵I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. ¹⁶I tell you the truth, ^dslaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends the message. ¹⁷Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them.

¹⁸“I am not saying these things to all of you; I know the ones I have chosen. But this fulfills the Scripture that says, ‘The one who eats my food has turned against me.’ ¹⁹I tell you this beforehand, so that when it happens you will believe that I Am the Messiah. ²⁰I tell you the truth, anyone who welcomes my messenger is welcoming me, and anyone who welcomes me is welcoming the Father who sent me.”

Jesus Predicts Judas's Betrayal

John 13:21-30 // Matt 26:20-25 // Mark 14:17-21 // Luke 22:21-23

²¹Now Jesus was deeply troubled, and he exclaimed, “I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me!”

²²The disciples looked at each other, wondering whom he could mean. ²³The disciple Jesus loved was sitting next to Jesus at the table. ²⁴Simon Peter motioned to him to ask, “Who's he talking about?” ²⁵So that disciple

13:4-5 Foot washing, common in the Hellenistic and Jewish cultures as a daily routine and as a gesture of hospitality (see Luke 7:36-50), was a lowly, menial task reserved for servants. When Jesus *began to wash the disciples' feet*, he took the posture of a slave.

13:8 Based on the depth of his devotion to Jesus, it is understandable that *Peter protested*. But Jesus was not simply giving Peter a model of service; this was a symbolic pre-enactment of his greater act of sacrifice on the cross (13:7). Receiving Jesus' spiritual cleansing is a condition for discipleship, so if Peter could not accept this act, he could not be Jesus' disciple at all.

13:9 *wash my hands and head as well*: Peter misunderstood Jesus (cp. 2:19-20; 3:3-4). Peter thought that to have more water was to have more of Jesus. Only when Peter received the Spirit did everything become clear (e.g., see Acts 2:14-36).

13:10 Jesus referred to an ultimate cleansing through his sacrifice which makes *a person* clean *all over*. • Some manuscripts do not include *except for the feet*.

13:14-15 Jesus' acts of service, such as washing feet and dying on the cross, provided *an example* of personal sacri-

ifice to follow. • *wash each other's feet*: Foot washing was so commonplace that Jesus might have intended a literal repetition of his act, or he might have seen it as symbolic. Either way, Jesus wants similar servanthood and sacrifice to characterize his followers.

13:16 *slaves are not greater than their master*: This proverb was popular and appears in many places (see also 15:20; Matt 10:24; Luke 6:40). Here, Jesus meant that the sacrifice modeled by the master should be seen in the life of the servant.

13:18 *I am not saying these things to all of you*: The subject of Judas's betrayal enters the story for the third time (13:2, 11). The matter weighed heavily on Jesus (13:21). • *I know the ones I have chosen*: The statement does not imply that Jesus chose only the eleven and that Judas was an outcast. Jesus chose Judas and gave him every opportunity to believe. He realized that Judas had embraced the darkness rather than the light (6:70). • *The one who eats my food has turned against me* (literally *has lifted his heel against me*): See Ps 41:9. Eating together was a cultural symbol of personal intimacy, which made Judas's betrayal all the more treacherous.

13:19 Judas's betrayal did not take Jesus unaware, and it should not shock his

disciples *when it happens*. • *that I Am the Messiah*: Or *that the 'I Am' has come*; or *that I am the LORD*; literally *that I am*. By using the phrase “I am,” Jesus clearly equated himself with the God of the OT. See Exod 3:14.

13:21 For the third time, *Jesus was deeply troubled* (literally *was troubled in his spirit*; Greek *tarassō*; see 11:33; 12:27). The personal betrayal of Judas brought Jesus profound grief.

13:23 *The disciple Jesus loved* appears at the cross (19:26-27), at the tomb (20:2-9), and at the resurrection (21:1, 20-23). He is the author of this Gospel (21:24-25). Some scholars believe that Lazarus was in fact the disciple whom Jesus loved (see 11:3, 5, 36), but the person referred to here was among the twelve apostles, usually identified as the apostle John. • *was sitting next to Jesus at the table*: Literally *was reclining on Jesus' bosom*. They were probably reclining at a *triclinium*, a U-shaped table with couches. Guests reclined on the couches, while the center provided access to servers. The diners supported their bodies by their left elbows while using their right hands for eating. Feet were extended away from the table (cp. Luke 7:38).

13:25 Peter told “the disciple Jesus loved” (13:23), who was sitting next to

leaned over to Jesus and asked, “Lord, who is it?”

²⁶Jesus responded, “It is the one to whom I give the bread I dip in the bowl.” And when he had dipped it, he gave it to Judas, son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷When Judas had eaten the bread, “Satan entered into him. Then Jesus told him, “Hurry and do what you’re going to do.” ²⁸None of the others at the table knew what Jesus meant. ²⁹Since Judas was their treasurer, some thought Jesus was telling him to go and pay for the food or to give some money to the poor. ³⁰So Judas left at once, going out into the night.

Jesus’ Final Farewell (13:31–17:26)
Jesus Predicts Peter’s Denial

John 13:36–38; cp. Matt 26:31–35 // Mark 14:27–31;
cp. Luke 22:31–34

³¹As soon as Judas left the room, Jesus said, “The time has come for the Son of Man to enter into his glory, and God will be glorified because of him. ³²And since God receives glory because of the Son, he will soon give glory to the Son. ³³Dear children, I will be

with you only a little longer. And as I told the Jewish leaders, you will search for me, but you can’t come where I am going. ³⁴So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. ³⁵Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”

³⁶Simon Peter asked, “Lord, where are you going?”

And Jesus replied, “You can’t go with me now, but you will follow me later.”

³⁷“But why can’t I come now, Lord?” he asked. “I’m ready to die for you.”

³⁸Jesus answered, “Die for me? I tell you the truth, Peter—before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me.

Jesus, the Way to the Father

14 “Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me.

²There is more than enough room in my Father’s home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a

13:27
Luke 22:3
John 13:2
satanas (4567)
• Acts 5:3

13:29
John 12:6

13:30
Luke 22:53

13:31–32
John 12:23; 17:1, 5

13:33
John 7:33–34; 8:21

13:34
Lev 19:18
Eph 5:2
1 Thes 4:9
1 Pet 1:22
1 Jn 2:8; 3:23; 4:10–11

13:35
1 Jn 3:14; 4:20

13:36–38
//Matt 26:33–35
//Mark 14:29–31
//Luke 22:33–34

13:36
John 21:18
2 Pet 1:14

14:1
kardia (2588)
• Acts 15:9

14:2
Ps 90:1
John 2:16, 19–21; 14:6

Jesus, to ask the betrayer’s identity. As he reclined next to Jesus, he *leaned over to Jesus* and spoke privately.

13:26 Meals were eaten with flat *bread*, which diners would *dip* into a common *bowl*. When Jesus gave a morsel to Judas (cp. Ruth 2:14), the disciples might have thought Jesus was honoring him. They did not understand what was occurring. They even thought that Judas’s departure (13:29) fulfilled an official duty for the feast! But Jesus was signaling to Judas that he understood Judas’s plan and was not taken by surprise. Jesus’ knowledge is profound and complete (see 1:48; 2:25).

13:27 When *Satan entered into* Judas (see Luke 22:3), he became an example of what happens to those who are consumed by the darkness. Satan uses such people as pawns in a wider struggle against the light. • *Hurry and do what you’re going to do*: In issuing this command, Jesus once again showed that he was in control, not human beings or Satan (see note on 7:30).

13:28–29 *None of the others* suspected that something odd was happening. Passover evening was one of the only nights when the city gates were left open. The night was spent in prayer and meditation, *money* was given *to the poor*, and provisions were always needed for this complex meal.

13:30 *out into the night*: Judas’s departure was emblematic: The darkness had swallowed him completely (see note on 13:2; cp. 3:19). Jesus, the light of the world, is the antithesis of the night.

13:31–17:26 The OT and later Jewish literature include numerous examples of farewells in which a dying person offers last words to intimate friends (see Gen 49:1–27; Deut 31–34; Josh 23–24; 1 Sam 12; 1 Chr 28–29). Such farewells used a standard form. The dying person, surrounded by his loved ones, comforted them and exhorted them to obey the law. He prayed and blessed them and often left behind some writings. In some cases, the departing person passed on his “spirit” to his followers or his successor (see Num 27:18; Deut 34:9; 2 Kgs 2:9–14). Each of these elements is present in Jesus’ farewell. • This section is often called the Upper Room Discourse, since the meal was taken in an “upstairs room” (Luke 22:39).

13:31 *The time has come*: Judas’s departure into the night marks a solemn divide in the plot of the Gospel. Jesus was left with his intimate friends as the hour of glory was dawning. This time was launched by Judas’s betrayal, and it culminated in the resurrection. • *Son of Man* is a title Jesus used for himself.

13:32 Some manuscripts do not include *And since God receives glory because of the Son*.

13:33 Jesus addressed the apostles as his *children*, marking the start of his farewell address.

13:34–35 That the disciples were to love one another was not a *new commandment* (see Lev 19:18). However, that they were to love each other with the sort of love modeled by Jesus was dra-

matic. Jesus’ love for God was expressed in perfect obedience (14:31); now this kind of love was his command—that disciples express their love for Jesus in committed obedience.

13:37 Peter claimed to be *ready to die* for Jesus, yet his denials are well known in the synoptic Gospels (Matt 26:32–34; Mark 14:27–30; Luke 22:31–34). Although Peter’s verve and devotion failed, he was restored (21:15–19).

14:1–31 Jesus provided answers to his disciples’ many spoken and unspoken concerns.

14:1 Jesus had himself been *troubled* (Greek *tarassō*) on three occasions (11:33; 12:27; 13:21). His confidence in God’s power made it possible for him to face these crises. Faced with the upsetting words of 13:33, the disciples confronted similar feelings. • *Trust* (or *believe*, or *have faith*) *in God*: Only trusting God would help them through his hour of death.

14:2 *There is more than enough room in my Father’s home* (or *There are many rooms in my Father’s house*): God’s house is the dwelling place where he resides (Rev 21:9–22:5). The word translated “room” is related to the Greek verb meaning “remain, abide, dwell.” Jesus promises that his followers will have a place to “dwell” alongside him, wherever he is. Later, this “dwelling” becomes a place of “indwelling” as Jesus makes his home in his followers’ hearts through the Spirit (14:23). • *If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for*

14:3
John 14:10-11, 18-20;
16:16-22; 17:21-24

14:6
John 1:4, 14, 16; 8:32;
10:10; 11:25
Rom 5:2
Eph 2:18
Heb 10:20
1 Jn 5:20

14:7
John 6:46; 8:19
1 Jn 2:13

14:9
John 1:14, 18; 12:45
2 Cor 4:4
Col 1:15
Heb 1:3

14:10
John 5:19; 10:38;
17:11, 21-24

place for you? ³When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. ⁴And you know the way to where I am going."

⁵"No, we don't know, Lord," Thomas said. "We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

⁶Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. ⁷If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. From now on, you do know him and have seen him!"

⁸Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."

⁹Jesus replied, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don't know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking me to show him to you? ¹⁰Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak are not my own, but my Father who lives in me does his work through me. ¹¹Just believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or at least believe because of the work you have seen me do.

¹²"I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am

JOHN THE APOSTLE, SON OF ZEBEDEE (13:23-25)

John 18:15-16;
19:26-27; 20:2-10;
21:2, 7, 20-24
Matt 4:21-22; 10:2;
17:1; 20:20-24;
26:37-46
Mark 1:19-20, 29;
3:17; 5:37; 9:2, 38;
10:35-41; 13:3-4;
14:33-42
Luke 5:10; 6:14;
8:51; 9:28, 49, 54
Acts 1:13; 3:1-11;
4:1-22; 5:17-42;
8:14-25
Gal 2:9

John, brother of James and son of Zebedee, was one of the twelve apostles. Early tradition identifies him as the author of the Gospel of John, the Letters of John, and the book of Revelation.

John and his brother James were among those closest to Jesus (Mark 5:37; 9:2; 13:3; 14:33). His mother, Salome, might have been a sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus (cp. 19:25; Matt 27:56; Mark 15:40; 16:1). John's name usually occurs after James's, which suggests that John was younger. James and John were fishermen like their father (Matt 4:21; Mark 1:19). They fished with Peter and Andrew, another pair of brothers who became disciples (Luke 5:10). They were among the first whom Jesus called as disciples, and they left everything to follow him (Matt 4:22; Mark 1:20; Luke 5:11; cp. John 1:35-40). Jesus named them "Sons of Thunder" (Mark 3:17), which might imply that they were loud or short-tempered (cp. Luke 9:54). At one point, the two brothers evoked the indignation of the other disciples when they asked for special positions of privilege in the coming kingdom (Matt 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-45; cp. Luke 22:24-27).

Early tradition links John to five NT books: the Gospel of John, three Letters of John, and the book of Revelation. John is understood to be the unnamed "disciple Jesus loved" and "another disciple" (13:23-25; 18:15-16; 19:26-27; 20:2-10; 21:20-24). He was possibly the unnamed disciple of John the Baptist, who, together with Andrew, became an early follower of Jesus (1:35-40).

John's name occurs three times in Acts; each time he was working with Peter (Acts 3:1-11; 4:1-23; 8:14-25). Paul referred to him as one of the "pillars" of the church in Jerusalem (Gal 2:9).

The most widespread tradition about John's later life is that he moved to Ephesus, where he eventually became the bishop of Asia Minor, lived to an old age, and died peacefully in the company of friends. His Gospel provides the most profound portrait that we have of Jesus, and his letters provide one of the finest depictions of the Christian life (1 John).

you? Or *If this were not so, I would have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you.* Some manuscripts read *If this were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you.*

14:3 Some scholars believe that Jesus meant he would *come and get* his followers after the resurrection (14:18). Others think these words refer to Jesus' second coming. For the disciples, the more important coming was Jesus' return from the grave (ch 16).

14:6 I am: See note on 6:35. Access to the Father's presence is only through Jesus, who is *the way, the truth, and the life*. • *The way to the Father* is only

through Jesus. Other religions and philosophies propose different avenues to God, but Jesus asserted that he is the one exclusive path to God. • Jesus is the *truth* because God is truth. • God is the source of eternal *life*. At Lazarus's tomb, Jesus showed his divine power over life and death (11:25).

14:7 *If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is:* Some manuscripts read *If you have really known me, you will know who my Father is.*

14:8 *Philip* did not yet understand that in Jesus he was seeing the full embodiment of God (14:9).

14:9 *Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father!* Cp. 1:1-2. Jesus Christ is God-in-the-flesh (1:14), which explains his capacity to accomplish divine works. Jesus did not simply teach about God; in him God can be found. Jesus' remarkable statement echoed what he had said at Hanukkah: "The Father and I are one" (10:30). This claim is at the root of the world's opposition to Christ (5:18).

14:10 Jesus' claims were astonishing (10:30, 37-38). Yet true faith recognizes Jesus' union with God *the Father*.

14:12 Jesus promised that *anyone who believes* in him would perform great miracles and experience answers to

going to be with the Father. ¹³You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. ¹⁴Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!

Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit

¹⁵"If you love me, obey my commandments. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another ⁸Advocate, who will never leave you. ¹⁷He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you. ¹⁸No, I will not abandon you as orphans—I will come to you. ¹⁹Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Since I live, you also will live. ²⁰When I am raised

to life again, you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. ²¹Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them."

²²Judas (not Judas Iscariot, but the other disciple with that name) said to him, "Lord, why are you going to reveal yourself only to us and not to the world at large?"

²³Jesus replied, "All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home with each of them. ²⁴Anyone who doesn't love me will not obey me. And remember, my words are not my own. What I am telling you is from the Father who sent me. ²⁵I am telling

14:16
John 14:26; 15:26
Acts 1:4-5
⁸paraklētos (3875)
• John 14:26

14:17
Rom 8:15-16
1 Jn 3:24

14:18
Rom 8:23; 9:4
2 Cor 4:9

14:20
John 10:38; 15:4-5;
16:16; 17:21-24

14:21
John 15:10; 16:27
1 Jn 2:5
2 Jn 1:6

14:22
Luke 6:16
Acts 10:41

14:23
Ps 91:1
Prov 8:17
John 15:10
Eph 3:17
1 Jn 4:16; 5:3
Rev 3:20; 21:3

Our Advocate (14:1–16:15)

1 Sam 2:25; 24:15
2 Sam 15:12
1 Kgs 12:6-14
1 Chr 27:32
Job 16:18-22
Isa 1:26; 9:6
Gal 3:19-20; 6:13
1 Tim 2:5
Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24
1 Jn 2:1

On four occasions, Jesus used an unusual word (Greek *paraklētos*, "called alongside," "advocate") to describe the Holy Spirit (14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). The same term occurs in Greek literature, where it refers to a legal advocate—someone who speaks in a person's defense and provides legal counsel. "Counselor" is a popular translation of this term, but the therapeutic connotations of this word in contemporary English are misleading; the older legal meaning of a lawyer providing advice or counsel is closer to the mark. "Comforter" is another popular translation, but this is also misleading; the older English meaning of someone who strengthens (an "encourager") is more accurate to the NT concept of *paraklētos*.

Jesus described the Spirit as *another Advocate* (14:16). Jesus, who is the first advocate (see 1 Jn 2:1), sent a second Advocate, the Holy Spirit. Every task of the Spirit in John 14–16 is a task Jesus undertook elsewhere in the Gospel. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come to encourage, instruct, and strengthen his followers. In fact, the Spirit would sustain Jesus' own presence among his disciples. Five promises of the Spirit each indicate a different work that the Spirit does (14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7, 13).

The Spirit became available to Jesus' disciples after his death (see 7:39; 20:22). The Spirit now continues the work of Jesus and his presence in the life of believers (14:16-24).

their prayers (see 1 Jn 5:14). These things would become possible when Jesus went to *the Father*, because he would send the Holy Spirit to empower the works (14:16). • The *greater works* will not outdo Jesus' work, but regular people empowered by the Spirit will be doing them. In the era of the Spirit, God promised to bring his Kingdom and power into the world in a way not seen before.

14:15 *If you love me*: Because Jesus loves the Father, he is obedient to what God directs him to say and do (12:49). If we love him, we will obey him, too (14:21, 23; 15:10, 14; see 1 Jn 2:3-4; 5:2). • *obey*: Other manuscripts read *you will obey*; still others read *you should obey*.

14:16 *another Advocate* (or *Comforter*, or *Encourager*, or *Counselor*; Greek reads *Paraclete*; also in 14:26): See "Our Advocate" at 14:1–16:15, above. The

Spirit continues Jesus' work by advising, defending, and protecting believers.

14:17 *The Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth* (literally *the Spirit of truth*; see also 15:26; 16:13), communicates the truth about God. The Spirit maintains Jesus' presence in the world, duplicating and sustaining Jesus' work. • *and later will be in you*: Some manuscripts read *and is in you*.

14:18 Jesus had already assured his followers that they would not be spiritual *orphans* and that he would return to them (14:1-4). While he is away, they will be filled with the Spirit, who will sustain them with his presence (14:12-17).

14:20 Jesus' resurrection (14:19) inaugurated his spiritual union with his disciples, which is parallel to the union he enjoys with the *Father* (see 15:4-5; 1 Jn 1:3).

14:22 Several men are named *Judas* in the NT. Judas, the brother of Jesus, (Mark 6:3) wrote the epistle of Jude. Judas, the son of James, whom John is referring to here, is listed as an apostle in Luke 6:16; he is elsewhere identified as Thaddaeus (Matt 10:3; Mark 3:18). • *Lord, why?* Judas posed an important question. If Jesus planned to return mightily from death, why not use the opportunity to *reveal* himself definitively to the world and validate his power and identity?

14:23-24 Jesus answered Judas's question, explaining that his coming would be a profound spiritual revelation beyond the world's grasp. • Jesus' coming would occur in three experiences: his resurrection, the coming of the Spirit, and his second coming. When he comes in the Spirit, he and the Father will reside within believers, making a *home with each of them* (see note on 14:2).

14:24
John 7:16; 14:10

14:26
John 1:33; 15:26;
16:7; 20:22
1 Jn 2:20, 27
^h*parakletos* (3875)
• John 15:26

14:27
John 16:33; 20:19
Phil 4:7
Col 3:15
^h*eirēnē* (1515)
• Acts 10:36

14:29
John 13:19

14:30
John 12:31

14:31
John 10:18; 12:49

15:1
Ps 80:8-11
Isa 5:1-7
^h*ampelos* (0288)
• John 15:5

15:5
^h*ampelos* (0288)
• Jas 3:12

15:6
Matt 3:10

15:8
Gal 5:22-23

you these things now while I am still with you. ²⁶But when the Father sends the ^hAdvocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you.

²⁷“I am leaving you with a gift—ⁱpeace of mind and heart. And the ⁱpeace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid. ²⁸Remember what I told you: I am going away, but I will come back to you again. If you really loved me, you would be happy that I am going to the Father, who is greater than I am. ²⁹I have told you these things before they happen so that when they do happen, you will believe.

³⁰“I don’t have much more time to talk to you, because the ruler of this world approaches. He has no power over me, ³¹but I will do what the Father requires of me, so that the world will know that I love the Father. Come, let’s be going.

Jesus, the True Vine of Israel

15“I am the true ^ggrapevine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn’t produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. ³You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. ⁴Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

⁵“Yes, I am the ^vvine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. ⁷But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! ⁸When you produce

Remaining in Christ (15:1-17)

John 6:56; 8:31
Exod 33:11; 34:28
Lev 8:35
Josh 7:11-12
1 Sam 16:22
2 Kgs 11:8
2 Chr 15:2
Ps 22:11, 19; 101:7
Dan 1:21; 2:49
Hag 2:5
Luke 15:31; 22:28
Phil 4:1
1 Jn 2:19, 27-28;
3:24
2 Jn 1:9
Rev 2:10; 13:10

One of Jesus’ favorite words was *menō*, often translated “remain,” “stay,” or “abide.” It describes a profound, intimate, and enduring relationship. For example, Jesus said, “You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to [*menō en*, ‘stay in’] my teachings” (8:31). The idea is that a disciple’s life is fully formed by Jesus’ word. Jesus described how the Son is in the Father and the Father is in the Son (14:10-11). Likewise, when we remain in Christ, the Son is in us and we are in the Father and the Son (17:21). Both the Father and the Son come and make their home within his disciples. This mutual indwelling is precisely what it means that the disciple remains in Christ. We cannot gain the permanence of our relationship by our own effort; this relationship is only made permanent by the gracious initiative of God indwelling our lives through his Spirit. This means commitment on the part of both God and the disciple. The mutual indwelling between God and the believer is not a fleeting or temporary commitment, but an enduring, permanent, and eternal relationship (see 1 Jn 2:14, 17).

14:26 Jesus promised to send *the Holy Spirit* (see also 14:16; 15:26; 16:7; 16:12-14). • The Spirit will *teach . . . everything*, recalling Jesus’ words and clarifying their meaning. John experienced this power as he wrote his Gospel (2:22); Christians experience this work of the Spirit as they read the Scriptures.

14:27 The Jewish greeting *peace* (Hebrew *shalom*) captured the spirit of Jesus’ work on earth to restore humanity’s relationship with God (Isa 9:6-7; 52:7; 57:19; Rom 5:1). The resurrection (14:28) and the Spirit were instrumental in achieving this work.

14:28 *the Father, who is greater than I am*: Jesus is subordinate to the Father (see also 5:19-20), and yet is also one with the Father (10:30).

14:30 The events unfolding in Jerusalem that led to the cross were not controlled by *the ruler of this world*, meaning Satan. The cross was not an

accident, and Jesus was not a helpless victim. Rather, Jesus was obedient to God’s plan.

15:1-27 Jesus prepared his disciples for his departure, instructing them to remain in close fellowship with him. The image of a grapevine illustrates both intimacy and fruitfulness. To sustain genuine spiritual life in the world, believers must remain intimately connected to Christ.

15:1 *I am*: See note on 6:35. The *grapevine* and the vineyard traditionally represented God’s people, planted and tended by him in Israel (Ps 80:8-18; Isa 5:1-7; Jer 2:21; 12:10-11; Ezek 15:1-5; Hos 10:1-2). When Jesus used this image, he made an important departure: He declared that he is *the true grapevine*, and that a relationship with God requires attachment to him.

15:2-3 Gardeners cut away dead *branches* and trim healthy branches so

they will produce more *fruit*. Fruitfulness is the result of life-giving connection to the vine.

15:4 The term *remain* (Greek *menō*) is key to understanding 15:4-10. A growing disciple, in whom the Father and the Son live through the Spirit, must be continuously connected to Christ (see 14:16-25; 15:26).

15:6 *Anyone who does not remain* in Christ is separated from the vine and its life. A living branch produces clusters of grapes (15:5). Connection with the vine allows the life of Jesus to flow fruitfully through the disciple. Those who claim to be attached to Christ but yield no fruit are *useless* and will *be burned*.

15:7 Those whose lives are in harmony with Jesus *may ask for anything* because their prayers are controlled by his word. Their prayers will be answered and bring glory to God (14:10-13).

much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.

⁹“I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my ^alove. ¹⁰When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. ¹¹I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! ¹²This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. ¹³There is no greater ^blove than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵I no longer call you ^cslaves, because a master doesn’t confide in his ^cslaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. ¹⁶You didn’t choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. ¹⁷This is my command: Love each other.

Jesus’ Disciples and the World

¹⁸“If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first. ¹⁹The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you. ²⁰Do you remember what I told you? ‘A slave is not greater than the master.’ Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you. And if they had listened to me, they would listen to you. ²¹They will do all this to you because of me, for they have rejected the one who sent me. ²²They would

not be guilty if I had not come and spoken to them. But now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³Anyone who hates me also hates my Father. ²⁴If I hadn’t done such miraculous signs among them that no one else could do, they would not be guilty. But as it is, they have seen everything I did, yet they still hate me and my Father. ²⁵This fulfills what is written in their Scriptures: ‘They hated me without cause.’

²⁶“But I will send you the ^dAdvocate—the Spirit of truth. He will come to you from the Father and will testify all about me. ²⁷And you must also testify about me because you have been with me from the beginning of my ministry.

16“I have told you these things so that you won’t abandon your faith. ²For you will be expelled from the synagogues, and the time is coming when those who kill you will think they are doing a holy service for God. ³This is because they have never known the Father or me. ⁴Yes, I’m telling you these things now, so that when they happen, you will remember my warning. I didn’t tell you earlier because I was going to be with you for a while longer.

The Work of the Holy Spirit

⁵“But now I am going away to the one who sent me, and not one of you is asking where I am going. ⁶Instead, you grieve because of what I’ve told you. ⁷But in fact, it is best for you that I go away, because if I don’t, the ^eAdvocate won’t come. If I do go away,

15:9
John 3:35
^aagapē (0026)
• John 15:13

15:10
John 14:15

15:11
John 17:13
1 Jn 1:4

15:12
John 13:34

15:13
John 10:11
Rom 5:6-8
^bagapē (0026)
• Rom 5:5

15:15
^ddoulos (1401)
• Rom 1:1

15:16
Rom 1:13
1 Cor 3:12-14
Phil 1:22

15:18
John 7:7
1 Jn 3:13

15:19
John 17:14
1 Jn 4:5

15:21
Matt 5:11
1 Pet 4:14

15:22
John 9:41

15:24
John 5:36; 9:41

15:25
^ePs 35:19; 69:4

15:26
John 14:17
1 Jn 5:6-7
^fparaklētos (3875)
• John 16:7

15:27
John 21:24
1 Jn 1:2; 4:14

16:2
John 9:22
Acts 22:3-4

16:3
John 15:21

15:8 *True disciples* will experience a transformed, fruit-bearing life because they live in a relationship of love with both Jesus and the Father (15:9-10).

15:10 Just as Jesus demonstrated his love for the Father by obeying his will (14:31), Jesus’ disciples exhibit their love through obedience to him (13:34-35; 14:15; 1 Jn 2:5; 5:2-3).

15:12-13 *This is my commandment: Love each other:* See 13:34. • Jesus demonstrated his *love* by sacrificing his *life* at the cross.

15:14-16 Both Abraham and Moses were called *friends* of God (Exod 33:11; 2 Chr 20:7; Isa 41:8; Jas 2:23). This is the highest relationship possible between God and a person. Jesus chooses his friends (15:16), who demonstrate their friendship by obeying him.

15:15 The disciples of a rabbi were considered his servants or *slaves*. Jesus elevated his followers to a higher relationship as his *friends*.

15:18-27 Disciples must be like their

master in every respect, both in showing love and obedience and in experiencing the antagonism of those who oppose their message (15:20-21; see ch 9; 11:16). If the darkness is opposed to the light (1:5), and if Jesus’ followers are bearers of that light in the world (1 Jn 1:7; 2:9), they should expect the world to hate them in the way it hated Jesus (see 17:14). Jesus’ disciples share his separation from and conflict with the world.

15:20 *A slave is not greater than the master:* See note on 13:16. Jesus’ disciples should mirror him in every way, even in his experience of persecution and martyrdom.

15:22-24 *But now they have no excuse:* Jesus’ ministry provided both words (15:22) and works (15:24) as evidence that pointed to God. Once people have heard and seen him, they are accountable.

15:25 *in their Scriptures:* Literally *in their law*. Ps 35:19; 69:4. • *They hated me without cause:* This OT citation

reveals the unwarranted anger of those who belong to the darkness.

15:26 *But I will send you the Advocate (or Comforter, or Encourager, or Counselor; Greek reads Paraclete)—the Spirit of truth:* See notes on 14:16-17. Like a legal advocate, the Holy Spirit counsels and protects Jesus’ followers.

15:27 Disciples are not alone when they *testify about Christ* (Matt 28:20). The Spirit accompanies them, providing the words to say (Matt 10:19-20).

16:1-2 Jesus had outlined the coming conflicts (15:18-25) so that the disciples would not *abandon their faith* (literally *be caused to stumble*). The greatest obstacle his disciples would face was to stumble and renounce their faith before their Jewish opponents (see Matt 23:34; Luke 6:22), especially during the dark days ahead (see 12:35; 1 Jn 2:9-11).

16:7 *the Advocate (or Comforter, or Encourager, or Counselor; Greek reads Paraclete):* The Spirit was a gift awaiting Jesus’ departure and glorification (7:37-39; 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:12-14).

16:4
John 13:19

16:5
John 7:33; 13:36

16:7
John 14:26; 15:26
**parakletos* (3875)
† 1 Jn 2:1

16:9
John 15:22

16:10
Acts 3:14; 7:52
Rom 1:17
† 1 Pet 3:18

16:11
John 12:31

16:13
John 14:17, 26

16:15
John 17:10

16:16
John 14:18-24

16:20
Mark 16:10
Luke 23:27
John 20:20

16:21
Isa 13:8; 21:3; 26:17
Acts 13:33
Col 1:18

16:22
Isa 66:14
John 20:20

16:23
John 14:20; 16:26

16:24
John 15:11

16:25
Ps 78:2
John 10:6

16:27
John 8:42; 14:21; 17:8

16:28
John 13:3

16:32
Zech 13:7
Matt 26:31, 56
John 8:29

16:33
John 14:27
Rom 5:1; 8:37
† 1 Jn 5:4

then I will send him to you. ⁸And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment. ⁹The world's sin is that it refuses to believe in me. ¹⁰Righteousness is available because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more. ¹¹Judgment will come because the ruler of this world has already been judged.

¹²"There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can't bear it now. ¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. ¹⁴He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me. ¹⁵All that belongs to the Father is mine; this is why I said, 'The Spirit will tell you whatever he receives from me.'

Sadness Will Be Turned to Joy

¹⁶"In a little while you won't see me anymore. But a little while after that, you will see me again."

¹⁷Some of the disciples asked each other, "What does he mean when he says, 'In a little while you won't see me, but then you will see me,' and 'I am going to the Father'?"

¹⁸And what does he mean by 'a little while'? We don't understand."

¹⁹Jesus realized they wanted to ask him about it, so he said, "Are you asking yourselves what I meant? I said in a little while you won't see me, but a little while after that you will see me again. ²⁰I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn over what is going to happen to me, but the world will rejoice.

You will grieve, but your grief will suddenly turn to wonderful joy. ²¹It will be like a woman suffering the pains of labor. When her child is born, her anguish gives way to joy because she has brought a new baby into the world. ²²So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again; then you will rejoice, and no one can rob you of that joy. ²³At that time you won't need to ask me for anything. I tell you the truth, you will ask the Father directly, and he will grant your request because you use my name. ²⁴You haven't done this before. Ask, using my name, and you will receive, and you will have abundant joy.

²⁵"I have spoken of these matters in figures of speech, but soon I will stop speaking figuratively and will tell you plainly all about the Father. ²⁶Then you will ask in my name. I'm not saying I will ask the Father on your behalf, ²⁷for the Father himself loves you dearly because you love me and believe that I came from God. ²⁸Yes, I came from the Father into the world, and now I will leave the world and return to the Father."

²⁹Then his disciples said, "At last you are speaking plainly and not figuratively. ³⁰Now we understand that you know everything, and there's no need to question you. From this we believe that you came from God."

³¹Jesus asked, "Do you finally believe? ³²But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when you will be scattered, each one going his own way, leaving me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me. ³³I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you

16:8-11 One of the Spirit's roles is to *convict the world*. Convict is a legal term: The world had conducted its trial of Jesus, examining the evidence for his case (his signs and claims). Now the world would stand trial before the Spirit, and its guilt would be proven.

16:8 The Spirit unveils to the world the real nature of *its sin*, the truth about *righteousness* found only in God, and *the coming judgment*, which has already dawned on the world as light penetrating the darkness.

16:11 *Judgment* of sinners had already begun, for the *ruler of this world*, Satan, had *already been judged* (see 12:31). The world thought it was judging Jesus, but the opposite occurred.

16:13 The *Spirit of truth* (see notes on 14:16-17), who conveys truth from God, guides the judgment of the world. • The Spirit says only *what he has heard* from the Father. The Father, Son, and Spirit work in perfect unity (16:15). The dis-

ciples could expect the Spirit to reveal things they had not heard before about the present and *the future* (see 14:26).

16:16-33 *a little while*: This refrain reassured the disciples that their separation from Jesus would be short lived.

16:16 Jesus reassured the disciples that his departure (on the cross) would be short and his return (in the resurrection) would be soon. When they saw him *again*, the disciples would experience overwhelming joy and intimacy with him in the Spirit.

16:20 At the crucifixion, *the world* thought it had won a victory over the light. The shock of the cross would cause the disciples to *weep and mourn*, but their sorrow would change to *joy* when Jesus defeated the grave (20:20).

16:21 *the pains of labor*: This metaphor symbolizes anguish that is followed by God's blessing and wonder (cp. Isa 21:2-3; 26:16-21; 66:7-10; Jer 13:21).

16:23-24 *Ask . . . and you will receive*: Two notable effects of the resurrection are the joy of understanding and the joy of successful prayer. The disciples would no longer experience the confusion described in 16:16-18.

16:25 Jesus spoke using *figures of speech*, which could only be interpreted with God's help (1 Cor 1:18-25). With the coming of the Spirit, the disciples would understand.

16:26-27 After Jesus' resurrection, the Spirit brought intimacy, allowing individual disciples to *ask the Father* to meet their needs. (14:23).

16:27 *from God*: Some manuscripts read *from the Father*.

16:33 *But take heart, because I have overcome the world*: "Such a saying as this is worthy to be carried from Rome to Jerusalem on one's knees" (Martin Luther). Jesus' final words did not chastise, but brought comfort. Jesus promised peace (14:27) and joy (16:20, 22).

will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”

Jesus' Final Prayer

17 After saying all these things, Jesus looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so he can give glory back to you. ²For you have given him authority over everyone. He gives eternal life to each one you have given him. ³And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth. ⁴I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. ⁵Now, Father, bring me into the glory we shared before the world began.

⁶“I have revealed you to the ones you gave me from this world. They were always yours. You gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷Now they know that everything I have is a gift from you, ⁸for I have passed on to them the message you gave me. They accepted it and know that I came from you, and they believe you sent me.

⁹“My prayer is not for the world, but for those you have given me, because they be-

long to you. ¹⁰All who are mine belong to you, and you have given them to me, so they bring me glory. ¹¹Now I am departing from the world; they are staying in this world, but I am coming to you. Holy Father, you have given me your name; now protect them by the power of your name so that they will be united just as we are. ¹²During my time here, I protected them by the power of the name you gave me. I guarded them so that not one was lost, except the one headed for destruction, as the Scriptures foretold.

¹³“Now I am coming to you. I told them many things while I was with them in this world so they would be filled with my joy. ¹⁴I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁵I’m not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. ¹⁶They do not belong to this world any more than I do. ¹⁷Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. ¹⁸Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. ¹⁹And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth.

17:1
John 13:31
17:2
Matt 28:18
John 6:37, 39
17:3
Phil 3:8
1 Jn 5:20
17:5
John 1:1-2; 17:24
Phil 2:6
17:6
John 17:26
17:8
John 13:3; 16:30
17:9
1 Jn 5:19
17:10
John 16:15
17:11
John 10:30; 17:21
Gal 3:28
17:12
Ps 41:9
John 6:39
17:13
John 7:33; 15:11
17:14
John 15:18-19
17:15
1 Jn 5:18
17:17
John 15:3
Eph 5:25-26
17:18
John 20:21
17:19
Heb 2:11

Now he added that his disciples can discover peace even when surrounded by threats; they can be tranquil despite those who are hostile to their faith.

17:1-26 This chapter records Jesus’ longest prayer, which is often called his “high priestly prayer.” It provides an intimate glimpse into his heart. In this prayer, which closes the farewell that began at 13:31, Jesus expressed his own concerns to his Father (17:1-8) and then turned to concerns for the church and its future (17:9-26).

17:1 *Jesus looked up to heaven*, assuming the traditional Jewish posture for prayer (11:41; Ps 123:1). He probably also raised his hands (Exod 9:33; 17:11; Ps 28:2). Prayers like this were said aloud so that followers could hear (11:41-42; 12:27-30; also Matt 11:25-30; Luke 10:21-22). • *Father* was Jesus’ usual way to address God, which he did six times in this prayer (see also 11:41; 12:27). This title—unusual in Judaism—reflected Jesus’ intimacy with God. • This *hour* included Jesus’ betrayal, arrest, torture, death, and resurrection (see note on 12:23). • *Glorify your Son*: In the Gospel of John, the cross is a place of honor. Jesus’ oneness with the Father means that if the Son is glorified, the Father will also be glorified.

17:2 All *authority* has been placed in Jesus’ hands (3:35); he can give *eternal life* as only God can (3:15; 5:21, 25-26).

17:3 to know you: The Hebrew idea

of knowing encompassed experience and intimacy, which for Christians means love for God and obedience to him. • *sent to earth*: Jesus originated in heaven and was returning there (17:5), so he exercises divine authority as the agent of God.

17:4 Jesus’ miracles displayed God’s *glory* for the world to see (1:14). This task was finished; Jesus’ life and obedience had glorified God.

17:5 Jesus prayed to return to the position he had with God *before the world began* (1:1).

17:6 This verse summarizes Christ’s mission. He revealed the true person of God to the world, gathered up God’s people into his flock, and instructed them in obedience. The result of this work is the church. • *have revealed you*: Literally *have revealed your name*; also in 17:26.

17:8 Jesus revealed himself widely to the world. Those who embraced his *message* became children of God (1:12; 11:52), and he revealed God’s word to them.

17:9-19 Jesus prayed for his disciples, who must carry on after his departure.

17:10 Just as the Son brings glory to the Father (17:1, 4-5), the disciples *bring the Son glory* (17:22). The love and obedience that brought glory to God in Jesus’ life become features of his disciples’ lives.

17:11 *you have given me your name*: Some manuscripts read *you have given me these* [i.e., *these disciples*]. • Jesus’ first concern for his disciples was that *they . . . be united* with an intimacy similar to the oneness shared by Jesus and the Father.

17:12-13 *I protected them by the power of the name you gave me*: Some manuscripts read *I protected those you gave me, by the power of your name*. • Until now, Jesus had *guarded* his followers. Now he was concerned for their strength and survival in his absence, because the world would be hostile toward them (15:18-27) and their mission of challenging the world by heralding the truth (16:8-11). After Jesus’ departure, the Spirit would protect them (15:26) and bring them joy.

17:14 God’s *word*, which Jesus had given his disciples, also provides a defense against the world. The Spirit would preserve and recall God’s word in the church (14:26), equipping the church for its encounter with the world.

17:16-18 Being *holy* refers to purity gained by separation from the world, and living a life so aligned with God that it reflects his passions. Disciples are set apart by God, equipped by the Spirit, and readied by God’s word to enter the world without being victimized by its darkness.

17:19 *I give myself as a holy sacrifice* (literally *I sanctify myself*): Priests and

17:20
John 17:9

17:21
John 10:38
Gal 3:28

17:22
John 17:11

17:23
John 16:27; 17:5

17:24
John 1:14; 12:26

17:25
Matt 11:27

17:26
John 15:9

18:1
2 Sam 15:23
Matt 26:36
Mark 14:32

18:3-11
//Matt 26:47-56
//Mark 14:43-50
//Luke 22:47-53

20“**I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message.** 21**I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.**

22“**I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one.** 23**I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me.** 24**Father, I want these whom you have given me to be with me where I am. Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began!**

25“**O righteous Father, the world doesn't know you, but I do; and these disciples know you sent me.** 26**I have revealed you to them, and I will continue to do so. Then your love for me will be in them, and I will be in them.”**

Jesus' Suffering and Death (18:1–19:42)

Jesus Is Betrayed and Arrested

John 18:1-12 // Matt 26:47-56 // Mark 14:43-52 // Luke 22:47-53

18 After saying these things, Jesus crossed the Kidron Valley with his disciples and entered a grove of olive trees. 2Judas, the betrayer, knew this place, because Jesus had often gone there with his disciples. 3The leading priests and

The World (17:5-26)

John 1:9-10; 3:16-19; 7:7; 8:12; 12:47; 14:17-19, 27; 15:18-19; 16:7-9, 20, 33
Gen 6:11-12
Ps 2:1-6; 9:8
Isa 61:11; 66:16
Matt 5:14; 13:38-40
Luke 16:8
Acts 17:31
1 Cor 1:20-28; 3:3; 6:2
2 Cor 5:19
Eph 2:2
Col 2:20
Jas 4:4
2 Pet 1:4; 2:20
1 Jn 2:15-16; 4:3-5
Rev 17:18; 19:19

One of the most frequently used words in John is “world” (Greek *kosmos*). In Greek-speaking Jewish thought, *kosmos* refers to the heavens and the earth as created by God (Gen 1; see also John 1:3, 10; 17:5, 24). John extends the concept to include the world of humanity (e.g., 1:10; 3:16).

Although it was created as good, the human world is hostile to God (1:10-11; 3:19-20; 12:37-41). It is controlled by a darkness that cannot comprehend the light and resists the light (3:19). The world is dead and needs life (6:33, 51), yet it hates the one who can save it (7:7). The world is under the dominion of Satan (12:31), who will one day be judged.

God loves the world of humanity, despite its hostility and rebellion against him. Jesus died to take away the sin of the world (1:29; 3:16-17). God's love for the world he created stands alongside his necessary judgment of the world (3:18-21, 36; 5:27-30; 12:47-48). Christ's followers experience this same tension in their mission. We are called into the world to bring the message of God's love, but we will experience conflict, because the world will be hostile to our message (see 14:27-31; 15:18-27; 17:13-26).

prophets were similarly set apart for service to God (Lev 8:30; Jer 1:5). Jesus recommitted himself to his mission, acknowledging that he was set apart for the purpose of the cross. The disciples would benefit because his death would enable them to experience new holiness in a deep attachment to God.

17:20 Jesus was *praying* for other sheep who were not yet in his flock (10:16). These are the believers through the centuries who have come to faith through the witness of Jesus' disciples.

17:21 For believers, becoming *one* with one another is an outgrowth of the union they enjoy with Jesus himself, a union modeled on the oneness of the Father and the Son. • *may they be in us*: Through the power of the Spirit, believers would experience a profound spiritual intimacy with the Father and the Son and be transformed (14:20, 23; 1 Jn 4:13). • Disciples of Jesus represent him, so their conduct and relationships with each other reflect the credibility of Christ in *the world*. When there is disunity, infighting, and intolerance, their

testimony to the world is unconvincing. When people observe the community of believers, they know that it represents Jesus; a unified, loving community convinces *the world to believe* (13:35; 1 Jn 3:11).

17:22 The community of believers should display the same *glory* that Jesus displayed from the Father.

17:23 that the world will know: If the church lives in the Spirit, reflects God's glory and love, and shows unity sustained by a shared knowledge of God, then its testimony will astonish *the world*.

17:24 I want these . . . to be with me: Some day, Jesus' followers will see Jesus' true glory, the true love that has existed in heaven since the beginning of time (17:5). Jesus was returning to heaven, and he yearned to see his disciples there so that they might glimpse what no words on earth can describe.

17:26 All who accept the Son and embrace the Father will experience the kind of *love* known only between the Father and the Son. • *I will be in*

them: Jesus wants to love his followers and indwell them with glory and joy unmatched by anything in the world.

18:1-40 After completing his farewell in the upper room (13:31–17:26), Jesus left the city and entered a garden just east of Jerusalem to pray. Here he was arrested, taken under guard into the city, and interrogated by the Jewish leaders. The climactic “time” that Jesus referred to repeatedly throughout the Gospel (see 2:4; note on 12:23) was now at hand.

18:1-2 Jesus crossed the Kidron Valley, a dry river valley (a *wadi*) outside Jerusalem's walls on the city's east edge. • The Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32) was a *grove of olive trees* that grew along the west shoulder of the Mount of Olives (*gath shemaney* means “olive press” in Aramaic). Jesus liked this place and frequently prayed there (see 8:1; Luke 21:37; 22:39).

18:3 John's full description of the arresting party expands the picture from the other Gospels. The Temple authorities sent *Roman soldiers and Temple guards*; while the Temple guards made

Pharisees had given Judas a contingent of Roman soldiers and Temple guards to accompany him. Now with blazing torches, lanterns, and weapons, they arrived at the olive grove.

⁴Jesus fully realized all that was going to happen to him, so he stepped forward to meet them. **“Who are you looking for?”** he asked.

⁵“Jesus the Nazarene,” they replied.

“I Am he,” Jesus said. (Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them.) ⁶As Jesus said **“I Am he,”** they all drew back and fell to the ground! ⁷Once more he asked them, **“Who are you looking for?”**

And again they replied, “Jesus the Nazarene.”

⁸**“I told you that I Am he,”** Jesus said. **“And since I am the one you want, let these others**

go.” ⁹He did this to fulfill his own statement: **“I did not lose a single one of those you have given me.”**

¹⁰Then Simon Peter drew a sword and slashed off the right ear of Malchus, the high priest’s slave. ¹¹But Jesus said to Peter, **“Put your sword back into its sheath. Shall I not drink from the cup of suffering the Father has given me?”**

¹²So the soldiers, their commanding officer, and the Temple guards arrested Jesus and tied him up.

Peter’s First Denial of Jesus

John 18:15-18 // Matt 26:69-70 // Mark 14:66-68 // Luke 22:54-57

¹³First they took him to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest at that time.

¹⁴Caiaphas was the one who had told the

18:4

John 6:64

18:9

John 6:39; 17:12

18:10

Luke 22:36, 38

18:11

Matt 20:22; 26:39

Mark 10:38; 14:36

Luke 22:42

18:12-15

//Matt 26:57-58

//Mark 14:53-54

//Luke 22:54

18:13

Luke 3:2

John 18:24

18:14

John 11:49-51

ANNAS AND CAIAPHAS (18:13-14, 19-24, 28)

John 11:49-53
Matt 26:3, 57-67
Mark 14:53-65
Luke 3:2
Acts 4:5-7

Annas and Caiaphas were both spoken of as high priests during the time of Jesus; they were instrumental in getting Jesus condemned to death.

Annas was the Jewish high priest about AD 6–15. Even after he was officially deposed by the Roman procurator of Judea, he retained considerable power and influence in the Jewish high council and was still spoken of as “high priest” fifteen to twenty years later (Luke 3:2; Acts 4:6)—perhaps because of the Jewish view that high priests retain their position for life. Five of his sons and his son-in-law Caiaphas became high priests after him. According to the Gospel of John, when Jesus was arrested, he was brought to Annas for his initial interrogation before he was turned over to Caiaphas for the official trial (18:13-24).

Caiaphas was the official Jewish high priest about AD 18–36. He worked closely with his powerful father-in-law, Annas. Caiaphas was the one who argued in the high council that it would be better for Jesus to be sacrificed than for the entire nation to be destroyed (11:49-50; cp. Matt 26:3-4). These prophetic words were given him by God because of his role as high priest (11:51-52). It was Caiaphas who tore his robes at Jesus’ claim to be the Son of God (Matt 26:57, 65) and urged the high council to condemn him for blasphemy.

Not long after the execution of Jesus, the Jewish authorities became increasingly disturbed over the rapidly growing numbers of believers in Christ. Annas and Caiaphas also actively involved themselves in the interrogation of Peter and John over their healing a crippled beggar and their preaching about the resurrection of the dead (Acts 4:5-7).

the arrest, the Roman detachment stood by to prevent a riot. The Roman detachment was large enough to warrant a commander (18:12) and came armed, anticipating a struggle (18:10). Numerous men had claimed to be the Messiah, and often they had made politically explosive attempts to expel the Romans.

18:5 Jesus the Nazarene: Or *Jesus of Nazareth*; also in 18:7. • **I Am he** (or “*The ‘I Am’ is here*”; or “*I am the LORD*”; literally *I am*; also in 18:6, 8): Jesus identified himself by the divine name God had revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exod 3:14; see also 4:26; 8:24, 58).

18:6 The soldiers and guards *all drew back* before the Lord (cp. Isa 6:5; Ezek 1:28; Dan 10:9; Acts 9:4; Rev 1:17). Even

Roman soldiers, who were trained not to fall, *fell to the ground* before Christ. Although they submitted to God, they didn’t really understand what had occurred and proceeded with the arrest.

18:8 I Am: Jesus used God’s divine name for the second time (see note on 18:5).

18:9 his own statement: See 6:39; 17:12. • **I did not lose a single one:** Jesus continued to be a good shepherd, offering his life for the sheep and protecting them from the wolves (10:11-15). From the beginning, however, Judas Iscariot had not been a true disciple of Jesus (17:12).

18:10-11 Simon Peter drew a short sword or a long knife that was generally worn with everyday garments. • The Hebrew name *Malchus* means “king,” a

detail that John might have included for its wordplay on Jesus’ true identity (see 18:36-37; 19:19). • **Put your sword back:** Jesus’ mission was not to fight for his life, but to die for ours.

18:12-14 Jesus was bound by the soldiers and returned to Jerusalem. • **First they took him to Annas,** who had been the high priest and remained highly influential (five of his sons also became high priests). *Caiaphas*, his son-in-law, was the official *high priest at that time* (literally *that year*; see 18:24).

18:14 one man should die for the people: Caiaphas had previously made this political analysis (11:49-50). John points out the irony of this statement. Jesus’ death did not bring Israel political salvation—it brought spiritual salvation to all who believe.

18:16-18
//Matt 26:69-70
//Mark 14:66-68
//Luke 22:55-57

18:18
Mark 14:54, 67

18:19-24
//Matt 26:59-68
//Mark 14:55-65
//Luke 22:63-71

18:19
tarchiereus (0749)
• Acts 5:27

18:20
Matt 26:55
John 7:26

18:22
John 19:3

18:23
Matt 5:39
Acts 23:2-5

18:24
Matt 26:3

18:25-27
//Matt 26:71-75
//Mark 14:69-72
//Luke 22:58-62

18:27
John 13:38

18:28-38
//Matt 27:1-2, 11-14
//Mark 15:1-5
//Luke 23:1-5

other Jewish leaders, "It's better that one man should die for the people."

¹⁵Simon Peter followed Jesus, as did another of the disciples. That other disciple was acquainted with the high priest, so he was allowed to enter the high priest's courtyard with Jesus. ¹⁶Peter had to stay outside the gate. Then the disciple who knew the high priest spoke to the woman watching at the gate, and she let Peter in. ¹⁷The woman asked Peter, "You're not one of that man's disciples, are you?"

"No," he said, "I am not."

¹⁸Because it was cold, the household servants and the guards had made a charcoal fire. They stood around it, warming themselves, and Peter stood with them, warming himself.

The High Priest Questions Jesus

John 18:19-24; cp. Matt 26:57-68 // Mark 14:53-65 // Luke 22:63-71

¹⁹Inside, the high priest began asking Jesus about his followers and what he had been teaching them. ²⁰Jesus replied, "Everyone knows what I teach. I have preached regularly in the synagogues and the Temple, where the people gather. I have not spoken in secret. ²¹Why are you asking me this question? Ask those who heard me. They know what I said."

²²Then one of the Temple guards standing nearby slapped Jesus across the face. "Is that the way to answer the high priest?" he demanded.

²³Jesus replied, "If I said anything wrong, you must prove it. But if I'm speaking the truth, why are you beating me?"

²⁴Then Annas bound Jesus and sent him to Caiaphas, the high priest.

Peter's Second and Third Denials

John 18:25-27 // Matt 26:71-75 // Mark 14:69-72 // Luke 22:58-65

²⁵Meanwhile, as Simon Peter was standing by the fire warming himself, they asked him again, "You're not one of his disciples, are you?"

He denied it, saying, "No, I am not."

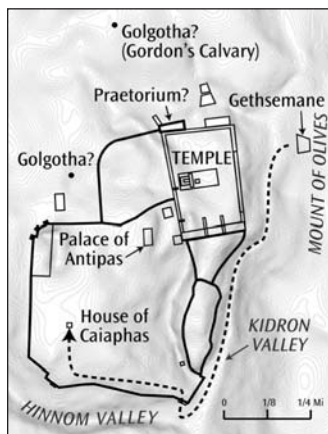
²⁶But one of the household slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Didn't I see you out there in the olive grove with Jesus?"

²⁷Again Peter denied it. And immediately a rooster crowed.

Jesus' Trial before Pilate

John 18:28-38a // Matt 27:1-2, 11-14 // Mark 15:1-5 // Luke 23:1-5

²⁸Jesus' trial before Caiaphas ended in the early hours of the morning. Then he was taken to the headquarters of the Roman



18:15 That other disciple is unnamed, but was probably the "disciple Jesus loved" (13:23)—John, the author of this Gospel.

18:16-17 During Jesus' interrogation by Annas (18:12-14, 19-24), the woman watching at the gate asked Peter if he was one of that man's disciples. In contrast to Jesus, who stood up to his questioners and denied nothing, Peter quickly denied his link to Jesus three times (18:17, 25, 27).

◀ **Jesus' Trial and Crucifixion** (John 18:1-19:27; see also Matt 26:47-27:26; Mark 14:43-15:15; Luke 22:47-23:25). After Jesus was arrested in GETHSEMANE, he was taken to the HOUSE OF CAIAPHAS the high priest. There the Jewish leaders decided to send him to Pilate (at the PRAETORIUM) to sentence him to death (18:28). Pilate sent Jesus to Herod (at the PALACE OF ANTIPAS?), who questioned Jesus and sent him back (Luke 23:6-12). Then Pilate sentenced Jesus to be crucified (19:16). • Regarding the location of GOLGOTHA, see note on 19:17; see also illustration of Jerusalem in Jesus' time, p. 1753.

18:19 The high priest began asking Jesus questions, but his inquiry was contrary to Jewish legal procedure. In Jewish court, the priest did not ask questions directly of the defendant, but accumulated evidence from witnesses to establish guilt (see Num 35:30; Deut 17:6; 19:15; cp. Matt 18:16). If Jesus said anything incriminating, Annas would later use it to testify against him at Jesus' trial. He was attempting to follow Roman practice by making Jesus incriminate himself, rather than gathering evidence through witnesses as Jewish law demanded.

18:20-21 Jesus' sharp answer,

reminding Annas that everything was in the public record, unmasked the priest's attempt to follow Roman practice.

18:20 people: Literally Jewish people; also in 18:38.

18:22-23 When Jesus reminded Annas of correct judicial procedure, one of the Temple guards viewed it as insolence and slapped Jesus. However, Jesus knew the law and represented it truthfully. No witnesses were accusing him, and no evidence was being presented.

18:24 Annas was at an impasse—his probing had been unsuccessful. So he sent Jesus to Caiaphas to be prosecuted before the Sanhedrin, Jerusalem's judicial high council (see Mark 14:53-15:1).

18:25-27 He denied it: Peter's three denials were later echoed when Jesus invited him three times to reaffirm his love (21:15-17).

18:28 The trial before Caiaphas ended in the early hours of the morning. Since they did not have the power of capital punishment (18:31), the Sanhedrin needed to enlist Pilate, the Roman governor, to carry out an execution. • the headquarters of the Roman governor: Greek the Praetorium; also in 18:33. • it would defile them: They did not want to become ritually unclean by contact with Gentiles in Pilate's headquarters.

governor. His accusers didn't go inside because it would defile them, and they wouldn't be allowed to celebrate the Passover. ²⁹So Pilate, the governor, went out to them and asked, "What is your charge against this man?"

³⁰"We wouldn't have handed him over to you if he weren't a criminal!" they retorted.

³¹"Then take him away and judge him by your own law," Pilate told them.

"Only the Romans are permitted to execute someone," the Jewish leaders replied. ³²(This fulfilled Jesus' prediction about the way he would die.)

³³Then Pilate went back into his headquarters and called for Jesus to be brought to him. "Are you the king of the Jews?" he asked him.

³⁴Jesus replied, "Is this your own question, or did others tell you about me?"

³⁵"Am I a Jew?" Pilate retorted. "Your own people and their leading priests brought you to me for trial. Why? What have you done?"

³⁶Jesus answered, "My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world."

³⁷Pilate said, "So you are a king?"

Jesus responded, "You say I am a king. Actually, I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true."

³⁸"What is truth?" Pilate asked.

Jesus Is Sentenced to Death

John 18:38b-19:16 // Matt 27:15-31 // Mark 15:6-20 // Luke 23:13-25

Then he went out again to the people and told them, "He is not guilty of any crime. ³⁹But you have a custom of asking me to release one prisoner each year at Passover. Would you like me to release this 'King of the Jews'?"

⁴⁰But they shouted back, "No! Not this man. We want Barabbas!" (Barabbas was a revolutionary.)

19 Then Pilate had Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip. ²The soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they put a purple robe on him. ³"Hail! King of the Jews!" they mocked, as they slapped him across the face.

⁴Pilate went outside again and said to the people, "I am going to bring him out to you now, but understand clearly that I find him not guilty." ⁵Then Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said, "Look, here is the man!"

18:32
Matt 20:19
John 12:32-33

18:33
Luke 23:3
John 19:9

18:36
Matt 26:53
Luke 17:21
John 6:15

18:37
John 8:47
1 Jn 4:6

18:39-19:5
//Matt 27:15-31
//Mark 15:6-20
//Luke 23:13-25

19:1
Isa 50:6; 53:5

19:3
John 18:22

19:4
Luke 23:4
John 18:38

So Pilate, probably fearing a riot, went outside to meet them. • The *Passover* meal itself had occurred the night before (see 13:1; Mark 14:14-16). The following day, another meal began the weeklong Festival of Unleavened Bread (Lev 23:5-6).

18:29 Pilate, the fifth Roman *governor* of Judea, ruled the country from AD 26 to 36. He usually lived on the coast in Caesarea, but kept troops stationed in a fortress in Jerusalem where he appeared personally for major festivals. He was a brutal ruler whose atrocities against the Jews were legendary (e.g., Luke 13:1; Josephus, *War* 2.9.2-4).

18:31-32 Pilate found the charges unsatisfying and told the Sanhedrin, *judge him by your own law*. Pilate saw this as a Jewish squabble, which he refused to investigate. The Jewish leaders, however, insisted that an execution was necessary. • *fulfilled Jesus' prediction about the way he would die* (see 12:32-33): The Jews would have employed stoning; the Romans used crucifixion. If Pilate delivered Jesus' sentence, he would be crucified.

18:33 Pilate was personally responsible for capital crimes in which the interests and security of the Roman empire were at stake, so he began his formal legal inquiry. • *Are you the king of the*

Jews? To get the governor's attention, Caiaphas had charged that Jesus had urged people not to pay their taxes to the Roman government and had claimed to be a king (Luke 23:2). To Pilate, Jesus might have been just another Jewish terrorist-revolutionary (see Luke 23:18-19; Acts 5:36-37) with a head full of messianic notions and a band of well-armed followers.

18:34-35 Jesus' reply forced the governor to show the origin of his *question*. The Temple leadership was behind these charges. Pilate only wanted to know if Jesus was a rebel who might threaten Roman interests.

18:36-37 Jesus was willing to accept the title of *king*, but he made it clear that he did not govern an *earthly kingdom* that might rival Rome. Jesus' kingship is *not of this world*. Rather than being a political ruler, he rules through the devotion and obedience of his followers.

18:38-39 *What is truth?* Truth was not a foreign idea to Pilate, but he did not wait for an answer to his question because he did not believe there was one. • Pilate returned to the council members waiting outside and delivered his verdict: *not guilty*. Although he referred to Jesus as "*King of the Jews*" (see also 19:19), the title meant nothing more to Pilate than a mocking expression

of contempt. Pilate's offer of amnesty revealed his desire to let Jesus go.

18:40 Jesus was no threat to Rome, but *Barabbas was a revolutionary*, a violent man who took part in political uprisings (see Luke 23:19), with a proven capacity to challenge the Roman military occupation of Israel.

19:1-16 Jesus was also beaten after his sentencing (Mark 15:15), but here John records an earlier beating, which was likely Pilate's attempt to show that Jesus had been punished and could be released (19:4). When this failed, Pilate passed his sentence and handed Jesus over to the Jewish leaders for crucifixion (19:16).

19:2 The *crown of thorns* might have come from a date palm (cp. 12:13-14), whose thorns can exceed twelve inches. There are Greek coin images showing such crowns, with the stems woven and the thorns radiating upward above the crown. • The *purple robe* was probably a soldier's robe—dark red to complete the picture of mock royalty.

19:4-6 Pilate's intention was *to bring* Jesus *out* to display the marks of his punishment to sway the crowd to let him go. After being flogged with a lead-tipped whip, Jesus was bleeding profusely. • Pilate announced his verdict

19:6
John 18:31

19:7
Lev 24:16
Matt 26:63-66

19:11
Rom 13:1

19:12
Luke 23:2
Acts 17:7

19:13
Matt 27:19

19:16-27
//Matt 27:32-44
//Mark 15:21-32
//Luke 23:26-43

⁶When they saw him, the leading priests and Temple guards began shouting, “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

“Take him yourselves and crucify him,” Pilate said. “I find him not guilty.”

⁷The Jewish leaders replied, “By our law he ought to die because he called himself the Son of God.”

⁸When Pilate heard this, he was more frightened than ever. ⁹He took Jesus back into the headquarters again and asked him, “Where are you from?” But Jesus gave no answer. ¹⁰“Why don’t you talk to me?” Pilate demanded. “Don’t you realize that I have the power to release you or crucify you?”

¹¹Then Jesus said, “**You would have no power over me at all unless it were given to you from above. So the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin.**”

¹²Then Pilate tried to release him, but the Jewish leaders shouted, “If you release this man, you are no ‘friend of Caesar.’ Any-

one who declares himself a king is a rebel against Caesar.”

¹³When they said this, Pilate brought Jesus out to them again. Then Pilate sat down on the judgment seat on the platform that is called the Stone Pavement (in Hebrew, *Gabbatha*). ¹⁴It was now about noon on the day of preparation for the Passover. And Pilate said to the people, “Look, here is your king!”

¹⁵“Away with him,” they yelled. “Away with him! Crucify him!”

“What? Crucify your king?” Pilate asked. “We have no king but Caesar,” the leading priests shouted back.

¹⁶Then Pilate turned Jesus over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus away.

The Crucifixion

John 19:17-24 // Matt 27:32-38 // Mark 15:21-27 // Luke 23:26-34

¹⁷Carrying the cross by himself, he went to the place called Place of the Skull (in

of *not guilty* a second time, but he was met with a strident call for Jesus’ death (19:6).

19:6 Pilate knew that a riot could happen when a man popular with the masses was executed, so he shifted responsibility to *crucify* Jesus to the Temple leaders.

19:7 During the trial before Caiaphas, the charge of blasphemy—calling *himself the Son of God*—was determined to be Jesus’ true crime (see Mark 14:61-65). • The leaders had already tried pitting Roman imperial interests against Jesus (18:33), and would do so again (19:12). Now they challenged the governor on another level: Pilate must keep the peace by upholding local *law*, even when it was irrelevant to Rome. Claiming to be God’s son was not illegal, because Israel’s kings did this (Ps 2:7; 89:22-27). However, Jesus claimed to have the divine authority of God himself (see 5:18), which they saw as blasphemy.

19:8-9 *Pilate . . . was more frightened than ever*: He was superstitious, and the idea of gods appearing in the world was not uncommon (Acts 14:11). He sensed that more than a political fight was going on, so he asked Jesus, *Where are you from?* He did not mean Jesus’ birthplace, but whether Jesus was a divine man who had descended from heaven. • *the headquarters*: Greek *the Praetorium*. • *Why Jesus gave no answer* is unclear. Perhaps it was because Pilate would not have been able to understand the answer—that true power comes only from God, and God had empowered Jesus (cp. 19:11).

19:10-11 *You would have no power over*

me: Although Pilate had *the power to . . . crucify* Jesus, it was only because God had given him this temporary power so Jesus could advance toward the cross (see 10:18).

19:12 Each time he had a conversation with Jesus, *Pilate tried to release him*: He kept trying, but his repeated efforts were fruitless. • *“Friend of Caesar”* is a technical term that refers to an ally of the emperor. It was an official title given to individuals such as senators who showed exceptional loyalty and service to the emperor. The Jewish leaders were implying that they would ruin Pilate’s career by reporting that he was not working in Rome’s interests. They probably knew that Pilate was also having a personal crisis. His patron in Rome, Sejanus (the chief administrator of the Empire under Tiberius Caesar), had fallen from favor and was executed in AD 31. Pilate had every reason to be afraid.

19:13 Pilate took the governor’s *judgment seat* (Greek *bēma*, cp. Acts 25:6, “seat in court”) to render his verdict. • *The Stone Pavement* was the platform holding the judgment seat; from there Pilate now spoke with the authority of his office.

19:14 *the day of preparation for the Passover* (or *the day of preparation during the Passover*): Here, Passover does not refer to the Jewish Passover meal, which had taken place the night before, but to the whole Festival of Unleavened Bread. It was now Friday, the day of preparation for the Passover Sabbath, which would begin at sundown (cp. Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54). • *people*: Literally *Jewish people*; also

in 19:20.

19:15 The final words of the priests, “*We have no king but Caesar*,” stood in direct contradiction to the OT understanding that God was Israel’s king (cp. Judg 8:23; 1 Sam 8:7; 10:19). Jerusalem and its leaders were in the process of killing their true king (18:37) while paying homage to Caesar, the pagan king of Rome.

19:16 *Pilate turned Jesus over to the Roman garrison*, who prepared Jesus for crucifixion by a second flogging (Mark 15:15), which brought him near death. Bleeding profusely, his clothes soaked in blood, his thorn-laced crown now digging deeply into his head, and nearly in shock, Jesus was marched to a site outside the city.

19:17 The vertical beam (Latin *staticulum*) of the *cross* was generally kept at the crucifixion site, and the victim was forced to carry only the heavy crossbeam (Latin *patibulum*). • Crucifixions were public executions that took place near major roadways. They were designed to shock and warn the people. • *Place of the Skull* (Hebrew and Aramaic *Golgotha*; Latin *calvariae*, “Calvary”): See map on p. 1809. Most archaeologists agree that Jesus’ crucifixion was at the site of the present-day Church of the Holy Sepulchre, located in the Christian Quarter of the old walled city of Jerusalem (see “First-Century Jerusalem,” p. 1753). An alternate site, Gordon’s Calvary (north of the Damascus Gate), is a model of what the scene possibly looked like, but it holds only a tomb from the 500s BC and therefore cannot be the authentic site of Jesus’ crucifixion and burial.

Hebrew, *Golgotha*).¹⁸ There they nailed him to the cross. Two others were crucified with him, one on either side, with Jesus between them.¹⁹ And Pilate posted a sign on the cross that read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."²⁰ The place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, so that many people could read it.

²¹ Then the leading priests objected and said to Pilate, "Change it from 'The King of the Jews' to 'He said, I am King of the Jews.'"

²² Pilate replied, "No, what I have written, I have written."

²³ When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they divided his clothes among the four of

them. They also took his robe, but it was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.²⁴ So they said, "Rather than tearing it apart, let's throw dice for it." This fulfilled the Scripture that says, "They divided my garments among themselves and threw dice for my clothing." So that is what they did.

²⁵ Standing near the cross were Jesus' mother, and his mother's sister, Mary (the wife of Clopas), and Mary Magdalene.

²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother standing there beside the disciple he loved, he said to her, "**Dear woman, here is your son.**"²⁷ And he said to this disciple, "**Here is your mother.**" And from then on this disciple took her into his home.

19:24
*Ps 22:18

19:25
Matt 27:55-56
Mark 15:40-41
Luke 8:2; 23:49

19:26
John 2:4; 13:23; 20:2;
21:7, 20

The Cross and Passover (19:17-36)

John 1:29, 36
Exod 12:1-13:16;
29:38-46
Num 9:1-14
Deut 16:1-8
2 Kgs 23:21-23
2 Chr 30:1-27
Ezra 6:19-21
Isa 53:7
Ezek 45:21-22
Matt 26:2, 17-19
Mark 14:17-31
Luke 22:14-30
Acts 8:32-35; 12:3-4
1 Cor 5:7-8
Heb 11:28
Rev 5:5-14

At the beginning of John's Gospel, John the Baptist introduced Jesus by calling him the "Lamb of God" (1:29, 36). This odd phrase might refer to the sacrificial lamb that was killed daily in the Temple (Exod 29:38-46) or to the sacrificial lamb of Isa 53:7 (cp. Acts 8:32-35; Rev 5:5-14). Both rituals of sacrifice spoke of rescue and forgiveness from sin.

However, this was not all that John had in mind. John presented Jesus as the Passover lamb whose death marks the central event of the Passover season (see Exod 12:46; Luke 22:7; 1 Cor 5:7). In the first century, Jews made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem each spring to celebrate the Passover and to reread the story of the Exodus (see Exod 12-15). When Israel was being rescued from Egypt, the blood of a lamb was sprinkled on the doorposts of each Jewish home in Egypt and saved those inside from death (Exod 12). Jews who came to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover needed to supply a perfect young lamb for sacrifice. The animal could not be diseased or have broken bones.

Jesus used his final Passover meal to show that his sacrificial death would give new meaning to the festival (Mark 14:17-31). In John, the cross became an altar where Christ, the Passover lamb, was slain. Jesus' legs were not broken (19:33), fulfilling a Passover rule (19:36; Exod 12:46). Blood ran freely from his wound (19:34), showing that his life was being exchanged for others. Just as a lamb died to save the lives of Jewish families at the Passover in Egypt, so, too, this one death of the Son of God on the cross serves to bring salvation to the world.

19:18 None of the Gospel writers dwell on the details of being *nailed . . . to the cross* because they were well known and horrific. The soldiers used the cross as a means of torture; they wanted victims to survive for a while, in some cases for days. Because the Sabbath would begin at dusk (19:31), they expedited Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus had been thoroughly beaten with stone- or metal-tipped whips, so his back was thoroughly lacerated, and he was bleeding profusely.

19:19-22 *Pilate posted a sign on the cross*: It was customary for the Roman soldiers to provide a written public notice of the criminal's name and crimes. Perhaps as a final act of revenge against the Jewish high council, Pilate ordered that the sign

should identify *Jesus of Nazareth* (or *Jesus the Nazarene*) as *the King of the Jews*. Jesus' kingship was posted in three languages for the whole world to understand.

19:23-24 As was their common practice, the Roman soldiers *divided his clothes*. The soldiers gambled for his valuable *robe*, which was *seamless*, rather than dividing it up. • *throw dice*: Literally *cast lots*. • "*They divided my garments among themselves and threw dice for my clothing*": See Ps 22:18.

19:25-26 This is the only reference to Jesus' *mother's sister* in the NT. She might have been the wife of Zebedee and the mother of James and John (cp. Matt 27:56), which would make Jesus and John cousins. If so, it would help explain why Jesus assigned the *disciple he loved* (John) to care for

Mary (John's aunt). • *Mary (the wife of Clopas)* is only mentioned here. She might be the same person as Mary the mother of James and Joseph (cp. Matt 27:56). • Jesus had healed *Mary Magdalene*, a woman from the village of Magdala (Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2). • *Dear woman* was a formal and polite form of address (see 2:4).

19:27 *Here is your mother*: Jesus employed a Jewish family law that assigned the care of one person to another. The scene had an additional significance: The people who were present represented the new community of the church that was born at the cross. Jesus wanted them to care for each other in obedience to his command to love one another (13:34; 15:12, 17).

19:28-29 *I am thirsty*: See Ps 22:15; 69:21. • The *hyssop* bush had been

19:28-37
//Matt 27:45-56
//Mark 15:33-41
//Luke 23:44-49

19:28
*Ps 22:15; 69:21

19:30
Job 19:26-27

19:31
Deut 21:22-23

19:35
John 20:30-31; 21:24
1 Jn 1:1

19:36
*Exod 12:46
Num 9:12
*Ps 34:20

19:37
*Zech 12:10
Rev 1:7

19:38-42
//Matt 27:57-61
//Mark 15:42-47
//Luke 23:50-56

19:39
John 3:1-2; 7:50

The Death of Jesus

John 19:28-30// Matt 27:45-56 // Mark 15:33-41 // Luke 23:44-49

28 Jesus knew that his mission was now finished, and to fulfill Scripture he said, **"I am thirsty."** 29 A jar of sour wine was sitting there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put it on a hyssop branch, and held it up to his lips. 30 When Jesus had tasted it, he said, **"It is finished!"** Then he bowed his head and released his spirit.

31 It was the day of preparation, and the Jewish leaders didn't want the bodies hanging there the next day, which was the Sabbath (and a very special Sabbath, because it was the Passover). So they asked Pilate to hasten their deaths by ordering that their legs be broken. Then their bodies could be taken down. 32 So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the two men crucified with Jesus. 33 But when they came to

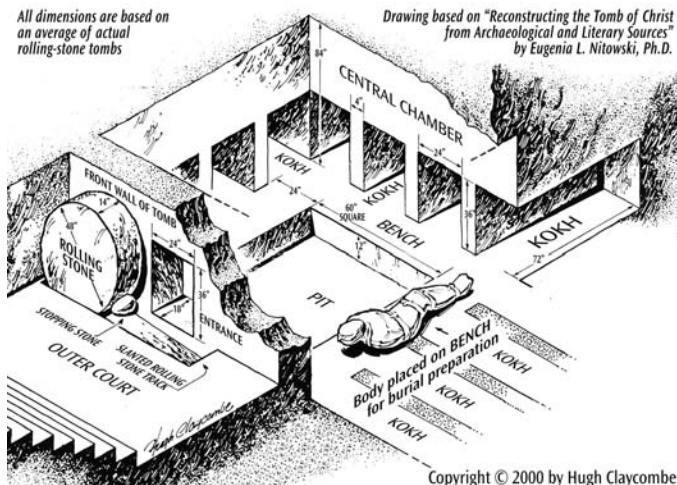
Jesus, they saw that he was already dead, so they didn't break his legs. 34 One of the soldiers, however, pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water flowed out. 35 (This report is from an eyewitness giving an accurate account. He speaks the truth so that you also can believe.) 36 These things happened in fulfillment of the Scriptures that say, "Not one of his bones will be broken," 37 and "They will look on the one they pierced."

The Burial of Jesus

John 19:38-42 // Matt 27:57-61 // Mark 15:42-47 // Luke 23:50-56

38 Afterward Joseph of Arimathea, who had been a secret disciple of Jesus (because he feared the Jewish leaders), asked Pilate for permission to take down Jesus' body. When Pilate gave permission, Joseph came and took the body away. 39 With him came

All dimensions are based on an average of actual rolling-stone tombs



◀ **First-century Judean Tombs (John 19:41).** Joseph of Arimathea's tomb, where Jesus was buried (see Matt 27:57-60), was like other first-century Judean tombs. This drawing is based on sixty-one such "rolling-stone" tombs that have been discovered. These tombs, carved in limestone, were affordable only by wealthy families, and they were constructed according to the laws of Judaism (see *Mishnah Baba Batra* 6:8). After preparation for burial, bodies were placed in the *KOKH* (niche) which was then sealed with a rolling closure stone. Much later the dried bones were stored in ossuaries (stone boxes) within the tomb.

first letter (1 Jn 1:1-4) • **can believe:** Some manuscripts read *can continue to believe*.

19:36 "Not one of his bones will be broken": Exod 12:46; Num 9:12; Ps 34:20. The Passover lamb could have no broken bones; Jesus was the perfect Passover lamb (see also 1 Cor 5:7).

19:37 "They will look on the one they pierced": Zechariah 12:10 describes how Israel would look on a prophet or the Messiah and lament their own fatal lack of faith.

19:38 According to Luke, *Joseph of Arimathea* was a courageous man who was waiting for the Kingdom of God (Luke 23:50-51). He was a wealthy (Matt 27:57) and influential leader in Jerusalem and a member of the high council (Mark 15:43) who disagreed with the decision to kill Jesus. He asked Pilate for the favor of burying Jesus in his personal tomb. • **Joseph was a secret disciple** (cp. 12:42-43), but his bold deed brought him out in public support of Jesus.

used in Egypt to brush lamb's blood on the doorposts and lintels during the first Passover (Exod 12:22). Jesus is God's Passover lamb (1:29, 36), and his blood likewise saves.

19:30 Jesus called out in triumph and exhaustion that he had *finished* the work he set out to do. On the cross he was not a victim, but a servant doing God's bidding.

19:31-33 The Jewish authorities, eager to complete the crucifixion before Sabbath began at dusk, asked Pilate to break *the legs* of the men. Breaking the legs with a mallet was common: It promoted asphyxiation and hemorrhaging, because the victim could no longer push himself up to breathe.

19:34 To confirm that Jesus was dead,

a Roman soldier *pierced his side with a spear*. • **blood and water flowed out:** This has several levels of meaning: (1) The spear probably punctured Jesus' pericardium, the sac around the heart, releasing these fluids. (2) John might have been thinking of more Passover symbolism. The Passover lamb's blood had to flow as it died. (3) The living water, flowing from Jesus' side, reminds readers of earlier language that Jesus used to describe himself (see 7:37-39; "Living Water" at 4:10-14, p. 1777).

19:35 John was at the foot of the cross (19:26). He was not simply a collector of traditions about Jesus, but *an eyewitness giving an accurate account* of the events of Jesus' life (cp. 21:24). This same confidence can be seen in the opening of John's

Nicodemus, the man who had come to Jesus at night. He brought about seventy-five pounds of perfumed ointment made from myrrh and aloes. ⁴⁰Following Jewish burial custom, they wrapped Jesus' body with the spices in long sheets of linen cloth. ⁴¹The place of crucifixion was near a garden, where there was a new tomb, never used before. ⁴²And so, because it was the day of preparation for the Jewish Passover and since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

Jesus' Resurrection (20:1-31)

The Empty Tomb

John 20:1-10 // Matt 28:1-10 // Mark 16:1-8 // Luke 24:1-12

20 Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. ²She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said, "They have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

³Peter and the other disciple started out for the tomb. ⁴They were both running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He stooped and looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn't go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen

wrappings lying there, ⁷while the cloth that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying apart from the other wrappings. ⁸Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed—⁹for until then they still hadn't understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then they went home.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

John 20:11-18; cp. Matt 28:8-10; Mark 16:9-11

¹¹Mary was standing outside the tomb crying, and as she wept, she stooped and looked in. ¹²She saw two white-robed angels, one sitting at the head and the other at the foot of the place where the body of Jesus had been lying. ¹³"Dear woman, why are you crying?" the angels asked her.

"Because they have taken away my Lord," she replied, "and I don't know where they have put him."

¹⁴She turned to leave and saw someone standing there. It was Jesus, but she didn't recognize him. ¹⁵"Dear woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who are you looking for?"

She thought he was the gardener. "Sir," she said, "if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him."

¹⁶"Mary!" Jesus said.

She turned to him and cried out, "Rabboni!" (which is Hebrew for "Teacher").

19:40
Luke 24:12
John 20:5-7

20:1-8
//Matt 28:1-8
//Mark 16:1-8
//Luke 24:1-12

20:2
John 13:23

20:3
Luke 24:12

20:5
John 19:40

20:7
John 11:44

20:9
John 2:22

20:11-18
Mark 16:9-11

20:12
Mark 16:5
Luke 24:4

20:14
Mark 16:9
Luke 24:16
John 21:4

20:16
rhabbouni (4462)
• Matt 23:7

19:39 Nicodemus (see 3:1; 7:50), a member of the high council, understood that these bodies had to be buried before the upcoming Sabbath (19:31, 42). His public support, as with Joseph of Arimathea, might indicate that he, too, was becoming a disciple (see note on 7:49-51). • **Myrrh** was a commonly used aromatic powder. • **The aloes** were fragrant powdered sandalwood often used as perfume. • **seventy-five pounds** (Greek 100 litras [32.7 kilograms]): This enormous amount of spices was appropriate for royalty; Jesus, the king, was given a royal burial.

19:41 a new tomb: More than 900 first-century burial tombs have been discovered in Judea, carved into the limestone hills (see illustration, p. 1813).

19:42 because it was the day of preparation for the Jewish Passover: Literally because of the Jewish day of preparation; see note on 19:14. The Sabbath was approaching, so Joseph and Nicodemus (19:38-39) would return to complete the burial process later.

20:1 Early on Sunday morning: Literally On the first day of the week. As a devoted follower of Jesus (see Luke

8:1-3; Matt 27:55-56), **Mary Magdalene** arrived at the tomb to help complete Jesus' burial (see 19:42). • Many Judean tombs were sealed with a rolling **stone** (see illustration, p. 1813).

20:2 Mary Magdalene ran and found Simon Peter. Her natural assumption was that someone had robbed the tomb and perhaps stolen the body—which was not an uncommon occurrence.

20:3-10 The other disciple was probably John, "the disciple Jesus loved," the author of this Gospel (see 13:23). He and Peter validated Mary's testimony by examining the tomb for themselves. John arrived first, but Peter entered first.

20:6-7 What Peter and John found in the tomb was remarkable. The **linen wrappings** (19:40) were on the burial bench (see note on 19:41). Jews also used a facial **cloth** for burials (cp. 11:44), which was rolled, wrapped under the chin, and tied on the top of the head. The apostles found this face cloth **folded up** on the bench. John's inclusion of these details counters any suggestion that grave robbers had taken Jesus' body; such costly garments would have been stolen in a robbery.

20:8-9 he saw and believed: Despite not fully understanding, John knew that God had been at work, and he realized that Jesus was alive.

20:11-13 Although **two . . . angels** appeared inside the tomb, the middle of Jesus' disappearance remained unsolved (see Luke 24:4). • **why are you crying?** Sorrow was not the appropriate response in this moment.

20:14-15 Jesus, whom Mary mistook for **the gardener**, repeated the angel's question and added, **Who are you looking for?** Jesus' question was to provoke Mary's thinking: At this point Mary was looking for the body of Jesus, but she was about to meet the living Christ. Was she truly ready to meet her Lord?

20:16 When Jesus called **Mary** by name, she recognized him immediately (see 10:3-4).

20:17 Mary thought that with the resurrection, Jesus would resume normal relations with his disciples. She was trying to **cling** to the joy she discovered in her resurrected Lord. But his fellowship with her would come in a new form (20:22). Jesus had **not yet ascended** to complete his return to the Father, but the process

20:17
Matt 28:10
John 16:28
Rom 8:29
Col 1:18
Heb 2:11

20:19-23
//Matt 28:16-20
//Luke 24:36-49

20:20
John 16:20-22; 19:34

20:21
Matt 28:19
John 17:18

20:22
John 7:37-39; 14:16-18, 26

20:24
John 11:16

17“Don’t cling to me,” Jesus said, “for I haven’t yet ascended to the Father. But go find my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

18Mary Magdalene found the disciples and told them, “I have seen the Lord!” Then she gave them his message.

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

John 20:19-23 // Luke 24:35-49

19That Sunday evening the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly,

Jesus was standing there among them! “Peace be with you,” he said. 20As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord! 21Again he said, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.” 22Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 23If you forgive anyone’s sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

Jesus Appears to Thomas

24One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), was not with the others

THOMAS (20:24-28)

John 11:16; 14:5; 21:2
Matt 10:3
Mark 3:18
Luke 6:15
Acts 1:13

Thomas, also known as “the twin,” was one of the twelve apostles (Matt 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). He is remembered for his unbelieving response to Jesus’ resurrection.

Nothing is known of how Jesus first met and called Thomas to be his disciple. The only personal accounts of Thomas are found in the Gospel of John. Thomas voiced his willingness to follow Jesus, even if it meant death (11:16); he openly told Jesus that he didn’t understand what he was saying (14:5); and he was one of the seven disciples who returned to fishing after the resurrection, when Jesus appeared to them (21:2).

When Jesus first appeared to his disciples after his death, Thomas was not present. When Thomas heard the report from the others, he did not believe it, insisting he would have to see the evidence of the crucifixion in Jesus’ body with his own eyes and feel it with his own hands (20:19-23). A week later, when Jesus once again appeared to the disciples, he especially addressed Thomas, telling him to examine the marks of the nails and the spear in his body and challenging him to believe and not be skeptical. Thomas’s response represents one of the strongest statements of Jesus’ deity in the New Testament, and the culmination of the Gospel of John’s portrayal of Jesus: “My Lord and my God!” (20:28).

Later tradition speaks of Thomas working as a missionary in the East: in Parthia (Eusebius), Persia (Jerome), and India (*Acts of Thomas*). The Mar Thoma church on the west coast of India traces its roots back to the early missionary work of Thomas. The historical reliability of these accounts is uncertain.

Thomas’s name is unreliably linked to several later apocryphal writings: the *Acts of Thomas*, the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, the *Epistle to the Apostles*, the *Apocalypse of Thomas*, the *Book of Thomas the Athlete*, and especially the *Coptic Gospel of Thomas*, a Gnostic collection of Jesus’ sayings.

was underway. Before his final departure, he would give the Holy Spirit (20:22; see 14:15-21, 26; 15:26-27; 16:5-15).

20:18 Mary was the first eyewitness to see *the Lord* following his resurrection. She not only saw him, she heard him and touched him (see 1 Jn 1:1-4). This great privilege was given to a woman whose broken life had experienced healing (Luke 8:2). In Jewish culture this was astounding; a woman could not even be a witness in court. No Jew in this period would make up such a story.

20:19 *That Sunday evening*: Literally *In the evening of that day, the first day of the week*. • *meeting behind locked doors*: The disciples feared prosecution for following Jesus. • *Peace be with you*: This was a standard Jewish greeting (see also 3 Jn 1:15), but Jesus was doing more than just greeting his disciples: he was offering the Messiah’s peace (see Isa

9:6; 52:7) and delivering the gift of his Kingdom (see 14:27; 16:33).

20:20 The reality of Jesus’ resurrection was quite clear. Jesus *showed them the wounds* from the nails and the spear. He did not feign death, but conquered it. He was no phantom, but a real man with a real body. He had been dead, but was now alive. Jesus was fully human both in life (1:14) and in his resurrection.

20:21 *I am sending you*: God had sent Jesus into the world to establish his Kingdom, and now Jesus was sending his disciples to carry on his mission. Christ’s emissaries carry the truth of Jesus’ words to the world (cp. 17:18).

20:22 Jesus commissioned the disciples and then empowered them with *the Holy Spirit*. The Spirit had not been given previously because Jesus had not yet been glorified (7:39). The glorified Jesus, resplendent in his resurrected

body, poured the Spirit on his followers. This gift fulfilled many promises that the Spirit would be sent (14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7, 13). It foreshadows the arrival of the Spirit’s empowering presence at Pentecost (Acts 1:4-5; 2:1-47).

20:23 *If you forgive anyone’s sins*: The ongoing work of Christ’s followers parallels the work of Christ. Christ’s followers do not distribute and withdraw God’s forgiveness on a whim, but they follow Jesus’ prompting through the Spirit (15:5), just as Jesus obeyed his Father (14:31).

20:24-25 *Thomas (nicknamed the Twin)*: Literally *Thomas, who was called Didymus* (see also 11:16; 14:5). Thomas was absent when Jesus revealed himself. He remained skeptical despite the testimony of his friends, who had *seen the Lord*. Thomas demanded a concrete experience identical to theirs.

when Jesus came. ²⁵They told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he replied, “I won’t believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side.”

²⁶Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. “**Peace be with you,**” he said. ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, “**Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don’t be faithless any longer. Believe!**”

²⁸“My Lord and my God!” Thomas exclaimed.

²⁹Then Jesus told him, “**You believe because you have seen me. ^bBlessed are those who believe without seeing me.**”

Purpose of the Book

³⁰The disciples saw Jesus do many other miraculous signs in addition to the ones recorded in this ^bbook. ³¹But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name.

4. EPILOGUE: THE WORD COMMISSIONS HIS FOLLOWERS (21:1-25)

The Miraculous Catch of Fish

21 Later, Jesus appeared again to the disciples beside the Sea of Galilee.

This is how it happened. ²Several of the disciples were there—Simon Peter, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples.

³Simon Peter said, “I’m going fishing.” “We’ll come, too,” they all said. So they went out in the boat, but they caught nothing all night.

⁴At dawn Jesus was standing on the beach, but the disciples couldn’t see who he was. ⁵He called out, “**Fellows, have you caught any fish?**”

“No,” they replied.

⁶Then he said, “**Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you’ll get some!**” So they did, and they couldn’t haul in the net because there were so many fish in it.

⁷Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, “It’s the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his tunic (for he had stripped for work), jumped into the water, and headed to shore. ⁸The others stayed with the boat and pulled the loaded net to the shore, for they were only about a hundred yards from shore. ⁹When they got there, they found breakfast waiting for them—fish cooking over a charcoal fire, and some bread.

¹⁰“**Bring some of the fish you’ve just caught,**” Jesus said. ¹¹So Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore. There were 153 large fish, and yet the net hadn’t torn.

20:28
John 1:1, 18; 10:30;
14:9
Phil 2:6
Col 2:9
Titus 2:13
2 Pet 1:1
1 Jn 5:20

20:29
1 Pet 1:8
1 *makarios* (3107)
• Acts 20:35

20:30
John 21:25
biblion (0975)
• John 21:25

20:31
John 3:15; 19:35
1 Jn 5:13

21:2
John 1:45-51; 11:16;
20:24

21:3
Luke 5:5

21:4
Luke 24:16
John 20:14

21:6
Luke 5:4-7

21:7
Matt 14:29
John 13:23

21:9
John 18:18

20:26-27 *Eight days later* was Sunday, one week after Jesus’ resurrection (it was customary to include the current day when counting forward). Jesus’ appearance on the following Sunday helps explain the disciples’ meeting on “the Lord’s Day” (see Rev 1:10). • **Peace be with you:** This scene was exactly like Jesus’ first appearance (20:19-20). Jesus had already heard Thomas’s complaint and now answered directly. • **Believe!** Jesus challenged Thomas to believe in the resurrection like the others.

20:28 “*My Lord and my God!*” This was not an astonished exclamation but a proclamation of heartfelt belief. It concludes John’s study of Jesus’ deity that has framed the whole book (see 1:1-18).

20:29 Jesus points to the generations of Christians who, through the testimony of others, would **believe without seeing**.

20:30-31 Many scholars view these words as the conclusion of John’s Gospel, viewing ch 21 as an appendix. John’s account is only a selection from Jesus’ *many . . . miraculous signs*.

20:31 *that you may continue to believe:* Some manuscripts use the present

tense, indicating that John wrote to encourage believers. Other manuscripts read *that you may come to believe*, suggesting that John wrote to stimulate new faith (cp. 1:7).

21:1-25 This final chapter adds an account about the resurrected Jesus in Galilee (21:1-14) and records the exchange between Peter and Jesus concerning Peter’s love (21:15-23). The chapter ends by summarizing the authority and importance of John’s eyewitness report (21:24-25).

21:1 *Sea of Galilee:* Greek *Sea of Tiberias*, another name for the Sea of Galilee (see 6:1).

21:2 *Several of the disciples* returned to fishing in the Sea of Galilee. This was not a sign that their faith had weakened—even rabbis who regularly preached kept practicing their occupations (see Acts 18:3; 20:34; 1 Cor 4:12). • **Thomas (nicknamed the Twin):** Literally *Thomas, who was called Didymus*. • **The sons of Zebedee** were James and John (see Matt 4:21).

21:3 Fishing was usually successful in the early hours of the morning.

However, this trip was useless and *they caught nothing all night*.

21:4-5 *Jesus was standing on the beach*, but the men did not recognize him (cp. 20:11-16; Luke 24:13-53). • **Fellows:** Literally *Children*.

21:6 “*Throw out your net on the right-hand side*”: Casting a net into the sea at random was futile. But when *they did* as the stranger said, the immense catch was immediate (21:11).

21:7 “*It’s the Lord!*” John recognized Jesus, probably remembering that a miracle like this had happened before (Luke 5:1-11). • **Peter, who had stripped** off his clothes while working, *put on his tunic* in order to meet the Lord.

21:8 *a hundred yards:* Greek *200 cubits* [90 meters].

21:9 *Cooked fish and bread* were the mainstays of the Galilean diet; Jesus provided the men with breakfast. The *charcoal fire* is reminiscent of the scene of Peter’s denials (18:18).

21:11 This miracle showed generous provision (as in 2:1-12; 6:1-15). No symbolism attaches to the number 153.

21:14
John 20:19, 26
21:15
Matt 26:33
21:16
Acts 20:28
Heb 13:20-21
1 Pet 5:2-3
ἰπομῖναι (4165)
↳ Acts 20:28

21:17
John 13:37-38; 16:30

21:19
John 13:36
2 Pet 1:14

21:20
John 13:23, 25

21:22
Matt 16:27

21:24
John 15:27; 19:35
1 Jn 1:1-3
3 Jn 1:12

21:25
John 20:30
ἡ βιβλίον (0975)
↳ 2 Tim 4:13

12“Now come and have some breakfast!” Jesus said. None of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. 13Then Jesus served them the bread and the fish. 14This was the third time Jesus had appeared to his disciples since he had been raised from the dead.

Peter’s Restoration

15After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” Peter replied, “you know I love you.”

“Then feed my lambs,” Jesus told him.

16Jesus repeated the question: “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

“Yes, Lord,” Peter said, “you know I love you.”

“Then take care of my sheep,” Jesus said.

17A third time he asked him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, “Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Then feed my sheep.”

18“I tell you the truth, when you were young, you were able to do as you liked; you dressed yourself and went wherever you

wanted to go. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and others will dress you and take you where you don’t want to go.” 19Jesus said this to let him know by what kind of death he would glorify God. Then Jesus told him, “Follow me.”

20Peter turned around and saw behind them the disciple Jesus loved—the one who had leaned over to Jesus during supper and asked, “Lord, who will betray you?” 21Peter asked Jesus, “What about him, Lord?”

22Jesus replied, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? As for you, follow me.” 23So the rumor spread among the community of believers that this disciple wouldn’t die. But that isn’t what Jesus said at all. He only said, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?”

Concluding Remarks

24This disciple is the one who testifies to these events and has recorded them here. And we know that his account of these things is accurate.

25Jesus also did many other things. If they were all written down, I suppose the whole world could not contain the books that would be written.

21:12-13 *None of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?”* Jesus’ resurrected appearance was different. His offer of fish and bread removed all uncertainties (cp. 6:11; Luke 24:30).

21:14 This scene on the beach was the third time Jesus had appeared (see 20:11-23, 26-29).

21:15-17 *do you love me?* The three questions and affirmations mirror Peter’s three denials (18:15-18, 25-27). Jesus invited Peter to reaffirm everything he had denied. • The Greek term translated *love* in Jesus’ first two questions (*ἀγαπάω*) is different from the word in his third question (*φιλέω*). In each case, Peter answered with the second word (*φιλέω*). Most Greek scholars view the two words as synonyms in this situation. The focus of Jesus’ exchange with Peter was not the quality of Peter’s love, but Peter’s commission to take care of Jesus’ flock. Peter might be meditating on these events in 1 Pet 5:2-4.

21:15 *more than these? Or more than these others do?* Jesus was reminding Peter of his insistence that he would be more faithful and courageous than the others (13:37; Matt 26:33; Mark 14:29). He was urging Peter to examine himself.

21:17 *feed my sheep:* Jesus, who knows

all things (1:42; 2:25; 16:30), understood that despite Peter’s terrible failing, he still had faith and commitment to Jesus. These words called Peter to nurture and protect Christ’s followers.

21:18 *you will stretch out your hands:* Jesus was probably predicting crucifixion, which according to tradition is how Peter died. • *others* (some manuscripts read *another one*) *will dress you* (literally *bind you*): Jesus alludes to captivity, bondage, and even crucifixion—victims were often tied to the cross.

21:19 Peter’s life was a ministry tending the flock of God, and his martyrdom was a *kind of death* that glorifies God. • *Follow me:* This might require suffering and death (see 13:16; 15:18-21).

21:20-22 “What about him, Lord?” Peter asked Jesus about the fate of John, wondering if he, too, would experience martyrdom. Jesus’ answer was abrupt: It was not Peter’s business to know how or when John would die. Peter’s only task was to follow Jesus, which John was already doing. This episode forms the core of John’s concept of discipleship: What matters most for the disciple of Jesus is to follow him and do his will, come what may.

21:23 Jesus’ words to Peter *spread*,

causing some to conclude that John would not die until Jesus returned in his second coming. Jesus’ rebuke to Peter (21:22) is repeated to answer that rumor. Those among *the community of believers* (literally *the brothers*) who believed this rumor were thus instructed to abandon any speculation about John. According to tradition, John died peacefully in Ephesus at an old age, surrounded by fellow believers.

21:24 *This disciple is the one who testifies . . . and has recorded:* John’s Gospel is anchored in his personal experiences. It is not a story written from hearsay or speculation, but from the remembrance of a man who spent life-changing years with Jesus and recalled, with the help of the Holy Spirit (14:26), what Jesus said and did. • *we know:* This account of the life of Christ was not speculation or weak reminiscence. Rather, it was based on the confident knowledge of reliable eyewitness accounts.

21:25 *the whole world could not contain the books:* John ends his Gospel acknowledging that the story he has described is larger than anything he can imagine or fully communicate. Though it is glorious for us to read, John’s account pales in comparison to the glory of the person it describes.

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS

Romans has been called the greatest theological document ever written. In this letter, the apostle Paul explains the Good News—the climactic revelation of God to the world through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul reflects on the human condition, on the meaning of our lives on earth, and on our hope for the world to come. He constantly moves us back to the fundamentals of God's truth revealed in Christ, and he teaches us to deal with the problems, failures, and disputes that characterize life in this world.

SETTING

We do not know who first brought the Good News to Rome. Perhaps Jews from Rome who were converted when God first poured out his Spirit on the day of Pentecost (see Acts 2:10) took the message back to their home city. Several "house churches" quickly grew up, made up primarily of converts from Judaism.

In AD 49, the Emperor Claudius expelled all Jews from Rome—including Jewish Christians (see Acts 18:2). Although Paul had never visited Rome (1:13), in his travels he met some of these Roman Christians, such as Priscilla and Aquila (16:3-4; cp. Acts 18:2).

Claudius's decree eventually lapsed, so by the time Paul wrote his letter to the Romans, many Jewish Christians had returned to Rome. However, in their absence the Gentile Christians had taken the lead in the Christian community in Rome. Therefore, when Paul wrote to the Roman Christians (probably about AD 57), the Roman Christian community was divided into two major factions. The Gentile Christians now comprised the majority group, and they were naturally less concerned about continuity with the OT or with the demands of the law of Moses than their Jewish brothers and sisters. They even looked down on the Jewish Christians (see 11:25). The minority Jewish Christians, for their

part, reacted to the Gentile-Christian majority by insisting on adherence to certain aspects of the law of Moses. Paul wrote this letter to the Roman Christians to address this theological and social division, a schism that had at its heart the question of continuity and discontinuity between Jewish and Christian faith.



◀ **The Setting of Romans, about AD 57.** Paul probably wrote Romans toward the end of his third missionary journey (Acts 18:23–19:41), perhaps from CORINTH. Paul had the opportunity to visit the Romans, as he hoped (1:10-15)—his third missionary journey ended in JERUSALEM, where he was imprisoned and eventually sent to ROME, where he arrived in AD 60 (Acts 28:11-15).

SUMMARY

In the introduction of the letter (1:1-17), Paul identifies himself and his readers (1:1-7), expresses thanks for the Roman Christians (1:8-15), and introduces the theme of the letter: the “Good News about Christ” (1:16-17).

Before elaborating on this Good News, Paul sets out the dark backdrop of universal human sinfulness that makes the Good News necessary. Both Gentiles (1:18-32) and Jews (2:1-3:8) have turned away from God’s revelation of himself. All are “under the power of sin” and cannot be made right with God by anything they do (3:9-20).

Into this hopeless situation comes the Good News, which reveals a

OUTLINE

1:1-17

The Letter Opening

1:18-4:25

The Heart of the Gospel: Justification by Faith

5:1-8:39

The Assurance Provided by the Gospel: The Hope of Salvation

9:1-11:36

The Defense of the Gospel: The Problem of Israel

12:1-15:13

The Transforming Power of the Gospel: Christian Conduct

15:14-16:27

The Letter Closing

new “way to be made right” with God. God provided this new way by sending Jesus as a sacrifice for sin, and all human beings can gain the benefits of that sacrifice by faith (3:21-26). Paul highlights the centrality of faith and its nature in 3:27-4:25. He shows that faith excludes boasting and that it enables both Jews and Gentiles to have equal access to God’s grace in Christ (3:27-31). He develops these same points through reference to Abraham (4:1-25).

In chs 5-8, Paul discusses the assurance or security of salvation. The assurance that believers will share God’s glory (5:1-11) is based on the way in which Jesus Christ more than reversed the terrible effects of Adam’s sin (5:12-21). Neither sin (6:1-23) nor the law (7:1-25) can prevent God from accomplishing his purposes for the believer. The Holy Spirit liberates believers from death (8:1-17) and assures them that the sufferings of this life will not keep them from the glory to which God has destined them (8:18-39).

The Good News can only truly be “good news” if the message of Christ stands in continuity with God’s promises in the OT. But the unbelief of so many Jews might show that God’s promises to Israel are not being fulfilled (9:1-5). So, in chs 9-11, Paul demonstrates that God is being faithful to his promises. God had never promised salvation to all Jews, but only to a remnant (9:6-29). The Jews themselves are responsible for their predicament because they refuse to recognize the fulfillment of God’s promises in Christ (9:30-10:21). Furthermore, God is faithfully preserving a remnant of Jewish believers (11:1-10), and God has still more to accomplish for his people Israel (11:11-36).

The Good News rescues people from the penalty of sin, and it also transforms a person’s life. In 12:1-15:13, Paul turns his attention to the transforming power of the Good News. In keeping with God’s mercies, this transformation demands a whole new way of thinking and living (12:1-2).

TIMELINE

Pentecost, AD 30 or 33
The birth of the church in Jerusalem

about AD 31 or 34
Probable founding of the church in Rome

AD 49
Emperor Claudius expels Jews from Rome

AD 53-57
Paul’s third missionary journey

about AD 57
▶ **Paul writes Romans from Corinth**

AD 57
Paul travels to Jerusalem and is arrested

AD 57-59
Paul is imprisoned in Caesarea

AD 59-60
Paul’s voyage to Rome

AD 60-62
Paul is imprisoned in Rome

AD 62-64
Paul is released, travels freely

July AD 64
Fire destroys Rome

AD 64-65
Persecution of Christians under Nero
Peter is crucified in Rome

about AD 64-65?
Paul is imprisoned and martyred in Rome

The transformed life will be fleshed out in community harmony (12:3-8), manifestations of love (12:9-21; cp. 13:8-10), and submission to the government (13:1-7). The transformed life derives its power from the work God has already done, as well as from the work he has yet to do (13:11-14).

In 14:1-15:13, Paul tackles a specific issue that was a problem in the church at Rome. Christians were criticizing each other over various practices related to the OT law. Paul exhorts them to accept each other and to look to Christ’s example of self-giving love as the model to emulate.

The letter format of Romans emerges again at the end, where Paul touches on his ministry and travel plans (15:14-33), greets and commends fellow workers and other Christians (16:1-16), and concludes with further references to fellow workers, a final warning, and a doxology (16:17-27).

DATE, PLACE, AND OCCASION OF WRITING

Paul probably wrote Romans during a three-month stay in Corinth near the end of his third missionary journey (Acts 20:2-3), around AD 57. The reference to Cenchrea in 16:1—a port city next to Corinth—identifies the geography more precisely. By this time, Paul had completed his missionary work in the eastern Mediterranean, and his visit to Jerusalem was imminent.

We can determine the general situation in which Romans was written by reviewing Paul’s references to his prior ministry and his future travel plans (15:14-33). Four geographical references provide the framework: (1) Looking back, Paul declared that he had “fully presented the Good News of Christ from Jerusalem all the way to Illyricum” (15:19). Illyricum was a Roman province that occupied the same general area as modern-day Serbia and Croatia. Paul noted that he had planted churches in major cities from Jerusalem, through Asia Minor, and into Macedonia and Greece. This was the territory Paul and his companions covered on the three great missionary journeys recorded in Acts. (2) Paul’s intermediate destination was Jerusalem, where he planned to deliver a “gift to the believers” (15:25). This gift was money that Paul had been collecting from the Gentile churches he had founded to assist the church in Jerusalem (15:26; see also 1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8-9). (3) After visiting Jerusalem to deliver the collection, Paul planned to go to Rome (15:24). (4) A long stay with the Roman Christians was not Paul’s final goal, as the language of 15:24 (“stop off”) makes clear. His ultimate goal was Spain, where he could pursue his calling to plant churches in places “where the name of Christ has never been heard” (15:20, 24). This information points to a date near the end of the third missionary journey.

[Romans] is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word, by heart, but occupy himself with it every day, as the daily bread of the soul. It can never be read or pondered too much, and the more it is dealt with the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes.

MARTIN LUTHER
 “Preface to the Epistle to the Romans”

PAUL’S PURPOSE IN WRITING

Romans combines three specific purposes: to summarize Paul’s theology, to solicit support for a future mission to Spain, and to bring unity to the church in Rome.

Paul saw himself standing at a critical juncture in his ministry (15:20). He had “fully presented” or fulfilled the Good News by taking it to a broad area of the eastern Mediterranean basin (15:19). He now stood ready to move to the far end of the Mediterranean to preach the

Good News in new territory. It is quite natural, then, that Paul took the occasion of his letter to the Romans to summarize his theology as he had hammered it out in the midst of controversy and trial for the previous twenty-five years.

In other words, Romans might be a summary of Paul's theology. Even so, this is not the whole of Paul's purpose in writing—it does not explain why Paul says so little in Romans about key theological ideas (e.g., the person of Christ, the church, the last days). Nor does it explain why Paul would have sent this summary of his theology to the church in Rome.

Another purpose emerges when we turn our attention to Paul's ultimate destination, Spain: Paul wanted to gather support from the Roman Christians for his new mission in a distant land. Paul's "sending church," Antioch, was thousands of miles from Spain. As the apostle sought a new church to partner with him, his attention naturally turned to the church in Rome (15:24). Therefore, it is likely that Paul sent this dense theological treatise to Rome because he wanted to explain who he was and what he believed. Because Paul's message had frequently been misunderstood, he became a controversial figure in the early church. He was undoubtedly aware that some Christians in Rome were suspicious of him and that he therefore must provide a careful and reasoned defense of his position on some of the most debated issues of the faith.

Finally, Paul wrote to a Christian community in Rome that was divided over the degree to which the OT law should continue to guide believers. Paul's long and explicit treatment of this problem (14:1–15:13) reveals that one of his purposes in writing was to heal this rift in the community in Rome.

In Romans, Paul presented the Good News as he had come to understand it. The heart of that Good News is the offer of salvation in Christ for all who believe. Paul explores the problem of human sin, the solution provided in the cross of Christ, and the assurance of glory that a living relationship with Christ provides. The message of the cross of Christ stands both in continuity with the OT (because its promises are truly fulfilled in Christ) and in discontinuity with it (as God in Christ inaugurates a new covenant that transcends the OT law).

INTERPRETATION

Since the time of the Reformation, Romans has been read as a letter about the salvation of the individual. Following the lead of Martin Luther, whose own spiritual pilgrimage was closely tied to the theology of Romans, the Reformers (such as John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli) saw in this letter the classic biblical expression of the truth that human beings are put right with God by their faith in Christ and not by their own effort. The Reformers viewed Paul as fighting against a legalistic Judaism that insisted that people had to obey the law to be saved. Jewish preoccupation with the law had led many Jews to presume that faithfulness to the law was sufficient for salvation (e.g., 10:1-4).

Many contemporary interpreters insist that this Reformation view of Romans left out important elements in understanding both the letter itself and first-century Judaism. Jews in Paul's day, it is argued, did not believe that they had to obey the law to be saved. They were already saved, through God's choosing them to be his people. Obeying the

The reasons why Romans is such a powerful piece of writing, and why it has been so influential in Christian history, are one and the same. . . . We see Paul the Jew wrestling with the implications of his own and his converts' experience of grace and Paul the Christian wrestling with the implications of his Jewish heritage. We see in Romans Paul operating at the interface between Pharisaic Judaism and Christianity, and the transition from the one to the other in process of being worked out.

JAMES D. G. DUNN
Romans, p. xvi

law was the way they maintained their status as God’s people. These interpreters say that Paul was not fighting against legalism but against exclusivism—against the Jewish claim that salvation was confined to Israel and was not to be shared with Gentiles. Accordingly, Paul shows how the Good News relates salvation through faith to the continuity of God’s people from the OT to the NT and to the relationship of Jews and Gentiles in his own day.

FURTHER READING

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JOHN R. W. STOTT
Romans: God’s Good News for the World (1994)

This new approach to understanding Romans has much to commend it. Christian interpreters have sometimes missed the notes of grace and faith that are part of Jewish teaching. And Romans does have a lot to say about including Gentiles in God’s people and the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in the church.

Ultimately, however, neither the Reformation view alone nor the contemporary view alone explains everything in Romans. They need to be combined if we are to appreciate the letter as a whole. At its most foundational level, Romans is about the Good News—and the Good News, first and foremost, is a message about how everyone can have a right relationship with God.

1. THE LETTER OPENING (1:1-17)

Greetings from Paul

1 This letter is from Paul, a ^aslave of Christ Jesus, chosen by God to be an apostle and sent out to preach his ^bGood News. ²God promised this Good News long ago through his prophets in the holy Scriptures. ³The Good News is about his Son. In his earthly life he was born into King David’s family line, ⁴and he was shown to be the Son of God when he was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit. He is Jesus

Christ our Lord. ⁵Through Christ, God has given us the privilege and authority as apostles to tell Gentiles everywhere what God has done for them, so that they will believe and obey him, bringing glory to his name.

⁶And you are included among those Gentiles who have been ^ccalled to belong to Jesus Christ. ⁷I am writing to all of you in Rome who are loved by God and are called to be his own holy people.

May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

1:1
^a*doulos* (1401)
‣ Rom 6:20
^b*euangelion* (2098)
‣ Rom 1:16

1:2
Titus 1:2

1:3
Matt 1:1; 22:42

1:4
1 Cor 15:1-4, 12-23

1:5
Acts 9:15; 26:15-18

1:6
^c*klētos* (2822)
‣ Rom 8:28

1:1-17 These verses contain the normal features of NT letter introductions: an identification of the writer (1:1-6) and readers (1:7); a thanksgiving (1:8-15); and the theme of the letter (1:16-17).

1:1 slave of Christ Jesus: The word *slave* is used of important OT leaders of God’s people, such as Moses (2 Kgs 18:12), Joshua (Josh 24:29), Elijah (2 Kgs 10:10), and David (2 Sam 7:8). The title underscores Paul’s complete subservience to Christ as Lord. • **sent out** (literally *set apart*): Paul may be alluding to being “set apart” by God for his mission before he was born, as the prophet Jeremiah was (Jer 1:5). He may also be referring to God’s call at the time of his Damascus Road conversion (Acts 9:15-16; cp. Acts 13:2), to preach the Good News to Jews and especially to Gentiles. • **The Good News**, or “gospel,” is a recurrent topic in the opening of the letter (1:1, 9, 15, 16). Paul takes the word from the OT, where the Hebrew equivalent refers to the victory that God wins for his people (Isa 40:9; 41:27; 60:6; 61:1; Nah 1:15; see Joel 2:32).

1:3-4 In the Greek, these verses are in carefully structured parallel form; Paul

might be quoting an early Christian creed or hymn about Jesus Christ as God’s *Son* in order to establish common ground with the Roman Christians, whom he had never visited.

1:3 In his earthly life (literally *As regards the flesh*): Paul often uses “flesh” (Greek *sarx*) to refer to bodily existence in this world (e.g., 4:1; 8:3). • Paul refers to **King David’s family line** because God promised that a descendant of David would be the Messiah and would be given an eternal kingdom (2 Sam 7:13-16; see Isa 9:7; Jer 33:15). Jesus was born into David’s line (Matt 1:6; Luke 1:27, 32), so he was qualified to fulfill God’s promise.

1:4 and he was shown to be (or *and was designated*): Although he eternally existed as the Son of God (1:3), Jesus’ resurrection demonstrated him to be God’s Son, revealing him in all his power and glory. • **by the power of the Holy Spirit:** Or *by the Spirit of holiness; or in the new realm of the Spirit*.

1:5 given us . . . apostles: Here Paul might have been thinking both of himself and of the other apostles, or he might be using an editorial plural

to refer only to himself. • **the privilege** (or *the grace*): Privilege and **authority** could specify two separate things, but one might explain the other, as in the privilege of having apostolic authority. Paul always makes it clear that his distinctive authority is a gift from God (see also 15:15-16). • **so that they will believe and obey him:** This summary of Paul’s purpose in preaching to Gentiles brackets the book of Romans, as he repeats the same idea in slightly different language at the end of the letter (16:26). Paul wanted Gentiles to believe in Jesus Christ; he underscored that believing in Jesus Christ as the Lord entails a commitment to obey him. Faith and obedience are not identical, but one does not occur without the other.

1:7 To be holy means to be set apart for God. This expression is used throughout the OT to describe Israel, God’s chosen **people** (cp. Exod 19:6), whom God called from among all other nations to be his own. By calling the Gentile Christians **his own holy people**, Paul makes it clear that Gentiles are now fully included among God’s people.

1:8
1 Thes 1:8

1:9
Phil 1:8-9

1:11
^acharisma (5486)
• Rom 12:6

1:14
1 Cor 9:16

1:15
Rom 15:20

1:16
Acts 3:26
1 Cor 1:18, 24
^eeuangelion (2098)
• Rom 2:16
^sōtēria (4991)
• Rom 8:24

1:17
^hHab 2:4
Rom 3:21-22
Gal 3:11
Heb 10:38
^dikaïosunē (1343)
• Rom 3:21
^pistis (4102)
• Rom 3:22

1:18
Eph 5:6
Col 3:6
^orgē (3709)
• Rom 2:5

1:19
Acts 14:15-17;
17:24-28

1:20
Job 12:7-9
Ps 19:1

Thanksgiving and Occasion: Paul and the Romans

⁸Let me say first that I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith in him is being talked about all over the world. ⁹God knows how often I pray for you. Day and night I bring you and your needs in prayer to God, whom I serve with all my heart by spreading the Good News about his Son.

¹⁰One of the things I always pray for is the opportunity, God willing, to come at last to see you. ¹¹For I long to visit you so I can bring you some spiritual ^dgift that will help you grow strong in the Lord. ¹²When we get together, I want to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours.

¹³I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to visit you, but I was prevented until now. I want to work among you and see spiritual fruit, just as I have seen among other Gentiles. ¹⁴For I have a great sense of obligation to people in both the civilized world and the rest of the world, to the educated and uneducated

alike. ¹⁵So I am eager to come to you in Rome, too, to preach the Good News.

The Theme of the Letter: God's Good News

¹⁶For I am not ashamed of this ^eGood News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, ^fsaving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile. ¹⁷This Good News tells us how God makes us ^gright in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by ^hfaith. As the Scriptures say, "It is through ^hfaith that a righteous person has life."

2. THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL: JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH (1:18–4:25) All Persons are Accountable to God for Sin (1:18-32)

¹⁸But God shows his ⁱanger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness. ¹⁹They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. ²⁰For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.

1:9 When Paul uses the phrase *with all my heart* (or *in my spirit*), he might be describing the influence of God's Holy Spirit on his own inner person. The word *spirit* also refers to the deepest part of a person, which the phrase *all my heart* expresses well.

1:11 *some spiritual gift*: Paul is probably referring to the spiritual benefit that he hopes his ministry will *bring* to the Roman Christians.

1:13 *brothers and sisters* (literally *brothers*): This Greek word (*adelphoi*) describes people who are in a familial relationship. Paul and other NT writers use this word to indicate that Christians are so intimately tied to one another in Christ that they are family. The word refers to both male and female Christians. • *I was prevented until now*: Paul wrote this letter when he was in Corinth toward the end of his third missionary journey (see Acts 20:2-4; cp. Rom 16:21-23). The need to plant and nourish churches in the eastern Mediterranean had occupied Paul up to this point. Before he could visit the Roman Christians, he first needed to return to Jerusalem to deliver a gift of money collected from the Gentile churches for the impoverished Jewish Christians (15:23-29).

1:14 *to people in both the civilized world and the rest of the world* (literally *to Greeks and barbarians*): The Greeks prided themselves on being sophisticated and cultured,

while regarding people from other cultures as inferior. They mocked other peoples' poorly spoken Greek, claiming that they could only say "bar bar," a nonsense phrase from which our word *barbarian* comes. Paul uses this cultural divide to emphasize his intention to preach the Good News to all kinds of people.

1:16 Paul consistently emphasizes that the Good News is for *everyone*. He also insists that God *first* chose the Jews to be his people, made promises to them, and gave them a unique place in the continuing plan of God (3:1-8; 9:1-5). They have a special responsibility to respond to the Good News and will be judged first if they turn away (2:9-10). • *also the Gentile*: Literally *also the Greek*.

1:17 *how God makes us right in his sight* (literally *the righteousness of God*): This key phrase appears eight times in Romans (see also 3:5; 21, 22, 25; 26; 10:3; the only other occurrence in Paul's writings is 2 Cor 5:21). The expression has OT roots, where God's righteousness refers to his character (as holy or faithful) or to an act of declaring his people sinless and perfect in his eyes (see especially Isa 46:13; 51:5-8). Paul uses the second meaning in this verse. The Good News has the power to save because it is the fulfillment of God's promise to vindicate his people. • The phrase *makes us right* comes from the law court. It does not mean

"makes us good people"; it means "puts us in right standing before God." • "*It is through faith that a righteous person has life*" (or "*The righteous will live by faith*" Hab 2:4): The prophet Habakkuk had struggled to understand how God could use pagan nations to judge his own people Israel. God reminded Habakkuk that his true people—the *righteous*—need to live by faith. In chs 1-4, Paul repeatedly insists that only through faith can human beings be made right in God's sight.

1:18-3:20 Paul delays exploring the theme of righteousness through faith (see 3:21) until he first teaches about universal sinfulness. Gentiles (1:18-32) and Jews (2:1-3:8) are equally under sin's power and cannot find favor with God by any action of their own (3:9-20).

1:18 God's *anger* is not a spontaneous emotional outburst, but the holy God's necessary response to sin. The OT often depicts God's anger (Exod 32:10-12; Num 11:1; Jer 21:3-7) and predicts a decisive outpouring of God's wrath on human sin at the end of history. While Paul usually depicts God's anger as occurring in the end times (2:5; 8; 5:9; Col 3:6; 1 Thes 1:10), the present tense of *shows* refers to God's expressions of anger throughout human history. • *who suppress the truth by their wickedness*: Or *who, by their wickedness, prevent the truth from being known*.

²¹Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. ²²Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. ²³And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles.

²⁴So God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies. ²⁵They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen. ²⁶That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. ²⁷And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved.

²⁸Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done. ²⁹Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip. ³⁰They

are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They invent new ways of sinning, and they disobey their parents. ³¹They refuse to understand, break their promises, are heartless, and have no mercy. ³²They know God's justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die, yet they do them anyway. Worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too.

Jews are Accountable to God for Sin

(2:1–3:8)

The Jews and the Judgment of God

2You may think you can condemn such people, but you are just as bad, and you have no excuse! When you say they are wicked and should be punished, you are condemning yourself, for you who judge others do these very same things. ²And we know that God, in his justice, will punish anyone who does such things. ³Since you judge others for doing these things, why do you think you can avoid God's judgment when you do the same things? ⁴Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?

⁵But because you are stubborn and refuse to turn from your sin, you are storing up terrible punishment for yourself. For a day of anger is coming, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶He will judge everyone according to what they have

1:21
2 Kgs 17:15
Eph 4:17-18

1:22
Jer 10:14
1 Cor 1:20

1:23
Deut 4:15-19
Ps 106:20

1:24
Acts 14:16

1:26
1 Thes 4:5

1:27
Lev 18:22; 20:13
1 Cor 6:9

1:30
2 Tim 3:2

1:31
2 Tim 3:3

1:32
Rom 6:23

2:1
Matt 7:1

2:4
Rom 9:22
2 Pet 3:9, 15
¹metanoia (3341)
• 2 Tim 2:25

2:5
Ps 110:5
¹orge (3709)
• Rom 2:8

2:6
²Ps 62:12
Matt 16:27

2:7
Matt 25:46
2 Tim 4:14

1:21 To know God in Scripture usually means to have an intimate, saving relationship with him (see 2 Cor 5:16; Gal 4:9; Phil 3:8, 10). Here, however, they knew God means that people knew about God. All people have some understanding of God through creation, yet they do not do what is right based on that knowledge. Rather than learn more about God, they worship gods of their own making.

1:24 When human beings exchanged the living God for idols, God abandoned them, a point Paul makes twice more in this paragraph (1:26, 28). The word abandon includes a sense of “handing over,” suggesting that God actively consigns people to the consequences of their sin.

1:26 women turned against the natural way: In this context, natural way refers to the nature of the world as God made it. As in the OT, Paul singles out homosexuality as a key illustration of how people have fallen away from worship of the true God (see Gen 19:1-28; Lev 18:22; 20:13; Deut 23:17-18). God created human beings as male and female,

and engaging in homosexual activity is a violation of God's creative intention.

1:27 suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved: When people abandon the Creator's intentions, they are judged for their actions. This judgment can take many different forms, but the ultimate consequence is spiritual death (see 1:32).

1:28 thought it foolish: Sin affects our actions and even our thoughts. One of the serious consequences of turning away from God is an unsound mind; people can no longer use their minds as God intended.

1:29-31 This list of sins follows a popular Hellenistic literary form called a vice list. While not exhaustive, it reminds readers of various forms that evil might take.

1:32 To encourage others to sin is worse than sinning oneself (Jas 3:1; cp. Testament of Asher 6:2: “The two-faced are doubly punished because they both practice evil and approve of others who practice it; they imitate the spirits of error and join in the struggle against mankind”).

2:1-5 You is singular in the Greek. Here, the you is a hypothetical complacent Jew, who feels superior to Gentiles and in no danger of judgment. Paul adopts a popular Hellenistic style called a diatribe, in which a writer tries to win over an audience to his views by portraying a debate between himself and a hypothetical opponent. • these very same things: Paul's point is that Jews, like Gentiles, turn from God's revelation to go their own way.

2:4 Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin? Behind Paul's question are Jewish passages (e.g., Wisdom of Solomon 12–15; cp. Jer 7:1-5; Amos 5:18-27) that portray a prevalent Jewish complacency toward judgment. Many Jews thought that because they were God's people, they did not need to worry about judgment, for their sins would not be punished as the sins of Gentiles would be. Paul emphasizes that God's grace was intended to turn the Jews from their sin, not to condone a sinful lifestyle.

2:6-11 Paul uses a chiasm (“X” arrangement) to make his point:

2:8
2 Thes 2:12
^oorgē (3709)
• Eph 2:3

2:11
Gal 2:6
Eph 6:9
Col 3:25

2:12
^onomos (3551)
• Rom 7:7

2:13
Matt 7:21
John 13:17
Jas 1:22-25

2:14
Acts 10:35

2:16
Acts 10:42
Rom 16:25
2 Tim 2:8
^oeuangelion (2098)
• Rom 15:19

2:17
Mic 3:11

done. ⁷He will give eternal life to those who keep on doing good, seeking after the glory and honor and immortality that God offers.

⁸But he will pour out his ^aanger and wrath on those who live for themselves, who refuse to obey the truth and instead live lives of wickedness. ⁹There will be trouble and calamity for everyone who keeps on doing what is evil—for the Jew first and also for the Gentile. ¹⁰But there will be glory and honor and peace from God for all who do good—for the Jew first and also for the Gentile. ¹¹For God does not show favoritism.

¹²When the Gentiles sin, they will be destroyed, even though they never had God's written law. And the Jews, who do have God's ^blaw, will be judged by that ^blaw when they fail to obey it. ¹³For merely listen-

ing to the law doesn't make us right with God. It is obeying the law that makes us right in his sight. ¹⁴Even Gentiles, who do not have God's written law, show that they know his law when they instinctively obey it, even without having heard it. ¹⁵They demonstrate that God's law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right. ¹⁶And this is the ^cmessage I proclaim—that the day is coming when God, through Christ Jesus, will judge everyone's secret life.

The Limitations of the Covenant

¹⁷You who call yourselves Jews are relying on God's law, and you boast about your special relationship with him. ¹⁸You know what

Natural Revelation (1:19-21)

When God speaks to people directly through his word, we call it *special revelation*. God also speaks to all people indirectly in *natural revelation*, through the world of nature he has created. Psalm 19, for example, proclaims that knowledge of God in creation is universal (see Ps 19:1-4).

Sadly, however, a saving response to God is anything but universal. Paul teaches in Romans 1–3 that as a result of Adam's sin, all people turn away from the knowledge of God that they find in the created world. Apart from God's grace, natural revelation only condemns people; as Paul states in 1:20, "They have no excuse for not knowing God."

God can still use natural revelation to awaken people to the reality of the one true God. When accompanied and empowered by the grace of God, the beauty and intricacy of the world can stimulate a search for the Creator. Paul appealed to natural revelation in Athens (Acts 17:16-31) as a bridge to preaching the Good News. God's revelation in the natural world and in human nature can stimulate people to search for the true God. And then, through the special revelation he has given in Scripture and in his Son, Jesus Christ, people can come to know him and experience his salvation.

Ps 19:1-4
Acts 14:15-17;
17:24-29

- A God judges everyone the same (2:6)
- B Life is the reward for doing good (2:7)
- C Wrath is the penalty for evil (2:8)
- C' Wrath for doing evil (2:9)
- B' Life for doing good (2:10)
- A' God shows no favoritism (2:11)

2:7 *He will give eternal life to those who keep on doing good:* Paul makes it clear elsewhere that no one can receive eternal life except as God's gift through faith (3:20, 28; 4:1-8). Here, Paul is either referring to Christians whose good deeds (that result from faith) will be taken into account in God's judgment, or he is reminding readers of the absolute standard that God's own holiness establishes, since only by perfection can sinners hope to find acceptance before God. As the argument of the letter unfolds, Paul will show that no one is capable of meeting that standard.

2:8 *Live for themselves* translates a rare Greek word (*eritheia*) that seems to convey the idea of selfish ambition or strife.

Using this word, Aristotle scolded the politicians of his day for seeking public office for selfish gain rather than from a desire to serve the people (Aristotle, *Politics* 5.3; see also 2 Cor 12:20; Gal 5:20; Phil 1:17; 2:3; Jas 3:14, 16).

2:9 *also for the Gentile:* Literally *also for the Greek*; also in 2:10.

2:12 *destroyed:* This common NT word describes the fate of the wicked after death (see also 9:22; 14:15; 1 Cor 1:18; 15:18; 2 Cor 2:15; 4:3; Phil 1:28; 3:19; 2 Thes 2:10; 1 Tim 6:9). Condemned sinners do not cease to exist, but they suffer eternal punishment, which includes the everlasting destruction of all good in their identity and experience.

• *the Jews, who do have God's law:* The Jews were given the law of Moses, while the Gentiles *never had God's written law*. In the NT period, Jews emphasized their possession of the law as a mark of God's favor and even as a guarantee of salvation.

2:13 *obeying the law . . . makes us right in his sight:* Regarding the promise of

righteousness through obedience, see 2:7; see also Jas 1:22.

2:14-15 *The Gentiles who know his law when they instinctively obey it* may be Gentile Christians, especially since *written in their hearts* (2:15) alludes to the prophecy of the new covenant (Jer 31:31-34). Or they could be non-Christian Gentiles who know God's general moral law through their consciences. In this case, Paul would be using the notion of *natural law* to show how all people could be held accountable for certain basic moral requirements.

2:16 *secret life* (literally *the hidden things*): Scripture frequently stresses that God will judge people according to their thoughts and intentions (see 1 Sam 16:7; Ps 139:1-2; Jer 17:10).

2:17-20 The boasting of the *Jews* reflects OT and Jewish teaching about the privileges and responsibilities God gave to Israel. God gave *his law* to Israel, entered into a *special relationship* with them, and commissioned them to be a *light* to the Gentiles (see Isa 42:6-7).

he wants; you know what is right because you have been taught his law. ¹⁹You are convinced that you are a guide for the blind and a light for people who are lost in darkness. ²⁰You think you can instruct the ignorant and teach children the ways of God. For you are certain that God's law gives you complete knowledge and truth.

²¹Well then, if you teach others, why don't you teach yourself? You tell others not to steal, but do you steal? ²²You say it is wrong to commit adultery, but do you commit adultery? You condemn idolatry, but do you use items stolen from pagan temples? ²³You are so proud of knowing the law, but you dishonor God by breaking it. ²⁴No wonder the Scriptures say, "The Gentiles blaspheme the name of God because of you."

²⁵The Jewish ceremony of circumcision has value only if you obey God's law. But if you don't obey God's law, you are no better off than an uncircumcised Gentile. ²⁶And if the Gentiles obey God's law, won't God declare them to be his own people? ²⁷In fact, uncircumcised Gentiles who keep God's law will condemn you Jews who are circumcised and possess God's law but don't obey it.

²⁸For you are not a true Jew just because you were born of Jewish parents or because you have gone through the ceremony of circumcision. ²⁹No, a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not merely obeying the letter of the law; rather, it is a change of heart produced by God's Spirit. And a person with a changed heart seeks praise from God, not from people.

God's Faithfulness and the Judgment of Jews

3 Then what's the advantage of being a Jew? Is there any value in the ceremony of circumcision? ²Yes, there are great benefits! First of all, the Jews were entrusted with the whole revelation of God.

³True, some of them were unfaithful; but just because they were unfaithful, does that mean God will be unfaithful? ⁴Of course not! Even if everyone else is a liar, God is true. As the Scriptures say about him,

"You will be proved right in what you say, and you will win your case in court."

⁵"But," some might say, "our sinfulness serves a good purpose, for it helps people see how righteous God is. Isn't it unfair,

2:20
2 Tim 3:5
2:21
Matt 23:3-4
2:24
¹Isa 52:5
Ezek 36:20
2:25
Gal 5:3
2:28
Matt 3:9
John 8:39
Gal 6:15
2:29
Deut 30:6
John 5:44
Rom 7:6
2 Cor 3:6; 10:18
Phil 3:3
Col 2:11
1 Pet 3:4
3:2
Deut 4:7-8
Ps 147:19-20
Acts 7:38
3:4
¹Ps 51:4
3:5
Rom 5:8

Jews were not wrong to enjoy these blessings; their error was in failing to live up to their privileged position.

2:21-22 Paul again uses the diatribe style to expose the inconsistency of Jewish claims (see note on 2:1-5).

2:22 *do you use items stolen from pagan temples?* (literally *do you steal from temples?*): OT law prohibited Jews from having anything to do with pagan idols (see Deut 7:26), but first-century Jews did not strictly follow this law. Sometimes they stole idols and used or sold the precious metals.

2:24 Paul quotes Isa 52:5 (Greek version), where God's *name* is blasphemed because Israel is oppressed by pagan nations. Here, Paul uses that passage to demonstrate the failure of the Jews to live up to their responsibilities.

2:25 God instituted *the Jewish ceremony of circumcision* as a sign of his covenant with Abraham; it was to be performed on every male Israelite child (Gen 17:9-13; see Rom 4:11). Circumcision therefore represents God's covenant with his people Israel. The rite took on greater significance during the intertestamental period when the pagan king Antiochus IV Epiphanes tried to stamp out the Jewish faith by forbidding circumcision. The Jews resisted in the famous Maccabean Revolt (166–160 BC). After they restored the worship of the Lord in Israel, the Jews regarded circumcision as a highly

prized mark of Jewish loyalty in the midst of a pagan culture.

2:26 *won't God declare them to be his own people?* Paul might be speaking of Gentile Christians who are God's people because they obey God's law, or he could be speaking hypothetically about what would happen if a Gentile perfectly obeyed God's law.

2:29 *The letter of the law* refers to the law of God written on tablets of stone (see 2 Cor 3:3), while *God's Spirit* now writes his law on people's hearts (Jer 31:33-34). Outward conformity is thus contrasted with obedience motivated by *a change of heart*. • *seeks praise*: Or *receives praise*.

3:1 *what's the advantage of being a Jew?* Paul moves his argument along by raising questions. After preaching the Good News for over twenty years, he knew what questions people would ask when they heard a particular teaching. His emphasis on the equality of Jews and Gentiles before God (ch 2) inevitably led people to ask whether he was eliminating all Jewish privileges. The question-and-answer style follows the pattern of the diatribe (see note on 2:1-5).

3:2 The advantage that Jews possessed was in having received God's word. • *First of all*: Paul never adds a second or a third point to the list he begins here. He might have forgotten to continue the list, or *first of all* might mean

"most importantly." However, 9:4-5 provides a good indication of what a list of Jewish privileges would have included. • *the whole revelation of God* (literally *the oracles of God*): By using the word *oracles* (Greek *logia*), Paul highlights God's personal communication with his people (see Deut 33:9; Ps 105:19) through which he gives them special privileges and responsibilities.

3:4 *Of course not!* The Greek *mē genoito* is an emphatic negation, popular in the diatribe style that Paul uses here and in several other passages in Romans (see 3:6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11). • *As the Scriptures say*: Paul quotes Ps 51:4 (Greek version), where David confessed his sin in having an adulterous relationship with Bathsheba (see 2 Sam 11). God punished David, and David admitted that God was *proved right* and would *win his case in court*—his punishment was entirely just. God is faithful to what he has said in the past—his entire revelation—and his words warn of punishment for sin even as they promise reward for obedience.

3:5-7 *how would he be qualified to judge the world?* Abraham asked a similar question: "Should not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?" (Gen 18:25). God punishes all sin, and he retains absolute righteousness as he does so. Even when God makes use of human sin for his own ends, that sin still deserves to be, and will be, punished (see 9:10-24).

3:7
Rom 9:19
3:8
Rom 6:1
3:9
Rom 1:18–2:24
hamartia (0266)
• Rom 4:7
3:10-12
^aPs 14:1-3; 53:1-3
3:13
^aPs 5:9; 140:3
3:14
^aPs 10:7
3:15-17
^aIsa 59:7-8
3:18
^aPs 36:1
3:19
Rom 2:12
3:20
Ps 143:2
Rom 4:15; 7:7
Gal 2:16; 3:11
3:21
Gen 15:6
Rom 1:2, 17; 9:30
dikaïosunē (1343)
• Rom 4:3
3:22
Rom 4:11; 10:4, 12
Gal 2:16
Col 3:11
ἰστυεύω (4100)
• Rom 3:25

then, for him to punish us?" (This is merely a human point of view.) ⁶Of course not! If God were not entirely fair, how would he be qualified to judge the world? ⁷"But," someone might still argue, "how can God condemn me as a sinner if my dishonesty highlights his truthfulness and brings him more glory?" ⁸And some people even slander us by claiming that we say, "The more we sin, the better it is!" Those who say such things deserve to be condemned.

The Guilt of All Humanity (3:9-20)

⁹Well then, should we conclude that we Jews are better than others? No, not at all, for we have already shown that all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under the power of ^asin. ¹⁰As the Scriptures say,

- "No one is righteous—
not even one.
- ¹¹No one is truly wise;
no one is seeking God.
- ¹²All have turned away;
all have become useless.
No one does good,
not a single one."
- ¹³"Their talk is foul, like the stench from
an open grave.

- Their tongues are filled with lies."
"Snake venom drips from their lips."
- ¹⁴"Their mouths are full of cursing and
bitterness."
- ¹⁵"They rush to commit murder.
- ¹⁶Destruction and misery always follow
them.
- ¹⁷They don't know where to find
peace."
- ¹⁸"They have no fear of God at all."

¹⁹Obviously, the law applies to those to whom it was given, for its purpose is to keep people from having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God. ²⁰For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are.

Justification and the Righteousness of God (3:21-26)

²¹But now God has shown us a way to be made ^aright with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. ²²We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who ¹believes, no matter who we are.

3:8 some people even slander us: Paul is referring to misrepresentations about his teaching on justification by faith. If a person is made right with God by faith alone, through God's grace and apart from works, it could seem as if the Good News allows believers to sin because their sin is forgiven when confessed (see 6:1). One of Paul's purposes is to help the Roman Christians understand that such misunderstandings are without basis.

3:9 No, not at all: Paul's emphatic answer does not contradict his claim in 3:1-2 that Jews have an advantage. But that advantage has not done them any good because they have disobeyed God's word and incurred God's punishment. Jews, like Gentiles, have sinned against the revelation of God and stand condemned. • **or Gentiles:** Literally *or Greeks*. • **under the power of sin** (literally *under sin*): Being "under" something carries the sense of being under its power. The ultimate problem of human beings is not the fact of sin, but the more basic situation of being slaves to sin. The solution to this problem requires the liberation provided in Christ Jesus, who frees us from both the penalty and the power of sin.

3:10-18 The six quotations in these verses, drawn from various parts of the OT, all address human sinfulness. Paul follows the practice of rabbis who gathered together OT texts on similar

themes in a practice called *pearl-stringing*.

3:10-12 This quotation from Ps 14:1-3; 53:1-3 (Greek version) directly supports the argument that all people are under the power of sin.

3:13-14 Paul here refers to sins of speech, mentioning a different organ of speech in each of the four lines (*talk* in 3:13 is literally *throat*).

3:13 These quotations are from Ps 5:9 (Greek version); 140:3.

3:14 This quotation is from Ps 10:7 (Greek version).

3:15-17 In this quotation from Isa 59:7-8, Paul addresses sins against others.

3:18 This concluding quotation from Ps 36:1 neatly ties up the whole series (3:10-18) by referring to the same Greek words that introduced the first quotation (*ouk estin*, "they have no" and "no one is").

3:19 Paul speaks of the entire OT as *the law* (see also 1 Cor 9:8, 9; 14:21, 34; Gal 4:21). • **Those to whom it was given** (literally *those in the law*) were the Jews, who were given the Scriptures. • How can Paul conclude that *the entire world is guilty before God* on the basis of evidence from the OT that Jews are sinful? He argues "from the greater to the lesser": If the law shows that the Jews, God's own people, are guilty, then how much more are the Gentiles, who have

not had the benefit of God's instruction, also guilty.

3:20 By doing what the law commands refers to obeying the requirements of the law of Moses. While this phrase refers to Jews, the principle extends to all people. If Jews cannot be put in right relationship with God by obeying the law God gave them, certainly other people cannot establish such a relationship through good deeds.

3:21-4:25 Paul returns to the central theme of the *righteousness* of God that is revealed in Christ and is available to anyone who believes. The fundamental statement of this theology is in 3:21-26; Paul elaborates on it in 3:27-31, and illustrates it with the experience of Abraham in ch 4.

3:21-22 After a lengthy reminder of the power of sin (1:18-3:20), Paul returns to the theme presented in 1:17, *the way to be made right with God* (literally *the righteousness of God*). As in that verse, "the righteousness of God" is the way that God puts people in right relationship with himself. • **without keeping the requirements of the law** (literally *apart from the law*): The old covenant looked forward to the climactic revelation of God's righteousness in his Son. What God now accomplishes for us in Christ, he does apart from the covenant structure set up by the law of Moses (Heb 8:13). • **the writings of Moses:** Literally *the law*.

²³For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. ²⁴Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. ²⁵For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, ²⁶for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he declares sinners to be right in his sight when they believe in Jesus.

Justification "By Faith Alone" (3:27–4:25)
"By Faith Alone": Initial Statement

²⁷Can we boast, then, that we have done anything to be accepted by God? No, because our acquittal is not based on obeying the law. It is based on faith. ²⁸So we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law.

²⁹After all, is God the God of the Jews only? Isn't he also the God of the Gentiles? Of course he is. ³⁰There is only one God, and

he makes people right with himself only by faith, whether they are Jews or Gentiles. ³¹Well then, if we emphasize faith, does this mean that we can forget about the law? Of course not! In fact, only when we have faith do we truly fulfill the law.

"By Faith Alone": Abraham

4 Abraham was, humanly speaking, the founder of our Jewish nation. What did he discover about being made right with God? ²If his good deeds had made him acceptable to God, he would have had something to boast about. But that was not God's way. ³For the Scriptures tell us, "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith."

⁴When people work, their wages are not a gift, but something they have earned. ⁵But people are counted as righteous, not because of their work, but because of their faith in God who forgives sinners. ⁶David also spoke of this when he described the happiness of those who are declared righteous without working for it:

⁷"Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sins are put out of sight.

3:23
^{dōxa} (1391)
 • 1 Cor 11:7

3:24
 Eph 2:8
 Heb 9:12
^{charis} (5485)
 • Rom 5:2
^{apolutrōsis} (10629)
 • Rom 8:23

3:25
 Lev 16:10
 Heb 9:12-14
 1 Pet 1:19
 1 Jn 4:10
^{hilastērion} (2435)
 • Heb 2:17
^{pistis} (4102)
 • Rom 5:1

3:27
 Rom 2:17; 4:2
 1 Cor 1:29-31

3:28
 Acts 13:39

3:29
 Rom 10:12
 Gal 3:28

3:31
 Matt 5:17

4:2
 1 Cor 1:31

4:3
^{Gen} 15:6
 Gal 3:6
 Jas 2:23
^{dikaiosisunē} (1343)
 • Rom 4:9

4:4
 Rom 11:6
 Gal 2:16

3:24 undeserved kindness: God declares that we are righteous, not because he has to, but because he has freely chosen to give us his favor through Christ Jesus. Because we are helpless slaves of sin (3:9), our righteous status before God can never be earned (see 4:4-5). • **through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins** (literally through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus): In Paul's day, redemption referred to the price paid to free a slave. God paid our redemption price with the blood of his own Son to rescue us from our slavery to sin (see 3:9). This language was used in the OT to refer to the Exodus, the first redemption of God's people from bondage (see 2 Sam 7:23). God promised that he would again redeem his people (Hos 13:14; Mic 4:10).

3:25 the sacrifice for sin (Greek *hilastērion*): This Greek word is used in the Greek OT to refer to the "atonement cover," the cover that rested on the Ark of the Covenant in the inner sanctuary of the Tabernacle. The atonement cover was prominent in the Day of Atonement ritual (Lev 16) and came to stand for the atonement ceremony itself. Paul characterizes Jesus Christ as God's provision of final atonement for his people. Jesus himself satisfies, or absorbs in himself, the anger of God against all sinful people (see 1:18). • **those who**

sinned in times past: Paul refers to righteous OT people who were not punished for their sins as strict justice would require. Hebrews reminds us, "it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Heb 10:4). How, then, could God forgive people in the OT? Paul answers that Jesus' sacrifice works backward in history as well as forward—through Christ, God provided for the full satisfaction of his righteous anger against human sin.

3:29-30 Paul uses the foundational Jewish commitment to monotheism to argue for universal access to God's forgiveness. If **there is only one God**, then he is equally the God of both Jews and Gentiles. All people must be able to come to God on the same terms, through **faith**. • **whether they are Jews or Gentiles:** Literally *whether they are circumcised or uncircumcised*.

3:31 we truly fulfill the law: Paul knows that some people will object to his insistence on faith apart from the law because it seems to dismiss the demands of the law. However, **faith** actually enables people to **fulfill the law**. The Holy Spirit is given to those who have faith, and he makes it possible for people to do as they should.

4:1 Jews in Paul's day revered **Abraham** as Israel's **founder**. Some Jewish texts claim that Abraham never sinned

(*Prayer of Manasseh* 8; *Jubilees* 23:10). Others emphasize his obedience to the law of Moses as the basis for his relationship with God (*1 Maccabees* 2:52; *Sirach* 44:19-20). However, Paul demonstrates that Abraham's faith, not his obedience, established his status with God. Abraham's position as the founder of God's people demonstrates that justification by faith is central in God's plan.

4:3 Paul quotes Gen 15:6. In response to God's promise that he would have descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky, **Abraham believed God**. It was faith that established Abraham's relationship with God—not works (4:3-8), circumcision (4:9-12), the law (4:13-17), or the number of his descendants (4:18-21).

4:4-5 The logic of these verses is as follows: (1) The stated premise is that **when people work**, their pay is what **they have earned**, not a gift. (2) The unstated premise is that God is never indebted to his creatures (because they owe him everything), so anything he gives them is **a gift** (see also 9:14-16). (3) The conclusion is that therefore, people cannot be declared **righteous** before God because of their works.

4:7-8 This quotation from Ps 32:1-2 (Greek version) follows the Jewish custom of supporting a reference to the

4:7-8

*Ps 32:1-2

2 Cor 5:19

*makarios (3107)

* Titus 2:13

*hamartia (0266)

* Rom 5:12

4:9

Gen 15:6

Rom 3:30

*dikaiosunē (1343)

* Rom 5:17

4:11

Gen 17:10-11

*patēr (3962)

* 1 Cor 1:3

4:13

Gen 18:18; 22:17-18

Gal 3:29

4:14

Gal 3:18

4:15

Rom 3:20; 7:12

1 Cor 15:55-56

Gal 3:10

4:16

Gal 3:7

8 Yes, what joy for those whose record the LORD has cleared of "sin."

9 Now, is this blessing only for the Jews, or is it also for uncircumcised Gentiles? Well, we have been saying that Abraham was counted as righteous by God because of his faith. 10 But how did this happen? Was he counted as righteous only after he was circumcised, or was it before he was circumcised? Clearly, God accepted Abraham before he was circumcised!

11 Circumcision was a sign that Abraham already had faith and that God had already accepted him and declared him to be righteous—even before he was circumcised. So Abraham is the spiritual father of those who have faith but have not been

circumcised. They are counted as righteous because of their faith. 12 And Abraham is also the spiritual father of those who have been circumcised, but only if they have the same kind of faith Abraham had before he was circumcised.

13 Clearly, God's promise to give the whole earth to Abraham and his descendants was based not on his obedience to God's law, but on a right relationship with God that comes by faith. 14 If God's promise is only for those who obey the law, then faith is not necessary and the promise is pointless. 15 For the law always brings punishment on those who try to obey it. (The only way to avoid breaking the law is to have no law to break!)

16 So the promise is received by faith. It is given as a free gift. And we are all certain

God's Unified Plan of Salvation (3:21-26)

Rom 1:3-5, 16-17; 5:6-11; 8:1-4; 10:5-13; 11:26-27
Matt 1:21-23
Luke 1:46-55, 67-79
Acts 4:10-12; 10:34-43; 13:23-41
1 Cor 15:1-4
Gal 2:14-21; 3:5-14
Eph 1:3-14
Col 1:15-22
1 Tim 2:3-6
2 Tim 1:9-10
Heb 9:27-28

The continuity of God's unfolding plan of salvation is a central theme in Romans. In 3:21, Paul makes two important points about the new way of being "made right" with God that has been inaugurated in Jesus Christ. First, it does not depend on obeying the laws and regulations of the OT. Second, it was "promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets" (3:21). God has always planned to save the world through Jesus, and the entire OT was a preparation for that climactic moment in salvation history. In 1:2, Paul claims that "God promised this Good News long ago through his prophets in the holy Scriptures." Paul keeps returning to this theme of continuity, especially in chs 9–11, where he shows how God's dealings with Israel fit into that single, unfolding plan.

At the same time, Paul is also concerned to help us understand the discontinuity in God's single plan of salvation. That plan unfolds in stages. Now that the final stage in Christ has arrived, the prior stage—during which the law of Moses ruled over God's people—has been left behind. Paul repeatedly emphasizes that our new relationship with God stands separate from the law of Moses (see 6:14, 15; 7:4-6; 10:4). A similar point is made in John 1:17 and Heb 10:1. Paul's recurring focus in Romans on the nature of God's plan helps us to put the whole story of the Bible together in a way that honors both of its parts.

Law with a reference in the Prophets or the Writings. Paul also uses a Jewish exegetical technique of linking unrelated quotations with a key word. Here, *record . . . has cleared* translates the same Greek word as "counted" in 4:3.

4:9 *is this blessing only for the Jews, or is it also for uncircumcised Gentiles?* Literally *is this blessing only for the circumcised, or is it also for the uncircumcised?*

4:10 *God accepted Abraham before he was circumcised!* Paul's point is simple: God's declaration of Abraham's righteousness in Gen 15:6 could not have been based on his circumcision, which happened later (Gen 17). This point further demonstrates that God's acceptance and blessing is a free gift and not earned by works.

4:11-12 When God instituted circumcision, he called it "a sign of the covenant" between himself and Abraham (Gen

17:11). The covenant was *already* in place (Gen 12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-8) *even before Abraham was circumcised* (Gen 17:9-14). This shows that the covenant was based on faith, not circumcision. *So Abraham is the spiritual father of all people, whether circumcised (Jews) or uncircumcised (Gentiles), who have the same kind of faith Abraham had—that is, faith in God's promises* (4:13-25).

4:13 *the whole earth:* God told Abraham that he would be the father of many nations (4:17; Gen 12:2; 13:16; 15:5; 17:4-6, 16-20; 22:17) and that he would be the means of blessing to all people (Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; cp. Isa 55:3-5).

4:14 *then faith is not necessary* (literally *faith is emptied*): If works of obedience can be substituted for faith, then "faith is emptied" of its importance. Believing in God means acknowledging our unworthiness and depending entirely on God's mercy.

4:15 *The only way to avoid breaking the law is to have no law to break!* (literally *where there is no law, neither is there transgression*): Paul always uses the word "transgression" to denote disobedience of a clear commandment of God (see also 2:23; 5:14; Gal 3:19; 1 Tim 2:14). Transgression only exists where the law exists, which is why *the law always brings punishment*. The law that God gave to the Israelites specified requirements in great detail, which made the people more accountable for sin than before. So when they inevitably disobeyed the law, God brought more severe punishment upon them.

4:16 *whether or not we live according to the law of Moses* (literally *not only those who are of the law*): The Jews were *of the law* in that their covenant with God included the law of Moses and they were to live according to it.

to receive it, whether or not we live according to the law of Moses, if we have faith like Abraham's. For Abraham is the father of all who believe. ¹⁷That is what the Scriptures mean when God told him, "I have made you the father of many nations." This happened because Abraham believed in the God who ¹brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing.

¹⁸Even when there was no reason for hope, Abraham kept hoping—believing that he would become the father of many nations. For God had said to him, "That's how many descendants you will have!" ¹⁹And Abraham's faith did not weaken, even though, at about 100 years of age, he figured his body was as good as dead—and so was Sarah's womb.

²⁰Abraham never wavered in believing God's promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. ²¹He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises. ²²And because of Abraham's faith, God counted him as righteous. ²³And when God counted him as righteous, it wasn't just for Abraham's benefit. It was recorded ²⁴for our benefit, too, assuring us that God will also count us as righteous if we believe in him, the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised to life to make us ⁸right with God.

3. THE ASSURANCE PROVIDED BY THE GOSPEL: THE HOPE OF SALVATION (5:1–8:39)

The Hope of Glory (5:1-21)

From Justification to Salvation

5 Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by ^hfaith, we have ⁱpeace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. ²Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved ⁱprivilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully ^klook forward to sharing God's glory.

³We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. ⁴And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. ⁵And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his ^alove.

⁶When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. ⁷Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. ⁸But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. ⁹And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation.

4:17
^aGen 17:5
 Isa 48:13
 John 5:21
 1 Cor 1:28
 ζῶποιος (2227)
ⁱ Rom 8:11
 4:18
⁸Gen 15:5
 4:19
 Gen 17:17; 18:11
 Heb 11:11
 4:22
²Gen 15:6
 Rom 4:3
 4:24
 1 Pet 1:21
 4:25
 Isa 53:4-5
 Rom 8:32
 1 Cor 15:17
 2 Cor 5:15
 1 Pet 1:21
^kδικαιοσύνη (1347)
ⁱ Rom 5:18
 5:1
 Acts 10:36
 Rom 3:28
^hπίστις (4102)
ⁱ Rom 10:17
^aεἰρήνη (1515)
ⁱ Rom 8:6
 5:2
 Eph 2:18; 3:12
^hχαρὶς (5485)
ⁱ Rom 5:21
^kἑλπίς (1680)
ⁱ Rom 8:24
 5:3
 Matt 5:12
 Jas 1:2-3
 5:5
 2 Cor 1:22
 Gal 4:6
 Eph 1:13
 Phil 1:20
^aἀγάπη (0026)
ⁱ Rom 8:39
 5:6
 Gal 4:4
 Eph 5:2

4:17 This quotation is from Gen 17:5.
 4:18 This quotation is from Gen 15:5.
 4:24 raised . . . from the dead: Abraham experienced the life-giving power of God in the birth of his son, Isaac. Christians witness it in the resurrection of Jesus. Throughout history, salvation has been available only through faith in God, who makes and keeps his promises.
 5:1–8:39 Paul now turns from the Good News about how people enter a relationship with God to the security of that relationship. Christians have a strong and unassailable promise because of God's work in Christ, God's love for them, and the power of the Holy Spirit. This theme frames the teaching of these chapters (5:1-11; 8:18-39) as Paul grounds that promise in the transfer of believers from the realm of Adam to the realm of Christ (5:12-21). No power—whether sin (ch 6), the law (ch 7), or death (8:1-13)—"will ever be able to separate us from the love of God" (8:39).
 5:1 we have peace: In many manuscripts, the underlying Greek verb

is indicative, as translated here. A number of other manuscripts use the subjunctive instead (*let us have peace*).
 • Peace with God does not refer to a mere feeling of peacefulness but to a real situation of peace. It is the end of hostilities between God and sinful human beings when they believe in Jesus Christ and the state of blessing and salvation that God promised his people in the end (see Isa 9:6-7; 52:7; Ezek 34:25; Nah 1:15).
 5:2 undeserved privilege (or grace): So basic is God's grace (Greek *charis*) that Paul can use the word to sum up our present situation as believers. • Where we now stand indicates that God's grace is needed throughout the Christian life, not just at the beginning. • Sharing God's glory describes the content of Christian hope, which Paul introduces here and expounds more fully in 8:18-30. Behind Paul's use of the word *glory* (Greek *doxa*) is the Hebrew word *kabod*, which depicts God's majesty and overwhelming presence (see "The Glory of God" at Exod 24:15-17, p. 167). The prophets predict a day when God's glory will return to dwell in the midst of his people (see, e.g., Isa 60:1-2).

5:3-4 See also Jas 1:2-4; 1 Pet 1:6-7. The similarities in these passages indicate early Christian teaching common to all three of these writers.
 5:5 this hope will not lead to disappointment (literally will not put to shame): In the OT, shame sometimes refers to a negative verdict from God's judgment (e.g., Isa 28:16, quoted in Rom 9:33). • he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love: See Jer 31:33-34; Acts 2:17-21.
 5:6 At just the right time might mean that God sent Christ at the time appointed in history, or that our condition as utterly helpless was the right time for God to demonstrate his love by sending his Son on our behalf.
 5:9 The blood of Christ refers to Jesus' sacrificial death (3:25). In the Scriptures, *blood* is shorthand for a violent death (Lev 17:11), especially when that death atones for sins. • he will certainly save us from God's condemnation: Paul frequently speaks of salvation as the final deliverance of believers from God's wrath and the tribulations of this life (see 13:11).

5:8
John 3:16
1 Jn 4:10

5:9
Rom 1:18; 2:5, 8

5:10
Rom 8:34
2 Cor 5:18-19
Eph 2:3
^a*katalassō* (2644)
• Rom 5:11

5:11
^a*katalagē* (2643)
• Rom 11:15

5:12
Gen 3:1-19
1 Cor 15:21-22
^a*hamartia* (0266)
• Rom 6:1

5:14
^a*typos* (5179)
• 1 Cor 10:6

5:17
1 Cor 15:21
^a*dikaiousinē* (1343)
• Rom 5:21

5:18
1 Cor 15:22
^a*dikaiosis* (1347)
• 1 Cor 15:34

10For since our friendship with God was ^brestored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. ¹¹So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has ^cmade us friends of God.

The Reign of Grace and Life

¹²When Adam sinned, ^dsin entered the world. Adam's ^esin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.

¹³Yes, people sinned even before the law was given. But it was not counted as sin because there was not yet any law to break. ¹⁴Still, everyone died—from the time of Adam to the time of Moses—even those who did not disobey an explicit commandment of God, as Adam did. Now Adam is a ^esymbol, a representation of Christ, who was yet to come.

¹⁵But there is a great difference between Adam's sin and God's gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ. ¹⁶And the result of God's gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man's sin. For Adam's sin led to condemnation, but God's free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins. ¹⁷For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of ^frighteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.

¹⁸Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a ^gright relationship

God's Grace (5:15-17, 20-21)

The grace of God is theological bedrock for Paul. He never tries to prove that God is gracious, but he assumes it as a fact when presenting the Good News to the Romans (see 3:24; 4:4-5, 16; 5:2, 15-21; 6:14-15; 11:5-6). Paul rules out any idea that we merit our salvation, because God acts by his grace (4:4-5). Our good works do not give us right standing with God—if they did, God would be obliged to reward us for our efforts, just as a worker earns a wage. Instead, he gives salvation as a gift to those he has chosen (11:5-6). Grace is so important to the Christian experience that Paul can refer simply to our “standing in” grace (cp. 5:2) and to our living under the power of grace (6:14-15). Grace now rules over us in the new age of redemption (5:20-21).

The apostle John makes the same point: “The law was given through Moses, but God's unending love [grace] and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). Neither John nor Paul meant that God's grace was not active in the OT, because God has always dealt graciously with his people. But the overwhelming power of God's grace is displayed for us in and through Jesus Christ.

Rom 12:6
Exod 34:5-7
Ezra 9:8
Ps 84:11
Isa 60:10
Hos 14:1-9
Acts 15:11; 20:24
2 Cor 8:9; 12:9
Eph 1:6-7; 2:5-9
2 Tim 1:9
Titus 2:11; 3:7
Heb 4:16; 13:9
Jas 4:6
1 Pet 5:12

5:10 *saved through the life of his Son:* Believers already share in the new life that Christ provided through his resurrection (6:11). Through this vital connection with Christ, believers will also be spared from God's wrath in the last day (see also Col 3:4).

5:12 *Adam* is both the name of the original man, Adam, and a Hebrew word that means “human.” Paul emphasizes the solidarity of *Adam* with the human race. • *sin entered the world:* The significance that Paul ascribes to this act, and the parallel that he draws between Adam's sin and Christ's act of obedience on the cross, makes clear that Paul views Adam and his sin in the Garden of Eden as historical fact. • *everyone sinned:* Death is universal because sin is universal. It is not clear when or how everyone sinned, but Paul later attributes the condemnation of all people to the sin of Adam, their representative (5:18). • Jewish tradition

is divided on the relationship between *Adam's sin* and the sin and death of human beings generally. Some texts emphasize a solidarity between Adam and all other people, as in “when Adam sinned a death was decreed against those who were to be born” (2 *Baruch* 23:4). Other texts insist that people die because of their own sin: “Adam is, therefore, not the cause, except only for himself, but each of us had become our own Adam” (2 *Baruch* 54:19).

5:13-14 Paul continues his explanation of “everyone sinned” (5:12) by stating that people who died between the times of Adam and Moses were not subject to specific commandments from God. Therefore, their condemnation was not only because of their own sin. It was because of their union with Adam, who sinned by violating *an explicit commandment of God*.

5:15 Paul uses the word *many* in contrast with *one*. *Many* does not

always mean *all*, but it can include all people if the context suggests it. Clearly, the many who suffer death because of *Adam* includes everyone (see 5:12), but Paul makes it clear elsewhere that the *many* who receive the *gift of forgiveness* through *Jesus Christ*, sadly, does not include everyone (see 11:1-5).

5:17 Both *Adam* and *Jesus Christ* committed a single act whose influence extends to all the people that they represent. Adam represents all people. People must *receive the gift of righteousness* to be represented by Christ.

5:18 *Christ's one act of righteousness* refers to his death on the cross, a righteous act because Christ chose to die in obedience to the Father's will (see John 10:18). • *new life for everyone:* Paul is not teaching that all people will experience the new life that Christ won through his death on the cross. New life is available to everyone through Christ, but not everyone receives it.

with God and new life for everyone. ¹⁹Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous.

²⁰God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful grace became more abundant. ²¹So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful ^hgrace rules instead, giving us ⁱright standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Freedom from Bondage to Sin (6:1-23)
"Dead to Sin" through Union with Christ*

6 Well then, should we keep on ⁱsinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful ^kgrace? ²Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? ³Or have you forgotten that when we were ^ajoined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we ^ajoined him in his death? ⁴For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

⁵Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was. ⁶We know that our old sinful selves

were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. ⁷For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. ⁸And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with him. ⁹We are sure of this because Christ was raised from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. ¹⁰When he died, he died once to break the power of sin. But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God. ¹¹So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus.

¹²Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires. ¹³Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. ¹⁴Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace.

Freed from Sin's Power to Serve Righteousness

¹⁵Well then, since God's grace has set us free from the law, does that mean we can go on sinning? Of course not! ¹⁶Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever

5:19
Phil 2:8

5:20
Rom 4:15; 7:8
Gal 3:19

5:21
Rom 6:23
^hcharis (5485)
‣ Rom 6:1
ⁱdikaiosisunē (1343)
‣ Rom 8:10

6:1
Rom 3:5-8
^hhamartia (0266)
‣ Rom 7:8
^hcharis (5485)
‣ Gal 1:15

6:2
Rom 8:13
Col 2:20; 3:3

6:3
Gal 3:27
^abaptizō (0907)
‣ 1 Cor 12:13

6:4
Eph 4:22-24
Col 2:12; 3:10

6:5
Phil 3:10-11
Col 2:12; 3:1

6:6
Gal 2:20; 5:24
Col 2:12

6:7
1 Pet 4:1

6:9
Acts 2:24

6:10
Heb 7:27

6:11
Rom 7:4
Col 2:20; 3:3

6:13
Rom 12:1
2 Cor 5:14

5:20 Many Jews believed that the giving of the law to Israel reversed or mitigated the negative effects of Adam's sin, but Paul says that God's law magnified and illuminated their sins.

6:1 *Well then:* Because Paul has just proclaimed that God multiplies grace where sin increases (5:20), he knows that people will wonder whether this means that sin does not matter in the Christian life.

6:2 *we have died to sin:* As Paul makes clear in 6:3-10, our new relationship to sin is possible because of our vital connection with the death of Jesus. Just as dying means entrance into an entirely new state of being, our relationship with sin is now different because of Christ's death. To be "dead to sin" does not mean to be entirely insensitive to sin and temptation—believers are still involved in a battle with sin (6:12-14). However, Christians no longer have to live as helpless slaves to sin; they can choose not to sin (6:6, 14, 16-22).

6:3 *Baptism* is the rite of initiation into the Christian faith (see "Baptism" at Acts 2:38, 41, p. 1828). It sometimes symbolizes the entire conversion experience, so Paul refers to baptism as the means through which believers are

joined to Christ in his death and resurrection (see also 6:4). However, baptism has no value apart from faith.

6:4 *we died and were buried with Christ:* The believer's power over sin and the ability to lead a new life stem from identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (see 6:5, 8). From God's perspective, Jesus' death to sin (see 6:10) is ours as well. His rising to new life means that we also begin to lead a new life, and in the future our bodies will also be raised.

6:6 *our old sinful selves:* Our "old selves" are not a nature that we possess or just one part of who we are; it reflects who we were in Adam. All human beings were born "in Adam." As heirs of the sin and death that he introduced into the world (5:12), we were slaves to the power of sin. But as people who are now in Christ, we have gone through crucifixion with him (see also Gal 2:20). When he died on the cross, we also died to the dominating power of sin that ruled in our former selves.

6:8 *We will also live with him* refers to bodily resurrection with Christ (see 6:5). While believers are already raised with Christ spiritually (Eph 2:5-6; Col 2:13), we will also be raised bodily with him

at the time of his coming in glory (2 Cor 4:14; Phil 3:21; 1 Thes 4:17; 2 Tim 2:11).

6:10 *he died once to break the power of sin:* Because we died with Jesus (6:4-5), we have also died to sin (6:2). Jesus was never under sin's power in the way that we are, because he had no sin nature from Adam and he never succumbed to temptation (2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15). However, when he became human, he entered the arena where sin holds sway, and he was truly vulnerable to sin.

6:12 *Do not let sin control the way you live: Or Do not let sin reign in your body, which is subject to death.*

6:14 *you no longer live under the requirements of the law:* With the Messiah's coming, the era governed by the law of Moses came to an end (see Gal 3:19-25). • *you live under the freedom of God's grace:* God's dealings with his people have always been characterized by grace, but grace dominates the new era in which Christians live in Christ. Cp. John 1:17.

6:15 *set us free from the law:* The law of Moses was the governing power of the old covenant era. Believers now live under the governing power of Christ himself.

6:14
Gal 5:18

6:16
John 8:34
2 Pet 2:19

6:17
2 Tim 1:13

6:18
John 8:32

6:19
^b*hagiasmos* (0038)
• Rom 6:22

6:20
^c*doulos* (1401)
• 1 Cor 7:22

6:22
John 8:32
1 Cor 7:22
1 Pet 1:9; 2:16
^a*hagiasmos* (0038)
• 1 Cor 1:30

6:23
John 3:16-21
Gal 6:8

7:2
1 Cor 7:39

7:3
Luke 16:18

you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living. ¹⁷Thank God! Once you were slaves of sin, but now you wholeheartedly obey this teaching we have given you. ¹⁸Now you are free from your slavery to sin, and you have become slaves to righteous living.

¹⁹Because of the weakness of your human nature, I am using the illustration of slavery to help you understand all this. Previously, you let yourselves be slaves to impurity and lawlessness, which led ever deeper into sin. Now you must give yourselves to be slaves to righteous living so that you will become ^bholly.

²⁰When you were ^cslaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right. ²¹And what was the result? You are now ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end

in eternal doom. ²²But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to ⁴holiness and result in eternal life. ²³For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Freedom from Bondage to the Law (7:1-25) Released from the Law, Joined to Christ

7 Now, dear brothers and sisters—you who are familiar with the law—don't you know that the law applies only while a person is living? ²For example, when a woman marries, the law binds her to her husband as long as he is alive. But if he dies, the laws of marriage no longer apply to her. ³So while her husband is alive, she would be committing adultery if she married another man. But if her husband dies, she is free from that

The Old Realm and the New (5:12–8:39)

Jews in Paul's day perceived a contrast between the “present evil age” and a “glorious age to come.” Throughout Rom 5–8, Paul uses these contrasting realms to conceptualize our experience of salvation. The old realm is ruled by death (5:12-21), sin (ch 6), the law (ch 7), and sinful nature (8:1-11). The new realm is characterized by life (ch 5), righteous living (ch 6), grace (ch 6), and the Holy Spirit (ch 8). People's destinies are controlled by the realm to which they belong.

Each realm is headed by a man who represents its constituents. The old realm of sin and death is headed by Adam, the first man, while the new realm of forgiveness and life is headed by Christ. By nature, all human beings are in the old realm of sin and death and are represented by Adam, the first man—whose sin and death control the destiny of all people (5:12, 18-19). Those who put their faith in God through Christ are transferred by faith into the new realm of life. God appointed Jesus Christ as a “second Adam” (see 5:14). By obeying God and fulfilling God's will, Jesus won a decisive victory over the realm of sin that Adam had inaugurated (5:18-19). By receiving God's gift of grace (5:17), people accept Jesus as their head and look forward to eternal life.

Those who are in the new realm are identified with Christ and enjoy the benefits of union with him. They have “died with Christ,” they have been “buried with Christ,” and their present new life with Christ is an anticipation of the day when they will “live with him” forever (6:3-10).

Rom 14:17
Ps 2:1-10; 110:2;
145:13
Dan 2:31-45; 7:1-28
Matt 3:2; 6:10; 7:13;
8:11-12; 12:25-28;
13:44-52; 20:25-28
John 18:36
1 Cor 6:9-11;
15:20-28
Gal 5:16-26
Eph 1:3, 20; 2:6;
5:1-20
Col 1:13-14
Heb 6:4-5; 12:18-29
Rev 11:15; 12:10

6:16 righteous living (Greek *dikaio-sunē*, “righteousness”): In the first part of Romans, Paul uses this Greek word in a judicial sense, referring (1) to the activity of God to set people in a right relationship with himself or (2) to the righteous standing that believers enjoy as a result of Christ's work (see, e.g., 1:17; 3:21-22; 4:3, 5). Here, Paul uses the same word as it is often used in the OT, meaning the right behavior that God demands from his people.

6:19 Paul uses the Greek word *sarx* (*human nature*, or *flesh*) to refer to the frailty and proneness to sin that characterizes humans. Paul uses the *illustration of slavery* to show the relationship of the human nature to sin.

6:20 free from the obligation to do right (literally *free from righteousness*): Paul

means either that unbelievers feel no obligation to obey God or that they are unable to do so. But the freedom that they boast of actually makes them slaves to sin.

6:21 eternal doom (literally *death*): Throughout chs 5–8, Paul uses *death* to describe the eternal consequences of sin (5:12, 14, 15, 17, 21; 6:16, 23; 7:5, 9-10, 13, 24; 8:2, 6, 13). The language goes back to God's warning to Adam and Eve (Gen 2:17). This death is not primarily physical death; it denotes separation from the fellowship of God that, if not reversed through faith in Christ, will last forever.

7:1 brothers and sisters: Literally *brothers*; also in 7:4. See note on 1:13. • Both Jewish Christians and many of the Gentile Christians were *familiar with the*

law. Jews were taught the law of Moses from birth. Many of the Gentiles in the church at Rome had been God-fearers, Gentiles who were interested in Judaism and attended the synagogue regularly. • *the law applies only while a person is living*: Paul may be paraphrasing a rabbinic saying: “If a person is dead, he is free from the Torah and the fulfilling of the commandments” (*Babylonian Shabbat* 30a; *baraita Shabbat* 151).

7:2-3 These verses are not an allegory, in which every element of the story has a theological counterpart. Paul simply cites an illustration to make two basic points: Death can release a person from obligation to the law, and freedom from one relationship can allow a person to establish a new one. Paul applies the illustration in 7:4.

law and does not commit adultery when she remarries.

⁴So, my dear brothers and sisters, this is the point: You died to the power of the law when you died with Christ. And now you are united with the one who was raised from the dead. As a result, we can produce a harvest of good deeds for God. ⁵When we were controlled by our old nature, sinful desires were at work within us, and the law aroused these evil desires that produced a harvest of sinful deeds, resulting in death. ⁶But now we have been released from the law, for we died to it and are no longer captive to its power. Now we can serve God, not in the old way of obeying the letter of the law, but in the new way of living in the Spirit.

The History and Experience of Jews under the Law

⁷Well then, am I suggesting that the ^elaw of God is sinful? Of course not! In fact, it was the ^elaw that showed me my sin. I would never have known that coveting is wrong if the ^elaw had not said, “You must not covet.” ⁸But ^fsin used this command to arouse all kinds of covetous desires within me! If there were no law, ^fsin would not have that power. ⁹At one time I lived without understanding the law. But when I learned the

command not to covet, for instance, the power of sin came to life, ¹⁰and I died. So I discovered that the law’s commands, which were supposed to bring life, brought spiritual death instead. ¹¹Sin took advantage of those commands and deceived me; it used the commands to kill me. ¹²But still, the ^glaw itself is holy, and its commands are holy and right and good.

¹³But how can that be? Did the law, which is good, cause my death? Of course not! Sin used what was good to bring about my condemnation to death. So we can see how terrible sin really is. It uses God’s good commands for its own evil purposes.

¹⁴So the trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good. The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin. ¹⁵I don’t really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don’t do it. Instead, I do what I hate. ¹⁶But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows that I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷So I am not the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.

¹⁸And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can’t. ¹⁹I want to do what is good, but I don’t. I don’t want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. ²⁰But if I

7:4
Rom 6:6; 8:2
Gal 5:18
Col 2:14
1 Pet 2:24

7:5
Rom 6:21; 8:8
Gal 5:19-21

7:6
2 Cor 3:6
Gal 5:22
Phil 3:3

7:7
^aExod 20:17
^bDeut 5:21
Rom 4:15
^cnomos (3551)
‣ Rom 7:12

7:8
Rom 4:15
^dhamartia (0266)
‣ Rom 8:2

7:10
Lev 18:5
Rom 10:5
2 Cor 3:7
Gal 3:12

7:11
Gen 3:13
Heb 3:13

7:12
1 Tim 1:8
^enomos (3551)
‣ Rom 8:2

7:14
1 Kgs 21:20-25
Rom 3:9; 6:6

7:15
Gal 5:17

7:18
Gen 6:5; 8:21
John 3:6
Rom 8:3

7:4 Christians have *died to the power of the law* (literally *died to the law*) and so are no longer bound to it. Paul often refers to the law of Moses as representing the old regime of sin and death, but through union with Christ in his death, believers are set free.

7:5 *When we were controlled by our old nature* (literally *When we were in the flesh*): Although “flesh” can refer to the human body in a neutral sense (see 8:3, which speaks of Christ coming “in the flesh”), Paul more often uses the word negatively, to denote human existence apart from God. To be “in the flesh” is to be dominated by sin and its hostility to God. • *the law aroused these evil desires*: The law of God is a good thing in itself (see 7:12), but it arouses sinful tendencies by provoking the rebellion that is in people’s hearts. When we are in rebellion against God, his commands spark in us a desire to do the exact opposite of what he commands.

7:6 *the letter of the law* (literally *the letter*): Paul uses the word *letter* to refer to the law, which was engraved on tablets of stone and consisted of individual letters (see 2:29; 2 Cor 3:5-7).

7:7-25 *Well then* (see note on 6:1): Paul has just said some rather negative things about the law, and he now explains how God’s law is good in order

to guard against any notion that it is evil in itself.

7:7 “*You must not covet*”: See Exod 20:17; Deut 5:21.

7:8 *sin used this command* (literally *sin took an opportunity through this command*): The word *opportunity* is a military term for a position seized in enemy territory that becomes a base of operations (see 7:11). By expressing God’s demands, the commandments stimulate rebellion in sinful human beings. The commandments of God become an occasion for sin to accomplish its deadly purposes. • *sin would not have that power*: The law, by clearly expressing God’s will, makes people more accountable than they would be without it. The law of Moses did not solve Israel’s sin problem but exposed and exacerbated it. This is always the effect that God’s law, by itself, has on sinful human beings.

7:9 *At one time I lived without understanding the law*: Paul might be referring to his early childhood, before he came to understand the full demands of the law. • *But when I learned the command*: Paul’s experience with the law as he grew to maturity exemplifies every person’s experience with it. With the law, we have greater accountability to God, which brings the *power of sin* to life, and

the result is greater judgment (7:10; see 4:15; 5:14, 20).

7:10 *which were supposed to bring life*: The OT promised a blessed and secure life to those who obeyed the law (e.g., Lev 18:5, quoted in Rom 10:5). However, human beings inherit from Adam a strong tendency to sin. Therefore, when God’s commands come to us, we do not naturally obey them, but resist and disobey them. Instead of bringing life, the law only confirms and exposes our lost and helpless condition. We need a change of heart that the law cannot provide.

7:11 *Sin . . . deceived me*: The language is reminiscent of Gen 3:13—Paul might be thinking of the Fall.

7:17 *I am not the one doing wrong*: Paul is not evading responsibility for his sin (see also 7:20). Rather, he is saying that because he genuinely wants to do what the law commands, some other factor must be causing him to do just the opposite. That factor is *sin living in me*. Paul experiences a divide between his will and his actions.

7:18 *my sinful nature* (literally *my flesh*; also in 7:25): This phrase could refer to Paul’s former state as an unredeemed person or to a part of Paul that remains tied to the world and resists the will of God. See note on 6:19.

7:21
Rom 8:2

7:22
Ps 1:2; 40:8

7:23
Gal 5:17
Jas 4:1
1 Pet 2:11

7:25
1 Cor 15:57

8:2
Gal 2:19; 5:1
^hnomos (3551)
• Rom 10:4
^hhamartia (0266)
• Rom 14:23

8:3
2 Cor 5:21
Heb 2:14; 4:15

do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.

²¹I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. ²²I love God's law with all my heart. ²³But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. ²⁴Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? ²⁵Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I

really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin.

Assurance of Eternal Life in the Spirit (8:1-30)

The Spirit of Life

8 So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. ²And because you belong to him, the ^hpower of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the ^hpower of ⁱsin that leads to death. ³The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his

The Limitations of Law (7:1-25)

Rom 2:13-29; 3:19-21, 27-28; 4:13-16; 8:3-4, 7; 9:4, 31-32; 10:3-5
Deut 4:44-45; 5:1-33; 6:17-25
Josh 24:19-27
1 Kgs 2:3
Ezra 7:25-26
Ps 1:1-3; 19:7-14; 78:56-59; 119:36, 79, 88, 144
Isa 24:5; 26:4-8
Jer 31:33-34
Hos 4:6; 8:12
Hab 1:4
Matt 5:17-20; 7:12; 22:36-40
Mark 7:8-9; 12:28-34
Luke 16:16-17
John 1:16-17; 7:19
Acts 13:38-39
Gal 2:16-21; 3:2, 10-13, 17-25; 5:1-4
1 Tim 1:5-11
Heb 7:18-19; 8:7-13; 10:1-18
1 Jn 3:4-6

The law was central to God's old covenant with the people of Israel, and many Jews in Paul's day still saw it as critical to how God's people lived. Therefore, in Romans, Paul frequently deals with questions about the law. The pinnacle of his treatment comes in Rom 7, where Paul powerfully argues that the law of Moses, rather than having a positive effect on people's lives, stimulated sin and brought death (7:5).

Paul wants us to realize that the law is not at fault. God's law is good and holy (7:12), but it is powerless to change the human heart. Whether we conclude that Paul (in 7:14-25) is describing the experience of an unbeliever, a mature believer, or an immature believer, the point remains that human sin cannot be overcome by the law. God's law is given to people who, because of their connection with Adam, are already locked under sin's power. They may want to do what God tells them, but they find that they cannot (7:15-20). Deliverance can come only through a new and radical experience of God's power and grace in Jesus Christ (7:25). Through God's Spirit, Jesus rescues us "from the power of sin that leads to death" (8:2).

If God's good and holy law cannot rescue us from our predicament and save us, how much less helpful are all human laws that people rely on for religious or spiritual well-being. Whether those laws come from a religious figure, a tradition we have inherited, or a church we attend, none of them can change the human soul. They can tell us what to do, but they cannot empower us to do it. God's law can provide guidelines in the new life God has given us by grace, but it can never substitute for the power of God's grace, made available through the work of Christ.

7:21 principle of life (literally *law*): Paul is referring to a regular occurrence, such as when we speak of the "law of gravity." The struggle between wanting to *do what is right* and instead doing *what is wrong* reveals a regular pattern operating in the human sphere.

7:22 with all my heart (literally *in my inner person*): The Greeks used this phrase to denote the spiritual or immortal side of human beings (cp. 2 Cor 4:16; Eph 3:16).

7:23 another power. . . . This power (literally *another law. . . . This law*): Paul plays on the word *law* in these verses. Opposed to God's law (7:22) is another law, a ruling *power* that prevents Paul from submitting to God's law even though he fully agrees with it.

7:24 this life that is dominated by sin and death (literally *this body of death*): Sin is so invasive that it affects the

whole person, particularly our interactions in the physical world.

8:1 So now there is no condemnation: Paul concludes from the argument of chs 5–7 that neither sin (ch 6) nor the law (ch 7) can keep believers from having eternal life (ch 5). Paul can triumphantly proclaim that *those who belong to Christ Jesus* need not fear that they will be condemned for their sins.

8:2 you belong . . . freed you: Some manuscripts read *I belong . . . freed me*. A scribe might have changed an original *you* into *I/me* at some point. • **the power** (literally *the law*) of the *life-giving Spirit*: This reference to *power* or *law* could refer to the law of Moses, which the Spirit can use to produce life. But because Paul does not portray the law as a life-giving entity, "law" here, as in 7:23, probably means *principle* or *power*. The Holy Spirit is a power that frees the believer from *the power*

(literally *the law*) of *sin that leads to death*.

8:3 our sinful nature: Literally *our flesh*; similarly in 8:4-9, 12. See note on 6:19. • **in a body like the bodies we sinners have:** Jesus identified with sinful people so that he could be their representative and redeem them. Paul also implies that Jesus' incarnate nature was not exactly like ours; born of a virgin through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus did not inherit a sinful nature from Adam. • **a sacrifice for our sins:** In the Greek OT, this phrase frequently describes a sin offering, and three of the eight NT occurrences also have this meaning (Heb 10:6, 8; 13:11). Christ was the sin offering that brought forgiveness and turned away God's wrath. God condemned sin in Christ, our substitute, so that we could escape condemnation.

own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. ⁴He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our 'sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.

⁵Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. ⁶So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and ⁶peace. ⁷For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. ⁸That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.

⁹But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.) ¹⁰And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the ²Spirit gives you life because you have been made ^bright with God.

¹¹The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will ^cgive life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.

¹²Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. ¹³For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the ^dSpirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live.

The Spirit of Adoption

¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

¹⁵So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he ^eadopted you as his own children. Now we call him, ^f"Abba, Father." ¹⁶For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. ¹⁷And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are ^gheirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.

The Spirit of Glory

¹⁸Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later.

8:4
Gal 5:16, 25
^h*sarx* (4561)
• 1 Cor 5:5

8:5
Gal 5:19-23

8:6
Gal 6:8
ⁱ*eirēnē* (1515)
• Rom 14:19

8:9
Gal 4:6

8:10
^j*pneuma* (4151)
• Rom 8:13
^k*dikaionē* (1343)
• Rom 10:10

8:11
^l*zōopoieō* (2227)
• 1 Cor 15:22

8:13
Gal 6:8
Col 3:5
^m*pneuma* (4151)
• 1 Cor 5:3

8:14
Gal 3:26

8:15
Gal 4:5-6
ⁿ*huiothesia* (5206)
• Rom 8:23
^o*abba patēr* (0005, 3962)
• Gal 4:6

8:16
2 Cor 1:22

8:17
Gal 3:29; 4:7
^p*sunklēronomos* (4789)
• Eph 3:6

8:4 just requirement of the law . . . fully satisfied for (Greek *en*, "in") us: The Greek preposition *en* might indicate that the law is fulfilled *in* us because of our connection with Jesus Christ, who perfectly fulfilled the law for us. It could also mean that by setting us free from sin's power, Jesus Christ enables us to please God and fulfill the true intention of the law. • As in the OT (see Gen 6:3, 12; Ps 78:39; Isa 40:6), *sinful nature* refers to human weakness and bondage to sin (also in 8:5-9, 12-13). Paul uses the phrase to describe the conflict between the ingrained human tendency to sin and the Holy Spirit.

8:5 think about sinful things: This phrase describes the general nature of a person's will, not just the mental process of thought (see also 12:3; 15:5; Phil 2:2, 5).

8:6 Peace here does not refer merely to peace of mind; instead, as opposed to *death*, it implies an objective state of peace with God (see note on 5:1).

8:9 You are controlled by the Spirit: In contrast to unbelievers, who continue to live under the domination of Adam's *sinful nature*, the Holy Spirit directs the lives of believers. The Spirit does not take away human initiative or make it impossible for believers to sin. However, as the most powerful force in believers' lives, the Spirit makes it possible for

them to resist the continuing power of sin.

8:10 the Spirit gives you life (or *your spirit is alive*): The Spirit opposes sin (which leads to physical death) and brings resurrection from the dead.

8:11 by this same Spirit: The Holy Spirit is the agent of the resurrection of our *bodies*. Some manuscripts read "*because of the same Spirit*," which would mean that the Spirit is the guarantee that our bodies will be raised (cp. Eph 1:14).

8:12 brothers and sisters: Literally *brothers*; also in 8:29. See note on 1:13.

8:13 deeds of your sinful nature: Literally *deeds of the body*. • **you will die**: Death is the consequence of sin. Those who consistently yield to sin will suffer spiritual death (eternal condemnation). The presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers makes it possible for them to turn away from sin. The result is eternal life (*you will live*).

8:14 children (literally *sons*) of God: In the OT, this phrase referred to Israel, the people God called to be his own (see especially Exod 4:22; Jer 3:19; 31:9; Hos 11:1). Paul uses it to remind believers that they enjoy an intimate relationship with God and that they will inherit many of the promises and blessings given to Israel. Christians are no longer

minors or slaves, but mature children with full rights (see Gal 4:1-7).

8:15 you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children (literally *you received a spirit of sonship*): According to Greco-Roman customs of adoption, a man had the right to adopt a son and to confer on that child all the legal rights and privileges that would be given to a natural child. This practice extended even to the imperial family. The Roman emperor Julius Caesar adopted Octavian as his heir; Octavian, using the name Augustus, later ruled the Roman empire. Paul's concept of adoption is also rooted in the OT and Judaism (Exod 4:22; Deut 1:31; Hos 11:1; see also Rom 9:4; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5). • **Abba** is an Aramaic term for "father." This word was used in an intimate family context ("Daddy"). Jesus used this word to address God (Mark 14:36); all those who become children of God through Jesus have the privilege of addressing God in the same way.

8:17 Jesus is heir to all of God's promises (Mark 12:1-12; Gal 3:18-19; Heb 1:2), and as those who belong to Jesus, we *share* with him in that glorious inheritance. However, just as it was for Jesus, our path to *glory* is also marked by *suffering*. We experience the difficulties that come from striving to live righteously in a world dominated by sin (2 Cor 1:5; Phil 1:29; 3:10).

8:18
2 Cor 4:17
1 Pet 1:6-7

8:20
Gen 3:17-19

8:21
Acts 3:21
^aeleutheria (1657)
• 1 Cor 10:29

8:23
^ahuiōthesia (5206)
• Rom 9:4
^aapolutrōsis (0629)
• 1 Cor 11:30

8:24
Heb 11:1
^aelpis (1680)
• 1 Cor 13:13
^asōzō (4982)
• Rom 10:9

8:26
John 14:16

8:28
^aklētos (2822)
• Rom 11:29

8:29
1 Pet 1:2
^aproginōskō (4267)
• Rom 11:2
^aproorizō (4309)
• Rom 8:30
^aprōtotokos (4416)
• Col 1:15

8:30
^aproorizō (4309)
• 1 Cor 2:7

8:31
Ps 118:6

8:34
1 Jn 2:1

8:35
^achristos (5547)
• 2 Cor 5:10

8:36
^aPs 44:22

8:37
John 16:33
1 Jn 5:4

19For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. 20Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, 21the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. 22For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us. 24We were given this hope when we were saved. (If we already have something, we don't need to hope for it. 25But if we look forward to something we don't yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently.)

26And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. 27And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will. 28And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose

for them. 29For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the first-born among many brothers and sisters. 30And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And having called them, he gave them right standing with himself. And having given them right standing, he gave them his glory.

Nothing Can Separate Us from God's Love (8:31-39)

31What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? 32Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? 33Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself. 34Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us.

35Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? 36(As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") 37No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

8:19-21 *All creation* includes animals, plants, and the earth itself. Paul follows OT precedent (see especially Ps 65:12-13; Isa 24:4; Jer 4:28; 12:4) by personifying the created world. • *waiting eagerly* . . . *looks forward*: Just as the entire world was harmed by Adam's fall into sin, it will share in the blessings that God has promised his people.

8:19 *his children*: Literally *his sons*.

8:22 *The pains of childbirth* is a metaphor for the longing of creation (see also Matt 24:8; Mark 13:8; John 16:20-22).

8:23 *we believers also groan*: "Groaning" expresses a frustrated longing for God's deliverance from the difficulties and oppression of this life (see Exod 3:7; Lam 1:22; Ezek 24:17; 2 Cor 5:2). • *we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory* (literally *we have the first harvest of the Spirit*): In the OT, the phrase *first harvest* or *firstfruits* often describes the offering of the first and best part of a harvest to God (see Exod 23:19; Lev 2:12; 23:10; cp. 1 Cor 15:20, 23). The Holy Spirit is God's pledge that he will see his work

in us through to its conclusion (see Eph 1:14). • *wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children*: Literally *wait anxiously for sonship*. Although we have already been adopted by God as his children, the full rights of that adoption—our inheritance (see 8:17)—are not yet ours. In this life, Christians live in tension between the "already" of redemption and the "not yet" of the glory to be revealed.

8:24 *we don't need to hope for it*: Some manuscripts read *we don't need to wait for it*.

8:26 *groanings that cannot be expressed in words*: This might refer to speech that does not take the form of human language, such as when believers, uncertain of what to pray, utter meaningless sounds in prayer. The groanings in question are the Spirit's, not ours. When we do not know how to pray, the Spirit is interceding for us before God.

8:27 *for us believers*: Literally *for God's holy people*.

8:28 *And we know that God causes*

everything to work together: Some manuscripts read *And we know that everything works together*.

8:29 *would be the firstborn*: Or *would be supreme*.

8:30 *gave them his glory*: Elsewhere in this passage, the *glory* Christians will experience is consistently in the future (8:18, 21, 23). The past tense here refers to God's past decision to glorify us in the future. We have not yet entered into our inheritance, but the Father has irrevocably determined to give us his glory.

8:31 *such wonderful things*: Paul is referring to everything he has taught in chs 5–8 about the blessings and sense of assurance that believers receive from their relationship with God.

8:32 *did not spare even his own Son*: Behind this language is the story about Abraham's willingness to offer his only son, Isaac (Gen 22:12, 16). Isaac, however, was not actually sacrificed. God's not sparing his only Son went the full course: He handed him over to the shameful and painful death of crucifixion.

8:36 This quotation is from Ps 44:22.

³⁸And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. ³⁹No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the ^hlove of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

4. THE DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL: THE PROBLEM OF ISRAEL (9:1–11:36)

Introduction: The Tension between God's Promises and Israel's Plight (9:1-5)

9 With Christ as my witness, I speak with utter truthfulness. My conscience and the Holy Spirit confirm it. ²My heart is filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief ³for my people, my Jewish brothers and sisters. I would be willing to be forever cursed—cut off from Christ!—if that would save them. ⁴They are the people of Israel, chosen to be God's ^hadopted children. God revealed his glory to them. He made covenants with them and gave them his law. He gave them the privilege of worshipping him and receiving his wonderful promises. ⁵Abraham,

Isaac, and Jacob are their ancestors, and Christ himself was an Israelite as far as his human nature is concerned. And he is God, the one who rules over everything and is worthy of eternal praise! Amen.

Defining the Promise (Part 1): God's Sovereign Election (9:6-29)
The Israel within Israel

⁶Well then, has God failed to fulfill his promise to Israel? No, for not all who are born into the nation of Israel are truly members of God's people! ⁷Being descendants of Abraham doesn't make them truly Abraham's children. For the Scriptures say, "Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted," though Abraham had other children, too. ⁸This means that Abraham's physical descendants are not necessarily children of God. Only the children of the promise are considered to be Abraham's children. ⁹For God had promised, "I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son."

¹⁰This son was our ancestor Isaac. When he married Rebekah, she gave birth to twins. ¹¹But before they were born, before they had done anything good or bad, she received a message from God. (This message shows that God chooses people according

8:38
John 10:28
Col 3:3

8:39
Rom 5:3-8
**agapē* (0026)
• Rom 13:10

9:1
1 Tim 2:7

9:2-3
Exod 32:32
Rom 10:1

9:4
Exod 4:22
Deut 4:13; 7:6
Eph 2:12
**huiothesia* (5206)
• Gal 4:5

9:5
John 1:1, 18
Rom 1:3
Titus 2:13
2 Pet 1:1
1 Jn 5:20

9:6
Num 23:19
Rom 2:28
Gal 6:16

9:7
**Gen* 21:12
Heb 11:18

9:8
Rom 8:14
Gal 3:16; 4:23

9:9
**Gen* 18:10, 14

9:10
Gen 25:21

8:38 nor demons: Literally *nor rulers*.

9:1–11:36 In this section, Paul takes up the problem raised by the belief of so many Jews. If God had promised salvation to Israel yet so few Jews were being saved, how could Jesus truly be the fulfillment of God's plan (9:1-5)? In his response to this objection, Paul cites the OT as evidence that God had always intended to save only a remnant of Israel (9:6-29), and he faults the Jews for refusing to embrace Christ (9:30–10:21). Paul then shows that God has not discarded Israel from his plan of salvation. Many Jews have already believed in Christ (11:1-10), and many more will believe in the future (11:12-26).

9:2-3 Paul does not explicitly say why he has such *bitter sorrow* for his *Jewish brothers and sisters*. Yet his willingness to become *cursed* on their behalf *if that would save them* makes clear that the failure of most Jews to respond to Jesus and be saved stimulated his agony (see also 10:1).

9:3 my Jewish brothers and sisters: Literally *my brothers*. Cp. note on 1:13. • *I would be willing to be forever cursed* (Greek *anathema*): *Anathema* is used in the Greek OT to translate a Hebrew expression that means "set apart for God," which usually has the negative sense of something destined to be destroyed as an offering to God (see Lev 27:28-29;

Josh 6:17-18; 7:1, 11-13; 22:20; 1 Sam 15:3; 1 Chr 2:7). Paul knows that he cannot, in fact, be *cut off from Christ*. Paul is echoing the offer of Moses, who pled with God to kill him but to spare the people (Exod 32:30-32).

9:4 Up to this point in Romans, Paul has called the Jewish people *Jews*. His shift to *people of Israel*, here and throughout most of chs 9–11, is significant. *Jew* connotes national identity, but *Israel* emphasizes the covenant relationship of the people with God. • *chosen to be God's adopted children* (literally *chosen for sonship*): The OT called Israel God's *son* or *child* to emphasize that God had selected Israel to be his own people (e.g., Exod 4:22; Jer 3:19; 31:9; Hos 11:1). Israel's adopted status meant that they received God's blessing and promises, not that they were necessarily saved. • *covenants*: The OT includes several covenants between God and the people of Israel: one with Abraham (Gen 17), one with the nation through Moses at Mount Sinai (Exod 19–24), and one with David (2 Sam 7:8-16; 23:5). See also "God's Covenant Relationships" at Gen 12:1-9, p. 44.

9:5 Christ came from the people of Israel, and God first made his promises of salvation to them. • *And he is God, the one who rules over everything and is worthy of eternal praise! Amen.* Or *May*

God, the one who rules over everything, be praised forever. Amen.

9:6 are truly members of God's people (literally *are Israel*): "Israel" can refer to the people of Israel in a biological sense, i.e., everyone descended from Jacob. But in the latter part of the OT and in Judaism, the idea of a "righteous remnant" within Israel developed (see "The Remnant" at Isa 11:10-16, p. 1126). On at least one occasion in the NT, *Israel* refers to everyone, Jew and Gentile, who belongs to God in a spiritual sense (Gal 6:16). Paul is stating that there is now an "Israel within Israel," a community consisting of both Jews and Gentiles who truly believe (cp. 11:16-17; Gal 6:16).

9:7 This quotation is from Gen 21:12, which God spoke to Abraham when he was reluctant to follow Sarah's advice to banish his son Ishmael, who was born to the slave woman Hagar. God assured Abraham that Sarah's child, Isaac, was the son through whom God's promises would be fulfilled.

9:9 This quotation is from Gen 18:10, 14.

9:10-11 she gave birth to twins: Literally *she conceived children through this one man*. No human circumstances differentiated Isaac's sons, Jacob and Esau. Not only were they born to the same mother, but they were also con-

9:12
*Gen 25:23

9:13
*Mal 1:2-3

9:14
Deut 32:4

9:15
*Exod 33:19

9:16
Eph 2:8

9:17
*Exod 9:16

9:18
Exod 4:21; 14:4
Josh 11:20
Rom 11:25

9:20
Isa 29:16; 45:9

9:21
Jer 18:6
2 Tim 2:20

9:22
Jer 50:25

9:23
Rom 8:30

9:24
Rom 3:29

9:25
*Hos 2:23
1 Pet 2:10

to his own purposes; ¹²he calls people, but not according to their good or bad works.) She was told, "Your older son will serve your younger son." ¹³In the words of the Scriptures, "I loved Jacob, but I rejected Esau."

Objections Answered: The Freedom and Purpose of God

¹⁴Are we saying, then, that God was unfair? Of course not! ¹⁵For God said to Moses,

"I will show mercy to anyone I choose,
and I will show compassion to anyone
I choose."

¹⁶So it is God who decides to show mercy. We can neither choose it nor work for it.

¹⁷For the Scriptures say that God told Pharaoh, "I have appointed you for the very purpose of displaying my power in you and to spread my fame throughout the earth."

¹⁸So you see, God chooses to show mercy to some, and he chooses to harden the hearts of others so they refuse to listen.

¹⁹Well then, you might say, "Why does God blame people for not responding? Haven't

they simply done what he makes them do?"

²⁰No, don't say that. Who are you, a mere human being, to argue with God? Should the thing that was created say to the one who created it, "Why have you made me like this?" ²¹When a potter makes jars out of clay, doesn't he have a right to use the same lump of clay to make one jar for decoration and another to throw garbage into? ²²In the same way, even though God has the right to show his anger and his power, he is very patient with those on whom his anger falls, who are destined for destruction. ²³He does this to make the riches of his glory shine even brighter on those to whom he shows mercy, who were prepared in advance for glory.

God's Calling of a New People: Israel and the Gentiles

²⁴And we are among those whom he selected, both from the Jews and from the Gentiles.

²⁵Concerning the Gentiles, God says in the prophecy of Hosea,

God Is in Charge (9:5-24)

We human beings always want to think that we are in charge. We think that we are the "captains of our souls"¹ and that by our decisions and actions we can determine what will happen. However, Scripture confronts us with quite a different scenario. Although human decisions and actions are significant, the will of God is vastly more important.

In Rom 9, Paul shows that God determines the course of salvation. Paul constantly explains the unexpected development of salvation history by appealing to what God has said and done. Human decisions alone cannot explain the situation, and God has said that he will show mercy to anyone he chooses (9:15). While theologians will continue to debate the role of God's action and the role of human decision in salvation, God's sovereignty stands out clearly.

The contemporary world has set God to the side and ignores the divine influence on the course of human affairs. But God's decisions really do direct the world as well as the personal histories of those who trust him. We can confidently affirm that "God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them" (8:28).

¹ "Invictus" by W. E. Henley (1849–1903).

Rom 8:28
Deut 4:39; 7:7-8;
32:8, 39
Josh 2:11
1 Sam 2:6-8
2 Kgs 13:4-5; 17:18-
20; 20:4-6
Ps 24:1-2; 84:11;
135:5-12
Isa 40:15-17; 42:8;
46:10
Jer 27:5-7
Dan 7:27-28
Hab 2:14
John 19:11
Acts 17:24-26
1 Cor 1:8-9
Col 1:15-20
2 Thes 1:11-12
Jude 1:24-25
Rev 1:7-8

ceived at the same time. Instead, Paul argues, the difference between them was of God's choosing.

9:12 "Your older son will serve your younger son": God spoke these words (Gen 25:23) to Rebekah before the twins were born. As the older of the twins, Esau was Isaac's natural heir. But Esau sold his birthright to Jacob and ceded his position to his brother in fulfillment of God's promise.

9:13 "I loved Jacob, but I rejected (literally *hated*) Esau": Paul quotes Mal 1:2-3, where *Jacob*, whose other name is Israel (Gen 32:28), stands for the nation of Israel, and *Esau* stands for Edom. Here, Paul is referring to them as

individuals. Just as love can sometimes express a choice, so hate can express rejection. The story of Jacob and Esau illustrates how the sovereign God chooses his own people.

9:14-16 God's choice is not unfair because he owes nothing to his sinful creatures (see note on 4:4-5).

9:15 This quotation from Exod 33:19 focuses on God's nature: God is free from obligation or constraint in bestowing mercy on people.

9:17 *God told Pharaoh*: Paul quotes Exod 9:16 (Greek version). At God's direction, Moses had asked Pharaoh to let the people of Israel leave Egypt for their own land. When Pharaoh stubbornly

refused, God displayed miracle after miracle to convince Israel, Pharaoh, and the Egyptians of God's power and authority (see Exod 6:7; 7:5; 9:14-16; 14:31).

9:18 *he chooses to harden the hearts of others so they refuse to listen*: Pharaoh refused to let Israel go because his heart was hardened. God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exod 9:12), and Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Exod 8:15).

9:20-21 See Isa 29:16; 45:9-10.

9:24-26 God was free to select people *from the Jews* who would have a true spiritual relationship with him; similarly, he was also free to choose some *from the Gentiles* to be saved as well. Paul uses *the prophecy of Hosea* to

“Those who were not my people,
I will now call my people.
And I will love those
whom I did not love before.”

26And,

“Then, at the place where they were told,
‘You are not my people,’
there they will be called
‘children of the living God.’”

27And concerning Israel, Isaiah the prophet
cried out,

“Though the people of Israel are as
numerous as the sand of the
seashore,
only a remnant will be saved.

28 For the LORD will carry out his sentence
upon the earth
quickly and with finality.”

29And Isaiah said the same thing in another
place:

“If the LORD of Heaven’s Armies
had not spared a few of our children,
we would have been wiped out like Sodom,
destroyed like Gomorrah.”

**Understanding Israel’s Plight: Christ as the
Climax of Salvation History (9:30–10:21)**
*Israel, the Gentiles, and the Righteousness
of God*

30What does all this mean? Even though
the Gentiles were not trying to follow God’s

standards, they were made right with God.
And it was by faith that this took place.
31But the people of Israel, who tried so hard
to get right with God by keeping the law,
never succeeded. 32Why not? Because they
were trying to get right with God by keeping
the law instead of by trusting in him. They
stumbled over the great rock in their path.
33God warned them of this in the Scriptures
when he said,

“I am placing a stone in Jerusalem that
makes people stumble,
a rock that makes them fall.
But anyone who trusts in him
will never be disgraced.”

10 Dear brothers and sisters, the long-
ing of my heart and my prayer to
God is for the people of Israel to be saved.
2I know what enthusiasm they have for God,
but it is misdirected zeal. 3For they don’t
understand God’s way of making people
right with himself. Refusing to accept God’s
way, they cling to their own way of getting
right with God by trying to keep the law.
4For Christ has already accomplished the
purpose for which the law was given. As a
result, all who believe in him are made right
with God.
5For Moses writes that the law’s way of
making a person right with God requires
obedience to all of its commands. 6But faith’s

9:26
Hos 1:10
9:27-28
Isa 10:22-23; 28:22
Hos 1:10
9:29
Isa 1:9
9:30
Gal 2:16
Heb 11:7
9:31
Isa 51:1
Rom 10:2-3
Gal 5:4
9:32
Isa 8:14
proskomma (4348)
Rom 9:33
9:33
Isa 28:16
Rom 10:11
1 Pet 2:6, 8
proskomma (4348)
Rom 14:13
10:2
Acts 22:3
Gal 1:14
10:3
Rom 9:31-32
10:4
Gal 3:24
nomos (3551)
1 Cor 14:21
10:5
Lev 18:5
Ezek 20:11, 13, 21
Rom 7:10

reinforce his point. Hosea predicted that
God would renew his mercy to the
ten northern tribes that had rebelled
against God and were under his judg-
ment. Paul saw a principle that applies
to Gentiles as well. • *Those who were
not my people*: see note on 10:19.

9:25 This quotation is from Hos 2:23.
9:26 *children of the living God*: Literally
sons of the living God. Hos 1:10.

9:27-28 This quotation is from Isa 10:22-
23 (Greek version). • *only a remnant will
be saved*: So many Israelites had turned
from God that the OT prophets spoke of
a true spiritual Israel within the larger
nation of Israel (see “The Remnant” at Isa
11:10-16, p. 1126). The remnant would
receive salvation, while the rest of the
Israelites would suffer condemnation.

9:29 This quotation is from Isa 1:9.
• The destruction of the cities of *Sodom*
and *Gomorrah* (Gen 19) is a poignant
illustration of the reality and severity of
God’s judgment.

9:31 *who tried so hard to get right with
God by keeping the law* (literally *who
pursued the law of righteousness*): *Law
of righteousness* is an idiom that means

“righteousness through the law.”

9:32-33 *by keeping the law*: Literally
by works. • *The great rock in their path*
is Christ. People either build on him
by putting their faith in him, or they
stumble over his message that faith,
and not human works, is the key to
getting right with God.

9:33 This quotation is from Isa 8:14;
28:16 (Greek version). These two
texts, along with Ps 118:22, are also
quoted together in 1 Pet 2:6-8. The
early church likely had a collection of
messianic “stone” quotations from the
OT that they used to illuminate the sig-
nificance of Christ (see also Matt 21:42).
• *Jerusalem*: Greek *Zion*.

10:1 *Dear brothers and sisters*: Literally
Brothers. See note on 1:13.

10:2 *Zeal* denotes a passionate and
commendable commitment to God and
his purposes (see Num 25:6-13). But in
Paul’s day Jewish zeal was *misdirected*
because it failed to understand that
Jesus Christ is the pinnacle of God’s
plan. (For Paul’s own misdirected zeal
before his conversion to Christ, see Acts
9:1-2; Gal 1:13-14.)

10:3 *God’s way of making people right
with himself*: See 1:17; 3:21-26. Paul
uses this phrase to explain Israel’s
failure in terms basic to the gospel. God
manifested his righteousness through
the ministry of Christ, but most Jews
did not *understand* it, partly because
they were so focused on the law as a
way of securing their own righteousness.

10:4 *For Christ has already accom-
plished the purpose for which the law
was given* (or *For Christ is the end of the
law*, or *For Christ is the culmination of
the law*): The function of the law was
to point forward and prepare the way
for the Messiah; Jesus’ coming does
not destroy the law but fulfills all of
its requirements, so that the primary re-
quirement for God’s people is to *believe
in him* (see 3:31; Matt 5:17-18).

10:5 *requires obedience to all of its com-
mands*: See Lev 18:5, where these words
encouraged the Israelites to obey the law
in order to enjoy long life and prosperity
in the land that God was giving them
(see also Lev 26:3-13; Deut 28:1-14). Paul
sees the implication that if people want
to be right with God through the law,
they can only do so by obeying all of it.

10:6-8
^aDeut 30:12-14

10:9
^aMatt 10:32
^akardia (2588)
^a2 Cor 5:12
^asōzō (4982)
^a1 Cor 15:2

10:10
^adikaionē (1343)
^aEph 5:9

10:11
^aIsa 28:16
^aRom 9:33

10:12
^aActs 15:9
^aEph 2:4-7

10:13
^aJoel 2:32
^aActs 2:21

10:15
^aIsa 52:7
^aNah 1:15

10:16
^aIsa 53:1
^aJohn 12:38
^aHeb 4:2

10:17
^aGal 3:2, 5
^aCol 3:16
^apistis (4102)
^aRom 14:1

10:18
^aPs 19:4

10:19
^aDeut 32:21

10:20
^aIsa 65:1
^aRom 9:30

10:21
^aIsa 65:2
^aMatt 23:37

11:1
^aPhil 3:5

11:2
¹Sam 12:22
¹proginōskō (4267)
^aGal 3:8

way of getting right with God says, "Don't say in your heart, 'Who will go up to heaven?' (to bring Christ down to earth). ⁷And don't say, 'Who will go down to the place of the dead?' (to bring Christ back to life again)." ⁸In fact, it says,

"The message is very close at hand; it is on your lips and in your heart."

And that message is the very message about faith that we preach: ⁹If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your ⁹heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be ^csaved. ¹⁰For it is by believing in your heart that you are made ^dright with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved. ¹¹As the Scriptures tell us, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced." ¹²Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. ¹³For "Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved."

Israel's Accountability

¹⁴But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? ¹⁵And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, "How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!"

¹⁶But not everyone welcomes the Good News, for Isaiah the prophet said, "LORD, who has believed our message?" ¹⁷So ^efaith

comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ. ¹⁸But I ask, have the people of Israel actually heard the message? Yes, they have:

"The message has gone throughout the earth, and the words to all the world."

¹⁹But I ask, did the people of Israel really understand? Yes, they did, for even in the time of Moses, God said,

"I will rouse your jealousy through people who are not even a nation. I will provoke your anger through the foolish Gentiles."

²⁰And later Isaiah spoke boldly for God, saying,

"I was found by people who were not looking for me. I showed myself to those who were not asking for me."

²¹But regarding Israel, God said,

"All day long I opened my arms to them, but they were disobedient and rebellious."

Summary: Israel, the "Elect," and the "Hardened" (11:1-10)

11 I ask, then, has God rejected his own people, the nation of Israel? Of course not! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham and a member of the tribe of Benjamin.

²No, God has not rejected his own people, whom he ^fchose from the very beginning.

10:6-8 Here Paul quotes three phrases from Deut 30:12-14 dealing with the law, and he applies them to the Good News about Christ. We do not need to *go up to heaven* to find Christ (and thus to be made right with God), because God has already brought him *down to earth* as a man. Nor do we need to *go down to the place of the dead* to find Christ, because God has already raised him from the dead. To find Christ, we must simply believe in *the message* that is *close at hand*.

10:11 See Isa 28:16 (Greek version).

10:12 and Gentile: Literally *and Greek*.

10:13 Paul quotes Joel 2:32, where the *LORD* in Hebrew is *Yahweh*, the personal name of God (see Exod 3:15). However, as 10:12 makes clear, *the Lord* in Romans is Jesus Christ. This verse shows that Christians from the time of the apostles have associated Jesus with God.

10:14 It is natural to presume that the pronoun *they* refers to "all who call on

him" from 10:12 or "everyone" from 10:13. While this verse probably does refer to all people, it also continues the accusation against Israel from 10:2-3 (see 10:18). Paul argues that Israel was in a position to know what God was doing through Jesus Christ, so they were culpable for their failure to understand or accept it. Israel was guilty both of failing to understand God's plan in light of Christ (10:3-4) and of focusing so much attention on the law that they missed Christ when he arrived (9:30-32).

10:15 This quotation is from Isa 52:7.

10:16 This quotation is from Isa 53:1.

10:18 Yes, they have: Paul quotes Ps 19:4 to show that the *message* of Good News was universally available through creation. And by the time Paul wrote Romans, early Christian missionaries had spread the Good News through most of the Roman empire. Most Jews would have had ample opportunity to hear the message.

10:19 rouse your jealousy . . . provoke your anger: This quotation from Deut 32:21 concerns God's punishment of Israel for their idolatry. In Paul's day, Israel remained guilty of idolatry because it put the law in place of God himself. God's punishment involved using the Gentiles, *people who are not even a nation*, to make Israel jealous and angry (11:12-32 elaborates on this theme).

10:20 This quotation is from Isa 65:1 (Greek version). In Isaiah, the words *people who were not looking for me* refer to the people of Israel. As in 9:25-26, Paul applies them to the Gentiles to show that God has opened the way for them to be a part of the people of God.

10:21 This quotation is from Isa 65:2 (Greek version).

11:2 chose from the very beginning: Before the people of Israel could do anything to earn their status, God selected them to be his people based

Do you realize what the Scriptures say about this? Elijah the prophet complained to God about the people of Israel and said, ³“LORD, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too.”

⁴And do you remember God’s reply? He said, “No, I have 7,000 others who have never bowed down to Baal!”

⁵It is the same today, for a few of the people of Israel have remained faithful because of God’s grace—his undeserved kindness in choosing them. ⁶And since it is through God’s kindness, then it is not by their good works. For in that case, God’s grace would not be what it really is—free and undeserved.

⁷So this is the situation: Most of the people of Israel have not found the favor of God they are looking for so earnestly. A few have—the ones God has chosen—but the hearts of the rest were hardened. ⁸As the Scriptures say,

“God has put them into a deep sleep.

To this day he has shut their eyes so they do not see,
and closed their ears so they do not hear.”

⁹Likewise, David said,

“Let their bountiful table become a snare,
a trap that makes them think all is well.

Let their blessings cause them to stumble,
and let them get what they deserve.
¹⁰Let their eyes go blind so they cannot see,
and let their backs be bent forever.”

Defining the Promise (Part 2): The Future of Israel (11:11-32)

God’s Purpose in Israel’s Rejection

¹¹Did God’s people stumble and fall beyond recovery? Of course not! They were disobedient, so God made salvation available to the Gentiles. But he wanted his own people to become jealous and claim it for themselves. ¹²Now if the Gentiles were enriched because the people of Israel turned down God’s offer of salvation, think how much greater a blessing the world will share when they finally accept it.

¹³I am saying all this especially for you Gentiles. God has appointed me as the apostle to the Gentiles. I stress this, ¹⁴for I want somehow to make the people of Israel jealous of what you Gentiles have, so I might save some of them. ¹⁵For since their rejection meant that God ^offered salvation to the rest of the world, their acceptance will be even more wonderful. It will be life for those who were dead!

The Interrelationship of Jews and Gentiles: Warning to Gentiles

¹⁶And since Abraham and the other patriarchs were holy, their descendants will also

11:3
^o1 Kgs 19:10, 14

11:4
^o1 Kgs 19:18

11:5
Rom 9:27

11:6
Rom 4:4

11:7
Rom 9:31

11:8
^oDeut 29:4
^oIsa 29:10
Matt 13:14
John 12:40
Acts 28:26-27

11:9-10
^oPs 69:22-23

11:11
Acts 13:46; 18:6

11:14
1 Cor 9:20
2 Tim 1:9

11:15
Luke 15:24, 32
Rom 5:10
^okatallagē (2643)
^o1 Cor 7:11

on his grace alone. • **Elijah the prophet:** In 1 Kgs 19:1-18, the apostate King Ahab had slaughtered many of the Lord’s prophets, and Ahab’s wife Jezebel threatened Elijah with the same fate. Elijah fled to the wilderness, where he bemoaned his fate. God responded with the assurance that many faithful people remained. Paul found the present situation to be somewhat parallel. While many Jews did not believe, and some were even hostile, God was (and is) still working to preserve a believing remnant.

11:3 This quotation is from 1 Kgs 19:10, 14.

11:4 This quotation is from 1 Kgs 19:18.

11:5 for a few of the people of Israel (literally for a remnant): Paul returns to the OT concept of the remnant that he used in 9:27-29. This solid core of godly Israelites represents God’s pledge of his continuing faithfulness to his promises and to his people.

11:7-8 the hearts of the rest were hardened: This is God’s own work; God has put them into a deep sleep and shut

their eyes. See Acts 13:46-48; 18:6.

11:8 This quotation is from Isa 29:10; Deut 29:4.

11:9-10 This quotation is from Ps 69:22-23 (Greek version).

11:11 so God made salvation available to the Gentiles: The offer of salvation to the Gentiles is the purpose, not just the result, of Israel’s disobedience. Paul emphasizes that God had the salvation of Gentiles in view all along, and, ultimately, the salvation of many Jews as well. • **he wanted his own people to become jealous:** The theme of jealousy comes from Deut 32:21, which Paul quoted in 10:19. The sight of Gentiles enjoying the blessings of salvation that God had promised to Israel would spur Jews to desire salvation so they could participate in those blessings as well.

11:13-14 you Gentiles: Paul addresses the Gentile Christians in Rome with the practical goal of rebuking them for thinking too highly of themselves (11:20), especially in relation to their Jewish brothers and sisters. He shows that their enjoyment of salvation de-

pends entirely on God’s kindness (11:22), and that God’s final goal is to stimulate repentance among the Jews (11:23). • **I stress this:** Paul devoted himself to the conversion of Gentiles because he knew that their salvation would ultimately lead to salvation for Jews as well.

11:15 The context emphasizes God’s role in hardening many Jews (11:7-10), so the phrase **their rejection** likely means God’s rejection of the unbelieving Jews. • **their acceptance** then refers to God’s acceptance of Jews into his Kingdom (see also 14:3 and 15:7). • While the phrase **life for those who were dead** could refer to the new spiritual life that comes to the Jews as a result of their conversion to Christ (see 6:13), the language more naturally suggests the physical resurrection from the dead that occurs when Christ returns in glory (see, e.g., 1 Thes 4:13-18).

11:16 the entire batch of dough is holy because the portion given as an offering is holy: This imagery comes from Num 15:17-21, where God commanded the Israelites to take part of their first batch of dough and set it aside as a gift. God’s

11:17
Jer 11:16
Eph 2:11-16

11:18
John 4:22

11:20
Rom 12:16

11:22
John 15:2, 14
Heb 3:14

11:23
2 Cor 3:14-16

be holy—just as the entire batch of dough is holy because the portion given as an offering is holy. For if the roots of the tree are holy, the branches will be, too.

¹⁷But some of these branches from Abraham's tree—some of the people of Israel—have been broken off. And you Gentiles, who were branches from a wild olive tree, have been grafted in. So now you also receive the blessing God has promised Abraham and his children, sharing in the rich nourishment from the root of God's special olive tree. ¹⁸But you must not brag about being grafted in to replace the branches that were broken off. You are just a branch, not the root.

¹⁹"Well," you may say, "those branches

were broken off to make room for me."²⁰Yes, but remember—those branches were broken off because they didn't believe in Christ, and you are there because you do believe. So don't think highly of yourself, but fear what could happen. ²¹For if God did not spare the original branches, he won't spare you either.

²²Notice how God is both kind and severe. He is severe toward those who disobeyed, but kind to you if you continue to trust in his kindness. But if you stop trusting, you also will be cut off. ²³And if the people of Israel turn from their unbelief, they will be grafted in again, for God has the power to graft them back into the tree. ²⁴You, by nature, were a branch cut from a wild olive

Jews and Gentiles (11:11-36)

One of the key themes of Romans is that God has incorporated Gentiles into the people of God while remaining faithful to his promises to Israel. In 11:11-32, Paul describes God's plan to save all nations in four distinct stages:

1. *The Good News is proclaimed to the Jews, who respond (mostly) with unbelief.* In the central metaphor of the olive tree, "some of these branches from Abraham's tree . . . have been broken off" (11:17). This stage was already a matter of history and personal experience for Paul—although he shared the Good News with Jews in synagogues all over the eastern Mediterranean basin, many Jews rejected the message (see Acts 13:42-49; 18:4-6; 28:23-28).

2. *Many Gentiles respond to the message with faith.* As the natural branches were broken off, "branches from a wild olive tree have been grafted in" (11:17). After being resisted in the synagogue, Paul and the other apostles offered salvation to the Gentiles, and many responded affirmatively (see Acts 13:48-49; 26:15-18). By the time Paul wrote Romans, the church in Rome was largely a Gentile community.

3. *Many Jews respond to the Good News with faith.* In the future, the natural branches will be "grafted in again" (11:23). As Gentiles enjoy the blessings of salvation, Jews become jealous and respond to the Good News.

4. *God pours out great blessing on the world, including the resurrection from the dead.* When Jews finally turn to the Lord in greater numbers, there will be a "much greater blessing" (11:12), and the dead will be resurrected (11:15). The end of history will see a great community of both Jews and Gentiles praising God for his mercy. Then all people will see and understand the great wisdom and love of God (11:33-36).

promises to and blessings on Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were like a down payment, guaranteeing the completion of God's work among his people.

11:17-24 In Paul's extended metaphor, *God's special olive tree* refers to the people of God. The image is a natural one, because the olive tree is the most widely cultivated fruit tree in the Mediterranean basin, and it was already used as a symbol of Israel in the OT (Jer 11:16; Hos 14:5-6). Paul refers to the Gentile Christians as *branches from a wild olive tree* because they were not originally included among the people of God.

11:18 *You are just a branch, not the root:* By the time Paul wrote to the church in Rome, it was composed

mainly of Gentiles, a common situation in the early Christian communities. This dominant role led many Gentile Christians to brag about their status, while treating Jews and their religious heritage with disdain. Paul reminds the Gentile believers that they enjoy God's blessings only because they have been included in the one people of God, who are rooted in God's promises to Israel.

11:20 *fear what could happen:* In Scripture, fear often means a reverential awe of God that includes the recognition that we must one day stand before him in judgment (see 2 Cor 5:11; 7:1, 11, 15; Phil 2:12; Col 3:22).

11:21 *he won't:* Some manuscripts read *perhaps he won't*.

11:22 *if you stop trusting, you also will be cut off:* Scripture consistently emphasizes that only believers who persevere to the end will be saved. However, Paul's warning leads to debate over the theological implications of his statement. Some think that it implies that genuine believers can stop believing and therefore not be saved in the end. Others argue that we should not press the metaphor so far and that Paul is referring to people who appear to be believers but whose lack of real faith ultimately reveals itself.

11:24 *by nature . . . contrary to nature:* The usual method of enhancing the yield of olive trees involved grafting a shoot from a *cultivated tree* onto a wild olive tree to benefit from the wild tree's

tree. So if God was willing to do something contrary to nature by grafting you into his cultivated tree, he will be far more eager to graft the original branches back into the tree where they belong.

The Salvation of "All Israel"

²⁵I want you to understand this mystery, dear brothers and sisters, so that you will not feel proud about yourselves. Some of the people of Israel have hard hearts, but this will last only until the full number of Gentiles comes to Christ. ²⁶And so all Israel will be saved. As the Scriptures say,

"The one who rescues will come from Jerusalem, and he will turn Israel away from ungodliness.

²⁷ And this is my covenant with them, that I will take away their sins."

²⁸Many of the people of Israel are now enemies of the Good News, and this benefits you Gentiles. Yet they are still the people he loves because he chose their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ²⁹For God's gifts and his ^hcall can never be withdrawn. ³⁰Once, you Gentiles were rebels against God, but when the people of Israel rebelled against him, God was merciful to you instead. ³¹Now they are the rebels, and God's mercy

has come to you so that they, too, will share in God's mercy. ³²For God has imprisoned everyone in disobedience so he could have mercy on everyone.

Conclusion: Praise to God in Light of His Awesome Plan (11:33-36)

³³Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways!

³⁴ For who can know the LORD's thoughts? Who knows enough to give him advice?

³⁵ And who has given him so much that he needs to pay it back?

³⁶For everything comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory. All glory to him forever! Amen.

5. THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF THE GOSPEL: CHRISTIAN CONDUCT (12:1–15:13)

The Heart of the Matter: Total Transformation (12:1-2)

12 And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly

11:25
Luke 21:24
11:26-27
Ps 14:7
^aIsa 59:20-21
Jer 31:31-34
Heb 8:8; 10:16

11:29
Heb 7:21
^bklēsis (2821)
• 1 Cor 1:2

11:32
Gal 3:22
1 Tim 2:4

11:33
Isa 45:15; 55:8
^cploutos (4149)
• Eph 1:7

11:34
Job 15:8; 36:22
^dIsa 40:13
Jer 23:18
1 Cor 2:16

11:35
Job 41:11

11:36
1 Cor 8:6

12:1
1 Pet 2:5

12:2
Gal 1:4
Eph 4:23
Col 3:10
^emetamorphōō (3339)
• 2 Cor 3:18
^fthelema (2307)
• Rom 15:32

12:3
Prov 3:7
1 Cor 12:11
Eph 4:7

12:4
1 Cor 12:12

vigor. By grafting wild olive branches (Gentiles) into the cultivated olive tree (the people of God), God has done what is contrary to nature.

11:25 dear brothers and sisters: Literally *brothers*. See note on 1:13. • Paul usually uses the word *mystery* to refer to an event of the last days that has already been determined by God. Such a *mystery* already exists in heaven, and is revealed to God's people in the Christian era (see 16:25; 1 Cor 2:1, 7; 4:1; 15:51; Eph 1:9; 3:3, 4, 9; 6:19; Col 1:26, 27; 2:2; 4:3; 1 Tim 3:9, 16). Here, the mystery is the relationship of Jews and *Gentiles* in the plan of salvation, which is at the heart of this entire passage (11:11-32).

11:26-27 The phrase *all Israel* could refer to the total of all believers, both Jewish and Gentile; with this meaning, *and so* would describe the way that God works to bring salvation to all his people. Alternatively, *all Israel* could refer to the total of all Jews destined to believe throughout the Christian era, or to a significant number of Jews who turn to Christ in the last days. With the last meaning, *and so* would have a sequential meaning—after the full number of Gentiles comes to Christ, *then* the full number of Jews will be saved. It does not mean all Jewish

people (see 2:17-29) • **As the Scriptures say:** This quotation is from Isa 59:20-21; 27:9 (Greek version). • **In the OT, *The one who rescues*** is the Lord. Paul almost surely is referring to Jesus Christ (see 1 Thes 1:10). • **from Jerusalem:** Greek *from Zion*. The Hebrew text of Isa 59:20 says that the redeemer will come *to* Jerusalem. Paul might have changed the wording to represent Jesus' first coming from among the people of Israel or to speak of the second coming when Jesus will return from the heavenly Jerusalem (see Heb 12:22). • **Israel:** Literally *Jacob*.

11:31 will share: Other manuscripts read *will now share*; still others read *will someday share*.

11:32 have mercy on everyone: *Everyone* has the sense of "all kinds of people." In the context of Romans, and especially this chapter, it refers to the inclusion of Gentiles alongside Jews.

11:34 This quotation is from Isa 40:13 (Greek version).

11:35 See Job 41:11.

11:36 everything comes from him and exists by his power: This statement is similar to statements found among Greek Stoic philosophers in their descriptions of God. Paul regularly draws on literature from the Greco-Roman world

to present and clarify the truth about God and his purposes (cp. Acts 17:24-29).

12:1–15:13 This section of Romans sets out the moral and ethical demands of the Good News. God's gift of salvation in Christ requires a response. God is not satisfied simply with forgiving our sin; he wants to transform our lives. Most of what Paul teaches concerning the moral duties of believers is paralleled in other letters. However, it also seems clear that he has chosen issues pertinent to the situation in Rome—most notably, the dispute between people who are weak in faith and people who are strong in faith (14:1–15:13).

12:1 dear brothers and sisters: Literally *brothers*. See note on 1:13. • **Your bodies** refers to the whole person in contact with the world, not just the physical body. • **because of all he has done for you:** As described in chs 1–11. • **This is truly the way to worship him** (or *This is your spiritual worship*; or *This is your reasonable service*): This phrase has at least three possible meanings: (1) Our sacrifice is *reasonable* in light of all God's mercies; (2) our sacrifice is *spiritual*, not the offering of an animal but of ourselves in spiritual service; or (3) our sacrifice is *intelligent*, offered with complete awareness of God's goodness to us.

12:5
1 Cor 12:27
Eph 4:25

12:6-8
1 Cor 12:4-11
1 Pet 4:10-11

12:6
^ccharisma (5486)
• 1 Cor 1:7

12:7
^ddiakonia (1248)
• 1 Cor 16:15

12:8
^ehaplotēs (0572)
• 2 Cor 8:2

12:9
Amos 5:15
1 Tim 1:5

12:10
John 13:34
Phil 2:3
1 Thes 4:9
2 Pet 1:7

12:12
Heb 10:32, 36

12:13
Heb 13:2

12:14
Matt 5:44

12:16
Prov 3:7
Isa 5:21

the way to worship him. ²Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God ³transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's ⁴will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

Humility and Mutual Service (12:3-8)

³Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us. ⁴Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, ⁵so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.

⁶In his grace, God has given us different ^agifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. ⁷If your gift is ^bservicing others, ^bserve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. ⁸If your

gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give ^cgenerously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.

Love and Its Manifestations (12:9-21)

⁹Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. ¹⁰Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. ¹¹Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. ¹²Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. ¹³When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.

¹⁴Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. ¹⁵Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!

12:2 *this world* (literally *this age*): The division of history into two ages was typical of the Jewish worldview. Early Christians adapted this point of view, identifying the coming of Christ as the time when the new age of salvation began. Unexpectedly, however, the new age did not bring an end to the old age. The old way of thinking and living continues, and it is a source of temptation even to Christians who seek to conform their lives to the values of the new age.

12:3 *Because of the privilege and authority*: Or *Because of the grace*; cp. 1:5. • *by the faith God has given us*: Or *by the faith God has given you*; or *by the standard of our God-given faith*. Whether Paul is referring to the amount of faith each of us has been given or to the Christian faith that we all hold in common, we need to assess ourselves accurately by this measure and not be vain about the abilities God has given us.

12:4-5 *so it is with Christ's body*: The parallel between the human body and the church—the body of Christ—is also found in 1 Cor 12. This metaphor provides an effective picture of unity and diversity in the church (cp. Livy, *History* 2.32; Epictetus, *Discourses* 2.10.4–5).

12:6 *The ability to prophesy* was one of the most important of the NT gifts (see also 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11). Although prophets are mentioned in several passages in Acts as predicting the future (see Acts 11:28; 21:10-12), the prophet's most fundamental responsibility is to communicate God's message to the community of believers (1 Cor 12:3, 24-

25, 29-30; see also 1 Cor 14). • *as much faith as God has given you* (literally *in proportion to the faith*): *Proportion* (Greek *analogia*) is a word drawn from mathematics and logic, where it refers to the correct proportions in a relationship among things, quantities, or ideas. Paul uses the phrase to remind prophets to make sure that their utterances are in right proportion to faith, whether the amount of individual faith the prophet has been given, or the Christian faith in general (see note on 12:3). This passage has given theology the phrase *the analogy of faith*, which refers to the importance of bringing the interpretation of any particular passage into line with the teaching of all of Scripture.

12:7 *teacher*: The gift of teaching comes third in the list of gifts in 1 Cor 12:28 and fifth in Eph 4:11. While prophets communicate to the community a message received directly from God, teachers address the church on the basis of studying the word of God.

12:8 *give generously*: See also 2 Cor 8:2; 9:11, 13.

12:9-21 The many injunctions in these verses do not follow a neat logical arrangement. The overall topic, stated at the beginning, is sincere *love*. Paul shows how we are to love both those inside the church (12:10, 13, 15-16) and those outside the church (12:14, 17-21).

12:10 *with genuine affection*: Literally *with brotherly love*. The key Greek word in this phrase connotes love of family. Christians are to *love each other* with the mutual love and commitment that are found within a healthy family.

12:11 *but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically* (or *but serve the Lord with a zealous spirit; or but let the Spirit excite you as you serve the Lord*): As Christians, we are to be passionate about our faith and eager to fulfill our ministry to others within the church.

12:12 The three commands in this verse are related. By rejoicing in *confident hope*, we can *be patient in trouble*. Continually *praying* is essential if we desire to have this attitude toward the difficulties of life (see also 8:24-27).

12:13 *be ready to help them*: The verb Paul uses is related to the familiar Greek word *koinōnia* ("fellowship"). When needs arise among our Christian brothers and sisters, we are not just to meet their needs; we should also enter into fellowship with these fellow Christians in ways that extend beyond material gifts.

12:14 The exhortations in this verse closely resemble two sayings of Jesus (Matt 5:44; Luke 6:27-28). Although Paul does not introduce the commands as a quotation, he is almost certainly alluding to these sayings of Christ. Perhaps the words were so well-known that he did not need to specify the source. The teaching of Rom 12–13 has many parallels with the teaching of Jesus.

12:16 All three exhortations in this verse use the Greek word *phroneō* (*think*). Paul addresses the need for right Christian thinking when it comes to our relationships with other Christians. • *Live in harmony*: Literally *Think the same things*. • *Don't be too proud*: Literally *Don't think arrogant things*.

¹⁷Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. ¹⁸Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

¹⁹Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say,

“I will take revenge;
I will pay them back,”
says the LORD.

²⁰Instead,

“If your enemies are hungry, feed them.
If they are thirsty, give them
something to drink.
In doing this, you will heap
burning coals of shame on their heads.”

²¹Don’t let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.

The Christian and Secular Rulers (13:1-7)

13 Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God. ²So anyone

who rebels against authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and they will be punished. ³For the authorities do not strike fear in people who are doing right, but in those who are doing wrong. Would you like to live without fear of the authorities? Do what is right, and they will honor you. ⁴The authorities are God’s servants, sent for your good. But if you are doing wrong, of course you should be afraid, for they have the power to punish you. They are God’s servants, sent for the very purpose of punishing those who do what is wrong. ⁵So you must submit to them, not only to avoid punishment, but also to keep a clear conscience.

⁶Pay your taxes, too, for these same reasons. For government workers need to be paid. They are ^d“serving God in what they do.” ⁷Give to everyone what you owe them: Pay your taxes and government fees to those who collect them, and give respect and honor to those who are in authority.

Love and the Law (13:8-10)

⁸Owe nothing to anyone—except for your obligation to love one another. If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill the

12:17
Prov 3:4; 20:22
1 Thes 5:15

12:19
Deut 32:35

12:20
Prov 25:21-22
Matt 5:44

13:1
Dan 2:21
John 19:11
Titus 3:1

13:3
1 Pet 2:13-14

13:5
1 Pet 2:13

13:6
Leitourgous (3011)
Rom 15:16

13:7
Matt 22:21
Mark 12:17
Luke 20:25

13:8
Matt 5:43
John 13:34

13:9
Exod 20:13-15, 17
Lev 19:18
Deut 5:17-19, 21

12:18 *Do all that you can:* Paul recognizes that our efforts to live at peace with others will sometimes be frustrated by our own moral constraints or by other people’s unwillingness to be reconciled to us.

12:19 This quotation is from Deut 32:35.

12:20-21 A simple act of Christian kindness can often bring a hostile person to repentance before God and restore fellowship between people.

12:20 This quotation is from Prov 25:21-22.

13:1-2 The basic command of 13:1-7 is to *submit to governing authorities*. In God’s ordering of the world, we answer to *those in positions of authority*. Our submission to them will usually take the form of obedience. However, because God stands over all governments, our submission to governing authorities must always be in terms of our ultimate submission to God (see Acts 4:19-20). The Roman Christians might have been resisting government (see note on 13:6) based on a false understanding of the Good News, as if no longer copying “the behavior and customs of this world” (12:2) meant that they could ignore earthly institutions. • *placed there by God:* Scripture consistently teaches that God is actively involved in raising up and casting down human governments and leaders (1 Sam 2:6-10; 12:8; Prov 8:15-16; Isa 41:2-4; 45:1-7; Jer 21:7, 10; 27:5-6; Dan 2:21, 37-38; 4:17). God instituted governing authorities, so rebelling against them is rebelling against God,

who will respond with judgment (13:2).

13:3 *the authorities do not strike fear in people who are doing right:* Paul presents a positive picture of the governing authorities, describing them in terms of what God has appointed them to do. He does not touch on situations where leaders punish those who do good and reward those who do evil, although he was certainly aware of such situations from OT and Jewish history, from the experience of Jesus and the other apostles, and from Greco-Roman affairs. Here, Paul confines himself to discussing the appropriate response to governing authorities who live according to their calling.

13:4 *servants* (Greek *diakonos*): The NT usually reserves this word to describe Christians who serve God in various capacities. However, it was also used in secular Greek to refer to a civic official. Whether they know it or not, governing authorities are serving God when they administer justice. • *they have the power to punish you* (literally *they do not bear the sword in vain*): The sword might simply be a metaphor for punishment of any kind, but some interpreters believe it suggests that human governments, under God’s authority, have the right to carry out capital punishment.

13:5 The two reasons for submission sum up the argument of 13:1-4 in reverse order: *to avoid punishment* relates to 13:3-4, while *to keep a clear conscience* refers to 13:1-2. • The word *conscience* (Greek *suneidēsis*) refers to

the painful knowledge of wrongdoing. Christians know about their duty to submit to governing authorities, and their failure to do so would bring the pain of a guilty conscience.

13:6 *Pay your taxes:* Jesus referred to paying taxes in his famous pronouncement about the disciples’ relationship to government (Matt 22:21). A tax revolt occurred in Rome at about the time that Paul was writing, so Paul’s whole discussion of the Christian’s responsibility to government might have been sparked by his knowledge that Roman Christians were participating in this tax revolt (see Tacitus, *Annals* 13).

13:8-10 These verses discuss how believers relate to other people. If we truly love others, our actions will reflect all the commandments in the law that concern our relationships with other people.

13:8 The idea of *obligation* is the hinge that connects 13:1-7 and 13:8-10. Christians are to “give to everyone what [they] owe them” (13:7); and Christians always owe love to their neighbors.

• *Owe nothing to anyone:* Debts are not sinful but should be avoided and, if incurred, should be promptly repaid so that the believer is free to serve in love (see Prov 22:7). • *love one another:* Believers are called to love all those they encounter (12:14-21; Luke 10:25-37), but the phrase especially emphasizes the love that each believer owes to other believers. • *you will fulfill the requirements of God’s law:* This teaching closely follows Jesus’ teaching in Matt 22:34-40.

13:10
Matt 22:39
John 13:34-35
Gal 5:13-14
**agapē* (0026)
† Rom 14:15

13:11
1 Cor 7:29-31
1 Thes 5:5-6
Jas 5:8
1 Pet 4:7

13:12
Eph 5:11; 6:13
1 Thes 5:8

13:13
Luke 21:34
Eph 5:18

14:1
1 Cor 9:22
**pistis* (4102)
† Gal 2:20

14:2
1 Cor 10:25-27

14:3
Col 2:16

14:4
Matt 7:1

14:5
Gal 4:10

14:6
1 Cor 10:30

14:7
2 Cor 5:15
Gal 2:20

14:8
Phil 1:20
1 Thes 5:10

14:9
Rev 1:18

requirements of God's law. ⁹For the commandments say, "You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not covet." These—and other such commandments—are summed up in this one commandment: "Love your neighbor as yourself." ^{10e}Love does no wrong to others, so ⁹love fulfills the requirements of God's law.

Living in Light of the Day (13:11-14)

¹¹This is all the more urgent, for you know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹²The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here. So remove your dark deeds like dirty clothes, and put on the shining armor of right living. ¹³Because we belong to the day, we must live decent lives for all to see. Don't participate in the darkness of wild parties and drunkenness, or in sexual promiscuity and immoral living, or in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴Instead, clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And don't let yourself think about ways to indulge your evil desires.

A Plea for Unity (14:1–15:13) *Do Not Condemn One Another!*

14 Accept other believers who are weak in ^ffaith, and don't argue with them

about what they think is right or wrong. ²For instance, one person believes it's all right to eat anything. But another believer with a sensitive conscience will eat only vegetables. ³Those who feel free to eat anything must not look down on those who don't. And those who don't eat certain foods must not condemn those who do, for God has accepted them. ⁴Who are you to condemn someone else's servants? Their own master will judge whether they stand or fall. And with the Lord's help, they will stand and receive his approval.

⁵In the same way, some think one day is more holy than another day, while others think every day is alike. You should each be fully convinced that whichever day you choose is acceptable. ⁶Those who worship the Lord on a special day do it to honor him. Those who eat any kind of food do so to honor the Lord, since they give thanks to God before eating. And those who refuse to eat certain foods also want to please the Lord and give thanks to God. ⁷For we don't live for ourselves or die for ourselves. ⁸If we live, it's to honor the Lord. And if we die, it's to honor the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. ⁹Christ died and rose again for this very purpose—to be Lord both of the living and of the dead.

13:9 "You must not commit adultery. . . . You must not covet": This quotation is from Exod 20:13-15, 17. • "Love your neighbor as yourself": This quotation is from Lev 19:18.

13:11 The NT often speaks of *salvation* as the final victory over sin and death that believers will experience when Jesus returns in glory (see 5:9-10).

13:12-13 *the day of salvation*: The word *day* reflects two sources. First, the OT repeatedly predicts the *day of the Lord* when God's plan culminates (see Isa 13:4-13; Jer 30:8-9; Joel 2:32; 3:18; Obad 1:15-18). Second, the tradition of moral instruction in the ancient world associated light/daytime with good and darkness/nighttime with evil. The Greeks, Romans, and ancient Jews all used this contrast. Because believers *belong to the day* they should be living out its values, avoiding the *dark deeds* that are typical of nighttime.

14:1–15:7 Paul moves to a specific issue that was causing conflict in the church at Rome. The church in Rome was embroiled in a dispute between people who were *weak in faith* and people who were strong (see 15:1) regarding certain practices. Throughout this section, Paul instructs believers to be tolerant toward others and their practices; he is convinced that people

on both sides of the issue are genuine believers, and he does not think the issues they are fighting over are essential to the faith.

14:1 Being *weak in faith* means having scruples against doing certain things that Christian liberty would allow. In Rome, most of the weak in faith were Jewish Christians whose consciences did not give them liberty from certain requirements of Jewish law.

14:2 The weak in faith apparently believed that they should *eat only vegetables*. Their conviction probably stemmed from a concern to maintain Jewish ritual purity in the midst of a pagan culture. These Jewish Christians were following the lead of Daniel and his friends, who refused to eat the rich food and wine that the king of Babylon offered them (Dan 1:3-16). Other Jewish sources reveal that pious Jews often restricted their diets in pagan cultures because they could never be sure that meat had been slaughtered according to Jewish requirements.

14:3-4 *look down on . . . condemn*: The "strong," those who prided themselves on their enlightened freedom in Christ, looked with disdain on those they considered to be "weak." The weak, in turn—certain that they were following the true route to piety—condemned

the strong for their laxness. These attitudes, over different issues, are mirrored throughout the history of the Christian church. • *God has accepted them*: Both the weak and the strong are genuine believers, welcomed by God into his family. Therefore, they have no right to treat each other as if they do not belong (14:4; see also 15:7).

14:5 *some think one day is more holy than another day, while others think every day is alike*: The reference is probably to Jewish festival days and to the Sabbath; cp. Col 2:16. With Christ's provision of salvation, observance of the Sabbath in its original form is not required of Christians.

14:7 As the Lord's servants (14:4), Christians are to look to God for guidance and seek to honor him in all things (14:8). Because we are ultimately accountable to him, our desire should always be to please him, not to *live for ourselves*.

14:9 Paul refers to standard early Christian teaching on the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection (e.g., 2 Cor 5:15). • *of the living and of the dead* (literally *of the dead and of the living*): The original word order matches the sequence of Jesus' death and resurrection, the redemptive events that make Jesus our Lord.

¹⁰So why do you condemn another believer? Why do you look down on another believer? Remember, we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹¹For the Scriptures say,

“‘As surely as I live,’ says the LORD, ‘every knee will bend to me, and every ^atongue will confess and give praise to God.’”

¹²Yes, each of us will give a personal ^baccount to God.

Do Not Cause Your Brother or Sister to Stumble!

¹³So let’s stop condemning each other. Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not cause another believer to ^bstumble and fall.

¹⁴I know and am convinced on the authority of the Lord Jesus that no food, in and of itself, is wrong to eat. But if someone believes it is wrong, then for that person it is wrong. ¹⁵And if another believer is distressed by what you eat, you are not acting in ^clove if you eat it. Don’t let your eating ruin someone for whom Christ died. ¹⁶Then you will not be criticized for doing something you

believe is good. ¹⁷For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸If you serve Christ with this attitude, you will please God, and others will approve of you, too. ¹⁹So then, let us aim for ^bharmony in the church and try to build each other up.

²⁰Don’t tear apart the work of God over what you eat. Remember, all foods are acceptable, but it is wrong to eat something if it makes another person ^bstumble. ²¹It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything else if it might cause another believer to stumble. ²²You may believe there’s nothing wrong with what you are doing, but keep it between yourself and God. Blessed are those who don’t feel guilty for doing something they have decided is right. ²³But if you have doubts about whether or not you should eat something, you are sinning if you go ahead and do it. For you are not following your convictions. If you do anything you believe is not right, you are ^bsinning.

Put Other People First!

15 We who are strong must be considerate of those who are sensitive about

14:10

2 Cor 5:10

14:11

^aIsa 45:23; 49:18

^bglossa (1100)

^c1 Cor 12:10

14:12

Gal 6:5

^blogos (3056)

^cRom 15:18

14:13

Matt 7:1

^bproskomma (4348)

^cRom 14:20

14:14

Acts 10:15

1 Cor 8:7

14:15

1 Cor 8:11-13

^bagapē (0026)

^c1 Cor 8:1

14:16

1 Cor 10:30

14:17

Gal 5:22

14:19

^beirēnē (1515)

^c1 Cor 14:33

14:20

Acts 10:15

1 Cor 8:9-12

^bproskomma (4348)

^c1 Cor 1:23

14:21

1 Cor 8:13

14:22

1 Jn 3:21

14:23

^bhamartia (0266)

^c1 Cor 15:56

14:10 another believer: Literally *your brother*; also in 14:10b, 13, 15, 21. See note on 1:13. • *we will all stand before the judgment seat of God:* Paul reminds the Roman Christians that it is God, not other Christians, who will ultimately judge all of us (cp. 2 Cor 5:10).

14:11 This quotation is from Isa 49:18; 45:23 (Greek version). In its original context, Isa 45:23 is surrounded by assertions of God’s sovereignty (Isa 45:22, 24). Only the sovereign God has the right to stand in judgment (14:10, 12). • *confess and give praise to God:* Or *confess allegiance to God*.

14:13 This verse acts as a bridge. *Let’s stop condemning each other* summarizes 14:1-12, while the concern about causing *another believer to stumble and fall* becomes the major emphasis of 14:14-23. • *stumble and fall:* This phrase originally applied to obstacles that could trip people as they walked, or to traps into which a person might fall. It is used metaphorically throughout the NT for behavior that might bring spiritual harm to another person (see 1 Cor 8:9, 13; 1 Jn 2:10; cp. Matt 21:42-44; Luke 20:17-18; Rom 9:32-33; 1 Pet 2:8).

14:14 no food, in and of itself, is wrong to eat (literally *nothing is common in itself*): The word *common* signals that the root concern that Paul was addressing was Jewish purity regulations. Jews

described food as *common* if it was not clean (i.e., not kosher), thereby causing a Jew to become ritually impure (see Lev 11; cp. Mark 7:2, 5; Acts 10:14). Paul again follows the teaching of Jesus that “every kind of food is acceptable in God’s eyes” (Mark 7:19). • *for that person it is wrong:* The truth that no food is wrong to eat was not easy for pious Jews to accept because they had been raised to honor God by avoiding certain foods. Paul urges those who are strong in faith not to force others to violate their consciences (cp. 1 Cor 8:1-13).

14:15 The word translated *ruin* (Greek *apollumi*, “destroy”) is often applied to eternal damnation (see 2:12; Matt 10:28; 18:14; Luke 9:24; 13:2-5; John 3:16; 10:10, 28; 1 Cor 1:18-19; Jas 4:12; 2 Pet 3:9). By insisting on their freedom to eat whatever they want, the strong might cause sensitive Jewish Christians *for whom Christ died* to turn away from the faith.

14:20 The work of God refers both to the spiritual life of other Christians (14:15) and to the Christian community itself (14:19). The strong, with their dogged insistence on doing whatever they want, create division and disrupt God’s intention to build a healthy and united community of believers.

14:21 or drink wine: Jews sometimes abstained from wine to avoid the

appearance of ritual contamination, since wine was used in pagan religious celebrations (see Dan 1:3-16).

14:22 keep it between yourself and God: Paul did not contest the freedom of the strong believers, but he instructed them to limit the expression of their freedom out of love for fellow believers so that the whole Christian community could be built up. • *Blessed are those who don’t feel guilty:* Guilt could come from harming the faith of the weak believers. Christian freedom is only worthwhile when it can be lived out without bringing such guilt.

14:23 If you do anything you believe is not right, you are sinning: God’s word defines sin for us, yet sin also involves violating our conscience. The weak Christians in Rome did not yet believe in their own hearts that they could eat meat, drink wine, or ignore Jewish holy days; their consciences were still weak. They should not violate their consciences on these matters. Nor should the strong, by the power of their example or by their scorn, force weak Christians to do so.

15:1-4 We who are strong: Paul aligns himself with those he identifies as strong in faith, and he reveals that the division in the Roman church was not simply between Jews and Gentiles. Like Paul, some Jews had enlightened consciences and so were counted

15:2
1 Cor 9:19; 10:24
Gal 6:2

15:3
*Ps 69:9

15:4
2 Tim 3:16
**paraklêsis* (3874)
* 1 Cor 14:31

15:5
1 Cor 1:10
2 Cor 1:3

15:6
Rev 1:6

15:8
Matt 15:24
Acts 3:25-26
2 Cor 1:20

15:9
*2 Sam 22:50
*Ps 18:49

things like this. We must not just please ourselves. ²We should help others do what is right and build them up in the Lord. ³For even Christ didn't live to please himself. As the Scriptures say, "The insults of those who insult you, O God, have fallen on me." ⁴Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. And the Scriptures give us hope and ^cencouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled.

⁵May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus. ⁶Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise

and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Receive One Another!

⁷Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory. ⁸Remember that Christ came as a servant to the Jews to show that God is true to the promises he made to their ancestors. ⁹He also came so that the Gentiles might give glory to God for his mercies to them. That is what the psalmist meant when he wrote:

"For this, I will praise you among the Gentiles;
I will sing praises to your name."

Tolerance and Its Limits (14:1–15:13)

Rom 12:9-21
Ps 133:1-3
1 Cor 1:10; 6:1-20;
8:1-13; 10:1-11:1;
12:12-27; 13:1-8
2 Cor 6:14-7:1
Col 3:12-15
2 Tim 2:23-26

Paul pleads for tolerance between those who are weak in faith and those who are strong in faith, and he teaches that believers need to accept each other (14:1; 15:7). They should stop condemning and belittling each other. Rather, they should learn to worship God with a united voice and spirit (15:6).

Paul is addressing the specific issue of whether believers need to practice certain requirements of the OT law and of Jewish worship. Theologians have used the word *adiaphora* ("non-essentials") to describe beliefs or practices that are neither required nor prohibited by Scripture. On such issues, Christians must accommodate a variety of opinions.

Paul takes a very different approach when the Good News itself is at stake. In Galatians, for example, Paul confronts false teaching about the Good News by severely castigating the false teachers (Gal 1:6-9) and by warning readers that adopting false teaching will alienate them from Christ (Gal 5:4).

In our day, we need to be careful about what we tolerate and accommodate, and we need to be equally careful about what we decide is worthy of confrontation. Believers need to consider carefully the different issues they confront in their associations with other believers. If the basic truth of the Good News is not violated, we should not quarrel or be divided over such issues. Other issues, however, strike at the heart of the message of Good News. In these cases, Christians need to take a stand and be faithful to the Good News and to Christ. The way Paul himself dealt with a variety of issues in his own time can serve as a guide for dealing with conflicts and controversies in our time.

among the strong. Similarly, some Gentiles were so strongly influenced by Jewish teaching and tradition that they were among the weak in faith. • *must be considerate of those who are sensitive about things like this:* This phrase is reminiscent of Gal 6:2. Paul did not want the strong to simply put up with those who were weak in faith; rather the strong were to actively and sympathetically assist the weak in living out their Christian faith with integrity (see also Gal 5:13-15).

15:2 *others* (literally *the neighbor*): See Lev 19:18, quoted in 13:9. Love for others should govern the conduct of people who are strong in faith.

15:3 This quotation is from Ps 69:9. • A number of passages in the NT use Psalm 69 to describe Jesus' suffering (Matt 27:34; Mark 15:35-36; Luke 23:36; John 15:25; 19:28-29). Paul's quotation

of just a small portion of that psalm evokes the whole experience of Jesus' suffering. • *who insult you, O God, have fallen on me:* Literally *who insult you have fallen on me*.

15:4 *Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us:* All that God caused to be recorded in the OT has supreme relevance to believers, who experience the fulfillment of God's plan.

15:5-6 *live in complete harmony:* This phrase (see note on 12:16) refers to the whole orientation of how someone thinks. A mindset of harmony is important for Christian unity (see 12:3-5, 16; Phil 2:2-5).

15:7 To *accept each other* means more than grudgingly putting up with each other. We are to welcome other believers, with all their flaws and sins, into our fellowship and treat them

as family (see note on 12:10), *just as Christ has accepted us*, with all our flaws and sins, into his fellowship and family (5:8-11).

15:8-9 Through *Christ*, God made it possible for *Jews and Gentiles* to join together to give glory to God in the new covenant people of God (see chs 9-11). The issue of Jewish-Gentile relationships was fundamental to the dispute in the Roman church (14:1-15:7).

15:8 *servant to the Jews:* Literally *servant of circumcision*.

15:9-12 These quotations from the OT all emphasize God's promise that *Gentiles* would join with Jews in praising God. Gentiles are now full members of God's people.

15:9 This quotation is from Ps 18:49.

¹⁰And in another place it is written,
 “Rejoice with his people,
 you Gentiles.”

¹¹And yet again,
 “Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles.
 Praise him, all you people of the
 earth.”

¹²And in another place Isaiah said,
 “The heir to David’s throne will come,
 and he will rule over the Gentiles.
 They will place their hope on him.”

¹³I pray that God, the source of hope,
 will fill you completely with joy and peace
 because you trust in him. Then you will
 overflow with confident hope through the
 power of the Holy Spirit.

6. THE LETTER CLOSING (15:14–16:27)
Paul’s Ministry and Travel Plans

¹⁴I am fully convinced, my dear brothers
 and sisters, that you are full of ⁴goodness.
 You know these things so well you can teach
 each other all about them. ¹⁵Even so, I have
 been bold enough to write about some of
 these points, knowing that all you need is
 this reminder. For by God’s grace, ¹⁶I am
 a ⁶special messenger from Christ Jesus to
 you Gentiles. I bring you the Good News so
 that I might present you as an acceptable of-
 fering to God, made holy by the Holy Spirit.

¹⁷So I have reason to be enthusiastic about
 all Christ Jesus has done through me in my
 service to God. ¹⁸Yet I dare not boast about
 anything except what Christ has done
 through me, bringing the Gentiles to God
 by my ¹message and by the way I worked
 among them. ¹⁹They were convinced by the
 power of miraculous ⁸signs and wonders
 and by the power of God’s Spirit. In this
 way, I have fully presented the ¹⁴Good News
 of Christ from Jerusalem all the way to Illyr-
 icum.

²⁰My ambition has always been to preach
 the Good News where the name of Christ
 has never been heard, rather than where a
 church has already been started by some-
 one else. ²¹I have been following the plan
 spoken of in the Scriptures, where it says,

“Those who have never been told about
 him will see,
 and those who have never heard of
 him will understand.”

²²In fact, my visit to you has been delayed
 so long because I have been preaching in
 these places.

²³But now I have finished my work in
 these regions, and after all these long years
 of waiting, I am eager to visit you. ²⁴I am
 planning to go to Spain, and when I do, I will
 stop off in Rome. And after I have enjoyed
 your fellowship for a little while, you can
 provide for my journey.

15:10
¹⁰Deut 32:43

15:11
¹¹Ps 117:1

15:12
¹²Isa 11:10
 Rev 5:5; 22:16

15:14
 2 Pet 1:12
¹⁴agathōsunē (0019)
 • Gal 5:22

15:15
 Rom 1:5; 12:3

15:16
 Phil 2:17
¹⁶leitourgos (3011)
 • 2 Cor 9:12

15:17
 Phil 3:3

15:18
 Rom 1:5
¹⁸logos (3056)
 • Gal 5:14

15:19
 Acts 19:11
 1 Cor 2:4
 1 Thes 1:5
¹⁹ēmeion (4592)
 • 1 Cor 1:22
¹⁹euangelion (2098)
 • 1 Cor 15:1

15:20
 Rom 1:15
 1 Cor 3:10
 2 Cor 10:13, 15

15:21
²¹Isa 52:15

15:22
 Rom 1:10-13
 1 Thes 2:18

15:23
 Acts 19:21
 Rom 1:10-11

15:24
 1 Cor 16:6

15:10 This quotation is from Deut 32:43.

15:11 This quotation is from Ps 117:1.

15:12 This quotation is from Isa 11:10 (Greek version). • *The heir to David’s throne:* Literally *The root of Jesse*. David was the son of Jesse.

15:14–16:27 This final section contains elements common at the end of NT letters: a discussion of travel plans (15:14-29), requests for prayer (15:30-33), references to ministry associates (16:1-2, 21-23), greetings (16:3-16), and a doxology (16:25-27). Only the warning about false teachers (16:17-19) is a non-standard feature in this conclusion.

15:14 dear brothers and sisters: Literally *brothers*; also in 15:30. See note on 1:13. • *You know these things so well:* Paul praises the Roman Christians, as he had in the opening of the letter (see 1:8-12), demonstrating a gracious manner toward a church he had neither founded nor visited.

15:15-16 by God’s grace: Paul emphasized that his role as apostle and teacher was because God had chosen

him to lead in the formation of the Christian church (see also 1:5; 12:3; 1 Cor 3:10; Gal 2:9; Eph 3:2, 7, 8).

15:16 special messenger: The Greek word (*leitourgos*, “servant” or “minister”) could refer to almost any kind of servant, but Jews often applied the word to priests. Paul probably chose this word to emphasize the priestly nature of his ministry. • *to you Gentiles:* Paul stresses the Gentile flavor of the church in Rome (see also 1:6-7). This does not mean that there were no Jews in the church (see 16:3-16), but Gentiles had become the majority. • *present you as an acceptable offering to God:* Paul was fulfilling Isa 66:19-20.

15:19 God’s Spirit: Other manuscripts read *the Spirit*; still others read *the Holy Spirit*. • *I have fully presented the Good News of Christ:* Paul was not claiming that the work of evangelism had been completed in these regions. His point was that churches had been planted in enough major population centers so that those churches could carry on the work of evangelism themselves. Paul’s own distinctive ministry of planting foundational and strategic churches had been fulfilled. • *from*

Jerusalem all the way to Illyricum: Illyricum was a region northeast of Italy, a Roman province that occupied most of the coastlands along the Adriatic Sea, from modern-day Albania to Croatia. An arc drawn from Jerusalem to Illyricum would include the areas where Paul had planted churches (southern Galatia, Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece).

15:21 This quotation is from Isa 52:15 (Greek version).

15:24 I am planning to go to Spain: In Paul’s day, “Spain” included the entire Iberian Peninsula (modern Spain and Portugal). Parts of the peninsula had been occupied by the Romans since 200 BC, but only within Paul’s lifetime had the area been organized into a Roman province. Paul saw Spain, at the far end of the Mediterranean, as his final target in fulfilling the promise of Isa 66:19-20. • *you can provide for my journey:* Spain was so far from Paul’s previous sending church, Antioch in Syria, that he hoped the Roman church could serve as the logistical base for this future evangelistic effort.

15:25
Acts 19:21; 20:22

15:26
1 Cor 16:1
2 Cor 8:1; 9:2

15:27
1 Cor 9:11

15:29
Rom 1:10-11

15:30
2 Cor 1:11
Col 1:8; 4:12

15:31
2 Thes 3:2

15:32
Phlm 1:7
theLema (2307)
• Eph 6:6

15:33
Rom 16:20
Heb 13:20

16:1
Acts 18:18
diakonos (1249)
• 2 Cor 11:23

16:2
Phil 2:29

16:5
1 Cor 16:15, 19
Col 4:15
Phlm 1:2
ekklesia (1577)
• 1 Cor 1:2

16:7
Rom 16:11, 21
Col 4:10
Phlm 1:23

²⁵But before I come, I must go to Jerusalem to take a gift to the believers there.

²⁶For you see, the believers in Macedonia and Achaia have eagerly taken up an offering for the poor among the believers in Jerusalem. ²⁷They were glad to do this because they feel they owe a real debt to them. Since the Gentiles received the spiritual blessings of the Good News from the believers in Jerusalem, they feel the least they can do in return is to help them financially. ²⁸As soon as I have delivered this money and completed this good deed of theirs, I will come to see you on my way to Spain. ²⁹And I am sure that when I come, Christ will richly bless our time together.

³⁰Dear brothers and sisters, I urge you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to join in my struggle by praying to God for me. Do this because of your love for me, given to you by the Holy Spirit. ³¹Pray that I will be rescued from those in Judea who refuse to obey God. Pray also that the believers there will be willing to accept the donation I am taking to Jerusalem. ³²Then, by the will of

God, I will be able to come to you with a joyful heart, and we will be an encouragement to each other.

³³And now may God, who gives us his peace, be with you all. Amen.

Paul Greet His Friends

16 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a deacon in the church in Cenchræa. ²Welcome her in the Lord as one who is worthy of honor among God's people. Help her in whatever she needs, for she has been helpful to many, and especially to me.

³Give my greetings to Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in the ministry of Christ Jesus. ⁴In fact, they once risked their lives for me. I am thankful to them, and so are all the Gentile churches. ⁵Also give my greetings to the church that meets in their home.

Greet my dear friend Epenetus. He was the first person from the province of Asia to become a follower of Christ. ⁶Give my greetings to Mary, who has worked so hard for your benefit. ⁷Greet Andronicus

15:25-28 *I must go to Jerusalem to take a gift to the believers there:* During his third missionary journey, Paul collected donations from the Gentile churches to help the believers in Jerusalem and to draw the two wings of the first-century church closer together (see also 1 Cor 16:1-2; 2 Cor 8-9).

15:25 *the believers:* Literally *God's holy people*; also in 15:26, 31.

15:26 *Macedonia and Achaia* were the northern and southern regions of Greece. Paul founded churches in several prominent cities in Macedonia, including Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. In Achaia, Paul had preached in Athens and founded the church in Corinth (see Acts 16-18). • *the poor among the believers in Jerusalem:* Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were suffering from famines that had hit the area (see Acts 11:27-30), and also because their faith in Christ caused them to be ostracized from Jewish society.

15:27 *they owe a real debt:* Gentile Christians owe their spiritual existence to God's work among the Israelites (see 11:17-24).

15:31 *Pray that I will be rescued from those in Judea who refuse to obey God:* See Acts 21-22. God preserved Paul's life and used the circumstances of his arrest in Jerusalem to take him precisely where he planned to go—Rome. • *the donation:* Literally *the ministry*; other manuscripts read *the gift*.

15:33 Some manuscripts do not include *Amen*. One very early manuscript

places the doxology (16:25-27) here. This has led some scholars to conclude that the original letter to the Romans consisted of only 1:1-15:33, but few now follow this theory. The best early manuscripts place the doxology at the end of ch 16, and the whole of ch 16 was most likely part of Paul's original letter to the Romans. See also note on 16:1-6.

16:1-16 Paul here commended and greeted twenty-seven Roman Christians, ten of whom were women. Women played important roles in the early church. • Paul had never been to Rome, which has led to some speculation as to how he knew so many people there. One theory is that ch 16 was actually part of another letter that Paul sent to Ephesus. However, we have no good manuscript evidence for a separate letter (cp. note on 15:33). Perhaps the answer is that Paul was able to greet so many people in Rome because he had encountered them during their travels away from Rome (see Romans Introduction, "Setting," p. 1888).

16:1 *A deacon* (Greek *diakonos*, "servant") refers both to a Christian who is recognized as a servant of Christ and specifically to someone who holds the office of deacon in a particular church (see Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8-12; cp. Acts 6:1-6). • *Cenchræa* was located eight miles from Corinth and functioned as its port. Paul might have been writing this letter to the Romans from Corinth on a winter-long stop there near the

end of his third missionary journey (see Acts 20:2-3).

16:2 *she has been helpful to many:* This phrase indicates the ancient role of the patron, a wealthy person who used influence and money to help people and causes (see "Work and Patronage" at 2 Thes 3:6-10, p. 2045). Phoebe was apparently a woman of wealth and influence who used her resources to help missionaries such as Paul.

16:3-16 Although Paul had never visited the Christian community in Rome, he established rapport with these believers by personally greeting many of the church's members. The names reveal that the Roman Christian community was very diverse—Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free, men and women all formed a new society in the church (see Gal 3:26-29).

16:3 *Priscilla and Aquila* were Paul's good friends (see "Priscilla and Aquila" at Acts 18:1-3, p. 1865). After leaving Rome around AD 49, they became his co-workers for an extended time in Corinth and Ephesus (see Acts 18-19). They had apparently returned to Rome by the time Paul wrote Romans (about AD 57).

16:5 *the church that meets in their home:* Early Christians did not have large buildings for their meetings—they met in private homes. The church in Rome was composed of a number of house churches where small groups of believers gathered for worship and instruction.

and Junia, my fellow Jews, who were in prison with me. They are highly respected among the apostles and became followers of Christ before I did. ⁸Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord. ⁹Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys.

¹⁰Greet Apelles, a good man whom Christ approves. And give my greetings to the believers from the household of Aristobulus.

¹¹Greet Herodion, my fellow Jew. Greet the Lord's people from the household of Narcissus. ¹²Give my greetings to Tryphena and Tryphosa, the Lord's workers, and to dear Persis, who has worked so hard for the Lord.

¹³Greet Rufus, whom the Lord picked out to be his very own; and also his dear mother, who has been a mother to me.

¹⁴Give my greetings to Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers and sisters who meet with them.

¹⁵Give my greetings to Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and to Olympas and all the believers who meet with them.

¹⁶Greet each other in Christian love. All the churches of Christ send you their greetings.

Closing Remarks and Doxology

¹⁷And now I make one more appeal, my dear brothers and sisters. Watch out for people who cause divisions and upset people's faith by teaching things contrary to what you have been taught. Stay away from them. ¹⁸Such people are not serving Christ our Lord; they are serving their own personal interests. By smooth talk and glowing words they deceive innocent people. ¹⁹But everyone knows that you are obedient to the Lord. This makes me very happy. I want you to be wise in doing right and to stay innocent of any wrong. ²⁰The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. May the grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

²¹Timothy, my fellow worker, sends you his greetings, as do Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my fellow Jews.

²²I, Tertius, the one writing this letter for Paul, send my greetings, too, as one of the Lord's followers.

²³Gaius says hello to you. He is my host and also serves as host to the whole church. Erastus, the city treasurer, sends you his greetings, and so does our brother Quartus.

²⁵Now all glory to God, who is able to make

- 16:10**
Acts 11:14
- 16:11**
Rom 16:7, 21
- 16:13**
Mark 15:21
2 Jn 1:1
- 16:16**
1 Cor 16:20
1 Thes 5:26
1 Pet 5:14
- 16:17**
1 Cor 5:9, 11
2 Thes 3:6
2 Tim 3:5
Titus 3:10
2 Jn 1:10
- 16:18**
Phil 3:19
Col 2:4
2 Pet 2:3
- 16:19**
Matt 10:16
- 16:20**
Gen 3:15
*satanas (4567)
* 2 Cor 11:14
- 16:21**
Acts 13:1; 16:1; 17:5
- 16:25**
1 Cor 2:1
Eph 1:9; 3:3-5
Col 1:26-27; 2:2
2 Tim 1:9-10
1 Pet 1:20

16:7 In Greek, the name *Junia* could refer to a man named *Junias* or to a woman named *Junia*. Most interpreters understand *Junia* as a feminine name. Some late manuscripts accent the word so it reads *Junias*, a masculine name; still others read *Julia* (feminine). This section pairs masculine and feminine names to refer to husband-and-wife teams, so Junia was probably a woman. • *fellow Jews*: Or *compatriots*; also in 16:21. • *who were in prison with me*: When this occurred is uncertain. According to Acts, Paul had been imprisoned overnight in Philippi (Acts 16:19-28); after Romans was written, he would later be imprisoned for two years in Caesarea (Acts 24:27) and for two years in Rome (Acts 28:30-31). Paul was undoubtedly imprisoned on occasions not mentioned in Acts (see 2 Cor 11:23). • *highly respected among the apostles*: This phrase probably indicates that Andronicus and Junia were apostles—i.e., accredited missionaries of the church (see Acts 14:4, 14; 1 Cor 9:5-6; Gal 2:9).

16:10 This *Aristobulus* was probably the same man as the brother of Herod Agrippa I; Aristobulus was a member of the Roman aristocracy who lived in Rome many years prior to his death in AD 48 or 49 (see Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.8.4; *War* 2.11.6). His *household* probably refers to his family and their servants in Rome.

16:11 *fellow Jew*: Or *compatriot*.

16:13 This *Rufus* might be the individual mentioned as the son of Simon of Cyrene, who carried Christ's cross (see Mark 15:21).

16:14 *brothers and sisters*: Literally *brothers*; also in 16:17. See note on 1:13.

16:15 *all the believers*: Literally *all of God's holy people*.

16:16 *in Christian love* (literally *with a sacred kiss*): The kiss was a common way to *greet* another person in the ancient world and particularly among the Jews. It is mentioned frequently in the NT as a greeting (1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; 1 Thes 5:26; see 1 Pet 5:14); the kiss of peace became a standard feature of the Christian liturgy by the second century.

16:17 *people who cause divisions*: Paul had trouble with divisive false teachers elsewhere (see Galatians, Colossians, 1 Timothy), so he warned the Roman church about this danger.

16:20 *The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet*: Paul alludes to the curse that God pronounced upon the serpent after he had deceived Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:15). Christ, the offspring of Eve, will soon crush Satan under the feet of the church (cp. Matt 16:18-19). • *Lord Jesus*: Some manuscripts read *Lord Jesus Christ*.

16:21 *Timothy* was one of Paul's closest ministry associates (see "Timothy" at

Acts 16:1-3, p. 1860). Timothy accompanied Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:2-3) and was with Paul in Corinth while Paul wrote this letter to the Roman church (see Acts 20:2-4).

16:22 *Tertius* was the scribe (or *amanuensis*) who wrote the letter as Paul dictated. Most ancient letter writers employed such a scribe.

16:23 Some manuscripts add v 24, *May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen*. Still others add this sentence after v 27. • This *Erastus* was probably the individual Paul sent from Ephesus to Macedonia during his third missionary journey (Acts 19:21-22; see 2 Tim 4:20). An inscription in Corinth mentions an Erastus who was a city magistrate, possibly the same Erastus mentioned here.

16:25-27 This doxology makes a very appropriate conclusion to Paul's letter and its argument, reprising many of the themes found at the very beginning (1:1-15). • The doxology is missing in two late manuscripts and is in different places in other manuscripts (after 14:23 and after 15:33). Therefore, these verses might have been added to Paul's letter at a later time. However, the majority of manuscripts do include the doxology at the end of the letter, and it uses vocabulary and themes common in the rest of the letter. Paul most likely wrote it himself as a conclusion to the letter.

^bapokalupsis (0602)
• 1 Cor 1:7

16:26
Rom 1:2, 5

16:27
Rom 11:36

you strong, just as my Good News says. This message about Jesus Christ has ^brevealed his plan for you Gentiles, a plan kept secret from the beginning of time. ²⁶But now as the prophets foretold and as the eternal

God has commanded, this message is made known to all Gentiles everywhere, so that they too might believe and obey him. ²⁷All glory to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, forever. Amen.

16:25 plan (literally *mystery*): For Paul, the *mystery* is the truth about God and his plan that was not clearly known in the OT era but which has been revealed in the NT era. While the OT predicted the conversion of Gentiles, it

did not make clear that Gentiles would become equal members of the people of God without becoming proselytes of Judaism.

16:26 the prophets: Literally *the pro-*

phetic writings. • *so that they too might believe and obey him:* Paul uses the same language about the mission to the Gentiles that he used in 1:5, creating a beautiful frame around the letter as a whole.