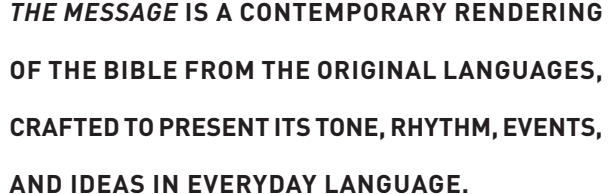


THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND BLOOD, AND MOVED INTO THE NEIGHBORHOOD. + JUST AS EACH DAY BRIMS WITH YOUR BEAUTY, MY MOUTH BRIMS WITH PRAISE. + THE LIFE-LIGHT BLAZED OUT OF THE DARKNESS. + I'VE PITCHED MY TENT IN THE LAND OF HOPE. + DISCOVER BEAUTY IN EVERYONE. + GOD IS LOVE. + TAKE YOUR EVERYDAY, ORDINARY LIFE—YOUR SLEEPING, EATING, GOING-TO-WORK, AND WALKING-AROUND LIFE—AND PLACE IT BEFORE GOD AS AN OFFERING. + HIS LOVE NEVER QUILTS. + NOW DO WHAT YOU'VE BEEN TAUGHT. SCHOOL'S OUT; QUIT STUDYING THE SUBJECT AND START *LIVING* IT! + LIVE GENEROUSLY AND GRACIOUSLY TOWARD OTHERS, THE WAY GOD LIVES TOWARD YOU. + THE SMALLEST ACT OF GIVING OR RECEIVING MAKES YOU A TRUE APPRENTICE. + ARE YOU TIRED? WORN OUT? BURNED OUT ON RELIGION? COME TO ME. + LET YOUR LOVE, GOD, SHAPE MY LIFE WITH SALVATION, EXACTLY AS YOU PROMISED. + I'M A STRANGER IN THESE PARTS; GIVE ME CLEAR DIRECTIONS. + YOU'RE HERE TO BE LIGHT, BRINGING OUT THE GOD-COLORS IN THE WORLD. + BECAUSE OF THE SACRIFICE OF THE MESSIAH, HIS BLOOD POURED OUT ON THE ALTAR OF THE CROSS, WE'RE A FREE PEOPLE—FREE OF PENALTIES AND PUNISHMENTS CHALKED UP BY ALL OUR MISDEEDS. AND NOT JUST BARELY FREE, EITHER. *ABUNDANTLY* FREE! + CELEBRATE GOD ALL DAY, EVERY DAY. I MEAN, *REVEL* IN HIM! + LET PETITIONS AND PRAISES SHAPE YOUR WORRIES INTO PRAYERS, LETTING GOD KNOW YOUR CONCERNS. + YOU'RE ABOUT TO BE GIVEN NEW GROUNDS FOR BELIEVING. NOW LET'S GO TO HIM. + THAT'S MY PARTING GIFT TO YOU. PEACE.



***THE MESSAGE* IS A CONTEMPORARY RENDERING  
OF THE BIBLE FROM THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGES,  
CRAFTED TO PRESENT ITS TONE, RHYTHM, EVENTS,  
AND IDEAS IN EVERYDAY LANGUAGE.**



# THE MESSAGE STUDENT BIBLE

THE BIBLE IN CONTEMPORARY LANGUAGE || EUGENE H. PETERSON

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# CONTENTS

Introduction to *The Message* . . . . . A7

## THE OLD TESTAMENT

<b>THE BOOKS OF MOSES</b> . . . . .	3
Genesis . . . . .	7
Exodus . . . . .	65
Leviticus . . . . .	111
Numbers . . . . .	143
Deuteronomy . . . . .	192

<b>THE HISTORY BOOKS</b> . . . . .	237
Joshua . . . . .	239
Judges . . . . .	269
Ruth . . . . .	299
1 Samuel . . . . .	305
2 Samuel . . . . .	342
1 Kings . . . . .	373
2 Kings . . . . .	409
1 Chronicles . . . . .	444
2 Chronicles . . . . .	476
Ezra . . . . .	513
Nehemiah . . . . .	526
Esther . . . . .	547

<b>THE WISDOM BOOKS</b> . . . . .	557
Job . . . . .	559
Psalms . . . . .	613
Proverbs . . . . .	757
Ecclesiastes . . . . .	811
Song of Songs . . . . .	826

<b>THE PROPHETS</b> . . . . .	837
Isaiah . . . . .	840
Jeremiah . . . . .	947
Lamentations . . . . .	1045
Ezekiel . . . . .	1056
Daniel . . . . .	1117
Hosea . . . . .	1136
Joel . . . . .	1154

Amos . . . . .	1162
Obadiah . . . . .	1176
Jonah . . . . .	1180
Micah . . . . .	1184
Nahum . . . . .	1196
Habakkuk . . . . .	1202
Zephaniah . . . . .	1209
Haggai . . . . .	1216
Zechariah . . . . .	1220
Malachi . . . . .	1234

## **THE NEW TESTAMENT**

<b>THE NEW TESTAMENT</b> . . . . .	1241
Matthew . . . . .	1243
Mark . . . . .	1285
Luke . . . . .	1310
John . . . . .	1355
Acts . . . . .	1389
Romans . . . . .	1430
1 Corinthians . . . . .	1452
2 Corinthians . . . . .	1472
Galatians . . . . .	1485
Ephesians . . . . .	1493
Philippians . . . . .	1500
Colossians . . . . .	1506
1 Thessalonians . . . . .	1512
2 Thessalonians . . . . .	1517
1 Timothy . . . . .	1519
2 Timothy . . . . .	1525
Titus . . . . .	1528
Philemon . . . . .	1530
Hebrews . . . . .	1532
James . . . . .	1546
1 Peter . . . . .	1552
2 Peter . . . . .	1558
1 John . . . . .	1561
2 John . . . . .	1567
3 John . . . . .	1568
Jude . . . . .	1569
Revelation . . . . .	1572
References for Cover and Testament Opener Pages . . . . .	1593
About <i>The Message</i> . . . . .	1597
The Translator and His Friends . . . . .	1599
What You Need to Know about the Books of the Bible . . . . .	1600
Well-Known Stories from the Bible . . . . .	1622
Books of the Old Testament . . . . .	1624
Books of the New Testament . . . . .	1625
The Drama of the Bible: A Visual Chronology . . . . .	1626
Maps . . . . .	1627

# INTRODUCTION TO THE MESSAGE

**READING IS THE FIRST THING**, just reading the Bible. As we read we enter a new world of words and find ourselves in on a conversation in which God has the first and last words. We soon realize that we are included in the conversation. We didn't expect this. But this is precisely what generation after generation of Bible readers do find: The Bible is not only written about us but to us. In these pages we become insiders to a conversation in which God uses words to form and bless us, to teach and guide us, to forgive and save us.

We aren't used to this. We are used to reading books that explain things, or tell us what to do, or inspire or entertain us. But this is different. This is a world of revelation: God revealing to people just like us—men and women created in God's image—how God works and what is going on in this world in which we find ourselves. At the same time that God reveals all this, God draws us in by invitation and command to participate in God's working life. We gradually (or suddenly) realize that we are insiders in the most significant action of our time as God establishes his grand rule of love and justice on this earth (as it is in heaven). "Revelation" means that we are reading something we couldn't have guessed or figured out on our own. Revelation is what makes the Bible unique.

And so just reading this Bible, *The Message*, and listening to what we read, is the first thing. There will be time enough for study later on. But first, it is important simply to read, leisurely and thoughtfully. We need to get a feel for the way these stories and songs, these prayers and conversations, these sermons and visions, invite us into this large, large world in which the invisible God is behind and involved in everything visible and illuminates what it means to live here—really live, not just get across the street. As we read, and the longer we read, we begin to "get it"—we are in conversation with God. We find ourselves listening and answering in matters that most concern us: who we are, where we came from, where we are going, what makes us tick, the texture of the world and the communities we live in, and—most of all—the incredible love of God among us, doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

Through reading the Bible, we see that there is far more to the world, more to us, more to what we see and more to what we don't see—more to everything!—than we had ever dreamed, and that this "more" has to do with God.

This is new for many of us, a different sort of book—a book that reads us even as we read it. We are used to picking up and reading books for what we can get out of them: information we can use, inspiration to energize us, instructions on how to do something or other, entertainment to while away a rainy day, wisdom that will guide us into living better. These things can and do take place when reading the Bible, but the Bible is given to us in the first place simply to invite us to make ourselves at home in the world of God, God's Word and world, and become familiar with the way God speaks and the ways in which we answer him with our lives.





Our reading turns up some surprises. The biggest surprise for many is how accessible this book is to those who simply open it up and read it. Virtually anyone can read this Bible with understanding. The reason that new translations are made every couple of generations or so is to keep the language of the Bible current with the common speech we use, the very language in which it was first written. We don't have to be smart or well-educated to understand it, for it is written in the words and sentences we hear in the marketplace, on school playgrounds, and around the dinner table. Because the Bible is so famous and revered, many assume that we need experts to explain and interpret it for us—and, of course, there are some things that need to be explained. But the first men and women who listened to these words now written in our Bibles were ordinary, everyday, working-class people. One of the greatest of the early translators of the Bible into English, William Tyndale, said that he was translating so that the “boy that driveth the plough” would be able to read the Scriptures.

One well-educated African man, who later became one of the most influential Bible teachers in our history (Augustine), was greatly offended when he first read the Bible. Instead of a book cultivated and polished in the literary style he admired so much, he found it full of homespun, earthy stories of plain, unimportant people. He read it in a Latin translation full of slang and jargon. He took one look at what he considered the “unspiritual” quality of so many of its characters and the everydayness of Jesus, and he contemptuously abandoned it. It was years before he realized that God had not taken the form of a sophisticated intellectual to teach us about highbrow heavenly culture so we could appreciate the finer things of God. When he saw that God entered our lives as a Jewish servant in order to save us from our sins, he started reading the book gratefully and believingly.

Some are also surprised that Bible reading does not introduce us to a “nicer” world. This biblical world is decidedly not an ideal world, the kind we see advertised in travel posters. Suffering and injustice and ugliness are not purged from the world in which God works and loves and saves. Nothing is glossed over. God works patiently and deeply, but often in hidden ways, in the mess of our humanity and history. Ours is not a neat and tidy world in which we are assured that we can get everything under our control. This takes considerable getting used to—there is mystery everywhere. The Bible does not give us a predictable cause-effect world in which we can plan our careers and secure our futures. It is not a dream world in which everything works out according to our adolescent expectations—there is pain and poverty and abuse at which we cry out in indignation, “You can't let this happen!” For most of us it takes years and years and years to exchange our dream world for this real world of grace and mercy, sacrifice and love, freedom and joy—the God-saved world.

Yet another surprise is that the Bible does not flatter us. It is not trying to sell us anything that promises to make life easier. It doesn't offer secrets to what we often think of as prosperity or pleasure or high adventure. The reality that comes into focus as we read the Bible has to do with what God is doing in a saving love that includes us and everything we do. This is quite different from what our sin-stunted and culture-cluttered minds imagine. But our Bible reading does not give us access to a mail-order catalog of idols from which we can pick and choose to satisfy our fantasies. The Bible begins with God speaking creation and us into being. It continues with God entering into personalized and complex relationships with us, helping and blessing us, teaching and training us, correcting and disciplining us, loving and saving us. This is not an escape from reality but a plunge into more reality—a sacrificial but altogether better life all the way.

+ + +

God doesn't force any of this on us: God's Word is personal address, inviting, commanding, challenging, rebuking, judging, comforting, directing—but not forcing. Not coercing. We are given space and freedom to answer, to enter the conversation. For more than anything else the Bible invites our participation in the work and language of God.

As we read, we find that there is a connection between the Word Read and the Word Lived. Everything in this book is live-able. Many of us find that the most important question we ask as we read is not “What does it mean?” but “How can I live it?” So we read personally, not impersonally. We read in order to live our true selves, not just get information that we can use to raise our standard of living. Bible reading is a means of listening to and obeying God, not gathering religious data by which we can be our own gods.

You are going to hear stories in this book that will take you out of your preoccupation with yourself and into the spacious freedom in which God is working the world's salvation. You are going to come across words and sentences that stab you awake to a beauty and hope that will connect you with your real life.

Be sure to answer.

*Eugene H Peterson*

GOD LOOKED OVER EVERYTHING HE HAD MADE; IT WAS SO GOOD,  
SO VERY GOOD! + MY PRESENCE WILL GO WITH YOU. I'LL SEE THE  
JOURNEY TO THE END. + I'LL SET UP MY RESIDENCE IN YOUR  
NEIGHBORHOOD; I WON'T AVOID OR SHUN YOU; I'LL STROLL THROUGH  
YOUR STREETS. + ALL ALONG, FROM THE TIME THEY LEFT EGYPT,  
YOU HAVE BEEN FORGIVING THIS PEOPLE. + BE VIGILANT, LISTEN  
OBEDIENTLY TO THESE WORDS THAT I COMMAND YOU SO THAT YOU'LL  
HAVE A GOOD LIFE. + JUST AS GOD COMMANDED HIS SERVANT MOSES,  
SO MOSES COMMANDED JOSHUA, AND JOSHUA DID IT. HE DIDN'T  
LEAVE INCOMPLETE ONE THING THAT GOD HAD COMMANDED MOSES.  
+ LIFT YOUR HEARTS HIGH, O ISRAEL, WITH ABANDON, VOLUNTEERING  
YOURSELVES WITH THE PEOPLE—BLESS GOD! + **OLD TESTAMENT**  
BLESSED BE GOD! HE DIDN'T LEAVE YOU WITHOUT FAMILY TO CARRY  
ON YOUR LIFE. + I'M BURSTING WITH GOD-NEWS! I'M WALKING ON  
AIR. I'M LAUGHING AT MY RIVALS. I'M DANCING MY SALVATION. +  
DO WHAT GOD TELLS YOU. WALK IN THE PATHS HE SHOWS YOU. + I KNOW  
THAT GOD LIVES—THE ONE WHO GIVES ME BACK MY LIFE. + HE'S PUT  
THE EARTH IN PLACE AND IT'S NOT MOVING. + THEY'VE KICKED ME  
AROUND EVER SINCE I WAS YOUNG, BUT THEY NEVER COULD KEEP ME  
DOWN. + THE LAST AND FINAL WORD IS THIS: FEAR GOD. DO WHAT  
HE TELLS YOU. + GOD'S LOYAL LOVE COULDN'T HAVE RUN OUT, HIS  
MERCIFUL LOVE COULDN'T HAVE DRIED UP. THEY'RE CREATED NEW  
EVERY MORNING. HOW GREAT YOUR FAITHFULNESS! + MEN AND  
WOMEN WHO HAVE LIVED WISELY AND WELL WILL SHINE BRILLIANTLY,  
LIKE THE CLOUDLESS, STAR-STREWN NIGHT SKIES.

# THE BOOKS OF MOSES

An enormous authority and dignity have, through the centuries, developed around the first five books of the Bible, commonly known as the Books of Moses. Over the course of many centuries, they have prompted a truly astonishing amount of reading and writing, study and prayer, teaching and preaching.

God is the primary concern of these books. That accounts for the authority and the dignity. But it is not only God; we also get included. That accounts for the widespread and intense human interest. We want to know what's going on. We want to know how we fit into things. We don't want to miss out.

The Books of Moses are made up mostly of stories and signposts. The stories show us God working with and speaking to men and women in a rich variety of circumstances. God is presented to us not in ideas and arguments but in events and actions that involve each of us personally. The signposts provide immediate and practical directions to guide us into behavior that is appropriate to our humanity and honoring to God.

The simplicity of the storytelling and signposting in these books makes what is written here as accessible to children as to adults. But the simplicity (as in so many simple things) is also profound, inviting us into a lifetime of growing participation in God's saving ways with us.

The image of human growth suggests a reason for the powerful pull of these stories and signposts on so many millions of men, women, and children to live as God's people. We can sketch the five books as five stages of growth in which God creates first a cosmos and then a people for his glory.

**GENESIS IS CONCEPTION.** After establishing the basic elements by which he will do his work of creation and salvation and judgment in the midst of human sin and rebellion (chapters 1–11), God conceives a people. He will reveal himself to them—and through them, over time, to everyone on earth—as a God of salvation. God begins small, with one man: Abraham. The embryonic People of God grow in the womb. Gradually details and then more details become evident as the embryo takes shape: Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob and Esau, Rachel, Joseph and his brothers. The pregnancy develops. Life is obviously developing in that womb, but there is also much that is not clear and visible. The background history is vague, the surrounding nations and customs veiled in a kind of mist. But the presence of life, God-conceived life, is kicking and robust.

**EXODUS IS BIRTH AND INFANCY.** The gestation of the People of God lasts a long time, but finally the birth pangs start. Egyptian slavery gives the first intimations of the contractions to come. When Moses arrives on the scene to preside over the birth itself, ten fierce plagues on Egypt accompany the contractions that bring the travail to completion: At the

Red Sea the waters break, the People of God tumble out of the womb onto dry ground, and their life as a free People of God begins. Moses leads them crawling and toddling to Sinai. They are fed. God reveals himself to them at the mountain. They begin to get a sense of their Parent. They learn the language of freedom and salvation—a word here, a word there, the Ten Words (Commandments) as a beginning, their basic vocabulary. The signposts begin to go up: Do this; don't do that. But the largest part of their infant life is God, the living God. As they explore the deep and wide world of God, worship becomes their dominant and most important activity. An enormous amount of attention is given to training them in worship, building the structures for worship, mastering the procedures. They are learning how to give their full attention in obedience and adoration to God.

**LEVITICUS IS SCHOOLING.** As infancy develops into childhood, formal schooling takes place. There's a lot to know; they need some structure and arrangement to keep things straight: reading, writing, arithmetic. But for the People of God the basic curriculum has to do with God and their relationship with him. Leviticus is an almost totally audiovisual book, giving a picture and ritual in the sacrifices and feasts for the pivotal ways in which God's people keep alert and observant to the ways their relationship with God goes awry (sin) and the ways they are restored to forgiveness and innocence (salvation). Everyday life consists of endless and concrete detail, much of it having to do with our behavior before God and with one another, and so, of course, Leviticus necessarily consists also of endless detail.

**NUMBERS IS ADOLESCENCE.** The years of adolescence are critical to understanding who we are. We are advanced enough physically to be able, for the most part, to take care of ourselves. We are developed enough mentally, with some obvious limitations, to think for ourselves. We discover that we are not simply extensions of our parents and we are not just mirror images of our culture. But who are we? Numbers asks, *Who are we as the People of God?* The People of God in Numbers are new at these emerging independent operations of behaving and thinking and so inevitably make a lot of mistakes. Rebellion is one of the more conspicuous mistakes. They test out their unique identity by rejecting the continuities with parents and culture. It's the easiest and cheapest way to "be yourself," as we like to say. But it turns out that there isn't much to the "self" that is thus asserted. Maturity requires the integration, not the amputation, of what we have received through our conception and birth, our infancy and schooling. The People of God have an extraordinarily long adolescence in the wilderness—about forty years of it.

**DEUTERONOMY IS ADULTHOOD.** The mature life is a complex operation. Growing up is a long process. And growing up in God takes the longest time. During their forty years spent in the wilderness, the People of God developed from their birth on the far shore of the Red Sea and were carried and led and nourished and protected under Moses to the place of God's revelation at Sinai—taught and trained, disciplined and blessed. Now they are ready to live as free and obedient men and women in the new land, the Promised Land. They are ready for adulthood, ready to be as grown up inwardly as they are outwardly. They are ready to live as a free people, formed by God, as a holy people, transformed by God. They still have a long way to go (as do we all), but all the conditions for maturity are there. The book of Deuteronomy gathers up that entire process of becoming the People of God and turns it into a sermon and a song and a blessing. The strongest and key word in Deuteronomy is *love*. Love is the most characteristic and comprehensive act of the human being. We are most ourselves when we love; we are most the People of God when we love. But love is not an abstract word defined out of a dictionary. In order to love maturely we

have to live and absorb and enter into this world of salvation and freedom, find ourselves in the stories, become familiar with and follow the signposts, learn the life of worship, and realize our unique identity as the People of God who love.

+ + +

The Books of Moses are foundational to the sixty-one books that follow in our Bibles. A foundation, though, is not a complete building but rather the anticipation of one. An elaborate moral infrastructure is provided here for what is yet to come. Each book that follows, in one way or another, picks up and develops some aspect of the messianic salvation involved in becoming the People of God, but it is always on this foundation. This foundation of stories and signposts has proven over and over to be solid and enduring.

+ + +

**A NOTE ON TRANSLATING THE NAME OF GOD:** In the original Hebrew text of the Old Testament, the generic name of divinity used by both Israel and its neighbors is translated “God” (or “god”). But the unique and distinctively personal name for God that was revealed to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:13-14) I have translated as “GOD.” The Jewish community early on substituted what we would translate as “LORD” for the unique name out of reverence (because our lips are not worthy to speak the name) and caution (lest we inadvertently blaspheme by saying God’s name in vain). Most Christian translators continue that practice.

# GENESIS

**FIRST, GOD.** God is the subject of life. God is foundational for living. If we don't have a sense of the primacy of God, we will never get it right, get life right, get *our* lives right. Not God at the margins; not God as an option; not God on the weekends. God at center and circumference; God first and last; God, God, God.

Genesis gets us off on the right foot. "First this: God" (Genesis 1:1). Genesis pulls us into a sense of reality that is God-shaped and God-filled. It gives us a vocabulary for speaking accurately and comprehensively about our lives—where we come from and where we are going, what we think and what we do, the people we live with and how to get along with them, the troubles we find ourselves in and the blessings that keep arriving.

Genesis uses words to make a foundation that is solid and true. Everything we think and do and feel is material in a building operation in which we are engaged all our lives long. There is immense significance in everything that we do. Our speech and actions and prayers are all, every detail of them, involved in this vast building operation comprehensively known as the kingdom of God. But we don't build the foundation. The foundation is given. The foundation is firmly in place.

Jesus concluded his most famous teaching by telling us that there are two ways to go about our lives—we can build on sand or we can build on rock. No matter how wonderfully we build, if we build on sand it will all fall to pieces like a house of cards. We build on what is already there, on the rock. Genesis is a verbal witness to

that rock: God's creative acts, God's intervening and gracious judgments, God's call to a life of faith, God's making a covenant with us.

God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature

So they can be responsible for . . . Earth itself. . . ."

God created human beings; he created them godlike, Reflecting God's nature.

He created them male and female.

God blessed them:

"Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge!" [Genesis 1:26-28]

But Genesis presents none of this to us as an abstract, bloodless truth or principle. We are given a succession of stories with named people—people who loved and quarreled, believed and doubted, had children and married, experienced sin and grace. If we pay attention, we find that we ourselves are living variations on these very stories: Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and his sons, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel, Joseph and his brothers. The stories show clearly that we are never outsiders or spectators to anything in Heaven and Earth. God doesn't work impersonally from space; he works with us where we are, as he finds us. No matter what we do, whether good or bad, we continue to be part of everything that God is doing. Nobody can drop out; there's no place to drop out to. So we may as well get started and take our place in the story—at the beginning.

# GENESIS

## HEAVEN AND EARTH

**1** First this: God created the Heavens and Earth—all you see, all you don't see. Earth 1-2  
was a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness. God's Spirit  
brooded like a bird above the watery abyss.

God spoke: "Light!" 3-5  
And light appeared.  
God saw that light was good  
and separated light from dark.  
God named the light Day,  
he named the dark Night.  
It was evening, it was morning—  
Day One.

God spoke: "Sky! In the middle of the waters; 6-8  
separate water from water!"  
God made sky.  
He separated the water under sky  
from the water above sky.  
And there it was:  
he named sky the Heavens;  
It was evening, it was morning—  
Day Two.

God spoke: "Separate! 9-10  
Water-beneath-Heaven, gather into one place;  
Land, appear!"  
And there it was.  
God named the land Earth.  
He named the pooled water Ocean.  
God saw that it was good.

God spoke: "Earth, green up! Grow all varieties 11-13  
of seed-bearing plants,  
Every sort of fruit-bearing tree."  
And there it was.  
Earth produced green seed-bearing plants,  
all varieties,  
And fruit-bearing trees of all sorts.  
God saw that it was good.  
It was evening, it was morning—  
Day Three.

God spoke: "Lights! Come out! 14-15  
Shine in Heaven's sky!



Separate Day from Night.

Mark seasons and days and years,  
Lights in Heaven's sky to give light to Earth."  
And there it was.

- 16-19 God made two big lights, the larger  
to take charge of Day,  
The smaller to be in charge of Night;  
and he made the stars.  
God placed them in the heavenly sky  
to light up Earth  
And oversee Day and Night,  
to separate light and dark.  
God saw that it was good.  
It was evening, it was morning—  
Day Four.
- 20-23 God spoke: "Swarm, Ocean, with fish and all  
sea life!  
Birds, fly through the sky over Earth!"  
God created the huge whales,  
all the swarm of life in the waters,  
And every kind and species of flying birds.  
God saw that it was good.  
God blessed them: "Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Ocean!  
Birds, reproduce on Earth!"  
It was evening, it was morning—  
Day Five.
- 24-25 God spoke: "Earth, generate life! Every sort and kind:  
cattle and reptiles and wild animals—all kinds."  
And there it was:  
wild animals of every kind,  
Cattle of all kinds, every sort of reptile and bug.  
God saw that it was good.
- 26-28 God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image,  
make them  
reflecting our nature  
So they can be responsible for the fish in the sea,  
the birds in the air, the cattle,  
And, yes, Earth itself,  
and every animal that moves on the face of Earth."  
God created human beings;  
he created them godlike,  
Reflecting God's nature.  
He created them male and female.  
God blessed them:  
"Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge!  
Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air,  
for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth."

Then God said, "I've given you  
every sort of seed-bearing plant on Earth  
And every kind of fruit-bearing tree,  
given them to you for food.  
To all animals and all birds,  
everything that moves and breathes,  
I give whatever grows out of the ground for food."  
And there it was.

29-30

God looked over everything he had made;  
it was so good, so very good!  
It was evening, it was morning—  
Day Six.

31

**2** Heaven and Earth were finished,  
down to the last detail.

1

By the seventh day  
God had finished his work.  
On the seventh day  
he rested from all his work.  
God blessed the seventh day.  
He made it a Holy Day  
Because on that day he rested from his work,  
all the creating God had done.

2-4

This is the story of how it all started,  
of Heaven and Earth when they were created.

## ADAM AND EVE

At the time GOD made Earth and Heaven, before any grasses or shrubs had sprouted from the ground—GOD hadn't yet sent rain on Earth, nor was there anyone around to work the ground (the whole Earth was watered by underground springs)—GOD formed Man out of dirt from the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life. The Man came alive—a living soul!

5-7

Then GOD planted a garden in Eden, in the east. He put the Man he had just made in it. GOD made all kinds of trees grow from the ground, trees beautiful to look at and good to eat. The Tree-of-Life was in the middle of the garden, also the Tree-of-Knowledge-of-Good-and-Evil.

8-9

A river flows out of Eden to water the garden and from there divides into four rivers. The first is named Pishon; it flows through Havilah where there is gold. The gold of this land is good. The land is also known for a sweet-scented resin and the onyx stone. The second river is named Gihon; it flows through the land of Cush. The third river is named Hiddekel and flows east of Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates.

10-14

GOD took the Man and set him down in the Garden of Eden to work the ground and keep it in order.

15

GOD commanded the Man, "You can eat from any tree in the garden, except from the Tree-of-Knowledge-of-Good-and-Evil. Don't eat from it. The moment you eat from that tree, you're dead."

16-17

GOD said, "It's not good for the Man to be alone; I'll make him a helper, a companion." So GOD formed from the dirt of the ground all the animals of the field and all

18-20

the birds of the air. He brought them to the Man to see what he would name them. Whatever the Man called each living creature, that was its name. The Man named the cattle, named the birds of the air, named the wild animals; but he didn't find a suitable companion.

21-22 GOD put the Man into a deep sleep. As he slept he removed one of his ribs and replaced it with flesh. GOD then used the rib that he had taken from the Man to make Woman and presented her to the Man.

23-25 The Man said,  
 "Finally! Bone of my bone,  
 flesh of my flesh!  
 Name her Woman  
 for she was made from Man."  
 Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and embraces his wife. They  
 become one flesh.  
 The two of them, the Man and his Wife, were naked, but they felt no shame.

1 **3** The serpent was clever, more clever than any wild animal GOD had made. He spoke to the Woman: "Do I understand that God told you not to eat from any tree in the garden?"

2-3 The Woman said to the serpent, "Not at all. We can eat from the trees in the garden. It's only about the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, 'Don't eat from it; don't even touch it or you'll die.'"

4-5 The serpent told the Woman, "You won't die. God knows that the moment you eat from that tree, you'll see what's really going on. You'll be just like God, knowing everything, ranging all the way from good to evil."

6 When the Woman saw that the tree looked like good eating and realized what she would get out of it—she'd know everything!—she took and ate the fruit and then gave some to her husband, and he ate.

7 Immediately the two of them did "see what's really going on"—saw themselves naked! They sewed fig leaves together as makeshift clothes for themselves.

8 When they heard the sound of GOD strolling in the garden in the evening breeze, the Man and his Wife hid in the trees of the garden, hid from GOD.

9 GOD called to the Man: "Where are you?"

10 He said, "I heard you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked. And I hid."

11 GOD said, "Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from that tree I told you not to eat from?"

12 The Man said, "The Woman you gave me as a companion, she gave me fruit from the tree, and, yes, I ate it."

GOD said to the Woman, "What is this that you've done?"

13 "The serpent seduced me," she said, "and I ate."

14-15 GOD told the serpent:  
 "Because you've done this, you're cursed,  
 cursed beyond all cattle and wild animals,  
 Cursed to slink on your belly  
 and eat dirt all your life.  
 I'm declaring war between you and the Woman,  
 between your offspring and hers.  
 He'll wound your head,  
 you'll wound his heel."

He told the Woman:  
 “I’ll multiply your pains in childbirth;  
 you’ll give birth to your babies in pain.  
 You’ll want to please your husband,  
 but he’ll lord it over you.”

He told the Man:  
 “Because you listened to your wife  
 and ate from the tree  
 That I commanded you not to eat from,  
 ‘Don’t eat from this tree,’  
 The very ground is cursed because of you;  
 getting food from the ground  
 Will be as painful as having babies is for  
 your wife;  
 you’ll be working in pain all your life long.  
 The ground will sprout thorns and weeds,  
 you’ll get your food the hard way,  
 Planting and tilling and harvesting,  
 sweating in the fields from dawn to dusk,  
 Until you return to that ground yourself, dead  
 and buried;  
 you started out as dirt, you’ll end up dirt.”

The Man, known as Adam, named his wife Eve because she was the mother of all the living. 20

GOD made leather clothing for Adam and his wife and dressed them. 21

GOD said, “The Man has become like one of us, capable of knowing everything, ranging from good to evil. What if he now should reach out and take fruit from the Tree-of-Life and eat, and live forever? Never—this cannot happen!” 22

So GOD expelled them from the Garden of Eden and sent them to work the ground, the same dirt out of which they’d been made. He threw them out of the garden and stationed angel-cherubim and a revolving sword of fire east of it, guarding the path to the Tree-of-Life. 23-24

**4** Adam slept with Eve his wife. She conceived and had Cain. She said, “I’ve gotten a man, with GOD’s help!” 1

Then she had another baby, Abel. Abel was a herdsman and Cain a farmer. 2

Time passed. Cain brought an offering to GOD from the produce of his farm. Abel also brought an offering, but from the firstborn animals of his herd, choice cuts of meat. GOD liked Abel and his offering, but Cain and his offering didn’t get his approval. Cain lost his temper and went into a sulk. 3-5

GOD spoke to Cain: “Why this tantrum? Why the sulking? If you do well, won’t you be accepted? And if you don’t do well, sin is lying in wait for you, ready to pounce; it’s out to get you, you’ve got to master it.” 6-7

Cain had words with his brother. They were out in the field; Cain came at Abel his brother and killed him. 8

GOD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” 9

He said, “How should I know? Am I his babysitter?”

GOD said, “What have you done! The voice of your brother’s blood is calling to me from the ground. From now on you’ll get nothing but curses from this ground; you’ll be 10-12

driven from this ground that has opened its arms to receive the blood of your murdered brother. You'll farm this ground, but it will no longer give you its best. You'll be a homeless wanderer on Earth."

13-14 Cain said to GOD, "My punishment is too much. I can't take it! You've thrown me off the land and I can never again face you. I'm a homeless wanderer on Earth and whoever finds me will kill me."

15 GOD told him, "No. Anyone who kills Cain will pay for it seven times over." GOD put a mark on Cain to protect him so that no one who met him would kill him.

16 Cain left the presence of GOD and lived in No-Man's-Land, east of Eden.

17-18 Cain slept with his wife. She conceived and had Enoch. He then built a city and named it after his son, Enoch.

Enoch had Irad,  
Irad had Mehujael,  
Mehujael had Methushael,  
Methushael had Lamech.

19-22 Lamech married two wives, Adah and Zillah. Adah gave birth to Jabal, the ancestor of all who live in tents and herd cattle. His brother's name was Jubal, the ancestor of all who play the lyre and flute. Zillah gave birth to Tubal-Cain, who worked at the forge making bronze and iron tools. Tubal-Cain's sister was Naamah.

23-24 Lamech said to his wives,  
Adah and Zillah, listen to me;  
you wives of Lamech, hear me out:  
I killed a man for wounding me,  
a young man who attacked me.  
If Cain is avenged seven times,  
for Lamech it's seventy-seven!

25-26 Adam slept with his wife again. She had a son whom she named Seth. She said, "God has given me another child in place of Abel whom Cain killed." And then Seth had a son whom he named Enosh.

That's when men and women began praying and worshiping in the name of GOD.

### THE FAMILY TREE OF THE HUMAN RACE

1-2 **5** This is the family tree of the human race: When God created the human race, he made it godlike, with a nature akin to God. He created both male and female and blessed them, the whole human race.

3-5 When Adam was 130 years old, he had a son who was just like him, his very spirit and image, and named him Seth. After the birth of Seth, Adam lived another 800 years, having more sons and daughters. Adam lived a total of 930 years. And he died.

6-8 When Seth was 105 years old, he had Enosh. After Seth had Enosh, he lived another 807 years, having more sons and daughters. Seth lived a total of 912 years. And he died.

9-11 When Enosh was ninety years old, he had Kenan. After he had Kenan, he lived another 815 years, having more sons and daughters. Enosh lived a total of 905 years. And he died.

12-14 When Kenan was seventy years old, he had Mahalalel. After he had Mahalalel, he lived another 840 years, having more sons and daughters. Kenan lived a total of 910 years. And he died.

15-17 When Mahalalel was sixty-five years old, he had Jared. After he had Jared, he lived another 830 years, having more sons and daughters. Mahalalel lived a total of 895 years. And he died.

When Jared was 162 years old, he had Enoch. After he had Enoch, he lived another 800 years, having more sons and daughters. Jared lived a total of 962 years. And he died. 18-20

When Enoch was sixty-five years old, he had Methuselah. Enoch walked steadily with God. After he had Methuselah, he lived another 300 years, having more sons and daughters. Enoch lived a total of 365 years. 21-23

Enoch walked steadily with God. And then one day he was simply gone: God took him. 24

When Methuselah was 187 years old, he had Lamech. After he had Lamech, he lived another 782 years. Methuselah lived a total of 969 years. And he died. 25-27

When Lamech was 182 years old, he had a son. He named him Noah, saying, “This one will give us a break from the hard work of farming the ground that GOD cursed.” After Lamech had Noah, he lived another 595 years, having more sons and daughters. Lamech lived a total of 777 years. And he died. 28-31

When Noah was 500 years old, he had Shem, Ham, and Japheth. 32

## GIANTS IN THE LAND

**6** When the human race began to increase, with more and more daughters being born, the sons of God noticed that the daughters of men were beautiful. They looked them over and picked out wives for themselves. 1-2

Then GOD said, “I’m not going to breathe life into men and women endlessly. Eventually they’re going to die; from now on they can expect a life span of 120 years.” 3

This was back in the days (and also later) when there were giants in the land. The giants came from the union of the sons of God and the daughters of men. These were the mighty men of ancient lore, the famous ones. 4

## NOAH AND HIS SONS

GOD saw that human evil was out of control. People thought evil, imagined evil—evil, evil, evil from morning to night. GOD was sorry that he had made the human race in the first place; it broke his heart. GOD said, “I’ll get rid of my ruined creation, make a clean sweep: people, animals, snakes and bugs, birds—the works. I’m sorry I made them.” 5-7

But Noah was different. GOD liked what he saw in Noah. 8

This is the story of Noah: Noah was a good man, a man of integrity in his community. Noah walked with God. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. 9-10

As far as God was concerned, the Earth had become a sewer; there was violence everywhere. God took one look and saw how bad it was, everyone corrupt and corrupting—life itself corrupt to the core. 11-12

God said to Noah, “It’s all over. It’s the end of the human race. The violence is everywhere; I’m making a clean sweep. 13

“Build yourself a ship from teakwood. Make rooms in it. Coat it with pitch inside and out. Make it 450 feet long, seventy-five feet wide, and forty-five feet high. Build a roof for it and put in a window eighteen inches from the top; put in a door on the side of the ship; and make three decks, lower, middle, and upper. 14-16

“I’m going to bring a flood on the Earth that will destroy everything alive under Heaven. Total destruction. 17

“But I’m going to establish a covenant with you: You’ll board the ship, and your sons, your wife and your sons’ wives will come on board with you. You are also to take two of each living creature, a male and a female, on board the ship, to preserve their lives with you: two of every species of bird, mammal, and reptile—two of everything so as to preserve their lives along with yours. Also get all the food you’ll need and store it up for you and them.” 18-21

Noah did everything God commanded him to do. 22

1 **7** Next GOD said to Noah, “Now board the ship, you and all your family—out of everyone in this generation, you’re the righteous one.

2-4 “Take on board with you seven pairs of every clean animal, a male and a female; one pair of every unclean animal, a male and a female; and seven pairs of every kind of bird, a male and a female, to insure their survival on Earth. In just seven days I will pour rain on Earth for forty days and forty nights. I’ll make a clean sweep of everything that I’ve made.”

5 Noah did everything GOD commanded him.

6-10 Noah was 600 years old when the floodwaters covered the Earth. Noah and his wife and sons and their wives boarded the ship to escape the flood. Clean and unclean animals, birds, and all the crawling creatures came in pairs to Noah and to the ship, male and female, just as God had commanded Noah. In seven days the floodwaters came.

11-12 It was the six-hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month that it happened: all the underground springs erupted and all the windows of Heaven were thrown open. Rain poured for forty days and forty nights.

13-16 That’s the day Noah and his sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth, accompanied by his wife and his sons’ wives, boarded the ship. And with them every kind of wild and domestic animal, right down to all the kinds of creatures that crawl and all kinds of birds and anything that flies. They came to Noah and to the ship in pairs—everything and anything that had the breath of life in it, male and female of every creature came just as God had commanded Noah. Then GOD shut the door behind him.

17-23 The flood continued forty days and the waters rose and lifted the ship high over the Earth. The waters kept rising, the flood deepened on the Earth, the ship floated on the surface. The flood got worse until all the highest mountains were covered—the high-water mark reached twenty feet above the crest of the mountains. Everything died. Anything that moved—dead. Birds, farm animals, wild animals, the entire teeming exuberance of life—dead. And all people—dead. Every living, breathing creature that lived on dry land died; he wiped out the whole works—people and animals, crawling creatures and flying birds, every last one of them, gone. Only Noah and his company on the ship lived.

24 The floodwaters took over for 150 days.

1-3 **8** Then God turned his attention to Noah and all the wild animals and farm animals with him on the ship. God caused the wind to blow and the floodwaters began to go down. The underground springs were shut off, the windows of Heaven closed and the rain quit. Inch by inch the water lowered. After 150 days the worst was over.

4-6 On the seventeenth day of the seventh month, the ship landed on the Ararat mountain range. The water kept going down until the tenth month. On the first day of the tenth month the tops of the mountains came into view. After forty days Noah opened the window that he had built into the ship.

7-9 He sent out a raven; it flew back and forth waiting for the floodwaters to dry up. Then he sent a dove to check on the flood conditions, but it couldn’t even find a place to perch—water still covered the Earth. Noah reached out and caught it, brought it back into the ship.

10-11 He waited seven more days and sent out the dove again. It came back in the evening with a freshly picked olive leaf in its beak. Noah knew that the flood was about finished.

12 He waited another seven days and sent the dove out a third time. This time it didn’t come back.

13-14 In the six-hundred-first year of Noah’s life, on the first day of the first month, the flood had dried up. Noah opened the hatch of the ship and saw dry ground. By the twenty-seventh day of the second month, the Earth was completely dry.

God spoke to Noah: “Leave the ship, you and your wife and your sons and your sons’ wives. And take all the animals with you, the whole menagerie of birds and mammals and crawling creatures, all that swarming extravagance of life, so they can reproduce and flourish on the Earth.” 15-17

Noah disembarked with his sons and wife and his sons’ wives. Then all the animals, crawling creatures, birds—every creature on the face of the Earth—left the ship family by family. 18-19

Noah built an altar to GOD. He selected clean animals and birds from every species and offered them as burnt offerings on the altar. GOD smelled the sweet fragrance and thought to himself, “I’ll never again curse the ground because of people. I know they have this bent toward evil from an early age, but I’ll never again kill off everything living as I’ve just done.” 20-21

For as long as Earth lasts,  
planting and harvest, cold and heat,  
Summer and winter, day and night  
will never stop.” 22

**9** God blessed Noah and his sons: He said, “Prosper! Reproduce! Fill the Earth! Every living creature—birds, animals, fish—will fall under your spell and be afraid of you. You’re responsible for them. All living creatures are yours for food; just as I gave you the plants, now I give you everything else. Except for meat with its lifeblood still in it—don’t eat that. 1-4

“But your own lifeblood I will avenge; I will avenge it against both animals and other humans. 5

Whoever sheds human blood,  
by humans let his blood be shed,  
Because God made humans in his image  
reflecting God’s very nature.  
You’re here to bear fruit, reproduce,  
lavish life on the Earth, live bountifully!” 6-7

Then God spoke to Noah and his sons: “I’m setting up my covenant with you including your children who will come after you, along with everything alive around you—birds, farm animals, wild animals—that came out of the ship with you. I’m setting up my covenant with you that never again will everything living be destroyed by floodwaters; no, never again will a flood destroy the Earth.” 8-11

God continued, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and everything living around you and everyone living after you. I’m putting my rainbow in the clouds, a sign of the covenant between me and the Earth. From now on, when I form a cloud over the Earth and the rainbow appears in the cloud, I’ll remember my covenant between me and you and everything living, that never again will floodwaters destroy all life. When the rainbow appears in the cloud, I’ll see it and remember the eternal covenant between God and everything living, every last living creature on Earth.” 12-16

And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I’ve set up between me and everything living on the Earth.” 17

The sons of Noah who came out of the ship were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham was the father of Canaan. These are the three sons of Noah; from these three the whole Earth was populated. 18-19



YOU'VE CONCEALED YOUR WAYS FROM SOPHISTICATES AND KNOW-IT-ALLS, BUT SPELLED THEM OUT CLEARLY TO ORDINARY PEOPLE. YES, FATHER, THAT'S THE WAY YOU LIKE TO WORK. + GIVING, NOT GETTING, IS THE WAY. + HE KNOCKED TYRANTS OFF THEIR HIGH HORSES, PULLED VICTIMS OUT OF THE MUD. + REMEMBER THE ROOT COMMAND: LOVE ONE ANOTHER. + GOD'S WAY OF PUTTING PEOPLE RIGHT SHOWS UP IN THE ACTS OF FAITH. + GO AFTER A LIFE OF LOVE AS IF YOUR LIFE DEPENDED ON IT—BECAUSE IT DOES. + GOD USES US TO PERSUADE MEN AND WOMEN TO DROP THEIR DIFFERENCES AND ENTER INTO GOD'S WORK OF MAKING THINGS RIGHT BETWEEN THEM. + BE VERY SURE NOW, YOU WHO HAVE BEEN TRAINED TO A SELF-SUFFICIENT MATURITY, THAT YOU ENTER INTO A GENEROUS COMMON LIFE WITH THOSE WHO HAVE TRAINED YOU, SHARING ALL THE GOOD THINGS THAT YOU HAVE AND EXPERIENCE. + GOD CAN DO ANYTHING, YOU KNOW— FAR MORE THAN YOU COULD EVER IMAGINE OR GUESS OR REQUEST IN YOUR WILDEST DREAMS! HE DOES IT NOT BY PUSHING US AROUND BUT BY WORKING WITHIN US, HIS SPIRIT DEEPLY AND GENTLY WITHIN US. + IT'S WONDERFUL WHAT HAPPENS WHEN CHRIST DISPLACES WORRY AT THE CENTER OF YOUR LIFE. + WEAR LOVE. IT'S YOUR BASIC, ALL-PURPOSE GARMENT. NEVER BE WITHOUT IT. + **NEW TESTAMENT** + THROUGH THE WORD WE ARE PUT TOGETHER AND SHAPED UP FOR THE TASKS GOD HAS FOR US. + THERE IS NOTHING DECEITFUL IN GOD, NOTHING TWO-FACED, NOTHING FICKLE. + THE WORLD AND ALL ITS WANTING, WANTING, WANTING IS ON THE WAY OUT—BUT WHOEVER DOES WHAT GOD WANTS IS SET FOR ETERNITY.

# THE NEW TESTAMENT

The arrival of Jesus signaled the beginning of a new era. God entered history in a personal way, and made it unmistakably clear that he is on our side, doing everything possible to save us. It was all presented and worked out in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It was, and is, hard to believe—seemingly too good to be true.

But one by one, men and women did believe it, believed Jesus was God alive among them and for them. Soon they would realize that he also lived in them. To their great surprise they found themselves living in a world where God called all the shots—had the first word on everything; had the last word on everything. That meant that everything, quite literally every thing, had to be re-centered, re-imagined, and re-thought.

They went at it with immense gusto. They told stories of Jesus and arranged his teachings in memorable form. They wrote letters. They sang songs. They prayed. One of them wrote an extraordinary poem based on holy visions. There was no apparent organization to any of this; it was all more or less spontaneous and, to the eye of the casual observer, haphazard. Over the course of about fifty years, these writings added up to what would later be compiled by the followers of Jesus and designated “the New Testament.”

Three kinds of writing—eyewitness stories, personal letters, and a visionary poem—make up the book. Five stories, twenty-one letters, one poem.

In the course of this writing and reading, collecting and arranging, with no one apparently in charge, the early Christians, whose lives were being changed and shaped by what they were reading, arrived at the conviction that there was, in fact, Someone in charge—God’s Holy Spirit was behind and in it all. In retrospect, they could see that it was not at all random or haphazard, that every word worked with every other word, and that all the separate documents worked in intricate harmony. There was nothing accidental in any of this, nothing merely circumstantial. They were bold to call what had been written God’s Word, and they trusted their lives to it. They accepted its authority over their lives. Most of its readers since have been similarly convinced.

A striking feature in all this writing is that it was done in the street language of the day, the idiom of the playground and marketplace. In the Greek-speaking world of that day, there were two levels of language: formal and informal. Formal language was used to write philosophy and history, government decrees and epic poetry. If someone were to sit down and consciously write for posterity, it would of course be written in this formal language with its learned vocabulary and precise diction. But if the writing was routine—shopping lists, family letters, bills, and receipts—it was written in the common, informal idiom of everyday speech, street language.

And this is the language used throughout the New Testament. Some people are taken aback by this, supposing that language dealing with a holy God and holy things should be elevated—stately and ceremonial. But one good look at Jesus—his preference for down-to-earth stories and easy association with common people—gets rid of that supposition. For Jesus is the descent of God to our lives, just as they are, not the ascent of our lives to God, hoping he might approve when he sees how hard we try.

And that is why the followers of Jesus in their witness and preaching, translating and teaching, have always done their best to get the Message—the “good news”—into the language of whatever streets they happen to be living on. In order to understand the Message right, the language must be right—not a refined language that appeals to our aspirations after the best but a rough and earthy language that reveals God’s presence and action where we least expect it, catching us when we are up to our elbows in the soiled ordinariness of our lives and God is the furthest thing from our minds.

**THE STORY OF JESUS** doesn't begin with Jesus. God had been at work for a long time. Salvation, which is the main business of Jesus, is an old business. Jesus is the coming together in final form of themes and energies and movements that had been set in motion before the foundation of the world.

Matthew opens the New Testament by setting the local story of Jesus in its world historical context. He makes sure that as we read his account of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we see the connections with everything that has gone before. In fact, in his account of Jesus' birth alone, Matthew reminds his readers of two Old Testament prophecies being fulfilled in the coming of the Messiah.

Watch for this—a virgin will get pregnant and bear a son; they will name him Immanuel (Hebrew for "God is with us"). [Matthew 1:23, quoting Isaiah 7:14]

"It's you, Bethlehem, in Judah's land, no longer bringing up the rear. From you will come the leader who will shepherd-rule my people, my Israel." [Matthew 2:6, quoting Micah 5:2]

*Fulfilled* is one of Matthew's characteristic verbs: such and such happened "that it might be fulfilled." Jesus is unique, but he is not odd.

Better yet, Matthew tells the story in such a way that not only is everything previous to us completed in Jesus; we are completed in Jesus. Every day we wake up in the middle of something that is already going on, that has been going on for a long time: genealogy and geology, history and culture, the cosmos—God. We are neither accidental nor incidental to the story. We get orientation, briefing, background, reassurance.

Matthew provides the comprehensive context by which we see all God's creation and salvation completed in Jesus, and all the parts of our lives—work, family, friends, memories, dreams—also completed in Jesus, who himself said, "Don't suppose for a minute that I have come to demolish the Scriptures—either God's Law or the Prophets. I'm not here to demolish but to complete. I am going to put it all together, pull it all together in a vast panorama" (Matthew 5:17). Lacking such a context, we are in danger of seeing Jesus as a mere diversion from the concerns announced in the newspapers. Nothing could be further from the truth.

# MATTHEW

- 1** The family tree of Jesus Christ, David's son, Abraham's son: 1
- Abraham had Isaac, 2-6  
Isaac had Jacob,  
Jacob had Judah and his brothers,  
Judah had Perez and Zerah (the mother was Tamar),  
Perez had Hezron,  
Hezron had Aram,  
Aram had Amminadab,  
Amminadab had Nahshon,  
Nahshon had Salmon,  
Salmon had Boaz (his mother was Rahab),  
Boaz had Obed (Ruth was the mother),  
Obed had Jesse,  
Jesse had David,  
and David became king.
- David had Solomon (Uriah's wife was the mother), 6-11  
Solomon had Rehoboam,  
Rehoboam had Abijah,  
Abijah had Asa,  
Asa had Jehoshaphat,  
Jehoshaphat had Joram,  
Joram had Uzziah,  
Uzziah had Jotham,  
Jotham had Ahaz,  
Ahaz had Hezekiah,  
Hezekiah had Manasseh,  
Manasseh had Amon,  
Amon had Josiah,  
Josiah had Jehoiachin and his brothers,  
and then the people were taken into the Babylonian exile.
- When the Babylonian exile ended, 12-16  
Jeconiah had Shealtiel,  
Shealtiel had Zerubbabel,  
Zerubbabel had Abiud,  
Abiud had Eliakim,  
Eliakim had Azor,  
Azor had Zadok,  
Zadok had Achim,  
Achim had Eliud,  
Eliud had Eleazar,  
Eleazar had Matthan,  
Matthan had Jacob,

Jacob had Joseph, Mary's husband,  
 the Mary who gave birth to Jesus,  
 the Jesus who was called Christ.

- 17 There were fourteen generations from Abraham to David,  
 another fourteen from David to the Babylonian exile,  
 and yet another fourteen from the Babylonian exile to Christ.

### THE BIRTH OF JESUS

18-19 The birth of Jesus took place like this. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. Before they enjoyed their wedding night, Joseph discovered she was pregnant. (It was by the Holy Spirit, but he didn't know that.) Joseph, chagrined but noble, determined to take care of things quietly so Mary would not be disgraced.

20-23 While he was trying to figure a way out, he had a dream. God's angel spoke in the dream: "Joseph, son of David, don't hesitate to get married. Mary's pregnancy is Spirit-conceived. God's Holy Spirit has made her pregnant. She will bring a son to birth, and when she does, you, Joseph, will name him Jesus—'God saves'—because he will save his people from their sins." This would bring the prophet's embryonic revelation to full term:

Watch for this—a virgin will get pregnant and bear a son;  
 They will name him Immanuel (Hebrew for "God is with us").

24-25 Then Joseph woke up. He did exactly what God's angel commanded in the dream: He married Mary. But he did not consummate the marriage until she had the baby. He named the baby Jesus.

### SCHOLARS FROM THE EAST

1-2 **2** After Jesus was born in Bethlehem village, Judah territory—this was during Herod's kingship—a band of scholars arrived in Jerusalem from the East. They asked around, "Where can we find and pay homage to the newborn King of the Jews? We observed a star in the eastern sky that signaled his birth. We're on pilgrimage to worship him."

3-4 When word of their inquiry got to Herod, he was terrified—and not Herod alone, but most of Jerusalem as well. Herod lost no time. He gathered all the high priests and religion scholars in the city together and asked, "Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?"

5-6 They told him, "Bethlehem, Judah territory. The prophet Micah wrote it plainly:

It's you, Bethlehem, in Judah's land,  
 no longer bringing up the rear.  
 From you will come the leader  
 who will shepherd-rule my people, my Israel."

7-8 Herod then arranged a secret meeting with the scholars from the East. Pretending to be as devout as they were, he got them to tell him exactly when the birth-announcement star appeared. Then he told them the prophecy about Bethlehem, and said, "Go find this child. Leave no stone unturned. As soon as you find him, send word and I'll join you at once in your worship."

9-10 Instructed by the king, they set off. Then the star appeared again, the same star they had seen in the eastern skies. It led them on until it hovered over the place of the child.

They could hardly contain themselves: They were in the right place! They had arrived at the right time!

They entered the house and saw the child in the arms of Mary, his mother. Overcome, they kneeled and worshiped him. Then they opened their luggage and presented gifts: gold, frankincense, myrrh. 11

In a dream, they were warned not to report back to Herod. So they worked out another route, left the territory without being seen, and returned to their own country. 12



After the scholars were gone, God’s angel showed up again in Joseph’s dream and commanded, “Get up. Take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt. Stay until further notice. Herod is on the hunt for this child, and wants to kill him.” 13

Joseph obeyed. He got up, took the child and his mother under cover of darkness. They were out of town and well on their way by daylight. They lived in Egypt until Herod’s death. This Egyptian exile fulfilled what Hosea had preached: “I called my son out of Egypt.” 14-15

Herod, when he realized that the scholars had tricked him, flew into a rage. He commanded the murder of every little boy two years old and under who lived in Bethlehem and its surrounding hills. (He determined that age from information he’d gotten from the scholars.) That’s when Jeremiah’s revelation was fulfilled: 16-18

A sound was heard in Ramah,  
weeping and much lament.  
Rachel weeping for her children,  
Rachel refusing all solace,  
Her children gone,  
dead and buried.

Later, when Herod died, God’s angel appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt: “Up, take the child and his mother and return to Israel. All those out to murder the child are dead.” 19-20

Joseph obeyed. He got up, took the child and his mother, and reentered Israel. When he heard, though, that Archelaus had succeeded his father, Herod, as king in Judea, he was afraid to go there. But then Joseph was directed in a dream to go to the hills of Galilee. On arrival, he settled in the village of Nazareth. This move was a fulfillment of the prophetic words, “He shall be called a Nazarene.” 21-23

**THUNDER IN THE DESERT!**

**3** While Jesus was living in the Galilean hills, John, called “the Baptizer,” was preaching in the desert country of Judea. His message was simple and austere, like his desert surroundings: “Change your life. God’s kingdom is here.” 1-2

John and his message were authorized by Isaiah’s prophecy: 3

Thunder in the desert!  
Prepare for God’s arrival!  
Make the road smooth and straight!

John dressed in a camel-hair habit tied at the waist by a leather strap. He lived on a diet of locusts and wild field honey. People poured out of Jerusalem, Judea, and the 4-6

Jordanian countryside to hear and see him in action. There at the Jordan River those who came to confess their sins were baptized into a changed life.

7-10 When John realized that a lot of Pharisees and Sadducees were showing up for a baptismal experience because it was becoming the popular thing to do, he exploded: “Brood of snakes! What do you think you’re doing slithering down here to the river? Do you think a little water on your snakeskins is going to make any difference? It’s your life that must change, not your skin! And don’t think you can pull rank by claiming Abraham as father. Being a descendant of Abraham is neither here nor there. Descendants of Abraham are a dime a dozen. What counts is your life. Is it green and flourishing? Because if it’s deadwood, it goes on the fire.

11-12 “I’m baptizing you here in the river, turning your old life in for a kingdom life. The real action comes next: The main character in this drama—compared to him I’m a mere stagehand—will ignite the kingdom life within you, a fire within you, the Holy Spirit within you, changing you from the inside out. He’s going to clean house—make a clean sweep of your lives. He’ll place everything true in its proper place before God; everything false he’ll put out with the trash to be burned.”

+ + +

13-14 Jesus then appeared, arriving at the Jordan River from Galilee. He wanted John to baptize him. John objected, “I’m the one who needs to be baptized, not you!”

15 But Jesus insisted. “Do it. God’s work, putting things right all these centuries, is coming together right now in this baptism.” So John did it.

16-17 The moment Jesus came up out of the baptismal waters, the skies opened up and he saw God’s Spirit—it looked like a dove—descending and landing on him. And along with the Spirit, a voice: “This is my Son, chosen and marked by my love, delight of my life.”

## THE TEST

1-3 **4** Next Jesus was taken into the wild by the Spirit for the Test. The Devil was ready to give it. Jesus prepared for the Test by fasting forty days and forty nights. That left him, of course, in a state of extreme hunger, which the Devil took advantage of in the first test: “Since you are God’s Son, speak the word that will turn these stones into loaves of bread.”

4 Jesus answered by quoting Deuteronomy: “It takes more than bread to stay alive. It takes a steady stream of words from God’s mouth.”

5-6 For the second test the Devil took him to the Holy City. He sat him on top of the Temple and said, “Since you are God’s Son, jump.” The Devil goaded him by quoting Psalm 91: “He has placed you in the care of angels. They will catch you so that you won’t so much as stub your toe on a stone.”

7 Jesus countered with another citation from Deuteronomy: “Don’t you dare test the Lord your God.”

8-9 For the third test, the Devil took him to the peak of a huge mountain. He gestured expansively, pointing out all the earth’s kingdoms, how glorious they all were. Then he said, “They’re yours—lock, stock, and barrel. Just go down on your knees and worship me, and they’re yours.”

10 Jesus’ refusal was curt: “Beat it, Satan!” He backed his rebuke with a third quotation from Deuteronomy: “Worship the Lord your God, and only him. Serve him with absolute single-heartedness.”

11 The Test was over. The Devil left. And in his place, angels! Angels came and took care of Jesus’ needs.



**TEACHING AND HEALING**

When Jesus got word that John had been arrested, he returned to Galilee. He moved from his hometown, Nazareth, to the lakeside village Capernaum, nestled at the base of the Zebulun and Naphtali hills. This move completed Isaiah’s revelation: 12-17

Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali,  
road to the sea, over Jordan,  
Galilee, crossroads for the nations.  
People sitting out their lives in the dark  
saw a huge light;  
Sitting in that dark, dark country of death,  
they watched the sun come up.

This Isaiah-prophesied revelation came to life in Galilee the moment Jesus started preaching. He picked up where John left off: “Change your life. God’s kingdom is here.”

Walking along the beach of Lake Galilee, Jesus saw two brothers: Simon (later called Peter) and Andrew. They were fishing, throwing their nets into the lake. It was their regular work. Jesus said to them, “Come with me. I’ll make a new kind of fisherman out of you. I’ll show you how to catch men and women instead of perch and bass.” They didn’t ask questions, but simply dropped their nets and followed. 18-20

A short distance down the beach they came upon another pair of brothers, James and John, Zebedee’s sons. These two were sitting in a boat with their father, Zebedee, mending their fishnets. Jesus made the same offer to them, and they were just as quick to follow, abandoning boat and father. 21-22

From there he went all over Galilee. He used synagogues for meeting places and taught people the truth of God. God’s kingdom was his theme—that beginning right now they were under God’s government, a good government! He also healed people of their diseases and of the bad effects of their bad lives. Word got around the entire Roman province of Syria. People brought anybody with a sickness, whether mental, emotional, or physical. Jesus healed them, one and all. More and more people came, the momentum gathering. Besides those from Galilee, crowds came from the “Ten Towns” across the lake, others up from Jerusalem and Judea, still others from across the Jordan. 23-25

**YOU’RE BLESSED**

**5** When Jesus saw his ministry drawing huge crowds, he climbed a hillside. Those who were apprenticed to him, the committed, climbed with him. Arriving at a quiet place, he sat down and taught his climbing companions. This is what he said: 1-2

“You’re blessed when you’re at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule. 3

“You’re blessed when you feel you’ve lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you. 4

“You’re blessed when you’re content with just who you are—no more, no less. That’s the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can’t be bought. 5

“You’re blessed when you’ve worked up a good appetite for God. He’s food and drink in the best meal you’ll ever eat. 6

“You’re blessed when you care. At the moment of being ‘care-full,’ you find yourselves cared for. 7

“You’re blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world. 8

“You’re blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That’s when you discover who you really are, and your place in God’s family. 9

10 “You’re blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God’s kingdom.

11-12 “Not only that—count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—give a cheer, even!—for though they don’t like it, *I* do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble.

### SALT AND LIGHT

13 “Let me tell you why you are here. You’re here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You’ve lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage.

14-16 “Here’s another way to put it: You’re here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We’re going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don’t think I’m going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I’m putting you on a light stand. Now that I’ve put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you’ll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.

### COMPLETING GOD’S LAW

17-18 “Don’t suppose for a minute that I have come to demolish the Scriptures—either God’s Law or the Prophets. I’m not here to demolish but to complete. I am going to put it all together, pull it all together in a vast panorama. God’s Law is more real and lasting than the stars in the sky and the ground at your feet. Long after stars burn out and earth wears out, God’s Law will be alive and working.

19-20 “Trivialize even the smallest item in God’s Law and you will only have trivialized yourself. But take it seriously, show the way for others, and you will find honor in the kingdom. Unless you do far better than the Pharisees in the matters of right living, you won’t know the first thing about entering the kingdom.

### MURDER

21-22 “You’re familiar with the command to the ancients, ‘Do not murder.’ I’m telling you that anyone who is so much as angry with a brother or sister is guilty of murder. Carelessly call a brother ‘idiot!’ and you just might find yourself hauled into court. Thoughtlessly yell ‘stupid!’ at a sister and you are on the brink of hellfire. The simple moral fact is that words kill.

23-24 “This is how I want you to conduct yourself in these matters. If you enter your place of worship and, about to make an offering, you suddenly remember a grudge a friend has against you, abandon your offering, leave immediately, go to this friend and make things right. Then and only then, come back and work things out with God.

25-26 “Or say you’re out on the street and an old enemy accosts you. Don’t lose a minute. Make the first move; make things right with him. After all, if you leave the first move to him, knowing his track record, you’re likely to end up in court, maybe even jail. If that happens, you won’t get out without a stiff fine.

### ADULTERY AND DIVORCE

27-28 “You know the next commandment pretty well, too: ‘Don’t go to bed with another’s spouse.’ But don’t think you’ve preserved your virtue simply by staying out of bed. Your *heart* can be corrupted by lust even quicker than your *body*. Those ogling looks you think nobody notices—they also corrupt.

“Let’s not pretend this is easier than it really is. If you want to live a morally pure life, here’s what you have to do: You have to blind your right eye the moment you catch it in a lustful leer. You have to choose to live one-eyed or else be dumped on a moral trash pile. And you have to chop off your right hand the moment you notice it raised threateningly. Better a bloody stump than your entire being discarded for good in the dump. 29-30

“Remember the Scripture that says, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him do it legally, giving her divorce papers and her legal rights’? Too many of you are using that as a cover for selfishness and whim, pretending to be righteous just because you are ‘legal.’ Please, no more pretending. If you divorce your wife, you’re responsible for making her an adulteress (unless she has already made herself that by sexual promiscuity). And if you marry such a divorced adulteress, you’re automatically an adulterer yourself. You can’t use legal cover to mask a moral failure. 31-32

**EMPTY PROMISES**

“And don’t say anything you don’t mean. This counsel is embedded deep in our traditions. You only make things worse when you lay down a smoke screen of pious talk, saying, ‘I’ll pray for you,’ and never doing it, or saying, ‘God be with you,’ and not meaning it. You don’t make your words true by embellishing them with religious lace. In making your speech sound more religious, it becomes less true. Just say ‘yes’ and ‘no.’ When you manipulate words to get your own way, you go wrong. 33-37

**LOVE YOUR ENEMIES**

“Here’s another old saying that deserves a second look: ‘Eye for eye, tooth for tooth.’ Is that going to get us anywhere? Here’s what I propose: ‘Don’t hit back at all.’ If someone strikes you, stand there and take it. If someone drags you into court and sues for the shirt off your back, giftwrap your best coat and make a present of it. And if someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the occasion to practice the servant life. No more tit-for-tat stuff. Live generously. 38-42

“You’re familiar with the old written law, ‘Love your friend,’ and its unwritten companion, ‘Hate your enemy.’ I’m challenging that. I’m telling you to love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the supple moves of prayer, for then you are working out of your true selves, your God-created selves. This is what God does. He gives his best—the sun to warm and the rain to nourish—to everyone, regardless: the good and bad, the nice and nasty. If all you do is love the lovable, do you expect a bonus? Anybody can do that. If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that. 43-47

“In a word, what I’m saying is, *Grow up*. You’re kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you.” 48

**THE WORLD IS NOT A STAGE**

**6** “Be especially careful when you are trying to be good so that you don’t make a performance out of it. It might be good theater, but the God who made you won’t be applauding. 1

“When you do something for someone else, don’t call attention to yourself. You’ve seen them in action, I’m sure—‘playactors’ I call them—treating prayer meeting and street corner alike as a stage, acting compassionate as long as someone is watching, playing to the crowds. They get applause, true, but that’s all they get. When you help someone out, don’t think about how it looks. Just do it—quietly and unobtrusively. That is the way your God, who conceived you in love, working behind the scenes, helps you out. 2-4

**PRAY WITH SIMPLICITY**

5 “And when you come before God, don’t turn that into a theatrical production either. All these people making a regular show out of their prayers, hoping for fifteen minutes of fame! Do you think God sits in a box seat?

6 “Here’s what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won’t be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace.

7-13 “The world is full of so-called prayer warriors who are prayer-ignorant. They’re full of formulas and programs and advice, peddling techniques for getting what you want from God. Don’t fall for that nonsense. This is your Father you are dealing with, and he knows better than you what you need. With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply. Like this:

Our Father in heaven,  
 Reveal who you are.  
 Set the world right;  
 Do what’s best—  
   as above, so below.  
 Keep us alive with three square meals.  
 Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others.  
 Keep us safe from ourselves and the Devil.  
 You’re in charge!  
 You can do anything you want!  
 You’re ablaze in beauty!  
   Yes. Yes. Yes.

14-15 “In prayer there is a connection between what God does and what you do. You can’t get forgiveness from God, for instance, without also forgiving others. If you refuse to do your part, you cut yourself off from God’s part.

16-18 “When you practice some appetite-denying discipline to better concentrate on God, don’t make a production out of it. It might turn you into a small-time celebrity but it won’t make you a saint. If you ‘go into training’ inwardly, act normal outwardly. Shampoo and comb your hair, brush your teeth, wash your face. God doesn’t require attention-getting devices. He won’t overlook what you are doing; he’ll reward you well.

**A LIFE OF GOD-WORSHIP**

19-21 “Don’t hoard treasure down here where it gets eaten by moths and corroded by rust or—worse!—stolen by burglars. Stockpile treasure in heaven, where it’s safe from moth and rust and burglars. It’s obvious, isn’t it? The place where your treasure is, is the place you will most want to be, and end up being.

22-23 “Your eyes are windows into your body. If you open your eyes wide in wonder and belief, your body fills up with light. If you live squinty-eyed in greed and distrust, your body is a musty cellar. If you pull the blinds on your windows, what a dark life you will have!

24 “You can’t worship two gods at once. Loving one god, you’ll end up hating the other. Adoration of one feeds contempt for the other. You can’t worship God and Money both.

25-26 “If you decide for God, living a life of God-worship, it follows that you don’t fuss about what’s on the table at mealtimes or whether the clothes in your closet are in fashion. There is far more to your life than the food you put in your stomach, more to your outer appearance than the clothes you hang on your body. Look at the birds, free and unfettered, not tied down to a job description, careless in the care of God. And you count far more to him than birds.

“Has anyone by fussing in front of the mirror ever gotten taller by so much as an inch? All this time and money wasted on fashion—do you think it makes that much difference? Instead of looking at the fashions, walk out into the fields and look at the wildflowers. They never primp or shop, but have you ever seen color and design quite like it? The ten best-dressed men and women in the country look shabby alongside them. 27-29

“If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers—most of which are never even seen—don’t you think he’ll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you? What I’m trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with *getting*, so you can respond to God’s *giving*. People who don’t know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don’t worry about missing out. You’ll find all your everyday human concerns will be met. 30-33

“Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don’t get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes. 34

### A SIMPLE GUIDE FOR BEHAVIOR

**7** “Don’t pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults—unless, of course, you want the same treatment. That critical spirit has a way of boomeranging. It’s easy to see a smudge on your neighbor’s face and be oblivious to the ugly sneer on your own. Do you have the nerve to say, ‘Let me wash your face for you,’ when your own face is distorted by contempt? It’s this whole traveling road-show mentality all over again, playing a holier-than-thou part instead of just living your part. Wipe that ugly sneer off your own face, and you might be fit to offer a washcloth to your neighbor. 1-5

“Don’t be flip with the sacred. Banter and silliness give no honor to God. Don’t reduce holy mysteries to slogans. In trying to be relevant, you’re only being cute and inviting sacrilege. 6

“Don’t bargain with God. Be direct. Ask for what you need. This isn’t a cat-and-mouse, hide-and-seek game we’re in. If your child asks for bread, do you trick him with sawdust? If he asks for fish, do you scare him with a live snake on his plate? As bad as you are, you wouldn’t think of such a thing. You’re at least decent to your own children. So don’t you think the God who conceived you in love will be even better? 7-11

“Here is a simple, rule-of-thumb guide for behavior: Ask yourself what you want people to do for you, then grab the initiative and do it for *them*. Add up God’s Law and Prophets and this is what you get. 12

### BEING AND DOING

“Don’t look for shortcuts to God. The market is flooded with surefire, easygoing formulas for a successful life that can be practiced in your spare time. Don’t fall for that stuff, even though crowds of people do. The way to life—to God!—is vigorous and requires total attention. 13-14

“Be wary of false preachers who smile a lot, dripping with practiced sincerity. Chances are they are out to rip you off some way or other. Don’t be impressed with charisma; look for character. Who preachers *are* is the main thing, not what they say. A genuine leader will never exploit your emotions or your pocketbook. These diseased trees with their bad apples are going to be chopped down and burned. 15-20

“Knowing the correct password—saying ‘Master, Master,’ for instance—isn’t going to get you anywhere with me. What is required is serious obedience—*doing* what my Father wills. I can see it now—at the Final Judgment thousands strutting up to me and saying, ‘Master, we preached the Message, we bashed the demons, our super-spiritual projects had everyone talking.’ And do you know what I am going to say? ‘You missed the boat. 21-23

All you did was use me to make yourselves important. You don't impress me one bit. You're out of here.'

24-25 "These words I speak to you are not incidental additions to your life, homeowner improvements to your standard of living. They are foundational words, words to build a life on. If you work these words into your life, you are like a smart carpenter who built his house on solid rock. Rain poured down, the river flooded, a tornado hit—but nothing moved that house. It was fixed to the rock.

26-27 "But if you just use my words in Bible studies and don't work them into your life, you are like a stupid carpenter who built his house on the sandy beach. When a storm rolled in and the waves came up, it collapsed like a house of cards."

28-29 When Jesus concluded his address, the crowd burst into applause. They had never heard teaching like this. It was apparent that he was living everything he was saying—quite a contrast to their religion teachers! This was the best teaching they had ever heard.

### HE CARRIED OUR DISEASES

1-2 **8** Jesus came down the mountain with the cheers of the crowd still ringing in his ears. Then a leper appeared and dropped to his knees before Jesus, praying, "Master, if you want to, you can heal my body."

3-4 Jesus reached out and touched him, saying, "I want to. Be clean." Then and there, all signs of the leprosy were gone. Jesus said, "Don't talk about this all over town. Just quietly present your healed body to the priest, along with the appropriate expressions of thanks to God. Your cleansed and grateful life, not your words, will bear witness to what I have done."

5-6 As Jesus entered the village of Capernaum, a Roman captain came up in a panic and said, "Master, my servant is sick. He can't walk. He's in terrible pain."

7 Jesus said, "I'll come and heal him."

8-9 "Oh, no," said the captain. "I don't want to put you to all that trouble. Just give the order and my servant will be fine. I'm a man who takes orders and gives orders. I tell one soldier, 'Go,' and he goes; to another, 'Come,' and he comes; to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it."

10-12 Taken aback, Jesus said, "I've yet to come across this kind of simple trust in Israel, the very people who are supposed to know all about God and how he works. This man is the vanguard of many outsiders who will soon be coming from all directions—streaming in from the east, pouring in from the west, sitting down at God's kingdom banquet alongside Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Then those who grew up 'in the faith' but had no faith will find themselves out in the cold, outsiders to grace and wondering what happened."

13 Then Jesus turned to the captain and said, "Go. What you believed could happen has happened." At that moment his servant became well.

14-15 By this time they were in front of Peter's house. On entering, Jesus found Peter's mother-in-law sick in bed, burning up with fever. He touched her hand and the fever was gone. No sooner was she up on her feet than she was fixing dinner for him.

16-17 That evening a lot of demon-afflicted people were brought to him. He relieved the inwardly tormented. He cured the bodily ill. He fulfilled Isaiah's well-known revelation:

He took our illnesses,  
He carried our diseases.

### YOUR BUSINESS IS LIFE, NOT DEATH

18-19 When Jesus saw that a curious crowd was growing by the minute, he told his disciples to get him out of there to the other side of the lake. As they left, a religion scholar asked if he could go along. "I'll go with you, wherever," he said.



Jesus was curt: “Are you ready to rough it? We’re not staying in the best inns, you know.” 20  
 Another follower said, “Master, excuse me for a couple of days, please. I have my father’s funeral to take care of.” 21  
 Jesus refused. “First things first. Your business is life, not death. Follow me. Pursue life.” 22



Then he got in the boat, his disciples with him. The next thing they knew, they were in a severe storm. Waves were crashing into the boat—and he was sound asleep! They roused him, pleading, “Master, save us! We’re going down!” 23-25

Jesus reprimanded them. “Why are you such cowards, such faint-hearts?” Then he stood up and told the wind to be silent, the sea to quiet down: “Silence!” The sea became smooth as glass. 26

The men rubbed their eyes, astonished. “What’s going on here? Wind and sea stand up and take notice at his command!” 27

**THE MADMEN AND THE PIGS**

They landed in the country of the Gadarenes and were met by two madmen, victims of demons, coming out of the cemetery. The men had terrorized the region for so long that no one considered it safe to walk down that stretch of road anymore. Seeing Jesus, the madmen screamed out, “What business do you have giving us a hard time? You’re the Son of God! You weren’t supposed to show up here yet!” Off in the distance a herd of pigs was grazing and rooting. The evil spirits begged Jesus, “If you kick us out of these men, let us live in the pigs.” 28-31

Jesus said, “Go ahead, but get out of here!” Crazy, the pigs stampeded over a cliff into the sea and drowned. Scared to death, the swineherds bolted. They told everyone back in town what had happened to the madmen and the pigs. Those who heard about it were angry about the drowned pigs. A mob formed and demanded that Jesus get out and not come back. 32-34

**WHO NEEDS A DOCTOR?**

**9** Back in the boat, Jesus and the disciples recrossed the sea to Jesus’ hometown. They were hardly out of the boat when some men carried a paraplegic on a stretcher and set him down in front of them. Jesus, impressed by their bold belief, said to the paraplegic, “Cheer up, son. I forgive your sins.” Some religion scholars whispered, “Why, that’s blasphemy!” 1-3

Jesus knew what they were thinking, and said, “Why this gossipy whispering? Which do you think is simpler: to say, ‘I forgive your sins,’ or, ‘Get up and walk’? Well, just so it’s clear that I’m the Son of Man and authorized to do either, or both. . . .” At this he turned to the paraplegic and said, “Get up. Take your bed and go home.” And the man did it. The crowd was awestruck, amazed and pleased that God had authorized Jesus to work among them this way. 4-8

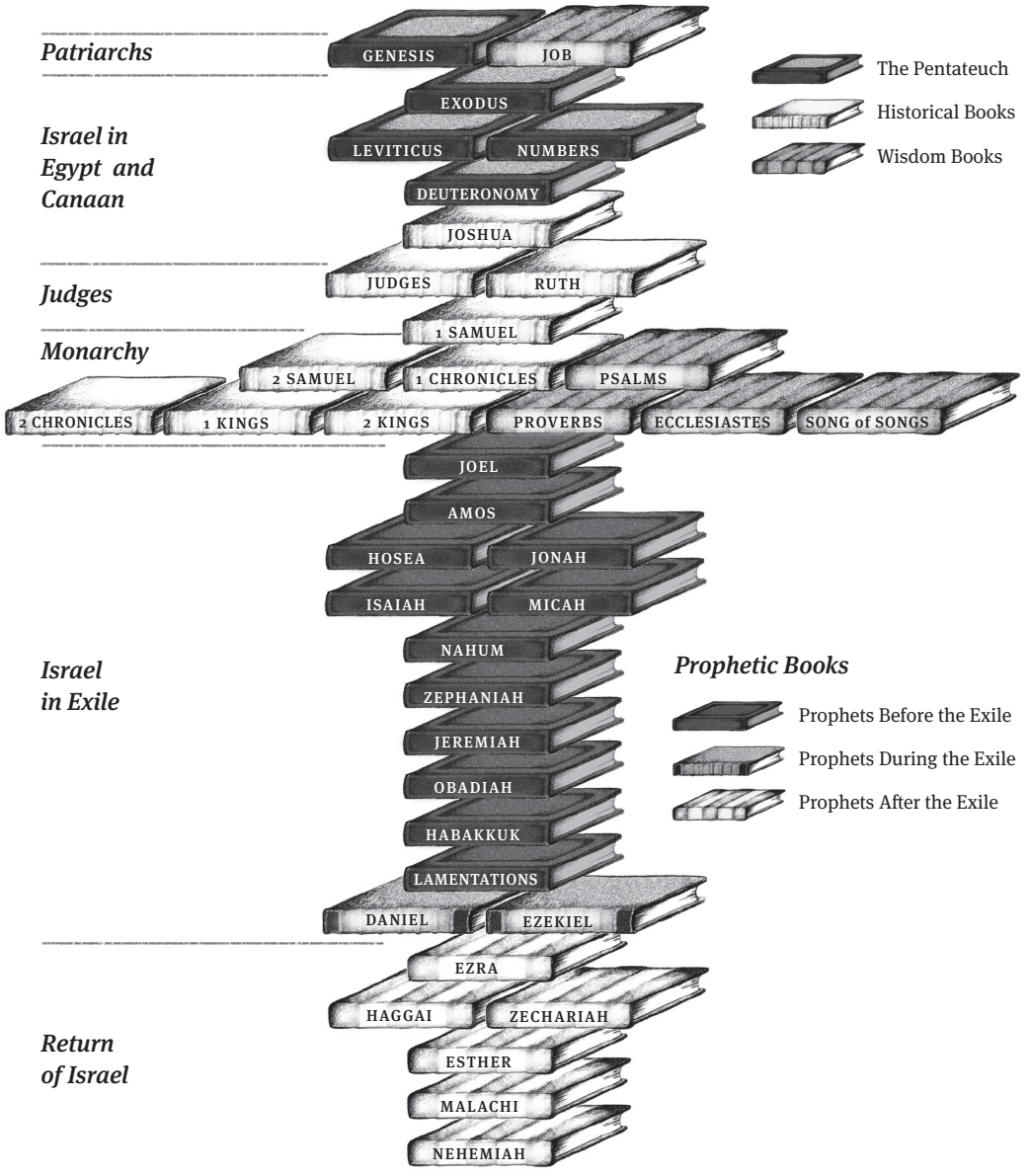
Passing along, Jesus saw a man at his work collecting taxes. His name was Matthew. Jesus said, “Come along with me.” Matthew stood up and followed him. 9

Later when Jesus was eating supper at Matthew’s house with his close followers, a lot of disreputable characters came and joined them. When the Pharisees saw him keeping this kind of company, they had a fit, and lit into Jesus’ followers. “What kind of example is this from your Teacher, acting cozy with crooks and misfits?” 10-11

Jesus, overhearing, shot back, “Who needs a doctor: the healthy or the sick? Go figure out what this Scripture means: ‘I’m after mercy, not religion.’ I’m here to invite outsiders, not coddle insiders.” 12-13

# BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

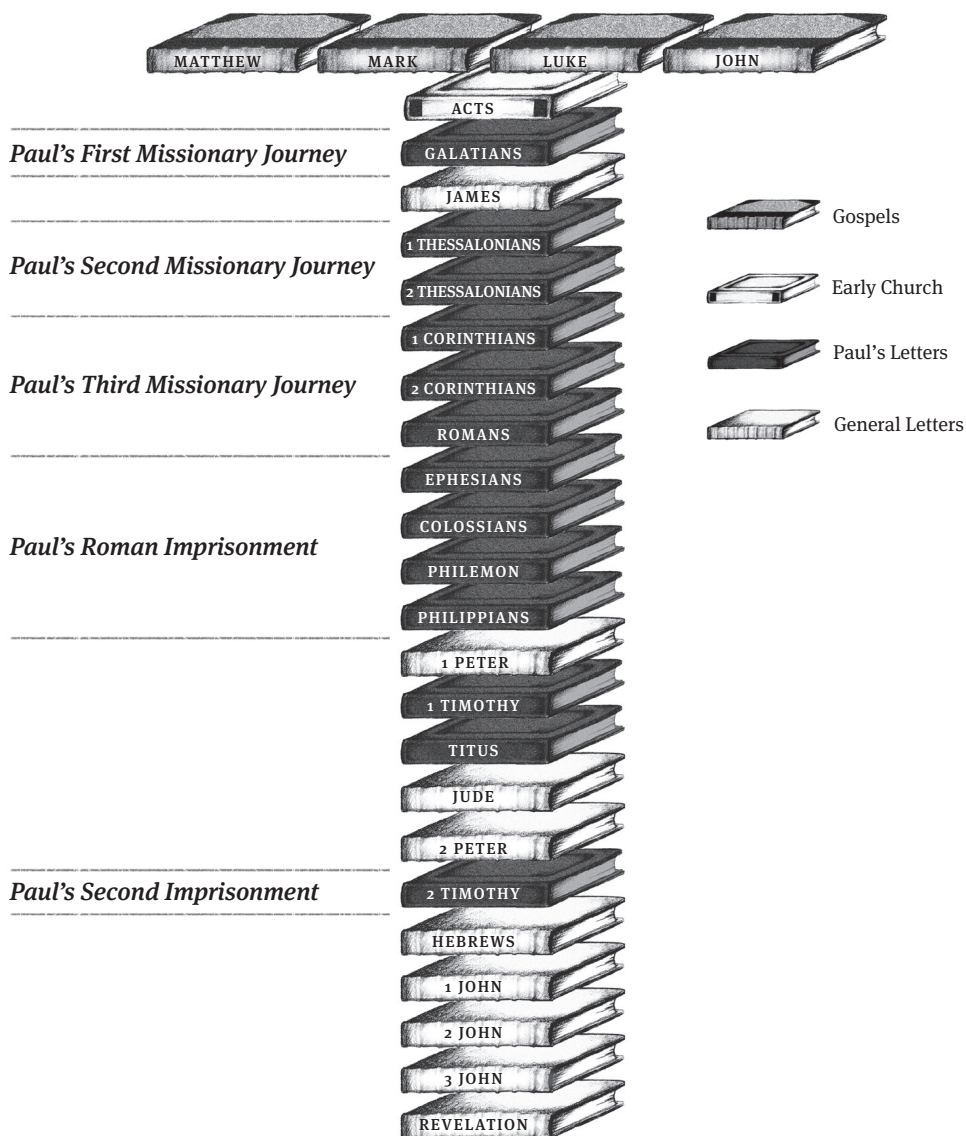
## Organized by General Order of Events





# BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

## Organized by General Order of Events



# THE DRAMA OF THE BIBLE

## A Visual Chronology

### World Events

- Pyramids built 2500s B.C.
- Hinduism gains influence in India 1100s B.C.
- Buddhism founded in India 500s B.C.
- Alexander the Great begins rule 336 B.C.
- China begins construction on The Great Wall 214 B.C.
- Rise of the Roman Empire 28 B.C.

### Act I: Creation

• Creation

• Flood Covers the Earth

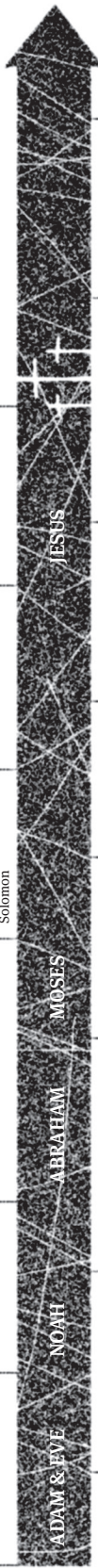
• God Chooses Abraham ca. 2100 B.C.

• Beginning of Kings' Rule  
Kings begin ruling ca. 1000 B.C.  
Saul  
David  
Solomon

• Kingdoms Exiled  
Israel 722 B.C.  
Judah 586 B.C.

• The Birth of Jesus

• Jesus Dies ca. A.D. 30;  
3 Days Later He Rises from the Dead

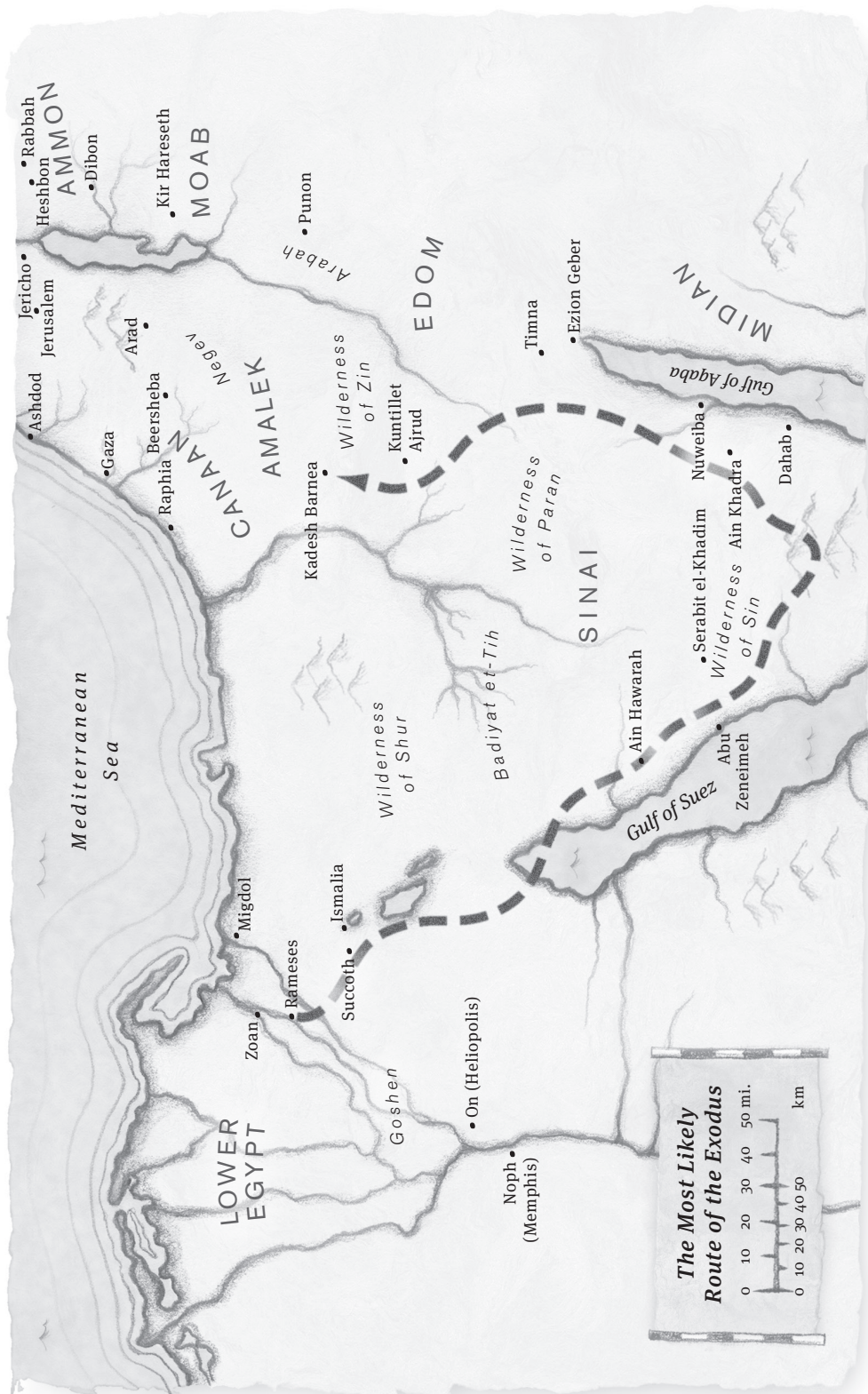


### Act III: Israel

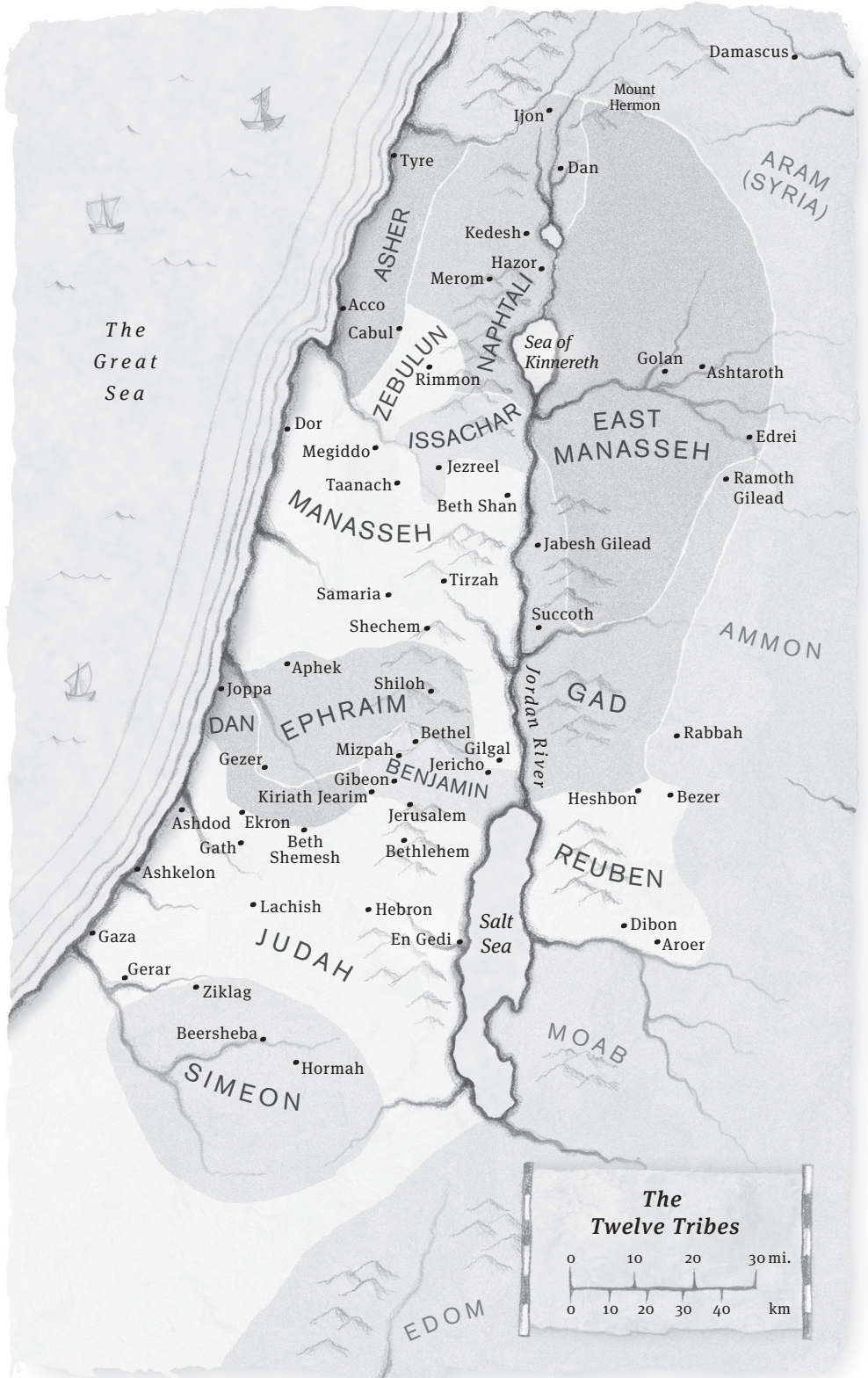
### Act IV: Jesus

### Act II: The Fall

### Act V: The New People of God





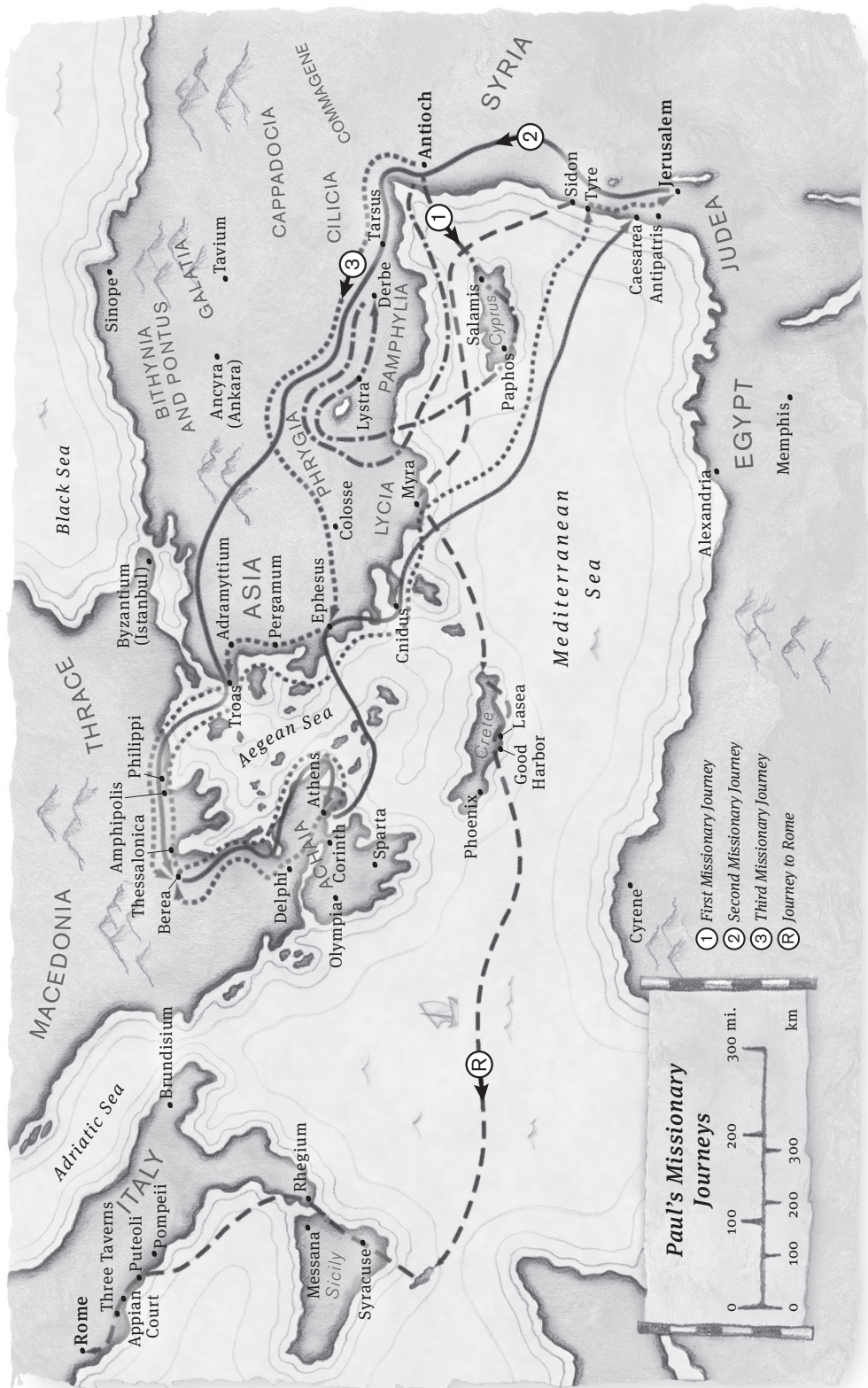












- ① First Missionary Journey
- ② Second Missionary Journey
- ③ Third Missionary Journey
- Ⓜ Journey to Rome

