

IGNATIUS CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE NEW TESTAMENT



RSV, SECOND CATHOLIC EDITION

THE IGNATIUS CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE
NEW TESTAMENT

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Revised Standard Version Second Catholic Edition

THE NEW TESTAMENT

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BEING THE VERSION SET FORTH A.D. 1611

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INTRODUCTION TO THE IGNATIUS STUDY BIBLE

You are approaching the "word of God". This is the title Christians most commonly give to the Bible, and the expression is rich in meaning. It is also the title given to the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, God the Son. For Jesus Christ became flesh for our salvation, and "the name by which he is called is The Word of God" (Rev 19:13; cf. Jn 1:14).

The word of God is Scripture. The Word of God is Jesus. This close association between God's *written* word and his *eternal* Word is intentional and has been the custom of the Church since the first generation. "All Sacred Scripture is but one book, and this one book is Christ, 'because all divine Scripture speaks of Christ, and all divine Scripture is fulfilled in Christ'¹" (CCC 134). This does not mean that the Scriptures are divine in the same way that Jesus is divine. They are, rather, divinely inspired and, as such, are unique in world literature, just as the Incarnation of the eternal Word is unique in human history.

Yet we can say that the inspired word resembles the incarnate Word in several important ways. Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate. In his humanity, he is like us in all things, except for sin. As a work of man, the Bible is like any other book, except without error. Both Christ and Scripture, says the Second Vatican Council, are given "for the sake of our salvation" (*Dei Verbum* 11), and both give us God's definitive revelation of himself. We cannot, therefore, conceive of one without the other: the Bible without Jesus, or Jesus without the Bible. Each is the interpretive key to the other. And because Christ is the subject of all the Scriptures, St. Jerome insists, "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ"² (CCC 133).

When we approach the Bible, then, we approach Jesus, the Word of God; and in order to encounter Jesus, we must approach him in a prayerful study of the inspired word of God, the Sacred Scriptures.

Inspiration and Inerrancy The Catholic Church makes mighty claims for the Bible, and our acceptance of those claims is essential if we are to read the Scriptures and apply them to our lives as the Church intends. So it is not

enough merely to nod at words like "inspired", "unique", or "inerrant". We have to understand what the Church means by these terms, and we have to make that understanding our own. After all, what we believe about the Bible will inevitably influence the way we read the Bible. The way we read the Bible, in turn, will determine what we "get out" of its sacred pages.

These principles hold true no matter what we read: a news report, a search warrant, an advertisement, a paycheck, a doctor's prescription, an eviction notice. How (or whether) we read these things depends largely upon our preconceived notions about the reliability and authority of their sources—and the potential they have for affecting our lives. In some cases, to misunderstand a document's authority can lead to dire consequences. In others, it can keep us from enjoying rewards that are rightfully ours. In the case of the Bible, both the rewards and the consequences involved take on an ultimate value.

What does the Church mean, then, when she affirms the words of St. Paul: "All Scripture is inspired by God" (2 Tim 3:16)? Since the term "inspired" in this passage could be translated "God-breathed", it follows that God breathed forth his word in the Scriptures as you and I breathe forth air when we speak. This means that God is the primary author of the Bible. He certainly employed human authors in this task as well, but he did not merely assist them while they wrote or subsequently approve what they had written. God the Holy Spirit is the *principal* author of Scripture, while the human writers are *instrumental* authors. These human authors freely wrote everything, and only those things, that God wanted: the word of God in the very words of God. This miracle of dual authorship extends to the whole of Scripture, and to every one of its parts, so that whatever the human authors affirm, God likewise affirms through their words.

The principle of biblical inerrancy follows logically from this principle of divine authorship. After all, God cannot lie, and he cannot make mistakes. Since the Bible is divinely inspired, it must be without error in everything that its divine and human authors affirm to be true. This means that biblical inerrancy is a mystery even broader in scope than infallibility, which guarantees for us that the Church will always teach the truth concerning faith and morals. Of course the mantle of inerrancy likewise covers faith and morals, but it extends even farther to ensure that all the facts and events of salvation history are accurately presented for us in the Scriptures. Inerrancy is our guarantee that the words and deeds of God found in the

Bible are unified and true, declaring with one voice the wonders of his saving love.

The guarantee of inerrancy does not mean, however, that the Bible is an all-purpose encyclopedia of information covering every field of study. The Bible is not, for example, a textbook in the empirical sciences, and it should not be treated as one. When biblical authors relate facts of the natural order, we can be sure they are speaking in a purely descriptive and "phenomenological" way, according to the way things appeared to their senses.

Biblical Authority Implicit in these doctrines is God's desire to make himself known to the world and to enter a loving relationship with every man, woman, and child he has created. God gave us the Scriptures not just to inform or motivate us; more than anything he wants to save us. This higher purpose underlies every page of the Bible, indeed every word of it.

In order to reveal himself, God used what theologians call "accommodation". Sometimes the Lord stoops down to communicate by "condescension"—that is, he speaks as humans speak, as if he had the same passions and weakness that we do (for example, God says he was "sorry" that he made man in Genesis 6:6). Other times he communicates by "elevation"—that is, by endowing human words with divine power (for example, through the prophets). The numerous examples of divine accommodation in the Bible are an expression of God's wise and fatherly ways. For a sensitive father can speak with his children either by condescension, as in baby talk, or by elevation, by bringing a child's understanding up to a more mature level.

God's word is thus saving, fatherly, and personal. Because it speaks directly to us, we must never be indifferent to its content; after all, the word of God is at once the object, cause, and support of our faith. It is, in fact, a test of our faith, since we see in the Scriptures only what faith disposes us to see. If we believe what the Church believes, we will see in Scripture the saving, inerrant, and divinely authored revelation of the Father. If we believe otherwise, we see another book altogether.

This test applies not only to rank-and-file believers but also to the Church's theologians and hierarchy, and even the Magisterium. Vatican II has stressed in recent times that Scripture must be "the very soul of sacred theology" (*Dei Verbum* 24). As Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Pope Benedict

XVI echoed this powerful teaching with his own, insisting that, "The *normative theologians* are the authors of Holy Scripture" (emphasis added). He reminded us that Scripture and the Church's dogmatic teaching are tied tightly together, to the point of being inseparable: "Dogma is by definition nothing other than an interpretation of Scripture." The defined dogmas of our faith, then, encapsulate the Church's infallible interpretation of Scripture, and theology is a further reflection upon that work.

The Senses of Scripture Because the Bible has both divine and human authors, we are required to master a different sort of reading than we are used to. First, we must read Scripture according to its *literal* sense, as we read any other human literature. At this initial stage, we strive to discover the meaning of the words and expressions used by the biblical writers as they were understood in their original setting and by their original recipients. This means, among other things, that we do not interpret everything we read "literalistically", as though Scripture never speaks in a figurative or symbolic way (it often does!). Rather, we read it according to the rules that govern its different literary forms of writing, depending on whether we are reading a narrative, a poem, a letter, a parable, or an apocalyptic vision. The Church calls us to read the divine books in this way to ensure that we understand what the human authors were laboring to explain to God's people.

The literal sense, however, is not the only sense of Scripture, since we interpret its sacred pages according to the *spiritual* senses as well. In this way, we search out what the Holy Spirit is trying to tell us, beyond even what the human authors have consciously asserted. Whereas the literal sense of Scripture describes a historical reality—a fact, precept, or event—the spiritual senses disclose deeper mysteries revealed through the historical realities. What the soul is to the body, the spiritual senses are to the literal. You can distinguish them; but if you try to separate them, death immediately follows. St. Paul was the first to insist upon this and warn of its consequences: "God . . . has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Cor 3:5-6).

Catholic tradition recognizes three spiritual senses that stand upon the foundation of the literal sense of Scripture (see CCC 115). **(1)** The first is the *allegorical* sense, which unveils the spiritual and prophetic meaning of

biblical history. Allegorical interpretations thus reveal how persons, events, and institutions of Scripture can point beyond themselves toward greater mysteries yet to come (OT), or display the fruits of mysteries already revealed (NT). Christians have often read the Old Testament in this way to discover how the mystery of Christ in the New Covenant was once hidden in the Old, and how the full significance of the Old Covenant was finally made manifest in the New. Allegorical significance is likewise latent in the New Testament, especially in the life and deeds of Jesus recorded in the Gospels. Because Christ is the Head of the Church and the source of her spiritual life, what was accomplished in Christ the Head during his earthly life prefigures what he continually produces in his members through grace. The allegorical sense builds up the virtue of faith. **(2)** The second is the *tropological* or *moral* sense, which reveals how the actions of God's people in the Old Testament and the life of Jesus in the New Testament prompt us to form virtuous habits in our own lives. It therefore draws from Scripture warnings against sin and vice, as well as inspirations to pursue holiness and purity. The moral sense is intended to build up the virtue of charity. **(3)** The third is the *anagogical* sense, which points upward to heavenly glory. It shows us how countless events in the Bible prefigure our final union with God in eternity, and how things that are "seen" on earth are figures of things "unseen" in heaven. Because the anagogical sense leads us to contemplate our destiny, it is meant to build up the virtue of hope. Together with the literal sense, then, these spiritual senses draw out the fullness of what God wants to give us through his Word and as such comprise what ancient tradition has called the "full sense" of Sacred Scripture.

All of this means that the deeds and events of the Bible are charged with meaning beyond what is immediately apparent to the reader. In essence, that meaning is Jesus Christ and the salvation he died to give us. This is especially true of the books of the New Testament, which proclaim Jesus explicitly; but it is also true of the Old Testament, which speaks of Jesus in more hidden and symbolic ways. The human authors of the Old Testament told us as much as they were able, but they could not clearly discern the shape of all future events standing at such a distance. It is the Bible's divine Author, the Holy Spirit, who could and did foretell the saving work of Christ, from the first page of the Book of Genesis onward.

The New Testament did not, therefore, abolish the Old. Rather, the New fulfilled the Old, and in doing so, it lifted the veil that kept hidden the face

of the Lord's bride. Once the veil is removed, we suddenly see the world of the Old Covenant charged with grandeur. Water, fire, clouds, gardens, trees, hills, doves, lambs—all of these things are memorable details in the history and poetry of Israel. But now, seen in the light of Jesus Christ, they are much more. For the Christian with eyes to see, water symbolizes the saving power of Baptism; fire, the Holy Spirit; the spotless lamb, Christ crucified; Jerusalem, the city of heavenly glory.

The spiritual reading of Scripture is nothing new. Indeed the very first Christians read the Bible this way. St. Paul describes Adam as a "type" that prefigured Jesus Christ (Rom 5:14). A "type" is a real person, place, thing, or event in the Old Testament that foreshadows something greater in the New. From this term we get the word "typology", referring to the study of how the Old Testament prefigures Christ (CCC 128-30). Elsewhere St. Paul draws deeper meanings out of the story of Abraham's sons, declaring, "This is an allegory" (Gal 4:24). He is not suggesting that these events of the distant past never really happened; he is saying that the events both happened *and* signified something more glorious yet to come.

The New Testament later describes the Tabernacle of ancient Israel as "a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary" (Heb 8:5) and the Mosaic Law as a "shadow of the good things to come" (Heb 10:1). St. Peter, in turn, notes that Noah and his family were "saved through water" in a way that "corresponds" to sacramental Baptism, which "now saves you" (1 Pet 3:20-21). Interestingly, the expression that is translated "corresponds" in this verse is a Greek term that denotes the fulfillment or counterpart of an ancient "type".

We need not look to the apostles, however, to justify a spiritual reading of the Bible. After all, Jesus himself read the Old Testament this way. He referred to Jonah (Mt 12:39), Solomon (Mt 12:42), the Temple (Jn 2:19), and the brazen serpent (Jn 3:14) as "signs" that pointed forward to him. We see in Luke's Gospel, as Christ comforted the disciples on the road to Emmaus, that "beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Lk 24:27). It was precisely this extensive spiritual interpretation of the Old Testament that made such an impact on these once-discouraged travelers, causing their hearts to "burn" within them (Lk 24:32).

Criteria for Biblical Interpretation We too must learn to discern the "full sense" of Scripture as it includes both the literal and spiritual senses together. Still, this does not mean we should "read into" the Bible meanings that are not really there. Spiritual exegesis is not an unrestrained flight of the imagination. Rather, it is a sacred science that proceeds according to certain principles and stands accountable to sacred tradition, the Magisterium, and the wider community of biblical interpreters (both living and deceased).

In searching out the full sense of a text, we should always avoid the extreme tendency to "over-spiritualize" in a way that minimizes or denies the Bible's literal truth. St. Thomas Aquinas was well aware of this danger and asserted that "all other senses of Sacred Scripture are based on the literal" (*STh* I, 1, 10, *ad* 1, quoted in CCC 116). On the other hand, we should never confine the meaning of a text to the literal, intended sense of its human author, as if the divine Author did not intend the passage to be read in the light of Christ's coming.

Fortunately the Church has given us guidelines in our study of Scripture. The unique character and divine authorship of the Bible calls us to read it "in the Spirit" (*Dei Verbum* 12). Vatican II outlines this teaching in a practical way by directing us to read the Scriptures according to three specific criteria:

1. We must "[b]e especially attentive 'to the content and unity of the whole Scripture' " (CCC 112).
2. We must "[r]ead the Scripture within 'the living Tradition of the whole Church' " (CCC 113).
3. We must "[b]e attentive to the analogy of faith" (CCC 114; cf. Rom 12:6).

These criteria protect us from many of the dangers that ensnare readers of the Bible, from the newest inquirer to the most prestigious scholar. Reading Scripture out of context is one such pitfall, and probably the one most difficult to avoid. A memorable cartoon from the 1950s shows a young man poring over the pages of the Bible. He says to his sister: "Don't bother me now; I'm trying to find a Scripture verse to back up one of my preconceived notions." No doubt a biblical text pried from its context can be twisted to say something very different from what its author actually intended.

The Church's criteria guide us here by defining what constitutes the authentic "context" of a given biblical passage. The first criterion directs us

to the literary context of every verse, including not only the words and paragraphs that surround it, but also the entire corpus of the biblical author's writings and, indeed, the span of the entire Bible. The *complete* literary context of any Scripture verse includes every text from Genesis to Revelation—because the Bible is a unified book, not just a library of different books. When the Church canonized the Book of Revelation, for example, she recognized it to be incomprehensible apart from the wider context of the entire Bible.

The second criterion places the Bible firmly within the context of a community that treasures a "living tradition". That community is the People of God down through the ages. Christians lived out their faith for well over a millennium before the printing press was invented. For centuries, few believers owned copies of the Gospels, and few people could read anyway. Yet they absorbed the gospel—through the sermons of their bishops and clergy, through prayer and meditation, through Christian art, through liturgical celebrations, and through oral tradition. These were expressions of the one "living tradition", a culture of living faith that stretches from ancient Israel to the contemporary Church. For the early Christians, the gospel could not be understood apart from that tradition. So it is with us. Reverence for the Church's tradition is what protects us from any sort of chronological or cultural provincialism, such as scholarly fads that arise and carry away a generation of interpreters before being dismissed by the next generation.

The third criterion places scriptural texts within the framework of faith. If we believe that the Scriptures are divinely inspired, we must also believe them to be internally coherent and consistent with all the doctrines that Christians believe. Remember, the Church's dogmas (such as the Real Presence, the papacy, the Immaculate Conception) are not something *added* to Scripture, but are the Church's infallible interpretation *of* Scripture.

Using This Study Guide This volume is designed to lead the reader through Scripture according to the Church's guidelines—faithful to the canon, to the tradition, and to the creeds. The Church's interpretive principles have thus shaped the component parts of this book, and they are designed to make the reader's study as effective and rewarding as possible.

Introductions: We have introduced the biblical book with an essay covering issues such as authorship, date of composition, purpose, and

leading themes. This background information will assist readers to approach and understand the text on its own terms.

Annotations: The basic notes at the bottom of every page help the user to read the Scriptures with understanding. They by no means exhaust the meaning of the sacred text but provide background material to help the reader make sense of what he reads. Often these notes make explicit what the sacred writers assumed or held to be implicit. They also provide scores of historical, cultural, geographical, and theological information pertinent to the inspired narratives—information that can help the reader bridge the distance between the biblical world and his own.

Cross-References: Between the biblical text at the top of each page and the annotations at the bottom, numerous references are listed to point readers to other scriptural passages related to the one being studied. This follow-up is an essential part of any serious study. It is also an excellent way to discover how the content of Scripture "hangs together" in a providential unity. Along with biblical cross-references, the annotations refer to select paragraphs from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. These are not doctrinal "proof texts" but are designed to help the reader interpret the Bible in accordance with the mind of the Church. The *Catechism* references listed either handle the biblical text directly or treat a broader doctrinal theme that sheds significant light on that text.

Topical Essays, Word Studies, Charts: These features bring readers to a deeper understanding of select details. The *topical essays* take up major themes and explain them more thoroughly and theologically than the annotations, often relating them to the doctrines of the Church. Occasionally the annotations are supplemented by *word studies* that put readers in touch with the ancient languages of Scripture. These should help readers to understand better and appreciate the inspired terminology that runs throughout the sacred books. Also included are various *charts* that summarize biblical information "at a glance".

Icon Annotations: Three distinctive icons are interspersed throughout the annotations, each one corresponding to one of the Church's three criteria for biblical interpretation. Bullets indicate the passage or passages to which these icons apply.



Notes marked by the book icon relate to the "content and unity" of Scripture, showing how particular passages of the Old Testament illuminate the mysteries of the New. Much of the information in these notes explains the original context of the citations and indicates how and why this has a direct bearing on Christ or the Church. Through these notes, the reader can develop a sensitivity to the beauty and unity of God's saving plan as it stretches across both Testaments.



Notes marked by the dove icon examine particular passages in light of the Church's "living tradition". Because the Holy Spirit both guides the Magisterium and inspires the spiritual senses of Scripture, these annotations supply information along both of these lines. On the one hand, they refer to the Church's doctrinal teaching as presented by various popes, creeds, and ecumenical councils; on the other, they draw from (and paraphrase) the spiritual interpretations of various Fathers, Doctors, and saints.



Notes marked by the keys icon pertain to the "analogy of faith". Here we spell out how the mysteries of our faith "unlock" and explain one another. This type of comparison between Christian beliefs displays the coherence and unity of defined dogmas, which are the Church's infallible interpretations of Scripture.

Putting It All in Perspective Perhaps the most important context of all we have saved for last: the interior life of the individual reader. What we get out of the Bible will largely depend on how we approach the Bible. Unless we are living a sustained and disciplined life of prayer, we will never have the reverence, the profound humility, or the grace we need to see the Scriptures for what they really are.

You are approaching the "word of God". But for thousands of years, since before he knit you in your mother's womb, the Word of God has been approaching you.

One Final Note. The volume you hold in your hands is only a small part of a much larger work still in production. Study helps similar to those printed in this booklet are being prepared for *all* the books of the Bible and will appear gradually as they are finished. Our ultimate goal is to publish a single, one-volume Study Bible that will include the entire text of Scripture, along with all the annotations, charts, cross-references, maps, and other features found in the following pages. Individual booklets will be published in the meantime, with the hope that God's people can begin to benefit from this labor before its full completion.

We have included a long list of Study Questions in the back to make this format as useful as possible, not only for individual study but for group settings and discussions as well. The questions are designed to help readers both "understand" the Bible and "apply" it to their lives. We pray that God will make use of our efforts and yours to help renew the face of the earth! «

INTRODUCTION TO THE 1966 EDITION

This [1966] edition of the New Testament from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible has been prepared for the use of Catholics by a committee of the Catholic Biblical Association of Great Britain. It is published with ecclesiastical approval and by agreement with the Standard Bible Committee and the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

The Revised Standard Version itself needs no lengthy introduction, being already well known and widely read. It is "an authorized version of the American Standard Version, published in 1901, which was a revision of the King James Version, published in 1611" (Preface to the RSV). In Britain the King James Version is more commonly called the Authorized Version. It occupies a unique place in English Biblical and indeed literary tradition. The Standard Bible of 1901 was the work of an American committee revising it in the light of modern textual criticism. In 1937 it was decided to make a revision of the Standard Version which should "embody the best results of modern scholarship as to the meaning of the Scriptures and express this meaning in English diction which is designed for use in public and private worship and preserves those qualities which have given to the King James Version a supreme place in English literature." The New Testament in this new version was published in 1946 and the whole Bible in 1952.

The remarkable success which attended the new revision on its appearance seems to be ample justification of the revisers' aims and it has been acclaimed on all sides as a translation which combines accuracy and clarity of meaning with beauty of language and traditional diction.

For four hundred years, following upon the great upheaval of the Reformation, Catholics and Protestants have gone their separate ways and suspected each other's translations of the Bible of having been in some way manipulated in the interests of doctrinal presuppositions. It must be admitted that these suppositions were not always without foundation. At the

present time, however, the sciences of textual criticism and philology, not to mention others, have made such great advances that the Bible text used by translators is substantially the same for all—Protestants and Catholics alike. Thus, for example, Catholics no longer make their translations from the Latin Vulgate; though it is arguable that before the development of textual criticism it was in certain respects a better way of making a translation than to make it from late and in some places corrupt Greek manuscripts as was done by some of the Reformers. Today, and indeed since the appearance in 1943 of the Encyclical Letter *Divino Afflante Spiritu* encouraging Biblical studies, Catholics like everyone else go back to the original languages and base their translations on the same critical principles.

Although twenty years have passed since the Encyclical Letter first appeared, there is [in 1966] still no Catholic translation of the *whole* Bible from the original languages available to English-speaking readers, though at least two are well on the way to completion. It was in fact with a view to filling this rather obvious gap in the shortest possible time that some Catholic scholars considered the possibility of so editing the Revised Standard Version, on its appearance in 1952, as to make it acceptable to Catholic readers.

Following up these advances in Biblical knowledge comes the great improvement in relations between the Christian Churches of which we are witnesses at the present time and which is not without its influence in still further narrowing the margin of difference between Bible translations. This is not to say that all differences have disappeared. There is frequently more than one way of translating a word or phrase with the critical evidence for each interpretation fairly evenly balanced. In such cases each man will translate according to his background and training. Thus a Roman Catholic might and indeed usually would give more weight to a reading or an interpretation which was traditional in his Church.

The main difference of course between Bibles lies in the attitude towards the books known to Protestants as the Apocrypha and to Catholics as the Deuterocanonical Books of the Old Testament. Catholics in fact regard them as inspired and canonical Scripture, while others, as is clear from the name Apocrypha, do not.

With the improvement in inter-denominational relations and the advance of Bible knowledge, the possibility of producing a Bible common to all Christians was mooted as far back as 1953. It was felt that if such a thing

could be achieved, it would be of incalculable benefit in wiping away remaining misconceptions and prejudices and in fostering still further good relations between the churches. The Word of God would then be our common heritage and a unifying link not only in theory but also in fact, and those engaged in theological discussion could appeal to the same authoritative text. This objective could be achieved in the quickest and most practical way by editing the Revised Standard Version for Catholic use. It would also provide Catholics with a complete version of the Bible from the original languages.

A small committee of members of the Catholic Biblical Association was formed and permission obtained to examine this translation and suggest any changes that might be required to make it acceptable to Catholics. The Standard Bible Committee of the U.S.A. was then approached and they gave a warm welcome to the proposal. Here was a wonderful opportunity to make a real step forward in the field of ecumenical relations. However, ideas of this kind take time to penetrate all levels and many difficulties and delays ensued. But a change of mind has taken place and what seemed to many in 1953 to be a novel idea of doubtful value, or even of no value at all, is now generally recognized to be a legitimate and desirable goal.

In the present edition the aim has been to make the minimum number of alterations and to change only what seemed absolutely necessary in the light of Catholic tradition. It has not been the aim to improve the translation as such. There are some places, however, where, the critical evidence being evenly balanced, considerations of Catholic tradition have favored a particular rendering or the inclusion of a passage omitted by the RSV translators.

The thanks of Catholics are due to their Bishops who have approved this edition and to the American Standard Bible Committee, who have throughout given an unfailing and generous support in spite of difficulties and delays.

May this edition of the New Testament contribute both to the increase in knowledge of God's Word and to better understanding between Christians according to the mind of our Savior, who prayed "that they may be one, even as we are one" (Jn 17:11).

INTRODUCTION TO THE REVISED STANDARD VERSION, SECOND CATHOLIC EDITION

The *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The New Testament* is based on the Revised Standard Version, Second Catholic Edition. The Revised Standard Version is, of course, one of the more-highly-regarded modern translations of the Bible.

The New Testament of the RSV Second Catholic Edition differs somewhat both from the New Testament of the RSV and from that of the RSV Catholic Edition. It differs from the RSV—as the Introduction to the 1966 edition of the Catholic RSV notes—in that, in certain places where scholarship alone cannot determine the translation or the text, "considerations of Catholic tradition have favored a particular rendering or the inclusion of a passage omitted by the RSV translators." It differs from the RSV Catholic Edition in that archaisms (e.g., "thee" and "thou", along with their accompanying verbs, which the RSV uses when God is addressed) have been replaced by standard modern English.

The RSV Second Catholic Edition has also been revised according to *Liturgiam Authenticam*, the Vatican's instruction concerning vernacular languages in the Sacred Liturgy.

Abbreviations for the Books of the Bible

THE OLD TESTAMENT (OT)

Gen	Genesis
Ex	Exodus
Lev	Leviticus
Num	Numbers
Deut	Deuteronomy
Josh	Joshua
Judg	Judges
Ruth	Ruth
1 Sam	1 Samuel
2 Sam	2 Samuel
1 Kings	1 Kings
2 Kings	2 Kings
1 Chron	1 Chronicles
2 Chron	2 Chronicles
Ezra	Ezra
Neh	Nehemiah
Tob	Tobit
Jud	Judith
Esther	Esther
Job	Job
Ps	Psalms
Prov	Proverbs
Eccles	Ecclesiastes
Song	Song of Solomon
Wis	Wisdom
Sir	Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)
Is	Isaiah
Jer	Jeremiah
Lam	Lamentations
Bar	Baruch
Ezek	Ezekiel

Dan	Daniel
Hos	Hosea
Joel	Joel
Amos	Amos
Obad	Obadiah
Jon	Jonah
Mic	Micah
Nahum	Nahum
Hab	Habakkuk
Zeph	Zephaniah
Hag	Haggai
Zech	Zechariah
Mal	Malachi
1 Mac	1 Maccabees
2 Mac	2 Maccabees

THE NEW TESTAMENT (NT)

Mt	Matthew
Mk	Mark
Lk	Luke
Jn	John
Acts	Acts of the Apostles
Rom	Romans
1 Cor	1 Corinthians
2 Cor	2 Corinthians
Gal	Galatians
Eph	Ephesians
Phil	Philippians
Col	Colossians
1 Thess	1 Thessalonians
2 Thess	2 Thessalonians
1 Tim	1 Timothy
2 Tim	2 Timothy
Tit	Titus
Philem	Philemon
Heb	Hebrews

Jas	James
1 Pet	1 Peter
2 Pet	2 Peter
1 Jn	1 John
2 Jn	2 John
3 Jn	3 John
Jude	Jude
Rev	Revelation (Apocalypse)

INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPELS

by Curtis Mitch

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are the foundational documents of historic Christianity. Most of what is known about the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth is known from these four books. Interlaced with their factual information about Christ is also the faith of the Church, the conviction that Jesus was the Messiah of ancient expectation and the eternal Son of God come in the flesh.

It is no surprise, then, that Christian tradition gives the four Gospels pride of place among the books of Sacred Scripture. They are placed first in the collection of New Testament writings, much as the five books of Moses, being the formative religious texts of Israel, stand at the head of the Old Testament. Without the Gospels, the Church would lack not only crucial information about her divine Founder but a vital source of strength and inspiration for her mission in the world.

Authority of the Gospels Because the Gospels give us unique access to the words and deeds of Jesus, they possess the very highest authority. The Church acknowledges this in various ways, most obviously in the liturgy, where the Gospels are held aloft in procession, perfumed with incense, and proclaimed as the word of God. Selections from all parts of the Scriptures are represented in the Church's lectionary, but the Gospel reading is always featured as the highpoint of the Liturgy of the Word. The belief is that Jesus is made present to his people in word and sacrament, both in the inspired accounts of the evangelists and in the consecrated elements of the Eucharist.

The authority of the Gospels is ultimately grounded in their divine inspiration, as is the case with all the books of the Bible. However, in addition to this theological conviction, the Church also maintains the historical conviction that the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John bear witness to the preaching of the apostles. As recently as Vatican II, this teaching was reaffirmed with clarity and emphasis: "The Church has always

and everywhere maintained, and continues to maintain, the apostolic origin of the four Gospels" (*Dei Verbum* 18). Unlike the many apocryphal gospels that proliferated in the second and third centuries, the four canonical Gospels come directly from the apostolic age. They express in written form what the apostles were preaching and teaching about Jesus in the earliest decades of Christian history.

Numerous ancient writers contend that the four Gospels represent the authority of four apostles of Christ. Virtually everyone in earliest times held that the first and the fourth Gospels were penned by the apostles Matthew (the tax collector) and John (the son of Zebedee), both of whom were companions and eyewitnesses of Jesus during his historical ministry (Mt 9:9; 10:2-3; Mk 1:19-20; Jn 19:35). The situation is different in the case of the second and third Gospels, which primitive testimony ascribes to two apostolic associates, Mark (also called John; see Acts 15:37) and Luke (the physician; Col 4:14). These individuals were not personal companions of Jesus but worked in close collaboration with the apostles Peter and Paul (see Col 4:11, 14; 2 Tim 4:11; 1 Pet 5:13). So whereas the Gospels of Matthew and John are apostolic writings in the strict sense, the Gospels of Mark and Luke are said to embody the apostolic witness of Peter and Paul, respectively.

One of the great strengths of these traditions of authorship is their unanimity. It is remarkable that there are no rival claims either disputing the apostolic origin of the four Gospels or purporting to identify different individuals as responsible for writing them. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are consistently named as the Gospel writers throughout Christian antiquity.¹ Indeed, there is no variation at all in the ancient Greek manuscripts with respect to the names that appear in the headings of the four Gospels ("The Gospel according to Matthew", "The Gospel according to Mark", etc.).

Scholars often assert that the Gospels initially circulated without titles and that only around A.D. 125 were they supplied with superscriptions giving the names of the evangelists. But this claim, while theoretically possible, is historically unlikely. First of all, every extant Gospel text with a surviving title page includes a superscription with the name of the evangelist as given by tradition. If untitled Gospels ever existed, none has survived to confirm the assertion. Second, given the need to tag and identify books stored in church libraries and archives, there is reason to suppose that

the Gospels were quickly supplied with some kind of heading (perhaps standardized into a common format at a later point) around the time of their publication. Such a need would be felt as soon as two or more Gospels were in circulation within the Christian community. Third, there was need to verify the authority of works read in the Christian liturgy alongside the books of the Old Testament. Since many produced written accounts about Jesus in the first century (see Lk 1:1), identifying the evangelist was one way to ensure that a given book was an authentic expression of apostolic testimony. In the end, no other scenario satisfactorily explains how the titles of the four Gospels were consistently used from the second century onward.² In all probability, the names of the four evangelists represent a tradition that goes back to the first century.

Another strength of the tradition of Gospel authorship is its unlikelihood as guesswork. Some would argue that the titles and traditions linked with the Gospels are historically unreliable. But if the Gospels were initially disseminated as anonymous works, and only decades later ideas about their origin began to crystallize and take hold throughout the Christian community, then we are left with a situation that is very difficult to explain. Not only are the names of the evangelists unanimously attested in the second century, but one is hard-pressed to account for why these names and not others were chosen and universally agreed upon. The apostle John may be thought an obvious choice to credit with a Gospel, given the extent of his influence in early Christianity. By why attribute the other Gospels to figures such as Matthew, Mark, and Luke? Even though Matthew was one of the Twelve, he appears only a few times in the New Testament and never in such a way that later generations would conclude that he was a figure of towering importance. Even more, it is unlikely that a Gospel addressed to readers from a Jewish background would be attributed to a tax collector, since tax collectors were generally despised by Jews as morally corrupt, ritually unclean, and politically traitorous. The problem is even more acute in the case of Mark and Luke, neither of whom was an apostle and neither of whom appears in the writings of the New Testament as a prominent authority figure in the earliest Christian community. If churchmen in the second century were merely speculating about the authorship of the Gospels, one might reasonably expect them to have preferred more illustrious personalities such as Peter or Paul. At the very least, one would

expect more than one opinion to have made itself heard in the annals of Christian history.

Canon of the Gospels Christianity recognizes and reveres four Gospels, no more and no less. Only the texts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are accepted as inspired witnesses to the life of Jesus and to what he accomplished for our salvation. These four writings stand as four pillars supporting the Church's faith and proclamation for all time.

In contrast, several heresies that sprouted up in the second century A.D. made the mistake of reducing or expanding the Church's fourfold Gospel collection. Some went astray by seizing upon a single Gospel to the neglect or outright rejection of the others. For example, it is said that the Ebionites made exclusive use of (some form of) Matthew. Likewise, Marcion and his band of followers acknowledged none but a mutilated and downsized version of Luke. Others moved in the opposite direction by composing spurious gospels to stand alongside the canonical Gospels. This was the fault of various Gnostic communities, who produced an array of pseudo-gospels in the second and third centuries, none of which has a serious claim to preserve eyewitness testimony from the first century.

Even within the Church it was necessary to safeguard the integrity of the fourfold Gospel. This need was first felt when Tatian, a student of St. Justin Martyr, compiled the *Diatessaron*, a work in which the four Gospels were woven together into a single, continuous narrative of the life and ministry of Jesus (ca. A.D. 170). Even this pious attempt to harmonize the Gospel accounts was deemed unacceptable by the Church. The integrity of the four Gospels as four distinct witnesses to Jesus Christ was not to be compromised.

The evidence of early Christian writings suggests that the authority of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John was widely acknowledged by the middle of the second century. By this time it was already an established custom to read the Gospels, called "the memoirs of the apostles", alongside the books of the Old Testament in the Church's liturgy (see St. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 67). Indeed, it is probable that the canon of the four Gospels was the first part of the New Testament canon to become a universal tradition in the Church. Doubts lingered about the authenticity of several biblical books during the early centuries, and the New Testament canon of twenty-seven books was not ratified by regional synods until the late fourth and early fifth

centuries. But the collection of Gospels deemed worthy of liturgical proclamation and instruction was a settled matter long before that.

So established was the fourfold Gospel canon by the late second century that writers such as St. Irenaeus were beginning to reflect on its theological significance (A.D. 180). For him, the Church's acceptance of four Gospels signified that the good news was to spread forth in all directions—to the four winds, as it were (*Against Heresies* 3, 11, 8). Irenaeus also correlated the four living creatures in Rev 4:6-7 with the four evangelists: Matthew, he said, was represented by the man, Mark by the eagle, Luke by the ox, and John by the lion (*Against Heresies* 3, 11, 8). Later this tradition would develop and change. So, for example, St. Jerome would see Matthew as the man, Mark as the lion, Luke as the ox, and John as the eagle (*Against Jovinianus* 1, 26), whereas St. Augustine preferred to see Matthew as the lion, Mark as the man, Luke as the ox, and John as the eagle (*Harmony of the Gospels* 1, 6, 9). However the correlation is made, the belief is that each book in the collection of four Gospels has a unique message that highlights a different dimension of the mystery of Christ.

Formation of the Gospels The Gospels stand as the outcome of a historical process that unfolded over the course of many years. Understanding the formation of the Gospels thus requires some awareness of the stages, literary and preliterate, that led to their composition. These formative stages began with Jesus, extended through the ministry of the apostles, and culminated with the evangelists writing out their inspired accounts. The Pontifical Biblical Commission underlined the importance of these stages in 1964 in its "Instruction on the Historical Truth of the Gospels" (*Sancta Mater Ecclesia* 7-9). A summary of these follows.

(1) Stage I begins with the person of Jesus, who conveyed his teaching to a handpicked group of disciples known as the apostles. Though he often addressed the crowds in general, he made the apostles his constant companions and invested himself in their formation. To them he revealed the deepest mystery of his identity through his preaching, private instruction, and the performance of miracles. He also provided them with a constant example of prayer and a life of heroic sacrifice.

(2) Stage II covers the ministry of the apostles, who were both commissioned and uniquely qualified to bear witness to all that Jesus had

said and done. Illumined by the Spirit, they possessed a true understanding of the mystery of Christ and were empowered by the grace of God to testify on his behalf. Through oral proclamation, they made known the purpose of his dying and rising as well as the significance of his living among men. The faith of the apostles did not obscure their memory but rather helped to keep the remembrance of these events alive. Their testimony to Jesus was proclaimed in various forms, including narratives of his life, catechetical instructions, prayers, and hymns.

(3) Stage III is the writing of the Gospels as lasting monuments of the apostolic witness to Jesus. The four evangelists composed these written records in order to provide an authentic record of the Lord's sayings and doings and to instruct the faithful in the elements of Christian doctrine and morals. To this end they selected episodes from the life of Jesus that most served their purpose, they synthesized these traditions on occasion, and they wrote with the situation of their readers in mind. Most importantly, the Church believes and teaches that the writers of the four Gospels set down their narratives under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Genre of the Gospels Scholarship has long wrestled with the question: What kind of books are the four Gospels? Some scholars consider them an example of *midrash*, a form of homiletic exposition in which texts of the Old Testament are applied to new situations in the life of God's people. Others classify them as *aretalogies*, in which Jesus appears as a heroic "divine man" who performs superhuman feats. Still others see them as literary *dramas* that weave together comic and tragic motifs along lines developed by the classical playwrights. Additional attempts at genre analysis have identified the Gospels as *apocalypses*, as historical *monographs*, and as a form of folk literature known as *cult legends*. Many twentieth-century scholars, owing to the considerable influence of form criticism, declared the Gospels *sui generis*—unique, one of a kind, in a class by themselves.

Not until the late twentieth century did a more promising avenue open for a literary classification of the Gospels. Thanks to ongoing historical and literary research, an increasing number of scholars are now claiming that the Gospels are a species of *Greco-Roman biography*. These were not like many modern biographies, which tend to concentrate on a person's appearance, habits, personality type, psychological development, etc. These

works, known in the Hellenistic world as "lives" (Greek *bioi* or Latin *vitae*), did not so much analyze their subjects abstractly as display their character through a narration of their significant words and actions. Prominent biographies of this type were written by Greek authors such as Xenophon and Plutarch, by Roman authors such as Tacitus and Suetonius, and by Hellenistic Jewish authors such as Philo of Alexandria.

Characteristic of these Greco-Roman "lives" are the following features: they focus attention on a single individual; they are broadly chronological but sometimes arrange their materials topically or thematically; and oftentimes only one period of the subject's life dominates the presentation. The subjects of biographical writing tended to be figures of renown and influence—statesmen, philosophers, military men, literary figures, and the like. Most importantly, the greatness of the biographical subject is revealed through heroic acts of virtue and memorable words of wisdom. Several biographies even undertake a careful examination of the subject's death and the circumstances surrounding it.

Insofar as the Gospels appear to stand within the literary category of ancient biography, there is good reason to suppose that the Gospels were written with historiographical intent. In other words, adoption of the biographical genre implies that the evangelists aimed to tell us about the historical life and accomplishments of Jesus. The basis of such a presentation would rest on personal recollections, whether their own or someone else's (see Lk 1: 1-4; Jn 19:35). This being so, the Gospel writers were free to interpret the significance of Jesus for their readers, but they would not have felt free to invent stories and sayings of Jesus out of whole cloth, nor would they have knowingly falsified or distorted the facts about his life as they knew them from experience or had received them through the most ancient channels of tradition. Ancient authors, no less than modern ones, knew the difference between history and historical fiction.

Finally, in addition to being historiographical works, the Gospels are also evangelical works. That is to say, they also aim to produce faith in their readers. This is made explicit in the Gospel of John, where the evangelist addresses his audience with the words: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (Jn 20:30-31). Most agree that this purpose behind the Gospel of John lies behind the Synoptic

Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) as well. If anything is unique about the Gospels in comparison with Greco-Roman biographies, then, it is their aim to make believers out of their readers. Other ancient biographies held up their subjects as objects of admiration and imitation. The Gospels do likewise, but they go beyond this by making Jesus an object of religious faith and by inviting readers into a personal relationship with him.

Historicity of the Gospels The Church has always affirmed the historicity of the Gospels. None of the four accounts can be reduced to a form of fictional writing in which realistic narratives serve merely as allegories of the life of the early Church or as vehicles to impart religious teaching in concrete and memorable ways. On the contrary, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John report about real events of the past and about real people who had a part in them. This is not to deny them the theological and spiritual richness that is theirs. It is only to insist, in concert with Vatican II, that the Gospels tell us what Jesus "really did and taught" for our salvation (*Dei Verbum* 19).

For the historian, the reliability of the Gospels means that their stories are generally accurate in bearing witness to Jesus and his times. The historian might admit the presence of slight errors and minor misstatements of fact, while concluding that the overall presentation of the main events is a trustworthy description of history. For the Church, however, the historical reliability of the Gospels means something more than this. Since the Bible is inspired by God, it can never be said that its human authors assert as true anything that is untrue, whether the affirmation be made about doctrine, morals, or the events of history. Of course, careful study is needed to ascertain the intention of the author, lest we mistake a non-historical narrative such as a parable for a historical one. And even historical narratives have a theological relevance and purpose behind them. But where an author's intent to record history can be established, the factual accuracy of the account is guaranteed as part of the mystery of divine inspiration. The Pontifical Biblical Commission reaffirmed this point in 1964, when it said that the four Gospels were written under the inspiration of the Spirit, who "preserved their authors immune from all error" (*Sancta Mater Ecclesia* 11). By implication, this is also the meaning of Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation when it states that "everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers must be held as asserted by the Holy Spirit" (*Dei Verbum* 11).

What, then, are we to make of the apparent mistakes and contradictions that appear in the Gospels? It can hardly be denied that numerous difficulties face the interpreter who would try to reconcile the four Gospels in detail. There are several places where a story in one Gospel seems to conflict with the same story as told in another. Sometimes the words of Jesus recorded in one Gospel seem to disagree with his words recorded in another. And occasionally the evangelists make historical claims that contradict the testimony of secular sources regarding the events and circumstances of the period.

The Church's approach to resolving such discrepancies has never been to compromise her belief in the divine inspiration and the historical truthfulness of the Gospels. Her faith is firmly maintained in spite of the difficulties that confront us. In practical terms, this means that interpretation proceeds with the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture in mind, and it falls to the Church's scholars to find ways to alleviate tensions and to reconcile discordant accounts to the best of their ability (see Leo XIII, *Providentissimus Deus* 45; Pius XII, *Divino Afflante Spiritu* 46). The attempt to harmonize the Gospels will not always produce satisfactory results. Nevertheless, it is good to remember that numerous difficult passages of the Bible have been clarified over time thanks to the efforts of scholars toiling to vindicate the truthfulness of Scripture. As for those problematic passages still in need of a solution, there are several considerations to keep in mind when one stumbles across apparent contradictions and inconsistencies in the Gospels.

(1) Biblical scholars have long recognized that the Gospels do not always present the story of Jesus in strict chronological order. Certainly the main outline of his life, ministry, and final days is kept intact. In this sense, the story line is broadly chronological. But some of the short episodes within this larger framework are moved around and repositioned according to the aim of each evangelist. Thus, one notices that episodes sharing a common theme are sometimes grouped together, as are sayings that touch upon a related topic of discussion.

The freedom to rearrange sayings and stories in a non-chronological sequence does not mean that the essential historicity of the Gospels is compromised. This is something that ancient biographers and historians were accustomed to doing in their writings. Besides, it is important to remember that the evangelists, in addition to preserving the memory of

Jesus' words and deeds, were also preachers of the good news. Their aims and interests as authors were evangelical and catechetical as well as historiographical. One result is that chronology is sometimes subordinate to theology in the narrative depiction of Jesus' life. Such adaptations of chronology can be explained by the Gospel writers' use of the literary techniques of their age to communicate the historical truth about Jesus.

(2) An examination of parallel passages shows that the four Gospels frequently record the words of Jesus in different ways. This is not surprising, since Jesus delivered much of his teaching in Aramaic, whereas the Gospels record his sayings in Greek. No doubt some variations in wording were bound to arise in the process of translation from one language to another. Also, it sometimes appears that the evangelists offer an interpretive paraphrase of Jesus' sayings in order to highlight a particular theme or teaching they deem especially relevant to their readers. The Gospel authors can thus clarify the meaning of a saying, or even place a certain emphasis on this detail or that, all the while preserving the substance of what Jesus said on the occasion.

Although this procedure may strike us as questionable, given our modern preference for exact quotation, the best historians of the ancient world typically allowed a measure of freedom in recording spoken discourse. They permitted an author to paraphrase, abbreviate, or even bring out the meaning of a person's words, so long as the original sense of the words was faithfully conveyed. Still, this was a liberty that operated within strict limits. The historian's aim was not always to preserve the exact words of a saying but rather the speaker's intended meaning.

With respect to the Gospels, it can be said that the evangelists preserved the authentic *voice* of Jesus, even though their reports are not always *verbatim transcripts* of his exact words. The Pontifical Biblical Commission has acknowledged this by saying that the authors of the Gospels employed "different words to express what he said, not keeping to the very letter, but nevertheless preserving the sense" (*Sancta Mater Ecclesia* 9). So the essence of Jesus' message is accurately expressed in the Gospels even though there are variations in the way each evangelist wrote it down.

(3) When it comes to reconciling Gospel accounts of the same event, it is important to distinguish between contradictory testimony and complementary testimony. One is dealing with contradictory testimony

when two reports of a single occurrence are in direct conflict and cannot be reconciled. For example, if one author places an individual at a specific time and location, and another author places the same individual at a different location but at the exact same time, then it must be presumed that at least one of the witnesses is either lying or mistaken. Both cannot be true at the same time.

On the other hand, complementary testimony is non-contradictory. If two authors describe an individual engaged in two different activities at the same time and place, we need not conclude that either is lying or mistaken, for the situation may be more complex. Suppose one witness says that Jesus was "teaching" at sunrise, while another witness claims that he was "walking" to Jerusalem at that time. Neither of these activities makes the other impossible or even unlikely, for Jesus could have been doing both at the same time. Being complementary rather than contradictory testimony, both reports can be taken as an accurate description of reality. The challenge is to piece together a coherent picture of what took place in all its complexity.

(4) Attempts to reconcile disparate Gospel accounts must reckon with the fact that all historical writing is necessarily selective and incomplete. No one can record everything that takes place at a given moment in time, so a complete history of any event is strictly impossible. By the same token, a partial history of any given event is not thereby a falsification of the facts. An nonexhaustive report, mentioning certain details while omitting others, is not at all the same as an inaccurate report. Of course, it is sometimes the case that excluding facts can lead to a distorted or misleading account of events. But this is not always or necessarily so. Some facts may not be pertinent to the purposes of a particular author's account of an event, so excluding those facts does not falsify the account.

(5) Measuring the truth of the Gospels against other historical records of antiquity is a delicate and difficult matter. Whether from new archeological finds or from literary monuments long possessed, historical data sometimes present biblical interpreters with conflicting testimony about the past. These are the difficulties that often make headlines, with skeptics claiming that the story of the Bible (or the Catholic Church's interpretation of it) has been disproved by the facts of history.

Sensationalists who make such claims tend to overlook two important points. First, the facts of a given case are always bound up with one's

interpretation of those facts. The objective evidence of historical and archeological study requires a subjective assessment of that evidence. The same is true with biblical interpretation. As a result, some of the contradictions said to exist between the Gospels and other ancient sources are, on closer inspection, more apparent than real. That is because some (or all) of the relevant evidence may have been given a faulty interpretation. Second, many interpreters are guilty of a methodological bias against the veracity of Scripture. Thus, when a contradiction is found between a Gospel passage and another historical document, the latter is often given the benefit of the doubt while the biblical testimony is declared erroneous. At the very least, it should be kept in mind that ancient writers, being fallible human beings, were prone to make mistakes and to experience slips of the memory, just as we are today. Only the Scriptures can be treated as absolutely reliable when properly interpreted.

(6) Finally, it must be said that humility and patience are called for when dealing with problematic passages in the Gospels. Humility is always essential when handling Scripture, for it is the inspired witness to God's love for us and the revealed record of his will for our lives. It is not our business to stand in judgment over the written word; rather, it is the word that stands in judgment over us. Likewise, patience is needed when wrestling with interpretive challenges and working toward solutions. Difficulties are not in the Bible by some oversight of God's Providence. They are opportunities to submit our minds to the mystery of his revelation and to trust that all things find their answer in him.

Relationship among the Synoptic Gospels One of the great enigmas of biblical scholarship concerns the relationship among the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. For the first eighteen centuries of Christian history, theologians made every effort to harmonize these Gospels with each other and with the Gospel of John in order to defend their testimony against charges of inconsistency and internal contradiction. Modern times, however, have witnessed a shift in focus, with much research now devoted to investigating the *sources* utilized by the evangelists and the probable *sequence* in which their Gospels were composed.

Today the effort to understand the relationship among the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke is known as the Synoptic Problem. These three Gospels are called "synoptic" because their contents, order, language, and

narrative structures are remarkably similar, making it easy to arrange the Gospel texts in parallel columns and examine them side-by-side (the Greek *synopsis* means "view together"). The "problem" is how to explain the similarities and differences among them. The first question is whether a dependence on oral tradition can sufficiently explain these phenomena, or whether it is more likely that Matthew, Mark, and Luke are interrelated at a literary level. Most scholars maintain that a literary relationship best explains why the Synoptic Gospels are so similar. Thus, studies of the Synoptic Problem typically seek to determine which of the three Synoptic Gospels was written first, second, and third, and which evangelist(s) relied on the work of his predecessor(s).

Proposing a reasonable solution to the Synoptic Problem requires a painstaking analysis of the internal data of the Gospels, an evaluation of the external testimony of Christian tradition, and a convincing explanation of how the Gospels came together to reach their final form. Numerous solutions have been put forward to explain the Synoptic Problem, but four main proposals have attracted most of the attention among scholars over the last two centuries.

(1) *The Augustinian Hypothesis.* The first detailed examination of Gospel parallels was undertaken at the turn of the fifth century by St. Augustine, who maintained that the order of the Gospels in the canon (Matthew-Mark-Luke-John) represents the order of Gospel composition (*Harmony of the Gospels* 3, 1, 2). On this paradigm, Matthew wrote his Gospel first, then Mark wrote an epitome or summary of Matthew, and then Luke wrote his Gospel by combining elements of Matthew and Mark with further traditions he had collected. Few scholars favor the hypothesis today, yet this was the dominant view of Christian scholarship until the nineteenth century.

Support for the Augustinian order of composition is claimed on several grounds. **(a)** Before the time of St. Augustine, this sequence was asserted by Origen of Alexandria (cited in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6, 25, 3-6) and seemingly also by St. Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 3, 1, 1). Likewise, the most common arrangement to appear in the ancient codices (large volumes in which the Gospels were bound together under one cover) was Matthew-Mark-Luke-John. **(b)** Early Christian writings that say nothing about the order of Mark and Luke are nevertheless unanimous in claiming that Matthew was the first Gospel to be written. **(c)** It has been said that the

Jewishness of Matthew's Gospel favors its priority in the sequence of Gospel composition. In other words, it is difficult to imagine that a Gospel written for Gentiles (such as Mark or Luke) would have appeared before one that addressed the needs of Jewish Christians living in Israel. Historically, the Church's mission in Palestine was well underway before its mission to the Gentiles even began. **(d)** Several passages in Matthew, noted for their pronounced Semitic features, arguably represent the most primitive form of the tradition about Jesus preserved in the Gospels. One example is the exchange between Jesus and Peter in Mt 16:17-19, a passage that exhibits antithetical parallelism, Aramaic wordplay, and traditional Jewish idioms. The parallel passages in Mark and Luke are much abbreviated, apparently eliminating these Semitic features to make the exchange more intelligible to a Gentile readership. **(e)** Though most modern scholars think Mark was written before Matthew and that Matthew made an effort to resolve ambiguities that he found in Mark, there are places where the opposite sequence appears to be more probable. Perhaps the most obvious example is Jesus' response to Caiaphas regarding his messianic identity. It is hard to believe that Mark preserves the original wording of the reply when he records Jesus saying "I am" (Mk 14:62) and that Matthew later changed this to read "You have said so" (Mt 26:64). In all likelihood, Matthew has preserved the actual wording of Jesus' affirmation, and it was Mark who paraphrased his response to bring out its meaning more clearly.

(2) *The Two-Gospel Hypothesis.* This solution to the Synoptic Problem proposes the order Matthew-Luke-Mark. The claim is that Matthew wrote first, that Luke wrote second, drawing upon Matthew and other sources, and that Mark wrote third, producing an abridged conflation of Matthew and Luke. The Two-Gospel hypothesis was originally known as the Griesbach hypothesis

after the scholar who developed it in the late eighteenth century, Johann Griesbach. The Two-Gospel hypothesis remains a minority view today, but it has enjoyed a surge of academic interest beginning in the latter part of the twentieth century.

Supporters of this hypothesis argue their case along several lines. **(a)** The universal tradition that Matthew wrote first is claimed in its favor, as is a statement from St. Clement of Alexandria (quoted in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6, 14, 5-7), who says that the two Gospels having genealogies, namely Matthew and Luke, were "written first" (though the

verb in question can also mean "published openly"). **(b)** Those arguments which support the priority of Matthew to Mark (noted above as *c*, *d*, and *e*) also offer support for this view. **(c)** Placing Mark third is said to account best for the fact that his Gospel parallels Matthew and Luke when Matthew and Luke run parallel to each other and that Mark typically runs parallel either to Matthew or Luke in places where Matthew and Luke diverge from one another. Thus, as a matter of compositional policy, Mark almost never departs from his predecessors when they agree, nor does he go his own way when his predecessors lack parallel accounts, for he always follows one or the other. **(d)** Proponents note that literary features characteristic of Mark's Gospel occur with far less frequency in Matthew and Luke (e.g., the use of the historical present tense to describe past events and the widespread use of adverbs such as *euthus*, "immediately", and *palin*, "again"). It is easier to explain this phenomenon if Mark is placed third rather than first or second in the order of composition. **(e)** Luke is said to have made several passes through Matthew's Gospel, each time gathering up material that he wished to arrange and present in a different way. Many of the sayings of Jesus found in both Matthew and Luke were not repeated a third time by Mark, who wished to focus more on the Lord's actions than on his teachings.

(3) *The Two-Source Hypothesis.* This solution maintains that Mark's Gospel was the first to be written and that Matthew and Luke made independent use of Mark as their primary source of information about the life of Jesus. In addition, because Matthew and Luke have roughly 230 verses of material in common that are not found in Mark, many scholars contend that a second source document, comprised mainly of Jesus' sayings, was also utilized by Matthew and Luke (called Q, an abbreviation for the German *Quelle*, meaning "source"). Though no Q document has survived from antiquity, it is argued that the substance of Q can be reconstructed from the material shared by Matthew and Luke but absent from Mark. Along with the source documents Mark and Q, Matthew and Luke allegedly had other traditions at their disposal as well, usually designated M and L. Developed in the nineteenth century and further refined in the twentieth, the Two-Source hypothesis (also known as the Marcan priority or Oxford hypothesis) is the most widely accepted solution to the Synoptic Problem in modern scholarship.

Supporters claim that several observations are best accounted for by the Two-Source hypothesis. **(a)** Mark writes in a rough and heavily Semitic

Greek, whereas Matthew and Luke write in a much smoother and more idiomatic Greek. Given this phenomenon, it is more likely that Matthew and Luke polished and improved the language of Mark than that Mark diminished the more elegant diction of his sources. **(b)** Statistical analysis indicates that more than 80 percent of Mark's Gospel is paralleled in Matthew, and more than 50 percent is paralleled in Luke. It is thus easier to account for Matthew and Luke writing after Mark, since they had so much more to say, than to envision Mark summarizing what was already stated in Matthew and Luke. **(c)** Advocates argue that one can readily explain why Matthew and Luke made editorial adjustments to material taken from Mark (called "redactions"), but it is not so clear why Mark would have changed material drawn from Matthew and Luke. Especially mysterious is Mark's omission of the infancy narratives along with much of the teaching of Jesus that appears in Matthew and Luke. **(d)** Proponents hold that Matthew and Luke either omitted or clarified certain details about Jesus that readers of Mark would likely find embarrassing, confusing, or hard to explain (see, e.g., Mk 6:5; 10:18). According to the argument, it is difficult to explain why Mark would have introduced these features into his Gospel if he were following Matthew and possibly Luke.

(4) *The Farrer Hypothesis.* Still another solution proposes the order Mark-Matthew-Luke. This view accepts the priority of Mark as the first written Gospel but dispenses with the hypothetical Q document as unnecessary. Instead of Matthew and Luke independently borrowing material from Mark and Q, supporters hold that Matthew relied upon Mark (and other traditions), while Luke, writing third, made use of Mark in establishing the chronological backbone of his Gospel and then inserted sayings and episodes about Jesus taken from Matthew. This solution to the Synoptic Problem takes its name from the twentieth-century scholar who pioneered it (Austin Farrer) and claims a moderate following among Gospel specialists today.

Supporters of the Mark-Matthew-Luke sequence argue their case along the following lines. **(a)** The arguments made by Two-Source theorists for Mark writing first are accepted by this hypothesis as well (noted above as *a*, *b*, *c*, and *d*). **(b)** On this paradigm, the material that Luke allegedly copied from Q is more likely to have come from Matthew. In fact, the narrative elements that are typically included in Q are found in Luke in the same order in which they appear in Matthew 3-11, which differs somewhat from

Mark (e.g., the appearance of John the Baptist at the Jordan, the Baptism of Jesus, the three temptations of Jesus in the wilderness, the healing of the centurion's son, the messengers sent to Jesus from the Baptist). **(c)** Oftentimes Matthew and Luke agree with one another over against Mark in places where all three Gospels record the same episode. For instance, in the parable of the Mustard Seed, Luke's version agrees with Matthew's in four descriptive details that are entirely absent from Mark (compare Mt 13:31-32 and Lk 13:18-19 with Mk 4:30-32). Positing the existence of Q is unnecessary if one allows that Luke simply acquired these details from Matthew. **(d)** There are sayings in Luke's Passion narrative that are identical to those found in Matthew's Passion narrative (e.g., "Who is it that struck you?" in Mt 26:68 and Lk 22:64). This is significant because such sayings do not appear in Mark, and scholars are universally agreed that Q, if it existed, had no Passion narrative. Thus it appears that Luke was familiar with Matthew's Gospel and made use of it in the composition of his own Gospel.

In the end, it is fair to say that the Synoptic Problem remains a problem. No solution, ancient or modern, has yet provided a satisfactory explanation of the total evidence. This may never be achieved. Nevertheless, our interpretation of the Gospels must ultimately focus on the inspired texts as the Church has received and canonized them, regardless of what sources may have been utilized in their composition.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

INTRODUCTION TO

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT MATTHEW

Author Christian tradition unanimously identifies the Apostle Matthew as the author of the first Gospel. Virtually all ancient manuscripts that preserve the title of the work give some form of the heading "According to Matthew" (Gk. *Kata Maththaion*). The same consensus can be found in the writings of the Church Fathers who address the issue: St. Irenaeus (A.D. 180), Origen (A.D. 250), St. John Chrysostom (A.D. 390), St. Jerome (A.D. 398), and St. Augustine (A.D. 400) affirm the apostolic authorship of the Gospel of Matthew. No traces of a rival tradition attributing the work to a different author have survived from Christian antiquity.

Modern scholarship, however, is largely disinclined to accept this tradition. Some would allow that the Apostle Matthew is the authority behind the work but is not its literary author in the strict sense. Most biblical scholars, however, reject the early tradition as a mistaken indication of authorship. Though it is commonly held that Matthew's Gospel was written by a Jewish Christian, only a minority today ascribe the work to Matthew the former tax collector (9:9) who became an apostle (10:2-3). One reason for this change in perspective is the widespread view that the writer of Matthew relied upon the Gospel of Mark as one of his primary sources of information about Jesus. There is no dispute that Mark's Gospel was written by a non-apostle, and many scholars therefore reason that the author of Matthew must not have been an apostle, either. Were the evangelist an eyewitness of the Messiah, he would more likely have drawn upon personal memories than the hearsay reports of Mark. Such is the basis of the modern objection.

For various reasons, the argument against Matthean authorship is not as strong as some proponents assert. The evidence can be read and interpreted otherwise. For example, if the author of the Gospel of Matthew did rely upon the Gospel of Mark, he could have done so with the awareness that Mark's Gospel was reputedly based on the preaching of Peter. In this case, it

is neither unreasonable nor improbable to suppose that one apostle made use of the testimony of another, especially when the apostle in question was Peter, whose authority and favored position among the Twelve are among the themes of Matthew's Gospel (10:2; 16:17-19; 17:24-27). Why would the evangelist feel compelled to produce his account from scratch if such a document, known to represent the apostolic witness to Jesus, was already in circulation? Furthermore, the hypothesis that Mark was written before Matthew and was used as a source by Matthew is not proven. A number of scholars hold the opposite, i.e., that Matthew was written before Mark and was used as a source by Mark. Though this alternative position remains a minority position among contemporary scholars, it dovetails with the tradition of the early Church that the Gospel of Matthew was the first of the four canonical Gospels to be written.

Also, there is a broad correspondence between the profile of the author that emerges from the Gospel and the tradition of Matthean authorship. First, because the evangelist is clearly steeped in the biblical and religious traditions of Israel, it is probable that he was a Jewish believer in Jesus. Second, because the author demonstrates a bilingual competence in writing accurate Greek and translating quotations directly from the Hebrew OT, it is probable also that he was either native to Palestine or educated there, for Greek was widely known in Palestine, especially in Galilee, and Hebrew was hardly known outside of Israel. Third, Matthew's Gospel features multiple references to currency, debts, business transactions, and other financial matters (17:24-27; 18:23-35; 20:1-16; 25:14-30; 26:25; 27:3-10). Taken together, these three aspects of the Gospel suggest that the author was Jewish, that he knew Hebrew and Greek, that he was probably from Palestine, and that he had some interest in episodes and teachings of Jesus involving money.

Of course, Matthew the tax collector and apostle from Galilee is not the only person who may be said to fit this general description. But the converging lines of correspondence do make him a suitable candidate for authorship. For this reason, the apostolic authorship of Matthew remains a defensible position. The external evidence of early Christian tradition offers considerable support for it, and the internal evidence of the Gospel can be read as compatible with its testimony.

Date There is no consensus regarding the date when Matthew was written. Most interpreters place its composition in the 80s or 90s of the first century, while some prefer to date it in the 50s or 60s. All things considered, a date in the middle of the first century seems more likely than a date near the end of the first century. Two major factors underlie this judgment. **(1)** Matthew records two sayings of Jesus that predict the fall of Jerusalem, one that refers to the burning of the city (22:7) and one that foretells the demolition of the Temple (24:2). Both predictions were fulfilled when Jerusalem fell before the conquering Romans in the year 70. Significantly, there is no indication in the Gospel that this catastrophe had yet occurred, even though Matthew makes it a point to stress how events of the past have a lasting significance for the Church in his day (27:8; 28:15). **(2)** Matthew refers to the Sadducees seven times, more frequently than the other Gospels combined (two times). He makes it a point to underscore, not only their opposition to Jesus, but also the danger their teaching poses to disciples (3:7; 16:1, 6, 11-12; 22:23, 34). Assuming that Matthew wrote with an eye to the situation of his audience, it is reasonable to suppose that his readers were threatened by the persecution and propaganda of the Sadducees, whose opposition to Christianity is historically documented in the NT (Acts 4:1-3; 5:17-18; 23:6). Of course, a similar inference can be made regarding the Pharisees, who also appear frequently in Matthew and come up for even more severe criticism (see 23:1-36). But there is a difference between the two that impinges on the question of dating: whereas the Pharisees were locked in a struggle with the Church throughout the first century, the Sadducees were a factor to be reckoned with only in the decades between A.D. 30 and 70, for the sect was entirely wiped out with the Roman conquest of Jerusalem. Hence, though it remains difficult to fix a precise date for the Gospel of Matthew, there is good reason to think that it was composed before the critical date of A.D. 70.

Destination Matthew seems to have written his Gospel for Jewish Christians in and around Palestine. Ancient scholarship came to this conclusion partly on the basis of a widespread tradition that Matthew's Gospel was originally written in a Semitic language, either Hebrew or Aramaic. Some modern scholars have argued that the canonical text of Matthew is indeed a translation from a Semitic original; but most Scripture scholars today remain unconvinced. In any case, apart from how one deals

with the linguistic issue, a Palestinian readership would explain why Matthew addresses multiple Jewish concerns, why he refers to Jewish customs and institutions without explanation, and why he works nearly two hundred references to the Jewish Scriptures into his narrative in order to demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah of Jewish expectation. Modern scholarship tends to locate Matthew's original audience north of Palestine in the Syrian city of Antioch. In the first century, this city was home to a large Jewish (and Christian) community that lived in the midst of a predominantly Gentile population. The Gospel's Jewish outlook, combined with its openness to Gentiles (4:15; 28:19), is said to favor such a setting.

Structure Matthew's Gospel consists of alternating panels of narrative and discourse. There are five story-collections separated by five main speeches, and these are all framed by an introductory prologue (chaps. 1-2) and a climactic epilogue (chaps. 26-28). This skeletal structure is revealed in a repeated expression—"when Jesus [had] finished . . ."—which occurs at the end of each of the five discourses and serves as a transition back to the storyline (see 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). At the very least, this literary technique highlights the dual significance of the works and words of Jesus. Some scholars go a step farther and suggest that Matthew presents us with five "books" about the Messiah, parallel to the five books of Moses. The idea is that Matthew offered his Gospel as a new Torah for the new People of God.

Themes The content of Matthew's Gospel has as its central theme "the kingdom of heaven". This keynote expression appears more than thirty times throughout the book and sounds forth in the preaching of Jesus (4:17), John the Baptist (3:2), and the twelve apostles (10:7). The kingdom is not reducible to a purely spiritual or otherworldly realm, nor is it exclusively linked with the future blessings of eternal life. It is a claim that God the Father is now working through the Messiah to establish his will on earth, as it is in heaven (6:10).

Jesus himself is the focus of this divine and kingly activity. Through his ministry, the kingdom of heaven is proclaimed and its power is made present in the lives of ordinary people (4:23; 9:35; 12:28). Jesus sows the kingdom in this world as a hidden grace that slowly exerts its influence over

time (13:33, 36-43). The kingdom stands in our midst wherever the messianic King (25:34) is invoked by his gathered disciples (18:20).

Though the expression "kingdom of heaven" is not attested in Jewish or Christian texts before Matthew's Gospel, it is not an altogether novel idea. It is rooted in OT expectations for the messianic age. One can speak, for instance, of its apocalyptic background in the Book of Daniel, where it is said that the God of heaven will triumph over the kingdoms of this world by establishing his royal dominion over the whole earth (Dan 2-7). Daniel foresees in a vision that God will exercise his divine kingship through "one like a son of man" (Dan 7:13-14). Several times, Jesus identifies himself in Matthew with Daniel's royal figure (24:30; 26:64; 28:18). One can speak also of a historical background to the kingdom of heaven in the ancient Davidic monarchy and in prophetic hopes for its restoration. The basis for such a hope was the Davidic covenant, in which the Lord swore an oath to establish the kingdom of David for ever (2 Sam 7:12-17; Ps 89:3-4). Since the eclipse of Davidic kingship in the sixth century b.c., the prophets envisioned the coming of a new David to restore his kingdom for all time (Is 9:6-7; 11:1-5; 55:3-5; Jer 23:5-6; Ezek 34:23-24; Hos 3:4-5; Amos 9:11-12). Matthew sees Jesus as this messianic "son of David" (1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30; 21:9, 15). Incorporated into the royal line of David (1: 2-16) and now enthroned in heaven (26:64), Jesus has achieved, not the re-founding of Israel's political empire, but a transcendent fulfillment that brings the ancient Davidic ideal to its perfection. In the risen Jesus, Davidic rule is for ever restored and given universal extension over heaven and earth and all nations (28:18-19).

Within the text of the Gospel, the "kingdom of heaven" is a theme that branches out in several directions. Starting from Christ as its center, it develops along lines that are ethical, ecclesial, and eschatological. **(1)** The kingdom of heaven is *ethical* in the sense that it calls for a human response to Jesus. It summons hearers to repentance (4:17), followed by a lifetime of discipleship, in which seeking the surpassing righteousness of Christ (5:20) is the highest priority (6:33). The righteousness of the kingdom is spelled out in practical terms by the actions and attitudes praised by Jesus in the Beatitudes (5:3-10) and further explicated by his deepened interpretations of the Mosaic Law (5:21-48). Other requirements for fellowship in the kingdom include observance of the Golden Rule (7:12), an effort to live with childlike humility (18:1-4), and a willingness to forgive those who

offend us (6:14-15; 18:23-35). A commitment to prayer (6:5-13), fasting (6:16-18), and works of compassion also is essential (6:2-4; 25:35-40). In the end, disciples who build their lives upon the teaching of Jesus (7:24-27) will come safely to the blessedness of eternal life (25:31-46). **(2)** The kingdom is also *ecclesial* in that its saving power is made present in the world through the Church. It is noteworthy that the Gospel of Matthew, which stresses the importance of the kingdom more than any other, is likewise the only Gospel to make explicit reference to the Church (16:18; 18:17). The authority to bind and loose in the kingdom is given to Peter, who is made the kingdom's chief steward and the guardian of its "keys" (16:19). Similar royal authority is conferred upon the other apostles as a group (18:18-19). Sent forth by Jesus, they extend the kingdom of heaven through their preaching (10:7) and sacramental actions (28:18-20). **(3)** Ultimately, the kingdom will have an *eschatological* fulfillment in the future. Its presence in the world through the Church is therefore a prelude to its full and final manifestation at the end of time. In this sense, the "coming" of the kingdom awaits the return of Christ in glory (16:28). This is the great hope of the Church on earth; for that, she prays to the Father (6:10) and makes wise preparation (25:1-13). When at last the Son of man comes, he will send the righteous and the wicked their separate ways; and the everlasting inheritance of the kingdom will be given to the faithful (25:31-46). «

OUTLINE OF THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT MATTHEW

- 1. Prologue Narrative: The Ancestry and Infancy of Jesus (1:1-2:23)**
 - A. Genealogy of Jesus ([1:1-17](#))
 - B. Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem ([1:18-25](#))
 - C. Visit of the Wise Men ([2:1-12](#))
 - D. Flight of the Holy Family into Egypt ([2:13-15](#))
 - E. Slaughter of the Holy Innocents ([2:16-18](#))
 - F. Return of the Holy Family to Nazareth ([2:19-23](#))

- 2. Book One: John the Baptist and the Early Ministry of Jesus ([3:1-7:29](#))**
 - A. *Narrative*: Ministry of John and Jesus ([chaps. 3-4](#))
 - B. *Discourse*: Sermon on the Mount ([chaps. 5-7](#))

- 3. Book Two: Jesus' Miracles and the Commission of the Twelve ([8:1-10:42](#))**
 - A. *Narrative*: Miracle Stories of Jesus ([chaps. 8-9](#))
 - B. *Discourse*: Missionary Sermon for the Apostles ([chap. 10](#))

- 4. Book Three: Growing Controversy and the New Kingdom ([11:1-13:58](#))**
 - A. *Narrative*: Jesus Confronts an Evil Generation ([chaps. 11-12](#))
 - B. *Discourse*: Parables of the Kingdom ([chap. 13](#))

- 5. Book Four: Jesus Instructs Peter and the Twelve ([14:1-18:35](#))**
 - A. *Narrative*: Various Travels and Miracles of Jesus ([chaps. 14-17](#))
 - B. *Discourse*: Sermon on Life in the Church ([chap. 18](#))

- 6. Book Five: Jesus Travels to Judea and Enters Jerusalem ([19:1-25:46](#))**
 - A. *Narrative*: Events in Judea and Jesus' Teaching in the Temple ([chaps. 19-23](#))
 - B. *Discourse*: The Olivet Discourse—Judgment on Jerusalem ([chaps. 24-25](#))

7. Passion Week Narratives: The Suffering and Resurrection of Jesus
([26:1-28:20](#))

- A. Anointing at Bethany ([26:1-16](#))
- B. The Last Supper ([26:17-29](#))
- C. Betrayal and Trials of Jesus ([26:30-27:26](#))
- D. Crucifixion and Burial of Jesus ([27:27-66](#))
- E. Resurrection of Jesus ([28:1-15](#))
- F. The Great Commission ([28:16-20](#))

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

SAINT MATTHEW

Chapters

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Essays and Charts

[Is Matthew's Infancy Narrative Historical?](#)

[Jesus and the Old Testament](#)

[Jesus on Marriage and Divorce](#)

[End of the World?](#)

The Genealogy of Jesus Christ

1 The [book of the genealogy](#) of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. *****

2 [Abraham was the father](#) of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, **3**and Judah the father of Per'ez and Ze'rah by [Ta'mar](#), and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, **a** **4**and Ram **a** the father of Ammin'adab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, **5**and Salmon the father of Boaz by Ra'hab, and Boaz the father of O'bed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, **6**and Jesse the father of David the king.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uri'ah, **7**and Solomon the father of Rehobo'am, and Rehoboam the father of Abi'jah, and Abijah the father of Asa, **b** **8**and Asa **b** the father of Jehosh'aphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Jo'ram, and Joram the father of Uzzi'ah, **9**and Uzzi'ah the father of Jo'tham, and Jotham the father of A'haz, and Ahaz the father of Hezeki'ah, **10**and Hezeki'ah the father of Manas'seh, and Manasseh

the father of Amos, ^c and Amos ^c the father of Josi'ah, ¹¹and Josi'ah the father of Jechoni'ah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

¹² And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoni'ah was the father of She-al'ti-el, ^d and She-alti-el ^d the father of Zerub'babel, ¹³and Zerub'babel the father of Abi'ud, and Abiud the father of Eli'akim, and Eliakim the father of A'zor, ¹⁴and A'zor the father of Za'dok, and Zadok the father of A'chim, and Achim the father of Eli'ud, ¹⁵and Eli'ud the father of Elea'zar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, ¹⁶and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. ^{*}

¹⁷ So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

The Birth of Jesus Christ

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ ^f took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; ¹⁹and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to send her away quietly. ²⁰But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; ²¹she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

²³"Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and his name shall be called Emmanuel"

(which means, God with us). ²⁴When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, ²⁵but knew her not until she had borne a son; ^{*} and he called his name Jesus.

The Visit of the Wise Men

² Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, Wise Men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, ²"Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him." ³When Herod the king

heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it is written by the prophet:

⁶'[And you, O Bethlehem](#), in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who will govern my people Israel.' "

⁷ Then Herod summoned the Wise Men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star appeared; ⁸and he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." ⁹When they had heard the king they went their way; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy; ¹¹and going [into the house](#) they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. ¹²And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

[The Escape to Egypt \[map\]](#)

¹³ Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "[Rise, take the child](#) and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." ¹⁴And he rose and took the child and his mother by night, and departed to Egypt, ¹⁵and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "[Out of Egypt](#) have I called my son."

¹⁶ Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the Wise Men, was in [a furious rage](#), and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the Wise Men. ¹⁷Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:

¹⁸"[A voice was heard](#) in Ra'mah,
wailing and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;

she refused to be consoled,
because they were no more."

The Return from Egypt

19 But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, **20**"Rise, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." **21**And he rose and took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. **22**But when he heard that [Archela'us](#) reigned over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. **23**And he went and dwelt in a city called [Nazareth](#), that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled. "He shall be called a Nazarene."

The Preaching of John the Baptist

3 In those days came [John the Baptist](#), preaching in the wilderness of Judea, **2**"Repent, ***** for the [kingdom of heaven](#) is at hand." **3**For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said,

"[The voice of one crying](#) in the wilderness:

Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight."

4Now John wore a garment of camel's hair, and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. **5**Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan, **6**and they were baptized by him in [the river Jordan](#), confessing their sins. *****

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sad'ducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? **8**Bear fruit that befits repentance, **9**and do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. **10**Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

11 "[I baptize you](#) with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. **12**His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

The Baptism of Jesus

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. **14** John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" **15** But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness." Then he consented. ***** **16** And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened **g** and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him; **17** and behold, a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, **h** with whom I am well pleased."

The Temptation of Jesus

4 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. **2** And he fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was hungry. **3** And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." **4** But he answered, "It is written,

'Man shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.' "

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, **6** and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written,

'He will give his angels charge of you,'
and

'On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.' "

7 Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.' " **8** Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; **9** and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." **10** Then Jesus said to him, "Begone, Satan! for it is written,

'You shall worship the Lord your God
and him only shall you serve.' "

11 Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and ministered to him.

Jesus Begins Preaching in Galilee

12 Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee; **13** and leaving Nazareth he went and dwelt in Caper'na-um by the

sea, in the territory of Zeb'ulun and Naph'tali, ¹⁴that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

¹⁵"[The land of Zeb'ulun](#) and the land of Naph'tali,
toward the sea, across the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles—

¹⁶the people who sat in darkness
have seen a great light,
and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death
light has dawned."

¹⁷From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

18 As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were [fishermen](#). ¹⁹And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zeb'edee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. ²²Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

Jesus Ministers to Crowds of people

23 And he went about all Galilee, teaching in their [synagogues](#) and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people. ²⁴So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them. ²⁵And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the [Decap'olis](#) and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan.

The Beatitudes

5 [Seeing the crowds](#), he went up [on the mountain](#), and when he sat down his disciples came to him. ²And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

3 "[Blessed](#) are [the poor in spirit](#), for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"[Blessed](#) are [those who mourn](#), for they shall be comforted.

5 "[Blessed](#) are [the meek](#), for they shall inherit the earth.

6 "Blessed are [those who hunger and thirst](#) for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

7 "Blessed are [the merciful](#), for they shall obtain mercy.

8 "Blessed are [the pure in heart](#), for they shall see God.

9 "Blessed are [the peacemakers](#), for they shall be called sons of God.

10 "Blessed are [those who are persecuted](#) for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Salt and Light

13 "You are the [salt of the earth](#); but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men.

14 "You are the light of the world. [A city set on a hill](#) cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to [your Father](#) who is in heaven.

The Fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets

17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish [the law and the prophets](#); I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them. * ¹⁸For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not [an iota](#), not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰For I tell you, unless [your righteousness](#) exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Concerning Anger

21 "[You have heard](#) that it was said to the men of old, '[You shall not kill](#)'; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.' ²²But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother ⁱ shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults ^j his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, '[You fool!](#)' shall be liable to the hell ^k of fire. ²³So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,

²⁴leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵Make friends quickly with your accuser, while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison; ²⁶truly, I say to you, you will never get out till you have paid the last penny.

Concerning Adultery

²⁷"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' ²⁸But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. ^k ^{*} ³⁰And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell. ^k

Concerning Divorce

³¹"It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' ³²But I say to you that every one who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, ^{*} makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Concerning Swearing Oaths

³³"Again you have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' ³⁴But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from the Evil One. [!]

Concerning Retaliation

³⁸"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' ³⁹But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; ⁴⁰and if any one would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well; ⁴¹and if any one forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. ⁴²Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from you.

Love for Enemies

⁴³"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those

who persecute you, ⁴⁵so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Concerning Almsgiving

6 "Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

2 "Thus, when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. ³But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Concerning Prayer

5 "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. ⁶But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. *

7 "And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹Pray then like this:

Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.

¹⁰Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹Give us this day our daily bread; m

¹²And forgive us our trespasses,

As we forgive those who trespass against us;

¹³And lead us not into temptation,

But deliver us from [evil](#). ⁿ

¹⁴For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; ¹⁵but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Concerning Fasting

¹⁶ "And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. ¹⁷But when you fast, [anoint your head](#) and wash your face, ¹⁸that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Concerning Treasures

¹⁹ "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust ^o consume and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust ^o consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

The Sound Eye

²² "[The eye is the lamp](#) of the body. So, if your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light; ²³but if your eye is not sound, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

Serving Two Masters

²⁴ "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and [mammon](#). ^{*}

Do Not Be Anxious

²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life? ^p ²⁸[And why](#) are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown

into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³²For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³But [seek first his kingdom](#) and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.

34 "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day.

Judging Others

7 "[Judge not](#), that you be not judged. ²For with the judgment you pronounce [you will be judged](#), and the measure you give will be the measure you get. ³Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Profaning the Holy

6 "Do not give [dogs](#) what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot and turn to attack you.

Ask, Seek, Knock

7 "[Ask, and it will be given you](#); seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ⁹Or what man of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? ¹¹If [you then, who are evil](#), know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him! ¹²So whatever you wish that men would do to you, [do so to them](#); for this is the law and the prophets.

The Narrow Gate

13 "Enter by [the narrow gate](#); for the gate is wide and the way is easy, ⁹ that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. ¹⁴For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

False Prophets

15 "Beware of [false prophets](#), who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷So, every sound tree

bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears evil fruit. ¹⁸A sound tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰Thus you will know them by their fruits.

Concerning Self-Deception

²¹ "Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' ²³And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.'

Hearers and Doers

²⁴ "Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; ²⁵and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; ²⁷and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it."

²⁸ And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, ²⁹for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

Jesus Cleanses a Leper

⁸ When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him; ²and behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." ³And he stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. * ⁴And Jesus said to him, "See that you say nothing to any one; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a proof to the people." ¹

Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant

⁵ As he entered Caper'na-um, a centurion came forward to him, begging him ⁶and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, in terrible distress." ⁷And he said to him, "I will come and heal him." ⁸But the centurion answered him, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under

my roof; but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹For I am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it." ¹⁰When Jesus heard him, he marveled, and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I say to you, not even ^s in Israel have I found such faith. ¹¹I tell you, many will come from east and west and [sit at table](#) with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, ¹²while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness; there men will [weep and gnash their teeth](#)." ¹³And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; let it be done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed at that very moment.

Jesus Heals Many at Peter's House

¹⁴ And when Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever; ¹⁵he touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and served him. ¹⁶That evening they brought to him many who were possessed with demons; and he cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick. ¹⁷This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, "[He took our infirmities](#) and bore our diseases."

Would-be Followers of Jesus

¹⁸ Now when Jesus saw great crowds around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. ¹⁹And a scribe came up and said to him, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." ²⁰And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head." ²¹Another of the disciples said to him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." ²²But Jesus said to him, "[Follow me](#), and leave the dead to bury their own dead."

Jesus Calms the Storm at Sea

²³ And when he got into the boat, [his disciples followed him](#). ²⁴And behold, there arose a great [storm](#) on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. ²⁵And they went and woke him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing." ²⁶And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, O men of little faith?" Then he rose and [rebuked](#) the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. ²⁷And the men marveled, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even [winds and sea obey him](#)?"

Jesus Heals the Gadarene Demoniacs

28 And when he came to the other side, to the country of [the Gad'arenes](#), ¹ two demoniacs met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way. **29** And behold, they cried out, "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?" * **30** Now a herd of many swine was feeding at some distance from them. **31** And the demons begged him, "If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of swine." **32** And he said to them, "Go." So they came out and went into the swine; and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank [into the sea](#), and perished in the waters. **33** The herdsmen fled, and going into the city they told everything, and what had happened to the demoniacs. **34** And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their neighborhood.

Jesus Heals a Paralytic

9 And getting into a boat he crossed over and came to [his own city](#). ² And behold, they brought to him a paralytic, lying on his bed; and when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven." ³ And behold, some of [the scribes](#) said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." ⁴ But Jesus, knowing ^u their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? ⁵ For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? ⁶ But [that you may know](#) that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he then said to the paralytic—"Rise, take up your bed and go home." ⁷ And he rose and went home. ⁸ When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such [authority to men](#).

The Call of Matthew

9 As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at [the tax office](#); and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him.

10 And as he sat at table ^v in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹ And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" ¹² But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³ Go and learn what this means, [I desire mercy](#), and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

The Question about Fasting

14 Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, [w](#) but your disciples do not fast?" **15** And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come, when [the bridegroom](#) is taken away from them, and then they will fast. **16** And no one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on [an old garment](#), for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. **17** Neither is [new wine put into old wineskins](#); if it is, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved."

A Girl Restored to Life and a Woman Healed

18 While he was thus speaking to them, behold, [a ruler](#) came in and knelt before him, saying, "My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live." **19** And Jesus rose and followed him, with his disciples. **20** And behold, a woman who had suffered from a hemorrhage for twelve years came up behind him and touched the [fringe of his garment](#); **21** for she said to herself, "If I only touch his garment, I shall be made well." **22** Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well. **23** And when Jesus came to the ruler's house, and saw the flute players, and the crowd making a tumult, **24** he said, "Depart; for the girl is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. **25** But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. **26** And the report of this went through all that district.

Jesus Heals Two Blind Men

27 And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, "Have mercy on us, [Son of David](#)." **28** When he entered the house, the blind men came to him; and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord." **29** Then he touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith let it be done to you." **30** And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly charged them, "See that no one knows it." **31** But they went away and spread his fame through all that district.

Jesus Heals a Man Who Was Mute

32 As they were going away, behold, a mute demoniac was brought to him. **33** And when the demon had been cast out, the mute man spoke; and the

crowds marveled, saying, "Never was anything like this seen in Israel."
³⁴But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the prince of demons."

The Harvest Is Plentiful, the Laborers Are Few

³⁵ And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity. ³⁶When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

The Twelve Disciples

¹⁰ And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every infirmity. ²The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zeb'edee, and John his brother; ³Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ^x ⁴Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

The Mission of the Twelve

⁵ These Twelve Jesus sent out, charging them, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, ^{*} ⁶but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷And preach as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' ⁸Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without pay, give without pay. ⁹Take no gold, nor silver, nor copper in your belts, ¹⁰no bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor a staff; for the laborer deserves his food. ¹¹And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it, and stay with him until you depart. ¹²As you enter the house, salute it. ¹³And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴And if any one will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. ¹⁵Truly, I say to you, it shall be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.

Coming Persecutions

¹⁶ "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷Beware of men; for they will deliver you

up to councils, and flog you in their synagogues, ¹⁸and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear testimony before them and the Gentiles. ¹⁹When they deliver you up, do not be anxious about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour; ²⁰for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. ²¹Brother will deliver up brother to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; ²²and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. ²³When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel, before the Son of man comes.

²⁴ "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant ^y above his master; ²⁵it is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant ^y like his master. If they have called the master of the house Be-el'zebul, how much more will they malign those of his household.

Whom to Fear

²⁶ "So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. ²⁷What I tell you in the dark, utter in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim upon the housetops. ²⁸And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ^z ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father's will. ³⁰But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. ³²So every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; ³³but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

Taking Up One's Cross

³⁴ "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; ³⁶and a man's foes will be those of his own household. ³⁷He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸and he who

does not [take his cross](#) and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it.

Rewards

⁴⁰ "He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives him who sent me. ⁴¹He who receives a prophet because he is a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward, and he who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. ⁴²And whoever gives to one of [these little ones](#) even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."

¹¹ And when Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities.

Messengers from John the Baptist

² Now when John heard in prison about the [deeds of the Christ](#), he sent word by his disciples ³and said to him, "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?" ^{*}⁴And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵[the blind](#) receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. ⁶And blessed is he who takes no offense at me."

Jesus Praises John the Baptist

⁷ As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to behold? [A reed shaken](#) by the wind? ⁸Why then did you go out? To see a man ^a dressed in soft robes? Behold, those who wear soft robes are in kings' houses. ⁹Why then did you go out? To see a prophet? ^b Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰This is he of whom it is written,

[Behold, I send](#) my messenger before your face,
who shall prepare your way before you.'

¹¹ Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen [no one greater](#) than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. ¹²From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has [suffered violence](#), ^c and men of violence take it by force. ¹³For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John; ¹⁴and if you are willing to accept it, he is Eli'jah who is to come. ¹⁵He who has ears to hear, ^d let him hear.

16 "But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places and calling to their playmates,

17 We piped to you, and you did not dance;
we wailed, and you did not mourn.'

18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'; **19** the Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds." ^e

Jesus Upbraids the Unrepentant Cities

20 Then he began to upbraid the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. **21** "Woe to you, Chora'zin! woe to you, Beth-sa'ida! for if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Si'don, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. **22** But I tell you, it shall be more tolerable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Si'don than for you. **23** And you, Caper'na-um, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. **24** But I tell you that it shall be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you."

Jesus Thanks His Father

25 At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to infants; **26** yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ^f **27** All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. ^{*} **28** Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. **29** Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30** For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Plucking Grain on the Sabbath

12 At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the sabbath; his disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. **2** But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the sabbath." **3** He said to them, "Have you not read what David did, when he was hungry, and those who were with him: **4** how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread, which it was

not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? ⁵Or have you not read in the law how on the sabbath the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are guiltless? ⁶I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. ⁷And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. ⁸For the Son of man is lord of the sabbath."

The Man with a Withered Hand

⁹ And he went on from there, and entered their synagogue. ¹⁰And behold, there was a man with a withered hand. And they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath?" so that they might accuse him. ¹¹He said to them, "What man of you, if he has one sheep and it falls into a pit on the sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? ¹²Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the sabbath." ¹³Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, whole like the other. ¹⁴But the Pharisees went out and took counsel against him, how to destroy him. *

God's Chosen Servant

¹⁵ Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all, ¹⁶and ordered them not to make him known. ¹⁷This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:

¹⁸"Behold, my servant whom I have chosen,
my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased.

I will put my Spirit upon him,
and he shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles.

¹⁹He will not wrangle or cry aloud,
nor will any one hear his voice in the streets;

²⁰he will not break a bruised reed
or quench a smoldering wick,
till he brings justice to victory;

²¹and in his name will the Gentiles hope."

Jesus and Beelzebul

²² Then a blind and mute demoniac was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw. ²³And all the people were amazed, and said, "Can this be the Son of David?" ²⁴But when the Pharisees heard it they said, "It is only by Be-el'zebul, * the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons." ²⁵Knowing their thoughts, he said to them,

"Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand; ²⁶and if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? ²⁷And if I cast out demons by Be-el'zebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. ²⁸But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house. ³⁰He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters. ³¹Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the [blasphemy against the Spirit](#) will not be forgiven. * ³²And whoever says a word against the Son of man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

A Tree and Its Fruit

33 "Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit. ³⁴You brood of vipers! how can you speak good things, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. ³⁵The good man out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. ³⁶I tell you, on the day of judgment men will render account for [every careless word](#) they utter; ³⁷for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

The Sign of Jonah

38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to him, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." ³⁹But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign; but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. ⁴¹The men of Nin'evah will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something [greater than Jonah](#) is here. ⁴²The queen of the South will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something [greater than Solomon](#) is here.

The Return of the Unclean Spirit

43 "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, he passes through waterless places seeking rest, but he finds none. **44**Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. **45**Then he goes and brings with him seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. So shall it be also with this evil generation."

The True Kindred of Jesus

46 While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren * stood outside, asking to speak to him. **g** **48**But he replied to the man who told him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?" * **49**And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brethren! **50**For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother."

The Parable of the Sower

13 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. **2**And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat there; and the whole crowd stood on the beach. **3**And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. **4**And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. **5**Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they had not much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, **6**but when the sun rose they were scorched; and since they had no root they withered away. **7**Other seeds fell upon thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. **8**Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. **9**He who has ears, h let him hear."

The Purpose of the Parables

10 Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" **11**And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. **12**For to him who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. * **13**This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. **14**With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which says:

'You shall indeed hear but never understand,

and you shall indeed see but never perceive.

¹⁵For this people's heart has grown dull,
and their ears are heavy of hearing,
and their eyes they have closed,
lest they should perceive with their eyes,
and hear with their ears,
and understand with their heart,
and turn for me to heal them.'

¹⁶But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.

¹⁷Truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

The Parable of the Sower Explained

¹⁸ "Hear then the parable of the sower. ¹⁹When any one hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the Evil One comes and snatches away what is sown in his heart; this is what was sown along the path. ²⁰As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. ⁱ ²²As for what was sown among thorns, this is he who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the delight in riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. ²³As for what was sown on good soil, this is he who hears the word and understands it; he indeed bears fruit, and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

The Parable of Weeds among the Wheat

²⁴ Another parable he put before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field; ²⁵but while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. ²⁷And the servants ^j of the householder came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then has it weeds?' ²⁸He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants ^j said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' ²⁹But he said, 'No; lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. ³⁰Let both grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers,

Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.' "

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

31 Another parable he put before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field; ³²it is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

The Parable of the Leaven

33 He told them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened."

Why Jesus Speaks in Parables

34 All this Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed he said nothing to them without a parable. ³⁵This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet: ^k

"I will open my mouth in parables,

I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world."

Jesus Explains the Parable of the Weeds

36 Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." ³⁷He answered, "He who sows the good seed is the Son of man; ³⁸the field is the world, and the good seed means the sons of the kingdom; the weeds are the sons of the evil one, ³⁹and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. ⁴¹The Son of man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, ⁴²and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

Three Parables about the Kingdom

44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, 46who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

47 "Again, [the kingdom of heaven is like a net](#) which was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind; 48when it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into vessels but threw away the bad. 49So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous, 50and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Treasures New and Old

51 "Have you understood all this?" They said to him, "Yes." 52And he said to them, "Therefore [every scribe](#) who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old." *

The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth

53 And when Jesus had finished these parables, he went away from there, 54and coming to his own country he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? 55Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not [his brethren](#) * James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? 56And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all this?" 57And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house." 58And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.

The Death of John the Baptist

14 [At that](#) time [Herod the tetrarch](#) heard about the fame of Jesus; 2and he said to his servants, "This is John the Baptist; he has been raised from the dead; that is why these powers are at work in him." 3For Herod had seized John and bound him and put him in prison, for the sake of Hero'di-as, his brother Philip's wife; 4because John said to him, "[It is not lawful](#) for you to have her." 5And though he wanted to put him to death, he feared the people, because they held him to be a prophet. 6But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Hero'di-as danced before the company, and pleased Herod, 7so that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. 8Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter." 9And the king was sorry, but because of his oaths and his

guests [he commanded](#) it to be given; ¹⁰he sent and had John beheaded in the prison, ¹¹and his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. ¹²And his disciples came and took the body and buried it; and they went and told Jesus.

Feeding the Five Thousand

[13 Now when Jesus heard](#) this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a lonely place apart. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴As he went ashore he saw a great throng; and he had compassion on them, and healed their sick. ¹⁵When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a lonely place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves." ¹⁶Jesus said, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." ¹⁷They said to him, "We have only five loaves here and two fish." ¹⁸And he said, "Bring them here to me." ¹⁹Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass; and taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples, and [the disciples gave them](#) to the crowds. ²⁰And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. ²¹And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Jesus Walks on the Sea

[22](#) Then he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. ²³And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴but the boat by this time was many furlongs distant from the land, ^mbeaten by the waves; for the wind was against them. ²⁵And in [the fourth watch](#) of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. ²⁶But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. ²⁷But immediately he spoke to them, saying, "Take heart, [it is I](#); have no fear."

²⁸ And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, bid me come to you on the water." ²⁹He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus; ³⁰but when he saw the wind, ⁿhe was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." ³¹Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "O you of little faith,

why did you doubt?" ³²And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly [you are the Son of God.](#)" *

Jesus Heals the Sick in Gennesaret

³⁴ And when they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennes'aret. ³⁵And when the men of that place recognized him, they sent round to all that region and brought to him all that were sick, ³⁶and begged him that they might only touch the fringe of his garment; and as many as touched it were made well.

The Tradition of the Elders

¹⁵ [Then Pharisees and scribes](#) came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, ²"Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat." ³He answered them, "And why do you transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? ⁴For God commanded, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him surely die.' ⁵But you say, 'If any one tells his father or his mother, What you would have gained from me [is given to God,](#) ⁹ he need not honor his father.' * ⁶So, for the sake of your tradition, you have made void the word **p** of God. ⁷You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said:

⁸"This people honors me with their lips,
but their heart is far from me;
⁹in vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.' "

Things That Defile a Man

¹⁰ And he called the people to him and said to them, "Hear and understand: ¹¹not what goes into the mouth defiles a man, but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man." ¹²Then the disciples came and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" ¹³He answered, "Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. ¹⁴Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit." ¹⁵But Peter said to him, "Explain the parable to us." ¹⁶And he said, "Are you also still without understanding? ¹⁷Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and so passes on? **q** ¹⁸But what comes out of the mouth

proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a man. ¹⁹For [out of the heart](#) come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. ²⁰These are what defile a man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man."

The Canaanite Woman's Faith

²¹ And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of [Tyre and Si'don](#). ²²And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and cried, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely possessed by a demon." ²³But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying after us." ²⁴He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." * ²⁵But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." ²⁶And he answered, "It is not fair to take [the children's bread](#) and throw it to the dogs." ²⁷She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." ²⁸Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly.

Jesus Heals Many People

²⁹ And Jesus went on from there and passed along the Sea of Galilee. And he went up on the mountain, and sat down there. ³⁰And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the maimed, the blind, the mute, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and he healed them, ³¹so that the throng wondered, when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.

Feeding the Four Thousand

³² Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "[I have compassion on the crowd](#), because they have been with me now three days, and have nothing to eat; and I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way." ³³And the disciples said to him, "Where are we to get bread enough in the desert to feed so great a crowd?" ³⁴And Jesus said to them, "How many loaves have you?" They said, "Seven, and a few small fish." ³⁵And commanding the crowd to sit down on the ground, ³⁶he took the seven loaves and the fish, and having given thanks he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. ³⁷And they all ate and were satisfied; and they took up seven baskets full of the broken

pieces left over. ³⁸Those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. ³⁹And sending away the crowds, he got into the boat and went to the region of Mag'adan.

The Demand for a Sign

¹⁶ And the Pharisees and Sad'ducees came, and to test him they asked him to show them [a sign from heaven](#). ²He answered them, ^r "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather; for the sky is red.' ³And in the morning, 'It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. ⁴An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign shall be given to it except the [sign of Jonah](#)." So he left them and departed.

The Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees

⁵ When the disciples reached the other side, they had forgotten to bring any bread. ⁶Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sad'ducees." ⁷And they discussed it among themselves, saying, "We brought no bread." ⁸But Jesus, aware of this, said, "O men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves the fact that you have no bread? ⁹Do you not yet perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? ¹⁰Or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? ¹¹How is it that you fail to perceive that I did not speak about bread? Beware of [the leaven](#) of the Pharisees and Sad'ducees." ¹²Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sad'ducees.

Peter's Declaration That Jesus Is the Christ [Map]

¹³ Now [when Jesus came](#) into the district of [Caesare'a Philip'pi](#), he asked his disciples, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" ¹⁴And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Eli'jah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." * ¹⁵He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, [the Son of the living God](#)." * ¹⁷And Jesus answered him, "[Blessed are you](#), Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you, you are [Peter](#), ^s and on this rock ^t [I will build](#) my Church, and the gates of Hades ^u shall not prevail against it. * ¹⁹I will give you [the](#)

keys of the kingdom of heaven, * and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." ²⁰Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

²¹ From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²²And Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to you." ²³But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance ^v to me; for you are not on the side of God, but of men."

The Cross and Self-Denial

²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? * Or what shall a man give in return for his life? * ²⁷For the Son of man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay every man for what he has done. ²⁸Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."

The Transfiguration

¹⁷ And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain apart. ²And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light. ³And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Eli'jah, talking with him. ⁴And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is well that we are here; if you wish, I will make three booths here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Eli'jah." * ⁵He was still speaking, when behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, ^w with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." ⁶When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces, and were filled with awe. ⁷But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." ⁸And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

9 And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of man is raised from the dead." **10** And the disciples asked him, "Then why do the scribes say that first Eli'jah must come?" **11** He replied, "Eli'jah does come, and he is to restore all things; **12** but I tell you that Eli'jah has already come, and they did not know him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of man will suffer at their hands." **13** Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

Jesus Cures an Epileptic Boy

14 And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him and kneeling before him said, **15** "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly; for often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. **16** And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him." **17** And Jesus answered, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me." **18** And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured instantly. **19** Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" **20** He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you." **x**

Jesus Again Foretells His Death and Resurrection

22 As they were gathering ^y in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men, **23** and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day." And they were greatly distressed.

Jesus and the Temple Tax

24 When they came to Caper'na-um, the collectors of the half-shekel tax went up to Peter and said, "Does not your teacher pay the tax?" **25** He said, "Yes." And when he came home, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tribute? From their sons or from others?" **26** And when he said, "From others," Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free. **27** However, not to give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook, and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel; take that and give it to them for me and for yourself."

True Greatness

18 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" ²And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them, ³and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Temptations to Sin

5 "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; ⁶but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, ⁷it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

7 "Woe to the world for temptations to sin! ^a For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the man by whom the temptation comes! ⁸And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, ⁹cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. ⁹And if your eye causes you to sin, ¹⁰pluck it out and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell b * of fire.

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

10 "See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven. ^c ¹²What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go in search of the one that went astray? ¹³And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. ¹⁴So it is not the will of my ^d Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

Binding and Loosing of Sins

15 "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the Church; and if he refuses to listen even to the Church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. ^{*} ¹⁹Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by

my Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Repeated Forgiveness

21 Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" ²²Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.^e

The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

23 "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴When he began the reckoning, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents; ^f ²⁵and as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. ²⁶So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' ²⁷And out of pity for him the lord of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But that same servant, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; ^g and seizing him by the throat he said, 'Pay what you owe.' ²⁹So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' ³⁰He refused and went and put him in prison till he should pay the debt. ³¹When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³²Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me; ³³and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴And in anger his lord delivered him to the jailers, ^h till he should pay all his debt. ³⁵So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

Teachings about Divorce

19 Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan; ²and large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.

3 And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" ⁴He answered, "Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined

to his wife, and the two shall become one'? ⁱ ⁶So they are no longer two but one. ⁱ What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder." ⁷They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?" ⁸He said to them, "For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. ⁹And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, ^j and marries another, commits adultery; and he who marries a divorced woman, commits adultery." ^k *

¹⁰ The disciples said to him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is not expedient to marry." ¹¹But he said to them, "Not all men can receive this precept, but only those to whom it is given. ¹²For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it." *

Jesus Blesses the Children

¹³ Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people; ¹⁴but Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." ¹⁵And he laid his hands on them and went away.

The Rich Young Man

¹⁶ And behold, one came up to him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?" ¹⁷And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? One there is who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments." ¹⁸He said to him, "Which?" And Jesus said, "You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, ¹⁹Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ²⁰The young man said to him, "All these I have observed; what do I still lack?" ²¹Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." ²²When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.

²³ And Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, it will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the

kingdom of God." ²⁵When the disciples heard this they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" ²⁶But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." ²⁷Then Peter said in reply, "Behold, we have left everything and followed you. What then shall we have?" ²⁸Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in [the new world](#), when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹And every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, ¹ and inherit eternal life. ³⁰But many that are first will be last, and the last first.

The Laborers in the Vineyard

²⁰ "[For the kingdom](#) of heaven is like a householder who went out [early in the morning](#) to hire laborers for his vineyard. ²After agreeing with the laborers for [a denarius](#) ^m a day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the market place; ⁴and to them he said, 'You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. ⁵Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. ⁶And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing; and he said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?' ⁷They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.' ⁸And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.' ⁹And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. ¹⁰Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. ¹¹And on receiving it they grumbled at the householder, ¹²saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' ¹³But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? ¹⁴Take what belongs to you, and go; I choose to give to this last as I give to you. ¹⁵Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?' ⁿ ¹⁶So the last will be first, and the first last."

A Third Time Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

17 And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them, ¹⁸"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death, ¹⁹and deliver him to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day."

The Request of the Mother of James and John

20 Then the mother of the sons of Zeb'edee came up to him, with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. **21** And he said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Command that these two sons of mine may sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom." **22** But Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the chalice that I am to drink?" They said to him, "We are able." **23** He said to them, "You will drink my chalice, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father." **24** And when the Ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers. **25** But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. **26** It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ²⁷and whoever would be first among you must be your slave; **28** even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Jesus Heals Two Blind Men

29 And as they went out of Jericho, a great crowd followed him. ³⁰And behold, two blind men sitting by the roadside, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, ^o "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" ³¹The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent; but they cried out the more, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!" ³²And Jesus stopped and called them, saying, "What do you want me to do for you?" ³³They said to him, "Lord, let our eyes be opened." ³⁴And Jesus in pity touched their eyes, and immediately they received their sight and followed him.

Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem

21 And when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Beth'phage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. ³If any one says anything to

you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and he will send them immediately." ⁴This took place to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

⁵"[Tell the daughter](#) of Zion,
Behold, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; ⁷they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their garments on them, and [he sat on them](#). ⁸Most of the crowd [spread their garments](#) on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹And the crowds that went before him and that followed him shouted, "[Hosanna](#) to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" * ¹⁰And when he entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, "Who is this?" ¹¹And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee."

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

¹² And Jesus entered the temple of God ^p and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. ¹³He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called [a house of prayer](#)'; but you make it a den of robbers."

¹⁴ And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. ¹⁵But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant; ¹⁶and they said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read,

['Out of the mouths of babies](#) and infants
you have brought perfect praise'?"

¹⁷And leaving them, he went out of the city to Beth'any and lodged there.

Jesus Curses the Fig Tree

¹⁸ In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he was hungry. ¹⁹And seeing [a fig tree](#) by the wayside he went to it, and found nothing on it but leaves only. And he said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" And the fig tree withered at once. ²⁰When the disciples saw it they

marveled, saying, "How did the fig tree wither at once?" ²¹And Jesus answered them, "Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and never doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it will be done. ²²And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."

The Authority of Jesus Questioned

²³ And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" * ²⁴Jesus answered them, "I also will ask you a question; and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵The baptism of John, where was it from? From heaven or from men?" And they argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' ²⁶But if we say, 'From men,' we are afraid of the multitude; for all hold that John was a prophet." ²⁷So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

The Parable of the Two Sons

²⁸ "What do you think? A man had two sons; and he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' ²⁹And he answered, 'I will not'; but afterward he repented and went. ³⁰And he went to the second and said the same; and he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go. ³¹Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. ³²For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the harlots believed him; and even when you saw it, you did not afterward repent and believe him."

The Parable of the Wicked Tenants

³³ "Hear another parable. * There was a householder who planted a vineyard, and set a hedge around it, and dug a wine press in it, and built a tower, and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. ³⁴When the season of fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants, to get his fruit; ³⁵and the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. ³⁶Again he sent other servants, more than the first; and they did the same to them. ³⁷Afterward he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' ³⁸But when the tenants saw the son, they said to

themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.'
³⁹And they took him and cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him.
⁴⁰When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" ⁴¹They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons."

The Stone Which the Builders Rejected

42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in [the Scriptures](#):

'The very stone which the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
this was the Lord's doing,
and it is marvelous in our eyes?'

⁴³Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and [given to a nation](#) producing the fruits of it. ⁴⁴And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but when it falls on any one, it will crush him." ⁹

⁴⁵ When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. ⁴⁶But when they tried to arrest him, they feared the multitudes, because they held him to be a prophet.

The Parable of the Marriage Feast

22 And [again Jesus spoke to them](#) in parables, saying, ²"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a [marriage feast](#) for his son, ³and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the marriage feast; but they would not come. ⁴Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, Behold, I have made ready my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves are killed, and everything is ready; come to the marriage feast.' ⁵But they made light of it and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, ⁶while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. ⁷The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. ⁸Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. ⁹Go therefore to the streets, and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find.' ¹⁰And those servants went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

11 "But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had [no wedding garment](#); * 12 and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14 For many are called, but few are chosen."

The Question about Paying Taxes

15 [Then the Pharisees went](#) and took counsel how to entangle him in his talk. 16 And they sent [their disciples](#) to him, along with the Hero'di-ans, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are true, and teach the way of God truthfully, and care for no man; for you do not regard the position of men. 17 Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" 18 But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? 19 Show me the money for the tax." And they brought him [a coin](#). r 20 And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" 21 They said, "[Caesar's](#)." Then he said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." 22 When they heard it, they marveled; and they left him and went away.

The Question about Man's Resurrection

23 The same day [Sad'ducees](#) came to him, who say that there is no resurrection; and they asked him a question, 24 saying, "Teacher, Moses said, '[If a man dies](#), having no children, his brother must marry the widow, and raise up children for his brother.' 25 Now there were seven brothers among us; the first married, and died, and having no children left his wife to his brother. 26 So too the second and third, down to the seventh. 27 After them all, the woman died. 28 In the resurrection, therefore, to which of the seven will she be wife? For they all had her."

29 But Jesus answered them, "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are [like angels](#) s in heaven. 31 And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God, 32 [I am the God of Abraham](#), and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living." 33 And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.

The Greatest Commandment

[34](#) But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sad'ducees, they came together. [35](#)And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, to test him. [36](#)"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" [37](#)And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. [38](#)This is the great and first commandment. [39](#)And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. [40](#)On [these two commandments](#) depend all the law and the prophets."

A Question about the Christ

[41](#) Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, [42](#)saying, "What do you think of the Christ? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." [43](#)He said to them, "How is it then that David, inspired by the Spirit, ^t calls him Lord, saying,

[44](#)"The Lord said to my Lord,

Sit at my right hand,

till I put your enemies under your feet'?

[45](#)If David thus [calls him Lord](#), how is he his son?" [46](#)And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did any one dare to ask him any more questions.

Jesus Denounces the Hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees

[23](#) Then said Jesus to [the crowds](#) and to his disciples, ²"The scribes and the Pharisees sit on [Moses' seat](#); ³so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach, but do not practice. ⁴They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, ^u and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with their finger. ⁵They do all their deeds to be seen by men; for they make [their phylacteries](#) ^{*} broad and their fringes long, ⁶and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues, ⁷and salutations in the market places, and being called [rabbi](#) by men. ⁸But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brethren. ⁹And [call no man your father](#) on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. ^{*} ¹⁰Neither be called masters, for you have one master, the Christ. ¹¹He who is greatest among you shall be your servant; [12](#)whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither enter yourselves, nor allow those who would enter to go in. **v** **15** Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you traverse sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell **w** as yourselves.

16 "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'If any one swears by the temple, it is nothing; but if any one swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.' **17** You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred? **18** And you say, 'If any one swears by the altar, it is nothing; but if any one swears by the gift that is on the altar, he is bound by his oath.' **19** You blind men! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? **20** So he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by everything on it; **21** and he who swears by the temple, swears by it and by him who dwells in it; **22** and he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it.

23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith; these you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. **24** You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!

25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you cleanse the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of extortion and rapacity. **26** You blind Pharisee! first cleanse the inside of the cup and of the plate, that the outside also may be clean.

27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. **28** So you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

29 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, **30** saying, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' **31** Thus you witness against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. **32** Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. **33** You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? **w** **34** Therefore I send you

prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, ³⁵that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of innocent [Abel to the blood of Zechari'ah](#) the son of Barachi'ah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. ³⁶Truly, I say to you, all this will come upon this generation.

The Lament over Jerusalem

³⁷ "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together [as a hen](#) gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! ³⁸Behold, [your house is forsaken](#) and desolate. ^x ³⁹For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.' "

The Destruction of the Temple Foretold

²⁴ [Jesus left the temple](#) and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. ^{*} ²But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down."

Signs of Jesus' Coming and of the Close of the Age

³ As he sat on the [Mount of Olives](#), the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your [coming](#) and of the close of the age?" ⁴And Jesus answered them, "Take heed that no one leads you astray. ⁵For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray. ⁶And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁷For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: ⁸all this is but the beginning of [the sufferings](#)."

Persecutions Foretold

⁹ "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation, and put you to death; and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. ¹⁰And then many will fall away, ^y and betray one another, and hate one another. ¹¹And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. ¹²And because wickedness is multiplied, most men's love will grow cold. ¹³But he who endures to the end will be saved. ¹⁴And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached [throughout the whole world](#), as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come.

The Desolating Sacrilege

15 "So when you see [the desolating sacrilege](#) spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), **16**then let those who are in Judea [flee to the mountains](#); **17**let him who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house; **18**and let him who is in the field not turn back to get a coat. **19**And alas for those who are with child and for those who are nursing in those days! **20**Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a sabbath. **21**For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. **22**And if those days had not been shortened, no human being would be saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. **23**Then if any one says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. **24**For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. **25**Behold, I have told you beforehand. **26**So, if they say to you, 'Behold, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out; if they say, 'Behold, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. **27**For as the [lightning](#) comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of man. **28**Wherever the body is, there [the eagles](#) ^z will be gathered together.

The Coming of the Son of Man

29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days [the sun](#) will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken; **30**then will appear the sign of the [Son of man](#) in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; **31**and he will send out his [angels](#) with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

32 "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. **33**So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. **34**Truly, I say to you, [this generation](#) will not pass away till all these things take place. **35**[Heaven and earth will pass away](#), but my words will not pass away.

The Necessity for Watchfulness

36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, ^a but the Father only. 37 As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of man. 38 For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, 39 and they did not know until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of man. 40 Then two men will be in the field; one is taken and one is left. 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill; one is taken and one is left. 42 Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. 43 But know this, that if the householder had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have watched and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 Therefore you also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

The Faithful and the Unfaithful Servant

45 "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? 46 Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing. 47 Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. 48 But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' 49 and begins to beat his fellow servants, and eats and drinks with the drunken, 50 the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, 51 and will punish ^b him, and put him with the hypocrites; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.

The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Maidens

25 "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be compared to ten maidens who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. ^c 2 Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. 3 For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; 4 but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. 5 As the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. 6 But at midnight there was a cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' 7 Then all those maidens rose and trimmed their lamps. 8 And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' 9 But the wise replied, 'Perhaps there will not be enough for us and for you; go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' 10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the

marriage feast; and the door was shut. ¹¹Afterward the other maidens came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' ¹²But he replied, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' ¹³Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

The Parable of the Talents

¹⁴ "For it will be as when a man going on a journey called his servants and entrusted to them his property; ¹⁵to one he gave five talents, ^d to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them; and he made five talents more. ¹⁷So also, he who had the two talents made two talents more. ¹⁸But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' ²¹His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master.' ²²And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.' ²³His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master.' ²⁴He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not winnow; ²⁵so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' ²⁶But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sowed, and gather where I have not winnowed? ²⁷Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has the ten talents. ²⁹For to every one who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. * ³⁰And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

The Judgment of the Nations

31 "[When the Son of man](#) comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. **32** Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, **33** and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. **34** Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; **35** for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, **36** I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' **37** Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? **38** And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? **39** And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' **40** And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, [you did it to me.](#)' **41** Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into [the eternal fire](#) prepared for the devil and his angels; **42** for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, **43** I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' **44** Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' **45** Then he will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.' **46** And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

The Conspiracy to Kill Jesus

26 [When Jesus had finished](#) all these sayings, he said to his disciples, **2** "You know that after two days [the Passover](#) is coming, and the Son of man will be delivered up to be crucified."

3 Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, who was called [Cai'aphas](#), **4** and took counsel together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him. **5** But they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be a tumult among the people."

The Anointing at Bethany

6 Now when Jesus was at [Beth'any](#) in the house of Simon the leper, **7** a woman came up to him with an alabaster jar of very [expensive ointment](#),

and she poured it on his head, as he sat at table. ⁸But when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? ⁹For this ointment might have been sold for a large sum, and given to the poor." ¹⁰But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. ¹¹For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. ¹²In pouring this ointment on my body she has done it to prepare me for burial. ¹³Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."

Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus

¹⁴ Then one of the Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests ¹⁵and said, "What will you give me if I deliver him to you?" And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. ¹⁶And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.

The Passover with the Disciples

¹⁷ Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?" * ¹⁸He said, "Go into the city to such a one, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.' " ¹⁹And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover.

²⁰ When it was evening, he sat at table with the twelve disciples; ^e ²¹and as they were eating, he said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." ²²And they were very sorrowful, and began to say to him one after another, "Is it I, Lord?" ²³He answered, "He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me, will betray me. ²⁴The Son of man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born." ²⁵Judas, who betrayed him, said, "Is it I, Master?" ^f He said to him, "You have said so."

The Institution of the Last Supper

²⁶ Now as they were eating, * Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." ²⁷And he took a chalice, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; ²⁸for this is my blood of the ^g covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹I tell you I shall not drink

again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Peter's Denial Foretold

30 And when they had [sung a hymn](#), they went out to the Mount of Olives. **31** Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of me this night; for it is written, '[I will strike the shepherd](#), and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' **32** But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." **33** Peter declared to him, "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away." **34** Jesus said to him, "Truly, I say to you, this very night, [before the cock crows](#), you will deny me three times." **35** Peter said to him, "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you." And so said all the disciples.

Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

36 Then Jesus went with them to a place called [Gethsem'ane](#), and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray." **37** [And taking with him](#) Peter and the two sons of Zeb'edee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. **38** Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch [h](#) with me." **39** And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, "My Father, if it be possible, [let this chalice pass](#) from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." **40** And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch [h](#) with me one hour? **41** Watch [h](#) and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." **42** Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." **43** And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. **44** So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. **45** Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still [sleeping](#) and taking your rest? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. **46** Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."

The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

47 While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the Twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. **48** Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I shall kiss is the man; seize him." **49** And he came up to Jesus at

once and said, "Hail, Master!" ⁱ And he kissed him. ⁵⁰ Jesus said to him, "Friend, why are you here?" ^j Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. ⁵¹ And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest, and cut off his ear. ^{*} ⁵² Then Jesus said to him, "[Put your sword back](#) into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. ⁵³ Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than [twelve legions](#) of angels? ⁵⁴ But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?" ⁵⁵ At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. ⁵⁶ But all this has taken place, that [the Scriptures](#) of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

Jesus before the High Priest

⁵⁷ Then those who had seized Jesus led him to [Cai'aphas](#) the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered. ⁵⁸ But Peter followed him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and going inside he sat with the guards to see the end. ⁵⁹ Now the chief priests and [the whole council](#) sought false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, ^{*} ⁶⁰ but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward ⁶¹ and said, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy [the temple](#) of God, and to build it in three days.' " ⁶² And the high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" ⁶³ But Jesus was silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." ^{*} ⁶⁴ Jesus said to him, "[You have said so](#). But I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." ⁶⁵ Then the high priest [tore his robes](#), and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy. ⁶⁶ What is your judgment?" They answered, "He deserves death." ⁶⁷ Then they spat in his face, and struck him; and some slapped him, ⁶⁸ saying, "Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?"

Peter Denies Jesus

69 Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a maid came up to him, and said, "You also were with Jesus the Galilean." **70**But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you mean." **71**And when he went out to the porch, another maid saw him, and she said to the bystanders, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." **72**And again he denied it with an oath, "I do not know the man." **73**After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Certainly you are also one of them, for [your accent betrays you](#)." **74**Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately [the cock crowed](#). **75**And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, "Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

Jesus Brought before Pilate

27 When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people [took counsel](#) against Jesus to put him to death; ²and they bound him and led him away and delivered him to [Pilate the governor](#).

Judas Hangs Himself

3 When Judas, his betrayer, saw that he was condemned, he repented and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, ⁴saying, "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood." They said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself." ⁵And throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed; and he went and [hanged himself](#). ⁶But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since they are [blood money](#)." ⁷So they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. ⁸[Therefore that field](#) has been called the Field of Blood to this day. ⁹Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel, ¹⁰and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me."

Pilate Questions Jesus

11 Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, "Are you the [King of the Jews](#)?" Jesus said to him, "You have said so." ¹²But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he made no answer. ¹³Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?" ¹⁴But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge; so that the governor wondered greatly.

Barabbas or Jesus?

15 Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. **16** And they had then a notorious prisoner, called Barab'bas. **17** So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you, Barab'bas **k** or Jesus who is called Christ?" **18** For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. **19** Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much over him today in a dream." **20** Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the people to ask for Barab'bas and destroy Jesus. **21** The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barab'bas." **22** Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Let him be crucified." **23** And he said, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified."

Pilate Delivers Jesus to Be Crucified

24 So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this righteous man's blood; **l** see to it yourselves." **25** And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" **26** Then he released for them Barab'bas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.

The Soldiers Mock Jesus

27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the praetorium, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. **28** And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe upon him, **29** and plaiting a crown of thorns they put it on his head, and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" **30** And they spat upon him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. **31** And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe, and put his own clothes on him, and led him away to crucify him.

The Crucifixion of Jesus

32 As they were marching out, they came upon a man of Cyre'ne, Simon by name; this man they compelled to carry his cross. **33** And when they came to a place called Gol'gotha (which means the place of a skull), **34** they offered him wine to drink, mingled with gall; but when he tasted it, he

would not drink it. ³⁵And when they had [crucified him](#), they divided his garments among them by casting lots; ³⁶then they sat down and kept watch over him there. ³⁷And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews." ³⁸Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. ³⁹And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads ⁴⁰and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." ⁴¹So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, ⁴²"He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. ⁴³He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him; for he said, 'I am the Son of God.' " ⁴⁴And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way.

The Death of Jesus

⁴⁵ Now from the [sixth hour](#) there was darkness over all the land ^m until the ninth hour. ⁴⁶And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "[Eli, Eli](#), la'ma sabach'-tha'ni?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" * ⁴⁷And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "This man is calling Eli'jah." ⁴⁸And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave it to him to drink. ⁴⁹But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Eli'jah will come to save him." ⁿ ⁵⁰And Jesus cried again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

⁵¹ And behold, the [curtain of the temple](#) was torn in two, from top to bottom; and the earth shook, and the rocks were split; ⁵²the tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the [saints who had fallen asleep were raised](#), ⁵³and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. ⁵⁴When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe, and said, "Truly this was the Son ^x of God!"

⁵⁵ There were also many women there, looking on from afar, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him; ⁵⁶among whom were Mary Mag'dalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zeb'edee.

The Burial of Jesus

[57](#) When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathe'a, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. ⁵⁹And Joseph took the body, and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud, ⁶⁰and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock; and he rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb, and departed. ⁶¹Mary Mag'dalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

The Guard at the Tomb

⁶² Next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate ⁶³and said, "Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise again.'⁶⁴ Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away, and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last fraud will be worse than the first." ⁶⁵Pilate said to them, "You have a [guard](#) ⁹ of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can." [p 66](#) So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard. [*](#)

The Resurrection of Jesus

[28](#) [*](#) Now after the sabbath, toward the dawn of the [first day of the week](#), Mary Mag'dalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ²And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. ⁵But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; for [he has risen, as he said](#). Come, see the place where he ⁹ lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. Behold, I have told you." ⁸So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Hail!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

The Report of the Guard

[11](#) While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. ¹²And when they had

assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sum of money to the soldiers ¹³and said, "Tell people, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.' ¹⁴And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." ¹⁵So they took the money and did as they were directed; and [this story](#) has been spread among the Jews to this day.

Jesus Commissions the Disciples

16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷And when they saw him they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, "[All authority](#) in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹[Go therefore](#) and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, [I am with you always](#), to the close of the age."

Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew

1:1 book of the genealogy: A title for the following ancestry (1:2-16) and the entire Gospel. The opening words recall the Greek OT in Gen 2:4 and 5:1. **Christ:** A title (Gk. *Christos*) meaning the "Anointed One". It is the Greek rendering of the OT word for "Messiah". According to Lk 4:18-19, Jesus is anointed by the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 10:36-38). It is this title for Jesus that Matthew elucidates throughout his Gospel. See word study: [Christ](#) at Mk 14 (CCC 436). [Back to text.](#)

1:2-17 The Abrahamic and Davidic ancestry of Jesus establishes his credentials to be the royal Messiah of Israel (1:1, 16). God long ago promised that "kings" would stem from Abraham's line (Gen 17:6) and later swore a covenant oath that David would always have a dynastic heir (2 Sam 7:16; Ps 89:34). Note that Matthew's genealogy reaches back to Abraham, the forefather of Israel, whereas Luke's genealogy of Jesus stretches back to Adam, the father of all nations (Lk 3:23-38). This difference is heightened by numerous discrepancies between the two genealogies, especially in the generations spanning from David to Jesus. More than a dozen solutions have been proposed to harmonize them. At the very least, it should be recognized that gaps are a common feature in genealogical registries from antiquity. There are also many examples in Scripture of one person having more than one name—a fact that must be considered when attempting to identify the ancestors of Jesus (e.g., Solomon/Jedidiah, 2 Sam 12:24-25). For the possibility that Matthew gives Jesus' *paternal* genealogy (Joseph's ancestry) and Luke his *maternal* genealogy (Mary's ancestry), [see note on Lk 3:23-38.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:3-6 The inclusion of women (**Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and the wife of Uriah**) in a Jewish genealogy is unusual, but not unprecedented (1 Chron 1:32, 39, 50; 2:4). All are Gentiles (Canaanite, Canaanite, Moabite, and Hittite, respectively), and three (all but Ruth) are associated with sexual immorality (Gen 38:12-26; Josh 2:1; 2 Sam 11:2-5). These irregularities may reflect an apologetic strategy. **(1)** Gentile blood within Jesus' lineage anticipates the international scope of the gospel for men and women of "all

nations" (28:19). **(2)** Matthew defuses Jewish accusations that the women in Jesus' genealogy undermine his messianic credentials. By listing the immoral women in the generations before Solomon, Matthew implies that if these women did not disqualify Solomon as the royal son of David, then neither do they disqualify Jesus, who assumes the same title as the Messiah (1:1). Indeed, Solomon's birth through the immorally arranged marriage of David and Uriah's wife (2 Sam 11) stands in vivid contrast to Mary's virginal conception of Jesus by the Spirit (1:18). [Back to text.](#)



1:16 the husband of: The final link in the genealogy breaks with the preceding pattern. Joseph is not called the father of Jesus but only the spouse of Mary. This prepares for the virginal conception of Jesus in 1:18-25. Joseph is, however, the legal foster-father of Jesus and exercises his paternal duty by naming the Child (1:25) and protecting the Holy Family (2:13-22). Following Jewish custom, Jesus received full hereditary rights through Joseph, even though he was adopted (CCC 437, 496). • In Catholic tradition, the fatherhood of Joseph is also held to be spiritual and real, albeit virginal, just as the Fatherhood of God is spiritual and non-physical. [Back to text.](#)



1:17 fourteen generations: Matthew divides the genealogy into three units of 14. It is not exhaustive, since several OT names are omitted and the divisions cover unequal periods of time. Matthew stresses the number 14 to show Jesus as the new Davidic king: **(1)** David and Jesus are the only names listed with their respective titles (**king**, 1:6; **Christ**, 1:16); **(2)** David is the 14th name in the list; **(3)** the numerical value of David's name (three consonants) in Hebrew equals 14 (D = 4 + V = 6 + D = 4). • The 42 generations from Abraham to Jesus correspond to the 42 encampments of Israel during its wilderness journey to the Promised Land (cf. Num 33:1-49). These generations bring us to the Messiah, through whom we arrive at the land of promise in heaven (St. Jerome, *Letters* 78). **deportation to Babylon:** The Exile of the Jews starting in 586 B.C. under the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. After that time, Israel's Davidic kingdom collapsed, and no legitimate heir assumed David's throne. Jesus comes as the awaited Messiah-king (21:4-5; Jn 1:49) to fulfill God's

covenant oath to perfect and establish the Davidic dynasty for all time (cf. Ps 132:11-12; Lk 1:32-33). [Back to text.](#)

1:18 betrothed to Joseph: Betrothal in ancient Judaism was unlike modern-day engagements. It was a temporary period (up to one year) between the covenant of marriage itself and the time when spouses lived together. Because couples were legally married during this intervening phase, a betrothal could be terminated only by death or divorce (Deut 24:1-4). **of the Holy Spirit:** Often read as an editorial comment addressed to the reader. Others take it to mean that Joseph himself had come to learn that Mary's pregnancy was the result of a miracle. [Back to text.](#)

1:19 just: Or, "righteous". Joseph is a man of sterling moral character, committed to living by the Mosaic Law (Deut 6:25; Lk 1:6). **put her to shame:** The Greek verb does not necessarily have a negative connotation. It simply means "to expose" or "to exhibit". **send her away:** Catholic tradition proposes three main interpretations to explain why Joseph resolved to end his betrothal with Mary. **(1) The Suspicion Theory.** Some hold that Joseph suspected Mary of adultery when he discovered her pregnancy. Joseph thus intended to pursue a divorce in accord with Deut 24:1-4 until the angel revealed to him the miraculous cause of the conception (1:20). Joseph is said to be righteous because he shuns immorality and directs his life by the Law of God. Proponents of this view include St. Justin Martyr, St. John Chrysostom, and St. Augustine. **(2) The Perplexity Theory.** Others hold that Joseph found the situation of Mary's pregnancy inexplicable. Divorce seemed to be his only option, and yet he wished to do this quietly, for he could not bring himself to believe that Mary had been unfaithful. Joseph is said to be righteous because he lives by the Law of God and judges Mary's situation with the utmost charity. The main proponent of this view is St. Jerome, whose exegesis was adopted into the notes of the medieval Bible. **(3) The Reverence Theory.** Still others hold that Joseph knew the miraculous cause of Mary's pregnancy from the beginning, i.e., he was made aware that the child was conceived "of the Holy Spirit" (1:18). Faced with this, Joseph considered himself unworthy to be involved in the Lord's work, and his decision to separate quietly from Mary was a discretionary measure to keep secret the mystery within her. On this reading, the angel confirms what Joseph had already known and urges him to set aside pious fears that would lead him away from his vocation to be the legal father of the Messiah (1:20). Joseph is said to be righteous because

of his deep humility and reverence for the miraculous works of God. Proponents of this view include St. Bernard of Clairvaux and St. Thomas Aquinas. [Back to text.](#)



1:20 Joseph: The angel's message is urgent: Joseph must maintain his marriage in order to be the foster-father of Jesus. As a descendant of King **David**, he imparts to Jesus Davidic (royal) rights of inheritance. • Matthew's portrait of Joseph recalls the OT patriarch Joseph. **(1)** Both share the same name (1:18; Gen 30:24); **(2)** both have fathers named Jacob (1:16; Gen 30:19-24); **(3)** God spoke to both of them through dreams (1:20-21; 2:13, 19-20, 22; Gen 37:5-11); **(4)** both were righteous and chaste (1:19; Gen 39:7-18); **(5)** both saved their families by bringing them to Egypt (2:13; Gen 45:16-20). [Back to text.](#)



1:21 Jesus: The Greek name *lesous* is equivalent to the Hebrew name Joshua (*Yehoshua*'), meaning "Yahweh saves". It was a popular name among first-century Jews. • Even greater than Joshua, who led Israel into the Promised Land (Sir 46:1), Jesus leads God's people into the eternal land of heaven (25:34; cf. Heb 4:1-11). Greater also than David (2 Sam 3:18), Jesus **will save his people from their sins**, not from their national enemies (i.e., the Romans) (CCC 430-32, 2666). [Back to text.](#)



1:23 Behold, a virgin: The first of several "formula-quotations" in Matthew (2:6, 15, 18, 23). Here the citation is from Is 7:14 of the Greek OT. Matthew interprets it with reference to Mary (**virgin**) and Jesus (**son**). • Isaiah 7:14 initially prophesied the birth of King Hezekiah, who rescued Israel from many evils (2 Kings 18:1-6). Matthew sees a deeper level of fulfillment here, where the absence of a human father in the prophecy points to the virginal conception of the Messiah (CCC 497). The name **God with us** is most perfectly fulfilled in Jesus' Incarnation, where his ongoing presence in the world is both ecclesial (18:20; 28:20) and eucharistic (26:26). [Back to text.](#)



1:25 until: The Greek *heos* does not imply that Joseph and Mary had marital relations following Jesus' birth. This conjunction is often used (translated "to" or "till") to indicate a select period of time, without implying change in the future (2 Sam 6:23 [LXX]; Jn 9:18; 1 Tim 4:13). Here Matthew emphasizes only that Joseph had no involvement in Mary's pregnancy *before* Jesus' birth. • Mary's perpetual virginity is firmly established in Church tradition. Its doctrinal formulation is traced to the Lateran Synod of A.D. 649 and was reaffirmed in 1968 by Pope Paul VI (*The Credo of the People of God*, 14; CCC 499501). [Back to text.](#)



2:1 Bethlehem: A small village south of Jerusalem. Its Hebrew name means "house of bread", and it came to be known as the "city of David" (Lk 2:4). As the new Davidic king, Jesus is born in the hometown of David and his family (1 Sam 16:1). It is also the site where David was anointed king (1 Sam 16:4-13). **Herod the king:** Herod the Great, ruler of Palestine. He was part of a non-Jewish (Edomite) family that held political favor with Rome. Herod was appointed "King of the Jews" by the Roman Senate in 40 B.C. to replace the collapsing dynasty of Jewish priestly rulers. He took power in Jerusalem in 37 B.C. and reigned until his death. He is famous for extensive building projects, especially his renovation of the Jerusalem Temple. As a ruler, he was extremely harsh and inflexible. He enjoyed little favor with the Jews since he remained loyal to the Roman emperor and was not a rightful Davidic leader. According to our current calendar, Jesus was born near the end of Herod's reign, either between 6 and 4 B.C. or 3 and 2 B.C.(cf. 2:16). **Wise Men from the East:** Probably astrologers from Persia—this would explain their interest in an extraordinary "star" (2:2). In Matthew, the Magi are the first Gentiles to recognize the kingship of Jesus (CCC 528). • The star recalls OT prophecy about the Messiah. In Num 24:17, Balaam predicted: "a star shall come forth out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel." Herod the Edomite was "troubled" (Mt 2:3), knowing that the same oracle foretold disaster for his family: "Edom shall be dispossessed" (Num 24:18). [Back to text.](#)



2:6 And you, O Bethlehem: A combined citation of Mic 5:2 and 2 Sam 5:2. Both the birthplace and the kingship of the Messiah are central. • According to Mic 5:2, the greatness of Bethlehem will far outweigh its small size because of the great king who will arise there. The reference to 2 Sam 5:2 also has a royal context, narrating David's covenant of kingship with the 12 tribes of Israel. The mention of these OT texts by the "chief priests and scribes" (2:4) indicates their close association with messianic expectations during NT times. [Back to text.](#)



2:11 into the house: This setting suggests the event took place after Jesus' presence in the "manger" (Lk 2:7) and the earlier visit of the shepherds (Lk 2:15-17). • The episode evokes Is 60:3, 6, where Gentile nations bring gifts of **gold** and **frankincense** to the God of Israel (cf. Tob 13:11; Ps 72:10-15). **myrrh:** An anointing oil used to consecrate Levitical priests and the wilderness Tabernacle (Ex 30:23-33). It was also a burial ointment (Jn 19:39-40). • *Allegorically* (St. Irenaeus, *AH* 3, 9, 2): the gifts of the Magi signify the mystery of Christ incarnate. Gold, a symbol of royalty, represents the kingship of Jesus. Frankincense, used in the worship of God, points to his divinity. Myrrh, a burial ointment, signifies the humanity of Christ, especially in his Passion and death. *Morally* (St. Gregory the Great, *Hom. in Evan.* 10): the treasures signify the gifts we present to Christ in our daily lives. Gold is Christ's wisdom, which shines in us, frankincense is the prayer and adoration we give him (cf. Rev 8:3-4), and myrrh is our daily self-sacrifices (10:39; cf. Rom 12:1). [Back to text.](#)

2:13 Rise, take the child: God works within the structures of the family: Joseph is instructed by the angel because he is the head of the Holy Family and the one most responsible for their well-being (cf. Eph 5:21-6:3). **Egypt:** A frequent place of refuge in the OT (Gen 12:10; 46:4; 1 Kings 11:40; Jer 26:21) and the location of large Jewish colonies (Alexandria and Elephantine) during NT times. [Back to text.](#)



2:15 Out of Egypt: A quotation from Hos 11:1. Matthew anticipates its fulfillment in 2:21. • Hosea 11:1 points back to the Exodus, where God's "first-born son" (Ex 4:22), Israel, was delivered from slavery

under the oppressive Pharaoh. Matthew sees this text also pointing forward, when Jesus, the eternal first-born Son (Rom 8:29), is delivered from the tyrant Herod and later brought out of Egypt (2:21) (CCC 530). [Back to text.](#)



2:16 a furious rage: Extrabiblical history paints a similar portrait of Herod: he murdered his favorite wife, three of his sons, and others who threatened his throne. • The Church considers these children from Bethlehem the first Christian martyrs. Their feast is celebrated December 28. • Matthew begins here to portray Jesus as a new and greater Moses: **(1)** The lives of both Jesus and Moses are threatened in their infancy by an imperial edict to kill Hebrew male children (Ex 1:15-16); **(2)** both were saved from the decree by the intervention of a family member (2:13; Ex 2:1-10); **(3)** both found protection for a time within Egypt (2:14-15; Ex 2:5-10); **(4)** both were called back to their respective birthplaces after a time of flight and exile (2:20; Ex 4:19); **(5)** both spent 40 days and nights fasting alone in the wilderness (4:2; Ex 34:28); **(6)** both were commissioned by God to promulgate his covenant Law (chaps. 5-7; Deut 5:1-21). See chart: [Jesus and the Old Testament](#) at Mt 12. [Back to text.](#)



The Journeys of Jesus' Birth. The decree of Caesar Augustus required Mary and Joseph, who were from Nazareth, to register for the census in the Judean city of Bethlehem (Lk 2:1-5). After the wise men from the East had visited to worship the Child, Joseph heeded the warning of the angel of the Lord and took his family to Egypt, where they remained until the death of Herod the Great. [Back to text.](#)

Is Matthew's Infancy Narrative Historical?

THE historical trustworthiness of the Christian Gospels is an important issue for the Church. Vatican II restated (1965) the Church's enduring conviction: the NT Gospels faithfully transmit the historical truth about Jesus, his teaching, and his mighty works (*Dei Verbum*, 19). Nevertheless, scholars sometimes question whether the Gospel writers intended to record history at all. Some claim that Matthew's Infancy Narrative (chaps. 1-2) is a prime example of this. Matthew, it is said, did not recount the events of Jesus' birth in the strict sense—he instead composed a *midrash* on the OT.

The word *midrash* is a Hebrew noun meaning "interpretation" or "commentary". The term has various meanings today. Sometimes it denotes ancient Jewish writings—common after A.D. 200—that use OT stories to teach religious truths. It can also describe the methods of OT interpretation found in these writings. Most notably, *midrash* is notorious for retelling biblical stories and embellishing them with fictional details. One *midrash* on the birth of Moses imaginatively expands the story found in Ex 2, describing how Moses' father had a dream predicting his birth, an Egyptian scribe informed Pharaoh of his birth, and the scribe himself later sought to kill the young Moses. These details add color to Moses' earliest years, but no such detail is found in the Bible. Matthew 1-2 is thought to fit in a similar category of pious reflection; the evangelist is thus charged with fabricating events related to OT passages but having no real basis in history. A response to this claim may be outlined in several points.

1. Matthew 1-2 is stylistically different from *midrash*. Unlike *midrash*, the evangelist's story of Jesus is not founded on an OT text. Whereas *midrash* seeks to mine deeper meanings of the OT, Matthew does not seek to interpret the OT for its own sake. More to the point, Matthew is not retelling OT episodes but is telling an entirely new story! It is a story with new characters and events; it is a story that could stand on its own apart from his OT citations. Matthew employs the OT to illuminate the significance of Jesus' birth, not to determine in advance its plot and outcome.

2. Matthew sees Jesus as the fulfillment of OT promises. He draws from Scripture to support Jesus' qualifications as Israel's Messiah by linking

important episodes (virginal conception, flight to Egypt, massacre of the Innocents, etc.) with ancient oracles. Unless these *events* are anchored in history in the first place, it seems unlikely that Matthew would fabricate stories *as if* Jesus fulfilled the OT. Scripture was never really fulfilled if the events Matthew narrates never happened. In this case, Matthew's exegesis of the OT would amount to little more than an exercise in self-delusion. Besides, were it Matthew's tendency to invent stories out of OT texts, it is likely his narrative would have turned out differently. For example, Ps 72:10 and Is 60:3-6 clearly stand behind Matthew's story of the wise men in Mt 2. Were Matthew writing *midrash*, these OT verses would probably exert greater control in shaping his story: Jesus would then receive only "two gifts" (gold and frankincense) instead of three, and "kings", instead of Persian astrologers, would pay him homage.

3. Matthew does not regard the OT as a simple, pre-written script of Jesus' life. With the exception of Mic 5:2 (Mt 2:6), Matthew's OT citations appear to be unlikely candidates for messianic prophecies, were he not peering at deeper mysteries within their literal meaning. For example, Is 7:14 (Mt 1:23) was first spoken about the birth of king Hezekiah; Hosea 11:1 (Mt 2:15) was originally looking backward to Israel's Exodus from Egypt; Jer 31:15 (Mt 2:18) describes the tragedy of the Jewish Exile in 586 B.C.; and Matthew's reference to the "Nazarene" (Mt 2:23) is difficult even to locate. Thus Matthew is not assembling the most obvious OT prophecies about the Messiah and neatly attaching them to Jesus. His use of the OT is legitimate and spiritual but not artificial. That Matthew gathers obscure texts to interpret Jesus' infancy suggests that history is controlling his story, not the OT.

4. Matthew 1-2 coheres well with our knowledge of history from extrabiblical sources. First, the Holy Family's flight to Egypt (Mt 2:13) squares with known historical circumstances: Egypt at this time was the home of large Jewish colonies (e.g., Alexandria, Elephantine). Second, the role of the wise men in Mt 2 corresponds with our knowledge of Persian sages from the ancient East. Their interests in astrology naturally link them with stellar phenomena (i.e., the star of Bethlehem). Third, the moral character of Herod the Great known from other sources is consistent with his actions in Mt 2. Having murdered many suspected adversaries—and even family members—it is reasonable to think Herod would execute

young Bethlehemites (Mt 2:16) as a preemptive strike against future threats to his crown.

5. Of some relevance: the Pontifical Biblical Commission addressed the issue of historicity in Matthew's Infancy Narrative at the turn of the twentieth century. This commission was instituted by Pope Leo XIII (1902) to examine select biblical questions related to the Catholic faith. Though not infallible declarations of faith, the early decisions and decrees of this commission may be taken as authoritative guidance. After careful study of this issue, weighing both ancient and modern interpretive traditions, the commission concluded on June 19, 1911, that contemporary challenges to the historical authenticity of Mt 1-2 are devoid of solid foundation.

In summary, Matthew's Infancy Narrative is both theological and historical. Matthew cites the OT as *confirmation* of his story, not as its *foundation*. He intends readers to view Jesus' early life as real events with real characters. For Matthew, Jesus himself holds the key to the OT, and his coming marks a new era in salvation history that gathers up all of God's promises and brings them to fulfillment. The historical reliability of Mt 1-2, then, is consistent with Catholic tradition and the sound principles of biblical and historical study. « [Back to Matthew 1:1.](#)



2:18 A voice was heard: A citation from Jer 31:15. • Jeremiah looks to **Ramah**, a city five miles north of Jerusalem, as a place of sorrow and exile. The Assyrians first devastated northern Israel in the eighth century B.C. by sweeping through the land and engulfing the city (Is 10:29; Hos 5:8); later the Babylonians conquered the southern tribes in the sixth century B.C., and Ramah became the assembly point for hauling away captives (Jer 40:1). In both cases, some Israelites were killed, and others were carried into exile. Matthew sees Bethlehem as a new city of sorrow where many are killed and the young Jesus, representing Israel, is carried away. These two sites are linked with the burial place of **Rachel**: one tradition puts her tomb on the outskirts of Bethlehem, where she gave birth to Benjamin in sorrow (Gen 35:17-19), while another locates it in the tribal territory of Benjamin near Ramah (1 Sam 10:2; cf. Josh 18:25). [Back to text.](#)

2:22 Archelaus: Son of Herod the Great. After Herod's death, the Roman emperor Augustus divided his kingdom among his three sons. Archelaus was given the title "ethnarch" of Judea, Idumea, and Samaria. He quickly acquired a reputation like his father's, governing with a ruthless and heavy hand. He was eventually banished by Augustus to Gaul in A.D. 6. Joseph took Mary and the Child north to the **district of Galilee**, where Archelaus' younger brother, Herod Antipas, ruled as tetrarch until A.D. 39. [Back to text.](#)



2:23 Nazareth: An obscure Galilean village nowhere mentioned in the OT. It was insignificant in the eyes of many Jews (cf. Jn 1:46). **He shall be called a Nazarene:** No OT prophecy corresponds to this exact wording. Matthew apparently paraphrases the message of several **prophets** into a summary statement about the Messiah. • The paraphrase is based on a word association between Jesus' home of Nazareth and the Hebrew word *netser*, translated as "branch" in Is 11:1. Isaiah used the image of a branch growing from a stump to signify hope for the kingdom of David. The great Davidic tree (dynasty) had been cut off since the Exile, but the sprouting branch indicated that God would raise up another king from the hopeless situation. Later prophets used this same image to signify the Messiah-king (Jer 23:5, 33:14-16) who would build the Temple (Zech 3:8, 6:11-13). See notes on [Mt 1:17](#) and [16:18](#). [Back to text.](#)



3:1 John the Baptist: The forerunner to the Messiah. A Levite (Lk 1:5) and relative of Jesus (Lk 1:36), John was considered a prophet by many Jews (21:26) and even by Jesus himself (11:9). His message was accompanied by an austere life of penance and self-denial (CCC 523). • John's clothing (3:4) recalls the OT prophet Elijah who "wore a garment of haircloth, with a belt of leather about his loins" (2 Kings 1:8). A figure like Elijah was expected to return before the Messiah (Mal 4:5) to begin restoring the tribes of Israel (Sir 48:10). [Back to text.](#)

3:2 kingdom of heaven: The overarching theme of Matthew's Gospel. The expression appears 32 times in the Gospel and is equivalent in meaning to "the kingdom of God" (see, e.g., 19:23-24). In their original Jewish context, the words "of heaven" helped to distinguish the kingdom proclaimed by John (3:2) and Jesus (4:17) from popular hopes for a literal restoration of Israel's political empire (cf. Acts 1:6). Instead, it is a kingdom that comes from the Father in heaven (Mt 6:10). The presence of the kingdom is mediated through the Church in history (16:18-19); its full manifestation, however, awaits the coming of Christ in glory (25:31-46) (CCC 541, 669-71). See introduction to Matthew: *Themes*. [Back to text.](#)



3:3 The voice of one crying: A quotation from Is 40:3. • Isaiah's oracle outlines John's mission: he is the important figure who prepares the **way of the Lord**. All four Gospels connect Isaiah's words with John's ministry (Mk 1:3; Lk 3:4; Jn 1:23). [See note on Lk 3:4-6.](#) [Back to text.](#)



3:6 the river Jordan: Runs along the eastern side of Palestine. Its headwaters begin north of the Sea of Galilee, and it flows southward into the Dead Sea. • In the OT, the Jordan is associated with God's deliverance. Like the Red Sea, it parted so that the Israelites could cross over on dry ground and inherit the Promised Land (Josh 3:14-17). Naaman the Syrian was cleansed from leprosy at this location when he "dipped" (LXX: *ebaptisato*) seven times in the river at the command of Elisha (2 Kings 5:14). Both OT events prefigure the saving power of the Sacrament of Baptism (CCC 1222). [Back to text.](#)

3:11 I baptize you: John's baptism differed from sacramental Baptism, which confers forgiveness and the regenerating grace of justifying faith (Acts 2:38). His was a visible token of repentance and preparation for the Messiah (cf. Is 1:16; Heb 9:10; CCC 718). **with water:** John administered a baptism by water alone as a sign of purification. But as was shown in Noah's day, water alone cannot cleanse the soul; the sinfulness of man's heart remained unchanged even after the flood (Gen 6:5; 8:21). Only the Sacrament of Baptism infuses the **Holy Spirit** (Jn 3:5) and marks one's adoption into God's family (28:19) (CCC 1265). **with fire:** A symbol of God and his purifying judgment (Deut 4:24; Sir 2:5; Is 4:3-5; Acts 2:3-4; CCC 696). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Righteousness ([Mt 3:15](#))

Dikaiosune (Gk.): denotes the uprightness and faithfulness of God and his people (Deut 6:25; Is 48:18). The word is part of a distinctive covenant vocabulary found throughout the Bible. It is used seven times in Matthew and 85 times in the rest of the NT. (1) God's *righteousness* is characteristic of his being (holy) and revealed through his saving deeds and care of Israel (Deut 32:4; Is 5:16; 42:6). God is righteous because he perfectly fulfills his covenant with Israel as a divine Father. The NT builds on this foundation: God now demonstrates his *righteousness* through the saving work of Jesus Christ. The New Covenant is ratified by Jesus' obedience to the Father (Mt 3:15; Rom 3:21-26) and is proclaimed in the gospel (Rom 1:16-17). (2) For God's people, *righteousness* is a New Covenant gift from Christ. It is first given in Baptism and received by faith (Rom 5:17). It denotes one's restored relationship with God as an adopted son or daughter. This gift of *righteousness* can increase through love and obedience to God's covenant Law (Mt 5:6; 6:33; Rom 6:16; Eph 4:24; 1 Pet 2:24; 1 Jn 3:7).



3:15 it is fitting: Jesus is sinless and has no need for John's baptism (Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 2:22). He nevertheless submits to the rite to identify with

sinner and align himself with God's plan. Jesus performs Old Covenant regulations to fulfill and perfect them in the New (5:17; cf. Lk 2:21-28; CCC 536). • *Mystically* (St. Thomas Aquinas, *ST* 3, 39, 8), Jesus' baptism prefigures the Christian sacrament. The water, Spirit, and divine voice signify the effects of Baptism whereby the soul is cleansed (Acts 22:16), the grace of the Holy Spirit is imparted (3:11; 1 Cor 12:13), and the recipient is adopted as a beloved child of God (3:17; Gal 3:26-27; CCC 537). [Back to text.](#)

3:16 the heavens: The episode reveals the Blessed Trinity: the Father speaks, the Son is baptized, and the Holy Spirit descends as a dove. [Back to text.](#)



4:1-11 Matthew's temptation narrative recounts 5 Jesus' spiritual preparation for ministry. • The event contrasts the disobedience of ancient Israel with the obedience of Jesus, representative of the new Israel: **(1)** Israel and Jesus are both called God's son (3:17; Ex 4:22); **(2)** the temptations of both Israel and Jesus are preceded by a baptism (3:13-17; 1 Cor 10:1-5); **(3)** Israel was tested for 40 years, Jesus is tempted for **forty days and forty nights** (4:2); **(4)** Israel failed its wilderness testing, while Jesus triumphs over Satan through obedience and self-abasement (4:11). These parallels are supported by Jesus' three responses (4:4, 7, 10) to the devil taken from Deut 6-8. These texts (Deut 8:3; 6:16; 6:13) warned the Israelites against disobedience and reminded them of God's provisions in the wilderness (CCC 538-39). • *Morally* (St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 8): Jesus' victory sets an example for Christian obedience. Earthly life is a wilderness trial for God's people en route to the land of heaven. Through this probationary period, God wills the faithful to overcome temptations from the world, the flesh, and the devil. Triumph is possible through penance and obedience to God's word. Rather than earthly bread and power, the faithful must desire the food of God's will and the humility of Christ (11:29; Jn 4:34). The battle successfully won merits heavenly comfort in the company of angels (4:11). The Church annually reminds us of this life-long vocation during the 40 days of Lent (CCC 540, 2849). [Back to text.](#)



4:1 tempted: Having witnessed the Father's declaration (3:17), Satan tests Jesus' identity as the Son of God. He tempts Jesus to embrace an earthly and political mission (4:89) and seeks to divert him from suffering and death. Peter is later rebuked as "Satan" (16:23) when he refuses to accept Jesus' path of suffering (16:21). • The Second Council of Constantinople (A.D. 553) condemned the view that Jesus was impeccable only after his Resurrection (can. 12). On the contrary, Christ is a divine Person and so could not have sinned at any time during his earthly life (Jas 1:13; 1 Jn 3:5). Furthermore, his temptations came entirely from the suggestions of the devil and had nothing to do with the inner struggles and disordered desires of fallen human nature that we experience (Jas 1:14-15). [Back to text.](#)



4:6 it is written: Both Jesus (4:4, 7, 10) and Satan (4:6) quote from Scripture. Whereas Jesus handles Scripture with reverence and sensitivity, Satan misconstrues its meaning. • Satan's use of Ps 91:11-12 violates its original meaning. The psalm encourages trust and faith in God's protection; it does not advocate testing him. Jesus' proper interpretation of Deut 6:16 (4:7) excludes the possibility of twisting Ps 91 to justify testing God. [Back to text.](#)

4:12 Galilee: The uppermost region of Palestine, north of Judea and Samaria. In ancient Israel, Galilee was home to several of the nation's 12 tribes. After military devastations by the Assyrians in the eighth century B.C. (2 Kings 15:29), Galilee was ruled separately from Judea and Samaria for most of its history extending into NT times. While some Jews resided in Galilee when Jesus lived there, many were descendants of the northern tribes of Israel who lived alongside Gentile immigrants. Even after the NT period, the Jewish Mishnah (A.D. 200) consistently refers to Galileans as "Israelites", as distinct from southern "Jews" or "Judeans" (cf. 10:5-6; Jn 1:47). Jesus chose Galilee as the place to restore the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" (15:24), regather his scattered disciples (26:31-32), and send them on a worldwide mission (28:7, 10, 16-20). [Back to text.](#)



4:15-16 The land of Zebulun . . . dawned: A citation I from Is 9:1-2 concerning the land allotments of two Israelite tribes, Zebulun and Naphtali. Since these Galilean regions were the first to be ravaged by Assyrian invasions from 733 to 732 B.C. (2 Kings 15:29), Jesus targets Galilee as the place to begin reversing the tragedies of Israel's history by restoring the 12 tribes in the New Covenant (cf. 15:24; 19:28; Rev 7:4-8). • Isaiah foresees a "latter time" (Is 9:1), when God will restore hope to Galilee. Matthew links this with Jesus' residence in "Capernaum" (4:13), a town north of the Sea of Galilee where the tribal territories of Zebulun and Naphtali intersect. Matthew's sustained interest in the Davidic kingship of Jesus suggests that the fuller context of this oracle is also significant. Isaiah 9:1-2 prefaces an Immanuel prophecy of the birth of a new king who will sit "upon the throne of David" (Is 9:7) and restore this light of hope to Galilee (cf. Lk 1:32-33). [Back to text.](#)



4:18-22 fishermen: A common Galilean occupation. Matthew emphasizes the promptness of the disciples' response to Jesus (**Immediately** 4:20, 22). Three of them—Peter, James, and John—enjoyed a special relationship with him (17:1; 26:37). • God's New Covenant grace builds upon, perfects, and elevates our human nature. The natural skills of these fishermen are thus raised to a new and spiritual level by grace, enabling them to gather souls for the kingdom as missionaries in the Church. [Back to text.](#)

4:23 synagogues: Buildings for Jewish worship, prayer, and instruction in the Scriptures. They also served a more general function as community centers within rural villages. Assemblies were held on the Sabbath (in the evening) and the liturgy centered on the proclamation and explanation of the Hebrew Bible. Since these are unmentioned in the OT, the origin of the synagogue is uncertain. Their beginning may be linked with teaching centers in the 48 Levitical cities (Num 35:1-8) or to the return of the Jewish exiles from Babylon in the sixth century B.C. Since Jewish males were required to travel to the Jerusalem Temple only three times annually (Deut 16:16), the synagogue was a complementary site for non-sacrificial worship and education during the remainder of the year. [Back to text.](#)

4:25 Decapolis: Literally, the "ten cities". These were predominantly Gentile cities in Palestine, and most were located east of the river Jordan. They are known for their distinctive Hellenistic (Greek) architecture. [Back to text.](#)

5:1-7:29 The Sermon on the Mount encapsulates the Law of the New Covenant. It is a collection of Jesus' teachings on Christian living and his perfection of Old Covenant moral laws (5:17). As the first of five discourses in Matthew (see outline), the sermon envisions our heavenly destiny based on acceptance or rejection of Jesus and his teaching (CCC 1965-68). [Back to text.](#)



5:1 on the mountain: The setting recalls the giving 5 of the Law on Mt. Sinai (Ex 19-24). However, Moses brought the Law down the mountain to the people, whereas Jesus delivers his teaching to disciples who have come up the mountain. • The mountain signifies the higher precepts of righteousness, for the precepts given to Israel were lower. God gave lesser laws to those requiring the bonds of fear, but higher laws to those ready to be set free by love. The higher precepts are for the kingdom of heaven, just as the lower precepts were for a kingdom on earth (St. Augustine, *On the Sermon on the Mount* 1, 1, 2). **he sat down:** The posture of a Jewish rabbi speaking with authority (cf. 23:1-2; Jn 8:2). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Blessed ([Mt 5:3-10](#))

Makarios (Gk.): An adjective meaning "fortunate" or "blessed". It is found 13 times in Matthew and 37 times elsewhere in the NT. The term is not used as an invocation of God's blessing but as a declaration that a person has either received a blessing from God (Mt 16:17; Rom 4:7) or can expect to receive his blessing in the future (Jas 1:12; Rev 14:13; 22:14). This distinction has its roots in the OT, where *wisdom* beatitudes congratulate those who enjoy divine benefits and favorable circumstances in the present (Job 5:17; Prov 3:13; Sir 25:8-9) and *eschatological* beatitudes promise the rewards and consolations of God in the future (Ps 1:1-6; Is 30:18; Dan 12:12). The beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount are of the latter type, for

they announce that the blessings of the New Covenant will be fully realized in heaven. Some do promise blessings that are partly enjoyed in this life, but all of them look beyond the struggles and hardships of this life to the eternal blessedness of the life to come (Mt 5:11-12).

5:3 the poor in spirit: Those who recognize their need for God and his grace. Unattached to this world, they find their security in the Lord and rely on his mercy rather than their merits or material wealth. The spiritually poor can also be economically poor, for these are often rich in faith (Jas 2:5). Full possession of the **kingdom** will be theirs at the final Judgment (Mt 25:34) (CCC 2544-47). [Back to text.](#)

5:4 those who mourn: Those who lament the present state of this life. This includes weeping for sins as well as the grief that comes when the saints are made to suffer for their faith. In the life to come, they will be **comforted** by God, who wipes away every tear (Rev 7:17). [Back to text.](#)

5:5 the meek: Those who appear powerless and insignificant in the eyes of the world. Far from being weak, however, the meek possess an inner strength to restrain anger and discouragement in the midst of adversity. Meekness is exemplified in the life of Moses (Num 12:3) and especially Jesus (11:29; 21:5). In the end, the meek will **inherit the earth** (or "the land" as in Ps 37:11). This refers either to heaven itself, envisioned as a new Promised Land (Heb 11:16), or to the new creation that is to come (Rom 8:21; Rev 21:1). [Back to text.](#)

5:6 those who hunger and thirst: Those who yearn to live rightly according to the will of God. Their first priority is to seek the Lord's kingdom and **righteousness** (6:33) as the most necessary sustenance of life (cf. Jn 4:34). Ultimately, they will be **satisfied** by God in eternal life (25:46). [Back to text.](#)

5:7 the merciful: Those who imitate the Father's mercy (Lk 6:36) by extending forgiveness to others (Mt 18:21-22, 33). The merciful are patient and understanding in bearing with others' faults, and they are generous in aiding the needy by works of charity and compassion (6:2-4; 25:34-40). When the final Judgment comes, they will receive the **mercy** that lasts forever (6:14; Jas 2:13) (CCC 2447). [Back to text.](#)

5:8 the pure in heart: Those who act with integrity and serve the Lord unselfishly. In biblical terms, the heart is the hidden center of the person

where one's thoughts, words, actions, and emotions are said to originate. A pure heart is undefiled by evil and lustful thoughts (5:27-30; 15:18-20) and finds its true treasure in heaven (6:19-21). In eternity, the pure in heart will **see God** as the angels do even now (18:10; 1 Cor 13:12; Rev 22:4). Catholic theology calls this unmediated union with God in heaven the Beatific Vision (CCC 2517-19).

5:9 the peacemakers: Those who sow peace in the world (Jas 3:18). Partly, this means striving to live at peace with others (Heb 12:14); ultimately, it means sharing the gospel so that others can be reconciled with God and live in the peace of Christ (Rom 5:1; Phil 4:7). Peacemakers will be called **children of God** (Mt 5:45). The gift of divine sonship is both a present possession of believers (Rom 8:14-16; 1 Jn 3:1) and a future hope linked with the resurrection of the body (Rom 8:23) and the glory of eternal life (Rev 21:7) (CCC 2305). [Back to text.](#)

5:10 those who are persecuted: Those who are slandered, abused, or oppressed for their public witness to Christianity. They are targets of the world's hatred (Jn 15:18-19) because of their commitment to the righteousness of the gospel (1 Pet 3:14). Persecuted disciples can expect a great reward in the coming **kingdom of heaven** (Mt 5:12). [Back to text.](#)



5:13-14 Two illustrations show that disciples must be true to their calling lest they render themselves useless for the kingdom. Being the **salt of the earth**, they are to season and preserve the world with peace (Mk 9:50) and gracious speech (Col 4:5). Being the **light of the world**, they are to bear witness to Jesus and his message (Jn 1:9; 8:12). • Both images have links with the OT. Salt is associated with the covenant of priesthood made with Aaron and his descendants (Num 18:19) as well as the covenant of kingship made with David and his descendants (2 Chron 13:5). Light is associated with the OT vocation of Israel to make the truth and justice of God shine out to all nations (Is 42:6; 49:6). [Back to text.](#)

5:14 a city set on a hill: An allusion to Jerusalem on Mt. Zion. It is a visible sign of the eternal city that awaits the saints in heaven (Gal 4:26; Heb 12:22; Rev 21:2). [Back to text.](#)



5:16 your Father: Earlier chapters make no mention of the Fatherhood of God. In the Sermon on the Mount, however, Jesus calls God

"Father" a total of 17 times (chaps. 5-7). • God's Fatherhood is the deepest mystery of his identity; from eternity he fathers a divine Son (Jn 1:1), and throughout history he adopts us as his children in Christ (Jn 1:12; Gal 4:4-7). [Back to text.](#)

5:17 the law and the prophets: A shorthand expression for the entire OT. **to fulfil them:** Jesus completely fulfilled the Mosaic Law and OT prophecies (1:23; 2:6, 15; 4:15-16; Lk 24:44-47). The Greek word translated *fulfil* means "to make complete". The New Covenant thus includes and concludes the Old Covenant; it both perfects it and transforms it. While sacrificial laws of the OT expired with the sacrifice of Jesus, the moral Law (Ten Commandments, etc.) was retained and refined (5:21, 27, 43; 19:17). In the Christian life, the power of God's Spirit is necessary if we are to obey the Law and grow in holiness (cf. Rom 8:4; CCC 577-81, 1967). [Back to text.](#)

5:18 an iota: Corresponds to the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet (*yod*). **a dot:** Tiny extensions that distinguish similar-looking Hebrew letters from one another. [Back to text.](#)

5:20 your righteousness: Jesus inaugurates a new and climactic phase in salvation history. He introduces a New Covenant standard of righteousness that surpasses the real, but insufficient, righteousness of the Old Covenant (cf. Deut 6:25; Is 48:18). The Old Covenant governed the temporal affairs of the earthly kingdom of Israel. The Mosaic Law (especially Deuteronomy) was designed to establish and maintain Israel as a nation-state in the land of Canaan. Its laws regulated public behavior to maintain civil order; it thus erected an outward standard of righteousness that defined God's people as a nation. Jesus invites **the scribes and Pharisees** to recognize the Mosaic Law as God's temporary arrangement for Israel (cf. Mt 19:8). It was a means of drawing them closer to God by separating them from the sins of the Gentiles (Lev 15:31; 20:26). Eventually, the Israelites expected a day when God would write his Law on their hearts (Jer 31:31-34; cf. Deut 30:6; Ezek 36:25-27). Christ's New Covenant signals the dawning of this great day when he perfects the moral laws of the Old Covenant and brings that covenant's temporary and national phase to a close. He implements a new level of covenant *righteousness* that stretches beyond the boundaries of the Old Law in two directions. **(1)** Outwardly, the scope of the New Covenant is wider than the one nation of Israel; it encompasses an international **kingdom** in the Church. All nations can now

share in God's blessing and become his covenant people. **(2)** Inwardly, the New Covenant penetrates to the heart; it reaches within to govern personal and private life by a maximal standard of holiness. As the Old Covenant formed virtuous citizens in Israel, so the New Covenant generates saints in the Church (CCC 196368). See also word study: *Righteousness* at Mt 3. [Back to text.](#)

5:21-48 Sometimes called the "Six Antitheses". Jesus acts with divine authority to perfect and deepen the moral codes of the Mosaic Law (cf. 7:29). Each antithesis follows a similar format: Jesus cites the Old Law, saying, **you have heard that it was said** (5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43), and responds with the refrain, **But I say to you** (5:22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44). The pattern underscores Jesus' authority as a new Moses and the lawgiver of the New Covenant. See notes on [Mt 2:16](#) and [17:5](#). [Back to text.](#)

5:21 You shall not kill: Jesus reaffirms that murder is unlawful (Ex 20:13; Deut 5:17) but introduces a new dimension to the civil law. Not only acts of murder but even personal anger (5:22) and private slander (5:22) constitute a violation of the New Law. Degrees of personal guilt are illustrated (5:22) by an escalating movement from a local court verdict ("judgment"), to the Jewish Sanhedrin ("council"), to eternal punishment ("hell"). At each step, the judgment corresponds to the severity of the sin (CCC 2302). [Back to text.](#)

5:22 You fool! The Greek transliterates an Aramaic term that implies a lack of intelligence. It is an insult that means something like "empty head" or "numskull". **the hell of fire:** The Greek expression (also in 5:29-30) denotes the Valley of Gehenna south of Jerusalem. It served as a large dump where garbage was burned continually. Jesus uses the image to illustrate the frightful reality of damnation (CCC 1034-35). See word study: [Hell](#) at Mk 9. [Back to text.](#)

5:27 adultery: Like the Mosaic Law, Jesus forbids acts of adultery (Ex 20:14; Deut 5:18). Yet he extends the prohibition to forbid even personal lust and interior thoughts of impurity. Looking and thinking "lustfully" (5:28) already violate the New Law, even if the exterior act of adultery is not committed (CCC 2380). [Back to text.](#)

5:29 pluck it out: A figurative overstatement, not a literal command of self-mutilation. Jesus uses alarming images to underscore the severity of sexual sins (cf. 18:7-9); extreme measures are needed to avoid occasions of

sin, the sins themselves, and the eternal punishment they lead to. [Back to text.](#)

5:31 a certificate of divorce: Divorce and remarriage were permitted under the Old Covenant only because of Israel's sinfulness (19:8; cf. Deut 24:1-4). In the New Covenant, remarriage leads to adultery (CCC 2382). **except on the ground of unchastity:** Matthew alone records this added "exception clause" (cf. 19:9). For the meaning of this clause, see topical essay: *Jesus on Marriage and Divorce* at Mt 19. [Back to text.](#)

5:33 not swear falsely: Jesus forbids oath swearing for private purposes. Oaths are important, however, in the public sector for the good of society. Judges, doctors, soldiers, politicians, and other professionals swear oaths for public service. Oaths are also sworn to make or renew covenants (cf. Heb 6:13-18). In every context, God's holy name is invoked to bring divine assistance (blessing) to the upright and divine punishment (curse) to those who violate their oaths. In Jesus' day, the practice of oath swearing was sometimes mishandled; people would swear private oaths for personal advantage. By invoking something other than God's name (heaven / earth / Jerusalem; 5:34-35), oaths were taken lightly or even disregarded (23:16-22). Jesus denounces this, teaching that truthfulness and integrity should govern private life. Matthew recounts three episodes where such illicit oaths are sworn for personal purposes (14:7; 26:72, 74; 27:25) (CCC 2153-54). [Back to text.](#)

5:38 An eye for an eye: Jesus forbids the misuse of Mosaic civil law to justify private vengeance. Exodus 21:24 was meant to limit retribution; it was never an invitation to inflict punishment for personal injuries or extend personal vengeance beyond the injury suffered (cf. Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21). The punishment had to fit the crime but not exceed it. Jesus eliminates such a policy of retaliation from personal life (cf. Rom 12:17). [Back to text.](#)

5:41 if any one forces you: Roman soldiers in NT Palestine reserved the right to recruit and compel Jews into temporary service. Simon of Cyrene was forced under this custom to carry Jesus' Cross in 27:32. Jesus calls for ungrudging generosity beyond the required call of duty. [Back to text.](#)

5:43 love your neighbor: A reference to Lev 19:18. Jesus considers it one of the two great commandments of the Mosaic Law (22:39). Unlike Jesus, however, some Jews held a narrow interpretation of *neighbor*, restricting it only to one's fellow Israelite (cf. Lk 10:29-37) (CCC 1933). **hate your enemy:** Probably a reference to Israel's warfare laws in Deut 20.

Because Gentiles in Canaan worshiped false gods, they were enemies of God. Moses thus called Israel to exterminate them under Joshua and the Judges, lest Israel imitate their idolatry (cf. Ex 23:32-33; Ps 139:19-22). Against this background, Jesus counters Jewish disdain for Gentiles who continue to live in Palestine. He broadens the meaning of *neighbor* to include Gentiles, even their Roman persecutors. The Father's impartial treatment of all people is a model for Christian mercy (5:45). [Back to text.](#)

5:48 You . . . must be perfect: Jesus advocates moral righteousness higher than the Old Covenant—it is a standard of mercy. Just as Israel was to imitate God in being "holy" (Lev 19:2), so Jesus calls the Church to imitate God's perfect compassion (Lk 6:36). The Father is kind and merciful to the good and evil alike, so his children must extend mercy even to their enemies (5:7; Lk 10:29-37; Jas 2:13). See note on [Lk 6:36](#) (CCC 1968, 2842). [Back to text.](#)

6:1-18 Jesus reaffirms three traditional works of mercy honored by Jews (cf. Tob 12:8-10): almsgiving (6:2-4), prayer (6:5-15), and fasting (6:16-18) (cCC 1434, 1969). **piety:** Literally "righteousness", as in 3:15; 5:6, 20; 6:33. See word study: [Righteousness](#) at Mt 3. Jesus does not challenge these practices in themselves; he warns against performing them for public esteem (CCC 1430). [Back to text.](#)

6:2 give alms: Charitable gifts given to the poor (Sir 17:22; Lk 3:11; CCC 2447). **hypocrites:** Refers to "actors" or "stage players". Jesus may have certain scribes and Pharisees in mind (cf. 23:5, 27-28) who perform outward devotions to be seen and **praised by men.** The exercise of one's faith can be public, so long as it flows from proper intentions (5:16). [Back to text.](#)

6:6 in secret: Private prayer stands in contrast to the false piety of hypocrites. It was Jesus' own custom to withdraw from the public and pray alone to the Father (14:23; Mk 1:35; Lk 9:18). Private prayer is a complement to communal prayer, not a rejection of it (cf. 18:20; Acts 1:12-14; CCC 2602, 2655). [Back to text.](#)

6:7 empty phrases . . . many words: Jesus briefly considers the false religiosity of **Gentiles.** Pagans would recite long litanies of divine names to gain the attention of gods. This was meant to ensure that the deity was addressed properly. Jesus considers the practice empty—i.e., devoid of faith and of love for the deity. Note that his warning is not aimed at repetitious or lengthy prayer in itself. With a pure heart, such prayer can be fruitful and

intimate. Jesus himself prayed to the Father in Gethsemane three times "saying the same words" (26:44) and "all night" (Lk 6:12) before choosing the apostles (CCC 2668). [Back to text.](#)

6:9-13 The Our Father is a model of prayer. Given by God's Son, it is part of the family inheritance of God's children. It has seven petitions and can be divided into two parts: the first section (6:9-10) glorifies God, while the second half (6:11-13) petitions God about human needs (CCC 2765, 2781). [Back to text.](#)

6:9 Our: The first person plural (our, us, we) is prominent in the Our Father. It is thus a prayer for the Church (CCC 2768). **Father:** Jesus may have taught this prayer in Aramaic, a language related to ancient Hebrew and in common usage among first-century Jews. In this case, Jesus would have addressed the Father as "Abba", an affectionate title preserved elsewhere in the NT (Mk 14:36; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6). While Jesus alone is the Father's Son by nature, we too become his children by the grace of divine adoption (Rom 8:14-16; Gal 4:4-7). As God's children in Christ (Jn 1:12), Christians now regard God as their Father in a more profound way than OT Israel had (Deut 32:6): they participate in God's divine life (2 Pet 1:4; 1 Jn 3:1; CCC 2766, 2780). **Hallowed be your name:** A petition that all would recognize God's name as holy (Ps 111:9; Lk 1:49). To call upon God's name is an ancient form of worship (Gen 4:26; Ps 116:17; Joel 2:32), and the Law warns against taking his name "in vain" (Ex 20:7) (CCC 2807). [Back to text.](#)

6:11 our daily bread: The Greek *epiousios* (translated *daily*) is used only here and in Lk 11:3 in the NT. It probably means "for tomorrow" or "for the future". The petition thus concerns food for the body and soul: **(1)** The necessities of life that fathers give their children is a form of daily bread. This may recall the manna that God provided each day for the Israelites in the wilderness (Ex 16:13-17). **(2)** Several Church Fathers interpret *daily bread* as a reference to the Holy Eucharist—a form of supernatural sustenance (Acts 2:46). The two connotations are connected, since Jesus advocates dependence on the Father for daily living (6:25-34) and later associates the manna with the Eucharist (Jn 6:30-40; CCC 2837). [Back to text.](#)

6:13 evil: Also translated "the Evil One", as in 13:19 (cf. Jn 17:15; 2 Thess 3:3). As such, it designates Satan, fallen angel and adversary of God. The petition is projected into the future: Christians pray for God's

deliverance in the final days, when the devil and evil will be destroyed (Rev 20:10). [Back to text.](#)

6:17 anoint your head: Fasting was often a public practice accompanied by wearing sackcloth and putting ashes on one's head (Esther 4:3; Dan 9:3). While it was intended to express inner repentance, hypocrites utilized it to appear devout. Washing and anointing outwardly symbolize happiness and disguise one's inner commitment to God (Ruth 3:3; Ps 23:5; Is 61:3; CCC 1438). [Back to text.](#)

6:22 The eye is the lamp: An ancient metaphor (Tob 10:5; Prov 15:30; Sir 23:19). Jesus uses it to advocate generosity. Those with evil or unsound eyes are stingy with their belongings (Deut 15:9; Sir 14:8-10; cf. Mt 20:15); they are full of darkness (6:23). Those with sound eyes share their goods with the needy (4:7); they are filled with **light**. [Back to text.](#)

6:24 mammon: An Aramaic word meaning "wealth" or "property". Jesus warns that earthly possessions can threaten an undivided love for God. The NT elsewhere exposes the dangers surrounding money and the accumulation of temporal goods (13:22; Lk 12:13-21; 1 Tim 6:10; Heb 13:5; CCC 2113). [Back to text.](#)



6:28-30 Jesus teaches with the logic of Jewish rabbis: the lesser fact of God's care for **lilies** (6:28) implies God's greater concern for men (6:30; CCC 2830). • *Anagogically:* God supplies our physical needs to signify his greater concern for our spiritual needs. As his care for the lilies and the grass is outmatched by his provision of clothing for us, so the garments we receive prefigure God's desire to clothe us with glory and immortality in heaven (cf. 1 Cor 15:51-55; Rev 19:7-8). [Back to text.](#)

6:33 seek first his kingdom: Christians must prioritize the pursuit of holiness in their lives. This is not an excuse for laziness in practical matters (2 Thess 3:6-13) but a call to trust in the Father's care (Phil 4:6; CCC 2608). [Back to text.](#)

7:1-6 Jesus' teaching on judgment is two-sided. **(1)** He condemns judging other's faults (7:1-2; Lk 6:37). We are incapable of judging with fairness and accuracy since God alone knows the heart (Prov 21:2; Lk 16:15). **(2)** However, Jesus commands us to exercise critical discernment (7:6, 15-19; 1 Thess 5:21). Examination is necessary to avoid profaning what is holy (7:6) and embracing what is false (7:15). [Back to text.](#)

7:2 you will be judged: i.e., by God (theological passive). We set the standards of our personal judgment by our own conduct toward others (cf. 18:35). [Back to text.](#)

7:6 dogs . . . swine: Derogatory Jewish epithets for pagans (15:26-28). Dogs were generally undomesticated in Jewish culture, and most were stray scavengers. Swine were especially contemptible to Jews; they were unclean and could not be eaten (Lev 11:7-8; cf. Is 66:3). Jesus redirects these insulting labels to anyone inhospitable to the gospel, Jew or Gentile (cf. Phil 3:2; Rev 22:15). **what is holy:** In Judaism, holiness characterized anything consecrated for covenant worship. To treat holy articles in a common manner would profane them (Ex 29:37; Lev 22:10-16). Jesus carries this same notion into the New Covenant. The early Church applied this statement to the Holy Eucharist, a sacrament rightly withheld from the unbaptized (*Didache* 9:5). [Back to text.](#)

7:7 Ask . . . given you: Jesus advocates perseverance in prayer (cf. Lk 18:1; Col 4:2; 1 Thess 5:17). Answered prayers stem from upright and faith-filled intentions (Jas 1:5-8; CCC 2609). [Back to text.](#)

7:11 you then, who are evil: Indicates the pervasive sinful-ness of man. **how much more:** A rhetorical device familiar to Jewish rabbis and used also by the Apostle Paul (Rom 5:15-17). [See note on Mt 6:28-30.](#) **good things:** i.e., the material necessities of life, as well as the grace to live as God's children. The Lk 11:13 parallel identifies the gift as the "Holy Spirit". [Back to text.](#)

7:12 do so to them: The "Golden Rule". It is similar to statements in the OT (Tob 4:15; Sir 31:15) and other world religions. While normally a negative statement (based upon *not* doing to others), Jesus states it positively (CCC 1970). [Back to text.](#)

7:13-14 the narrow gate: An image with various associations. **(1)** Cities surrounded by a fortified wall had gates to permit access. Main gates were wide and tall enough for caravans of people and animals; smaller gates permitted only pedestrian traffic. Jesus envisions the **many** passing with ease through a main gate. The **few** must exert greater effort to enter a narrow pedestrian gate (cf. 22:14). **(2)** The Jerusalem Temple had a series of gates that prohibited entry for the unqualified; only a privileged few had close access to God. This teaching of the "two ways" is common in the OT (cf. Deut 30:15-20; Ps 1; Wis 5:6-7; CCC 1696). [Back to text.](#)

7:15 false prophets: These so-called prophets appear harmless, yet their ministry breeds error, division, and immorality (cf. 24:24; 2 Pet 2:1-3). The distinction between true and false prophets is rooted in the OT (Deut 18:20-22; Jer 14:13-16). [Back to text.](#)



7:22 On that day: The Day of Judgment. Jesus is portrayed as the divine Judge (cf. 25:31-46; Jn 5:25-29; 2 Cor 5:10; CCC 678, 682). • God's sanctifying grace enlivens the soul, making it fit for heaven; it is the grace of divine Sonship. It is manifested through conformity with the Father's will by knowing and obeying Jesus (7:23; cf. Jn 17:3; 1 Jn 2:36). In Catholic tradition, sanctifying grace is distinct from graces that are manifest through miraculous works such as prophecy and exorcism. These charismatic graces are also heavenly gifts but are not conclusive evidence of one's personal sanctity or membership in the family of God (CCC 2003). [Back to text.](#)



7:24 like a wise man: True wisdom puts Jesus' teaching into practice and prepares for the future (cf. 25:1-13; Jas 2:14-26). **his house:** The parable reflects building conditions in NT Palestine. Houses made of mud brick were generally built during the dry season. When torrential rains arrived, only the house with a solid foundation resisted erosion and ultimate destruction (cf. Prov 14:11). • Jesus' reference to the wise man and his house alludes to King Solomon. He was known for his wisdom (1 Kings 3:10-12) and built the Lord's house (i.e., Temple; 1 Kings 8:27) upon a great foundation stone (1 Kings 5:17; 7:10; cf. Is 28:16). [See note on Mt 16:18.](#) • *Morally:* the enduring house (7:25) is like the soul; it is maintained only through labor and the materials of prayer and virtue grounded on Christ (Ps 127:1; 1 Cor 3:11). The foolish man neglects sound construction and maintenance, building on a weak foundation of wealth and earthly success. The Day of Judgment will expose the foundation and destiny of every spiritual builder (Prov 10:25; 1 Tim 6:17-19). [Back to text.](#)

7:29 one who had authority: Jesus' teaching differs from that of the **scribes**, who taught the already-existing traditions of Judaism. Jesus, cast as a new Moses, delivered "new teaching" (Mk 1:27) that excelled even the Mosaic Law in perfection (5:21-48). Jesus later denounced traditions that were incompatible with God's word (15:3-6) (CCC 581). [Back to text.](#)

8:1-9:38 Matthew assembles ten miracle stories. They portray Jesus bringing into the world a divine holiness that overpowers the causes of defilement: sin, disease, demons, and even death. The Jews, especially the Pharisees, considered those defiled by these things to be unclean and untouchable; Jesus, however, takes an offensive stance against evil and by his mighty words (8:13, 16, 26, 32; 9:6) and physical touch (8:3, 15; 9:21, 25, 29) heals the effects of sin. He was not only immune to uncleanness, but the superior power of his holiness went forth to purify others in his midst. These episodes also reveal Jesus' favor with the crowds (8:1, 16, 18; 9:8, 31, 33) as well as mounting opposition by skeptical authorities (9:3, 34). [Back to text.](#)

8:2 a leper: Leprosy infects human skin, garments, and homes (Lev 13-14). The skin disease was to be diagnosed by a Levitical priest. If the infection spread, the victim was pronounced ritually unclean and was excluded from the social and religious life of Israel. The Law required lepers to live in isolation and maintain a ragged appearance (Lev 13:45-46). Since contact with lepers rendered others unclean, it was shocking by Jewish standards for Jesus to cure the man by touching him (7:3). His ability is later recalled as a messianic credential (11:5). [Back to text.](#)



8:4 the gift that Moses commanded: The Law required anyone healed of leprosy to be examined by a Levitical priest (Lev 13:1-3). Upon approval, the individual would undertake procedures for cleansing and reinstatement into the covenant life of Israel. This entailed a sacrifice tailored to his ability to pay (Lev 14:1-32). • *Symbolically* (St. Augustine, *Quaest. Evan.* 2, 40): Jesus' cleansing of the leper signifies the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Leprosy represents mortal sin, the spiritual disease that extinguishes grace from the soul and impedes one's full participation in the Church. This condition can also be contagious and influence others through scandal and false contrition. The Levitical priest typifies New Covenant priests, who are instrumental in reconciling sinners with God and restoring them to spiritual health through the sacrament. [Back to text.](#)

8:5 centurion: A Roman military commander of 100 soldiers. Emphasis falls on his ethnic identity as a Gentile who has faith in Jesus (8:10). According to Luke, he was favorable to the Jewish nation and responsible for building a synagogue in Capernaum (Lk 7:5). [Back to text.](#)



8:8 Lord, I am not worthy: Demonstrates great faith and humility. Jesus "marveled" (8:10) that such virtue was displayed by a Gentile. • These words are adapted for use in the Roman liturgy. Unworthy to receive the Eucharist, Christians ask to be cleansed of personal faults and place their faith in the healing power of God's word (CCC 1386). [Back to text.](#)



8:11 sit at table: Alludes to an OT promise of a great feast to accompany the messianic age (Is 25:6-9). [See note on Mt 22:2.](#) **Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob:** Jesus hints at the universal spread of the gospel to all nations in the Church (28:19). • These OT patriarchs are linked with God's covenant oath to Abraham that all nations would eventually share his blessings (Gen 22:18; CCC 543). The covenant was renewed with Isaac (Gen 26:3-5) and Jacob (Gen 28:14). [Back to text.](#)



8:12 weep and gnash their teeth: Describes the pangs of the damned excluded from the heavenly banquet (22:13). • Similar language in the OT portrays the wicked who slander the righteous with hatred and disgust (Job 16:9; Ps 37:12; 112:10). [Back to text.](#)



8:17 He took our infirmities: A formula quotation from Is 53:4. Jesus fulfills this role by physical healings. Peter evokes the same OT context to speak also of Jesus' spiritual healing of sinners (1 Pet 2:24-25; cf. Is 53:5-6). • Isaiah foretold of a Servant figure who would take Israel's sins upon himself and heal God's people (Is 52:13-53:12). This Servant would inaugurate the restoration of the tribes of Israel and bring the Gentiles to the family of God (Is 49:6). Matthew sees Jesus in this role, ushering in the kingdom by expelling demons and healing diseases. The close relationship between sin and physical affliction is assumed (cf. Ps 107:17; Is 33:24; CCC 1505). [Back to text.](#)



8:22 Follow me: Discipleship is based on the imitation of Christ (11:29). Unlike the apostles, who left their occupations and families

(4:19, 22; 9:9), this would-be follower of Jesus is hesitant to embrace the demanding call (8:21). **bury their own dead:** Burial was a sacred duty in ancient Judaism (Gen 50:5; Tob 4:3-4). Jesus singles out the custom to emphasize the greater importance of discipleship. Allegiance to Jesus must outweigh even family commitments (10:37; 19:29; Lk 14:26). Those who are spiritually dead (i.e., clinging to worldly concerns) can bury the physically dead. Jesus does not thereby undermine the propriety of burial but uses it as a stepping-stone to illustrate the higher demands of the Christian life. • The episode resembles Elijah's call of Elisha to be his follower (1 Kings 19:19-21). Unlike Elijah, however, Jesus denies the request to fulfill parental duties, showing that discipleship in the New Covenant has higher demands than in the Old. • Following Jesus, the Church considers burial a corporal work of mercy (CCC 2447). [Back to text.](#)



8:23-27 Here Jesus reveals his divine authority over creation. [See note on Mt 8:27.](#) • Jesus' stilling of the storm parallels the experience of Jonah in the OT (Jon 1:116). **(1)** Both set sail on a **boat** (8:23; Jon 1:3); **(2)** both are caught in a **storm on the sea** (8:24; Jon 1:4, 11); **(3)** both are found **asleep** (8:24; Jon 1:5); **(4)** both are accompanied by frightened sailors (8:24-26; Jon 1:5); **(5)** both groups of sailors call upon the Lord for deliverance (8:25; Jon 1:14); **(6)** both are instrumental in bringing about a **great calm** (8:26; Jon 1:12, 15); **(7)** and the sailors in both episodes **marveled** at the outcome (8:27; Jon 1:16). Jesus' identity as a new Jonah is mentioned elsewhere, in 12:39-41 and 16:4. [See note on Mk 4:35-41.](#) • *Morally* (St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 28): the wave-tossed boat signifies the struggles of the Christian life. Endangered by the wind and fierce waves, God's people are awakened by spiritual assaults and become aware of their helplessness. They call upon the Lord for salvation and inner peace. The near presence of Christ assures their deliverance, and his swiftness strengthens their wavering faith. [Back to text.](#)

8:24 storm: The Greek term *seismos* literally means "earthquake", as in 24:7, 27:54, and 28:2. It here describes the violent conditions of the sea. [Back to text.](#)

8:26 rebuked: The verb (Gk. *epitimaō*) is elsewhere used in connection with exorcisms and the rebuking of Satan himself (17:18; Mk 1:25; Lk

4:41; Jude 1:9). [Back to text.](#)

8:27 winds and sea obey him: The OT credits God alone with authority over the sea (Job 26:11-14; Ps 89:8-10; 93:4; 107:28-31). Aware of this, the disciples marvel and question Jesus' identity. Their uncertainty indicates that Jesus manifested his divinity gradually; it was not until later that they worshiped him as the "Son of God" (14:33). [Back to text.](#)

8:28 the Gadarenes: The city of Gadara was about six miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee. It was one of the Decapolis cities (cf. 4:25), and its population was predominantly Gentile. This non-Jewish setting is reinforced by the presence and herding of swine in 8:30, animals considered unclean by the Mosaic Law (Lev 11:7-8). [Back to text.](#)



8:32 into the sea: Jesus manifests divine power by his control over demons. • In the OT, waters represent hostile forces (Ps 69:1-4) that are sometimes personified as beasts that rise out of the sea (Dan 7:1-3; cf. Rev 13:1). By driving the demon-possessed beasts back into the sea, Jesus symbolically demonstrates his triumph over the legions of Satan's kingdom. [Back to text.](#)

9:1 his own city: Capernaum in Galilee (cf. 4:13; Mk 2:1). [Back to text.](#)

9:3 the scribes: Jewish leaders and experts in the Mosaic Law. The episode marks the beginning of a growing resistance to Jesus, which culminates in his death (16:21; 20:18; 27:41-43). **blaspheming:** A charge leveled at Jesus for his claim to absolve sins (cf. Lev 24:16; Jn 10:33). From the scribes' perspective, only God can rightly forgive (Ps 103:12; Is 43:25; Mk 2:7). Moreover, this forgiveness was available only through the sacrificial system of the Temple. Jesus' actions hence prove scandalous: he not only claims to forgive, but he does so apart from the Old Covenant system. In the end, the scribes remain unaware that Jesus has divine authority to inaugurate the New Covenant (Jer 31:31-34; CCC 589). [Back to text.](#)



9:6 that you may know: Since forgiveness cannot be verified by his audience, Jesus demonstrates his power by healing the man. His authority over paralysis points beyond the body— it signifies his ability to cure the soul. The OT indicates that bodily sickness is sometimes tangible evidence of sin (Ps 107:17; Is 33:24; cf. Jn 5:14; 9:2). • *Anagogically* (St. Ambrose,

In Luc.), the healing of the paralytic signifies the future resurrection of the faithful. The paralytic is the Christian whose sins are forgiven and who stands before God as son (9:2). When the Lord raises him (9:7), he will take up the bed of his body (9:7) and proceed to his heavenly home with God (9:6; cf. Jn 14:2-3). [Back to text.](#)



9:8 authority to men: The crowd links Jesus' authority with his power to forgive. • Matthew's description points forward to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. After his Resurrection, Jesus invests other men (apostles) with this same power to forgive sins in his name (Jn 20:23; cf. Mt 18:18; CCC 1441, 1444). [Back to text.](#)

9:9 the tax office: Collecting taxes in the territory of Herod Antipas (Galilee) involved frequent contact with Gentiles. Many religious Jews thus despised the occupation, considering tax collectors socially equivalent to "sinners" (9:10; 11:19) and Gentiles (18:17). Undeterred by this religious and cultural convention, Jesus invites Matthew to break with his livelihood and **follow** him. Matthew's former life as a sinner only increased his need to be a disciple. [Back to text.](#)



9:13 I desire mercy: Jesus challenges the Pharisees with Hos 6:6 (12:7). Understanding the prophet's message will explain Jesus' fellowship with "those who are sick" (9:12). • Hosea addressed the Northern Kingdom of Israel and declared them sick and wounded by sin (Hos 5:13). Their rebellion against Yahweh (Hos 4:1-2), their rejection of the Jerusalem Temple, and their preference for idolatrous sacrifices (Hos 4:13-14; 8:11-13; 13:2) made this sickness deadly. The real tragedy is that Yahweh appointed Israel to be a physician to the nations, yet Israel acted irresponsibly and so contracted the very illness (idolatry) they were supposed to eradicate. Jesus cites Hosea to make an implied comparison between the prophet's sinful contemporaries and his own critical opponents, the Pharisees. Just as the Northern Kingdom of Israel rejected the royal son of David (the Judean king) to sacrifice to idols, so the Pharisees have rejected the messianic Son of David (Jesus) in preference to the sacrificial and purity regulations of the Mosaic Law. By eating with sinners and tax collectors—whom the Pharisees considered unclean and untouchable—Jesus claims to fulfill Israel's original vocation by reaching out to the sick

with divine mercy. [See note on Mt 5:20](#). **not to call the righteous:** Jesus came, not to perpetuate the Old Covenant, but to inaugurate the New Covenant of forgiveness (Jer 31:31-34). His frequent fellowship with sinners was central to this healing work (9:12). [Back to text](#).



9:15 the bridegroom: A depiction of Jesus found elsewhere in Matthew (25:1-13). [See note on Mk 2:19](#). • Similar OT imagery depicts Yahweh as the husband of Old Covenant Israel (Is 54:5; Jer 3:20; Hos 2:14-20). Jesus takes this role upon himself and is now the divine spouse of the New Covenant Church (Jn 3:29; Eph 5:25; Rev 19:7-9; CCC 796). **The days will come:** Only after Jesus' departure (Passion and Ascension) is fasting appropriate (cf. 6:16). [Back to text](#).



9:16 an old garment: An image of the Old Covenant. It suggests that Jesus viewed it as a "worn out" piece of clothing ready to be cast off. • According to Ps 102:26, the Old Covenant world was scheduled to "wear out like a garment" (cf. Heb 1:10-12; Is 65:17; Rev 21:1). [Back to text](#).

9:17 new wine . . . old wineskins: Fermenting wine is accompanied by a build-up of pressure. If kept in skins already used and dried out, the wine would certainly **burst** them. Jesus thus illustrates the impossibility of inaugurating the New Covenant while maintaining the Old. The abundance of New Covenant grace cannot be contained within the structures of the Old Covenant (cf. Jn 1:16). A new kingdom is needed to contain it—one fashioned to endure for ever. [Back to text](#).

9:18 a ruler: Mark 5:22 and Lk 8:41 refer to him as "Jairus", head of the local Capernaum synagogue. [Back to text](#).

9:20 fringe of his garment: According to the Mosaic Law, Israelites were instructed to wear "tassels on the corners of their garments" (Num 15:38; cf. Mt 14:36; 23:5). These were outward reminders to follow God's commandments. [Back to text](#).

9:27 Son of David: A messianic title for Jesus, used eight times in Matthew. It is sometimes linked with Jesus' healings and exorcisms (20:30-34; CCC 439). [See note on Mt 12:23](#). [Back to text](#).



9:36 compassion: Those needing spiritual and physical ' healing lie close to Jesus' heart (14:14; 15:32; 20:34). **like sheep without a shepherd:** A familiar OT simile. • Sheep often represent the people of Israel (1 Kings 22:17; Jud 11:19; Jer 23:1-3; Zech 10:2). Shepherd imagery is used for Israel's spiritual leaders. **(1)** Joshua was Moses' successor and the "shepherd" of Israel (Num 27:17). **(2)** David was elected to "shepherd" Israel as its king (2 Sam 5:2-3). **(3)** In Ezek 34, God himself promised to set "one shepherd" (Ezek 34:23) over his people to feed and protect them as a new Davidic king (Ezek 34:23-24; cf. Jer 23:1-6). Jesus draws on these to illustrate his own role as the Shepherd and King of the restored Israel, the Church (25:31-34; Jn 10:16; 1 Pet 2:25). [Back to text.](#)

9:37 the laborers are few: Anticipates the following narrative, where Jesus chooses the apostles as laborers to shepherd the "lost sheep" of Israel (10:6; cf. Jer 23:4; Mt 15:24). [Back to text.](#)

10:1-11:1 The second major discourse in Matthew (see outline). Jesus selects twelve apostles and delivers a "missionary sermon" before sending them to the surrounding Galilean villages and charging them to preach that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (10:7; cf. 3:2; 4:17). Jesus confers on the apostles the same authority of healing and exorcism displayed during his early ministry (10:1, 8; cf. 4:23, 24; 9:35). [Back to text.](#)

10:2 the twelve: Jesus chooses 12 patriarchs, like the 12 sons of Israel in the OT, to carry out his mission (Gen 35:22-26). In doing so, he designates the Church as the restored Israel (cf. 19:28; Gal 6:16). **apostles:** The Greek term *apostolos* means "one who is sent forth" (cf. 10:5) and invested with the authority of the sender (cf. 10:40). See chart: *The Twelve Apostles* at Mk 3. [Back to text.](#)

10:5 nowhere among the Gentiles: Jesus sends the apostles only to the Israelites of Galilee (10:6). This reflects the order and direction of salvation history. Since God adopted them as his "own possession" (Ex 19:5) and lavished them with privileges (Rom 9:4, 5), it was appropriate that they first hear the New Covenant gospel (cf. Acts 1:8; Rom 1:16). After Jesus' Resurrection, the apostles are sent also to the Gentiles (28:18-20; Mk 16:16; CCC 543). [See note on Mt 4:12.](#) [Back to text.](#)

10:14 shake off the dust: Palestinian Jews shook dust from their sandals when leaving Gentile territory and reentering the Holy Land. It was a

derogatory statement against the uncleanness of Gentiles as pagans. Jesus commands a similar gesture to signify judgment on those who reject the gospel (Lk 10:10-12; Acts 13:51). [Back to text.](#)

10:23 before the Son of man: Jesus promised to come again within the generation of the living apostles (16:28; 24:34). As a prelude to his Second Coming, this initial "coming" refers to his visitation of destruction upon unfaithful Jerusalem in A.D. 70, an event that destroyed his enemies and vindicated his words of judgment (24:2). [See note on Mt 24:1-25:46](#) and topical essay: [Jesus the Son of Man](#) at Lk 17. [Back to text.](#)

10:25 Beelzebul: A Philistine god worshiped at Ekron (2 Kings 1:2-16). It translates something like "Prince Baal", a well-known god of the Canaanites. Jews mockingly changed its meaning to "lord of flies" or "lord of dung". In the Gospels, it refers to Satan, "the prince of demons" (9:34; 12:24-27; Mk 3:22; Lk 11:15). [Back to text.](#)

10:28 do not fear: Human agents of persecution are not to be feared. Men can impose suffering and death on the body but cannot force spiritual death on the soul. Jesus uses this distinction between body and soul to contrast the relative value of earthly life with the absolute good of eternal life in heaven (CCC 363). **rather fear him:** Since Satan deceives and tempts souls into sin, he should be feared and resisted as our worst enemy (Eph 6:11; Jas 4:7; 1 Pet 5:8-10). In view of the similar expression in Is 8:12-13, God should also be feared. He alone administers perfect justice and can send the faithless to eternal punishment (3:12; 25:41). A holy fear of God is thus necessary to avoid sin and its consequences (Ex 20:20; Phil 2:12). [Back to text.](#)

10:38 take his cross: A striking image of the demands and consequences of discipleship. Jews needed no explanation of it, since the Romans utilized crucifixion as a torturous means of execution for many criminals during NT times. Jesus here assures us that faithfulness will entail self-denial, suffering, and possibly death. Before his Passion, the cross symbolized shame and rejection; afterward it symbolizes the glory of Christian martyrdom (CCC 1506). [See note on Mk 15:24.](#) [Back to text.](#)

10:42 these little ones: i.e., the apostles. They must rely on the hospitality of others for daily necessities during their mission (11:9-11). Service rendered to them is service to Jesus himself (11:40; 25:34-36). Children are elsewhere used as examples in Jesus' teaching on faith in 18:1-4 and 19:13-15. [Back to text.](#)

11:2 deeds of the Christ: i.e., the works and credentials of the awaited Messiah. Jesus performs messianic signs in Galilee in chaps. 8-9 (11:5). His works stir such great public interest that **John** hears of his ministry even in **prison**. [Back to text.](#)



11:5 the blind . . . the lame . . . lepers: Jesus' miracles recall Isaian prophecy and link him with an agent of God's healing (Is 26:19; 29:18; 35:4-6; 61:1-2; CCC 549). [See note on Mt 8:17.](#) [Back to text.](#)

11:7 A reed shaken . . . ?: John is not swayed by earthly comforts or diverted from the path of discipline. [Back to text.](#)



11:10 Behold, I send: John the Baptist's ministry recalls Mal 3:1 (Sir 48:9-10). As in Is 40:3 (Mt 3:3), this **messenger** is also the Lord's forerunner. • Malachi's prophecies associate the Lord's forerunner with Elijah, the great prophet of the OT (Mal 4:5). Jesus views John as this prophet, who preaches repentance to Israel in the "spirit" of Elijah (Lk 1:17) and offers God's faithful remnant a final opportunity for salvation (11:15). Even John's clothing recalls Elijah's distinctive dress. [See note on Mt 3:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)

11:11 no one greater: John is the greatest OT prophet (11:9). In the New Covenant, however, even the least NT saint outshines the most illustrious saints of old. These prophets looked ahead to the New Covenant but did not share fully in its blessings (13:17; 1 Pet 1:10-12). Jesus thus contrasts the Old and New Covenants; he does not undermine the saintly life of John (CCC 523, 719). [Back to text.](#)

11:12 suffered violence: Notoriously obscure. Some interpret the word *violence* as a reference to asceticism. In this case, it is those who discipline themselves by prayer and fasting who seize hold of the kingdom. From a historical viewpoint, it seems likely that Jesus is referring to the onset of the "messianic woes". This was the Jewish expectation that the kingdom of God would come during a time of intense tribulation and distress. These days would witness mass apostasy, rampant lawlessness, and a violent persecution of the saints. John the Baptist, executed for his witness to the Messiah (14:10), is the first of the faithful to perish with the arrival of these woeful days. Jesus will suffer the same violence (20:18-19), as will his disciples (10:17-18, 23; 24:9). [Back to text.](#)

11:17 Jesus exposes the excuses of his contemporaries. The children's song highlights both the joyousness of a wedding (**We piped**) reflected in Jesus' ministry (11:19; 9:15), and the solemnity of a funeral (**we wailed**) reflected in John's ministry of penance. The unbelievers of Jesus' generation (11:16) refuse invitations to embrace the kingdom. [Back to text.](#)



11:19 a glutton and a drunkard: Jesus is accused of dangerous and irreligious behavior. • Many viewed Jesus as a "stubborn and rebellious" son, in accordance with Deut 21:20. Evoking the context of this OT verse, they implied that Jesus should be killed (Deut 21:21). **wisdom . . . her deeds:** Recalls OT traditions that personify wisdom (Prov 8-9; Wis 7:22-8:21; Sir 51:13-30). Jesus transfers these to himself in light of his messianic signs (11:1-5). Paul similarly regards Jesus as "our wisdom" (1 Cor 1:30). [See note on Mt 11:28-30.](#) [Back to text.](#)

11:21 Chorazin . . . Bethsaida: Two cities north of the Sea of Galilee. Both are within five miles of Jesus' home in Capernaum, and both are unresponsive to his ministry. Privileged by Jesus' presence and works, they bear greater guilt for rejecting him than the Gentile cities of **Tyre and Sidon**, north of Palestine on the coast of Phoenicia (cf. Lk 12:48). [Back to text.](#)



11:23 Capernaum: Jesus' home during his Galilean ministry (4:13). Like his childhood home of Nazareth, this city too rejects Jesus and his works (13:53-58; Lk 4:16-30). • Jesus' rebuke upon the city recalls God's judgment on the king of Babylon in Is 14:13-15. • *Morally:* Capernaum signifies the soul that receives Christ but falls into mortal sin. Because Christ dwelt there, the fallen-away and prideful soul is subject to harsher judgment (2 Pet 2:20-22; CCC 678). **Sodom:** The city destroyed by God in Gen 19:24-25. It was a proverbial OT example of sexual sin and inhospitality that called down God's wrath (Is 1:9; Jer 23:14; Ezek 16:44-46; Amos 4:11). [Back to text.](#)



11:25-27 Jesus' thanksgiving prayer stands in contrast to the preceding narrative (11:20-24). While several towns reject Christ, there is a remnant (including the disciples) who trust him with the simplicity of

infants (11:25; cf. 18:1-4; 19:13-15). Jesus' language is similar to several statements in John's Gospel that articulate his unique relationship with the Father (Jn 3:35; 10:14-15; 17:25). • The intimacy between the Father and Son points to their oneness within the Blessed Trinity—i.e., their shared divine knowledge implies a shared divine nature. [Back to text.](#)



11:28-30 Jesus invites disciples to follow and learn from him as the model of perfect obedience to the Father (11:27; CCC 520). • Jesus evokes "wisdom's" invitation to the humble in the OT. In Sir 51, wisdom calls "Draw near to me" (51:23), "put your neck under the yoke" (51:26), and "see with your eyes that I have labored little and found for myself much rest" (51:27). These parallels reinforce Jesus' self-identification as "wisdom" in 11:19. [Back to text.](#)

11:29 you will find rest: Jesus' invitation cues the following controversies regarding the spiritual significance of the Sabbath (12:1-14). While the Old Covenant celebration of the Sabbath centered on earthly rest from earthly labor (Ex 20:8-11), Jesus offers heavenly rest in the New (Heb 4:1-11). [Back to text.](#)



12:2 not lawful . . . on the sabbath: The Pharisees charge the disciples with violating Ex 34:21, which forbids harvesting on the Sabbath. Although Deut 23:25 differentiates between plucking grain and harvesting it, the Pharisees forbade even plucking grain by a rigid extension of the Exodus prohibition. • *Allegorically* (St. Hilary, *In Matt.* 12, 2): Christ's passing through the field signifies his passing into the world through the Incarnation. The standing grain is the harvest of souls ready to believe in the gospel and be gathered into the Church by the hungry disciples. [Back to text.](#)



12:3 have you not read: An insult to the intellectual pride of the Pharisees. Jesus uses the question to humble learned leaders who lack childlike faith (12:5; 19:4; 21:16, 42; 22:31). • Jesus draws on the parallels between 1 Sam 21:1-6 and his own situation. As David's companions were **hungry** (12:1), so were the disciples; as David was heir to the united kingdom of Israel, so Jesus is the son of David. He thus implies that if his

disciples are in sin, then David himself would stand guilty—a conclusion nowhere suggested in the OT. This is the first premise of Jesus' response to the Pharisees. [See note on Mt 12:7.](#) [Back to text.](#)

12:5 profane the sabbath: Levitical priests worked every sabbath, replacing the bread of Presence in the Temple (Lev 24:5-9) and offering sacrifice (Num 28:9-10). Nevertheless, they remained **guiltless** (CCC 582, 2173). [Back to text.](#)



12:6 greater than the temple: The Jerusalem Temple was spectacular because it housed the very presence of God among his people. • God's presence in Jesus, as the divine Son, exceeds that in the Temple (1:23). The earthly sanctuary thus prefigured God's more intimate presence in the world through Christ. The NT elsewhere compares the humanity of Jesus Christ to the wilderness Tabernacle (Jn 1:14) and the Temple (Jn 2:19-21) (CCC 590). See chart: *Jesus and the Old Testament.* [Back to text.](#)

12:7 I desire mercy: Quoted from Hos 6:6. Earlier Jesus challenged the Pharisees to study and learn the meaning of this oracle (9:13), and Hosea's words here complete Jesus' apologetic against the Pharisees. His logic proceeds: **(1)** Mercy is more important than Temple regulations (12:3-4); **(2)** the Temple laws themselves take precedence over the Sabbath (12:5); **(3)** therefore, mercy is more important than the Sabbath (CCC 2100). [Back to text.](#)

12:9-14 Jesus asserts his Lordship over the Sabbath (12:8). Since the Sabbath was meant for man's good, doing good works on the Sabbath cannot be construed as unlawful. If the Pharisees are willing to save one of their livestock, they should be more willing to see a crippled man relieved of his burden on the same day. In short, the Sabbath forbids servile works, not works of mercy. [Back to text.](#)

12:14 took counsel: The Pharisees' conspiracy marks their complete rejection of Jesus. [See note on Mt 27:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)



12:18-21 A reference to Is 42:1-4. The Father evokes this same passage at Jesus' Baptism (3:17). Note that **servant** (Gk. *pais*) can be translated "son". • Matthew cites Isaiah for three reasons. **(1)** It summarizes his portrait of Christ: Jesus is the Father's **beloved** Son (3:17; 4:3; 11:25-27) and the **Servant** of the Lord (8:17; 11:5), anointed by the **Spirit** (3:16), who

brings God's grace to the **Gentiles** (8:5-13). **(2)** The citation is fulfilled when Jesus withdraws from his enemies and ministers to the lowly (12:20)—he has no regard for public acclaim (12:16, 19). **(3)** It points forward to link Jesus' exorcisms with the power of the Spirit (12:28) (CCC 713). [Back to text.](#)

12:23 the Son of David?: The question reflects the Jewish tradition that King Solomon, the son of David, was empowered by God to exorcize demons (cf. Wis 7:20). Similar abilities were expected of the coming Davidic Messiah. [Back to text.](#)

12:24 only by Beelzebul: The Pharisees' spiritual blindness led them to blasphemy—i.e., they thought Jesus was an agent of Satan's kingdom (CCC 574). [See note on Mt 10:25.](#) [Back to text.](#)

12:25-26 Jesus uses the images of a **kingdom**, **city**, and **house** as cryptic allusions to the city and Temple of Jerusalem. By Jesus' day, Jerusalem had reached a point of spiritual crisis. Long known as the Holy City, it was now the center of diabolical resistance to Jesus, with its leadership squarely opposed to the kingdom of heaven. Even the Temple was by then "forsaken and desolate" (23:38). The Pharisees' conspiracy (12:14) thus exposes them as unwitting collaborators and representatives of Satan's kingdom. With Jesus' Crucifixion, the power of Satan is finally destroyed—a fact later evidenced by the plundering of his city (Jerusalem) and house (Temple) in A.D. 70 (12:29) (CCC 550). See notes on [Mt 23:38](#) and [24:1-25:46](#). [Back to text.](#)

12:31 blasphemy against the Spirit: i.e., the sin of attributing to Satan the work of God. It is a mature spiritual hardness that directs sinners away from God's mercy and ends in final impenitence. One who blasphemes the Spirit cannot receive forgiveness when he refuses to repent and seek forgiveness. It is this sin that the Pharisees commit in 12:24 (CCC 1864). [See note on Mk 3:29.](#) [Back to text.](#)

JESUS AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

Matthew frequently quotes OT passages to establish Jesus' credentials as the Messiah. However, Jesus and Matthew often allude to the OT in more subtle ways by drawing comparisons between ancient persons, places, and events and Jesus himself. This form of OT interpretation is called *typology*. A typological reading of the OT is attuned to distinctive "rhymes" in salvation history where God acts in similar (or typical) ways each time he reveals himself and delivers his people. Thus the Father teaches us about himself through the use of things and events long familiar in the minds of his people; in short, he uses old truths to instruct us about new ones. Jesus and Matthew look back on several OT figures and institutions to bring the surpassing glory of Christ and the New Covenant into focus. The great heroes and memories of old bring clarity to the greater person of Christ. The coming of Jesus marks the dramatic climax to the OT story as he fulfills all of the *types* that God prepared throughout the history of salvation.

NEW MOSES

As the supreme lawgiver of the Old Covenant, Moses prefigures Christ, who gives the New Law in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7). Jesus also reenacts experiences from Moses' infancy and the prophet's 40 days of fasting in solitude (Mt 4:2; Ex 34:28). Finally, Moses bears witness to Jesus' greater glory at the Transfiguration (Mt 17:1-5), where Jesus is showcased as the prophet-like-Moses (Mt 17:5; Deut 18:15).

NEW DAVID

As Israel's ideal king, David foreshadows the role of Jesus, who assumes his royal throne forever (Mt 1:1; 2:2; Lk 1:32-33). Jesus is greater than David (Mt 22:41-45); his hungry disciples, like David's companions, are permitted to breach the Sabbath (Mt 12:3). As David gave Israel rest from its enemies (2 Sam 7:1), Jesus saves Israel from its sins (Mt 1:21).

NEW TEMPLE

The Jerusalem Temple housed the presence of God in the midst of Israel. Similarly, Jesus comes bearing within himself God's glory in a more profound way; he embodies divine holiness (Mt 1:23; 12:6; Jn 1:14; 2:19-21). It is thus the Temple—God's dwelling among his people—that prepared Israel to accept Christ's Incarnation. His presence is likewise embodied in a new spiritual Temple, the Church (Mt 16:18; 18:20).

NEW ISRAEL

As Israel's Messiah, Jesus reenacts the experience of the Israelites and their Exodus from Egypt (Mt 2:15). He endures a 40-day period of testing in the wilderness, corresponding to Israel's 40 years of testing. Unlike wayward Israel, Jesus prevails over the devil through his obedience and trust in God (Mt 4:1-11). Jesus' disciples are now assigned Israel's vocation to be a light to the world (Mt 5:14; Is 42:6).

NEW SOLOMON

Solomon the "son of David", prefigures Jesus as the royal Son of God (Mt 16:16; 2 Sam 7:14). Like Solomon, he receives gifts from the nations (Mt 2:11; 1 Kings 10:23-25). As the wise Solomon (1 Kings 3:12) built Israel's Temple (2 Sam 7:12-14), Jesus is wisdom-in-the-flesh (Mt 11:19; 12:42) and God's designated builder of the new Temple, the Church (Mt 16:18).

NEW JONAH

Jonah was a Hebrew prophet. His experience sleeping on a ship and calming a storm (Jon 1:1-16) anticipates that of Jesus with his disciples (Mt 8:23-27). Jonah's three days in the belly of the great fish foreshadows the death and third-day Resurrection of Jesus (Mt 12:39-41). In addition, the ministry of Jonah to the Ninevites beyond the borders of Israel anticipates the spread of Christ's gospel to all nations (Mt 28:18-20). [Back to Matthew 12:1.](#)

12:36 every careless word: Spoken insults call down God's judgment (5:21-26). The NT frequently notes that gossip, slandering, and lies are serious sins, inconsistent with holiness and purity of speech (2 Cor 12:20; Eph 4:25-32; Jas 3:1-12). [Back to text.](#)



12:41 greater than Jonah: Jesus' teaching (16:4) and experiences (8:23-27) recall the ministry of the prophet Jonah. • Jonah prefigures Jesus in two ways: **(1)** His three days in the whale foreshadow Jesus' Resurrection on the third day (12:40; 16:21); **(2)** he prefigures Jesus as a prophet to the Gentiles. As Jonah preached to Nineveh in Assyria (Jon 3:2), so Jesus ministers to Gentiles (8:5-13; 15:21-28) and commissions the international spread of the gospel (28:19; Lk 24:45-47). See chart: *Jesus and the Old Testament*. [Back to text.](#)



12:42 greater than Solomon: The connections between Jesus and King Solomon are elsewhere more implicit (2:11; 12:23; 16:18). • Solomon was the quintessential wise man and Temple builder of the OT (1 Kings 4:29-34; 5-8). As the son of David and heir to his kingdom, Solomon reigned over all Israel and extended his dominion over other nations (1 Kings 4:20-21). He thus prefigured Christ as the son of David (1:1), the embodiment of wisdom (11:19), the new Temple builder (16:18), and the divine ruler of both the 12 tribes of Israel (19:28) and the nations of the world (28:19). See chart: *Jesus and the Old Testament*. [Back to text.](#)

12:44-46 A parable about Jesus' generation. It may be understood in two ways. **(1)** It is a warning to those who benefit from Jesus' *ministry* without embracing his *message* and its demands. Since one must be not only emptied of evil but filled with divine goodness, the messianic works of Jesus should lead people to accept his messianic kingdom; otherwise they land themselves in a worse state than before (2 Pet 2:20-22). **(2)** The controversy over exorcisms in the preceding context (12:22-29) sets the stage for Jesus to establish the superiority of his New Covenant ministry over the Old as administered by the Pharisees. Although the Pharisees expel evil spirits ("your sons" [12:27]), they leave a vacuum that exposes individuals to more severe counterattacks from Satan. Jesus also drives out demons, but, unlike the Pharisees, he fills believers with the greater power of his kingdom through the Spirit (12:28). Jesus' contemporaries must

prefer these blessings of his kingdom ministry to the real but limited benefits of the Pharisees' ministry; otherwise they are left vulnerable to spiritual catastrophes worse than before. [Back to text.](#)



12:45 this evil generation: Many in Jesus' day refused their inheritance, i.e., God's heavenly kingdom. • The expression recalls Deut 1:35 and description of Israel in the wilderness. They saw many signs during the Exodus but refused to trust God. God thus swore their "evil generation" would perish in the desert (Num 14:21-23). Jesus sees a parallel situation before him: granting the Pharisees a "sign" (12:38) is useless; they have no intention of trusting him but want only to "destroy him" (12:14). [Back to text.](#)

12:46 his brethren: The NT often mentions Jesus' brethren (13:55; Mk 3:31; 6:3; Lk 8:19; Jn 2:12; 7:3; Acts 1:14; Gal 1:19). The Church maintains, however, that Jesus' Mother, Mary, remained a virgin throughout her life. These so-called brethren of Jesus are thus his relatives but not children of Mary. Four observations support the Church's tradition: **(1)** These brethren are never called the children of Mary, although Jesus himself is (Jn 2:1; 19:25; Acts 1:14). **(2)** Two names mentioned, James and Joseph, are sons of a different "Mary" in Mt 27:56 (Mk 15:40). **(3)** It is unlikely that Jesus would entrust his Mother to the Apostle John at his Crucifixion if she had other natural sons to care for her (Jn 19:26-27). **(4)** The word "brethren" (Gk. *adelphoi*) has a broader meaning than blood brothers. Since ancient Hebrew had no word for "cousin", it was customary to use "brethren" in the Bible for relationships other than blood brothers. In the Greek OT, a "brother" can be a nearly related cousin (1 Chron 23:21-22), a more remote kinsman (Deut 23:7; 2 Kings 10:13-14), an uncle or a nephew (Gen 13:8), or the relation between men bound by covenant (2 Sam 1:26; cf. 1 Sam 18:3). Continuing this OT tradition, the NT often uses "brother" or "brethren" in this wider sense. Paul uses it as a synonym for his Israelite kinsmen in Rom 9:3. It also denotes biologically unrelated Christians in the New Covenant family of God (Rom 8:29; 12:1; Col 1:2; Heb 2:11; Jas 1:2; CCC 500). [Back to text.](#)

12:50 will of my Father: Obedience to God the Father creates relationships greater than natural family bonds. Although Jesus had no biological siblings, his spiritual brothers and sisters are the adopted children

of God (Rom 8:29; 1 Jn 3:1). They are empowered to obey the Father as he did (cf. Jn 8:29; 1 Jn 3:710). [See note on Mt 12:46](#). **mother:** Far from undermining the role of Mary, Jesus reveals the true greatness of her divine maternity. After all, she was not merely his *natural* mother through generation, but she became the Mother of God precisely by embracing the Father's will (Lk 1:38, 43). Her relationship to Jesus—physical and spiritual—is thus magnified by Jesus' statement (CCC 495). [Back to text](#).

13:1-51 The parables of the kingdom. Jesus speaks of the hidden mysteries of God's kingdom present in the Church. Of the seven, the parables of the Wheat and the Weeds (13:24-30), the Hidden Treasure (13:44), the Pearl of Great Value (13:45-46), and the Dragnet (13:47-50) are found only in Matthew. [Back to text](#).



13:11 to you: Jesus speaks parables to the "great crowds" (13:2) but explains them only to his disciples. While the illustrations are clear enough—drawn from everyday life—the underlying truths remain obscure to the faithless (13:9, 13). **secrets of the kingdom:** The inner circle of disciples accept Jesus with faith and are privileged to know God's mysteries (13:36-43). • Jesus' private instruction of his disciples reflects his intention to arrange the Church hierarchically. He invests his authority in the apostles (and their successors) to administer the sacraments (28:19; Jn 20:23; 1 Cor 11:25) and transmit God's truth through their teaching (28:20; Jn 17:17-20; 1 Cor 4:1; CCC 888-90). [Back to text](#).



13:14-15 A reference to Is 6:9-10. • In context, God commissioned Isaiah to preach judgment to the Israelites for their covenant infidelity. Similarly, Jesus uses parables to proclaim God's judgment on the faithless of his generation (cf. Mk 4:12; Lk 8:10). [Back to text](#).

13:18-23 The parable of the Sower illustrates how indifferent responses to the **word of the kingdom** (13:19) prove unfruitful (CCC 29). Distractions come from the world (13:22; 19:24), the flesh (13:21; 10:22; 26:41), and the devil (13:19; 10:28). On the other hand, **fruit** brought forth from the responsive heart abounds (13:23). Fruit is a common biblical image for the good works and faithfulness that flow from God's grace (7:17; 12:33; cf. Ps 1:1-3; Jer 17:10; Jn 15:5; Gal 5:22-23). [Back to text](#).

13:25 sowed weeds: Probably "darnel", a slightly poisonous plant resembling wheat in the early stages of growth. Only when it fully matures can it be distinguished and separated from wheat (13:30). [Back to text.](#)



13:32 becomes a tree: The parable of the Mustard Seed illustrates the contrast in size between the seed and the mature shrub, reaching nearly ten feet in height. Jesus likewise sows the kingdom in a small band of disciples, expecting it to grow into a worldwide Church. • Similar metaphors used in the OT represent great empires as great trees (Ezek 31:1-13; Dan 4:12), including the kingdom of Israel (Ezek 17:22-24). In these instances, **birds** represent Gentile nations. Jesus' parable thus points to the spread of the gospel and acceptance of Gentiles into the Church (28:19). [Back to text.](#)

13:33 like leaven: Sometimes symbolic of evil in the world (16:5-12; 1 Cor 5:6-8). It has positive symbolism here. At one level, leaven represents the grace of the kingdom that sanctifies the world through the Church. At the personal level, leaven is the individual Christian called to bring the gospel to those around him. **three measures:** i.e., about 50 pounds of **meal**, which here symbolizes the world. The parable thus highlights a great disproportion: the little leaven is hidden yet actively raising a significant amount of meal. [Back to text.](#)

13:35 by the prophet: A reference to Ps 78:2, attributed to Asaph. In 2 Chron 29:30 of the Greek OT, Asaph is called a "prophet". In any case, all OT writers were inspired by the Spirit and thus prophets (cf. 22:43; 2 Pet 1:20-21). **what has been hidden:** Psalm 78:2 accents the positive function of parables: they enlighten the humble by revealing God's mysteries. See word study: [Parables.](#) [Back to text.](#)

13:36-43 The final separation of good and evil. Accordingly, God's forbearance toward sin and evil in the world will last only until the Last Judgment; in the meantime, saints and sinners will continue side by side in the Church. [See note on Mt 25:31-46.](#) [Back to text.](#)

13:36 went into the house: Jesus shifts attention from the "great crowds" (13:2) to his private instruction of the disciples. [See note on Mt 13:11.](#) [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Parables ([Mt 13:3](#))

Parabole (Gk.): A spoken or literary "comparison" between two things for illustration. The word is found 48 times in the Synoptic Gospels for short stories that use familiar images and word pictures to illustrate a truth or challenge a common outlook on life and religion. The term is found also in the Greek OT, where it frequently translates the Hebrew word *mashal*, a term for literary forms such as proverbs (1 Sam 10:12; 1 Kings 4:32), riddles (Ps 49:4; Sir 47:15), and allegories (Ezek 17:2; 24:3). Jesus uses parables in the NT for two purposes: to reveal and to conceal divine mysteries. (1) Parables invite the humble to reach behind the images and lay hold of God's truth (Mt 11:25; Mk 4:33). Parables sketch out earthly scenarios that reveal heavenly mysteries. (2) Conversely, they obstruct the proud and conceal divine mysteries from the unworthy. Parables thus have a second, albeit negative, function and are spoken as judgments on the faithless (cf. Is 6:9-10). In Matthew, Jesus shifts from straightforward teaching (chaps. 5-7) to parables (chap. 13) immediately following his rejection by the Pharisees (12:14). Like the OT prophets Jotham (Judg 9:7-15) and Nathan (2 Sam 12:1-6), Jesus speaks parables for the benefit of the faithful and the judgment of unbelievers.

13:39 the harvest: A biblical image for the Day of the Lord— i.e., the time when God will judge all nations (3:12; cf. Jer 51:33; Hos 6:11; Joel 3:13; Rev 14:14-16). [Back to text.](#)

13:42 gnashing of teeth: The wicked will experience punishment (CCC 1034). [See note on Mt 8:12.](#) [Back to text.](#)



13:43 shine like the sun: Those resurrected to eternal life share in Jesus' glory. • The expression evokes Dan 12:3. In context, Daniel foresees the general resurrection, when the "wise" will be delivered from God's judgment and "shine" for ever (Dan 12:1-4). [Back to text.](#)



13:44-46 Two parables, the Hidden Treasure (13:44) and the Pearl of Great Value (13:45-46), that underscore the same point. Both stress that the kingdom's value is inestimable, and surrendering earthly attachments is

required to obtain it (19:21, 29; Phil 3:8). This may entail literal poverty (religious) or spiritual poverty (5:3) for those whose state in life involves ownership of property (laity) (CCC 546). • *Allegorically* (St. Irenaeus, *AH* 4, 26, 1): Christ himself is the great treasure hidden within the field of the OT Scriptures. Only in light of his Cross and Resurrection can the mysteries of the Old be fully understood to announce the advent of God's Son. [Back to text.](#)

13:47-50 The parable of the Dragnet envisions the Day of Judgment when the righteous are separated from the wicked (compare 13:49 with 25:32). Leading up to this event, men and women are gathered into the kingdom from all nations, just as a **net** pulled through the **sea** collects various species of **fish**. The fishermen of the parable are the apostles and missionaries of the Church (see 4:18-19). The **angels** are elsewhere linked with the coming of Christ in judgment (16:27; 2 Thess 1:7). [Back to text.](#)

13:52 every scribe: Legal experts in first-century Judaism. Here it denotes the apostles instructed for the **kingdom**. Jesus equips them to evangelize and catechize (28:18-20) the world about the treasures hidden in the **old** Covenant and manifest in the **new**. Matthew's own ministry follows this pattern: he continually cites the OT to explain its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. [Back to text.](#)

13:55 his brethren: [See note on Mt 12:46.](#) [Back to text.](#)

14:1-12 John the Baptist's martyrdom is a narrative "flashback" on events of the past. Matthew's account has a double purpose: **(1)** It marks a clear distinction between John and Jesus in light of popular rumors about their identity (14:2; 16:14). **(2)** It underscores the high cost of Christian discipleship (5:1011; 10:39). The execution of John by governing authorities anticipates the fate of Jesus (17:12) and the early Christian martyrs (Rev 20:4). [Back to text.](#)

14:1 Herod the tetrarch: Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, who governed Galilee and Perea from 4 B.C. until A.D. 39. [See note on Mt 2:22.](#) [Back to text.](#)

14:4 It is not lawful: John publicly denounced the union of Herod Antipas and his mistress, Herodias. While the NT gives little background, extrabiblical history details how Antipas desired Herodias while she was married to his half-brother Herod Philip. Antipas and Herodias then abandoned their respective spouses in order to be united. The Mosaic Law, however, forbids the union of a man with his brother's wife while the

brother is still living (Lev 18:16; 20:21). Since Philip was yet living, John the Baptist spoke out against the union of Herod Antipas and Herodias and publicly disgraced them (Mk 6:19). [Back to text.](#)

14:9 he commanded it: Herod succumbed to peer pressure by swearing an illicit oath (14:7) before his distinguished guests (14:9). Condemning an innocent man without trial, he stands in a stream of immorality historically linked with the Herodian dynasty. See notes on [Mt 2:16](#) and [2:22](#). [Back to text.](#)



14:13-21 Jesus' multiplication of loaves appears in every Gospel. The event anticipates the Eucharist, a point that Matthew reinforces by using the same series of verbs (**taking . . . blessed . . . broke . . . gave**) here (14:19) and at the Last Supper (26:26; Mk 14:22). • The miracle also recalls the similar OT episode in 2 Kings 4:42-44, where the prophet Elisha multiplied 20 barley loaves (Jn 6:9) to feed 100 men, with some left over (CCC 1335). • *Morally* (St. John, Patriarch of Alexandria; Theophylact): the five loaves signify alms given to the poor (cf. 6:2-4). As here, the size of the donation is less significant than the generosity of one's heart (cf. Lk 21:1-4; 2 Cor 9:6-8). Gifts given to the poor are, in return, multiplied by God back to the giver as treasure in heaven (6:19-21; CCC 1434). [Back to text.](#)



14:19 the disciples gave them: Jesus feeds the crowd through the hands of the apostles. • The disciples' intermediary role points forward to their priesthood (cf. 15:36). They distribute the bread provided by Jesus in anticipation of the eucharistic liturgy, where the priests of the New Covenant give the Bread of Life as Holy Communion to the Church (1 Cor 10:16; CCC 1329). [Back to text.](#)

14:25 the fourth watch: The 12 hours of the night between 6 P.M. and 6 A.M. were divided into four "watches" (cf. Mk 13:35). This event took place between 3 and 6 A.M. and suggests the disciples were battling the storm most of the night. **walking on the sea:** [See note on Mt 8:27.](#) [Back to text.](#)



14:27 it is I: Literally, "I am." • In light of his power over nature, Jesus' statement may allude to God's self-revelation at the burning bush (Ex

3:14; cf. Jn 8:58; 18:5, 6). Jesus thus goes beyond reassuring the disciples and claims for himself a divine identity and authority (14:33). [Back to text.](#)

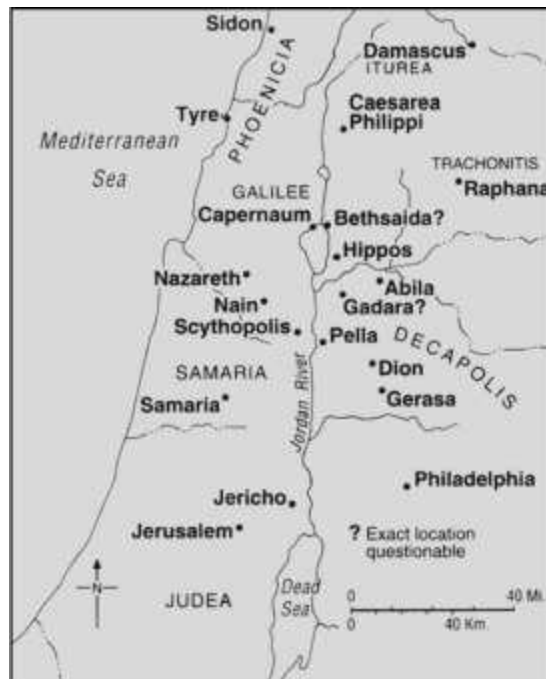
14:33 you are the Son of God: Anticipates the confessions of Jesus' divinity by Peter (16:16) and the centurion (27:54). [Back to text.](#)

15:1-20 Jesus' clash with religious leaders centers on oral traditions added to the Mosaic Law. Addressing the Pharisees, Jesus designates ceremonial washing (15:2, 20) and the custom of dedication (15:5) as **your tradition** (15:6). He denies that these Pharisaic customs hold the same weight and authority as the Law of God (cf. Col 2:8). The Pharisees were violating the **word of God** (15:6) by overemphasizing the importance of their own traditions at the expense of the Law. Only traditions that stem from Christ and the apostles have divine authority, since they are not human in their origin (1 Cor 11:2; 2 Thess 2:15; 3:6). [See note on Mk 7:3](#) and topical essay: [Who Are the Pharisees?](#) at Mk 2 (CCC 83-84). [Back to text.](#)

15:5 is given to God: The Pharisees sometimes withheld financial support from parents in order to donate money to the Temple. This tradition of dedication was probably enforced by a vow, and money offered to the Temple could not be repossessed. While the practice of Temple donations appeared pious, its practical effect marginalized God's commandment to **honor** one's parents (15:4; Ex 20:12). [Back to text.](#)

15:19 out of the heart: Real defilement is spiritual and moral, not ceremonial. The scribes and Pharisees unduly emphasized external ceremonies and compromised the true spirit of Israel's religion. Real defilement stems from evil intentions within and is manifest through sinful deeds (5:28). Jesus stresses the need for inner purity of heart, not ritual purity of the body (CCC 2517). [See note on Mt 5:8.](#) [Back to text.](#)

15:21 Tyre and Sidon: Gentile cities in Phoenicia, north of Palestine. According to the table of nations in Gen 10, Sidon was the first-born son of Canaan (Gen 10:15), and thus the woman is a "Canaanite" (15:22). Mark refers to her more proximate geographical background as "Syrophoenician" (Mk 7:26). [Back to text.](#)



MAP—Jesus' Ministry beyond Galilee. In the region of Tyre and Sidon, Jesus cast out a demon from the daughter of a Syrophenician woman (Mk 7:24-30). In the region of Caesarea Philippi, Peter made his great declaration of faith in Jesus as God's Messiah (Mt 16:13-19). Jesus returned to Galilee via the Decapolis region, crossing the Jordan River south of the Sea of Galilee.



15:26 the children's bread: i.e., Israel and its inherited right to God's blessings. As in 8:5-13, Jesus heals a faith-filled Gentile despite his intention to minister to Israel first (15:24; 10:6; cf. Rom 1:16). **the dogs:** Literally, "little dogs" or "puppies". [See note on Mt 7:6](#). • *Morally* (St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 52): the Canaanite woman signifies repentant souls. Incapable of boasting, contrite sinners lean wholly on God's mercy; they recognize their weakness before God and can only beg for blessings, unable to demand from God gifts that he freely bestows. Only the humble and faith-filled are rewarded with spiritual healing. [Back to text](#).

15:32-39 The feeding of the 4,000 is similar to the episode in 14:13-21. Differences lie in the number of people (15:38; 14:21), the number of loaves (15:34; 14:17), and the number of leftover baskets involved (15:37; 14:20). Both narratives emphasize the miraculousness of Jesus' sign and the abundance of bread provided (cf. 16:9-10). [See note on Mk 8:19](#). [Back to text](#).

16:1 a sign from heaven: These leaders interpret signs in heaven to predict the weather, yet they are blind in spiritual matters (15:14; 23:16). Jesus refuses to perform miracles for those unconvinced of his authority—it is something already manifest through his healings (11:2-5; 1 Cor 1:22). [Back to text](#).

16:4 the sign of Jonah: A reference to Jesus' Resurrection. [See note on Mt 12:41](#). [Back to text](#).

16:11 the leaven: Symbolic of an effective and hidden influence (13:33). It is here a negative symbol of the dangerous teaching of the **Pharisees** and **Sadducees**, who prevent others from entering the kingdom (cf. 12:24; 22:23; 23:13). Jesus' warning prepares for the following episode, where he ensures the transmission of true Christian doctrine through Peter. [Back to text](#).



16:13-20 The Gospels generally highlight Peter's preeminence among the disciples (10:2; Lk 22:31-32; Jn 1:42; 21:15-18). This episode defines his role explicitly. • Jesus' blessing on Peter draws from OT traditions about the Davidic covenant. The key concepts and images (**Christ / Son of the living God / rock / build / gates of Hades / keys / kingdom**) are all connected with Israel's kingdom established under

David and confirmed by Solomon and his construction of the Temple (cf. 2 Sam 7:4-17; Ps 2:7; 89; 132). Although David's empire crumbled in 586 B.C., Jesus announces its restoration in the New Covenant (cf. Mk 11:10; Lk 1:32-33; Acts 15:15-18). Christ is the long-awaited "son of David", who rebuilds and transforms the ancient kingdom in the Church. See introduction: *Themes*. • Vatican I (1870) cited this episode as biblical support for the primacy of Peter and successive popes. The Council's interpretation touches five points of doctrine: **(1)** The Magisterium built upon Peter is instituted by Jesus Christ; **(2)** Peter is given a unique role as chief teacher and ruler (primacy of jurisdiction) over the Church; **(3)** Peter is the visible head of the Church; **(4)** Peter's authority is passed on through successors; **(5)** through Peter, Christ himself assures the infallible preservation of the gospel in the Church. [Back to text.](#)

16:13 Caesarea Philippi: A predominantly Gentile city north of Palestine. It was originally known as Panion (or Paneas) because of a shrine built there to the Greco-Roman god Pan. When Herod the Great's son Philip became tetrarch of that region (4 B.C.—A.D. 33), he rebuilt the city and renamed it in honor of Tiberius Caesar, adding his own name to distinguish it from the Judean coastal city of Caesarea. [Back to text.](#)

16:16 Son of the living God: The confession is double-sided: **(1)** Peter proclaims the mystery of Christ's divinity as the head and spokesman of the Church (cf. 11:25-27; 14:33). **(2)** Peter sees Jesus as the awaited Messiah-king of Israel (26:63; Jn 1:49). The close relationship between the titles **Christ** and *Son* reflects OT traditions, where Israel's kings enjoyed unique relationships with God as his sons (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7; 89:27; CCC 436, 439, 442). See word study: [Christ](#) at Mk 14. [Back to text.](#)



16:17 Blessed are you: Jesus blesses Peter and elevates him to be the chief patriarch of the New Covenant. • Parallels between Genesis and Jesus' words (16:17-19) suggest that Peter assumes a role in salvation history similar to Abraham's. **(1)** Both are blessed by God (Gen 14:19); **(2)** both respond with heroic faith (Heb 11:8); **(3)** both receive a divine mission (Gen 12:1-3); **(4)** both have their names changed (Gen 17:5); **(5)** both are called a "rock" (Is 51:1-2); and **(6)** both are assured a victory over the "gate" of their enemies (Gen 22:17). **Simon Bar-Jona:** Literally means "Simon son of Jonah". Since Peter's father is actually named "John" (Jn

1:42), the title may be symbolic. **(1)** Jesus' role as a new Jonah (12:39-41) may suggest he views Peter as his spiritual son. **(2)** Since the Hebrew name "Jonah" means "dove", Jesus may point to the relationship between Peter and the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the same Spirit who confirmed Jesus' Sonship in the form of a dove (3:16) now inspires Peter's confession. **flesh and blood:** A Semitic idiom for human beings, emphasizing their natural limitations and weaknesses (Sir 14:18; Gal 1:16). [Back to text.](#)



16:18 I will build: Jesus portrays the Church as a spiritual Temple (cf. 1 Cor 3:16-17; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:19-22; 1 Pet 2:4-8). • As Solomon was the son of David and the anointed Temple builder in the OT, so Jesus is the Davidic "Son" of God (16:16) and the anointed Messiah who builds the Church in the New. Jesus elsewhere sees himself as both similar and superior to King Solomon (12:42). [See note on Mt 7:24.](#) **my Church:** Among the Gospels, Matthew alone uses the word *Church* (18:17). The word is used often in the Greek OT for the "congregation" or "assembly" of Israel united to God. Jesus uses it in a similar way for the New Covenant community. **the gates of Hades:** In the OT, Hades—also called "Sheol" or "the Pit"—is the place of the dead where souls descend through its gates (Ps 9:13, 17; Wis 16:13; Is 38:10; Jon 2:2). It is not hell, but a temporary realm where souls are detained until the Last Judgment (Rev 20:13-15). By extension, Hades is also the habitation of evil forces that bring about death and deception (Rev 6:8; 20:1-3). According to Jewish tradition, the foundation stone (Heb. *'eben shetiyyah*) of the Jerusalem Temple capped off and sealed a long shaft leading down to the netherworld (Rev 9:1-2; 20:1-3). The Temple, resting securely on a rock, was thus the center of the cosmos, the junction between heaven and Hades. Drawing from this background, Jesus guarantees that the powers of death and deception will not overcome the Church—i.e., the new Temple built on Peter. He enables Peter (and his successors) to hold error at bay and faithfully proclaim the gospel (CCC 552). [Back to text.](#)



16:19 the keys: A symbol of teaching authority (Lk LU 11:52). Jesus consecrates Peter as the Church's chief teacher, whose office will continue on through successors. The plural use of keys may imply a connection with the "gates" in 16:18 and mean that Peter's position

includes, among other things, the authority to release the righteous souls who are detained in Hades but destined for heaven. • In the OT Davidic empire, the king appointed a cabinet of ministers for specific tasks in the kingdom (1 Kings 4:1-6; 2 Kings 18:37). Of these, a prime minister was elevated to unique status of authority, ranking second only to the king. This government structure was common among kingdoms in the ancient Near East (cf. Gen 41:39-43; Esther 3:1-2). Jesus here evokes Is 22:15-25, where the prime minister's office is handed on to a successor by the symbolic act of handing on the "key of the house [i.e., kingdom] of David" (Is 22:22). In Matthew, Jesus is the new Davidic king, who appoints Peter the prime minister over the **kingdom of heaven** in the Church. As in Is 22, Peter's position is designed for him and his successors; the office is meant to endure as long as the kingdom itself. Entrusted with the keys, Peter wields Christ's own royal authority (cf. Rev 1:18; 3:7). **whatever you bind . . . loose:** Familiar language in early Jewish literature. The metaphor carries several connotations: **(1)** It signifies teaching authority and the ability to render binding decisions. Rabbis were said to make "binding" interpretations of the Law. **(2)** It denotes authority to include or exclude members of a religious community. **(3)** It signals the forgiveness of sins (Tg *Neof* in Gen 4:7). The verb *loose* is used this way in Rev 1:5 (translated "freed") and by the early Church Fathers (cf. Jn 20:23). Peter is thus invested with Christ's authority as the kingdom's chief teacher and administrator; through him **heaven** governs the Church on **earth** (cf. Jn 21:15-17; 1 Tim 3:15; CCC 553, 1445). [Back to text.](#)

16:23 Satan: In contrast to the blessing of Peter in 16:17, Jesus here rebukes him. Peter's confession (16:16) was inspired by the Father; here his natural instincts object to a suffering Messiah. On his own, he cannot see the spiritual necessity of Jesus' Passion for sinners. [Back to text.](#)

16:24 take up his cross: Jesus' challenge follows his first Passion prediction (16:21). He indicates that suffering and self-denial are central to the Christian life (cf. Rom 8:17; Col 1:24; CCC 618). [See note on Mt 10:38.](#) [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Peter ([Mt 16:18](#))

Petros (Gk.): A masculine noun meaning "rock" or "stone". Although a common word in Greek, there is no evidence that *Peter* was ever a proper name before Jesus renamed Simon. This accentuates the symbolism of the name: Simon is himself the rock upon which Jesus builds the Church. Further NT evidence suggests that Jesus' words to Peter were originally spoken in Aramaic. In this language, the word *kepha* is the equivalent of *Peter* and denotes a "sizeable rock"—one suitable as a building foundation. This Aramaic name is preserved as "Cephas" 9 times in the NT (Jn 1:42; 1 Cor 1:12; 15:5; Gal 1:18; 2:9, etc.). At another level, Simon's name change recalls the OT episodes where God renamed Abram as Abraham (Gen 17:5) and Jacob as Israel (Gen 32:28). Peter now stands in this biblical tradition where new names signify new God-given roles in salvation history. In Peter's case, Jesus designates him the foundation stone of the New Covenant Church. Just as the Temples of the OT were built upon a great stone (1 Kings 5:17; Ezra 3:10), so Jesus builds his NT Church upon the foundational rock of Peter (cf. Eph 2:20; Rev 21:14).



17:1-8 Jesus' Transfiguration confirms his divine Sonship (3:17; 16:16). It also strengthens three early Church leaders (**Peter, James, and John**) after Jesus' first Passion prediction (16:21). Being **transfigured before them** (17:2), Jesus unveils his glory, later manifest in his Resurrection and shared by his angels (28:2-3) and Virgin Mother in heaven (Rev 12:1) (CCC 555-56). • The OT background for this event is God's self-revelation to Moses on Mt. Sinai. **(1)** Both take place on the seventh day (17:1; Ex 24:16); **(2)** both occur on a mountain (17:1; Ex 24:13, 15); **(3)** both Jesus and Moses take three companions with them (17:1; Ex 24:1); **(4)** the faces of both Jesus and Moses shine with God's glory (17:2; Ex 34:29); **(5)** both involve the glory-cloud of God's Presence; **(6)** and both events involve God speaking through a heavenly voice (17:5; Ex 24:16). • *Anagogically* (Dionysius, *The Divine Names* 1.4): the glory that shone around the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration prefigures the contemplation of God in eternity, when the minds of the saints will be forever lifted up from lower concerns and engulfed in the blazing light of the Trinity. [Back to text.](#)

17:3 Moses and Elijah: Represent the testimony of the Law and the Prophets, respectively (cf. 5:17; 7:12). They are the only OT figures to hear

God's voice atop Mt. Sinai, also called Horeb (Ex 24:18; 1 Kings 19:8-18). They here witness to the surpassing glory of Jesus as the lawgiver and prophet of the New Covenant (cf. Jn 5:39; Rev 11:3-6). [Back to text.](#)

17:4 I will make three booths: Peter desires to prolong the heavenly experience. The booths are small, tentlike shelters erected yearly at the Jewish Feast of Booths (Lev 23:39-43). This liturgical feast became an early Church symbol of the ongoing joys of heaven (cf. Rev 7:9-10). [Back to text.](#)



17:5 beloved Son . . . listen to him: A similar proclamation was made at Jesus' baptism (3:17; cf. Is 42:1). • The final statement, "listen to him", evokes Deut 18:15. In context, God promised that a prophet like Moses (Messiah) would come to Israel to be heeded by his people (cf. Acts 3:20-22). [See note on Mt 2:16.](#) [Back to text.](#)

17:6 fell on their faces: The posture of those overwhelmed by God's glory (Gen 17:3; Ezek 1:28; Rev 1:17). [Back to text.](#)

17:11 to restore all things: e.g., family relationships (Mal 4:5-6) and the 12 tribes of Israel (Sir 48:10). [Back to text.](#)

17:12 Elijah has already come: The "scribes" (17:10) were correct in their teaching and expectation (Mal 4:5) but wrong not to recognize Elijah's arrival in John the Baptist (17:13). [See note on Mt 11:10.](#) [Back to text.](#)

17:20 your little faith: Jesus challenges the unbelief of his disciples (8:26; 14:31; 16:8). He suggests their attempts to exorcize demons (17:16) were impeded by presumption, since even a small measure of genuine faith can accomplish great things. [Back to text.](#)

17:24 Capernaum: Jesus' hometown during his Galilean ministry (4:13). **the half-shekel tax:** Literally, the *didrachma*, or "two-drachma tax", required annually of all male Jews over 20 years old. Moses levied a similar tax for the services of the Tabernacle (Ex 30:11-16). This was reimplemented with King Joash for Solomon's Temple (2 Chron 24:6), while a comparable "third part of a shekel" was required for the second Temple (Neh 10:32). **went up to Peter:** Matthew's "fourth book" features the primacy of Peter (14:28-33; 16:13-19; 17:1, 4; see outline). Here the tax collectors recognize and approach him as the apostles' spokesman. [Back to text.](#)

17:26 the sons are free: The divine sonship shared by Jesus (natural) and Peter (adoptive) exempts them from Temple taxes. Nevertheless, they submit their New Covenant liberty to the regulations of the Old. In the early Church, believers maintained certain Old Covenant practices to avoid giving "offense" (17:27) to the Jews and in the hope of winning some to the gospel (Acts 16:3; 21:17-26; Rom 14:13-21; 1 Cor 9:19-23). [Back to text.](#)



17:27 you will find a shekel: A Greek *stater* worth two CkS *didrachma* (17:24). The full shekel thus pays the half-shekel tax for both Jesus and Peter. • The single payment for both Christ and Peter underscores the spiritual union between Jesus and his vicar on earth (cf. 16:17-19). [Back to text.](#)

18:1-35 The fourth discourse in Matthew (see outline). Jesus teaches about life in the Church, where the greatness of her leaders is measured by humility, service (18:1-14), and boundless mercy (18:21-35). [Back to text.](#)

18:1 Who is the greatest . . . ?: A question prompted by Jesus' favoritism and honor of Peter in the previous episodes (16:17-19; 17:1, 27). [Back to text.](#)

18:3 like children: Total dependence on God is required to enter the **kingdom**. Childlike simplicity is especially demanded of the apostles, who must lead the Church with a spirit of servanthood and humility. All, however, are called to trust the Father for daily provisions (6:25-33) and the graces necessary for salvation (CCC 2785). [Back to text.](#)

18:6 who believe in me: Religious scandal is a stumbling block for others and may even cause some members of the Church to lose their faith (CCC 2284-85). **a great millstone:** A stone so large that donkeys were required to turn it when milling grain (cf. Rev 18:21). This punishment by drowning was often reserved for the worst criminals. [Back to text.](#)

18:8-9 Jesus' severe language underscores the great dangers of sin. [See note on Mt 5:29.](#) [Back to text.](#)



18:10 their angels: Scripture portrays God's angels as protectors, guides, and helpers of his people (Tob 12:15; Job 33:23-24; Ps 34:7; 91:11; Acts 12:15; Heb 1:14). The elect angels already participate in glory as they **behold the face** of God in heaven (CCC 329, 336). • This verse is traditionally cited as biblical evidence for guardian angels. Several Church

Fathers teach that God assigns everyone an angel to watch over him throughout life. [Back to text.](#)



18:12 a hundred sheep: Jesus is often described as a shepherd (25:32; Jn 10:1-18; 1 Pet 2:25). • This parable alludes to the messianic prophecy of Ezek 34:11-31. In context, Ezekiel foretells that God himself would assume the role of a shepherd to seek out and rescue the lost sheep of his fold. • *Allegorically* (St. Hilary, St. Anselm): the lost sheep represent mankind, who went astray in sin. The 99 on the hills are the angels in heaven. In the Incarnation, Christ temporarily descended from the hills to seek the lost souls of men (cf. 15:24; Lk 19:10); through the redemption, Christ restores men to grace and raises them again to the company of the angels (cf. Heb 12:22). [Back to text.](#)

18:15-20 Church discipline is a serious matter for her leaders. Jesus outlines a three-step procedure for **(1)** privately confronting the sinner, **(2)** addressing the sin before a circle of witnesses, and **(3)** bringing the matter before the Church. Emphasis is placed on reconciliation. If the member resists correction, the Church's leaders (apostles and successors) may exercise Christ's authority by disciplining the impenitent. This final decision is backed even by the Father (18:19) (CCC 1463). [Back to text.](#)

18:16 two or three witnesses: Criteria for judicial testimony in Old Covenant Israel (Deut 19:15). Jesus' language reinforces the Church's identity as the restored Israel of the New Covenant (Gal 6:16; cf. 2 Cor 13:1). [See note on Mt 5:14.](#) [Back to text.](#)

18:17 the Church: Mentioned only here and 16:18 in the Gospels. Whereas 16:18 envisions Peter's authority over the universal Church, this verse pertains to a local congregation of Christians. **Gentile . . . tax collector:** Two groups generally despised by first-century Jews. The choice of these terms suggest that Jesus requires a policy of non-association with those who are disciplined by leaders of the Church (cf. 1 Cor 5:9-13; 2 Cor 6:14-15). [Back to text.](#)

18:18 whatever you bind . . . loose: In 16:19, Peter was invested with Christ's authority as the visible head of the Church. A derivative—but subordinate—authority is given also to the apostles as royal ministers in the kingdom. Jesus' authority in this context is related to Church discipline; by

extension, it is also a sacramental authority to forgive sins (cf. Jn 20:23; CCC 553, 1444). See notes on Mt 9:8 and 16:19. [Back to text.](#)



18:22 seventy times seven: Denotes limitless forgiveness and mercy. • Jesus contrasts the behavior expected of the apostles with the boundless vengeance of Lamech in Gen 4:24 (LXX), where the same figures of "seven" and "seventy times seven" are contrasted (CCC 982). [Back to text.](#)

18:24 ten thousand talents: A "talent" (coin) is equivalent to 6,000 denarii, or 20 years' wages for a laborer. The figure is exaggerated for emphasis: the parable accentuates the king's (God's) mercy in forgiving an incalculable debt that was impossible for the servant (man) to repay. [Back to text.](#)

18:28 a hundred denarii: A minor debt, since a "denarius" was equivalent to a single day's wage for a laborer (cf. 20:2). Repayment of 100 days' wages required patience (18:29) but was not impossible. [Back to text.](#)

18:35 forgive your brother: Jesus demonstrates the folly of mercilessness. One forgiven an eternal debt of sin should readily forgive others of much smaller debts. The lesson is summarized in Jesus' commentary on the Our Father in 6:14-15 (cf. Jas 2:13; CCC 2842-43). [Back to text.](#)

19:1 Judea beyond the Jordan: Jesus has concluded his Galilean ministry and is now headed for Jerusalem. His presence east of the Jordan has a dual significance. **(1)** This location is linked with John the Baptist (3:5), who was executed for condemning the divorce and remarriage of Herod Antipas and his mistress, Herodias (14:3-10). This tragedy looms in the background of the ensuing question about divorce (19:3). One suspects that the Pharisees hoped to lure Jesus into the same trap that cost John his life. **(2)** The region beyond the Jordan is also the place where Moses gave Israel the laws of Deuteronomy (Deut 1:5). It seems more than coincidental that Jesus is about to repeal the Deuteronomic concession for divorce and remarriage (Deut 24:1-4) in the very place where it was ratified. [Back to text.](#)

19:3-9 Jesus forbids divorce and remarriage (Mk 10:11-12; Lk 16:18) and revokes the lower standard of the Old Law permitting divorce for non-Levitical laymen in Israel (Deut 24:14). Jesus thus restores marriage to its

original integrity (Gen 2:24) and elevates it to a New Covenant sacrament (Eph 5:22-33; CCC 2382). [Back to text.](#)

19:3 tested: The Greek verb can also mean "tempted" and often implies a hostile intent (as in 4:1 and 22:18). The Pharisees, resolved to destroy Jesus (12:14), hope to ensnare him with an incriminating question (cf. 22:15; Jn 8:6). **for any cause:** Many read this as a question about the *legitimate grounds* for divorce. It is said that Jesus is pressed to take sides in a debate between the Pharisaic schools of Hillel (liberal) and Shammai (conservative). This is doubtful; giving an opinion on an intramural dispute among the Pharisees would hardly constitute a trap. More likely, the question concerns the *legality* of divorce itself (as in Mk 10:2). Presumably it was becoming known that Jesus forbids divorce and remarriage (5:32; Lk 16:18), even though Moses had long ago permitted it (Deut 24:1-4). The Pharisees thus see an opportunity to discredit Jesus by pitting him against Moses. Jesus evades the trap by quoting the words of Moses from Genesis (19:4-5) and then turns the tables by showing that the Pharisees are the ones out of touch with God's true intention for married life as revealed in the Torah. [Back to text.](#)

19:4 Have you not read?: A counterquestion frequently posed by Jesus to his learned adversaries (i.e., Pharisees and Sadducees). [See note on Mt 12:3.](#) [Back to text.](#)

19:6 God has joined together: Citing Gen 2:24 (Mt 19:5), Jesus reaffirms that marriage is God's creation, not man's invention. Since God forges the indissoluble bond that unites a married couple, it follows that no civil or religious authority has the power to break it (CCC 1603, 1640). [See note on 1 Cor 7:15.](#) [Back to text.](#)

19:9 And I say to you: Jesus invokes his own authority to forbid divorce and remarriage. Matthew's account reflects Jewish cultural conditions, where men alone had the right to divorce (cf. 5:32). Mark more fully records Jesus' statement that both men and women are forbidden to divorce and remarry (Mk 10:11-12; CCC 1614, 2382). See essay: [Jesus on Marriage and Divorce](#) at Mt 19. [Back to text.](#)

19:10 not expedient to marry: The disciples marvel that Jesus prohibits divorce and remarriage in the New Covenant (19:9), reversing the long-standing permission of the Old (Deut 24:1-4). Their incredulous response makes it certain that Jesus permitted no exceptions for husbands and wives bound together by the sacrament. This new and higher standard leads them

to see the comparative superiority of lifelong virginity to married life (CCC 1615). [Back to text.](#)



19:12 eunuchs: i.e., royal servants in charge of a king's wives. To safeguard against sexual temptations, eunuchs in the ancient Near East were either impotent or physically castrated. Jesus speaks metaphorically: those who have **made themselves eunuchs** are those who voluntarily embrace celibacy in imitation of Jesus and for service in his **kingdom**. These men are leaders entrusted with the care of Christ's bride, the Church on earth; embracing consecrated virginity, they live by anticipation the life of heaven (22:30). [See note on Mt 9:15.](#) • The Council of Trent (Sess. 24, can. 10) teaches in accord with Scripture that the objective state of celibacy is higher than the married state, although both vocations are important for the Church's life (1 Cor 7:1-8, 32-35; Rev 14:4; CCC 1618-20). [Back to text.](#)

Jesus on Marriage and Divorce

SINCE the dawn of creation, God designed marriage to be permanent, exclusive, and fruitful (Gen 1:28; 2:24; Mt 19:5). However, since man's rebellion against God, the institution of marriage has suffered many distortions that tarnished its God-given beauty. Moses permitted divorce and remarriage as a concession to the sinfulness of Israel under the Old Covenant (Deut 24:1-4). Even so, it was ultimately clear that divorce falls short of God's will and plan for married couples (cf. Mal 2:16).

This leads to an important question: Does Jesus reaffirm the permission of divorce stipulated in Deut 24:1-4, or, rather, does he revoke this concession and announce the indissolubility of marriage for the New Covenant? The Catholic Church has consistently maintained that Jesus forbids divorce and remarriage. The bond that unites a couple in the sacrament of matrimony is created by God (Mt 19:6) and can be dissolved only by the death of one of the spouses (cf. Rom 7:1-3). For men or women to remarry while their spouse is living is to commit adultery (Mt 19:9; Rom 7:3).

Jesus' teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage is unfortunately a source of controversy among Christians. Much confusion swirls around his statement in Mt 19:9: "[W]hoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery" (cf. Mt 5:32). Does Jesus really make an "exception" to allow for divorce and remarriage? Since the rise of Protestantism in the sixteenth century, many non-Catholic groups have answered "yes". They began to appeal to this "exception clause" to justify divorce and remarriage in extreme circumstances. However, this view fails to interpret Jesus' statement in light of its immediate, biblical context. The disciples' response to Jesus' statement on divorce ("it is not expedient to marry" [19:10]) demonstrates that, in their understanding, Jesus was leaving no room at all for divorce and remarriage. In fact, they viewed celibacy as a preferable alternative to marriage precisely because Jesus' teaching on this matter is so strict—far more so than that of any of his Jewish contemporaries. The disciples' incredulous response to Jesus thus confirms the Catholic Church's constant teaching on the indissolubility of sacramental marriage.

Still, the question remains: What did Jesus mean when he said "except for unchastity" in Mt 5:32 and 19:9? Over the centuries, Catholic exegesis has put forward three main interpretations of this exception clause. None is endorsed by the Church as her official understanding of the passage. However, all are permissible interpretations inasmuch as they harmonize the exception clause with the revolutionary teaching of Jesus (and the Catholic Church) on the indissolubility of sacramental marriage.

1. Patristic View

Several Church Fathers suggest Jesus allowed for divorce in cases of serious sexual sin such as adultery, but he never permitted remarriage after divorce. The spouses may separate in these circumstances by a legal arrangement of living apart, but they cannot break the marriage bond, and they are not free to remarry. This view finds support by a consideration of the Greek word *porneia*, translated "unchastity", in Mt 19:9. While the word has a broad range of meaning, it can mean "adultery", as in the Greek OT (also translated "harlotry"; Sir 23:23; Ezek 16:33; Hos 2:2). Thus, an adulterous situation may give cause for separation so long as the spouses do not embark upon a second marriage. This squares with St. Paul's teaching that a separated couple has only two options: be reconciled to one another, or remain single (1 Cor 7:10-11).

2. Levitical Law View

This position interprets "unchastity" in Mt 19:9 as invalid marriages where the spouses are too closely related. Thus, "except for unchastity" (Mt 19:9) means "except where unlawful unions exist". Such unions ought to be severed because of the impediment posed by near blood-relations. A divorce under these conditions does not sunder a true marriage bond because a valid marriage never existed. It is equivalent to an annulment. This view is supported by two NT instances where *porneia* refers to incest. In Acts 15:20, 29, the apostles charge Gentile Christians to abstain from blood and unchastity. The OT background for this decision in Lev 18:6-18 suggests that *unchastity* refers to prohibited marriages between closely

related kinsfolk. In 1 Cor 5:1-2 (translated "immorality"), *porneia* clearly refers to an illicit union of a man and his father's wife.

3. "No Comment" View

According to this position, Jesus sets aside Jewish debates over the grounds for divorce in the Old Covenant (Deut 24). Because Jesus is revoking the OT concession on divorce, he brackets the whole issue and sets it off to the side as irrelevant. Thus, "except for unchastity" (Mt 19:9) means "regardless of the OT grounds for divorce". Jesus refuses even to comment on Deut 24:1. To do so would blunt the force of his own teaching, since he is not clarifying or reaffirming Moses' permission, he is abolishing it.

Each of these views faithfully upholds Jesus' prohibition against divorce and remarriage (cf. Mk 10:11, 12; Lk 16:18). He restores marriage to its original purity as a lifelong union of love and fidelity. Greater still, Jesus elevates marriage, transforming it into a New Covenant sacrament. Married couples are now called to be an image of Christ and his enduring love for the Church (Eph 5:21-33; cf. Rev 19:6-8). Through the sound principles of biblical interpretation and the guidance of tradition, the revolutionary standard of Jesus' teaching on marriage and divorce is preserved intact in his Church. «[Back to Matthew 19:1.](#)

19:14 the children: Jesus' concern for marriage (19:9) reflects a practical concern for children. God's plan for marriage includes the mutual love of spouses and the responsible upbringing of "Godly offspring" (Mal 2:15; cf. CCC 1646, 1652). In this episode, Jesus blesses children as legitimate members of the **kingdom**, laying a foundation for infant Baptism (cf. Jn 3:5). [See note on Lk 18:16. Back to text.](#)

19:24 easier for a camel: A parable of impossibility. Jesus thus warns that extreme difficulties face the rich and threaten their entrance into the **kingdom**. Only with God's help (19:26) can the wealthy detach themselves from the love of money and material possessions (5:3; 1 Tim 6:9-10; Jas 5:1-6). The young man's refusal (19:22) to embrace poverty proves Jesus' point (CCC 2053). [Back to text.](#)



19:28 the new world: The Greek could be rendered "re-generation" as in Tit 3:5. The historian Josephus uses this expression with reference to Israel's "restoration" after the Exile. This latter connotation is closest to Jesus' meaning here, where the establishment of the universal Church includes the reestablishment of Israel under the leadership of the Twelve. **on twelve thrones:** Jesus portrays the Church as the restored kingdom of Israel (cf. Rev 7:4-8). As the royal son of David (1:1), he reconstitutes the Davidic empire that governed the 12 tribes (2 Sam 5:1-5) along with other nations (2 Sam 8:1-15; 1 Kings 4:20-21). He thus appoints the apostles to his royal cabinet and invests them with authority to minister and judge in the new kingdom (Lk 22:28-30). • Jesus' language recalls Ps 122:3-5. In context, Jerusalem is the city where the thrones of the Davidic kingdom stood and where Israel's tribes went to find justice. In the New Covenant, Christ imparts justice through his apostles in the liturgy of the heavenly Jerusalem (cf. Heb 12:22-24; Rev 21:1-14; CCC 551, 765). See notes on Mt 5:14 and 10:2. [Back to text.](#)



20:1-16 The parable of the Householder highlights God's generosity (20:15). It refers to Israel's labor throughout salvation history and climaxes with the inclusion of the Gentiles in the New Covenant. Despite complaints, there is no violation of justice; God is not unfair to Israel, he is simply generous to late-coming Gentiles, making them equal members of his people (20:12; Eph 2:11-13). • *Morally* (Origen): the hours of the workday

correspond to stages in life when people turn to God. When converted, they are rescued from idle living to serve Christ in his vineyard, where they harvest much fruit for God before the sun sets on their earthly life. Whether converted early in life or later, all are awarded the generous and equal gift of eternal life. [Back to text.](#)

20:1 early in the morning: The day was divided into four nighttime "watches" and several daytime "hours" (6 A.M. to 6 P.M.). The early laborers begin around 6 A.M., and those hired at the "third" (9 A.M.; 20:3), "sixth" (noon; 20:5), and "ninth" (3 P.M.; 20:5) hours each agree to a fair wage. The group hired at the "eleventh hour" (5 P.M.; 20:6) only work about one hour since the Law commanded that workers receive their wages by sundown (Deut 24:14-15). [Back to text.](#)

20:2 a denarius: A standard daily wage. [See note on Mt 18:28.](#) [Back to text.](#)

20:17-19 Jesus' third Passion prediction is detailed. Unlike in the previous ones (16:21; 17:22-23), he foresees the collaboration of Jewish leaders (20:18) with Roman authorities (20:19) in bringing about his death by means of crucifixion (20:19). [Back to text.](#)

20:20 the sons of Zebedee: James and John (4:21). Along with Peter, they form a privileged inner circle of Jesus' disciples (17:1; 26:37; Mk 5:37). [Back to text.](#)

20:22 drink the chalice: An OT metaphor that describes God's wrath poured upon the wicked (Ps 75:8; Is 51:17; Jer 25:15). Here it denotes Jesus' Passion endured for sinners (20:28; 26:39; 1 Pet 2:24). James and John are assured (20:23) a share in this Passion, a prediction partially fulfilled with the martyrdom of James in Acts 12:2. [Back to text.](#)

20:30 two blind men: One of them was Bartimaeus the son of Timaeus (Mk 10:46). **Son of David:** The title may reflect an early belief that the Messiah would possess powers of healing and exorcism, as did the original son of David, King Solomon. [See note on Mt 12:23.](#) [Back to text.](#)

21:1-22 The first actions of Jesus during Passion Week—the triumphal entry (21:1-11), the cleansing of the temple (21:12-17), and the cursing of the fig tree (21:18-22)—are all symbolic gestures. Jesus performs them as prophetic acts to demonstrate that he is the Messiah and that his coming marks the end of the Old Covenant. This provokes Jerusalem's leadership to conspire and have him crucified (26:3-4; 27:1-2; CCC 559-60). [Back to text.](#)



21:1-11 Jesus' triumphal entry recalls Solomon's coronation as king of Israel. • **(1)** Jesus and Solomon are both the "Son of David" (21:9, 15; Prov 1:1). **(2)** Jesus rides a colt into Jerusalem (21:7) as Solomon rode David's mule into the city (1 Kings 1:32-40). **(3)** Both processions involve a great crowd celebrating the investiture of a new king (21:8-9: 1 Kings 1:39-40). **(4)** In both instances, Jerusalem was in a state of commotion (21:10: 1 Kings 1:45). Similar celebrations are recounted in 1 Mac 13:51 and 2 Mac 10:6-7. [Back to text.](#)

21:1 Bethphage: A small village of an uncertain location but clearly on the **Mount of Olives**, east of Jerusalem. Its Hebrew name means "house of figs". [Back to text.](#)



21:5 A combined reference to Is 62:11 and Zech 9:9. • The emphasis of this citation is twofold: **(1)** Isaiah's prophecy, only partially cited, speaks of a highway to Jerusalem when the Lord declares, "Behold, your salvation comes." The similar wording of Zechariah's prophecy connects this salvation with the coming **king**. **(2)** The uniqueness of this king is his lowliness and humility; he rides a peaceful **donkey** rather than a "war horse" (Zech 9:10). [Back to text.](#)



21:7 he sat on them: Matthew alone mentions a **donkey** and a **colt** (cf. Mk 11:7; Lk 19:35). That Jesus *sat on them* refers either to the **garments** or indicates that he rode both beasts successively. • *Allegorically* (St. Jerome, *Homily* 81): the two beasts are the nations that Christ brings under his Lordship. The donkey signifies Israel in its long-standing covenant with God; the colt is the younger Gentiles, unfamiliar with God and his Law. Jesus ushers them together into the Church of the heavenly Jerusalem (Gal 4:26; Heb 12:22). [Back to text.](#)



21:8 spread their garments: An expression of homage for a new king. • Similarly in 2 Kings 9:13, garments were laid on the ground for Jehu when he was hailed the king of Israel. [See note on Mk 11:8.](#) [Back to text.](#)

21:9 Hosanna: A Hebrew acclamation meaning "Save us" (cf. 2 Sam 14:4; Ps 118:25). **Blessed is he:** Words from Ps 118:26, the last of the Hallel Psalms (113-18), which were sung as hymns at Israel's great feasts of Passover, Weeks, and Booths. [Back to text.](#)



21:13 a house of prayer: Merchants sold sacrificial animals in the Temple as a service to pilgrims celebrating Passover. However, rates of monetary exchange and inflated prices made the selling a profitable enterprise. By citing Is 56:7, Jesus indicts the merchants for profaning the Temple. The Temple is not a common marketplace but a sanctuary for worship. • In context (Is 56:3-8), Isaiah sees God gathering all nations to his Temple. No longer shall Gentiles be excluded from his covenant people; God will join them to himself. The prophecy looks endangered by the present circumstances—animals are being sold in the Temple's outermost court, the court of the Gentiles. This prevents Gentiles from truly worshiping. Drawing from Isaiah, Jesus charges the establishment with obstructing God's intentions. **a den of robbers:** A citation from Jer 7:11. • In context, Jeremiah delivered a sermon of judgment to Israelites in the Temple. They presumed that the Temple guaranteed the Israelites' security and protection, despite their sinful living (Jer 7:4, 8-10). Because Israel disregarded Jeremiah, God destroyed Solomon's Temple in 586 B.C. Jesus here recalls both the circumstances and outcome of Jeremiah's prophecy: If Israel fails to repent, the Temple will again be destroyed (CCC 584). [Back to text.](#)



21:16 Out of the mouths of babies: A citation from Ps 8:2 (LXX). • In context, the psalm describes infants glorifying the Lord—a point that Jesus uses to hint at his divinity (cf. 11:25). [Back to text.](#)

21:19 a fig tree: A symbol of Old Covenant Israel (Jer 8:13; Hos 9:10). Jesus curses it because it is barren and has no figs (Mk 11:21). Symbolically, then, he announces God's curse on the unfaithful of Israel—i.e., those who refuse him as the Messiah and lack the fruits of repentance (3:8-10; 21:41, 43). Israel's faithlessness is a negative example: the Church must learn from the nation's mistakes and pray instead with faith and confidence (21:21; 17:20; Jas 1:6). [Back to text.](#)

21:28-32 The parable of the Two Sons explains the preceding question about John the Baptist's authority (21:25). The **sons** (21:28) represent two groups of people: the first are sinners who repent at the preaching of **John** (21:32); the second are Israel's leaders, who refuse the Baptist's message, even when **tax collectors** and **harlots** (21:32) respond to him (Lk 7:29-30). By following John's **way of righteousness** (21:32), the former sinners do the **will** of the **father** (21:31). [Back to text.](#)

21:33-41 The parable of the Wicked Tenants is an allegory—i.e., each of its details is important and symbolic (cf. Is 5:1-2). The **householder** is God (21:33) and the **vineyard** is Jerusalem (21:33). The **tenants** are Israel's leaders (21:33, 45) while the **servants** are OT prophets persecuted for warning Israel of its sins (21:34; cf. 23:37). The **son** is Jesus, who will be thrown **out of the vineyard** and crucified outside the city (21:39; cf. Jn 19:17, 20). Because of the wickedness of the tenants, God will put them to **death** (21:41) when he judges Jerusalem in A.D. 70. He will entrust the New Covenant kingdom to the **other tenants** in the Church (16:17-19; 18:17-19). [See note on Mt 24:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)



21:42 in the Scriptures: A reference to Ps 118:22. • Jesus states that he (**stone**) is commissioned by God (**the Lord's doing**), despite his rejection by Jerusalem (**the builders**). Scripture thus foresees that the Messiah will paradoxically meet opposition from the leaders of his own people; conversely, the faithful see in the work of Jesus God's **marvelous** deeds. Psalm 118 is elsewhere cited as biblical support for Jesus' vindication and Resurrection (Acts 4:10-11; 1 Pet 2:7; CCC 756). [Back to text.](#)

21:43 given to a nation: God will transfer his **kingdom** from the leaders of the Old Covenant establishment to the shepherds of the New Covenant Church (19:28; Lk 22:28-30). [Back to text.](#)

22:1-14 The parable of the Marriage Feast is an allegory of salvation history culminating in Jesus. The **king** is God (22:2) who prepares a heavenly banquet for his **son** (22:2). The **servants** are OT prophets (22:3) called to summon Israel (22:3). Because some of the **invited** guests ignored the prophets and others **killed** them (22:6; 23:37), God will destroy **their city**, Jerusalem (22:7), and send other **servants** as apostles (22:8) to invite Gentiles, **bad** and **good** (22:10), to the celebration. Those lacking proper

attire are cast into the **darkness** of eternal punishment (22:14). The parable highlights God's impartial treatment of all who are called—Jews and Gentiles. He rewards and punishes on the basis of one's acceptance or rejection of his call (cf. Rom 2:6-11) (CCC 546, 796). [Back to text.](#)

22:2 marriage feast: An image of rejoicing and communion with God. • The background is probably Is 25:6-9, where the salvation of God's people is portrayed as a joyful banquet. Its fulfillment takes shape at two levels: **(1) Present Liturgical.** The Holy Eucharist is Christ's banquet of sacramental food and drink (cf. Jn 6:53-58; 1 Cor 10:16; Rev 19:9). **(2) Future Eschatological.** Ultimate communion with Christ takes place in heaven with the unending union of God and his saints. [Back to text.](#)

22:11 no wedding garment: A symbol of righteous deeds that accompany faith (Rev 19:7-8). These deeds are outlined in Matthew as almsgiving (6:2-4), prayer (6:5-15), fasting (6:16-18), and works of mercy (25:34-40). [Back to text.](#)

22:15-22 The collaboration of the Pharisees and Herodians—representing opposite political views—reveals the extreme measures taken to eliminate Jesus (cf. 12:14; 26:4). Their strategy was to trap him: if Jesus opposed the tax, the Herodians could charge him with treason for instigating a tax revolt against Rome. If Jesus approved of it, the Pharisees would charge him as unfaithful to Judaism and its hopes of national independence. [Back to text.](#)

22:16 their disciples: Jewish nationalists opposed to Rome's occupation and rule over Palestine. See topical essay: *Who Are the Pharisees?* at Mk 2. **Herodians:** Supporters of Roman rule, sympathetic to the Herodian dynasty. See notes on Mt 2:1 and 2:22. [Back to text.](#)

22:19 a coin: A "denarius" stamped with a profile portrait of Tiberius Caesar, the Roman Emperor (A.D. 14-37). This tax was especially offensive to the Jews, who knew that God forbade the fashioning of graven images in the likeness of any created thing (Ex 20:4). [Back to text.](#)

22:21 Caesar's . . . God's: Jesus evades the intended trap (22:17) with a subtle and riddle-like response. His words have several implications. **(1)** At one level, Jesus plays on the word "likeness" (literally, "image"). Caesar's coins could be given back to him in taxes without religious compromise; after all, he minted the coins with his own image and they were his rightful property. **(2)** More important, everyone has the duty of giving himself—created in the "image" of God (Gen 1:27)—back to God. Jesus implies that

this higher duty is incumbent even upon Caesar. **(3)** Jesus' response turns his adversaries' trap back on themselves. He hints that taxation is the result of their own sins—had Israel been giving God his due, they would not have been subjected to the yoke of Roman rule. **(4)** In the end, Jesus affirms the propriety of fulfilling civil duties while emphasizing our primary duty of serving God (cf. Rom 13:1-7; 1 Pet 2:13-17; CCC 2242). [Back to text.](#)

22:23 Sadducees: Priestly aristocrats centered mostly in Jerusalem. See topical essay: *Who Are the Sadducees?* at Mk 12. **there is no resurrection:** A denial at odds with mainstream Judaism (cf. Acts 23:8). Their apparent acceptance of the doctrine in 22:28 is only a facade; they hope to stump Jesus with an unanswerable question. [Back to text.](#)

22:24 If a man dies: A hypothetical scenario based on the levirate law of Deut 25:5-6. If a married man dies childless, this law requires one of his brothers to marry the widow and so produce offspring for his brother (cf. Gen 38:6-8). The seven husbands mentioned (22:26) may allude to the situation in Tob 7:11. [Back to text.](#)

22:30 like angels: Against the Sadducees, Jesus affirms the resurrection (cf. Jn 5:28-29). The event will signal the end of earthly marriage and its purposes **(1)** to beget children and **(2)** help spouses advance toward holiness. Life in heaven will no longer require populating the Church and sanctifying spouses. Rather, the righteous will live as angels, who beget no offspring and worship God continually (cf. Is 6:2-3; Rev 5:11, 12). [Back to text.](#)



22:32 Abraham . . . Isaac . . . Jacob: The Sadducees lack faith in God's power and thus misinterpret Scripture. At another level, Jesus' controversy with the Sadducees may also involve the canon of the Bible. The Sadducees accepted only the five books of Moses (Gen-Deut) as Sacred Scripture and rejected the full authority of the OT prophets. Jesus appears aware of this, since he could have cited several passages from the prophets that speak clearly of the resurrection (Is 26:19; Ezek 37:1-14; Dan 12:2). Instead, he tailors his response to the Sadducees by strategically citing one of the books of Moses (Ex 3:6). • In context, God revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush as the God of the long-deceased patriarchs (Ex 3:1-6). Jesus draws two conclusions from the text: **(1)** Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still alive with God; **(2)** their ongoing

presence with God is the decisive precondition for their resurrection in the future (CCC 581). [Back to text.](#)

22:40 these two commandments: The 613 commands of the Mosaic Law are distilled into two prescriptions: love God (Deut 6:5) and your neighbor (Lev 19:18). These summarize the spirit of the entire OT (**law and the prophets**). According also to Paul, love is the greatest theological virtue (1 Cor 13:13) and fulfills God's moral Law (Rom 13:8-10; CCC 182224). [Back to text.](#)



22:45 calls him Lord: Jesus' question concerns the meaning of Ps 110:1. The Pharisees (22:42) assume it mentions the Messiah, but their understanding of the verse is partial and inadequate. • Psalm 110 is an enthronement psalm that was probably used at coronation ceremonies for Davidic kings. In context, David addresses his son as "my Lord" (22:44), a title more appropriate for one's superior. This implies that the expected Messiah would be greater than David himself, a crucial point missed by the Pharisees (cf. Acts 2:34-36). As Messiah, Jesus is the son of David (1:1) and yet greater than David as the Son of God (3:17; 16:16; 17:5) (CCC 439, 447). [See note on Mt 1:17.](#) [Back to text.](#)

23:1-36 Jesus warns the **crowds** and his **disciples** (23:1) that the **scribes and the Pharisees** (23:2) are dangerous and their false piety is unworthy of imitation. Jesus takes aim at Pharisaic attitudes (23:2-12) and announces seven "woes" indicting them as murderers (23:34-35). [Back to text.](#)

23:2 Moses' seat: This may be an actual "chair", like those used in later synagogues, or only a symbol of teaching authority. The Pharisees thus preach the Mosaic Law with authority, but their failure to practice its "weightier matters" (23:23) should not be followed by others. See topical essay: *Who Are the Pharisees?* at Mk 2. [Back to text.](#)

23:5 their phylacteries: Small leather boxes containing Scripture verses. These are tied to the forearm and forehead while praying (Deut 6:8; 11:18). Making them **broad**, the Pharisees sought to parade their piety for public recognition. **fringes:** [See note on Mt 9:20.](#) [Back to text.](#)

23:7 rabbi: A Hebrew word meaning "my great one" and a title for revered Jewish teachers (Jn 1:38). [Back to text.](#)



23:9 call no man your father: Jesus uses hyperbole to post a warning that no one should pridefully desire honorific titles. His words are not meant literally. The NT writers elsewhere use *father* for natural fathers (Heb 12:7-11) and spiritual fathers in the Church (1 Cor 4:15; Philem 10). • The spiritual fatherhood of New Covenant priests is an extension of its application to Old Covenant priests (Judg 17:10; 18:19). [Back to text.](#)



23:13 woe to you: Recalls OT oracles of judgment (Is 5:8-23; Ezek 24:6, 9; Hab 2:6-20). This is the first of seven "woes" in Jesus' denunciation of the Pharisees (23:15-16, 23, 25, 27, 29). He presents a covenant lawsuit against unfaithful Israel and pronounces "woes" as covenant curses upon the impenitent (cf. Deut 27:15-26). In Matthew, these seven "woes" stand opposite the New Covenant "blessings" in the Beatitudes (5:3-12; cf. Lk 6:24-26). • The OT background is likely Lev 26 and God's promise to exact "sevenfold" vengeance upon the Israelites if they violate his covenant (Lev 26:18, 21, 24, 28). [Back to text.](#)

23:15 a single proselyte: i.e., a convert to Pharisaic Judaism. [Back to text.](#)

23:16-22 The Pharisees made false and hair-splitting distinctions between oaths, supposing the object invoked (Temple, gold, altar) determined the binding force of sworn statements. Their distinctions, which made some oaths less binding than others, abused and devalued the sacredness of the practice (CCC 2153). [See note on Mt 5:33.](#) [Back to text.](#)

23:23 mint and dill and cummin: Small seasoning herbs. According to the Law, a tenth part (**tithe**) of all produce must be offered to God (Lev 27:30; Deut 14:22-23). The Pharisees scrupulously adhered to this small command but neglected greater and more important principles; for **justice**, **mercy**, and **faith** are the foundations of the Mosaic Law and should inspire all obedience to God (cf. 9:13). [Back to text.](#)

23:24 a gnat: One of the smaller unclean animals, which Jews were forbidden to eat (Lev 11:41-43). The Pharisees dutifully poured beverages through a cloth to strain them out before drinking. **a camel:** One of the larger unclean animals (Lev 11:4). Jesus' contrast exposes the Pharisees for observing the minute laws of God at the expense of greater principles of the spiritual life. [Back to text.](#)

23:27 whitewashed tombs: Since contact with the dead makes Jews temporarily unclean, it was customary to whitewash grave sites to make them visible and help prevent inadvertent contact (Num 19:11-20). According to Jesus, the practice illustrates how the visible piety of many Pharisees only disguises their interior corruption and hypocrisy. [Back to text.](#)

23:35 Abel to . . . Zechariah: Some see this as a reference to the first (Gen 4:8) and last (2 Chron 24:20-22) murders in the OT. This is based on the Palestinian arrangement of the OT, where Genesis is the first book and 2 Chronicles is the last. This is difficult to maintain, because the Zechariah in 2 Chron 24:20 is the "son of Jehoiada", not the **son of Barachiah**. Zechariah the "son of Barachiah" is rather the OT prophet (Zech 1:1) whose death is nowhere recorded in the Bible. Jesus may instead be drawing from ancient tradition, just as Isaiah's martyrdom is never mentioned in the OT but alluded to in Heb 11:37 as the prophet "sawn in two". In fact, later rabbinic tradition maintains that Zechariah the son of Barachiah was killed in the Temple (e.g., *Targum on Lamentations* 2, 20). In any case, the cup of iniquity filled throughout history begins to overflow with the Pharisees' intent to murder Jesus (12:14). By rejecting God's Messiah, Jesus' generation calls down divine judgment stored up from the ages. [Back to text.](#)



23:37 as a hen: The Holy City persistently rejected God's messengers. Jesus too stands rejected, though he desired to protect and gather its faithful (CCC 558). • Jesus' language evokes Is 31:5 and the Lord's protection of Jerusalem. Other OT texts similarly portray God as a winged bird protecting Israel (Deut 32:10-12; Ps 91:4). • *Allegorically:* the hen is the Church, who constantly calls out to her young lest they go astray. Just as a hen takes care of her own, so the Church regenerates the faithful in Baptism, feeds them with her preaching, and loves them with maternal affection (*Auctor Imperfecti, Incomplete Commentary on Matthew*). [Back to text.](#)



23:38 your house is forsaken: The city and Temple of Jerusalem are abandoned by God to judgment (cf. Jer 12:7; Dan 9:17). Jesus, God-in-flesh, symbolically enacts this by exiting the Temple (Mt 24:1) and walking

to the Mount of Olives (24:3). • Jesus' Temple exit recalls Ezekiel's vision in the OT. He witnessed God's glory leaving Solomon's Temple and resting on the Mount of Olives, east of the city (Ezek 10:18; 11:23). God's departure was soon followed by the Temple's first destruction in 586 B.C. [Back to text.](#)



24:1-25:46 The Olivet Discourse is the final sermon of Jesus featured in Matthew (see outline for Matthew). Its purpose is to reveal events of the near and distant future. **(1) Prophetically:** Jesus foretells the Roman conquest of Jerusalem and the Temple that occurred in A.D. 70. His predictions about this catastrophe and the tribulations leading up to it are expressed in the apocalyptic language of the OT prophets, which is often cryptic and symbolic. The effect is to show that Jerusalem's doom will be an event of world-shaking consequence in the divine plan of salvation. **(2) Typologically:** the devastation of the Temple, which stood as an architectural symbol of creation, anticipates the fiery dissolution of heaven and earth. This will occur at the end of time when Jesus comes again in glory to judge the living and the dead (2 Pet 3:10-13; Rev 20:11-15; CCC 585-86). [Back to text.](#)

24:3 Mount of Olives: Rises directly east of Jerusalem. **when . . . what:** The disciples' question determines the focus of the Olivet Discourse, which all acknowledge is difficult to interpret. **(1)** Some read it as a *double question* about two distinct events: the fall of the Temple and the future return of Jesus. Several proponents contend that Jesus speaks of the first event in 24:4-35 and of the second in 24:36-25:46. **(2)** Others read it as a *single question* about a single event and the circumstances surrounding it. For some, the entire discourse concerns the demise of Jerusalem and the Temple; for others, its principle topic is the Second Coming. Either way, the whole of Matthew 24-25 is read as a unified exposition, with 24:36 marking a shift in emphasis rather than a change of subject. In favor of the single-question view, Luke records many of the same statements that span the two parts of Mt 24 (housetop, 24:17; lightning, 24:27; body and eagles, 24:28; Noah, 24:37; women grinding, 24:41) but rearranges them into a different sequence, all referring to a single time of fulfillment (see Lk 17:22-37). Luke's presentation thus undermines a division of the discourse into two halves dealing with two different subjects. For the main subject being the

Temple's destruction, see essay: [End of the World?](#) **close of the age:** Jewish theology distinguished between "this age" and "the age to come" heralded by the Messiah. Christian theology transposed this traditional schema of the two ages to cover the present age of history, still dominated by sin and evil (2 Cor 4:4; Gal 1:4), and the coming age of eternal life in the resurrected state (Mk 10:30; Lk 20:34-36). Jesus may be said to address the closing of the age at both levels in the following discourse. Not only does he speak of the demolition of the Temple (24:2), which marks the end of the pre-messianic order of worship (cf. Jn 4:21; Heb 9:26), but he also foretells that heaven and earth will pass away (24:35), thus addressing the end of history as well (as in 28:20). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Coming ([Mt 24:3](#))

Parousia (Gk.): literally means "presence" but can denote "appearing" or "visitation". The word is used four times in Mt 24 and 20 times in the rest of the NT. It is sometimes used in Greek literature to describe the visitation of a king or high official to a city he has previously conquered. In this sense, it presumes a period of absence before the king's return. The Bible uses it in a similar way for the arrival of important people (Jud 10:18; 2 Mac 8:12; 2 Cor 7:6; Phil 1:26). More important, it denotes the coming of Jesus Christ, who brings judgment upon his enemies (Mt 24:37, 39; 2 Thess 2:8) and rescues his faithful disciples (1 Cor 15:23; 1 Thess 3:13; 1 Jn 2:28). The word can refer both to Christ's "visitation" of destruction upon Jerusalem in A.D. 70 as well as to his Second Advent at the end of time as Judge of the living and the dead (cf. Acts 1:11; 2 Tim 4:1).

End of the World?

JESUS' Olivet Discourse in Mt 24-25 is difficult to interpret (cf. Mk 13; Lk 21). He speaks extensively about cosmic catastrophes, heavenly signs, and the future judgment of God. This has led some to think that Jesus was predicting his Second Coming and the end of the visible world. This interpretation appears to take Jesus' words seriously and at their face value. Nevertheless, it leads to a troublesome scenario: Jesus expected these world-shaking events to occur soon after his Ascension. After all, he told the disciples, "Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away till all these things take place" (Mt 24:34). Was Jesus mistaken? Should we feel uncomfortable because the world is still with us almost two thousand years after he prophesied its frightful end?

A closer look at Jesus' words in the context of ancient Judaism reveals a better interpretation. Namely, Jesus was predicting the demise of the Jerusalem Temple—the architectural symbol of the Old Covenant. At the literal-historical level, Jesus' entire discourse is an extension of his cryptic comment about the Temple: "[T]here will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down" (Mt 24:2). Hearing this, the disciples were probably reminded of a similar event in the OT when God allowed the Temple to be destroyed in 586 B.C. as punishment for Israel's sins (2 Kings 25:8-10). Interpreting Jesus' words in this way does more adequate justice to the symbolism of his language and the testimony of history. Ancient sources confirm his prophecy: the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70, a tragedy that claimed the lives of more than 1 million Jews. From this perspective Jesus stands vindicated, since his words did come to pass within the lifetime of his contemporaries.

But how are the details of Jesus' strange language to be understood? Could he expect us to associate cosmic upheavals like national warfare (Mt 24:6-7), earthly catastrophes (Mt 24:7-8), the darkening of the sun and the moon (Mt 24:29), and stars falling out of the sky (Mt 24:29) with the collapse of a sacred building? The answer lies in biblical and traditional views of the Temple. Like many religions in the Near East, the Israelites regarded their Temple as a miniature replica or microcosm of the world; it was an architectural model of the universe fashioned by God. Conversely,

the universe itself was a macrotemple, where God also dwells with his people. This is best summarized by the Psalmist, "He built his sanctuary like the high heavens, like the earth, which he has founded for ever" (Ps 78:69). Other indications of this Temple theology are found in OT parallels and Jewish traditions that link the Temple and the world closely together:

(1) The Place of God's Rest

After the week-long construction of the world, "God rested from all his work which he had done in creation" (Gen 2:3). Likewise, when God established order and gave the Israelites "rest" from their enemies (2 Sam 7:1), He commissioned the building of the Temple by Solomon as his "resting place for ever" (Ps 132:14; cf. 2 Chron 6:41; Sir 24:11; Is 66:1).

(2) Symbolism of Seven

God's creation of the world is described as the construction of a Temple (Job 38:4-6; Amos 9:6) that is completed and blessed on the seventh day (Gen 2:2-3). Similarly, Solomon built the Jerusalem Temple in seven years (1 Kings 6:38) and dedicated it in the seventh month (1 Kings 8:2) during the seven-day Feast of Booths (1 Kings 8:65).

(3) A House of Glory

Isaiah's vision of the Lord (Is 6:1-7) makes an implicit comparison: the Temple and the cosmos are mutually and interchangeably filled with divine glory. As the train of God's robe "filled the temple" (Is 6:1) and God's house is "filled with smoke" (Is 6:4), so the angels cry out "the whole earth is full of his glory" (Is 6:3).

(4) Jewish Tradition

Jewish writers of Jesus' day describe in great detail the Temple as a model of the universe. Josephus, Philo, and later rabbinic writings interpret the Temple's divisions, furniture, colors, and architecture as symbols of the cosmos. One tradition links the three divisions of the Temple with three realms of the world: heaven is the most holy place,

the land is the holy place, and the sea is the outer courtyard and the bronze laver of water.

These considerations help make sense of Jesus' words in their historical context. With the dawning of the New Covenant, God had to clear away the central symbol of the Old Covenant, the Temple. The Church is God's new and spiritual Temple, built with the living stones of Christian believers (Mt 16:18; Eph 2:20-22; 1 Pet 2:4-5). In this light, the devastation of the Temple and the judgment of Israel in A.D. 70 can be seen as an overture to greater things. That is, the termination of the Old Covenant world prefigures the destruction of the universe, God's macrotemple, and the judgment of all nations by Christ (cf. 2 Pet 3:5-7). Thus Jesus' Olivet Discourse (Mt 24-25) is initially fulfilled in the first century as he said (Mt 24:34). But imbedded in Christ's words are spiritual truths that point forward to his Second Coming in glory and the end of the visible world. «



24:8 the sufferings: Literally, "the birth pangs." • An OT prophetic image for grief, which overcomes sinners when God comes as Judge (Is 26:17-18; Jer 6:24; Hos 13:13). [Back to text.](#)

24:14 throughout the whole world: This language is elsewhere used to denote the scope of Christianity's presence in the Roman Empire (Rom 1:8; Col 1:6, 23). The gospel was substantially spread throughout the Roman world by the middle of the first century A.D. (cf. 1 Thess 1:8). [Back to text.](#)



24:15 the desolating sacrilege: Recalls Dan 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11. • In context, Daniel foresees the desecration of the Jerusalem Temple by the Gentile ruler Antiochus Epiphanes IV (167 B.C.). Antiochus burned Jerusalem, plundered the Temple of its sacred articles, and erected an idol to the Greek god Zeus within its precincts (1 Mac 1:31, 37, 54). Jesus draws from this episode and projects it forward to announce the Temple's ultimate destruction and desecration by the Roman army in A.D. 70 (cf. Lk 21:20). [Back to text.](#)



24:16 flee to the mountains: A warning for early Christians to escape Jerusalem before its judgment and to resist temptations to defend the city. According to the Church Father Eusebius (A.D. 340), Christians living in the city fled to Pella, east of the Jordan River. • Jesus' command evokes Zech 14. In context, Zechariah envisions a day of judgment for Jerusalem, when the faithful are beckoned to "flee" the city (Zech 14:5; cf. Joel 2:32; Obad 17). Similarly, in 1 Mac 1:37-39 and 2:27-28, the righteous had to evacuate the sinful cities of Jerusalem and Modein in times of crisis. [Back to text.](#)



24:27 lightning: Points to the swiftness of God's judgment on the city. • The OT similarly depicts God's presence and frightful punishment as a raging storm (Ps 97:4; Is 29:5-6; Zech 9:14). **the coming:** See word study: [Coming](#) at Mt 24:3. [Back to text.](#)



24:28 the eagles: Scavengers (Romans) who eat the remains of a carcass (Jerusalem). It is noteworthy that Roman military standards featured eagles as symbols of the empire. • In the OT, the eagle (also translated "vulture") symbolized pagan nations who brought suffering upon Israel (Deut 28:49; Hab 1:8; cf. Hos 8:1). [Back to text.](#)



24:29 sun . . . moon . . . stars: Images of cosmic catastrophe underscore the magnitude of Jerusalem's coming doom. • Depictions of heavenly chaos are used by the OT prophets to predict the downfall of pagan kingdoms (Is 13:9-10; 34:4; Ezek 32:7-8; Joel 2:10, 31; Amos 8:9). Jesus redirects this language toward Jerusalem: the kingdom of Old Covenant Israel will be devastated for corrupting itself like the pagans and rejecting Jesus. [Back to text.](#)



24:30 the Son of man: An allusion to Dan 7:13. • In context, Daniel beholds "a son of man" coming to God with the **clouds of heaven**; he is given a royal "kingdom" and "everlasting dominion" (Dan 7:14) over all nations (cf. 28:18). Daniel's vision takes historical shape (initially) with Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension to the Father (Mk 16:19; Acts 1:9). Jesus' victory over his enemies will be visibly manifest with Jerusalem's judgment and the termination of the Old Covenant. See topical essay: *Jesus the Son of Man* at Lk 17. [Back to text.](#)



24:31 angels: Presumably the angels of heaven, who will accompany Christ when he comes again in his kingdom (16:27; 2 Thess 1:7). Others see them as preachers of the gospel since the Greek *angeloi* can also refer to human "messengers" (e.g., John the Baptist in 11:10). **trumpet call:** An allusion to Is 27:13. • Isaiah envisions the messianic restoration of Israel. Summoned by the Lord's trumpet, the tribes of Jacob will come forth from their exile among the nations to be united with God once again. **the four winds:** The four points of the compass. • The statement recalls OT passages about the ingathering of God's people from among the nations (Deut 30:4; Is 11:12; Zech 2:6). [Back to text.](#)

24:34 this generation: The expression in Greek can mean "this race" or "these contemporaries of mine". The latter meaning best fits this context, not only because Jesus envisions his initial coming within the lifetime of his first disciples (16:28), but also because he often addresses his unbelieving contemporaries with the same term (11:16), either contrasting them with an earlier generation that responded to God's message (12:41-42) or implicitly comparing them with the faithless generation of Israel that failed to enter the Promised Land (12:39, 45; 16:4; 17:17; cf. Deut 1:35; 32:5). [Back to text.](#)



24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away: A solemn prediction, not a hypothetical contrast. Jesus thus prophesies the termination of the Old Covenant order, i.e., the old creation awaiting renewal in Christ (cf. 2 Cor 5:17; Rev 21:1). As the OT era gave way to the NT age established by Christ's powerful **words**, so even the NT age will give way to eternal life at the end of history. • Jesus' statement recalls OT oracles that describe God's word (Is 40:8) and salvation (Is 51:6) outlasting the frail elements of the cosmos. [Back to text.](#)

24:36-25:46 Jesus turns from revealing general prophesies to concealing specific details. Jerusalem's doom will be preceded by proximate signs (24:5-8, 30, 33), but the precisetime of the city's judgment will remain unknown (24:42, 44; 25:13). [Back to text.](#)



24:36 nor the Son, but the Father: This saying is comparable to 20:23, where Jesus says that the Father, not the Son, makes royal appointments of rank. Here also **only** the Father appoints the time of the Son's royal return in glory. Christ's professed ignorance of this **day** and **hour** may be understood as hyperbole (overstatement), a teaching device used by Jewish rabbis and Jesus himself (5:34; 23:9; Lk 14:26). • Tradition maintains that Jesus' apparent ignorance is not a literal statement, but a figurative expression; for the Father and the Son share everything in common, including their divine knowledge: 11:27; Jn 3:35; 10:15; 17:25). Here Jesus does not display any human knowledge of the time when the Father will send the Son to judge all nations, because this mystery lies beyond the scope of what the Father intends the Son to reveal (CCC 472-74). [Back to text.](#)

24:38 The lesson from **the flood** is based on unexpected catastrophe (cf. Dan 9:26). Except for **Noah** and his family, the rest of his generation showed no concern for God. They were distracted by the concerns of the world and were destroyed in God's judgment. [Back to text.](#)

24:40 one is taken . . . one is left: This scenario follows Jesus' example of Noah and the flood (24:37). The righteous will be left, just as Noah and his family were spared (Sir 44:17); the wicked will be taken, as Noah's generation was swept away by the flood (Mt 24:39; 2 Pet 2:4-10). [Back to text.](#)

24:42 Watch therefore: A prominent theme in Jesus' teaching (24:43; 25:13; 26:38-41). It addresses the glorious **coming** of Christ at three levels. **(1) Past historical.** The disciples were to look vigilantly for Christ's judgment on Jerusalem A.D. 70, lest they fail to heed his words and evacuate the city before its demise (24:16). **(2) Present liturgical.** Disciples must look with faith to see the coming of Christ in the Eucharist. Here too Jesus' presence must be discerned to avoid divine judgment when he comes in the sacrament (1 Cor 11:27-29). **(3) Future eschatological.** Disciples must watch for Christ's Second Coming in glory at the end of history. Being vigilant in faith and good works is necessary to inherit eternal life with Christ (25:34-36). See word study [Coming](#) at Mt 24. [Back to text.](#)



25:1-13 The parable of the Ten Maidens emphasizes the need for watchfulness (25:13). Its story line centers on a Jewish marital custom: following the period of betrothal, the groom would lead a procession to bring his new wife to their home, and they would celebrate a week-long banquet with family and friends. Here the **bridegroom** (25:6; 9:15) arrives to begin the joyous procession and take his wife to the **marriage feast**. Unprepared and without **oil** (25:3), the **foolish** maidens are excluded from the celebration (22:1-14) while the **wise** participate fully. Likewise, Christians are called to be spiritually prepared: the moment Jesus brings judgment on Jerusalem is unknown, as is the time of his Second Coming as Judge (CCC 672, 796). [See note on Mt 1:18.](#) • *Morally* (Origen, St. Hilary): awaiting the bridegroom signifies one's uncertain life-span—no one knows the hour of his death and judgment. The lamp is Christian faith, while the oil represents good works; thus faith without works is useless (Jas 2:17). Souls must prepare for their personal encounter with Christ (bridegroom)

by loving God and neighbor (Mt 25:35-40; 1 Jn 3:7), since those lacking good works will be shut out of heaven's banquet. [Back to text.](#)

25:14-30 The parable of the Talents is about stewardship. It warns against the dangers of sloth, whereby God-given blessings and abilities are squandered because of fear (25:25) and laziness (25:26-28). Personal diligence, however, is greatly rewarded with superior gifts and responsibilities (25:21, 23). Accountability to Christ entails risk and challenges; God's endowments must be invested in and for the good of others to increase heavenly earnings. [Back to text.](#)

25:14 on a journey: A sufficient time for servants to multiply their master's wealth. In the context of Jesus' sermon, the journey represents the delay between his Ascension and God's judgment on Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (Lk 19:11-27). At the personal level, it indicates one's lifetime, during which God expects his gifts to be cultivated (1 Pet 4:10). [Back to text.](#)

25:15 talents: Coins representing sizable sums of money. The modern notion of God-given "talents" (i.e., abilities) is derived from this parable (CCC 1936-37). [See note on Mt 18:24.](#) [Back to text.](#)

25:26 slothful servant!: The master rebuked his servant for more than laziness—he was **wicked**. The servant was presumably insulted when the master entrusted him with only a single talent (25:15), while others received more. Despising his master, then, he refused to trade with—or even invest—the talent, lest his master should benefit from his stewardship. The parable thus warns against sloth that is fueled by envy (cf. Lk 19:14). [Back to text.](#)

25:28 Failure to use and cultivate one's talents results in their loss. [Back to text.](#)

25:31-46 Jesus' prophesy of the Last Judgment unfolds at two historical levels. **(1)** He initially foretells the judgment of Old Covenant Israel. This involves his "coming" to Jerusalem (A.D. 70) as the Shepherd who separates the faithful sheep of Israel from the wicked goats (10:23; 16:27-28; cf. Ezek 34:17-22). **(2)** He ultimately foretells the General Judgment at the end of history. This will involve Christ's Second Coming and the general resurrection of all people before his throne to be **blessed** (25:34) or **cursed** (25:41) according to their deeds (Jn 5:25-29; Rev 20:11-12; CCC 1038-39). [Back to text.](#)

25:40 you did it to me: Jesus identifies himself with all men, especially the poor and afflicted. Thus by serving others we serve Christ; by

performing works of mercy we hope to find mercy (Jas 2:1-13). Indeed, Jesus' own ministry was marked by concern for the disadvantaged (4:23-24; 8:1-17; 11:4-6). [Back to text.](#)

25:41 the eternal fire: A description of hell. Here the wicked are consigned to everlasting punishment with the **devil** and his fallen **angels** (cf. Mk 9:48; 2 Pet 2:4; Rev 20:10; CCC 103335). [Back to text.](#)

26:1-27:66 All four Gospels give more attention to Jesus' final days than to the rest of his ministry. In Matthew, Passion Week (chaps. 21-28) comprises nearly one-third of his Gospel. This unparalleled emphasis reflects the centrality of Jesus' Passion and Resurrection in the gospel message. [Back to text.](#)

26:2 the Passover: One of the great feasts of the Jewish calendar. It commemorates God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt (Ex 12) and is celebrated on the 15th of Nisan (or Abib), the first month of the OT liturgical year (March/April). With Weeks (Pentecost) and Booths (Tabernacles), it is one of three feasts that required Israelites to travel to Jerusalem (Ex 23:14; Lev 23:4-8; Deut 16:16). By NT times, the Passover was celebrated in conjunction with the feast of Unleavened Bread (26:17). [Back to text.](#)

26:3 Caiaphas: The Jerusalem high priest from A.D. 18 to 36. [Back to text.](#)

26:6 Bethany: A small village about two miles from Jerusalem (Jn 11:18). It is on the eastern hillside of the Mount of Olives and was the hometown of Jesus' friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (Jn 11:1). [Back to text.](#)

26:7 expensive ointment: A costly extract from pure nard that was poured **on his head** and his feet (Mk 14:3; Jn 12:3). [Back to text.](#)

26:12 for burial: Jesus' anointing is a twofold sign: **(1)** It points to the immeasurable value of Jesus' presence. The costly ointment is not wasted but used in a generous act of reverence and worship. **(2)** It points forward to Jesus' Passion and death as his own priceless gift for man's salvation. [Back to text.](#)

26:15 thirty pieces of silver: The price of a slave (Ex 21:32). Judas' betrayal for "blood money" (27:6) stands in contrast to the lavish gesture of the woman (26:6-13). He places little value on Jesus and prefers instead personal gain. [Back to text.](#)

26:17 first day of Unleavened Bread: Begins with the day of Passover. During this feast, the Jews ate only unleavened bread for seven days (Ex 12:14-20). [Back to text.](#)

26:26-29 Matthew's Last Supper account highlights three aspects of the Eucharist (CCC 1339-40). **(1)** Jesus identifies the unleavened **bread** and the **chalice** with his **body** and **blood** (26:26-28). Through his spoken words the mystery of "transubstantiation" takes place: his body and blood replace the entire substance of the bread and wine. Although his presence remains undetected by the senses, the force of the verb "**is**" (Gk. *estin*) should not be reduced to "represents" or "symbolizes". The Church's faith rests entirely on Jesus' solemn words (cf. Jn 6:68; 2 Cor 5:7). **(2)** Jesus links the Eucharist with his forthcoming sacrifice on the Cross (27:35; Jn 19:34). The expression **poured out** (26:28) recalls how Old Covenant priests poured the blood of sacrificial offerings at the base of the Temple's altar to make atonement for sin (Lev 4:16-20; cf. Deut 12:26, 27; Is 53:12). Shedding his own blood, Jesus is both the high priest and the sacrificial victim of the New Covenant; his priestly offering is present in an unbloody manner in the sacrament and secures for us the **forgiveness of sins**. **(3)** Christ's presence in the Eucharist makes the sacrament a true communion with Jesus (1 Cor 10:16). The phrase **blood of the covenant** is drawn from Ex 24:8, where God entered a covenant of love and communion with Israel through sacrifice. The consumption of blood—always forbidden under the Old Covenant (Lev 17:11-12)—is now enjoined in the New, since it communicates Christ's divine life to the believer (Jn 6:53; CCC 1329, 1374, 1381). [Back to text.](#)



26:26 The Eucharist is prefigured when Jesus multiplies bread for the crowds. [See note on Mt 14:13-21.](#) • *Anagogically* (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Office of the Adorable Sacrament*): the Eucharist is a pledge and sign of heavenly glory. While the sacrament is a true communion with Christ in the present, it points also to our perfect communion with him in eternity. In heaven, the sacraments will give way to the saints' direct and unmediated union with the Trinity (CCC 1402). [Back to text.](#)

26:30 sung a hymn: The Passover liturgy included the singing of various Hallel Psalms. Normally Psalms 113-14 were sung before the main meal, while Psalms 115-18 were sung afterward. [Back to text.](#)

26:31 I will strike the shepherd: A citation from Zech 13:7. Its fulfillment unfolds when the disciples flee from Gethsemane (26:56). Jesus' assurance of a later appearance in "Galilee" (26:32) implies that the apostles will abandon him only temporarily—they will be regathered (28:16; cf. Lk 22:31-32). [Back to text.](#)

26:34 before the cock crows: Possibly the bugle call that signaled the end of the third watch of the night. The Romans referred to this watch (midnight to 3 A.M.) as the "cockcrow" (Mk 13:35). [See note on Mt 14:25.](#) [Back to text.](#)

26:36 Gethsemane: A Hebrew word meaning "oil press". It is a garden traditionally located near the foot of the Mount of Olives, facing Jerusalem (cf. Jn 18:1). [Back to text.](#)

26:37 The third episode when Peter, James, and John alone are privileged to accompany Jesus. They also witnessed the raising of Jairus' daughter (Mk 5:37) and the Transfiguration (17:1). [Back to text.](#)

26:39 let this chalice pass: Jesus fears his Passion and Crucifixion. As a man, he has a natural aversion to suffering that is both physical (crucifixion) and spiritual (bearing the sins of the world). As God's Son, he could have suppressed these human passions by divine effort, but he chose to embrace the Father's plan even in agony. This ordeal in the garden is traditionally viewed as Satan's most aggressive assault on Jesus (Lk 22:53) (CCC 612). [See note on Mt 20:22.](#) **not as I will:** Jesus entrusts himself to the Father despite his fear of death (cf. Phil 2:8; Heb 5:7). Note that his human will is in perfect harmony with the divine will (cf. Jn 6:38; CCC 475). [Back to text.](#)

26:45 sleeping: The slumber of the disciples is clear evidence that "the flesh is weak" (26:41). The privilege of their presence with Jesus at his time of distress was wasted by their lack of attention and prayer. [See note on Mk 14:38.](#) [Back to text.](#)

26:52 Put your sword back: Jesus rebukes Peter for responding with violence, recoiling from any attempt at frustrating the Father's plan. His obedience and life-giving love fulfills the Scriptures (26:54; cf. Is 53:4-12; CCC 2262). [Back to text.](#)

26:53 twelve legions: In the Roman army, a "legion" consisted of nearly 6,000 soldiers. Here it is not the Father's will to dispatch angelic armies to deliver Jesus from sinners; his betrayal and Crucifixion are essential to God's plan of redemption. [Back to text.](#)



26:56 the Scriptures: A fulfillment of Zech 13:7, quoted earlier in 26:31. • Jesus' betrayal recalls the conspiracy against King David in 2 Sam 17. Judas Iscariot's role in particular parallels the treachery of Ahithophel, who planned to seek out David at night (2 Sam 17:1; cf. Mt 26:31) when he was "weary and discouraged" (2 Sam 17:2), so that David's companions would flee (cf. Mt 26:38, 56). He then prepared to "strike down the king only" (2 Sam 17:2; cf. Mt 26:31). When Ahithophel's plans fell apart, he "hanged himself" (2 Sam 17:23; cf. Mt 27:5). [Back to text.](#)

26:57 Caiaphas: The Jerusalem high priest (A.D. 18-36) and representative head of Israel. He presided over the Sanhedrin, the supreme court of the Jews, during Jesus' trial (cf. Jn 11:49; 18:14). [Back to text.](#)

26:59 the whole council: The entire membership (71) of the Sanhedrin. Their primary function was to regulate and judge the internal affairs of Judaism. Their attempts to procure "false witnesses" (Mt 26:60) underscores the extreme measures taken by Jerusalem's leaders to condemn Jesus. [See note on Mk 14:55.](#) [Back to text.](#)

26:61 the temple . . . in three days: A distortion of Jesus' words in Jn 2:19. Jesus was predicting his bodily Resurrection, not announcing a plan to reconstruct a fallen building (Jn 2:21). [Back to text.](#)



26:64 You have said so: Jesus breaks silence under oath. According to Mk 14:62, Jesus' response to Caiaphas is unambiguous: he accepts fully the charge to be Israel's divine Messiah and king. **But I tell you:** Jesus appears to be the victim, but he claims to be the victor. Drawing from two OT texts (Ps 110:1 and Dan 7:13), Jesus anticipates his vindication by God. • In context, Ps 110 and Dan 7 share common images. Both envision a heavenly throne room in God's presence (Ps 110:1; Dan 7:9); both depict a royal Messiah who reigns with God (Ps 110:1; Dan 7:14); and both present this figure triumphing over his enemies (Ps 110:2, 56; Dan 7:23-27). Jesus here weaves these texts into a self-portrait: he is the royal **Son of man** soon to be vindicated over his enemies and enthroned at God's **right hand**. By contrast, the high priest and the council are cast as the Messiah's adversaries seeking his death. Caiaphas in particular is toppled from his high position. As Israel's head representative, he is the only person permitted to enter the Temple's innermost chamber. Jesus claims something still greater for

himself: as Messiah, he is now the true head of faithful Israel in the Church and will assume his throne in the inner shrine of God's heavenly presence at his Ascension (Mk 16:19; CCC 663-64). [Back to text.](#)

26:65 tore his robes: A gesture of extreme distress and wrongdoing—the Mosaic Law forbade the **high priest** to tear his sacred vestments (Lev 10:6; 21:10). **blasphemy:** The council charges Jesus with blaspheming the name of God and issues a death sentence (Lev 24:16). The Romans, however, reserved for themselves the sole authority to administer capital punishment in NT Palestine (Jn 18:31). For this reason, the council delivers Jesus to the Roman governor, Pilate (27:2), in hopes of enforcing their judgment (CCC 591, 596). [Back to text.](#)

26:73 your accent: Peter's Galilean *accent* was foreign to natives of Jerusalem (Mk 14:70). [Back to text.](#)



26:74 the cock crowed: Peter is unwilling to identify with Jesus and denies even knowing him. Hearing the cock, he recalls Jesus' prophecy (26:34) and probably his foolish over-confidence (26:35). [See note on Mt 26:34.](#) • *Morally* (St. Laurence Giustiniani, *de Christi agone*, chap. 9): Peter typifies man's proneness to sin. The cock is the informed conscience that accuses us of sins, reminding us of God's commandments and stirring the soul to contrition. As with Peter, the informed conscience directs sinners away from despair and toward genuine repentance. [Back to text.](#)



27:1 took counsel: Depicts the conspiracy of Jesus' adversaries (12:14; 22:15; 26:4). • Matthew's description of the plot alludes to Ps 2:2 (Acts 4:25-27). In context, David describes rulers who "take counsel together, against the Lord and his anointed" (i.e., the Messiah). [Back to text.](#)

27:2 Pilate the governor: Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator of Judea, Idumea, and Samaria from A.D. 26 to 36. He is known from first-century sources as a harsh tyrant. Although he considers Jesus innocent of a capital crime (27:23), he lacks the integrity to release him by his own authority. He is now immortalized in the Apostles' Creed as responsible for the suffering and Crucifixion of Christ. [Back to text.](#)

27:5 hanged himself: The suicide of Judas is difficult to interpret. Matthew describes a hanging, but Acts 1:18 suggests his death involved a headlong fall whereby his "bowels gushed out". Since both the hanging

(Mt) and the fall (Acts) seem to involve some height or elevation related to the incident, the two accounts should be considered complementary, although the precise course of events is unknown. [See note on Mt 26:56.](#) [Back to text.](#)

27:6 blood money: The priests deem it inappropriate to use Judas' betrayal money as a religious donation to the Temple. [Back to text.](#)



27:8-10 An allusion to OT passages from both **Jeremiah** and Zechariah. • The central scenario of buying a **potter's field** links these prophets. **(1)** Jeremiah made a famous visit to a potter (Jer 18:1-11) and was commissioned by God to purchase a field (Jer 32:6-9), **(2)** while Zechariah narrates how the wicked shepherds of Israel valued the Lord at a mere "thirty shekels of silver" (Zech 11:12), a price so worthless it was thrown away to a "potter" (see text note *q* at Zech 11:13). The wider context of Jeremiah gives these oracles a geographical focus: the prophet also smashed a potter's vessel in the gate overlooking the valley of Hinnom (i.e., Gehenna / Topheth) as a sign that Jerusalem and Judea would be destroyed for shedding innocent blood (Jer 19:1-15). Ancient tradition locates Judas' burial site (**Field of Blood**) in this same valley of Hinnom, precisely where Jeremiah smashed the pot and foretold its destiny as a future graveyard (Jer 19:11). Matthew may think of the smashed vessel, originally a sign of Judea's demise, as also a prophetic sign of Judas' destruction. [Back to text.](#)

27:11 King of the Jews?: The Jerusalem leaders give Jesus a title with obvious political overtones. The concern is whether Jesus represents a challenge to the authority of Rome; if so, Pilate would have legal cause to execute him for sedition. [Back to text.](#)

27:19 a dream: Matthew alone records this episode with Pilate's **wife**. As in the Infancy Narratives, dreams are channels for divine warning and instruction (1:20; 2:12-13, 22). [Back to text.](#)

27:24 a riot: The same word is translated "tumult" (Gk. *thorybos*) in Mt 26:5. The Jerusalem leaders originally hoped to avoid a public upheaval but now instigate one to their own advantage. **washed his hands:** Pilate's vain gesture to excuse himself from the responsibility of Jesus' death. [See note on Mt 27:2.](#) [Back to text.](#)

27:25 His blood be on us: An oath formula (cf. Josh 2:17/19). The Jerusalem mob invokes a curse upon itself, staking their lives to their

decision. Sadly, their oath was rash and inappropriate; they did not take seriously the responsibilities attached to crucifying Jesus. Their guilt eventually brought judgment on the Holy City (cf. Jer 26:15; Acts 5:28; CCC 597598). [See note on Mt 5:33.](#) [Back to text.](#)

27:27 praetorium: The residence of a Roman official (Pilate) in Jerusalem. [Back to text.](#)

27:28 a scarlet robe: The military cloak of a Roman soldier. [Back to text.](#)



27:29 King of the Jews!: A title suggested by the Sanhedrin and used mockingly by the soldiers (Lk 23:2). It is also the transcription on Jesus' Cross (27:37). The wise men are the only figures in Matthew to use the title in a positive and honorable way (2:2). • *Allegorically:* the title and articles used to slander Jesus signify his kingship and triumph over sin. The scarlet robe (27:28) represents Jesus' defeat of Satan through his shed blood; the crown of thorns (27:29) points to the crown of glory that adorns Jesus at his Ascension; the reed (27:29) signifies the scepter of his heavenly kingdom. Through these images, Christ's victory is paradoxically announced in the midst of his apparent defeat. [Back to text.](#)

27:33 Golgotha: An Aramaic term meaning "skull". The Vulgate translation of this word (Lat. *Calvariae*) is the source of the modern term "Calvary". Golgotha lies outside Jerusalem's walls (Jn 19:20) and probably acquired its name as a site commonly used for executing criminals. [Back to text.](#)

27:34 gall: A mixture of herbs and myrrh used as a narcotic (cf. Mk 15:23). Jesus' refusal of painkillers signifies his total acceptance of the Father's will and the extent of his sacrificial love (cf. Jn 10:17-18; Rom 5:8). [Back to text.](#)

27:35 crucified him: Crucifixion was designed to facilitate a slow and torturous death. Victims died from a combination of blood loss and asphyxiation. [See note on Mk 15:24.](#) **divided his garments:** An allusion to Ps 22:18. This psalm is quoted by Jesus before his death (Mt 27:46; cf. Jn 19:24). [Back to text.](#)



27:45 sixth hour . . . ninth hour: i.e., from noon until 3 P.M. [See note on Mt 20:1.](#) • The phenomena surrounding the Crucifixion recall

Amos 8:8-10. In context, Amos prophesies the day of the Lord, when God would judge his enemies and the sinners of his people. On this day, the land would "tremble", the sun would "go down at noon", and there would be "lamentation" like the "mourning for an only son". • *Symbolically* (St. Cyprian, *De bono patientiae*, 7): the disturbances of Good Friday signify creation's distress over the death of its Creator. The sun in particular withdraws its rays to look away, lest it be forced to gaze upon the crime of Jesus' enemies. [Back to text.](#)



27:46 Eli, Eli: A mixed Hebrew and Aramaic quotation of Ps 22:1. Matthew elsewhere alludes to the psalm in 27:35 (Ps 22:18), 27:39 (Ps 22:7), and 27:43 (Ps 22:8). • In context, Ps 22 depicts the plight of a righteous sufferer. Although innocent, he is mocked and abused by the ungodly. He thus turns to God in his distress and petitions God for deliverance. By citing the psalm's opening line, Jesus expresses his agony as he experiences the full brunt of rejection. This evokes the entire plot of Ps 22, where the sufferer's humiliation gives way to his vindication. Thus Jesus does not consider his Passion meaningless or a mark of failure; still less does he succumb to a sin of despair. Rather, he "trusts in God" (27:43) and surrenders his spirit to the Father (Lk 23:46). Like the innocent sufferer of Ps 22, he is confident that God will turn his misery into victory (cf. Lk 23:43). [Back to text.](#)

27:51 curtain of the temple: Hung between the Temple's two holiest chambers, the holy place and the most holy place (Ex 26:31-34). The veil was a sign that God's infinite holiness could not be approached by sinners (cf. Heb 9:8). With Jesus' saving death, forgiveness is secured for man, and access to heaven is reopened (Eph 2:18; Heb 10:19-22). This is announced by God himself, who tears the veil **from top to bottom**. [See note on Mk 15:38.](#) [Back to text.](#)

27:52 saints . . . were raised: Apart from Matthew's Gospel, history is silent regarding this event and the OT personalities involved. No indication is given as to *who* was raised, how *long* they remained, or what *kind of body* these saints possessed; yet there would be no reason for Matthew to record it, except that witnesses from Jerusalem verified the facts (27:53). Theologically, it is essential to note that these OT saints were raised after

(27:53) Easter morning, since Jesus was the first to be resurrected in glory (Col 1:18). [Back to text.](#)

27:65 a guard of soldiers: Probably Roman military personnel, since they sought refuge with the Jerusalem priests after verifying the empty tomb (28:11). This was to keep them "out of trouble" with Pilate (28:14). The consequences of Jesus' disappearance for these soldiers would have likely involved capital punishment (cf. Acts 12:19; 16:27). [Back to text.](#)

28:1 first day of the week: Sunday, the day following the Jewish Sabbath. To commemorate Christ's Resurrection, the early Christians called it the "Lord's day" (Rev 1:10) and designated it a day for sacred assembly, eucharistic worship, and prayer (Acts 20:7; CCC 2174). [Back to text.](#)

28:6 he has risen, as he said: Jesus predicted his Resurrection six times in Matthew (12:40; 16:21; 17:9, 23; 20:19; 26:32). Historically, the miraculous fact of Jesus' Resurrection is central to the Christian faith and provides the ultimate proof of his divinity (Jn 10:17-18). The event is not a mere resuscitation of Jesus' body but a glorification of his humanity, body and soul. Christ's Resurrection anticipates the general resurrection of all people before the Last Judgment (cf. Jn 5:28, 29; 1 Cor 15:20-24; Rev 1:5; CCC 638). [Back to text.](#)

28:15 this story: A desperate fabrication by the Jerusalem leaders. Their bribe of the Roman soldiers illustrates how willful blindness hardens the heart to resist uncomfortable truths, even in the face of evidence (cf. Rom 1:18-21). [Back to text.](#)

28:18 All authority: The Father vindicates Jesus at his Resurrection and gives him full dominion over creation (cf. Dan 7:13, 14; Eph 1:19-22). Jesus confers his authority on the apostles to preach the gospel and "make disciples" (27:19) as witnesses of his Resurrection (cf. Lk 10:16; Acts 2:32). [See note on Mt 24:30.](#) [Back to text.](#)



28:19 Go therefore: Christ's commission to evangelize and catechize the world fulfills God's covenant oath to Abraham that "all the nations" would be blessed (Gen 22:18; Gal 3:8). His outline for the Church's mission is threefold: **(1) Evangelizing all nations** involves more than winning individuals; it entails the conversion of entire cultures. Every area of life must be brought under the Lordship of Christ and in line with the gospel. **(2) The administration of the sacraments** is essential to the

Church's mission and our response. **[B]aptizing** new converts is the first step in a long process of sanctification and participation in the life of the Church. **(3)** The transmission of all that Christ taught necessitates the assistance of the Holy Spirit, who guides the Church to proclaim the gospel infallibly (cf. Jn 14:26). [See note on Jn 16:13](#). • The Sacrament of Baptism incorporates Christians into the divine family of the Trinity as children of God (cf. Gal 3:26, 27). The single **name** of the **Father, Son, and Spirit** reveals the unity of God's inner life and the oneness of his nature. This expression has become the normative baptismal formula for the Church (CCC 849, 1122, 1257). [See note on Mt 3:11](#). [Back to text](#).

28:20 I am with you always: Jesus' parting words further elucidate Isaiah's prophetic name for the Messiah, "Emmanuel . . . God with us" (1:23). The risen Christ's ongoing presence in the Church is both ecclesial (18:20) and eucharistic (26:26-28); he thus directs and empowers the world-wide mission of the Church throughout history (CCC 860, 2743). [Back to text](#).

INTRODUCTION TO

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT MARK

Author The earliest manuscripts of the second Gospel are titled "According to Mark" (Gk. *Kata Markon*). This heading summarizes the Church's uniform tradition that Mark, a disciple of Simon Peter, wrote the second Gospel. Although Mark did not write as an eyewitness of Christ's public ministry, he was a channel of apostolic tradition through Peter, who was his primary source of information about the life of Jesus. His association with Peter is evident in both the NT and the testimony of the early Church. (1) Within the NT, Peter refers to his companionship with "my son Mark" in 1 Pet 5:13, and interpreters have noted that the general outline of Mark's Gospel is similar to Peter's presentation of the gospel in Acts 10:36-43. (2) Outside the NT, several Church Fathers insist that Peter's authority stands behind the second Gospel. Papias (A.D. 130) describes Mark as the "interpreter" of Peter, while Irenaeus (A.D. 180), Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 200), and Tertullian (A.D. 200) echo this tradition.

Few details exist about the life and character of Mark. He is known principally by his Roman name "Mark" (Lat. *Marcus*) but is sometimes called by his Jewish name "John" (Acts 12:25; 15:37). He is the cousin of the missionary Barnabas according to Col 4:10. More significantly, he was an associate of the Apostle Paul (Acts 12:25) and a welcome companion on Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13:5). For reasons unstated, Mark withdrew prematurely from the mission (Acts 13:13), creating an awkward situation that later became a source of contention between him and Paul (Acts 15:36-41). At some point, however, Mark was reconciled with him and again became active in his ministry, since he is later present with Paul in Rome (Col 4:10; Philem 24), and, according to the apostle's estimation, "he [Mark] is very useful in serving me" (2 Tim 4:11). Tradition states that after the martyrdom of Peter and Paul, Mark was the first to establish churches in Alexandria in northern Egypt.

Date Two factors suggest that Mark completed his Gospel before A.D. 70, within one generation of the events he records. First, the Gospel itself points us in this direction. In Mk 13, Jesus prophesies the imminent destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. This was fulfilled in A.D. 70, when the Romans violently destroyed the Holy City. Mark, however, makes no mention of this as a past event, nor does he give detailed information about the catastrophe that would indicate he was writing after the fact. Second, prominent traditions in the early Church date Mark's Gospel in the 60s A.D., or even earlier. Both a second-century document, called the Anti-Marcionite Prologue, and Irenaeus (A.D. 180) state that Mark wrote soon after Peter's martyrdom (c. A.D. 67)—a tradition that still allows for a date in the late 60s. Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 200), on the other hand, maintains that Mark wrote his Gospel *before* Peter's death. Still another witness, Eusebius (A.D. 340), fixes a date for Mark during the reign of the Emperor Claudius between A.D. 41 and 54. Although these varying traditions make it impossible for us to assign an exact date for the Gospel, they together suggest that Mark published his work sometime before A.D. 70. Many modern scholars likewise place the composition of Mark just before A.D. 70, though some put it just after this critical date.

Destination Mark wrote his Gospel primarily for Gentile believers in Imperial Rome. This is suggested by several considerations. (1) Mark regularly explains Jewish customs that would be unfamiliar to his readers (7:3-4; 14:12); (2) he translates Aramaic words and phrases (3:17; 5:41; 7:11, 34; 15:34); (3) he at times uses Latinized terms instead of their Greek equivalents (12:42; 15:16); (4) his story climaxes with a confession of faith by a Roman soldier (15:39). It is also possible that Mark's audience in Rome was the target of fierce persecution at the time of composition (the Neronian persecution ran from about A.D. 64 to 68). His Gospel, then, may have been written to remind Roman believers of the suffering endured by their Lord and to encourage them to remain faithful during their own time of trial.

Structure Mark's Gospel resists a neat and clear-cut outline. As the narrator, Mark remains tucked behind his story and imposes no artificial structure on the traditions he has received; he is content, rather, to present the events of Jesus' life as he learned them. For the sake of convenience,

however, the Gospel may be divided into two major sections and two minor sections (see outline). The two major sections (1:16-8:30; 8:31-15:47) comprise most of Mark's narrative and consist of various events that gradually build in momentum toward a climactic confession of faith. In the first movement (1:16-8:30), the story culminates with Peter's testimony, "You are the Christ" (8:29), a confession that stands out amid the surrounding confusion about Jesus' identity (8:28). Similarly, the second movement (8:31-15:47) ascends gradually and peaks with the centurion's declaration, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (15:39), which also stands in contrast to the surrounding taunts leveled at Jesus (15:29-32, 36). The Gospel's two minor sections (1:1-15; 16:1-20) are small in size but great in importance. The Prologue (1:1-15) sets the stage for Jesus, narrating the preparations leading up to his public ministry. The Epilogue (16:1-20) crowns Mark's story with the account of Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension, bringing to a climax "the gospel of Jesus Christ" anticipated since the beginning (1:1).

Themes Mark paints a portrait of Jesus that is vivid and dynamic, focusing most of his attention on Jesus' mighty works. Apart from two lengthy sermons (4:1-32; 13:1-37), Mark depicts Jesus as an active healer and exorcist continually on the move—a feature the evangelist accentuates by using the word "immediately" over forty times in his mere sixteen chapters! In addition, Mark's Gospel engages the Christian reader with a number of rhetorical questions and statements that punctuate the story: "What is this? A new teaching!" (1:27); "Why does this man speak like this? . . . Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (2:7); "Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?" (4:41); "But who do you say that I am?" (8:29); "And what I say to you I say to all: Watch" (13:37). These statements address the attentive reader much as they address characters in the story. They invite every believer to look at Jesus with the eyes of faith, embrace him in hope, and imitate his heroic love.

The content of Mark's story revolves primarily around the identity of Jesus. Two aspects figure prominently: Jesus' secret and his divine Sonship. (1) *Secret*. In Mark, Jesus often attempts to conceal his identity as the Messiah because of the great possibility that his contemporaries will misunderstand his mission. During NT times, many in Israel expected the Messiah to liberate them from the oppressive rule of the Romans. For this

reason they awaited an outstanding royal and military figure to subdue their enemies and reestablish the earthly kingdom of David in Jerusalem (11:10). Jesus distances himself from these popular, but mistaken, aspirations and instead works to conceal his messianic identity to avoid confusion about his ministry. When unclean spirits attempt to publicize his identity, Jesus silences them (1:25, 34; 3:12). When men try to announce Jesus as a miracle worker or Messiah, he orders them not to (5:43; 7:36; 8:26, 30; 9:9). Far from embracing the role of a political leader, Jesus labors to reconfigure messianic expectations through his example of servanthood and suffering. The true Messiah liberates God's people from the burdens of Satan, sickness, and sin—not the yoke of an earthly empire (1:27, 34, 41; 2:5, 17; 3:5, 10; 5:41; 7:37).

(2) *Sonship*. The divine Sonship of Jesus is also a leading theme in Mark. It could be said, in fact, that recognizing Jesus as the divine Son of God is the goal of Mark's Gospel. Ironically, Jesus' Sonship and Incarnation are mysteries hidden from most of the Gospel's characters, despite repeated suggestions and hints pointing in this direction. As the narrator, Mark introduces Jesus from the outset as "the Son of God" (1:1). The demons are aware of it (3:11; 5:7), God the Father twice proclaims it in public (1:11; 9:7), and Jesus himself affirms it in no uncertain terms (14:61-62). Only at the Crucifixion is the Sonship of Jesus fully recognized as he surrenders his life with love to the Father. It is here that a single Gospel character (Roman centurion) confesses Jesus as "the Son of God" (15:39). Mark's Gospel proclaims this mystery of Christ's Sonship in story form and seeks both to inform and to challenge readers with this central truth of the gospel. «

OUTLINE OF THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT MARK

1. Prologue: Preparations for the Messiah and His Forerunner ([1:1-15](#))

- A. Preaching and Ministry of John the Baptist ([1:1-8](#))
- B. Baptism of Jesus by John ([1:9-11](#))
- C. Testing of Jesus by Satan ([1:12-13](#))
- D. Jesus Begins to Preach the Gospel ([1:14-15](#))

2. Public Ministry: The Messiah's Secret and His Widespread Ministry ([1:16-8:30](#))

- A. Jesus Becomes Popular and Controversial in Galilee ([1:16-3:12](#))
- B. Jesus Teaches the Apostles through Words and Deeds ([3:13-7:23](#))
- C. Jesus Travels to Gentile Regions ([7:24-8:30](#))

3. Passion Narrative: The Suffering Messiah and Passion Week Narratives ([8:31-15:47](#))

- A. Passion Predictions and Formation of Disciples on the Way to Jerusalem ([8:31-10:52](#))
- B. Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem and His Conflict in the Temple ([11:1-13:37](#))
- C. Last Supper, Trials, and Crucifixion of Jesus ([14:1-15:47](#))

4. Resurrection Epilogue: The Risen Messiah and Easter Narratives ([16:1-20](#))

- A. Empty Tomb of Jesus ([16:1-8](#))
- B. Resurrection Appearances and Great Commission ([16:9-18](#))
- C. Jesus' Ascension and the Spread of the Gospel ([16:19-20](#))

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

SAINT MARK

Chapters

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Essays and Charts

[Who Are the Pharisees?](#)

[Chart: The Twelve Apostles \(Mk 3\)](#)

[Who Are the Sadducees?](#)

[The Appearances of the Risen Christ](#)

The Preaching of John the Baptist

1 [The beginning](#) of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ^a

2 [As it is written](#) in Isaiah the prophet, ^b

"Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who shall prepare your way;

³the voice of one crying in the wilderness:

Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight—"

⁴John the Baptist appeared ^c in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of [repentance](#) for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were [baptized by him](#) in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now [John was clothed](#) with camel's hair, and had a leather belt around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals [I am not worthy](#) to stoop down and untie. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

The Baptism of Jesus

9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. **10** And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove; **11** and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; ^d with you I am well pleased."

The Temptation of Jesus

12 The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. **13** And he was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to him.

Jesus Preaches the Gospel in Galilee

14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, **15** and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel."

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

16 And passing along by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. **17** And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men." **18** And immediately they left their nets and followed him. **19** And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zeb'edee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. **20** And immediately he called them; and they left their father Zeb'edee in the boat with the hired servants, and followed him.

The Man with an Unclean Spirit

21 And they went into Caper'na-um; and immediately on the sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught. **22** And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. **1** And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; **24** and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." **25** But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" **26** And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. **27** And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching! With authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." **28** And

at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

Healings at Simon's House

29 And immediately he ^e left the synagogue, and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰Now Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever, and immediately they told him of her. ³¹And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her; and she served them.

32 That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. ³³And the whole city was gathered together about the door. ³⁴And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

Jesus Preaches and Heals throughout Galilee

35 And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed. ³⁶And Simon and those who were with him followed him, ³⁷and they found him and said to him, "Every one is searching for you." ³⁸And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also; for that is why I came out." **39** And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Jesus Cleanses a Leper

40 And a leper came to him begging him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." ⁴¹Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I will; be clean." ⁴²And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. ⁴³And he sternly charged him, and sent him away at once, ⁴⁴and said to him, "See that you say nothing to any one; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to the people." ^f ⁴⁵But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus ^g could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.

Jesus Heals a Paralytic

2 And when he returned to Caper'na-um after some days, it was reported that he was at home. ²And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room for them, not even about the door; and he was preaching the

word to them. ³And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. ⁴And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and when they had made an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay. ⁵And when Jesus saw [their faith](#), he said to the paralytic, "Child, your sins are forgiven." ⁶Now some of [the scribes](#) were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ⁷"Why does this man speak like this? [It is blasphemy!](#) Who can forgive sins but God alone?" ⁸And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they questioned like this within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question like this in your hearts? ⁹[Which is easier](#), to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk'? ¹⁰But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic—¹¹"I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home." ¹²And he rose, and immediately took up the pallet and went out before them all; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

Jesus Calls Levi

¹³ He went out again beside the sea; and all the crowd gathered about him, and he taught them. ¹⁴And as he passed on, he saw [Levi](#) the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him.

¹⁵ [And as he sat](#) at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were sitting with Jesus and his disciples; for there were many who followed him. ¹⁶And the scribes of ^h the Pharisees, when they saw that he was [eating with sinners](#) and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat ⁱ with tax collectors and sinners?" ¹⁷And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have [no need of a physician](#), but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

The Question about Fasting

¹⁸ Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" ¹⁹And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests fast while [the bridegroom](#) is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. ²⁰The days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. ²¹No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an [old garment](#); if he

does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. ²²And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins; but new wine is for fresh skins." ^j

A Teaching about the Sabbath

²³ One sabbath he was going through the grainfields; and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. ²⁴And the Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?" ²⁵And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: ²⁶how he entered the house of God, when Abi'athar was high priest, and ate the showbread, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?" ²⁷And he said to them, "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath; ²⁸so the Son of man is lord even of the sabbath."

The Man with a Withered Hand

³ Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. ²And they watched him, to see whether he would heal him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him. ³And he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come here." ⁴And he said to them, "Is it lawful on the sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. ⁵And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. ⁶The Pharisees went out, and immediately held counsel with the Hero'dians against him, how to destroy him.

A Multitude by the Sea

⁷ Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a great multitude from Galilee followed; also from Judea ⁸and Jerusalem and Idume'a and from beyond the Jordan and from about Tyre and Si'don a great multitude, hearing all that he did, came to him. ⁹And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they should crush him; ¹⁰for he had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed upon him to touch him. ¹¹And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." ¹²And he strictly ordered them not to make him known.

Jesus Appoints the Twelve

13 And he went up on the mountain, and called to him those whom he desired; and they came to him. **14**And he appointed twelve, **k** to be with him, and to be sent out to preach **15**and have authority to cast out demons: **16**Simon whom he surnamed Peter; **17**James the son of Zeb'edee and John the brother of James, whom he surnamed Bo-aner'ges, that is, sons of thunder; **18**Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphae'us, and Thaddae'us, and Simon the Cananaean, **19**and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Jesus and Beelzebul

Then he went home; **20**and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. **21**And when his friends heard it, they went out to seize him, for they said, "He is beside himself." **22**And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Be-el'zebul, and by the prince of demons he casts out the demons." **23**And he called them to him, and said to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? **24**If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. **25**And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. **26**And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. **27**But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man; then indeed he may plunder his house.

28 "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; **29**but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"—**30**for they had said, "He has an unclean spirit."

The True Kindred of Jesus

31 And his mother and his brethren came; and standing outside they sent to him and called him. **32**And a crowd was sitting about him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brethren **1** are outside, asking for you." **33**And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brethren?" **34**And looking around on those who sat about him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brethren! **35**Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother."

The Parable of the Sower

4 Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea; and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. **2**And he taught them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: **3**"Listen! A sower went out to sow. **4**And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. **5**Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it had not much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil; **6**and when the sun rose it was scorched, and since it had no root it withered away. **7**Other seed fell among thorns and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. **8**And other seeds fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold." **9**And he said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Explanation of the Parable

10 And when he was alone, those who were about him with the Twelve asked him concerning the parables. **11**And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables; **12**so that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand; lest they should turn again, and be forgiven." **13**And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? **14**The sower sows the word. **15**And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown; when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word which is sown in them. **16**And these in like manner are the ones sown upon rocky ground, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; **17**and they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. **18**And others are the ones sown among thorns; they are those who hear the word, **19**but the cares of the world, and the delight in riches, and the desire for other things, enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. **20**But those that were sown upon the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."

A Lamp Is Not Hidden

21 And he said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under a bushel, or under a bed, and not on a stand? **22**For there is nothing hidden, except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret, except to come to light. **23**If any man

has ears to hear, let him hear." ²⁴And he said to them, "Take heed what you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you. ²⁵For to him who has will more be given; and from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away."

A Parable about Seeds

²⁶ And he said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground, ²⁷and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he knows not how. ²⁸The earth produces of itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. ²⁹But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

³⁰ And he said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? ³¹It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; ³²yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."

The Use of Parables

³³ With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; ³⁴he did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.

Jesus Calms a Storm on the Sea

³⁵ On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." ³⁶And leaving the crowd, they took him with them, just as he was, in the boat. And other boats were with him. ³⁷And a great storm of wind arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. ³⁸But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care if we perish?" ³⁹And he awoke and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" ⁴¹And they were filled with awe, and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?"

Jesus Heals the Gerasene Demoniac

⁵ They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Ger'asenes. ²And when he had come out of the boat, there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, ³who lived among the tombs; and no one could bind him any more, even with a chain; ⁴for he had often been

bound with shackles and chains, but the chains he wrenched apart, and the shackles he broke in pieces; and no one had the strength to subdue him. ⁵Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out, and bruising himself with stones. ⁶And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped him; ⁷and crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me." ⁸For he had said to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" ⁹And Jesus ^o asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is [Legion](#); for we are many." ¹⁰And he begged him eagerly not to send them out of the country. ¹¹Now a great herd of swine was feeding there on the hillside; ¹²and they begged him, "Send us to the swine, let us enter them." ¹³So he gave them leave. And the unclean spirits came out, and entered the swine; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank [into the sea](#), and were drowned in the sea.

¹⁴ The herdsmen fled, and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. ¹⁵And they came to Jesus, and saw the demoniac sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, the man who had had the legion; and they were afraid. ¹⁶And those who had seen it told what had happened to the demoniac and to the swine. ¹⁷And they began to beg Jesus ^p to depart from their neighborhood. ¹⁸And as he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. ¹⁹But he refused, and said to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them how much [the Lord has done for you](#), and how he has had mercy on you." ²⁰And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decap'olis how much Jesus had done for him; and all men marveled.

[A Girl Restored to Life and a Woman Healed](#)

²¹ And when [Jesus had crossed](#) again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him; and he was beside the sea. ²²Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Ja'irus by name; and seeing him, he fell at his feet, ²³and begged him, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and [lay your hands on her](#), so that she may be made well, and live." ²⁴And he went with him.

And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him. ²⁵And there was a woman who had had [a flow of blood](#) for twelve years, ²⁶and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. ²⁷She had heard the reports about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. ²⁸For she said, "If I touch even his garments, I shall be made well." ²⁹And immediately the hemorrhage ceased; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. ³⁰And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone forth from him, immediately turned about in the crowd, and said, "Who touched my garments?" ³¹And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, 'Who touched me?' " ³²And he looked around to see who had done it. ³³But the woman, knowing what had been done to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. ³⁴And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

³⁵ While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" ³⁶But ignoring ⁹ what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." ³⁷And he allowed no one to follow him except [Peter and James and John](#) the brother of James. ³⁸When they came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, he saw a tumult, and people weeping and wailing loudly. ³⁹And when he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a tumult and weep? The child is [not dead but sleeping](#)." ⁴⁰And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. ⁴¹Taking her by the hand he said to her, "[Tal'itha cu'mi](#)"; which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." ⁴²And immediately the girl got up and walked; for she was twelve years old. And immediately they were overcome with amazement. ⁴³And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

[The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth \[Map\]](#)

6 He went away from there and came to [his own country](#); and his disciples followed him. ²And on the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue; and many who heard him were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get all this? What is the wisdom given to him? What mighty works

are wrought by his hands! ³Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense ^r at him. ⁴And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house." ⁵And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands upon a few sick people and healed them. ⁶

And he went about among the villages teaching.

The Mission of the Twelve

⁷ And he called to him the Twelve, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. ⁸He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; ⁹but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics. ¹⁰And he said to them, "Where you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. ¹¹And if any place will not receive you and they refuse to hear you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet for a testimony against them." ¹²So they went out and preached that men should repent. ¹³And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them.

The Death of John the Baptist

¹⁴ King Herod heard of it; for Jesus' s name had become known. Some ^t said, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead; that is why these powers are at work in him." ¹⁵But others said, "It is Eli'jah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." ¹⁶But when Herod heard of it he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised." ¹⁷For Herod had sent and seized John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Hero'di-as, his brother Philip's wife; because he had married her. ¹⁸For John said to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." ¹⁹And Hero'di-as had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, ²⁰for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and kept him safe. When he heard him, he was much perplexed; and yet he heard him gladly. ²¹But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and the leading men of Galilee. ²²For when Hero'di-as' daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will grant it." ²³And he vowed to her, "Whatever you ask me, I

will give you, even half of my kingdom." ²⁴And she went out, and said to her mother, "What shall I ask?" And she said, "[The head of John the Baptist](#)." ²⁵And she came in immediately with haste to the king, and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." ²⁶And the king was [exceedingly sorry](#); but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word to her. ²⁷And immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard and gave orders to bring his head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, ²⁸and brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother. ²⁹When his disciples heard of it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.

[Feeding the Five Thousand](#)

³⁰ The apostles returned to Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. ³¹And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. ³²And they went away in the boat to a lonely place by themselves. ³³Now many saw them going, and knew them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns, and got there ahead of them. ³⁴As he landed he saw a great throng, and he had compassion on them, because they were like [sheep without a shepherd](#); and he began to teach them many things. ³⁵[And when it grew late](#), his disciples came to him and said, "This is a lonely place, and the hour is now late; ³⁶send them away, to go into the country and villages round about and buy themselves something to eat." ³⁷But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." And they said to him, "Shall we go and buy [two hundred denarii](#) ^u worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?" ³⁸And he said to them, "How many loaves have you? Go and see." And when they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." ³⁹Then he commanded them all to sit down by companies upon the green grass. ⁴⁰So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. ⁴¹And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and broke the loaves, and [gave them to the disciples](#) to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. ⁴²And they all ate and were satisfied. ⁴³And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. ⁴⁴And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men.

[Jesus Walks on the Sea](#)

45 Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to [Beth-sa'ida](#), while he dismissed the crowd. **46**And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. **47**And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. **48**And he saw that they were distressed in rowing, for the wind was against them. And about [the fourth watch](#) of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, **49**but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out; **50**for they all saw him, and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart, [it is I](#); have no fear." **51**And he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, **52**for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

Jesus Heals the Sick in Gennesaret

53 And when they had crossed over, they came to land at [Gennes'aret](#), and moored to the shore. **54**And when they got out of the boat, immediately the people recognized him, **55**and ran about the whole neighborhood and began to bring sick people on their pallets to any place where they heard he was. **56**And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or country, they laid the sick in the market places, and begged him that they might touch even [the fringe of his garment](#); and as many as touched it were made well.

The Tradition of the Elders

7 Now when the Pharisees gathered together to him, with some of the scribes, who had come from Jerusalem, **2**they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands defiled, that is, unwashed. **3**(For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they wash their hands, **v** observing the [tradition of the elders](#); **4**and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they purify **w** themselves; and there are many other traditions which they observe, the washing of cups and pots and vessels of bronze. **x**) **5**And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not live **y** according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with hands defiled?" **6**[And he said to them](#), "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written,

"This people honors me with their lips,
but their heart is far from me;
7in vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'

⁸You leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men."

9 And he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God, in order to keep your tradition! ¹⁰For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him surely die'; ¹¹but you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, What you would have gained from me is Corban' (that is, given to God) ¹²then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, ¹³thus making void the word of God through your tradition which you hand on. And many such things you do."

14 And he called the people to him again, and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand: ¹⁵there is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him; but the things which come out of a man are what defile him." ^a **17** And when he had entered the house, and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. ¹⁸And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a man from outside cannot defile him, ¹⁹since it enters, not his heart but his stomach, and so passes on?" ^b (Thus he declared all foods clean.) ²⁰And he said, "What comes out of a man is what defiles a man. ²¹For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, ²²coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. ²³All these evil things come from within, and they defile a man."

The Syrophenician Woman's Faith

24 And from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ^c And he entered a house, and would not have any one know it; yet he could not be hidden. ²⁵But immediately a woman, whose little daughter was possessed by an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell down at his feet. ²⁶Now the woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. ²⁷And he said to her, "Let the children first be fed, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." ²⁸But she answered him, "Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." ²⁹And he said to her, "For this saying you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter." ³⁰And she went home, and found the child lying in bed, and the demon gone.

Jesus Cures a Deaf Man

31 Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, through the region of [the Decap'olis](#). **32** And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand upon him. **33** And taking him aside from the multitude [privately](#), he put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue; **34** and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said to him, "[Eph'phatha](#)," that is, "Be opened." **35** And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. **36** And he charged them to tell no one; but the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. **37** And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well; he even makes [the deaf hear and the mute](#) speak."

Feeding the Four Thousand

8 In those days, when again a [great crowd had gathered](#), and they had nothing to eat, he called his disciples to him, and said to them, **2**"[I have compassion](#) on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days, and have nothing to eat; **3**and if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way; and some of them have come a long way." **4**And his disciples answered him, "How can one feed these men with bread here in the desert?" **5**And he asked them, "How many loaves have you?" They said, "Seven." **6**And he commanded the crowd to sit down on the ground; and he took the seven loaves, and having [given thanks](#) he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and they set them before the crowd. **7**And they had a few small fish; and having blessed them, he commanded that these also should be set before them. **8**And they ate, and were satisfied; and they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. **9**And there were about four thousand people. **10**And he sent them away; and immediately he got into the boat with his disciples, and went to the district of [Dalmanu'tha](#). ^d

The Demand for a Sign

11 The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him [a sign from heaven](#), to test him. **12**And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation." **13**And he left them, and getting into the boat again he departed to the other side.

The Leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod

14 Now they had forgotten to bring bread; and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. 15 And he cautioned them, saying, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and [the leaven](#) of Herod." e 16 And they discussed it with one another, saying, "We have no bread." 17 And being aware of it, Jesus said to them, "Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? 18 Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? 19 [When I broke](#) the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" They said to him, "Twelve." 20 "And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" And they said to him, "Seven." 21 And he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

Jesus Cures a Blind Man at Beth-saida

22 And they came to Beth-sa'ida. And some people [brought to him a blind man](#), and begged him to touch him. 23 And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the village; and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands upon him, he asked him, "Do you see anything?" 24 And he looked up and said, "I see men; but they look like trees, walking." 25 Then again he laid his hands upon his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and saw everything clearly. 26 And he sent him away to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village."

Peter's Declaration That Jesus Is the Christ

27 And Jesus went on with his disciples, to the villages of Caesare'a Philip'pi; and on [the way](#) he asked his disciples, "Who do men say that I am?" 28 And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Eli'jah; and others one of the prophets." 29 And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." 30 And he charged them to tell no one about him.

Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

31 [And he began to teach them](#) that [the Son of man](#) must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 And he said this plainly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. 33 But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter, and said, "Get behind me, [Satan!](#) For you are not on the side of God, but of men."

34 And he called to him the multitude with his disciples, and said to them, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. **35** For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. **36** For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? **37** For what can a man give in return for his life? **38** For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his

9 Father with the holy angels." **1** And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power."

The Transfiguration

2 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves; and he was transfigured before them, **3** and his garments became glistening, intensely white, as no fuller on earth could bleach them. **4** And there appeared to them Eli'jah with Moses; and they were talking to Jesus. **5** And Peter said to Jesus, "Master, **f** it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Eli'jah." **6** For he did not know what to say, for they were exceedingly afraid. **7** And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; **8** listen to him." **8** And suddenly looking around they no longer saw any one with them but Jesus only.

The Coming of Elijah

9 And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of man should have risen from the dead. **10** So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant. **11** And they asked him, "Why do the scribes say that first Eli'jah must come?" **12** And he said to them, "Eli'jah does come first to restore all things; and how is it written of the Son of man, that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? **13** But I tell you that Eli'jah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him."

The Healing of a Boy with a Mute Spirit

14 And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd about them, and scribes arguing with them. **15** And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed, and ran up to him and greeted

him. ¹⁶And he asked them, "What are you discussing with them?" ¹⁷And one of the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has [a mute spirit](#); ¹⁸and wherever it seizes him, it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able." ¹⁹And he answered them, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me." ²⁰And they brought the boy to him; and when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. ²¹And Jesus ^h asked his father, "How long has he had this?" And he said, "From childhood. ²²And it has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us." ²³And Jesus said to him, "If you can! [All things are possible](#) to him who believes." ²⁴Immediately the father of the child cried out ⁱ and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" ²⁵And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again." ²⁶And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse; so that most of them said, "He is dead." ²⁷But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. ²⁸And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" ²⁹And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting." ^j

[Jesus Again Foretells His Death and Resurrection](#)

³⁰ [They went on](#) from there and passed through Galilee. And he would not have any one know it; ³¹for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he will rise." ³²But they did not understand the saying, and they were afraid to ask him.

[True Greatness](#)

³³ And they came to [Caper'na-um](#); and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" ³⁴But they were silent; for on the way they had discussed with one another who was the greatest. ³⁵And he sat down and called the Twelve and he said to them, "If any one would be first, he must be last of all and [servant of all](#)." ³⁶And he took a child, and put him in the midst of them; and taking him in his arms, he said

to them, ³⁷"Whoever receives [one such child](#) in my name receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me."

Another Exorcist

³⁸ John said to him, "Teacher, we saw a man casting out demons in your name, ^k and we forbade him, because he was not following us." ³⁹But Jesus said, "Do not forbid him; for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon after to speak evil of me. ⁴⁰For he that is not against us is for us. ⁴¹For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ, will by no means lose his reward.

Temptations to Sin

⁴² "[Whoever causes](#) one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, ^l it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung round his neck and he were thrown into the sea. ⁴³And if your hand causes you to sin, ^l cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go to hell, ^m to the unquenchable fire. ⁿ ⁴⁵And if your foot causes you to sin, ^l cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. ^{m, n} ⁴⁷And if your eye causes you to sin, ^l pluck it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, ^m ⁴⁸where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched. ⁴⁹For every one will be [salted with fire](#). ^o ⁵⁰Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."

Teachings about Divorce [Map]

¹⁰ And he left there and went to [the region of Judea](#) and beyond the Jordan, and crowds gathered to him again; and again, as his custom was, he taught them.

² And Pharisees came up and in order [to test him](#) asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" ³He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" ⁴They said, "Moses allowed a man to write [a certificate of divorce](#), and to put her away." ⁵But Jesus said to them, "For your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. ⁶But [from the beginning](#) of creation, 'God made them male and female.' ⁷For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, ^p ⁸and the two shall become one flesh.' ⁹ So they are no longer two but one flesh. ⁹ ⁹What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder."

10 And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. **11**[And he said to them](#), "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; **12**and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

Jesus Blesses the Children

13 And they were bringing children to him, that he might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them. **14**But when Jesus saw it he was indignant, and said to them, "[Let the children come](#) to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. **15**Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." **16**And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.

The Rich Man

17 And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" **18**And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. **19**You know [the commandments](#): 'Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.' " **20**And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth." **21**And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." **22**At that saying his countenance fell, and he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.

23 And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" **24**And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches ^r to enter the kingdom of God! **25**It is [easier for a camel](#) to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." **26**And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, ^s "Then who can be saved?" **27**Jesus looked at them and said, "With men [it is impossible](#), but not with God; for all things are possible with God." **28**Peter began to say to him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed you." **29**Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, **30**who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers

and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. ³¹But many that are first will be last, and the last first."

A Third Time Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

³² And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the Twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, ³³saying, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles; ³⁴and they will mock him, and spit upon him, and scourge him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise."

The Request of James and John

³⁵ And James and John, the sons of Zeb'edee, came forward to him, and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." ³⁶And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" ³⁷And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." ³⁸But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the chalice that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" ³⁹And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The chalice that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; ⁴⁰but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." ⁴¹And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. ⁴²And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. ⁴³But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Bartimaeus Receives His Sight

⁴⁶ And they came to Jericho; and as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great multitude, Bartimae'us, a blind beggar, the son of Timae'us, was sitting by the roadside. ⁴⁷And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁸And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent; but he cried out

all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁹And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; rise, he is calling you." ⁵⁰And throwing off his cloak he sprang up and came to Jesus. ⁵¹And Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" And the blind man said to him, "Master, ^t let me receive my sight." ⁵²And Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.

Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem

11 And when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Beth'phage and Beth'any, at the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, ²and said to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat; untie it and bring it. ³If any one says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.'" ⁴And they went away, and found a colt tied at the door out in the open street; and they untied it. ⁵And those who stood there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" ⁶And they told them what Jesus had said; and they let them go. ⁷And they brought the colt to Jesus, and threw their garments on it; and he sat upon it. ⁸And many spread their garments on the road, and others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields. ⁹And those who went before and those who followed cried out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! ¹⁰Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that is coming! Hosanna in the highest!"

11 And he entered Jerusalem, and went into the temple; and when he had looked round at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Beth'any with the Twelve.

Jesus Curses the Fig Tree

12 On the following day, when they came from Beth'any, he was hungry. ¹³And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴And he said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard it.

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

15 And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold

pigeons; ¹⁶and he would not allow any one to carry anything through the temple. ¹⁷And he taught, and said to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a [house of prayer](#) for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers." ¹⁸And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and sought a way to destroy him; for they feared him, because all the multitude was astonished at his teaching. ¹⁹And when evening came they ^u went out of the city.

The Lesson from the Withered Fig Tree

²⁰ As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. ²¹And Peter remembered and said to him, "Master, ^v look! The fig tree which you cursed has withered." ²²And Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God. ²³Truly, I say to you, whoever says to [this mountain](#), 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. ²⁴Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you receive it, and you will. ²⁵And whenever you [stand praying](#), forgive, if you have anything against any one; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." ^w

Jesus' Authority Is Questioned

²⁷ And they came again to Jerusalem. And as he was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to him, ²⁸and they said to him, "By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you this authority to do them?" ²⁹Jesus said to them, "I will ask you a question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. ³⁰Was [the baptism of John](#) from heaven or from men? Answer me." ³¹And they argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' ³²But shall we say, 'From men?'"—they were afraid of the people, for all held that John was a real prophet. ³³So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

The Parable of the Wicked Tenants

¹² [And he began](#) to speak to them in parables. "A man planted a vineyard, and set a hedge around it, and dug a pit for the wine press, and built a tower, and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. ²When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants, to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. ³And they took him and beat him, and sent him away

empty-handed. ⁴Again he sent to them another servant, and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully. ⁵And he sent another, and him they killed; and so with many others, some they beat and some they killed. ⁶He had still one other, a beloved son; finally he sent him to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' ⁷But those tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' ⁸And they took him and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. ⁹What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants, and give the vineyard to others. ¹⁰[Have you not read](#) this Scripture:

'The very stone which the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;

¹¹this was the Lord's doing,
and it is marvelous in our eyes?'"

¹² And they tried to arrest him, but feared the multitude, for they perceived that he had told the parable against them; so they left him and went away.

[The Question about Paying Taxes](#)

¹³ And they sent to him some of the [Pharisees and some of the Hero'dians](#), to entrap him in his talk. ¹⁴And they came and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are true, and care for no man; for you do not regard the position of men, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? ¹⁵Should we pay them, or should we not?" But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why put me to the test? Bring me a coin, ^x and let me look at it." ¹⁶And they brought one. And he said to them, "[Whose likeness](#) and inscription is this?" They said to him, "Caesar's." ¹⁷Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were amazed at him.

[The Question about Man's Resurrection](#)

¹⁸ And [Sad'ducees](#) came to him, who say that there is no resurrection; and they asked him a question, saying, ¹⁹"Teacher, Moses wrote for us that [if a man's brother dies](#) and leaves a wife, but leaves no child, the man ^y must take the wife, and raise up children for his brother. ²⁰There were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and when he died left no children; ²¹and the second took her, and died, leaving no children; and the third likewise; ²²and

the seven left no children. Last of all the woman also died. ²³In the resurrection whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife."

24 Jesus said to them, "Is not this why you are wrong, that you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God? ²⁵For [when they rise](#) from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. ²⁶And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God said to him, '[I am the God](#) of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? ²⁷He is not God of the dead, but of the living; you are quite wrong."

The First Commandment

28 And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" ²⁹[Jesus answered](#), "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; ³⁰and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' ³¹The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." ³²And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that he is one, and there is no other but he; ³³and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole [burnt offerings and sacrifices](#)." ³⁴And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that no one dared to ask him any question.

A Question about the Christ

35 And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, "How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? ³⁶David himself, inspired by ^z [the Holy Spirit](#), declared,

"The Lord said to my Lord,
Sit at my right hand,
till I put your enemies under your feet.'

³⁷David himself calls him Lord; so how is he his son?" And the great throng heard him gladly.

Jesus Denounces the Hypocrisy of the Scribes

38 And in his teaching he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to go about in long robes, and to have salutations in the market places ³⁹and the

best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, ⁴⁰who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

The Widow's Offering

41 And he sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the multitude putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. ⁴²And a poor widow came, and put in two copper coins, which make a penny. ⁴³And he called his disciples to him, and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. ⁴⁴For they all contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living."

The Destruction of the Temple Foretold

13 And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" ²And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down."

3 And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴"Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign when these things are all to be accomplished?" ⁵And Jesus began to say to them, "Take heed that no one leads you astray. ⁶Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. ⁷And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁸For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places, there will be famines; this is but the beginning of the sufferings.

Persecutions Foretold

9 "But take heed to yourselves; for they will deliver you up to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear testimony before them. ¹⁰And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. ¹¹And when they bring you to trial and deliver you up, do not be anxious beforehand about what you are to say; but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. ¹²And brother will deliver up brother to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; ¹³and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.

The Desolating Sacrilege

14 "But when you see the [desolating sacrilege](#) set up where it ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; **15**let him who is on the housetop not go down, nor enter his house, to take anything away; **16**and let him who is in the field not turn back to get a coat. **17**And alas for those who are with child and for those who are nursing in those days! **18**Pray that it may not happen in winter. **19**For in those days there will be [such tribulation](#) as has not been from the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will be. **20**And if the Lord had not shortened the days, no human being would be saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days. **21**And then if any one says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it. **22**False Christs and false prophets will arise and show signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. **23**But take heed; I have told you all things beforehand.

The Coming of the Son of Man

24 "[But in those days](#), after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, **25**and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. **26**And then they will see [the Son of man](#) coming in clouds with great power and glory. **27**And then he will send out [the angels](#), and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

28 "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. **29**So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. **30**Truly, I say to you, [this generation](#) will not pass away before all these things take place. **31**Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

The Necessity for Watchfulness

32 "But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, [nor the Son](#), but only the Father. **33**Take heed, watch and pray; **a** for you do not know when the time will come. **34**[It is like](#) a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. **35**[Watch therefore](#)—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the

evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning—³⁶lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. ³⁷And what I say to you I say to all: Watch."

The Conspiracy to Kill Jesus

14 It was now two days before the Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth, and kill him; ²for they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be a tumult of the people."

The Anointing at Bethany

3 And while he was at Beth'any in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the jar and poured it over his head. ⁴But there were some who said to themselves indignantly, "Why was the ointment thus wasted? ⁵For this ointment might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, ^b and given to the poor." And they reproached her. ⁶But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ⁷For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you will, you can do good to them; but you will not always have me. ⁸She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burying. ⁹And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."

Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus

10 Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. ¹¹And when they heard it they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him.

The Passover with the Disciples

12 And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, "Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?" ¹³And he sent two of his disciples, and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, ¹⁴and wherever he enters, say to the householder, 'The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I am to eat the Passover with my disciples?' ¹⁵And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us." ¹⁶And the disciples set out and went to the city, and found it as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover.

17 And when it was evening he came with the Twelve. 18 And as they were at table eating, Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, [one who is eating with me.](#)" 19 They began to be sorrowful, and to say to him one after another, "Is it I?" 20 He said to them, "It is one of the Twelve, one who is dipping bread in the same dish with me. 21 For the Son of man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."

The Institution of the Last Supper

22 And as they were eating, he [took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it](#) to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." 23 And he took a chalice, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. 24 And he said to them, "[This is my blood](#) of the ^c covenant, which is poured out for many. 25 Truly, I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

Peter's Denial Foretold

26 And when they had [sung a hymn](#), they went out to the Mount of Olives. 27 And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away; for it is written, 'I will [strike the shepherd](#), and the sheep will be scattered.' 28 But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." 29 Peter said to him, "Even though they all fall away, I will not." 30 And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I say to you, this very night, [before the cock crows](#) twice, you will deny me three times." 31 But he said vehemently, "If I must die with you, I will not deny you." And they all said the same.

Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

32 And they went to a place which was called [Gethsem'ane](#); and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I pray." 33 And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. 34 And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch." ^d 35 And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. 36 And he said, "[Abba](#), Father, all things are possible to you; remove this chalice from me; yet not what I will, but what you will." 37 And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch ^d one hour? 38 Watch ^d and pray that you may not enter [into temptation](#); the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." 39 And again he went away and

prayed, saying the same words. ⁴⁰And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer him. ⁴¹And he came the third time, and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come; the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴²Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."

The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

43 And immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the Twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. ⁴⁴Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I shall kiss is the man; seize him and lead him away safely." ⁴⁵And when he came, he went up to him at once, and said, "Master!" ^e And he kissed him. ⁴⁶And they laid hands on him and seized him. ⁴⁷But one of those who stood by drew his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. ⁴⁸And Jesus said to them, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? ⁴⁹Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. But let the Scriptures be fulfilled." ⁵⁰And they all deserted him and fled.

⁵¹ And a young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body; and they seized him, ⁵²but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked.

Jesus before the Council

53 And they led Jesus to the high priest; and all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes were assembled. ⁵⁴And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the guards, and warming himself at the fire. ⁵⁵Now the chief priests and the whole council sought testimony against Jesus to put him to death; but they found none. ⁵⁶For many bore false witness against him, and their witness did not agree. ⁵⁷And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying, ⁵⁸"We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.' " ⁵⁹Yet not even so did their testimony agree. ⁶⁰And the high priest stood up in their midst, and asked Jesus, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" ⁶¹But he was silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"

[62](#) And Jesus said, "[I am](#); and you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." [63](#) And the high priest [tore his clothes](#), and said, "Why do we still need witnesses? [64](#) You have heard his [blasphemy](#). What is your decision?" And they all condemned him as deserving death. [65](#) And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to strike him, saying to him, "Prophecy!" And the guards received him with blows.

Peter Denies Jesus

[66](#) And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the maids of the high priest came; [67](#) and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him, and said, "You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus." [68](#) But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you mean." And he went out into the gateway. [f](#) [69](#) And the maid saw him, and began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them." [70](#) But again he denied it. And after a little while again the bystanders said to Peter, "Certainly you are one of them; for you are a Galilean." [71](#) But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know this man of whom you speak." [72](#) And immediately [the cock crowed](#) a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, "Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and wept.

Jesus before Pilate

[15](#) And as soon as it was morning the chief priests, with the elders and scribes, and the whole council held a consultation; and they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him to Pilate. [2](#) And [Pilate](#) asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so." [3](#) And the chief priests accused him of many things. [4](#) And Pilate again asked him, "Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you." [5](#) But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate wondered.

Pilate Delivers Jesus to Be Crucified

[6](#) Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. [7](#) And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barab'bas. [8](#) And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he always did for them. [9](#) And he answered them, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" [10](#) For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up.

¹¹But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them [Barab'bas](#) instead. ¹²And Pilate again said to them, "Then what shall I do with the man whom you call the King of the Jews?" ¹³And they cried out again, "Crucify him." ¹⁴And Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him." ¹⁵So Pilate, wishing [to satisfy the crowd](#), released for them Barab'bas; and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

The Soldiers Mock Jesus

¹⁶ And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, [the praetorium](#)); and they called together the whole battalion. ¹⁷[And they clothed him](#) in a purple cloak, and plaiting a crown of thorns they put it on him. ¹⁸And they began to salute him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ¹⁹And they struck his head with a reed, and spat upon him, and they knelt down in homage to him. ²⁰And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak, and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him.

The Crucifixion of Jesus

²¹ And [they compelled](#) a passer-by, Simon of Cyre'ne, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. ²²And they brought him to the place called [Gol'gotha](#) (which means the place of a skull). ²³And they offered him [wine mingled with myrrh](#); but he did not take it. ²⁴And [they crucified him](#), and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. ²⁵And it was [the third hour](#), when they crucified him. ²⁶And the inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." ²⁷And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left. ²⁸ ^g ²⁹And those who passed by [derided him](#), shaking their heads, and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, ³⁰save yourself, and come down from the cross!" ³¹So also the chief priests mocked him to one another with the scribes, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. ³²Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also reviled him.

The Death of Jesus

³³ And when the [sixth hour](#) had come, there was darkness over the whole land ^h until the ninth hour. ³⁴And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud

voice, "[E'lo-i, Elo-i](#), la'ma sabach-tha'ni?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ³⁵And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, he is calling Eli'jah." ³⁶And one ran and, filling a sponge full of vinegar, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Eli'jah will come to take him down." ³⁷And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed his last. ³⁸And [the curtain](#) of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. ³⁹And when the [centurion](#), who stood facing him, saw that he thus ⁱ breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son ^x of God!"

⁴⁰ There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Mag'dalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salo'me, ⁴¹who, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered to him; and also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem.

The Burial of Jesus

⁴² And when evening had come, since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, ⁴³[Joseph of Arimathe'a](#), a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁴⁴And Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. ^j ⁴⁵And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. ⁴⁶And he bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud, and laid him [in a tomb](#) which had been hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. ⁴⁷Mary Mag'dalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was laid.

The Resurrection of Jesus

¹⁶ [And when](#) the [sabbath was past](#), Mary Mag'dalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salo'me, bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. ²And very early on the [first day of the week](#) they went to the tomb when the sun had risen. ³And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb?" ⁴And looking up, they saw that the stone was rolled back; for it was very large. ⁵And entering the tomb, they saw [a young man](#) sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe; and they were amazed. ⁶And he said to them, "Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. [He has risen](#), he is

not here; see the place where they laid him. ⁷But go, tell his disciples and [Peter](#) that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you." ⁸And they went out and fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; and they said nothing to any one, for they were afraid.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

⁹ [Now when he rose](#) early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. ¹⁰She went and told those who had been with him, as they mourned and wept. ¹¹But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.

Jesus Appears to Two Disciples

¹² After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. ¹³And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them.

Jesus Commissions the Disciples

¹⁴ Afterward he appeared to [the Eleven](#) themselves as they sat at table; and he upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. ¹⁵[And he said](#) to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. ¹⁶He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. ¹⁷[And these signs](#) will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover."

The Ascension of Jesus

¹⁹ So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was [taken up into heaven](#), and sat down at the right hand of God. ²⁰And they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it. Amen. ^k

Commentary on the Gospel of Mark

1:1 The beginning: The opening verse is a title for the entire Gospel. **the gospel:** The "good news" that Christ has come to *rescue* all nations from sin, selfishness, and Satan and to *reveal* the inner life of God to the world. This is accomplished as Jesus inaugurates the kingdom of God (1:15). **the Son of God:** The predominant title for Jesus in Mark (1:1; 3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 12:6; 14:61; 15:39; CCC 422, 515). Both the works (miracles) and words (teaching) of Jesus substantiate this claim to divine Sonship, while the Father announces it publicly at his Baptism (1:11) and Transfiguration (9:7). [Back to text.](#)



1:2-3 Mark outlines the mission of John and Jesus by splicing together three OT passages: Is 40:3, Ex 23:20, and Mal 3:1. • The Exodus passage recalls how Yahweh appointed a messenger (angel) to lead Israel from the slavery of Egypt to the safety of the Promised Land. Isaiah projects this memory from the distant past into the future, announcing that both Israel and the nations will experience a New Exodus in the messianic age. Preparations are in order for a new Deliverer, the Suffering Servant, who will bring the nations from the darkness of sin and idolatry to the light of Mt. Zion. Malachi's oracle presents the dark side of this scenario, warning Jerusalem that the coming of the messianic Lord will mean disaster if the shepherds of Israel are unprepared to welcome his arrival. For Mark, these passages are linked together by a common call to prepare the "way" of the Lord: John is the herald who points out the "way" of this New Exodus, while Jesus is the "Lord" and Suffering Servant who accomplishes it. This is the only time Mark quotes directly from the OT as the Gospel narrator. [See note on Mk 8:27-10:52.](#) [Back to text.](#)



1:5 baptized by him: The baptism of John signified the need for inner purity but did not effect this in a sacramental way. John was fully aware that his disciples must also receive the greater Baptism of the Messiah, which both signifies and effects spiritual cleansing. Only the

Christian sacrament washes the soul of sin, infuses the grace of divine sonship, and regenerates the believer in the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:5; Acts 2:38; Tit 3:5; CCC 718-20). **in the river Jordan:** The main river in Palestine and a suitable location to baptize large numbers. • The Jordan is linked with stories of deliverance in the OT. Here the Israelites crossed over to inherit the Promised Land (Josh 3:14-17). Here too Naaman the Syrian (a Gentile) was cleansed of leprosy (2 Kings 5:14). Against this twofold background John's ministry at the Jordan prepares for the salvation of Israel and the Gentiles by the Messiah. [Back to text.](#)



1:6 John was clothed: Garments of animal skin were the distinctive attire of OT prophets (Zech 13:4). • John's appearance recalls that of Elijah (2 Kings 1:8), and his presence at the Jordan recalls the site where Elijah departed into heaven (2 Kings 2:6-11). [See note on Mk 9:11.](#) **ate locusts:** One of a few clean (kosher) insects that God permitted the Israelites to eat under the Old Covenant (Lev 11:22). This detail portrays John as faithful to the Torah and highlights his renunciation of worldly comforts. His disciplined life-style also included fasting (2:18). [Back to text.](#)



1:7 I am not worthy: Evidence of John's humility. Removing and carrying **sandals** was a menial task reserved for slaves serving their master. John regards himself as unworthy to perform even a slave's task for the Messiah. • *Allegorically* (St. Gregory the Great, *Hom. in Evan.* 7): Jesus' sandals, made from the skins of dead animals, represent mankind dead in sin. Once Christ clothed himself with our nature in the Incarnation, the miracle proved so profound that not even John was able to unfasten or explain this mystery of God-made-man. [Back to text.](#)

1:9-11 The Baptism of Jesus. As One who is sinless, Jesus has no actual need for repentance (Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 2:22). He nevertheless receives John's baptism to identify with sinners as part of the Father's plan to save them (CCC 536). The **voice** of the Father, the Baptism of the **Son**, and the descent of the **Spirit** mark this episode as a revelation of the Blessed Trinity. [See note on Mt 3:15.](#) [Back to text.](#)



1:10 the heavens opened: The underlying expression is more dramatic than the translation, since the Greek verb *schizo* means to "rip" or "tear". Heaven was thus "torn open" at the sound of God's voice and the descent of the Spirit (Is 64:1). Elsewhere in Mark this same verb depicts the tearing of the Temple veil (15:38), an episode similarly accompanied by a declaration of Jesus' Sonship (15:39). **a dove:** An image with various associations in the Bible (Song 1:15; 6:9; Hos 11:11; Mt 10:16). • A close connection between the Spirit and a dove is found in Genesis: as the "Spirit of God" hovered over the waters at creation (Gen 1:2), so Noah sent forth a "dove" to hover over the flood waters once creation was cleansed and renewed (Gen 8:10-12). Jesus' Baptism likewise inaugurates a new beginning for the world through the Spirit and prefigures our own cleansing through Baptism (1 Pet 3:18-22; CCC 536, 694, 701). [See note on Mt 3:11.](#) [Back to text.](#)



1:11 my beloved Son: The Father's announcement echoes several OT passages. • **(1)** Isaiah 42:1 prophesies the coming of God's pleasing Servant, who will rescue Israel (Is 42:7) and be a "light to the nations" (Is 42:6). Jesus fulfills this role as the Suffering Servant (10:45) and light of the world (Jn 8:12). **(2)** Psalm 2:7 portrays King David as the anointed son of God. Jesus is here the royal Son anointed by the Spirit (Lk 4:18; Rom 1:3). **(3)** The same title was once given to Isaac, where the Greek OT translates "only son" in Gen 22:2, 12, as "my beloved son". As Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac procured a divine oath of worldwide blessing (Gen 22:16-18), so Jesus is sent by the Father to fulfill this covenant oath and unleash the blessings promised to the patriarch (Jn 3:16; Rom 8:32). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Repentance ([Mk 1:4](#))

Metanoia (Gk.): literally a "change of mind". The word is used 22 times in the NT for a conversion of one's entire life to the Lord. Based on similar OT concepts, it involves a twofold movement of the heart: one who repents

turns *away from* sin (1 Kings 8:35; Ezek 18:30) and *toward* God (Hos 6:1; Sir 17:25, 26; Heb 6:1). This entails genuine contrition for past failings and a firm resolve to avoid them in the future, and it may be accompanied by bodily disciplines like fasting (Dan 9:3-5; Joel 2:12; 2 Cor 7:10). Because repentance is a gradual process of transformation, God is patient with sinners struggling to make amends and redirect their lives toward holiness (Wis 12:10; Rom 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9). Repentance is inspired by the eternal life offered in Christ (Mk 1:15; Acts 2:38), and its genuineness becomes evident when lives are changed in accord with the gospel (Mt 3:8; Acts 26:20; Gal 5:22-24).



1:12-13 An abridged account of Jesus' temptation. 5 • Jesus faces the same ordeal that Adam and Israel endured in the OT (CCC 538-540). He is thus **tempted by Satan** among the **wild beasts**, as the first Adam was tempted amid the beasts in paradise. He likewise retraces the steps of Israel, being led into the **wilderness** by the **Spirit** and tested for **forty days** as the Israelites marched in the desert for 40 years of testing. In the end, Jesus succeeds where Adam and Israel failed by resisting the devil and proving his filial love for the Father. This initiates an extended campaign against demons, death, and disease throughout the Gospel (1:25, 31, 34; 2:11; 3:5; 5:13, 39-41). [See note on Mt 4:1-11](#). • *Morally* (St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 13): Jesus endured temptation to train his disciples how to overcome the devil. No one should be surprised, then, that after our own Baptism the tempter assails us more aggressively than before. Victory is assured if, like Jesus, we commit ourselves to fasting, wait upon the Lord with patience, and have no desire for things beyond our need. [Back to text](#).

1:14 John was arrested: A pivotal event turning the focus of Jesus' ministry to Galilee. Prior to this, Jesus had an earlier ministry in Judea that overlapped with John's (Jn 3:23). [See note on Mt 4:12](#). [Back to text](#).



1:15 the kingdom of God: God's sovereign rule over all nations through Jesus. • The kingdom of Christ is closely linked with the ancient kingdom of Israel that flourished under David and Solomon. Although

David's empire soon collapsed, for a brief time it foreshadowed the glory of Christ's reign over the tribes of Israel (2 Sam 5:1-5; Mt 19:28) and other Gentile nations (1 Kings 4:20-21; Mt 28:18-20). The international kingdom of old is now resurrected and transfigured in the Church, where Christ rules as David's rightful heir (Mt 1:1; Lk 1:32-33) enthroned in heaven (Mk 16:19; Heb 8:1-2). [Back to text.](#)

1:16-20 The first disciples respond to Jesus **immediately** (1:18, 20). His compelling invitation to **follow** as a disciple is Jesus' initial step toward sending missionaries into the world as **fishers of men** (Mt 28:18-20). Christ chooses men of modest education to demonstrate to the world that the wisdom of the gospel stems directly from God and not the ingenuity of man. See chart: *The Twelve Apostles* at Mk 3. [Back to text.](#)

1:20 left their father: Such an abrupt break with family and livelihood was extraordinary then as now. The impulse to abandon everything and follow Jesus highlights the surpassing excellence of Christian discipleship over every worldly pursuit. **hired servants:** Suggests that the fishing enterprise of Zebedee and his sons was prosperous. [Back to text.](#)

1:21 Capernaum: Jesus' new home and headquarters in Galilee (2:1; Mt 4:12-13). It is located on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. **on the sabbath:** The seventh day of the Jewish week set aside for worship and rest (Gen 2:3; Ex 20:8-11; CCC 2168-73). Since Jews number the days from sunset to sunset, the Sabbath begins every Friday evening and ends at sundown Saturday. **synagogue:** A small building used as a gathering place for prayer, worship, and instruction in the Scriptures. [See note on Mt 4:23.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:23 an unclean spirit: A demon or fallen angel (3:11; 5:2; 6:7; 9:25). He confesses that Jesus is the "Holy One" (1:24) out of fear, not genuine faith (cf. Jas 2:19). [Back to text.](#)

1:27 With authority: Divine power is displayed through Jesus' word. While most exorcists of the day recited lengthy incantations or used odorous roots to expel demons, Jesus simply commands the spirits and they leave (CCC 550). The demons' inability to resist him is shown by their dramatic exhibition of "convulsing" and "crying" (1:26). [Back to text.](#)

1:32 That evening: i.e., after sunset on the Sabbath (Saturday). Bringing the sick and demon-possessed to Jesus was laborious and thus unlawful before the Sabbath day ended. [See note on Mk 1:21.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:35 in the morning: Following Mark's chronology, Jesus **prayed** early Sunday morning following the Sabbath. His practice anticipates the liturgical prayer of the Church early on the first day of the week (CCC 2174). Jesus also practices what he preaches on the propriety of solitary prayer (Mt 6:5-6; CCC 2602). [See note on Mk 1:32.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:40 a leper: Leprosy was a skin disease that made victims unclean, i.e., unfit to participate in the liturgical life of Israel (Lev 13:1-8). Because ritual uncleanness was considered contagious under the Old Covenant—infesting everyone who came in contact with it—lepers were isolated from society to keep those who were clean separated from those who were unclean (Lev 13:45-46). Jesus reaches across this divide when he touches the leper, and though others would be defiled by such contact, he conquers the uncleanness by the greater power of his holiness (1:41; CCC 1503-5). [See note on Mt 8:1-9:38.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:44 say nothing to any one: The "messianic secret" is a leading theme in Mark. Jesus frequently enjoins silence on demons (1:25, 34; 3:12) and men (5:43; 7:36; 8:30; 9:9) to conceal his identity as the Messiah (CCC 439). Several considerations account for this strategy. **(1)** Jesus wanted to avoid a sensationalist reputation of being no more than a wonderworker. Publicizing his deeds by word of mouth comes with the danger that rumors will begin to disconnect his miracles from his saving message. **(2)** He wanted to sidestep popular expectations that the Messiah would be a political and military leader. **(3)** He did not wish to ignite the wrath of his enemies before the appointed time of his Passion. See introduction: *Themes.*

show yourself: The Mosaic Law required Levitical priests to inspect lepers and determine their status as clean or unclean (Lev 14:1-32). With approval, an individual pronounced clean would offer sacrifices at the Temple to be reinstated in the worshiping community of Israel. [See note on Mt 8:4.](#) [Back to text.](#)

2:1-12 The healing of the paralytic reveals Jesus' identity through his actions: he claims to forgive sins as only God can forgive and to channel that forgiveness to the world as only the Jerusalem Temple and priesthood were authorized to do under the Old Covenant. [Back to text.](#)



2:5 their faith: i.e., the faith of the four men who carried the paralytic (2:4). • The forgiveness that Jesus confers upon the helpless

paralytic in response to the faith of others (the four men) mirrors the effects of Infant Baptism, where he continues to regenerate helpless children through the intercessory faith of their parents (CCC 1250-53). [Back to text.](#)

2:6 the scribes: Scholars of the Mosaic Law and its traditional interpretation. With the exception of one episode (12:2834), they are cast as Jesus' adversaries in Mark. [Back to text.](#)

2:7 it is blasphemy!: The scribes are incensed that Jesus claims for himself a prerogative that belongs only to God: the power to remit sins (Ps 103:3; Is 43:25; CCC 1441). They have misjudged the matter as blasphemy, which was a capital crime in ancient Israel (Lev 24:16). Note that Jesus manifests his divinity both by absolving the man's sins and by exposing the unspoken disapproval of his critics (2:8). [Back to text.](#)

2:9 Which is easier: Forgiveness is easier to claim than to accomplish, since its effects cannot be verified by observation. For this reason, Jesus restores the man's body as a visible demonstration of what he has already done invisibly in his soul. [See note on Mt 9:8.](#) [Back to text.](#)

2:14 Levi: Also called "Matthew" (Mt 9:9). He abandoned his occupation to follow Jesus and was later named an apostle (3:18). **the tax office:** The Pharisees despised tax collectors as "sinners" (2:15) for several reasons. **(1)** Collecting revenue in Galilee involved frequent contact with Gentiles. By Pharisaic standards, this meant that collectors were exposed to the ritual defilement of the pagans. **(2)** Since taxes were collected for the unwelcome Romans, who ruled Palestine, collectors were branded as traitors to Israel's hope for national independence. **(3)** Collectors were sometimes guilty of extortion, exacting personal commissions above the required tax amount. [Back to text.](#)

2:15-28 Three controversies between Jesus and the Pharisees. In each, the Pharisees try to discredit Jesus as a spiritual leader (2:16, 18, 24). They consider his behavior questionable and even dangerous, as though Jesus were leading Israel away from true covenant holiness. **(1)** In 2:15-17, the Pharisees are scandalized by those *with whom* Jesus eats (tax collectors, sinners). **(2)** In 2:18-22, they question *why* he eats with his disciples instead of fasting like John's followers. **(3)** In 2:23-28, the issue concerns *when* his disciples pluck and eat grain (on the Sabbath). These tensions reach the breaking point with the Pharisees' conspiracy to eliminate Jesus (3:6). [Back to text.](#)

2:16 eating with sinners: Table-fellowship was symbolic of personal acceptance and mutual friendship in the ancient Near East. Jesus' open association with outcasts thus violates the standards of the **Pharisees**, who regarded **sinners** and **tax collectors** as inappropriate company for the religious Jew. They clung to Old Covenant standards of holiness that required Israelites to separate themselves from all sources of uncleanness, including fellowship with Gentiles (Acts 10:28). Jesus exemplifies New Covenant holiness, which extends mercy to everyone in imitation of the Father (Mt 5:43-48; Lk 6:36; CCC 545, 574). See essay: [Who Are the Pharisees?](#) [Back to text.](#)

2:17 no need of a physician: A well-known proverb. Jesus adapts it to imply that table-fellowship is central to his healing mission. Just as doctors do not avoid the sick, so Jesus cannot avoid those wounded by sin. **not to call the righteous:** Jesus did not come to prolong the Old Covenant with the nation of Israel. This was an imperfect, provisional covenant designed to separate Israel from the Gentiles and their sins (Lev 20:26) while Israel was not ready to love God from the heart (Jer 11:8; Mt 19:8). Jesus inaugurates the New Covenant to transform the hearts of his people (Jer 31:31-34; Mt 5:8) and so welcomes all into God's covenant family. Whereas the Old Covenant quarantined Israel from the world, the New Covenant embraces the world within God's mercy (Rom 11:32). [Back to text.](#)



2:19 the bridegroom: Jesus uses marital imagery to reveal his divinity. • His words recall several OT passages that depict Yahweh as a groom wedded to Israel (Is 54:5; Jer 3:20; Hos 2:20). The NT transfers this covenant relationship to Christ as the divine spouse of the Church (Mt 25:1-13; Eph 5:25; CCC 796). **they cannot fast:** Since fasting symbolizes mourning and separation, it was inappropriate while Jesus was present among the disciples. • Christians fast before celebrating the liturgy, i.e., before Christ comes among them in Word and Sacrament. The arrival of Christ then makes it a time of feasting, when the divine Bridegroom gives himself in love to his bride, the Church. Communion with Jesus in the Eucharist is a foretaste of the heavenly "marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev 19:9). [Back to text.](#)

Who Are the Pharisees?

THE Pharisees are part of a Jewish renewal movement that appears frequently in the NT. In almost every instance, they stand beneath dark clouds of suspicion and controversy. The Gospels depict them as the critical opponents of Jesus, his teaching, and his mission. The Pharisees seem to lurk behind every corner, waiting to trap Jesus and discredit him before the crowds. What is the source of this conflict? Why were the Pharisees so threatened by Jesus and his proclamation of God's kingdom?

From biblical and extrabiblical information it is evident that the Pharisees advocated a religious program quite at odds with the gospel of the New Covenant. Although not Israel's official teachers or leaders, the Pharisees were popular and held great sway with the masses. They were deeply concerned with the cultural and religious crisis of the day: How does one live as a faithful Jew in a land that is ruled and occupied by pagans (Romans)? The Pharisees' answer: Israel must separate itself from all Gentile impurity and defilement, since only in this way will God rescue his people from the clutches of Rome. Even their name—which means the "separated ones" (Heb. *perushim*)—underscores this national agenda.

At a practical level, the Pharisees' quest for holiness and separation was expressed in a number of ways.

(1) The Pharisees gave considerable attention to ritual purity.

They looked to the Temple and priests of Jerusalem, considering the elaborate purity requirements for priests (Lev 21-22) a fitting model for Jewish purity in the homes of laypeople. All Israelites, the Pharisees reasoned, should maintain this high level of priestlike holiness in their personal lives. Related to this:

(2) The Pharisees tightened their grip on Israel's national symbols.

Circumcision (Lev 12:3), the Sabbath day (Ex 20:8-11), food laws (Lev 11), and tithing (Deut 14:22-29) were all expressions of Israel's unique covenant with God upon which the Pharisees laid great stress. Scrupulous observance of these laws meant that the Pharisees could proudly assert their identity in the midst of their Gentile neighbors. In addition to God's written law (Gen-Deut):

(3) The Pharisees developed an entire body of personal rituals and traditions to stand alongside the books of Moses.

These embodied Pharisaic interpretations of the Law and functioned as supplements to the Law. They included practices like cleansing hands and utensils before preparing or eating food (Mk 7:3-4).

This background sets the clashes between Jesus and the Pharisees in a whole new light. The Pharisees attached themselves to the destiny of Old Covenant Israel, while Jesus was inaugurating the international New Covenant in the Church. The Pharisees tried to insulate Israel from the Gentiles, while Jesus was reaching out to embrace the nations with God's mercy. The Pharisees were religious separatists, while Jesus' proclamation of God's kingdom was open and inclusive.

For these reasons, Jesus offers a harsh critique of the Pharisees (Mt 23). Their tenacious concern for ritual exactness and outward observances distracted them from the most important matters of God's Law: "justice and mercy and faith" (Mt 23:23). The Pharisees' inordinate concern with Jewish nationalism became the idol that blocked their way into the kingdom.

In the Gospels, this smoldering tension ignited as Jesus challenged their views on the Sabbath (Mt 12:1-14), ritual purity (Mk 7:1-23), table-fellowship (Mt 9:10-13), tithing (Mt 23:23), and divorce (Mt 19:1-9). He charged many of them with hypocrisy (Lk 12:1) and a misplaced confidence in Pharisaic piety (Lk 18:9-14).

In the end, Jesus' conflicts with the Pharisees had little to do with isolated disagreements over the Torah and everything to do with God's saving plan for Israel and the world.

The arrival of Christ's New Covenant signaled the end of Israel's separation from Gentiles and the beginning of a worldwide family of God.
«[Back to Mark 2:1.](#)

2:21-22 Because the Old Covenant has become like an **old garment** and **old wineskins**, the New Covenant can neither be stitched to its worn fibers nor poured into its brittle skins. Rather, the *fasting* and anticipation of the Old Covenant must give way to the *feasting* and celebration of the New Covenant that Jesus brings into the world. [Back to text.](#)

2:24 not lawful on the sabbath: Although Deut 23:25 permits the Israelites to pluck and eat standing grain, the Pharisees indict the disciples under the law of Ex 34:21, which forbids harvesting on the Sabbath (Ex 20:8-11; CCC 2168-73). Resolved to discredit him, the Pharisees equate plucking grain with harvesting it. [Back to text.](#)



2:25 Have you never read: A stinging insult to the educated Pharisees. [See note on Mt 12:3.](#) **what David did:** Jesus recalls 1 Sam 21:1-6 to shed light on the present circumstances. • David was permitted to override the Mosaic ritual Law by letting his hungry companions eat the sacred bread of the Tabernacle reserved for the priests. Since Jesus is the Messiah and thus greater than David (12:35-37), he should not be condemned for suspending the Sabbath to meet a legitimate need (hunger) for his own disciples. Should the Pharisees denounce Jesus, they would unwittingly denounce the honored King David. [Back to text.](#)



2:26 when Abiathar was high priest: The priest who provided David with bread was actually Ahimelech, Abiathar's father (1 Sam 21:1). This apparent discrepancy causes some modern scholars to accuse Jesus of misquoting Scripture, although this conclusion is unnecessary. • Jesus probably mentioned Abiathar instead of Ahimelech to post a warning for the Pharisees. Abiathar is infamous in OT history as the last high priest of his line, who was banished from Jerusalem and the priesthood for opposing Solomon, the son of David and the heir of his kingdom (1 Kings 2:26-27). He thus represents the end of an old order that passes away with the coming of David's royal successor. As Jesus compares himself and the disciples with David and his men, he likewise draws the Pharisees into the story by casting them as figures like Abiathar. The Pharisees, then, represent an old order of covenant leadership that is about to expire, and if they persist in

their opposition to Jesus, the new heir of the Davidic kingdom, they will meet the same disastrous fate that befell Abiathar. Jesus' allusion to this OT tradition was a subtle yet strategic way to caution the Pharisees against their antagonism to his ministry. [Back to text.](#)

2:27 the sabbath: A day for physical rest and spiritual worship (Gen 2:1-3; Ex 20:8-11). It reminded the Israelites weekly of their total dependence upon God. The Pharisees, however, made observance of the Sabbath according to their own standards a stringent test of Jewish faithfulness. Whoever disobeyed the minute Sabbath regulations codified by the Pharisees was automatically suspected of religious laxity or compromise. According to Jesus, God designed the Sabbath to benefit his people, not to burden them (CCC 2172-73). [Back to text.](#)



3:4 Is it lawful . . . ?: Jesus implies that doing **good** for the sake of mercy or necessity does not constitute a violation of the Sabbath. One should abstain from servile works, not good works. **or to kill?:** An alarming alternative to saving life. Common sympathy might allow for the preservation of life on the Sabbath, but not its destruction. • Jesus may allude to the precedent of 1 Macc 2:41, where the Jews temporarily suspended Sabbath observance to permit defensive warfare. This was necessary in order to **save life** from military attacks on their sacred day of rest. If Israel could sidestep the Sabbath to preserve life, then surely Jesus can heal a man's hand on the same day. [See note on Lk 6:9.](#) [Back to text.](#)

3:6 Pharisees . . . Herodians: Two religious and political groups in NT Palestine. They held opposite political stances and outlooks on Jewish life but stood united in their opposition to Jesus (CCC 574). [See note on Mk 12:13.](#) [Back to text.](#)

3:7-12 Jesus gains widespread popularity with the crowds. Although they perceive him as a powerful healer and exorcist, the demons know his true identity as God's Son (3:11). Jesus' popular appeal here stands in contrast to 3:6 and the resentment of the Pharisees and Herodians. [Back to text.](#)



3:14 he appointed twelve: Jesus spent the entire night in prayer before selecting the apostles (Lk 6:12). • The number of apostles is symbolic: as the 12 sons of Jacob were representatives of Old Covenant Israel (Gen 49:3-28), so Jesus gathers 12 patriarchs to found his New

Covenant people in the Church (Mt 19:28; Rev 21:12-14; CCC 551, 765). **to be sent out:** An apostle is "one who is sent out" as a messenger or emissary (cf. Mt 10:5; CCC 858). See chart below: [The Twelve Apostles](#). [Back to text](#).

3:22 Beelzebul: A pagan god worshipped at Ekron (see Baalzebul, 2 Kings 1:2-16). The name probably meant "Prince Baal". The scribes use it as a disdainful title for Satan. **by the prince of demons:** It was commonly held that weaker demons could be exorcised by more powerful ones. The scribes wrongfully attribute Jesus' power to the sorcery of Satan, the most powerful demon of all (Mt 9:34; 10:25; CCC 548). [Back to text](#).

3:24-25 By ascribing the power of Jesus to Satan, the scribes reveal their own collaboration with the devil's **kingdom**. Satan's **house** will fall because Christ will conquer him, not because his demons are weakened by divisions within their own ranks (Heb 2:14; 1 Jn 3:8). [See note on Mt 12:25-26](#). [Back to text](#).



3:29 an eternal sin: The scribes utter blasphemy by attributing to Satan what is actually the work of the Holy Spirit (3:22, 30). Their sin is not unforgivable in principle since no sin can place us beyond the reach of God's mercy. However, blasphemy **against the Holy Spirit** is a form of rebellion that is particularly grievous because it blinds people to their own need for forgiveness; in this case, sins are unpardonable when they are not confessed with contrition (CCC 1864). • The sin against the Holy Spirit was prefigured in the OT when the Israelites fashioned the golden calf (Ex 32:1-6). Instead of giving worship and thanks to Yahweh for their deliverance, they honored as their true redeemer an idol of their own making (Ex 32:4). [Back to text](#).

The Twelve Apostles (Mk 3)

MATTHEW 10:2-4	MARK 3:16-19	LUKE 6:14-16	ACTS 1:13
Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Peter
Andrew	James	Andrew	John
James	John	James	James
John	Andrew	John	Andrew
Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
Bartholomew ¹	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
Thomas	Matthew	Matthew	Bartholomew
Matthew	Thomas	Thomas	Matthew
James (of Alphaeus)	James (of Alphaeus)	James (of Alphaeus)	James (of Alphaeus)
Thaddaeus ²	Thaddaeus	Simon (the Zealot)	Simon (the Zealot)
Simon (the Cananaean) ³	Simon (the Cananaean)	Judas (of James)	Judas (of James)
Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	—

¹ **Bartholomew** is also called "Nathanael" in John's Gospel (Jn 1:45-49; 21:2).

² The apostle called **Thaddaeus** in Matthew and Mark is the same apostle called **Judas the son of James** in Luke and Acts. Some suggest the name **Thaddaeus** was preferred in certain circles to avoid confusing him with Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus.

³ The name **Cananaean** is probably derived from an Aramaic term meaning "zealot" (as in Luke and Acts). This title usually refers to Jewish revolutionaries who forcibly resisted the Roman rule and occupation of first-century Palestine.

3:32 your brethren: Jesus' cousins or related kinsmen (CCC 500). [See note on Mt 12:46.](#) [Back to text.](#)

3:35 the will of God: Obedience to the Father is more important than being related to Jesus biologically. Baptized Christians are children of God and brothers and sisters of Jesus through the Holy Spirit (Jn 1:12; Rom 8:29; Heb 2:10-11). Membership in this New Covenant family is maintained through a life conforming to God's will (Mt 7:21). **brother . . . sister . . . mother:** Christ widens the scope of his spiritual family to *include* his disciples, not to exclude his Mother or his biological relatives. [See note on Mt 12:50.](#) [Back to text.](#)

4:2 in parables: A teaching method with two purposes. **(1)** Parables *conceal* Jesus' message from the faithless, so that the stories and scenes from everyday life have no impact on those who react to his claims with opposition and violence. [See note on Mk 4:12.](#) **(2)** Parables also *reveal* the mystery of Jesus' mission to those who believe and embrace his message. In short, the parables draw us into divine mysteries according to the measure and intensity of our faith (4:33; CCC 546). See word study: [Parables](#) at Mt 13. [Back to text.](#)



4:3-8 The parable of the Sower. Jesus places himself in a long line of OT prophets whose message was received by some but rejected by many (Mt 23:37; Heb 11:32-38). Jesus is the **sower** whose message likewise elicits diverse responses. The condition of the **soil** in each scenario determines one's reaction to Jesus (see CCC 29). Three responses prove unfruitful: those like the **path** are corrupted by Satan (4:15); those like **rocky ground** are hampered by weak and partial commitments to the gospel (4:17); those with **thorns** are entangled in the distractions and concerns of the world (4:19). Jesus' graphic language (**devoured, scorched, choked;** 4:4, 6-7) underscores the opposition facing the gospel. In contrast, the **good soil** is receptive to God's word and yields an abundant harvest (CCC 2707). • The imagery in Jesus' parable evokes Is 55:10-13, where Isaiah describes God's word as a powerful and effective force. He cannot sow his divine word without bringing blessing and accomplishing his will. [Back to text.](#)



4:11 To you has been given: Jesus explains his parables to the inner circle of disciples. By instructing them privately, he prepares them for their future role as teachers and stewards of God's mysteries (16:15, 20; 1 Cor 4:1). • According to Vatican II (*Dei Verbum*, 7), Jesus ensures the transmission of his truth to every age by the Holy Spirit, who guides the Church through the teaching and apostolic succession of bishops (Jn 14:26; 16:13; 2 Tim 2:2) (CCC 888-90). [Back to text.](#)



4:12 see but not perceive: A paraphrase of Is 6:9-10. • Isaiah was commissioned by the Lord to file a covenant lawsuit against Jerusalem in the eighth century B.C. It was a time when wickedness and injustice were flourishing in Israel despite Yahweh's repeated attempts to reform the people (Is 5:1-30). As a result of persistent rebellion, Israel became blind and deaf to the warnings of the prophets. Isaiah's mission was a dreadful one of preaching judgment upon his wayward generation until destruction and exile would overtake all but a holy remnant of the people (Is 6:13). Jesus likewise addresses a crooked generation and preaches a message that reaches a remnant of Israel but leaves the rest hardened and unresponsive (Jn 12:37-43; Acts 28:23-28). [Back to text.](#)

4:14-20 Jesus explains the parable to his disciples only when they are "alone" (4:10). The crowd "outside" is not privileged to hear its interpretation (4:11). [Back to text.](#)

4:21-22 A parable about the purpose and function of Jesus' teaching. Although the mystery of the kingdom is temporarily **hidden** and **secret** in parables, its true meaning will eventually be **manifest** and **come to light** (Lk 12:2). [Back to text.](#)



4:26-29 An agricultural parable found only in Mark. Jesus compares the mystery of natural, organic growth to the expansion of the **kingdom of God**. The kingdom will visibly mature like **grain**, but the spiritual forces behind it will remain invisible. The parable of the Leaven in Mt 13:33 elucidates the same mystery. • *Morally* (St. Gregory the Great, *Hom. in Ezek.* 2, 3): the maturing grain signifies our increase in virtue. First, the seeds of good intentions are sown; these gradually bring forth the blade of

repentance and ultimately the mature ear of charitable works. When established in virtue, we are made ripe for God's harvest. [Back to text.](#)

4:29 the harvest: The day of God's manifestation and judgment (Jer 51:33; Joel 3:13; Mt 13:39; Rev 14:15). [Back to text.](#)



4:30-32 The parable of the Mustard Seed. It is based on the difference between the **smallest** seed and the **greatest** shrub and depicts how Christ's **kingdom** begins with a small band of disciples and gradually grows into a worldwide Church. • The imagery Jesus uses to explain this is drawn from OT oracles that describe the dominion of ancient empires. Babylon (Dan 4:10-12), Egypt (Ezek 31:1-6), and Israel (Ezek 17:22-24) were all portrayed as kingdoms that grew into mighty trees. [See note on Mt 13:32.](#) [Back to text.](#)



4:35-41 Jesus manifests his divinity by exercising authority over nature. • According to the OT, God *alone* has the power to subdue the raging seas (Ps 89:9; 93:4; 107:28-29). This biblical background alarms the disciples and prompts their question, **Who then is this . . . ?** (4:41). • *Morally* (St. Augustine, *Sermo* 51): the episode at sea signifies the drama of the Christian life. All of God's children embark with Christ on a life that is full of dangerous storms, especially attacks from evil spirits and temptations of the flesh. We must learn to trust in Christ daily, since he alone can restrain these forces and bring us to the safe harbor of salvation. [See note on Mt 8:23-27.](#) [Back to text.](#)

5:1 Gerasenes: Gerasa is one of the cities of the "Decapolis" (5:20), a confederation of ten cities in NT Palestine. They were predominantly Gentile in population, and most of them were located east of the Jordan River. The presence of "swine" in 5:11 reinforces this Gentile context, since the Jews would never herd animals that God declared unclean (Lev 11:7-8). [Back to text.](#)



5:9 Legion: The term for an armed regiment of nearly 6,000 Roman soldiers. It points to the overwhelming presence of demons in the man and accentuates the intensity of spiritual combat between Jesus and forces of evil. Matthew indicates that two men approached Jesus suffering from

demonic possession (Mt 8:28). • *Allegorically* (St. Bede, *In Marcum*): the demoniac represents the Gentile nations saved by Christ. As pagans, they once lived apart from God amid the tombs of dead works, while their sins were performed in service to demons. Through Christ, the pagans are at last cleansed and freed from Satan's domination. [Back to text.](#)



5:13 into the sea: Biblical symbolism associated with the sea is diverse and flexible. • According to one tradition, God's enemies arise from the sea in the form of beasts that oppress God's people (Dan 7:1-3; Rev 13:1). Here Jesus reverses the direction of evil by sending the demon-possessed swine back into the sea. Like Pharaoh's army in the OT, God's adversaries are **drowned** in the waters (Ex 14:26-28; 15:1). [Back to text.](#)

5:19 the Lord has done for you: Hints at Jesus' divinity (cf. 2:28; 11:3; 12:37). The parallel text in Lk 8:39 has "God". [Back to text.](#)

5:21-43 Two miracle stories connected chronologically and thematically. Both highlight Jesus' power over physical sickness (5:29, 42) and his favorable response to faith (5:23, 34, 36; CCC 548, 2616). The accounts are also linked by the figure **twelve years**, which represents the duration of the woman's illness (5:25) and the age of the young girl (5:42). [Back to text.](#)

5:23 lay your hands on her: Often in the Gospels Jesus responds to the persistent pleas of parents whose children are suffering or in danger (7:25-30; 9:17-27; Mt 17:14-18; Jn 4:46-54). His mercy touches these distressed parents whenever they turn to him in faith. Jesus also displays a deep affection for children (10:13-16; Mt 18:5-6). [Back to text.](#)

5:25 a flow of blood: A condition that makes the woman and everything she touches legally unclean (Lev 15:25-30). This excludes her from full participation in the covenant life of Israel. To the crowd's astonishment, Jesus removes her uncleanness by physical contact, not in spite of it. [See note on Mk 1:40.](#) [Back to text.](#)

5:37 Peter . . . James . . . John: Three of Jesus' closest disciples, who were also present with him at the Transfiguration (9:2) and in the garden of Gethsemane (14:33). They are likewise the only apostles Jesus renamed: Simon became "Peter", which means "rock", while James and John were called "Boanerges", which means "sons of thunder" (3:16-17). [Back to text.](#)



5:39 not dead but sleeping: Biblical writers often speak of "sleep" as a euphemism for biological death (Mt 27:52; Jn 11:11; 1 Cor 15:6). Jesus uses this description to emphasize that the girl's condition is only temporary and reversible. • *Morally* (St. Bede, *In Marcum*): the girl signifies the young Christian whose heart remains deadened by the world. Christ must clear away the crowds of impure thoughts to revive and strengthen the believer to begin walking in good deeds. Spiritual nourishment for this new life is given through the Eucharist. [Back to text.](#)

5:41 Talitha cumi: One of several Aramaic expressions preserved in Mark (7:11, 34; 14:36; 15:22, 34). He regularly translates these expressions for his non-Jewish readers in Rome. [Back to text.](#)

6:1 his own country: Nazareth, the Galilean village where Jesus was raised (Mt 2:23). Following an earlier incident recorded in Lk 4:16-30, this episode marks the second rejection of Jesus by his kinsfolk. [Back to text.](#)

6:3 brother . . . his sisters: Jesus' cousins or more distant relatives (CCC 500). They are not siblings from the same Virgin Mother. [See note on Mt 12:46.](#) [Back to text.](#)

6:4 not without honor: Jesus adapts a common proverb to explain his rejection: like the OT prophets before him, Jesus is persecuted and rejected for preaching the word of the Lord (Mt 5:11-12; Heb 11:32-38). Jesus is often called a prophet in the Gospels (Mt 21:11; Lk 7:16; 13:33; 24:19; Jn 4:19). [Back to text.](#)



6:7-13 Jesus dispatches the Twelve **two by two** as emissaries to the surrounding Galilean towns (Mt 10:5-6). It is his **authority** that empowers their ministry of exorcism, healing, and preaching (Mt 10:1). Their mission is a training exercise for leadership in the Church, when they will be summoned to embrace evangelical poverty (6:8-9) and to trust in God for daily provisions (6:11). • *Morally* (St. Gregory the Great, *Hom. in Evan.* 17): Jesus sends out the disciples in pairs to signify that the twin precepts of charity are indispensable for the duty of Christian preaching. Those entrusted with this mission must always exemplify the love of God and neighbor. [Back to text.](#)

6:11 shake off the dust: A symbolic act of judgment for those who reject the apostles' preaching. [See note on Mt 10:14.](#) [Back to text.](#)



6:13 anointed with oil: A symbol of healing and a medicinal agent in the ancient world (Is 1:6; Lk 10:34). • According to the Council of Trent, the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is "suggested" by this text (Sess. 14, chap. 1). Whether or not this episode marks the formal institution of the sacrament, it is clear the disciples' ministry anticipates its future administration in the life of the Church (Jas 5:14-15; CCC 1511-16). [Back to text.](#)

6:14-29 A narrative "flashback" on past events. Mark recounts this episode to dispel rumors that John the Baptist and Jesus are the same person (6:16; 8:28). John's execution foreshadows both the death of Jesus (9:12; 10:32-34) and the martyrdom of other believers in the early Church (Rev 20:4; CCC 523). [Back to text.](#)

6:14 King Herod: Herod Antipas. After the death of Herod the Great (4/1 B.C.), the Roman Emperor Augustus divided the kingdom in Palestine among three of Herod's sons. Herod Antipas was the son who received the title "tetrarch" (Mt 14:1) and governed the regions of Galilee and Perea until A.D. 39. His brothers Archelaus and Philip were apportioned the remainder of their late father's territory. Since "tetrarch" is not strictly a royal title, the use of "King" here probably reflects popular usage and is not intended literally (Mt 14:9). [Back to text.](#)

6:18 your brother's wife: John the Baptist was imprisoned and executed for publicly repudiating the illicit union of Herod Antipas and Herodias, the wife of his half-brother Philip. According to Lev 18:16 and 20:21, the Mosaic Law forbids the union of a man with his brother's wife when the brother is still living. Since Philip was alive and well, the marriage between Antipas and Herodias was no marriage at all—it was adultery. [See note on Mt 14:4.](#) [Back to text.](#)



6:23 Whatever you ask me: Herod's oath recalls a similar banquet scene in Esther 5-7. • Queen Esther was giving a feast for the Persian King Ahasuerus when he promised to grant her any request, even half of his kingdom (Esther 7:1-2). Esther then requested that the king spare the life of the Jews throughout the Persian empire (Esther 7:3-4). This OT scenario is the mirror opposite of Mark's narrative: unlike righteous Esther, the sinful

Herodias seizes the opportunity to bid for the execution of a righteous Jew. [Back to text.](#)

6:24 The head of John: The prompt response of Herodias, in light of her "grudge" against John (6:19), suggests his demise was premeditated. The careless oath of Herod Antipas afforded the opportune moment for Herodias to implement her plan (6:26). [Back to text.](#)

6:26 exceedingly sorry: Herod's remorse is overshadowed by his injustice. His reputation before the prestigious company of high officials (6:21) was more important to him than a fair trial and, ultimately, John's life. [Back to text.](#)



6:34 sheep without a shepherd: A familiar simile from the OT. • It generally depicts Israel's need for spiritual leadership (Num 27:17; 1 Kings 22:17; Jud 11:19; Jer 23:1-3; Zech 10:2). Ultimately God himself promised to shepherd his sheep through the Messiah (Ezek 34:23; Jn 10:1116). [Back to text.](#)

6:35-44 The miracle of the loaves looks both to the past and to the future. **(1)** It recalls miraculous feedings from the OT, like the heavenly manna God provided for Israel in the wilderness (Ex 16) and the multiplied loaves and leftover baskets provided by Elisha (2 Kings 4:42-44). **(2)** It also anticipates the later institution of the Eucharist, where the same string of verbs (**taking . . . blessed . . . broke . . . gave**) is found together, something that occurs only here and at the Last Supper (14:22; CCC 1335). [Back to text.](#)

6:37 two hundred denarii: A single "denarius" is equivalent to a laborer's daily wage. Over half a year's wages would be required to purchase food for the multitude. [Back to text.](#)



6:41 gave them to the disciples: Jesus does not give the multiplied bread directly to the crowds but distributes it to them by the hands of his apostles. • This mediation foreshadows their role as New Covenant priests, when they apportion to God's people the heavenly bread that Jesus provides in the Eucharist (cCC 1564). [Back to text.](#)

6:45 Bethsaida: Located on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. It is the hometown of Peter, Andrew, and Philip (Jn 1:44; 12:21). [Back to text.](#)

6:48 the fourth watch: Between 3 and 6 A.M. The evening hours between 6 P.M. and 6 A.M. were divided into four "watches" (13:35). [Back to text.](#)





6:50 it is I: Or, "I am". • Jesus takes for himself the 5 divine name "I AM" that God revealed to Moses at the burning bush (Ex 3:14). This claim to divinity is corroborated as Jesus does what only God can do: he treads upon the sea (Job 9:8). • *Mystically (Glossa ordinaria):* Jesus walks on the water to reveal the mystery of his sinlessness. It is because he is entirely free from the weight of sin that he can stride safely across the sea without sinking. [Back to text.](#)

6:53 Gennesaret: A village on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. [Back to text.](#)



6:56 the fringe of his garment: Moses instructed the 6 Israelites to wear tassels on their clothing as visible reminders to keep God's commandments (Num 15:38-40). • Jesus often makes tangible things such as spittle (8:23), clay (Jn 9:6), clothing (5:28-29), and water (Jn 9:7) channels of his healing power. He thus prepares the way for the seven sacraments of the New Covenant, which heal the body and soul as visible instruments of grace (CCC 1504). [Back to text.](#)

7:3 the tradition of the elders: Religious customs manufactured by the Pharisees and added to the Mosaic Law. Sometimes called the oral Law, this body of rituals was designed to supplement God's written Law and intensify its requirements of ritual purity. These traditions were passed on orally until recorded in the Jewish Mishnah about A.D. 200. Here the controversy is sparked by the "unwashed" hands of the disciples (7:2). The Pharisees charge them, not with poor hygiene, but with religious laxity. Jesus responds with a vigorous attack on these Pharisaic customs because they distract practitioners from the more important principles of the Mosaic Law (7:8-9). That is, they emphasize the dangers of ritual impurity (on the hands) to the neglect of moral defilement (in the heart) defined by the commandments (7:20-23). In the end, these traditions promoted by the elders are examples of merely human tradition that the Pharisees have wrongly elevated to an equal level with the revealed Law of God (CCC 581). [See note on Col 2:8](#) and essay: [Who Are the Pharisees?](#) at Mk 2. [Back to text.](#)



7:6-7 A reference to Is 29:13. • Isaiah reprimands Jerusalem for consulting its politicians while rejecting the prophets. Because their leaders routinely exclude the Lord from foreign policy decisions and rely instead on their own wisdom, their worship of the Lord has become empty and vain. No longer, says Isaiah, will Yahweh tolerate their lip service when their hearts are devoid of living faith. The Pharisees have fallen into the same trap of rejecting God's wisdom in favor of their own (Mt 23:23; Col 2:20-23). As a result, their venerated traditions are empty and in dangerous competition with God's will as revealed in the gospel. [Back to text.](#)

7:11 Corban: Aramaic for "offering". It denotes something dedicated to God for a religious purpose. It often consisted of money or property donated by vow to the Temple. Jesus denounces the abuse of this practice: giving gifts to the Temple does not exempt children from the obligation of honoring their parents through financial support (Ex 20:12; Deut 5:16; CCC 2218). [Back to text.](#)

7:19 all foods clean: An editorial comment by Mark. Since Jesus traces true defilement back to the heart (7:21), the outward distinctions between clean and unclean as defined by the Old Covenant are no longer operative or binding in the New. These ceremonial distinctions have been superseded in two ways: **(1)** Ritual defilement was an external matter under the Old Covenant, whereas the New Covenant penetrates to cleanse and govern the inward life of believers (Mt 5:8; Acts 15:9). **(2)** Since Mosaic food laws effectively separated Israel from the Gentiles, these dietary restrictions were set aside in the New Covenant once Jews and Gentiles were gathered together into the same covenant family. The early Church grappled much with the issues surrounding Old Covenant dietary laws and table-fellowship in light of the gospel (Acts 10:9-16; Rom 14:13-23; Gal 2:11-16; CCC 582). [Back to text.](#)

7:21 the heart of man: In biblical terminology, the heart is the center of the person and the source of every decision that manifests itself through deeds. Jesus thus links true defilement with the heart, where evil actions and intentions have their hidden beginning (Mt 5:28). His inventory of vices is similar to others in the NT (Rom 1:29-31; Gal 5:19-21; 1 Pet 4:3; CCC 1432, 2517-19). [Back to text.](#)

7:24 Tyre and Sidon: Two Phoenician cities on the Mediterranean coast, north of Palestine. They were predominantly Gentile in population and thus contemptible to the Jews (Ezek 26:1-28:26; Joel 3:4-8). [Back to text.](#)

7:27 the children first: The children of Israel hold first claim to the blessings of the New Covenant (Mt 15:24; Rom 1:16; 9:4-5; CCC 839). Only after Jesus' Resurrection is the gospel systematically proclaimed to all nations (Mt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). **dogs:** Often a derogatory term in the Bible (1 Sam 17:43; Phil 3:2; Rev 22:15). Jesus uses it to illustrate the progress of the gospel: just as children are fed before pets, so the gospel is offered to Israel before the Gentiles. The woman's acceptance of this epithet reveals her humility, and her unwillingness to be turned away reveals her perseverance (7:28-29). [Back to text.](#)

7:31 the Decapolis: This setting indicates that Jesus continued to travel and minister in Gentile territory. [See note on Mk 5:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)

7:33 privately: Reflects Jesus' intention to conceal his identity. [See note on Mk 1:44.](#) [Back to text.](#)

7:34 Ephphatha: An Aramaic expression that Mark translates for his Gentile readers. [Back to text.](#)

7:37 the deaf . . . the mute: Recalls the messianic blessings prophesied in Is 35:4-6 (Wis 10:21; CCC 549). [See note on Mt 11:5.](#) [Back to text.](#)

8:1-10 An episode similar to the miracle in 6:35-44, but dissimilar in several details. Jesus multiplies **seven** (8:5) loaves instead of five (6:38), collects **seven** (8:8) leftover baskets instead of twelve (6:43), and feeds **four thousand** (8:9) people instead of 5,000 (6:44). The symbolism of these figures is examined in 8:18-21. [Back to text.](#)

8:2 I have compassion: The lack of food in this episode illustrates how Jesus rewards the crowd for their perseverance, despite natural discomforts like hunger (8:2). [Back to text.](#)

8:6 given thanks: A translation of the Greek verb *eucharisteō*, which is the basis for the English word "Eucharist". Jesus' multiplication of bread after giving thanks foreshadows the Last Supper and the institution of the Blessed Sacrament (1 Cor 11:24; CCC 1328, 1335). [See note on Mk 6:35-44.](#) [Back to text.](#)

8:10 Dalmanutha: An unknown location in Galilee also called "Magadan" (Mt 15:39). [Back to text.](#)

8:11 a sign from heaven: Jesus refuses to perform miracles on demand, especially not for **Pharisees** who are plotting to destroy him (3:6). They are

like the Israelites in the wilderness who refused to believe in God, even after seeing numerous signs in Egypt (Num 14:11; CCC 548). [Back to text.](#)

8:15 the leaven: A metaphor based on the "one loaf" in the boat (8:14). Jesus warns the disciples that as leaven permeates and expands bread, so the **Pharisees** and their teaching exert a corruptive influence on the crowds (Mt 16:11-12). Similar imagery is used elsewhere in the NT (Lk 12:1; 1 Cor 5:6-8; Gal 5:9). **Herod:** Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee. He was interested in Jesus primarily as a miracle worker (Lk 23:8). See note on 6:14. [Back to text.](#)

8:19-21 Jesus rehearses the figures in both miracles of the loaves (6:35-44; 8:1-10). While the symbolism of these numbers is nowhere made explicit, they most likely signify the nations who hear the gospel. The **twelve** (8:19) leftover baskets from the first episode represent the twelve tribes of Israel that Jesus gathers into the Church (Mt 15:24; 19:28). The **seven** (8:20) baskets of the second miracle represent the seven Gentile nations who once occupied the land of Canaan alongside Israel (Deut 7:1) and to whom Christ subsequently offers salvation. Jesus' previous conversation with the Syrophenician (Canaanite) woman in 7:24-30 already established the point that Israel's leftover bread would be given to Gentiles. Together these figures point to the international dimensions of the New Covenant (Rom 1:16; Gal 3:28). [Back to text.](#)



8:22-26 A unique miracle performed in stages. It has multiple significance in Mark: Jesus not only healed the man, but he also heals the spiritual deafness and blindness of the disciples (8:18-21). Although they are still uncertain about his true identity, Jesus sharpens their vision to recognize him as Messiah in the following episode (8:29). • *Allegorically* (St. Bede, *In Marcum*): Jesus heals the blind man to announce the mystery of redemption. As God Incarnate, Jesus heals man through the sacrament of his human nature, here signified by his hands and spittle. This grace cures our spiritual blindness gradually, and, as with the blind man, progress is measured in proportion to our faith. *Allegorically* (St. Jerome, *Homily 79*), the restoration of the blind man signifies our gradual increase in wisdom, from the darkness of ignorance to the light of truth. Christ's spittle is the perfect doctrine that proceeds from his mouth; it enhances our vision and brings us progressively to the knowledge of God. [Back to text.](#)



8:27-10:52 Seven times in this section reference is made to "the way", although this (Greek) motif is muted through various translations like "journey", "road", and "roadside" (8:27; 9:33-34; 10:17, 32, 46, 52). At the narrative level, it depicts the steady movements of Jesus on "the way" to Jerusalem. On a theological level, Jesus is teaching that "the way" to heavenly glory is "the way" of heroic suffering. He first clears "the way" through his own Passion and then summons disciples to follow in his footsteps (1 Pet 2:21; 4:13). • This Marcan motif recalls the New Exodus motif of Isaiah. Just as Yahweh delivered the Israelites from Egypt and led them on "the way" to the Promised Land (Ex 13:21-22), so Isaiah envisioned a second Exodus from the bondage of sin to a new life with the Lord. The prophet describes this as a great journey along "the way" to Mt. Zion (Is 30:19-21; 35:8-10; 40:3-5; 48:17; 51:10-11; 62:10-11). [See note on Mk 1:2-3.](#) [Back to text.](#)

8:27 Caesarea Philippi: A Gentile city beyond the northern border of Palestine. [See note on Mt 16:13.](#) **Who do men . . . ?:** Popular opinion agreed that Jesus was a prophet, but there was no consensus about *which* prophet he was (8:28; 6:14-15). [Back to text.](#)

8:29 You are the Christ: i.e., Israel's Messiah and king. Peter's confession is the climax of the first half of Mark's Gospel. To counteract expectations that the Messiah would be a purely political and military figure, Jesus immediately instructs the disciples about the suffering and shame he will have to face to accomplish his mission (8:31-33). [See note on Mt 16:16](#) and word study: [Christ](#) at Mk 14. [Back to text.](#)

8:30 he charged them: The blessing that accompanied Simon's name change to "Peter" (3:16) is not mentioned in Mark as it is in Matthew (16:17-19). According to one ancient tradition, this omission reflects Mark's dependence upon Peter for his Gospel information, since it is likely that Peter would humbly omit from his preaching sayings of Jesus that exalt him above others (CCC 552). [See note on Mt 16:17](#) and introduction: *Author.* **tell no one:** Jesus enjoins silence on his disciples as part of a strategy to conceal his "messianic secret". See note on 1:44. [Back to text.](#)

8:31-33 The first of three predictions regarding Jesus' Passion and Resurrection (9:30-32; 10:32-34). In this way Jesus intensifies his effort to

instruct the apostles about the suffering that awaits both him and his loyal followers (8:34-37; 13:9). [Back to text.](#)

8:31 the Son of man: Alludes to the royal figure described in Dan 7:13-14. Jesus often associates this title with his Passion (9:12, 31; 10:33, 45; 14:21, 41). See essay: [Jesus the Son of Man](#) at Lk 17. [Back to text.](#)

8:33 Satan!: Jesus rebukes Peter for rejecting the prospect of suffering. Scandalized and perhaps frightened, Peter briefly aligned himself with the mind-set of Satan, who similarly tried to divert Jesus from his mission to suffer (Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:113). The Crucifixion proved to be a "stumbling block" to many of Jesus' contemporaries (1 Cor 1:23). [Back to text.](#)

8:34 take up his cross: A graphic image of suffering. It refers to the Roman custom of forcing criminals to carry on their shoulders a crossbar to the site of their crucifixion (15:21; Jn 19:17). Jesus warns that disciples must be so committed to him that they are willing to endure persecution, hardship, and even death. The faithful, he assures them, will find resurrection and glory beyond the hardships of this life (Jn 12:24-26; 2 Tim 2:11; CCC 458). [See note on Mt 10:38.](#) [Back to text.](#)



8:38 when he comes: The Father has given Christ the authority to judge the living and the dead (Jn 5:22-29; Acts 10:42). At the appointed time he will reward the righteous with eternal life (Rom 2:7) and punish those who are **ashamed** of him with eternal fire (Mt 25:31, 41-46; 2 Tim 2:11-13; CCC 678-79). **with the holy angels:** Jesus alludes to the prophecy of Zech 14:5. • Zechariah describes the "day of the Lord", when God will bring judgment on the unfaithful of Israel by gathering armies against Jerusalem to plunder the city (Zech 14:1-2). Once the faithful have evacuated the city, God is expected to "come" with his "holy ones" (Zech 14:5; angels) and there be established "king" over the earth (Zech 14:9). These events transpired with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, which prefigures the glorious return of Christ at the end of history and the full unveiling of his kingdom. [Back to text.](#)

9:1 not taste death: Jesus promises to inaugurate his **kingdom** within the lifetime of the apostles (1:15). This begins with Christ's heavenly enthronement (16:19) and the birth of the Church. Its authority is manifest with the termination of the Old Covenant, when Jerusalem and the Temple are destroyed with fire (Lk 21:31-32). The kingdom, while present in

mystery in the Church, will be fully manifest at the consummation of history (CCC 669-71). [Back to text.](#)



9:2-8 The Transfiguration balances out the shock of Jesus' first Passion prediction in 8:31-33, strengthening the faith of three apostles (9:2) destined for special leadership positions in the early Church. Beholding the glory of Jesus assures them of his divine Sonship and foreshadows their own glorification at the resurrection (CCC 554-55). Like Jesus' Baptism, this event reveals the Trinity: the Father's **voice** is heard (9:7), the Son is **transfigured** (9:2), and the Spirit is present in the **cloud** (9:7). • *Morally* (Origen, *Comm. in Matt.* 12, 36): Christ led the disciples up the mountain after six days to show that we must rise above our love for created things, which were made by God in six days, to enter on the seventh day into the vision of Christ's glory. [Back to text.](#)



9:2 Peter . . . James . . . John: Three of Jesus' closest companions. See note on 5:37. • *Anagogically*(Rabanus Maurus, *Comm. in Matt.* 5, 17): Christ took three disciples up the mountain to signify that those who in this life believe in the Holy Trinity will in the next life behold the three Persons of the Godhead in heavenly glory. **high mountain:** Traditionally identified with Mt. Tabor in lower Galilee. Theologically, this mountain is the New Covenant counterpart to Mt. Sinai, where Jesus manifests his divine splendor just as God revealed his glory to Moses (Ex 24:15-18) and Elijah (1 Kings 19:8-18) on Sinai (Horeb). [See note on Mt 17:1-8.](#) [Back to text.](#)

9:4 Elijah with Moses: Representatives of the prophets and the Law of the OT. Together they testify that Jesus is the foretold Messiah and mediator of the New Covenant (cf. Lk 24:25-27; Jn 5:39; Rev 11:3-6). [Back to text.](#)

9:5 three booths: Small shelters in which the Israelites dwelt during the liturgical feast of Booths (Lev 23:39-43). Peter requests to build these shelters in his desire to prolong the heavenly experience. [Back to text.](#)



9:7 listen to him: This final injunction alludes to Deut 18:15. • Yahweh promised to raise up another prophet like Moses, so that just as Israel received instructions for worship and life issued through Moses, so they must obey the words of his prophetic successor. The Father uses this

passage to identify Jesus as this Mosaic prophet (Jn 6:14; Acts 3:22). [Back to text.](#)

9:10 rising from the dead: The belief in a collective resurrection was accepted by many Jews during NT times (Dan 12:2; Jn 11:23-25; Acts 24:15). Only the Sadducees expressly denied it (12:18). The disciples are here perplexed that Jesus speaks of an individual resurrection, since they as yet had no clear understanding of a dying and rising Messiah (8:31-33). [Back to text.](#)



9:11 first Elijah must come: Elijah's reappearance was a common expectation based on the prophecy of Mal 4:5. • In context, God promised to send Elijah to prepare Israel for his scheduled arrival on the "day of the Lord". His mission was to restore family relationships (Mal 4:6) and the tribes of Israel (Sir 48:10). John the Baptist fulfills this prophetic role as the forerunner to Jesus (9:13). [See note on Mk 1:6.](#) [Back to text.](#)

9:13 as it is written of him: As Elijah suffered at the hands of King Ahab and his wife, Jezebel (1 Kings 19:1-10), so John the Baptist suffered martyrdom by Herod Antipas and his mistress Herodias (6:27). [Back to text.](#)

9:17 a mute spirit: Demon possession is sometimes manifested through sickness, seizures, and self-inflicted injuries (Mt 8:16; Mk 1:26; 5:2-5). These phenomena in no way diminish the spiritual dimension of the condition; they simply make it visible. The symptoms here resemble epilepsy (9:18). [Back to text.](#)

9:23 All things are possible: The issue is not whether Jesus *can* cure the boy, but whether his father is willing to believe it. The omnipotent power of God is more than sufficient for the task, but it must be sought with faith and prayer (9:29; Jer 32:17; Lk 1:37). This father, who struggles with "unbelief" (9:24), bids Jesus to stabilize his wavering faith (Lk 17:5; CCC 162, 2610). [Back to text.](#)

9:30-32 Jesus foretells his Crucifixion and Resurrection a second time. The prophecy is still confusing and frightening to the disciples (9:32). [See note on Mk 8:31-33.](#) [Back to text.](#)

9:33 Capernaum: Jesus' Galilean residence. See note on 1:21. [Back to text.](#)

9:35 servant of all: Greatness in God's eyes is measured by humility and service to others (Lk 22:24-27), a principle put into practice by Jesus (10:45). As future leaders of the Church, the apostles must shun aspirations for worldly honor and attention in order to serve Christ more faithfully and effectively (8:35; CCC 876, 896). [Back to text.](#)

9:37 one such child: An image of those who are weak and helpless. Welcoming them with affection is tantamount to serving both Jesus (**me**) and the Father (**him who sent me**). [See note on Mt 25:40.](#) [Back to text.](#)



9:42-48 Jesus uses hyperbole (overstatement) to emphasize that drastic measures are needed to avoid sin (CCC 1861, 2284-87). Because public sin can embolden others to sin likewise, the consequences that await those who cause scandal are worse than drowning by the weight of a **great millstone** (9:42). Because grave (mortal) sins merit **hell** (9:43, 45, 47), avoiding them requires us to take action so serious that it can be compared to bodily dismemberment (Mt 5:29-30). • *Morally* (St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 59): severing bodily limbs signifies the amputation of intimate friends. When close companions drag Christians away from holiness, they must be cut away. It is better for us to enter heaven without them than to maintain their company in everlasting misery. See word study: [Hell](#) (page 35). [Back to text.](#)

9:49 salted with fire: Probably a reference to the trials and temptations that face believers. Given the preceding context (9:42-48), it may include the purifying suffering of penance needed to avoid sin and turn away from impure habits. Such fire is meant to test the genuineness of our Christian commitment and lead us to perfection (Sir 2:5; 1 Pet 1:6-7; CCC 1430-31). In the end, those refined by the temporal fires of this world will be spared the unquenchable fires of the next. [Back to text.](#)

10:1 the region of Judea: Jesus turns from his ministry in Galilee and northern Gentile territory (1:14; 5:1; 7:24; 8:27) to head southward toward Jerusalem (10:32; Lk 9:51). **beyond the Jordan:** Also called Perea, the region governed by Herod Antipas and the location of John the Baptist's ministry (Lk 3:13). [See note on Mk 6:14](#) and [Mt 19:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)

10:2 to test him: The Pharisees lay a trap for Jesus as part of a strategy to eliminate him (3:6). They anticipate he will deny the legality of **divorce** and so draw upon himself the wrath of Herod Antipas and his unlawful

mistress, Herodias. For it was well known that Herod, the ruler of this territory, and his consort had abandoned their spouses in order to remarry. Because John the Baptist had been executed for condemning their unlawful union (6:17-19) as he ministered in this very region (10:1), the Pharisees hope Jesus will meet the same fate as John by making the same outspoken mistake. [See note on Mk 6:18](#). [Back to text](#).

Word Study

Hell (Mk 9:43)

Geenna (Gk.): "Gehenna", the valley directly southwest of Jerusalem. Jesus refers to it 11 times in the Gospels as a dreadful symbol of hell. Two associations are made with Gehenna, one drawn from the OT and the other from Jesus' contemporary setting. (1) Gehenna is a Greek rendering of the Hebrew place-name "Valley of the sons of Hinnom". It was the site of a frightful Canaanite cult that worshipped the idols of Molech and Baal by burning children in sacrifice (Jer 7:30-32; 19:1-6; 32:35). (2) In the NT period, Gehenna served as a smoldering garbage dump where refuse burned continually. Jesus evokes these associations to teach us that hell is not a place of purgation or purification, but one of fiery punishment (Mt 5:22; 18:9; 23:33). In the afterlife, the bodies and souls of the wicked will suffer in hell for eternity (Mt 10:28; 25:41, 46). Other biblical passages corroborate this horrifying prospect (Is 33:14; 66:24; Jude 7; Rev 20:10).



10:4 a certificate of divorce: Moses permitted Israelite laymen to divorce their wives under the Old Covenant (Deut 24:1-4). This was a temporary legal concession tailored to the weaknesses of Israel (10:5). Jesus now revokes Mosaic divorce legislation by returning to God's original intention for every married couple: lifelong monogamy (10:6-9). See essay: [Jesus on Marriage and Divorce](#) at Mt 19. • Divorce is one of many concessions that Yahweh made for Israel in Deuteronomy. This is seen by a careful reading of the Pentateuch, which distinguishes the Levitical covenant ratified at Mt. Sinai (Ex 19:24; Lev 27:34) from the Deuteronomic covenant that was ratified 40 years later on the plains of Moab (Deut 1:1-5; 29:1). There are, in fact, many laws distinctive to Deuteronomy that are

absent in earlier Mosaic legislation: cultic worship was confined to a single, central sanctuary (Deut 12:11), genocidal warfare was permitted for the first time (Deut 20:16-17), animals once sacrificed at the sacred Tabernacle could now be slaughtered in profane contexts (Deut 12:15-24), allowance was made to collect interest on money loaned (Deut 15:3; 23:20), and the grim reality of divorce was tolerated and regulated (Deut 24:1-4). These and other laws indicate that Deuteronomy was a less than perfect law that lowered the standards of covenant faithfulness for wayward Israel (Ezek 20:25). It was always a temporary and concessionary arrangement designed to permit lesser evils in order to avoid greater ones. [Back to text.](#)



10:6 from the beginning: God alone is the Creator of marriage and the laws that govern it. • Jesus demonstrates this by citing Gen 1:27 and 2:24, passages that describe God's design for marriage as a lifelong union between one man and one woman. This marital bond is spiritual, exclusive, and indissoluble. Since it is forged by God himself (10:9), it cannot be broken by any civil or religious authority (CCC 1603, 1640). [Back to text.](#)

10:11-12 Divorce and remarriage are prohibited in the New Covenant (Lk 16:18; 1 Cor 7:10-11; CCC 2382-86). To divorce and remarry is to commit **adultery**. According to Mark's account, Jesus warns both spouses of this danger. This speaks directly to Mark's readers in ancient Rome, where men and women shared the right to initiate divorce. This double warning may also evoke the well-known story of Herod Antipas' illicit union with Herodias, since *both* of them abandoned their respective spouses before unlawfully remarriage. [See note on Mt 14:4](#) and [19:9](#). [Back to text.](#)



10:14 Let the children come: When Jesus blesses the children, he attaches great practical importance to his teaching on the indissolubility of marriage (10:11-12). Children are, after all, the fruit of married love and the ones who stand most affected by the tragedy of divorce. God intends them to be raised and blessed in the security of a healthy family. • Jesus welcomes children into the kingdom of God and so lays a foundation for the Church's practice of Infant Baptism (CCC 1250-52). [See note on Lk 18:16](#). [Back to text.](#)

10:19 the commandments: Jesus reaffirms the necessity of keeping God's moral laws in the New Covenant (12:28-34; Rom 13:8-10; 1 Cor

7:19). The Ten Commandments forever lead God's children to moral maturity and remain integral to our pursuit of "eternal life" (10:17; CCC 2068, 2072). Jesus cites five precepts of the Decalogue that command us to love our neighbors and parents (Ex 20:2-17; Deut 5:6-21). Do not defraud: Not an ordinance from the Decalogue but here included with them. It may refer to Deut 24:14. [Back to text.](#)

10:25 easier for a camel: A parable that depicts wealth as a formidable obstacle to entering God's kingdom (1 Tim 6:9-10; Heb 13:5). This difficulty is sorely demonstrated by the young man's refusal to part with his riches and embrace the gospel (10:22). [See note on Mt 19:24.](#) [Back to text.](#)

10:27 it is impossible: We are completely incapable of reaching salvation on our own. The human family descended from Adam suffers from a wounded nature and is unable to obey God completely or consistently without divine assistance (Rom 7:21-25). Only by cooperating with God and his grace can we fulfill the righteous requirements of his Law (Rom 8:4). By ourselves we can do nothing (Jn 15:5), but with the Lord's help **all things are possible** (Jer 32:17; Lk 1:37; CCC 2082). [Back to text.](#)



The Gospel in a Small Corner

10:33-34 Jesus' third and final prediction of his Passion and Resurrection (8:31-33; 9:30-32). It is the most detailed of the three, specifying that his death will result from a conspiracy of Jewish (**chief priests, scribes**) and Roman (**Gentiles**) authorities. [Back to text.](#)



10:38 drink the chalice: A reference to Jesus' forthcoming suffering (10:45; 14:36). • The OT uses this image to depict the misery that God compels the unfaithful to drink (Ps 75:8; Is 51:17; Jer 25:15). Although Jesus is innocent and pure, he consumes the cup that was filled for sinners. **with the baptism:** Symbolic for immersion in trial and suffering. James and John will share in Jesus' cup and baptism as they encounter persecution in the early Church. The NT recounts the martyrdom of James in Acts 12:2 and the exile of John in Rev 1:9. [Back to text.](#)

10:42-45 The ambitions voiced by James and John lead Jesus to clarify the true nature of Christian leadership (10:37). His disciples are not to imitate the pomp and tyranny of Gentile rulers (10:42) but the humility and service he has been modeling for them during his ministry (10:45; Jn 13:14-15; CCC 1551). [Back to text.](#)



10:45 for many: The expression is used idiomatically to mean "for all". It indicates that Jesus will die, not just for some, but for the sins of the entire world (2 Cor 5:14; 1 Jn 2:2). • Here and elsewhere Jesus interprets his Passion as the fulfillment of the Isaian prophecy about the Suffering Servant (Is 52:13-53:12; Lk 22:37). Pouring out his life "for many" recalls how the messianic Servant will make "many" righteous and remit the sins of "many" by bearing their afflictions (Is 53:11-12; Rom 5:19). [Back to text.](#)

10:46 Jericho: Six miles north of the Dead Sea in the Jordan Valley. Jesus' brief stay in the city was spent with Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10). [Back to text.](#)



10:47 Son of David: Refers to the Messiah, who was expected to be a descendant of King David and the rightful heir to his throne (Is 9:7; Ezek 34:23-24). Many hoped he would possess the power to heal sickness and exorcize demons (Mt 15:22), much like the original son of David, King

Solomon (Wis 7:20). Here the confession of Bartimaeus is ironic: this blind man sees Jesus' messianic identity more clearly than most people in Mark's Gospel. • *Allegorically* (St. Bede, *In Marcum*): Bartimaeus signifies the Gentile nations saved by Christ. Jesus bids them to rise up from their spiritual blindness, throw aside the mantle of their sinful habits, and follow him down the road to glory. [See note on Mt 12:23](#). [Back to text](#).

Word Study

Ransom ([Mk 10:45](#))

Lytron (Gk.): a "redemption price" paid for the release of captives. The word occurs only two times in

the NT (Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45) but is related to other biblical concepts with a similar meaning (Eph 1:7; 1 Tim 2:5-6). In the OT, kinship relations gave rise to the obligation of protecting one's parents, brothers, sisters, and cousins. Family members thus took responsibility for paying the ransom price for other family members who were taken captive or sold into slavery (Lev 25:47-49). As a divine Father, God became the "Redeemer" of Israel (Is 41:14; 54:5), who ransomed his beloved son from Egypt (Ex 4:22-23; Deut 7:8). In the NT, God purchases his people from slavery in sin (Rom 6:16-18) by the price of Christ's own life (1 Pet 1:18-19). His saving death thus ransomed us for freedom and fellowship in the family of God (1 Cor 6:20; Col 1:11-14; Rev 5:9).

11:1-15:47 Mark devotes over one-third of his Gospel to Passion Week, the final days of Jesus' life. His emphasis on these events reflects their importance for the Church, which annually celebrates them from Palm Sunday to Holy Saturday. [Back to text](#).

11:1 Jerusalem: Jesus journeys to the Holy City amid thousands of pilgrims arriving for the annual feast of Passover (Ex 12:1-13; CCC 583). It is this OT feast that Jesus transforms at the Last Supper and through his death on the Cross (14:22-25; 1 Cor 5:7). **Bethphage:** Hebrew for "house of figs". Its exact location is uncertain but presumably near **Bethany**, about two miles east of Jerusalem (Jn 11:18). **Mount of Olives:** The mountain

directly east of Jerusalem. Its western slope faces the Temple Mount (13:3). [Back to text.](#)



11:7 the colt: Recalls the messianic prophecy of Zech 9:9. • The colt in this oracle symbolizes the king's humility as he comes to Israel in "peace", not mounted on a "war horse" to lead a military strike against Rome (Zech 9:10). Jesus' entry into the city also recalls Solomon's procession into Jerusalem at his coronation as the King of Israel (1 Kings 1:32-40; CCC 559-60). [See note on Mt 21:1-11.](#) [Back to text.](#)



11:8-10 Three details surrounding the triumphal entry recall Psalm 118, a psalm chanted by Passover pilgrims flocking to Jerusalem. • **(1) The leafy branches** (11:8) echo the "festal procession with branches" in Ps 118:27. **(2) The Hebrew acclamation Hosanna** (11:9) means "save us" and is taken from Ps 118:25. **(3) Blessed . . . in the name of the Lord** (11:9) is quoted from Ps 118:26. Jesus later interprets Psalm 118 in the Temple (12:10-11). [Back to text.](#)



11:8 spread their garments: A symbolic gesture for honoring a newly crowned king (2 Kings 9:13). • *Morally* (St. Bede, *In Marcum*): the garments thrown under the colt signify the flesh of Christian martyrs, who lay down their lives for the gospel and so proclaim the Lordship of Jesus Christ. [Back to text.](#)

11:13 a fig tree: A traditional symbol of Israel (Jer 8:13; Hos 9:10). **not the season for figs:** The import of this statement is not immediately clear. It probably underscores what is most evident about Israel: it has yet to bear the fruits of repentance (Lk 13:6-9). When Jesus curses it, the withering and death of the tree become a visible prophecy of the doom that awaits Jerusalem for murdering the Messiah. The same point is made in the following episode, when Jesus topples the commercial stations set up in the Temple. [Back to text.](#)



11:15 to drive out: Animals were sold in the outer court of the Temple as a service to Passover pilgrims who traveled to the city to offer

sacrifice. Merchants, however, exploited this arrangement for their own financial gain. According to Jesus, they offended God by *what* they were doing and *where* they were doing it. The Temple should be a house of worship, not a place where daylight thievery and business traffic make prayer impossible. • Jesus' dramatic demonstration of overturning tables foreshadows the Temple's violent destruction in A.D. 70. Several OT passages resonate in the background. **(1)** His aggressive cleansing of the outer court recalls Mal 3:1-4, where the Lord forewarned Jerusalem that he would make a divine inspection of the Temple to purify the sanctuary and its priests. **(2)** His temporary interruption of the Temple liturgy (11:16) is a prelude to a more permanent disruption in the sacrificial cult foretold in Dan 9:26-27. **(3)** His expulsion of the merchants recalls the vision of Zech 14:21, where the prophet predicts that no trader will be found within the Temple precincts in the messianic age. See note on 13:2 and CCC 584. [Back to text.](#)



11:17 house of prayer: A reference to Is 56:7. • Isaiah foresaw Yahweh gathering the Gentiles to share in the covenant worship of Israel. Jesus sees the corruption in the Temple courts as an affront to this oracle (CCC 584). The Temple's outer court—the area reserved for Gentile pilgrims—has become a marketplace where worship is now impossible. Ultimately, Isaiah's vision of a Temple *for* all nations is fulfilled when Jesus makes a Temple *of* all nations in the Church (Eph 2:11-22). **den of robbers:** An excerpt from Jer 7:11. • In context, Jeremiah delivered a sermon in the Temple to warn Israel of God's coming judgment upon Jerusalem. Because Israel failed to repent, Solomon's Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. Jesus similarly confronts Israelites who presume that their covenant relationship with God will remain secure despite their sin (Jer 7:8-15). Their impenitence will result in the Temple's second destruction in A.D. 70. [Back to text.](#)



11:23 this mountain: Presumably a reference to Mt. Zion, where Jerusalem stands. Its dramatic removal illustrates the power unleashed through prayer (Mt 17:20; 1 Cor 13:2; CCC 2610). • Jesus may allude to Zech 4:7, where the prophet describes a vision of Zerubbabel rebuilding the Temple after its first destruction (586 B.C.). In his way stood a great

mountain that Zerubbabel had to clear away in order to begin construction. Here too the mountain of Jerusalem and the Temple must be pushed aside to make room for a new Temple: the true house of prayer built of Christian believers quarried from all nations (Mt 16:18; 1 Pet 2:4-5). [See note on Mt 24:1-25:46.](#) [Back to text.](#)

11:25 stand praying: A traditional posture for Jewish worship (Ps 134:2; Mt 6:5; Lk 18:11). [Back to text.](#)

11:30 the baptism of John: Jesus questions his interrogators to expose their malice (11:18). If they deny that John's ministry is **from heaven**, they will quickly lose favor with the people (11:32). If they affirm its heavenly authority, they stand condemned for ignoring God's plan for their lives (Mt 21:32; Lk 7:28-30). [Back to text.](#)



12:1-9 The parable of the Wicked Tenants narrates the history of Israel. The story stresses that God has been patient with his wayward people throughout the ages. The **vineyard** represents Israel dwelling in the walled city of Jerusalem (Jer 2:21; Hos 10:1), the **tower** is the Temple (as in Jewish tradition based on Is 5:1-2), and the **tenants** are Israel's leaders stationed in the city. The servants are OT prophets repeatedly sent by God to call for repentance. Many prophets were abused and **killed** (12:5; Lk 13:34). God eventually sent Jesus as the **beloved son** (12:6), whom they also **killed** (12:8). By adding the detail that the son is thrust **out of the vineyard** (12:8), Jesus predicts his Crucifixion outside the city walls of Jerusalem (Jn 19:20). God will avenge his Son when he sends him to **destroy** (12:9) the unfaithful of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. See note on 13:2. • *Morally* (St. Bede, *In Marcum*): the vineyard of Israel signifies every Christian, whose duty it is to cultivate his new life given in Baptism. The Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms are sent as messengers one after another, and finally, as recounted in the Gospels, the Father sends his Son. Should we despise these servants in pride, and even spurn the Son of God through sin, the graces we forfeit will be given to others more willing to receive them. [Back to text.](#)



12:10-11 A citation from Ps 118:22-23, a psalm chanted by Passover pilgrims flocking to Jerusalem. • Psalm 118 foretells the bitter irony of Holy Week: Jerusalem's leaders (**the builders**) will reject their

Messiah (**stone**) despite his divine mission (**the Lord's doing**), while his work will be called **marvelous** by those who recognize him with the **eyes** of faith. The psalm is implying that the old Temple will be replaced with another, where the rejected Messiah will serve as the honored cornerstone of the new edifice (Eph 2:19-22; 1 Pet 2:4-5; CCC 756). [See note on Mk 11:8-10.](#) [Back to text.](#)

12:13 Pharisees . . . Herodians: Two opposing groups in NT Palestine. They stand far apart in their political outlook but close together in their opposition to Jesus (3:6). The Pharisees opposed the Roman rule and occupation of Palestine, whereas the Herodians were sympathetic to Rome's government of Israel through the Herodian dynasty. See essay: [Who Are the Pharisees?](#) at Mk 2. **entrap him:** Roman taxation was a sensitive and potentially explosive issue for Jews of the NT period. Jesus' opponents thus confront him on the tax in order to trap and eliminate him once and for all. The dilemma they pose appears inescapable: If Jesus agrees with the tax, he will lose credibility with the majority of Jews embittered by Roman rule; if Jesus rejects the tax, he will be reported to the Roman governor for instigating rebellion. [Back to text.](#)

12:16 Whose likeness . . . ? Jesus responds with a riddle that plays on the word "likeness". Because Caesar's likeness is stamped on the coin for the tax, it should be given back to him as his rightful property. God's image and likeness, however, is stamped into every living person, including Caesar (Gen 1:27). Even more important than civil responsibilities is the obligation everyone, including Caesar, has to give himself back to God. In the end, Jesus is able to rise above the controversy over taxation by stressing this higher duty incumbent upon all (CCC 450). [See note on Mt 22:19.](#) [Back to text.](#)

12:18 Sadducees: Priestly aristocrats who managed the affairs of the Jerusalem Temple. Their denial of a future **resurrection** was unacceptable to most Jews of the day (Acts 23:8; CCC 992-93). Here they consider a future resurrection only hypothetically; they are really out to prove there is no such thing. See topical essay: *Who Are the Sadducees?* [Back to text.](#)



12:19 if a man's brother dies: The Sadducees draw attention to the levirate law of Deut 25:5-6. • This law required a man to marry his brother's widow if the brother died childless (Gen 38:6-8). The man would thus

produce children for his deceased brother and carry on his family name in Israel. The Sadducees considered this legislation inconsistent with a belief in bodily resurrection, since the widow's numerous marriages would only lead to confusion if all of her husbands were raised. [Back to text.](#)

12:25 when they rise: At the general resurrection the righteous will become **like angels** in glory and immortality; they will not, however, live as disembodied spirits. Marriage will no longer exist in this state since its purposes are fulfilled during earthly life (CCC 1619). [See note on Mt 22:30.](#) [Back to text.](#)



12:26 I am the God: Since the Sadducees restricted biblical authority to the Pentateuch, Jesus deliberately draws from the Pentateuch to demonstrate the resurrection (Ex 3:6). • The passage narrates how Yahweh revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush as the God of the deceased patriarchs: **Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.** Their intimacy with God even after death proves the immortality of their souls (Wis 3:1) and so hints at the future resurrection of their bodies (Is 26:19). [See note on Mk 12:18.](#) [Back to text.](#)



12:29-31 Jesus summarizes the teaching of the entire Old Covenant in two commandments. • The greatest is the Shema (Hebrew for "hear!"), taken from Deut 6:4-5. The Israelites considered this passage a summary or creed of their faith in the one God of the universe. The second is taken from Lev 19:18. Together these injunctions to love God and one's neighbor underlie all 613 precepts of the Mosaic Law and especially the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:2-17; Deut 5:6-21). The distillation of Yahweh's revealed Law into two commandments was prefigured by the two stone tablets of the Decalogue (Ex 34:1). [Back to text.](#)



12:33 burnt offerings and sacrifices: The scribe recalls what is often restated in the Scriptures: the moral laws of God are superior to the sacrificial laws of the Temple (1 Sam 15:22; Jud 16:16; Ps 40:6-8; Hos 6:6; Mic 6:6-8). It is implied that drawing close to the New Covenant kingdom means backing away from the Old Covenant Temple (12:34). • The sacrificial system as managed by the Levitical priesthood was not part of

the Mosaic covenant in Ex 19-24 but was imposed upon the Israelites after they worshipped the golden calf in Ex 32. Originally, the Mosaic covenant was to consist only of the Ten Commandments (Deut 5:22; Jer 7:22) and a single sacrificial ceremony where Israelites would renounce idolatry once and for all by slaughtering the very animals they had begun to worship in Egypt (Ex 24:3-8; Ezek 20:7-8). However, the golden calf episode in Ex 32 proved that the Israelites were still attached to their idols and needed a permanent means to eradicate idolatry from the nation. Detailed legislation for priesthood and sacrifice was thus added to Mosaic covenant as Yahweh's (temporary) solution to this predicament (Ex 25-31, 35-40; Lev 1-27). [Back to text.](#)

Who Are the Sadducees?

THE Sadducees make brief but memorable appearances in the NT. They are most often cast in a negative light as the adversaries of Jesus and the early Christians. Sadducees seem to have been Jewish conservatives not prone to embrace new ideas or movements. This religious instinct—to cling to the "old ways"—set them at odds with Jesus and the radical claims of the gospel.

Although historical details about the Sadducees in the NT period are fragmentary, the combination of biblical and extrabiblical evidence brings a reasonably focused picture into view. The Sadducees emerged as a religious and political interest group around the second century B.C. Their name is derived from the high priest Zadok, who served under King Solomon (1 Kings 2:35) and whose descendants were granted exclusive rights to minister in Jerusalem (Ezek 40:46). As part of Jewish society's upper class, it is likely that many Sadducees were wealthy and held important positions in the Holy City. Most notably, the Sadducees were closely associated with the Temple and the priesthood (Acts 4:1; 5:17). While not all Sadducees were Levitical priests, many priests aligned themselves with the Sadducees and their agenda for Jewish life. The Sadducees thus held many "official" leadership positions in Old Covenant Judaism and were in charge of maintaining national relations between Israel and Rome. This high profile earned them the support of wealthier citizens, while many lower-class Jews held them in suspicion and even contempt. The masses probably regarded the Sadducees as corrupt.

Controversy surrounding the Sadducees stems from several factors. First, they were notoriously opposed to the Pharisees, a movement held in honor by many Jews. Unlike the Pharisees, the Sadducees sought to maintain the status quo. Their outlook on Jewish life was likely one of tolerance: Live peaceably with the governing Romans, and Judaism will successfully weather the storm of foreign rule. This collided with the Pharisees' perspective that Israel had to separate and purify itself of the Gentiles, even if this meant driving the Romans out. Second, the Sadducees stand out on the Jewish landscape for their emphatic doctrinal denials. Unlike the majority of first-century Jews, the Sadducees expressly denied: (1) an

afterlife with rewards and punishments for the righteous and wicked, (2) the immortality of the soul, (3) the resurrection of the body, and (4) the existence of angels or spirits (Acts 23:6-8). At a more fundamental level, the Sadducees denied full authority to any Scripture except the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible (Gen-Deut). As a consequence, they opposed every doctrine not explicitly taught within the Pentateuch. This restrictive view of the biblical canon also provided them with one more reason to oppose the Pharisees: the Sadducees repudiated the oral traditions that the Pharisees developed to supplement the books of Moses (Mk 7:1-5).

In the Gospels, Jesus squares off against the Sadducees only once (Mt 22:23-33; Mk 12:18-27; Lk 20:27-38). While Jesus is teaching in the Temple, the Sadducees approach him with a theological puzzle, convinced that the doctrine of the general resurrection is incompatible with the teaching of the Pentateuch (Deut 25:5). If a woman has several husbands during her life, they reason, surely this will cause great marital confusion in the next life. If all of her husbands are raised, whose wife will she be (Mk 12:20-23)? Jesus responds with ingenuity and tact, affirming nearly everything the Sadducees expressly denied. He asserts the existence of *angels* and deliberately cites the Pentateuch (Ex 3:6) to demonstrate that *souls live beyond death* and that their bodies will one day be *raised* (Mk 12:27). «[Back to Mark 12:1.](#)



12:36 by the Holy Spirit: Jesus affirms the divine inspiration of Scripture (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20-21). Although **David** wrote the Psalm, the Holy Spirit authored divine words of prophecy through him. **declared:** Scripture itself exposes the inadequate understanding of Israel's leaders. Although the scribes were rightly aware that the Messiah would be a royal descendant of David (12:35; 2 Sam 7:12-14), they overlooked the Messiah's lordship over David in Ps 110. This leaves them with a dangling question: How can David's son and successor also be David's superior? • In Ps 110, David foresaw the greatness of the Messiah by calling him **Lord**, a title associated with Israel's kings (1 Sam 24:6; 26:19; 1 Kings 1:37). Accordingly, David's successor becomes his superior once the Davidic heir is crowned and enthroned by the Lord. Jesus stakes out this royal claim for himself (14:62; 16:19). • Theological reflection yields another solution to this puzzle. Jesus is the son of David in his humanity, and thus David's successor (Lk 1:32; Rom 1:3), while he is also the divine Son of God, and thus David's superior Lord (CCC 202, 668). [Back to text.](#)

12:42 copper coins: The smallest unit of currency in circulation. **a penny:** Worth one sixty-fourth a laborer's daily wage. [Back to text.](#)

12:44 out of her poverty: Jesus points to a paradox: the **poor widow** (12:42) gave more to the Temple treasury than the **rich people** (12:41), despite her minuscule donation. Unlike them, she offered to God her whole livelihood with pure intentions and a generous spirit (2 Cor 9:7). [Back to text.](#)

13:1-37 Commonly called the Olivet Discourse or "Little Apocalypse", in which Jesus teaches his disciples at length about the imminent destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (A.D. 70). This coming catastrophe will mark the expiration of the Old Covenant and bring God's vengeance on those who have rejected Jesus as the Messiah. The Temple's demise is also a prophetic sign of the end of the world (CCC 585-86). See essay: [End of the World?](#) at Mt 24. [Back to text.](#)

13:1 what wonderful stones: Herod the Great began rebuilding the Jerusalem Temple about 20 B.C., and the project was still in progress during Jesus' ministry (Jn 2:20). Several of its marble stones measured almost 40 feet in length, some weighing nearly 100 tons. Its massive platform spanned more than 170,000 square yards, and the wall facing the Mount of Olives to

the east towered more than 300 feet in height. To the senses, the Temple was an impregnable fortress that appeared indestructible by every earthly standard. [Back to text.](#)



13:2 one stone upon another: Jesus' words were fulfilled in A.D. 70, when Roman legions destroyed Jerusalem and brought the Old Covenant to a dramatic and violent end (Lk 19:41-44). More than one million Jews perished in the catastrophe. • Jesus forecasts the Temple's doom, much as the OT prophets predicted the devastation of Solomon's Temple by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. (Jer 26:6; Mic 3:12). [Back to text.](#)

13:3 Mount of Olives: See note on 11:1. **opposite the temple:** Jesus symbolizes his opposition to the Temple's corruption by standing over against it. Once sacred and revered, it had now become a "den of robbers" (11:17). [Back to text.](#)

13:6 Many will come: According to Acts 5:35-39 and extrabiblical sources, several self-proclaimed Messiahs appeared in Israel in the first and second centuries A.D. [Back to text.](#)

13:10 to all nations: The missionaries of the early Church must spread the good news throughout the Roman Empire and eventually the world. Much of the Roman world was evangelized by the middle of the first century, just before the onset of Jerusalem's judgment in A.D. 70 (Rom 1:8; Col 1:6, 23; 1 Thess 1:8). [Back to text.](#)



13:12 brother . . . father . . . children: The demands of Christian discipleship outweigh even the sacred duties of family unity and loyalty (Lk 14:26). • The scenes of family strife recall Mic 7:6, where the prophet condemns Jerusalem for her rampant injustices (Mic 6:9-7:10). Although families were suffering internal division (Ezek 22:7), Micah assures Israel that the faithful will be vindicated by God. Jesus evokes this oracle to paint a similar portrait of Jerusalem in his own day: disciples may suffer persecution, but they will be vindicated and delivered in **the end** (13:13). [Back to text.](#)



13:14 the desolating sacrilege: A recurrent expression in Dan 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11. • The desolating sacrilege in Daniel refers to the Temple's

desecration in 167 B.C. by the villainous Antiochus Epiphanes IV. He sacked the Jerusalem Temple and erected within it an idol of the Greek god Zeus (1 Mac 1:31, 54). According to Jesus, this tragic event prefigures the final profanation of Jerusalem's Temple by the pagan armies of Rome (Lk 21:20). **those . . . in Judea flee:** Jesus forewarns Christians (13:23) to evacuate Jerusalem when its demise draws near (13:29) and to resist every temptation to defend the city. [See note on Mt 24:16.](#) [Back to text.](#)

13:19 such tribulation: Great calamities will precede the Old Covenant's termination (Dan 12:1). [Back to text.](#)



13:24-25 Jesus speaks of cosmic disturbances in the manner of the prophets. • These are not literal predictions of heavenly convulsions or an atmospheric meltdown, but they evoke OT oracles of judgment that foretell the downfall of pagan kingdoms (Is 13:9-10; 34:4; Ezek 32:7-8; Joel 2:10, 31; Amos 8:9). Visions of heavenly chaos serve to underscore the magnitude of God's dreadful judgment, i.e., it will be a "world-shaking" event. Jesus turns the language of these prophecies toward Jerusalem to condemn its pagan ways and forecast its coming doom. [Back to text.](#)



13:26 the Son of man: Jesus identifies himself with the royal figure of Dan 7:13. • Drawing from the details of its original context, Jesus implies that he will be enthroned with the Father and receive a worldwide "kingdom" and "everlasting dominion" (Dan 7:14; cf. Mt 28:18). The oracle foretells his heavenly Ascension (16:19) as well as his Second Coming in glory (Acts 1:11; CCC 673). See essay: [Jesus the Son of Man](#) at Lk 17. [Back to text.](#)

13:27 the angels: Or, "the messengers". This may denote the apostles and their missionary work (cf. Mk 16:15). [See note on Mt 24:31.](#) [Back to text.](#)

13:30 this generation: These words of Jesus were fulfilled with Jerusalem's demise in A.D. 70, within the lifetime of his contemporaries (Mt 10:23; 16:28). His words are thus more reliable than the stable universe itself (13:31). [See note on Mt 24:35.](#) [Back to text.](#)

13:32 nor the Son: Jesus describes the general signs preceding Jerusalem's destruction (13:6-23), but does not disclose the exact **day** or

hour of judgment appointed by the Father (CCC 672-74). [See note on Mt 24:36.](#) [Back to text.](#)



13:34 It is like: A short parable to promote vigilance. • *Allegorically* (St. Gregory the Great, *Hom. in Evan.* 9): the parable outlines the responsibilities of the Church before the Second Coming. The man signifies the human nature that Christ assumed in the Incarnation and took into the far country of heaven at his Ascension. Christ then imparts the Holy Spirit to his servants, enabling them to fulfill their duties in his absence. The pastors of the Church are the doorkeepers, guarding against the intrusion of the devil until Christ's glorious return. [Back to text.](#)

13:35 Watch therefore: The command to be vigilant operates on several levels. **(1)** The earliest Christians, still worshipping in the Jerusalem Temple (Lk 24:52), must be prepared to flee the city before its downfall (13:14-16). **(2)** Everyone must be ready for his personal judgment by God (2 Cor 5:10). **(3)** The Church must persevere in holiness while awaiting Jesus' Second Coming at the end of time (Acts 1:11; 1 Thess 1:10). The Gospels elsewhere focus on similar themes of watchfulness and accountability (14:32-42; Mt 24:45-51; 25:1-13; Lk 19:11-27; CCC 2612, 2849). **evening . . . midnight . . . cockcrow . . . morning:** Names for the four "watches" of the night between 6 P.M. and 6 A.M. [See note on Mk 6:48.](#) [Back to text.](#)

14:1 the Passover: The yearly Jewish feast celebrating Israel's deliverance from Egyptian slavery (Ex 12). Paschal lambs (14:12) were sacrificed in the Temple courts the afternoon before the feast. At sundown families or small groups would gather to eat a Seder meal of lamb, unleavened bread, wine, and herbs. Combined with the festival of **Unleavened Bread**, the liturgical celebrations ran seven days, from the 15th of the month (Mar/ Apr) until the 21st of the month (Lev 23:4-8; Num 9:1-14). Passover was one of three pilgrim feasts that required Jewish men to travel to Jerusalem (Deut 16:16). [Back to text.](#)

14:2 the people: Jerusalem's normal population of approximately 50,000 swelled to several hundred thousand with the influx of Passover pilgrims. This made the Jerusalem leaders think twice about arresting a popular figure like Jesus, since provoking such unmanageable numbers could easily

incite a violent reaction from the Jews and ultimately bring Rome's reprisal upon the city. [Back to text.](#)

14:3 Bethany: [See note on Mk 11:1.](#) **a woman came:** According to Jn 12:3, she was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus (Jn 11:1-2). **pure nard:** An aromatic perfume probably imported from India. It is mentioned also in the OT (Song 1:12; 4:13-14). [Back to text.](#)

14:5 three hundred denarii: Equivalent to 300 days' wages. [See note on Mk 6:37.](#) [Back to text.](#)

14:7 you always have the poor: Jesus is neither insensitive nor unsympathetic toward the poor. His ministry is marked, rather, by a deep concern for them (Mt 19:21; Lk 4:18; 14:7-14). His words are only meant to underscore the inestimable worth of his presence among the disciples. [Back to text.](#)

14:8 beforehand for burying: It was customary to withhold burial ointments from the bodies of executed criminals. The woman's gesture remedies this deficiency in anticipation of Jesus' impending death as a falsely accused enemy of Rome. [See note on Mt 26:12.](#) [Back to text.](#)

14:11 give him money: Judas was given "thirty pieces of silver" (Mt 26:15). His betrayal of Jesus for personal profit contrasts sharply with the woman's generous gift in the preceding episode (14:3-9). Greed blinded Judas from seeing Jesus' true identity and worth. [Back to text.](#)

14:13 a man . . . jar of water: An unusual sight in the context of Jewish culture, since women customarily assumed the task of drawing and carrying water (Gen 24:11; Ex 2:16; Jn 4:7). [Back to text.](#)



14:18 one who is eating with me: According to Matthew and John, Jesus discreetly identifies Judas Iscariot as the traitor (Mt 26:25; Jn 13:26).
• His words allude to Ps 41:9, which foretells the Messiah's betrayal by a close and trusted friend (Jn 13:18). [Back to text.](#)



14:22 took . . . blessed . . . broke . . . gave: Mark uses this same language to recount Jesus' multiplication of the loaves (6:41). [See note on Mk 6:35-44.](#) **this is my body:** Jesus identifies the unleavened bread of the Passover feast with his own flesh (Jn 6:51). This gift of his humanity in the sacrament is inseparable from his self-offering on the Cross (14:24; Heb 10:10), since together they constitute a single sacrifice in which Jesus is

both the priest and sacrificial victim of the New Covenant (CCC 1363-65).
• *Allegorically* (St. Bede, *In Marcum*): Jesus' actions signify the mystery of his Passion. In breaking the bread, Christ pre-enacts the breaking of his body on the Cross. Likewise as Jesus gives himself *voluntarily* in the Last Supper, so his Crucifixion will be a death he *freely* accepts, not the end result of hostile forces beyond his control. [See note on Mt 26:26-29.](#) [Back to text.](#)



14:24 blood of the covenant: An allusion to Ex 24:8. • As the Old Covenant between Yahweh and Israel was sealed through sacrificial blood at Mt. Sinai, the New Covenant between Christ and the Church is sealed through his own blood **poured out** in the upper room on Mt. Zion. This new and perfect sacrifice enables us to enter a covenant of communion with the Father through the forgiveness of our sins (Jer 31:31-34; Rom 5:9; Heb 9:22). The blood of Jesus is forever a sacrament of his divine life for those who receive him in the Eucharist (Jn 6:53; CCC 610, 1392-93). [Back to text.](#)

14:26 sung a hymn: Probably Ps 115-118. This was the completion of the Hallel Psalms (113-118) that were sung during the course of the Passover liturgy. [Back to text.](#)



14:27 strike the shepherd: A reference to Zech 13:7. • Zechariah foresaw the messianic shepherd of Israel struck down, leaving his sheep temporarily without leadership. The prophet sees this as a deliberately planned scenario to identify and purify the faithful of the Lord's flock (Zech 13:8-9). Jesus' arrest sets this time of trial in motion, causing his disciples to scatter in fear (14:49-50). [Back to text.](#)

14:30 before the cock crows: This may refer to the "cockcrow", or third watch of the night, between 12 and 3 A.M. (13:35). Others interpret it more generally to mean "before morning". [See note on Mk 6:48.](#) **you will deny me:** Mark often notes Jesus' foreknowledge of significant events (2:20; 8:31; 10:33-34; 11:1-2; 13:6-9; 14:9). [Back to text.](#)

14:32 Gethsemane: A Hebrew name meaning "oil press". It is a garden area facing Jerusalem on the western slope of the Mount of Olives (Jn 18:1). [Back to text.](#)



14:36 Abba: An Aramaic word meaning "Father". Jesus uses it to address God the Father and underscore their intimate relationship (Mt 11:27). Paul preserves this title for God in Rom 8:15 and Gal 4:6. • The divine Fatherhood of God is a familiar teaching from the OT, where Yahweh is called the Father of Israel (Deut 32:6; Ps 103:13; Jer 31:9) and the Father of David and his royal successors (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 89:26-27). **remove this chalice:** Jesus fears his impending Passion and Crucifixion (Heb 5:7). See notes on Mt 26:39 and Mk 10:38. **what you will:** Jesus fully embraced the plan of salvation and so surrendered his human will perfectly and continuously to the Father's divine will (Jn 6:38; 8:29; Phil 2:8). [Back to text.](#)

14:38 into temptation: Prayer and watchfulness are necessary to withstand the attacks of Satan (Col 4:2; 1 Pet 5:8-10). Jesus here refers to man's inner struggle, where the **flesh**, wounded by sin, is constantly at war with the **spirit** (Rom 8:12-14; Gal 5:19-24). The graces we need to overcome our weaknesses must be sought through persistent prayer (1 Thess 5:17; Heb 4:16). Although the power of the Holy Spirit enables us to live victoriously, the struggle is not minimized or made easy. God's ready assistance during temptation is also the subject of the final petition of the Lord's Prayer (Mt 6:13; Lk 11:4; CCC 2849). [Back to text.](#)

14:45 he kissed him: Normally a gesture of affection in the Bible (Lk 7:45; Rom 16:16; 1 Pet 5:14). Judas Iscariot contorts this kiss into one of betrayal (Prov 27:6). [Back to text.](#)

14:47 Mark leaves both the bearer of the **sword** and the injured **slave** unidentified. It is John who specifies that "Peter" reacted violently with the weapon and identifies the victim as "Malchus" (Jn 18:10). Luke further notes that Jesus healed the man's ear (Lk 22:51). [Back to text.](#)

14:51 a young man: An unnamed witness that many scholars identify as Mark. If this is the case, the evangelist chose to remain anonymous in light of the episode's embarrassing details. Ultimately, how we identify this individual has little bearing on the tradition that Mark wrote the second Gospel as a summary of Peter's preaching, since he could have witnessed the arrest of Jesus without being an eyewitness to his three-year ministry. [Back to text.](#)

14:53 the high priest: Caiaphas, who officiated in Jerusalem from A.D. 18 to 36. While in office, he also presided over the Jewish court, the Sanhedrin. [See note on Mk 14:55.](#) [Back to text.](#)

14:55 the whole council: The Sanhedrin, the supreme court of the Jews, which convened in Jerusalem (15:1; Acts 5:27; 23:1). Its origin is traced to the second century B.C., and its primary role was to enforce Jewish law and custom. Fully assembled, the Sanhedrin probably consisted of 71 members: **(1)** the reigning "high priest", who headed the court, **(2)** the "elders" of Jerusalem's leading families, **(3)** "chief priests" who had held the office of high priest, and **(4)** "scribes", or professional lawyers who were experts in the Law of Moses. Several members were also aligned with the Pharisees or Sadducees (Acts 23:6-10). Under Roman rule, the Sanhedrin retained considerable freedom to regulate the civil and religious affairs of Jewish life. Only the right to administer capital punishment was denied them (Jn 18:31). [Back to text.](#)

14:58 destroy this temple: False witnesses misconstrue the cryptic statements recorded in Jn 2:19 and the Olivet Discourse (Mt 24:2; Mk 13:2; Lk 21:6). In the former passage Jesus foretold his Resurrection in terms of rebuilding his crucified body, and in the latter context he was predicting the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple. Only shades of his intended meaning filter through this accusation, since Jesus never claimed he would reconstruct the Jerusalem sanctuary after its downfall (13:2). The scandal of the false indictment is twofold: **(1)** Jesus claims he will erect a new sanctuary in the course of a weekend when the Jerusalem Temple has been at that time 46 years in the making (Jn 2:20), and **(2)** he claims he will build it without hands, while an army of manual laborers are still at work erecting the existing Temple. See essay: [Not Made with Hands](#) at 2 Cor 5. [Back to text.](#)



14:62 I am: Jesus unambiguously accepts the charge that he is the Son of God and the Messiah of Israel. See word study: [Christ, the Son of man](#): Jesus expects the Father will vindicate him soon after he is condemned. His words evoke the majestic imagery of Ps 110:1 and Dan 7:13. • The specific contexts of these OT passages are linked together by common images: the Messiah of Ps 110 and the Son of Man in Dan 7 both stand before God in a royal throne room (Ps 110:1; Dan 7:9), and both

triumph over their enemies (Ps 110:2, 5-7; Dan 7:23-27). Merging the two texts into a single self-portrait, Jesus claims that God himself will overturn the death sentence of the Sanhedrin by raising him from the dead and enthroning him in glory (CCC 664). [See note on Mt 26:64](#) and essay: [Jesus, the Son of Man](#) at Lk 17. [Back to text.](#)



14:63 tore his clothes: The Bible often associates this gesture with overwhelming sorrow or distress (Gen 37:29; 2 Kings 19:1; Ezra 9:3). Here the **high priest** disregards the Mosaic Law, which forbids priests to tear their vestments (Lev 10:6; 21:10). • *Mystically* (St. Bede, *In Marcum*): the drama of Caiaphas tearing his vestments signifies the termination of the Old Covenant priesthood. In contrast, the seamless vestment of Jesus is not torn but remains intact (Jn 19:23-24), signifying that the new priesthood of Christ will endure forever (Heb 7:23-24). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Christ ([Mk 14:61](#))

Christos (Gk.): "the Anointed One". It translates the Hebrew word for "Messiah". Since kings (2 Sam 2:4; 1 Kings 1:34), prophets (Ps 105:15), and priests (Ex 29:7; Lev 8:12) were anointed with oil for their respective ministries, it was expected that the Messiah would take all these ministries upon himself as a covenant representative anointed by the Spirit (Is 61:1). Most linked the Messiah with an ideal king from the line of David (Mk 12:35). He would be born in David's hometown of Bethlehem (Mic 5:2), rule over the restored Davidic kingdom (Is 9:7; Mk 11:10), and enjoy a unique relationship with God as his son (2 Sam 7:14). The OT also hinted that the Messiah would suffer the scorn and rejection of his enemies (Ps 2:2; 89:38-51; Dan 9:26). All of this is fulfilled in Jesus. Anointed by the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38), he is the Son of God (Mk 1:1; Jn 1:49) and the Son of David (Mt 1:1; Lk 1:32-33), hailed by Christians as the Messiah (Jn 1:41).

14:64 blasphemy: The Sanhedrin charges Jesus with the capital crime of Lev 24:16. They register his claim to a heavenly enthronement as an insult to God's name. In their eyes, he has no credentials to be Israel's Messiah and king, much less one who will rule the universe in the presence of God (15:32; Jn 10:36). [Back to text.](#)

14:72 the cock crowed: Possibly a bugle call that signaled the end of the third watch (3 A.M.) of the night (13:35). [See note on Mk 6:48.](#) **Peter remembered:** He presumably recalled both the prophecy of Jesus (14:30) and his own rash overconfidence (14:31). [Back to text.](#)

15:2 Pilate: Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator of Judea (A.D. 26-36). He was stationed in Jerusalem for the Passover feast. [See note on Mt 27:2.](#) **King of the Jews?:** The Jewish leaders give Jesus a title with obvious political overtones, fully aware that Roman law punishes the crime of sedition by death (Lk 23:2; Jn 19:12). The accusation dominates the subsequent narrative (15:9, 12, 18, 26). [Back to text.](#)

15:11 Barabbas: An Aramaic name that literally means "son of the father". Aramaic-speaking Christians surely detected the tragic irony: the guilty Barabbas is released in place of Jesus, the truly innocent Son of the Father (1:1, 11; 3:11; 9:7; 15:39). [Back to text.](#)

15:15 to satisfy the crowd: Pilate remained unconvinced of Jesus' guilt throughout the trial (15:14; Lk 23:4; Jn 19:4). Nevertheless, he lacked the integrity to release Jesus and crumbled instead beneath the pressure of the Jerusalem mob. As the Roman magistrate, Pilate alone had the authority to execute Jesus, since the Jewish leaders were powerless to enforce the penalty of capital punishment without him (Jn 18:31; 19:10; CCC 596-97). [Back to text.](#)

15:16 the praetorium: Pilate's official residence in Jerusalem, built by Herod the Great. **the whole battalion:** A military cohort of up to 600 men. [Back to text.](#)

15:17-19 The soldier's mockery of Jesus is surrounded with paradox and irony. They remain unaware in their ridicule that Jesus is truly a king (Jn 18:36). Adorning him with a **purple cloak** and a **crown** and kneeling in false **homage**, the soldiers unwittingly bear witness to the royal identity of Jesus (Lk 1:32-33; Rev 19:16). [Back to text.](#)

15:21 they compelled: Roman garrisons in NT Palestine claimed the right to recruit Jews for temporary service (see Mt 5:41). Mark designates **Simon of Cyrene** as the individual forced to assist Jesus. His son **Rufus**

may have been a well-known member of the early Roman Church (Rom 16:13). [Back to text.](#)

15:22 Golgotha: The Aramaic word for **skull**. The popular term "Calvary" is derived from the Latin Vulgate translation (Lat. *Calvariae*). Located outside Jerusalem's walls (Jn 19:20), Golgotha may have acquired its name as a common site for criminal executions. [Back to text.](#)

15:23 wine . . . with myrrh: A narcotic painkiller. Jesus refuses it, choosing instead to bear the full weight of suffering for man's sin (10:45; 1 Pet 2:24). [Back to text.](#)



15:24 they crucified him: A form of Roman execution adopted from earlier Persian practice. Crucifixion was torturous, degrading, and reserved for the most heinous criminals—usually insurrectionists. The victims' feet were nailed to an upright stake and their wrists to a wooden crossbeam (Ps 22:16). Death came slowly from a combination of blood loss and asphyxiation, a process that could be hastened by breaking the criminal's legs (Jn 19:33). Corpses were often left hanging for days as a public deterrent against criminal activity and a powerful symbol of Rome's domination of Palestine. • Christian tradition sees in Jesus' physical death on the tree (Acts 10:39) the antithesis of Adam's spiritual death at the tree of good and evil (Gen 3:6, 17-19). Whereas Adam's sin brought death to the entire human family, Jesus' death rescues man from sin and gives him new life in the family of God (Rom 5:12-19). **divided his garments:** The collection of spoil by the execution squad recalls the messianic prophecy of Ps 22:18. This text is explicitly quoted in Jn 19:24. [See note on Mk 15:34.](#) [Back to text.](#)

15:25 the third hour: About 9 A.M. on Friday morning of Passion Week (15:42). [See note on Mt 20:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)



15:29 derided him: Literally, "they were blaspheming him". • By slandering and shaking their heads at Jesus, the angry crowd unwittingly fulfills messianic prophecy from Ps 22:7. [Back to text.](#)



15:33 sixth hour . . . ninth hour: i.e., from noon until 3 P.M. Luke's account may suggest that the **darkness** was caused by an extended solar

eclipse (Lk 23:45). • The OT associates such dreadful darkness with divine judgment on sin (Ex 10:21-23; Is 13:10-11; Amos 8:9). [See note on Mt 27:45.](#) [Back to text.](#)



15:34 Elo-i, Elo-i: Jesus quotes the opening line of Ps 22 in Aramaic (CCC 603, 2605). • Psalm 22 forecasts both the Messiah's suffering and his eventual deliverance. The full context of Ps 22, in light of its hopeful outcome, rules out the possibility that Jesus succumbed to despair (Lk 23:46). [See note on Mt 27:46.](#) [Back to text.](#)

15:38 the curtain: Two veils hung in the Jerusalem Temple to symbolize God's inaccessibility to sinners (Heb 9:8). One was visible, as it separated the outer courts from the sanctuary proper, and the other was invisible to all but the priests, as it hung inside the sanctuary in front of its most sacred chamber, the Holy of Holies (Ex 26:31-34; Heb 9:3, 7). Although the evangelist does not specify which of the two veils was torn, the lesson to be learned is clear: access to the Father is now open through Jesus, who as high priest has entered on our behalf (Eph 2:18; Heb 10:19-22). Moreover, as the curtain ripped **from top to bottom**, the barrier between the face of God and his people was removed, and the termination of the Old Covenant was prophetically announced. **was torn:** Mark uses the same Greek expression at 1:10 to describe God "tearing" the heavens at the Baptism of Jesus. If a connection is being made between these two events, as seems likely, it may have been the outer veil draped in front the sanctuary that was rent in two, since history testifies that it was embroidered with images of the heavens and the cosmos (Josephus, *Jewish War* 5, 212-14). [Back to text.](#)

15:39 centurion: A Roman commander of 100 soldiers. **Son of God!:** A confession of faith that stands in contrast to the taunting cries of the mob (15:14, 18, 29-30, 31, 32, 36). It marks a high point in Mark's Gospel, as it crowns the theme of Jesus' divine Sonship developed throughout (1:1, 11; 3:11; 9:7; CCC 444). It likewise adds more irony to Mark's narrative: a non-Jewish soldier was the only one to profess faith in the "King of the Jews" at the Cross (15:26). Similar faith is exhibited by a Gentile centurion in Mt 8:5-13 and Lk 7:1-10. [Back to text.](#)

15:43 Joseph of Arimathea: A wealthy member of the Jewish Sanhedrin. According to Luke, he withheld his consent from the court's condemnation of Jesus (Lk 23:51). His courage as a "disciple of Jesus" (Jn

19:38) helped him to arrange the burial (Mt 27:57-60) and so risk his reputation as a respected leader in Israel. [See note on Mk 14:55.](#) [Back to text.](#)

15:46 in a tomb: Located in a garden near Jerusalem (Jn 19:41-42). The site had to be close by, since the Sabbath rest began at sunset and all labor would have to cease by then (15:42). [See note on Mk 1:21.](#) [Back to text.](#)

16:1-20 Easter morning marks the day of Christ's victory over death and the devil. Jesus himself foresaw this triumphant outcome of his Passion (8:31; 9:31; 10:34; 14:28). [Back to text.](#)

16:1 the sabbath was past: It was after 6 P.M. on Holy Saturday. [See note on Mk 1:21.](#) [Back to text.](#)

16:2 first day of the week: Sunday morning. Christians commemorate this weekly as the "Lord's day" (Rev 1:10). It is a day set apart for worship, rest, and the celebration of the Eucharist as an assembled Church (Acts 20:7; CCC 2174-77). [Back to text.](#)

16:5 a young man: Matthew calls him an "angel of the Lord" (Mt 28:2). [Back to text.](#)

16:6 He has risen: The Resurrection of Jesus is the greatest miracle of history. The NT describes it as a glorious accomplishment of the Trinity: the Father (Rom 6:4), Son (Jn 10:17-18), and Holy Spirit (Rom 1:4) were together active in bringing about Christ's Resurrection, glorification, and heavenly Ascension (CCC 648-50). [Back to text.](#)

16:7 Peter: Simon is singled out as the leader of the apostolic band and the head of the New Covenant Church (Mt 16:17-19; CCC 642). The summons to meet Jesus indicates that Peter's cowardice has been forgiven (Lk 22:31-32). In John's Gospel, Peter three times affirms his love for Jesus as personal restitution for his threefold denial (Jn 21:15-17). [Back to text.](#)

16:9-20 Ancient manuscripts of Mark's Gospel differ in their conclusions after 16:8. Two important fourth-century manuscripts simply end at 16:8. Other versions of Mark include a "short ending" of two sentences after 16:8. The majority of Marcan manuscripts, however, include this "longer ending" (16:9-20). According to the Council of Trent, the canon of Scripture corresponds to everything included in the Latin Vulgate edition (Sess. 4, Dec. 1). This official translation includes 16:9-20 as part of the inspired Gospel. [Back to text.](#)

16:14 the Eleven: Mark makes no mention of Judas Iscariot's suicide (Mt 27:3-5) but implies his elimination from the ranks of the Twelve (3:14;

14:10, 43). [Back to text.](#)

16:15-16 Mark's account of the Great Commission stresses that the apostles must spread the Christian faith by **(1)** evangelization (**preach**) and **(2)** the administration of the sacraments (**baptized**; CCC 977, 1253, 1257). The apostles' mission to the **whole creation** includes all the nations of the world (Lk 24:47). [See note on Mt 28:19.](#) [Back to text.](#)

16:17-18 The power of the gospel is displayed through the miracles of those who preach it. In the early Church, the apostles drove out **demons** (Acts 16:16-18), spoke in **new tongues** (Acts 2:4-11), sustained the sting of **serpents** unharmed (Acts 28:1-6), and healed infirmities by placing their **hands on the sick** (Acts 3:6-8; 28:8; CCC 434, 670). Although these signs are not ends in themselves, they can be motives of credibility that lead unbelievers to embrace the gospel and likewise lead believers to see the reasonableness of their faith. [Back to text.](#)

16:19 taken up into heaven: Jesus ascended to heaven 40 days after his Resurrection (Acts 1:3). He is now enthroned as King and Judge at the Father's **right hand** (Col 3:1; Heb 12:2; CCC 659, 663). [See note on Mk 14:62.](#)

The Appearances of the Risen Christ

Central to Christian faith is the bodily resurrection of Jesus. By recording the resurrection appearances, the New Testament leaves no doubt about this event.

IN OR NEAR JERUSALEM

To Mary Magdalene

Mk 16:9; Jn 20:11-18

To other women

Mt 28:8-10

To Peter

Lk 24:34

To ten disciples

Lk 24:36-43; Jn 20:19-25

To the Eleven, including Thomas

Mk 16:14; Jn 20:26-29

At his Ascension

Mk 16:19, 20; Lk 24:50-53; Acts 1:4-12

OTHER APPEARANCES

To the disciples on the Emmaus road

Mk 16:12, 13; Lk 24:13-35

In Galilee

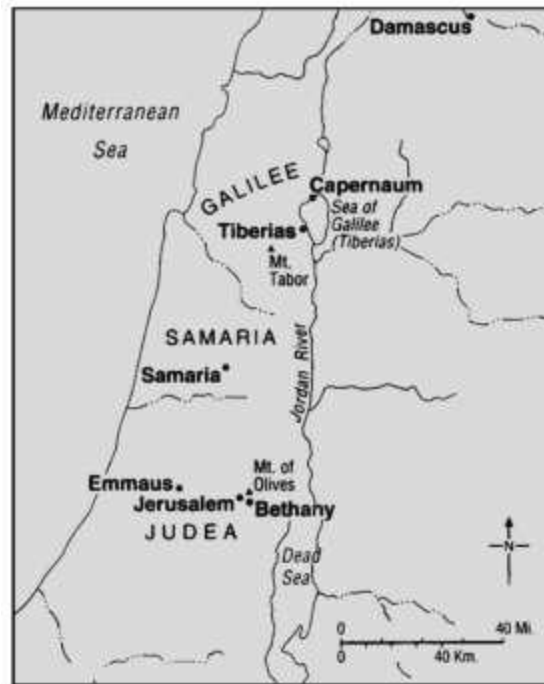
Mt 28:16-20; Jn 21:1-24

To 500 people

1 Cor 15:6

To James and the other apostles
1 Cor 15:7

To Paul on the road to Damascus
Acts 9:1-6; 22:1-10; 26:12-18; 1 Cor 15:8



INTRODUCTION TO

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT LUKE

Author Early manuscripts of the third Gospel are titled "According to Luke" (Gk. *Kata Loukan*). This heading serves as a signpost of apostolic tradition, for the earliest Christians unanimously ascribed the work to Luke, a Gentile physician and companion of the Apostle Paul (2 Tim 4:11; Philem 24). Several Church Fathers, such as Irenaeus (A.D. 180), Tertullian (A.D. 200), and Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 200), assert Luke's authorship of the third Gospel, and an anonymous list of NT books, called the Muratorian Fragment (c. A.D. 170), also attaches his name to it. There is thus no reason to doubt Luke's authorship of this Gospel, since the tradition is virtually uncontested in early Christianity.

Luke himself is unique among the writers of the NT. First, he is the only Gentile author to compose a NT book—all others were of Israelite descent. Paul hints at his Gentile identity when he numbers "Luke the beloved physician" among his uncircum-cised companions (Col 4:14). Secondly, Luke is the only evangelist to write a sequel. In addition to his Gospel, he wrote the Acts of the Apostles as the second part of a two-volume work. The Book of Acts picks up where Luke's Gospel narrative ends, showing how the Holy Spirit's work in the life of Jesus now operates in the living community of Christ's mystical body, the Church.

Date Scholars are divided over when the Gospel of Luke was written. Some advocate an early date in the 60s, while others prefer a later date in the 80s. Assuming Lucan authorship, the weight of the evidence tilts in favor of the earlier date. This is due, in part, to the close connection between Luke's Gospel and its sequel, the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1:1). **(1)** The Book of Acts ends abruptly with Paul under house arrest in Rome around A.D. 62, without any hint as to the outcome of his trial or his subsequent activities. **(2)** Although Luke often draws our attention in Acts to Christianity's relationship with imperial Rome, he says nothing about the Roman persecution of Christians in the mid 60s, nor does he mention that Peter and

Paul—the leading characters in Acts— were both martyred at this time. (3) Neither the Gospel nor the Book of Acts informs us of the complete destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman army in A.D. 70. Taken together, Luke's silence on these important matters is a strong indication that both his Gospel and the Book of Acts were written in the early 60s, before any of these events had taken place.

Destination Luke addresses his Gospel to "Theophilus" (1:3), possibly a Roman official who agreed to finance the publication of the work. If this is so, Luke may have intended his Gospel to be circulated and read more widely through the patronage of Theophilus. His larger intended audience probably included Gentile Christians throughout the Mediterranean world, as well as Israelites and Samaritans living among them in the Diaspora. For the sake of Gentile readers, Luke sometimes omits Semitic words, or simply replaces them with their Greek equivalents, to make his story more readable for believers unfamiliar with Aramaic. Yet Luke is also very sophisticated in his use of the OT. Although few direct citations appear in the Gospel, allusions and echoes of the OT abound. This makes it likely, then, that Luke was directing his message not only to the Gentile world, but also to readers long familiar with the Scriptures of Israel.

Structure Luke's Gospel is beautifully written and logically arranged. He has given us an "orderly account" (1:3) of the full scope of Jesus' earthly life, from the announcement of his birth to his heavenly Ascension. The structure of the Gospel is straightforward and generally follows the similar story line of Matthew and Mark. After opening with a classical *Prologue* (1:1-4), Luke begins his story with the *Infancy Narrative* (1:5-2:52) of the birth of Jesus and his forerunner, John the Baptist. These episodes are filled with joy and hope that Jesus will bring all the promises of Scripture to fulfillment. Most of the Gospel's central section is devoted to the public life of Jesus. After various *Preparations* (3:1-4:13) for ministry, Jesus begins to preach and teach throughout his *Galilean Ministry* (4:14— 9:50), and then embarks upon a long *Journey to Jerusalem* (9:51-19:27), the city where God's redemptive plan is destined to unfold. At last Jesus enters the Holy City in a royal procession at the start of the *Passion Week Narratives* (19:28-23:56). It is during this final and fateful week that Jesus is betrayed, arrested, and crucified by the leaders of Jerusalem in collaboration with

Roman authorities. Finally, the Gospel climaxes with the *Resurrection and Ascension* (24:1-53) of Jesus as the victor over sin and death.

Themes Although Luke displays an interest in many facets of Jesus' life and mission, the one theme that towers above all others is the universal message of salvation. For Luke emphasizes throughout his Gospel that Christ has come to gather all people and nations into the family of God. **(1) *Salvation of Israel.*** Luke first anchors his Gospel in the traditions of the OT, portraying Jesus as the Savior of God's Old Covenant people. He shows us, among other things, that Jesus came to initiate the restoration of Israel foretold by the prophets (Is 11:10-12; 49:6; Ezek 39:25-29). He thus depicts Jesus as the royal Messiah who comes in the line and legacy of King David to reunite the scattered tribes of Israel by gathering them into his kingdom (1:33, 68; 22:28-30). This theme stands behind the Gospel's numerous references to "Israel" (1:54, 68, 80; 2:32; 24:21) and the positive light it throws on the descendants of the northern Israelites, the Samaritans (10:33; 17:16; Acts 8:14). **(2) *Salvation of the Nations.*** The forgiveness that Jesus extends to Israel also reaches the Gentiles, making the family of the New Covenant international in scope. Simeon calls Jesus "a light for revelation to the Gentiles" (2:32), while John the Baptist uses the words of Isaiah to announce that "all flesh" can now look to Christ for salvation (3:6). It is especially the closing notes of the Gospel that ring out this theme, where Jesus tells the apostles that forgiveness must be carried from Jerusalem "to all nations" (24:47). **(3) *Salvation of the Lowly.*** Jesus' message for Israel and the nations is also for the outcasts, the poor, and the disreputable among them. Luke preserves a number of powerful statements about God's concern for the lowly and oppressed (1:52-53; 4:18; 6:20-26; 14:7-11). Women in particular are showcased throughout this Gospel, despite their otherwise low social standing in antiquity. Luke's portrayal of the Virgin Mary is simply unparalleled in the NT for its beauty and sensitivity (1:26-56; 2:19, 51). Other women, too, play leading roles in the story: Elizabeth (1:39-45), Anna (2:36-38), the widow of Nain (7:11-17), the sinful woman (7:36-50), Mary Magdalene (8:2), Joanna (8:3), Susanna (8:3), Mary and Martha of Bethany (10:38-42), and the woman with a spirit of infirmity (13:10-17). Women also figure in Jesus' parables of the Lost Coin (15:8-10) and the Unrighteous Judge (18:1-8).

Other memorable features include Luke's unique contributions to the Gospel tradition. For Luke alone recounts the parables of the Good Samaritan (10:25-37) and the Prodigal Son (15:11-32). Luke alone tells us of Gabriel's Annunciation to Mary (1:26-38), Jesus' boyhood experience in the Temple (2:41-51), and the details of his Ascension into glory (24:50-53). And only Luke has preserved some of the Church's most beautiful hymns, such as Mary's *Magnificat* (1:46-55), Zech-ariah's *Benedictus* (1:68-79), Simeon's *Nunc Dimittis* (2:29-35), and the *Gloria* sung by the angels on Christmas night (2:14).

There can be little doubt that Luke has bequeathed to us an artistic and spiritual masterpiece. This is no less true of his second volume, the Acts of the Apostles. Together these writings give clear and convincing witness to the greatness of Jesus Christ as he continues his worldwide mission of salvation through the Church. «

OUTLINE OF THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT LUKE

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2. Infancy Narrative ([1:5-2:52](#))

- A. Birth Announcements of John and Jesus ([1:5-38](#))
- B. The Visitation ([1:39-56](#))
- C. Birth of John the Baptist ([1:57-80](#))
- D. Birth and Presentation of Jesus ([2:1-40](#))
- E. Finding Jesus in the Temple ([2:41-52](#))

3. Preparations for Ministry ([3:1-4:13](#))

- A. Ministry of John the Baptist ([3:1-20](#))
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4. Galilean Ministry ([4:14-9:50](#))

- A. Rejection at Nazareth ([4:14-30](#))
- B. Healing the Sick and the Call of Disciples ([4:31-6:16](#))
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5. Journey to Jerusalem ([9:51-19:27](#))

- A. First to Second Reference to Jerusalem ([9:51-13:21](#))
- B. Second to Third Reference to Jerusalem ([13:22-17:10](#))
- C. Third to Fourth Reference to Jerusalem ([17:11-18:30](#))
- D. Fourth to Fifth Reference to Jerusalem ([18:31-19:27](#))

6. Passion Week Narratives ([19:28-23:56](#))

- A. Jesus as He Enters Jerusalem and Teaches ([19:28-20:47](#))
- B. Jesus' Olivet Discourse ([21:1-38](#))
- C. Celebration of the Passover ([22:1-38](#))
- D. Agony and Arrest of Jesus ([22:39-53](#))

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F. Jesus' Crucifixion and Burial ([23:26-56](#))

7. Resurrection and Ascension ([24:1-53](#))

A. The Empty Tomb ([24:1-12](#))

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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

SAINT LUKE

Chapters

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Essays and Charts

[Mary, Ark of the Covenant](#)

[The Census of Quirinius](#)

[The Parables of Jesus](#)

[Jesus, the Son of Man](#)

[Dedication to Theophilus](#)

1 Inasmuch as [many have undertaken](#) to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us, ²just as they were [delivered to us](#) by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, ³it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely^a for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, [most excellent Theoph'ilus](#), ^{*} ⁴that you may know the truth concerning the things of which you have been [informed](#).

[The Birth of John the Baptist Foretold](#)

5 ^{*} [In the days of](#) Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechari'ah,^b of the division of Abi'jah; and he had a wife of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶And they were both [righteous before God](#), walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly. ⁷But they had no child, because Elizabeth was [barren](#), and both were advanced in years.

8 Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, ⁹according to the custom of the priesthood, it fell to him by lot to enter the [temple of the Lord](#) and burn incense. ¹⁰And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the [hour of incense](#). ¹¹And there appeared to him an [angel of the Lord](#) standing on the right side of the altar

of incense. ¹²And Zechari'ah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. ¹³But the angel said to him, "[Do not be afraid](#), Zechari'ah, for your prayer is heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.

¹⁴And you will have joy and gladness,
and many will rejoice at his birth;

¹⁵for he will be great before the Lord,
and he shall drink no [wine nor strong drink](#),
and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit,
even from his mother's womb.

¹⁶And he will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God,

¹⁷and he will go before him in the [spirit and power of Eli'jah](#),
to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,
and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just,
to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."

¹⁸And Zechari'ah said to the angel, "[How shall I know this](#)? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." ¹⁹And the angel answered him, "I am [Gabriel](#), who stand in the presence of God; and I was sent to speak to you, and to bring you this good news. ²⁰And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things come to pass, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time." ²¹And the people were waiting for Zechari'ah, and they wondered at his delay in the temple. ²²And when he came out, he could not speak to them, and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple; and he made signs to them and remained mute. ²³And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home.

²⁴ After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she hid herself, saying, ²⁵"Thus the Lord has done to me in the days when he looked on me, to take away [my reproach](#) among men."

[The Birth of Jesus Foretold \[Map\]](#)

²⁶ In the [sixth month](#) the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "[Hail](#), full of grace,^{b2} the Lord is with you!"^c ²⁹But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort

of greeting this might be. ³⁰And the angel said to her, * "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end."

³⁴And Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, * since I have no husband?" ³⁵And the angel said to her,

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born^d will be called holy, the Son of God.

³⁶And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷For with God nothing will be impossible." ³⁸And Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Mary Visits Elizabeth; and Mary's Song of Praise

³⁹In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, ⁴⁰and she entered the house of Zechari'ah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the child leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴²and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the child in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be^e a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord." ⁴⁶And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden.

For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed;

⁴⁹for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

⁵⁰And his mercy is on those who fear him
from generation to generation.

⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm,
he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts,

⁵²he has put down the mighty from their thrones,
and exalted those of low degree;

⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent empty away.

⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,

⁵⁵as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his posterity for ever." *

⁵⁶And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her home.

The Birth of John the Baptist

⁵⁷ Now the time came for Elizabeth to be delivered, and she gave birth to a son. ⁵⁸And her neighbors and kinsfolk heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. ⁵⁹And on the eighth day they came [to circumcise](#) the child; and they would have named him Zechari'ah after his father, ⁶⁰but his mother said, "Not so; he shall be called John." ⁶¹And they said to her, "None of your kindred is called by this name." ⁶²And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he would have him called. ⁶³And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, "His name is John." And they all marveled. ⁶⁴And immediately his mouth was opened and [his tongue loosed](#), and he spoke, blessing God. ⁶⁵And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea; ⁶⁶and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him.

Zechariah's Prophecy

⁶⁷ And his father Zechari'ah was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying,

⁶⁸"[Blessed be the Lord](#) God of Israel,

for he has visited and redeemed his people,

⁶⁹and has raised up [a horn](#) of salvation * for us

in the house of his servant David,
70as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,
71that we should be saved from our enemies,
and from the hand of all who hate us;
72to perform the mercy promised to our fathers,
and to [remember his holy covenant](#),
73the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, 74to grant us
that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies,
might serve him without fear,
75in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.
76And you, child, will be called the [prophet of the Most High](#);
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
77to give knowledge of salvation to his people
in the forgiveness of their sins,
78through the tender mercy of our God,
when [the day](#) shall dawn upon^f us from on high
79to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace."
80And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the
wilderness till the day of his manifestation to Israel.

The Birth of Jesus

2 In those days a decree went out from [Caesar Augustus](#) that all the
world should be enrolled. 2This was the first enrollment, when Quirin'ius
was governor of Syria. 3And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city.
4And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea,
to the city of David, which is called [Bethlehem](#), because he was of the
house and lineage of David, 5to be enrolled with Mary his betrothed, who
was with child. 6And while they were there, the time came for her to be
delivered. 7And she gave birth to her [first-born *](#) son and wrapped him in
swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for
them in the inn.

The Shepherds and the Angels

8 And in that region there were [shepherds](#) out in the field, keeping watch
over their flock by night. 9And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and
the [glory of the Lord](#) shone around them, and they were filled with fear.

¹⁰And the angel said to them, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; ¹¹for to you is born this day in the city of David a [Savior, who is Christ the Lord](#). ¹²And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the [heavenly host](#) praising God and saying,

¹⁴"[Glory to God](#) in the highest,

and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!"^g

¹⁵When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷And when they saw it they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But [Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart](#). ²⁰And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

[Jesus Is Circumcised and Named](#)

²¹And at the end of eight days, when he was [circumcised](#), he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

[Jesus Is Presented in the Temple](#)

²²And when the time came for their [purification](#) according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the law of the Lord, "[Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord](#)") ²⁴and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." ²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the [consolation of Israel](#), and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷And inspired by the Spirit^h he came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law, ²⁸he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

²⁹"[Lord, now let your servant depart in peace](#),

according to your word;

³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation

³¹which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to your people Israel."

33 And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him;

³⁴and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother,

"Behold, this child is set for the [fall and rising](#) of many in Israel,
and for a sign that is spoken against

³⁵(and [a sword will pierce](#) through your own soul also),
that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed."

36 And there was [a prophetess](#), Anna, the daughter of Phan'uel, of the tribe of Asher; she was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years from her virginity, ³⁷and as a widow till she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸And coming up at that very hour she gave thanks to God, and spoke of him to all who were looking for the [redemption of Jerusalem](#).

The Return to Nazareth

39 And when they had performed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. ⁴⁰And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

The Boy Jesus in the Temple

41 Now [his parents went to Jerusalem](#) every year at the feast of the [Passover](#). ⁴²And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom; ⁴³and when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, ⁴⁴but supposing him to be in the company they went a day's journey, and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances; ⁴⁵and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking him. ⁴⁶[After three days](#) they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; ⁴⁷and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸And when they saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously." ⁴⁹And he said to them, "How is it that you sought me? [Did you not know](#) that I must

be in my Father's house?" * ⁵⁰And they did not understand the saying which he spoke to them. ⁵¹And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart.

⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature,ⁱ and in favor with God and man.

The Preaching of John the Baptist

³ In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tibe'rius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Iturae'a and Trachoni'tis, and Lysa'nias tetrarch of Abile'ne, ²in the high-priesthood of Annas and Cai'aphas, * the word of God came to John the son of Zechari'ah in the wilderness; ³and he went into all the region about the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁴As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.

⁵Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be brought low,
and the crooked shall be made straight,
and the rough ways shall be made smooth;

⁶and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

⁷ He said therefore to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! * Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Bear fruits that befit repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ⁹Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

¹⁰ And the multitudes asked him, "What then shall we do?" ¹¹And he answered them, "He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise." ¹²Tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" ¹³And he said to them, "Collect no more than is appointed you." ¹⁴Soldiers also asked

him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Rob no one by violence or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."

15 As the people were in expectation, and all men questioned in their hearts concerning John, whether perhaps he were the Christ, **16** John answered them all, "I baptize you with water; but he who is mightier than I is coming, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. **17** His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into his granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

18 So, with many other exhortations, he preached good news to the people. **19** But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reproved by him for Hero'di-as, his brother's wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, **20** added this to them all, that he shut up John in prison.

The Baptism of Jesus

21 Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, **22** and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form, as a dove, and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son;^j with you I am well pleased."^k

The Ancestry of Jesus

23 Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, ^{*} the son of He'li, **24** the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jan'na-i, the son of Joseph, **25** the son of Mattathi'as, the son of Amos, the son of Na'hum, the son of Es'li, the son of Nag'ga-i, **26** the son of Ma'ath, the son of Mattathi'as, the son of Sem'e-in, the son of Jo'sech, the son of Jo'da, **27** the son of Jo-an'an, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerub'babel, the son of She-al'ti-el,^l the son of Ne'ri, **28** the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Co'sam, the son of Elma'dam, the son of Er, **29** the son of Joshua, the son of Elie'zer, the son of Jo'rim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, **30** the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jo'nam, the son of Eli'akim, **31** the son of Me'le-a, the son of Menna, the son of Mat'tatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, **32** the son of Jesse, the son of O'bed, the son of Boaz, the son of Sa'la, the son of Nahshon, **33** the son of Ammin'adab, the son of Admin, the son of Arni, the son of Hezron, the son of Per'ez, the son of Judah, **34** the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Te'rah, the son of

Na'hor, ³⁵the son of Se'rug, the son of Re'u, the son of Pe'leg, the son of E'ber, the son of She'lah, ³⁶the son of Ca-i'nan, the son of Arpha'xad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of La'mech, ³⁷the son of Methu'selah, the son of E'noch, the son of Jar'ed, the son of Maha'lale"el, the son of Ca-i'nan, ³⁸the son of E'nos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the [son of God](#).

The Temptation of Jesus

4 And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and [was led by the Spirit](#) ²for [forty days](#) in the wilderness, tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing in those days; and when they were ended, he was hungry. ³The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." **4**And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.' " ⁵And the devil took him up, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, ⁶and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory; for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. ⁷If you, then, will worship me, it shall all be yours." **8**And Jesus answered him, "It is written,

'You shall worship the Lord your God,
and him only shall you serve.' "

⁹And he took him to Jerusalem, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here; ¹⁰for it is written,

'He will give his angels charge of you, to guard you,'

¹¹and

'On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.' "

¹²And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.' " ¹³And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him [until an opportune time](#).

Jesus Begins Preaching and Teaching in Galilee

14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and a report concerning him went out through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth

16 And he came to [Nazareth](#), where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as was his custom, on the sabbath day. ^{*} And he stood up

to read; ¹⁷and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written,

¹⁸"[The Spirit of the Lord](#) is upon me,

because he has anointed me to preach [good news to the poor](#).

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives

and recovering of sight to the blind,

to set at liberty those who are oppressed,

¹⁹to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

²⁰And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." ²²And all spoke well of him, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth; and they said, "Is not this [Joseph's son](#)?" ²³And he said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself; what we have heard you did at Caper'na-um, do here also in your own country.' " ²⁴And he said, "Truly, I say to you, [no prophet is acceptable](#) in his own country. ²⁵But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the [days of Eli'jah](#), when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there came a great famine over all the land; ²⁶and Eli'jah was sent to none of them but only to Zar'ephath, in the land of Si'don, to a woman who was a widow. ²⁷And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Eli'sha; and none of them was cleansed, but only Na'aman the Syrian." ²⁸When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. ²⁹And they rose up and put him [out of the city](#), and led him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw him down headlong. ³⁰But passing through the midst of them he went away.

[The Man with an Unclean Spirit](#)

³¹ And he went down to [Caper'na-um](#), a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them on the sabbath; ³²and they were astonished at his teaching, for his word was with authority. ³³And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon; and he cried out with a loud voice, ³⁴"Ah!^m What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." ³⁵But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And when the

demon had thrown him down in their midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm. ³⁶And they were all amazed and said to one another, "What is this word? For [with authority and power](#) he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out." ³⁷And reports of him went out into every place in the surrounding region.

Healings at Simon's House

38 And he arose and left the synagogue, and entered Simon's house. Now Simon's [mother-in-law](#) was ill with a high fever, and they asked him about her. ³⁹And he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her; and immediately she rose and served them.

40 Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to him; and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them. ⁴¹And demons also came out of many, crying, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them, and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ.

Jesus Preaches in the Synagogues of Judea

42 And when it was day he departed and went into a lonely place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them; ⁴³but he said to them, "I must preach the good news of the [kingdom of God](#) to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose." ⁴⁴And he was preaching in the synagogues of [Judea](#).ⁿ

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

5 While the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennes'aret. ²And he saw two boats by the lake; but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. **3**Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. ⁴And when he had ceased speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." ⁵And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But [at your word](#) I will let down the nets." ⁶And when they had done this, they enclosed a great shoal of fish; and as their nets were breaking, ⁷they beckoned to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for [I am a sinful man](#), O Lord." ⁹For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the catch of fish which they had

taken; ¹⁰and so also were [James and John](#), sons of Zeb'edee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men." ¹¹And when they had brought their boats to land, [they left everything](#) and followed him.

Jesus Cleanses a Leper

12 While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of [leprosy](#); and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." ¹³And he stretched out his hand, and [touched him](#), saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him. ¹⁴And he charged him to tell no one; but "go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, [as Moses commanded](#), for a proof to the people."^o ¹⁵But so much the more the report went abroad concerning him; and great multitudes gathered to hear and to be healed of their infirmities. ¹⁶But [he withdrew](#) to the wilderness and prayed.

Jesus Heals a Paralytic

17 On one of those days, as he was teaching, there were [Pharisees](#) and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was with him to heal.^p ¹⁸And behold, men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they sought to bring him in and lay him before Jesus;^q ¹⁹but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into their midst before Jesus. ²⁰And when he saw their faith he said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." ²¹And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, "Who is this that speaks blasphemies? Who can [forgive sins](#) but God only?" ²²When Jesus perceived their questionings, he answered them, "Why do you question in your hearts? ²³Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? ²⁴But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the man who was paralyzed—"I say to you, rise, take up your bed and go home." ²⁵And immediately he rose before them, and took up that on which he lay, and went home, glorifying God. ²⁶And amazement seized them all, and [they glorified God](#) and were filled with awe, saying, "We have seen strange things today."

Jesus Calls Levi

27 After this he went out, and saw a [tax collector](#), named Levi, sitting at the tax office; and he said to him, "Follow me." **28** And he left everything, and rose and followed him.

29 And Levi made him a great feast in his house; and there was a large company of tax collectors and others sitting at table^r with them. **30** And the Pharisees and their scribes murmured against his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" **31** And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of [a physician](#), but those who are sick; **32** I have [not come to call the righteous](#), but sinners to repentance."

The Question about Fasting

33 And they said to him, "The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but [yours eat and drink](#)." **34** And Jesus said to them, "Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? **35** The days will come, when [the bridegroom](#) is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days." **36** He told them a parable also: "No one tears a piece from [a new garment](#) and puts it upon an old garment; if he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. **37** And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. **38** But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. **39** And no one after drinking old wine desires new; for he says, 'The old is good.'"^s

A Teaching about the Sabbath

6 On a [sabbath](#),^t while he was going through the grainfields, his disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands. **2** But some of the Pharisees said, "Why are you doing what is [not lawful](#) to do on the sabbath?" **3** And Jesus answered, "[Have you not read](#) what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: **4** how he entered the house of God, and took and ate the [showbread](#), which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those with him?" **5** And he said to them, "The [Son of man](#) is lord of the sabbath."

The Man with a Withered Hand

6 On another sabbath, when he entered the synagogue and taught, a man was there whose right hand was withered. **7** And the scribes and the Pharisees watched him, to see whether he would heal on the sabbath, so that they might find an accusation against him. **8** But he knew their thoughts, and

he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come and stand here." And he rose and stood there. ⁹And Jesus said to them, "I ask you, [is it lawful](#) on the sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?" ¹⁰And he looked around on them all, and said to him, "Stretch out your hand." And he did so, and [his hand was restored](#). ¹¹But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

Jesus Chooses the Twelve Disciples

¹² In these days he went out to the hills to pray; and [all night](#) he continued in prayer to God. ¹³And when it was day, he called his disciples, and chose from them twelve, whom he named [apostles](#); ¹⁴Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, ¹⁵and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, ¹⁶and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Jesus Teaches and Heals

¹⁷ And he came down with them and [stood on a level place](#), with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of [Tyre and Sidon](#), who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; ¹⁸and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. ¹⁹And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came forth from him and healed them all.

Blessings and Woes

²⁰ And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, [and said](#): *

"Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

²¹ "[Blessed](#) are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied.

"Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh.

²² "Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, on account of the Son of man! ²³Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.

²⁴ "But [woe](#) to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation.

²⁵ "Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger.

"Woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

²⁶ "Woe to you, when all men speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

Love for Enemies

27 "But I say to you that hear, [Love your enemies](#), do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from [him who takes away](#) your cloak do not withhold your coat as well. ³⁰Give to every one who begs from you; and of him who takes away your goods do not ask them again. ³¹And as you wish that men would do to you, [do so to them](#).

32 "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. ³⁵But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return;^v and your reward will be great, and you will be [sons of the Most High](#); for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. ³⁶[Be merciful](#), even as your Father is merciful.

Judging Others

37 "Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put [into your lap](#). For the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

39 He also told them a parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰A disciple is not above his teacher, but every one when he is fully taught will be like his teacher. ⁴¹Why do you see the speck that is in [your brother's eye](#), but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴²Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.

A Tree and Its Fruit

43 "For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; ⁴⁴for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. ⁴⁵The good man out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil man out of his evil treasure produces evil; for out of the [abundance of the heart](#) his mouth speaks.

Hearers and Doers

46 "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? **47** Every one who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: **48** he is like [a man building a house](#), who dug deep, and laid the foundation upon rock; and when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house, and could not shake it, because it had been well built.^w **49** But he who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation; against which the stream broke, and immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great."

Jesus Heals a Centurion's Slave

7 After he had ended all his sayings in the hearing of the people he entered Caper'na-um. **2** Now [a centurion](#) had a slave who was dear^x to him, who was sick and at the point of death. **3** When he heard of Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his slave. **4** And when they came to Jesus, they begged him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy to have you do this for him, **5** for he loves our nation, and he built us our synagogue." **6** And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for [I am not worthy](#) to have you come under my roof; **7** therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed. **8** For I am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me: and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it." **9** When Jesus heard this he marveled at him, and turned and said to the multitude that followed him, "I tell you, [not even in Israel](#) have I found such faith." **10** And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave well.

Jesus Raises a Widow's Son at Nain

11 Soon afterward^y he went to a city called [Na'in](#), and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. **12** As he drew near to the gate of the city, behold, a man who had died was [being carried out](#), the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a large crowd from the city was with her. **13** And when [the Lord](#) saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." **14** And he came and [touched the bier](#), and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." **15** And the dead man sat up, and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother. **16** Fear seized them all; and they glorified God, saying, "[A great prophet](#) has arisen among us!"

and "God has visited his people!" ¹⁷And this report concerning him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country.

Messengers from John the Baptist

18 The disciples of John told him of all these things. ¹⁹And John, calling to him two of his disciples, sent them to the Lord, saying, "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?" ²⁰And when the men had come to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, 'Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?' " ²¹In that hour he cured many of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many that were blind he bestowed sight. ²²And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. ²³And blessed is he who takes no offense at me."

24 When the messengers of John had gone, he began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to behold? A reed shaken by the wind? ²⁵What then did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in kings' courts. ²⁶What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ²⁷This is he of whom it is written,

'Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who shall prepare your way before you.'

²⁸I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." * ²⁹(When they heard this all the people and the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John; ³⁰but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.)

31 "To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like? ³²They are like children sitting in the market place and calling to one another,

'We piped to you, and you did not dance;
we wailed, and you did not weep.'

³³For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine; and you say, 'He has a demon.' ³⁴The Son of man has come eating and

drinking; and you say, 'Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' ³⁵Yet wisdom is justified by all her children."

A Sinful Woman Forgiven

36 One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat at table. ³⁷And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was sitting at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, ³⁸and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. ³⁹Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." ⁴⁰And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "What is it, Teacher?" ⁴¹"A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴²When they could not pay, he forgave them both. Now which of them will love him more?" ⁴³Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, to whom he forgave more." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." ⁴⁴Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house, you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. ⁴⁶You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little." * ⁴⁸And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." ⁴⁹Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" ⁵⁰And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Some Women Accompany Jesus

8 Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the Twelve were with him, ²and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Mag'dalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, ³and Jo-an'na, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them^z out of their means.

The Parable of the Sower

4 And when a great crowd came together and people from town after town came to him, he said [in a parable](#): **5**"[A sower](#) went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell along the path, and was trodden under foot, and the birds of the air devoured it. **6**And some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. **7**And some fell among thorns; and the thorns grew with it and choked it. **8**And some fell into good soil and grew, and yielded a hundredfold." As he said this, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

The Explanation of the Parable

9 And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, **10**he said, "To you it has been given to know [the secrets](#) of the kingdom of God; but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand. **11**Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. **12**The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, that they may not believe and be saved. **13**And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy; but these have no root, they believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. **14**And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. **15**And as for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience.

A Lamp Is Not Hidden

16 "No one after [lighting a lamp](#) covers it with a vessel, or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, that those who enter may see the light. **17**For nothing is hidden that shall not be made manifest, nor anything secret that shall not be known and come to light. **18**[Take heed](#) then how you hear; for to him who has will more be given, and from him who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away."

The True Kindred of Jesus

19 Then his mother and his brethren * came to him, but they could not reach him for the crowd. **20**And he was told, "Your mother and your brethren are standing outside, desiring to see you." **21**But he said to them, "My mother and [my brethren](#) are those who hear the word of God and do it."

Jesus Calms a Storm on the Sea

[22 One day](#) he got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake." So they set out, ²³and as they sailed he fell asleep. And a storm of wind came down on the lake, and they were filling with water, and were in danger. ²⁴And they went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves; and they ceased, and there was a calm. ²⁵He said to them, "Where is your faith?" And they were afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another, "[Who then is this](#), that he commands even wind and water, and they obey him?"

Jesus Heals the Gerasene Demoniac

[26](#) Then they arrived at the country of the [Ger'asenes](#),^a which is opposite Galilee. ²⁷And as he stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons; for a long time he had worn no clothes, and he lived not in a house but among the tombs. ²⁸When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him, and said with a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me." ²⁹For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time it had seized him; he was kept under guard, and bound with chains and shackles, but he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the desert.) ³⁰Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "[Legion](#)"; for many demons had entered him. ³¹And they begged him not to command them to depart into [the abyss](#). ³²Now a large herd of swine was feeding there on the hillside; and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them leave. ³³Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

³⁴ When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled, and told it in the city and in the country. ³⁵Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting [at the feet of Jesus](#), clothed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. ³⁶And those who had seen it told them how he who had been possessed with demons was healed. ³⁷Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Ger'asenes^a asked him to depart from them; for they were seized with great fear; so he got into the boat and returned. ³⁸The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but he sent him away, saying, ³⁹"[Return to your home](#), and declare how

much God has done for you." And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him. *

A Girl Restored to Life and a Woman Healed

40 Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him. ⁴¹And there came a man named Ja'irus, who was a ruler of the synagogue; and falling at Jesus' feet he begged him to come to his house, ⁴²for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying.

As he went, the people pressed round him. ⁴³And a woman who had had a flow of blood for twelve years and had spent all her living upon physicians^b and could not be healed by any one, ⁴⁴came up behind him, and touched the fringe of his garment; and immediately her flow of blood ceased. ⁴⁵And Jesus said, "Who was it that touched me?" When all denied it, Peter^c said, "Master, the multitudes surround you and press upon you!" ⁴⁶But Jesus said, "Some one touched me; for I perceive that power has gone forth from me." ⁴⁷And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. ⁴⁸And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

⁴⁹ While he was still speaking, a man from the ruler's house came and said, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more." ⁵⁰But Jesus on hearing this answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she shall be well." ⁵¹And when he came to the house, he permitted no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child. ⁵²And all were weeping and bewailing her; but he said, "Do not weep; for she is not dead but sleeping." ⁵³And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. ⁵⁴But taking her by the hand he called, saying, "Child, arise." ⁵⁵And her spirit returned, and she got up at once; and he directed that something should be given her to eat. ⁵⁶And her parents were amazed; but he charged them to tell no one what had happened.

The Mission of the Twelve

9 And he called the Twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, ²and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal. ³And he said to them, "Take nothing for your

journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics. ⁴And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. ⁵And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town [shake off the dust](#) from your feet as a testimony against them." ⁶And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

Herod's Perplexity

7 Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done, and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead, ⁸by some that Eli'jah had appeared, and by others that one of the old prophets had risen. ⁹Herod said, "John I beheaded; but who is this about whom I hear such things?" And he sought to see him.

Feeding the Five Thousand

10 On their return the apostles told him what they had done. And he took them and withdrew apart to a city called Beth-sa'ida. ¹¹When the crowds learned it, they followed him; and he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God, and cured those who had need of healing. ¹²Now the day began to wear away; and the Twelve came and said to him, "Send the crowd away, to go into the villages and country round about, to lodge and get provisions; for we are here in a lonely place." ¹³But he said to them, "You give them something to eat." They said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish—unless we are to go and buy food for all these people." ¹⁴For there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, "Make them sit down in companies, about fifty each." ¹⁵And they did so, and made them all sit down. ¹⁶And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. ¹⁷And all ate and were satisfied. And they took up what was left over, twelve baskets of broken pieces.

Peter's Declaration That Jesus Is the Christ

18 Now it happened that as he was praying alone the disciples were with him; and he asked them, "Who do the people say that I am?" ¹⁹And they answered, "John the Baptist; but others say, Eli'jah; and others, that one of the old prophets has risen." ²⁰And he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered, "The Christ of God." ²¹But he charged and commanded them to tell this to no one, ²²saying, "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."

Taking Up One's Cross

23 And he said to all, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it. ²⁵For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? ²⁶For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him

will the Son of man be ashamed when he [comes in his glory](#) and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. ²⁷But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they [see the kingdom](#) of God."

The Transfiguration

²⁸ Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James, and [went up on the mountain to pray](#). ²⁹And as he was praying, the appearance of his countenance was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. ³⁰And behold, two men talked with him, Moses and Eli'jah, ³¹who appeared in glory and spoke of his [exodus](#), which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³²Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep but kept awake, and they [saw his glory](#) and the two men who stood with him. ³³And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Eli'jah"—not knowing what he said. ³⁴As he said this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. ³⁵And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is [my Son, my Chosen](#);^d listen to him!" ³⁶And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silence and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

Jesus Heals a Boy with a Demon

³⁷ On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. ³⁸And behold, a man from the crowd cried, "Teacher, I beg you to look upon my son, for he is my only child; ³⁹and behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out; it convulses him till he foams, and shatters him, and will hardly leave him. ⁴⁰And I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not." ⁴¹Jesus answered, "O faithless and [perverse generation](#), how long am I to be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here." ⁴²While he was coming, the demon tore him and convulsed him. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. ⁴³And all were astonished at the majesty of God.

Jesus Again Foretells His Death

But while they were all marveling at everything he did, he said to his disciples, ⁴⁴"Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men." ⁴⁵But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, that they should not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask him about this saying.

True Greatness

46 And an argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest. **47** But when Jesus perceived the thought of their hearts, he took a child and put him by his side, **48** and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me; for he who is least among you all is [the one who is great](#)."

Another Exorcist

49 John answered, "Master, we saw a man casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him, because he does not follow with us." **50** But Jesus said to him, "Do not forbid him; for he that is not against you is for you."

A Samaritan Village Refusesto Receive Jesus

51 When the days drew near for him [to be received up](#), ***** he set his face to go to Jerusalem. ***** **52** And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of [the Samaritans](#), to make ready for him; **53** but the people would not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. ***** **54** And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to [bid fire come down](#) from heaven and consume them?"^e **55** But he turned and rebuked them.^f **56** And they went on to another village.

Would-Be Followers of Jesus

57 As they were going along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." **58** And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head." **59** To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and [bury my father](#)." **60** But he said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." **61** Another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home." **62** Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow [and looks back](#) is fit for the kingdom of God."

The Mission of the Seventy [Map]

10 After this the Lord [appointed seventy](#)^g others, and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to come. **2** And he said to them, "[The harvest](#) is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. **3** Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. **4** Carry [no purse, no bag, no sandals](#); and salute no one on the road.

⁵Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' ⁶And if a son of peace is there, your peace shall rest upon him; but if not, it shall return to you. ⁷And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages; do not go from house to house. ⁸Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you; ⁹heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' ¹⁰But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, ¹¹'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off against you; nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.' ¹²I tell you, it shall be more tolerable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

Woes to Unrepentant Cities

¹³ "Woe to you, Chora'zin! woe to you, Beth-sa'ida! for if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Si'don, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴But it shall be more tolerable in the judgment for Tyre and Si'don than for you. ¹⁵And you, Caper'na-um, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades.

¹⁶ "He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me."

The Return of the Seventy

¹⁷ The seventy^g returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" ¹⁸And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. * ¹⁹Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall hurt you. ²⁰Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

Jesus Rejoices and Thanks the Father

²¹ In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ^h ²²All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

23 Then turning to the disciples he said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see what you see! **24**For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

25 And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" **26**He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" **27**And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." **28**And he said to him, "You have answered right; do this, and you will live."

29 But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" **30**Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. **31**Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. **32**So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. **33**But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, **34**and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. **35**And the next day he took out two denariiⁱ and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'³⁶Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" **37**He said, "The one who showed mercy on him." And Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Jesus Visits Martha and Mary

38 Now as they went on their way, he entered a village; and a woman named Martha received him into her house. **39**And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. **40**But Martha was distracted with much serving; and she went to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." **41**But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; **42**one thing is needful.^j Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her."

The Lord's Prayer

11 He was praying in a certain place, and when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."
2And he said to them, "When you pray, say:

"Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. **3**Give us each day our daily bread; **4**and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive every one who is indebted to us; and lead us not into temptation."

Perseverance in Prayer

5 And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; **6**for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; **7**and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything'? **8**I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him whatever he needs. **9**And I tell you, Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. **10**For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. **11**What father among you, if his son asks for **1**a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; **12**or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? **13**If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Jesus and Be-elzebul

14 Now he was casting out a demon that was mute; when the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled. **15**But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Be-el'zebul, the prince of demons"; **16**while others, to test him, sought from him a sign from heaven. **17**But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and house falls upon house. **18**And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Be-el'zebul. **19**And if I cast out demons by Be-el'zebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. **20**But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. **21**When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace; **22**but when one stronger than he assails him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted, and divides

his spoil. ²³He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.

The Return of the Unclean Spirit

²⁴ "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, he passes through waterless places seeking rest; and finding none he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' ²⁵And when he comes he finds it swept and put in order. ²⁶Then he goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first."

True Blessedness

²⁷ As he said this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!" ²⁸But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

The Sign of Jonah

²⁹ When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, "This generation is an evil generation; it seeks a sign, but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah. ³⁰For as Jonah became a sign to the men of Nin'evah, so will the Son of man be to this generation. ³¹The queen of the South will arise at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. ³²The men of Nin'evah will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

The Light of the Body

³³ "No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar or under a bushel, but on a stand, that those who enter may see the light. ³⁴Your eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is sound, your whole body is full of light; but when it is not sound, your body is full of darkness. ³⁵Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness. ³⁶If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light."

Jesus Denounces the Hypocrisy of the Pharisees and Lawyers

³⁷ While he was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him; so he went in and sat at table. ³⁸The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner. ³⁹And the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees

[cleanse the outside](#) of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of extortion and wickedness. ⁴⁰You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? ⁴¹But give for alms those things which are within; and behold, everything is clean for you.

⁴² "But [woe to you](#) Pharisees! for you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God; these you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. ⁴³Woe to you Pharisees! for you love the best seat in the synagogues and salutations in the market places. ⁴⁴Woe to you! for you are [like graves](#) which are not seen, and men walk over them without knowing it."

⁴⁵ One of the lawyers answered him, "Teacher, in saying this you reproach us also." ⁴⁶And he said, "Woe to you lawyers also! for you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. ⁴⁷Woe to you! for you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed. ⁴⁸So you are witnesses and consent to the deeds of your fathers; for they killed them, and you build their tombs. ⁴⁹Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,' ⁵⁰that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation, ⁵¹from the blood of [Abel to the blood of Zechari'ah](#), who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it shall be required of this generation. ⁵²Woe to you lawyers! for you have taken away [the key of knowledge](#); you did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering."

⁵³ As he went away from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard, and to provoke him to speak of many things, ⁵⁴lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say.

[A Warning against Hypocrisy](#)

¹² In the meantime, when so many thousands of the multitude had gathered together that they trod upon one another, he began to say to his disciples first, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is [hypocrisy](#). ²Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. ³Whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.

[Whom to Fear](#)

4 "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. **5** But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has power to cast into hell; **m** yes, I tell you, fear him! **6** Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. **7** Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.

8 "And I tell you, every one who acknowledges me before men, the Son of man also will acknowledge before the angels of God; **9** but he who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. **10** And every one who speaks a word against the Son of man will be forgiven; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. **11** And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how or what you are to answer or what you are to say; **12** for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

The Parable of the Rich Fool

13 One of the multitude said to him, "Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me." **14** But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or divider over you?" **15** And he said to them, "Take heed, and beware of all covetousness; for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." **16** And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man brought forth plentifully; **17** and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' **18** And he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods. **19** And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.' **20** But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' **21** So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Do Not Be Anxious

22 And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat, nor about your body, what you shall put on. **23** For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. **24** Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are

you than the birds! ²⁵And which of you by being anxious can add a cubit to his span of life?ⁿ ²⁶If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? ²⁷Consider the lilies, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin;^o yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ²⁸But if God so clothes the grass which is alive in the field today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O men of little faith! ²⁹And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be of anxious mind. **30^{sup}**>For all the nations of the world seek these things; and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹Instead, seek his^p kingdom, and these things shall be yours as well.

32 "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. **33** Sell your possessions, and [give alms](#); provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

The Necessity of Watchfulness

35 "Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning, ³⁶and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the marriage feast, so that they may open to him at once when he comes and knocks. ³⁷Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes; truly, I say to you, he will put on his apron and have them sit at table, and he will come and serve them. ³⁸If he comes in the [second watch, or in the third](#), and finds them so, blessed are those servants! ³⁹But know this, that if the householder had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would have been awake and^q would not have left his house to be broken into. ⁴⁰You also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

The Faithful and the Unfaithful Servant

41 Peter said, "Lord, are you telling [this parable](#) for us or for all?" ⁴²And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? ⁴³Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing. ⁴⁴Truly I tell you, he will set him over all his possessions. ⁴⁵But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, ⁴⁶the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not

expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will punish^r him, and put him with the unfaithful. ⁴⁷And that servant who knew his master's will, but did not make ready or act according to his will, shall receive a severe beating. ⁴⁸But he who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, shall receive a light beating. Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required; and of him to whom men commit much they will demand the more.

Jesus the Cause of Division

⁴⁹ "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled! ⁵⁰I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how I am constrained until it is accomplished! ⁵¹Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division; ⁵²for henceforth in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three; ⁵³they will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against her mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

Interpreting the Present Time

⁵⁴ He also said to the multitudes, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, 'A shower is coming'; and so it happens. ⁵⁵And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, 'There will be scorching heat'; and it happens. ⁵⁶You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky; but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?"

Settling with Your Accuser

⁵⁷ "And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? ⁵⁸As you go with your accuser before the magistrate, make an effort to settle with him on the way, lest he drag you to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer put you in prison. ⁵⁹I tell you, you will never get out till you have paid the very last copper."

Repent or Perish

13 There were some present at that very time who told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ²And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered thus? ³I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. ⁴Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Silo'am fell and killed them, do you think that they were

worse offenders than all the others who dwelt in Jerusalem? ⁵I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

6 And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. ⁷And he said to the vinedresser, 'Behold, these three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down; why should it use up the ground?' ⁸And he answered him, 'Let it alone, sir, this year also, till I dig about it and put on manure. ⁹And if it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.' "

Jesus Heals a Crippled Woman

10 Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. ¹¹And there was a woman who had had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years; she was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. ¹²And when Jesus saw her, he called her and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your infirmity." ¹³And he laid his hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and she praised God. ¹⁴But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be healed, and not on the sabbath day." ¹⁵Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to water it? ¹⁶And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?" ¹⁷As he said this, all his adversaries were put to shame; and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

18 He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? ¹⁹It is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his garden; and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches."

The Parable of the Leaven

20 And again he said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? ²¹It is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened."

The Narrow Door

22 He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. 23And some one said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, 24"Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 25When once the householder has risen up and shut the door, you will begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us.' He will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' 26Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' 27But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from; depart from me, all you workers of iniquity!' 28There you will weep and gnash your teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves thrust out. 29And men will come from east and west, and from north and south, and sit at table in the kingdom of God. 30And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

The Lament over Jerusalem

31 At that very hour some Pharisees came, and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." 32And he said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course. 33Nevertheless I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.' 34O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! 35Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' "

Jesus Heals the Man with Dropsy on the Sabbath

14 One sabbath when he went to dine at the house of a ruler who belonged to the Pharisees, they were watching him. 2And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. 3And Jesus spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath, or not?" 4But they were silent. Then he took him and healed him, and let him go. 5And he said to them, "Which of you, having a son^s or an ox that has fallen into a well, will not immediately pull him out on a sabbath day?" 6And they could not reply to this.

Humility and Hospitality

7 Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he marked how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, ⁸"When you are invited by any one to a marriage feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest a more eminent man than you be invited by him; ⁹and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. ¹⁰But when you are invited, go and [sit in the lowest place](#), so that when your host comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher'; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. ¹¹For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

¹² He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your kinsmen or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and you be repaid. ¹³But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. [You will be repaid](#) at the resurrection of the just."

The Parable of the Great Banquet

¹⁵ When one of those who sat at table with him heard this, he said to him, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!" ¹⁶But he said to him, "A man once gave [a great banquet](#), and invited many; ¹⁷and at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who [had been invited](#), 'Come; for all is now ready.' ¹⁸But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it; please, have me excused.' ¹⁹And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them; please, have me excused.' ²⁰And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' ²¹So the servant came and reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.' ²²And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' ²³And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. ²⁴For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.' "

The Cost of Discipleship

25 Now great multitudes accompanied him; and he turned and said to them, ²⁶"If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. * ²⁷Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple. ²⁸For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, ³⁰saying, 'This man began to build, and was not able to finish.' ³¹Or what king, going to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³²And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends an embassy and asks terms of peace. ³³So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

About Salt

³⁴ "Salt is good; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? ³⁵It is fit neither for the land nor for the dunghill; men throw it away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

¹⁵ Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. ²And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

³ So he told them this parable: ⁴"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? ⁵And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.' ⁷Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

The Parable of the Lost Coin

⁸ "Or what woman, having ten silver coins,[†] if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? ⁹And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost.' ¹⁰Just

so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

The Parable of the Prodigal and His Brother

11 And he said, "There was a man who had two sons; **12** and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that falls to me.' And he divided his living between them. **13** Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living. **14** And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. **15** So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. **16** And he would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything. **17** But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! **18** I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; **19** I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants." ' **20** And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. **21** And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' **22** But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; **23** and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; **24** for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to make merry.

25 "Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. **26** And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant. **27** And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.' **28** But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, **29** but he answered his father, 'Behold, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. **30** But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!' **31** And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all

that is mine is yours. ³²It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.' "

The Parable of the Dishonest Steward

16 He also said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a steward, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. ²And he called him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.' ³And the steward said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the stewardship away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. ⁴I have decided what to do, so that people may receive me into their houses when I am put out of the stewardship.' ⁵So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' ⁶He said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' ⁷Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' He said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.' ⁸The master commended the dishonest steward for his prudence; for the sons of this world^w are wiser in their own generation than the sons of light. * ⁹And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations.

10 "He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. ¹¹If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true riches? ¹²And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? ¹³No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

The Law and the Kingdom of God

14 The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they scoffed at him. ¹⁵But he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts; for what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

16 "The law and the prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and every one enters it violently. ¹⁷But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one dot of the law to become void.

18 "Every one who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.

The Rich Man and Lazarus

19 "There was a rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. **20** And at his gate lay a poor man named Laz'arus, full of sores, **21** who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. **22** The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried; **23** and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far off and Laz'arus in his bosom. **24** And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Laz'arus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame.' **25** But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Laz'arus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. **26** And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.' **27** And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house, **28** for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' **29** But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' **30** And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if some one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' **31** He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead.' "

Some Sayings of Jesus

17 And he said to his disciples, "Temptations to sin^x are sure to come; but woe to him by whom they come! **2** It would be better for him if a millstone were hung round his neck and he were cast into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin.^y **3** Take heed to yourselves; if your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him; **4** and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, and says, 'I repent,' you must forgive him."

5 The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" **6** And the Lord said, "If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this sycamine tree, 'Be rooted up, and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

7 "Will any one of you, who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep, say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down at table'? ⁸Will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, and put on your apron and serve me, till I eat and drink; and afterward you shall eat and drink'? ⁹Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? ¹⁰So you also, when you have done all that is commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'

Jesus Cleanses Ten Lepers

¹¹ On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Sama'ria and Galilee. ¹²And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance ¹³and lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." ¹⁴When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. ¹⁵Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; ¹⁶and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷Then said Jesus, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? ¹⁸Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" ¹⁹And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."

The Coming of the Kingdom

²⁰ Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; * ²¹nor will they say, 'Behold, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst."^z

²² And he said to the disciples, "The days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and you will not see it. ²³And they will say to you, 'Behold, there!' or 'Behold, here!' Do not go, do not follow them. ²⁴For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of man be in his day.^a ²⁵But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. ²⁶As it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of man. ²⁷They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. ²⁸Likewise as it was in the days of Lot—they ate, they drank, they bought,

they sold, they planted, they built, ²⁹but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and brimstone rained from heaven and destroyed them all—³⁰so will it be on the day when the Son of man is revealed. ³¹On that day, let him who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away; and likewise let him who is in the field not turn back. ³²Remember Lot's wife. ³³Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it. ³⁴I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. ³⁵There will be two women grinding together; one will be taken and the other left." ^{b 37}And they said to him, "Where, Lord?" He said to them, "Where the body is, there the eagles^c will be gathered together."

The Parable of the Widow and the Unrighteous Judge

¹⁸ And he told them a parable, to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. ²He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor regarded man; ³and there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Vindicate me against my adversary.' ⁴For a while he refused; but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor regard man, ⁵yet because this widow bothers me, I will vindicate her, or she will wear me out by her continual coming.'" ⁶And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. ⁷And will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? ⁸I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

The Parable of the Pharisees and the Tax Collector

⁹ He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others: ¹⁰"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.' ¹³But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Jesus Blesses the Children

15 Now they were bringing even [infants](#) to him that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. **16** But Jesus called them to him, saying, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such [belongs the kingdom of God](#). **17** Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

The Rich Ruler

18 And a ruler asked him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" **19** And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. **20** You know [the commandments](#): 'Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.' " **21** And he said, "All these I have observed from my youth." **22** And when Jesus heard it, he said to him, "One thing you still lack. [Sell all](#) that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." **23** But when he heard this he became sad, for he was very rich. **24** Jesus looking at him said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! **25** For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." **26** Those who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?" **27** But he said, "What is impossible with men is possible with God." **28** And Peter said, "Behold, we have left our homes and followed you." **29** And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there is no man who has left house or [wife or brothers or parents](#) or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, **30** who will not receive manifold more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life."

A Third Time Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

31 And taking the Twelve, [he said to them](#), "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written of the Son of man [by the prophets](#) will be accomplished. **32** For he will be delivered to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon; **33** they will scourge him and kill him, and on the third day he will rise." **34** But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.

Jesus Heals a Blind Beggar near Jericho

35 As he drew near to [Jericho](#), a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging; **36** and hearing a multitude going by, he inquired what this meant. **37** They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." **38** And he cried, "Jesus, [Son of David](#), have mercy on me!" **39** And those who were in front rebuked

him, telling him to be silent; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁰And Jesus stopped, and commanded him to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, ⁴¹"What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me receive my sight." ⁴²And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." ⁴³And immediately he received his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

Jesus and Zacchaeus [Map]

19 [He entered Jericho](#) and was passing through. ²And there was a man named Zacchae'us; he was a [chief tax collector](#), and rich. ³And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not, on account of the crowd, because he was small of stature. ⁴So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was to pass that way. ⁵And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchae'us, make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today." ⁶So he made haste and came down, and received him joyfully. ⁷And when they saw it they all murmured, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." ⁸And Zacchae'us stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it [fourfold](#)." ⁹And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a [son of Abraham](#). ¹⁰[For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost](#)."

The Parable of the Ten Pounds

11 As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to [appear immediately](#). ¹²He said therefore, "[A nobleman](#) went into a far country to receive kingly power^d and then return. ¹³Calling ten of his servants, he gave them [ten pounds](#),^e and said to them, 'Trade with these till I come.' ¹⁴But his citizens hated him and sent an embassy after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.' ¹⁵When he returned, having received the kingly power,^d he commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by trading. ¹⁶The first came before him, saying, 'Lord, your pound has made ten pounds more.' ¹⁷And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.' ¹⁸And the second came, saying, 'Lord, your pound has made

five pounds.' ¹⁹And he said to him, 'And you are to be over five cities.'
²⁰Then another came, saying, 'Lord, here is your pound, which I kept laid
away in a napkin; ²¹for I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man;
you take up what you did not lay down, and reap what you did not sow.'
²²He said to him, 'I will condemn you out of your own mouth, you wicked
servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking up what I did not lay
down and reaping what I did not sow? ²³Why then did you not put my
money into the bank, and at my coming I should have collected it with
interest?' ²⁴And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the pound from him,
and give it to him who has the ten pounds.' ²⁵(And they said to him, 'Lord,
he has ten pounds!') ²⁶I tell you, that to every one who has will more be
given; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away.
²⁷But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over
them, bring them here and [slay them](#) before me.' "

Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem

²⁸ And when he had said this, [he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.](#)
²⁹When he drew near to [Beth'phage and Beth'any](#), at the mount that is
called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰saying, "Go into the village
opposite, where on entering you will find [a colt](#) tied, on which no one has
ever yet sat; untie it and bring it here. ³¹If any one asks you, 'Why are you
untying it?' you shall say this, 'The Lord has need of it.' " ³²So those who
were sent went away and found it as he had told them. ³³And as they were
untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?"
³⁴And they said, "The Lord has need of it." ³⁵And they brought it to Jesus,
and throwing their garments on the colt they set Jesus upon it. ³⁶And as he
rode along, they spread their garments on the road. ³⁷As he was now
drawing near, at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of
the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the
mighty works that they had seen, ³⁸saying, "[Blessed is the King](#) who comes
in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" ³⁹And
some of the Pharisees in the multitude said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your
disciples." ⁴⁰He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones
would cry out."

Jesus Weeps over Jerusalem

41 And when he drew near and saw the city he wept over it, ⁴²saying, "Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³For the days shall come upon you, when your enemies will cast up a bank about you and surround you, and hem you in on every side, ⁴⁴and dash you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave one stone upon another in you; because you did not know the time of your visitation." *

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

45 And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold, ⁴⁶saying to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer'; but you have made it a den of robbers."

47 And he was teaching daily in the temple. The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people sought to destroy him; ⁴⁸but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people hung upon his words.

The Authority of Jesus Questioned

20 One day, as he was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders came up ²and said to him, "Tell us by what authority you do these things, or who it is that gave you this authority." ³He answered them, "I also will ask you a question; now tell me, ⁴Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?" ⁵And they discussed it with one another, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why did you not believe him?' ⁶But if we say, 'From men,' all the people will stone us; for they are convinced that John was a prophet." ⁷So they answered that they did not know where it was from. ⁸And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

The Parable of the Wicked Tenants

9 And he began to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard, and leased it to tenants, and went into another country for a long while. ¹⁰When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants, that they should give him some of the fruit of the vineyard; but the tenants beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. ¹¹And he sent another servant; him also they beat and treated shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. ¹²And he sent yet a third; this one they wounded and cast out. ¹³Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; it may be

they will respect him.' ¹⁴But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.' ¹⁵And they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? ¹⁶He will come and destroy those tenants, and give the vineyard to others." When they heard this, they said, "God forbid!" ¹⁷But he looked at them and said, "[What then is this that is written](#):

'The very stone which the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone'?

¹⁸Every one who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but when it falls on any one it will crush him."

[The Question about Paying Taxes](#)

¹⁹ The scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on him at that very hour, but they feared the people; for they perceived that he had told this parable against them. ²⁰So they watched him, and sent spies, who pretended to be sincere, that they might take hold of what he said, so as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of [the governor](#). ²¹They asked him, "Teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly, and show no partiality, but truly teach the way of God. ²²[Is it lawful](#) for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" ²³But he perceived their craftiness, and said to them, ²⁴"Show me [a coin](#).^f Whose likeness and inscription has it?" They said, "Caesar's." ²⁵He said to them, "Then render [to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's](#)." ²⁶And they were not able in the presence of the people to catch him by what he said; but marveling at his answer they were silent.

[The Question about Man's Resurrection](#)

²⁷ There came to him some [Sad'ducees](#), those who say that there is no resurrection, ²⁸and they asked him a question, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife but no children, the man^g must take the wife and raise up children for his brother. ²⁹Now there were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and died without children; ³⁰and the second ³¹and the third took her, and likewise all seven left no children and died. ³²Afterward the woman also died. ³³In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife."

34 And Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage; ³⁵but those who are accounted worthy to attain to [that age](#) and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, ³⁶for they cannot die any more, because they are [equal to angels](#) and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. ³⁷But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. * ³⁸Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to him." ³⁹And some of the scribes answered, "Teacher, you have spoken well." ⁴⁰For they no longer dared to ask him any question.

[A Question about the Messiah](#)

⁴¹ But he said to them, "How can they say that the Christ is [David's son](#)? ⁴²For David himself says in the Book of Psalms,
'The Lord said to my Lord,
Sit at my right hand,
⁴³till I make your enemies a stool for your feet.'
⁴⁴David thus calls him Lord; so how is he his son?"

[Jesus Denounces the Hypocrisy of the Scribes](#)

⁴⁵ And in the hearing of all the people he said to his disciples, ⁴⁶"Beware of the scribes, who like to go about in long robes, and love salutations in the market places and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, ⁴⁷who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the [greater condemnation](#)."

[The Widow's Offering](#)

²¹ He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury; ²and he saw a poor widow put in [two copper coins](#). ³And he said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; ⁴for they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all the living that she had."

[The Destruction of the Temple Foretold](#)

⁵ [And as some spoke of the temple](#), how it was adorned with [noble stones](#) and offerings, he said, ⁶"As for these things which you see, the days will come when there shall not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down." ⁷And they asked him, "Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign when this is about to take place?" ⁸And he said, "Take heed that you are not led astray; for [many will come](#) in my name, saying, 'I

am he!' and, 'The time is at hand!' Do not go after them. ⁹And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified; for this must first take place, but the end will not be at once."

Signs and Persecutions

¹⁰ Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; ¹¹there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. ¹²But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. ¹³This will be a time for you to bear testimony. ¹⁴Settle it therefore in your minds, not to meditate beforehand how to answer; ¹⁵for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. ¹⁶You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and kinsmen and friends, and some of you they will put to death; ¹⁷you will be hated by all for my name's sake. ¹⁸But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹By your endurance you will gain your lives.

The Destruction of Jerusalem Foretold

²⁰ "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. ²¹Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it; ²²for these are days of vengeance, to fulfil all that is written. ²³Alas for those who are with child and for those who are nursing in those days! For great distress shall be upon the earth and wrath upon this people; ²⁴they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led captive among all nations; and Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles * are fulfilled.

The Coming of the Son of Man

²⁵ "And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, ²⁶men fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷And then they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸Now when these things begin to take place, look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

[29](#) And he told them a parable: "Look at the [fig tree](#), and all the trees; [30](#) as soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. [31](#) So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. [32](#) Truly, I say to you, [this generation](#) will not pass away till all has taken place. [33](#) [Heaven and earth](#) will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Exhortation to Watchfulness

[34](#) "But take heed to yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a snare; [35](#) for it will come upon all who dwell upon the face of the whole earth. [36](#) But watch at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that will take place, and [to stand](#) before the Son of man."

[37](#) And every day he was teaching in the temple, but at night he went out and lodged on the mount called Olivet. [38](#) And early in the morning all the people came to him in the temple to hear him.

The Conspiracy to Kill Jesus

[22](#) Now [the feast](#) of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover. [2](#) And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death; for they feared the people.

[3](#) Then [Satan entered into Judas](#) called Iscariot, who was of the number of the Twelve; [4](#) he went away and conferred with the chief priests and [captains](#) how he might betray him to them. [5](#) And they were glad, and engaged to give him money. [6](#) So he agreed, and sought an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of the multitude.

The Preparation of the Passover

[7](#) Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. [8](#) So Jesus^h sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it." [9](#) They said to him, "Where will you have us prepare it?" [10](#) He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him into the house which he enters, [11](#) and tell the householder, 'The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I am to eat the Passover with my disciples?' [12](#) And he will show you a large upper room furnished; there make ready." [13](#) And they went, and found it as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover.

Jesus Institutes the Eucharist

14 And when the hour came, he sat at table, and the apostles with him. **15** And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; **16** for I tell you I shall not eat itⁱ until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." **17** And he took a chalice, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves; **18** for I tell you that from now on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." **19** And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." **20** And likewise the chalice after supper, saying, "This chalice which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."^j **21** But behold the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. **22** For the Son of man goes as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!" **23** And they began to question one another, which of them it was that would do this.

The Dispute about Greatness

24 A dispute also arose among them, which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. **25** And he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. **26** But not so with you; rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. **27** For which is the greater, one who sits at table, or one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at table? But I am among you as one who serves.

28 "You are those who have continued with me in my trials; **29** as my Father appointed a kingdom for me, so do I appoint for you **30** that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Peter's Denial Foretold

31 "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you,^k that he might sift you^k like wheat, **32** but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren." **33** And he said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death." **34** He said, "I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you three times deny that you know me."

Purse, Bag, and Sword

[35](#) And he said to them, "When I sent you out with no purse or bag or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "Nothing." [36](#)He said to them, "But now, let him who has a purse take it, and likewise a bag. And let him who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one. [37](#)For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me, 'And he was [reckoned with transgressors](#)'; for what is written about me has its fulfilment." [38](#)And they said, "Look, Lord, here are two swords." And he said to them, "[It is enough](#)."

Jesus Prays on the Mount of Olives

[39](#) And he came out, and went, as was [his custom](#), to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. [40](#)And when he came to [the place](#) he said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." [41](#)And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, [42](#)"Father, if you are willing, remove [this chalice](#) from me; nevertheless not my will, but yours, be done." [43](#)And there appeared to him [an angel](#) from heaven, strengthening him. [44](#)And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great [drops of blood](#) falling down upon the ground. [45](#)And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, [46](#)and he said to them, "Why do you sleep? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation."

The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

[47](#) While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him; [48](#)but Jesus said to him, "Judas, would you betray the Son of man [with a kiss](#)?" [49](#)And when those who were about him saw what would follow, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" [50](#)And [one of them](#) struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. [51](#)But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him. [52](#)Then Jesus said to the chief priests and captains of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, [*](#) "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? [53](#)When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and [the power of darkness](#)."

Peter Denies Jesus

[54](#) Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the [high priest's house](#). Peter followed at a distance; [55](#)and when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among

them. ⁵⁶Then a maid, seeing him as he sat in the light and gazing at him, said, "This man also was with him." ⁵⁷But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." ⁵⁸And a little later some one else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not." ⁵⁹And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, "Certainly this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean." ⁶⁰But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are saying." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed. ⁶¹And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times." ⁶²And he went out and wept bitterly.

The Mocking and Beating of Jesus

⁶³ Now the men who were holding Jesus mocked him and beat him; ⁶⁴they also blindfolded him and asked him, "Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?" ⁶⁵And they spoke many other words against him, reviling him.

Jesus before the Council

⁶⁶ When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes; and they led him away to their council, and they said, ⁶⁷"If you are the Christ, tell us." But he said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe; ⁶⁸and if I ask you, you will not answer. ⁶⁹But from now on the Son of man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God." ⁷⁰And they all said, "Are you the Son of God, then?" And he said to them, "You say that I am." ⁷¹And they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips."

Jesus before Pilate

²³ Then the whole company of them arose, and brought him before Pilate. ²And they began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ a king." * ³And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so." ⁴And Pilate said to the chief priests and the multitudes, "I find no crime in this man." ⁵But they were urgent, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place."

Jesus before Herod

6 When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. ⁷And when he learned that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him over to [Herod](#), who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. ⁸When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him. ⁹So he questioned him at some length; but he made no answer. ¹⁰The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. ¹¹And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him; then, clothing him in [gorgeous apparel](#), he sent him back to Pilate. ¹²And [Herod and Pilate](#) became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other.

Jesus Sentenced to Death

¹³ Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, ¹⁴and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people; and after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him; * ¹⁵neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Behold, nothing deserving death has been done by him; ¹⁶I will therefore chastise him and release him." **m**

¹⁸ But they all cried out together, "Away with this man, and release to us Barab'bas"—¹⁹a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city, and for murder. ²⁰Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus; ²¹but they shouted out, "Crucify, crucify him!" ²²A third time he said to them, "Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no crime deserving death; I will therefore chastise him and release him." ²³But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And [their voices prevailed](#). ²⁴So Pilate gave sentence that their demand should be granted. ²⁵He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, whom they asked for; but Jesus he delivered up to their will.

The Crucifixion of Jesus

²⁶ And as they led him away, they seized one [Simon of Cyre'ne](#), who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus. ²⁷And there followed him a great multitude of the people, and of women who bewailed and lamented him. ²⁸But Jesus turning to them said, "[Daughters of Jerusalem](#), do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and

for your children. ²⁹For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed!' ³⁰Then they will begin to say to the mountains, '[Fall on us](#)'; [and to the hills](#), '[Cover us](#).' ³¹For if they do this when [the wood](#) is green, what will happen when it is dry?" *

³² Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. ³³And when they came to the place which is called [The Skull](#), there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on the right and one on the left. ³⁴And Jesus said, "[Father, forgive them](#); for they know not what they do."ⁿ And they cast lots to divide his garments. ³⁵And the people stood by, watching; but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!" ³⁶The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him vinegar, ³⁷and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" ³⁸There was also [an inscription](#) over him,^o "This is the King of the Jews."

³⁹ One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" ⁴⁰But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?" ⁴¹And we indeed justly; for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." ⁴²And he said, "Jesus, [remember me](#) when you come in your kingly power."^p ⁴³And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

[The Death of Jesus](#)

⁴⁴ It was now about the [sixth hour](#), and there was darkness over the whole land^q until the ninth hour, ⁴⁵while the sun's light failed;^r and the [curtain](#) of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "[Father, into your hands](#) I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last. ⁴⁷Now when the [centurion](#) saw what had taken place, he praised God, and said, "Certainly this man was innocent!" ⁴⁸And all the multitudes who assembled to see the sight, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. ⁴⁹And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance and saw these things.

[The Burial of Jesus](#)

50 Now there was a man named Joseph from the Jewish town of Arimathe'a. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, ⁵¹who had not consented to their purpose and deed, and he was [looking for the kingdom](#) of God. ⁵²This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁵³Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud, and laid him in a [rock-hewn tomb](#), where no one had ever yet been laid. ⁵⁴It was the [day of Preparation](#), and the sabbath was beginning.^s ⁵⁵The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and saw the tomb, and how his body was laid; ⁵⁶then they returned, and prepared [spices and ointments](#).

On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

The Resurrection of Jesus

24 But on the [first day](#) of the week, at early dawn, they went to [the tomb](#), taking the spices which they had prepared. ²And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³but when they went in they did not find the body.[†] ⁴While they were perplexed about this, behold, [two men](#) stood by them in dazzling apparel; ⁵⁵and as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen."^u ⁶Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷that the Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise." ⁸And they remembered his words, ⁹and returning from the tomb they told all this to the Eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰Now it was [Mary Mag'dalene](#) and Jo-an'na and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told this to the apostles; ¹¹but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹²But [Peter rose](#) and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home wondering at what had happened.^v

The Walk to Emmaus

13 That very day two of them were going to a village named [Emma'us](#), about seven miles^w from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, "What is this conversation which you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then one of them, named [Cle'opas](#), answered

him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" ¹⁹And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet [mighty in deed and word](#) before God and all the people, ²⁰and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. ²¹But we had hoped that he was the one to [redeem Israel](#). Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since this happened. ²²Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning ²³and did not find his body; and they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. ²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb, and found it just as the women had said; but him they did not see." ²⁵And he said to them, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" ²⁷And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in [all the Scriptures](#) the things concerning himself.

²⁸ So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He appeared to be going further, ²⁹but they constrained him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰When he was at table with them, he [took the bread and blessed and broke it, and gave it](#) to them. ³¹And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished out of their sight. ³²They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" ³³And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the Eleven gathered together and those who were with them, ³⁴who said, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the [breaking of the bread](#).

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

³⁶ As they were saying this, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you."^x ³⁷But they were startled and frightened, and supposed that they saw a spirit. ³⁸And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do questionings rise in your hearts? * ³⁹See [my hands and my feet](#), that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have." ⁴⁰And when he had said this he showed

them his hands and his feet.^y ⁴¹And while they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" ⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³and he took it and ate before them.

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, "These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of [Moses and the prophets and the psalms](#) must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the [Christ should suffer](#) and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷and that repentance and [forgiveness](#) of sins should be preached in his name to all nations,^z beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹And behold, I send [the promise](#) of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high."

The Ascension of Jesus

⁵⁰ Then he led them out as far as [Beth'any](#), and lifting up his hands he blessed them. ⁵¹While he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried [up into heaven](#).^a ⁵²And they worshiped him, and^b returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³and were continually in the [temple](#) blessing God.

Commentary on the Gospel of Luke

1:1-4 Luke opens with a prologue and personal dedication. Stylistically, he follows a conventional format that was used to preface historical works in the Hellenistic world. Luke likewise sets out to record history, not as a stale collection of facts and figures, but as an evangelistic presentation of Jesus' life and mission. [Back to text.](#)

1:2 delivered to us: Luke is probably a second-generation Christian. His work is heavily indebted to the testimony of **eyewitnesses** and **ministers** of the gospel in the early Church. Three points follow from this: **(1)** Luke is a careful historian who has sifted relevant sources to obtain accurate information; **(2)** he transmits, not private opinions, but apostolic traditions; and **(3)** he writes to strengthen the faith of fellow Christians. [Back to text.](#)

1:3 most excellent Theophilus: Otherwise unknown in early sources. He may be a distinguished figure or high-ranking official of the Roman government. The formal designation, *most excellent*, appears elsewhere as an honorific title (Acts 23:26; 24:2; 26:25). A similar dedication serves to preface Luke's second volume, the Book of Acts (Acts 1:1). [Back to text.](#)

1:5-2:52 Luke's Infancy Narrative recounts the births of John the Baptist and Jesus. Stylistically, he makes a transition from the classical format of his prologue (1:1-4) to a biblical style of writing used in the Greek OT. For Luke, the OT is an unfinished book whose concluding notes resonate with expectation and unfulfilled promise. He thus weaves numerous allusions to the OT into his narrative, implying that the story he now tells is a continuation of biblical revelation and, indeed, its awaited climax. [Back to text.](#)

1:5 In the days of: Luke situates his narrative within the broader framework of world history (2:1-2; 3:1-2). **Herod:** Herod the Great, who was appointed **king** over Palestine by the Roman Senate in 40 B.C. and reigned in Jerusalem from 37 B.C. until his death in 4/1 B.C. [See note on Mt 2:1.](#) **Zechariah:** A Hebrew name meaning "Yahweh has remembered." **division of Abijah:** Israel's Levitical priesthood was comprised of 24 divisions of priests (1 Chron 24:7-19). Each division served at the Jerusalem Temple two different weeks each year, and those represented by Abijah were the eighth group in the priestly rotation. **Elizabeth:** A Greek

form of the Hebrew name meaning "My God's oath". Being a daughter of **Aaron**, she was a Levite (1 Chron 6:1-3). [Back to text.](#)



1:6 righteous before God: Zechariah and Elizabeth live in faithful observance of the Old Covenant (Deut 6:25; Is 48:18). See word study: [Righteousness](#) at Mt 3. • Luke places the couple in an OT stream of righteous figures: Noah (Gen 6:9), Abraham (Gen 15:6), Phineas (Ps 106:30-31), David (2 Sam 22:21-25), and others had exemplified similar devotion to the Lord. • *Mystically* (St. Bede, *In Lucam*): Zechariah and Elizabeth represent the priesthood and Law of the Old Covenant. Both were righteous, as the priesthood was holy and the Law was good; but together they were unable to bear children for God or bring forth the grace of Christ. The couple thus signifies the aging Old Covenant awaiting the blessings of the New. [Back to text.](#)



1:7 barren: This was sometimes considered a sign of I God's disfavor (Gen 30:2), while a fruitful womb was viewed as a divine blessing (Deut 7:14; Ps 128:3-4). • Elizabeth, along with Sarah (Gen 11:30), Rebekah (Gen 25:21), Rachel (Gen 29:31), Samson's mother (Judg 13:2), and Hannah (1 Sam 1:2), suffered barrenness until God miraculously blessed her with a child. John's birth thus falls in line with Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Samson, and Samuel, all of whom were covenant representatives in Israel. [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Informed ([Lk 1:4](#))

Katecheo (Gk.): means to "instruct" or "teach orally" and is the basis of our English word "catechism". The verb is used eight times in the NT. It is often linked with the early transmission of the gospel, when the apostles and their associates instructed believers by word of mouth. Luke writes his Gospel to a certain Theophilus, who has already been catechized in this way, in order to confirm and deepen his understanding of Jesus' life and teachings (Lk 1:4). Apollos had likewise learned the rudiments of Christian doctrine by

oral instruction (Acts 18:25). Paul employs this term years earlier when he encourages young Christians to assist their local catechists with financial support (Gal 6:6), and when he stresses that intelligible instruction in the faith is more profitable for God's people than the unintelligible speech of charismatic tongues (1 Cor 14:19).

1:9 temple of the Lord: The Jerusalem Temple is often the focus of Jesus' teaching and action in Luke (2:27, 37, 46; 4:9; 19:45; 20:1; 21:37; 23:45; 24:53). [Back to text.](#)

1:10 hour of incense: Also called the "hour of prayer" (Acts 3:1). Priests burned incense twice a day in the Temple, at the morning and evening sacrifices (Ex 30:7-8). The evening liturgy took place about 3 P.M. while crowds prayed in the Temple courts. Since most priests were honored to burn incense only once in their lifetime, this was the crowning moment of Zechariah's ministry. He would offer prayers and incense in the Temple's second holiest chamber, the Holy Place, and emerge to bless the people (1:21; Num 6:22-27). [See note on Lk 1:5.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:11 angel of the Lord: Angels play important roles in salvation history. **(1)** Angels are closely connected with worship. Since the Temple was an earthly model of God's heavenly sanctuary (Heb 8:1-5), the Israelites believed that priests officiated on earth just as the angels ministered in heaven (Is 6:1-6; Rev 8:2-6; 15:5-8). The Temple itself was adorned with crafted images of angels, e.g., cherubim (Ex 25:18-22; 1 Kings 6:23-36). **(2)** Angels deliver news of conception and childbirth, as with Ishmael (Gen 16:11), Isaac (Gen 18:10), and Samson (Judg 13:3-5). **(3)** Angels appear often in Luke (1:26; 2:9, 13; 22:43; 24:4) (CCC 332, 336). [Back to text.](#)

1:13 Do not be afraid: Words of reassurance reminiscent of OT visions (Gen 15:1; Dan 10:12, 19). **your prayer:** Zechariah prayed not only for the people, but for his and his wife's own dire circumstances, since they were elderly and still childless. **John:** A Hebrew name meaning "Yahweh has shown favor." [Back to text.](#)



1:15 no wine nor strong drink: An allusion to Num 6:3, indicating that John will be dedicated to the Lord as a Nazirite. He will thus refrain from intoxicating beverages, cutting his hair, and all contact with the dead (Num 6:1-12). Practically speaking, Nazirites lived an early form of

religious life and were the equivalent of Old Covenant monks and nuns. They could be priests or lay people, and their consecrated service could be temporary or lifelong. • John's dedication recalls that of Samson (Judg 13:4-7) and Samuel (1 Sam 1:11). Like these Nazirites, John will play an outstanding role in God's plan for Israel. **filled with the Holy Spirit:** To prepare Israel for the Lord (Lk 1:17), the Lord first prepares John with grace. He and the Virgin Mary were sanctified before birth (CCC 717). [See note on Lk 1:28](#). • John's consecration resembles the calling of Jeremiah from his mother's womb (Jer 1:5). [Back to text](#).



1:17 spirit and power of Elijah: An allusion to Mal 3:1 and 4:5-6. • Malachi announced the Lord's coming to Israel. Preparations for his arrival would be completed by a messenger like Elijah, who would preach repentance, restore the tribes of Israel, and work to heal broken families (Sir 48:110; Mt 11:13-15; CCC 523, 718-20). **to turn:** A biblical image for moral and spiritual repentance. See word study: [Repentance](#) at Mk 1:4. **a people prepared:** Luke later examines the significance of John's role through the lens of Is 40. [See note on Lk 3:4-6](#). [Back to text](#).

1:18 How shall I know this?: Unlike Mary in the following episode (1:45), Zechariah is hampered by doubt and does not receive the good news with faith. God strikes him mute as a temporary sign of discipline (1:20). [Back to text](#).



1:19 Gabriel: A Hebrew name meaning "God is mighty." Jewish and Christian tradition identify him as an archangel. Like Raphael, he is one of seven angels who minister **in the presence of God** (Tob 12:15; Rev 8:2). • In the OT, Gabriel interprets visions (Dan 8:15-16) and explains to Daniel events that will accompany the Messiah's coming (Dan 9:21-27). Gabriel thus stands at both ends of biblical prophecy: having foretold the Messiah's coming in the OT, he now delivers the message of his arrival in Jesus (Lk 1:26-38) and in John as his forerunner (1:13-17). [Back to text](#).



1:25 my reproach: God has lifted the burden of disappointment from Elizabeth. Although previously dishonored before **men**, she is now blessed with a child. [See note on Lk 1:7](#). • Elizabeth echoes the joyful

words of Rachel, who bore Joseph following years of barrenness (Gen 30:23). [Back to text.](#)

1:26 sixth month: Refers to the progress of Elizabeth's pregnancy (1:24, 36). **Nazareth:** A small village of Galilee in northern Palestine. To many, it was a town of little or no importance (Jn 1:46). [Back to text.](#)



1:28 Hail: Or "Rejoice!" It crowns the theme of joy and gladness that punctuates Luke's Infancy Narrative (1:14, 44, 47, 58; 2:10, 20). • The call to rejoice echoes OT passages that address Daughter Zion. In the prophets this refers to Mother Jerusalem, whose faithful children will rejoice in the messianic age because God has chosen to dwell in their midst (Joel 2:23-24; Zeph 3:14-17; Zech 9:9). Mary, chosen to be the virgin mother of the Messiah, is greeted with the same summons because she is the embodiment of faithful Israel and the most privileged recipient of Yahweh's messianic blessings. **full of grace:** This is the only biblical instance where an angel addresses someone by a title instead of a personal name. Two considerations help to clarify its meaning. **(1)** The expression *full of grace* is rooted in Catholic tradition and traced to St. Jerome's translation of this verse in the Latin Vulgate. Although fundamentally accurate, it lacks some of the depth of the Greek original. Luke could have described her with the words *full of grace* (Gk. *plērēs charitos*) as he did of Stephen in Acts 6:8, yet here he uses a different expression (Gk. *kecharitōmenē*) that is even more revealing than the traditional rendering. It indicates that God has already "graced" Mary previous to this point, making her a vessel who "has been" and "is now" filled with divine life. **(2)** Alternative translations like "favored one" or "highly favored" are possible but inadequate. Because of the unparalleled role that Mary accepts at this turning point in salvation history, the best translation is the most exalted one. For God endowed Mary with an abundance of grace to prepare her for the vocation of divine motherhood and to make her a sterling example of Christian holiness (CCC 490-93, 722). • Gabriel's declaration points in the direction of Mary's Immaculate Conception. According to Pope Pius IX's 1854 definition *Ineffabilis Deus*, Luke's Annunciation narrative is an important indicator of Mary's lifelong holiness. God is her "Savior" (1:47) in the most perfect way possible: he sanctified Mary in the first instance of

her conception and preserved her entirely from sin and even from the inclination toward sin that we experience. [Back to text.](#)

1:31 Jesus: A Hebrew name meaning "Yahweh saves" (CCC 430). [See note on Mt 1:21.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:32-33 Jesus is the awaited Messiah from David's dynastic line (2 Sam 7:12-16; Ps 89:26-29; 132:11; Is 9:6-7). Following Jewish custom, Joseph's legal fatherhood was equivalent to natural fatherhood in matters of inheritance. Joseph thus confers the privileges of a Davidic descendant upon Jesus (1:27), whereas God the Father anoints him as king (Mk 16:19) (CCC 437). [Back to text.](#)



1:33 the house of Jacob: i.e., the kingdom of Israel. • Since the eighth century B.C., the northern tribes of Israel had been scattered among the Gentiles (2 Kings 17:21-23), and since the sixth century B.C., many from the southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin had likewise lived in exile throughout the ancient world (2 Kings 25:8-11). The prophets lamented this tribal disintegration of God's people but announced a future reunion of Jacob's descendants under the Davidic Messiah (Is 11:12; Ezek 37:15-24; Hos 1:10-11; Amos 9:9-12). Jesus, says Gabriel, is this anointed Davidic ruler who will re-gather the tribes of Israel, together with all nations, into his glorious kingdom (Mt 28:18-20; Acts 15:15-18; Rom 11:25-27) (CCC 709-10). [See note on Lk 4:43.](#) [Back to text.](#)



1:34 How can this be: Or, better, "How will this be . . . ?" Mary is not questioning God's ability to give her a son, but she is inquiring as to how such a plan will unfold. **I have no husband:** The Greek text literally reads "I do not know man", which refers to Mary's *virginal* status rather than her *marital* status. Her concern is not that she is unmarried but that she is a virgin at present and that she intends to remain one in the future. The announcement of a miraculous conception (1:31) thus causes Mary to wonder aloud how God will bless her with a son and yet preserve her virginal purity. Her words are inexplicable otherwise. For nothing about the angel's announcement should have perplexed Mary—whose betrothal to Joseph was already a legally binding marriage—unless she intended to forego ordinary sexual relations even as a married woman. [See note on Mt 1:18.](#) • According to certain Church Fathers, such as St. Gregory of Nyssa

and St. Augustine, Mary had previously taken a vow of lifelong virginity. See notes on Mt 1:25 and 12:46. [Back to text.](#)



1:35 overshadow you: The conception of Jesus within the womb of Mary will be entirely supernatural, i.e., the result of God's creative work within her (Mt 1:18-25; CCC 497, 723). • The expression used by the angel is the same used in the Greek version of Ex 40:35 to describe how Yahweh "overshadowed" the Tabernacle, making it his dwelling place in Israel. • Gabriel mentions the **Holy Spirit**, the **Most High**, and the **Son of God**, offering Mary a glimpse of the Trinity. [Back to text.](#)



1:37 nothing will be impossible: Gabriel's reassurance casts its light over the entirety of Lk 1. He insists that God can surmount every obstacle to motherhood, including the infertility of Elizabeth and the virginity of Mary (CCC 269, 273). • The statement carries overtones of the OT, especially Gen 18:14 and Jer 32:17. [Back to text.](#)

1:38 let it be to me: Mary freely and actively embraces God's invitation to bear the Messiah. The Greek expression denotes more than mere passive acceptance, indicating that she *wishes* or *desires* to fulfill God's will in her life. Unlike Zechariah, she welcomes the angel's words uninhibited by doubt (CCC 148, 494, 2617). [See note on Lk 1:18.](#) [Back to text.](#)



1:41 leaped in her womb: Elizabeth's experience parallels that of Rebekah in Gen 25. • Both Luke and the Greek OT use the same verb (Gk. *skirtao*) to describe children leaping or stirring in the womb. As Rebekah's experience signaled the preeminence of Jacob over his older brother Esau (Gen 25:22-23), so the similar experience of Elizabeth was a sign that Jesus would be greater than his older cousin John (3:16; Jn 3:27-30). [Back to text.](#)



1:42 Blessed are you: Elizabeth blesses Mary with words once spoken to Jael and Judith in the OT (Judg 5:24-27; Jud 13:18). • These women were blessed for their heroic faith and courage in warding off enemy armies hostile to Israel. Victory was assured when both Jael and Judith assassinated the opposing military commanders with a mortal blow

to the head. Mary will follow in their footsteps, yet in her case both the enemy destroyed and the victory won will be greater, for she will bear the Savior who crushes the head of sin, death, and the devil underfoot (Gen 3:15; 1 Jn 3:8) (CCC 64, 489). [Back to text.](#)



1:43 mother of my Lord: This title reveals the twin mysteries of Jesus' divinity and Mary's divine maternity (CCC 449, 495). Note that every occurrence of the word *Lord* in the immediate (1:45) and surrounding context refers to God (1:28, 32, 38, 46, 58, 68). • Mary's divine motherhood was the first Marian dogma expounded by the Church. The Ecumenical Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431) defined her unique relationship to Christ and honored her with the title "Mother of God" (Gk. *Theotokos*). This was reaffirmed in 1964 at Vatican II (*Lumen Gentium*, 53). [Back to text.](#)



1:46-55 The *Magnificat* (Latin for "magnifies") is a hymn of praise and a recital of God's covenant faithfulness. Mary extols humility (1:48) and rejoices in God's blessings on the lowly (1:47, 52-53). The song also introduces the theme of God's "mercy" (1:50, 54), which flows into the following episode (1:58, 72, 78) (CCC 2097, 2619). •The *Magnificat* is imbued with themes and imagery from the OT. It closely resembles the Song of Hannah in 1 Sam 2:1-10, while other passages illumine the background (Ps 89:10, 13; 98:3; 111:9; Sir 33:12; Hab 3:18). [Back to text.](#)



1:59 to circumcise: Jewish parents customarily name their male children on the day of their circumcision, the **eighth day** after birth (2:21). These were events of great importance, signaling the beginning of the child's covenant membership in Israel (Gen 17:9-14; Lev 12:3). [Back to text.](#)

1:64 his tongue loosed: Following nine months of silence, Zechariah experiences a dramatic recovery (1:20). He no longer doubts but accepts with joy the arrival of the child (1:68-79). [Back to text.](#)

Mary, Ark of the Covenant

Luke's Gospel tells us more about the Mother of Jesus than any other book in the New Testament. Most of this information is packed within his first two chapters, where Luke strings together some of the most beautiful traditions we have about her life and mission. The deeper we delve into Luke's narrative, the more we appreciate the way in which Luke tells us the story of Mary. One example of this is found in the story of the Visitation. On one level, it tells of a joyous encounter between two expectant mothers; on another, it recalls memorable stories told in the Old Testament about the Ark of the Covenant. By alluding to these ancient traditions, Luke expands the vision of the careful reader considerably. For he leads us to see Mary as the Ark of God's New Covenant and implies that the sacred Ark of the Old Covenant merely prefigured a more wonderful Ark to come: the Mother of the divine Messiah.

One tradition that Luke draws upon is from 2 Samuel. He intentionally sets up the subtle but significant parallels between Mary's Visitation with Elizabeth and David's effort to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem narrated in 2 Sam 6. When Luke tells us that Mary "arose and went" into the Judean hill country to visit her kinswoman (Lk 1:39), he reminds us of how David "arose and went" into the same region centuries earlier to retrieve the Ark (2 Sam 6:2). Upon Mary's arrival, Elizabeth is struck by the same sense of awe and unworthiness before Mary (Lk 1:43) that David felt standing before the Ark of the Covenant (2 Sam 6:9). Parallels continue as the joy surrounding this great encounter causes the infant John to leap with excitement (Lk 1:41), much as David danced with excitement before the Ark (2 Sam 6:16). Finally, Luke adds that Mary stayed in the "house of Zechariah" for "three months" (Lk 1:40, 56), recalling how the Ark of Covenant was temporarily stationed in the "house of Obed-edom" for a waiting period of "three months" (2 Sam 6:11). Taken together, these parallels show us that Mary now assumes a role in salvation history that was once played by the Ark of the Covenant. Like this golden chest, she is a sacred vessel where the Lord's presence dwells intimately with his people.

Luke also draws upon a second tradition from the Books of Chronicles. This time he brings into his story a highly significant expression once connected with the Ark. The term shows up in Lk 1:42, where Elizabeth bursts out with an exuberant cry at the arrival of Mary and her Child. Although the Greek verb translated as "exclaimed" seems ordinary enough, it is hardly ever used in the Bible. In fact, it is found only here in the entire New Testament. Its presence in the Greek Old Testament is likewise sparse, appearing only five times. Why is this important? Because every time the expression is used in the Old Testament, it forms part of the stories surrounding the Ark of the Covenant. In particular, it refers to the melodic sounds made by Levitical singers and musicians when they glorify the Lord in song. It thus describes the "exulting" voice of instruments that were played before the Ark as David carried it in procession to Jerusalem (1 Chron 15:28; 16:4-5) and as Solomon transferred the Ark to its final resting place in the Temple (2 Chron 5:13). Alluding to these episodes, Luke connects this same expression with the melodic cry of another Levitical descendant, the aged Elizabeth (Lk 1:5). She too lifts up her voice in liturgical praise, not before the golden chest, but before Mary. Luke's remarkable familiarity with these ancient stories enables him to select even a single word that will whisper to his readers that this young Mother of the Messiah is the new Ark of the Covenant.

For the reader with eyes to see and ears to hear, Luke has given us a vision of the Virgin Mary that becomes ever more glorious the deeper we dig into the Scriptures. Our ability to see Mary as he did depends in part on our knowledge of the Old Testament and in part on our sensitivity to Luke's skillful use of it. By choosing his words and phrases carefully, he is able to weave various strands of biblical tradition into his narrative, adding beauty and depth to his already elegant prose. Little wonder the Church's liturgical and theological traditions have so often described Mary as the Ark of the New Covenant. This vision is not merely the fruit of mystical speculation from a later age. It is already embedded within the Infancy Narrative of Luke's Gospel. [«Back to Luke 1:1.](#)

1:68-79 The *Benedictus* (Latin for "blessed") praises God for his faithfulness to Israel and his careful orchestration of salvation history. At the climax of this plan is Jesus, whose coming fulfills God's covenant oaths **(1)** to establish David's throne forever (2 Sam 7:12-16; Ps 89:1-4, 26-37), and **(2)** to bless all nations through Abraham's descendants (Gen 22:16-18) (CCC 422, 706). [Back to text.](#)

1:69 a horn: A symbol of strength (Ps 18:2; Sir 47:11; Mic 4:13). Zechariah applies it to Jesus as the Lord's Anointed One (Ps 132:17; cf. Ezek 29:21). [See note on Lk 1:32-33.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:72 remember his holy covenant: God's covenant oath to Abraham (Gen 22:16-18) nears its fulfillment in the preparatory role played by John's parents. Even their names symbolize that God *remembers* (Zechariah) his *oath* (Elizabeth) and will soon fulfill it through the mission of John and Jesus. [See note on Lk 1:5.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:76 prophet of the Most High: John's vocation is closely linked to Jesus, yet their titles distinguish between them: John is the *prophet* of the Most High, whereas Jesus is the *Son* of the Most High (1:32). [Back to text.](#)



1:78 the day: Also translated "the dayspring", or simply "the rising" (textual note *f*). • In light of the OT, Zechariah's words can be viewed from different angles. **(1)** The "rising" is used idiomatically to describe the rising sun at dawn or the stars at night. Several texts draw upon this notion to depict the Messiah as a light or star (Num 24:17; Is 9:2; Mal 4:2). **(2)** The "rising" also connects with Jer 23:5 and Zech 3:8; 6:12 of the Greek OT. In these texts, the same expression depicts the Messiah as a branch that rises or sprouts from the royal stock of David. Since Zechariah mentions David (1:69) and the Messiah's light (1:79) in this context, both connotations are possible. [See note on Mt 2:23.](#) [Back to text.](#)

2:1 Caesar Augustus: The Roman emperor from 27 B.C. to A.D. 14. He was famous for establishing peace in the empire, the noted *Pax Romana* ("Roman Peace"), and was hailed as a "god" and "savior" by his subjects. Luke indicates that Caesar's **decree** was caught up into God's plan, since it brought Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem to fulfill the prophecy about the Messiah's birthplace (Mic 5:2; Mt 2:3-6). **be enrolled:** i.e., registered by a census. In Judea, custom required families to be enlisted in their ancestral hometowns (2:3-4). [Back to text.](#)

2:4 Bethlehem: A small Judean village about 90 miles south of **Nazareth**. It was known principally as the hometown of King David and the site of his royal anointing (1 Sam 16:1-13). [See note on Mt 2:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)



2:7 first-born: A legal term linked with a son's social standing and rights of inheritance (Deut 21:15-17). It does not imply that Mary had other children after Jesus, only that she had none before him (CCC 500). As the only begotten One, Jesus is also the first-born Son of the Father (Jn 1:18; Col 1:15). [See note on Mt 12:46.](#) **swaddling cloths:** Newborns were wrapped with strips of cloth to prevent movement in their arms and legs. • Luke's description recalls King Solomon's birth (Wis 7:4-6). **a manger:** A feeding trough for horses, cattle, etc. • *Allegorically* (St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Catena of the Greek Fathers*): the setting of Christ's birth points us to the Eucharist. Since through sin man becomes like the beasts, Christ lies in the trough where animals feed, offering them, not hay, but his own body as life-giving bread. [Back to text.](#)



2:8 shepherds: Religious Jews often frowned upon this occupation. • As with these men, God favored numerous shepherds in the OT, including Abel (Gen 4:2-4), Jacob (Gen 31:3-13), Joseph (Gen 37:2-9), Moses (Ex 3:1-6), David (1 Sam 16:11-13), and Amos (Amos 1:1). [Back to text.](#)

2:9 glory of the Lord: The bright and fiery cloud of God's presence (Ex 40:35; Num 9:15-17; CCC 697). [Back to text.](#)

The Census of Quirinius

THE opening verses of Luke 2 have long baffled interpreters of the Bible. Despite Luke's intention to set the birth of Jesus on the timeline of world history, many scholars claim that Lk 2:1-2 are the most historically inaccurate verses of the entire Gospel! It is said that Caesar Augustus never ordered an empire-wide census (Lk 2:1) and that the census of the Roman governor of Syria, Quirinius, did not occur until A.D. 6, a full decade after what many accept as the date of Jesus' birth (c. 64 B.C.). If Caesar's decree is historically suspect and Quirinius' census is chronologically too late to have brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, how can Luke bind these events together to set the stage for the first Christmas?

Various explanations for this have been proposed by scholars. Some think Luke was confused about his facts. Others suggest Luke was giving us a rough sketch of these early events without intending to be precise about chronological details. Still others rush to Luke's defense as a reliable historian but are forced to reconstruct the history of the period in ways that are not easily reconciled with the historical data currently available. Thankfully, recent research is beginning to shed more light on this issue. It involves a reinterpretation of three essential pieces of the historical puzzle: the year of *Herod the Great's death*, the nature of *Caesar's decree*, and the role of *Quirinius*.

1. A majority of scholars believe that Herod the Great, the ruler of Palestine, died in the spring of 4 B.C., soon after a lunar eclipse in March of that year. Widespread agreement on this date has led modern interpreters to place Jesus' birth a year or two earlier, between 6 and 4 B.C.—after all, Herod was still alive at the time of the Nativity (Mt 2:1-18). Objections are now being raised against this view. In fact, several scholars are favoring a date for Herod's death in the early spring of 1 B.C., soon after a lunar eclipse in January of that year. Interestingly, this alternative chronology would push the date of Christ's birth into full agreement with the testimony of the early Christians. By calculating the Nativity according to the years of Caesar Augustus' reign, several Church Fathers, such as Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Hippolytus of Rome, Eusebius, and Epiphanius, fix a date for Christ's birth between 3 and 2 B.C. If accepted,

this chronological revision moves the Nativity closer to the end of the first century B.C. and opens new possibilities for understanding the circumstances described by Luke.

2. Caesar's decree has long been a problematic detail in Luke's narrative (Lk 2:1). There is clear evidence that Augustus initiated registrations of Roman citizens at different points during his career, but there is said to be no indication that any was taken in the closing years of the first century B.C. or that such a census would have embraced the entire empire. Since most registrations in the Roman world were taken for taxing purposes, it is further argued that Caesar would never have taken a census of Palestine while Herod the Great ruled the region as king and collected taxes of his own. These commonly accepted views are currently coming under fire. The Jewish historian Josephus recounts that during the last years of Herod's rule, Judea was required to swear an oath of loyalty to Caesar. Archeological evidence confirms that the same type of oath was sworn elsewhere in the empire around 3 B.C. This might well mean that the registration described in Lk 2:1 involved an oath of allegiance sworn to the emperor, not a census taken for the purpose of taxation. A later Christian historian named Orosius (fifth century A.D.) says explicitly that Augustus required every person in every Roman province to be enrolled with a public oath. His description of the event strongly suggests that this oath was required in the years just prior to 2 B.C., when the Roman people hailed Augustus as the first of all men. Even Caesar Augustus tells us in his personal writings that the whole Roman world had professed him to be the "Father" of the empire by the time this title was officially given to him in 2 B.C. These converging lines of evidence make it possible that the census of Luke 2 was not a registration of residents to be taxed but a public enrollment of subjects expressing their loyalty to the reigning emperor.

3. The role of Quirinius is perhaps the most difficult detail to interpret in Luke's narrative (Lk 2:2). It is well established that he initiated a taxation census soon after he was appointed the provincial legate of Syria in A.D. 6. Yet evidence is lacking that he held this position more than once or that he ever conducted more than one census. How, then, can Luke associate Quirinius with a census that occurred many years earlier, when Jesus was born? The most helpful clue might be found in Luke's own words. The Greek expression that he uses in Lk 2:2 for the governing role of Quirinius is the exact description he uses for Pontius Pilate's governing role in Lk 3:1.

Since Pilate "governed" as a regional procurator and was not the legate of an entire Roman province (like Syria), it leaves open the possibility that Luke is referring to an administrative role assumed by Quirinius that had nothing to do with his later position as an imperial legate. This possibility is strengthened by the Church Father Justin Martyr, who states that Quirinius was a "procurator" in Judea (not Syria) at the time of Jesus' birth! It likewise enables us to make greater sense of the testimony of another early Christian writer, Tertullian, who says that Saturninus (not Quirinius) was the official legate of Syria at the time of the Nativity. It may be that Quirinius was an administrator of a Judean census (i.e., the 3 B.C. oath-registration) several years before conducting another census for taxation in A.D. 6.

Although there are gaps in this reconstruction, and much remains uncertain, the cumulative force of the evidence is significant. Herod's death, Caesar's decree, and the governing position of Quirinius are all historical factors that, when reconsidered, yield a more coherent portrait of the events surrounding the Nativity. This would mean that Jesus was born between 3 and 2 B.C., the enrollment of Joseph and Mary was a registration of their loyalty to the Roman Caesar, and the documentation of this oath was organized and implemented in Judea by Quirinius several years before he was made the official governor of Syria. This reconstruction not only eases the chronological tensions in Lk 2:1-2, it helps to confirm Luke's reliability as a historian as well as the early Church's reliability as a channel of historical traditions. «[Back to Luke 2:1.](#)

2:11 Savior . . . Christ . . . Lord: Titles that encapsulate the mystery of Jesus and his mission. As Savior, Jesus rescues mankind from sin (Mt 1:21; Jn 4:42); as Christ, he is the awaited Messiah and king descended from David (1:32-33; Jn 1:49); as Lord, he sits enthroned at God's right hand and rules over all nations (Acts 2:34-36; Phil 2:11). See word study: [Christ](#) at Mk 14:61. [Back to text.](#)

2:13 heavenly host: An entire army of God's angels (CCC 333). **praising God:** A joyous note ringing throughout Luke (2:20; 5:26; 7:16; 13:13; 17:15; 18:43; 24:53). [Back to text.](#)

2:14 Glory to God: A short hymn commonly known by its Latin title, *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*. **peace:** Not the mere absence of conflict but a peace rooted in one's reconciliation with God. Jesus' bestowal of peace is prominent in Luke (7:50; 8:48; 19:38; Jn 14:27). [See note on Mt 5:9](#). **with whom he is pleased:** Similar words resurface at Jesus' Baptism in Lk 3:22. This suggests a link between the two episodes: those baptized into Christ are those who are pleasing and at peace with God (Acts 2:38-41; Rom 5:1; Eph 2:11-19) (CCC 537). [Back to text.](#)

2:19 Mary . . . in her heart: Mary contemplates Jesus' birth and childhood, not from a distance, but as a participant in the mystery (1:35, 43; 2:51). Luke's insight suggests that Mary is either the direct or the indirect source of his information, since she alone could relate these hidden details of the story. [Back to text.](#)

2:21 circumcised: Like John, Jesus is named at his circumcision (1:59-60). The event initiates his full solidarity with God's covenant people, Israel (Gen 17:9-14; CCC 527). [Back to text.](#)



2:22 purification: The birth of a male child disqualifies an Israelite woman from touching any holy object or approaching the Temple for 40 days, after which time she must offer sacrifice in Jerusalem (Lev 12:1-8). Strictly speaking, these offerings cleanse women of legal impurity and have no connection with moral failures or guilt. Mary here gives the sacrifice of the poor: two "turtledoves", or two "pigeons" (2:24; Lev 12:8). • Several Church Fathers hold that Mary had no legal impurity to atone for. She nevertheless conformed herself to the Mosaic Law to avoid scandalizing others. Her submission was similar to that of Jesus, who was sinless yet received John's baptism of repentance (Mt 3:13-15). [Back to text.](#)



2:23 Every male . . . to the Lord: A paraphrase of Ex 13:2. It implies either that Jesus is consecrated as a priest or that he was purchased from the Levites by a redemption price of five shekels (Num 18:15-16). Either way, Mary and Joseph fulfill the Law faithfully (2:22, 24, 27) and completely (2:39). **called holy:** This fulfills the angel's announcement in 1:35. • Jesus' presentation parallels the OT dedication of Samuel, who was also taken by devout parents to the Temple (1 Sam 1:24-27). Since Samuel was offered to God to become a priest (1 Sam 1:11, 22), Luke may imply the same of Jesus' dedication. [Back to text.](#)



2:25 consolation of Israel: i.e., the time when many believed that Yahweh would rescue his people from Gentile rule (Romans) and reestablish the glorious kingdom of David in Jerusalem (1:71; 2:38). These hopes were linked with the coming Messiah (Mk 11:10; Acts 1:6). • Simeon's words evoke several Isaian promises along this line (Is 40:1; 52:9; 61:2-3). [See note on Lk 4:43.](#) [Back to text.](#)



2:29-32 Simeon's *Nunc Dimittis* (Latin for "now dismiss") extols the Child as the crown of God's covenant promises. • The oracle is a tapestry of Isaian prophecy fulfilled in Jesus. First, Jesus embodies God's **salvation** (2:30), recalling Is 40:5, 46:13, and 52:9-10. He is also a **light shining to the Gentiles**, evoking Is 42:6 and 49:6. As Messiah, Jesus is the covenant representative who takes Israel's vocation upon himself and completes the mission that was left unfulfilled at his coming, i.e., to pour out blessings on all nations (CCC 529). [Back to text.](#)

2:34 the fall and rising: Simeon's second oracle casts a shadow over the Child's future. He is the Messiah who will draw a line in the sand of **Israel**, causing the nation to divide itself by taking a stand for or against him (20:17-18; 1 Pet 2:6-8; CCC 587). Those who reject him stand self-condemned, while those who embrace him will be blessed (6:20-23, 4649). [Back to text.](#)

2:35 a sword will pierce: An advance glimpse of Calvary, when the rejection of Jesus by sinners will bear heavily on his Mother. Attached to

her vocation is a grim expectation of maternal suffering (CCC 618). [Back to text.](#)

2:36 a prophetess: Like Miriam (Ex 15:20), Deborah (Judg 4:4), and Huldah (2 Kings 22:14) in the OT, Anna is a recognized interpreter of God's will for Israel. Other NT prophetesses appear in Acts 21:9. [Back to text.](#)

2:38 redemption of Jerusalem: Anna awaits God's deliverance for Israel and the Holy City. Her expectations mirror that of Simeon. [See note on Lk 2:25.](#) [Back to text.](#)

2:41-52 Luke alone records this episode of Jesus' boyhood. It stands off from the rest of his story, surrounded by years of silence on both sides. In addition, it brings Luke's Infancy Narrative full circle, so that his story begins and ends in the Temple (1:9; 2:46) (CCC 531-34). [Back to text.](#)

2:41 Passover: Jewish males were expected to travel to Jerusalem for three feasts each year: Passover, Weeks, and Booths (Deut 16:16). The yearly participation of Mary and Joseph highlights their faithfulness to God's Law. [Back to text.](#)



2:46 After three days: A time of great anxiety for Mary and Joseph. Thinking Jesus was with their caravan of Galilean pilgrims, they left the city without him. **listening . . . asking:** Jewish religious instruction often involved posing questions and wrestling with them in the light of Scripture. Jesus' insights as a boy astonished even the learned rabbis (2:47).
• *Allegorically* (St. Ambrose, *In Lucam*): the discovery of Jesus in the Temple prefigures his Resurrection, when Christ will be three days absent in death, only to be found again in the flesh. The anxiety following his burial will likewise give way to joy and relief at his rising. [Back to text.](#)

2:49 Did you not know: Jesus is not rebuking Mary and Joseph, as though they had done something wrong, but instructs them on how their parental role must be subordinate to the will of his divine Father. His parents do have an important part to play in his mission, as indicated in the subsequent context, where Jesus submits himself to their leadership and honors them with the faithful obedience of a son (2:51). **my Father's house:** Literally, "in that of my Father". This could refer to the Temple specifically or to his mission from the Father more generally. [Back to text.](#)



2:52 Jesus increased: The human development of Jesus was a process of building character and acquiring experiential knowledge that kept pace with his physical and psychological growth (Prov 3:3-4). At the end of these developmental stages, Christ's life as a man was a perfect reflection of his divine Sonship (CCC 472). [See note on Mt 24:36](#). • Luke's description recalls young Samuel's maturation in 1 Sam 2:26. [Back to text](#).

3:1-2 Luke situates John the Baptist's ministry on the timeline of world events, intending readers to view him in the light of both civil and religious history. He moves from a wide focus to a more narrow one by considering the Roman emperor (Tiberius), Palestine's local rulers (Pilate, Herod, Philip, Lysanias), and Israel's priestly leaders (Annas, Caiaphas). [Back to text](#).

3:1 Tiberius Caesar: The Roman Emperor from A.D. 14 to 37. His **fifteenth year** in office falls between A.D. 27 and 29. **Pontius Pilate:** The Roman procurator who governed Judea, Samaria, and Idumea from A.D. 26 to 36. **Herod:** Herod Anti-pas, son of Herod the Great. He governed Galilee and Perea from 4/1 B.C. until A.D. 39, while his half-brother **Philip** governed the regions northeast of Galilee from 4/1 B.C. until A.D. 34. Otherwise unknown, **Lysanias** governed the territory north of Palestine called **Abilene**. [Back to text](#).

3:2 the high-priesthood: Israel's high priests held office one at a time. By NT times, Roman authorities appointed and deposed these priests at will. **Annas:** Ministered from A.D. 6 until his replacement in A.D. 15. His influence in Jerusalem endured long after his term of office (Jn 18:13, 24; Acts 4:6). **Caiaphas:** The son-in-law of Annas who ministered as high priest from A.D. 18 to 36. [Back to text](#).



3:4-6 Isaiah's words announce the restoration of Israel and the world (Is 40:3-5). John is the desert **voice** calling Israel to **prepare** for the Lord's coming. Just as roads were improved for the procession of ancient kings, so John prepares for Jesus' arrival and the **salvation** of **all flesh**. • By citing the opening chapter of Isaiah's central section (chaps. 40-55), Luke cues an entire symphony of biblical promises to be fulfilled by the Lord. He will rescue the poor and oppressed (Is 41:17; 42:7; 49:13), pour out the Spirit (44:3), restore Israel (43:5-7; 48:20; 49:5), come to Jerusalem as King

(40:9-10; 52:7-10), destroy his enemies (41:11-13; 47:1-15), and show mercy to his children (43:25; 44:22; 55:7). At the summit of this stands the messianic Servant, whose mission is to bless the nations (42:1-4; 49:1-6) and atone for sin (50:4-9; 52:13-53:12). All of this is fulfilled by Jesus (2:32; 22:37; 24:46; Acts 3:13). [Back to text.](#)

3:8 as our father: Israel traced its ancestry to **Abraham** (Gen 17:3-5; Is 51:2). Nevertheless, John warns that racial descent does not guarantee God's favor, since Abraham's true children are those who imitate his persevering faith (Jn 8:39-40; Rom 4:16). [Back to text.](#)

3:10-14 John directs his message to all persons and professions. The spiritual renewal he calls for entails, among other things, a return to social justice (3:11, 14), honesty (3:13), and generosity (3:11) (CCC 2447). See word study: [Repentance](#) at Mk 1:4. [Back to text.](#)

3:15 John . . . the Christ: The multitudes wonder if John is the Messiah. He denies this and speaks of the Messiah as one "mightier" than he (3:16; cf. Jn 1:20). [See note on Mk 1:5.](#) [Back to text.](#)

3:17 winnowing fork: According to common practice, grain was tossed into the air with a forked shovel. The wind blew away the useless chaff, while the grain kernels fell to the threshing floor to be gathered up and stored. God will similarly separate the righteous and wicked at the final Judgment (Ps 1:4-6; Mt 13:24-30). [Back to text.](#)

3:19 reproved by him: John denounced sin and summoned wrongdoers to be reconciled with God. In the case of **Herod** Antipas, John charged him with unlawfully marrying **Herodias**, the divorced wife of his brother Philip. [See note on Mk 6:18.](#) [Back to text.](#)



3:21-22 Luke abbreviates Jesus' Baptism, emphasizing that the **Holy Spirit** came **upon him** (4:18). This was to strengthen him for a later "baptism" of suffering (12:50). • Two OT oracles resonate in the background. **(1)** Isaiah 11:2 describes the "Spirit of the Lord" resting upon the Davidic Messiah, enabling him to judge the poor with "righteousness" and victoriously "slay the wicked" (Is 11:4). This fits Luke's portrait of Jesus as a minister to the poor (4:18; 6:20) and a Davidic king (1:32-33). **(2)** Isaiah 42:1 similarly portrays the "Spirit" descending upon the Servant of the Lord, who will minister to "the nations" (Is 42:6) and give sight to the "blind" (Is 42:7). Luke also depicts Jesus as the Servant who brings God's

saving light to all nations (1:32; 22:37; 24:47) (CCC 536, 1286). [Back to text.](#)

3:21 praying: Luke often depicts Jesus praying during significant moments in his life (6:12; 9:18, 28; 11:1; 22:32, 41; 23:46; CCC 2600). [Back to text.](#)

3:22 as a dove: Symbolic of peace and innocence (Gen 8:10-11; Mt 10:16; CCC 701). [See note on Mk 1:10.](#) [Back to text.](#)

3:23-38 There are several differences between the genealogies of Jesus in Luke (3:23-38) and Matthew (Mt 1:2-16) that make it difficult to reconcile them in every detail. Two considerations should be noted to put their differences in perspective. **(1)** Matthew traces Jesus' lineage forward from Abraham, the forefather of Israel (Mt 1:2), while Luke traces his ancestry backward to Adam, the father of humanity (3:38). Thus while Matthew is stressing the kingship of Jesus over Israel, Luke is stressing his qualifications to be the Savior of mankind as a whole. **(2)** The two genealogies are substantially the same from Abraham to David, but diverge significantly in the generations that span from David to Jesus. It is quite possible that Matthew records the ancestry of Jesus' legal father, Joseph, and Luke records that of his biological mother, Mary. In this case, Matthew gives us the *dynastic line* that passes from David to Joseph through King Solomon (Mt 1:6), and Luke gives us the *Davidic line* more generally as it passes from David to Mary through Nathan (3:31). As with his Infancy Narratives, Luke may have obtained information about Jesus' family traditions from Mary herself. See notes on Lk 2:19 and Mt 1:2-17. [Back to text.](#)



3:23 thirty years of age: Luke alone notes Jesus' adult age, which the Jews generally considered the age of maturity. • Earlier emphasis on Jesus' royal mission links him with David (1:32; 2:4), who was also thirty when anointed king (2 Sam 5:4). [Back to text.](#)

3:31 son of David: Jesus' Davidic ancestry qualifies him for kingship in Israel, and the Father will install him on David's throne for ever (1:32-33, 69; 18:38; 20:41-44). [See note on Lk 1:32-33.](#) [Back to text.](#)

3:38 son of God: The final link of the genealogy points to Adam's sonship at creation. In light of the similar statements about Jesus (1:35; 3:22), Luke implies a connection between the two: Christ is a new Adam

who regenerates a new humanity in the life and grace of God (Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:45). [Back to text.](#)



4:1-13 Luke's temptation narrative plots the course of Jesus' ministry. At question is the nature of his mission: What kind of Messiah will he be? Satan attempts to detour Jesus from the path of suffering to one of earthly power (4:6) and sensationalism (4:9-10). His final effort to tempt Jesus brings them to **Jerusalem** (4:9), which anticipates Passion Week and the defeat of Satan by the Cross (Heb 2:14-15; 1 Jn 3:8) (CCC 538-40, 2119). [See note on Mt 4:1-11.](#) • *Allegorically* (St. Ambrose, *In Lucam*): Christ goes into the wilderness to rescue man from his exile in sin. Since Adam's expulsion from Eden, man has languished in the desert of spiritual death, cut off from paradise. Christ pursues man in the desert to wrest him from the grip of the devil. [Back to text.](#)



4:2 forty days: The duration of Jesus' fast. • The number 40 is symbolic of probation and testing in the Bible. It is linked with the flood (Gen 7:4, 17), Moses' fast on Mt. Sinai (Ex 34:28), Israel's journey in the desert (Deut 8:2), the twelve spies' inspection of Canaan (Num 14:34), Israel's oppression by the Philistines (Judg 13:1), Elijah's fasting (1 Kings 19:8), and Nineveh's opportunity to repent at the preaching of Jonah (Jon 3:4). [Back to text.](#)

4:13 until an opportune time: The devil's defeat is as yet incomplete. He will continue fighting against God's kingdom (11:17-22) and will mount an aggressive assault on Jesus in Gethsemane (22:3, 39-53). [Back to text.](#)

4:16 Nazareth: Jesus' boyhood home (2:51). [See note on Lk 1:26.](#)
synagogue: A small building used for worship and instruction in the Bible. Sabbath services were structured around the reading and exposition of the Law of Moses (Acts 15:21) and the prophets (4:17; Acts 13:15). [See note on Mt 4:23.](#) [Back to text.](#)



4:18-19 A reference to Is 61:1-2, with an additional excerpt from Is 58:6. Since many during NT times expected the Messiah to liberate Israel from the political domination of the Romans, the townspeople mistakenly thought these passages promised their national independence (CCC 439). •

Isaiah's oracle picks up the language of Lev 25 regarding the jubilee year. As part of Israel's economic legislation, a jubilee was celebrated every 50 years. It signaled the remission of debts, the release of slaves, and the return of ancestral property to its original family owners. Isaiah projects this jubilee celebration into the future when God will come to release Israel from its slavery (idols) and debt (guilt). Jesus follows the spirit of Isaiah when he announces liberation from sin, not from political or economic subjugation (Rom 6:6). Elsewhere in Luke the word **release** (Gk. *aphesis*) means "forgiveness" (1:77; 3:3; 24:47). [Back to text.](#)

4:18 good news to the poor: Christ reserves many blessings for the lowly and powerless (1:52; 6:20; 14:12-14; 16:19-26; 18:1-8; 19:8-10; CCC 544, 2443). [Back to text.](#)

4:22 Joseph's son?: People naturally considered Jesus the offspring of Joseph, unaware of his virginal conception by the Holy Spirit (1:34-35; 3:23). The Nazarenes were skeptical about Jesus' credentials and felt he was unqualified to inaugurate Israel's national liberation (Mk 6:1-3). [Back to text.](#)

4:24 no prophet is acceptable: Jesus places himself in the company of the OT prophets, many of whom were rejected and even killed by fellow Israelites (11:47; 13:33-34; Acts 7:52). [Back to text.](#)



4:25-30 Jesus recalls the mission of **Elijah** and **Elisha** to explain his own. • These prophets lived during dark times, when God looked unfavorably upon the northern kingdom of Israel and sent blessings to the Gentiles instead. Elijah was sent to a widow in **Sidon** (1 Kings 17:1-16), and Elisha cleansed a **Syrian** leper (2 Kings 5:1-14). Jesus declares that the "acceptable year of the Lord" (4:19) will likewise be a time of blessing, even outside of Israel. This collided with Jewish perspectives that anticipated only punishment for Gentile nations. [Back to text.](#)

4:29 out of the city: The crowd probably intended to stone Jesus as a false teacher (Deut 13:10; Acts 7:58). [Back to text.](#)

4:31 Capernaum: The headquarters of Jesus' Galilean ministry (Mt 4:13; Mk 2:1). The town lies on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee and thrived on its fishing industry. [Back to text.](#)

4:36 with authority and power: Many popular exorcists during NT times recited long incantations and used odorous roots to expel demons

(Wis 7:20; Mt 12:27; Acts 19:13). Jesus, however, merely speaks a **word** and the spirits depart. Exorcism played a pivotal role in his campaign against Satan's kingdom (4:41; 8:28-29; 9:42; 11:14-20) (CCC 550). [Back to text.](#)

4:38-39 The healing of Peter's **mother-in-law** highlights the power of Jesus' word. Just as he vanquishes demons by rebuking them (4:35, 41), so Jesus **rebuked** the woman's illness. Her immediate recovery is evidenced by her hospitality. [Back to text.](#)



4:43 kingdom of God: A leading theme in the Gospels. It is mentioned more than 30 times in Luke. • The kingdom of Christ is closely connected with the ancient kingdom of David. For centuries David's empire lay in ruins, existing only in the minds of the prophets who foretold its glorious restoration by the Messiah (Is 9:6-7; Amos 9:11; Mk 11:10; Acts 1:6). Jesus now comes as the messianic heir to resurrect this fallen kingdom in a spiritual way, ruling from his throne at the Father's right hand (Mk 16:19; Acts 2:33-36). His everlasting reign in the heavenly Jerusalem thus fulfills God's covenant oath to establish David's throne for all time (1:32-33; Ps 89:3-4). Like David, Christ appoints a cabinet of royal ministers (apostles) to manage the daily affairs of the kingdom (22:28-30; 2 Sam 8:15-18; 1 Kings 4:1-6). Even the international scope of Christ's kingdom was prefigured in the Davidic empire, which not only ruled over the tribes of Israel but extended its dominion over other nations as well (2 Sam 8:1-14; 1 Kings 4:20-21) (CCC 543, 551-53). [See note on Mt 16:19.](#) • According to Vatican II, the kingdom of God is mysteriously present in the Church, where Christ reigns as king and shepherds his people through the Magisterium (*Lumen Gentium*, 3). The kingdom will reach its full perfection in heaven (Jn 18:36; 2 Tim 4:18; CCC 541). [Back to text.](#)

4:44 Judea: Sometimes denotes all of Palestine in Luke, including Galilee (1:5; 7:17; 23:5). [Back to text.](#)

5:1 lake of Gennesaret: Also called the Sea of Galilee (Mt 4:18) or the Sea of Tiberias (Jn 6:1). [Back to text.](#)

5:5 at your word: Though exhausted from a night of unsuccessful fishing, Peter places his faith in Christ, despite the apparent odds against catching anything. [Back to text.](#)

5:8 I am a sinful man: Peter's imperfections seem magnified to him in the presence of divine holiness (Gen 18:27; Is 6:5; CCC 208). [Back to text.](#)

5:10 James and John: Zebedee's sons enjoy a close relationship with Jesus (8:51; 9:28). **you will be catching men:** Peter's occupation points to his future mission, when Christ will send him and the other apostles to preach the gospel (Mt 28:18-20; Jn 21:15-17). Peter himself will play a leading role among the Twelve (22:31, 32; Acts 1:15-20; 2:14-40; 15:7-11). [Back to text.](#)

5:11 they left everything: Luke's Gospel stresses that Christian discipleship demands a loose attachment to worldly possessions and a willingness to part with them if necessary (5:28; 12:33; 14:33; 18:22). [Back to text.](#)

5:12 leprosy: An infectious skin disease that was damaging at several levels. **(1)** Physically, the disease could be painful and sometimes fatal. **(2)** Socially, the Law required lepers to be quarantined outside of Israelite society (Lev 13:45-46). **(3)** Religiously, lepers were ritually unclean and thus unable to participate in worship (Lev 13:3, 8). The combined weight of these burdens was extreme, and nothing would be more welcome than healing and cleansing. [Back to text.](#)

5:13 touched him: It was unthinkable for a Jew to touch a leprous outcast. Jesus nevertheless crosses this boundary and reverses the expected outcome: instead of contracting ritual uncleanness himself, he cleanses the leper of his ailment by the very act of touching him. This shows that Jesus brings into the world a new form of holiness that overpowers even defilement and disease. [See note on Mt 8:1-9:38.](#) [Back to text.](#)

5:14 as Moses commanded: The Law required lepers to be examined by a Levitical priest (Lev 14:1-9). Once a healing was verified, the former leper would offer a sacrifice tailored to his financial situation (Lev 14:10-32). This procedure restored him to full covenant participation in Israel. [See note on Mt 8:4.](#) [Back to text.](#)



5:16 he withdrew: Jesus does not want people to think he is merely a wonder-worker. [See note on Mk 1:44.](#) **prayed:** Solitary prayer is part of Jesus' teaching (Mt 6:5-6) and constant practice (9:18; Mk 1:35) (CCC 2602). [See note on Lk 3:21.](#) • *Morally* (St. Gregory Nazianzen): Christ serves as a model for both the active and the contemplative life, since we

see in his example both the dignity of labor and the higher duty of laying aside work for prayer. [Back to text.](#)

5:17 Pharisees: Members of a Jewish renewal movement in Palestine, stringent in their obedience to the Law and concern for legal purity. They are often the accusers and enemies of Jesus (5:30; 6:2, 7; 11:37-54; 16:14). See topical essay: *Who Are the Pharisees?* at Mk 2. **teachers of the law:** Also called "scribes" (Mt 9:3; Mk 2:6). [Back to text.](#)

5:21 forgive sins: Jerusalem's Temple and priesthood were the official channels of forgiveness under the Old Covenant. Jesus challenges this system, offering reconciliation with God by his own authority and on his own terms. This is part of his mission to inaugurate the New Covenant (Jer 31:31-34). **God only:** A doctrine implicit in the OT (Ps 103:2-3; Is 43:25) that hints at Jesus' divine authority to remit sins (Eph 1:7; 1 Jn 1:7; CCC 1441). [Back to text.](#)

5:24 I say to you, rise: The skepticism of the crowd moves Jesus to demonstrate his authority. It is because sickness is often linked with sin that Jesus can display his forgiving power through a physical healing (Ps 107:17; Is 33:24). The outward miracle thus manifests the inward cleansing of the man's soul. [Back to text.](#)

5:26 they glorified God: Luke often notes this reaction to Jesus' work (7:16; 13:13; 17:15; 18:43; 23:47). [Back to text.](#)

5:27 tax collector: An occupation despised by many Jews. [See note on Mk 2:14.](#) **Levi:** Also named "Matthew" (6:15; Mt 9:9). [Back to text.](#)

5:31 a physician: A familiar analogy used by Jewish and Hellenistic teachers. For Jesus, it explains his ministry of extending mercy to outcasts (CCC 1503). **those who are sick:** Jesus' table-fellowship scandalized certain Jews, such as the Pharisees. Enjoying the company of those considered "unclean" implies that God opens the doors of mercy to everyone, pious and sinners alike (Mt 5:43-48; CCC 545, 588). [Back to text.](#)

5:32 not . . . to call the righteous: Jesus did not come to perpetuate Old Covenant standards of righteousness, which were designed to separate Israel from the sins and uncleanness of their Gentile neighbors (Lev 20:26). Jesus brings a new standard of righteousness that tears down the wall that barricades Israel from other nations, as he stretches the boundaries of God's covenant family to include everyone in need of mercy, even tax collectors and sinners. [See note on Mt 5:20.](#) [Back to text.](#)

5:33 yours eat and drink: Fasting in the company of Jesus would be as insulting as fasting at a wedding feast. It would nevertheless become important after his departure (5:35; Mt 6:16-18). [Back to text.](#)

5:35 the bridegroom: Yahweh was the divine husband of Old Covenant Israel (Is 54:5; Jer 3:20; Hos 2:14-20). Jesus now assumes this role as the divine spouse of the Church (Mt 25:1-13; Eph 5:25; Rev 19:7-9). [Back to text.](#)



5:36-39 Just as **new** garments and wine are incompatible with **old** garments and wineskins, so God's New Covenant cannot coexist with the Old. [See note on Mk 2:21-22.](#) • *Allegorically* (St. Augustine, *De Quaest. Evang.* 2, 18): the old wineskins signify the disciples, who would more easily burst than contain Jesus' heavenly teaching. Only after Pentecost do they become new skins, enabled by the Spirit to store in themselves a greater fullness of grace and truth. [Back to text.](#)

6:1 sabbath: Under the Old Covenant, every seventh day (Saturday) was set aside for worship and rest; and no man, woman, slave, or beast was permitted to work (Gen 2:3; Ex 20:8-11; Deut 5:12-15). By NT times, Sabbath observance was greatly emphasized as a symbol of Israel's unique relationship with God. The Pharisees made Sabbath observance a benchmark of Jewish faithfulness and added a multitude of precepts that differentiated between lawful and unlawful behavior. Even the slightest infraction of these Sabbath standards would bring one's religious commitment into question in the eyes of the Pharisees. Jesus, though frequently accused of disregarding the Sabbath, acts out the true meaning of the Sabbath by restoring and giving rest to suffering individuals on this day. [Back to text.](#)

6:2 not lawful: The Pharisees equate plucking grain with harvesting it. In their view, the disciples violated God's commandment to abstain from gathering crops (Ex 34:21). [Back to text.](#)



6:3 Have you not read: The question is intentionally sarcastic and would be taken as an insult by the well-educated Pharisees. **what David did:** Jesus appeals to a scriptural precedent from 1 Sam 21:1-6. • The legal exception once made for King David and his men to eat holy bread permits Jesus and his disciples to eat grain on the holy day of Sabbath. In both cases

the strict regulations of the Torah were allowed to bend to meet a pressing need (hunger) and to serve the anointed king of Israel (David and Jesus). [Back to text.](#)

6:4 showbread: Twelve cakes of bread were replaced weekly in the Temple (Ex 25:30). When new loaves were set out on the Sabbath, Levitical priests ate the old ones (Lev 24:5-9). David and his men were permitted to breach this Levitical legislation by eating the bread reserved only for priests (1 Sam 21:6). [Back to text.](#)

6:5 Son of man: Hints at Jesus' messianic authority. See topical essay: *Jesus, the Son of Man*, at Lk 17. [Back to text.](#)

6:9 is it lawful: Jesus unmasks his opponents with a question: Is the Sabbath day for **good** or **harm**? The implied answer is obvious (for good) and designed to expose the malice of the Pharisees (6:7). For regardless of what Jesus does, they are already planning to harm him. In the end, it is the Pharisees who violate the Sabbath and walk straight into their own trap. [Back to text.](#)



6:10 his hand was restored: Jesus looks to the Sabbath as the most suitable day to relieve the oppressed of their burdens. • *Allegorically* (St. Bede, *In Lucam*): the crippled man signifies mankind corrupt and fallen from grace. His hand is withered in sin because it stretched forth to eat the forbidden fruit in paradise. Christ now comes with forgiveness to restore man to spiritual health. [Back to text.](#)

6:12 all night: Jesus undertakes a prayer vigil to prepare for his selection of the twelve apostles in the morning (6:13). [See note on Lk 3:21.](#) [Back to text.](#)



6:13 apostles: Those who will preach the gospel and lead the early Church. They are emissaries invested with Christ's royal and priestly authority (9:1-6; Mt 28:16-20) (CCC 765, 1577). See chart: *The Twelve Apostles* at Mk 3. • Like the 12 patriarchs of Israel (Gen 35:22-26), Jesus chooses 12 men to be the father figures of the renewed kingdom of Israel, the Church (22:28-30; Gal 6:16; Rev 21:14). [Back to text.](#)

6:17-49 Luke's "Sermon on the Plain" is similar to Matthew's longer "Sermon on the Mount" (Mt 5-7). Both begin with Beatitudes (6:20-22; Mt 5:3-10); both advocate love of enemies (6:27-36; Mt 5:43-48); and both end

with the parable of two builders (6:47-49; Mt 7:24-27). The sermon encapsulates the high moral standards of the New Covenant. [See note on Mt 5:1. Back to text.](#)

6:17 Tyre and Sidon: Two coastal cities north of Palestine in Phoenicia. People from these areas are predominantly Gentiles— a fact that highlights Jesus' popularity outside Israel (2:31-32). [Back to text.](#)

6:20-26 The Beatitudes (6:20-22) stand opposite the covenant curses, or Woes (6:24-26; Deut 30:19-20). Jesus envisions the conditions of this life being overturned in the next, where the blessed can expect their present suffering to give way to future peace, and the prosperous can expect divine curses if wealth and notoriety have smothered their love for God. See notes on Mt 5:3-10. [Back to text.](#)



6:20 Blessed: God's children receive his blessing for their faith and adherence to his Law (11:28; Ps 1:1-2; Gal 3:9). See word study: [Blessed](#) at Mt 5:3. **poor:** This may denote *material* poverty defined by social or economic conditions as well as *spiritual* poverty defined by inward detachment. Note, however, that even the materially poor can be attached to the little they own, as even the wealthy can live in poverty of spirit (CCC 2444, 2546). [See note on Mt 5:3.](#) • *Morally* (St. Ambrose, *In Lucam*): the Lucan Beatitudes reflect the four cardinal virtues. The *poor* exhibit temperance as they shun the vain and excessive pleasures of the world. The *hungry* display justice as they share the plight of the lowly and give to those who have little. Those who *weep* exercise prudence as they lament the vanity of temporal things and look to what is eternal. Those *hated* by men exercise fortitude because they persevere when persecuted for their faith (CCC 1805-9). [Back to text.](#)

6:24 woe: A cry of impending distress used by the prophets of Israel (Is 5:8-22; Amos 6:1; Hab 2:6-20). Jesus voices the same cry to warn that disaster awaits the comfortable of the world whose prosperity and notoriety have turned them away from God and the demands of his covenant. **rich:** Society's most prosperous and prestigious members. Their success in this life can tempt them to overlook the need for God and his mercy. Worldly wealth is thus dangerous (14:33; 18:24) because it can lead to selfishness and a false sense of security (1 Tim 6:17-19; Heb 13:5; CCC 2547). [Back to text.](#)

6:27 Love your enemies: A revolutionary commandment. Under the Old Covenant, loving one's neighbor meant loving everyone within the covenant family of Israel (Lev 19:18). Jesus widens the scope of charity in the New, commanding a radical love that reaches out to everyone, even our enemies (Rom 12:9-21; 1 Jn 4:7-11). [Back to text.](#)

6:29 him who takes away: A warning against retaliation. Even when robbed of one's **cloak** (outer garment) and **coat** (inner garment worn next to the skin), Christians must fight the impulse to exact personal revenge on their oppressors (1 Cor 6:1-7) and be willing to part with belongings in the face of persecution (Heb 10:32-34). [Back to text.](#)

6:31 do so to them: The "Golden Rule" summarizes the moral law of the New Covenant and is a sure test to distinguish virtue from vice (Mt 7:12). Similar statements are found in the OT (Tob 4:15; Sir 31:15) (CCC 1970). [Back to text.](#)

6:35 sons of the Most High: From a Hebrew perspective, parents reproduce character traits in the children who bear their image (Gen 5:3). Jesus applies this same logic to the family of God: as the Father is forgiving and loving, even toward the unfaithful and undeserving, so his children must imitate his kindness toward all without discrimination. [Back to text.](#)



6:36 Be merciful: Mercy is the towering rule of Christ's kingdom (10:36-37; Mt 9:13; CCC 1458). • Jesus reformulates the teaching of Lev 19:2, replacing the command to imitate Yahweh's holiness with a command to imitate his mercy. The subtle difference between these divine attributes points to the difference between the Old Covenant and the New. The quest for holiness in ancient Israel meant that God's people had to separate themselves from everything ungodly, unclean, and impure, including Gentiles and sinners (Lev 15:31; 20:26). Jesus gives holiness a new focus, defining it as mercy that reaches out to others and no longer divides people into segregated camps or disqualifies some and not others to enter the family of God (CCC 2842). [Back to text.](#)

6:38 into your lap: By folding one's cloak over the belt, a pouch could be formed to carry grain from the marketplace. When grain was **shaken** and **running over**, the buyer was guaranteed a full and honest amount. The illustration shows how God's generosity overflows on our behalf. [Back to text.](#)

6:41 your brother's eye: It is foolish to correct others for slight faults when we ourselves are beset with greater ones. The size difference between a **speck** and a **log** makes such practice look ridiculous. [Back to text.](#)

6:45 abundance of the heart: The heart is the center of the person and the origin of all moral decisions. The goodness or wickedness of our heart is revealed through our life and deeds, just as a tree is known by the fruit that it bears (Mt 7:15-20; 12:33-37; 15:18-20). [Back to text.](#)

6:47-49 The parable of the Builders is about preparation and practical living (Mt 7:24-27; 1 Cor 3:10-15). The wise builder (6:48) hears Jesus' words and acts on them, investing great energy to dig a stable foundation for his life. The foolish builder (6:49) hears Jesus' words but fails to heed his warnings. The wise builder will stand secure at the Last Judgment, while the foolish builder will reap the tragic consequences of his sins and shortcuts. [Back to text.](#)

7:2 a centurion: A Roman officer in command of 100 soldiers. His non-Jewish identity is important background for this episode, and his exemplary faith looks forward to the conversion of the Gentile centurion Cornelius in Acts 10:1-48. [Back to text.](#)

7:6 I am not worthy: The centurion displays humility despite the popular sentiment that he is "worthy" to receive help from Jesus (7:4). He also respects cultural sensibilities, aware that Jews are discouraged from entering Gentile homes (Acts 10:28). [See note on Mt 8:8.](#) [Back to text.](#)

7:9 not even in Israel: The centurion's **faith** is astonishing and foreshadows the acceptance of Gentiles into the New Covenant Church (24:47; Mt 28:19). [Back to text.](#)

7:11 Nain: A small Galilean village about six miles southeast of Nazareth. It is not otherwise mentioned in the Bible. [Back to text.](#)



7:12 being carried out: A funeral procession that probably involved the young man's relatives and neighbors as well as hired mourners and musicians (Mt 9:23; Mk 5:38). **a widow:** The bereaved mother faces great hardship. With the death of her **only son**, she is left without family or economic security. Her livelihood would depend upon the charity of others in Israel (Deut 26:12). • *Mystically* (St. Ambrose, *In Lucam*): the widow signifies Mother Church, weeping for those who are dead in sin and carried beyond the safety of her gates. The multitudes looking on will praise the

Lord when sinners rise again from death and are restored to their mother. [Back to text.](#)

7:13 the Lord: One of many uses of this title for Jesus in Luke (10:1; 11:39; 12:42; 13:15). It is used repeatedly in the Greek OT to translate God's personal name, "Yahweh". [Back to text.](#)

7:14 touched the bier: A shocking gesture. Although the Mosaic Law warns that contact with the dead renders Israelites unclean for an entire week (Num 19:11-19), Jesus reverses this expected outcome with his powerful word, **arise**. By bringing the dead to life again, he eliminates the very cause of legal defilement and therefore its undesired effects. Jesus elsewhere raises Jairus' daughter (Lk 8:40-56) and Lazarus (Jn 11:17-27) as signs of the Messiah's arrival (Lk 7:22; CCC 994). [Back to text.](#)



7:16 A great prophet: A popular view of Jesus by his contemporaries (24:19; Mt 16:14; 21:11, 46; Jn 6:14). • Jesus' miracle parallels the mighty works of the prophets Elijah and Elisha. **(1)** In 1 Kings 17:17-24, Elijah resuscitates the son of the widow of Zarephath. Luke's expression, "he gave him to his mother" (7:15), is taken verbatim from this episode. **(2)** In 2 Kings 4:32-37, Elisha likewise restores life to the son of a Shunammite woman. [Back to text.](#)

7:20 look for another?: John knows the Messiah is coming (3:16) but is uncertain whether Jesus fits the description. He may have been influenced by popular views that the Messiah would reign as king in Jerusalem and conquer the Romans. Jesus makes no moves in this direction, and John naturally wants reassurance. [Back to text.](#)



7:22 seen and heard: Jesus manifests his identity through his works. The restoration of the **blind**, the **lame**, the **lepers**, the **deaf**, and the **dead** together confirms that he is the Messiah (4:18-19; CCC 549). • These miracles recall Isaian prophecy about the wonders of the messianic era (Is 35:4-6; 61:1). [Back to text.](#)

7:24 A reed shaken: At one level, Jesus is speaking of the familiar reed plant that grew plentifully in the Jordan valley; on another, he is making a riddle-like comparison between a wavering reed and the immediately following image of a king living in luxury (7:25). These images come together in Herod Antipas, the chief opponent of John the Baptist. Not only

was Antipas a tetrarch (ruler) who resided in the royal palaces at Tiberias, his capital city beside the Sea of Galilee, but he also commemorated the founding of Tiberias by minting coins stamped with the emblem of a reed. The contrast implied by Jesus' questions is stark: John is an uncompromising leader and even more than a prophet, while Antipas is an accommodating leader, whose weakness of character makes him less than a king. [Back to text.](#)



7:27 I send my messenger: A citation from Mal 3:1. John fulfills this prophecy as the Messiah's forerunner (Mk 1:2). • Malachi foresees the messenger who will prepare Israel for the Lord's arrival. This herald closely resembles the prophet Elijah (Mal 4:5). [See note on Lk 1:17.](#) [Back to text.](#)

7:28 none is greater: John the Baptist was the most illustrious prophet of the OT era (16:16). Unlike those before him, he did not merely see the blessings of the New Covenant from a distance but received them even before birth (1:15) (CCC 523, 719). [Back to text.](#)

7:32 like children: Jesus compares his generation to children who complain regardless of what games are suggested by others. Both the joyousness (**We piped**) of Jesus' ministry and the somberness (**we wailed**) of John's preaching were invitations to the kingdom, yet both were refused. [Back to text.](#)

7:35 wisdom is justified: God's children recognize the wisdom announced by Jesus and John and welcome it as an invitation to enter the kingdom. [See note on Mt 11:19.](#) [Back to text.](#)

7:36 One of the Pharisees: Three times Jesus dines with a Pharisee in Luke (11:37; 14:1). **sat at table:** Jews of that time customarily reclined on low couches near the floor to eat festal and ritual meals. They leaned upon a cushion on their left side and ate with their right hand. This explains how the woman stood at Jesus' feet while also standing behind him (7:38). [Back to text.](#)

7:37 a sinner: The host and dinner guests knew the woman's reputation, although her sins are not specified for the reader (7:39). Jesus' own reputation in 7:34 is confirmed, since he befriends even sinners to extend them mercy (CCC 545). **alabaster flask:** An elegant stone jar. The woman's lavish use of the **ointment** is an expression of her courage and contrition, as she goes beyond the already extravagant norms of Eastern

hospitality (7:44-46; Gen 18:4-5). A similar episode occurs in Bethany before Passion Week (Mt 26:6-13; Jn 12:1-8). [Back to text.](#)

7:41 denarii: A denarius was a Roman coin equivalent to a laborer's daily wage. Central to the parable is the considerable difference between **five hundred** and **fifty** day's wages. [Back to text.](#)

7:47 for she loved much: As illustrated by the parable (7:41-43), the woman's love was the effect of her forgiveness, not the cause of it (CCC 2712). [Back to text.](#)

7:49 even forgives sins?: Jesus claims to accomplish what only God can do for sinners. [See note on Lk 5:21.](#) [Back to text.](#)

8:1-3 Jesus' urgent mission left no time for him and the disciples to settle into a trade. Several women thus accompanied them to offer provisions and financial assistance. This challenged Jewish custom, which discouraged men from associating with women in public (Jn 4:27). [Back to text.](#)

8:4 in a parable: Parables either reveal or conceal divine mysteries. Here Jesus' message remains hidden to the crowds, although it is explained to the disciples (8:9-10). See word study: [Parables](#) at Mt 13:3. [Back to text.](#)

8:5-8 The parable of the Sower. Jesus sketches four different responses to the gospel. Three scenarios are unfruitful, while the **good soil** is receptive and produces a great harvest (8:8). As the **sower**, Jesus' ministry runs parallel to the OT prophets who encountered opposition and widespread unbelief (13:33-34; Acts 7:51-53). [See note on Mk 4:3-8.](#) [Back to text.](#)



8:10 the secrets: Jesus explains the parable to his disciples instead of the crowds. He is preparing them for leadership roles in God's kingdom, the Church (22:28-30). [See note on Mk 4:11.](#) **seeing they may not see:** An allusion to Is 6:9-10. • Isaiah pronounced Yahweh's judgment on wayward Israel. It had the disciplinary effect of closing their eyes and ears to the truth and hardening their hearts to God's love. Even still, God preserved a "holy seed" (Is 6:13) or remnant of faithful people who believed in him. Jesus' own ministry falls in line with Isaiah's (Jn 12:39-40). [Back to text.](#)



8:16-18 The parable of the **lamp** explains Jesus' teaching strategy, where the mysteries of the kingdom will be **hidden** from the multitudes only temporarily. With the birth of the New Covenant Church, they will finally **come to light** (8:17; 12:2-3). • *Morally* (St. Augustine, *De Quaest.*

Evang. 2, 12): Jesus encourages boldness in evangelical preaching. No minister of the gospel should conceal the light of truth beneath earthly fears of persecution. The faithful servant puts Christ's lamp in full view, displaying his truth for the benefit of all. [Back to text.](#)

8:18 Take heed: Jesus attaches great responsibility to his message (12:48). The blessings of God's truth must be treasured and shared, since whoever neglects or ignores them will lose them. [Back to text.](#)

8:21 my brethren: Not Mary's children, but probably the cousins of Jesus (CCC 500). [See note on Mt 12:46.](#) **hear the word of God and do it:** Jesus' spiritual family shares his life and follows his ways (6:35; 11:28; Jn 1:12; Rom 8:29). Mary's divine motherhood was established on this same basis; she embraced God's will throughout her life. [See note on Lk 1:38.](#) [Back to text.](#)

8:22-56 Three episodes highlighting the power of Jesus' word. At his command, raging storms are stilled (8:24), demons are cast out (8:29), and the dead are raised to new life (8:54). [Back to text.](#)



8:25 Who then is this: The disciples marvel at Jesus' divine power over nature (Job 26:12; Ps 89:9; 107:28-29). [See note on Mt 8:23-27.](#) • *Allegorically* (St. Bede, *In Lucam* 31): Jesus' sleep signifies his death, an absence that strikes fear in the heart of his disciples. Beaten by waves of doubt, they are finally comforted when Christ awakes from the grave to put down the devil and strip him of the power of death. [Back to text.](#)

8:26 Gerasenes: The city of Gerasa was located east of the Jordan river and was one of the ten Gentile cities of the Decapolis (Mk 5:1, 20). This non-Jewish setting is accentuated by the presence of feeding swine (8:32), animals the Israelites would neither raise nor eat (Lev 11:7-8; Deut 14:8). [Back to text.](#)

8:30 Legion: A military term for 6,000 Roman soldiers. It points to the overwhelming presence of evil in the man and the intensity of the spiritual warfare taking place. The superiority of Jesus is made clear when his mere word conquers an entire army of Satan's forces (11:20). See note on 4:36. [Back to text.](#)

8:31 the abyss: The gloomy pit where demons are confined until the Last Judgment (2 Pet 2:4; Rev 9:1-11; 20:1-3). [Back to text.](#)

The Parables of Jesus

PARABLE

The Builders: Matthew [7:24-27](#); Luke [6:47-49](#)

The Sower: Matthew [13:1-9](#); Mark [4:1-9](#); Luke [8:4-8](#)

The Wheat and the Weeds: Matthew [13:24-30](#)

The Mustard Seed: Matthew [13:31-32](#); Mark [4:30-32](#); Luke [13:18-19](#)

The Leaven: Matthew [13:33](#); Luke [13:20-21](#)

The Hidden Treasure: Matthew [13:44](#)

The Pearl of Great Value: Matthew [13:45-46](#)

The Dragnet: Matthew [13:47-50](#)

The Lamp: Mark [4:21-23](#); Luke [8:16-18](#)

The Growing Seed: Mark [4:26-29](#)

The Two Debtors: Luke [7:41-43](#)

The Good Samaritan: Luke [10:25-37](#)

The Friend at Midnight: Luke [11:5-13](#)

The Rich Fool: Luke [12:16-21](#)

The Barren Fig Tree: Luke [13:6-9](#)

The Lost Sheep: Matthew [18:10-14](#); Luke [15:4-7](#)

The Lost Coin: Luke [15:8-10](#)

The Prodigal Son: Luke [15:11-32](#)

The Unforgiving Servant: Matthew [18:23-35](#)

The Unrighteous Steward: Luke [16:1-9](#)

The Unrighteous Judge: Luke [18:1-8](#)

The Pharisee and Tax Collector: Luke [18:9-14](#)

The Laborers in the Vineyard: Matthew [20:1-16](#)

The Two Sons: Matthew [21:28-32](#)

The Wicked Tenants: Matthew [21:33-46](#); Mark [12:1-12](#); Luke [20:9-19](#)

The Marriage Feast: Matthew [22:1-14](#)

The Great Banquet: Luke [14:15-24](#)

The Wise and the Foolish Bridesmaids: Matthew [25:1-13](#)

The Talents: Matthew [25:14-30](#)

The Pounds: Luke [19:11-27](#)

8:35 at the feet of Jesus: The posture of a disciple before his teacher (10:39; Acts 22:3). [Back to text.](#)

8:39 Return to your home: Jesus refuses the man's permanent company but sends him to publicize God's grace. Hinting at Christ's divinity, the man announces the mercy of **God** in terms of what **Jesus** has accomplished for him (Mk 5:19-20). [Back to text.](#)

8:40-56 Three details link these miracle stories together. **(1)** Both highlight the number **twelve**, which represents the age of the young girl and the duration of the woman's suffering. **(2)** Both beneficiaries are females. **(3)** Both illustrate how God honors genuine faith (8:48, 50) (CCC 2616). [Back to text.](#)

8:41 ruler of the synagogue: A leading Jewish elder who presided over Sabbath services and other weekly activities (13:14; Acts 13:15). [See note on Mt 4:23.](#) [Back to text.](#)

8:43 a flow of blood: This condition excluded the woman from normal life in Israel. According to the Law, she lived in perpetual uncleanness and could not be touched by anyone (Lev 15:19-30). Jesus first cures her infirmity and then publicizes her restoration before "all the people" (8:46-48) to facilitate her reintegration into Jewish society. [Back to text.](#)

8:44 fringe of his garment: The Mosaic Law required Israelites to wear tassels on their garments to remind them of God's commandments (Num 15:38-39; Deut 22:12). [Back to text.](#)

8:51 Peter and John and James: Three of Jesus' closest disciples (9:28; Mk 14:33). [Back to text.](#)

8:52 she is not dead: The departure and return of the girl's spirit (8:55) suggest that Jesus speaks metaphorically. She is in fact dead, but he says she is **sleeping** to emphasize that her condition is only temporary and soon to be reversed. [See note on Mk 5:39.](#) [Back to text.](#)

9:1 gave them power: Jesus equips the apostles with his own spiritual **authority** to expel demons (4:35, 41), cure the sick (4:39; 5:13; 7:22; 8:47), and proclaim God's kingdom (4:43; 8:1). [Back to text.](#)

9:3 Take nothing: Trusting in God, the apostles must rely on local hospitality for necessities during their mission (12:2224). This prepares them for leadership in the Church, where they will preach the gospel through a life of spiritual poverty (10:7). [Back to text.](#)

9:5 shake off the dust: A symbolic act of judgment and curse (10:10-12; Acts 13:51). Those who reject God's kingdom disqualify themselves from

its blessings. [See note on Mt 10:14.](#) [Back to text.](#)

9:7 Herod the tetrarch: Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee and Perea from 4/1 B.C. to A.D. 39. **John had been raised:** Luke does not recount John's execution but last mentions him in Herod's prison (3:20). His martyrdom is narrated in Mt 14:11-12 and Mk 6:14-29. [Back to text.](#)

9:9 he sought to see him: Rumors were circulating that Jesus was a resurrected prophet, either John the Baptist (9:7), Elijah (9:8), or another OT figure (9:8). Herod's desire to meet Jesus went unfulfilled until his trial (23:8-12). [Back to text.](#)

9:10-17 Apart from the Resurrection, the multiplication of the loaves is the only miracle recounted in all four Gospels (Mt 14:13-21; Mk 6:30-44; Jn 6:1-13). It recalls previous miracles from the OT and foreshadows the sacramental miracle of the Eucharist. It also connects with a larger theme in Luke where Jesus describes God's kingdom as a great feast (13:29-30; 14:7-14, 15-24). This messianic banquet is celebrated first at the Last Supper (22:14-23) and later in heaven (Rev 19:7-9). [See note on Mk 6:35-44.](#) [Back to text.](#)

9:10 Bethsaida: A fishing town on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was located in Herod Philip's territory (3:1) and was the hometown of the apostles Peter, Andrew, and Philip (Jn 1:44; 12:21). Jesus later cursed the city for rejecting him (10:13). [Back to text.](#)

9:18 Who do the people: According to the following verse (9:19), the crowds associated Jesus with the prophets of recent (John the Baptist) and distant memory (Elijah, old prophets). The "polls" were nonetheless divided, and Jesus' true identity remained a mystery to them. [Back to text.](#)

9:20 who do you: In view of conflicting opinions (9:19), Jesus swings the question around to his disciples: What has their experience suggested about his identity and mission? **The Christ of God:** The awaited Messiah (Jn 1:41). Peter was enlightened by the Father (Mt 16:17) to see in Jesus the king of Israel (1:32-33; Jn 1:49) and the only Son of God (9:35; Jn 1:18). [See note on Mt 16:16](#) and word study: [Christ](#) at Mk 14:61. [Back to text.](#)

9:21 tell this to no one: Broadcasting Jesus as the Messiah could invite misunderstanding and obscure the spiritual thrust of his mission. [See note on Mk 1:44.](#) [Back to text.](#)

9:22 Son of man must suffer: The first of several Passion predictions in Luke (9:44; 12:50; 17:25; 18:31-33). Jesus here begins to clarify that his

mission is not earthly or political, but one that entails suffering and death. See topical essay: *Jesus, the Son of Man*, at Lk 17. [Back to text.](#)

9:23 take up his cross: Christian discipleship is costly, involving much sacrifice and self-denial (14:26, 33). Perseverance is necessary to follow the way of Christ on a **daily** basis (CCC 1435). [See note on Mt 10:38.](#) [Back to text.](#)

9:26 comes in his glory: Jesus is appointed to be the world's divine Judge (Mt 25:31-46; 2 Cor 5:10). Those with the courage to identify with him will be saved, while those ashamed of him will be rejected in the presence of the Father (2 Tim 2:11-13). [See note on Mk 8:38.](#) [Back to text.](#)

9:27 see the kingdom: Jesus promises that his kingdom will arrive within the lifetime of his contemporaries. This points to the birth of the Church in general (22:28-30) and to the destruction of Jerusalem in particular (21:31-32). The downfall of the city (A.D. 70) will mark a turning point in salvation history that signals the expiration of the Old Covenant kingdom and the definitive establishment of the New. [See note on Lk 4:43.](#) [Back to text.](#)



9:28-36 The Transfiguration has three levels of significance. **(1)** Christ reveals his glory to offset the shock of his first Passion prediction (9:22). **(2)** The Father's **voice**, the chosen **Son**, and the **cloud** of the Spirit manifest the presence of the Blessed Trinity. **(3)** The prophets **Moses** and **Elijah** testify that Jesus will fulfill the Law and prophets of the OT. This episode also parallels Yahweh's manifestation to Moses on Mt. Sinai (CCC 554-56, 697). [See note on Mt 17:1-8.](#) • *Allegorically* (St. Hilary, *In Matt.* 17): Christ invites three companions up the mountain to signify the salvation of mankind. As the human family stems from the three sons of Noah—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—so its elevation to glory is represented by Peter, James, and John ascending the mountain into the divine presence. [Back to text.](#)



9:32 saw his glory: Evident by the changes in Jesus' appearance and clothing (9:29). • The experience of Peter, James, and John parallels that of the Israelites at Sinai who similarly witnessed the "glory" of God and "heard his voice" at the mountain (Deut 5:24). [Back to text.](#)



9:35 my Son, my Chosen: One of several announcements of Jesus' divine Sonship (3:22; 4:41; 8:28). • The Father's words echo Is 42:1, where the Lord's Servant is empowered by the Spirit to bring relief to the oppressed and justice to all nations (Is 42:2-7). The final injunction, **listen to him**, is taken from Deut 18:15, where Moses prophesied that another prophet like himself would someday arise in Israel. Jesus fits this prophetic description, and because his teaching is backed by the approval and authority of the Father, he must be followed as the Israelites once followed their leader Moses (Acts 3:22; 7:37). [See note on Lk 3:21-22.](#) [Back to text.](#)



9:41 perverse generation: An expression drawn from Deut 32:5, 20. • These verses are part of the "Song of Moses", in which Moses prophesied the future failures of Israel and indicted the people in advance for their faithlessness (Deut 32:1-43). Jesus directs these words to his own generation in order to link them with God's wayward people through the ages. [See note on Mt 12:45.](#) [Back to text.](#)

9:48 the one who is great: Greatness in God's kingdom is measured by a standard of humility and service to others. Competition for prestige or worldly recognition is ruled out (22:24-27; Mk 10:35-45). [Back to text.](#)



9:51 to be received up: A reference to Jesus' Ascension ' (Acts 1:2, 11). • Jewish tradition holds that both Moses and Elijah were assumed into heaven and that both imparted a share of their spirit to their successors (Deut 34:9; 2 Kings 2:9-15). Jesus will likewise ascend into glory and pour out his Spirit upon his followers (Acts 1:8-9). **set his face to go:** Jesus now begins a long journey to Jerusalem. When he arrives, he will denounce the city for rejecting his message (13:22, 33; 17:11; 18:31; 19:11, 28). • Luke describes Jesus' resolution in terms that recall how Yahweh commissioned the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel to preach against Jerusalem for its corruption (Jer 21:10; Ezek 21:2). [Back to text.](#)

9:52 the Samaritans: Samaritan territory lies in central Palestine, between Judea (south) and Galilee (north). Historically, Jews and Samaritans were bitter enemies who worshiped in rival sanctuaries, the former in Jerusalem and the latter on Mt. Gerizim (Jn 4:20). Although the

Samaritans were distant descendants of the northern tribes of Israel, the Jews considered them impure because their ancestors had intermarried with foreign immigrants and honored foreign gods (2 Kings 17:24). Despite centuries of animosity, Jesus shows mercy toward the Samaritans and even praises some of them (10:33; 17:11-19; Jn 4:39-42). Many from Samaria embraced the gospel in the early Church (Acts 8:14). [Back to text.](#)



9:54 bid fire come down: The disciples are full of zeal but lacking in mercy. This episode may illustrate why **James** and **John** are elsewhere called the "sons of thunder" (Mk 3:17). • The disciples wish Jesus to follow the example set by Elijah, who called down fire from heaven to consume messengers from the king of Samaria (2 Kings 1:9-14). [Back to text.](#)

9:59 bury my father: A sacred responsibility and practical extension of the commandment to honor one's parents (Gen 50:5; Ex 20:12; Lev 19:3; Deut 5:16; Tob 4:3-4). The duty of Christian discipleship is more sacred still (14:26). [Back to text.](#)



9:62 and looks back: Postponing commitment to the kingdom is tantamount to rejecting it. • Jesus shows himself more demanding than Elijah, who permitted Elisha to kiss his parents good-bye before following him (1 Kings 19:19-21). [Back to text.](#)



10:1 appointed seventy: An episode only in Luke. It is the second missionary tour, since Jesus has sent out the Twelve with similar tasks (9:1-6). • Jesus patterns his missionary effort on Moses, who commissioned 70 elders to be prophets in Israel (Num 11:24-25). The 71 members of the Jewish court, the Sanhedrin, had already modeled itself after this leadership structure of Moses and the 70 elders. At another level, this number alludes to Gen 10, which describes the origin of the 70 nations of the ancient world, not including Israel. The ministry of the 70 disciples thus anticipates the Church's mission to the nations (24:47). **two by two:** A missionary practice reflected in the early Church (Acts 8:14; 15:39-40). [Back to text.](#)



10:2 The harvest: A picture of God's people ready to be gathered into the kingdom (Mt 9:37; Jn 4:35). • Similar imagery in Is 27:12-13 depicts the restoration of Israel from exile as the ingathering of a grain harvest. [Back to text.](#)



10:4 no purse . . . bag . . . sandals: The disciples must travel light and unencumbered. Traditional hospitality, orchestrated by God's providence, will supply their daily needs. **salute no one:** The urgency of the mission allows for no distractions or delays, especially since customary greetings could be quite elaborate. • Elisha gave similar instructions when sending his servant on a pressing mission (2 Kings 4:29). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Exodus ([Lk 9:31](#))

Exodos (Gk.): "a going forth" or "exodus". The word is used three times in the NT and several times in the Greek OT. Sometimes it refers to the historical Exodus, when Yahweh delivered the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt (Ex 19:1; Heb 11:22). Other times it refers to physical death, as when souls depart from this life and go to another (Wis 7:6; 2 Pet 1:15). These shades of meaning are blended together when Moses and Elijah converse about the exodus of Jesus at the Transfiguration (Lk 9:31). On the one hand, Jesus will exit this life when he dies on the Cross; on the other, his death will accomplish a new Exodus that frees the world from slavery in sin. Jerusalem is the chosen destination for this mission because the city's resistance to the gospel made it a new "Egypt" where Jesus must go to liberate the human family from spiritual bondage (Rev 11:8).



10:7 deserves his wages: Ministers of the gospel should be supported by the believing community. This allows them to pursue apostolic work with undivided attention (1 Cor 9:14; 1 Tim 5:18). •

According to Catholic tradition and Canon Law (222 § 1), Christians are obligated to contribute to the Church from their earnings. These offerings help to support the clergy, provide for the necessities of liturgical worship, and equip the Church to minister to the needy (CCC 2043, 2122). [Back to text.](#)

10:11 wipe off against you: A symbolic act of judgment. [See note on Mt 10:14.](#) [Back to text.](#)

10:13 Chorazin . . . Bethsaida: Two Galilean towns that refused the message of Jesus. **Tyre and Sidon:** Two Gentile towns north of Palestine on the Mediterranean coast. Unlike the people of Galilee, these cities had no direct opportunity to hear and believe in Jesus. [Back to text.](#)

10:15 Capernaum: Jesus' Galilean residence. The townspeople rejected Jesus despite ample opportunities to see his works and respond to his preaching. [See note on Mt 11:23.](#) [Back to text.](#)

10:16 He who hears you hears me: The messengers of Jesus carry his authority wherever they go. To reject them is to reject both the Father and the Son (Jn 12:48-49; 13:20). Jesus confers an even greater share of his royal, priestly, and prophetic authority upon the apostles before his Ascension (Mt 28:18-20) (CCC 87, 858). [Back to text.](#)

10:18 I saw Satan fall: The rapid advance of God's kingdom through the disciples' preaching and exorcistic ministry is matched by the downfall and retreat of the devil (11:20; 13:16; Rev 12:7-9). [Back to text.](#)

10:20 written in heaven: The saints are enrolled in God's heavenly "book of life" (cf. Ex 32:32; Ps 69:28; Dan 12:1; Rev 3:5). Disciples should therefore rejoice more because of their sonship in God's family than because of their successful missions. [Back to text.](#)



10:22 Jesus is the divine **Son** of God and, so, the heir of GfcJ his Father's authority and estate (Mt 28:18; Jn 3:35; 17:2). • The Father, Son, and Spirit are equal in being, and no one of them possesses more of the divine life and knowledge than another. Since the Son is no less perfect than the Father, he is uniquely qualified to reveal the inner life of the Trinity to the world (Jn 1:18; 14:9) (CCC 253, 2603). [Back to text.](#)



Jewish Pilgrimage from Galilee to Jerusalem

10:25 a lawyer: An expert interpreter of the Mosaic Law. [Back to text.](#)

10:27 the Lord . . . your neighbor: A reference to Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18, which Jesus calls the two greatest commandments of the OT (Mt 22:37-40; Mk 12:28-34). [Back to text.](#)



10:30-37 The parable of the Good Samaritan presents both a moral and a theological lesson. Morally, Jesus teaches that love for our neighbor must accompany our love for God. These together, and not one without the other, are indispensable for living in God's friendship. Theologically, Jesus illustrates that holiness as defined by the Old Covenant is now surpassed by the holiness of the New. The **priest** and the **Levite** adhere to Israel's purity laws, which forbade them from touching the corpses of anyone other than family members (Lev 21:1-3). They therefore chose to preserve their legal purity and so passed by the **half dead** victim. The **Samaritan** exemplifies this new standard of holiness, where God no longer requires his people to separate from others, but calls them to extend mercy to everyone in need and exclude no one on the grounds of prejudice, dislike, or even legal uncleanness as defined by the Torah (CCC 1825, 2447). [See note on Lk 6:36.](#) • The parable recalls a similar story in 2 Chron 28:8-15, where the people of Judah were ravaged and captured by a northern Israelite army. Instead of taking them as prisoners, four men of Samaria had compassion on the Jews. Among their works of mercy, they "anointed" them, put them upon their "donkeys", and took them peacefully to "Jericho". • *Allegorically* (St. Augustine, *De Quaest. Evang.* 2, 19): the parable signifies Christ's restoration of mankind. Adam is the man attacked by Satan and his legions; he is stripped of his immortality and left dead in sin. The priest and the Levite represent the Old Covenant and its inability to restore man to new life. Jesus Christ comes as the Good Samaritan to rescue man from death and brings him to the inn of the Church for refreshment and healing through the sacraments. [Back to text.](#)

10:30 from Jerusalem to Jericho: A 17-mile journey eastward that descends nearly 3,200 feet. Its rough terrain made the roadway a target area for bandits and thieves. [Back to text.](#)

10:35 two denarii: About two days' wages. It would have paid for several days of lodging. [Back to text.](#)

10:38 a village: Bethany, the home of Lazarus, near Jerusalem (Jn 11:1). [Back to text.](#)

10:39 at the Lord's feet: i.e., like a disciple before his master (8:35; Acts 22:3). [Back to text.](#)



10:42 one thing is needful: Martha was preoccupied with hospitality, while Mary gave her full attention to the guest himself. Her quiet devotion displayed greater reverence for Jesus than Martha's anxious toil. • *Mystically* (St. Gregory the Great, *Moralia* 2, 6): the two women signify two dimensions of the spiritual life. Martha signifies the active life as she busily labors to honor Christ through her work. Mary exemplifies the contemplative life as she sits attentively to listen and learn from Christ. While both activities are essential to Christian living, the latter is greater than the former. For in heaven the active life terminates, while the contemplative life reaches its perfection. [Back to text.](#)

11:2-4 A shorter version of the Our Father from Mt 6:9-13. As a model of prayer, it leads us first to adore God as our Father, and only then to petition him with our spiritual and material needs. Because it calls us to converse with the Lord on a **daily** basis, it is a sure means to deepen our relationship with him and develop confidence in his fatherly care. The repetition of the word **us** makes it is a family prayer for the Church (CCC 2601, 2765-66). [See note on Mt 6:9.](#) [Back to text.](#)

11:2 hallowed: The holiness of God's name should be revered by all (1:49; Ezek 36:22-28; Jn 12:28). [Back to text.](#)

11:3 daily bread: Literally "bread for tomorrow" or "super-substantial bread". It is food for the whole person: for the body, God gives us daily necessities, and for the soul he gives us the eucharistic "bread of life" (Jn 6:48) (CCC 2837). [See note on Mt 6:11.](#) [Back to text.](#)

11:8 importunity: i.e., persistence. The parable (11:5-8) advocates perseverance in prayer, so that God's children learn to approach him repeatedly with daily concerns. It is not that God needs to be informed of our needs, but that we must realize our total dependence on him for everything (CCC 2613). [Back to text.](#)

11:13 the Holy Spirit: The Father's greatest gift to us is his own divine life (Jn 14:17). Through the Spirit, he sanctifies his children and distributes the graces of salvation won by Christ (Rom 8:14-17; 1 Cor 12:4-11; Gal

5:22). The fullness of the Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) (CCC 728, 2670-71). [Back to text.](#)

11:15 He casts out demons: Jesus forces his opponents to decide for themselves whether he is empowered by God or the devil, leaving no neutral ground for them to stand upon. **Beelzebul:** A derogatory name for Satan. It is linked to a pagan idol worshiped at Ekron (2 Kings 1:2). [See note on Mt 10:25.](#) [Back to text.](#)



11:20 the finger of God: i.e., the Holy Spirit (Mt 12:28; CCC 700).
• Jesus alludes to Ex 8:19, where Pharaoh's magicians finally confess that their own sorcery has been outmatched by the power of Yahweh. Jesus likewise wields divine power that is far superior to that of other exorcists in his day (11:19). [See note on Lk 4:36.](#) [Back to text.](#)

11:22 one stronger: A reference to Jesus, who overthrows Satan and plunders his house of sinners held captive (13:16; Is 49:24-25; Heb 2:14-15). [Back to text.](#)

11:26 the last state: Those delivered of demons must be filled with the goodness of Christ's kingdom. To benefit from his ministry without accepting his message leads to spiritual ruin (2 Pet 2:20). [See note on Mt 12:44-46.](#) [Back to text.](#)

11:28 Blessed: It is better to belong to Jesus' spiritual family than to his earthly family. His mother Mary is blessed on both counts, since she is Christ's biological mother (1:42, 48) and the sterling example of one who hears and keeps the word of the Lord (1:38, 45). [Back to text.](#)

11:29-32 Both **Jonah** and **Solomon** ministered to the Gentiles, the former to the Assyrians in **Nineveh** (Jon 3) and the latter to the **queen** of Sheba (1 Kings 10). They together prefigure Jesus, who sends the gospel out to all nations (24:47; Mt 28:19). [Back to text.](#)

11:33-36 These sayings make use of two traditional beliefs about the eye. **(1)** Ancient peoples including Israel commonly held that the human eye was a source of light that shone out into the world and made vision possible (Ps 38:10; Prov 15:30). **(2)** The difference between a good eye and an evil eye was a metaphorical distinction between a generous and compassionate spirit (Prov 22:9) and a selfish and miserly one (Deut 15:9; Sir 14:8-10). In this context, Jesus is calling for an examination of the interior of our lives. Unless one is filled with light, which shines out through healthy eyes in the

form of generosity, one cannot be a lamp enabling others to see and enter the kingdom (11:33; Mt 5:15-16). To be filled with darkness and beset with an evil eye of greed and selfishness is to stand outside of the kingdom and to leave others in the darkness as well (11:52). This emphasis on what is inside a person is closely connected with the following episode, where Jesus chides the Pharisees and lawyers for their preoccupation with the *exterior* practices of religion and their neglect of *interior* holiness (11:37-52). That they appear outwardly devout to others when in fact they are inwardly filled with corruption and impurity makes them guilty of "hypocrisy" (12:1). [Back to text.](#)

11:34 not sound: Literally, "evil". The expression is related to several Greek terms in the surrounding context. In 11:26 Jesus warns of being filled with seven "evil" spirits; in 11:29 he calls his contemporaries an "evil" generation; and in 11:39 he says the Pharisees are full of **extortion and wickedness** (or evil). [Back to text.](#)

11:38 did not first wash: Jesus disregards Pharisaic customs of cleansing. These washing rituals were religious in nature, not hygienic. [See note on Mk 7:3.](#) [Back to text.](#)

11:39 cleanse the outside: The religious zeal of the Pharisees focused on the exterior of the body and often failed to penetrate to the heart. See topical essay: *Who Are the Pharisees?* at Mk 2. [Back to text.](#)

11:42 woe to you: An oracle of judgment. [See note on Mt 23:13.](#) **you tithe:** The Pharisees give a tenth part of all produce to the Temple, even the smallest of their herbs and spices (Lev 27:30; Deut 14:22-27). Sadly, their concern for the Torah's most minute laws distracts them from its most important principles: **justice** and the **love of God** (10:25-28). [Back to text.](#)

11:44 like graves: Jews were temporarily defiled by contact with tombs and corpses and thereby disqualified from worshiping at the Temple (Num 19:11-16). Ironically, the Pharisees also became sources of defilement, since the influence of their strict ceremonial piety was keeping people from the kingdom. [Back to text.](#)

11:51 Abel . . . Zechariah: Abel's martyrdom is the first recorded in the Bible (Gen 4:8), while Zechariah's death centuries later is not mentioned in the Old Testament. The point here is that the bloodguilt accumulated throughout the OT era will spill over when the Jerusalem leaders conspire to execute the Messiah. [See note on Mt 23:35.](#) [Back to text.](#)

11:52 the key of knowledge: Legal experts kept the Scriptures locked up, concealing from the multitudes the most important spiritual principles of the Old Covenant. [Back to text.](#)

12:1 hypocrisy: The besetting vice of the Pharisees. As **leaven** permeates dough, their teaching and example influence the crowds in a disastrous way, especially when they fail to practice what they preach (Mt 23:1-8). Their sins will be brought to "light" (12:3) at the Last Judgment (CCC 678). [Back to text.](#)

12:4-5 do not fear: Since physical death is only a moderate threat compared to spiritual death, Jesus calls us to have courage in the face of persecution and to be more concerned by temptations to sin. **hell:** Literally, "Gehenna". [See note on Mt 10:28](#) and word study: [Hell](#) at Mk 9:43. [Back to text.](#)

12:7 the hairs of your head: Nothing is hidden to God (Ps 139:1-6), and no suffering goes unnoticed by him (21:18; Acts 27:34). Christian martyrs can therefore look beyond the afflictions of this life to God's vindication and eternal reward (Rev 20:4). [Back to text.](#)

12:13 the inheritance: Jesus is asked to arbitrate a fraternal dispute over an inheritance. Seeing that family wealth is causing family divisions, he responds with a parable on the danger of riches (12:16-21). [Back to text.](#)

12:19 eat, drink, be merry: i.e., indulge in earthly pleasures and comforts (Tob 7:9; Eccles 8:15; Is 22:13). The foolish man hoards his resources, makes them the basis for his security, and then adds laziness to his greed. Death will expose his folly by stripping him of all that he owns (6:24; 16:13; 18:25). [Back to text.](#)

12:20 Fool!: A harsh rebuke for someone unconcerned with God or his Law (Ps 14:1; Prov 1:7). [Back to text.](#)

12:22-31 God's care for the **ravens** and the **lilies** mirrors his greater concern for man. His unfailing providence supplies for our needs when we organize our lives around his will and prioritize the pursuit of his **kingdom**. [See note on Mt 6:28-30.](#) [Back to text.](#)

12:33 give alms: Generosity is an expression of spiritual poverty (Mt 5:3) and helps us to sever our attachments to worldly wealth (14:33; 16:9; 18:22). [Back to text.](#)

12:38 second watch . . . third: Between 10 P.M. and sunrise. The Romans divided the night into four watches (Mk 13:35), while the Jews divided it into three (Judg 7:19). This parable seems to follow the Jewish calculation,

where servants stand ready for their master throughout the night (CCC 2849). [Back to text.](#)

12:41-48 A parable about leadership and responsibility. The apostles are compared to domestic servants who are charged with various duties in the household of God's kingdom (12:32; [Back to text.](#)

22:29-30). The royal tasks entrusted to them must be fulfilled diligently before Christ's sudden return.

12:49 fire: A symbol of **(1)** God's presence and love (Deut 4:24; Acts 2:3), **(2)** God's judgment on sinners (Lev 10:2; Mt 22:7), and **(3)** divine purification (3:16; 1 Pet 1:7) (CCC 696). [Back to text.](#)

12:50 a baptism: A figure of Jesus' Passion, when he will be immersed in suffering and death and will rise again to a new life (Mk 10:38; Rom 6:4; CCC 536, 1225). [Back to text.](#)

12:53 they will be divided: Loyalty to Jesus is even more important than family unity (14:26), and peace is possible only if we embrace him in faith (Jn 14:27). [See note on Mk 13:12.](#) [Back to text.](#)

13:1-5 Jesus uses current events to teach spiritual truths. While neither Pilate's bloodshed (13:1) nor the Siloam tower incident (13:4) is known outside the NT, both examples are used to stress the urgency of repentance. Jesus even denies what many in his day affirmed, i.e., that God permits only grievous sinners to suffer violent deaths (Job 31:3; Prov 10:24). To reject, or even neglect, Christ's call for repentance is to gamble with disaster (Heb 2:3). [Back to text.](#)

13:6-9 The **fig tree** represents Old Covenant Israel (Jer 8:13; Hos 9:10). Although God found no fruits of repentance, he was patient and gave them an ample **three years** to accept their Messiah (Rom 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9). The impenitence of Jerusalem would later bring divine judgment upon the city (19:41-44; 20:9-19; 21:6). [See note on Mk 11:13.](#) [Back to text.](#)

13:11 a spirit of infirmity: There is sometimes a close link between demonic oppression and physical ailments, with the former being the unseen cause of the latter (4:40-41; 8:35; 9:38-39). [Back to text.](#)

13:16 whom Satan bound: If hypocrites untie even their livestock on the Sabbath to feed them, they should be more willing to see a woman **loosed** from her bondage to the devil on the same day (CCC 342). After all, the **sabbath** is for everyone: oxen, donkeys, and the daughters of Israel (Deut 5:14). The Sabbath's deepest significance as a day of rest and

refreshment makes it the most appropriate day for Jesus to relieve burdens from the oppressed (Mk 2:27). [See note on Lk 6:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)

13:18-21 The parables of the **mustard seed** (13:19) and the **leaven** (13:21) describe the growth of God's kingdom, which begins small and unnoticed but expands to sanctify the entire world (CCC 2660). See notes on Mt 13:32 and 13:33. [Back to text.](#)

13:24 the narrow door: Salvation depends first on God's grace, then on our cooperation and obedience (Eph 2:8-10; Phil 2:12-13). Jesus here stresses the difficulties of the spiritual life, where few will enter God's glory while the door remains open (Mt 22:14). [See note on Mt 7:13.](#) [Back to text.](#)

13:27 depart from me: Although heirs to the kingdom, the impenitent of Israel will be shut out from God's blessings (Mt 21:43; Rom 2:9). [Back to text.](#)

13:28 weep and gnash: The suffering of the damned. [See note on Mt 8:12.](#) [Back to text.](#)



13:29 east . . . west . . . north . . . south: Christ invites his family from the ends of the earth to celebrate with the patriarchs. • Jesus evokes OT prophecies that depict Yahweh regathering the exiled children of Israel from the four points of the compass (Ps 107:3; Is 11:12; 43:5-6). The celebration banquet will include Israelites and Gentiles in the one family of God (24:47; Rev 5:9). [See note on Lk 1:33.](#) [Back to text.](#)

13:31 Get away from here: Jesus was probably in Perea, the region governed by **Herod** Antipas directly east of the Jordan river. Herod's mixture of animosity and curiosity (9:9) was left unsatisfied until Jesus' trial (23:8). [See note on Mk 6:14.](#) [Back to text.](#)

13:32 that fox: Herod was known for his shrewdness. **the third day:** The Father's predetermined plan enables Jesus to escape harm before fulfilling his mission (4:29-30; Jn 7:30; 10:39). [Back to text.](#)

13:34 O Jerusalem: Jesus laments the hardened impenitence of the Holy City (19:41-44). As a prophet (13:33), he anticipates the same suffering and martyrdom that befell countless others before him (11:49-51; Rev 18:24) (CCC 557-58). [See note on Mt 23:37.](#) **How often:** John's Gospel indicates that Jesus made several visits to Jerusalem before Passion Week (Jn 2:13; 5:1; 7:10; 10:22). [Back to text.](#)



13:35 your house is forsaken: God has withdrawn his presence and favor from the earthly Jerusalem. • Jesus alludes to Jer 12:7 and 22:5, where the abandoned house represents both the Temple and city of Jerusalem. As in Jeremiah's day, God's evacuation of the city will soon be followed by its violent destruction (19:41-44; 21:6). **Blessed is he:** A citation from Ps 118:26, later connected with Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem (19:38). [Back to text.](#)

14:1 One sabbath: Luke narrates five episodes when Jesus heals on the Sabbath (4:31-35, 38-39; 6:6-11; 13:10-17). [See note on Lk 6:1.](#) **watching him:** Jesus was the object of his enemies' constant surveillance (6:7; 11:53-54). [Back to text.](#)

14:2 dropsy: A condition characterized by swelling in the body caused by fluid retention. [Back to text.](#)

14:10 sit in the lowest place: A lesson on humility, where greatness is measured by concern for others and a modest estimation of self (18:14; Jas 4:6; 1 Pet 5:6). It is dishonorable to presume that one's position, social or otherwise, will automatically win the favor of God (Prov 25:6-7). [Back to text.](#)

14:14 You will be repaid: God will look favorably on works of mercy at the Judgment (6:32-36; Mt 10:42; 25:34-36). **resurrection of the just:** i.e., the general resurrection (Jn 5:28-29; Acts 24:15). [Back to text.](#)



14:16 a great banquet: An image of the joys and blessings of the New Covenant. Israel was long invited to this feast by the prophets, yet many of the people declined when the Messiah announced the meal was ready. The Father therefore revised the guest list, summoning the despised of Israel (14:21) and the Gentiles (14:23, cf. Acts 13:46; 28:28) to enjoy the banquet in their place. • Festal meals had great religious significance in biblical times and often symbolized covenant communion with God or others (Gen 26:28-31; 31:44-54; Ex 24:9-11; 2 Sam 3:20-21). According to Is 25:6-9, God was preparing a grand, messianic banquet to celebrate the salvation of all his children from Israel and the nations (13:29). • Jesus gives us the bread of the kingdom first in the Eucharist (22:19-20) and ultimately in the communion we will enjoy with him in heaven (Rev 19:9). [Back to text.](#)

14:17 had been invited: Invitations were customarily issued in two phases. The first was given far in advance of the meal, and the second when everything was ready (Esther 5:8; 6:14). [Back to text.](#)

14:26 hate: An idiomatic term meaning "to love less" (Gen 29:31-33; Mal 1:2-3). Not even the sacredness of family loyalty should outweigh our commitment to Christ, since we must be willing to abandon even close relationships to follow him (Mt 10:37) (CCC 1618, 2544). [Back to text.](#)

14:28 count the cost: Discipleship is a serious commitment. It is not about testing the waters or holding ourselves back from God (9:62). A complete surrender to Christ is necessary to complete the tasks of Christian living. [See note on Mt 10:38.](#) [Back to text.](#)

14:34 Salt: Used to preserve or flavor food. It was often impure in the ancient world and could sometimes lose its potency. In contrast, Jesus demands from us loyalty that remains constant and does not diminish over time (14:26, 33). [Back to text.](#)

15:2 eats with them: Since table-fellowship is an expression of friendship and acceptance, the **Pharisees** were scandalized that Jesus ate with disreputable men (5:30). The following parables indicate that God does not simply welcome penitent sinners, he seeks them out (15:4, 8, 20; 19:10) (CCC 545, 1443). [Back to text.](#)



15:3-7 The parable of the Lost Sheep. In a pastoral culture every sheep of one's flock was valuable, and shepherds would naturally rejoice when a stray was recovered (15:6). Jesus is the shepherd who restores us to friendship with God (Jn 10:1-10). • Yahweh is depicted as a shepherd in the OT (Ps 23:1; Is 40:11), as is the Messiah (Mic 5:4; Zech 13:7). Ezekiel brings these two traditions together, promising that God himself will seek the scattered flock of his people (Ezek 34:11-16) and send the Davidic Messiah to shepherd them (Ezek 34:22-24). • *Allegorically* (St. Gregory the Great, *Hom. in Evan.* 2): Jesus is the shepherd who recovers the lost sheep of mankind. Hoisting it upon his shoulders signifies how he takes upon himself both the nature of man and the heavy burden of man's sins. [Back to text.](#)

15:8 ten silver coins: Literally, "ten drachmas". Each one was worth an entire day's wage. [Back to text.](#)



15:11-32 The parable of the Prodigal Son reveals the boundless mercy of God. Though our sins offend the Father, he is ever willing to show us compassion and restore us to family life. In many ways the parable narrates the continuing struggles of the spiritual life, where conversion and repentance are part of an ongoing process (CCC 1439, 2839). • At another level, the parable narrates the exile and eventual homecoming of historical Israel. After the reign of King Solomon, Israel split into two kingdoms, becoming like **two** brothers living side by side in northern (Israel) and southern (Judah) Palestine (1 Kings 12). By the eighth century B.C., the Assyrians had carried off the northern tribes of Israel into a **far country**, where they forsook God and worshiped idols—a sin the prophets called harlotry (15:30; Jer 3:6; Hos 4:15). In the New Covenant, God welcomes home his exiled son by lavishing him with mercy and restoring him to full sonship (Ezek 37:21-23; Hos 11:1-3, 11). This is especially brought out in Jer 31:18-20, where Ephraim (northern Israel), after a period of exile and disgrace, repents of his sin, is ashamed of his wrongdoing, and turns to God for mercy. It is important to remember that in the Genesis narratives, Ephraim was the nephew of Judah and the youngest brother in the tribal family of Israel (Gen 48:14). See note on 1:33. [Back to text.](#)

15:12 share of property: It was unusual and even shameful for a son to demand his inheritance before his father's death (Sir 33:23). Here the prodigal son compounded his father's dishonor by squandering his inheritance in sin (15:13; Prov 28:7). [Back to text.](#)

15:15 feed swine: Since Jews considered pigs unclean animals (Lev 11:7), only the most desperate conditions would force the son to take this disgraceful position. Working for a Gentile employer, he would be expected to violate the weekly Sabbath as well (Ex 20:8-11). [Back to text.](#)



15:20 embraced him: Literally, "fell upon his neck". • The actions of the father recall the mercy shown to Jacob (Gen 33:4) and the joys of family reunion in the patriarchal narratives (Gen 45:14; 46:29). [Back to text.](#)

15:22 robe . . . ring: Symbols of honor and authority (Gen 41:42; Esther 3:10; 1 Mac 6:15). **shoes:** Household slaves normally went barefoot. The

father refuses this for his son, restoring him instead to full family membership. [Back to text.](#)

15:24 was dead . . . is alive: A transfer of covenant status from curse to blessing. It is a restoration from spiritual death to eternal life (Jn 5:24; Rom 6:13; Eph 2:1-5). [Back to text.](#)

15:25 elder son: The older brother's grumbling signified the bitterness of the Pharisees (15:2), who wrongly saw God's acceptance of sinners as a violation of covenant justice. The father in the parable is innocent of such a charge; he is simply forgiving and loving to his son, who recognized his errors and turned to his father for mercy. [Back to text.](#)



16:1-8 The parable of the Unrighteous Steward is about urgency and preparedness. About to lose his position (16:2), the steward makes use of a pressing situation to find favor with his master's debtors and prepare for his future (16:4). Christians should take even greater care to prepare for life in the world to come. • *Mystically* (St. Gaudentius, *Sermo* 18): the unrighteous steward signifies the devil, whose dominion over this world is nearing its end. Having wasted the Lord's goods by stripping us of divine grace and friendship, he now works anxiously to make friends by deception and empty promises of forgiveness. While his ardor and foresight are worthy of imitation, his wicked and dishonest tactics are not. [Back to text.](#)

16:1 a steward: A head servant who handled the business affairs of his master's estate. Like the prodigal son (15:13), this manager wasted his master's goods. [Back to text.](#)

16:6 hundred measures of oil: About 800 gallons. The steward reduces the debt 50 percent. [Back to text.](#)

16:7 hundred measures of wheat: About 1,000 bushels. The debt is reduced 20 percent. [Back to text.](#)

16:8 his prudence: The master, although cheated by the debt reduction, commends the steward for his shrewdness. He recognizes that the steward's last-minute efforts proved successful in winning the favor of the debtors and making his financial future more secure. The unjust strategy of the steward shows that he was motivated by an entirely selfish concern for his own temporal welfare. Jesus points to the steward as both an example and a warning. **(1)** As an example, the steward shows how to expend every effort in making use of our means to prepare for the future. Just as his cunning

won him a comfortable living in the "houses" of his master's debtors (16:4), so believers are challenged to make friends by almsgiving in order to be received into "eternal habitations" (16:9). **(2)** As a warning, the steward is intended to characterize the attitude of the Pharisees, who have been listening to Jesus since 15:2 and who are charged with being "lovers of money" in 16:14. It is implied that the Pharisees are despising God by their devotion to mammon, i.e., they seek not eternal riches but the esteem of men and the temporal comforts of this world (16:13). [Back to text.](#)

16:9 mammon: An Aramaic word meaning "wealth". Almsgiving makes us friends of the poor by means of money. Investing in God's kingdom means divesting ourselves of riches to help others in need (3:11; 2 Cor 9:6-15; CCC 952). [Back to text.](#)

16:16 The law and the prophets: A shorthand reference to the OT (24:44). John the Baptist stands at the pivot of salvation history, being included within the OT era even as he concludes it. Both he and the OT Scriptures announced the coming of Jesus (CCC 523). **violently:** Refers to the persecution of Christians or to the ascetic disciplines exemplified by John. [See note on Mt 11:12.](#) [Back to text.](#)

16:17 one dot: One of the short extensions that distinguish similar-looking Hebrew letters (Mt 5:18). Jesus does not invalidate even these minute details of the OT, much less the substance of the **law**. [See note on Mt 5:17.](#) [Back to text.](#)

16:18 one who divorces: While Moses permitted divorce and remarriage in the Old Covenant (Deut 24:1-4), Jesus forbids it entirely in the New (Mk 10:11-12; 1 Cor 7:10-11; CCC 2382). See topical essay: *Jesus on Marriage and Divorce* at Mt 19. [Back to text.](#)

16:19-31 The story of the Rich Man and Lazarus depicts the lot of the wealthy and the poor, first in this life and then in the next. For all his worldly comforts, the rich man's callousness toward the poor plunged him into ruin (16:23). Lazarus, despite his earthly hardships, is escorted to Abraham's side (16:22). A similar reversal of fortunes underlies the Beatitudes and Woes in 6:20-26 (Mt 25:31-46) (CCC 2463, 2831). [Back to text.](#)

16:19 There was a . . . man: The same opening line is used in the two preceding parables (15:11; 16:1) and may suggest this story is also a parable. On the other hand, the poor man is personally identified in 16:20 ("Lazarus"), a feature that is uncharacteristic of parables. **purple and fine**

linen: Expensive apparel often associated with royalty (Judg 8:26; Esther 8:15). [Back to text.](#)

16:22 Abraham's bosom: i.e., in the lap or presence of Abraham, the forefather of Israel (3:8; Is 51:2). It refers to a temporary realm within Hades where the righteous souls of the Old Covenant era waited patiently for Christ to open the gates of heaven (Eph 4:8-10). [Back to text.](#)

16:23 Hades: The netherworld or realm of the dead. It refers to a waiting place where the deceased souls of the wicked are detained until the Last Judgment (Rev 20:13). Here it stands opposite Abraham's presence and is a place where sinners languish in the grip of torment (Lk 16:24; Mt 11:23). It is separated from the abode of the righteous by a permanent, unbridgeable gulf that permits no traffic to pass between them (Lk 16:26) (CCC 633, 1021). [See note on Mt 16:18.](#) [Back to text.](#)

16:28 he may warn them: The first and only hint of the rich man's concern for others. His request for the resurrection of Lazarus is nevertheless denied, since the Scriptures already give sufficient warnings to prevent his **brothers** from neglecting the poor (Lev 23:22; Deut 15:9; Is 10:1-2; Amos 2:6-7). Others suggest the rich man is still being selfish, for he realizes that the damnation of his entire family would only increase his misery. [Back to text.](#)

16:31 Moses and the prophets: The entire OT (24:27). **rise from the dead:** Not even miracles will benefit those indifferent to the Scriptures. [Back to text.](#)

17:2 a millstone: A large stone used in a grinding mill (Rev 18:21). The severity of such a punishment corresponds to the severity of Christian scandal and indicates that God's curse will fall on anyone who sets a stumbling block before the faith of his **little ones**, i.e., disciples (10:21; 12:32) (CCC 228487). [Back to text.](#)

17:4 seven times: A call for limitless mercy (Jas 2:13; CCC 2227). [See note on Mt 18:22.](#) [Back to text.](#)

17:10 unworthy servants: Disciples should not expect congratulations for their service. Their work is important but not beyond the call of Christian **duty**, and no one can fully repay God for his gifts. [Back to text.](#)

17:12 stood at a distance: Because lepers were unclean, they were excluded from the Temple and ostracized from Israelite society (Lev 13:45-46; Num 5:2-3). Only when they recovered, and passed Levitical

inspection, could they be reinstated into Israel's covenant life. [See note on Lk 5:12.](#) [Back to text.](#)



17:18 this foreigner: Of the ten who were cleansed, only the Samaritan expressed gratitude (17:16) and faith (17:19). [See note on Lk 9:52.](#) • Jesus' actions recall how Elisha cleansed a foreign leper while living in Samaria (2 Kings 5:114). At another level, he initiates the adoption of foreigners into God's covenant family as prophesied in Is 56:3-8. [Back to text.](#)

17:21 in your midst: The expression probably means "among you" or "within your reach" and is used to stress the nearness of the **kingdom** (10:9; 21:31). [Back to text.](#)

17:22-37 Jesus announces the coming of the kingdom of God in the days of the Son of man. Two considerations suggest he is forewarning the disciples of the downfall of Jerusalem. **(1)** Many of the sayings collected here appear in the Olivet Discourse, where they more explicitly refer to the doom that awaits the city and the Temple (Mt 24-25; Mk 13). **(2)** Mention of the **days** of the Son of man (17:22) is echoed later in Luke when reference is made to the "days" when foreign armies will besiege the city (19:43) and the "days" when the Temple will be devastated (21:6). [Back to text.](#)

17:22 you will desire to see: The disciples will long to see the vindication of Jesus as he avenges the city that condemned him to a violent death. They will not see it firsthand, however, because Jesus will order them to evacuate Jerusalem and flee from Judea before the onset of judgment (21:20-21; Mk 13:14-16). To stress the importance of fleeing without hesitation, Jesus reminds them of how Lot escaped from Sodom before its demise and yet his own wife perished for turning back (17:28-32; Gen 19:24-26). [Back to text.](#)

17:34 taken . . . left: Depicts the fate of the wicked, who will be swept away, and the righteous, who will be mercifully spared. [See note on Mt 24:40.](#) [Back to text.](#)

17:37 Where the body is: An image of Jerusalem surrounded and besieged (19:43; 21:10). [See note on Mt 24:28.](#) [Back to text.](#)

18:1-14 Two parables on Christian prayer. The first teaches that we should pray continually (18:2-8), the second that we should pray humbly,

asking God for mercy (18:9-14) (CCC 2098, 2613). [Back to text.](#)

18:3 a widow: Widows were often powerless and vulnerable in ancient society, and many were supported by fellow Israelites (Deut 26:12). Both Jesus and Luke take a compassionate interest in their plight (2:37; 4:25-26; 7:12; 20:47; 21:3). [Back to text.](#)

18:5 her continual coming: The parable encourages persistent prayer (18:1). As the widow pleaded for justice, so we should persevere in faith and tirelessly petition God for our needs (Rom 12:12; 1 Thess 5:17). [Back to text.](#)

18:6 the unrighteous judge: His indifference to the widow's distress was a violation of justice (Deut 27:19). The parable's outcome is thus a mere shadow of God's concern for us. If an unjust and callous judge will vindicate a persevering widow, the Father will much more come to the aid of his prayerful children (Sir 35:12-17). [Back to text.](#)

18:11 The Pharisee stood: A common prayer posture (Mt 6:5; Mk 11:25). **God, I thank you:** Because the Pharisee is prideful, he will be "humbled" (18:14) for presuming that his adherence to traditional forms of piety is an automatic guarantee of divine blessing (18:12). He sadly overlooked his need for God's mercy (CCC 588). See topical essay: *Who Are the Pharisees?* at Mk 2. [Back to text.](#)

Jesus, the Son of Man

OF THE titles applied to Jesus in the Gospels, none appears more frequently than "Son of man". Nearly everywhere Jesus drops this mysterious name into his conversations and teaching, often attaching to it some of the most spectacular claims voiced in the Scriptures. Yet for all its familiarity to readers of the Bible, it is comparatively difficult to understand. This is hardly surprising, since even Jesus' contemporaries were puzzled by his use of it and at one point were driven to ask: "Who is this Son of man?" (Jn 12:34). The question has not lost its poignancy over the centuries but continues to ring out even today.

As we search for an answer, it is important to realize that Jesus was not the first to use the expression. In fact, it appears over 100 times in the Old Testament! In many contexts it functions as an idiom, meaning something like "human being" or "mere mortal" (Num 23:19; Job 25:6; Ps 8:4; Sir 17:30), and can be applied to individual men like the prophets Ezekiel (Ezek 2:1, 3) and Daniel (Dan 8:17). There are times in the Gospels when Jesus seems to speak of himself in this way, presumably to emphasize his full solidarity with humanity. In this sense Jesus is the "Son of man" because he possesses a true human body (Jn 6:53) and has the capacity for human activities like resting (Mt 8:20), eating and drinking (Lk 7:34), suffering (Mk 8:31), and even lying in a grave (Mt 12:40).

But something more lies hidden within this "Son of man" expression that, in certain contexts, stretches it beyond merely human limitations. Sometimes Jesus refers to himself in this way, and then goes on to claim all kinds of *divine* prerogatives for himself. As the "Son of man", he has the authority to forgive sins (Mk 2:10), suspend the Sabbath (Mk 2:28), and judge men for their deeds (Jn 5:27), and he even claims to be sent down from heaven (Jn 3:31)! What accounts for this fuller meaning? Could Jesus expect his disciples to unpack from this simple expression such enormous claims of divine authority?

The answer again leads us to the Old Testament, this time to the Book of Daniel. Here the prophet spends an entire chapter describing a bizarre vision of things to come (Dan 7:1-28). At first Daniel sees four beasts trudging up out of the sea, with each one looking more ferocious and powerful than the one before it. These monsters, we are told, represent pagan empires notoriously hostile to Israel. They instigate war with God's faithful people, called the "saints of the Most High" (Dan 7:25), and then the fourth and worst beast begins to trample them mercilessly. All of a sudden, the scene jumps from earth to heaven, where a celestial courtroom is in session and the Lord is seated as one "ancient of days" upon his royal throne (Dan 7:9). Into his presence comes a glorious figure "like a son of man", being escorted on the clouds of heaven (Dan 7:13). The court judges this "son of man" to be a worthy figure and gives him a kingdom unmatched in size and prestige by any other in history. With his coronation, the court likewise pronounces a verdict of condemnation upon the fourth beast, strips him of his power, and hands over his dominion to the "Son of man" and the "saints" of God (Dan 7:26-27).

Here we see a "Son of man" who looks more like a glorious and divine Messiah than a lowly and insignificant mortal. He is enthroned in heaven, given authority over all nations, and his royal appointment signals the dramatic defeat of God's enemies. The victorious outcome of this prophetic dream makes it impossible to think that Jesus could adopt for himself a title like the "Son of man" without drawing the minds of his followers back to this memorable vision. Indeed, there are several occasions in the Gospels when he makes unmistakable allusions to it (Mt 19:28; 24:30; 25:31). In these instances, we see Jesus teaching his disciples through the Scriptures about his own kingship and about the authority given him to triumph over evil. Even at his trial, Jesus can stand face to face with his accusers and claim that the death sentence awaiting him will not mean his demise. For he is the "Son of man", and the Father will soon vindicate him, raise him up, seat him on a royal throne, and decree the destruction of all his enemies (Mt 26:64; Mk 14:62).

The "Son of man" is an expression that tells us a great deal about the Messiah and his mission. Its roots in the Old Testament show it to be versatile and full of significance, able to draw our attention to things human

and mortal and to lift us up to see a glorious king seated next to the Lord. Who, then, is this "Son of man"? It is Jesus Christ, who conquered evil and now sits enthroned in heaven, exercising his universal kingship over the world through the Church (Mk 16:19; Acts 7:56; Rev 14:14-16). «[Back to Luke 18:1.](#)

18:13 the tax collector: Considered sinners and second-class citizens by the Pharisees. [See note on Mk 2:14.](#) **God, be merciful:** A prayer of humility and dependence on God. Unlike the Pharisee, he parades none of his credentials before God and begs only for forgiveness (Ps 51:1-4; Dan 9:18) (CCC 2559, 2839). [Back to text.](#)



18:16 belongs the kingdom: Since Baptism is the doorway into God's kingdom (Jn 3:5), the early Church naturally administered the sacrament to young **children** (Acts 2:38-39; CCC 1250-52). • Following the apostolic age, clear evidence for the widespread practice of Infant Baptism emerges from the second and third centuries A.D., where early Fathers such as Origen trace it back to apostolic tradition (*Comm. Rom.* 5, 9). The Council of Trent (1547) later confirmed and promoted the practice (Sess. 7, can. 13). [Back to text.](#)

18:20 the commandments: Jesus gives the Ten Commandments a central place in the Christian life. Although the sacrificial and judicial legislation of the Old Covenant has since passed away, its moral laws remain essential to our pursuit of eternal life (Rom 13:8-10; 1 Cor 7:19). [See note on Mk 10:27.](#) [Back to text.](#)

18:22 Sell all: Jesus exposes the rich man's greatest weakness: his attachment to earthly wealth (18:23). Because his heart is tied to his possessions, even the prospect of gaining eternal life fails to conquer his affections for them. Unless we become "poor in spirit" (Mt 5:3), wealth will have the same disastrous effect on us as it has on the rich man. Note that Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10) and Joseph of Arimathea (Mt 27:57) were also wealthy, yet both preferred the higher treasures of the kingdom by responding to the gospel. [See note on Mt 19:24.](#) [Back to text.](#)

18:29 wife . . . brothers . . . parents: Disciples who surrender earthly goods to the Lord exchange them for heavenly ones in return (9:57-62; 14:26). These worldly sacrifices are far outmatched by God's eternal gifts (9:24; Phil 3:8). [Back to text.](#)

18:31-34 Jesus makes several Passion predictions in Luke (9:22, 44; 12:50; 13:33; 17:25). Only here does he mention the involvement of the **Gentiles** (i.e., Romans). [Back to text.](#)

18:31 by the prophets: The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus were part of the prearranged plan of God (24:25-27, 44; Acts 2:14-23; 3:18, 24; 8:32-35). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Infants ([Lk 18:15](#))

Brephos (Gk.): a "newborn" or "small baby". The noun is used eight times in the NT. It is here tied to the important question: Who is invited to enter God's kingdom? Does Jesus call to himself only children above the age of reason, or all little ones— infants and adolescents alike? The meaning of this term in several NT contexts leaves no room for doubt. Luke himself uses it to describe the newborn Jesus lying in a manger (Lk 2:12, 16) and even John the Baptist as an infant still in the womb (1:41, 44)! In Acts 7:19, it refers to Israel's male children immediately after their birth, and Peter uses it metaphorically to depict young Christians who long for spiritual milk (1 Pet 2:2). Together these references make it certain that Jesus calls even newborn babies to share in his heavenly kingdom (Lk 18:16).



18:35 Jericho: About 17 miles northeast of Jerusalem. The city was renovated by Herod the Great nearly a mile from the OT city of Jericho, which was uninhabited by the first century (Josh 6:26). **a blind man:** Mark calls him "Bartimaeus" (Mk 10:46). Ironically, this blind beggar saw Jesus' identity more clearly than the crowds who rebuked him (18:39). • *Morally* (St. Augustine, *Sermo* 351): the crowd signifies fellow believers who walk with Christ and yet sometimes hinder our progress in the spiritual life. We must strive, like the blind man, to overcome their discouragement and make growth in virtue our spoken prayer to Christ. [Back to text.](#)

18:38 Son of David: A title for the Messiah, who was expected to bring God's healing to Israel (4:18; Is 35:4-6; Mt 11:2-5). He would also follow the steps of King Solomon, the royal son of David, whom Jewish tradition revered as a great healer and exorcist (Wis 7:20; Mt 12:22-23). [Back to text.](#)

19:1-10 This is an episode recounted only in Luke. The story is marked with irony, since Zacchaeus sought with great effort to see Jesus (19:3-4), only to discover that Jesus was seeking him (19:10)! Despite his riches (19:2), Zacchaeus held a loose grip on his wealth and so gave generously to the poor (19:8). [Back to text.](#)

19:2 chief tax collector: Possibly the head of a taxing district in charge of other collectors. Most tax collectors were suspected of dishonesty and despised as sinners (19:7). [See note on Mk 2:14.](#) [Back to text.](#)

19:8 fourfold: The most stringent standard of restitution for thievery (Ex 22:1) (CCC 2412). [Back to text.](#)

19:9 son of Abraham: Israel traced its ancestry to the patriarch (Is 51:1-2). Zacchaeus showed himself a true descendant by his repentance (3:12-13) and faith (Rom 4:12). Abraham is an important figure in Luke (1:55, 73; 13:16; 16:22). [Back to text.](#)

19:10 A Lucan summary of Jesus' mission as the "Savior" (2:11; 5:32; 9:24; 15:3-32). [Back to text.](#)

19:11 appear immediately: The disciples expected Jesus' long journey to **Jerusalem** to culminate in his enthronement and the establishment of an earthly kingdom (Acts 1:6). The parable corrects this misunderstanding on two counts. **(1)** It hints that Jesus will be enthroned far away in the heavenly Jerusalem, not in the earthly city just up the road (Acts 2:33-36). **(2)** It shows that Jesus will be absent for a time before he returns to judge his enemies and settle accounts with his servants. [Back to text.](#)

19:12-27 Luke's parable of the Pounds is similar to the parable of the Talents in Mt 25:14-30. It has multiple layers of significance. **(1) Historically,** it recalls how the Herodian rulers of Palestine often traveled to Rome to bid for ruling authority. Archelaus in particular went before Caesar Augustus seeking the kingdom of his late father, Herod the Great, in 4/1 B.C. As in the parable (19:14), Jewish delegates also journeyed to Rome to oppose the request. **(2) Morally,** Jesus stresses the need for diligence and responsibility. He expects disciples to fulfill their Christian duties in his absence, warning that fear will be no excuse for laziness or lack of productivity (19:20-24). **(3) Theologically,** the parable envisions Jesus ascending to the Father to receive his kingdom (19:12; Mk 16:19) and returning to judge those who reject his royal authority (19:27). His return is closely linked with the judgment of Israel and the downfall of Jerusalem in

A.D. 70, which is itself a prophetic preview of his Second Coming in glory to judge all nations at the end of time. [Back to text.](#)



Last Journey to Jerusalem

19:13 ten pounds: Literally, "ten minas". Each one was worth nearly four months' wages for a laborer. Here the pounds are distributed equally, while the Matthean parable distributes "talents" unequally (Mt 25:15). [Back to text.](#)

19:27 slay them: Points to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, when the city will draw a divine curse upon itself for rejecting Jesus as its messianic king (13:34-35; 19:41-44; 21:20-24). [Back to text.](#)

19:28 going up to Jerusalem: The long journey begun at 9:51 finally ends as Jesus arrives at his appointed destination (13:22, 33; 17:11; 18:31; 19:11). [Back to text.](#)

19:28-40 Jesus' triumphal entry is staged as a royal procession (Jn 12:12-19). [See note on Mt 21:1-11.](#) [Back to text.](#)

19:29 Bethphage . . . Bethany: Two villages within two miles of Jerusalem (Jn 11:18). [See note on Mk 11:1.](#) **Olivet:** The Mount of Olives directly faces the city on the east. It is here that Jesus and the disciples lodged during the evenings of Passion Week (21:37). [Back to text.](#)



19:30 a colt: Matthew mentions a "donkey" also (Mt 21:7). The animal was fit for sacred use, since no one had ridden upon it (Num 19:2; 1 Sam 6:7). • Jesus' procession into the city fulfills the royal prophecy of Zech 9:9. The colt symbolizes that Jesus comes in peace; otherwise he would be mounted on a war horse (Zech 9:10) (CCC 559). [Back to text.](#)

19:38 Blessed is the King: The crowds chant Ps 118:26 in fulfillment of Jesus' words in 13:35. The Hallel Psalms (113-118) were regularly sung by Jewish pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem for the sacred feasts of Passover, Weeks, and Booths. [See note on Mk 11:8-10.](#) **Peace . . . glory:** Echoes the angelic hymn of 2:14. [Back to text.](#)



19:42-44 Jesus foresees what eventually took place in A.D. 70, when the Roman army laid siege to Jerusalem and destroyed it (21:20). Its conquest will be a sign that God is visiting his judgment on the wayward city. • Jesus clothes his solemn words with the language and imagery of OT prophecy (Is 29:1-3; Jer 6:6; Ezek 4:1-3). Because Jerusalem has become a repeat offender, it will again suffer the devastation that befell the city in 586

B.C. with the Babylonian invasions. • *Mystically* (St. Gregory the Great, *Hom. in Evan.* 39): Christ continues to weep for sinners who, like Jerusalem, run after evil and refuse to make peace with God. Their sins hide from their eyes the judgment that is coming, otherwise they would weep for themselves. When it arrives, demons will besiege the soul and the Lord will visit them with his dreadful punishment. [Back to text.](#)

19:45-48 Jesus' dramatic expulsion of Temple merchants both prophesies and preenacts the sanctuary's imminent downfall (21:5-6). He is appalled that God's **house of prayer** (Is 56:7) has been desecrated like a **den of robbers** (Jer 7:11). [See note on Mt 21:13.](#) [Back to text.](#)

20:8 by what authority: Jesus turns the tables on his interrogators to silence them. If the Jerusalem leaders rejected John's heavenly authority, they would inevitably reject Jesus and his divine mission as well (7:29-34). [Back to text.](#)



20:9-16 The parable of the Wicked Tenants. Jesus pictorially recounts OT history as it culminates in the Messiah, God's **beloved son** (20:13). The parable challenges Israel's leaders, the **tenants** (20:9), and warns them of the consequences of rejecting Jesus (20:15-16). • Israel is often portrayed as Yahweh's **vineyard** in the OT (Ps 80:8; Is 5:1-7; Jer 2:21; Hos 10:1). [See note on Mk 12:1-9.](#) [Back to text.](#)



20:17-18 Jesus brings together three OT texts that employ the image of a stone: Ps 118:22, Is 8:14-15, and Dan 2:44-45. • Psalm 118 describes the Messiah as one rejected by Israel's builders, yet chosen by Yahweh to be the honored foundation stone of a new Temple. Isaiah 8 describes the Lord as a stumbling stone that will trip and destroy the sinners of Israel, especially those in Jerusalem. Daniel 2 recounts a vision in which God destroys the empires of the earth with a crushing stone, replacing them with his messianic kingdom. Similar uses of these texts are found in Rom 9:33 and 1 Pet 2:6-8. [Back to text.](#)

20:20 the governor: Pontius Pilate, the Roman prefect of Judea. [See note on Lk 23:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)

20:22 Is it lawful . . . ?: A trap question. If Jesus affirms the tax, he will provoke to anger fellow Jews who aspire to national independence from

Rome. If he denounces the tax, he will be reported to the Romans on charges of sedition. [See note on Mk 12:13.](#) [Back to text.](#)

20:24 a coin: A "denarius" bearing the stamped **likeness** (or "image") of the Roman emperor, Tiberius Caesar (A.D. 14-37). [Back to text.](#)

20:25 to Caesar . . . to God: Jesus evades his interrogators' trap by using the example of Roman taxation to illustrate a higher duty. Since Caesar's image belongs to him, he should receive it back (Rom 13:1-7; 1 Pet 2:13-17). It is nevertheless more important to give yourself, stamped with the "image" of God, back to God (Gen 1:27). [See note on Mk 12:16.](#) [Back to text.](#)



20:27-40 The **Sadducees** challenge Jesus about his teaching on the afterlife. They are convinced that the Mosaic Law says nothing about a future **resurrection** (20:27) and so present him with a dilemma: If Moses permits a woman to remarry every time her husband dies (Deut 25:5), will this not bring confusion into the next life? How will she determine who is her legitimate spouse if all of them are raised? Jesus deals with his objectors on their own terms: first, by denying that marriage exists in the next life and, second, by deliberately citing the Mosaic Law against them. • The burning bush episode shows that Yahweh identified himself with the patriarchs long after their death (Ex 3:6). If **Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob** are still with God, then life must endure beyond death and a future resurrection is implied in the Pentateuch. See topical essay: *Who Are the Sadducees?* at Mk 12. [Back to text.](#)

20:35 that age: The institution of marriage will not exist in heaven. [See note on Mt 22:30.](#) [Back to text.](#)



20:36 equal to angels: Like the angels, the saints will be clothed in glory and immortality; but, unlike the angels, they will ultimately live in resurrected bodies and not as disembodied spirits (1 Cor 15:35-50). They are thus equal in some respects, but not the same in all respects. • Belief in the general resurrection is central to the Christian faith. The Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed both state that our physical bodies will be raised again to enjoy eternal life. [Back to text.](#)



20:41 David's son?: The greatness of David was proverbial in the OT. He was the ideal king of Israel by whom all others were measured. • Jesus uses the OT to challenge a mistaken assumption that even the Messiah would be inferior to David. On the contrary, David himself calls the Messiah his superior "Lord" in Ps 110:1 (20:42; Acts 2:34-36). [See note on Mk 12:36.](#) [Back to text.](#)

20:47 greater condemnation: Severe judgment awaits the scribes who abuse their authority to exploit the defenseless. Widows were particularly vulnerable to their tactics. See note on 18:3. [Back to text.](#)



21:2 two copper coins: Literally, "two lepta". These were the least valuable (Jewish) coins in circulation. Within the Temple precincts, there were over a dozen receptacles for different types of donations (CCC 2544). • *Allegorically* (St. Bede, *In Marcum*): the widow's offering signifies the purity of the Church in contrast to unfaithful Jerusalem, which gives to God only from its surplus. The Church is the widow whose husband, Christ, has died on her behalf. She lives in poverty of spirit and gives devoutly to the Lord's treasury the two coins of charity—the love of God and neighbor. [Back to text.](#)

21:5-36 Jesus' Olivet Discourse foretells the coming devastation of Jerusalem in language that makes use of several OT images and themes (21:6, 24). His words were confirmed a generation later, when the Romans trampled the city and the Temple to the ground in A.D. 70. The catastrophe was a historical preview of the end of the world, showing how God's judgment upon the one nation of Israel at the end of the Old Covenant era prefigures the judgment of all nations at the end of the New (CCC 585-86). See topical essay: *End of the World?* at Mt 24. [Back to text.](#)

21:5 noble stones: Herod the Great began to renovate and expand the Jerusalem Temple in 19 B.C. The structure was immense, with many of its stones measuring nearly 40 feet in length. According to Jesus, its indestructible appearance is only an illusion (21:6). [See note on Mk 13:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)

21:8 many will come: First-century Palestine experienced a surge of messianic fervor. Many claimed to be a "military Messiah" who would lead Israel to overthrow the Romans (Acts 5:33-39). [Back to text.](#)

21:12 persecute you: Disciples must fearlessly identify with Jesus despite opposition (Mk 8:38; Jn 16:2-4, 33). Persecution will provide opportunities to proclaim the gospel. Luke recounts several such episodes where believers are locked up in **prisons** (Acts 4:3; 5:18; 8:3; 12:4; 16:23) and hauled before **kings and governors** (Acts 25:23-26:32). [Back to text.](#)

21:15 a mouth and wisdom: Unlike professional orators who rehearse their speeches before delivering them, disciples should only prepare to be faithful. Christ will give them words through the Holy Spirit (Mt 10:20; Mk 13:11). Stephen was an example of this by his powerful witness in Jerusalem (Acts 6:9-10), as were other early Christians (Acts 4:8-14; 26:24-32). [Back to text.](#)

21:16 parents . . . brothers . . . kinsmen: Jesus demands heroic allegiance that may drive a wedge between family members (14:26). Whether martyred or persecuted, the faithful will "gain" their lives (21:19) by laying them down for Christ (9:24). [Back to text.](#)

21:20 Jerusalem surrounded: Jesus envisions the siege and destruction of Jerusalem that eventually took place in A.D. 70. Some scholars infer from this verse and from 19:42-45 that Luke must have written his Gospel *after* the catastrophe of A.D. 70. The claim is that Luke's wording in these passages reflects knowledge of the event as past history. Two considerations cast doubt on the validity of this interpretation. **(1)** The language of Jesus' discourse in Luke draws heavily on the wording and imagery of judgment oracles aimed at Jerusalem in the OT. Jesus formulated his own prophecies in this way to alert believers that Jerusalem would be laid waste for its iniquities in the first century A.D. just as it had been in the sixth century B.C. (Jer 6:6-8; 52:4; Ezek 4:1-3). To say that Luke must be dependent upon actual reports of the event is to minimize the prophetic character of Jesus' discourse and its distinctive biblical coloring. **(2)** There is nothing unique about Luke's description that suggests he must have known the details of Jerusalem's downfall. Although Roman troops did besiege and destroy the capital, the military operations described by Luke were commonplace in the ancient world for the overthrow of walled cities. See introduction: *Date* and note on Mt 24:15. [Back to text.](#)



21:22 days of vengeance: God will send covenant curses upon Jerusalem for rejecting its Messiah (Dan 9:25-27). • This expression is used

in the Greek OT for a time of divine judgment that falls upon Israel when it forsakes the Lord in favor of idolatry and lawlessness (Deut 32:35; Hos 9:7). [Back to text.](#)



21:24 Jesus describes the atrocities ahead for Jerusalem, indicating that foreign nations will play a strategic role in administering God's punishment (Rev 11:2). • He draws from several OT passages that describe Jerusalem's destruction in the past and reapplies them to its devastation in the near future (A.D. 70). Casualties falling by the **sword** recall Jer 21:7 and Ezek 39:23; the city **trodden down** evokes Is 63:18, Dan 8:13, and 1 Macc 3:45; and the **times of the Gentiles** refer to God's use of foreign armies to chastise Israel, as in Deut 28:49 and Zech 14:1-2. [Back to text.](#)



21:25 sun . . . moon . . . stars: Heavenly disturbances figure in many OT prophecies that portray Yahweh destroying pagan kingdoms (Is 13:9-10; Ezek 32:7; Joel 2:10, 31). [See note on Mk 13:24-25.](#) **roaring of the sea:** An image of foreign nations enraged and ready for battle. • Isaiah uses this imagery for the nation God rouses to punish wayward Israel (Is 5:30). It also portrays the anger of God raging against his foes (Wis 5:22). [Back to text.](#)

21:27 the Son of man: Jesus will visit Jerusalem with divine judgment, while bringing "redemption" to his faithful disciples (21:28). See topical essay: *Jesus, the Son of Man*, at Lk 17. [Back to text.](#)

21:29-31 The short parable of the **fig tree** advocates constant prayer and readiness (12:35-40; 22:40, 46). Disciples must be alert at all times, lest they grow lazy in their pursuit of holiness (21:36). Tribulations are inevitable before the dramatic onset of God's judgment and the coming of his **kingdom** (Acts 14:22) (CCC 2612). [See note on Mk 13:35.](#) [Back to text.](#)

21:32 this generation: Jesus insists that God's judgment will fall upon Jerusalem within the lifetime of his contemporaries (A.D. 70). [Back to text.](#)



21:33 Heaven and earth: Not even the stable universe will outlast Jesus' words. • The OT similarly stresses the permanence of God's word in

contrast to the impermanence of creation (Ps 102:25-27; Is 40:8; 51:6). [See note on Mt 24:35.](#) [Back to text.](#)

21:36 to stand: i.e., to withstand temptation and face the divine Judge with confidence (Eph 6:13; 1 Jn 2:28). [Back to text.](#)

22:1 the feast: The celebration of **Unleavened Bread** and **Passover** took place together in the spring (Lev 23:4-8; Ezek 45:21), when thousands traveled to Jerusalem to observe the festival as a nation (Deut 16:1-8). Passover commemorated Israel's redemption from Egypt and looked forward to an even greater deliverance in the future (Ex 12). The feast was celebrated with a sacred meal of lamb, wine, herbs, and bread. Unleavened Bread, which began on the same day as Passover and extended for another six days, was a time when no leaven or yeast (symbolic of sin, 1 Cor 5:8) could be eaten among the Israelites. See topical essay: *When Did Jesus Celebrate the Last Supper?* at Jn 13. [Back to text.](#)

22:3 Satan entered into Judas: The devil himself has orchestrated the plot against Jesus (Jn 13:27). Since 4:13, he has awaited an "opportunity" (22:6) to attack, and the moment arrives when Judas' loose commitment to Jesus is finally broken (22:48). [Back to text.](#)

22:4 captains: Levites who served as Temple police in Jerusalem (22:52; Acts 4:1; 5:24-26). [Back to text.](#)

22:10 the city: Jerusalem. **man . . . jar of water:** An unusual sight. Retrieving and carrying water was normally a woman's task (Jn 4:7). [Back to text.](#)

22:14-23 The Last Supper, where Jesus gathered with his apostles to transform the Old Covenant Passover into the sacrificial banquet of the New Covenant. As Passover recalls Israel's deliverance from Egypt, so the Eucharist both commemorates and accomplishes our redemption from slavery in sin. Jesus reconfigures this ancient feast by placing himself at the center of its significance: he is the true Lamb offered for sin and given as food to God's family (Jn 1:29; 1 Cor 5:6-8; CCC 1151, 1340). [Back to text.](#)

22:17 he took a chalice: The Passover meal (Seder) was structured around four cups of wine. Here Jesus takes the first or second cup; either he was sanctifying the feast (cup one) or he and the disciples had just finished singing Ps 113-14 (cup two). The eucharistic cup that Jesus consecrates in 22:20 was probably cup three, the "cup of blessing", which was drunk after the main meal (1 Cor 10:16). [Back to text.](#)



22:19 given thanks: A translation of the Greek verb *eucharisteō*, from which the Sacrament of the Eucharist takes its name (CCC 1359-60). **broke it:** The early Christians closely associated the Eucharist with this gesture, calling it the "breaking of the bread" (24:35; Acts 2:42; 20:7). **This is my body:** Once Jesus consecrates the unleavened bread, it is no longer a *symbol* of the Old Covenant Passover (Deut 16:3) but the *substance* of the New Covenant Passover: Christ himself (CCC 1365). **Do this:** The apostles and their successors are to imitate Jesus' actions. Note that only "the Twelve" were present with him at the Last Supper (Mt 26:20; Mk 14:17). According to Jewish custom, the feast was celebrated by families or fraternities of 10 to 20 people. • According to the Council of Trent in 1562, Jesus' words "Do this in memory of me" are linked with the apostles' ordination to the New Covenant priesthood (Sess. 22, chap. 1). Priests perpetuate this memorial through the continual celebration of the Eucharist, where Christ's once-for-all sacrifice is present, but hidden, behind the visible signs of bread and wine (CCC 611, 1337). See word study: [Remembrance](#) at Lk 22:19. [Back to text.](#)



22:20 is poured out: This is part of the cultic language of the OT, where the blood of animal sacrifices was poured at the base of the altar to make atonement (Ex 29:12; Lev 4:7, 18). It is also linked with the martyrs, who pour out or shed their blood before God (Mt 23:35; Acts 22:20). **new covenant:** An expression that, in the Gospels, is used only at the Last Supper. The epistles use it more frequently (Rom 11:27; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 8:6). [Back to text.](#)

22:25 benefactors: A title of honor claimed by various rulers of the Hellenistic world. [Back to text.](#)

22:26 one who serves: The disciples must not confuse worldly honor and recognition with spiritual greatness. The shepherds of God's people must instead imitate Christ in their humility and selfless concern for those under their care (Jn 13:12-15; CCC 894). [Back to text.](#)



22:29 a kingdom: Jesus confers royal authority on the apostles and entrusts them with the Church on earth (12:32). • Jesus alludes to the

prophetic vision of Daniel 7, in which God gives a worldwide kingdom to the Son of man, who in turn gives it to the saints (Dan 7:18, 22, 27). In context, these events coincide with the Son of man's heavenly enthronement (Dan 7:13-14). The historical unfolding of this prophecy begins with the Ascension of Jesus and the birth of the Church (Mk 14:62; 16:19; Acts 7:56). [Back to text.](#)



22:30 thrones: Seats of royal honor. As the new Davidic king, Jesus gives his apostles a share in his kingdom, enabling them to exercise his royal authority over God's people (1:32-33; Mt 19:28). [See note on Mt 16:19.](#) • The role of the apostles is described in terms that recall how King David's cabinet of ministers ruled Israel from thrones in Jerusalem (Ps 122:3-5; Is 22:20-23). [Back to text.](#)

22:31-32 Jesus displays a special interest in Peter both here and elsewhere. For, although **Satan** will test the faith of all the disciples, Jesus prays for **Simon** in particular (see textual note k). In this way Christ helps Peter regain his balance after he stumbles, making him a source of stability for others as well (CCC 552, 641). [See note on Jn 21:15-17.](#) [Back to text.](#)



22:37 reckoned with transgressors: Jesus views his ensuing Passion through the lens of OT prophecy. • In particular, he excerpts from Isaiah's vision of the Suffering Servant (Is 53:12). This figure represents the rejected Messiah, who is despised (53:3), wounded (53:5), and struck down (53:8). He is even numbered among the sinners, yet he is innocent and offers himself as a sacrifice for the sins of others (53:10-12). The NT often depicts Jesus as this Suffering Servant (Mt 8:17; Acts 8:32-35; 1 Pet 2:24-25; CCC 601, 713). [Back to text.](#)

22:38 It is enough: An expression of frustration. Although Jesus spoke of **swords** metaphorically in 22:36 to warn of the coming spiritual battle, some of the disciples took his words literally. Jesus will clarify his meaning in a subsequent episode when he rebukes Peter for violently defending him with a sword (22:49-51). [Back to text.](#)

22:39 his custom: Jesus regularly lodged outside of Jerusalem in the evenings (21:37). [Back to text.](#)

22:40 the place: The garden of Gethsemane, east of Jerusalem (Mt 26:36; Jn 18:1). [Back to text.](#)



22:42 this chalice: An image of bitter suffering (Is 51:17; kilkJ Ezek 23:33). [See note on Mt 20:22](#). **not my will:** Jesus never resists his appointed mission (Jn 4:34; 6:38). The Father answers this prayer, not by removing the Passion, but by strengthening the Son to endure it (Heb 5:7-9) (CCC 2824, 2849). • As a man, Jesus recoils from the prospect of suffering. His anguish is intensified by his foresight, knowing that he will experience pain in his body and bear the dreadful weight of man's sins on the Cross. Even still, Jesus is obedient unto death (Phil 2:8). [Back to text](#).

22:43 an angel: A detail only in Luke. Angels were similarly present at Jesus' temptation in the wilderness (Mt 4:11; Mk 1:13). [See note on Lk 1:11](#). [Back to text](#).



22:44 drops of blood: The extreme distress of Jesus' soul is manifest through his body. • Although Christ is a Divine Person, the human nature he has assumed gives him the full capacity to suffer and die as a man (Heb 2:14-15). [Back to text](#).

22:48 with a kiss?: Judas contorts a symbol of affection into one of betrayal. It was part of his prearranged plot to identify Jesus for the soldiers (Mt 26:48). [Back to text](#).

22:50 one of them: Simon Peter (Jn 18:10). Jesus both reprimands him and rectifies his wrong (Lk 22:51). [Back to text](#).

22:53 the power of darkness: The appointed time of Satan's final attack on Jesus (4:13). Paul uses the same language (in Greek) to describe the devil's dominion in Col 1:13. [See note on Lk 22:3](#). [Back to text](#).

22:54 high priest's house: His official residence in Jerusalem (Jn 18:28). Since the Jewish court normally convened in a building near the Temple, the gathering here is unusual and suggests they viewed Jesus' high-profile case as an emergency situation. Matthew and Mark portray Jesus' nighttime interrogations as a formal trial (Mt 26:57-68; Mk 14:53-65). [Back to text](#).

Word Study

Remembrance ([Lk 22:19](#))

Anamnesis (Gk.): a "recollection" or "memorial". The word is used four times in the NT, three times in connection with the Last Supper. In the Greek OT, the term is linked with liturgical memorials. In one case, incense is placed with the bread of Presence in the Temple as a remembrance offering (Lev 24:7); in another, trumpets are blown at the time of sacrifice to remind Israel of the Lord (Num 10:10). In the NT, this term describes how the animal sacrifices of the Old Covenant only reminded Israel of their sins, but were unable to remove them (Heb 10:3). It is only Christ's sacrifice on the Cross that powerfully remits our sins. His priestly offering is then perpetuated throughout history, being drawn into the present every time the eucharistic liturgy is celebrated. Unlike those in the OT, this liturgical "memorial" not only reminds us of his saving death, but re-presents it before us in a sacramental way (Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24-26; CCC 1341, 1362).

22:61 looked at Peter: The gaze of Jesus brings shame upon Peter for his cowardice. The apostle's bitter weeping (22:62) marks the beginning of his restoration (22:32; CCC 1429). [See note on Mt 26:74.](#) [Back to text.](#)

22:66 their council: The Sanhedrin, which governed the internal affairs of Judaism. It was composed of Jerusalem's religious authorities and headed by the high priest. [See note on Mk 14:55.](#) [Back to text.](#)



22:67 If I tell you: Jesus detects malice in his accusers and answers them by paraphrasing the response of Jeremiah to King Zedekiah (Jer 38:15). • The entire context of this OT episode runs parallel to the trial of Jesus: Jeremiah was accused as a false prophet for announcing Jerusalem's doom, abused by the head princes of the city who sought his death, and stood trial before the Judean ruler (Jer 38:2-14). [Back to text.](#)

22:69 from now on: Jesus envisions the verdict of the Sanhedrin being overturned in God's court. He draws from Ps 110:1 and Dan 7:13 to predict his enthronement at the Father's **right hand** and his vindication as the royal **Son of man**. [See note on Mt 26:64.](#) [Back to text.](#)

22:70 You say that I am: The ambiguity of Jesus' response is more apparent than real, since Mark makes it clear that Jesus accepted the claim to be the Messiah and Son of God (Mk 14:62). The Sanhedrin hears this loud and clear, judging that his response crosses the line of "blasphemy"

(Mt 26:65). Since only the Romans could administer capital punishment in NT Palestine (Jn 18:31), the Jewish authorities now present Jesus to them as a "king" and rival to Caesar (23:2; CCC 596). [Back to text.](#)

23:1 Pilate: Pontius Pilate, the Roman prefect of Judea from A.D. 26 to 36. While insensitive toward the Jews generally, he remains convinced of Jesus' innocence throughout the trial (Jn 18:38; 19:4). He alone holds the authority to issue and execute a capital sentence in Judea (Jn 19:10; Acts 13:28). [Back to text.](#)

23:2 perverting our nation: The Jerusalem authorities depict Jesus as a threat to Roman peace in Palestine (23:5). The charge was of obvious interest to Pilate. **forbidding . . . tribute:** A false accusation. Jesus permits the practice but stresses our greater duties toward God (20:19-26). [Back to text.](#)

23:3 King of the Jews?: Jesus hesitates to adopt the title because Pilate is thinking in purely political terms (Jn 6:15). Jesus' kingdom is heavenly, not earthly, leaving Pilate with no legitimate grounds to accuse him of challenging Roman authority (Jn 18:36). [Back to text.](#)

23:4 no crime: Luke's narrative repeatedly emphasizes Jesus' innocence (23:15, 22, 41, 47). [Back to text.](#)

23:7 Herod: Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee from 4/1 B.C. until A.D. 39. Pilate sends Jesus to Herod out of deference and some disinterest, since the trial charges included causing commotion in Galilee (23:5). Only Luke mentions the interrogation of Jesus before Herod (23:8-12). [Back to text.](#)

23:11 gorgeous apparel: Herod mocks the charge of kingship (23:2), unaware of Jesus' royal dignity (1:32-33). [Back to text.](#)

23:12 Herod and Pilate: A sinister alliance (Acts 4:25-28; 1 Cor 2:8). [See note on Mt 27:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)

23:23 their voices prevailed: The Jerusalem mob coerces Pilate to execute Jesus. By questioning the governor's own loyalty to Caesar, they threaten to report him to the emperor should he refuse their insistent request (Jn 19:12). [Back to text.](#)

23:26 Simon of Cyrene: Roman law granted soldiers in Palestine the right to force civilians into temporary service (Mt 5:41). **carry it behind Jesus:** Symbolic of faithful discipleship (Lk 9:23; 14:27). [Back to text.](#)

23:28-31 Jesus warns the women of **Jerusalem** that another tragedy is heading for their city. It would soon be destroyed by siege, war, and fire in

A.D. 70. Even barrenness will seem like a blessing in these dreadful days. [See note on Lk 21:5-36.](#) [Back to text.](#)



23:30 Fall on us . . . Cover us: Expressions of agony and despair drawn from Hos 10:8. • In its original context, Hosea pronounced doom on the northern kingdom of Israel (in Samaria) for abandoning the Lord in favor of idols. Since the Israelites ignored the prophet's warnings, they were crushed by the Assyrians in the eighth century B.C. Jesus redirects this oracle from Samaria to Jerusalem, which will likewise taste the bitterness of war and devastation for its prolonged impenitence (Rev 6:16). [Back to text.](#)



23:31 the wood: A symbol of Jerusalem. As long as the city is like **green** wood, which is moist and unsuitable for making a fire, there is still time to repent and embrace the Messiah. Persistent rebellion, however, will make Jerusalem **dry** and fit to be burned. • Jesus alludes to Ezekiel's condemnation of Jerusalem in the sixth century B.C., implying that once again the wayward city will become firewood for the flames of divine judgment (Ezek 15:1-8; 20:47). In addressing this to the faithful "Daughters of Jerusalem" (Lk 23:28), he may be identifying them with the righteous "daughters" of the city who will escape the catastrophe by the mercy of God and become a source of consolation for others (Ezek 14:22). [Back to text.](#)

23:33 The Skull: A translation of the Aramaic "Golgotha" (Mk 15:22). **crucified:** The Romans reserved crucifixion for insurrectionists and other base criminals. Nailed to wooden beams, the victims died excruciating deaths through gradual blood loss and asphyxiation. Ironically, what appeared to be Jesus' utter defeat became the sign of his victory and the instrument of salvation for the world (1 Cor 2:2; 1 Pet 2:24). [See note on Mk 15:24.](#) [Back to text.](#)



23:34 Father, forgive them: Jesus shows mercy to his executioners (1 Pet 2:23), realizing they are sinning in ignorance (Acts 3:17; 1 Cor 2:8). Stephen likewise prayed for his enemies at death (Acts 7:60) (CCC 597, 2635). **divide his garments:** The execution squad customarily dispossessed the dying victim of any remaining belongings. • The Passion of Jesus parallels the entire movement of Ps 22, which narrates the rejection and

final vindication of the righteous sufferer. The division of garments echoes Ps 22:18, the Crucifixion recalls Ps 22:16, and the mockery of the crowds evokes Ps 22:6-7. According to Mt 27:46 and Mk 15:34, Jesus recited the opening line of Ps 22 on the Cross. [See note on Mt 27:46.](#) [Back to text.](#)

23:38 an inscription: According to Roman practice, criminals displayed a sign inscribed with the charges brought against them. Jesus' placard was written in three languages (Jn 19:20). [Back to text.](#)

23:42 remember me: The penitent thief may have sneered at Jesus earlier (Mk 15:32). His conversion at the final hour is now manifest by his insight: he does not see Jesus' death as his demise, but looks forward to the coming of his royal kingdom. The promise of "Paradise" (Lk 23:43) is generously out of proportion to the man's simple request (CCC 1021). See word study: [Paradise](#) at 2 Cor 12:3. [Back to text.](#)

23:44 sixth . . . ninth hour: From noon until 3 P.M., when the day's brightest hours were shrouded by the "power of darkness" (22:53). [See note on Mt 27:45.](#) [Back to text.](#)

23:45 curtain: One of the two veils that separated God's presence from his people in the Jerusalem Temple. That this curtain is torn at the time of the Crucifixion indicates that Jesus' suffering is a sacrificial and priestly act that opens for us a new and living way into the sanctuary of heaven (Heb 10:19-22). [See note on Mk 15:38.](#) [Back to text.](#)



23:46 Father, into your hands: Jesus is in full possession of himself as he entrusts even his death to the Father's care. His Crucifixion is thus a willing sacrifice, not a tragic accident beyond his control (Jn 10:17-18; Eph 5:2). • Jesus makes the cry of Ps 31:5 his own. The entire psalm moves from lamentation to praise, expressing both the agony and the confidence of an innocent sufferer. It is because the sufferer trusts in the Lord's goodness that he anticipates his final deliverance and vindication in the end. [Back to text.](#)

23:47 centurion: A commander of 100 Roman soldiers. **innocent!:** Or, "righteous". The centurion also professes that Jesus was God's Son (Mt 27:54; Mk 15:39). [Back to text.](#)

23:51 looking for the kingdom: Joseph of Arimathea risked his honored reputation as a member of the Jewish court, the Sanhedrin. Withholding consent, he distanced himself from the council's verdict against Jesus

(22:71) and now arranges his burial. He is elsewhere called a "disciple" (Mt 27:57; Jn 19:38). [Back to text.](#)

23:53 rock-hewn tomb: Owned by Joseph of Arimathea (Mt 27:60). Such tombs resembled small caves, with bench-like shelves cut into the walls, and could be used to bury entire families. A large stone was lodged into the entryway to seal it shut (Mk 16:4). [Back to text.](#)

23:54 day of Preparation: Friday. Because the **sabbath** rest began at sundown, Jesus was buried quickly in a tomb near the city (Jn 19:42). [Back to text.](#)

23:56 spices and ointments: The little time between Jesus' death and the start of the Sabbath allowed for some preparation of his body but not the full customary procedures (Jn 19:39). The women return to finish on Sunday what was not completed on Friday (Lk 24:1). [Back to text.](#)

24:1-53 Jesus' Resurrection crowns the story of all four Gospels (Mt 28:1-10; Mk 16:1-8; Jn 20:1-18). In Luke, Jesus' *disappearance* from the tomb is only the initial evidence of his rising. He soon *appears* to his disciples (24:31, 36), eats in their presence (24:42), and invites them to touch his risen body (24:39). There are some of the "many proofs" that testify to the miracle of Easter (Acts 1:3) (CCC 640-44). [Back to text.](#)

24:1 first day: Sunday. The Sabbath day (Saturday) is the final day of the Jewish week (Gen 2:1-3). The early Christians called Sunday the "Lord's day" to commemorate Christ's Resurrection and celebrate the Eucharist (see Acts 20:7; Rev 1:10; CCC 1166, 2174). [Back to text.](#)

24:4 two men: They are angels, according to 24:23 (Mt 28:2; Acts 1:10). [Back to text.](#)

24:10 Mary Magdalene: The first person on record to see the risen Jesus (Mk 16:9; Jn 20:11-18). She had long been a disciple (Lk 8:2). [Back to text.](#)

24:12 Peter rose: Simon rushes to the empty tomb, accompanied by the Apostle John (Jn 20:3-9). His inspection confirms the report of Jesus' disappearance. [Back to text.](#)

24:13 Emmaus: A Judean village of uncertain location (1 Mac 9:50). [Back to text.](#)

24:18 Cleopas: Probably the same person as the one called "Clopas" in Jn 19:25. Early Christian tradition identifies him as the brother of Joseph, the legal father of Jesus (3:23), and the father of Simon/Simeon, the second bishop of Jerusalem (see Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3, 11, and 4, 22). [Back to text.](#)



24:19 mighty in deed and word: Moses is described in these terms in Acts 7:22. The implication is that Jesus is the awaited prophet-like-Moses announced in Deut 18:15 (Acts 3:22-23; 7:37). Jesus was often viewed as a prophet by his contemporaries (Lk 7:16; Mt 16:14; 21:46; Jn 6:14). [See note on Lk 9:35.](#) [Back to text.](#)

24:21 redeem Israel: The discouraged travelers had hoped that Jesus would reign as king in Jerusalem and rescue their nation from Roman oppression (19:11; Mk 11:10; Acts 1:6). Their expectations are out of step with God's plan to free Israel from sin and death, not from political subjugation (Mt 1:21; Jn 1:29; CCC 439). [See note on Lk 4:18-19.](#) [Back to text.](#)

24:27 all the Scriptures: Jesus gives an overview of salvation history from the OT. His entire life was foreordained in Scripture, including his birth (Mt 1:23; 2:6), ministry (4:18-19), death (20:17; Acts 8:32-33), and Resurrection (Mt 12:40; Acts 2:24-28) (CCC 601, 652). [Back to text.](#)



24:30 took . . . blessed . . . broke . . . gave: A sequence of actions recalling the Last Supper accounts (22:19; Mt 26:26). Here the disciples encounter Christ in a spiritual way, discerning his presence in the meal (24:35). [See note on Mt 14:13-21.](#) • The structure of the Emmaus episode reflects the structure of the eucharistic liturgy, where Jesus gives himself to the Church in word and sacrament, in the proclamation of Scripture (24:27) and in the eucharistic Bread of Life (24:30, 35) (CCC 1346-47). [Back to text.](#)

24:35 breaking of the bread: Among Jews this was a ceremonial gesture that commenced the celebration of an ordinary meal. Among Christians it was used as a description of the eucharistic liturgy (Acts 2:42; 20:7; CCC 1329). [Back to text.](#)



24:39 my hands . . . my feet: The nail marks demonstrate that Jesus' risen body is the same body that was crucified only days earlier (CCC 645). The evidence for his rising becomes incontrovertible as it mounts from his disappearance (empty tomb), to his various appearances (24:34; 1 Cor 15:4-8), and now to a direct examination of his wounds (Jn

20:27). • *Analogically* (St. Ambrose, *In Lucam*): Jesus' risen body prefigures the resurrected bodies of the saints. By convincing us of his own Resurrection, he likewise assures us of the physical nature of our own resurrection on the Last Day. • Jesus' risen body is truly physical but no longer earthly, since his humanity is now incorruptible and endowed with spiritual qualities. He for ever reigns in a human body, but one that can pass through locked doors (Jn 20:19), vanish at will (Lk 24:31), and is no longer subject to the limitations of time, space, and the laws of nature (CCC 646, 659). [See note on 1 Cor 15:42-44.](#) [Back to text.](#)

24:44 Moses . . . prophets . . . psalms: Reflects a classical division of the OT into three parts. The third division is sometimes called the "writings", or the "other books", as in the prologue to the Book of Sirach. [Back to text.](#)



24:46 Christ should suffer: A mystery foretold in the OT (Acts 3:18; 17:3). • Jesus' mockery and rejection recall Ps 31, 69, 118, and Is 50:6. His agony and Crucifixion are depicted in Ps 22 and Is 53. **on the third day rise:** An emphasis in Jesus' own predictions (9:22; 18:33; 24:6-7). • The OT background is diverse. **(1)** Isaac was for three days under a death sentence until God intervened to give him back alive to Abraham on the third day (Gen 22:4, 13). This was a historical preview of Jesus rising to new life after obeying his Father unto death (Heb 11:17-19). **(2)** The experience of Jonah coming forth from a whale after three days in its stomach foreshadows Christ emerging from the grave after three days in the earth (Jon 1:17; Mt 12:40). **(3)** Hosea depicts Israel's restoration from exile as a third-day resurrection (Hos 6:2). Since the Messiah represents Israel in the fullest sense, embodying both its vocation and destiny, Christ's own Resurrection initiates the resurrection of Israel from a state of spiritual death (Rom 11:15, 25-27). **(4)** More generally, the "three days" motif is linked with a prelude to divine liberation (Ex 10:21-23) and a period of preparation before meeting the Lord (Ex 19:10-11) (CCC 702, 1094). • *Allegorically* (St. Bede, *Homilies* 2, 10): Christ lay two nights in the tomb to rescue man from the twofold death of sin. For souls die spiritually on account of sin, and bodies die physically as a penalty for sin. Victorious on the third day, Christ now raises our souls to new life in grace and will later raise our bodies in glory. [Back to text.](#)

24:47 forgiveness: The Church dispenses the blessings of the New Covenant through the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments (Mt 28:19-20; Jn 20:23; Acts 2:38). Salvation now extends beyond Israel to encompass **all nations** (Acts 1:8) (CCC 981, 1122). [Back to text.](#)

24:49 the promise: i.e., the Holy Spirit (Gal 3:14; Eph 1:13). The outpouring of God's Spirit was long promised in the OT (Is 44:3; Ezek 36:26; Joel 2:28-29). [Back to text.](#)

24:50 Bethany: A village within two miles of Jerusalem to the east (Jn 11:18). [Back to text.](#)

24:51 up into heaven: Jesus' Ascension is the only episode that overlaps with Luke's second book, the Acts of the Apostles. No mention is made here of the "forty days" that intervened between Easter Sunday and the day of his ascent (Acts 1:3, 9). The event culminates in Jesus' royal enthronement at the Father's right hand (Mk 16:19; Acts 2:32-35; CCC 659-64). [Back to text.](#)

24:53 Luke both opens and closes his Gospel in the Jerusalem **temple** (1:9). [Back to text.](#)

INTRODUCTION TO

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT JOHN

Author Unlike the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the Gospel of John is not strictly anonymous. The author discreetly identifies himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (21:20, 24) and claims to be an eyewitness to the life and ministry of Christ (1:14; 19:35). However, this Beloved Disciple never reveals his name, although he appears several times in the Gospel narrative (13:23; 19:26; 20:2).

The combined weight of textual and traditional evidence suggests that this disciple is the Apostle John, one of the sons of Zebedee (Mt 4:21). Several considerations support this conclusion. **(1)** The Beloved Disciple is clearly an Israelite, whose knowledge of biblical feasts and institutions is detailed and whose familiarity with Palestinian geography is quite accurate. **(2)** The Beloved Disciple is one of the Twelve who was present with Jesus at the Last Supper (13:23; Mk 14:17-25) and with the band of apostles after his Resurrection (21:4-7). **(3)** That he is "beloved" suggests he is part of the inner circle of disciples closest to Jesus: Peter, James, and John. These were the only apostles among the Twelve whom Jesus renamed in the written Gospel tradition (Mk 3:16-17) and the only apostles selected to accompany him at pivotal moments in his ministry (Mk 5:37; 9:2; 14:33). Since Peter is clearly distinguished from the Beloved Disciple (20:2; 21:20) and James was martyred far too early to be considered for authorship (Acts 12:2), John remains as the most likely candidate. **(4)** The close association between Peter and the Beloved Disciple in this Gospel (20:1-9) mirrors the close association between Peter and John in the writings of Luke (Lk 22:8; Acts 3:1; 8:14). **(5)** The attention to detail displayed by the author has all the earmarks of an eyewitness: he notices that the stone jars were filled "up to the brim" at Cana (2:7), the multiplied loaves were made of "barley" (6:9), and the aroma of the perfume used to anoint Jesus "filled" the house where the event took place (12:3). **(6)** As for external evidence, Irenaeus (A.D. 180), Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 200), and other early Christian writers testify with one voice that the Apostle John is the Beloved Disciple who

wrote the Fourth Gospel, probably from the city of Ephesus in Asia Minor. Although John's authorship is disputed by many today, no alternative attempt to identify the Beloved Disciple aligns the evidence as clearly and convincingly as the traditional one.

Date Several scholars of the 19th and 20th centuries claimed the Gospel of John was written in the second century, some dating it as late as A.D. 150 and beyond. This is no longer tenable because of solid evidence to the contrary. For instance, a fragment of John's Gospel discovered in Egypt in 1935 has been dated as early as A.D. 120. The original Gospel must have been written at least by this time and probably much earlier, since ample time was needed for it to gain popularity and circulate from Asia Minor all the way to Africa. Likewise, Ignatius of Antioch seems to allude to the teaching of the Fourth Gospel in a collection of letters written about A.D. 107. This makes it probable that John's Gospel was composed by at least A.D. 100.

Whether it can be dated much earlier than this is a matter of dispute. Some have argued that John wrote his Gospel closer to the middle of the first century, even prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Interestingly, nothing within the Gospel demands a date later than this, and the casual statement in 5:2 that there "is" (present tense) a pool near the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem may lend support to its antiquity. It seems unlikely that John would have described this pool as though it were intact if, in fact, it was buried beneath a heap of rubble at the time he was writing about it. This makes a date in the 60s a viable option for the composition of John's Gospel, although most scholars prefer to date it in the 90s of the first century.

Destination and Purpose The Gospel of John was probably written for Jews and Jewish Christians living throughout the Mediterranean world. This is inferred from the distinctively Jewish flavor of the book and its numerous allusions to scriptural and liturgical symbols associated with Israel (1:1, 29, 45, 51; 2:21; 3:14; 4:10, etc.). Its positive depiction of the Samaritans, who were distant descendants of the Israelites, suggests they too were part of John's target audience (4:39-42). Although it was once popular to interpret John's Gospel against the backdrop of Greek culture and thought, more recent scholarship—especially since the discovery of the

Dead Sea Scrolls—has led to a fuller appreciation of its Jewish background and themes.

Whatever the uncertainties of its destination, there is little uncertainty as to its aim. John tells us outright that his Gospel has an evangelistic purpose: "[T]hese are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (20:31). A secondary purpose, although unstated, seems to be to fill in some of the blanks left by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Whereas the Synoptic Gospels focus on Jesus' Galilean ministry and mention only one trip to Jerusalem, John tells us that Jesus made several trips to Jerusalem and mentions only brief excursions into the northern regions of Samaria and Galilee (1:43; 4:3-4; 11:54; 21:1). Whereas the Synoptics tell us of Jesus' ministry after the arrest of John the Baptist, the Fourth Gospel informs us that Jesus' ministry was already under way before John's imprisonment (3:24). Likewise, whereas the Synoptics narrate the Last Supper, John is silent about the eucharistic words and actions of Jesus, choosing instead to recount the Bread of Life discourse where Jesus first promises to give himself to the world as sacramental food (6:35-58). These differences have suggested to several scholars, ancient and modern alike, that John was familiar with one or more of the Synoptic Gospels. If so, he must have wanted to give readers additional information about the life and teaching of Jesus that would supplement the authentic Gospels already in circulation.

Themes and Characteristics The Fourth Gospel is a book of magnificent beauty and artistry. The richness of its expression and imagery has made it one of the most celebrated works in Christian history. So much of it is devoted to the heavenly identity and mission of Jesus that John was known as the "spiritual" Gospel in the ancient Church. Perhaps the most pervasive theme in John, which in many ways is the master key that unlocks the Gospel as a whole, is the revelation of God as a family. Nearly every chapter is marked by familial language that explains the inner life of God as well as our relation to God through the grace of divine generation.

The "divine family" of God revealed as Father, Son, and Spirit is the towering mystery of the Fourth Gospel. The Father initiates this revelation by sending his only Son, Jesus Christ, into the world as a man (1:14; 16:28). Through him we learn that the Father loves the Son (3:35), nourishes him with his will (4:34), and entrusts him with the responsibilities of judging

and giving life to the world (5:22, 27). The divine unity between the Father and the Son is unlike any known on earth (10:30; 14:11). Christ, for his part, shows us the heart of his Father (1:18; 14:9) by imitating the Father's works (5:19-21; 10:25), speaking the Father's words (8:28; 12:49), and returning the Father's love (14:31). The essence of Jesus' divine Sonship is thus expressed through a lifetime of pleasing and honoring the Father (8:29, 49). The Spirit, too, is sent into the world by the Father and the Son (14:26; 15:26). His mission is to continue the ministry of Jesus, always teaching the truth (14:26), announcing things to come (16:13), and filling the hearts and lives of believers with his presence (14:17).

The "human family" also plays an important role in the Fourth Gospel. In fact, the heart of Jesus' message is that the children of men are invited to become children of God (1:12). This new life begins with a spiritual rebirth in Baptism (3:5) and is sustained as the Father nourishes us with divine food and drink (6:32, 51; 7:37-39), educates us in the truth (8:31-32; 16:13), and protects us from spiritual danger (17:15). Christ models the life of divine Sonship to perfection (13:15), showing us how to worship the Father (4:23-26), how to obey his commandments (15:10), and how to love our spiritual siblings (13:34). We are not left orphans (14:18) after Christ returns to the Father (20:17) because his presence dwells with us and even within us (14:17-18, 23). Our full union with the Trinity awaits only the coming of Jesus Christ, who will return in glory to escort the children of God into the house of their heavenly Father (14:2-3). «

OUTLINE OF THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT JOHN

1. Prologue ([1:1-18](#))

- A. Christ, the Eternal Word ([1:1-13](#))
- B. Christ, the Word Made Flesh ([1:14-18](#))

2. The Book of Signs ([1:19-12:50](#))

- A. The Witness of John and the Calling of Disciples ([1:19-51](#))
- B. The Inaugural Signs of Jesus' Ministry ([2:1-4:54](#))
- C. Healing on the Sabbath ([5:1-47](#))
- D. The Bread of Life ([6:1-71](#))
- E. The Feast of Tabernacles and the Sons of Abraham ([7:1-8:59](#))
- F. The Light of the World ([9:1-41](#))
- G. The Good Shepherd ([10:1-42](#))
- H. The Raising of Lazarus ([11:1-57](#))
- I. Triumphal Entry and the Rejection of Jesus ([12:1-50](#))

3. The Book of Glory ([13:1-20:31](#))

- A. The Foot Washing ([13:1-30](#))
- B. The Last Supper Discourse ([13:31-16:33](#))
- C. The High Priestly Prayer ([17:1-26](#))
- D. The Passion Narrative ([18:1-19:42](#))
- E. The Resurrection and Appearances ([20:1-31](#))

4. Resurrection Epilogue ([21:1-25](#))

- A. The Final Appearance and Miracle of Jesus ([21:1-14](#))
- B. Jesus Questions and Commissions Peter ([21:15-23](#))
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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

SAINT JOHN

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Essays and Charts

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[The Word Became Flesh \[Map\]](#)

[1](#) [In the beginning](#) was the [Word](#), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. * [2](#)He was in the beginning with God; [3](#)all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. [4](#)In him was [life](#),^a and the life was the light of men. [5](#)The [light shines in the darkness](#), * and the darkness has not overcome it.

[6](#) There was a man sent from God, whose name was [John](#). [7](#)He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him. [8](#)He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light.

[9](#) The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. [10](#)He was in [the world](#), and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. [11](#)He came to his own home, and his own people [received him not](#). [12](#)But to all who received him, who [believed in his name](#), he gave power to become children of God; [13](#)who were born, [not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man](#), but of God.

[14](#) And [the Word became flesh](#) and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only-begotten Son from the Father. [15](#)(John bore witness to him, and cried, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me [ranks before me, for he was before me.](#)' ")

¹⁶And from his fulness have we all received, [grace upon grace](#). ¹⁷For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸[No one has ever seen God](#); the only-begotten Son,^b who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.

[The Testimony of John the Baptist \[Map\]](#)

¹⁹And this is the testimony of John, when the [Jews](#) sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰He confessed, he did not deny, but confessed, "I am not [the Christ](#)." ²¹And they asked him, "What then? Are you [Eli'jah](#)?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" And he answered, "No." ²²They said to him then, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" ²³He said, "[I am the voice](#) of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said."

²⁴ Now they had been sent from [the Pharisees](#). ²⁵They asked him, "Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Eli'jah, nor the prophet?" ²⁶John answered them, "[I baptize with water](#); but among you stands one whom you do not know, ²⁷even he who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." ²⁸This took place in [Beth'any](#) beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

[The Lamb of God](#)

²⁹ The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the [Lamb of God](#), who takes away the sin of the world! * ³⁰This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, for he was before me.' ³¹I myself did not know him; but for this I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." ³²And John bore witness, "I saw [the Spirit descend as a dove](#) from heaven and remain on him. ³³I myself did not know him; but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

[The First Disciples of Jesus](#)

³⁵ The next day again John was standing with [two of his disciples](#); ³⁶and he looked at Jesus as he walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" ³⁷The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸Jesus turned, and saw them following, and said to them, "What do you seek?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you

staying?" ³⁹He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying; and they stayed with him that day, for it was about [the tenth hour](#). ⁴⁰One of the two who heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. ⁴¹He first found his brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found [the Messiah](#)" (which means Christ). ⁴²He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him, and said, "So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called [Ce'phas](#)" (which means Peter^c).

Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael

⁴³The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. And he found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." ⁴⁴Now Philip was from [Beth-sa'ida](#), the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵Philip found Nathan'a-el, and said to him, "We have found him of whom [Moses in the law and also the prophets](#) wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." ⁴⁶Nathan'a-el said to him, "Can anything good come out of [Nazareth](#)?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." ⁴⁷Jesus saw Nathan'a-el coming to him, and said of him, "Behold, [an Israelite indeed](#), in whom is no guile!" ⁴⁸Nathan'a-el said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." ⁴⁹Nathan'a-el answered him, "Rabbi, you are the [Son of God! You are the King of Israel!](#)" ⁵⁰Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these." ⁵¹And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God [ascending and descending](#) upon the Son of man."

The Marriage at Cana

² On [the third day](#) there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; ²Jesus also was invited to the marriage, with his disciples. ³When the wine failed, [the mother of Jesus](#) said to him, "They have no wine." ⁴And Jesus said to her, "O [woman](#), what have you to do with me? ^{*} My hour has not yet come." ⁵His mother said to the servants, "[Do whatever he tells you](#)." ⁶Now [six stone jars](#) were standing there, for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the steward of the feast." So they took it. ⁹When the steward of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants

who had drawn the water knew), the steward of the feast called [the bridegroom](#) ¹⁰and said to him, "Every man serves [the good wine](#) first; and when men have drunk freely, then the poor wine; but you have kept the good wine until now." ¹¹This, the first of his [signs](#), Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

¹² After this he went down to [Caper'na-um](#), with his mother and his brethren * and his disciples; and there they stayed for a few days.

[The Cleansing of the Temple](#)

¹³ The [Passover](#) of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴[In the temple](#) he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and [the money-changers](#) at their business. ¹⁵And making a whip of cords, he drove them all, with the sheep and oxen, out of the temple; and he [poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned](#) their tables. ¹⁶And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; you shall not make my Father's house a house of trade." ¹⁷His disciples remembered that it was written, "[Zeal for your house](#) will consume me." ¹⁸The Jews then said to him, "What sign have you to show us for doing this?" ¹⁹Jesus answered them, "[Destroy this temple](#), and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" ²¹But he spoke of the temple of his body. ²²When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

²³ Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs which he did; ²⁴but Jesus did not trust himself to them, ²⁵because [he knew all men](#) and needed no one to bear witness of man; for he himself knew what was in man.

[Nicodemus Visits Jesus](#)

³ Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named [Nicodemus](#), a ruler of the Jews. ²This man came to Jesus ^d [by night](#) and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him." ³Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born [anew](#),^e he cannot see the kingdom of God." ⁴Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" ⁵Jesus answered,

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is [born of water and the Spirit](#), he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the [flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.](#)^f ⁷Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born anew.'^e ⁸[The wind](#)^f blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with every one who is born of the Spirit." ⁹Nicodemus said to him, "How can this be?" ¹⁰Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand this? ¹¹Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen; but you do not receive [our testimony](#). ¹²If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man.^g ¹⁴And as Moses lifted up [the serpent](#) in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."^h

¹⁶For God so loved the world that he [gave his only-begotten Son](#), that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is [condemned already](#), because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. ²¹But he who does what is true comes to the light, that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God.

[Jesus and John the Baptist](#)

²²After this Jesus and his disciples went into the land of Judea; there he remained with them and [baptized](#). * ²³John also was baptizing at [Ae'non](#) near Sa'lim, because there was much water there; and people came and were baptized. ²⁴For John had not yet been [put in prison](#). *

²⁵Now a discussion arose between [John's disciples](#) and a Jew over purifying. ²⁶And they came to John, and said to him, "Rabbi, he who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you bore witness, here he is, baptizing, and all are going to him." ²⁷John answered, "No one can receive anything except what is given him from heaven. ²⁸You yourselves bear me

witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him. ²⁹He who has the bride is the bridegroom; the friend of [the bridegroom](#), who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice; therefore this joy of mine is now full. ³⁰He must increase, but I must decrease."ⁱ

He Who Comes from Heaven [Map]

³¹ He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth belongs to the earth, and of the [earth he speaks; he who comes from heaven](#) is above all. ³²He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony; ³³he who receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. ³⁴For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for it is [not by measure](#) that he gives the Spirit; ³⁵the Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand. ³⁶He who believes in the Son has eternal life; [he who does not obey](#) the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him.

Jesus and the Woman of Samaria

⁴ Now when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John ²(although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), ³he left Judea and departed again to Galilee. ⁴He [had to pass through](#) Samar'ia. ⁵So he came to a city of Samar'ia, called [Sy'char](#), near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. ⁶[Jacob's well](#) was there, and so Jesus, wearied as he was with his journey, sat down beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

⁷ There came a woman of [Samar'ia](#) to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." ⁸For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. ⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, "[How is it](#) that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samar'ia?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. ¹⁰Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you [living water](#)." ¹¹The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; where do you get that living water? ¹²Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?" ¹³Jesus said to her, "Every one who drinks of this water will thirst again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give

him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." ¹⁵The woman said to him, "[Sir](#), give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." ¹⁷The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; ¹⁸for you have had [five husbands](#), and he whom you now have is not your husband; this you said truly." ¹⁹The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. ²⁰Our fathers worshiped [on this mountain](#); * and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." ²¹Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ²²You worship [what you do not know](#); we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father [in spirit and truth](#), for such the Father seeks to worship him. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." ²⁵The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ); when he comes, he will show us all things." ²⁶Jesus said to her, "[I who speak to you am he](#)."

²⁷ Just then his disciples came. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but none said, "What do you wish?" or, "Why are you talking with her?" ²⁸So the woman [left her water jar](#), and went away into the city, and said to the people, ²⁹"Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" ³⁰They went out of the city and were coming to him.

³¹ Meanwhile the disciples begged him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." ³²But he said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." ³³So the disciples said to one another, "Has any one brought him food?" ³⁴Jesus said to them, "[My food](#) is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work. ³⁵Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are already [white for harvest](#). ³⁶He who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. ³⁷For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' ³⁸I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

39 Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." **40** So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. **41** And many more believed because of his word. **42** They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of your words that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed [the Savior](#) of the world."

Jesus Departs for Galilee

43 After the two days he departed to Galilee. **44** For Jesus himself testified that [a prophet has no honor](#) in his own country. **45** So when he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast, for they too had gone to the feast.

Jesus Heals an Official's Son

46 So he came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. And at [Caper'na-um](#) there was an official whose son was ill. **47** When he heard that Jesus had come from [Judea to Galilee](#), he went and begged him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. **48** Jesus therefore said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe." **49** The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my child dies." **50** Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went his way. **51** As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was living. **52** So he asked them the hour when he began to mend, and they said to him, "Yesterday at [the seventh hour](#) the fever left him." **53** The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live"; and he himself believed, and all his household. **54** This was now [the second sign](#) that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee.

Jesus Heals on the Sabbath

1 After this there was [a feast of the Jews](#), and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

2 Now there is in Jerusalem by [the Sheep Gate](#) a pool, in Hebrew called Beth-za'tha,^j which has five porticoes. **3** In these lay a multitude of invalids, blind, lame, paralyzed.^k **5** One man was there, who had been ill for [thirty-eight years](#). **6** When Jesus saw him and knew that he had been lying there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be healed?" **7** The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is

troubled, and while I am going another steps down before me." ⁸Jesus said to him, "[Rise, take up your pallet, and walk.](#)" ⁹And at once the man was healed, and he took up his pallet and walked.

Now that day was the sabbath. ¹⁰So the Jews said to the man who was cured, "It is the sabbath, it is not lawful for you to carry your pallet." ¹¹But he answered them, "The man who healed me said to me, 'Take up your pallet, and walk.'" ¹²They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your pallet, and walk?'" ¹³Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for [Jesus had withdrawn](#), as there was a crowd in the place. ¹⁴Afterward, Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you are well! [Sin no more](#), that nothing worse befall you." ¹⁵The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. ¹⁶And this was why the Jews persecuted Jesus, because he did this on the sabbath. ¹⁷But Jesus answered them, "[My Father is working](#) still, and I am working." ¹⁸This was why the Jews sought all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the sabbath * but also called God his Father, making himself [equal with God](#).

The Authority of the Son

¹⁹ Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever he does, that the Son does likewise. ²⁰For the Father loves the Son, and shows him all that he himself is doing; and greater works than these will he show him, that you may marvel. ²¹For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. ²²The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, ²³that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. ²⁴Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed [from death to life](#).

²⁵ "Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. ²⁶For as the Father has [life in himself](#), so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself, ²⁷and has given him authority to [execute judgment](#), because he is the Son of man. ²⁸Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice ²⁹and come forth,

those who have done good, to [the resurrection](#) of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment.

The Testimony to Jesus

30 "I can do nothing on my own authority; as I hear, [I judge](#); and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me. **31**If I bear witness to myself, my testimony is not true; **32**there is another who bears witness to me, and I know that the testimony which he bears to me is true. **33**You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. **34**Not that the testimony which I receive is from man; but I say this that you may be saved. **35**He was a [burning and shining lamp](#), and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. **36**But the testimony which I have is greater than that of John; for the works which the Father has granted me to accomplish, these very works which I am doing, bear me witness that the Father has sent me. **37**And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness to me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen; **38**and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe him whom he has sent. **39**You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me; **40**yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. **41**I do not receive glory from men. **42**But I know that you have not the love of God within you. **43**I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive. **44**How can you believe, who receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? **45**Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; it is Moses who accuses you, on whom you set your hope. **46**If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for [he wrote of me](#). **47**But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"

Feeding the Five Thousand

6 After this [Jesus went](#) to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the [Sea of Tibe'ri-as](#). **2**And a multitude followed him, because they saw the signs which he did on those who were diseased. **3**Jesus went up into the hills, and there sat down with his disciples. **4**Now [the Passover](#), the feast of the Jews, was at hand. **5**Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a multitude was coming to him, Jesus said to Philip, "How are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" **6**This he said to test him, for he himself knew what

he would do. ⁷Philip answered him, "[Two hundred denarii](#)¹ would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." ⁸One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, ⁹"There is a lad here who has five [barley loaves](#) and two fish; but what are they among so many?" ¹⁰Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place; so the men sat down, in number about five thousand. ¹¹Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had [given thanks](#), he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹²And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, that nothing may be lost." ¹³So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten. ¹⁴When the people saw the sign which he had done, they said, "This is indeed [the prophet](#) who is to come into the world!"

¹⁵Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to [make him king](#), Jesus withdrew again to the hills by himself.

[Jesus Walks on the Sea](#)

¹⁶When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, ¹⁷got into a boat, and started across the sea to Caper'na-um. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. ¹⁸The sea rose because a strong wind was blowing. ¹⁹When they had rowed about three or four miles, ²⁰they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat. They were frightened, ²¹but he said to them, "[It is I](#); do not be afraid." ²²Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

[The Bread from Heaven](#)

²³On the next day the people who remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. ²⁴However, boats [from Tibe'ri-as](#) came near the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks. ²⁵So when the people saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Caper'na-um, seeking Jesus.

²⁶When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" ²⁷Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. ²⁸Do not labor for the [food which perishes](#), but for

the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you; for on him has God the Father set his seal." ²⁸Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" ²⁹Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." ³⁰So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see, and believe you? What work do you perform?" ³¹Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, '[He gave them bread](#) from heaven to eat.' "³²Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven; my Father gives you [the true bread](#) from heaven. ³³For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world." ³⁴They said to him, "Lord, give us this bread always."

³⁵ Jesus said to them, "I am [the bread of life](#); he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst. ³⁶But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. ³⁷[All that the Father gives](#) me will come to me; and him who comes to me I will not cast out. ³⁸For I have come down from heaven, [not to do my own will](#), but the will of him who sent me; ³⁹and this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up at the last day. ⁴⁰For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

⁴¹ The [Jews then murmured](#) at him, because he said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven." ⁴²They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" ⁴³Jesus answered them, "Do not murmur among yourselves. ⁴⁴No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁴⁵It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be [taught by God](#).' Every one who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. ⁴⁶Not that any one has seen the Father except him who is from God; he has seen the Father. ⁴⁷Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. ⁵⁰This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹I am the living bread * which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he

will live for ever; and the bread which [I shall give](#) for the life of the world is my flesh."

52 The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us [his flesh to eat](#)?" * **53** So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you [eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood](#), you have no life in you; **54** he who [eats](#) my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. **55** For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. **56** He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. **57** As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. **58** This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread [will live for ever](#)." **59** This he said in the synagogue, as he taught at Caper'na-um.

The Words of Eternal Life

60 Many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" **61** But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at it, said to them, "Do you take offense at this? **62** Then what if you were to see [the Son of man](#) ascending where he was before? * **63** It is [the Spirit that gives life, the flesh](#) is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are Spirit and life. **64** But there are some of you that do not believe." For Jesus knew from the first who those were that did not believe, and who it was that would betray him. **65** And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."

66 After this many of [his disciples drew back](#) and no longer walked with him. **67** Jesus said to the Twelve, "Will you also go away?" **68** Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; **69** and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are [the Holy One](#) of God." **70** Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the Twelve, and one of you is a devil?" **71** He spoke of [Judas](#) the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was to betray him.

The Unbelief of Jesus' Brethren

1 After this Jesus went about in Galilee; he would not go about in Judea, because the Jewsⁿ sought to kill him. **2** Now the Jews' [feast of Tabernacles](#) was at hand. **3** So [his brethren](#) * said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples may see the works you are doing. **4** For no man works in

secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." ⁵For even his brethren did not believe in him. ⁶Jesus said to them, "[My time](#) has not yet come, but your time is always here. ⁷[The world](#) cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify of it that its works are evil. ⁸Go to the feast yourselves; [I am not](#)⁹ going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come." ⁹So saying, he remained in Galilee.

Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles

¹⁰ But after his brethren had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private. ¹¹The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, "Where is he?" ¹²And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, "He is a good man," others said, "No, he is leading the people astray." ¹³Yet for [fear of the Jews](#) no one spoke openly of him.

¹⁴ About the [middle of the feast](#) Jesus went up into the temple and taught. ¹⁵The Jews marveled at it, saying, "How is it that this man has learning,^p when he has [never studied](#)?" ¹⁶So Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me; ¹⁷if any man's will is to do his will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. ¹⁸He who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but he who seeks [the glory of him](#) who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood. ¹⁹Did not Moses give you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?" ²⁰The people answered, "You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?" ²¹Jesus answered them, "[I did one deed](#), and you all marvel at it. ²²Moses gave you [circumcision](#) (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man upon the sabbath. ²³If on the sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the sabbath I made a man's whole body well? ²⁴Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."

Is This the Christ?

²⁵ Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, "Is not this the man whom they seek to kill? ²⁶And here he is, speaking openly, and they say nothing to him! Can it be that [the authorities](#) really know that this is the Christ? ²⁷Yet we know where this man comes from; and when the Christ appears, [no one will know](#) where he comes from." ²⁸So Jesus proclaimed,

as he taught in the temple, "You know me, and you know where I come from? But I have not come of my own accord; he who sent me is true, and him you do not know. ²⁹I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me." ³⁰So they sought to arrest him; but no one laid hands on him, because [his hour](#) had not yet come. ³¹Yet many of the people believed in him; they said, "When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?"

Officers Are Sent to Arrest Jesus

³² The Pharisees heard the crowd thus muttering about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent [officers](#) to arrest him. ³³Jesus then said, "I shall be with you a little longer, and then I go to him who sent me; ³⁴you will seek me and you will not find me; where I am you cannot come." ³⁵The Jews said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we shall not find him? Does he intend to go to the [Dispersion among the Greeks](#) and teach the Greeks? ³⁶What does he mean by saying, 'You will seek me and you will not find me,' and, 'Where I am you cannot come'?"

Rivers of Living Water

³⁷ On the last day of the feast, [the great day](#), Jesus stood up and proclaimed, "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸He who believes in me, as⁹ the Scripture has said, '[Out of his heart](#) shall flow rivers of living water.' " ³⁹Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was [not yet glorified](#).

Division among the People

⁴⁰ When they heard these words, some of the people said, "This is really [the prophet](#)." ⁴¹Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Is [the Christ](#) to come from Galilee? ⁴²Has not [the Scripture](#) said that the Christ is descended from David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" ⁴³So there was a division among the people over him. ⁴⁴Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

The Authorities and the Woman Caught in Adultery

⁴⁵ The officers then went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why did you not bring him?" ⁴⁶The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this man!" ⁴⁷The Pharisees answered them, "Are you led astray, you also? ⁴⁸Have any of the authorities or of the Pharisees believed in him? ⁴⁹But this crowd, who do not know the law, are accursed." ⁵⁰Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said

to them, ⁵¹"Does our law judge a man without first giving him [a hearing](#) and learning what he does?" ⁵²They replied, "Are you from Galilee too? Search and you will see that no prophet is to rise from Galilee." * ⁵³[They went](#) each to his

⁸ own house, ¹but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ²Early in the morning he came again to the temple; all the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. ³The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in their midst ⁴they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. ⁵Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such. What do you say about her?" ⁶This they said [to test him](#), that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. ⁷And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "[Let him who is without sin](#) among you be the first to throw a stone at her." ⁸And once more he bent down and [wrote with his finger on the ground](#). ⁹But when they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with [the eldest](#), and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. ¹⁰Jesus looked up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" ¹¹She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and [do not sin again](#)."^r

Jesus and the Light of the World

¹² Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am [the light of the world](#); he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." ¹³The Pharisees then said to him, "You are bearing witness to yourself; your testimony is not true." ¹⁴Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness to myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I have come from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. ¹⁵You judge [according to the flesh](#), I judge no one. ¹⁶Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone that judge, but I and he^s who sent me. ¹⁷In your law [it is written](#) that the testimony of two men is true; ¹⁸I bear witness to myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness to me." ¹⁹They said to him therefore, "Where is your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father; if you knew me, you would know my Father also." ²⁰These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because [his hour](#) had not yet come.

Jesus Alludes to His Death

21 Again he said to them, "I go away, and you will seek me and die in your sin; * where I am going, you cannot come." **22** Then said the Jews, "Will he kill himself, since he says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?" **23** He said to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. **24** I told you that you would die in your sins, for you will die in your sins unless you believe that I am he." **25** They said to him, "Who are you?" Jesus said to them, "Even what I have told you from the beginning.† **26** I have much to say about you and much to judge; but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him." **27** They did not understand that he spoke to them of the Father. **28** So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority but speak thus as the Father taught me. **29** And he who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him." **30** As he spoke thus, many believed in him.

True Disciples of Jesus

31 Jesus then said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, **32** and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." **33** They answered him, "We are descendants of Abraham, and have never been in bondage to any one. How is it that you say, 'You will be made free'?"

34 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, every one who commits sin is a slave to sin. **35** The slave does not continue in the house for ever; the son continues for ever. **36** So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. **37** I know that you are descendants of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me, because my word finds no place in you. **38** I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father."

Jesus and Abraham

39 They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do what Abraham did, **40** but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God; this is not what Abraham did. **41** You do the works of your father." They said to him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God." * **42** Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I proceeded and came forth from God; I came not of my own

accord, but he sent me. ⁴³Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. ⁴⁴You are of [your father the devil](#), and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵But, because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. ⁴⁶Which of you [convicts me of sin](#)? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? ⁴⁷He who is of God hears the words of God; the reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."

⁴⁸The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are [a Samaritan](#) and have a demon?" ⁴⁹Jesus answered, "I have not a demon; but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. ⁵⁰Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it and he will be the judge. ⁵¹Truly, truly, I say to you, if any one keeps my word, he will [never see death](#)." ⁵²The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham died, as did the prophets; and you say, 'If any one keeps my word, he will never taste death.' ⁵³Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you claim to be?" ⁵⁴Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing; it is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say that he is your God. ⁵⁵But you have not known him; I know him. If I said, I do not know him, I should be a liar like you; but I do know him and I keep his word. ⁵⁶Your father Abraham rejoiced that he was [to see my day](#); he saw it * and was glad." ⁵⁷The Jews then said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" ^u ⁵⁸Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, [before Abraham was, I am](#)." * ⁵⁹So they took up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple.

[Healing of the Blind Man](#)

¹ As he passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth. ²And his disciples asked him, "[Rabbi, who sinned](#), this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that [the works of God](#) might be made manifest in him. * ⁴We must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work. ⁵As long as I am in the world, [I am the light](#) of the world." ⁶As he said this, he spat on the ground and [made clay of the spittle](#) and anointed the man's eyes with the clay, ⁷saying to him, "[Go, wash](#) in the pool of

Silo'am" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing. ⁸The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar, said, "Is not this the man who used to sit and beg?" ⁹Some said, "It is he"; others said, "No, but he is like him." He said, "I am the man." ¹⁰They said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" ¹¹He answered, "[The man called Jesus](#) made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Silo'am and wash'; so I went and washed and received my sight." ¹²They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

[The Pharisees Investigate the Healing](#)

¹³ They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. ¹⁴Now it was a [sabbath day](#) when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. ¹⁵The Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." ¹⁶Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" There was a division among them. ¹⁷So they again said to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

¹⁸ The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight, ¹⁹and asked them, "[Is this your son](#), who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" ²⁰His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; ²¹but how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself." ²²His parents said this because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if any one should confess him to be Christ, he was to be [put out of the synagogue](#). ²³Therefore his parents said, "He is of age, ask him."

²⁴ So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, "[Give God the praise](#); we know that this man is a sinner." ²⁵He answered, "Whether he is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see." ²⁶They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" ²⁷He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you too want to become his disciples?" ²⁸And they reviled him, saying,

"You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." ³⁰The man answered, "Why, this is a marvel! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. ³¹We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if any one is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. ³²[Never since the world began has it been heard that any one opened the eyes](#) of a man born blind. ³³If this man were not from God, [he could do nothing](#)." ³⁴They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out.

Spiritual Blindness

³⁵ Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in [the Son of man](#)?"^v ³⁶He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" ³⁷Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who speaks to you." ³⁸He said, "Lord, I believe"; and he worshiped him. ³⁹Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see [may see, and that those who see may become blind](#)." ⁴⁰Some of the Pharisees near him heard this, and they said to him, "Are we also blind?" ⁴¹Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains.

Jesus the Good Shepherd

¹ "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter [the sheepfold](#) by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber; ²but he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³To him the gatekeeper opens; the sheep hear his voice, and he [calls his own sheep by name](#) and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. ⁵A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers." ⁶This figure Jesus used with them, but [they did not understand](#) what he was saying to them.

⁷ So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸[All who came before](#) me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not heed them. ⁹I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may [have life](#), and have it abundantly. ¹¹[I am the good shepherd](#). The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

¹²He who is a hireling and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees [the wolf](#) coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³He flees because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴I am the good shepherd; [*](#) I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶And I have [other sheep](#), that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷For this reason the Father loves me, because I [lay down my life, that I may take it again](#). ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father." [*](#)

¹⁹ There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. ²⁰Many of them said, "He has a demon, and he is mad; why listen to him?" ²¹Others said, "These are not the sayings of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

Jesus Is Rejected by the Jews

²² It was the [feast of the Dedication](#) at Jerusalem; ²³it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. ²⁴So the Jews gathered round him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, [tell us plainly](#)." ²⁵Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness to me; ²⁶but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. ²⁷My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; ²⁸and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them [out of my hand](#). ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me,^w is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰[I and the Father are one](#)."

³¹ The Jews took up stones again to stone him. ³²Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of these do you stone me?" ³³The Jews answered him, "We stone you for no good work but for blasphemy; because you, being a man, make yourself God." ³⁴Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in [your law](#), 'I said, you are gods'? ³⁵If he called them gods to whom the word of God came (and [Scripture cannot be nullified](#)), ³⁶do you say of him whom the Father [consecrated](#) and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? ³⁷If

I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; ³⁸but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, [believe the works](#), that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father."

³⁹Again they tried to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands.

⁴⁰He went away again across the Jordan to the place [where John at first baptized](#), and there he remained. ⁴¹And many came to him; and they said, "John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true."

⁴²And many believed in him there.

The Death of Lazarus

¹[Now a certain man](#) was ill, [Laz'arus](#) of Beth'any, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ²It was [Mary who anointed the Lord](#) with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Laz'arus was ill. ³So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." ⁴But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness is [not unto death](#); it is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it."

⁵Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Laz'arus. ⁶So when he heard that he was ill, he stayed [two days longer](#) * in the place where he was. ⁷Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go into Judea again." ⁸The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were but now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?" ⁹Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any one [walks in the day](#), he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. ¹⁰But if any one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." ¹¹Thus he spoke, and then he said to them, "Our friend Laz'arus has [fallen asleep](#), but I go to awake him out of sleep." ¹²The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." ¹³Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. ¹⁴Then Jesus told them plainly, "Laz'arus is dead; ¹⁵and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." ¹⁶Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may [die with him](#)."

Jesus the Resurrection and the Life

¹⁷Now when Jesus came, he found that Laz'arus^x had already been [in the tomb four days](#). ¹⁸Beth'any was near Jerusalem, about two miles^y off, ¹⁹and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. ²⁰When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she

went and met him, while Mary sat in the house. ²¹Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²²And [even now](#) I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." ²³Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in [the resurrection](#) at the last day." ²⁵Jesus said to her, "[I am the resurrection](#) and the life;^z he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, he who is coming into the world."

Jesus Weeps

²⁸ When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying quietly, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." ²⁹And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. ³⁰Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. ³¹When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. ³²Then Mary, when she came where Jesus was and saw him, fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, [if you had been here](#), my brother would not have died." ³³When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and [troubled](#); ³⁴and he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵[Jesus wept](#). ³⁶So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" ³⁷But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Jesus Raises Lazarus to Life

³⁸ Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb; it was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. ³⁹Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." ⁴⁰Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" ⁴¹So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴²I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this on account of the people standing by, that they may believe that you sent me." ⁴³When he had said this, he cried [with a loud voice](#), "Laz'arus, come out." ⁴⁴The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with bandages, and his

face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

The Plot to Put Jesus to Death

45 Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him; ⁴⁶but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. ⁴⁷So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered [the council](#), and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. ⁴⁸If we let him go on like this, every one will believe in him, and [the Romans will come](#) and destroy both our holy place^a and our nation." ⁴⁹But one of them, [Cai'aphas](#), who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all; ⁵⁰you do not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish." * ⁵¹He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year [he prophesied](#) that Jesus should die for the nation, ⁵²and not for the nation only, but to gather into one [the children of God](#) who are scattered abroad. ⁵³So from that day on they took counsel about how to put him to death.

54 Jesus therefore no longer went about openly among the Jews, but went from there to the country near the wilderness, to a town called [E'phraim](#); and there he stayed with the disciples.

55 Now [the Passover](#) of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves. ⁵⁶They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? That he will not come to the feast?" ⁵⁷Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if any one knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him.

Mary of Bethany Anoints Jesus

12 * [Six days before the Passover](#), Jesus came to [Beth'any](#), where Laz'arus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ²There they made him a supper; Martha served, and Laz'arus was one of those at table with him. ³Mary took a pound of costly ointment of [pure nard](#) and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment. ⁴But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was to betray him), said, ⁵"Why was this ointment not sold for [three hundred denari](#)^b and given to the poor?" ⁶This he said, [not that he cared](#) for the poor but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box he used to

take what was put into it. ⁷Jesus said, "Let her alone, let her keep it for the day of my burial. ⁸[The poor](#) you always have with you, but you do not always have me."

[The Plot to Put Lazarus to Death](#)

⁹ When the great crowd of the Jews learned that he was there, they came, not only on account of Jesus but also to see Laz'arus, whom he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰So the chief priests planned to put Laz'arus also to death, ¹¹because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

[Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem](#)

¹² [The next day](#) a great crowd who had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³So they took [branches of palm](#) trees and went out to meet him, crying, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" ¹⁴And Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it; as it is written,

¹⁵"[Fear not, daughter of Zion](#);

behold, your king is coming,

sitting on a donkey's colt!"

¹⁶His disciples did not understand this at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then [they remembered](#) that this had been written of him and had been done to him. ¹⁷The crowd that had been with him when he called Laz'arus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead bore witness. ¹⁸The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. ¹⁹The Pharisees then said to one another, "You see that you can do nothing; look, [the world has gone after him](#)."

[Some Greeks Wish to See Jesus](#)

²⁰ Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were [some Greeks](#). ²¹So these came to Philip, who was from Beth-sa'ida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." ²²Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew went with Philip and they told Jesus. ²³And Jesus answered them, "[The hour has come](#) for the Son of man to be glorified. ²⁴Truly, truly, I say to you, [unless a grain of wheat](#) falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶If any one

serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also; if any one serves me, the Father will honor him.

Jesus Speaks about His Death

²⁷ "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, for this purpose I have come to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." ²⁹ The crowd standing by heard it and said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." ³⁰ Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. ³¹ Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out; ³² and I, when I am lifted up * from the earth, will draw all men to myself." ³³ He said this to show by what death he was to die. ³⁴ The crowd answered him, "We have heard from the law that the Christ remains for ever. How can you say that the Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man?" ³⁵ Jesus said to them, "The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, lest the darkness overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. ³⁶ While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light."

The Unbelief of the People

When Jesus had said this, he departed and hid himself from them. ³⁷ Though he had done so many signs before them, yet they did not believe in him; ³⁸ it was that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

"Lord, who has believed our report,
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

³⁹ Therefore they could not believe. For Isaiah again said,

⁴⁰ "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart,

lest they should see with their eyes and perceive with their heart,
and turn for me to heal them."

⁴¹ Isaiah said this because he saw his glory and spoke of him. ⁴² Nevertheless many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: ⁴³ for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Summary of Jesus' Teaching

44 And Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in me, believes not in me but in [him who sent me](#). **45** And he who sees me sees him who sent me. **46** I have come as light into the world, that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. **47** If any one hears my sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. **48** He who rejects me and does not receive my sayings has a judge; the word that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day. **49** For I have not spoken on my own authority; the Father who sent me has himself given me commandment what to say and what to speak. **50** And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has bidden me."

Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet

13 * [Now](#) before the [feast of the Passover](#), when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. **2** And [during supper](#), when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, **3** Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, **4** rose from supper, laid aside [his garments](#), and tied a towel around himself. **5** Then he poured water into a basin, and began to [wash the disciples' feet](#), and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. **6** He came to Simon Peter; and Peter said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" **7** Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not know now, but afterward you will understand." **8** Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have [no part in me](#)." **9** Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" **10** Jesus said to him, "[He who has bathed](#) does not need to wash, except for his feet,^c but he is clean all over; and you are clean, but not all of you." **11** For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "You are not all clean."

12 When he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? **13** You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. **14** If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. **15** For I have given you [an example](#), that you also should do

as I have done to you. ¹⁶Truly, truly, I say to you, [a servant^d](#) is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. ¹⁷If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. ¹⁸I am not speaking of you all; I know whom I have chosen; it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He [who ate my bread](#) has lifted his heel against me.' ¹⁹I tell you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may [believe that I am](#) he. ²⁰Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives any one whom I send receives me; and he who receives me receives him who sent me."

Jesus Foretells His Betrayal

²¹ When Jesus had thus spoken, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." ²²The disciples looked at one another, [uncertain of whom](#) he spoke. ²³One of his disciples, [whom Jesus loved](#), was lying close to the breast of Jesus; ²⁴so Simon Peter beckoned to him and said, "Tell us who it is of whom he speaks." ²⁵So lying thus, close to the breast of Jesus, he said to him, "Lord, who is it?" ²⁶Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I shall give this morsel when I have dipped it." So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷Then [after the morsel, Satan](#) entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly." ²⁸Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. ²⁹Some thought that, because Judas had the money box, Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the feast"; or, that he should give something to the poor. ³⁰So, after receiving the morsel, he immediately went out; and it was night.

The New Commandment

³¹ When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and in him [God is glorified](#); ³²if God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. ³³Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.' ³⁴A [new commandment](#) * I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Jesus Foretells Peter's Denial

³⁶ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now; but you shall follow

afterward." ³⁷Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." ³⁸Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the cock will not crow, till you have denied me three times.

Jesus the Way, the Truth, and the Life

14 "Let not your hearts be troubled; believe^e in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. ⁴And you know the way where I am going."^f ⁵Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" ⁶Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me. ⁷If you had known me, you would have known my Father also; henceforth you know him and have seen him."

8 Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied." ⁹Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves.

12 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to the Father. ¹³Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son; ¹⁴if you ask^g anything in my name, I will do it.

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

15 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, ¹⁷even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you.

18 "I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you. ¹⁹Yet a little while, and the world will see me no more, but you will see me; because I live, you will live also. ²⁰In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it

is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." ²²[Judas \(not Iscariot\)](#) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" ²³Jesus answered him, "If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make [our home with him](#)." ²⁴He who does not love me does not keep my words; and the word which you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.

²⁵ "These things I have spoken to you, while I am still with you. ²⁶But the Counselor, [the Holy Spirit](#), whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, * and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. ²⁷Peace I leave with you; [my peace](#) I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. ²⁸You heard me say to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you.' If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I go to the Father; for [the Father is greater than I](#). ²⁹And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place, you may believe. ³⁰I will no longer talk much with you, for the [ruler of this world](#) is coming. He has no power over me; ³¹but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that [I love the Father](#). Rise, let us go from here.

[Jesus the True Vine](#)

¹⁵ "I am [the true vine](#), and my Father is the vinedresser. ¹⁵Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit [he prunes](#), that it may bear more fruit. ³You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that [bears much fruit](#), for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, [thrown into the fire](#) and burned. ⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. ⁸By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept [my Father's](#)

[commandments](#) and abide in his love. ¹¹These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

¹² "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³[Greater love](#) has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴You are [my friends](#) if you do what I command you. ¹⁵No longer do I call you servants, ^h for the servant ⁱ does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. ¹⁷This I command you, to love one another.

The World's Hatred

¹⁸ "[If the world hates you](#), know that it has hated me before it hated you. * ¹⁹If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant ⁱ is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. ²¹But all this they will do to you on my account, because they do not know him who sent me. ²²If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have [no excuse](#) for their sin. ²³He who hates me hates my Father also. ²⁴If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. ²⁵It is to fulfil the word that is written in [their law](#), 'They hated me without a cause.' ²⁶But when the Counselor comes, [whom I shall send](#) to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me; ²⁷and you also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning.

¹⁶ "I have said all this to you to keep you from falling away. ²They will put you [out of the synagogues](#); indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. ³And they will do this because they have not known the Father, nor me. ⁴But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told you of them.

The Work of the Spirit

"I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. ⁵But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, '[Where are you going?](#)' ⁶But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. ⁷Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is [to your advantage](#) that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸And when he comes, [he will convince](#) the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment: ⁹of sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more; ¹¹of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

¹² "I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, [he will guide you](#) into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and [declare it to you](#).

Sorrow Will Turn into Joy

¹⁶ "A little while, and you will see me no more; again a little while, and you will see me." ¹⁷Some of his disciples said to one another, "What is this that he says to us, 'A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me'; and, 'because I go to the Father'?" ¹⁸They said, "What does he mean by '[a little while](#)'? We do not know what he means." ¹⁹Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him; so he said to them, "Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, 'A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me'?" ²⁰Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. ²¹When a woman is in labor, she has pain, because [her hour has come](#); but when she is delivered of the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a child^j is born into the world. ²²So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. ²³In that day you will [ask nothing](#) of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father, he will give it to you in my name. ²⁴Until now you have asked nothing in my name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

Peace for the Disciples

25 "I have said this to you [in figures](#); the hour is coming when I shall no longer speak to you in figures but tell you plainly of the Father. **26**In that day you will ask in my name; and I do not say to you that I shall ask the Father for you; **27**for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from the Father. **28**I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and going to the Father."

29 His disciples said, "Ah, now you are speaking plainly, not in any figure! **30**Now we know that [you know all things](#), and need none to question you; by this we believe that you came from God." **31**Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe? **32**The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when [you will be scattered](#), every man to his home, and will leave me alone; yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. **33**I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Jesus Prays for the Church

17 When [Jesus had spoken](#) these words, he [lifted up his eyes](#) to heaven and said, * "Father, the hour has come; [glorify](#) your Son that the Son may glorify you, **2**since you have given him power over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. **3**And this is [eternal life](#), that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. **4**I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work which you gave me to do; **5**and now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory which I had with you before the world was made. *

6 "I have [manifested your name](#) to the men whom you gave me out of the world; they were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. **7**Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you; **8**for I have given them the words which you gave me, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. **9**I am praying for them; I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours; **10**all mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. **11**And now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even [as we are one](#). **12**While I was with them, I kept them in

your name, which you have given me; I have guarded them, and none of them is lost but [the son of perdition](#), that the Scripture might be fulfilled. ¹³But now I am coming to you; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. ¹⁴I have given them your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am [not of the world](#). ¹⁵I do not pray that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them [from the evil one](#).^k ¹⁶They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁷[Sanctify them](#) in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸As you sent me into the world, [so I have sent them](#) into the world. ¹⁹And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth.

²⁰ "I do not pray for these only, but also for [those who believe](#) in me through their word, ²¹that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²The glory which you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so [that the world may know](#) that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. ²⁴Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, [may be with me](#) where I am, to behold my glory which you have given me in your love for me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵O righteous Father, the world has not known you, but I have known you; and these know that you have sent me. ²⁶I made known to them your name, and I will make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

[The Arrest of Jesus \[Map\]](#)

¹⁸ When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples across [the Kidron valley](#), where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. ²Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place; for Jesus often met there with his disciples. ³So Judas, procuring a [band of soldiers](#) and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons. ⁴Then Jesus, knowing all that was to befall him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" ⁵They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. ⁶When he said to them, "[I am](#) he," they drew back and fell to the ground. ⁷Again he asked them,

"Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." ⁸Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he; so, if you seek me, let these men go." ⁹This was to fulfil the word which he had spoken, "Of those whom you gave me I lost not one." ¹⁰Then Simon Peter, having [a sword](#), drew it and struck the high priest's slave and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was Malchus. ¹¹Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink [the chalice](#) which the Father has given me?"

Jesus before the High Priest

¹² So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews seized Jesus and bound him. ¹³First they led him to [Annas](#); for he was the father-in-law of Cai'aphas, who was high priest that year. * ¹⁴It was Cai'aphas who had given counsel to the Jews that it was expedient that [one man should die](#) for the people.

Peter Denies Jesus

¹⁵ Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did [another disciple](#). As this disciple was known to the high priest, he entered the court of the high priest along with Jesus, ¹⁶while Peter stood outside at the door. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the maid who kept the door, and brought Peter in. ¹⁷The maid who kept the door said to Peter, "Are not you also one of this man's disciples?" He said, "I am not." ¹⁸Now the servants¹ and officers had made a charcoal fire, because it was cold, and they were standing and warming themselves; Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself.

The High Priest Questions Jesus

¹⁹ The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. ²⁰Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together; I have said nothing secretly. ²¹Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me, what I said to them; they know what I said." ²²When he had said this, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" ²³Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken wrongly, bear witness to the wrong; but if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" ²⁴Annas then sent him [bound to Cai'aphas](#) the high priest.

Peter Denies Jesus Again

[25](#) Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They said to him, "Are not you also one of his disciples?" He denied it and said, "I am not." [26](#)One of the servants¹ of the high priest, a kinsman of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" [27](#)Peter [again denied it](#); and at once the cock crowed.

Jesus before Pilate [Map]

[28](#) Then they led Jesus from the house of Cai'aphas to [the praetorium](#). It was early. They themselves did not enter the praetorium, so that they might not be defiled, but might eat the Passover. * [29](#)So [Pilate](#) went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" * [30](#)They answered him, "If this man were not an evildoer, we would not have handed him over." [31](#)Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." The Jews said to him, "[It is not lawful](#) for us to put any man to death." * [32](#)This was to fulfil the word which Jesus had spoken to show by [what death](#) he was to die.

Jesus Sentenced to Death

[33](#) Pilate entered the praetorium again and called Jesus, and said to him, "Are you the [King of the Jews](#)?" [34](#)Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" [35](#)Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me; what have you done?" [36](#)Jesus answered, "[My kingship](#) is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world." [37](#)Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Every one who is of the truth hears my voice." [38](#)Pilate said to him, "[What is truth](#)?"

After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again, and told them, "I find no crime in him. [39](#)But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover; will you have me release for you the King of the Jews?" [40](#)They cried out again, "Not this man, but Barab'bas!" Now Barab'bas was [a robber](#).

[1](#) Then Pilate took Jesus and [scourged](#) him. [2](#)And the soldiers plaited a [crown of thorns](#), and put it on his head, and clothed him in a purple robe; [3](#)they came up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and struck him with their hands. [4](#)Pilate went out again, and said to them, "Behold, I am bringing

him out to you, that you may know that I find no crime in him." ⁵So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!" ⁶When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "[Crucify him](#), crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no crime in him." ⁷The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and by that law [he ought to die](#), because he has made himself the Son of God." * ⁸When Pilate heard these words, he was even more afraid; ⁹he entered the praetorium again and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?" * But Jesus gave no answer. ¹⁰Pilate therefore said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?" ¹¹Jesus answered him, "You would have [no power over me](#) unless it had been given you from above; therefore he who delivered me to you has the greater sin."

¹² Upon this Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are [not Caesar's friend](#); every one who makes himself a king sets himself against Caesar." ¹³When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called [The Pavement](#), and in Hebrew, Gab'batha. ¹⁴Now it was the [day of Preparation](#) of the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, "Here is your King!" ¹⁵They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have [no king but Caesar](#)." ¹⁶Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

The Crucifixion

¹⁷ So they took Jesus, and he went out, [bearing his own cross](#), to the place called the place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew Gol'gotha. ¹⁸There they crucified him, and with him two others, [one on either side](#), and Jesus between them. ¹⁹Pilate also wrote a title and put it on the cross; it read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." ²⁰Many of the Jews read [this title](#), for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. ²¹The chief priests of the Jews then said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.' " ²²Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

²³ When the soldiers had crucified Jesus they took his garments and made four parts, one for each soldier; also his tunic. But [the tunic](#) was without

seam, woven from top to bottom; ²⁴so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfil the Scripture,

"[They parted my garments](#) among them,
and for my clothing they cast lots."

²⁵ So the soldiers did this. But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and [his mother's sister](#), Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Mag'dalene. ²⁶When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, "[Woman](#), behold, your son!" ²⁷Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. *

²⁸ After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfil the Scripture), "[I thirst](#)." ²⁹A bowl full of vinegar stood there; so they put a sponge full of the [vinegar](#) on hyssop and held it to his mouth. ³⁰When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished"; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Jesus' Side Is Pierced

³¹ Since it was the day of Preparation, in order to prevent the bodies from remaining on the cross on the sabbath (for that sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. ³²So the soldiers came and [broke the legs](#) of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him; ³³but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. ³⁴But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out [blood and water](#). ³⁵He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that [he tells the truth](#)—that you also may believe. ³⁶For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled, "[Not a bone](#) of him shall be broken." ³⁷And again another Scripture says, "[They shall look](#) on him whom they have pierced."

The Burial of Jesus

³⁸ After this [Joseph of Arimathea](#), who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him leave. So he came and took away his body. ³⁹[Nicodemus](#) also, who had at first come to him by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds' weight. ⁴⁰They took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is [the](#)

[burial custom](#) of the Jews. ⁴¹Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb where no one had ever been laid. ⁴²So because of the Jewish [day of Preparation](#), as the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

The Resurrection of Jesus

²⁰ Now on [the first day](#) of the week, Mary Mag'dalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. ²So she ran, and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord [out of the tomb](#), and we do not know where they have laid him." ³Peter then came out with the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb. ⁴They both ran, but [the other disciple](#) outran Peter and reached the tomb first; ⁵and stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; he saw the linen cloths lying, ⁷and [the napkin](#), which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not know [the Scripture](#), that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples went back to their homes.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw [two angels](#) in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. ¹³They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." ¹⁴Saying this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing, but [she did not know](#) that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." ¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rab-bo'ni!" (which means Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus said to her, "[Do not hold me](#), for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." * ¹⁸Mary Mag'dalene went and said to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Jesus Gives the Disciples the Power to Forgive Sins

19 On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." ²⁰When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." ²²And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Jesus and Thomas

24 Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe."

26 Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing." ²⁸Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹Jesus said to him, "You have believed because you have seen me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."

The Purpose of This Book

30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.

Jesus Appears to Disciples by the Sea of Tiberias

21 * After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tibe'ri-as; and he revealed himself in this way. ²Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathan'a-el of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zeb'edee, and two others of his disciples were together. ³Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat; but that night they caught nothing.

4 Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. **5** Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any fish?" They answered him, "No." **6** He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, for the quantity of fish. **7** That disciple whom Jesus loved ***** said to Peter, "[It is the Lord!](#)" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his clothes, for he was stripped for work, and sprang into the sea. **8** But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards^m off.

9 When they got out on land, they saw a [charcoal fire](#) there, with fish lying on it, and bread. **10** Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." **11** So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, [a hundred and fifty-three](#) of them; and although there were so many, the net was not torn. **12** Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. **13** Jesus came and [took the bread and gave](#) it to them, and so with the fish. **14** This was now [the third time](#) that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Peter Is Given a Command

15 ***** When they had finished breakfast, [Jesus said to Simon Peter](#), "Simon, son of John, do you love me [more than these](#)?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." **16** A second time he said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." **17** He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep." **18** Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you fastened your own belt and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will [stretch out your hands](#), and another will fasten your belt for you and carry you where you do not wish to go." **19** (This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God.) And after this he said to him, "Follow me."

Jesus and the Beloved Disciple

[20](#) Peter turned and saw following them the disciple whom Jesus loved, who had lain close to his breast at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?" ²¹When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?" ²²Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!" ²³[The saying spread](#) abroad among the brethren that this disciple was not to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?"

[24 This is the disciple](#) who is bearing witness to these things, and who has written these things; and we know that his testimony is true.

[25](#) But there are also [many other things](#) which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

Commentary on the Gospel of John

1:1-18 The Prologue functions like a musical overture, introducing the main themes of the Gospel to be developed in subsequent chapters: light (1:4), life (1:4), darkness (1:5), testimony (1:7), faith (1:12), glory (1:14), truth (1:17). This network of images and ideas is held together around Jesus the Word, who is portrayed as the Creator and Redeemer of all things. Similar poetic passages are found in Col 1:15-20 and Heb 1:1-4. [Back to text.](#)



1:1 In the beginning: John traces the origin of the Word into eternity past, where God the Son was present with God the Father before time itself began (17:5). • This opening verse of John is a direct allusion to the opening verse of the Bible. As in Genesis 1, the evangelist draws attention to light, darkness, life, and the spoken Word that brought all things into existence (1:1-5). It is implied that the universe, once *created* through the Word of God, is now being *renewed* through that same Word come in the flesh as Jesus Christ (1:14; Rev 21:15; *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [hereafter CCC] 241, 291). **was with God:** Distinguishes the Word from the Father. They are not the same Person, yet they share the same nature in the family of the eternal Godhead (17:25-26) (CCC 25456). **was God:** Or, "was divine". This is the first and clearest assertion of the deity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel (5:18; 10:30-33; 20:28) (CCC 242). [Back to text.](#)

1:4 life: Earthly life is a gift that is given and sustained by God through his eternal Word (Heb 1:3). Ultimately, natural and biological life points beyond itself to the supernatural and divine life that Jesus grants in abundance to the children of God (10:10; 2 Pet 1:4; CCC 1997). This new life comes to us when we give ourselves to Christ in faith (3:16; 20:31), and Christ gives himself to us through the sacramental action of the Church (3:5; 6:53). [Back to text.](#)

1:5 light . . . darkness: Symbolic of the struggle between good and evil (1 Jn 2:8-11). Jesus himself is the true light (1:9) that drives away death, deception, and the devil (1 Jn 3:8). Other contrasts in the Gospel include flesh and Spirit (3:6), truth and falsehood (8:44-45), heaven and earth (3:31), and life and death (5:24). [Back to text.](#)

1:6 John: John the Baptist, who fulfilled a divine mission to Israel (1:31) but was not the divine Messiah (1:20). Emphasis on John's subordinate role to Jesus runs throughout the Fourth Gospel, suggesting that one of the aims of the evangelist is to win over the remaining band of John's disciples who had not yet accepted Jesus (3:25-30; 5:36; 10:41). Support for this is found in Acts 19:1-7, where we learn that a contingent of John's followers lived in Ephesus—the same city that tradition links with the publication of the Fourth Gospel. See introduction: *Author*. [Back to text](#).

1:10 the world: One of several concepts in John with multiple meanings. The world can refer **(1)** to the universe created by God (1:10), **(2)** to the fallen family of man in need of redemption (3:17), **(3)** and to the sphere of the devil that opposes God and hates the truth (15:18-20). [Back to text](#).

Word Study

Word ([Jn 1:1](#))

Logos (Gk.): "word", "statement", or "utterance". The term is used 330 times in the NT. The background of this concept in John is both philosophical and biblical. **(1)** Ancient Greek philosophers associated the Word with the order and design of the universe or with the intelligible expression of the mind of God as he sustains and governs it. **(2)** In biblical tradition the Word is the powerful utterance of God that brought all things into being at the dawn of time (Gen 1:3; Ps 33:6; Wis 9:1). **(3)** Another biblical tradition links the Word of God with the Wisdom of God, who was depicted as God's eternal companion (Prov 8:23; Sir 24:9), the craftsman who labored alongside God at creation (Prov 8:30; Wis 7:22), and the one who remains a source of life for the world (Prov 8:35). John, it seems, has pulled these traditions together to say something entirely new: the Word of God is not so much an abstract principle or an audible power as it is a Divine Person: God the Son (Rev 19:13). This eternal Word, once a mediator of creation, has now become a mediator of salvation through his Incarnation (Jn 1:14; 3:17).

1:11 received him not: Jesus' ministry to Israel was often resisted and sometimes rejected (8:56-59; 10:31; Lk 4:28-30). [Back to text](#).

1:12 believed in his name: i.e., believed that Jesus is the Messiah of Israel and the eternal Son of God (20:31; 1 Jn 5:1, 13). Names are inseparable from persons in Semitic thinking. So, for instance, the Lord himself is invoked when his name is called upon in worship (Gen 4:26; 12:8) and when covenants are ratified by swearing an oath in his name (Gen 21:23; 24:3). **children of God:** By the grace of divine generation we are filled with divine life and reborn as sons and daughters of the Father (1 Jn 3:1, 9). This transformation requires faith and takes place in Baptism (3:5-8; Gal 3:26-27) (CCC 2780-82). [Back to text.](#)



1:13 not of blood . . . flesh . . . man: Three means or processes that bring about natural birth into the world, i.e., women, the sexual impulse, and men. John is stressing that natural birth does not establish us in a supernatural relationship with God. • A similar cluster of ideas is found in Wis 7:1-2, where human existence is said to depend on the blood of prenatal gestation, the pleasure of marital relations, and the seed of man. [Back to text.](#)



1:14 the Word became flesh: Asserts the mystery of the Incarnation. It means that Christ, who is fully divine, eternal, and equal in being with the Father, came from heaven to earth and entered history as a man. The word "flesh" signifies all that is natural, earthly, and human (3:6; 6:63; 1 Jn 4:2) (CCC 423, 456-63). **dwelt among us:** The Greek means that Jesus "tabernacled" or "pitched his tent" among us (Rev 21:3). • John is making a link between the Incarnation of Jesus and the erection of the wilderness Tabernacle in the OT (Ex 25:89). The Tabernacle, once the architectural expression of Yahweh's presence in Israel, is a prophetic image of Jesus dwelling in our midst as a man. Likewise, as the Wisdom of God once tabernacled in Israel in the Torah of Moses (Sir 24:8), so Jesus is the embodiment of divine Wisdom in the flesh (1 Cor 1:24). See word study: [Word.](#) **grace and truth:** Equivalent to the "mercy and faithfulness" of God celebrated in the OT (Ex 34:6; Ps 25:10; 89:1; Prov 20:28; CCC 214). **his glory:** The magnificence of God's presence and Being once visible in the fiery cloud that indwelt the wilderness Tabernacle (Ex 40:34-35) and later the Jerusalem Temple (1 Kings 8:10-11). The glory of Christ is veiled

behind his humanity and becomes visible only when he manifests it through his miracles (2:11; 11:40) (CCC 697). [Back to text.](#)

1:15 ranks before me . . . was before me: The preeminence of Jesus over John is deduced from his preexistence. Although his ministry followed that of John, his life with the Father predated the foundations of the world itself (1:1; 8:58; 17:5). [Back to text.](#)

1:16 grace upon grace: Or "grace in place of grace". As implied in the next verse, the graces of the Old Covenant have been superseded by the blessings of the New (1:17; CCC 504). [Back to text.](#)

1:18 No one has ever seen God: God is pure spirit and thus invisible to human eyes (4:24; 1 Tim 6:16). Even still, the face of the Father can be seen in the face of Christ, who is the visible image of the invisible God (14:9; Col 1:15). Only in eternity will we see God as he truly is (1 Cor 13:12) (CCC 151). **the only-begotten Son:** A significant textual variant reads "God, the only begotten", which directly asserts the deity of Jesus. The reading followed in the translation can **(1)** refer to the eternal generation of Christ within the Trinity or **(2)** mean "unique" and "precious", as Isaac was the beloved of his father, Abraham (Heb 11:17) (CCC 444). [Back to text.](#)

1:19 Jews: The term has a geographical tint and can sometimes be translated "Judeans". It has negative connotations in the Fourth Gospel because Jesus encounters great resistance in Judea (4:43-44) from the Judean leaders of Jerusalem who orchestrate his death (11:47-53; 19:12-16). The term is not a derogatory epithet directed at ethnic Jews in general; after all, Jesus was a Jew, as was his Mother, his disciples, and most of the earliest Christians (CCC 597). [See note on Jn 4:47.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:20 the Christ: i.e., the Messiah (1:41). See word study: [Christ](#) at Mk 14. [Back to text.](#)



1:21 Elijah?: Israel anticipated the return of the prophet Elijah. • Malachi foretold that Elijah would make final preparations for the arrival of Israel's messianic Lord (Sir 48:10; Mal 4:5). John is not Elijah come again in the flesh, but he fulfills his mission in spirit (Lk 1:17) (CCC 718). [See note on Mk 9:11.](#) **the prophet?:** Israel awaited the coming of a prophet in the likeness of Moses. • That the authorities question whether John is *the* prophet and not simply *a* prophet suggests they are thinking of this Mosaic

figure foretold in Deut 18:15-19. John is not the messianic prophet; it is Jesus who fulfills this role as the new Moses (4:20-26; 6:14; 7:40). [Back to text.](#)

1:23 I am the voice: A quotation from Is 40:3. [See note on Lk 3:4-6.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:24 the Pharisees: The influential leaders of a Jewish renewal movement in NT Palestine. They are fierce opponents of Jesus and his message (7:45-53). See topical essay: *Who Are the Pharisees?* at Mk 2. [Back to text.](#)

1:26 I baptize with water: The water baptism of John is merely a sign of the sacramental Baptism of Jesus. The former signified our need for cleansing and renewal; the latter effects this by an infusion of the grace and new life of the Spirit (Acts 2:38; Tit 3:5) (CCC 720, 1262). [Back to text.](#)

1:28 Bethany: An unknown location east of the Jordan River (10:40). It is distinct from the Judean village of Bethany near Jerusalem (11:18). [Back to text.](#)



1:29 Lamb of God: Points to the sacrificial dimension of I Jesus' mission. • This was *prefigured* by the Passover lambs of the Exodus, whose blood was a mark of divine protection for Israel and whose flesh was eaten in a liturgical meal (Ex 12:1-27), and *prophesied* by Isaiah, who portrayed the suffering Messiah as an innocent lamb slain for the sins of others (Is 53:7-12; CCC 608). See notes on Jn 12:32 and 19:36. [Back to text.](#)

1:32 the Spirit descend as a dove: The Baptism of Jesus, which initiates his manifestation to Israel (1:31) and prefigures the effects of sacramental Baptism (3:1-13). See notes on Mt 3:15 and Mk 1:10. **remain:** The Greek expression is used often in John (also translated "dwell" or "abide") for the enduring bond between the Father and Son (14:10; 15:10) and for the indwelling of the Trinity in the believer (6:56; 14:17; 15:4-7). [Back to text.](#)

1:35 two of his disciples: One of these is identified as "Andrew" (1:40), while the other is probably the evangelist himself. See introduction: *Author.* [Back to text.](#)

1:39 the tenth hour: About 4 P.M. [See note on Mt 20:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:41 the Messiah: A rendering of the Hebrew word for "Anointed One". This title is rendered into Greek as **Christ** (4:25). See word study: [Christ](#) at Mk 14. [Back to text.](#)

1:42 Cephas: A rendering of the Aramaic word *kepha'*, meaning "rock". With one exception from the fifth century B.C., this term was not generally used as a personal name before Jesus renamed Simon. The name **Peter** is its Greek equivalent. See word study: [Peter](#) at Mt 16. [Back to text.](#)

1:44 Bethsaida: A village on the northern edge of the Sea of Galilee. **Nathanael:** Also called "Bartholomew" in the Synoptic Gospels. See chart: *The Twelve Apostles* at Mk 3. [Back to text.](#)

1:45 Moses . . . the prophets: Introduces a theme of scriptural fulfillment that runs throughout the Gospel narrative (2:22; 5:46; 7:38; 10:35; etc.). [Back to text.](#)

1:46 Nazareth: A small and secluded Galilean village considered unimportant to many in Israel. [Back to text.](#)



Baptism and Temptation

1:47 an Israelite indeed: i.e., a descendant of the patriarch Jacob, who was renamed "Israel" (Gen 32:28). Ironically, Jacob himself was known for his beguiling ways, especially when he intercepted the family blessing intended for his older brother Esau (Gen 27:35). [Back to text.](#)



1:49 Son of God . . . King of Israel: Titles closely connected in ancient Israel, where King David and his successors are called the "sons" of Yahweh (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7; 89:26-27). Unlike his Davidic predecessors, however, Jesus is the Son of God by nature and not by a covenant of divine adoption (1:18) (CCC 441-42). • Nathanael speaks from his knowledge of the OT. **(1)** That he was "called" while sitting "under the fig tree" (1:48) recalls how neighbors will "invite" one another under their "fig tree" in the messianic age (Zech 3:10). Judaism linked this hope with the coming of the royal "Branch", a messianic figure mentioned by Zechariah (Zech 3:8; 6:11-13) and modeled on his contemporary Zerubbabel, who rebuilt the Temple after the Exile (Hag 1:14; Zech 4:9). **(2)** Mention of Jesus' hometown suggests a connection with Is 11:1, where the "branch" that will sprout from David is a term (Heb. *netser*) linked to the word "Nazareth" (1:46). Once these oracles converged in the mind of Nathanael, he could reason that Jesus is the messianic "Branch" and thus the royal Son of God. • *Allegorically* (St. Augustine, *Tract. on John 7*, 21): the shade of the fig tree is the shadow of sin and death. Nathanael is the Church, who is known in advance by the mercy of God, cleansed of all guilt and impurity, and summoned by the apostles to come forth from darkness to live in the light. [Back to text.](#)



1:51 ascending and descending: An allusion to Jacob's dream in Gen 28:11-15. • Jacob dreamed of a ladder spanning heaven and earth that enabled the angels to pass in and out of the world. Moved by the experience, he renamed the place where he slept "the house of God" and "the gate of heaven" (Gen 28:17). Jesus puts himself in the center of this vision, claiming that **(1)** he is the place where heaven touches down to earth; **(2)** he is the true house of God; and **(3)** he is the mediator through whom the angels exercise their ministry. See notes on Jn 2:19 and Heb 1:14. **the Son of man:** Alludes to the heavenly figure of Dan 7:13. See topical essay: *Jesus, the Son of Man* at Lk 17. [Back to text.](#)



2:1 the third day: Chronologically, this refers to the third day since Jesus' encounter with Nathanael (1:43-51). Theologically, it has two levels

of significance. **(1)** The third day is actually the seventh day of Jesus' opening week of ministry. The evangelist hints at this when he delineates the successive days in 1:29, 35, 43, and 2:1, implying that the creation fashioned in seven days (Gen 1:1-2:3) is being transformed and renewed through Jesus (2 Cor 5:17; Rev 21:1-5). **(2)** Jesus manifests his glory on the third day at Cana (2:11), just as he reveals his glory by rising on the third day after his death (1 Cor 15:4). See word study: [Signs. marriage at Cana](#): Jewish weddings, like this one five miles north of Nazareth, could be celebrated for an entire week or more (Judg 14:12; Tob 11:19). Curiously, the young couple is never identified, leaving Jesus and his Mother to hold center stage for the entire episode (2:11). • Traditional exegesis holds that Jesus sanctifies the covenant of marriage by his presence at the wedding at Cana (CCC 1613). [Back to text.](#)



2:3 the mother of Jesus: Mary is never called by her personal name in the Fourth Gospel (2:12; 19:25). **no wine:** An embarrassing predicament for the young couple. Mary's concern for the situation may suggest she is a relative of the wedding party. • Vatican II affirms the propriety of the title "Advocate" for the Mother of Jesus (*Lumen Gentium*, 62). It means that just as Mary intervened at Cana for the needs of others, so she continues to make heavenly intercession for the needs of the saints on earth (CCC 969). [Back to text.](#)



2:4 woman: Although it might offend the standards of modern etiquette, this was a title of respect and endearment in antiquity (4:21; 8:10; 20:13). There is, however, no ancient example of a son addressing his mother in this way. • Genesis 3 is the reverse image of the Cana episode. As Eve prompted Adam to defy the Lord and drag the human family into sin, so Mary prompts Jesus, the new Adam, to initiate his mission of salvation. The description of Mary even alludes to Gen 3:15, where Yahweh speaks of a "woman" whose son will trample the devil underfoot (CCC 489, 494). **what have you to do with me?** The expression is a Hebrew idiom rendered in Greek (literally, "what to me and to you?"). It typically presupposes some perceived tension between two parties having contrary perspectives (Judg 11:12; 1 Kings 17:18; Mk 5:7), though not always (2 Chron 35:21). When the idiom is used in response to a person's request, either stated or implied,

the speaker sometimes capitulates to the expressed will of the other (2 Kings 3:13) and sometimes not (2 Sam 16:10). Here the former pattern is evident: Jesus complies with Mary's request (Jn 2:7-8), and Mary herself appears perfectly confident that Jesus will respond favorably to her petition (2:5). In effect, Jesus would not have initiated the miracle at Cana, but neither does he refuse his Mother's prompting. **My hour has not yet come:** The assertion hides an important assumption. The statement would seem exaggerated unless the provision of wine was somehow connected with Jesus' appointed "hour". This points beyond the historical hour of his Passion to the commemoration of that hour in the eucharistic liturgy, where Christ is present behind the visible sign of wine (CCC 2618). See topical essay: *The "Hour" of Jesus* at Jn 4. [Back to text.](#)



2:5 Do whatever he tells you: The final words of Mary in the NT, which ring out as her spiritual testament for all disciples of Jesus. • The command to follow Jesus echoes the command to follow Joseph in Gen 41:55. As the patriarch went on to provide bread in abundance during a time of famine, so Jesus supplies wine in abundance at a time of need. [Back to text.](#)



2:6 six stone jars: Together holding over 120 gallons of water. • The purpose of these water jars is outlined in Num 19:11-22, which stipulates that any Israelite defiled by contact with the dead must be purified with water on the third day and then again on the seventh day. Curiously, the Cana miracle takes place on the third day (2:1), which, according to John's chronology, is also the seventh day. [See note on Jn 2:1.](#) • The first sign performed by Jesus (water into wine) recalls the first sign performed by Moses (the first plague, water into blood, Ex 7:19). Note that wine is called the "blood" of the grape in Hebrew poetry (Gen 49:11; Deut 32:14). [Back to text.](#)

2:9 the bridegroom: The unidentified groom at the wedding. Jesus fulfills this role on a spiritual level (3:29; Mt 25:113; CCC 796). [Back to text.](#)

2:10 the good wine: A biblical symbol capable of many associations. **(1)** An abundance of wine is a sign of the messianic age (Is 25:6; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13). **(2)** It signifies the joys of marital love (Song 1:2; 4:10; 7:9).

(3) The transformation of water into wine anticipates the transubstantiation of wine into blood when Jesus gives himself to the world in the eucharistic liturgy (6:53; 1 Cor 10:16). (4) The wine of the marital celebration looks beyond this life to the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven (Rev 19:7-9) (CCC 1335). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Signs (Jn 2:11)

Semeion (Gk.): a "sign" or "miracle". The term is used 17 times in John and 60 times in the rest of the NT. Since the signs in the Fourth Gospel are concentrated mainly in chaps. 1-12, the first half of John has been called the "Book of Signs". For the evangelist, the signs of Jesus are not just mighty works, but miracles that unveil the glory and power of God working through Christ. The signs of Jesus also recall the signs performed by Moses during the Exodus, signs that likewise revealed the glory of Yahweh (Num 14:22) working through Moses (Ex 3:12; 4:28-31; Deut 34:11). The Fourth Gospel draws attention to seven signs: (1) the miracle at Cana (2:1-11), (2) the healing of the official's son (4:46-54), (3) the healing of the paralytic (5:1-9), (4) the multiplication of the loaves (6:1-14), (5) the restoration of the blind man (9:1-41), (6) the raising of Lazarus (11:17-44), and, most important of all, (7) the Resurrection of Jesus, which is the second sign mentioned in the Gospel (2:18-22) but the final and climactic sign to be accomplished (20:1-10). Jesus elsewhere calls this the "sign of the prophet Jonah" (Mt 12:39).

2:12 Capernaum: A village on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee and the headquarters of Jesus' Galilean ministry (Mt 4:13). **his brethren:** Not full brothers of Jesus but his close relatives (CCC 500). [See note on Mt 12:46.](#) [Back to text.](#)

2:13 The Passover: Celebrated every spring to commemorate Israel's rescue from Egyptian slavery (Ex 12). Three times the Passover is mentioned in John, indicating that Jesus' ministry extended beyond two years (6:4; 13:1). [See note on Jn 6:4.](#) **Jerusalem:** Nearly 80 percent of

John's narrative places Jesus in Jerusalem. The Synoptic Gospels give greater attention to the ministry of Jesus in Galilee. [Back to text.](#)

2:14-22 The cleansing of the Temple is recorded in all four Gospels. One difference among them is that John places the event at the *beginning* of Jesus' ministry, while the other Gospels place it at the *end* of his ministry. Two explanations for this are possible. **(1)** All four accounts may refer to the same event. If so, John moved the episode to the beginning of his narrative to highlight an important truth. As it stands, the Temple cleansing makes the same theological point as that in the preceding Cana episode: Jesus brings a New Covenant that supersedes the institutions of the Old. **(2)** Jesus may have cleansed the Temple twice. In fact, some have dated the episode in John around A.D. 27 or 28, calculating "forty-six years" from the time Herod the Great began renovating the Temple in 19 or 20 B.C. (2:20). This date fits more easily into the early period of Jesus' ministry than the latter part of it. [Back to text.](#)

2:14 In the temple: The Jerusalem Temple was divided into several courts. The outermost court, open to Gentile pilgrims, was used for selling sacrificial animals and exchanging foreign currency for the appropriate coins needed to pay the annual Temple tax. Jesus is angry that the merchants are robbing Israel through inflated rates of exchange and robbing the Gentiles of the opportunity to worship and pray (CCC 583-84). [See note on Mt 17:24.](#) [Back to text.](#)



2:15 poured out . . . overturned: The aggressive actions of Jesus are a prophetic sign of the Temple's imminent destruction (Mk 13:1-2). The expulsion of oxen, sheep, and pigeons (2:14) from the precincts likewise signifies the termination of animal sacrifice in the Temple (4:21-24). [See note on Mk 11:15.](#) • *Allegorically* (Origen, *Comm. in Jo.* 10, 16): the sanctuary is the undisciplined soul, filled, not with animals and merchants, but with earthly and senseless attachments. Christ must expel them with the whip of his divine doctrine to make spiritual worship possible. [Back to text.](#)



2:17 Zeal for your house: A reference to Ps 69:9. • Psalm 69 depicts the suffering of the righteous, who are pained by the insults that sinners heap upon God. Jesus, burning with righteous indignation, is

outraged that business dealings have taken the place of prayer in the Temple courts. [Back to text.](#)

2:19 Destroy this temple: Jesus challenges his critics to destroy, not the sacred building, but his own body (2:21-22). Ironically, the latter is destined to replace the former: after the Crucifixion, the Temple of Jerusalem will be razed to the ground in divine judgment while the temple of Jesus' body will be raised from the grave in divine glory (CCC 586, 994). [Back to text.](#)

2:25 he knew all men: The supernatural knowledge of Jesus is often highlighted in the Gospels (4:39; 16:30; Mt 9:4; 17:27; Mk 11:2-4; Lk 22:9-13). Here he detects deficient faith in those who marvel at his miracles but fail to grasp the significance of his mission. In the next episode, Nicodemus is representative of such inadequate belief (3:1-15) (CCC 473). [Back to text.](#)

3:1 Nicodemus: Probably a member of the Jewish court, the Sanhedrin. [See note on Mk 14:55.](#) [Back to text.](#)

3:2 by night: Nicodemus comes to Jesus under the cover of darkness because he fears persecution from the unbelieving leaders of Israel (12:42; 19:38). Symbolically, he is walking in spiritual darkness and lacks the enlightenment of true faith (8:12). [Back to text.](#)

3:3 anew: The Greek expression can mean either "again" or "from above". Nicodemus takes it to mean "again", as though Jesus required a physical rebirth to enter his kingdom. This is a misunderstanding. Jesus instead calls for a spiritual rebirth "from above" (CCC 526). The Greek expression always means "from above" elsewhere in John (3:31; 19:11, 23). [Back to text.](#)



3:5 born of water and the Spirit: The syntax of this verse in Greek suggests that Jesus is speaking, not of two separate births, one by water and another by the Spirit, but of a single birth through the working of water and Spirit together. Several observations suggest the verse refers to the Sacrament of Baptism. **(1)** A close link between water and Spirit is forged elsewhere in John's writings (7:38-39; 1 Jn 5:8). This is most explicit in 1:33, where the Spirit descends upon Jesus at the very moment he is baptized in the waters of the Jordan. **(2)** Immediately following this episode Jesus and the disciples begin a baptismal ministry in Judea (3:22). **(3)** Other NT passages describe Baptism as a sacrament of salvation through the

Spirit (Acts 2:38; 1 Cor 6:11; Tit 3:5; 1 Pet 3:21). • The OT envisions Yahweh pouring out his Spirit from above in the messianic age (Is 32:15; Ezek 39:29; Joel 2:28-29). This was depicted as water being poured upon the Israelites to wash away their iniquities and renew their hearts (Is 44:3; Ezek 36:25-26). These prophetic hopes should have prepared Nicodemus to understand the thrust of Jesus' teaching (3:10). • The Council of Trent declared in 1547 that Jn 3:5 refers to Baptism. It was said that "water" is no mere metaphor, but a visible sign of the Spirit's invisible work in the sacrament (Sess. 7, can. 2) (CCC 694, 1215, 1257). [Back to text.](#)

3:6 flesh . . . spirit: A significant contrast in John. Flesh represents all that is natural, earthly, and human, while spirit signifies all that is supernatural, heavenly, and divine. The distance once separating these realms has been bridged by Jesus Christ, whose flesh (1:14) is an instrument that conveys the life and Spirit of God to the world (5:21; 6:51-53; 20:22). [Back to text.](#)

3:8 The wind blows: Or "The Spirit blows" (see textual note f). By capitalizing on the double meaning of this expression, Jesus reasons that if the direction and destiny of the wind is mysterious, then the mission of the Holy Spirit is even more so in the lives of believers (CCC 691). [Back to text.](#)

3:11 our testimony: i.e., the twofold witness of Jesus and John the Baptist (1:7, 19; 3:28). [Back to text.](#)



3:14 the serpent: A reference to the episode in Num 21:4-9. • Moses hoisted a bronze serpent upon a pole as a remedy for faithless Israel. Although God punished them with poisonous serpents, he promised to save everyone who looked to the bronze serpent in search of his mercy. Jesus sees this relic as an image of his own Crucifixion and the healing it will bring to a rebellious world (CCC 2130). **be lifted up:** A shorthand reference to the Paschal Mystery, when Jesus is lifted up *on* the Cross, *from* the grave, and *into* heaven (8:28; 12:32). [Back to text.](#)

3:16 gave his only-begotten Son: The earthly mission of Jesus is part of the heavenly plan of the Father, who displays the depth of his love through the sacrifice of his Son (Rom 5:8; 1 Jn 3:16; CCC 219). This verse marks a transition from the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus (3:1-15) to an extended monologue by either Jesus or the evangelist himself (3:16-21).

eternal life: The expression refers both to the *divine* quality of new life in Christ as well as its *duration*. We receive this gift already on earth in the hope that we will possess it irrevocably in heaven (10:10; 1 Jn 5:13). [Back to text.](#)

3:18 condemned already: Unbelief is a form of rebellion that puts offenders outside the safety of the covenant. To reject the Son of God is to reject the light of faith in preference to spiritual darkness, death, and disinheritance (3:20; CCC 679). [Back to text.](#)

3:22 baptized: Clarification is made in 4:2 that only the disciples of Jesus were baptizing. [Back to text.](#)

3:23 Aenon: An uncertain location, probably in either Samaria (central Palestine) or the Jordan Valley (eastern Palestine). [Back to text.](#)

3:24 put in prison: John is imprisoned for reprimanding Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee. [See note on Mk 6:18.](#) [Back to text.](#)

3:25-30 The ministry of John the Baptist is of real but secondary importance compared to the saving mission of Jesus. John humbly recognizes this and so directs his disciples to become followers of Christ. [See note on Jn 1:6.](#) [Back to text.](#)



3:29 the bridegroom: Jesus, whose bride is the Church (2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:21-32). John the Baptist is the friend or "best man" of the groom who, in Jewish custom, arranges and manages the wedding celebration. John is content to fade into the background now that his duties are fulfilled (3:30). • The marital covenant between Jesus and the Church is an extension of the spousal relation between Yahweh and Israel under the Old Covenant (Is 54:5-8; Jer 2:2; Hos 2:16-20; CCC 796; 1612). [Back to text.](#)

3:31 earth . . . heaven: A contrast between the earthly origin and ministry of John the Baptist and the heavenly origin and ministry of Jesus Christ. [Back to text.](#)

3:34 not by measure: As the Messiah, Jesus possesses the fullness of the Spirit (Is 11:2) and his graces (1:16) (CCC 504). [Back to text.](#)



The Region of John the Baptist

3:36 believes . . . does not obey: Faith is exercised when we trust in God and entrust ourselves to God. Because it involves both the *assent* of the mind and the *consent* of the will, it can never be a purely intellectual decision that exists independently of one's behavior (Jas 2:14-26). It is because faith and faithfulness are two sides of the same coin that the opposite of faith is not just unbelief, but disobedience (CCC 161). [Back to text.](#)

4:4 had to pass through: A divine necessity, dictated not by geography but by the missionary schedule given to Jesus by the Father. Jews normally traveled a longer route from Judea to Galilee by skirting around the eastern side of Samaria along the Jordan River. [Back to text.](#)

4:5 Sychar: Probably ancient Shechem, where Jacob purchased a field (Gen 33:18-20). [Back to text.](#)



4:6 Jacob's well: Nowhere mentioned in the OT but traditionally located at the foot of Mt. Gerizim in central Samaria. • The setting recalls the marital arrangements described in the Pentateuch. As the wives of Isaac

(Gen 24:10-67), Jacob (Gen 29:1-30), and Moses (Ex 2:15-21) were first encountered at a well, so Jesus is the divine bridegroom in search of believers to be his covenant bride (3:29). **the sixth hour:** About noon. [Back to text.](#)

4:7-42 Centuries of animosity between Jews and Samaritans loom in the background of this episode. It began with the devastation of northern Palestine by Assyria in the eighth century B.C., when masses of Israelites were deported out of the land and foreign peoples were forcibly resettled in the region (2 Kings 17:6, 24-41). According to the Jews of southern Palestine, the remaining Israelites (Samaritans) had defiled themselves by assimilating the practices of these pagan peoples and intermarrying with them. The enmity between Jews and Samaritans was very much alive in NT times, and both groups took steps to avoid interaction with one another, especially in matters of food and drink. [Back to text.](#)

4:9 How is it . . . ? Jesus oversteps the boundaries of Jewish tradition, which discouraged men from conversing with women in public (4:27), sharing a drink with a Samaritan (4:7), or associating with a recognized sinner (4:18). [Back to text.](#)



4:10 living water: An expression with two levels of meaning. The woman takes it to mean "flowing" water, i.e., a preferable alternative to stagnant well water (4:11-12). Jesus, however, is speaking of the life and vitality of the Spirit (7:38-39; CCC 728, 2560). • Several prophetic texts depict the blessings of the Lord as life-giving "water" (Is 12:3; 44:3; Ezek 47:1-12; Zech 14:8). [See note on Jn 3:5.](#) • Christian tradition associates living water with baptismal waters, which lead us to "eternal life" (4:14). Paul, in fact, describes Baptism in terms of drinking from the Spirit (1 Cor 12:13; CCC 694). [Back to text.](#)

4:15 Sir: A respectful term of address. As the episode progresses, the perception of Jesus' identity becomes ever more clear: by 4:19 he is a "prophet", by 4:29 he is the "Christ", and by 4:42 he is the "Savior of the world". [Back to text.](#)



4:18 five husbands: The woman has endured multiple marital struggles. • The woman's personal life parallels the historical experience of the Samaritan people. According to 2 Kings 17:24-31, the five foreign

tribes who intermarried with the northern Israelites (Samaritans) introduced five male deities into their religion. These idols were individually addressed as *Baal*, a Hebrew word meaning "lord" or "husband". The prophets denounced Israel for serving these gods, calling such worship infidelity to its true covenant spouse, Yahweh. Hope was kept alive, however, that God would show mercy to these Israelites and become their everlasting husband in the bonds of a New Covenant (Hos 2:16-20). This day has dawned in the ministry of Jesus, the divine bridegroom (3:29), who has come to save the Samaritans from a lifetime of struggles with five pagan "husbands". [See note on Jn 4:6.](#) [Back to text.](#)

4:20 on this mountain: In OT times the Samaritans worshiped in a sanctuary built on Mt. Gerizim. Although it was destroyed in 128 B.C., they continued to worship on the mountain during NT times and even to the present day. [Back to text.](#)



4:22 what you do not know: Samaritan religion was an admixture of Israelite faith and pagan idolatry (2 Kings 17:29-34). • Jesus speaks from the perspective of the OT, which describes idol worship as ignorant worship (Wis 13:1-2, 10-19; Is 44:9-20). **from the Jews:** The Messiah was expected to come from the line of King David, who belonged to the royal tribe of Judah (Gen 49:8-12). [Back to text.](#)

4:23 in spirit and truth: Christian worship contrasts with Jewish and Samaritan worship. It will be in *spirit*, not confined to a single Israelite sanctuary where the ritual sacrifice of animals has continued since the days of Moses. It will also be in *truth*, not tainted by the errors of idolatry that have plagued the Samaritans since the days of the divided kingdom. See topical essay: [The "Hour" of Jesus](#) . [Back to text.](#)

4:26 I . . . am he: Jesus accepts the title "Messiah" (4:25) only here and at his trial (Mk 14:61-62). [See note on Mk 1:44.](#) [Back to text.](#)



4:28 left her water jar: The woman becomes both a believer and a missionary, accepting Jesus as the Messiah and sharing that belief with her hometown (4:39-42). • *Morally* (St. Augustine, *Tract. on John* 15, 16, 30): the water jar is the fallen desire of man that draws pleasure from the dark wells of the world but is never satisfied for long. Conversion to Christ moves us, like the Samaritan woman, to renounce the world, leave behind

the desires of our earthen vessels, and follow a new way of life. [Back to text.](#)

4:34 My food: The Father's will is always the driving force behind Jesus' mission (5:19; 6:38; 12:49; 14:10; etc.). [Back to text.](#)

4:35 white for harvest: Suggests that the world in general and the Samaritans in particular are ripe and ready to be gathered by the missionary efforts of the Church (Acts 8:4-25; Rev 14:14-16). [Back to text.](#)

4:42 the Savior: A title for Jesus also in Lk 2:11 and 1 Jn 4:14. Although salvation comes *from* the Jews (4:22), it is *for* all the nations of the world (3:17; 1 Jn 2:2). [Back to text.](#)

4:44 a prophet has no honor: A similar proverb is uttered when Jesus is rejected by his hometown of Nazareth (Lk 4:24). The remark resonates with bitter irony: although Jesus is a Jew (4:9), he is rejected by kinsmen from his own country of Judea (4:3, 47). [See note on Jn 1:19.](#) [Back to text.](#)

4:46 Capernaum: This village was more than 15 miles from Cana. The official from the town was probably a royal officer under Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee. A similar episode where Jesus heals from a distance appears in Mt 8:5-13 and Lk 7:1-10. [Back to text.](#)

4:47 Judea to Galilee: Geography plays a symbolic role in John. For the most part, the northern regions of Samaria and Galilee accept Jesus in faith (1:43-49; 2:11; 4:39, 53-54), whereas the southern region of Judea with its capital in Jerusalem is persistently antagonistic toward him (5:18; 7:1; 9:22; 10:33; 11:7-8, etc.). This tension between north and south is underscored by repeated emphasis on Jesus' withdrawal from Judea to Galilee (4:3, 45, 46, 54) and elsewhere when the Judean opponents of Jesus make derogatory remarks about Galileans and Samaritans (7:52; 8:48). It is against this background that John classifies the enemies of Christ as "the Jews", i.e., the unbelieving leaders of Judea and Jerusalem. [See note on Jn 1:19.](#) [Back to text.](#)

4:52 the seventh hour: About 1 P.M. [See note on Mt 20:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)

The "Hour" of Jesus

SEVENTEEN times the Gospel of John mentions the "hour" of Jesus. In the first half of the book, the "hour" is a highly anticipated moment in the ministry of Jesus that constantly grabs the attention of the reader and drives the narrative forward (Jn 2:4; 4:21; 5:25; 7:30, 8:20). In the second half of the book, readers discover that Jesus comes upon his "hour" only in the final days of his life (Jn 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1). What is the meaning of this "hour", and why was it the singular focus of Jesus' mission?

A careful analysis of the Fourth Gospel reveals two dimensions of this mysterious "hour", one rooted in the historical life of Christ and another in the liturgical life of the Church.

THE HISTORICAL HOUR

The "hour" of Christ is first and foremost the appointed time of his Passion, which in John, as in all the Gospels, is the climactic phase of his mission. Before this time the attempts of Jesus' enemies to arrest him are in vain because his "hour" has not yet come (Jn 7:30; 8:20). The clock begins ticking, however, at the start of Passion Week, when Jesus declares that the "hour" of his glorification has at last arrived (Jn 12:23). Although troubled by the painful ordeal that will seize him in this "hour" (Jn 12:27), Jesus embraces the prospect of suffering as the "hour" when he will pass out of this world to his heavenly Father (Jn 13:1). His disciples, too, will share in this trial as the "hour" strikes them with the fear and distress of a woman in labor (Jn 16:21-22). At the historical level, then, the "hour" is the time when Christ passes through the agonies of betrayal and bodily torment, finally mounting the Cross out of love for the Father and as a sacrifice for our salvation. This "hour" of Christ's humiliation and death is in John's Gospel the "hour" of his exaltation that becomes the source of everlasting life for the world.

THE LITURGICAL HOUR

If Christ's "hour" is linked with the historical events of his Passion, it also reaches beyond them into the liturgical commemoration of these events in the life of the Church. Several statements regarding the "hour" of Jesus are thus connected with Christian worship.

1. In Jn 2:4, Jesus responds to his Mother's request for wine with the puzzling statement "My hour has not yet come." The hidden premise, it seems, is that when this still-distant "hour" finally arrives, he expects to provide an abundance of the finest wine (Jn 2:10). This may be read as an allusion to the liturgy, where believers all over the world gather to worship Christ as he pours himself into the eucharistic cup under the visible sign of wine.

2. In Jn 4:21-23, Jesus insists that his coming "hour" has everything to do with worship—and not just with any worship, but with a spiritual adoration of the Father superior to any previously known in Samaria or even in Israel! The worship characteristic of this "hour" will not be confined to any particular mountain sanctuary, but will lift true worshipers up to a new and heavenly height in the Spirit (Rev 1:10, chaps. 4 and 5).

3. In Jn 5:25-29, Jesus looks to his "hour" as a time when those who are dead will hear his voice and live again. This, too, has connections with the liturgy, where Christ continues to speak through the Scriptures and awaken souls deadened by sin.

4. Finally, Christ's "hour" will bring in a harvest of believers from every nation, because Jesus, like a grain of wheat that dies and is buried in the earth, enables Israel and every nation to sprout into new life (Jn 12:20-24). This blessing comes not only through Christ's death, but also through his risen and glorified humanity, which is the wheat that becomes for us the "bread of life" in the Eucharist (Jn 6:48).

These two dimensions of the "hour" are part of the one Paschal Mystery of Christ. We cannot, therefore, drive a wedge between the historical and the liturgical, between the *sacrificial* gift of Christ to the Father on the Cross and the *sacramental* gift of Christ to us in the liturgy. This was recognized in the early Church, where the "hour" of Jesus referred not only to his

suffering and death, but, as in the ancient liturgies of St. James and St. Mark, the expression "this hour" referred to re-presentation of the Passion in the eucharistic celebration.

Combined with references to Baptism (Jn 3:5), the Eucharist (Jn 6:35-58), and Reconciliation (Jn 20:23), we see in John's Gospel that the "hour" of Jesus that unfolds during Holy Week also extends throughout the centuries and throughout the world as Christians commemorate the sacred mysteries of this "hour" in the sacramental liturgy of the New Covenant. «[Back to John 2:1.](#)

4:54 the second sign: Despite numerous signs performed in Jerusalem (2:23), this is only the second performed in Galilee (2:11). See word study: [Signs](#) at Jn 2:11. [Back to text.](#)

5:1 a feast of the Jews: John usually identifies the religious festivals that Jesus attends, whether it is Passover (2:13), Tabernacles (7:2), or Dedication (10:22). Here the unnamed feast may be Pentecost (Weeks), which celebrates the spring harvest as well as the giving of the Torah to Israel. It is one of three pilgrim feasts that required Israelite men to travel to Jerusalem (Deut 16:16; 2 Chron 8:13) (CCC 583). [Back to text.](#)

5:2 the Sheep Gate: An entryway in the northeastern wall of Jerusalem used in bringing sheep to the Temple for sacrifice (Neh 3:1). Two pools were built in the same area of the city; they were surrounded by four colonnade walkways and separated by a fifth portico running between them. One of these pools was called **Bethzatha** and was believed to possess healing properties. [Back to text.](#)



5:5 thirty-eight years: The man's protracted suffering is evident to Jesus (5:6). • The duration of the man's illness, due to some unspecified sin (5:14), recalls the duration of Israel's wandering in the wilderness after rebelling against Yahweh at Kadesh (Num 13:25-14:11). The grueling journey from Kadesh to the threshold of Canaan lasted 38 years (Deut 2:14). [Back to text.](#)

5:8 Rise . . . and walk: According to Jewish tradition, medical attention could be given on the Sabbath only when someone's life was in danger. The boldness of Jesus in neglecting this convention reflects his own theological stance that giving rest to suffering souls, whether or not they are on the brink of death, fulfills the true intent of the Sabbath (CCC 2173). [See note on Lk 6:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)



5:13 Jesus had withdrawn: i.e., from the man just cured of paralysis. • *Morally* (St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Sermon on the Paralytic* 16): Jesus disappears into the crowd to teach us to shun worldly praise. Though we are inclined to boast of our accomplishments, or at least be recognized

for them, humility must turn us away from whatever acclaim might lead us to pride. [Back to text.](#)

5:14 Sin no more: The Bible reveals a link between sin and suffering, with the former being the cause of the latter (Ps 107:17). This general truth, however, does not extend to every individual case (9:3). [Back to text.](#)

5:17 My Father is working: God the Son imitates God the Father and obeys all that he hears from him (5:19-21). Jesus thus depicts himself as the apprentice of Yahweh, drawing on the familiar custom of sons learning by observation and imitation the trade skills of their fathers. [Back to text.](#)



5:18 equal with God: By calling God his Father, Jesus claims a status of divine Sonship for himself. • The three Persons of the Trinity equally possess the same fullness of divine life and Being. Although the Son is less than the Father in his humanity (14:28), he is equal to the Father in his divinity (10:33) (CCC 253-54). [Back to text.](#)

5:24 from death to life: Signifies a spiritual transfer from the curses of the Old Covenant to the blessing of the New (Deut 30:15-20; Eph 2:1-5). Believers are rescued from the fallen family of Adam and reinstated in the divine family of God (Rom 5:12-21) (CCC 580, 1470). [Back to text.](#)

5:26 life in himself: The Father is the first link in a chain of supernatural life, since he alone has not received divine life from anyone else. His capacity to give life, however, is shared by Christ, who receives life from the Father and gives it to the world through the sacraments (6:53; 10:10). [Back to text.](#)

5:27 execute judgment: The Son is given absolute sovereignty over life and death, being authorized by the Father to judge the living and the dead and decide their eternal destiny (Mt 25:31-46; Acts 10:42; CCC 679). [Back to text.](#)



5:29 the resurrection: Christ claims the authority to raise all men from death, the righteous and wicked alike (Acts 24:15). • Two oracles from the OT stand in the background of Jesus' teaching. **(1)** Dan 12:2 envisions a final separation of saints and sinners once their bodies have awakened from the sleep of bodily death. **(2)** Ezek 37:1-4 envisions the resurrection, where bones and flesh are reassembled and made to live again. Rising from the grave is made possible by the spoken words of Ezekiel, called the Son of

man, and the life-giving breath of the Spirit. Jesus casts himself in the lead role of these prophetic narratives: he is the "Son of man" (5:27) whose powerful "voice" (5:25) raises the dead from their "tombs" (5:28) and separates them for everlasting "life" or eternal "judgment" (5:29) (CCC 997-1001). [Back to text.](#)

5:30-47 Jewish legal tradition required two or three witnesses to sustain a claim in court (Deut 19:15). Jesus has a list of witnesses beyond the required number: **(1)** John the Baptist (5:33), **(2)** his miracles (5:36), **(3)** the Father (5:37), **(4)** the Scriptures (5:39), **(5)** and Moses (5:46) all bear witness to his divine authority and mission. [Back to text.](#)



5:35 burning and shining lamp: The ministry of John the Baptist lights the way for Israel to see and accept its Messiah (1:31). • Elijah is similarly depicted as a fiery torch in Sir 48:1. [See note on Jn 1:21.](#) [Back to text.](#)

5:46 he wrote of me: Jesus follows the Jewish tradition that Moses authored the Pentateuch (Gen—Deut). Moses thus described the Messiah as a Redeemer (Gen 3:15), a universal King (Gen 49:10), and a Prophet like himself (Deut 18:15-19). [Back to text.](#)



6:1-14 The multiplication of the loaves is the only miracle, besides the Resurrection, that is recorded in all four Gospels. John's account forms the preface to Jesus' extensive discourse on the "bread of life" in 6:35-59. • The two food miracles in John involve bread (6:1-14) and wine (2:1-11). Together they anticipate the eucharistic liturgy, where Jesus gives himself as food under the visible signs of bread and wine (CCC 1335). [Back to text.](#)

6:1 Sea of Tiberias: Also known as the "Sea of Galilee" (Mk 1:16) or the "lake of Gennesaret" (Lk 5:1). The city of Tiberias, then the administrative capital of Galilee, was built by Herod Antipas on its western shore about A.D. 20 in honor of the Roman emperor Tiberias Caesar. [Back to text.](#)

6:4 the Passover: Three times this feast is mentioned in John (2:13; 11:55). It was celebrated annually in Jerusalem to commemorate Israel's deliverance from Egyptian slavery (Ex 12). Central to the feast is a liturgical meal, called a seder, in which the story of the Exodus is retold,

psalms are sung, and a lamb is eaten with unleavened bread and other condiments. The evangelist mentions this upcoming feast to hint that Jesus will give new and greater meaning to the Passover. He is the true "Lamb of God" (1:29), whose redeeming work will accomplish a new deliverance from the slavery of sin (8:31-36) in a sacramental and liturgical meal (6:53-58; 1 Cor 5:7-8). The significance of Passover, here placed in the background of John 6, will move to the foreground when Jesus transforms this feast into the memorial meal of the New Covenant at the Last Supper (Mt 26:17-29; CCC 1340). [See note on Jn 19:36.](#) [Back to text.](#)

6:7 Two hundred denarii: About 200 days' wages for a laborer (Mt 20:2). [Back to text.](#)



6:9 barley loaves: The food of the poor. • This detail recalls the similar miracle of Elisha, who multiplied 20 loaves of barley for 100 men with some left over (2 Kings 4:42-44). The miracle of Jesus is comparatively greater: he begins with fewer loaves (**5**), multiplies them for a larger crowd (5,000), and likewise has bread left over (6:13). • *Allegorically* (St. Bede, *Hom. in Evan.*): the five loaves are the five books of the Torah, the two fish are the Prophets and Psalms, and the young boy is the Jewish people. When Jesus receives these OT Scriptures from the Jews, he breaks open their deeper, spiritual meanings to refresh the multitudes. [Back to text.](#)

6:11 given thanks: Renders the Greek verb *eucharisteō*, from which the English word "Eucharist" is derived. The miracle of the loaves thus foreshadows the institution of this sacrament at the Last Supper. [See note on Mk 6:35-44.](#) [Back to text.](#)

6:14 the prophet: i.e., the messianic prophet foretold by Moses. [See note on Jn 1:21.](#) [Back to text.](#)

6:15 make him king: Israel hoped for a militant Messiah to overthrow the Romans and reestablish their national independence in Palestine. Jesus backs away from these aspirations, knowing that his kingdom is heavenly and spiritual (CCC 439). [See note on Jn 18:36.](#) [Back to text.](#)



6:20 It is I: Or "I am". • The reassurance that Jesus gives to the disciples is also an act of self-revelation. His words recall the holy name "I am" that Yahweh revealed to Moses at the burning bush (Ex 3:14). The

claim to divinity inherent in this name is substantiated by Jesus' exhibition of power over the laws of nature (6:19; Job 9:8). Several times Jesus claims this divine name for himself in the Fourth Gospel (8:24, 58; 13:19; 18:6) (CCC 213). **do not be afraid:** Words often spoken when God reveals himself to his people, whether directly or through an angel (Gen 26:24; Judg 6:22-23; Lk 1:30). [Back to text.](#)

6:23 from Tiberias: i.e., from the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. [See note on Jn 6:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)

6:25 Rabbi: A Hebrew title for respected Jewish teachers (1:38). [Back to text.](#)

6:27 food which perishes: Earthly food is necessary to sustain earthly life, but because it is perishable it does not suffice to give us supernatural life or to safeguard against death (6:49). Only Christ can give us food that satisfies our spiritual hunger and gives everlasting life. The subsequent narrative will identify this heavenly food as the Eucharist (6:50-58). [Back to text.](#)



6:31 He gave them bread: A reference to Ex 16:4. • Jesus is challenged to match the provision of manna by Moses. He responds by stressing that although the manna had a heavenly origin (6:32), it did not bring the Israelites to their heavenly destiny (6:49). Manna is rather a food that perishes, since it melted away every morning (Ex 16:21) and turned foul if it was stored overnight (Ex 16:19-20). [Back to text.](#)

6:32 the true bread: The wilderness manna was not false bread; it was merely a sign of the imperishable eucharistic bread that the Father sends down from heaven in Jesus (6:51; CCC 1094). [Back to text.](#)

6:35-59 The Bread of Life discourse. Interpretations of this sermon often take one of two positions. Some think of the discourse as an extensive invitation to faith, so that eating the bread of life is seen as a metaphor for believing in Jesus. Others interpret the discourse along sacramental lines, so that eating the bread of life means partaking of the Eucharist. Both of these views are true and can be correlated with a natural and symmetrical division of the sermon into two parts. **(1) Invitation to Faith** (6:35-47). The first half of the discourse opens with the statement "I am the bread of life" (6:35). This is followed by a string of invitations to come to Jesus and believe in him for salvation. The metaphorical import of Jesus' teaching is so obvious

that it stands out in the response of the Jews, who ask him, not why he calls himself bread, but how he can claim to have descended from heaven (6:42). **(2) Invitation to the Eucharist** (6:48-58). The second half of the discourse likewise opens with the statement "I am the bread of life" (6:48). This is followed by a string of invitations to eat the flesh of Jesus and drink his blood. Here the literal import of Jesus' teaching is so obvious that it, too, stands out in the response of the Jews, who ask how it is possible to consume his flesh (6:52). In the end, these two halves of the sermon work in tandem, since without faith we can neither be united with Christ nor recognize his presence in the Eucharist. If eating is believing in 6:35-47, then believing leads to eating in 6:48-58 (CCC 161, 1381). [Back to text.](#)

6:37 All that the Father gives: Alludes to the mystery of predestination. [See note on Rom 8:29.](#) [Back to text.](#)

6:38 not . . . my own will: The human will of Jesus and the divine will of the Father are in such perfect harmony that there is never any tension or competition between them (4:34; 8:29; Mk 14:36; CCC 475, 2824). [Back to text.](#)



6:41 Jews then murmured: Recalls how the Israelites complained against the Lord and Moses in the wilderness (Ex 16:2; 17:2-3; Num 11:1). [Back to text.](#)



6:45 taught by God: A paraphrase of Is 54:13. • Isaiah envisions the messianic age as a time when Yahweh will restore, prosper, and teach the children of Israel. Other passages, such as Jer 31:34, may be included in Jesus' broad reference to the **prophets**. [Back to text.](#)

6:51 I shall give: The future tense points both to the Cross, where Jesus surrenders his life for human sins, and to the eucharistic liturgy, where Jesus offers himself as living bread to a starving world. [Back to text.](#)

6:52 his flesh to eat?: The crowd is thinking of cannibalism, i.e., the sin of eating a human corpse, an idea thoroughly repugnant to them (Deut 28:53). This is a misunderstanding. Jesus gives us, not his mortal flesh as it was during his earthly ministry, but his glorified humanity as it was after rising from the dead. This is why he calls himself the "living bread" (6:51). [Back to text.](#)



6:53 eat the flesh . . . drink his blood: Jesus is speaking literally and sacramentally. If he were speaking metaphorically or figuratively, his words would echo a Hebrew idiom where consuming flesh and blood refers to the brutalities of war (Deut 32:42; Ezek 39:17-18). **no life in you:** i.e., divine life. • Drinking the blood of animals is forbidden under the Old Covenant (Gen 9:4; Lev 17:10-13; Deut 12:16). To do so is to consume "life" that is merely natural and of a lower order than human life. Jesus' injunction does not fall under these prohibitions. The "life" he imparts is not natural but supernatural; it does not pull us down to the level of animals; it elevates us to become sharers in his divine nature (2 Pet 1:4) (CCC 1391). [Back to text.](#)



6:58 will live for ever: The expression occurs rarely in the Bible, only twice in John (6:51, 58) and once in the Greek version of Gen 3:22. • A comparison is thus implied between the Tree of Life, which bore the fruit of immortality, and the Bread of Life, which tradition calls the "medicine of immortality" (CCC 1331). [Back to text.](#)

6:62 the Son of man: The heavenly figure described in Dan 7:13. See topical essay: *Jesus, the Son of Man* at Lk 17. [Back to text.](#)

6:63 the Spirit . . . the flesh: A contrast between the Spirit's ability to enlighten our minds (14:26) and human reason's inability to comprehend revealed truths apart from faith (8:15). It is this earthbound perspective that is profitless in the face of divine mysteries. Note that Jesus is not speaking of his own "flesh", which does in fact give life to the world (6:51; Eph 2:13-16; Heb 10:10) (CCC 737). [Back to text.](#)

6:66 his disciples drew back: This is the only instance in the Gospels where followers of Jesus abandon him in such large numbers. Even so, Jesus still makes no effort to soften his words or clear up potential misunderstandings about his eucharistic teaching (CCC 1336). [Back to text.](#)

6:69 the Holy One: A title for Jesus also in Mk 1:24, Lk 4:34, and Acts 3:14. Here it is a confession of faith by Peter, who believes the words of Christ from the heart, even though his head does not yet understand the mysteries revealed in the discourse (6:35-58). [Back to text.](#)

6:71 Judas: Anticipates the defection of the betrayer during the Last Supper (13:21-30). [Back to text.](#)

7:2 feast of Tabernacles: Also called the "feast of Booths" (Lev 23:33-43; Deut 16:13-16). It is a seven-day fall festival held annually in Jerusalem. The feast of Tabernacles commemorates both the completion of the autumn harvest and Yahweh's provisions for Israel during their Exodus journey through the wilderness. Throughout the week, Jewish pilgrims dwelled in small huts made of tree branches called "booths". Two liturgical ceremonies from this feast hang as a backdrop behind Jesus' teaching in chaps. 7 and 8. **(1)** Each morning Levitical priests drew water from the pool of Siloam in the southern quarter of Jerusalem, carried it in procession into the Temple, and poured it out as a libation next to the altar of sacrifice. This is connected with Jesus' teaching about "water" in 7:37-39. **(2)** Giant candelabras burned in the sanctuary (Court of Women) that illuminated the Temple courts; at the same time dancers with flaming torches processed through the Temple amid singing and music. This is linked with Jesus' teaching about "light" in 8:12. [Back to text.](#)

7:3 his brethren: Close relatives of Jesus, but not biological siblings. Although lacking in faith here, they later become believers (Acts 1:14). [See note on Mt 12:46.](#) [Back to text.](#)

7:6 My time: Jesus is not scheduled to manifest the fullness of his glory until the "hour" of his Passion (7:30; 13:1). His earthly relatives, therefore, cannot dictate the timing or direction of his heavenly mission. [Back to text.](#)

7:7 The world: i.e., the family of sinful man. The relatives of Jesus are still part of the world because they are not hated by it as he is (15:18-19). [See note on Jn 1:10.](#) [Back to text.](#)

7:8 I am not going up: The expression has two levels of meaning: **(1)** It is not yet time for Jesus to travel up to Jerusalem, **(2)** nor is it time for him to ascend in glory to the Father (20:17). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Eats ([Jn 6:54](#))

TrÅ gÅ (Gk.): A verb meaning "chew" or "gnaw". It is used five times in the Fourth Gospel and only once elsewhere in the NT. Greek literature used it to describe the feeding of animals such as mules, pigs, and cattle, and in some cases for human eating. In John, the verb is used four times in

the second half of the Bread of Life discourse (Jn 6:54, 56, 57, 58). This marks a noticeable shift in Jesus' teaching, which up until Jn 6:54 made use of a more common verb for eating (Gk. *esthio*, Jn 6:49, 50, 51, 53). The change in vocabulary marks a change of focus and emphasis, from the necessity of faith to the consumption of the Eucharist. The graphic and almost crude connotation of this verb thus adds greater force to the repetition of his words: he demands we express our faith by eating, in a real and physical way, his life-giving flesh in the sacrament.

7:13 fear of the Jews: Rumors had leaked out that the Jerusalem authorities were plotting against Jesus (7:1, 11, 19). The crowds were thus reluctant to be associated with him or his teaching. [Back to text.](#)

7:14 middle of the feast: Either the third or fourth day of the week-long festival. [See note on Jn 7:2.](#) [Back to text.](#)

7:15 never studied: Jewish students were normally tutored by older rabbis in the interpretation of Scripture and in the traditions of their revered teachers. Jesus exhibits such profound insight into Scripture and spiritual things that many are shocked that he has no formal training (Mk 6:1-3; Lk 2:47). [Back to text.](#)

7:18 the glory of him: i.e., of his heavenly Father (5:44; 17:5). [Back to text.](#)

7:21 I did one deed: The healing of the lame man in 5:1-9. [Back to text.](#)

7:22 circumcision: A sign of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 17:10-14) that was later incorporated into the Mosaic covenant (Lev 12:3). According to Jewish tradition, the duty to circumcise newborn boys on the eighth day overrides the duty to observe the Sabbath rest when it falls on the same day. Jesus reasons that if *part* of the body may be lawfully tended to, then how much more should the *whole* body participate in the blessings of the covenant on the Sabbath (7:23) (CCC 2173). [Back to text.](#)

7:26 the authorities: Probably members of the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. [See note on Mk 14:55.](#) [Back to text.](#)

7:27 no one will know: Two traditions regarding the birth and origin of the Messiah circulated in ancient Judaism. **(1)** Some expected the Messiah to grow up in obscurity and be manifested to the world only as an adult. **(2)** Others expected the Messiah to come from Bethlehem in accordance with the prophecy of Mic 5:2. The irony here is that both are true of Jesus: his

heavenly origin in the Trinity is unknown to his audience (8:14), as is his birth in Bethlehem (Lk 2:4-7). [Back to text.](#)

7:30 his hour: See topical essay: *The "Hour" of Jesus* at Jn 4. [Back to text.](#)

7:32 officers: Temple police in Jerusalem (Acts 4:1-3; 5:24-26). [Back to text.](#)

7:35 Dispersion among the Greeks: i.e., among the Jews and Gentiles scattered throughout the Mediterranean world. Although Jesus himself never undertakes such a mission, his disciples will do precisely this, showing that the advance of the gospel beyond the borders of Israel is unwittingly announced by Christ's adversaries (Mt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). [Back to text.](#)

7:37 the great day: The seventh and final day of Tabernacles. **come to me and drink:** Jesus is the source of the spiritual "water" (4:10) that quenches our deepest "thirst" (6:35). The symbolic meaning of this is that Christ is the source of the Spirit poured out upon the world (7:39; 20:22). Jesus is probably alluding to the water-drawing ceremony of the feast, thus inviting us to think of him as the heavenly counterpart to the pool of Siloam. See notes on Jn 7:2 and 9:7. [Back to text.](#)



7:38 Out of his heart . . . living water: Not a verbatim reference to any one OT passage, but a summary or synthesis of at least three. • **(1)** In Num 20:10-13, Yahweh quenched Israel's thirst in the wilderness by making water gush forth from a rock. **(2)** In Ezek 47:1-12, the prophet sees water streaming forth from the Temple and bringing new life everywhere it flows. **(3)** In Zech 14:8, Jerusalem of the last days is depicted as a spring of living water that flows when the Lord becomes king over the earth and the nations come to celebrate the "feast of booths" (Tabernacles) year after year (Zech 14:9, 16). These traditions point forward to Jesus: he is the rock that slakes our thirst (1 Cor 10:4), the true temple that channels life to the world (2:21), and the Lord who reigns as king over the world (12:13; 18:36). [See note on Jn 19:34.](#) [Back to text.](#)

7:39 not yet glorified: i.e., through his Passion and Resurrection (12:23; 17:1). Only then will the Spirit be poured out through the risen humanity of Christ (20:22) (CCC 728, 1287). [Back to text.](#)

7:40 the prophet: The awaited prophet like Moses from Deut 18:15-19. [See note on Jn 1:21.](#) [Back to text.](#)

7:41 the Christ: The awaited Messiah and king of Israel. See word study: [Christ](#) at Mk 14. [Back to text.](#)

7:42 the Scripture: The Davidic lineage of the Messiah is mentioned in 2 Sam 7:12-14, Is 9:6-7, Jer 23:5, and Ezek 34:23-24, while his birthplace in Bethlehem is noted in Mic 5:2. [Back to text.](#)

7:51 a hearing: Nicodemus pleads for due process and legal justice, only to be ridiculed by the Pharisees, just as the officers (7:47) and the people were (7:49). [Back to text.](#)

7:53-8:11 Some ancient manuscripts of the Fourth Gospel omit this episode entirely. Other manuscripts place it elsewhere in John or even in the Gospel of Luke. According to the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century, the official canon of the Scriptures corresponds to everything included in the Latin Vulgate edition (Sess. 4, Dec. 1). This translation includes the episode as canonical. [Back to text.](#)

8:6 to test him: The Pharisees are not seeking legal advice from Jesus. Their question in 8:5 is a trap designed to incriminate or discredit him. **(1)** If Jesus *authorizes* the stoning, the Pharisees will report him to the Romans for criminal wrongdoing, for the Jews were not permitted to administer capital punishment under Roman rule (18:31). **(2)** If Jesus *forbids* the stoning, the Pharisees will discredit him as a false messiah who contradicts Moses, for the Torah classifies adultery as a capital crime (Lev 20:10; Deut 22:22). [Back to text.](#)

8:7 Let him who is without sin: Many popular interpretations of this verse are unworkable because they lead Jesus straight into the trap set by the Pharisees in 8:4-5. **(1)** Some argue that Jesus is overturning the death penalty for adultery prescribed in the Torah. This could not have been so because the Pharisees would have immediately discredited him for contradicting Moses. In fact, Jesus is not addressing the status or legality of the death penalty at all; he is simply dodging the Pharisees' trap. **(2)** Others argue that Jesus permits the adulteress to walk free because no witnesses are present to testify against her. This could not have been so, first, because it wrongly implies that Jesus would have been caught off guard if the witnesses who caught the adulteress in the act did come forward and, second, because it wrongly implies that Jesus would then have authorized the stoning. **(3)** Others argue that Jesus brings the examination to a halt

because the woman's partner is absent and so the process of incrimination cannot proceed. This could not have been so, first, because of a clear precedent in the OT where Susanna is falsely condemned for adultery without first establishing who and where her partner was (Dan 13:34-41) and, second, because it wrongly implies that Jesus would have authorized the stoning if the woman's partner had eventually been found. Against these views, it must be stressed that Jesus eludes the trap entirely—he neither authorizes the stoning (incriminating himself) nor contradicts Moses (compromising his teaching). The genius of his response is that it turns the tables on the Pharisees and forces them into their own trap. Although the Pharisees probably considered themselves sinless (like Saul, Phil 3:5-6), and thus qualified to administer the stoning, they realize that executing the adulteress will bring Rome's reprisal on *them* instead of Jesus, who is not truly authorizing the stoning because he does not truly think the Pharisees are without sin (9:40-41). On the other hand, by restraining themselves and walking away, the Pharisees are made to look like *sinners* and *compromisers* in the eyes of the crowd. [Back to text.](#)



8:8 wrote . . . on the ground: What Jesus inscribes in the dirt is unknown but probably symbolic. • The gesture may recall Jer 17:13, a warning that those who forsake the Lord "shall be written in the earth" because they have rejected the "fountain of living water". The Pharisees fall into this category for rejecting Jesus, who has just been identified as the source of "living water" (7:38). • *Morally* (St. Bede, *Hom. in Evan.*): Christ, who twice bends down to write on the ground, teaches us to bend low in humility to examine ourselves both before and after addressing the faults of our neighbor. If his example becomes our practice, we will avoid as he did the extremes of being unjust and unmerciful toward others. [Back to text.](#)

8:9 the eldest: i.e., the wisest, who were the first to detect the brilliance of Jesus' reply (8:7). [Back to text.](#)

8:11 do not sin again: Jesus neither condemns the woman nor condones her sins. He rather forgives her past and challenges her to live a life of purity in the future (see also 5:14). [Back to text.](#)



8:12 the light of the world: Christ enlightens the world with truth as the golden candelabras illuminated the Temple courts with fire during the

feast of Tabernacles. The location of Jesus as he delivers these words supports this symbolism: he is standing in the "treasury" adjacent to the Court of Women (8:20), precisely where the lamp-lighting ceremony was recently conducted. [See note on Jn 7:2](#). • Several OT themes prepared the way for Jesus, the "true light" (1:9). **(1)** Ex 13:21 describes how Yahweh, enthroned in a pillar of fire, enlightened the way for Israel to travel through the wilderness toward the Promised Land. **(2)** Ps 119:105 describes the Law of the Lord as a light for our path. **(3)** Is 42:6 and 49:6 call Israel to be a light to the nations. [Back to text](#).

8:15 according to the flesh: i.e., on the basis of limited human reason. [See note on Jn 6:63](#). [Back to text](#).

8:17 it is written: Deut 17:6 and 19:15 require two or three witnesses to establish credible legal testimony in court. [Back to text](#).

8:20 his hour: See topical essay: *The "Hour" of Jesus* at Jn 4. [Back to text](#).

8:23 from below: Not from hell but from the earth. Jesus comes from heaven above (3:31). [Back to text](#).



8:24 you will die: An assurance not simply of bodily death, which is the fate of everyone, but of spiritual death, which irrevocably separates sinners from God for all eternity. **I am:** Recalls the name of Yahweh revealed to Moses at the burning bush. [See note on Jn 6:20](#). • Jesus stresses in this context the importance of *believing* (8:24) and *knowing* (8:28) that he is the great "I am". This evokes Is 43:10-11, where witnesses from Israel come to "know" and "believe" that the Lord is truly the God of their forefathers, the sovereign "I am". [Back to text](#).

8:28 lifted up the Son: i.e., in his Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension. [See note on Jn 12:32](#). [Back to text](#).

8:32 truth will make you free: Jesus embodies divine truth (14:6) and has come to bear witness to the truth (18:37). Acceptance of him liberates us from the slavery of sin, ignorance, and deception (8:12; CCC 2466). [Back to text](#).

8:33-47 The exchange between Jesus and the Jewish authorities turns around the question of family identity. Jesus is the Son of his heavenly Father, who extends the gift of sonship to those who accept his word (1:12; 8:36). Those claiming that Abraham is their father are denied the status of

Abrahamic sonship, not because they have no genealogical ties to the patriarch, but because they do not imitate his faith (8:39-40). They are rather sons of Satan, for the character traits of their father, the devil, are manifest in them as they reject the word of Jesus and seek to kill him (8:40, 44). [Back to text.](#)

8:33 never been in bondage: An almost ridiculous response. Throughout biblical history, Israel had been enslaved by the Egyptians, subjugated by the Philistines, Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians, and was now in the grip of Imperial Rome. These forms of political domination were merely symptoms of Israel's slavery to sin. [Back to text.](#)

8:34 slave to sin: Man is powerless to break free from the devil and the bondage of his own weaknesses. This predicament entangles everyone, Israelites and Gentiles alike (Rom 3:9). Christ alone can liberate slaves of the devil and make them sons of the Father (Gal 4:3-7) (CCC 549, 1741). [Back to text.](#)



8:35 The slave . . . the son: Jesus alludes to the story of Abraham's two sons, Ishmael and Isaac, to demonstrate that genealogical descent from the patriarch does not guarantee the blessing of divine sonship in the New Covenant. • Ishmael was born to Abraham by a slave woman, Hagar (Gen 16:15), while Isaac was born to Abraham by his lawful wife, Sarah (Gen 21:3). Though both were the natural sons of Abraham, Ishmael was later expelled from Abraham's family, disinherited, and excluded from the blessings of the covenant (Gen 17:19-21; 21:10-14). Jesus applies this narrative to the sons of Abraham in his own day: Unless they accept him in faith and become sons of God (1:12), they will follow the way of Ishmael, being driven out from the house of Abraham and cut off from the blessings promised to his descendants (Gal 4:21-31). [Back to text.](#)

8:44 your father the devil: A bold indictment of Israel's leadership. They are sons neither of Abraham (8:40) nor of God the Father (8:42), but are the offspring of a murderer, liar, and deceiver (CCC 391, 2482). [Back to text.](#)

8:46 convicts me of sin?: Jesus is completely unstained by sin, as is his conscience (Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 2:22; CCC 578). [Back to text.](#)



8:48 a Samaritan: An insult implying that Jesus was born of mixed racial parentage and followed a deviant form of religion. [See note on Jn 4:7-42](#). **have a demon:** A common charge leveled at Jesus (7:20; 10:20; Mt 9:34; 12:24). • *Morally* (St. Gregory the Great, *Homily 18*): Jesus sets the example of perfect composure in the face of insults, since he denied the charge of being a demoniac but did not counter it with an abusive response. If Jesus did not avenge himself, then neither should we return injury for injury when reviled by our neighbor. [Back to text](#).

8:51 never see death: Not that Jesus exempts believers from the experience of bodily death, but that he saves their souls from spiritual death by the gift of eternal life (Rom 6:23). [Back to text](#).



8:56 to see my day: Probably a reference to the events in Gen 22:1-18. • **(1)** When Abraham nearly sacrifices Isaac as a holocaust, only to receive him back alive, the patriarch witnessed a *preview* of the Father surrendering his Son to death and receiving him back in the Resurrection (Heb 11:17-19). **(2)** In response to this act of faith, Yahweh rewarded Abraham with a sworn covenant *promise* that one of his descendants would arise to bless all nations (Gen 22:16-18). This oath is fulfilled in the dying and rising of Jesus, who offers blessings to every nation (Mt 28:18-20; Gal 3:14; CCC 706). [Back to text](#).

8:57 not yet fifty years old: Jesus is only in his early thirties (Lk 3:23). [Back to text](#).

8:58 before Abraham was, I am: Jesus takes for himself the divine name of Yahweh, "I am" (Ex 3:14). He thus claims to be one with God (10:30), whose life in eternity has neither beginning nor end. The Pharisees hear this claim loud and clear and, thinking it outrageous, stand ready to stone him for blasphemy (8:59; Lev 24:16) (CCC 590). See notes on Jn 1:1 and 6:20. [Back to text](#).

9:2 Rabbi, who sinned . . . ?: Sickness was thought to be a direct consequence of sin (Job 31:3; Ps 107:17). Responsibility for physical ailments was imputed either to one's parents (Tob 3:3) or to the earliest period of one's life, since certain rabbis taught that infants could sin before birth (9:34). Jesus does not deny the *principle* that sickness is brought on by sin, but that a *personal* link can be established in every case. [Back to text](#).

9:3 the works of God: The man's blindness was part of the providential plan of God (11:4). Giving physical sight to the blind is a sign that Jesus gives us spiritual sight to see earth in light of heaven, time in light of eternity, and our lives in light of our destiny. [Back to text.](#)

9:5 I am the light: Jesus is the source of all truth, faith, and life (1:9; 14:6; 18:37). [See note on Jn 8:12.](#) [Back to text.](#)

9:6 made clay of the spittle: The use of common materials to serve a holy purpose anticipates Jesus' institution of the seven sacraments. [See note on Mk 6:56.](#) [Back to text.](#)



9:7 Go, wash: Recalls the miracle of Elisha in 2 Kings 5:10-14. • Elisha commanded Naaman the Syrian to "go and wash" in the Jordan River to be restored to health. **the pool of Siloam:** A rock-hewn reservoir in the southern district of ancient Jerusalem. The pool was built by King Hezekiah to serve as a water supply for the city (2 Kings 20:20; 2 Chron 32:30). The editorial comment that Siloam means **Sent** suggests that the pool is a symbol of Jesus, the source of living water (4:10) and the One sent by his Father (9:4; 12:44). Its contents are symbolic of the Spirit, who is the living water poured out by Christ (7:38-39) and the One who is sent by the Father and the Son (14:26; 15:26). • The miracle anticipates the administration of Baptism, where catechumens are *washed* (9:7) in water, *anointed* (9:6) with oil, and *enlightened* with grace and truth (9:5; Eph 1:18; Heb 6:4; CCC 1216). [Back to text.](#)

9:11 The man called Jesus: The perception of Jesus deepens as the story unfolds: here he is a "man"; by verse 9:17 he is a "prophet"; by 9:33 he is "from God"; and by 9:38 he is the "Lord" worthy of worship. The narrative challenges our minds to make the same conclusion and our hearts to make the same response. [Back to text.](#)

9:14 sabbath day: Instead of rejoicing with the man cured of blindness, the Pharisees haggle over the supposed illegality of the miracle on the sacred day of rest. They are missing the fact that Jesus fulfills the true intent of the Sabbath by offering the man "rest" after long years of being handicapped (CCC 2173). [Back to text.](#)

9:19 Is this your son . . .?: The testimony of the man's parents would be the most credible of all since they would have known him from birth (9:20). [Back to text.](#)

9:22 put out of the synagogue: i.e., excommunicated from the fellowship and worship of the Jews (Ezra 10:8). This was a frightful prospect for many Jewish Christians in the early Church (12:42; 16:2). [Back to text.](#)

9:24 Give God the praise: An oath formula that binds a witness to speak the truth (Josh 7:19). [Back to text.](#)

9:32 Never . . . opened the eyes: Even Tobit, whose eyesight was temporarily lost and later restored, was not blind from birth (Tob 2:9-10; 11:7-15; 14:1-2). [Back to text.](#)

9:33 he could do nothing: Mirrors the logic of Nicodemus in 3:2. [Back to text.](#)

9:35 the Son of man: The heavenly figure from Dan 7:13. See topical essay: *Jesus, the Son of Man* at Lk 17. [Back to text.](#)

9:39 may see . . . become blind: To the humble and childlike, Jesus reveals the Father and his will, but to the wise and understanding, he withholds the light necessary to see the truth (Mt 11:25-27; 13:13-16). The Pharisees fall in the latter category because, while they claim to see clearly, they are blind to their deepest spiritual needs (9:41). [Back to text.](#)

10:1 the sheepfold: Probably a stone wall enclosure with a single entryway, used to protect flocks at night from thieves and predators. Only the shepherd would be recognized and admitted by the designated gatekeeper (10:3). The whole illustration gives a realistic portrayal of pastoral conditions in ancient Palestine (10:1-16). [Back to text.](#)



10:3 calls . . . by name: A mark of intimacy and familiarity (Is 43:1; 49:1). **leads them out:** To graze and find pasture (10:9). The sheep are disciples who hear the voice of Jesus and follow him wherever he goes. • The expression "to lead out" recalls how Joshua was appointed to lead Israel out of the wilderness (Num 27:17) and how Yahweh promised to recover the lost sheep of Israel by leading them out of their exile among the nations (Ezek 34:13). [See note on Jn 10:11.](#) [Back to text.](#)

10:6 they did not understand: The Pharisees, who are blind to the spiritual dimension of Jesus' teaching (9:39-41). [Back to text.](#)

10:8 All who came before: Refers to the shepherds of Israel, many of whom were denounced by the prophets as worthless and evil (Jer 23:1-3;

Ezek 34:1-10; Zech 11:17). The Pharisees are their spiritual descendants (Mt 23:29-36). [Back to text.](#)

10:10 have life: Divine life. [See note on Jn 3:16.](#) [Back to text.](#)



10:11 I am the good shepherd: Jesus leads his flock away from dangers and into safe pastures. He is so committed to the welfare of each one of his sheep that he is willing to die for them (10:17-18; CCC 609). • Although Yahweh was the divine shepherd of Israel (Ps 23:1; Is 40:11), he exercised his rule through earthly shepherds like Joshua and David (Num 27:16-18; 2 Sam 5:2). A similar arrangement was expected for the last days, when the Lord would shepherd the flock of his people through the Davidic Messiah (Ezek 34:11-24). Note that David himself was a good shepherd, who, before his kingship over Israel, risked his life to deliver his flock from predators that tried to kill them (1 Sam 17:34-36). [Back to text.](#)

10:12 the wolf: A traditional symbol of spiritual enemies (Mt 7:15; 10:16; Acts 20:29). [Back to text.](#)



10:16 other sheep: A reference to the Gentiles, who are gathered into the Messiah's flock alongside the restored sheep of Israel (11:52). **one flock, one shepherd:** Jesus Christ is the supreme Shepherd over the one universal Church (Heb 13:20). The spiritual authority of other shepherds like Peter and the apostles is derived entirely from Christ, who gives disciples a share in his saving mission to different degrees (21:1517; CCC 553, 754). • The Nicene Creed delineates the four marks of the Church as "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic". The first mark, oneness, means that the Church is unified in her faith, worship, and leadership and receives her life from the one true God (17:11; Eph 4:4-6) (CCC 813-22). [Back to text.](#)

10:17 lay down my life . . . take it again: Only God himself, who has absolute power over life and death, could make such a claim and hope to fulfill it (2:19; CCC 609). [Back to text.](#)

10:22 feast of the Dedication: Also called "Hanukkah". It is an eight-day winter festival that celebrates Israel's deliverance from Syrian oppression as well as Judas Maccabeus' cleansing and rededication of the Jerusalem Temple in 164 B.C. (1 Mac 4:36-59; 2 Mac 10:1-8). **the portico of Solomon:** Colonnade walkways surrounded the outer perimeter of the

Temple. The section running along the eastern side was named after King Solomon (Acts 3:11). [Back to text.](#)

10:24 tell us plainly: The antagonism between Jesus and his enemies kept him from broadcasting his messianic mission openly. [See note on Mk 1:44. Back to text.](#)



10:28 out of my hand: The protection that Jesus provides for his sheep is equivalent to the Father's divine protection (10:29). • This means, from the perspective of the OT, that Christ wields the sovereign power of Yahweh to shield the righteous from the threats of their enemies (Deut 32:39; Wis 3:1; Is 43:13). [Back to text.](#)

10:30 I and the Father are one: The Father and the Son are united in the loving embrace of the Spirit. We cannot, therefore, divide the essential unity of the Trinity when we distinguish between the three Divine Persons. See notes on Jn 1:1 and 5:18. [Back to text.](#)



10:34 your law: Sometimes this expression refers to the OT in general and not just to the Pentateuch (12:34; 15:25; 1 Cor 14:34). **I said, you are gods:** A citation from Ps 82:6. • The psalm is a prayer for Yahweh to punish the corrupt shepherds of Israel. These leaders, who are charged with teaching and enforcing divine Law, are called "gods" by the Psalmist because of the divine authority they wield over the people. The abuse of this power makes their corruption all the more insidious. Jesus reasons that if sinful authorities are given a divine title because of their duties, how much more is he entitled to it who is guiltless and who speaks the words of God (8:45-47). [Back to text.](#)

10:35 Scripture cannot be nullified: Three implications can be drawn from this statement. **(1)** Scripture cannot be set aside, since its teaching is as trustworthy and true as God himself (17:17). **(2)** The OT, represented in this context by a psalm, has permanent authority even under the New Covenant (Mt 5:17). **(3)** The authority of Scripture extends even to individual words, as in this context where Jesus' whole argument rests on the import of a single word ("gods") from Ps 82:6. [Back to text.](#)



10:36 consecrated: The Greek means to be "sanctified" or "set apart as holy". Christ is set apart by the Father to consecrate the world in truth (17:19). • Jesus' words resonate against the background of the Feast of the Dedication, which celebrates the *consecration* of the Second Temple by the Maccabees (1 Mac 4:48), just as its predecessors, the wilderness Tabernacle (Num 7:1) and the Solomonic Temple, had been consecrated (1 Kings 9:3). These sanctuaries of old are replaced by the new and consecrated temple of Jesus' body (2:20-21). [Back to text.](#)

10:38 believe the works: The miracles of Jesus are meant to authenticate his mission in the eyes of Israel (5:36; 14:11) and to corroborate his claims to divinity (5:18; 10:33). The Jews knew that only God, who has absolute power over creation, can suspend the laws of nature in a miraculous way (3:2; 9:33) (CCC 548). [Back to text.](#)

10:40 where John . . . baptized: An unknown location near Bethany, east of the Jordan River (1:28). [Back to text.](#)



11:1-44 The raising of Lazarus is the sixth of seven "signs" that Jesus performs in John (12:18), giving emphatic support to his claim to give "life" (5:25-29; 6:40). There is a dark side to the episode as well, as it provokes Jewish opposition that will precipitate Jesus' death (11:45-53). Similar miracles are recorded in the Synoptic Gospels, such as the raising of Jairus' daughter (Mk 5:21-43) and the raising of the widow's son from Nain (Lk 7:11-17) (CCC 994). See word study: [Signs](#) at Jn 2. • Precedent for raising the dead was set by the prophets Elijah (1 Kings 17:17-24) and Elisha (2 Kings 4:32-37). [Back to text.](#)

11:1 Lazarus: A beloved friend of Jesus (11:5). **Bethany:** A small village about two miles east of Jerusalem (11:18). **Mary . . . Martha:** Possibly the friends of Jesus mentioned in Lk 10:38-42. The personalities of these two women in John, with Martha as the busy hostess (12:2) and Mary giving her attention to Jesus (12:3), make this identification probable. [Back to text.](#)

11:2 Mary who anointed the Lord: Anticipates the following episode in 12:1-8. [Back to text.](#)

11:4 not unto death: Lazarus will in fact die (11:14). But this will not be his ultimate fate because Jesus will raise him to new life, affording an

opportunity for others to glorify God by means of the miracle (9:3). [Back to text.](#)

11:6 two days longer: The delay of Jesus proves fatal for Lazarus. This period of waiting is not a mistake or miscalculation, but part of his plan to generate faith in the disciples (11:15, 42). Raising the dead to new life will have a more profound effect on them than raising the sick to health. [Back to text.](#)

11:9 walks in the day: Jesus can travel safely in Judea so long as his "hour" lies in the future (see 7:30; 8:20; 10:39). [Back to text.](#)

11:11 fallen asleep: A euphemism for biological death (Mt 27:52; Acts 7:60; 1 Cor 15:6). The disciples take Jesus' words literally, thinking Lazarus has only to be awakened. [Back to text.](#)

11:16 die with him: An obscure statement. It may be that Thomas, like Peter in 13:37, is full of confidence that will prove to be rash when Jesus is later arrested and the disciples scatter for their lives (16:32). [Back to text.](#)



11:17 in the tomb four days: Decisive confirmation of Lazarus' death, since by this time the process of bodily decay was thought to begin in earnest. Martha thus expected the tomb to emit an unpleasant "odor" (11:39). Jews during NT times customarily wrapped the dead with a shroud, tied strips of cloth around their extremities (11:44), and anointed their bodies with fragrant oils and spices (19:39-40). The procedure was not strictly equivalent to embalming, but it helped to delay temporarily the stench of bodily corruption (CCC 627). • *Allegorically (Glossa Ordinaria):* four days in the tomb signifies four stages of spiritual death. Original sin is the first death of the human race; violation of the natural law is the second; violation of the written Law of Moses is the third; and despising the gospel of grace is the fourth. A preview of man's resurrection from this fourfold death is seen as Christ brings Lazarus to life after his four-day entombment. [Back to text.](#)

11:22 even now: Martha's faith fills her with confidence. Although she neither begs nor even asks Jesus to intervene for Lazarus, she knows that God's love is more powerful than death and leaves Jesus to handle the situation as he sees fit. [Back to text.](#)

11:24 the resurrection: A doctrine already current in Judaism (Dan 12:2-3; 2 Mac 7:9). Only the Sadducees denied that our bodies would live

again on the last day (Mt 22:23; Acts 23:8). See topical essay: *Who Are the Sadducees?* at Mk 12. [Back to text.](#)

11:25 I am the resurrection: Jesus places all hopes for a future resurrection upon himself. He possesses the absolute sovereignty over life and death that was always believed to be the sole prerogative of Yahweh (1 Sam 2:6; Wis 16:13; CCC 994). [Back to text.](#)

11:32 if you had been here: Mary's initial disappointment mirrors that of Martha (11:21). [Back to text.](#)

11:33 troubled: Literally, "angered". Though left unexplained, Jesus is probably angry with the Jews who are now weeping with Mary but who will soon betray him to hostile authorities (11:46). In other words, he foresees that the raising of Lazarus, while strengthening the faith of some, will also occasion the unbelief and treachery of others (11:53; 12:10). [Back to text.](#)

11:35 Jesus wept: Tears, not of despair, but of love and sympathy for Lazarus and his family. This small narrative detail points to an awesome theological mystery: Jesus, who became man in every respect except sin, experienced a full range of human emotions (CCC 478). [Back to text.](#)

11:43 with a loud voice: Dramatizes what will take place at the general resurrection on the last day, when the dead will hear the "voice" of the Son of man and come forth from their tombs to live again (5:25-29; CCC 988-91). [Back to text.](#)

11:47 the council: The Sanhedrin, the supreme court of the Jews. Though many reasons underlie their conspiracy against Jesus (11:53), the raising of Lazarus was particularly insulting to the Sadducees, who did not believe such a thing was possible in the first place (Acts 23:6-8). See notes on Jn 11:24 and Mk 14:55. [Back to text.](#)

11:48 the Romans will come: The statement is brimming with historical irony. The Romans did in fact destroy both Jerusalem and its Temple in A.D. 70, not because the Jewish authorities let Jesus continue his ministry in peace, but precisely because they condemned him to a violent death. In the end, it was not the acceptance of Jesus that threatened the city but the rejection of him that made its demise inevitable (CCC 59697, 1753). [See note on Jn 2:19.](#) **our holy place:** A reference to the Temple or to Jerusalem more generally (Acts 6:13; 21:28). [Back to text.](#)

11:49 Caiaphas: The high priest of Israel from A.D. 18 to 36. As such, he was the recognized head of the Jewish "council" (11:47). [Back to text.](#)

11:51 he prophesied: Caiaphas unwittingly announces that Jesus will die for the salvation of the nation. This is not his own insight, but the grace of prophecy speaking through him in virtue of his priestly office and position as chief teacher of Israel. [Back to text.](#)

11:52 the children of God: Recalls the "other sheep" that Jesus promised to gather into his "one flock" (10:16). It indicates that Christ calls to himself not only Israelites living in the land of Judea, but Israelites and Gentiles who are scattered throughout the Mediterranean world and beyond (Is 43:5-7; 66:18-21; Jer 31:10). The gospel of Christ thus reunifies the human family by gathering believers from every nation into the divine family of God (CCC 706, 2793). [See note on Jn 1:12.](#) [Back to text.](#)

11:54 Ephraim: A village of uncertain location, but probably north of Jerusalem in the lower region of Samaria. [Back to text.](#)

11:55 the Passover: The third mention of this feast in John (2:13; 6:4). **to purify themselves:** Jews underwent a process of ritual purification before the Passover, since it was forbidden to celebrate the festival in a state of ceremonial uncleanness (Num 9:9-11; 2 Chron 30:18-21). [Back to text.](#)

12:1-8 The anointing of Jesus at Bethany is also narrated in Mt 26:6-13 and Mk 14:3-9. The episode is similar but distinct from the earlier anointing at the house of Simon the Pharisee in Lk 7:36-50. [Back to text.](#)

12:1 Six days before the Passover: The chronology of the Fourth Gospel places this event on Saturday evening just before Holy Week. The following day is Palm Sunday (12:12). [Back to text.](#)

12:3 pure nard: An imported spice from India. **anointed the feet:** Matthew and Mark have her also anoint the "head" of Jesus (Mt 26:7; Mk 14:3). **the house was filled:** The detail suggests John is testifying to what he himself smelled on the occasion. It may be symbolic of what Jesus says explicitly in the Synoptic tradition: the spread of the fragrance throughout the house anticipates the news of this event spreading throughout the world (Mt 26:13; Mk 14:9). [Back to text.](#)

12:5 three hundred denarii: Nearly an entire year's income for a laborer, since a single denarius was equivalent to a single day's wage (Mt 20:2). It is tragic that Judas complained about Mary's extravagance when he himself betrayed Jesus for much less—a mere "thirty pieces of silver" (Mt 26:15). [Back to text.](#)

12:6 not that he cared: Judas wants to pocket the proceeds of the sale for himself, not to give it away as alms for the needy. **the money box:**

Suggests that Judas was the treasurer in charge of the disciples' funds (13:29; Lk 8:3). [Back to text.](#)



12:8 The poor: Jesus is not indifferent toward the poor. Elsewhere he promotes almsgiving in no uncertain terms (Mt 6:2-4; Lk 6:30; 12:33). • The words of Jesus echo the words of Deut 15:11, which states that the unceasing presence of the poor offers countless opportunities to give generously to less fortunate neighbors. The disciples, too, will have plenty of chances to give alms, but only a brief time remains to be generous toward Jesus while he remains among them (CCC 2449). [Back to text.](#)

12:12 The next day: Palm Sunday. come to the feast: Three times a year the nation of Israel traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate the great festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Acts 2:5-11). Even Gentiles were known to make the pilgrimage from considerable distances (12:20; Acts 8:27). [Back to text.](#)

12:13 branches of palm: Recalls how the Israelites waved bundles of palm branches for the feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:40; 2 Mac 10:6-7). **Hosanna!:** A Hebrew acclamation meaning "Save us!" (Ps 118:25). **Blessed . . . name of the Lord:** An excerpt from Ps 118:26, one of the Hallel Psalms (113-118) customarily sung at Israel's great feasts. [See note on Mk 11:8-10](#) and CCC 559. [Back to text.](#)



12:15 Fear not, daughter of Zion: A reference to Zech 1 9:9. • Zechariah depicts the royal procession of the Messiah into Jerusalem in a manner that recalls King Solomon's coronation ceremony in 1 Kings 1:38-40. Though a victorious king and leader, he will be mounted on a humble donkey instead of a powerful war horse; indeed, the Messiah will banish the instruments of warfare and proclaim "peace" to Israel and all nations (Zech 9:10). This text provides one of the clearest indications that the Messiah would not be a military general, poised to fight against Israel's political oppressors, but a peaceful king who calls for an end to retaliation and bloodshed. [Back to text.](#)

12:16 they remembered: The Holy Spirit inspired the memory of the apostles not only to recall the prophecies and events of the past, but to understand them in terms of the Father's saving plan (2:22; 14:26). [Back to text.](#)

12:19 the world has gone after him: A sweeping assessment of Jesus' popularity. Since John 7, the evangelist has noted a steady stream of Jews believing in him despite opposition from the Jerusalem authorities (7:31; 8:30; 9:38; 10:42; 11:45). [Back to text.](#)

12:20 some Greeks: Either Gentile converts to Judaism or "God fearers" who were attracted to Judaism but were not circumcised (Acts 13:26; 17:4). Their request for an audience with Jesus anticipates his prophecy that "all men" will be drawn to him (Jn 12:32). [Back to text.](#)

12:23 The hour has come: A decisive turning point in the Gospel narrative, when the awaited "hour" of Jesus has finally arrived (2:4; 4:23; 5:25; 7:30; etc.). The inquiry of the Greeks sets this in motion, indicating that the forthcoming suffering of Jesus will secure blessings not only for Israel but for the whole world (1:29; 4:42; 1 Jn 2:2). [Back to text.](#)

12:24 unless a grain of wheat: As a planted seed must decay before it sprouts new life, so Jesus must endure death to bring us eternal life. This principle also holds true for disciples, who must die to themselves to receive the fullness of life from God and be channels of life to others (12:25; 2 Cor 4:11-12). [Back to text.](#)

12:28 a voice: Three times the Father speaks to Jesus from heaven: here, at his Baptism (Mt 3:17), and at his Transfiguration (Mt 17:5). These announcements were made audible for the sake of his followers (12:30). [Back to text.](#)

12:31 ruler of this world: Satan, whose dominion over the world began with Adam's rebellion in the garden (Gen 3:11-13). **cast out:** Christ will *defeat* the devil when he mounts the Cross (Heb 2:14-15) and will *destroy* him when he comes again in glory (Rev 20:10) (CCC 550, 2853). [Back to text.](#)



12:32 when I am lifted up: Refers primarily to the Crucifixion of Christ, as indicated in the next verse, but also hints at his Resurrection and Ascension (CCC 662). [See note on Jn 3:14.](#) • The expression recalls the opening line of Isaiah's fourth Servant Song, which runs from Is 52:13 to 53:12. The whole song is a prophetic depiction of the suffering of the Messiah, who will be exalted and lifted up in the sight of the nations, but only after he is cast down by his own people. Isaiah interprets the humiliation and death of this Servant as a redemptive sacrifice for sin. **draw**

all men to myself: Points to the worldwide acceptance of the gospel (Mt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). • As Isaiah envisioned the Davidic Messiah as an "ensign" posted for the ingathering of the "nations" and the "outcasts of Israel" (Is 11:10-12), so Jesus sees the world gathering around the "sign" of the Cross (CCC 542). [Back to text.](#)



12:34 the law: A reference to the entire OT (10:34; 15:25). • Several passages indicate that the Messiah will reign forever as a priest and king (Ps 110:4; Ezek 37:25; Dan 7:14). **the Son of man:** The royal figure of Dan 7:13. See topical essay: *Jesus, the Son of Man* at Lk 17. [Back to text.](#)

12:36 sons of light: i.e., followers of Jesus, who is the light (1:9; 8:12; 12:46). Paul echoes this teaching in Eph 5:8 and 1 Thess 5:5. [Back to text.](#)



12:38 Lord, who has believed: A quotation from Is 53:1. • Isaiah bemoans the unbelief of Israel, to whom the Messiah comes as a Savior but by whom he is rejected. This is an explicit citation from the same Servant Song to which Jesus made an implicit reference in 12:32. [Back to text.](#)



12:40 He has blinded: A reference to Is 6:10. • Isaiah's mission to Israel in the eighth century B.C. parallels Jesus' mission to Israel in the first century A.D. Both confront a rebellious generation whose unbelief calls down the covenant judgment of Yahweh; and, in both cases, God responds to unbelief by blinding and hardening the rebels, making them unresponsive to the warnings of the Prophets. [See note on Mk 4:12.](#) [Back to text.](#)



12:41 saw his glory: Alludes to the context of Is 6:10 cited in the preceding verse. • Isaiah's prophetic mission began with a vision of Yahweh enthroned in glory, "high and lifted up" (Is 6:1). It is possible that John is connecting this with Isaiah's later vision of the messianic Servant, who is likewise "exalted and lifted up" (Is 52:13) (CCC 712-13). [Back to text.](#)

12:44 him who sent me: Because Jesus is the image of the Father (14:9) and speaks the words of the Father (8:28), our response to him is a measure of how we respond to the Father (1 Jn 2:23). [Back to text.](#)

13:1-16:33 Begins the second half of the Gospel, called the "Book of Glory", with four chapters devoted to the final instructions that Jesus gives to the apostles on the night he is betrayed. [Back to text.](#)

13:1 feast of the Passover: The original meaning of this feast, celebrating the passing of the angel of death over the Israelites and their escape from Egypt (Ex 12:13), is being reshaped by the works and words of Christ, who will "pass over" to the Father through the upcoming events of his Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension. This saving work of Jesus will inaugurate a new Exodus, liberating the human family from sin, selfishness, and Satan (1:29; 8:34-36) (CCC 1340). [See note on Jn 6:4. to the end:](#) i.e., "completely" or "to the fullest extent" (CCC 609). [Back to text.](#)

13:2 during supper: The Synoptic Gospels specify that it was a Passover meal (Mt 26:19; Mk 14:16; Lk 22:15). [Back to text.](#)

13:4 his garments: Symbolic of Christ's human life. John's carefully worded narrative makes this clear: the same Greek verbs that Jesus uses for laying down his life and taking it up again in 10:17-18 are here employed to describe how Christ "laid aside" his garments (13:4) in service and has "taken" them up again (13:12). [Back to text.](#)



13:5 wash the disciples' feet: A gesture of hospitality normally performed by a household slave, not the presiding host. Jesus thus shows himself a model of humility (1 Tim 5:10) and, at the same time, gives a preview of the heroic service he will render when he accepts the humiliation of the Cross (Mk 10:45; Phil 2:5-8). • The foot washing may be a sign of priestly ordination as in the OT (Ex 40:12, 30-32). Against this background, Jesus washing Peter and the disciples parallels the scene of Moses washing Aaron and his sons on the day of their consecration to the priesthood (Lev 8:6). Likewise, the apostles' receiving a "part" (Gk., *meros*) in Jesus (Jn 13:8) recalls how the Levites had their "portion" (Gk., *meris*) in the Lord God alone (Num 18:20 and Deut 10:9 in the LXX). On the institution of Holy Orders in the upper room, [See note on Lk 22:19.](#) [Back to text.](#)

13:8 no part in me: Peter cannot be a disciple of Christ on his own terms but must submit himself to the divine plan already determined by the Lord. [Back to text.](#)



13:10 He who has bathed: Seems to imply that the QfcJ apostles have already been baptized, although this is not explicitly stated in the Gospels. • Jesus' words hint at the distinction between Baptism, which washes away every stain of sin committed (actual) and contracted (Original), and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which cleanses us of the accumulated dust of sins committed after our baptismal washing (20:23; 1 Jn 1:9; CCC 1446). [Back to text.](#)

13:15 an example: Jesus says with words what was already expressed in his deeds: we must pattern our lives after Jesus, whose actions show us how to love and honor our heavenly Father (Mt 11:29; CCC 520). Included in this is the willingness to serve others even to the point of death (15:13). [Back to text.](#)

13:16 a servant is not greater: Similar statements occur in Mt 10:24 and Lk 22:27. [Back to text.](#)



13:18 He who ate my bread: A quotation from Ps 41:9. • The Psalmist laments the treachery of his enemies but even more that of his trusted companion, who ate at his table as a friend only to betray him as a foe. As the psalm progresses, however, the turmoil of the Psalmist gives way to the confidence that Yahweh will vindicate him in due time (Ps 41:11-12). [Back to text.](#)

When Did Jesus Celebrate the Last Supper?

ON THE SURFACE, the Synoptic Gospels appear to contradict the Gospel of John concerning the date of the Last Supper. All four Gospels agree that Jesus died on Good Friday a few hours before sundown and the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath. However, the Synoptic Gospels have Jesus celebrating the Last Supper as a Passover meal prior to Good Friday (Mt 26:17; Mk 14:12; Lk 22:15), while John's Gospel seems to indicate that the Passover was not celebrated by Jewish authorities until the evening of Good Friday itself (Jn 18:28; 19:14). How can Jesus have celebrated the Passover *before* his crucifixion (Synoptics) when the Passover did not begin until several hours *after* his death (John)?

Some deal with this problem by denying that the Last Supper was a Passover meal. Others suggest that Passover did indeed fall on the evening of Holy Thursday, but that John manipulated the historical facts for theological reasons in order to present Jesus as the true paschal Lamb. Still others hold that Jesus celebrated an anticipatory Passover one day ahead of the official date. Unfortunately, none of these views is satisfactory. Two main solutions, however, have been proposed to reconcile the accounts in John and the Synoptics. Both rely on the findings of modern scholarship as well as ancient traditions of the Church.

The Calendar Proposal Some maintain that Jesus, when he celebrated the Last Supper, followed an alternative Jewish calendar in which Passover fell on Tuesday night instead of Friday night. Thus, the Synoptic Gospels correctly describe the Last Supper as a Passover meal, whereas John correctly notes that Jewish authorities did not celebrate the feast until the evening of Good Friday. Four considerations are said to favor this solution. **(1)** It is clear that Judaism was divided over the acceptance of a liturgical calendar in the first century. Authorities in control of the Jerusalem Temple followed a *lunar* calendar in which feast days fell on a different day each year, but other Jewish groups such as the Essenes and the Qumran community preferred a *solar* calendar in which annual festivals always fell on the same day of the week year after year. Passover, for instance, was always held on Tuesday night (the first hours of Wednesday) according to

the solar calendar. Given this situation, it is conceivable that Jesus followed the Essene calendar instead of the Temple calendar when he celebrated his final Passover. (2) Archaeology suggests that the traditional site of the upper room (the Cenacle) lies within the Essene quarter of ancient Jerusalem. Thus, the probable location of the Last Supper on the southwest hill of the city is precisely where archeologists have uncovered the remains of an Essene settlement from the first century. If the identification holds, this would tighten the possible connection between Jesus, the Last Supper, and the Essene solar calendar. (3) The hypothesis that Jesus celebrated the Last Supper on Tuesday night has an added dimension of historical plausibility: it allows more time for the extensive legal proceedings that transpired between his arrest and condemnation. Recall that Jesus was taken before Annas (Jn 18:13, 19-23), Caiaphas (Jn 18:24), the Sanhedrin (Lk 22:66-71), Herod (Lk 23:6-11), and Pilate (Jn 18:28-40). These trials may have occurred during a single night, but the events fit more comfortably within the span of several days. (4) A Syriac text from the third century explicitly states that Jesus celebrated the Last Supper on Tuesday night (*Didascalia Apostolorum* 5, 12-18), and other ancient writers, such as bishop Victorinus of Pettau (*De Fabrica Mundi* 3) and Saint Epiphanius (*Panarion* 51, 26), state that Jesus was taken into custody on Tuesday night. Recently, Pope Benedict XVI commented that this solution is worthy of consideration ("Homily for the Mass of the Lord's Supper", Holy Thursday, 5 April 2007).

The Paschal Proposal Another solution contends that John's Gospel follows the same chronology as the Synoptics when its historical notations are considered more carefully. On this view, Jesus celebrated the Last Supper on Thursday night, along with the rest of Jerusalem, and the notion that John puts Passover on Friday night is simply a misunderstanding of the evangelist's use of Passover terminology. Four considerations may be said to favor this hypothesis. (1) It is important to recognize that the word "Passover", both in Hebrew (*pesah*) and in Greek (*pascha*), has a wider range of meaning than simply "Passover lamb" or "Passover meal". It can also designate the entirety of "Passover week" (Lk 22:1), as well as "the peace offerings sacrificed and eaten during Passover week" (Deut 16:2-3; Mishnah, *Pesahim* 9, 5). In light of this latter usage, one could say that the Jewish authorities in John 18:28 probably fear that defilement will

disqualify them from partaking, not of the Passover Seder (held the night before), but of the celebratory sacrifices eaten during Passover week. Peace offerings, after all, could not be eaten in a state of ritual defilement (Lev 7:19-20). (2) The supper that Jesus attends in John 13:2 is the same as the Synoptic Last Supper, in which case it was a Passover meal. This is not stated explicitly, but John's description of the meal highlights features that, taken together, are distinctive of a Passover banquet (e.g., the participants *reclined*, Jn 13:23; morsels were *dipped*, Jn 13:26; some thought Judas was sent with an offering for *the poor*, Jn 13:29; the meal took place at *night*, Jn 13:30). Thus, the comment that Jesus contemplated his hour "before the feast of the Passover" (Jn 13:1) puts this moment of reflection, not a full day before the paschal celebration began, but on the afternoon of Passover eve, only a short time before the start of the feast. (3) The RSV takes John 19:14 to mean that Jesus was sentenced to death on "the day of Preparation of the Passover". This translation is not impossible, but neither is it preferable. The Greek term rendered "day of Preparation" is simply the common word for "Friday", the day when Jews made preparations for the Sabbath (Mk 15:42; Lk 23:54). Since John himself appears to use the term primarily in relation to the Sabbath (see Jn 19:31, 42), it is likely that the expression in John 19:14 means "Friday of Passover week" and is not meant to identify the afternoon of Good Friday as Passover eve. (4) Christian theologians who have favored this solution include Saint John Chrysostom (*Homilies on John* 83) and Saint Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologiae* III, 46, 9). « [Back to John 13:1.](#)

13:19 believe that I am: The foreknowledge of Jesus is further evidence that he is God from true God, the true "I am". [See note on Jn 6:20.](#) [Back to text.](#)

13:22 uncertain of whom: Judas successfully camouflages his malice from the other disciples. [Back to text.](#)

13:23 whom Jesus loved: i.e., the Apostle John. See introduction: *Author.* **lying close:** Festal meals were eaten, not in a sitting position, but in a reclining position on cushions spread around a short table. [See note on Lk 7:36.](#) [Back to text.](#)

13:27 after the morsel, Satan: Although Judas is sharing a meal with Jesus, he is feeding on the lies of the devil (8:44). The darkness that fills him draws him out into the "night" (13:30). [Back to text.](#)

13:31 God is glorified: It is precisely when Christ accepts his suffering at the hands of evil men that he shows us the dimensions of God's love for the world (Rom 5:8; Jn 3:16). [Back to text.](#)

13:34 new commandment: The Torah commanded *human* love for ourselves and our neighbor (Lev 19:18). Jesus commands *divine* love for one another that is modeled on his own acts of charity and generosity (15:13; 1 Jn 3:16-18). This supernatural love comes not from us but from the Spirit (Rom 5:5; CCC 1822-29). [See note on 1 Cor 13:4-7.](#) [Back to text.](#)

13:37 lay down my life: Peter is probably sincere but certainly overconfident. Soon his bravery will be crushed under the weight of human fear (18:25-27). [Back to text.](#)

14:1 Let not your hearts: Jesus wants to protect his disciples from despair at his death and from discouragement when persecution comes their way (14:27; 16:33). Only the peace of God that surpasses understanding can calm their anxieties (Phil 4:6-7). [Back to text.](#)

14:2 my Father's house: A similar expression is used in 2:16 for the Jerusalem Temple, hinting that the Father's house is a heavenly sanctuary (Rev 21:22) perched high above in the heavenly Jerusalem (Gal 4:26; Rev 21:1). This is the eternal dwelling where the glorified angels and saints worship the Lord in the eternal liturgy (Heb 12:22-24; Rev 4-5) (CCC 2795). **many rooms:** Similar to the Herodian Temple in Jerusalem, which had several courts for worship, chambers for storage, and living quarters for priests. [Back to text.](#)

14:6 I am the way: A claim to be the sole Savior of the world (Acts 4:12). He is the one mediator chosen by the Father to bring the human family to glory. Earlier Jesus made this claim when he compared himself to Jacob's ladder (1:51) (CCC 661, 2466). [Back to text.](#)

14:9 has seen the Father: Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God (Col 1:15), his human flesh (1:14) being an icon of divine spirit (4:24). Through faith we see how Christ's entire life shows us the heart of the Father and his love for the world (3:16; 5:19-23; CCC 516). [Back to text.](#)

14:13 Whatever you ask: The Ascension of Jesus will not be his retirement, since even now he lives to make priestly intercession for the Church on earth (Heb 7:25; 9:24). **I will do it:** A promise to grant whatever is needed to facilitate our salvation (Mt 7:7-11). To pray in the name of Jesus is to pray that the Father will bless us through him (Jn 16:23-24; CCC 2614, 2615). [Back to text.](#)

14:15 If you love me: Our commitment to Christ is proved by works and not merely by words (14:23-24; 1 Jn 3:18). [Back to text.](#)

14:17 with you . . . in you: The first expression refers to the Spirit's *ecclesial* presence within the Church as a whole, and the second to his *personal* presence dwelling within each of God's children individually. For this reason both the universal Church (Eph 2:19-22) and individual Christians (1 Cor 6:19) can be called "temples" of the Spirit (CCC 797). [Back to text.](#)

14:18 desolate: Literally, "orphans". **I will come to you:** i.e., with the Father and the Spirit (14:23). • When Jesus withdraws his visible presence from the world, he does not withdraw his spiritual presence. Christ is always present in his Church, especially in the liturgy, where he ministers through his priests, speaks through the Scriptures, and sanctifies us through the sacraments (CCC 788, 1380). [Back to text.](#)

14:22 Judas (not Iscariot): Presumably "Judas the son of James" (Lk 6:16), also called "Thaddaeus" (Mt 10:3). See chart: *The Twelve Apostles* at Mk 3. [Back to text.](#)

14:23 our home with him: Through grace the living presence of the Trinity inhabits the hearts of the faithful (14:17; Gal 2:20). From John's perspective, God dwells in the saints on earth before the saints dwell in God in heaven (14:2-3; Rev 21:22; CCC 260). [Back to text.](#)

14:26 the Holy Spirit: Sent from heaven to complete the teaching ministry of Jesus and give the apostles an accurate understanding of the

gospel (16:12-13). The Spirit also works through the sacraments to renew the world with the graces and blessings that Christ died to give us (3:5; 6:63; 20:22-23) (CCC 243, 729). [See note on Jn 16:13.](#) **teach you . . . bring to your remembrance:** The terms "you" and "your" in this verse are plural. It is thus a promise to guide and instruct the ordained leaders of the Church, here represented by the eleven apostles. It is not a promise that the Spirit will grant every individual Christian supernatural insight into the full meaning of the gospel or the Scriptures (2 Pet 1:20-21). [Back to text.](#)

14:27 my peace: Not worldly peace, which is often procured by violence and is always unstable, but a spiritual serenity that comforts us regardless of our outward circumstances. See word study: [Peace](#) at Col 3. [Back to text.](#)

14:28 the Father is greater: The Son is equal to the Father in his divinity but less than the Father in his humanity. • Although no one of the Divine Persons exceeds the others in greatness or glory in the eternal Trinity, there is a relational hierarchy among them, where, unlike the Son and the Spirit, the Father alone possesses divine Paternity and has the distinction of being entirely without origin. [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Counselor ([Jn 14:16](#))

Parakl tos (Gk.): an "advocate" or "helper". The word is used five times in John's writings, always with reference to Jesus or the Holy Spirit. It is a legal term for an attorney or spokesman who defends the cause of the accused in a courtroom. Jesus uses it for a heavenly intercessor who is called to the side of God's children to offer strength and support. Jesus is a "Paraclete" because in heaven he pleads to the Father for believers still struggling on earth (1 Jn 2:1). The Spirit, too, is a "Paraclete" because he is sent to strengthen the disciples in Jesus' absence (Jn 14:16), instruct them in the truth (Jn 14:26; 15:26), and defend them against the prosecutions of the devil (Jn 16:7-11), who is the "accuser" of the family of God (Rev 12:10).

14:30 ruler of this world: Satan. [See note on Jn 12:31.](#) [Back to text.](#)



14:31 I love the Father: This is the only place in the k6kJ Gospels where Jesus verbalizes his love for the Father. The fact is never in doubt, however, since his every deed is done to honor the Father (8:29; 15:10), and he will soon make a loving gift of himself to the Father on the Cross (15:13) (CCC 606). • Christ reveals through his humanity the mystery of his divinity. The life and death of Jesus are thus a visible expression of the invisible life of the Trinity, where the Son eternally pours himself out in love to the Father. [Back to text.](#)



15:1-11 The metaphor of the vine underscores Jesus' union with the disciples and their absolute dependency on him for life and growth. It assumes that because the vinedresser (the Father) seeks an abundant harvest, he trims back the vine stock (Jesus) to rid it of fruitless branches (apostates) and to invigorate the other branches (disciples) to become even more fruitful. • Several times the OT depicts Israel as a vineyard planted and tended by the Lord (Ps 80:8-16; Is 5:17; 27:2-6; Jer 2:21). When Jesus clothes himself with this same imagery, he is stressing that Israel finds its life and vigor no longer in the Old Covenant but in the New Covenant ratified by its Messiah. • The delivery of this sermon during the Last Supper gives it a sacramental coloring. Note how the invitation to "abide" in Christ (15:4-5) picks up a theme from the Bread of Life discourse (6:56) and how the Synoptic Gospels make an explicit link between the "fruit of the vine" and the eucharistic meal (Mt 26:29; Mk 14:25; Lk 22:18) (CCC 787). [Back to text.](#)

15:2 he prunes: The Father must trim away our selfishness to increase our growth in love. Pruning probably refers to the trials and fatherly discipline we experience in this life (Heb 12:511; Jas 1:2-4; 1 Pet 1:6-7). [Back to text.](#)

15:5 bears much fruit: The fruits of righteousness are borne in us by the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23; CCC 737). Without this lifegiving sap, which flows into the branches through the vine, we can do absolutely nothing to please the Father or move closer to salvation (CCC 308, 2074). [Back to text.](#)



15:6 thrown into the fire: Damnation awaits every branch that withers away from Christ and becomes worthless (Mt 3:10; Heb 6:4-8). • Ezekiel similarly described the residents of Jerusalem as vine branches that failed to yield *fruit* and so became *fuel* for the fires of divine judgment (Ezek 15:18). Vines, the prophet reasoned, are useless to the craftsman as wood and thus have no value apart from the grapes they bear. [Back to text.](#)

15:10 my Father's commandments: Love for the Father expresses itself through obeying his commandments as Jesus did (1 Jn 3:23-24). It was common in ancient society for younger siblings to look up to the eldest brother for guidance on how to honor and obey one's parents. [Back to text.](#)

15:13 Greater love: The fullest expression of love consists in pouring out our lives to God as Jesus Christ did on the Cross (1 Jn 3:16). See notes on Jn 13:34 and 14:31. [Back to text.](#)



15:14 my friends: The promise of intimacy with Jesus is conditional because it can be fulfilled only if we commit ourselves to his teaching. • Abraham, the man of faith, was the first to be called a "friend" of God in the Bible (2 Chron 20:7; Is 41:8). [Back to text.](#)

15:18-27 Jesus cautions the disciples against the hostility and persecution of the world. The hatred it has for Jesus will likewise fall on them for preaching his gospel and living as he lived. The wording of 15:24-25 and 16:2 suggests that by "world" Jesus is referring to unbelieving Israel. [See note on Jn 1:10.](#) [Back to text.](#)

15:22 no excuse: Revelation entails the responsibility of embracing it. Had Jesus not spoken the truth to the world, its culpability would be lessened; since he did, however, scoffers and unbelievers face the dreadful consequences of rejecting the voice of the living God (12:47-50). [Back to text.](#)



15:25 their law: Refers to the entire OT, not only to the Pentateuch (10:34; 12:34). **They hated me:** Echoes Ps 35:19 and 69:4. • In both verses the Psalmist pleads for Yahweh's vindication because wicked men harass him for no justifiable reason. The disciples must learn from this word of caution from Jesus that the world's hatred will not go unnoticed by the

Father, but he will one day deliver them from the malice of their oppressors. [Back to text.](#)



15:26 whom I shall send: The Spirit comes forth from the Father (14:16, 26) and the Son (16:7). • The mission of the Spirit in history is a reflection of the procession of the Spirit in eternity. This is expressed in the Nicene Creed, which says that the Holy Spirit "proceeds from the Father and the Son" (CCC 244-48). [Back to text.](#)

16:2 out of the synagogues: i.e., excommunicated from the fellowship of Israel. **service to God:** Or "worship to God". According to rabbinic meditations on the Phinehas episode of Num 25:1-13, to slay apostates from Judaism is to sacrifice unto the Lord. [Back to text.](#)

16:5 Where are you going?: Although both Peter (13:36) and Thomas (14:5) asked this question earlier, they were too troubled by the prospect of Jesus' departure to press for information about his destination. [Back to text.](#)

16:7 to your advantage: Greater blessings will come when the Spirit dwells *within* them at Pentecost (14:17; Acts 2:1-4). Chief among these benefits will be the power **(1)** to proclaim the gospel with boldness (Acts 1:8; 4:31), **(2)** to preserve and understand the truth in its fullness (16:13), **(3)** to give witness to Jesus in times of persecution (Lk 12:11-12), and **(4)** to fulfill the just requirements of God's Law (Rom 8:4). [Back to text.](#)

16:8 he will convince: The Spirit exposes the sin of unbelief for what it is (3:20), convinces the world that Christ, though condemned as a criminal, was truly righteous (8:46), and makes it known that Satan and every enemy of Christ will face judgment for rejecting him (5:26-29; 12:31; CCC 388, 1433). The mission of the Spirit, here described in juridical language, shows that while he acts as an advocate or defense lawyer for the disciples, he is also a prosecutor who indicts the unbelieving world. See word study: [Counselor](#) at Jn 14. [Back to text.](#)



16:13 he will guide you: The work of the Spirit counteracts the work of Satan. The former discloses the full meaning of the gospel (14:26); the latter spreads deception and falsehood throughout the world (8:44). The point here is that the Spirit continues the teaching mission of Jesus to bear witness to the truth (8:31-32; 18:37; CCC 687). • Vatican II outlined the doctrine of magisterial infallibility, meaning that the pope alone or the pope

and the bishops united with him are divinely protected from teaching error when they define matters pertaining to faith and morals (*Lumen Gentium*, 25). The guidance of the Spirit is Christ's guarantee that the gospel will not be corrupted, distorted, or misunderstood by the ordained shepherds of the Church during her earthly pilgrimage (CCC 768, 889-92). [See note on Jn 14:26.](#) [Back to text.](#)

16:15 declare it to you: The Spirit gives us a share in the divine life and authority of Jesus (6:63; Rom 8:14-16; CCC 690). [Back to text.](#)

16:18 A little while: The disciples will again see Jesus at his Resurrection (20:19-30), and after his Ascension they will await his visible return in glory (Acts 1:9-11). [Back to text.](#)



16:21 her hour has come: The hour of Christ's Passion is compared to the pangs of childbirth. The disciples, like a woman in labor, will experience extreme distress that soon gives way to joy when Christ is reborn to a new life on Easter morning. • The Prophets similarly compare times of divine testing and judgment to the onset of labor pain (Is 13:6-8; 26:17; Mic 4:10). [Back to text.](#)

16:23 ask nothing . . . ask anything: Two different Greek verbs are translated "ask" in this verse: the first means "to question", and the second "to request". So the disciples must not interrogate Jesus when they see him risen, but they may petition the Father for their needs (CCC 2614). [Back to text.](#)

16:25 in figures: Refers back to the metaphor of the true vine (15:1-6) and probably to numerous parables in the Synoptic Gospels that tell us about the Father (Mt 21:33-41; 22:114; Lk 13:6-9). [Back to text.](#)

16:30 you know all things: Amounts to a confession of faith in the divinity of Jesus, since only God is omniscient (21:17; Ps 139:1-6). [Back to text.](#)

16:32 you will be scattered: Jesus foretells his abandonment with the help of Zech 13:7 in the Synoptic Gospels (Mt 26:31; Mk 14:27). His words come to fulfillment with his arrest in Gethsemane (Mk 14:50). [Back to text.](#)

17:1-26 The high priestly prayer of Jesus, who turns attention from his disciples (chaps. 13-16) to his heavenly Father (chap. 17). The prayer has three parts: Jesus offers up his approaching sacrifice to the Father (17:1-5), pleads for the preservation of his disciples (17:6-19), and prays for the unity

of the universal Church (17:20-26). This is the longest extended prayer recorded in the Gospels (CCC 2746-51). [Back to text.](#)

17:1 lifted up his eyes: A traditional prayer gesture (Ps 123:1; Mk 6:41).
the hour: The time of Christ's Passion begins in earnest. Because it involves his rejection and the aggressive assault of the devil, it is also called the hour of "darkness" (Lk 22:53). See topical essay: *The "Hour" of Jesus* at Jn 4. [Back to text.](#)



17:3 eternal life: To possess life is to **know** the living God in his triune glory. Although this knowledge has a cognitive and intellectual dimension, it also includes a relational bond of love, friendship, and communion with God that grows steadily until our union with him is complete in heaven (Eph 1:17; 1 Jn 4:7). • Personal knowledge of God is a sign of the New Covenant, according to Jer 31:33-34. **the only true God:** The NT doctrine that God is a Trinity is built on the OT doctrine that Yahweh alone is God (Deut 6:4; 32:39). This ancient belief, held dear both in Israel and in the Church, stands in sharp contrast to the pagan notion that many gods exist and deserve our recognition (Ex 20:3-6; Is 43:10; 1 Cor 8:5-6). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Glorify ([Jn 17:1](#))

Doxazo (Gk.): to "praise", "honor", or "give glory". The verb is used 23 times in John and 38 times in the rest of the NT. From a biblical perspective, the glory of God is the weight and magnificence of his Being (2 Cor 4:17). John shows that Jesus, the eternal Son, possesses the divine glory of his Father (Jn 1:14). This glory shines through his miracles (Jn 2:11) and especially through his loving acceptance of the Cross (Jn 12:23-24). The Son's obedience to his mission glorifies the Father (Jn 13:31; 14:13), and in return, the Father glorifies the Son (Jn 8:54; 11:4). Before his death, Jesus petitions the Father to glorify his humanity that it may rise again to participate in the eternal glory that he already possesses in his divinity (Jn 17:5, 24).

17:6 manifested your name: Possibly the divine name "I am", which is shared by Jesus (8:58; 18:6). Or, too, it may refer to the general revelation of the Father's life and love through the Incarnation (14:6-11) (CCC 2812). [See note on Jn 6:20.](#) [Back to text.](#)

17:11 as we are one: The family unity of the apostles is to reflect the family oneness of the Divine Persons in the Trinity (10:30). [Back to text.](#)



17:12 the son of perdition: Judas Iscariot, whose betrayal of the Messiah was foretold in passages such as Ps 41:9 (13:18) and Ps 69:25 (Acts 1:20). [See note on Mt 26:56.](#) [Back to text.](#)

17:14 not of the world: The disciples remain *in* the world after Jesus returns to the Father, but they are not *of* the world, because they are not allied with the godless forces that fight against the kingdom of God (15:18-24). [See note on Jn 1:10.](#) [Back to text.](#)

17:15 from the evil one: The prayer of Jesus becomes our prayer every time we utter the Our Father (Mt 6:13; CCC 285054). [Back to text.](#)



17:17 Sanctify them: To "sanctify" means to consecrate for a holy purpose, which here concerns the spread and preservation of divine truth. The task of the apostles is to speak the **word** of the Lord both orally (1 Thess 2:13; 1 Pet 1:25) and in writing (2 Thess 2:15; 1 Tim 3:14-15). • Similar language is used in the OT for the consecration and ordination of Aaronic priests (Ex 29:1; 40:12-13). Here the disciples are set apart for "the priestly service of the gospel" (Rom 15:16) (CCC 611). [Back to text.](#)

17:18 so I have sent them: The mission of Christ becomes the mission of the Church once he returns to the Father. Although cooperation in this work is incumbent upon all baptized believers (CCC 1268-70), the apostles are sent forth in a special way for the ministry of preaching the word and sanctifying the world. This missionary mandate continues to be fulfilled by the bishops, who are the ordained successors to apostles (1 Tim 4:13-16; 2 Tim 2:1-2) (CCC 858-62). [Back to text.](#)

17:20 those who believe: Jesus' prayer reaches into the future to bless believers of every age (20:29). [Back to text.](#)

17:23 that the world may know: Envisions unity that is not only spiritual, but also visible and organizational, so that even the world can see it clearly (Eph 4:4-13). The indivisible unity of the Trinity is the source and

pattern of this ecclesial oneness (17:11, 21-22). [See note on Jn 10:16.](#) [Back to text.](#)

17:24 may be with me: A prayer for the salvation of believers (14:2-3). [Back to text.](#)

18:1 the Kidron valley: The deep ravine directly east of Jerusalem, separating the city from the Mount of Olives. The garden area on the western slope of the mount is called "Gethsemane" (Mt 26:36). [Back to text.](#)

18:3 band of soldiers: A detachment (cohort) of several hundred Roman troops accompanied by Temple policemen (Acts 5:24-26). The authorities must have anticipated resistance from Jesus and his followers as they came armed in such large numbers. [Back to text.](#)

18:6 I am: Jesus unleashes the power of the divine name, "I am", simply by uttering it (Ex 3:14). [See note on Jn 6:20.](#) [Back to text.](#)

18:10 a sword: Peter's zeal unsheathes the weapon in defense of Jesus. Here and elsewhere he fails to understand how the betrayal and suffering of Christ are part of the Father's plan (Mt 16:21-23). Luke notes how Jesus rectifies his wrong by healing the slave's ear (Lk 22:51). [Back to text.](#)

18:11 the chalice: The chalice of suffering that Jesus will drink on the Cross (Mk 10:38; CCC 607). [See note on Lk 22:17.](#) [Back to text.](#)

18:13 Annas: The high priest of Israel from A.D. 6 to 15. Because the Romans deposed and replaced him with another priest contrary to the regulations of the Torah, many Jews still revered him as the rightful head of Israel even after he was relieved of his duties (18:19; Acts 4:6). **Caiaphas:** The son-in-law of Annas and the officiating high priest from A.D. 18 to 36. [Back to text.](#)

18:14 one man should die: A reminder of the prophecy in 11:47-53. [See note on Jn 11:51.](#) [Back to text.](#)

18:15 another disciple: Probably John the evangelist, who never reveals his name in the Gospel but often calls himself the disciple "whom Jesus loved" (13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7). One tradition preserved by Eusebius holds that the Apostle John was born of a Jewish priestly family, which could explain his familiarity with the high priest (18:15), the name of the high priest's slave (18:10), and the family of the slave (18:26). See introduction to John: *Author.* [Back to text.](#)

18:24 bound to Caiaphas: John summarizes Jesus' nighttime trial before the Sanhedrin in this one statement (Mt 26:57-68; Mk 14:53-65). He gives

greater attention to Jesus' interrogation before Pilate (Jn 18:33-38). [Back to text.](#)

18:27 again denied it: Three times Peter denies his association with Jesus (18:17, 25), just as three times he fell asleep while Jesus prayed in agony (Mk 14:32-42) and three times he will renew his commitment to Jesus after the Resurrection (Jn 21:15-17). **the cock crowed:** Possibly the Roman bugle call that signaled the end of the "cockcrow" at about 3 A.M. [See note on Mk 13:35.](#) [Back to text.](#)

18:28 the praetorium: The official residence of the Roman governor in Jerusalem. It served as his headquarters during Israel's annual feasts and other occasions that required his presence to maintain civil order in the city. **It was early:** On the morning of Good Friday. **did not enter:** Jews generally declined to enter the home of a Gentile for fear of ritual defilement (Acts 10:28). This was all the more important during Passover, since defilement disqualified a Jew from eating the initial Seder meal (Num 9:6-11), as well as from the paschal peace consumed throughout the week of the festival (Lev 7:19-20). [Back to text.](#)

18:29 Pilate: The Roman governor of Judea from A.D. 26 to 36. [See note on Mt 27:2.](#) [Back to text.](#)

18:31 It is not lawful: The Romans denied the authorities of Israel the right to administer capital punishment. Only the Romans themselves could put a condemned criminal to death, either by beheading (Roman citizens) or by crucifixion (non-citizens and insurrectionists). That Jesus was a Jewish peasant charged with sedition made crucifixion inevitable (CCC 596). [Back to text.](#)

18:32 what death: Jesus was alluding to crucifixion when he spoke of being "lifted up" (3:14; 12:32). [Back to text.](#)

18:33 King of the Jews?: The accusation of Jesus' enemies (Lk 23:2). The title functions as a slogan that is meant to resonate with Pilate as a threat to Roman rule (Jn 19:12). [Back to text.](#)

18:36 My kingship: Jesus does not deny his royal mission, but he disassociates it from the political form of government that concerns Pilate. He thus turns the focus toward heaven, where he will be crowned not with gold but with glory and honor (Heb 2:9) and where homage is paid to him not in taxes but in worship (9:38) and allegiance to the truth (8:31-32). The coronation of Jesus begins with his Passion and culminates with his Ascension (Eph 1:20-23), from which time his dominion extends over the

earth through the preaching and sacramental ministry of the Church (Mt 28:18-20). [Back to text.](#)

18:38 What is truth?: The cynical response shows Pilate to be politically disinterested in the otherworldly perspective of Jesus. The irony here is that, while Pilate sees "truth" as a harmless abstraction, the acceptance of the gospel throughout the Roman world will eventually lead to the downfall of the Empire and the rise of a Christian civilization in its place (CCC 2471). [Back to text.](#)

18:40 a robber: Or "revolutionary". Elsewhere Barabbas is described as an insurrectionist and a murderer (Mk 15:7). [Back to text.](#)

19:1 scourged: Flogging was a cruel prelude to crucifixion in Roman practice. Tied to the ends of the whip were fragments of bone or metal designed to tear up the skin, causing injuries that were sometimes fatal. Pilate may have ordered this measure to appease the Jews, since he already felt there were no legal grounds to execute Jesus (18:38). [Back to text.](#)

19:2-3 The royal tribute of the soldiers is both an act of mockery and an ironic witness to the kingship of Jesus (1:49; 18:36). [Back to text.](#)

Roman Control
of Palestine
at the Time
of Christ



19:6 Crucify him: The Jerusalem authorities incite a chanting mob in order to crush remaining sympathies for Jesus and bend the will of Pilate in the direction of their own (CCC 597, 600). **I find no crime:** The third time Pilate acquits Jesus of the charges laid against him (18:38; 19:4). Luke's trial narrative likewise stresses the innocence of Jesus (Lk 23:4, 15, 22, 41, 47). [Back to text.](#)

19:7 he ought to die: A charge of blasphemy, which was a capital crime in Israel (Lev 24:16). Similar accusations are made at Jn 5:18 and 10:33. [Back to text.](#)

19:11 no power over me: Jesus, not Pilate, controls the situation, and so death cannot be forced upon him unwillingly (10:18). **from above:** Ultimately, authority over the temporal affairs of society is granted to civil officials by God, not by governments themselves or by the consent of those they govern (Rom 13:1). **the greater sin:** Implies that Pilate shares the blame for Jesus' death, even though Judas and the Jerusalem leaders are even more culpable (Acts 4:27). [Back to text.](#)

19:12 not Caesar's friend: An attempt to blackmail Pilate, who could face charges of disloyalty to the emperor if he lets a (supposed) royal claimant like Jesus go unpunished. [Back to text.](#)

19:13 The Pavement: A stone slab platform. The Semitic expression **Gabbatha** refers to some sort of elevation. [Back to text.](#)

19:14 day of Preparation: This chronological statement has been read in two different ways. Some, including the RSV, understand it to mean that Jesus was sentenced to die on "the eve" of the Jewish Passover, which would begin at sundown. Others note that the Greek term is one that normally means "Friday", the day before the Jewish Sabbath (as in 19:31 and Mk 15:42). In this case, the point is that Jesus was condemned on the Friday that fell during Passover week. **the sixth hour:** Noon. [Back to text.](#)

19:15 no king but Caesar: A compromise so extreme that the Jerusalem authorities deny even the kingship of Yahweh (1 Sam 8:7). [Back to text.](#)

19:17 bearing his own cross: Refers to the wooden crossbeam to be fixed horizontally to an upright stake at the execution site. [See note on Mk 15:24.](#) [Back to text.](#)



19:18 one on either side: The four Gospels agree that Jesus was crucified between two criminals (Mt 27:38; Mk 15:27; Lk 23:33). • John's

description is similar to that in the Greek version of Ex 17:12, where Moses' arms were suspended in the air by Aaron and Hur as they stood on either side of him. This was to ensure for Israel a military victory over the Amalekites. Jesus' arms are similarly stretched out between two men as he triumphs over the unseen armies of the devil (Col 2:14-15). [Back to text.](#)

19:20 this title: Signs were hung around the necks of crucified victims and then fastened to their crosses. Listed on these placards was a brief inventory of the criminal charges brought against them. The trilingual inscription of Pilate could be read by everyone in the region: **Hebrew** was the religious language of Israel still known by some Palestinian Jews; **Latin** was the official language of the Roman occupiers of Palestine; and **Greek** was the commercial language of the eastern Mediterranean world (CCC 440). [Back to text.](#)



19:23 the tunic: A one-piece garment worn next to the skin. • The seamless tunic of Christ recalls the linen vestment worn by the high priest of Israel (Lev 16:4), which was not to be torn (Lev 21:10) and which, according to the historian Josephus, was seamless. This implies that Christ acts as a high priest when he makes himself a sacrifice on the Cross (Heb 2:17; 9:11-14). • *Allegorically* (St. Cyprian, *The Unity of the Catholic Church* 7): the seamless tunic signifies the indivisible kingdom of Christ. Although Solomon's kingdom was rent asunder like a garment and its glory passed away (1 Kings 11:29-32), the Church of Christ is forever glorious and will always remain intact (Jn 19:24). [Back to text.](#)

19:24 They parted my garments: A quotation from Ps 22:18, a psalm that runs parallel to the entire plot of the Passion narrative. [See note on Mt 27:46.](#) [Back to text.](#)

19:25 his mother's sister: Possibly "Salome", the mother of the apostles James and John, the sons of Zebedee (Mt 27:56; Mk 15:40). [Back to text.](#)



19:26 Woman: The address sounds impersonal to modern readers but was considered polite in biblical antiquity. • Jesus probably alludes to Gen 3:15, which describes the mother of the Messiah as the "woman" whose offspring conquers the devil (CCC 726, 2618). [See note on Jn 2:4.](#) **behold your son!:** Jesus honors his Mother by entrusting her to the protective care of the Apostle John, presumably because Mary had no other

children to assume the responsibility. [See note on Mt 12:46](#). • John is not just an *individual* disciple, he is portrayed by the evangelist as an *icon* of every disciple whom Jesus loves. In this sense, Mary is given to all beloved disciples of Christ, just as every disciple is given to the maternal care of Mary. The assumption here is that family relations are extended beyond the limits of natural lineage, so that every baptized believer has God as a Father, Christ as an eldest brother, Mary as a Mother, and the saints as brothers and sisters (CCC 501, 964, 2679). See introduction: *Themes and Characteristics*. [Back to text](#).

19:28 I thirst: Recalls Ps 22:15 and Ps 69:21. [Back to text](#).



19:29 vinegar: Sour wine. This was not the narcotic drink that Jesus earlier refused (Mk 15:23). • The use of **hyssop** to lift the sponge to Jesus suggests a connection with the original Passover, when the Israelites used hyssop branches to smear blood on their doorposts as a mark of divine protection (Ex 12:21-23). [Back to text](#).

19:32 broke the legs: A mallet was used to crush the leg bones and hasten the processes of death. [Back to text](#).



19:34 blood and water: Stresses the reality and finality of Jesus' death. • The episode is reminiscent of Num 20:10-13 as read in Jewish tradition. In the original story only water issued from the rock struck by Moses, but in the Aramaic rendition both blood and water gushed forth (*Palestinian Targum* on Num 20:11). Paul similarly interprets this rock as a symbol of Christ, from which flows the spiritual drink of the Eucharist (1 Cor 10:4) and the Spirit (1 Cor 12:13). • *Allegorically* (St. John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions* 3, 16-19): the water and blood streaming from the side of Christ are symbolic of the new life we receive in Baptism (3:5) and the nourishment we receive in the Eucharist (6:53) (CCC 1225). It indicates, moreover, that the Church constituted by these sacraments is the bride of Christ that issues from his side, just as Eve came forth from the side of Adam (Gen 2:21-23). In another sense (Tertullian, *On Baptism* 16,2), the blood and water signify the two baptisms of martyrdom and Christian initiation. [Back to text](#).

19:35 he tells the truth: The evangelist verifies the historical facts of the Crucifixion as an eyewitness (19:26). [Back to text](#).



19:36 Not a bone: A reference to Ex 12:46. • This restriction was part of Israel's Passover legislation that disqualified lambs with blemishes and broken bones from being slaughtered and eaten for the liturgical celebration (Ex 12:5; Num 9:11-12). Jesus, whose bones are left intact, is the unblemished Lamb (Jn 1:29) fit to be consumed in the eucharistic liturgy (6:53-58; CCC 608). [Back to text.](#)



19:37 They shall look: A reference to Zech 12:10. • Zechariah describes a day of mourning for Jerusalem, which will weep with remorse that its sins have pierced the Messiah. It is also a day of compassion, when Yahweh opens a fountain to cleanse the city of its iniquities (Zech 13:1). John may be suggesting, in light of the full context of this prophecy, that there is a close connection between the *piercing* of the Messiah and the *opening* of the fountain of divine mercy. [Back to text.](#)

19:38 Joseph of Arimathea: A wealthy follower of Jesus who provided the tomb (Mt 27:57-60). He is a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, although he did not consent to its condemnation of Christ (Lk 23:50-51; CCC 596). [Back to text.](#)

19:39 Nicodemus: Also a member of the Sanhedrin (3:1). [Back to text.](#)

19:40 the burial custom: For the procedure, [See note on Jn 11:17.](#) [Back to text.](#)

19:42 day of Preparation: The Sabbath is fast approaching (sundown Friday). By then labor must cease (Lk 23:56), and so corpses must be quickly buried (Deut 21:22-23). [Back to text.](#)

20:1 the first day: Sunday, the first day of the Jewish week. **Mary Magdalene:** A devoted disciple of Christ, who was delivered of demonic possession (Lk 8:2) and whose love for Jesus carried her all the way to the Cross (19:25; CCC 641). [Back to text.](#)

20:2 out of the tomb: The empty tomb is the indisputable fact of Easter morning, as testified to even by the Roman soldiers who guarded the site (Mt 28:11-15). The disappearance of Jesus is the first indication that he has risen as he said (Mt 20:17-19). This is confirmed by several appearances throughout the next 40 days (Jn 20:19-21:1; Acts 1:3; CCC 640). **we do not know:** Presumes that Mary has come to the tomb with other women, as in Mt 28:1, Mk 16:1, and Lk 23:55-24:1. [Back to text.](#)



20:4 the other disciple: John, the evangelist himself. Luke makes similar mention of certain disciples, including Peter, running to the tomb on Easter morning (Lk 24:12, 24). See introduction: *Author. reached the tomb first:* John defers to Peter by letting him enter the tomb first (20:6). This is more than a polite gesture, as it reflects his deference to the preeminent honor and authority that Jesus has bestowed on Simon (Mt 16:16-19). • *Allegorically* (John Scotus Erigena, *Hom. in Prol. Jn.*): the tomb is the Sacred Scriptures. Peter is faith, which is the first thing we bring to its pages, and John is understanding, which afterward enters and penetrates their meaning more deeply. *Morally*, Peter and John represent the active and contemplative missions of the Church, so that even when contemplatives are the first to arrive at a deeper understanding of the faith, deference is given to the hierarchical leadership, who later defines and promulgates their authentic insights. [Back to text.](#)

20:7 the napkin . . . the linen cloths: Corroborating evidence of the Resurrection. No thief would have taken the time to unwrap Jesus' corpse and fold his burial clothes neatly in the tomb. In any case, the grave robbers of antiquity usually stole the expensive linens and left the body behind, not the other way around. [Back to text.](#)

20:9 the Scripture: For important resurrection passages, [See note on Lk 24:46.](#) [Back to text.](#)

20:12 two angels: Luke likewise mentions two angels (Lk 24:4, 23). [Back to text.](#)

20:14 she did not know: Failure to recognize the risen Jesus immediately is also noted in 21:4 and Lk 24:16 (CCC 659). [Back to text.](#)

20:17 Do not hold me: Mary wants to keep Jesus with her, but he must first ascend to the Father. Only then will he come again to his disciples in spiritual and sacramental ways. [See note on Jn 14:18.](#) **my Father and your Father:** Jesus is the Son of God by nature (1:18); believers are sons and daughters by grace (1:12); and all have the same Father (CCC 443, 654). [Back to text.](#)

20:19 that day: The evening of Easter Sunday. [Back to text.](#)

20:20 his hands and his side: The point is that Jesus is raised not simply with *a* body, but with the *same* body that was crucified and died only days

earlier (20:25, 27). He carries these marks of his earthly sacrifice with him even when he ascends into heaven (Rev 5:6) (CCC 645). [Back to text.](#)

20:21 Peace: A traditional Hebrew greeting. [See note on Jn 14:27.](#) [Back to text.](#)



20:22 he breathed on them: Anticipates the coming of the Spirit on Pentecost, which will take place 50 days later (Acts 2:1-4). Here we see that the risen humanity of Jesus has become a sacrament of the divine Spirit (6:53-58; CCC 1116). • John uses an expression that recurs in significant contexts in the Greek OT. It appears in Gen 2:7, where the Lord breathes life into Adam; in 1 Kings 17:21, where the Greek version specifies that Elijah resuscitated a boy with his breath; and in Ezek 37:9, where God raises an army of corpses to new life by the breath of the Spirit. [Back to text.](#)



20:23 forgive the sins: Jesus' ministry of mercy and reconciliation will continue through the apostles (2 Cor 5:18-20; Jas 5:14-15). The power to "forgive and retain" sins in the name of Jesus is elsewhere described as the authority to "bind and loose" (Mt 16:19; 18:18; CCC 553, 730). • The Council of Trent connects this episode with the institution of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Sess. 14, chap. 1), by which Christ distributes divine forgiveness to the world through the successors of the apostles (bishops) and their assistants in the presbyterate (priests) (CCC 976, 1441, 1461). [Back to text.](#)

20:26 Eight days later: The second Sunday of the Easter octave. [Back to text.](#)

20:28 My Lord and my God!: The climactic confession of faith in John's Gospel (CCC 448, 644). [Back to text.](#)

20:30-31 A statement of purpose by the evangelist. He has written the Fourth Gospel both as history and as witness, in the hope that a factual portrayal of the Christ's life will not just inform readers, but challenge them to accept him and his claims with true faith (Lk 1:1-4). [Back to text.](#)

21:1 Sea of Tiberias: Another name for the Sea of Galilee. [See note on Jn 6:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)

21:2 At least five of these seven disciples are apostles. John, who is one of the **sons of Zebedee** (Mt 10:2), remains consistent until the end in

withholding his name from the Gospel narrative. See introduction: *Author* and chart: *The Twelve Apostles* at Mk 3. [Back to text.](#)

21:3 that night: Net fishing was done at night (Lk 5:5). The most popular fish were tilapias, now called "Peter's fish". [Back to text.](#)



21:7 It is the Lord!: John is the first to recognize Jesus on the shore. It is unclear whether his identity was veiled because of the distance, the lingering darkness, or a dullness of spiritual insight (20:14, Lk 24:16; CCC 645). • *Allegorically* (St. Gregory the Great, *Hom. in Evan.* 24): the presence of Christ on land signifies the stability and peace of his Resurrection life, as distinct from the instability and commotion of mortal life still experienced by the disciples as they labor upon the waves of the sea. [Back to text.](#)

21:9 charcoal fire: This expression, used only here and in 18:18 in the NT, sets up the following conversation between Jesus and Peter. The point is that Peter is given a second chance to affirm his love for Christ in front of a fire after three times denying him in front of a fire (18:15-18, 25-27). [Back to text.](#)

21:11 a hundred and fifty-three: The number of fish hauled ashore is symbolic. St. Jerome claims that Greek zoologists had identified 153 different kinds of fish (*Comm. in Ez.* 14, 47). If this is the background, the episode anticipates how the apostles, made fishers of men by Christ (Mt 4:19), will gather believers from every nation into the Church (Mt 28:18-20). [Back to text.](#)

21:13 took . . . gave: The breakfast recalls the feeding of the 5,000 in 6:1-14, since these are the only two meals in John eaten beside the Sea of Galilee and the only two where bread and fish are served. [See note on Jn 6:11.](#) [Back to text.](#)

21:14 the third time: i.e., that Jesus appears risen to the group of disciples. Individual encounters like the one in 20:16 are not included in this numbering. [Back to text.](#)

21:15-17 Three times Peter reaffirms his love for Jesus as personal restitution for the three times he denied him (13:38; 18:15-18, 25-27). The dialogue in Greek makes use of several synonyms: two different nouns are used for *sheep*, and two different verbs are used for *feed*, *know*, and *love*. Although this may be a stylistic feature to avoid redundancy, others think it

more significant, especially with the verb *love*. In his first two questions, Jesus asks Peter if he loves him with "willing love" (Gk. *agapaō*), but in the third question he asks if Peter loves him with merely "friendly affection" (Gk. *phileō*), which is the word Peter uses in all three of his responses. An intended distinction between these terms would indicate that Jesus, desirous of a complete and heroic love from Peter, was willing by the end of the conversation to settle for his friendship. [Back to text.](#)



21:15 more than these?: Peter is challenged to live up to his own words, since earlier he declared that even if the other disciples should fall away from Christ, his commitment would never falter (Mt 26:33). **Feed my lambs:** Jesus entrusts to Peter the task of shepherding his entire flock. This supreme leadership position over the Church gives him a unique share in the authority of Christ, who is still acknowledged by Peter as the "chief Shepherd" (1 Pet 5:4). It is important to recognize that no tension exists in the mind of Jesus between his own role as the "good shepherd" and the delegation of pastoral authority to Peter (Jn 10:11; CCC 553, 881). • Vatican I declared that in this episode Christ made Peter the visible head and chief pastor over the universal Church (*Pastor aeternus*, chap. 1). [See note on Mt 16:13-20.](#) [Back to text.](#)

21:18 stretch out your hands: An allusion to Peter's martyrdom by crucifixion. Tradition holds that it took place in Rome around A.D. 67. [Back to text.](#)

21:23 The saying spread: This verse is included to correct a misunderstanding among believers that the Apostle John would remain alive until Christ returns in glory. [Back to text.](#)

21:24 This is the disciple: Equivalent to the evangelist's personal signature. See introduction: *Author.* **we know:** Apparently this comment was inserted, not by the evangelist, but by other Christians who knew the facts about Jesus as John did and willingly testified to the veracity of his Gospel. [Back to text.](#)

21:25 many other things: John claims that his Gospel is accurate, not that it is comprehensive or exhaustive (19:35). He has given enough information about the life and ministry of Jesus to elicit faith from his readers (20:30-31; CCC 515). [Back to text.](#)

The Seven "I am" Sayings of Jesus

1. *"I am the bread of life"* John [6:35](#)
2. *"I am the light of the world"* John [8:12](#)
3. *"I am the door of the sheep"* John [10:7](#)
4. *"I am the good shepherd"* John [10:11](#)
5. *"I am the resurrection and the life"* John [11:25](#)
6. *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life"* John [14:6](#)
7. *"I am the true vine"* John [15:1](#)

INTRODUCTION TO THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Author The Book of Acts, like the Gospels, is anonymous. Tradition reaching back to the second century identifies its author as Luke, a Gentile physician and traveling associate of the Apostle Paul (2 Tim 4:11; Philem 24). Explicit testimony for the Lucan authorship of Acts comes from early Christian Fathers such as Irenaeus (A.D. 180), Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 200), and Eusebius (A.D. 325). Though some modern scholars have questioned the Lucan authorship of the book, the evidence gives strong support to the traditional view. **(1)** Few question that the author of Acts was also the author of Luke. The opening line of Acts refers to a "first book" that the same author dedicated to the same man, "Theophilus" (1:1). This is a clear reference to the Gospel of Luke (Lk 1:1-4), a book unanimously ascribed by the early Church to Paul's companion Luke. **(2)** Both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts show concern for the sick, sometimes using medical terminology in their respective stories (9:18; 28:6, 8; Lk 4:38; 8:43-44). This is consistent with Luke's occupation as a "physician" (Col 4:14). **(3)** A careful reading of Acts reveals that its author was an eyewitness to several of the events recounted. This can be seen in the second half of Acts, where the author uses a series of "we" passages to include himself as a member of the missionary team headed by Paul (16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16). **(4)** There is no clear reason why the early Christians would attribute the Book of Acts (or the Third Gospel) to Luke unless there was some factual basis for his authorship in the tradition. Of all the people to whom the Book of Acts could have been attributed, how did a relatively insignificant figure such as Luke become associated with the work rather than a more prominent person, such as an apostle? The most reasonable answer is that Luke was known to have written the work.

Date Scholars generally date the Book of Acts in either the 60s or the 80s of the first century. All things considered, it is most likely that Luke wrote the Book of Acts around A.D. 63, soon after Paul's house arrest in Rome

recorded in the closing chapter (28:16). This early date is inferred on the basis of what Luke does *not* tell us. For example, he makes no mention of the fire that swept through Rome and sparked a fierce persecution of Christians by the emperor Nero in A.D. 64. He tells us nothing of the martyrdom of Peter or Paul in Rome in the mid 60s. He gives no indication that Rome's military conquest of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 had already happened. Luke's silence on these matters speaks loudly, especially since Christianity's relationship with Imperial Rome is a key theme in the book, Peter and Paul are the leading figures in the book, and Jerusalem is the most important city in the early chapters of the book. Luke was apparently bringing the early history of the Church up to date around A.D. 63, just after Paul's detainment in Rome from A.D. 60 to 62 (28:30).

Structure The Book of Acts can be outlined in various ways. **(1)** Focusing on the leading figures, it can be said that chaps. 1-12 narrate the leadership role of Peter in establishing the Church, while chaps. 13-28 narrate the missionary efforts of Paul in expanding the Church. **(2)** Focusing on the central cities, the broad story of Acts stretches from the holy city of Jerusalem in the east (1:4) to the imperial city of Rome in the west (28:14). **(3)** Focusing on the geographical movement of the plot, Jesus' mandate in Acts 1:8 outlines the course of the entire book: "[Y]ou shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth." The story unfolds in precisely this way, with the apostles preaching in Jerusalem (chaps. 1-7), then in Judea and Samaria (chaps. 8-12), and then all throughout the Roman world (chaps. 13-28). Luke's open-ended conclusion, with Paul still preaching the gospel (28:31), makes the entire Book of Acts a fitting prologue to the rest of Church history.

Themes The Book of Acts traces the first thirty years of Christian history from the Ascension of Jesus in Jerusalem to the imprisonment of Paul in Rome. It is Luke's intention to continue the story of Jesus through the life and mission of his first disciples (1:1; Lk 1:1-4). Though it is also the work of a careful historian, whose accuracy and reliability are increasingly confirmed in modern research, Acts is far from being a lifeless chronicle of facts and figures. Luke has given us an artful narrative filled with inspiring heroes, moving speeches, and daring adventures. Stylistically, he combines the best traditions of biblical and Hellenistic historiography. Like the

writers of the OT, he brings out the *theological* meaning of history by taking readers behind the scenes to see God orchestrating all things to further his plan of salvation. Like the Hellenistic writers of his day, Luke also brings out the *moral* lessons of history by highlighting the particular people and events that exemplify universal moral truths. For him, the apostles and their opponents are living icons of virtue or vice whose actions encourage or discourage certain forms of behavior in light of the gospel.

Historical though it is, the Book of Acts is by no means an exhaustive account of Christian beginnings. Luke was forced, as all historians are, to be selective. So, for instance, despite the accepted title of the work, "The Acts of the Apostles", only two apostles spend significant time in the spotlight: Peter and Paul. Many scholars contend that Luke is mainly interested in the activity of the Holy Spirit. We see this from the beginning, where the Spirit descends mightily upon the apostles (2:1-4) and sends them out to evangelize Israel (chaps. 1-9) and the Gentiles (chaps. 10-28) with the good news that Jesus is risen. Thanks to the Spirit, who controls the pace and direction of these missions throughout the book (4:31; 13:2; 15:8, 28; 16:6-10; 20:23), the gospel meets with staggering success, and the Church is quickly built up (2:41, 47; 4:4; 6:7, etc.). Luke shows us that, even in the face of opposition, neither prisons (5:19; 12:7) nor persecutions (8:1; 12:1-5) nor plots (9:23-24; 23:12; 25:3) could thwart the spread of the gospel through the power of the Spirit (1:8).

Within this general focus of the book lies another reason for writing. Inferential evidence suggests the Book of Acts was also written as an apologetic defense for the apostolic mission of Paul. As one of his traveling companions (16:10), Luke knew as well as anyone that rival missionaries were busily trying to discredit Paul and undermine his authority to preach the gospel (2 Cor 11:4-6; 12:11; Gal 6:12). We learn from Paul's epistles that propaganda from these missionaries had damaging effects on some of the Churches he had established on his travels (especially in Galatia and Corinth). For skeptical opponents, it was Paul's unique status that called his apostleship into question: he was not one of the original Twelve; he had played no part in the founding of the Church; and at one time he had been a sworn enemy of the faith.

This background best accounts for the present shape of Acts, especially its later chapters. Whereas Luke could have narrated Paul's conversion on the Damascus road once, he includes three separate accounts to stress that

Paul is no missionary maverick but a chosen messenger sent by the risen Jesus (9:1-19; 22:3-16; 26:2-18). It is also notable that Luke never mentions the spread of Christianity eastward into Mesopotamia or southward into Egypt and Africa but focuses solely on the northwesterly arc between Jerusalem and Rome that formed the mission field of Paul's apostolic work (Rom 15:18-19). Most striking of all, Luke has drawn out an extended series of parallels between the ministry of Peter, whose apostolic status was never seriously questioned in the ancient Church, and the ministry of Paul:

- Both deliver inaugural sermons to Israel focusing on the Davidic covenant (2:22-36; 13:26-41).
- Both appeal to Psalm 16 to explain the Resurrection of Jesus (2:25-28; 13:35).
- Both have the power to heal cripples (3:1-10; 14:8-10).
- Both are filled with the Holy Spirit (4:8; 13:9).
- Both are renowned for extraordinary miracles (5:15-16; 19:11-12).
- Both confer the Spirit by the laying on of hands (8:14-17; 19:6).
- Both confront and rebuke magicians (8:18-24; 13:6-11).
- Both raise the dead to new life (9:36-41; 20:9-12).
- Both refuse to accept divine worship (10:25-26; 14:11-15).
- Both are miraculously delivered from prison (12:6-11; 16:25-34).

These parallels announce to the careful reader that the *power* at work in Peter is also at work in Paul, that the *preaching* of Peter is also the preaching of Paul, and that the *protection* given to Peter by God is likewise given to Paul. Together they show that Paul is equally approved by God and has all the credentials of a true apostle of Christ (1 Cor 9:1; 2 Cor 12:12). «

OUTLINE OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

1. Preface ([1:1-5](#))

2. From the Ascension to Pentecost ([1:6-2:13](#))

- A. Ascension of Jesus ([1:6-14](#))
- B. Replacement of Judas ([1:15-26](#))
- C. Pentecost ([2:1-13](#))

3. The Gospel in Jerusalem ([2:14-8:3](#))

- A. The Spirit's Descent on Jerusalem ([2:14-47](#))
- B. Peter's Ministry and First Imprisonment ([3:1-4:31](#))
- C. Donations and Discipline among Believers ([4:32-5:11](#))
- D. Peter's Ministry and Second Imprisonment ([5:12-42](#))
- E. Selection of the Seven ([6:1-7](#))
- F. Stephen's Ministry and Martyrdom ([6:8-7:60](#))
- G. The First Persecution of the Church ([8:1-3](#))

4. The Gospel in Judea and Samaria ([8:4-12:25](#))

- A. Philip's Ministry in Samaria and Judea ([8:4-40](#))
- B. The Conversion of Saul ([9:1-31](#))
- C. Peter's Ministry in Lydda, Joppa, and Caesarea ([9:32-11:18](#))
- D. Gentile Conversions in Syrian Antioch ([11:19-30](#))
- E. The Persecution and Death of Herod Agrippa ([12:1-25](#))

5. The Gospel to the End of the Earth ([13:1-28:31](#))

- A. Paul's First Missionary Journey: Cyprus and Asia Minor ([13:1-14:28](#))
- B. The Council of Jerusalem ([15:1-35](#))
- C. Paul's Second Missionary Journey: Asia Minor, Greece, Ephesus ([15:36-18:22](#))
- D. Paul's Third Missionary Journey: Asia Minor, Ephesus, Greece ([18:23-21:15](#))
- E. Paul's Arrest in Jerusalem and Imprisonment in Caesarea ([21:16-26:32](#))
- F. Paul's Journey to Rome ([27:1-28:16](#))
- G. Paul's Ministry in Rome ([28:17-31](#))

The Acts of the Apostles

Chapters

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [9](#) [10](#) [11](#) [12](#) [13](#) [14](#) [15](#) [16](#) [17](#) [18](#) [19](#) [20](#) [21](#) [22](#) [23](#) [24](#) [25](#) [26](#) [27](#) [28](#)

Essays and Charts

[Peter, Prince of the Apostles](#)

[Kingdom Restoration](#)

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

1 In [the first book](#), * O Theoph'ilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, **2**until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. **3**To them he presented himself alive after his passion by [many proofs](#), appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the kingdom of God. **4**And while staying^a with them he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the [promise of the Father](#), which, he said, "you heard from me, **5**for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

The Ascension of Jesus

6 So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time [restore the kingdom](#) to Israel?" **7**He said to them, "It is not for you to know [times or seasons](#) which the Father has fixed by his own authority. **8**But you shall receive [power when the Holy Spirit](#) has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samar'ia and to the end of the earth." **9**And when he had said this, as they were looking on, he was [lifted up](#), and a cloud took him out of their sight. **10**And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, **11**and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come [in the same way](#) as you saw him go into heaven."

Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a [sabbath day's journey](#) away; ¹³and when they had entered, they went up to [the upper room](#), where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴All these with one accord devoted themselves to [prayer](#), together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. *

15 In those days [Peter stood up](#) among the brethren (the company of persons was in all about a hundred and twenty), and said, ¹⁶"Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which [the Holy Spirit spoke](#) beforehand by the mouth of David, concerning Judas who was guide to those who arrested Jesus. ¹⁷For he was numbered among us, and was allotted his share in this ministry. ¹⁸([Now](#) this man [bought a field](#) with the reward of his wickedness; and falling headlong^b he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. ¹⁹And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in [their language](#) Akel'dama, that is, Field of Blood.) ²⁰For it is written in [the book of Psalms](#),

'Let his habitation become desolate,
and let there be no one to live in it';
and

'His office let another take.'

²¹So one of the men who have [accompanied us](#) during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²²beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection." * ²³And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthi'as. ²⁴And they prayed and said, "Lord, you know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two you have chosen ²⁵to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside, to go to his own place." ²⁶And they [cast lots](#) for them, and the lot fell on Matthi'as; and he was enrolled with the eleven apostles.

[The Coming of the Holy Spirit \[Map\]](#)

2 When the day of [Pentecost](#) had come, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly [a sound](#) came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. ³And there

appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. ⁴And they were all [filled with the Holy Spirit](#) and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

⁵ Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, [devout men](#) from every nation under heaven. ⁶And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. ⁷And they were amazed and wondered, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? ⁹Par'thians and Medes and E'lamites and residents of Mesopota'mia, Judea and Cappado'cia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phryg'ia and Pamphyl'ia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyre'ne, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and [proselytes](#), ¹¹Cretans and Arabians, we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." ¹²And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."

[Peter Addresses the Crowd](#)

¹⁴ But Peter, * standing with the Eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. ¹⁵For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only [the third hour](#) of the day; ¹⁶but this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ [And](#) in [the last days](#) it shall be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams;

¹⁸ yes, and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days
I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹ And I will show wonders in the heaven above
and signs on the earth beneath,
blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;

²⁰ the sun shall be turned into darkness
and the moon into blood,
before the [day of the Lord](#) comes,
the great and manifest day.

²¹And it shall be that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

22 "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—²³this Jesus, delivered up according to [the definite plan](#) and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. ²⁴But God raised him up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. ²⁵For David says concerning him,

['I saw the Lord](#) always before me,
for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;

²⁶therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
moreover my flesh will dwell in hope.

²⁷For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,
nor let your Holy One see corruption.

²⁸You have made known to me the ways of life;
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'

29 "Brethren, I may say to you confidently of the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with [an oath](#) to him that he would set one of his descendants upon his throne, ³¹he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³²This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. ³³Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you see and hear. ³⁴For David did not ascend into the heavens; but he himself says,

['The Lord said to my Lord](#), Sit at my right hand,

³⁵till I make your enemies a stool for your feet.'

³⁶Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both [Lord](#) and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

The First Converts

37 Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" ³⁸And Peter said to them, "[Repent, and be baptized](#) every one of you in the name of Jesus

Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For the promise is to you [and to your children](#) and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him." ⁴⁰And he testified with many other words and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from [this crooked generation](#)." ⁴¹So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. ⁴²And they held steadfastly to the apostles' [teaching and fellowship](#), to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers.

Life among the Believers

43 And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. ⁴⁴And all who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶And day by day, attending [the temple](#) together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all the people. And [the Lord added](#) to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Peter Heals a Lame Beggar

3 Now [Peter and John](#) were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. ^{*} ²And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at that gate of the temple which is [called Beautiful](#) to ask alms of those who entered the temple. ³Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked for alms. ⁴And Peter directed his gaze at him, with John, and said, "Look at us." ⁵And he fixed his attention upon them, expecting to receive something from them. ⁶But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise and walk." ⁷And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. ⁸And leaping up he stood and walked and entered the temple with them, walking and [leaping and praising God](#). ⁹And all the people saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰and recognized him as the one who sat for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

Peter Addresses the People in Solomon's Portico

11 While he clung to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the [portico called Solomon's](#), astounded. ¹²And when Peter saw it he

addressed the people, "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk? ¹³The [God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob](#), the God of our fathers, glorified his servant^c Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. ¹⁴But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for [a murderer](#) to be granted to you, ¹⁵and killed [the Author of life](#), whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. ¹⁶And his name, by faith in his name, has made this man strong whom you see and know; and the faith which is through Jesus^d has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

¹⁷ "And now, brethren, I know that you [acted in ignorance](#), as did also your rulers. ¹⁸But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should suffer, he thus fulfilled. ¹⁹Repent therefore, and turn again, that your [sins may be blotted out](#), that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, ²⁰and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, ²¹whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old. ²²Moses said, '[The Lord God will raise](#) up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. ²³And it shall be that every soul that does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.' ²⁴And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came afterwards, also proclaimed these days. ²⁵You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God gave to your fathers, saying to Abraham, '[And in your posterity](#) shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' ²⁶God, having raised up his servant,^c sent him to you first, to bless you in turning every one of you from your wickedness."

[Peter and John before the Council](#)

⁴ And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and [the captain](#) of the temple and the Sad'ducees came upon them, ²annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. * ³And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was [already evening](#). ⁴But many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to about [five thousand](#).

⁵ On the next day their [rulers and elders and scribes](#) were gathered together in Jerusalem, ⁶with [Annas the high priest](#) and Cai'aphas and John

and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. ⁷And when they had set them in their midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" ⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, ⁹if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a cripple, by what means this man has been healed, ¹⁰be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him this man is standing before you well. ¹¹[This is the stone](#) which was rejected by you builders, but which has become the cornerstone. ¹²And there is salvation in no one else, for there is [no other name](#) under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

¹³Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were [uneducated](#), common men, they wondered; and they recognized that they had been with Jesus. ¹⁴But seeing the man that had been healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. ¹⁵But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred with one another, ¹⁶saying, "What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is manifest to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and [we cannot deny it](#). ¹⁷But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to any one in this name." ¹⁸So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; ²⁰for [we cannot but speak](#) of what we have seen and heard." ²¹And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people; for all men praised God for what had happened. ²²For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.

[The Believers Pray for Boldness](#)

²³When they were released they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, ²⁵[who by the mouth](#) of our father David, your servant,^c said by the Holy Spirit,

'Why did the Gentiles rage,

and the peoples imagine vain things?

²⁶The kings of the earth set themselves in array,
and the rulers were gathered together,
against the Lord and against his Anointed'—^e

²⁷for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant^c Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. ²⁹And now, Lord, look upon their threats, and grant to your servants^f to speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant^c Jesus." ³¹And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.

The Believers Share Their Possessions

³² Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common. * ³³And with great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. ³⁴There was not any one needy among them, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of what was sold ³⁵and laid it at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made to each as any had need. ³⁶Thus Joseph who was surnamed by the apostles Barnabas (which means, Son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, ³⁷sold a field which belonged to him, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Ananias and Sapphira

5 But a man named Anani'as with his wife Sapphi'ra sold a piece of property, ²and with his wife's knowledge he kept back some of the proceeds, and brought only a part and laid it at the apostles' feet. ³But Peter said, "Anani'as, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? ⁴While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." ⁵When Anani'as heard these words, he

fell down and died. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. ⁶The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him.

⁷ After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸And Peter said to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much." And she said, "Yes, for so much." ⁹But Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Listen, the feet of those that have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." ¹⁰Immediately she fell down at his feet and died. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹And great fear came upon the whole Church, * and upon all who heard of these things.

The Apostles Heal Many

¹² Now many signs and wonders were done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. ¹³None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high honor. ¹⁴And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women, ¹⁵so that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and pallets, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. ¹⁶The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

The Apostles Are Imprisoned and Brought before the Council

¹⁷ But the high priest rose up and all who were with him, that is, the party of the Sad'ducees, and filled with jealousy ¹⁸they arrested the apostles and put them in the common prison. ¹⁹But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out and said, ²⁰"Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life." * ²¹And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and taught.

Now the high priest came and those who were with him and called together the council and all the senate of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. ²²But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, and they returned and reported, ²³"We found the prison securely locked and the sentries standing at the doors, but when we opened it we found no one inside." ²⁴Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were much perplexed about them,

wondering what this would come to. ²⁵And some one came and told them, "The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people." ²⁶Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but without violence, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people.

27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, ²⁸saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you intend to bring this man's [blood upon us](#)." ²⁹But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must [obey God rather than men](#). ³⁰The God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him [on a tree](#). ³¹God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³²And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him."

33 When they heard this they were enraged and wanted to kill them. ³⁴But a Pharisee in the council named [Gama'li-el](#), * a teacher of the law, held in honor by all the people, stood up and ordered the men to be put outside for a while. ³⁵And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you do with these men. ³⁶For before these days [Theu'das](#) arose, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him; but he was slain and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. ³⁷After him [Judas the Galilean](#) arose in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him; he also perished, and all who followed him were scattered. ³⁸So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this undertaking is of men, it will fail; ³⁹but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!"

40 So they took his advice, and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹Then they left the presence of the council, [rejoicing](#) that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. ⁴²And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

Seven Chosen to Serve

6 Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, [the Hellenists](#) * murmured against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. ²And the Twelve summoned the body of

the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. ³Therefore, brethren, pick out from among you [seven men](#) of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this duty. ⁴But we will [devote ourselves](#) to prayer and to the ministry of the word." ⁵And what they said pleased the whole multitude, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Proch'orus, and Nica'nor, and Ti'mon, and Par'menas, and Nicola'us, a proselyte of Antioch. ⁶These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and [laid their hands](#) upon them.

⁷ And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great [many of the priests](#) were obedient to the faith.

The Arrest of Stephen

⁸ And Stephen, full of grace and power, [did great wonders](#) and signs among the people. ⁹Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of [the Freedmen](#) (as it was called), and of the Cyre'nians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cili'cia and Asia, arose and disputed with Stephen. ¹⁰But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke. ¹¹Then they secretly instigated men, who said, "We have heard him speak [blasphemous words](#) against Moses and God." ¹²And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and seized him and brought him [before the council](#), ¹³and set up false witnesses who said, "This man never ceases to speak words against [this holy place](#) and the law; ¹⁴for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place, and will change the customs which Moses delivered to us." ¹⁵And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

Stephen's Speech to the Council

⁷ And the high priest said, "[Is this so?](#)" ²And [Stephen said](#):

"Brethren and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father [Abraham](#), when he was in Mesopota'mia, before he lived in Haran, ³and said to him, 'Depart from your land and from your kindred and go into the land which I will show you.' ⁴Then he departed from the land of the Chalde'ans, and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him from there into [this land](#) in which you are now living; ⁵yet he gave him no

inheritance in it, not even a foot's length, but promised to give it to him in possession and to his posterity after him, though he had no child. ⁶And God spoke to this effect, that his posterity would be aliens in a land belonging to others, who would enslave them and ill-treat them four hundred years. ⁷'But I will judge the nation which they serve,' said God, 'and after that they shall come out and [worship me in this place](#).' ⁸And he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs.

⁹ "And the patriarchs, jealous of [Joseph](#), sold him into Egypt; but God was with him, ¹⁰and rescued him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him governor over Egypt and over all his household. ¹¹Now there came a famine throughout all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction, and our fathers could find no food. ¹²But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent forth our fathers the first time. ¹³And at the second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph's family became known to Pharaoh. ¹⁴And Joseph sent and called to him Jacob his father and all his kindred, [seventy-five souls](#); ¹⁵and Jacob went down into Egypt. And he died, himself and our fathers, ¹⁶and they were carried back to [She'chem](#) and laid in the tomb that Abraham had bought for a sum of silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

¹⁷ "But as the [time of the promise](#) drew near, which God had granted to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt ¹⁸till there arose over Egypt another king who had not known Joseph. ¹⁹He dealt craftily with our race and forced our fathers to expose their infants, that they might not be kept alive. ²⁰At this time Moses was born, and was beautiful before God. And he was brought up for three months in his father's house; ²¹and when he was exposed, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son. ²²And Moses was instructed in all the [wisdom of the Egyptians](#), and he was mighty in his words and deeds.

²³ "When he was [forty years old](#), it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel. ²⁴And seeing one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking the Egyptian. ²⁵He supposed that his brethren understood that God was giving them deliverance by his hand, but they did not understand. ²⁶And on the

following day he appeared to them as they were quarreling and would have reconciled them, saying, 'Men, you are brethren, why do you wrong each other?' ²⁷But the man who was wronging his neighbor thrust him aside, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?' ²⁸Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?' ²⁹At this retort Moses fled, and became an exile in the land of Mid'ian, where he became the father of two sons.

³⁰ "Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush. ³¹When Moses saw it he wondered at the sight; and as he drew near to look, the voice of the Lord came, ³²'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.' And Moses trembled and did not dare to look. ³³And the Lord said to him, 'Take off the shoes from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. ³⁴I have surely seen the ill-treatment of my people that are in Egypt and heard their groaning, and I have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt.'

³⁵ "This Moses whom they refused, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge?' God sent as both ruler and deliverer by the hand of the angel that appeared to him in the bush. ³⁶He led them out, having performed wonders and signs in Egypt and at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness for forty years. ³⁷This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, '[God will raise up](#) for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up.' ³⁸This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our fathers; and he received living oracles to give to us. ³⁹Our fathers refused to obey him, but thrust him aside, and in their hearts [they turned to Egypt](#), ⁴⁰saying to Aaron, 'Make for us gods to go before us; as for this Moses who led us out from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' ⁴¹And [they made a calf](#) in those days, and offered a sacrifice to the idol and rejoiced in the works of their hands. ⁴²But God turned and [gave them over](#) to worship [the host of heaven](#), as it is written in the book of the prophets:

'Did you offer to me slain beasts and sacrifices,
forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?

⁴³And you took up the tent of Mo'loch,
and the star of the god Re'phan,

the figures which you made to worship;
and I will remove you beyond Babylon.'

44 "Our fathers had the tent of witness in the wilderness, even as he who spoke to Moses directed him to make it, according to the pattern that he had seen. **45** Our fathers in turn brought it in with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations which God thrust out before our fathers. So it was until the days of David, **46** who found favor in the sight of God and asked leave to find a habitation for the God of Jacob. **47** But it was Solomon who built a house for him. **48** Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made with hands; as the prophet says,

49 Heaven is my throne,
and earth my footstool.

What house will you build for me, says the Lord,
or what is the place of my rest?

50 Did not my hand make all these things?'

51 "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. **52** Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, **53** you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it."

The Stoning of Stephen

54 Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth against him. **55** But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; **56** and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God." **57** But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together upon him. **58** Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. **59** And as they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." **60** And he knelt down and cried with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said

8 this, he fell asleep. **1** And Saul was consenting to his death.

Saul Persecutes the Church

And on that day a great persecution arose against the Church in Jerusalem; and they were all [scattered](#) throughout the region of Judea and Sama'ria, except the apostles. ²Devout men buried Stephen, and made great lamentation over him. ³But Saul [laid waste](#) the Church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.

[Philip Preaches in Samaria \[Map\]](#)

⁴ Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. ⁵[Philip](#) went down to a city of Samar'ia, and proclaimed to them the Christ. ⁶And the multitudes with one accord gave heed to what was said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs which he did. ⁷For unclean spirits came out of many who were possessed, crying with a loud voice; and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. ⁸So there was much joy in that city.

[Simon the Magician](#)

⁹ But there was a man named [Simon](#) who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the nation of Samar'ia, saying that he himself was somebody great. ¹⁰They all listened to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is that power of God which is called Great." ¹¹And they listened to him, because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. ¹²But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. ¹³Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed.

¹⁴ Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samar'ia had [received the word](#) of God, they sent to them Peter and John, ¹⁵who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit; ¹⁶for the Spirit had [not yet fallen](#) on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he [offered them money](#), ¹⁹saying, "Give me also this power, that any one on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." ²⁰But Peter said to him, "Your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! * ²¹You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. ²²Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if

possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. ²³For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." ²⁴And Simon answered, "Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."

²⁵ Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

²⁶ But an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Rise and go toward the south^g to [the road](#) that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is a desert road. ²⁷And he rose and went. And behold, an Ethiopian, [a eunuch](#), a minister of Canda'ce the queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of all her treasure, had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸and was returning; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot." ³⁰So Philip ran to him, and [heard him](#) reading Isaiah the prophet, and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" ³¹And he said, "How can I, unless some one guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ³²Now [the passage](#) of the Scripture which he was reading was this:

"As a sheep led to the slaughter
or a lamb before its shearer is silent,
so he opens not his mouth.

³³In his humiliation justice was denied him.

Who can describe his generation?

For his life is taken up from the earth."

³⁴And the eunuch said to Philip, "Please, about whom does the prophet say this, about himself or about some one else?" ³⁵Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news of Jesus. ³⁶And as they went along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What is to prevent my being baptized?"^h ³⁸And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. ³⁹And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord [caught up Philip](#); and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰But Philip was found at

[Azo'tus](#), and passing on he preached the gospel to all the towns till he came to Caesare'a.

The Conversion of Saul

9 [But Saul](#), still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to [the high priest](#) ²and asked him for letters to the synagogues at [Damascus](#), so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³Now as he journeyed he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed about him. ⁴And he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "[Saul, Saul](#), why do you persecute me?" ⁵And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting; * ⁶but rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." ⁷The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing [the voice](#) but seeing no one. ⁸Saul arose from the ground; and when his eyes were opened, he could [see nothing](#); so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

10 Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Anani'as. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." ¹¹And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for a man of Tarsus named Saul; for behold, he is praying, ¹²and he has seen a man named Anani'as come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." ¹³But Anani'as answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints * at Jerusalem; ¹⁴and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call upon your name." ¹⁵But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a [chosen instrument](#) of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; ¹⁶for I will show him how much [he must suffer](#) for the sake of my name." ¹⁷So Anani'as departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came, has sent me that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸And immediately something like [scales fell](#) from his eyes and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized, ¹⁹and took food and was strengthened.

Saul Preaches in Damascus

For several days he was with the disciples at Damascus. ²⁰And in the [synagogues](#) immediately he proclaimed Jesus, saying, "He is the Son of

God." ²¹And all who heard him were amazed, and said, "Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called on this name? And he has come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests." ²²But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.

Saul Escapes from the Jews

23 When many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him, ²⁴but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night, to kill him; ²⁵but his disciples took him by night and let him down over the wall, lowering him in a basket.

Saul in Jerusalem

26 And when he had come to Jerusalem he attempted to join the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. ²⁷But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. ²⁸So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, ²⁹preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists; but they were seeking to kill him. ³⁰And when the brethren knew it, they brought him down to Caesare'a, and sent him off to Tarsus.

31 So the Church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samar'ia had peace and was built up; and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit it was multiplied.

Peter Heals Aeneas in Lydda

32 Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints that lived at Lydda. ³³There he found a man named Aene'as, who had been bedridden for eight years and was paralyzed. ³⁴And Peter said to him, "Aene'as, Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed." And immediately he rose. ³⁵And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

Peter in Joppa

36 Now there was at Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which means Dorcas or Gazelle. She was full of good works and acts of charity. ³⁷In those days she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. ³⁸Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him entreating him, "Please come to us without

delay." ³⁹So Peter rose and went with them. And when he had come, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping, and showing coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them. ⁴⁰But Peter put them all outside and knelt down and prayed; then turning to the body he said, "[Tabitha, rise](#)." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. ⁴¹And he gave her his hand and lifted her up. Then calling the saints and widows he presented her alive. ⁴²And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. ⁴³And he stayed in Joppa for many days with one Simon, [a tanner](#).

Peter and Cornelius [Map]

10 At [Caesare'a](#) there was a man named [Cornelius](#), a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, ²a devout man who [feared God](#) with all his household, gave alms liberally to the people, and prayed constantly to God. ³About [the ninth hour](#) of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius." ⁴And he stared at him in terror, and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. ⁵And now send men to Joppa, and bring one Simon who is called Peter; ⁶he is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the seaside." ⁷When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those that waited on him, ⁸and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

9 The next day, as they were on their journey and coming near the city, Peter went up [on the housetop](#) to pray, about the sixth hour. ¹⁰And he became hungry and desired something to eat; but while they were preparing it, he fell into [a trance](#) ¹¹and saw the heaven opened, and something descending, like a great sheet, let down by four corners upon the earth. ¹²In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. ¹³And there came a voice to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." ¹⁴But Peter said, "No, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is [common or unclean](#)." ¹⁵And the voice came to him again a second time, "What [God has cleansed](#), you must not call common." ¹⁶This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven. *****

17 Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision which he had seen might mean, behold, the men that were sent by Cornelius,

having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood before the gate ¹⁸and called out to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there. ¹⁹And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. ²⁰Rise and go down, and accompany them without hesitation; for I have sent them." ²¹And Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for your coming?" ²²And they said, "Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house, and to hear what you have to say." ²³So he called them in to be his guests.

The next day he rose and went off with them, and some of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him. ²⁴And on the following day they entered Caesare'a. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his kinsmen and close friends. ²⁵When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. ²⁶But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; [I too am a man](#)." ²⁷And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered; ²⁸and he said to them, "You yourselves know how [unlawful](#) it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit any one of another nation; but God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. ²⁹So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me."

³⁰ And Cornelius said, "Four days ago, about this hour, I was keeping the ninth hour of prayer in my house; and behold, a man stood before me in bright apparel, ³¹saying, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. ³²Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter; he is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the seaside.' ³³So I sent to you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord."

Gentiles Hear the Good News

³⁴ And [Peter opened his mouth](#) and said: "Truly I perceive that God shows [no partiality](#), ³⁵but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶You know the word which he sent to the sons of Israel, preaching good news of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), ³⁷the word which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, beginning

from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: ³⁸how [God anointed Jesus](#) of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹And we are witnesses to all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; ⁴⁰but God raised him on the third day and made him manifest; ⁴¹not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴²And he commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that he is the one ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³To him all the prophets bear witness that every one who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins [through his name](#)."

[The Gentiles Receive the Holy Spirit](#)

44 While Peter was still saying this, [the Holy Spirit fell](#) on all who heard the word. ⁴⁵And the believers from among the circumcised who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶For they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, ⁴⁷"Can any one forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" ⁴⁸And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

[Peter's Report to the Church at Jerusalem](#)

11 Now the apostles and the brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ²So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, [the circumcision party](#) criticized him, ³saying, "Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?" ⁴But Peter began and explained to them in order: ⁵"I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, something descending, like a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came down to me. ⁶Looking at it closely I observed animals and beasts of prey and reptiles and birds of the air. ⁷And I heard a voice saying to me, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.' ⁸But I said, 'No, Lord; for nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' ⁹But the voice answered a second time from heaven, 'What God has cleansed you must not call common.' ¹⁰This happened three times, and all was drawn up again into heaven. ¹¹At that very moment three men arrived at the house in which we

were, sent to me from Caesare'a. ¹²And the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction. These six brethren also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. ¹³And he told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, 'Send to Joppa and bring Simon called Peter; ¹⁴he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.' ¹⁵As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. ¹⁶And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, 'John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷If then God gave [the same gift](#) to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?" ¹⁸When they heard this they were silenced. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted [repentance unto life](#)."

The Church in Antioch

¹⁹ Now [those who were scattered](#) because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as [Phoen'cia and Cyprus and Antioch](#), speaking the word to none except Jews. ²⁰But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and [Cyre'ne](#), who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Greeksⁱ also, preaching the Lord Jesus. ²¹And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number that believed turned to the Lord. ²²News of this came to the ears of the Church in [Jerusalem](#), and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad; and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose; ²⁴for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a large company was added to the Lord. ²⁵So Barnabas went to Tarsus to [look for Saul](#); ²⁶and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with^j the Church, and taught a large company of people; and in Antioch the disciples were for the first time called [Christians](#).

²⁷ Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸And one of them named [Ag'abus](#) stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world; and this took place in the days of Claudius. ²⁹And the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send [relief to the brethren](#) who lived in Judea; ³⁰and they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

James Killed and Peter Imprisoned by Herod

12 [About](#) that time [Herod the king](#) laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the Church. * ²He killed [James](#) the brother of John with the sword; ³and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of [Unleavened Bread](#). ⁴And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to [four squads](#) of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people. ⁵So Peter was kept in prison; [but earnest prayer](#) for him was made to God by the Church.

[An Angel Rescues Peter from Prison](#)

6 The very night when Herod was about to bring him out, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, [bound with two chains](#), and sentries before the door were guarding the prison; ⁷and behold, an angel of the Lord appeared, and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his hands. ⁸And the angel said to him, "Dress yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me." ⁹And he went out and followed him; he did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened to them of its own accord, and they went out and passed on through one street; and immediately the angel left him. ¹¹And Peter came to himself, and said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."

12 When he realized this, he went to [the house of Mary](#), the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. ¹³And when he knocked at the door of the gateway, a maid named Rhoda came to answer. ¹⁴Recognizing Peter's voice, in her joy she did not open the gate but ran in and told that Peter was standing at the gate. ¹⁵They said to her, "You are mad." But she insisted that it was so. They said, "It is [his angel!](#)" ¹⁶But Peter continued knocking; and when they opened, they saw him and were amazed. ¹⁷But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, "Tell this to [James](#) and to the brethren." Then he departed and went to another place.

18 Now when day came, there was no small stir among the soldiers over what had become of Peter. **19** And when Herod had sought for him and could not find him, he examined the sentries and ordered that they should be [put to death](#). Then he went down from Judea to Caesare'a, and remained there.

The Death of Herod

20 Now Herod was angry with the people of [Tyre and Si'don](#); and they came to him in a body, and having persuaded Blastus, the king's chamberlain, they asked for peace, because their country depended on the king's country for food. **21** On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and made an oration to them. **22** And the people shouted, "The voice of a god, and not of man!" **23** Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give God the glory; and he was [eaten by worms](#) and died.

24 But the word of God grew and multiplied.

25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from^k Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, bringing with them John whose other name was Mark.

Barnabas and Saul Commissioned

13 Now in the Church at Antioch there were [prophets and teachers](#), Barnabas, Symeon who was called Ni'ger, Lucius of Cyre'ne, Man'a-en a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. **2** While they were [worshiping](#) the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." **3** Then after [fasting and praying](#) they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

The Apostles Preach in Cyprus

4 So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, [they went down to Seleu'cia](#); and from there they [sailed to Cyprus](#). **5** When they arrived at Sal'amis, they proclaimed the word of God in [the synagogues](#) of the Jews. And they had John to assist them. **6** When they had gone through the whole island as far as Pa'phos, they came upon a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet, named Bar-Jesus. **7** He was with the proconsul, [Sergius Paulus](#), a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. **8** But [El'ymas](#) the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) withstood them, seeking to turn away the proconsul from the faith. **9** But Saul, who is [also called Paul](#), filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him **10** and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all

righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? ¹¹And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and [you shall be blind](#) and unable to see the sun for a time." Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand. ¹²Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

[Paul and Barnabas in Antioch of Pisid'ia \[Map\]](#)

13 Now Paul and his company set sail from Pa'phos, and [came to Perga](#) in Pamphyl'ia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem; ¹⁴but they passed on from Perga and came to [Antioch of Pisid'ia](#). And on the sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. ¹⁵After the reading of [the law and the prophets](#), the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, "Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it." ¹⁶So [Paul stood up](#), and motioning with his hand said: [*](#)

"Men of Israel, and [you that fear God](#), listen. ¹⁷The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. ¹⁸And for about forty years he bore with [m](#) them in the wilderness. ¹⁹And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance, for about four hundred and fifty years. ²⁰And after that he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. ²¹Then they asked for a king; and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. ²²And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king; of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David, the son of Jesse, a man after my heart, who will do all my will.' ²³Of this man's posterity God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised. ²⁴Before his coming John had preached a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. ²⁵And as John was finishing his course, he said, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but after me one is coming, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.'

26 "Brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you that fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation. ²⁷For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets which are read every sabbath,

fulfilled these by condemning him. ²⁸Though they could charge him with nothing deserving death, yet they asked Pilate to have him killed. ²⁹And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a tomb. ³⁰But God raised him from the dead; ³¹and for many days he appeared to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. ³²And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, ³³this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus; as also it is written in [the second psalm](#),

'You are my Son,
today I have begotten you.'

³⁴And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, [he spoke in this way](#),

'I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.'

³⁵Therefore he says also in another psalm,

'You will not let your Holy One see corruption.'

³⁶For David, after he had served the counsel of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid with his fathers, and saw corruption; ³⁷but he whom God raised up saw no corruption. ³⁸Let it be known to you therefore, brethren, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, ³⁹and by him every one that believes is freed from everything from which you could not be [freed](#) by the law of Moses. ⁴⁰Beware, therefore, lest there come upon you what is said in the prophets:

⁴¹[Behold, you scoffers](#), and wonder, and perish;

for I do a deed in your days,

a deed you will never believe, if one declares it to you.' "

⁴² As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next sabbath. ⁴³And when the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.

⁴⁴ The next sabbath almost the whole city gathered together to hear the word of God. ⁴⁵But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with jealousy, and contradicted what was spoken by Paul, and reviled him. ⁴⁶And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken [first to you](#). Since you thrust it from you, and

judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.
⁴⁷For so the Lord has commanded us, saying,

'I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles,

that you may bring salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth.' "

48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of God; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. ⁴⁹And the word of the Lord spread throughout all the region. ⁵⁰But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. ⁵¹But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and went to Ico'nium. ⁵²And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Paul and Barnabas in Iconium

14 Now at Ico'nium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue, and so spoke that a great company believed, both of Jews and of Greeks. ²But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren. ³So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. ⁴But the people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles. ⁵When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to molest them and to stone them, ⁶they learned of it and fled to Lystra and Der'be, cities of Lycao'nia, and to the surrounding country; ⁷and there they preached the gospel.

Paul and Barnabas in Lystra and Derbe

8 Now at Lystra there was a man sitting, who could not use his feet; he was a cripple from birth, who had never walked. ⁹He listened to Paul speaking; and Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, ¹⁰said in a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he sprang up and walked. ¹¹And when the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycao'nian, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" ¹²Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, because he was the chief speaker, they called Hermes. ¹³And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the people. ¹⁴But when the

apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they [tore their garments](#) and rushed out among the multitude, crying, ¹⁵"Men, why are you doing this? [We also are men](#), of like nature with you, and bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. ¹⁶In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways; ¹⁷yet he did not leave himself without [witness](#), for he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." ¹⁸With these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them.

¹⁹ But Jews came there from Antioch and Ico'nium; and having persuaded the people, [they stoned Paul](#) and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. ²⁰But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city; and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to [Derbe](#). ²¹When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Ico'nium and to Antioch, ²²strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying that through [many tribulations](#) we must enter the kingdom of God. ²³And when they had [appointed](#) elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they believed.

[The Return to Antioch in Syria](#)

²⁴ Then they passed through Pisid'ia, and came to Pamphyl'ia. ²⁵And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attali'a; ²⁶and from there they [sailed to Antioch](#), where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled. ²⁷And when they arrived, they gathered the Church together and declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. ²⁸And they remained no little time with the disciples.

[The Council at Jerusalem](#)

¹⁵ But [some men](#) came down from Judea and were teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, [you cannot be saved](#)." ²And when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were [appointed to go up](#) to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question. ³So, being sent on their way by the Church, they passed

through both Phoenicia and Samaria, reporting the conversion of the Gentiles, and they gave great joy to all the brethren. ⁴When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the Church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them. ⁵But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up, and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep [the law of Moses](#)."

⁶ The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter. ⁷And after there had been much debate, [Peter rose and said to them](#), "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. ⁸And God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us; ⁹and he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith. ¹⁰Now therefore why do you make trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? ¹¹But [we believe](#) that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

¹² And all the assembly kept silence; and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. ¹³After they finished speaking, [James](#) replied, "Brethren, listen to me. ¹⁴[Symeon](#) has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. ¹⁵And with this the words of the prophets agree, as it is written,

¹⁶'After this [I will return](#),

and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen;

I will rebuild its ruins,

and I will set it up,

¹⁷that the rest of men may seek the Lord,

and all the Gentiles who are called by my name,

¹⁸says the Lord, who has made these things known from of old.'

¹⁹Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, ²⁰but should [write to them](#) to abstain from the pollutions of idols and from unchastity and from what is strangled^u and from blood. ²¹For from early generations Moses has had in every city those who preach him, for he is read every sabbath in the synagogues."

The Council's Letter to the Gentile Believers

22 Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole Church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent [Judas called Barsab'bas, and Silas](#), leading men among the brethren, ²³with the following letter: "The brethren, both the apostles and the elders, to the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cili'cia, greeting. ²⁴Since we have heard that some persons from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions, ²⁵it has seemed good to us in assembly to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, ²⁶men who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. ²⁸For it has seemed good to [the Holy Spirit](#) and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: ²⁹that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangledⁿ and from unchastity. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell."

30 So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. ³¹And when they read it, they rejoiced at the exhortation. ³²And Judas and Silas, who were themselves [prophets](#), exhorted the brethren with many words and strengthened them. ³³And after they had spent some time, they were sent off in peace by the brethren to those who had sent them.^o ³⁵But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

Paul and Barnabas Separate

36 And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Come, [let us return and visit](#) the brethren in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are." ³⁷And Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. ³⁸But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphyl'ia, and had not gone with them to the work. ³⁹And there arose [a sharp contention](#), so that they separated from each other; Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, ⁴⁰but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. ⁴¹And he went through Syria and Cili'cia, strengthening the churches.

Timothy Accompanies Paul and Silas

16 And he came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer; but his father was a Greek. ²He was well spoken of by the brethren at Lystra and Ico'nium. ³Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews that were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. ⁴As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions which had been reached by the apostles and elders who were at Jerusalem. ⁵So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.

Paul's Vision of the Man of Macedonia

6 And they went through the region of Phry'gia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. ⁷And when they had come opposite My'sia, they attempted to go into Bithyn'ia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; ⁸so, passing by My'sia, they went down to Troas. ⁹And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing pleading with him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. *

The Conversion of Lydia and Her Household

11 Setting sail therefore from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Sam'othrace, and the following day to Ne-ap'olis, ¹²and from there to Philip'pi, which is the leading city of the district^x of Macedonia, and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days; ¹³and on the sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; * and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. ¹⁴One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyati'ra, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to listen to what was said by Paul. ¹⁵And when she was baptized, with her household, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

Paul and Silas Beaten and Imprisoned

16 As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by

soothsaying. ¹⁷She followed Paul and us, crying, "These men are [servants of the Most High](#) God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." ¹⁸And this she did for many days. But Paul was annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I charge you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour.

¹⁹ But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the rulers; ²⁰and when they had brought them to the [magistrates](#) they said, "These men are Jews and they are disturbing our city. ²¹They advocate customs which it is not lawful for us Romans to accept or practice." ²²The crowd joined in attacking them; and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to [beat them with rods](#). ²³And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely. ²⁴Having received this charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

²⁵ But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, ²⁶and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and every one's chains were unfastened. ²⁷When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about [to kill himself](#), supposing that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." ²⁹And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, ³⁰and brought them out and said, "Men, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹And they said, "[Believe in the Lord Jesus](#), and you will be saved, you and your household." ³²And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in his house. ³³And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their wounds, and he was baptized at once, with all his family. ³⁴Then he brought them up into his house, and set food before them; and he rejoiced with all his household that he had believed in God.

³⁵ But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, "Let those men go." ³⁶And the jailer reported the words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go; now therefore come out and go in peace." ³⁷But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are [Roman citizens](#), and have thrown us into

prison; and do they now cast us out secretly? No! let them come themselves and take us out." ³⁸The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens; ³⁹so they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city. ⁴⁰So they went out of the prison, and visited Lydia; and when they had seen [the brethren](#), they exhorted them and departed.

[The Uproar in Thessalonica \[Map\]](#)

17 Now when they had passed through Amphip'olis and Apollo'nia, they came to [Thessaloni'ca](#), where there was a synagogue of the Jews. ²And Paul went in, as was [his custom](#), and for three weeks^p he argued with them from the Scriptures, ³explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ." ⁴And some of them were persuaded, and joined Paul and Silas; as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. ⁵But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked fellows of the rabble, they gathered a crowd, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of [Jason](#), seeking to bring them out to the people. ⁶And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brethren before the city authorities, crying, "These men who have turned [the world upside down](#) have come here also, ⁷and Jason has received them; and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is [another king](#), Jesus." ⁸And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard this. ⁹And when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

[Paul and Silas in Beroea](#)

10 The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to [Beroe'a](#); and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. ¹¹Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessaloni'ca, for they received the word with all eagerness, [examining the Scriptures](#) daily to see if these things were so. ¹²Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men. ¹³But when the Jews of Thessaloni'ca learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Beroe'a also, they came there too, stirring up and inciting the crowds. ¹⁴Then the brethren immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea, but [Silas and Timothy remained](#) there. ¹⁵Those who conducted Paul brought

him as far as Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed.

Paul in Athens

16 Now while Paul was waiting for them at [Athens](#), his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷So he argued in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the market place every day with those who chanced to be there. ¹⁸Some also of the [Epicurean](#) and Stoic philosophers met him. And some said, "What would this babbler say?" Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities"—because he preached Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹And they took hold of him and brought him to [the Are-op'agus](#), saying, "May we know what this new teaching is which you present? ²⁰For you bring some strange things to our ears; we wish to know therefore what these things mean." ²¹Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

22 So Paul, standing in the middle of the Are-op'agus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. ²³For as I passed along, and observed [the objects of your worship](#), I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by man, ²⁵nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything. ²⁶And he made from one [every nation of men](#) to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation, ²⁷that [they should seek God](#), in the hope that they might feel after him and find him. Yet he is not far from each one of us, ²⁸for

['In him we live and move and have our being'](#);

as even some of your poets have said,

'For we are indeed his offspring.'

²⁹Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the Deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man. ³⁰The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent, ³¹because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead."

32 Now when they heard of [the resurrection](#) of the dead, some mocked; but others said, "We will hear you again about this." 33 So Paul went out from among them. 34 But some men joined him and believed, among them [Dionys'ius](#) the Are-op'agite and a woman named Dam'aris and others with them.

Paul in Corinth

18 After this he left Athens and went to [Corinth](#). 2 And he found a Jew named [Aqui'la](#), a native of Pontus, lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them; 3 and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them, and they worked, for by trade they were tentmakers. 4 And he argued in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks.

5 When [Silas and Timothy](#) arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with preaching, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. 6 And when they opposed and reviled him, he [shook out his garments](#) and said to them, "Your blood be upon your heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." 7 And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titus⁴ Justus, [a worshiper of God](#); his house was next door to the synagogue. 8 Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with all his household; and many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized. 9 And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent; 10 for [I am with you](#), and no man shall attack you to harm you; for I have many people in this city." 11 And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

12 But when [Gallio](#) was proconsul of Acha'ia, the Jews made a united attack upon Paul and brought him before the tribunal, 13 saying, "This man is persuading men to worship God [contrary to the law](#)." 14 But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, I should have reason to bear with you, O Jews; 15 but since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves; I refuse to be a judge of these things." 16 And he drove them from the tribunal. 17 And they all seized [Sos'thenes](#), the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to this.

Paul's Return to Antioch

18 After this Paul stayed many days longer, and then took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. At [Cen'chre-ae](#) he cut his hair, for he had a vow. ¹⁹And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there; but he himself went into the synagogue and argued with the Jews. ²⁰When they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined; ²¹but on taking leave of them he said, "I will return to you if God wills," and he set sail from Ephesus.

22 When he had landed at Caesarea, [he went up](#) and greeted the Church, and then went down to Antioch. ²³After spending some time there [he departed and went](#) from place to place through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

Ministry of Apollos

24 Now a Jew named [Apollos](#), a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, well versed in the Scriptures. ²⁵He had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶He began to speak boldly in the synagogue; but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him and expounded to him [the way](#) of God more accurately. ²⁷And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him, and wrote to the disciples to receive him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, ²⁸for he powerfully confuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

Paul in Ephesus

19 While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to [Ephesus](#). There he found some disciples. ²And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have [never even heard](#) that there is a Holy Spirit." ³And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism." ⁴And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." ⁵On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶And when Paul had [laid his hands](#) upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. ⁷There were about twelve of them in all.

8 And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, arguing and pleading about the kingdom of God; ⁹but when some were

stubborn and disbelieved, speaking evil of [the Way](#) before the congregation, he withdrew from them, taking the disciples with him, and argued daily in the hall of Tyran'nus.^r ¹⁰This continued for [two years](#), so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

[The Sons of Sceva](#)

11 And God did [extraordinary miracles](#) by the hands of Paul, ¹²so that handkerchiefs or aprons were carried away from his body to the sick, and diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. ¹³Then some of the itinerant [Jewish exorcists](#) undertook to pronounce the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." ¹⁴Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named [Sceva](#) were doing this. ¹⁵But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" ¹⁶And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, mastered all of them, and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. ¹⁷And this became known to all residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks; and fear fell upon them all; and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled. ¹⁸Many also of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. ¹⁹And a number of those who practiced magic arts brought their books together and [burned them](#) in the sight of all; and they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. ²⁰So the word of the Lord grew and prevailed mightily.

[The Riot in Ephesus](#)

21 Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Acha'ia and go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, [I must also see Rome](#)." ²²And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Eras'tus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.

23 About that time there arose no little stir concerning [the Way](#). ²⁴For a man named Deme'trius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of [Ar'temis](#), brought no little business to the craftsmen. ²⁵These he gathered together, with the workmen of like occupation, and said, "Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. ²⁶And you see and hear that not only at Ephesus but almost throughout all Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable company of people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. ²⁷And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Ar'temis

may count for nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship."

28 When they heard this they were enraged, and cried out, "Great is Ar'temis of the Ephesians!" 29 So the city was filled with the confusion; and they rushed together into [the theater](#), dragging with them Ga'ius and Aristar'chus, Macedonians who were Paul's companions in travel. 30 Paul wished to go in among the crowd, but the disciples would not let him; 31 some of the A'si-archs also, who were friends of his, sent to him and begged him not to venture into the theater. 32 Now some cried one thing, some another; for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. 33 Some of the crowd prompted [Alexander](#), whom the Jews had put forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand, wishing to make a defense to the people. 34 But when they recognized that he was a Jew, for about two hours they all with one voice cried out, "Great is Ar'temis of the Ephesians!" And when the [town clerk](#) had quieted the crowd, he said, "Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple keeper of the great Ar'temis, and of the sacred stone * that fell from the sky? s 36 Seeing then that these things cannot be contradicted, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash. 37 For you have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess. 38 If therefore Deme'trius and the craftsmen with him have a complaint against any one, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls; let them bring charges against one another. 39 But if you seek anything further,† it shall be settled in the regular assembly. 40 For we are in danger of being [charged with rioting](#) today, there being no cause that we can give to justify this commotion." 41 And when he had said this, he dismissed the assembly.

Paul Goes to Macedonia and Greece

20 After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples and having exhorted them took leave of them and [departed for Macedonia](#). 2 When he had gone through these parts and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece. 3 There he spent three months, and when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he determined to return through Macedonia. 4 Sop'ater of Beroe'a, the son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalo' nians, Aristar'chus and Secun'dus; and Ga'ius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tych'icus and

Troph'imus. ⁵These went on and were [waiting for us](#) at Troas, ⁶but we sailed away from Philip'pi after the days of [Unleavened Bread](#), and in five days we came to them at Troas, where we stayed for seven days.

[Paul Preaches and Heals Eutychus in Troas \[Map\]](#)

7 On the [first day of the week](#), when we were gathered together to break bread, ^{*} Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day; and he prolonged his speech until midnight. ⁸There were many lights in the upper chamber where we were gathered. ⁹And a young man named Eu'tychus was sitting in the window. He sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer; and being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. ¹⁰But Paul went down and [bent over him](#), and embracing him said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him." ¹¹And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed. ¹²And they took the lad away alive, and were not a little comforted.

¹³ But going ahead to the ship, we set sail for Assos, [intending to take Paul](#) aboard there; for so he had arranged, intending himself to go by land. ¹⁴And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene. ¹⁵And sailing from there we came the following day opposite Chi'os; the next day we touched at Sa'mos; and ^u the day after that we came to Mile'tus. ¹⁶For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of [Pentecost](#).

[Paul Speaks to the Elders of Ephesus](#)

¹⁷ And from Mile'tus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the Church. ¹⁸And when they came to him, [he said to them](#):

"You yourselves know how I lived among you all the time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹servicing the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which befell me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance to God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. ²²And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, bound in the Spirit, not knowing what shall befall me there; ²³except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. ²⁴But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may

accomplish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵And now, behold, I know that all you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will see my face no more. ²⁶Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, ²⁷for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you guardians, to feed the Church of the Lord^v which he obtained with his own blood.^w ²⁹I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. ³²And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities, and to those who were with me. * ³⁵In all things I have shown you that by so toiling one must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

³⁶ And when he had spoken thus, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷And they all wept and embraced Paul and kissed him, ³⁸sorrowing most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they should see his face no more. And they brought him to the ship.

Paul's Journey to Jerusalem

²¹ And when we had parted from them and set sail, we came by a straight course to Cos, and the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Pat'ara.^x ²And having found a ship crossing to Phoeni'cia, we went aboard, and set sail. ³When we had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left we sailed to Syria, and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload its cargo. ⁴And having sought out the disciples, we stayed there for seven days. Through the Spirit they told Paul not to go * on to Jerusalem. ⁵And when our days there were ended, we departed and went on our journey; and they all, with wives and children, brought us on our way till we were outside the city; and kneeling down on the beach we prayed and bade one another farewell. ⁶Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home.

7 When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at [Ptolema'is](#); and we greeted the brethren and stayed with them for one day. ⁸The next day we departed and came to [Caesare'a](#); and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. ⁹And he had four unmarried daughters, who prophesied. ¹⁰While we were staying for some days, a prophet named [Ag'abus](#) came down from Judea. ¹¹And coming to us he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.' " ¹²When we heard this, we and the people there begged him not to go up to Jerusalem. ¹³Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but [even to die](#) at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." ¹⁴And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, "The will of the Lord be done."

¹⁵After these days we made ready and went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁶And some of the disciples from Caesare'a went with us, bringing us to the house of Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we should lodge.

[Paul Visits James at Jerusalem](#)

¹⁷When we had come to [Jerusalem](#), the brethren received us gladly. ¹⁸On the following day Paul went in with us to [James](#); and all the elders were present. ¹⁹After greeting them, he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. ²⁰And when they heard it, they glorified God. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how [many thousands](#) there are among the Jews of those who have believed; they are all zealous for the law, ²¹and they have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to [forsake Moses](#), telling them not to circumcise their children or observe the customs. ²²What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. ²³Do therefore what we tell you. We have four men who are [under a vow](#); ²⁴take these men and purify yourself along with them and pay their expenses, so that they may shave their heads. Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you but that you yourself live in observance of the law. ²⁵But as for the Gentiles who have believed, we have [sent a letter](#) with our judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled^y and from unchastity." ²⁶Then Paul took the men, and the next day he purified himself with them and went

into the temple, to give notice when the days of purification would be fulfilled and the offering presented for every one of them.

Paul Arrested in the Temple

27 When the seven days were almost completed, the [Jews from Asia](#), who had seen him in the temple, stirred up all the crowd, and laid hands on him, ²⁸crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who is teaching men everywhere [against the people and the law and this place](#); moreover he also brought Greeks into the temple, and he has defiled this holy place." ²⁹For they had previously seen Troph'imus the Ephesian with him in the city, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. ³⁰Then all the city was aroused, and the people ran together; they seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and at once the gates were shut. ³¹And as they were trying to kill him, word came to the [tribune of the cohort](#) that all Jerusalem was in confusion. ³²He at once took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them; and when they saw the tribune and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. ³³Then the tribune came up and [arrested him](#), and ordered him to be bound with two chains. He inquired who he was and what he had done. ³⁴Some in the crowd shouted one thing, some another; and as he could not learn the facts because of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks. ³⁵And when he came to the steps, he was actually carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the crowd; ³⁶for the mob of the people followed, crying, "[Away with him!](#)"

Paul Defends Himself

37 As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the tribune, "May I say something to you?" And he said, "Do [you know Greek?](#)" ³⁸Are you not the Egyptian, then, who recently stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of [the Assassins](#) out into the wilderness?" ³⁹Paul replied, "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cili'cia, a citizen of no mean city; I beg you, let me speak to the people." ⁴⁰And when he had given him leave, Paul, standing on the steps, motioned with his hand to the people; and when there was a great hush, he spoke to them in [the Hebrew language](#), saying:

22 "Brethren and fathers, [hear the defense](#) which I now make before you."

2 And when they heard that he addressed them in the Hebrew language, they were the more quiet. And he said:

3 "[I am a Jew](#), born at Tarsus in Cili'cia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gama'li-el, educated according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as you all are this day. 4I persecuted [this Way](#) to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, 5as the high priest and the whole council of elders bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brethren, and I journeyed to Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished.

Paul Tells of His Conversion

6 "As I made my journey and [drew near to Damascus](#), about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone about me. 7And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' 8And I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you are persecuting.' 9Now those who were with me saw the light but did not hear the voice of the one who was speaking to me. 10And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do.' 11And when I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus.

12 "And one Anani'as, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, 13came to me, and standing by me said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And in that very hour I received my sight and saw him. 14And he said, 'The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see [the Just One](#) and to hear a voice from his mouth; 15for you will be a witness for him to all men of what you have seen and heard. 16And now why do you wait? Rise and [be baptized](#), and wash away your sins, calling on his name.'

Paul Tells How He Was Sent to the Gentiles

17 "When I had [returned to Jerusalem](#) and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance 18and saw him saying to me, 'Make haste and get quickly out of Jerusalem, because they will not accept your testimony about me.' 19And I said, 'Lord, they themselves know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. 20And when the blood of Stephen your witness * was shed, I also was standing by and approving, and keeping the garments of those who killed him.' 21And he said to me, 'Depart; for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.' "

Paul and the Roman Tribune

22 Up to this word they listened to him; then they lifted up their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth! For he ought not to live." 23 And as they cried out and waved their garments and threw dust into the air, 24 the tribune commanded him to be brought into the barracks, and ordered him to be examined by [scourging](#), to find out why they shouted thus against him. 25 But when they had tied him up with the thongs, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a [Roman citizen](#), and uncondemned?" 26 When the centurion heard that, he went to the tribune and said to him, "What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman citizen." 27 So the tribune came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?" And he said, "Yes." 28 The tribune answered, "I bought this citizenship for a large sum." Paul said, "But I was born a citizen." 29 So those who were about to examine him withdrew from him instantly; and the tribune also was afraid, for he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had bound him.

[Paul before the Chief Priests and Council](#)

30 But the next day, desiring to know the real reason why the Jews accused him, he unbound him, and commanded the chief priests and [all the council](#) to meet, and he brought Paul down and set him before them.

23 And Paul, looking intently at the council, said, "Brethren, I have lived before God in [all good conscience](#) up to this day." 2 And the high priest [Anani'as](#) commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. 3 Then Paul said to him, "God shall strike you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting to judge me according to the law, and yet contrary to the law you order me to be struck?" 4 Those who stood by said, "Would you revile God's high priest?" 5 And Paul said, "I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, '[You shall not speak evil](#) of a ruler of your people.' "

6 But when Paul perceived that one part were [Sad'ducees and the other Pharisees](#), he cried out in the council, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead I am on trial." 7 And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sad'ducees; and the assembly was divided. 8 For the Sad'ducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. 9 Then a great clamor arose; and some of the scribes of the Pharisees' party stood up and contended, "We find nothing wrong in

this man. What if a spirit or an angel spoke to him?" ¹⁰And when the dissension became violent, the tribune, afraid that Paul would be torn in pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them and bring him into the barracks.

11 The following night [the Lord stood by](#) him and said, "Take courage, for as you have testified about me at Jerusalem, so you must bear witness also at Rome."

The Plot to Kill Paul

12 When it was day, the Jews made a plot and [bound themselves by an oath](#) neither to eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. ¹³There were more than forty who made this conspiracy. ¹⁴And they went to the chief priests and elders, and said, "We have strictly bound ourselves by an oath to taste no food till we have killed Paul. ¹⁵You therefore, along with the council, give notice now to the tribune to bring him down to you, as though you were going to determine his case more exactly. And we are ready to kill him before he comes near."

16 Now [the son of Paul's sister](#) heard of their ambush; so he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. ¹⁷And Paul called one of the centurions and said, "Take this young man to the tribune; for he has something to tell him." ¹⁸So he took him and brought him to the tribune and said, "Paul the prisoner called me and asked me to bring this young man to you, as he has something to say to you." ¹⁹The tribune took him by the hand, and going aside asked him privately, "What is it that you have to tell me?" ²⁰And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire somewhat more closely about him. ²¹But do not yield to them; for more than forty of their men lie in ambush for him, having bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they have killed him; and now they are ready, waiting for the promise from you." ²²So the tribune dismissed the young man, charging him, "Tell no one that you have informed me of this."

Paul Is Brought to Felix the Governor

23 Then he called [two of the centurions](#) and said, "At the third hour of the night get ready two hundred soldiers with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go as far as Caesare'a. ²⁴Also provide [mounts for Paul](#) to ride, and bring him safely to Felix the governor." ²⁵And [he wrote a letter](#) to this effect:

26 "Claudius Lys'ias to his Excellency the governor Felix, greeting. 27 This man was seized by the Jews, and was about to be killed by them, when I came upon them with the soldiers and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman citizen. 28 And desiring to know the charge on which they accused him, I brought him down to their council. 29 I found that he was accused about questions of their law, but charged with [nothing deserving death](#) or imprisonment. 30 And when it was disclosed to me that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, ordering his accusers also to state before you what they have against him."

31 So the soldiers, according to their instructions, took Paul and brought him by night to [Antip'atris](#). 32 And the next day they returned to the barracks, leaving the horsemen to go on with him. 33 When they came to Caesare'a and delivered the letter to the governor, they presented Paul also before him. 34 On reading the letter, he asked to what province he belonged. When he learned that he was from Cili'cia 35 he said, "I will hear you when your accusers arrive." And he commanded him to be guarded in [Herod's praetorium](#).

[Paul before Felix at Caesarea](#)

24 And after five days the high priest [Anani'as](#) came down with some elders and a spokesman, one Tertul'lus. They laid before the governor their case against Paul; 2 and when he was called, [Tertul'lus](#) began to accuse him, saying:

"Since through you we enjoy much peace, and since by your provision, most excellent Felix, reforms are introduced on behalf of this nation, 3 in every way and everywhere we accept this with all gratitude. 4 But, to detain you no further, I beg you in your kindness to hear us briefly. 5 For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, an agitator among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the [sect](#) of the [Nazarenes](#). 6 He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him. 7 8 By examining him yourself you will be able to learn from him about everything of which we accuse him."

9 The Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that all this was so.

[Paul's Defense before Felix](#)

10 And when the governor had motioned to him to speak, [Paul replied](#):

"Realizing that for many years you have been judge over this nation, I cheerfully make my defense. 11 As you may ascertain, it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship at Jerusalem; 12 and they did not find

me disputing with any one or stirring up a crowd, either in the temple or in the synagogues, or in the city. ¹³Neither can they prove to you what they now bring up against me. ¹⁴But this I admit to you, that according to [the Way](#), which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the law or written in the prophets, ¹⁵having a hope in God which these themselves accept, that there will be a [resurrection](#) of both the just and the unjust. ¹⁶So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward God and toward men. ¹⁷Now after some years I came to bring to my nation [alms and offerings](#). ¹⁸As I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult. But some Jews from Asia—¹⁹they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, if they have anything against me. ²⁰Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council, ²¹except this one thing which I cried out while standing among them, 'With respect to the resurrection of the dead I am on trial before you this day.' "

²² But Felix, having a rather accurate [knowledge of the Way](#), put them off, saying, "When Lys'ias the tribune comes down, I will decide your case." ²³Then he gave orders to the centurion that he should be kept in custody but should have some liberty, and that none of his friends should be prevented from attending to his needs.

[Paul Held in Custody](#)

²⁴ After some days Felix came with his wife [Drusil'la](#), who was Jewish; and he sent for Paul and heard him speak upon faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁵And as he argued about justice and self-control and future judgment, [Felix was alarmed](#) and said, "Go away for the present; when I have an opportunity I will summon you." ²⁶At the same time he hoped that [money](#) would be given him by Paul. So he sent for him often and conversed with him. ²⁷But when two years had elapsed, Felix was succeeded by [Por'cius Festus](#); and desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison.

[Paul Appeals to Caesar](#)

²⁵ Now when Festus had come into his province, after three days he went up to Jerusalem from Caesare'a. ²And the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they urged him, ³asking as a favor to have the man sent to Jerusalem, [planning an ambush](#) to kill him on the way. ⁴Festus replied that Paul was being kept at Caesare'a, and that he himself intended to go there shortly. ⁵"So," said he, "let the men

of authority among you [go down with me](#), and if there is anything wrong about the man, let them accuse him."

6 When he had stayed among them not more than eight or ten days, he went down to Caesare'a; and the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought. ⁷And when he had come, the Jews who had gone down from Jerusalem stood about him, bringing against him many serious charges which they [could not prove](#). ⁸Paul said in his defense, "Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended at all." ⁹But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, "Do you wish to go up to Jerusalem, and there be tried on these charges before me?" ¹⁰But Paul said, "I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried; to the Jews I have done no wrong, as you know very well. ¹¹If then I am a wrongdoer, and have committed anything for which [I deserve to die](#), I do not seek to escape death; but if there is nothing in their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar." ¹²Then Festus, when he had conferred with his council, answered, "You have appealed [to Caesar](#); to Caesar you shall go."

[Festus Consults King Agrippa](#)

13 Now when some days had passed, [Agrippa the king](#) and Bernice arrived at Caesare'a to welcome Festus. ¹⁴And as they stayed there many days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying, "There is a man left prisoner by Felix; ¹⁵and when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews gave information about him, asking for sentence against him. ¹⁶I answered them that it was not the custom of the Romans to give up any one before the accused met the accusers face to face, and had opportunity to make his defense concerning the charge laid against him. ¹⁷When therefore they came together here, I made no delay, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought in. ¹⁸When the accusers stood up, they brought no charge in his case of such evils as I supposed; ¹⁹but they had certain points of dispute with him about their own superstition and about one Jesus, who was dead, but whom Paul asserted to be alive. ²⁰Being at a loss how to investigate these questions, I asked whether he wished to go to Jerusalem and be tried there regarding them. ²¹But when Paul had appealed to be kept in custody for the decision of the emperor, I commanded him to be held until I could send him to

Caesar." ²²And Agrippa said to Festus, "[I should like to hear](#) the man myself." "Tomorrow," said he, "you shall hear him."

Paul Is Brought before Agrippa

23 So the next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp, and they entered the audience hall with the military tribunes and the prominent men of the city. Then by command of Festus Paul was brought in. ²⁴And Festus said, "King Agrippa and all who are present with us, you see this man about whom the whole Jewish people petitioned me, both at Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. ²⁵But I found that he had done nothing deserving death; and as he himself appealed to the emperor, I decided to send him. ²⁶But I have [nothing definite to write](#) to my lord about him. Therefore I have brought him before you, and, especially before you, King Agrippa, that, after we have examined him, I may have something to write. ²⁷For it seems to me unreasonable, in sending a prisoner, not to indicate the charges against him."

Paul Makes His Defense before Agrippa

26 Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense:

2 "I think myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I am to make [my defense](#) today against all the accusations of the Jews, ³because you are especially [familiar with all customs](#) and controversies of the Jews; therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently.

4 "My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and at Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews. ⁵They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as [a Pharisee](#). ⁶And now I stand here on trial for hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, ⁷to which [our twelve tribes](#) hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king! ⁸Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?

9 "I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰And I did so in Jerusalem; I not only shut up many of the saints [in prison](#), by authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. ¹¹And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme; and in raging fury against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

Paul Tells of His Conversion

12 "[Thus I journeyed to Damascus](#) with the authority and commission of the chief priests. ¹³At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining round me and those who journeyed with me. ¹⁴And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It hurts you to [kick against the goads](#).' ¹⁵And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. ¹⁶But rise and stand upon your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you to serve and bear witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, ¹⁷delivering you from [the people](#) and from the Gentiles—to whom I send you ¹⁸to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

Paul Tells of His Preaching

19 "Wherefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, ²⁰but declared first to those at Damascus, then at Jerusalem and throughout all the country of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God and perform deeds worthy of their repentance. ²¹[For this reason](#) the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. ²²To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: ²³that the Christ must suffer, and that, by being [the first to rise](#) from the dead, he would proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles."

Paul Appeals to Agrippa to Believe

24 And as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are mad; your great learning is turning you mad." ²⁵But Paul said, "I am not mad, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking the sober truth. ²⁶For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this was [not done in a corner](#). ²⁷King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe." ²⁸And Agrippa said to Paul, "In a short time you think to [make me a Christian](#)!" ²⁹And Paul said, "Whether short or long, I would to

God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains."

30 Then the king rose, and the governor and Bernice and those who were sitting with them; ³¹and when they had withdrawn, they said to one another, "This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment." ³²And Agrippa said to Festus, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

Paul Sails for Rome

27 And when it was decided that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan Cohort, named Julius. ²And embarking in a ship of Adramyt'tium, which was about to sail to the ports along the coast of Asia, we put to sea, accompanied by Aristar'chus, a Macedonian from Thessalon'i'ca. ³The next day we put in at Si'don; and Julius treated Paul kindly, and gave him leave to go to his friends and be cared for. ⁴And putting to sea from there we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were against us. ⁵And when we had sailed across the sea which is off Cili'cia and Pamphyl'ia, we came to Myra in Ly'cia. ⁶There the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing for Italy, and put us on board. ⁷We sailed slowly for a number of days, and arrived with difficulty off Cni'dus, and as the wind did not allow us to go on, we sailed under the lee of Crete off Salmo'ne.⁸ Coasting along it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lase'a.

9 As much time had been lost, and the voyage was already dangerous because the fast had already gone by, Paul advised them, ¹⁰saying, "Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives." ¹¹But the centurion paid more attention to the captain and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said. ¹²And because the harbor was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to put to sea from there, on the chance that somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, looking northeast and southeast,^a and winter there.

The Storm at Sea [Map]

13 And when the south wind blew gently, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, close inshore. ¹⁴But soon a tempestuous wind, called the northeaster, struck down from the land; ¹⁵and when the ship was caught and could not face the wind,

we gave way to it and were driven. ¹⁶And running under the lee of a small island called Cau'da,^b we managed with difficulty to secure the boat; ¹⁷after hoisting it up, they took measures^c to [undergird the ship](#); then, fearing that they should run on the Syr'tis, they lowered the gear, and so were driven. ¹⁸As we were violently storm-tossed, they began next day to throw the cargo overboard; ¹⁹and the third day they cast out with their own hands the tackle of the ship. ²⁰And when neither sun nor stars appeared for many a day, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned.

²¹ As they had been long without food, Paul then came forward among them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me, and should not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss. ²²I now bid you take heart; for there will be [no loss of life](#) among you, but only of the ship. ²³For this very night there stood by me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, ²⁴and he said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.' ²⁵So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. ²⁶But we shall have to run on some island."

²⁷ When the fourteenth night had come, as we were drifting across [the sea of A'dria](#), about midnight the sailors suspected that they were nearing land. ²⁸So they sounded and found twenty fathoms; a little farther on they sounded again and found fifteen fathoms. ²⁹And fearing that we might run on the rocks, they let out four anchors from the stern, and prayed for day to come. ³⁰And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, and had [lowered the boat](#) into the sea, under pretense of laying out anchors from the bow, ³¹Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved." ³²Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the boat, and let it go.

³³ As day was about to dawn, Paul urged them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have continued in suspense and without food, having taken nothing. ³⁴Therefore I urge you to take some food; it will give you strength, since not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you." ³⁵And when he had said this, [he took bread](#), and giving thanks to God in the presence of all, he broke it and began to eat. ³⁶Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves. ³⁷(We were in all

two hundred and seventy-six^d persons in the ship.) ³⁸And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea.

The Shipwreck

³⁹ Now when it was day, they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, on which they planned if possible to bring the ship ashore. ⁴⁰So they cast off the anchors and left them in the sea, at the same time loosening the ropes that tied the rudders; then hoisting the foresail to the wind they made for the beach. ⁴¹But striking a shoal^e they [ran the vessel aground](#); the bow stuck and remained immovable, and the stern was broken up by the surf. ⁴²The soldiers' plan was [to kill the prisoners](#), lest any should swim away and escape; ⁴³but the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept them from carrying out their purpose. He ordered those who could swim to throw themselves overboard first and make for the land, ⁴⁴and the rest on planks or on pieces of the ship. And so it was that all escaped to land.

Paul on the Island of Malta

²⁸ [After we had escaped](#), we then learned that the island was called Malta. ²And [the natives](#) showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold. ³Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on the fire, when [a viper](#) came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand. ⁴When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer. Though he has escaped from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live." ⁵He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. ⁶They waited, expecting him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead; but when they had waited a long time and saw no misfortune come to him, they changed their minds and said that [he was a god](#).

⁷ Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island, named Pub'lius, who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days. ⁸It happened that the father of Pub'lius lay sick with fever and dysentery; and Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hands on him healed him. ⁹And when this had taken place, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured. ¹⁰They presented many gifts to us;^f and when we sailed, they put on board whatever we needed.

Paul Comes to Rome

11 After three months we set sail in a ship which had wintered in the island, a [ship of Alexandria](#), with the Twin Brothers as figurehead. 12 Putting in at Syracuse, we stayed there for three days. 13 And from there we made a circuit and arrived at Rhegium; and after one day a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to [Puteoli](#). 14 There we found brethren, and were invited to stay with them for seven days. And so [we came to Rome](#). 15 And the brethren there, when they heard of us, [came as far as](#) the Forum of Ap'pius and Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them Paul thanked God and took courage. 16 And when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed [to stay by himself](#), with the soldier that guarded him.

Paul and Jewish Leaders in Rome

17 After three days he called together the local leaders of [the Jews](#); and when they had gathered, he said to them, "Brethren, though I had done nothing against the people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. 18 When they had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. 19 But when the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar—though I had no charge to bring against my nation. 20 For this reason therefore I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is because of [the hope of Israel](#) that I am bound with this chain." 21 And they said to him, "We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brethren coming here has reported or spoken any evil about you. 22 But we desire to hear from you what your views are; for with regard to [this sect](#) we know that everywhere it is spoken against."

Paul Preaches in Rome

23 When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in great numbers. And he expounded the matter to them from morning till evening, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from [the law of Moses and from the prophets](#). 24 And some were convinced by what he said, while others disbelieved. 25 So, as they disagreed among themselves, they departed, after Paul had made one statement: "The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet:

²⁶[Go to this people](#), and say,

You shall indeed hear but never understand,
and you shall indeed see but never perceive.

²⁷For this people's heart has grown dull,
and their ears are heavy of hearing,
and their eyes they have closed;
lest they should perceive with their eyes,
and hear with their ears,
and understand with their heart,
and turn for me to heal them.'

²⁸Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen." ^g

30 And he lived there two whole years at his own expense,^h and welcomed all who came to him, ³¹preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered.

Commentary on The Acts of the Apostles

1:1 the first book: The Gospel of Luke, which has a similar but more expanded dedication (Lk 1:1-4). This link with the preface of the Gospel has a direct bearing on the composition of Acts, i.e., Luke has gone to the same painstaking lengths to separate fact from fiction in preserving the historical memory of the earliest Christians. [See note on Lk 1:2.](#) **began to do and teach:** Implies that what Jesus began to do in Luke he continues to do through his disciples in Acts. The Spirit directs this mission of the Church and is the driving force behind it (1:8; Lk 24:46-49). [Back to text.](#)

1:3 many proofs: The Resurrection of Jesus is a miracle substantiated by multiple strands of historical evidence (CCC 640-44). **(1)** His tomb was empty Easter morning (Jn 20:4-9); **(2)** he presented himself alive to the apostles and other disciples that evening (Lk 24:13-31; Jn 20:19-20); **(3)** he invited eyewitnesses to touch his risen body and examine his wounds (Lk 24:36-43; Jn 20:26-29); **(4)** he showed himself risen to more than 500 people (1 Cor 15:6); and **(5)** his appearance to the Church's fiercest adversary, Saul of Tarsus, transformed him into her most zealous apostle (9:1-19). **forty days:** A period of final instruction between Easter Sunday and Ascension Thursday. The number 40 signifies a time of preparation for the disciples, just as Jesus underwent 40 days of preparation before his own ministry (Mt 4:2). For other symbolic meanings of the number 40, [See note on Lk 4:2.](#) **the kingdom of God:** A central pillar in the apostolic preaching of Acts (8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31). [Back to text.](#)

1:4 promise of the Father: The Holy Spirit (Lk 24:49), poured out through Christ (2:33). [Back to text.](#)



1:6 restore the kingdom: Judaism hoped for a militant Messiah who would redeem Israel from the yoke of Roman oppression (Lk 24:21) and rebuild the kingdom of David that had lain in ruins since the sixth century B.C. (Mk 11:10). These political aspirations are given a spiritual fulfillment in Acts with the enthronement of Christ in heaven (2:32-36; Lk 1:32-33) and the redemption of Israel and the Gentiles in the Church (5:31; 15:16-18; CCC 439, 672). See essay: [Kingdom Restoration](#) at Acts 15. •

Two interrelated traditions echo in the question of the disciples. **(1)** The time of *restoration* evokes Yahweh's promise to reunite the tribal family of Israel in the messianic age (Sir 48:10; Jer 50:19-20; Hos 11:11). This hope is confirmed in Luke (Lk 22:30) and kept alive throughout Acts (26:6-7). **(2)** Giving the kingdom to Israel recalls Daniel's vision of the Son of man (Messiah) giving an everlasting kingdom to the saints (Dan 7:18, 22, 27). This hope is likewise confirmed in Luke (Lk 12:32; 22:29). [Back to text.](#)

1:7 times or seasons: Jesus affirms the coming of the kingdom but conceals the precise timing determined by the Father. His words imply that speculation is pointless, although the parable in Lk 19:11-27 denied that the kingdom would come in its fullness when Jesus arrived in Jerusalem at the start of Passion Week. [Back to text.](#)



1:8 power . . . Spirit . . . come upon: These terms also appear together in Lk 1:35, showing that the same Spirit who brought forth Christ in the womb of Mary is about to bring forth the Church in the world. • The wording of this promise is inspired by Is 32:15. **witnesses:** That is, to the dying and rising of Jesus (1:22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:41). The word translates the Greek *martys*, from which the English term "martyr" is derived. All the disciples in Acts witness to Christ with their words and life, while Stephen and James offer the testimony of a martyr's death (7:58-60; 12:1-2; CCC 857, 995). See word study: [Witnesses](#) at Rev 11. • The witness motif comes from Isaiah, where the people of the covenant proclaim Yahweh as the God and Savior of all nations (Is 43:10-13; 44:8). This missionary vocation of Israel to enlighten the world with the truth is now the mission of the Church (13:47). **Jerusalem . . . Samaria . . . end of the earth:** A thumbnail sketch of Acts: the gospel seizes Jerusalem (chaps. 1-7), spreads to Judea and Samaria (chaps. 8-12), and then stretches throughout the Roman Empire (chaps. 13-28). • The outer limits of the mission recall Isaiah's vision of salvation reaching the ends of the earth (Is 45:22; 48:20; 49:6; 62:11). Although writers in Jewish and pagan antiquity equated the outer rim of the world with the Atlantic coast of Spain, here the expression "end of the earth" signifies that the scope of the mission is unlimited rather than bound within geographical borders. [Back to text.](#)



1:9 lifted up: The Ascension of Jesus culminates with his heavenly enthronement at the right hand of the Father (Mk 16:19). The traditional site of the Ascension is located on the crest of Mt. Olivet, directly east of Jerusalem (1:12). Theologically, the withdrawal of Christ's visible presence from the world is not a withdrawal of his actual presence. He continues to live and work through the ministry of the pilgrim Church (Mt 18:20; 28:20; Gal 2:20) animated by the Spirit (2:4, etc.; CCC 659). [See note on Jn 14:18.](#) **a cloud:** Represents the divine presence in general (Ex 13:21; 24:16) and the Holy Spirit in particular (Is 63:11; CCC 697). • Christ's return to the Father evokes the vision of Dan 7:13, where the messianic Son of man is carried to the Ancient of Days on the clouds of heaven. Interestingly, the next time Jesus appears in Acts he appears as the heavenly Son of man (7:55-56; CCC 664). There may also be an implied link with Moses and Elijah: not only were these men speaking about the departure of Jesus at his Transfiguration (Lk 9:30-31), but Jewish tradition holds that both Moses and Elijah were taken up to heaven (Rev 11:12) and that both gave a share of their spirit to their successors (Deut 34:9; 2 Kings 2:9-12). See essay: [Jesus, the Son of Man](#) at Lk 17. [Back to text.](#)



1:11 in the same way: The departure of Jesus is the pattern and pledge of his future return. The same cloud that took him away will bring him back to retrieve the saints destined for glory (1 Thess 4:14-17). • The Church's earliest creeds affirm that Christ will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead (CCC 678-79). [Back to text.](#)

1:12 sabbath day's journey: Rabbinic tradition limited this distance to 2000 cubits, nearly three-quarters of a mile. The calculation is based on Ex 16:29 and Num 35:5. [Back to text.](#)

1:13 the upper room: Refers back to the spacious room in Lk 22:12 where Jesus celebrated the Last Supper. One of the most reliable topographical traditions of ancient Jerusalem locates the cenacle on modern Mt. Zion, the southwestern hill of the city. [Back to text.](#)

1:14 prayer: A vital expression of the Church's life and mission in Acts (1:24; 2:42; 4:31; 6:6; 9:11; 10:9; 12:5, etc.; CCC 2623). **the women:** Disciples of Jesus whose generosity helped to subsidize his public ministry (Mk 15:40-41; Lk 8:2-3). **and Mary:** The final appearance of Jesus' Mother

in the NT. **his brethren:** Cousins of Jesus once skeptical of his mission but now portrayed as disciples (Jn 7:5). [See note on Mt 12:46.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:15 Peter stood up: The leadership role of Peter in the early Church was evident from the start. See essay: [Peter, Prince of the Apostles](#) at Acts 2. [Back to text.](#)

1:16 the Holy Spirit spoke: The apostles maintained the Jewish belief that the Scriptures of Israel embodied the words of God expressed in the written words of men. [See note on 2 Pet 1:21.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:18-19 Only Matthew and Luke record traditions about the demise of Judas Iscariot (Mt 27:3-10). Matthew apparently recounts the *manner* of Judas' suicide (hanging), while Luke focuses on the *results* of his death (disembowelment). The brevity of both accounts makes it impossible to reconstruct the exact sequence of events. [See note on Mt 27:5.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:18 bought a field: Indirectly, since Judas returned the betrayal money to the Temple and the Jerusalem priests purchased the burial site (Mt 27:7-8). [Back to text.](#)

1:19 their language: Aramaic. The perspective of the author is one of an outsider and supports the traditional notion that Luke was a Greek-speaking Gentile, i.e., someone whose first language was not a Semitic language. See introduction to Luke: *Author.* [Back to text.](#)



1:20 the book of Psalms: Peter gives free quotations from the Psalter to explain the removal (Ps 69:25) and replacement of Judas (Ps 109:8). • Psalms 69 and 109 are imprecatory psalms that curse the enemies of God and Israel. In both, the righteous man groans in agony over the treachery of the wicked. Peter reads them messianically, i.e., the suffering Psalmist prefigures the suffering and betrayal of Christ by his enemies. **office:** The Greek term refers to a position of oversight and was used in early Christianity for an episcopal office or bishopric (1 Tim 3:1). • The replacement of one apostle with another is a pattern repeated in the episcopal succession of bishops from the first century to the present day (1:26; CCC 77, 860). [Back to text.](#)

1:21 accompanied us: Candidates for the vacant apostolic office had to have witnessed the full scope of Jesus' ministry (1:22). Paul was a unique exception to this rule; though an apostle, he saw only the risen and glorified Jesus (26:15-18; 1 Cor 9:1). [Back to text.](#)

1:26 cast lots: A process of selection using marked sticks or stones. It was not a game of chance but a venerated means of discerning God's will (Lev 16:7-10; Prov 16:33). It was also a means for assigning ritual duties to Levitical priests serving in the Temple (1 Chron 24:31). Matthias: His enrollment with the Eleven reconstitutes the original number of the Twelve, who represent the restored tribes of Israel gathered around the Messiah (Lk 22:30; Rev 21:12-14; CCC 765). For Luke, the main point of the election is to recover the symbolic number 12, as seen in the fact that Matthias never again appears in the narrative of Acts. Note that the Twelve belong to the period of the Church's founding and do not represent an ongoing institution in the life of the Church (no mention is made in Acts 12:2 of a replacement for the Apostle James after his martyrdom). [Back to text.](#)

2:1 Pentecost: One of three pilgrim feasts that required the adult men of Israel to travel to Jerusalem (Deut 16:16). It was a harvest festival celebrated 50 days after Passover, when the first loaves of bread from the spring wheat crop were dedicated as a firstfruits offering to the Lord (Lev 23:15-17). Over time, theological significance was added to its agricultural focus: Pentecost became a celebration of the Torah given to Israel on Mt. Sinai, with lectionary readings taken from Ex 19-20. For Christians, Pentecost celebrates the new law of the Spirit (Rom 8:2), written on the hearts of believers (Jer 31:31-34; 2 Cor 3:4-6), which surpasses the Law of Moses, inscribed on stone tablets (Ex 31:18). [Back to text.](#)



2:2-3 The sound of a mighty wind (2:2) and the visible fire (2:3) dramatize the coming of the Spirit (CCC 696). • The loud and fiery descent of the Spirit here on Mt. Zion (Jerusalem) recalls the loud and fiery descent of Yahweh on Mt. Sinai during the Exodus (Ex 19:16-19). [Back to text.](#)



2:4 filled with the Holy Spirit: The miracle of Pentecost is anticipated by isolated instances in Luke (Lk 1:15, 35, 41, 67), and its effects are noted several times in Acts (4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9). The Spirit is the founding gift of the New Covenant and the soul that animates the body of the Christian community (1 Cor 12:12-13). He directs the missionary efforts of the Church (1:8; 13:2), guides her leadership into truth (Jn 16:13), and sanctifies her life through the sacraments (2:38; 8:17; Jn 20:22-23; CCC 1287, 2623). other tongues: Foreign languages. • Echoes can be heard of the

tragedy of Babel, where God used multiple languages to confuse and scatter the family of man (Gen 11:19). Here, the Spirit uses multiple languages to communicate the gospel and gather together the family of God (2:11). [Back to text.](#)

2:5 devout men: Pilgrims staying in the city to celebrate Pentecost. from every nation: The international gathering of Jews in Jerusalem, with many accepting the gospel (2:41), foreshadows the international acceptance of the gospel by Gentiles from all over the world (1:8; Lk 24:47). [Back to text.](#)

2:10 proselytes: Gentile converts to Judaism. [Back to text.](#)



The Nations of Pentecost

2:15 the third hour: About 9 A.M. Jewish pilgrims normally fasted the morning of Pentecost, a fact that makes drunkenness an unlikely explanation for the excitement. [Back to text.](#)



2:17-21 Pentecost confirms the arrival of the messianic age. • The text for Peter's first sermon is Joel 2:28-32, which envisions an outpouring of the Spirit upon men and women, young and old, slaves and free. Signs and wonders would abound in this new age and salvation would come through the name of the Lord. Peter links the "wonders" and "signs" (Acts 2:19) with the mighty deeds of Jesus (2:22) and identifies him as the saving "Lord" (2:36) whose "name" is invoked in Baptism (2:38). It is significant in this context that Joel was speaking of the saved remnant of Israel rescued from Jerusalem (Joel 2:32). Other prophecies corroborate his vision of the Spirit poured out at the turn of the ages (Is 32:15; 44:3; Ezek 36:26-27; 39:29). [Back to text.](#)



2:17 the last days: The first days of the New Covenant overlap with the final days of the Old (Heb 1:2). • The expression comes, not from Joel, but from several prophetic oracles of the messianic age (Num 24:14; Is 2:2; Dan 2:28; Hos 3:5). [Back to text.](#)

2:20 day of the Lord: A day of divine judgment for Israel (Zech 14:1-5). [See note on 2 Pet 3:10.](#) [Back to text.](#)

2:23 the definite plan: The collaboration of Jewish and Roman authorities to execute Jesus was part of a divine program for our salvation (4:27-28; CCC 599-600). [Back to text.](#)



2:25 I saw the Lord: A citation from Ps 16:8-11. • In Ps 16 David rejoices in the Lord and prays for preservation from death. Since David eventually died, as evidenced by his tomb in Jerusalem (2:29), Peter concludes that his prayer is only fulfilled in the Messiah, who alone rose from the dead untouched by corruption (2:31). This mystery of incorruption is expressed by Jesus' rising on the third day, since Jewish tradition held

that the process of bodily decay did not begin until the fourth day after death (Jn 11:39; CCC 627). [Back to text.](#)



2:30 an oath: A sworn guarantee from God that cannot be revoked. • Peter refers to the covenant Yahweh made with David to continue his dynastic line forever (Ps 89:3-4; 132:11-12). The oath is fulfilled in Jesus, who reigns forever from the throne of David in heaven (Lk 1:32-33). See essay: [Kingdom Restoration](#) at Acts 15. [Back to text.](#)



2:34 The Lord said to my Lord: A citation from Ps 110:1, the most frequently cited psalm in the NT. • David overhears Yahweh (Lord) inviting the Davidic Messiah (my Lord) to sit beside him in heaven while he subdues his enemies on earth. This enthronement scene is the fulfillment of Yahweh's covenant of everlasting kingship sworn to David (2:30). The tomb of David in Jerusalem is evidence that David was prophesying of someone other than himself (2:29). [Back to text.](#)

2:36 Lord: A messianic title for Jesus used in the preceding citations from Scripture (2:21, 34). It was a *royal* title used for the kings of Israel (1 Kings 1:37) as well as a *divine* title used in the Greek OT to translate the name "Yahweh" (CCC 446, 449). **Christ:** The anointed Messiah. See word study: [Christ](#) at Mk 14. [Back to text.](#)

Peter, Prince of the Apostles

CATHOLIC tradition makes mighty claims for Simon Peter. It holds that Peter was lifted to an unrivaled position of honor and preeminence among the original apostles. It holds, too, that Peter was the chief shepherd and teacher of the early Church. Since these points have generated debate and even division among Christian groups, there is need to reexamine the biblical data that shapes the Catholic perspective on the primacy of Peter. Do these claims reflect the intentions of Jesus? Are they consistent with the evidence of the NT?

Peter in the Gospels Simon Peter is at once the most visible and the most vocal apostle in the Gospels. (1) When the evangelists recount how Jesus selected the Twelve, they put Peter at the top of the apostolic list (Mk 3:16; Lk 6:14), with Matthew even specifying that he was "first" (Mt 10:2). (2) When the evangelists mention the apostles together, Peter is often singled out from the group in a way that is not done with any other apostle (Mk 1:36; 16:7; Lk 9:32). (3) When the collectors of the Temple tax approached the apostles for the annual half-shekel, they approached Peter as the conspicuous representative of the group (Mt 17:24-27). (4) When Peter spoke with Jesus, he often did so on behalf of the Twelve (Mk 8:29; Lk 12:41; Jn 6:66-69). (5) Peter was one of three apostles given special attention by Jesus. Together with James and John, the sons of Zebedee, he was chosen to witness the raising of Jairus' daughter (Mk 5:37), the Transfiguration (Mk 9:2), and the agony of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane (Mk 14:33). These are also the only three disciples among the Twelve whom Jesus renamed—Simon being called "Peter" (the rock, Mk 3:16) and James and John being called "Boanerges" (the sons of thunder, Mk 3:17). (6) On the night of his betrayal, when Satan was about to test the disciples, Jesus told Peter that he had prayed for him personally that he might turn again and steady the faith of his brother apostles (Lk 22:31-32). (7) On Easter morning, Peter and John raced to inspect the empty tomb. Though John outran him, he waited for Peter to catch up and in deference allowed him to enter the tomb first (Jn 20:3-8). (8) Later that Easter day, Jesus appeared privately to Peter, making him the first witness of the

Resurrection among the apostles (Lk 24:34; 1 Cor 15:5). (9) Lastly and most importantly, Jesus made promises to Peter that he never made to any other apostle. He promised to build his Church on Peter, so that he alone would be the foundation stone of Christ's new and living Temple (Mt 16:18), that he alone would be the keeper of the keys of Christ's kingdom (Mt 16:19), and that he alone would be the head shepherd in charge of Christ's sheep (Jn 21:15-17).

Peter in the Book of Acts This prominence of Peter in the Gospels continued into the earliest days of the Church. Here we see Peter exercising a level of authority and leadership that was unmatched in the ministry of any other apostle.

1. Soon after Jesus ascended into heaven, it was Peter who initiated and oversaw the replacement of Judas Iscariot with another longtime disciple, Matthias, to complete the number of the Twelve (Acts [1:15-26](#)).
2. When the Spirit rained down upon the apostles at Pentecost, it was Peter who delivered the inaugural sermon of Church history to the throngs in Jerusalem (Acts [2:14-36](#)).
3. When the crowds accepted his testimony and wondered how to respond, it was Peter who urged them to repent and receive Baptism (Acts [2:37-41](#)).
4. It was Peter who performed the first recorded healing in Church history ([Acts 3:1-10](#)).
5. When Peter and John were arrested and asked to account for their actions, it was Peter who addressed the Sanhedrin and gave powerful witness to the gospel (Acts [4:5-12](#)).
6. It was Peter who handled the first recorded case of ecclesial discipline exercised in Church history (Acts [5:1-11](#)).
7. When the gospel first spread beyond Judea into the neighboring region of Samaria, it was Peter who brought the Spirit to endorse this new missionary development (Acts [8:14-17](#)).

8. When God arranged for the first Gentile conversions in Church history, he sent Peter to preach and administer Baptism (Acts [10:1-48](#)).

9. Lastly and most importantly, when the first recorded council in Church history convened in Jerusalem, it was Peter who stood up to end the debate with a solemn proclamation of Christian doctrine (Acts [15:6-11](#)).

The sheer breadth and depth of this evidence is staggering. In passage after passage in the Gospels we see Jesus grooming Peter for a unique mission of leadership and service. In passage after passage in Acts we see Peter engaged in leadership as a spiritual father caring for the family of faith. The testimony of Catholic tradition is thus merely an echo of biblical tradition. No other apostle appears so prominently in NT history. No other apostle receives such honors and is asked to shoulder such responsibilities. Among the apostles, only Simon Peter holds a position of primacy. « [Back to Acts 2:1](#).



2:38 Repent, and be baptized: The call for conversion is a call for Baptism, the sacrament that takes away sin and confers the Spirit (22:16; Jn 3:5; Tit 3:5). Here and elsewhere Peter insists that Baptism is the sacrament that brings us salvation (2:40; 1 Pet 3:21). • The Council of Trent (1547) describes Baptism as the instrumental cause of our justification, i.e., the means used by Christ to cleanse us of guilt, fill us with the grace of divine life, and adopt us as children of God (Sess. 6, chap. 7; CCC 1226, 1262, 1427). **in the name of Jesus:** Not a complete baptismal formula like the trinitarian formula in Mt 28:19, but a thematic expression used in several ways in Acts. **(1)** Calling upon the name of Christ in Baptism (22:16) is linked with calling upon the name of the Lord for salvation in the earlier quotation from Joel (2:28-32). **(2)** The name distinguishes the Baptism of Jesus from the baptism of John (1:5; 19:2-5). **(3)** The name of Jesus is also invoked to work miracles and exorcisms (3:6; 4:30; 9:34; 16:18). [See note on Acts 4:12.](#) [Back to text.](#)

2:39 and to your children: The benefits of Baptism are available to adults and children alike. This explains why the apostles baptized entire households (16:15, 33; 1 Cor 1:16; CCC 1252). [See note on Lk 18:16.](#) **all that are far off:** Applicable to the dispersed nation of Israel (Is 57:19) and to the worldwide family of Gentiles (Eph 2:17). [Back to text.](#)



2:40 this crooked generation: Peter indicts his contemporaries as Jesus had done before him (Lk 9:41) and Paul would do after him (Phil 2:15). • The expression comes from the Song of Moses and was first applied to the faithless generation of Israel that came out of Egypt (Deut 32:5). [Back to text.](#)

2:42 teaching . . . fellowship . . . bread . . . prayers: Essential actions of the Church's life shown forth in the believing community of Jerusalem. They held to the doctrinal catechesis of the apostles (teaching), interpersonal communion and support (fellowship), the celebration of the Eucharist (breaking of bread), and community praise and petitions (prayers). Thus, in every aspect of life, the earliest believers were united as

a family: they learned together, lived together, ate together, worshiped together, and prayed together (CCC 950, 1329, 2624). [Back to text.](#)

2:46 the temple: Continued to be a venue for prayer and preaching in the earliest days of Christianity (3:1; Lk 24:53; CCC 584). Separate gatherings for the eucharistic liturgy were initially held in private homes (20:7-8; 1 Cor 11:17-22). [Back to text.](#)

2:47 the Lord added: Because Christ is the true builder of the Church (Mt 16:18), he is credited with her astonishingly rapid growth (2:41; 4:4; 5:14, etc.). [Back to text.](#)

3:1 Peter and John: Closely associated in the writings of Luke (8:14; Lk 22:8) and John (Jn 18:15; 20:2-3; 21:20-23). **the hour of prayer:** Twice a day liturgical services were held in the Temple, at the time of the morning and evening sacrifices (Ex 29:38-39). The **ninth hour** corresponds to the evening prayers recited around 3 P.M., just a few hours before sunset and the end of the Jewish day. [See note on Lk 1:10.](#) [Back to text.](#)

3:2 called Beautiful: Probably the gate that led from the outermost court of the Gentiles into a series of inner courts where only Israelites were permitted to worship. [Back to text.](#)



3:8 leaping and praising God: The healing ministry of Jesus (Mt 11:5) continues through the apostles he has authorized to speak in his name (3:6; Mk 16:17-18). • The leaping of the man once lame is a sign that the messianic age has arrived (Is 35:6; Mal 4:2). [Back to text.](#)

3:11 portico called Solomon's: A colonnade walkway along the eastern edge of the Temple platform. It was a favorite meeting place of the early Christians (5:12), as it had been for Jesus (Jn 10:23). [Back to text.](#)



3:13 God of Abraham . . . Isaac . . . Jacob: The formula spoken to Moses at the burning bush (Ex 3:6). **glorified his servant:** The Father glorified Jesus in his suffering, dying, and rising. See word study: [Glorify](#) at Jn 17:1. • Peter identifies Jesus as the messianic Servant of the Lord, who is exalted and lifted up (in Gk., "glorified") in Is 52:13. The context of this excerpt includes the entire song of the "Suffering Servant", which runs from Is 52:13 to 53:12. It is clear by the end of the song that Yahweh glorified his Servant because he endured the rejection of his people and offered his life

as a sacrifice for sin. This prophecy is examined again in 8:32-33. [Back to text.](#)

3:14 a murderer: Barabbas (Lk 23:18-19). [Back to text.](#)

3:15 the Author of life: All creation and life comes from Jesus Christ, who created the world with the Father (Jn 1:1-4; Heb 1:2) and renews the world through the Spirit (Jn 20:22-23; 2 Cor 3:18). [Back to text.](#)

3:17 acted in ignorance: The perpetrators of Christ's death were unaware of the full gravity of their actions or the divine plan that lay behind them (Lk 23:34). [See note on Acts 2:23.](#) [Back to text.](#)

3:19 sins may be blotted out: That is, through Baptism (2:38; 22:16). [Back to text.](#)



3:22 The Lord God will raise: Peter identifies Jesus as the messianic prophet envisioned in the Torah. • Moses forewarned in Deut 18:15-19 that a prophet after his own likeness would arise in Israel bearing the word of the Lord. Failure to heed this prophet would bring a curse of destruction and disinheritance upon the impenitent. This prophecy is quoted again in 7:37. [Back to text.](#)



3:25 And in your posterity: A reference to the Abrahamic covenant ratified by divine oath in Gen 22:18. • Yahweh swore an oath to make the descendants of Abraham his chosen instrument for blessing the world. As the messianic son of Abraham, Jesus makes this promise a reality, first by restoring life to Israel (5:31; Mt 10:5-6) and then by using believers from Israel to bless the nations with the gospel (15:16-18; Mt 28:18-20). [Back to text.](#)

4:1 the captain: The head of the police force that patrolled the Temple precincts. **Sadducees:** Members of the priestly aristocracy of Jerusalem. They were fierce opponents of the apostles and their doctrine of the resurrection (23:8). See essay: [Who Are the Sadducees?](#) at Mk 12. [Back to text.](#)

4:3 already evening: The gates of the Temple were locked shut after the evening liturgy, around 4 P.M. Criminal cases, usually tried within a judicial chamber inside (or adjacent to) the Temple, could not be dealt with until the following day. [Back to text.](#)

4:4 five thousand: A growth of nearly 2,000 since Pentecost (2:41). [See note on Acts 2:47.](#) [Back to text.](#)

4:5 rulers and elders and scribes: A formal assembly of the Sanhedrin, the supreme court of ancient Judaism. [See note on Mk 14:55.](#) [Back to text.](#)

4:6 Annas the high priest: He served in this capacity from A.D. 6 to 15, at which time Roman authorities replaced him with another (Eleazar). The Jewish leadership, however, still considered him the rightful occupant of the position and so addressed him accordingly (Lk 3:2). **Caiaphas:** The son-in-law of Annas and the officiating high priest appointed by the Romans in A.D. 18 (Jn 18:13). **John:** Probably the son of Annas and the direct successor of Caiaphas. He was appointed high priest in A.D. 36. [Back to text.](#)



4:11 This is the stone: A paraphrase of Ps 118:22. • The apostles learned from Jesus that Ps 118 envisions the rejection of the Messiah (Mk 12:10-12). This tragedy is described as the builders of Jerusalem discarding a stone that God would make the honored cornerstone of a new and living Temple (Eph 2:20-22). Peter turns to this text again in 1 Pet 2:4-7 (CCC 756). **you builders:** The Psalmist's depiction of the leaders of Israel as "builders" is here reinforced by the setting: the priestly leaders of the Sanhedrin supervised the building of the Herodian Temple in Jerusalem, which was under continual construction from 19 B.C. until A.D. 63. [Back to text.](#)

4:12 no other name: The powerful name of Jesus is the focus of the entire episode (3:6, 16; 4:7, 10, 17-18). Its Hebrew form can also be rendered "Joshua", meaning "Yahweh saves" (Sir 46:1; Mt 1:21). The name is invoked in Acts to heal the sick (9:34), perform signs and wonders (4:30), drive out demons (16:18; 19:13), and administer Baptism (2:38; 10:48; 22:16; CCC 430-35, 1507). [Back to text.](#)

4:13 uneducated: Peter and John were former fishermen, i.e., men of labor, not learning (Mk 1:16-20). Even so, their bold defense of the gospel caused many to wonder and made their limited knowledge of traditional Jewish theology irrelevant (1 Cor 1:26-27). [Back to text.](#)

4:16 we cannot deny it: The standing result of the healing miracle is irrefutable. [Back to text.](#)

4:20 we cannot but speak: The apostles are compelled to witness by the power of the Spirit (1:8) and the solid evidence that Jesus has indeed risen (1:3). Even the threats and intimidation of the Sanhedrin (4:21) cannot silence them, especially since Jesus promised to help them in times of persecution (Lk 21:12-15; CCC 425). [Back to text.](#)



4:25-26 At the center of the community's prayer (4:24-30) stands a citation from Ps 2:1-2. • The Psalmist wonders at the conspiracy of rebel nations plotting against Yahweh and the anointed king of Israel, knowing that God's plans cannot be frustrated by earthly princes (Ps 2:4-9). Read as a prophecy, the psalm envisions the collaboration of Jewish and Roman authorities in executing Jesus, the anointed Messiah. Mention of **rulers** being **gathered together** also echoes the statement in 4:5, where the leadership of Jerusalem is conspiring against the apostles. [Back to text.](#)

4:27 whom you anointed: The Spirit anointed Jesus at his Baptism (10:38; Lk 3:22). [Back to text.](#)

4:29 with all boldness: The believers pray, not for an end to persecution, but for evangelical courage in the face of opposition (Eph 6:18-20; 1 Thess 2:2). [Back to text.](#)

4:31 filled with the Holy Spirit: The apostolic community relives the experience of Pentecost and is renewed in the grace and encouragement of the Spirit (2:1-4). [See note on Acts 2:4.](#) [Back to text.](#)

4:32-37 A snapshot of community life in the early Jerusalem Church. It is characterized by a selfless concern for all, an even distribution of goods, and a complete trust in the oversight of the apostles. [See note on Acts 2:42.](#) [Back to text.](#)

4:36 Barnabas: Introduced early in Acts because of his prominent role later in the book as a missionary and companion of Paul (9:27; 11:22-24). He was among the first to evangelize his native island of Cyprus in the Mediterranean Sea (13:4-12) and would return there after parting company with Paul (15:39). **Son of encouragement:** A parenthetical aside that suggests Barnabas must have lived up to the true meaning of his name. **a Levite:** An Israelite descended from the priestly tribe of Levi. [Back to text.](#)

5:1-11 The deceptive ploy of Ananias and Sapphira stands in stark contrast to the heroic generosity of the Jerusalem community (2:45; 4:32-

37). While most believers were filled with the Spirit (4:31), this couple allowed their hearts to be filled with Satan instead (5:3). [Back to text.](#)



5:4 at your disposal: Donations to the apostolic fund were voluntary, not mandatory. So the couple was entitled to retain some or all of their monetary resources, but apparently they misled the apostles to think they had donated everything and gave the false impression of being honest and generous (5:8). **not lied to men but to God:** The parallel statement in 5:3 hints at the personhood and divinity of the Holy Spirit. • The First Council of Constantinople in 381 declared that the Spirit is the third Divine Person of the Trinity, coequal with the Father and the Son. Its credal formula states that the Holy Spirit is to be "worshiped and glorified" as God (CCC 255, 266). [Back to text.](#)



5:12 signs and wonders: An expression drawn from 2:19 that appears frequently in Acts (2:43; 4:30; 6:8; 14:3; 15:12). • The same expression is a recurrent theme in the Exodus traditions, describing how Yahweh performed mighty deeds through Moses in bringing Israel out of Egypt (Ex 7:3; 11:10; Deut 6:22; 26:8). This association stands out in Stephen's speech in 7:36. **Solomon's Portico:** A covered walkway in the Temple (3:11). [Back to text.](#)

5:14 men and women: Luke often highlights the fact that the gospel claimed disciples from the ranks of both genders (8:12; 9:2; 16:1; 17:4, 12). [Back to text.](#)

5:15 at least his shadow: In the name of Jesus, the apostles displayed extraordinary power over demons, death, and disease. This was particularly true in the ministry of Peter, the recognized leader of the apostolic band (3:6; 9:34, 40-41). [Back to text.](#)

5:17 the high priest: Presumably Annas, although Caiaphas was officiating in this capacity at the time. [See note on Acts 4:6.](#) [Back to text.](#)

5:19 angel of the Lord: Angelic intervention, instruction, and assistance feature regularly in the narrative of Acts (8:26; 10:3-6; 12:7-10, 23; 27:23-24). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Church (Acts [5:11](#))

Ekklesia (Gk.): refers to an "assembly" or "congregation" of people. The word is used 23 times in Acts and 91 times in the rest of the NT. The term was broadly applied in Greek literature to several types of social or political gatherings, but more narrowly applied in the Greek OT to the worshiping assembly of Israel (Deut 9:10; Josh 8:35; 1 Kings 8:65). With the exception of Acts 19:32, this latter usage is closest to the NT meaning of the word. Jesus was the first to use a Semitic equivalent of this term for the covenant community he founded and entrusted to the apostles (Mt 16:18; 18:17). Thereafter it became the normal designation for local Churches (Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 1:2) and for the collective body of local communities that make up the universal Church (Acts 9:31; Eph 3:10; 5:23). This worldwide congregation is governed by an apostolic hierarchy (1 Cor 12:28) and is one with the assembly of angels and saints in the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22-23).

5:21 the council: The Sanhedrin, the high court of Judaism, was composed of the high priest and 70 leaders of Israel. Many of its members followed the Pharisee or Sadducee movement (5:17, 34; 23:6). Roman law permitted the court to administer corporal discipline (5:40) but prohibited it from executing a capital sentence (Jn 18:31). [See note on Mk 14:55.](#) [Back to text.](#)

5:28 blood upon us: Bloodguilt for the condemnation and death of Jesus rested on the head of Jewish and Roman authorities (4:27). Though degrees of personal and individual guilt are known to God alone, collective responsibility for this outrage was accepted by the frenzied mob in Jerusalem that coerced Pilate to have him crucified (Mt 27:24-26; CCC 597). [Back to text.](#)

5:29 obey God rather than men: The foundational premise of civil disobedience. It insists that believers cannot submit to human authorities, institutions, and laws that contradict the laws of God (Wis 6:1-3; Mk 7:8-13). Part of the Christian mission is to bring civil legislation in line with divine law and, when this proves unsuccessful, to make a courageous stand in favor of the gospel. In this episode, the mandate of Jesus to preach the

gospel (1:8) overrides the charge of the Sanhedrin to keep silent (4:18; CCC 450, 2242). [Back to text.](#)

5:30 on a tree: A reference to crucifixion, described in terms of Deut 21:22. [See note on Gal 3:13.](#) [Back to text.](#)

5:34 Gamali-el: Gamali-el I, the Elder, a distinguished Pharisee influential in Jerusalem around A.D. 20 to 50. Jewish tradition revered his memory with the honorary title "rabban" (our teacher) over the more usual "rabbi" (teacher). Gamali-el is also remembered in Christian antiquity for his moderate stance toward the apostolic movement (5:38-39) and his role as the teacher of the Apostle Paul (22:3). [Back to text.](#)

5:36 Theudas: History knows of a later Theudas whose following was crushed by the prefect Fadus between A.D. 44 and 46, but nothing is known of this earlier figure beyond this verse. [Back to text.](#)

5:37 Judas the Galilean: According to the historian Josephus, he led a violent revolt against Rome for imposing taxes on Judea in A.D. 6. His philosophy of armed resistance later crystallized into the Zealot movement, which failed to liberate Israel from Roman control in the Jewish War of A.D. 66 to 70. **the census:** Not the census ordered by Caesar Augustus in Lk 2:1 but a later registration for taxation in A.D. 6, when Judea came under direct Roman rule. [Back to text.](#)

5:41 rejoicing . . . to suffer: The apostles remembered the blessings in store for those who suffer like Jesus (Mt 5:10-12). This joyous response to persecution and affliction resonates throughout the NT writings (Jn 16:33; Rom 5:3; Jas 1:2; 1 Pet 2:19-21). [Back to text.](#)

6:1-6 The earliest Jerusalem Church was composed entirely of believers from Israel; some were **Hellenists**, and some were **Hebrews**. The Hellenists were Greek-speaking immigrants who had come to Jerusalem from various Jewish settlements throughout the Roman world. The Hebrews were Aramaic-speaking natives who lived in Palestine. Tensions eventually rose between the groups and led to discrimination and injustice against widows, who were especially vulnerable in ancient society and depended on the assistance of others for their livelihood (Deut 26:12; Jas 1:27). [Back to text.](#)

6:3 seven men: All of the names listed in 6:5 are Greek names, suggesting that the seven men were Hellenists chosen to represent the interests of their own community. This promoted fairness, inasmuch as the Greek-speaking community raised the complaint in the first place (6:1). [Back to text.](#)

6:4 devote ourselves: The Twelve continued to address the *spiritual* needs of the community by praying and preaching, while the Seven focused on meeting its *material* needs by acts of service. [Back to text.](#)



6:6 laid their hands: A symbolic gesture of consecration and commission (13:3; Num 27:18-23). • Several considerations suggest the Seven are the first ordained deacons of the Church. **(1)** The laying on of hands is elsewhere linked with the sacramental sign of ordination (1 Tim 4:14); **(2)** the men are commissioned "to serve" (6:2), which translates a Greek verb related to the noun "deacon" (Phil 1:1); and **(3)** their ministry also includes preaching (8:5) and baptizing (8:12). In Catholic tradition, the diaconate is the first level of Holy Orders and conforms the recipient to Christ the Servant (Lk 22:27; CCC 1569-70). [Back to text.](#)

6:7 many of the priests: Converts came from the priestly ranks of the Sadducees, who formed the Temple establishment, and possibly, too, from an Essene group of priests who lived in the southwestern quarter of Jerusalem. [Back to text.](#)

6:8-7:60 The ministry and martyrdom of Stephen, one of the Seven (6:5). His death was the end result of tensions that escalated from debate (6:8-10) to false accusations (6:11-14) to an eruption of mob violence (7:57-58). Luke deliberately portrays these events in terms that recall the trial and death of Jesus. Parallels include testimony from false witnesses (6:13; Mt 26:60), reports that Jesus would destroy the Temple (6:14; Mt 26:61), visions of the Son of man in heaven (7:56; Lk 22:69), prayers of surrender to God (7:59; Lk 23:46), and petitions of forgiveness for the executioners (7:60; Lk 23:34). [Back to text.](#)

6:9 the Freedmen: A synagogue assembly of Hellenistic Jews. Its founding members were probably emancipated slaves who had returned to Jerusalem from Italy. By this time it also included Jewish settlers from significant cities in North Africa (Cyrene, Alexandria) and from two Roman provinces in Asia Minor (Cilicia, Asia). [Back to text.](#)



6:11 blasphemous words: An accusation that looms large in the following episode. • It is calculated to evoke Lev 24:16, which prescribes death by stoning for the blasphemer (7:58). [Back to text.](#)

6:12 before the council: Stephen is arraigned before the Jewish high court. [See note on Acts 5:21.](#) [Back to text.](#)

6:13 this holy place: The Jerusalem Temple (21:28). Although Luke assigns the accusations in 6:13-14 to false witnesses, it is clear from the speech in 7:1-53 that Stephen was in fact openly critical of the most cherished symbols of Jewish identity: the Torah and the Temple. [Back to text.](#)

7:1-53 Stephen's defense speech rehearses covenant history from Genesis to his own generation. He stresses that much of the story of Israel is a story of stubborn rebellion, highlighting the rejection of Joseph (7:9), Moses (7:27-29), the Law (7:53), the prophets (7:52), and finally Jesus the Messiah (7:52). He also undermines Jewish reverence for the *land* of Israel and the *Temple* of Jerusalem by stressing that God has shown himself present and active in other places, such as Mesopotamia (7:2), Haran (7:4), Egypt (7:9), Midian (7:29), Mt. Sinai (7:30), and the Red Sea (7:36). The speech ends with a searing indictment of the Jerusalem court (7:51-52). [Back to text.](#)



7:2-8 A summary of the patriarchal age of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. • The biblical backdrop is Gen 12-36. References and allusions to key events in the speech include Gen 12:1 (7:3), Gen 11:31 and 12:5 (7:4), Gen 15:13 (7:6), and Gen 17:9-14 (7:8). [Back to text.](#)

7:2 Abraham: The great-grandfather of the tribal family of Israel. **Mesopotamia:** Abraham hails from the ancient city of Ur (Gen 11:31), along the Euphrates River (in modern Iraq). [Back to text.](#)

7:4 this land: Palestine, earlier called Canaan (Gen 12:5). [Back to text.](#)

7:7 worship me in this place: A promise of the Exodus (Ex 3:12). [Back to text.](#)



7:9-16 A summary of the Joseph story. It receives attention because of its anticipation of the Gospel story: both Joseph and Jesus were *rejected* by their kinsmen, *rescued* by God, and made *redeemers* of the family of Israel. • The biblical backdrop is Gen 37-47. Allusions to key events are drawn from Gen 37:11, 25-28 (7:9); Gen 41:39-44 (7:10); and Gen 41:53-47:28 (7:11-15). [Back to text.](#)

7:14 seventy-five souls: This figure follows the Greek versions of Gen 46:27 and Ex 1:5. The Hebrew OT counts only 70 persons in Egypt, possibly omitting the descendants of Ephraim (two sons, one grandson) and Manasseh (two sons). [Back to text.](#)

7:16 Shechem: According to the Hebrew OT, the patriarchs were buried at Mach-pelah (Gen 49:29-32) near Hebron (Gen 23:19), and Joseph alone was buried at Shechem (Josh 24:32). Here Stephen follows a Samaritan tradition that locates the tombs of all the patriarchs in Shechem. [Back to text.](#)



7:17-41 The central part of the speech abbreviates the story of Moses. His life prefigures the life of Jesus according to the same pattern of rejection, rescue, and redemption that also stands out in the preceding Joseph story. [See note on Acts 7:9-16.](#) • The biblical backdrop is Ex 1-32. Allusions to key events are drawn from Ex 1-2 (7:17-29); Ex 3 (7:30-34); Ex 12-14 (7:36); Ex 19-24 (7:38); and Ex 32 (7:39-41). [Back to text.](#)

7:22 wisdom of the Egyptians: The Egyptian education of Moses is unmentioned in the OT but part of Jewish tradition, possibly as an inference from his upbringing in the royal house of Pharaoh (Ex 2:10). Contemporary Jewish writers, such as Josephus and Philo, praise him as a man of great learning. **mighty . . . words and deeds:** One of the many ways that Moses prefigures Jesus (Lk 24:19). [Back to text.](#)

7:23 forty years old: Moses ultimately lived to be 120 years old (Deut 34:7), which Stephen breaks down into three equal periods of 40 years (7:23, 30, 36). [Back to text.](#)

7:37 God will raise up: A direct quote from Deut 18:15. [See note on Acts 3:22.](#) [Back to text.](#)

7:39 they turned to Egypt: The generation of Israel liberated from Egypt remained slaves of the idols they had worshiped during their stay (Josh 24:14; Ezek 20:7-8). [Back to text.](#)



7:41 they made a calf: Worship of the golden calf was the original sin of the nation of Israel, a sin that led to repeated idolatry. • Literary analysis of the Pentateuch suggests the calf episode in Ex 32 was a pivotal event that made necessary what Yahweh never desired for his people in the first place—a sanctuary cult of continuous animal sacrifice. It was this act

of apostasy that called forth an entire body of sacrificial laws and liturgies (Exodus, Leviticus) as a means of ordering the worship of Israel toward Yahweh and eradicating idolatry from the heart of the nation. Several OT texts stress that the ritual laws of the Temple are laws of secondary importance in the eyes of God (1 Sam 15:22; Ps 40:6-8; Jer 7:22-23; Hos 6:6). [See note on Mk 12:33.](#) [Back to text.](#)

7:42 gave them over: A dreaded form of divine punishment. When God surrenders sinners over to their wickedness, as he did with the Exodus generation of Israel, he allows them to follow a path that leads to destruction without deterrence or merciful restraint. The same mystery of divine discipline is described by Paul in Rom 1:24, 26, 28. [Back to text.](#)



7:42-43 Stephen quotes a Greek rendition of Amos 5:25-27. • The oracle looks back on the idolatry of Israel during the Exodus and looks forward to the exile of northern Israel for the same sin. This tragic history repeats itself in the present context: Stephen is about to warn Jerusalem that its excessive reverence for the Temple also crosses the line of idolatry. [Back to text.](#)



7:46 habitation . . . God of Jacob: Allusions to the Greek version of Ps 132:5. [Back to text.](#)



7:48 made with hands: A subversive description of the Temple (Mk 14:58) that compares it with a handmade idol (7:41). Every occurrence of this expression in the Greek OT is associated with idols and idolatry (Lev 26:1; Wis 14:8; Dan 5:23, etc.). • Israel is charged with failing to grasp what Solomon himself understood when he built the first Temple— that no earthly sanctuary could contain the Most High God (1 Kings 8:27). Centuries of devotion to the Temple led to a false perception of God and an exaggerated emphasis on the sacredness of the building itself. [Back to text.](#)



7:49-50 A citation of Is 66:1-2. • Yahweh rebukes the Israelites for their overattachment to the Temple and their presumptuous attitude toward its services. The Israelites had forgotten that the architectural Temple in

Jerusalem was only a man-made structure, far outmatched by the macrotemple of heaven and earth that God had erected with his own hand (Ps 102:25). Stephen uses the text to draw a sharp contrast between the creative hand of God (7:50) and the corrupting hands of men (7:41, 48). [Back to text.](#)



7:51 stiff-necked . . . resist the Holy Spirit: Stephen links his accusers with the long line of sinners from covenant history. • The same charges were leveled against the generation of Israel that came out of Egypt (Ex 33:5; Is 63:10). [Back to text.](#)

7:52 the Righteous One: Jesus, described as the Suffering Servant from Is 53:11. [See note on Acts 3:13.](#) [Back to text.](#)

7:53 delivered by angels: Jewish tradition based on the Greek version of Deut 33:2 held that angels delivered the Torah to Moses on Mt. Sinai (Gal 3:19; CCC 332). [Back to text.](#)

7:56 the Son of man: Jesus, depicted as the messianic king from Dan 7:13. Though normally seated upon his throne, he stands up to give Stephen a royal welcome into his kingdom. See essay: [Jesus, the Son of Man](#) at Lk 17. [Back to text.](#)

7:58 stoned him: A crude means of execution always staged outside Israelite camps and cities (Num 15:35). Although the Sanhedrin was formally prohibited from administering this and other forms of capital punishment under Roman rule (Jn 18:31), the enraged mob took matters into their own hands. [See note on Acts 6:8-7:60.](#) **Saul:** The initial appearance of Saul prepares for his prominent role later in the book as Paul the Apostle. By ancient standards, he was a **young man** between 24 and 40 years old. [Back to text.](#)

8:1 scattered: Persecution pushes Christianity out of Jerusalem and into the surrounding regions of Judea and Samaria (8:25, 40), and even beyond the northern border of Palestine as far as Phoenicia, Syria, and the Mediterranean island of Cyprus (11:19). Far from driving believers into hiding, the dispersion launches a new phase of missionary activity (8:4). [See note on Acts 1:8.](#) **except the apostles:** Jerusalem remained the center of apostolic presence and authority in the earliest years. The exemption of the apostles from this first persecution is explained by Gamali-el's advice to the Sanhedrin in 5:38 to leave the leaders of the movement alone. [Back to text.](#)

8:5 Philip: One of the seven deacons appointed in 6:5, later called "the evangelist" (21:8). Philip's successful ministry in Samaria displays the power of the gospel to make friends of enemies: many accepted his message and came to him for Baptism, even though racial and religious tensions between Jews and Samaritans could be traced back several centuries. Jesus himself set the precedent for an outreach to the Samaritans in Lk 17:11-19 and Jn 4:7-42. [See note on Lk 9:52.](#) [Back to text.](#)

8:9 Simon: Revered by the Samaritan masses as the embodiment of divine power (8:10). Beyond the narrative of Acts, Christian tradition calls him the father of heretics and the founder of Gnosticism. It is said that when Simon and his teaching eventually reached Rome, a statue was erected in his honor along the Tiber River with the inscription: "To Simon, the holy god". Luke probably included this episode to alert readers that Simon and his devotees were not approved by the apostles. **practiced magic:** This is the first of several episodes in Acts where Christianity triumphs over the magical and superstitious arts so prevalent in the ancient world (13:6-11; 16:16-18; 19:18-19). [Back to text.](#)

8:14 received the word: Samaria's enthusiasm in this episode is the mirror opposite of Lk 9:51-53. **Peter and John:** The apostles are called to examine and endorse this new development of bringing the first non-Jews into the family of faith. [Back to text.](#)



8:16 not yet fallen: A distinction is made in Acts between Baptism, which confers the Spirit in an invisible way (2:38), and the laying on of hands, which calls down the Spirit to manifest his presence in a visible and charismatic way (19:6). • In the interpretive tradition of the Church, this deeper conferral of the Spirit through the imposition of hands is linked with Confirmation, a sacrament that follows Baptism and is integral to the process of Christian initiation. As in this episode, deacons (Philip) can baptize, but it belongs to the bishops (Peter and John) to bestow a fuller measure of the Spirit on the baptized by the laying on of hands (CCC 1288, 1313). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Laid Waste (Acts [8:3](#))

Lymaino (Gk.): means to "ravage" or "bring to ruin" and is found only here in the NT. It was used in Greek literature of wild animals ravaging field crops (Ps 80:13), kings authorizing human cruelties (2 Chron 16:10), and armies devastating cities and countrysides (Josephus). Here it underscores the intensity and brutality of Saul's attack on the budding Christian movement. Saul himself, following his dramatic conversion, informs us that imprisonments, beatings, and even votes for execution were among his tactics (Acts 9:1; 22:4; 26:9-11). The point is that Saul was not merely harassing the young Church; he wanted to stamp both her faith and her followers out of existence. Years later he was haunted by these violent memories and declared himself "unfit to be called an apostle" (1 Cor 15:9) and even "the foremost of sinners" (1 Tim 1:15).

8:18 offered them money: Simon wanted to purchase the sacramental power of the apostles to confer the Spirit. He was interested, not in ministry, but in the miraculous. Simony is the sin of buying and selling ecclesiastical authority and takes its name from Simon and his self-centered motives (CCC 2121). [Back to text.](#)

8:26 the road: It ran southwest from Jerusalem to the coastal city of Gaza, one of the last inhabited settlements before the desert stretch from Palestine to Egypt. [Back to text.](#)



8:27 a eunuch: An emasculated court official, here specified as the treasurer of the Ethiopian kingdom in Africa. **Candace:** Either the name or the title of the queen mother and royal matriarch of Ethiopia. **Jerusalem to worship:** Judaism drew admirers from many places and nationalities in the ancient world. The eunuch falls into this category, but because of his physical condition he could not be circumcised, enter the Temple, or unite himself fully with the community of the Old Covenant. • Although castration was an impediment to fellowship and membership in Israel (Deut 23:1), Isaiah envisioned a lifting of this restriction in the messianic age (Is 56:3-5). The dawning of this new age in Christ convinces Philip there is no longer anything to "prevent" the eunuch's Baptism into the covenant family of God (8:36-38). [Back to text.](#)

8:30 heard him: Reading aloud was customary in antiquity. [Back to text.](#)

8:32-33 The eunuch is puzzled by the prophecy of Is 53:7 **and the person to whom it refers (8:34).** • **The passage comes** from the song of

the "Suffering Servant" in Is 52:13—53:12, which describes the rejection, humiliation, and murder of the Messiah by his own generation. In the midst of this tragedy, the Servant pours out his life willingly in sacrifice for human sin. Philip interprets the poem christologically, i.e., as a preview of the suffering and sacrifice of Christ (CCC 601). [Back to text.](#)



8:39 caught up Philip: Sudden relocations by the Spirit were also experienced by the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 18:12; 2 Kings 2:16). **went on his way:** According to the report of Irenaeus (A.D. 180), the eunuch returned home to become the first Christian to evangelize Ethiopia. [Back to text.](#)



Philip's Missionary Journeys

8:40 Azotus: Another name for the Philistine city of Ashdod, 20 miles north of Gaza. Nearly 55 miles up the coast from Azotus is **Caesarea**, the Roman capital of Judea, where Philip presumably stayed for several years (21:8). [Back to text.](#)



9:1-19 The conversion of Saul the Pharisee. Once a ruthless assailant of the Church, he became one of her most energetic apostles through a miraculous encounter with Christ (1 Cor 15:8-10). This complete turnaround of Saul's life and mission sets the stage for his leading role in the missionary campaigns of chaps. 13-28. The event is twice retold in Acts (22:3-16; 26:2-18) and occurred in either A.D. 32 or 36. • Saul stands in a long line of Hebrew prophets who saw the Lord in a vision and heard his voice sending them forth with a revealed message for Israel and the nations (Is 6:1-13; Jer 1:4-10; Ezek 1:1-3:11; Dan 8:15-26). [Back to text.](#)

9:1 the high priest: The religious leaders of Israel held sway over the synagogue communities that paid annual taxes to the Jerusalem Temple. [Back to text.](#)



9:2 Damascus: A Syrian city just north of Palestine. Saul, armed with arrest warrants issued by the high priest, hoped to drag believers from its synagogues back to Jerusalem to stand trial before the Sanhedrin. See word study: *Laid Waste* at 8:3. **the Way:** Several times this expression appears elsewhere in Acts as a code name for the early Christian movement (18:26; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). It was similarly used by the Qumran community that wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls. • This unusual title has ties with Isaiah, whose visions of the messianic age focus on "the way" of the Lord (Is 40:3). The prophet is utilizing a key term from the Exodus story (Ex 13:21) to prophesy how Yahweh will effect a new Exodus by leading his people along a new "way" from sin to salvation (Is 35:8; 43:16-19; 48:17; 51:10; 62:10-12). The early Christians adopted this title to lay claim to the promises of Isaiah and to assert their identity as the newly redeemed people of God. This new "way" of life passes through Jesus (Jn 14:6). [Back to text.](#)



9:4 Saul, Saul: The original Hebrew name of Paul (26:14). As a member of the tribe of Benjamin (Rom 11:1), he was probably named after the first king of Israel, Saul the Benjaminite (1 Sam 9:1-2). • The repetition of one's name is characteristic of divine encounters in the Bible (Gen 22:11; 46:2; Ex 3:4; 1 Sam 3:10). **why do you persecute me?:** To attack the members of Christ's body is to attack Christ himself. This mystery of baptismal union between Jesus and his followers would occupy Paul's mind for years to come (1 Cor 12:12-26; Eph 5:21-32; CCC 790-91). [Back to text.](#)

9:7 the voice: Or, "the sound". Paul heard Christ speaking words of instruction, while his companions must have heard an inarticulate rumble (compare with 22:9). For another instance of heaven speaking clearly to some and not to others, see Jn 12:28-29. [Back to text.](#)

9:8 see nothing: Saul was temporarily blinded by the light of Christ's glory. The effect of this ironically reversed his intentions: instead of hauling off Christians as prisoners from Damascus, he himself was taken captive by Christ and led helplessly by the hand into the city. [Back to text.](#)

9:15 a chosen instrument: Or, "an elect vessel". Saul was handpicked by Jesus to carry the gospel beyond the borders of Palestine. This would involve traveling missions to evangelize the Gentiles (Rom 11:13; Gal 1:16), governors and kings (13:7, 12; 26:2-23), and the sons of Israel living throughout the Roman world (9:20; 14:1; Rom 11:14; CCC 442). [Back to text.](#)

9:16 he must suffer: A prophecy amply confirmed in Acts (14:19; 16:22; 21:31) and in the Pauline epistles (1 Cor 4:11; 2 Cor 11:23-29; Phil 1:29). [Back to text.](#)



9:18 scales fell: Saul regained his physical sight and acquired a true spiritual vision of Christ. • The description may recall the temporary blindness of Tobit in the OT (Tob 11:13). **was baptized:** After three days of fasting (9:9) and praying (9:11). [Back to text.](#)

9:20 synagogues: Centers of Jewish fellowship, worship, and instruction in the Scriptures. Paul's initial preaching in the Damascus synagogues anticipated his missionary habit of using local synagogues as a platform to evangelize new territories (13:5, 14; 14:1; 17:1-3, 10, etc.). [See note on Mt 4:23.](#) [Back to text.](#)

9:23 many days had passed: Paul spent three years in Arabia before making his first trip to Jerusalem as a Christian (Gal 1:17-18). **plotted to kill him:** The conspiracy orchestrated by hostile Jews also involved the governor of Damascus (2 Cor 11:32-33). For similar escapes (9:25) from walled cities, see Josh 2:15 and 1 Sam 19:12. [Back to text.](#)

9:27 Barnabas: A Christian from the Israelite tribe of Levi. [See note on Acts 4:36.](#) **to the apostles:** Paul's first visit with the Jerusalem Church was spent with Peter and James (Gal 1:18-19). [Back to text.](#)

9:29 against the Hellenists: Paul debated with the same Greek-speaking Jews who had argued with Stephen (6:9-10). [See note on Acts 6:1-6.](#) [Back to text.](#)

9:30 Tarsus: Saul's birthplace (22:3). It was the capital of the Roman province of Cilicia (southeastern Turkey), a prestigious center of culture and education (21:39), and home to Jewish settlements dating back to the second century B.C. Saul remained in the city until he was summoned to Syrian Antioch in 11:25-26. [Back to text.](#)

9:32 Lydda: A Judean town 12 miles inland from the Mediterranean coast. It sat just north of the road between Jerusalem and the port of Joppa (9:36). [Back to text.](#)

9:34 Christ heals you: Jesus was working through Peter to unleash the same healing power he had manifested during his ministry (Lk 5:17-26; Jn 5:2-9). Both this and the following miracle were occasions of faith and conversion (9:35, 42). [Back to text.](#)

9:36 Joppa: A seaport city on the western coast of Judea (Jon 1:3). **Tabitha . . . Dorcas:** The respective Aramaic and Greek names meaning "gazelle". [Back to text.](#)

9:37 washed her: A ritual preparation for burial that could last up to three days in cities outside of Jerusalem. [Back to text.](#)



9:40 Tabitha, rise: Peter's resuscitation miracle recalls the one Jesus performed on the daughter of Jairus in Mk 5:35- 43. • It likewise evokes memories of Elijah, who revived the son of a widow to new life in the upper room of their house in 1 Kings 17:17-24. [Back to text.](#)

9:43 a tanner: A tradesman who lived in a state of perpetual uncleanness because of his frequent contact with animal skins and carcasses (Lev 5:2). Though association with such people was discouraged among religious

Jews, Peter accepts Simon's hospitality with a new level of openness that anticipates his discovery in the following episode that no man is legally "unclean" in the age of the New Covenant (10:28). [Back to text.](#)

10:1-48 The Baptism of Cornelius and his household opens a new chapter in the history of Christianity. For the first time, Gentiles accept the gospel and become full members of the Church. The narrative stresses that God initiates, orchestrates, and approves this new missionary step: he instructs Cornelius by an angel (10:3), directs Peter by a vision (10:10-16), and pours out the Spirit as a tangible sign of acceptance (10:44). [Back to text.](#)

10:1 Caesarea: A port city 30 miles up the coast from Joppa (9:43). Herod the Great renovated and greatly expanded the city to serve as the Roman capital of Judea. [See note on Mt 2:1.](#) **centurion:** A military commander of 100 Roman soldiers. [Back to text.](#)

10:2 feared God: Cornelius was among a class of devout Gentiles who admired Judaism (13:16, 26). Known from antiquity as "God-fearers", they worshiped Yahweh, attended synagogue services, and followed many of the moral and religious precepts of the Torah. Because they stopped short of receiving circumcision, they were not considered Jewish converts in the full and strict sense. **alms . . . prayed:** Traditional acts of Jewish piety (Tob 12:8). [Back to text.](#)



10:3 the ninth hour: About 3 P.M., the time of the evening liturgy, when prayers and sacrifices were offered up in the Jerusalem Temple. [See note on Acts 3:1.](#) • Daniel was likewise visited by an angel while praying at the time of the evening sacrifices (Dan 9:20-21). According to the angel in this episode, the prayers and alms of the Gentile Cornelius have also ascended to heaven as a sacrificial "memorial" (10:4), i.e., as the equivalent of a cereal offering whose memorial portion ascended with the fire and smoke of the Temple altar (Lev 2:2, 9, 16; Sir 38:11). For earlier expressions of the same idea, see Tob 12:12 and Sir 35:2, 7. [Back to text.](#)

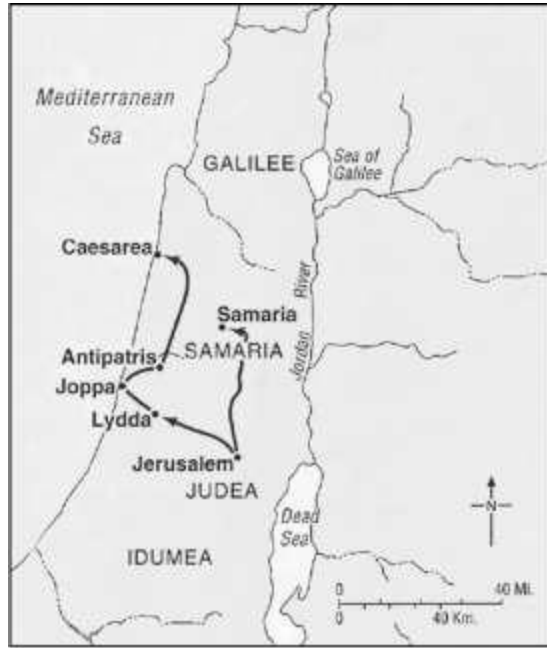
10:9 on the housetop: Palestinian homes often had an outside staircase leading up to a flat roof. **the sixth hour:** About noon. [Back to text.](#)

10:10 a trance: A mystical and visionary state of communion with God (22:17). [Back to text.](#)

10:14 common or unclean: As a faithful Jew, Peter declines to eat foods forbidden by the Torah (Lev 11). The vision labors to overcome his objection. It teaches him **(1)** that the dietary restrictions of the Mosaic Law that distinguish between acceptable (clean) and unacceptable (unclean) foods are now lifted in the New Covenant, and **(2)** that the distinction between foods is a legal allegory for the moral and religious distinction between Israel (clean) and the Gentiles (unclean) maintained under the Old Covenant. Lifting the Mosaic ban on unclean foods is thus a sign that the Gentiles are no longer banned from full and equal acceptance into the covenant (10:28). [Back to text.](#)

10:15 God has cleansed: Jesus revoked the Mosaic food laws when he declared "all foods clean" (Mk 7:19), a teaching echoed in the catechesis of the apostles (Rom 14:14; 1 Tim 4:3-5). Allegorically, Peter was to learn that God was cleansing the hearts of the Gentiles (15:9). [Back to text.](#)

10:26 I too am a man: Peter recoils, not from honor or veneration, but from worship (as did Barnabas and Paul, 14:11-18). Not even the holy angels can accept the adoration that belongs to God alone (Rev 19:10). [Back to text.](#)



Peter's Missionary Journeys

10:28 unlawful: Palestinian Jews went to great lengths to avoid social contact with Gentiles. They generally declined both their hospitality and their food for fear of legal defilement. Peter's actions were naturally criticized by conservative Jewish believers (11:2-3). **not call any man common:** The vision taught Peter that the Jews and the Gentiles were no longer separated by covenant barriers in the messianic age (Eph 2:11-16). [See note on Acts 10:14.](#) [Back to text.](#)

10:34 no partiality: God shows no favoritism to one nation over another in the New Covenant, but all stand as equal candidates for divine blessing and sonship (Rom 2:10-11; Gal 3:28; CCC 761). [Back to text.](#)

10:34-43 Peter's sermon, which begins with the baptism of John and ends with the commission of Jesus to preach the good news, covers the same ground as the Gospel of Mark, which early tradition describes as a summary of Peter's preaching. See [introduction to Mark: Author.](#) [Back to text.](#)

10:38 God anointed Jesus: At his Baptism, designating him as the Messiah (Lk 3:22; 4:18; CCC 438). [Back to text.](#)

10:43 through his name: Forgiveness comes through the invocation of Christ's name in Baptism (2:38; 10:48; 22:16). [Back to text.](#)

10:44-48 A Pentecost experience for the Gentiles (11:15). As with the original event, (1) Peter preaches the gospel (2:14-36); (2) the Spirit descends in a dramatic way (2:17); (3) the recipients speak in different tongues (2:4); and (4) a call is issued for Baptism (2:38-41). [Back to text.](#)

11:2 the circumcision party: Believers from Israel shocked at Peter's disregard for the Jewish policy of separation from Gentiles (10:28). Some of them stubbornly maintained this policy even after the Gentiles were openly accepted into the Church (Gal 2:12). [Back to text.](#)

11:17 the same gift: The equal footing of Jews and Gentiles before God is shown by their equal reception of the Spirit. Peter appeals to this fact at the Jerusalem Council when he denies that Gentiles must add circumcision to Baptism to become full members of the New Covenant (15:7-11). [Back to text.](#)

11:18 repentance unto life: Involves turning away from sin and leads to Baptism (2:38). See word study: [Repentance](#) at Mk 1:4. [Back to text.](#)

11:19-26 Luke places this episode immediately after 10:1 — 11:18 to show that as God directed the first Gentile *conversion* through Peter, he was

also directing the first Gentile *mission* through the Antioch Church. Systematic outreach to the Gentiles gains considerable momentum after this point, as Antioch becomes the launch pad for all three of Paul's missionary journeys in Acts (13:1-3; 15:35-41; 18:22-23). [Back to text.](#)

11:19 Phoenicia . . . Cyprus . . . Antioch: Three centers of Christian presence outside the land of Israel—Phoenicia, a territory northwest of Galilee; Cyprus, an island in the Mediterranean; and Antioch, a prominent city in Syria. [Back to text.](#)

11:20 Cyrene: A city on the northern shore of Africa (in modern Libya). [Back to text.](#)

11:22 Jerusalem: As when the first conversions were reported in Samaria (8:14), Jerusalem sent delegates to Antioch to ensure this new missionary development was the work of God. The enthusiasm of Barnabas confirms that it was (11:23-24). [See note on Acts 4:36.](#) [Back to text.](#)

11:25 look for Saul: He had returned to his home in Tarsus since the Jewish Hellenists in Jerusalem were plotting against his life (9:28-30). He is now summoned to assume teaching responsibilities in the Antioch Church. [Back to text.](#)

11:26 Christians: This new title for the disciples of Jesus Christ is elsewhere used at 26:28 and 1 Pet 4:16 in the NT. [Back to text.](#)

11:28 Agabus: A Palestinian prophet who also foresaw Paul's arrest and imprisonment in Jerusalem (21:10-11). **great famine:** Other ancient historians, such as Tacitus, Suetonius, and Josephus, also mention a famine that gripped the eastern Mediterranean world in the 40s. **Claudius:** The Roman emperor from A.D. 41 to 54. [Back to text.](#)

11:29 relief to the brethren: This is the first of two relief offerings that Paul brought to Jerusalem. The second was a collection taken up among Gentile Churches that he delivered to the poor of the city after his third missionary journey (24:17; Rom 15:25-28). [Back to text.](#)

12:1-5 The Church is hit with a second wave of persecution. Unlike the first, which targeted the laity but not their leadership (8:1), this one is aimed directly at the apostles (James and Peter). [See note on Acts 8:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)

12:1 Herod the king: Herod Agrippa I, ruler of all Palestine from A.D. 41 to 44. He was the grandson of Herod the Great (Lk 1:5) and the brother-in-law of Herod Antipas (Lk 23:7). [Back to text.](#)

12:2 James: A son of Zebedee; one of the Twelve (Mk 3:17). After Stephen, he is the second martyr mentioned in Acts (7:58-60). Tradition has it that all the apostles except John died as martyrs for the faith. **with the sword:** Beheading was a Roman form of capital execution (Rom 13:4). [Back to text.](#)

12:3 Unleavened Bread: A religious festival that began with Passover (12:4) and extended another six days. Jerusalem was usually flooded with Jewish pilgrims during these national feasts. [See note on Lk 22:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)

12:4 four squads: Four shifts of four soldiers each took turns standing guard over Peter throughout the night. This maximum-security measure heightens the miraculousness of his deliverance in the following episode (12:6-11). [Back to text.](#)

12:5 but earnest prayer: Early believers fought the battles of persecution on their knees. It is here implied that Peter's upcoming rescue is God's answer to the intercessory prayers of the Church (CCC 2634-36). [Back to text.](#)



12:6-11 The third imprisonment of Peter in Acts (4:3; 5:18) and the second time he is rescued by an angel (5:19; 12:7). • The deliverance of Peter during Passover evokes memories of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. Like Israel, Peter is "brought . . . out" of bondage (12:17; Ex 12:51) and rescued "from the hand" of his enemies (12:11; Ex 3:8) on "Passover" night (12:4; Ex 12:11-12) by an "angel of the Lord" (12:7; Ex 14:19) after dressing himself and putting "sandals" on his feet (12:8; Ex 12:11). [Back to text.](#)

12:12 the house of Mary: A place of prayer and assembly for Jerusalem believers. According to one tradition, this is also the house of the upper room where Jesus and the disciples celebrated the Last Supper. [See note on Acts 1:13.](#) **Mark:** According to tradition, the evangelist of the Second Gospel and a companion of Peter (1 Pet 5:13) and Paul (13:5). Like many Jews, he had both a Roman ("Marcus") and a Semitic ("John") name. See [introduction to Mark: Author.](#) [Back to text.](#)

12:15 his angel: Assumes a belief that particular angels are assigned to guard and to guide particular individuals. [See note on Mt 18:10.](#) [Back to text.](#)

12:17 James: Not the brother of John martyred in 12:2, and probably not the son of Alphaeus mentioned in 1:13. This James was a near kinsman of Jesus (Mk 6:3; Gal 1:19) who had seen him raised from the dead (1 Cor 15:7). Tradition identifies him as the first bishop of Jerusalem who assumed leadership over the Church in the city after Peter began to travel. See introduction to the Letter of James: *Author*. **another place:** Our knowledge of the precise movements of Peter after this point is limited. The Church historian Eusebius puts him in Rome about A.D. 42; Luke puts him back in Jerusalem about A.D. 49 (15:7); Paul puts him in Syrian Antioch soon after this (Gal 2:12); and Christian tradition is generally agreed that he later returned to Rome and was martyred there in the mid 60s. [Back to text.](#)

12:19 put to death: According to Roman law, prison guards were subject to severe punishment if inmates escaped during their watch (16:27; 27:42). [Back to text.](#)

12:20 Tyre and Sidon: Two Phoenician cities northwest of Galilee (Mt 15:21). [Back to text.](#)

12:23 eaten by worms: The miserable death of Herod Agrippa in A.D. 44 was punishment for accepting divine praise (2 Mac 9:5-12). Luke's account is corroborated by a similar report from the Jewish historian Josephus. [Back to text.](#)

13:1 prophets and teachers: Important pastoral ministers in the early Church (1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11). Prophets envisioned future events (11:27-28; 21:10-11) and encouraged the assembled community (15:32; 1 Cor 14:3), while teachers educated the faithful in the rudiments of Christian truth (11:26; 1 Tim 2:7). **Barnabas . . . Saul:** All five men were Jews who were Greek-speaking. Barnabas and a group of prophets came to Antioch from Jerusalem (11:22, 27); Symeon and Lucius came from Africa (11:20); Manaen came from Herod's court in Galilee (Lk 3:1); and Saul was summoned from Tarsus in Asia Minor (11:25-26). [Back to text.](#)

13:2 worshiping: Translates the Greek *leitourgeo*, which originally meant acts of public service performed on behalf of the state or in honor of a deity. In biblical Greek, the verb is used for the cultic ministry of Aaronic priests and their Levitical assistants in the sanctuary (Ex 28:43; Num 18:2; Sir 45:15; Heb 10:11). Luke's use of the term follows the biblical tradition, suggesting that the Antiochene Church was worshiping the Lord through various liturgical actions, probably in connection with the Eucharist. In

patristic times, this verb was closely associated with the sacramental liturgy of the Church. [Back to text.](#)

13:3 fasting and praying: Traditional forms of Jewish piety (Lk 2:37) revered as a means of seeking the Lord and finding his will (14:23; CCC 1434, 1969). **laid their hands:** A congregational act to commission individuals for a specific task (Num 8:10). [Back to text.](#)

13:4-14:28 Paul's first missionary journey from A.D. 46 to 49. He later embarks on a second (15:36-18:22) and third mission (18:23-21:15). [Back to text.](#)

13:4 sailed to Cyprus: An island in the eastern Mediterranean Sea. It was a Roman province and the homeland of Barnabas (4:36). Paul's first wave of preaching swept all the way from Salamis on its eastern shore (13:5) to the port capital Paphos on its southwestern shore (13:6). Prior to this, only some of the Cypriot Jews had heard the gospel (11:19). [Back to text.](#)

13:5 the synagogues: Paul targets the local Jewish synagogue every time he enters a new missionary frontier in Acts (13:14; 14:1; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:4, 19, etc.). This strategy was shaped by practical as well as theological considerations: on the one hand, synagogues already served as weekly gathering places where Jews and even Gentiles came together for prayer and religious instruction; on the other, Paul was driven by the conviction that Israel stood first in line to inherit the blessings of the messianic age (13:46; Rom 1:16). **John:** John Mark, who was a cousin of Barnabas (Col 4:10). [See note on Acts 12:12.](#) [Back to text.](#)

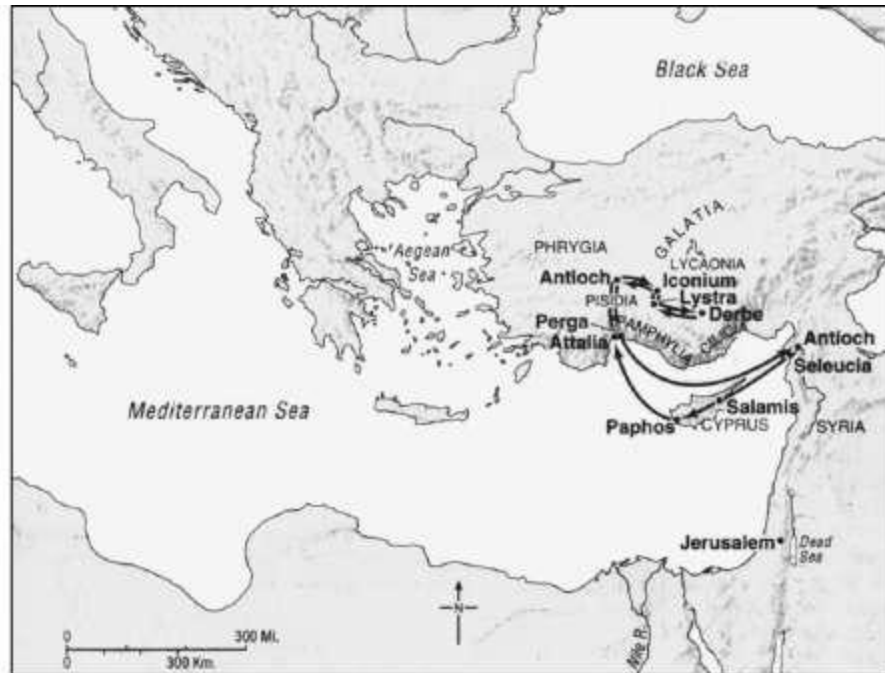
13:7 Sergius Paulus: The Roman governor of the island and the first Gentile ruler in Acts to become a believer (13:12). [Back to text.](#)

13:8 Elymas: Earlier called "Bar-Jesus", an Aramaic name meaning "son of Joshua/Jesus" (13:6). He is the second magician, after Simon the Samaritan, to be rebuked by the apostles in Acts (13:10-11). [See note on Acts 8:9.](#) [Back to text.](#)

13:9 also called Paul: Like numerous Jews in the NT period, the apostle had both a Roman ("Paul") and a Semitic ("Saul") name (1:23; 12:12; 13:1). Except when Saul recounts his conversion (22:7; 26:14), he is hereafter called Paul throughout Acts and the rest of the NT. Some hold that this permanent switch to Paul's Roman name is linked with the conversion of the Roman governor, Sergius *Paulus* (13:7). [Back to text.](#)

13:11 blind . . . lead him by the hand: Reminiscent of Paul's own experience at Damascus (9:8). [Back to text.](#)

**Paul Goes to
Galatia: The First
Missionary Journey**



13:13 came to Perga: Twelve miles inland from the coast of Pamphylia, a Roman province in southern Asia Minor (modern Turkey). **John left them:** No reason is given for his withdrawal, but it became a source of irritation and disagreement between Paul and Barnabas as plans were made for a second missionary journey (15:36-40). Paul and Mark were eventually reconciled and worked closely together in later years (Col 4:10; 2 Tim 4:11). [Back to text.](#)

13:14 Antioch of Pisidia: Not the Syrian city of Antioch where the mission originated (13:1), but a prominent city of the same name in southern Galatia that was home to a large Jewish community in the NT period. [Back to text.](#)

13:15 the law and the prophets: Scriptural readings from the Torah and the prophets formed the heart of the synagogue liturgy every Sabbath (15:21). Prayers such as the *Shema* (Deut 6:4) and the Eighteen Benedictions were also recited, and sometimes guest rabbis were invited to comment on the readings and exhort the assembly (13:15; Lk 4:16-21). [Back to text.](#)

13:16-41 Paul's inaugural sermon skims the highlights of biblical history from the Exodus to the coming of Jesus. He stresses that Christ *fulfills* the Davidic covenant by rising from the dead to an everlasting kingship (13:33-37) and *supersedes* the Mosaic covenant by offering the gift of divine forgiveness (13:38-39). The sermon ends with a warning that scoffers who reject this message are doomed to perish (13:41). [Back to text.](#)

13:16 you that fear God: Paul addresses Gentiles who were attending synagogue services alongside the Jews. This is why his preaching elicits faith from Jews and Greeks alike (14:1; 18:4). [See note on Acts 10:2.](#) [Back to text.](#)



13:33 the second psalm: Paul cites Ps 2:7 to explain how the rising of Jesus fulfills Yahweh's oath to give one of David's descendants everlasting dominion over Israel and the world (2 Sam 7:12-16; Ps 2:8). • Psalm 2 is an enthronement psalm probably recited on the day the kings of Israel were *anointed* for office and *adopted* as sons by Yahweh. Paul interprets it messianically, so that the "today" of the psalm corresponds to the "Sunday" when Jesus rose from the grave. This is the day when Christ's

humanity was anointed for eternal kingship (Lk 1:32-33) and made to share in the glory of his eternal Sonship (Rom 1:4; CCC 445, 2606). See essay: [Kingdom Restoration](#) at Acts 15. [Back to text.](#)



13:34-35 Paul continues to build his case for the Davidic kingship of Jesus by citing Is 55:3 and Ps 16:10. • Isaiah gives hope to Israel in exile that God will restore the kingdom and blessings of David through an everlasting covenant. Psalm 16 is David's own prophecy that Yahweh will preserve the anointed Messiah from the corruption of death. Paul applies these hopes directly to Jesus: Because his humanity was rescued from death and raised to immortal life, he is the only Davidic descendant (13:23) qualified to rule the eternal kingdom promised to David. Peter made this same argument with the help of Ps 16 in his inaugural sermon in 2:24-31. [Back to text.](#)

13:39 freed: Or "justified". For Paul, Christ succeeds where the Mosaic Law failed, so that believers receive the true justification and forgiveness (Rom 6:7) that was signified but not fully conferred through the ceremonial rites of the Old Covenant (Heb 10:1-4; CCC 614, 1990). [Back to text.](#)



13:41 Behold, you scoffers: The sermon concludes with I a warning from the Greek version of Hab 1:5. • God is responding to Habakkuk's complaint that wickedness flourishes unchecked in Israel. He assures the prophet that judgment is marching toward Israel with the Babylonian army to devastate the land and haul its inhabitants into exile. Paul cautions that a similar catastrophe is in store for unbelievers who reject the gospel. [Back to text.](#)

13:46 first to you: The apostles prioritized the evangelization of Israel before reaching out to the Gentiles (3:26). [See note on Acts 13:5.](#) **we turn to the Gentiles:** Paul is not abandoning his mission to Israel; he is simply turning away from the hardened leaders of the Antioch synagogue. This is confirmed by his preaching to Jews in the very next episode (14:1). [Back to text.](#)



13:47 I have set you: Paul supports his Gentile ministry with a quotation from Is 49:6. • In context, Yahweh commissions his Servant first

to restore the dispersed tribes of Israel and then to spread his salvation far and wide to all nations. As in Isaiah, where the Servant symbolizes both the Redeemer (individual) and the redeemed of Israel (collective), Paul contends that Jesus the Servant (3:13) continues his mission through the servant apostles who are sent to enlighten the Gentiles (26:17-18, 23). [Back to text.](#)

13:51 shook off the dust: A symbolic curse gesture. It adapts the Jewish custom of shaking dust from one's sandals before reentering the land of Israel from Gentile territory (Mt 10:14). [Back to text.](#)

14:1 Iconium: A city of southern Galatia, more than 80 miles southeast of Pisidian Antioch. [Back to text.](#)

14:3 signs and wonders: Miracles are God's way of authenticating the divine mission of his true apostles (2 Cor 12:12; Heb 2:4). [See note on Acts 5:12.](#) [Back to text.](#)

14:4 the apostles: Barnabas and Paul (14:14). This is the first time Luke applies the apostolic title to men other than the original Twelve chosen by Jesus (Lk 6:13). [Back to text.](#)

14:8 Lystra: A Roman colony of retired army veterans in southern Galatia, more than 100 miles from Pisidian Antioch. Neither this settlement nor the colony in Philippi had a Jewish synagogue (16:12-13). [Back to text.](#)

14:11-18 The crowd's reaction is based on a local legend preserved by the Roman poet Ovid. It was said that Greek deities once before had made a disguised visit to this region, but the natives had refused them hospitality and turned them away. Only a single devout couple had taken them in. In thanksgiving, the gods had turned the home of the couple into a beautiful temple, and in anger, they had destroyed the dwellings of the rest. Amazed by the healing of the cripple, the crowd thought the gods were revisiting them disguised as Paul and Barnabas (14:12) and hoped to avoid the tragic mistake of their ancestors. [Back to text.](#)

14:11 in Lycaonian: The foreign dialect of the crowd explains why Paul and Barnabas did not immediately realize the gravity of the misunderstanding. [Back to text.](#)

14:14 tore their garments: A sign of protest and extreme distress (Jud 14:16; Mk 14:63). [Back to text.](#)

14:15 We also are men: Peter similarly refused divine honor in 10:26. **these vain things:** A traditional Jewish critique of idolatry (1 Sam 12:21). Though for centuries God permitted the pagans to stumble in the darkness

of mythology and false worship, the time to enlighten all nations has come with the gospel, which urges them to turn away from lifeless idols to serve the living and true God (1 Thess 1:9). Paul preaches this same message to Athens in 17:29-31. [Back to text.](#)

14:17 witness: From the foundation of the world, God has made his deity and goodness known through the beauty and blessings of the natural order (Rom 1:20). This natural revelation was to prepare the human family for the supernatural revelation of the gospel (CCC 32, 1147). [Back to text.](#)

14:19 they stoned Paul: What began as a deification of Paul (14:11) nearly ended with his death (2 Cor 11:25). Unlike the Jews, who staged executions outside the city gates (7:58), the heathen mob stoned Paul in the city streets, only afterward dragging him out. [Back to text.](#)

14:20 Derbe: More than 60 miles from Lystra in southeastern Galatia. [Back to text.](#)

14:22 many tribulations: Paul urges believers to brace themselves for the suffering and persecution that come with being a Christian (2 Tim 3:12). Far from being signs of God's disapproval, earthly afflictions open the way to heavenly glory (Mt 5:10; Rom 8:17). [Back to text.](#)

14:23 appointed: The Greek expression means "to stretch forth hands" and alludes to the rite of priestly ordination (1 Tim 4:14; Tit 1:5). The installation of **elders** provided guidance and stability to missionary communities while Paul continued to travel. Acts portrays this as a hierarchical procedure, not a democratic one, i.e., it is Paul and Barnabas who ordain the elders, not the lay assembly. See word study: [Elders](#) at Jas 5:14. [Back to text.](#)

14:26 sailed to Antioch: Paul's first missionary journey ends where it began, in the Syrian city of Antioch (13:1-3). [Back to text.](#)

15:1-29 The Council of Jerusalem (ca. A.D. 49) is a defining moment in Christian history. It was convened to examine the status of Gentile believers crowding into the Church. Some insisted they must be circumcised to complete their Christian initiation (15:5), but the Council rejected the push to add circumcision to the saving grace of Christ (15:10-11). This decisive break with the national religion of Israel makes the Jerusalem Council the theological center of Acts: it shows that the Church is **(1)** a covenant community distinct from Judaism and **(2)** a catholic community that embraces all nations. [Back to text.](#)

15:1 you cannot be saved: For centuries, circumcision was the rite of initiation into the covenant family of Abraham (Gen 17:9-14) and the Mosaic religion of Israel (Lev 12:3). It was a badge of Jewish identity that entitled one to share in the blessings of the Old Covenant. The absolute necessity of circumcision in Jewish tradition implied that any male who was uncircumcised was destined for destruction (*Jubilees* 15:26). [Back to text.](#)

15:2 appointed to go up: The local Church in Antioch looks to the apostolic Church in Jerusalem for doctrinal guidance. [Back to text.](#)

15:5 the law of Moses: Circumcision was the first of many ceremonial precepts mandated by the Torah. Accepting it meant accepting the entire "yoke" (15:10) of the Mosaic covenant with all its animal sacrifices, dietary laws, ritual washings, Sabbath restrictions, etc. (Gal 5:1-3). [Back to text.](#)

15:7-11 Peter quells the debate with a decisive pronouncement: Jews and Gentiles alike are saved, not by the flint knife of circumcision, but by faith in Christ alone. He argues this from the precedent of Acts 10:44-48, where the Spirit first came upon the Gentiles as a sign that God accepts them into the Church just as they are (15:8-9). To insist on circumcision after this event is to fight against the revealed will of God (15:10). [Back to text.](#)

15:11 we believe: Peter speaks as the head and spokesman of the apostolic Church. He formulates a *doctrinal* judgment about the means of salvation, whereas James takes the floor after him to suggest a *pastoral* plan for inculturating the gospel in mixed communities where Jewish and Gentile believers live side by side (15:13-21). [Back to text.](#)

15:13 James: A close relative of Jesus (Gal 1:19) who became the leader of the Jerusalem Church after Peter first fled the city and began to travel. [See note on Acts 12:17.](#) [Back to text.](#)

15:14 Symeon: The original Semitic name of Peter transliterated into Greek (Heb. *Shime'on*, Gen 29:33). It is used of him only here and in the Greek text of 2 Pet 1:1. [Back to text.](#)



15:16-18 James sees confirmation of Gentile conversions in the Greek OT. • The opening line of his extended quotation alludes to Jer 12:15; the bulk of it comes from Amos 9:11-12; and the final line alludes to Is 45:21. They all envision Yahweh gathering the Gentiles into his covenant family in the messianic age. See essay: [Kingdom Restoration.](#) [Back to text.](#)



15:20 write to them: James sets forth a pastoral initiative to promote fellowship and preempt foreseeable friction between Jewish and Gentile believers coming together in the Church. The result is an apostolic letter from Jerusalem to the Churches in Syria and Cilicia that requires Gentile converts to observe a minimal code of religious purity—abstinence from idol foods, sexual immorality, and the consumption of blood in meat or by itself (15:23-29). The Jews abhorred these practices as cultural expressions of idolatry. James is saying that even though the Gentiles are exempt from the ritual observances of *Judaism* (circumcision), they are still expected to break away from the ritual observances of *paganism*. Allusions to this decree appear in 1 Cor 8-10, 1 Thess 4:3, and Rev 2:14, 20. See essay: [Paul, Idol Food, and the Jerusalem Council](#) at 1 Cor 8. • The decree is shaped by the laws of Lev 17-18 that govern the conduct of Gentile sojourners living in the company of Israel. They were forbidden to eat meat consecrated to idols instead of to Yahweh (Lev 17:7-9), to consume blood (Lev 17:10-12), to eat meat not properly drained of blood (Lev 17:13-14), and to engage in various forms of sexual immorality, such as incest, adultery, homosexuality, and bestiality (Lev 18:6-23). Though several such laws are enjoined on the foreigner in the Torah, only these four prohibitions are applied equally to Israelites and sojourners and threaten to cut violators off from the covenant. • According to the Council of Florence in 1442, the apostolic decree was only a temporary measure to facilitate unity among Jews and Gentiles in the early Church. The binding force of its food restrictions was relaxed once the ethnic circumstances that made them necessary passed away. [Back to text.](#)

15:22 Judas . . . Silas: The Jerusalem delegation sent to deliver the Apostolic Decree to the Church of Antioch (15:30). Silas is also known as "Silvanus" (2 Cor 1:19) and became a trusted member of Paul's missionary team (15:40). [Back to text.](#)

Kingdom Restoration

IN Acts 15 the apostles and elders convened a council in Jerusalem to rule on the status of Gentiles in the Church. After much debate, Peter insisted that Gentile believers need not be circumcised for salvation (Acts 15:11). Then James, to lend scriptural support to this decision, made a startling announcement that the vision of Amos 9:11-12 was taking shape before their eyes: In gathering the Gentiles into the Church, the Lord was rebuilding "the dwelling of David, which has fallen" (Acts 15:16). For many modern readers, the meaning of this prophecy is not immediately clear. What is the dwelling of David? How and when did it fall? In what way is God rebuilding it? These questions lead us back several millennia to the days of David and Solomon in the Old Testament. Once the questions are answered, we will see the unfolding drama of Acts in a whole new light.

The Dwelling of David The dwelling (tent) of David refers to the kingdom of David pitched in the land of Israel around 1000 B.C. It began with King David himself, whose achievements surpassed that of every other judge and king before him: he unified the family of Israel after years of intertribal fighting; he silenced the threats of Israel's enemies; and he transferred the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, making it the spiritual and political capital of his growing empire (2 Sam 1-6). Even more importantly, God swore a solemn covenant oath to make David's family a royal dynasty and to establish his throne for all time (2 Sam 7:8-17; Ps 89:3-4). This was provisionally played out in the life of David's son, Solomon, who succeeded him on the throne and built a glorious Temple for the Lord (1 Kings 1-8). What is striking about the Davidic empire inherited by Solomon is that, for the first time in history, the covenant family of Yahweh stretched to international dimensions. Following the lead of his father (2 Sam 8), Solomon extended his rule not only over the twelve tribes of Israel, but even over neighboring nations in the region (1 Kings 4:20-24). With this unprecedented development, Gentiles such as the Queen of Sheba traveled great distances to learn the wisdom of God from the king of Israel (1 Kings 10:1-13). Space was made in the Temple so that pious Gentiles could come and give praise to Yahweh (1 Kings 8:41-43). It is even possible that the

Wisdom literature of the Old Testament, much of which is traditionally attributed to Solomon, was written to instruct these Gentile nations in the ways of righteousness (Prov 1:1; Eccles 1:1; Songs 1:1). Yet for all its greatness, this golden age was not to last. Over time Solomon allowed the attractions of power, pleasure, and prestige to drag him away from the Lord. By 930 B.C., only decades after Yahweh first pitched the Davidic kingdom in Israel, it all came crashing down—the tribes of Israel split apart; the Gentiles broke away; the glory departed. Though descendants from David's line continued to rule the southern kingdom of Judah until its demise in the sixth century B.C., the tent of David had already fallen.

Rebuilding the Kingdom of David For the prophet Amos, however, whose words were taken up by James in Acts 15, the tent of David would not lie collapsed on the ground forever. Yahweh gave his promise to repair, restore, and repitch it in the messianic age (Amos 9:11-12). This is precisely the vision of the Book of Acts as it builds to the full acceptance of the Gentiles at the Jerusalem Council. We see this throughout the book, where the good news of the "kingdom" is central to the preaching of Jesus (Acts 1:3), Philip (Acts 8:12), and Paul (Acts 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31). We see this in the disciples' final question to Jesus before his departure, where they ask him point-blank when the kingdom of Israel will be restored (Acts 1:6). We see this in Peter's inaugural sermon on Pentecost, where he draws from Psalm 16 and Psalm 110 to argue that Jesus, the risen and enthroned Messiah, has fulfilled the covenant of eternal kingship that God swore to David (Acts 2:22-36). We see this in Paul's inaugural sermon to Israel, where he assembles passages from Psalm 2, Psalm 16, and Isaiah 55 to make the same point as Peter—that in rising to everlasting life, Jesus is the messianic heir who sits on the throne of David and rules over his restored kingdom (Acts 13:22-37). Lastly, we see this in the missionary progress of the book, where the gospel first raises Judah and Jerusalem to new life (Acts 1-7), then spreads north to restore the Samaritans, who were descendants of the first Israelite tribes that split away from David's empire (Acts 8), and, from the conversion of Cornelius onward, radiates out to the nations beyond Israel (Acts 10-28). This vision of an international kingdom gathered around the Davidic Messiah is the same vision set forth in Luke's Gospel (Lk 1:31-33; 2:29-32; 12:32; 22:29-30) and, indeed, in the biblical

prophets before him (Ps 72; Is 11:10-13; 16:5; 55:3-5; 66:18-23; Jer 3:17-18; Ezek 37:1-26; Hos 3:5; Zech 2:11; 8:22).

Lest the point be missed or misunderstood, Acts shows us that the restored dwelling of David looks quite different from the original tent propped up in the tenth century B.C. The kingship of Christ is indeed a Davidic kingship, and the throne from which he rules is indeed a Davidic throne (Lk 1:32). Yet the royal empire he establishes in the Church far outshines in glory and grandeur anything accomplished under David and Solomon. The focal point of this new kingdom is no longer a palace in Jerusalem but a throne standing next to the Father, high above in the heavenly Jerusalem. The unity of this kingdom is no longer held together by citizenship and taxes but by the Holy Spirit, who draws believers into one body through the sacraments. The royal ministers of this kingdom are no longer administrators and politicians but apostles and prophets. The borders of this kingdom are no longer extended by military campaigns but by missionary outreach. For readers with eyes to see, the multinational empire of David, uniting Israel and the Gentiles together into a single covenant family, was only a scale model of the worldwide kingdom of David's royal heir, Jesus Christ (Rom 1:1-5; 15:7-12). « [Back to Acts 15:1.](#)

15:28 the Holy Spirit: The deliberations and decisions of the Council were guided by the hand of God. This is precisely what Jesus promised to do for the ordained leadership of the Church through the Spirit. [See note on Jn 16:13.](#) [Back to text.](#)

15:32 prophets: That is, both men had the spiritual gift of exhortation. [See note on Acts 13:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)

15:36-18:22 Paul's second missionary journey from A.D. 50 to 52. [Back to text.](#)

15:39 a sharp contention: Paul and Barnabas go their separate ways after a dispute about John Mark, who abandoned their earlier mission (13:13). Barnabas decides to join his cousin Mark (Col 4:10) and return to his native island of Cyprus (4:36), while Paul teams up with Silas and then Timothy (16:1) to revisit the converts of Syria and Asia Minor (15:40-41). [Back to text.](#)

16:1 Timothy: A longtime friend and companion of Paul. He is also mentioned with Paul and Silas (Silvanus) in 1 Thess 1:1 and 2 Thess 1:1. [See note on 1 Tim 1:2.](#) [Back to text.](#)

16:3 circumcised: Paul thought it advantageous to circumcise Timothy so their joint ministry among the Jews would not be hindered by scandal (1 Cor 9:20). At this stage, circumcision and other ritual observances of the Torah were permitted for Jewish believers even though unnecessary for Gentiles (15:111). Timothy's descent from a Jewish mother seems to put him in the former category. Later rabbinic law states that religious affiliation followed matrilineal lines, so that children born of a Jewish mother were automatically Jewish, regardless of the faith of the father. [Back to text.](#)

16:4 the decisions: The prohibitions of the Apostolic Decree (15:23-29). [See note on Acts 15:20.](#) [Back to text.](#)

16:6-10 The direction of the second mission was determined by the Spirit. After ministering in the southern territories of the Galatian province (**Phrygia** and **Galatia**), the team was forbidden to go directly west (**Asia**) or directly north (**Bithynia**), but was channeled northwest to the Aegean port of **Troas**. Here Paul received further instructions to cross over from Asia Minor to evangelize the mainland of Europe near Greece (**Macedonia**). [Back to text.](#)

16:10 immediately we: An abrupt shift in narrative perspective. Up to this point, Luke has retold the events in Acts as an outsider or spectator. Here, for the first time, he steps into the story ("we", not "they") as a traveling member of Paul's missionary team. Several "we" sections punctuate the later chapters of Acts and are likely based on historical memoirs that Luke stored away in his memory or possibly in a travel diary (16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16). [Back to text.](#)

16:12 Philippi: A colony of retired army veterans in the Roman province of Macedonia (northern Greece). About eight miles inland from the Aegean Sea, the city was named after Philip II of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great. The Church established there (A.D. 50) later received Paul's NT letter to the Philippians. Few Jews settled in Philippi in the NT period, and it apparently had no synagogue, only a "place of prayer" where pious women gathered on the Sabbath (16:13). According to Jewish tradition, a synagogue could not be built unless ten or more household heads (males) lived in the area. [Back to text.](#)

16:14 Lydia: A reputable businesswoman and possibly a widow. **worshiper of God:** Lydia was a righteous Gentile or "God-fearer" attracted to Judaism. [See note on Acts 10:2.](#) **opened her heart:** Faith in the gospel is a gift from God, who prepares the heart and mind of every believer with the grace needed to embrace the message (Jn 6:44; Eph 2:8). [Back to text.](#)

16:15 her household: The apostles routinely baptized entire households, many of which probably included infants and children as well as servants (16:33; 1 Cor 1:16; CCC 1655). [See note on Acts 2:39.](#) [Back to text.](#)

16:16 spirit of divination: Literally, "a python spirit", which refers to a mythical serpent said to guard the Greek temple of Apollo at Delphi. One controlled by a python spirit was seen as a ventriloquist or fortune-teller. Because the owners of the slave girl exploited her misfortune for its moneymaking potential, they were angered when Paul exorcised the demon and their means of income was gone (16:19). [Back to text.](#)

16:17 servants of the Most High: A true confession forced out of a lying spirit (Mk 1:24; 5:7). [Back to text.](#)

16:20 magistrates: An honorific title for the two city leaders of Philippi. In charge of civil order, they authorized a beating (16:22) on charges that Paul and Silas were causing a citywide disturbance with questionable religious teaching. [Back to text.](#)

16:22 beat them with rods: This is probably the shameful treatment at Philippi that Paul would later speak about in 1 Thess 2:2. He received this same type of beating at least two more times in his missionary career (2 Cor 11:25). [Back to text.](#)

16:26 great earthquake: Paul's miraculous deliverance recalls how Peter was twice rescued from prison by the Lord (5:19; 12:6-11). [Back to text.](#)

16:27 to kill himself: Prison guards were liable to severe punishment if criminals escaped during their watch (12:19). Thinking the inmates had fled, the jailer contemplated suicide as a way to escape the humiliation and condemnation he was sure to receive. [Back to text.](#)

16:31 Believe in the Lord Jesus: The faith asked of the jailer is a faith that embraces Jesus as Lord and Savior and leads directly to Baptism (16:33; Mk 16:16). The spiritual transformation that takes place in this sacrament (2:38) is immediately evident as the jailer no longer views the missionaries as prisoners but as fellow brothers in need of hospitality, food, and first aid (16:33-34; CCC 1226). [See note on Acts 16:15.](#) [Back to text.](#)

16:37 Roman citizens: Enjoyed certain privileges not shared by all inhabitants of the empire. Citizens, for example, were exempt from degrading forms of punishment and were not to endure any form of punishment without a thorough investigation of the charges brought against them (22:25-26). Because Paul and Silas were citizens unlawfully mistreated, they felt the injustice should not go overlooked. [Back to text.](#)

16:40 the brethren: The new believers in Philippi, including Lydia and her household (16:15). Over the years Paul developed a special affection for the Philippian Church, calling them his "joy and crown" (Phil 4:1). **they . . . departed:** Apparently Luke himself stayed behind. He rejoins the group in 20:6. [See note on Acts 16:10.](#) [Back to text.](#)

17:1 Thessalonica: The leading city of the Roman province of Macedonia (northern Greece). Nearly 100 miles west of Philippi, the Church established there (A.D. 50) received two NT letters from Paul: 1 and 2 Thessalonians. [Back to text.](#)

17:2 his custom: Much of Paul's missionary activity centered on local Jewish synagogues. [See note on Acts 13:5.](#) [Back to text.](#)

17:5 Jason: One of the believing Jews who hosted Paul and Silas. The raid on his house failed to turn up the missionaries, who apparently hid

themselves elsewhere. Other Thessalonian converts are named in 20:4. [Back to text.](#)

17:6 the world upside down: Jason is charged with harboring political dissidents suspected of insurrection. He was released only after the city authorities collected "security" (17:9) that made him legally responsible for his missionary guests. [Back to text.](#)

17:7 another king: The unstated assumption is that the expected Messiah ("the Christ", 17:3) was to come from the royal line of David and restore his glorious kingdom (2 Sam 7:12-17; Mk 11:10). Here the proclamation of Christ's kingship is heard as a political threat to Rome and a direct challenge to the imperial rule of Caesar Claudius (A.D. 41-54). From the perspective of the NT, this was a misunderstanding: although Christ demands the highest allegiance of every believer, his universal rule *over* the world is not *of* the world (Jn 18:36), so his heavenly kingship does not eliminate the need for earthly rulers to govern the temporal affairs of human society (Rom 13:1; 1 Pet 2:17). See essay: [Kingdom Restoration](#) at Acts 15. [Back to text.](#)

17:10 Beroea: A Macedonian city nearly 60 miles west of Thessalonica. [Back to text.](#)

17:11 examining the Scriptures: The Beroeans measured the claims of the gospel against the standard of OT revelation and found them to be in agreement (Lk 24:44; Jn 5:39). In their zealous pursuit of the truth, they searched the Scriptures every day and not just on the Sabbath. Some have inferred from this passage that the Beroeans relied on the Bible alone as the sole foundation of revealed doctrine. The inference is unwarranted: Luke tells us that Scripture was central to their faith, but not its exclusive basis. It is only logical that Jews would test the messianic message of the gospel by searching the messianic prophecies of the OT. [Back to text.](#)

17:14 Silas and Timothy remained: Leaving these two in Beroea and Luke back in Philippi (16:12, 40), Paul ventured on to Athens alone (17:16). [Back to text.](#)

17:16 Athens: A leading city of the province of Achaia (southern Greece). It reached the height of its fame in the fifth century B.C. but was still celebrated as a cultural center of philosophy, art, and literature during NT times. The city was filled with shrines and statues of Greek deities. Athenian interest in new and novel ideas was proverbial in antiquity (17:21). [Back to text.](#)

17:18 Epicurean: The disciples of Epicurus (d. 271 B.C.) believed the goal of life was to avoid pain and discomfort as much as possible. By NT times, Epicurean philosophy had degraded into a pursuit of sensual pleasure. Most followers felt that if gods existed, they were disinterested in human affairs. Against this philosophy, Paul insists that God does exist; he is near to everyone; and he will judge the world for its conduct (17:24, 28, 31). **Stoic philosophers:** Intellectuals committed to living a disciplined life in accord with nature. Their view of God was pantheistic, i.e., they believed the entire world was divine or imbued with divinity. Against this philosophy, Paul makes a clear distinction between the Creator and his creation (17:24, 26, 28). **babblers:** A derogatory term for someone who collected ideas but lacked wisdom and intellectual sophistication. [Back to text.](#)

17:19 the Are-opagus: Or, "the hill of Ares" (the Greek god of war). It refers both to a low hill in Athens and to a council of elders who met there as professional consultants to discuss Greek education, philosophy, and religion. [Back to text.](#)

17:23 the objects of your worship: The Greeks venerated a vast pantheon of gods. Because they feared offending the gods through neglect, they built shrines for unnamed gods to ensure that every deity was properly honored. To an unknown god: One tradition links the Cretan poet and philosopher Epimenides with such an altar. The story is told that a panel of elders summoned him from Crete to drive away a plague that ravaged Athens in the sixth century B.C. Epimenides counseled the city leaders on this matter, and when his advice proved successful in lifting the plague, the Athenians built memorial altars on the slope of the Are-opagus (17:19) to honor and remember the unnamed god who saved them. Paul, who excerpts from the writings of Epimenides in 17:28 and Tit 1:12, alludes to this tradition to build a bridge for the gospel, stating that God, although unknown to Athens by name, deserves the honor of all. Unlike the lifeless idols of Greece, Yahweh is the living Creator of all things and does not inhabit man-made shrines or statues (17:24; CCC 287). [Back to text.](#)



17:26 every nation of men: The entire human family stems from one common ancestor, the first man, Adam (Gen 2:7- 8). • The mention of national boundaries recalls how God made 70 nations spring from the sons

of Noah and apportioned land for them in Europe (Japheth), Africa (Ham), and Asia (Shem) after the Flood (Gen 10; Deut 32:8; CCC 57, 360). [Back to text.](#)

17:27 they should seek God: God revealed himself openly to Israel but expected all nations to recognize his existence and goodness by reflecting on the visible world (14:17; Rom 1:19-20; CCC 32, 2566). [Back to text.](#)

17:28 In him . . . our being: Probably a citation from the Greek poet Epimenides, who wrote in the sixth century B.C. The line summarizes Paul's teaching that God created and sustains the world (CCC 301). we are indeed his offspring: Cited from the *Phaenomena*, a work by the Greek writer Aratus, who wrote in the third century B.C. Paul cites Greek poetry elsewhere, in 1 Cor 15:33 and Tit 1:12. [Back to text.](#)



**Paul Goes to Greece:
The Second Missionary
Journey**

17:32 the resurrection: A strange and scandalous notion to Athenian ears. The Greeks believed only in the immortality of the soul; the body, they thought, was a prison from which the soul would be happily liberated at death (CCC 996). [Back to text.](#)

17:34 Dionysius: One tradition identifies him as the first bishop of Athens. Other traditions link him with mystical writings from Syria that probably date to the fifth century A.D. [Back to text.](#)

18:1 Corinth: The capital of the Roman province of Achaia (southern Greece) and one of the leading commercial and tourist centers of the Mediterranean world. It was home to numerous Greco-Roman religious cults and at least one Jewish synagogue. The Corinthians had a tarnished reputation for sexual impurity and ruthless business tactics. Paul arrived in the city around A.D. 51 and would later address several letters to the community: 1 and 2 Corinthians, and at least one letter that has not survived (1 Cor 5:9). [Back to text.](#)

18:2 Aquila: He and his wife were Jewish Christians recently come from Rome. The couple worked closely with Paul in Corinth (18:3), moved on from there to Ephesus (18:18-19), and eventually made it back to Rome (Rom 16:3-5). They were longtime supporters of his apostolic work (1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19). **Claudius:** The Roman Caesar from A.D. 41 to 54. He expelled the Jewish population of Rome from the capital in A.D. 49 because of disturbances instigated by a certain "Chrestus". Many scholars take this as a reference to Christ (Lat. *Christus*) and suggest the commotion was caused by disputes over the messiahship of Jesus in the synagogue communities of the city. [Back to text.](#)

18:5 Silas and Timothy: Arrived from Beroea (17:14). It was about this time that Paul wrote his NT letters to the Thessalonians (1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1). [Back to text.](#)

18:6 shook out his garments: Paul symbolically refused to bear responsibility for the rejection of the gospel by Corinthian Jews (13:51). Their refusal called down a curse of bloodguilt upon themselves. [See note on Acts 5:28.](#) [Back to text.](#)

18:7 a worshiper of God: Titius was a righteous Gentile or "God-fearer" attracted to Judaism. [See note on Acts 10:2.](#) [Back to text.](#)

18:8 Crispus: The leading synagogue elder who was personally baptized by Paul (1 Cor 1:14). [Back to text.](#)



18:10 I am with you: The Lord assures Paul of divine protection and success during his Corinthian ministry. • Paul is comforted with words spoken many times to the patriarchs and prophets of the OT (Gen 26:24; 28:15; Ex 3:12; Judg 6:12; Jer 1:8). [Back to text.](#)

18:12 Gallio: An archeological discovery in Greece (Delphi) indicates he was proconsul of Achaia from A.D. 51 to 52. He was the older brother of the famous Roman philosopher Seneca. [Back to text.](#)

18:13 contrary to the law: Roman law recognized and protected numerous religions in the empire, including Judaism. The Jews, attempting to discredit the Christian message and disassociate the budding Church from Judaism, accused Paul of promoting a new religion that was neither recognized nor authorized by Rome. Gallio dismissed the charge because he considered the matter an intramural debate among the Jews to be settled in the synagogue (18:15). [Back to text.](#)

18:17 Sosthenes: Possibly the associate of Paul mentioned in 1 Cor 1:1. If so, he was the second synagogue ruler, after Crispus (18:8), to become a Christian in Corinth. [Back to text.](#)

18:18 Cenchræ: An eastern seaport on the isthmus near Corinth. A Church was eventually founded there as well (Rom 16:1). **he had a vow:** A temporary commitment to abstain from cutting the hair (Num 6:5). The vow was probably a gesture of thanksgiving for God's deliverance (18:10), and its completion involved shaving the head. For another example of Paul performing Jewish ceremonial rites, see 21:23-26 (CCC 2102). [Back to text.](#)

18:22 he went up: Suggests Paul made a short visit to Jerusalem, which sits 2,500 feet above sea level. [Back to text.](#)

18:23-21:15 Paul's third missionary journey, from A.D. 53 to 58. He began his overland travel through southern Galatia (18:23), spent much of his time in Ephesus (20:31), and ended the tour in Jerusalem (21:17). [Back to text.](#)

18:24 Apollos: A convert from Judaism whose extensive knowledge of the OT made him an effective Christian apologist (18:28). After a ministry in Ephesus, where his own understanding of the faith was deepened and refined (18:26), he moved on to Corinth to follow up on the work that Paul

had begun (19:1; 1 Cor 3:6). **Alexandria:** A port city on the northern coast of Egypt. It was home to a large settlement of Jews and was the second largest city in the Mediterranean world after Rome. [Back to text.](#)

18:26 the way: A code name for the early Christian movement. [See note on Acts 9:2.](#) [Back to text.](#)

19:1 Ephesus: The most distinguished city in the Roman province of Asia (southwest Turkey). As a cultural, commercial, and religious center, it drew tourists and entrepreneurs from all over the Mediterranean, and by NT times it was hailed the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire. Ephesus was also the guardian of one of the seven wonders of the ancient world: the temple of Artemis (19:24). [Back to text.](#)

19:2 never even heard: Only fragments of the gospel reached Ephesus before Paul's arrival. This small band of disciples knew only the baptism of John and nothing of sacramental Baptism or the gift of the Holy Spirit. [Back to text.](#)

19:6 laid his hands: For the distinction between this gesture and Baptism, [See note on Acts 8:16.](#) [Back to text.](#)

19:9 the Way: A code name for the early Christian movement. [See note on Acts 9:2.](#) **the hall of Tyrannus:** An educational facility or lecture hall for addressing large numbers. [Back to text.](#)

19:10 two years: Paul's longest missionary stop in Acts. Adding the previous "three months" of preaching in the synagogue (19:8), his work in Ephesus extended just beyond the years A.D. 53 to 55 toward a third year (20:31). He wrote 1 Corinthians at some point during his stay (1 Cor 16:8).

all the residents of Asia: Prolonged evangelization led eventually to the founding of Churches in numerous Asian cities during NT times, such as Collosae, Laodicea, Hierapolis, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia (Col 1:2; 4:13; Rev 1:11). [Back to text.](#)



19:11 extraordinary miracles: Divine power flowed so powerfully through Paul that even his work clothes were used to drive away demons and diseases. He wore the "handkerchiefs" around his head, and the "aprons" he tied around his waist (19:12). • According to Catholic tradition, the bodies of the saints and even their belongings can occasion great miracles in the presence of faith. This perspective on the efficacy of holy

relics is corroborated by other biblical passages (2 Kings 13:21; Mt 14:36; Mk 5:27-30). [See note on Acts 5:15.](#) [Back to text.](#)

19:13 Jewish exorcists: The profession was recognized in Judaism, sometimes in connection with the power over spirits given to Solomon, the son of David (Wis 7:20; Mt 12:22-27). [Back to text.](#)

19:14 Sceva: Otherwise unknown. His sons were overpowered by the demon (19:16) because they made unauthorized use of a Christian exorcistic formula, i.e., they wielded the name of Jesus without faith in him or a commitment to his teaching. [See note on Acts 4:12.](#) [Back to text.](#)

19:19 burned them: The Ephesian believers threw their magical and superstitious books onto a bonfire as a public act of renunciation. **pieces of silver:** With each coin equivalent to a single day's wage, the value of the library was worth 50,000 days' earnings. [Back to text.](#)

19:21 I must also see Rome: Paul is magnetically drawn to the imperial capital in Italy (23:11), finally arriving there at the climax of Acts (28:14-31). [Back to text.](#)

19:23 the Way: A code name for the early Christian movement. [See note on Acts 9:2.](#) [Back to text.](#)

19:23-41 The riot at Ephesus shows how the good news of the gospel was bad news for the idols and idol manufacturers of antiquity. Here Demetrius and a guild of tradesmen turn the city against missionaries whose promotion of one God dishonored the cult of Artemis and led to a sharp decline in the sale of miniature Artemis statues. The impression comes through that Demetrius was zealous not only to preserve the honor of the goddess (19:27), but even more so to protect his source of income (19:25). [See note on Acts 14:15.](#) [Back to text.](#)

19:24 Artemis: A goddess and huntress of Greek mythology whose cult was widely followed throughout the Roman world (19:27). In Ephesus, which was the center of Artemis worship and the home of her magnificent temple, she was closely associated with the ancient mother goddess of Asia Minor and was revered as a patroness of fertility. Figurines unearthed in recent times depict her as a woman with multiple breasts. [Back to text.](#)

19:29 the theater: Archeologists estimate that the Ephesian amphitheater seated nearly 25,000 people. **Gaius:** Possibly mentioned in Rom 16:23, but this is uncertain. **Aristarchus:** Accompanied Paul on his trips to Jerusalem (20:4) and Rome (27:2). He apparently stayed with the

apostle during his first Roman detainment (Col 4:10; Philem 24). [Back to text.](#)

19:33 Alexander: He hoped to disclaim Jewish responsibility for the grievances of Demetrius. Once identified as a Jew, however, he was drowned out with two hours of shouting by the clamorous mob (19:34). It was no secret among pagans that Judaism was just as intolerant of idolatry as Christianity. [Back to text.](#)

19:35 town clerk: The city secretary of Ephesus and the local official who mediated public relations with Rome. **temple keeper:** An official title given to cities that hosted shrines associated with the Roman imperial cult. **the sacred stone:** A meteorite in the Artemis temple thought to resemble the goddess. [Back to text.](#)

19:40 charged with rioting: The mob was on the brink of disturbing the *Pax Romana* (Lat. "Roman Peace"). To preserve this worldwide stability and social order, Roman authorities were known to stamp out civil upheavals with swift and violent measures. [Back to text.](#)

20:1-6 Leaving Ephesus, Paul makes a final sweep through northern and southern Greece before setting out for Jerusalem. Information about his activities during this time can also be gleaned from his NT letters: **(1)** Paul was collecting donations to help the poor Christians of Jerusalem (Rom 15:25-27; 2 Cor 8-9); **(2)** he had written two more epistles along the way, 2 Corinthians and Romans; and **(3)** he may have ventured into new missionary territory as far west as Illyricum, on the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea (Rom 15:19). [Back to text.](#)

20:5 waiting for us: The shift in perspective ("us") indicates that Luke, who had stayed behind in Philippi (16:12), met up with Paul and sailed with him to Troas (20:6). [See note on Acts 16:10.](#) [Back to text.](#)

20:6 Unleavened Bread: A religious festival that began with Passover and was celebrated in Jerusalem every spring. Although the adult men of Israel were required to make an annual pilgrimage to the city at this time (Deut 16:16), Paul no longer felt bound by this requirement of the Old Covenant and so did not attend the feast. For another example of this, see 1 Cor 16:8. [Back to text.](#)



20:7 first day of the week: The day following the Saturday Sabbath (Gen 2:3). This passage provides the earliest evidence that believers

assembled on Sundays for catechetical instruction and sacramental worship. It was soon called the "Lord's day" (Rev 1:10) to commemorate the day Jesus rose from the dead (Lk 24:1; CCC 1343). • The sequence of apostolic preaching (20:7) followed by a eucharistic celebration (20:11) reflects the essential structure of Christian liturgy, where Christ comes to us in word and sacrament. [See note on Lk 24:30.](#) [Back to text.](#)



20:10 bent over him: Or, "laid upon him". Paul revives the boy Eutychus just as Peter revived the young girl Tabitha (9:40). • The prophets Elijah and Elisha both resuscitated youths to new life by lying down upon them (1 Kings 17:21; 2 Kings 4:34). [Back to text.](#)



**Asia and Greece
Revisited: Paul's Third
Journey**

20:13-15 Paul and his missionary team move down the chain of islands off the Aegean coast of Asia Minor. The final stop, at Miletus, is 30 miles from Ephesus. [Back to text.](#)

20:16 Pentecost: A religious festival held in Jerusalem 50 days after Passover. Pilgrims came to dedicate the first loaves of bread made from the spring wheat harvest. Paul's desire to arrive in time for the feast may be linked with the collection of money he had taken up among the Gentiles for the poor saints in Jerusalem (Rom 15:25-28). Delivering this gift at the feast would have symbolized the initial harvest reaped among the nations by his gospel. [See note on Acts 2:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)

20:17-38 A farewell speech to the leaders of the Ephesian Church. Paul challenges them with memories of his own conduct and cautions them of dangers that lie ahead. He urges them to be humble, persevering, and bold (20:18-21), giving their hands to hard work and their hearts to the less fortunate (20:34-35). He also warns them to protect their flocks from heretical wolves who are sure to bring confusion and error (20:28-30). After hints that Paul is uttering his final good-bye (20:22, 25), the speech ends with the elders in tears (20:37). [Back to text.](#)

20:28 guardians: The Greek term refers to "overseers", suggesting the Ephesian leaders are either "bishops" appointed to succeed the apostles or "elders" who shepherd the local Church only (20:17). Because ecclesiastical titles were not yet standardized, some degree of fluidity is evidenced in their NT usage. [See note on 1 Tim 3:1](#) and word study: [Elders](#) at Jas 5:14. **the Church of the Lord:** The better reading is: "the Church of God" (see textual note v). **with his own blood:** This translation asserts both the divinity (his = God) and humanity (blood) of Jesus. Others translate it: "with the blood of his Own" (see textual note w). This changes the sense of the passage, saying that the Father (his = God) obtained the Church through the redeeming death (blood) of the Son (his Own). [Back to text.](#)

20:29 fierce wolves: False teachers, who invariably attacked the Ephesian flock in later years (1 Tim 1:3-7; Rev 2:2). [Back to text.](#)

20:31 three years: The approximate duration of Paul's ministry in Ephesus. [See note on Acts 19:10.](#) [Back to text.](#)

20:34 these hands ministered: Paul often refused stipends from local Churches, preferring instead to support himself with income earned as a

tentmaker (18:3). He wanted at all costs to make his gospel free of charge (2 Cor 2:17; 1 Thess 2:9). [Back to text.](#)

20:35 It is more blessed: This saying of Jesus is not recorded in the four Gospels but was passed down by the apostles in the form of oral tradition. The Gospels themselves give us only selections from this tradition, which was far too broad and detailed for anyone to make an exhaustive record of it in writing (Jn 21:25). [Back to text.](#)

20:36 knelt down: A traditional prayer posture noted also in 21:5. Kneeling illustrates the proper relation between God and his servants, who express the submission of their hearts through the lowering of their bodies (Ps 95:6; Eph 3:14). Other prayer postures stemming from Jewish practice include raising the hands (Ps 141:2; 1 Tim 2:8) and standing (Mk 11:25; Lk 18:11; CCC 2702). [Back to text.](#)

21:1-18 A third series of "we" passages where Luke accompanies Paul on his final journey to Jerusalem. [See note on Acts 16:10.](#) [Back to text.](#)

21:1-3 Paul and companions sail from port to port around the southwestern edge of Asia Minor and on past the island of Cyprus to Phoenicia, just north of Palestine. The final stretch from Patara to the harbor of Tyre was nearly 400 miles long. [Back to text.](#)

21:7 Ptolemais: A Phoenician port just south of Tyre (21:3). [Back to text.](#)

21:8 Caesarea: The provincial capital of Judea, another 32 miles down the coast from Ptolemais (21:7). This was the final stop on Paul's sea voyage; from here he would travel more than 50 miles on foot to Jerusalem (21:15). **Philip the evangelist:** One of the seven men ordained for service in 6:56. Soon afterward he was engaged in missionary preaching in Samaria (8:4-25) and along the coastline of Judea (8:26-40). [Back to text.](#)



21:10 Agabus: The prophet who foretold the famine years earlier (11:28) here announces Paul's upcoming arrest in Jerusalem (21:11). He enacts his message with the help of Paul's belt instead of merely enunciating it. • On the premise that actions speak louder than words, several Hebrew prophets delivered messages from Yahweh through symbolic acts and public demonstrations (Is 20:2-4; Jer 19:1-15; Ezek 4:1-17; Hos 1:2-11). [Back to text.](#)

21:13 even to die: Already aware that suffering awaits him (20:23), Paul has prepared himself to wear the martyr's crown. Even the affections of his friends could not overpower his sense of mission or dissuade him from traveling to Jerusalem. Paul preferred martyrdom over further ministry; see Phil 1:19-26. [Back to text.](#)

21:17 Jerusalem: The final destination of Paul's third missionary tour, where he arrived about A.D. 58. So far as we know, this is the last time the apostle ever set foot in the city. [Back to text.](#)

21:18 James: The acknowledged leader of the Jerusalem Church since the departure of Peter (12:17). That Luke surrounds him with a body of elders instead of the apostles suggests the original Twelve had left the city by this time for mission fields beyond Israel (Lk 24:47). [See note on Acts 12:17.](#) [Back to text.](#)

21:20 many thousands: Luke has already noted how the evangelization of Israel met with great success in the earliest days (2:41; 4:4; 6:7). [Back to text.](#)



21:21 forsake Moses: Rumors had reached Jerusalem that Paul forbade Jewish Christians to observe the religious traditions of Judaism. James takes this report to be false and urges Paul to make a public display of his reverence for the customs of Moses. From the perspective of Acts, only the Gentiles were exempt from circumcision and other ceremonies of the Torah (15:1-11), although hints are given that the Temple and its Mosaic rituals will pass away even for the Jews in due time (6:14; 10:9-16). • According to the Council of Florence in 1442, circumcision and other rites of the Mosaic Law could still be observed in the earliest days of the Church, so long as no one considered them necessary requirements for salvation. [Back to text.](#)

21:23 under a vow: A temporary Nazirite vow of abstinence from wine, cutting the hair, and physical contact with corpses (Num 6:1-12). The completion of the vow involved a week of purification, a ritual shaving of the head, and a sacrificial offering of animals and food in the Temple (Num 6:13-21). Paul had completed a similar vow in 18:18. [Back to text.](#)

21:25 sent a letter: The epistle issued years earlier by the Jerusalem Council (15:23-29). [See note on Acts 15:20.](#) [Back to text.](#)

21:27 Jews from Asia: Pilgrims in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. Presumably they recognized Paul from his years of missionary work in Ephesus, the leading city of the Roman province of Asia (20:16). [Back to text.](#)

21:28 against . . . the law and this place: The charge that Paul was slandering both the Torah and the Temple is reminiscent of the accusations against Stephen in 6:13. **Greeks into the temple:** An unthinkable violation of Temple law. Gentiles were permitted to gather and worship in the outermost court of the sanctuary, but they were absolutely forbidden to penetrate into the inner courts, where the people of Israel alone had privilege of access. Separating the inner courts and the outer court was a partition wall with plaques posted near its gates that threatened death for Gentile trespassers. Luke contends that Paul was innocent of the charge—his Greek friend "Trophimus" was seen in the city, not the inner precincts of the Temple (21:29). [Back to text.](#)

21:31 tribune of the cohort: Claudius Lysias, a commander of 600 or more Roman soldiers (23:26). They were stationed in a tower connected to the northwest corner of the Temple called the Fortress Antonia. Stairway access to the Temple platform enabled the Roman military to maintain order during Jewish festivals, when the courts were overflowing with pilgrims. [Back to text.](#)

21:33 arrested him: Roman intervention saved Paul from the assaults of the Jewish mob, who would have beaten him to death for supposedly defiling the Temple (21:28). [Back to text.](#)

21:36 Away with him!: Reminiscent of the crowd's rejection of Jesus in Lk 23:18. [Back to text.](#)

21:37 you know Greek?: As soon as Paul addressed him in fluent Greek, the tribune suspected he was the Egyptian insurrectionist who had led a revolt in Israel a few years earlier. According to one report, this false prophet had gathered his followers on the summit of the Mount of Olives with the intention of charging Jerusalem and wresting the city from the Romans. Although the uprising had been crushed, the prophet had somehow escaped without a trace. [Back to text.](#)

21:38 the Assassins: Jewish revolutionaries known as "dagger men" (Lat. *sicarii*). [Back to text.](#)

21:40 the Hebrew language: Probably Aramaic, a language closely related to Hebrew that was widely spoken in Palestine. [Back to text.](#)

22:1-21 The first of four defense speeches delivered by Paul in Acts. Later he addresses the governor Felix (24:10-21), the governor Festus (25:8), and King Agrippa II (26:1-23). Here, before the restless Jerusalem mob, Paul stresses his Jewish upbringing and his former antagonism toward Christianity, hoping to show that only a miracle like the Resurrection could have changed the course of his entire life and mission so drastically. In the end, the attentiveness of the crowd turns back to anger when Paul mentions his mission to the Gentiles (22:21-22). [Back to text.](#)

22:3 I am a Jew: Paul tries to ease the tension with autobiographical details. Not only is he a son of Israel by birth, but he was raised in Jerusalem and educated in the orthodox traditions of Judaism under the renowned Gamaliel the Elder (Gal 1:14). [See note on Acts 5:34.](#) **Tarsus:** A popular commercial and intellectual center in Asia Minor (modern Turkey). [See note on Acts 9:30.](#) [Back to text.](#)

22:4 this Way: A code name for the early Christian movement. [See note on Acts 9:2.](#) [Back to text.](#)

22:6-16 The first retelling of Paul's Damascus road conversion since its occurrence in 9:1-19. The second comes later, in 26:12-18. [Back to text.](#)

22:14 the Just One: Or, "the Righteous One". It is also a title for Jesus in 3:14 and 7:52. [Back to text.](#)

22:16 be baptized: Baptism signifies on the body what it accomplishes in the soul—the washing away of human sin. The visible water is coupled with the audible word of the minister, who calls upon the saving name of Christ (2:38; Eph 5:26). [Back to text.](#)

22:17 returned to Jerusalem: After his nighttime escape from Damascus (9:23-26). **a trance:** A mystical encounter with God. As with Peter's experience in 10:10, the state of spiritual ecstasy can be a means for divine communication. [Back to text.](#)

22:24 scourging: The Roman scourge was made of leather strips tipped with bone or metal fragments designed to tear open the skin. Flogging injuries could be crippling or even fatal. [Back to text.](#)

22:25 Roman citizen: Citizenship could be purchased with money, inherited through the family, or conferred by the empire as a gift for outstanding service and patriotism. Among other things, Roman citizens were exempt from the scourge as a torturous means of examination. This civil privilege protected Paul from unreasonable punishment and guaranteed him a fair judicial inquiry. [Back to text.](#)

22:30 all the council: The Sanhedrin, the supreme court of Judaism. [See note on Mk 14:55.](#) [Back to text.](#)

23:1 all good conscience: Even during his days as a persecutor of the Church, Paul was convinced he was doing the right thing (26:9). Only afterward was he given the grace to see how wrong he had been (1 Cor 15:9-10). [Back to text.](#)

23:2 Ananias: The son of Nedebaeus, high priest from A.D. 47 to 59. He was a notoriously greedy and violent man, so disliked by the Jews that they assassinated him at the start of the Jewish War with Rome in A.D. 66. He is not the high priest Annas mentioned in 4:6 or the Ananias who baptized Paul in 9:17-18. [Back to text.](#)



23:5 You shall not speak evil: Paul apologizes to the court with a quotation from Ex 22:28. • The prohibition comes from the Book of the Covenant, a body of case law given to Israel at Mt. Sinai (Ex 21-23). Paul made it clear that he holds himself to this law, although it remains unclear why he did not recognize the high priest. [Back to text.](#)

23:6 Sadducees . . . Pharisees: Two religious movements that emerged in Israel around the second century B.C. They were united on certain Jewish issues but deeply divided over others. The Pharisees, for instance, believed in the resurrection of the body, the unseen existence of angels and demons, and the hope of an afterlife, but the Sadducees denied all this and more (23:8). As a matter of strategy, Paul revealed his association with the Pharisees to generate partisan disputes and split the sympathy of the court. See essays: [Who Are the Pharisees?](#) at Mk 2 and [Who Are the Sadducees?](#) at Mk 12. [Back to text.](#)

23:11 the Lord stood by: The risen Christ spoke to Paul several times after their initial encounter near Damascus (9:36; 18:9; 22:17-18). **witness also at Rome:** Sets the stage for the final movement of Acts, where Paul appeals his case to Caesar (25:12) and journeys by ship to the imperial capital in Italy (28:14). [Back to text.](#)

23:12 bound themselves by an oath: Or "anathematized themselves". Essentially more than 40 fanatical Jews invoked a curse upon themselves should they consume any food or drink before murdering Paul (Mk 14:71). Whether or not these men starved themselves to death is unknown; it is certain only that Paul slipped through their hands unharmed. [Back to text.](#)

23:16 the son of Paul's sister: A nephew of Paul informs the tribune of the plot to ambush the apostle and take his life. This is the only mention of Paul's biological relatives in the NT. [Back to text.](#)

23:23 two of the centurions: Roman military commanders, each in charge of 100 soldiers. **the third hour:** About 9 P.M. [Back to text.](#)

23:24 mounts for Paul: The tribune took seriously the alleged conspiracy against Paul's life. Accountable for the welfare of the Roman citizen in his custody, he organized a military escort of infantry and cavalry to extricate Paul from Jerusalem under cover of darkness. He was to be taken on horseback 60 miles northwest to Caesarea, the provincial capital of Judea and the headquarters of the Roman procurator. **Felix the governor:** Antonius Felix, the Roman procurator of Judea from A.D. 52 to 59. History remembers him as a barbarous and immoral ruler. [Back to text.](#)

23:25-30 It was customary for a subordinate (tribune) to send a written explanation to his superior (procurator) about the transference of a prisoner. As told by the tribune, the facts of the story are rearranged to cover up his own mistakes: he did not learn of Paul's citizenship when he rescued the apostle from the angry crowd (23:27), but only when he was about to have him scourged (22:24-29). [Back to text.](#)

23:29 nothing deserving death: Recalls the verdict of innocence given to Jesus in Lk 23:15. [Back to text.](#)

23:31 Antipatris: A military post near the halfway point between Jerusalem and Caesarea. [Back to text.](#)

23:35 Herod's praetorium: A Caesarean palace built by the late Herod the Great (d. 4/1 B.C.). It served as the official residence of the procurator. Other praetoria mentioned in the NT were located in Rome (Phil 1:13) and Jerusalem (Jn 18:28). [Back to text.](#)

24:1 Ananias: The high priest, accompanied by a delegation of Jewish elders to represent the interests of the Sanhedrin before Felix. [See note on Acts 23:2.](#) **Tertullus:** A trained orator who acted as a prosecuting attorney on behalf of the Jerusalem leadership. [Back to text.](#)

24:2-8 Tertullus' case against Paul distorts the truth about his character and conduct. After flattering the governor with praises of his benevolence and moderation, he levels two accusations sure to grab the attention of Felix. **(1)** He portrays Paul as a troublemaker who provokes disturbances wherever he goes. The implication is that Paul is an enemy of peace and a threat to Roman order. **(2)** He also tries to disassociate Paul from Judaism

and make him the ringleader of a new and unapproved religion. At the time, it was illicit to practice or promote religions not officially recognized by the Romans. [Back to text.](#)



24:5 Nazarenes: The only use of this title for the followers of Jesus in the NT. • Among Jewish Christians, its Hebrew form, *Notsrim*, was associated not only with the village of Nazareth, but also with the prophecy of Is 11:1, where the Messiah is depicted as a "branch" (Heb. *netser*) that sprouts from the royal stump of Jesse, the father of King David. [See note on Mt 2:23.](#) [Back to text.](#)

24:10-21 Paul defends himself with outright denials of the charges laid against him. Far from being an agitator, he has conducted himself in a peaceable and orderly manner ever since his arrival in Jerusalem (24:12). Far, too, from promoting religious novelties, he worships the same God, venerates the same Scriptures, and maintains the same belief in a resurrection as his Jewish accusers (24:14-15). [See note on Acts 24:2-8.](#) [Back to text.](#)

24:14 the Way: A code name for the early Christian movement. [See note on Acts 9:2.](#) [Back to text.](#)

24:15 resurrection: Paul inherited from Pharisaic Judaism (23:8) the belief that God will raise the bodies of saints and sinners alike on the last day and send them their separate ways (Dan 12:2). This was reaffirmed in the teaching of Jesus, who claimed for himself the leading role in this final drama of history (Jn 5:25-29; CCC 1038). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Sect (Acts [24:5](#))

Hairesis (Gk.): refers to a "party", "school", or "faction". The word is used six times in Acts and three times elsewhere in the NT. It can have both *neutral* and *negative* connotations. **(1)** As applied to the Sadducees (Acts 5:17) and the Pharisees (15:5), it is a neutral term for distinct religious movements or schools of thought within the common heritage of Judaism. **(2)** Its application to the Christian sect (Acts 24:5, 14; 28:22) leans in a more negative direction. It expresses the sentiment of the Jerusalem

authorities that Christianity was an illegitimate and even dangerous deviation from Judaism. Members of the sect were thus considered "heretics", an English term derived from the root of this Greek noun. Other uses of the word in the NT apply it to factions and religious fictions that go astray from Christian teaching in one way or another (1 Cor 11:19; Gal 5:20; 2 Pet 2:1).

24:17 alms and offerings: This is the only reference in Acts to the collection of money that Paul had taken up among Gentile Churches to assist the poor of Jerusalem (Rom 15:25-27; 1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8-9). Paul had accepted this responsibility years earlier at the Jerusalem Council (Gal 2:10). [Back to text.](#)

24:22 knowledge of the Way: Felix was already familiar with the rudiments of Christian teaching, possibly from the preaching of Philip the evangelist in Caesarea (8:40; 21:8). [Back to text.](#)

24:24 Drusilla: One of the daughters of Herod Agrippa I (12:1). She was Felix' third wife, and Felix was her second husband. [Back to text.](#)

24:25 Felix was alarmed: Paul's insistence on righteousness and moral purity in the face of the coming judgment made the immoral couple too uncomfortable to listen further. [Back to text.](#)

24:26 money: Felix' interest in Paul was in part driven by greed, i.e., he hoped to get his hands on some of the funds Paul had brought to Jerusalem should the apostle attempt to buy his way out of confinement (24:17). [Back to text.](#)

24:27 Porcius Festus: The Roman procurator who replaced Felix in A.D. 59 and governed Judea until 61. History portrays him as a man more sensible and restrained than his predecessor. Paul had been left in the Caesarean prison for two years by the time he took office. [Back to text.](#)

25:3 planning an ambush: The hatred of the Jerusalem leaders for Paul had not diminished over the course of his imprisonment. With the recent appointment of Festus, they jumped at another chance to eliminate him (23:12-15). [Back to text.](#)

25:5 go down with me: Festus denied the request to bring Paul to Jerusalem but agreed to reopen his case in Caesarea. [Back to text.](#)

25:7 could not prove: Festus heard nothing but hearsay accusations against Paul. The eyewitness testimony needed to substantiate their

allegations was entirely lacking. [Back to text.](#)

25:11 If . . . I deserve to die: Paul affirms the authority of the state to issue and enforce a capital death sentence. What he denies is his own guilt. [See note on Rom 13:4.](#) **I appeal to Caesar:** Every Roman citizen had the right to appeal his case to the emperor either before or after the verdict of a lower court was rendered. Paul exercises this right to protect his own life, knowing full well that justice would be denied him in Jerusalem. At this point, only the tribunal of Caesar in Rome could handle his case with equity and impartiality. [Back to text.](#)

25:12 to Caesar: Nero, who reigned as emperor from A.D. 54 to 68. [Back to text.](#)

25:13 Agrippa the king: Herod Agrippa II, the son of Agrippa I (12:1) and the great-grandson of Herod the Great (Lk 1:5). The last ruler of the Herodian dynasty, he governed parts of Galilee and Perea until about A.D. 85. His consort **Bernice** was actually his sister, with whom he had a scandalous affair for many years. [Back to text.](#)

25:22 I should like to hear: Reminiscent of Herod Antipas' interest in hearing Jesus in Lk 23:8. [Back to text.](#)

25:26 nothing definite to write: Festus wanted Agrippa to assist him in drafting a report of Paul's case to Caesar. Having witnessed the battle of words—with Paul and his opponents contradicting one another on every point (25:7-8)—there appeared to the procurator to be no violation of Roman law, only disputes about Jesus and the Jewish religion (25:19). Luke stresses that both Festus and Agrippa believed Paul to be innocent of wrongdoing (25:25; 26:31), just as he highlights the innocence of Jesus during his trials before Roman judges (Lk 23:4, 15, 22). [Back to text.](#)

26:2-23 Paul's final defense speech in Acts, delivered before Jewish (Agrippa II) and Roman (Festus) authorities. Paul insists the Jews have wrongly accused him of abandoning the ancestral faith of Israel. Not only is he trained as a Pharisee (26:5), but the doctrine of the resurrection he now preaches is both a classic tenet of Pharisaic theology (23:8) and a central hope of the Hebrew Scriptures (26:22-23). [Back to text.](#)

26:3 familiar with all customs: Agrippa II was well acquainted with Judaism, being authorized by the Romans to have charge over the Temple treasury and to appoint its high priests. [Back to text.](#)

26:5 a Pharisee: Paul spent his formative years mastering the strictest traditions of Judaism under the tutelage of one of its most celebrated rabbis

(22:3; Gal 1:14). [Back to text.](#)



26:7 our twelve tribes: The tribal family of Israel living in Palestine and abroad yearned for the resurrection of the dead and the restoration of their nation. • Hopes of bodily resurrection and national restoration are blended together in texts such as Ezek 37:1-14 and Hos 6:1-2, where the redemption of all Israel from sin (exile) to covenant sonship (return) is described as the resurrection of a body from death to new life. Paul deals at length with the tribal restoration of Israel in Rom 9-11. **worship night and day:** Luke has already hinted at this in Lk 2:36-37, where Anna, of the tribal lineage of Asher, prays night and day in the Temple for the redemption of her people. [Back to text.](#)

26:10 prison . . . death: For Paul's relentless attacks on the early Christians, see word study: [Laid Waste](#) at 8:3. [Back to text.](#)

26:12-18 The second retelling of Paul's conversion since its occurrence (9:1-19; 22:6-16). [Back to text.](#)

26:14 kick against the goads: A Greek proverb about useless and harmful resistance. The idea was well understood among farmers: yoked oxen that kick against the plowman only injure themselves on the sharpened spikes that follow behind them. Jesus was telling Paul that his resistance to the gospel was futile to the point of being personally harmful. [Back to text.](#)

26:17 the people: The sons of Israel (9:15). [Back to text.](#)

26:21 For this reason: More than anything else, it was Paul's ministry to the Gentiles that infuriated his Jewish opponents (22:21-22). [Back to text.](#)



26:23 the first to rise: Israel's hope in the resurrection (24:15) has become history in the personal experience of the Messiah (25:19), who is the first of an entire company of saints to be raised again in glory (1 Cor 15:20-23). **he would proclaim light:** A probable allusion to Is 49:6, excerpted earlier by Paul in 13:47. • Isaiah hears Yahweh sending out his messianic Servant, first to restore the scattered tribes of Israel and then to shine his light on the nations. The sequence of the prophecy explains why the apostles, who share in this mission of the Messiah (1:8; 9:15), carried the gospel to Israel before systematically evangelizing the Gentiles (3:26; 13:46; 26:20). [See note on Acts 13:5.](#) [Back to text.](#)

26:26 not done in a corner: The founding events of Christianity were public events of recent history. The well-attested facts of Holy Week and the open proclamation of the gospel make it anything but a secretive movement. [Back to text.](#)

26:28 make me a Christian!: When Paul's preaching turned personal, Agrippa followed the path of political expedience. He did not want to alienate himself from the Jews who hated Paul (26:2) or from the Roman procurator who thought him mad (26:24). So instead of admitting the cogency of Paul's argument, he fell back on the excuse that the exposition was too short to expect of him an authentic conversion. [Back to text.](#)

27:1-28:16 Paul's sea voyage to Rome. The journey has three phases: he takes one ship from Caesarea to Myra (27:15), another from Myra to Malta (27:6-28:1), and another still from Malta to Italy (28:11-16). Though a harrowing voyage through storm and shipwreck, Paul stands out as a pillar of strength and composure who encourages those around him. [Back to text.](#)

27:1 decided that we: Last mentioned accompanying Paul to Jerusalem (21:15-17), Luke again joins the apostle on his travels, this time to Rome. Confirmation of this emerges from the narrative, which is filled with the minute details of an eyewitness account and makes use of technical, nautical terminology. [See note on Acts 16:10.](#) **a centurion:** Paul and other prisoners are guarded by a military escort. [Back to text.](#)

27:2 Adramyttium: The ship was destined to port along the western coast of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). **Aristarchus:** Earlier he traveled with Paul from Ephesus (19:29) to Greece (20:2-4) and eventually to Jerusalem (21:15-17). His trip to Rome is independently confirmed by Paul's own letters, where he appears at the apostle's side during his detainment (Col 4:10; Philem 24). [Back to text.](#)

27:3-5 Embarking from Caesarea, the ship sailed up the coast nearly 70 miles to Sidon, then around the northeastern shoulder of the island of Cyprus to the port of Myra, on the southern edge of Asia Minor. All told, this first leg of the trip probably lasted around 12 days. [Back to text.](#)

27:6 ship of Alexandria: That is, from the largest port city in northern Africa. Cargo ships like this one often passed from Egypt to Italy, supplying the Roman capital with most of its wheat and grains (27:38). [Back to text.](#)

27:7-28:1 Embarking from Myra, the second ship sailed west to Cnidus and then south around the island of Crete. After docking in the bay of Fair Havens, the captain and crew decided to push on to another Cretan port at

Phoenix but were blasted with powerful winds from the northeast that drove them away from the coastline and into the turbulent sea. Eventually they drifted to the island of Malta, where the ship ran aground and everyone on board was able to swim or paddle to safety. [Back to text.](#)

27:9 the fast: The annual Day of Atonement, when the nation of Israel sought the mercy of God and spent the day fasting (Lev 16:29-31). The feast fell in late September, i.e., about the same time the sailing season was drawing to a close around the Mediterranean. By the middle of November, sailing was deemed impossible for a full three months (28:11). [Back to text.](#)

27:17 undergird the ship: Ropes were tied sideways around the body of the vessel to keep it from breaking up in the stormy waters. the Syrtis: A stretch of offshore sandbars along the northern coast of Africa. lowered the gear: Probably the sails, not the anchors. [Back to text.](#)



On to Rome: Paul's Fourth Journey

27:22 no loss of life: A timely note of encouragement— God's kindness toward Paul would embrace all 276 passengers on board (27:37). It had already been revealed to Paul that his safe arrival in Rome was part of God's plan (23:11), and this had been reaffirmed by an angelic messenger the night before (27:24). [Back to text.](#)

27:27 the sea of Adria: Not the Adriatic Sea east of Italy, but another name for the central waters of the Mediterranean. [Back to text.](#)

27:30 lowered the boat: The crewmen intended to desert the ship on a getaway lifeboat. [Back to text.](#)

27:35 he took bread: After days of rough waters and seasickness drowned the crew's appetite, Paul encouraged them to find strength in food before their final swim to safety. The sequence of giving thanks and breaking bread could suggest a eucharistic celebration (Lk 24:30-35), but similar ritual actions were performed at normal Jewish meals (Lk 9:16; 1 Tim 4:45). Since Luke gives no indication that the captain and crew were baptized believers, the latter case is more probable than the former. [Back to text.](#)

27:41 ran the vessel aground: This was at least the fourth time Paul was shipwrecked during the days of his apostolic ministry (2 Cor 11:25). [Back to text.](#)

27:42 to kill the prisoners: Roman soldiers were accountable for prisoners under their guard. They would be severely punished if even one of the inmates escaped in the confusion and desperation of the moment. [Back to text.](#)

28:1-10 The entire manifest of the ship's personnel and passengers washed up on the shores of Malta, a small island 60 miles south of Sicily. The islanders met them with extraordinary hospitality, tending to their needs for the three months of winter when sailing was impossible (Nov.-Jan.). Everyone was especially impressed with Paul, who shrugged off deadly snakes unharmed (28:3-6) and healed the sick with his hands (28:7-10). These were signs that Paul was a divinely authorized apostle (Mk 16:17-18; Lk 10:19). [Back to text.](#)

28:2 the natives: The Greek term *barbaroi* refers to non-Greek-speaking peoples, as in Rom 1:14 and Col 3:11. The Maltese people of the NT period traced their language and lineage back to the Phoenicians. [Back to text.](#)

28:3 a viper: Lying stiff and still, the snake was mistaken for a twig as Paul gathered up brushwood to feed the fire. Poisonous vipers like this one no longer live on the island. [Back to text.](#)

28:6 he was a god: Paul's immunity to the viper suggested to the islanders he could not be a mere mortal. This was opposite their initial conclusion that Paul was a murderer whose sinful past had finally caught up with him (28:4). For a similar attempt to deify Paul, see 14:11-18. [Back to text.](#)

28:11 ship of Alexandria: Another cargo ship from Egypt headed for Italy. [See note on Acts 27:6.](#) **the Twin Brothers:** On the front of the vessel were images of Castor and Pollux, sons of the high god Zeus in Greek mythology. Popular piety revered them as the patron deities of sailing. [Back to text.](#)

28:13 Puteoli: The major commercial seaport of western Italy. The presence of Christian brethren here (28:14) and in Rome (28:15) confirms what Paul himself says elsewhere—that long before his arrival, the Romans had already embraced the faith and were admired the world over for it (Rom 1:8). Though no one knows for certain how and when Christianity first came to Italy, it is possible that Jewish converts from Rome (2:10) carried the gospel back with them after Peter evangelized the Pentecost pilgrims in Jerusalem years earlier (2:1-41). Tradition also puts Peter in Rome nearly two decades before Paul first set foot in the city. [See note on Acts 12:17.](#) [Back to text.](#)

28:14 we came to Rome: Luke not only accompanied Paul to Rome but must have stayed with him for a time, since he appears at the apostle's side during his detention (Col 4:14; Philem 24). [See note on Acts 16:10.](#) [Back to text.](#)

28:15 came as far as: Roman believers hurried out to welcome Paul and escort him into the capital. One group met him at the Forum of Appius, more than 40 miles from the city, and another joined him at Three Taverns, more than 30 miles outside the city. [Back to text.](#)

28:16 to stay by himself: Paul lived for two years under house arrest in Rome. He rented the place at his own expense (28:30), and his wrist was chained at all times to a Roman soldier (28:20). This living arrangement gave him the freedom to continue limited apostolic work: he evangelized the crowds that gathered around his home (28:23) and wrote his famous

"Captivity Epistles" to the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, and to Philemon. [Back to text.](#)

28:17 the Jews: It is no surprise that Paul first makes contact with the Jews, as this was his missionary policy throughout Acts (17:1-2). The presence of a Jewish community in Rome here in A.D. 60 suggests that Claudius' edict to expel them from the capital in A.D. 49 was either revoked, relaxed, or no longer remembered as time went by. See notes on Acts 13:5 and 18:2. [Back to text.](#)

28:20 the hope of Israel: The hope in a bodily resurrection from the dead (23:6; 24:15; 26:6-8). [Back to text.](#)

28:22 this sect: The early Christian movement. See word study: [Sect](#) at 24:5. [Back to text.](#)

28:23 the law . . . the prophets: The Scriptures of Israel that Paul used to expound the gospel to the Jews (24:14; 26:22). The conviction that OT passages foretell the dying and rising of the Messiah goes back to Jesus himself (Lk 24:44). [Back to text.](#)



28:26-27 Paul indicts his kinsmen with the words of Is 6:9-10, a text used in a similar way in the Gospels (Mt 13:14- 15; Mk 4:11-12; Jn 12:40).
• Isaiah consigned all but a faithful remnant of Israel to divine judgment, making the rebels who had closed their eyes and ears to Yahweh even less responsive to his urgent warnings. Paul is faced with a similar situation, where all but a remnant of Israel accepted the gospel. [Back to text.](#)

28:28 they will listen: Or, better, "they also will listen". Paul is not slamming the door on the Jews permanently, since some are still accepting his message (28:24). The pattern seen here and elsewhere in Acts is a regional pattern: rejection of the gospel by local Jews turns the focus of Paul's outreach to local Gentiles instead (13:46; 18:6). At no time does Paul fully abandon his mission to the "sons of Israel" (9:15). [Back to text.](#)

28:30 two whole years: From about A.D. 60 to 62. Luke is silent about the outcome of Paul's case before Caesar, although tradition has it that Paul was released and returned to active ministry. If so, the story of his captivity probably unfolded in one of two ways. **(1)** It may be that Paul successfully defended himself and was acquitted by the Roman tribunal. This might be expected since every Roman official in Acts up to this point was convinced of his innocence. **(2)** It is also possible that Paul's accusers from Jerusalem

failed to make an appearance before the court, giving Rome legal cause to dismiss the charges against him and warrant his release. As for a subsequent ministry, Paul expressed intentions to travel *westward* from Rome to Spain (Rom 15:24) as well as *eastward* from Rome to Macedonia and Asia Minor (Phil 2:24; Philem 22). There is some evidence to suggest he was successful on both counts: Titus 1:5 tells us that Paul evangelized the island of Crete in the east—a mission that is all but impossible to fit into Paul's travel schedule anywhere earlier in Acts—and Clement of Rome tells us around A.D. 95 that he carried the gospel to the limits of the west (*1 Clement* 5:5-7). Tradition holds that Paul was later rearrested and martyred (beheaded) in Rome in the mid 60s. [See note on Acts 28:16.](#) [Back to text.](#)

28:31 unhindered: The preaching of Paul in Rome is a preliminary fulfillment of Jesus' mandate to witness to the "end of the earth" (1:8). Scholars generally hold that Luke has left this conclusion open-ended to show that the Church's mission to the world, far from drawing to a close, has only just begun. Also, the fact that Luke's narrative reaches a climax with Paul still shackled as a prisoner may suggest that the Book of Acts was written about this time, around A.D. 63. The inference is not conclusive in itself, but, combined with other factors, it leads to a compelling case for dating Acts in the early 60s. See introduction to Acts: *Date.* [Back to text.](#)

INTRODUCTION TO

THE LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Author and Date Ancient and modern commentators agree that the Apostle Paul wrote Romans. His name is attached to it (1:1), and its contents are consistent with our knowledge of Paul's mind and ministry from the Book of Acts and his other NT epistles. It is similarly agreed that Paul must have written the letter during the final months of his third missionary tour (Acts 18:23-21:16), probably during the winter of late A.D. 57 or early 58. This is based on information from Romans 15, where Paul mentions his fund-raising efforts in Macedonia and Achaia (modern Greece) for "the poor among the saints at Jerusalem" (15:26). According to Acts 20:1-3, Paul went through these regions just before setting out for Jerusalem with the relief offering in A.D. 58. The letter was probably dispatched from the Achaian city of Corinth or its nearby port of Cenchreae (Rom 16:1).

Destination In Paul's day, Rome was the imperial capital of the Roman Empire and the most populated metropolis of the Mediterranean world. Although predominantly pagan and notoriously corrupt, the city was also home to more than a dozen Jewish synagogues. The birth of Christianity in Rome is one of the unsolved puzzles of history. The good news may have first reached the city through Jewish pilgrims returning from Jerusalem (Acts 2:10). Tradition also remembers the Apostle Peter ministering in the capital during the 40s ([See note on Acts 12:17](#)). Whatever its first contact with the gospel, Rome had a glowing reputation for its faith by the time Paul wrote to the Christian community (Rom 1:8). Hints scattered throughout the letter suggest the Roman Church at this time was a mixed community of Jewish (2:17; 7:1) and Gentile believers (11:13; 15:15-16). The majority were probably Gentiles, since most of the individual names listed in chapter 16 are Greco-Roman and only a handful are distinctively Semitic. In any case, many scholars hold that the Roman Church was still

closely associated with the synagogue communities of the city where it seems to have first taken root.

Purpose Three principal aims underlie the Letter to the Romans. **(1)** Paul wrote to introduce himself and his teaching to the Roman Christians in preparation for his planned visit (1:11-13). The Church in Rome was one of the few to which Paul wrote before making a personal visit. **(2)** Paul hoped to establish the Roman Church as his missionary base for a new phase of evangelization. Having completed his work in the eastern Mediterranean, Paul was now ready to turn his attention and energies toward Spain in the west (15:23-24). The letter is Paul's initial attempt to enlist the support of the Romans in carrying out these apostolic plans. **(3)** Paul also hoped to ease tensions that were straining the unity and fellowship of the Roman Church itself. Boasting, it seems, was a problem for Jews and Gentiles alike: the Jews took pride in the blessings and advantages of the Old Covenant not shared by the Gentiles (2:1-3:20); and the Gentiles claimed to have replaced Israel as the new and beloved people of God (11:13-32). For this reason, Paul argues at length for the unity and equality of all peoples in Jesus Christ (3:28-30) and challenges believers of every nationality to welcome one another as servants and worshipers of the same Lord (10:12; 15:7-12).

Themes and Characteristics Romans is a work of profound theological reflection. As such, it has probably influenced Christian thinking and history more than any other epistle of Paul. It is his longest letter and, in the eyes of many, his most mature. Indeed, Paul had been preaching and defending the gospel for two decades before he wrote Romans, leaving us a work that is stamped with the imprint of his wisdom, depth, and spiritual energy. Even more than his other writings, however, Romans is full of things that are "hard to understand" (2 Pet 3:16). His style is more formal than usual, and his thoughts weave back and forth through a maze of theological mysteries concerning sin, judgment, righteousness, justification, sanctification, salvation, suffering, law, grace, sonship, election, mercy, sacrifice, and the triune God. If any NT epistle can claim to resemble a theological treatise, it is Romans.

The body of Romans divides neatly into three major parts. **(1)** *Salvation in Christ* (1:16-8:39). The letter begins with a sweeping indictment of

mankind, declaring the world guilty before God. Here Paul states that the cancer of human rebellion that spread rampantly among the pagans (1:18-32) has also infected Israel (2:1-3:20). As a result, all nations without distinction stand trapped in the same predicament: entangled in sin and in desperate need of salvation (3:23). God responds to this tragedy by sending forth his Son, Jesus Christ, whose dying and rising rescues the fallen family of Adam and restores them to a righteous standing with God (5:1-21). At several points throughout this section Paul reflects deeply on the mystery of sin (6:12-23; 7:7-25) and the salvation we experience in Christ through the Spirit (8:13-19). **(2) *Restoration of Israel*** (9:1-11:39). The central section of Romans examines the place of Israel in the new economy of grace. Though many in Israel have repudiated the gospel, Paul insists that God has not abandoned his covenant people but is planning to save "all Israel" in Christ (11:26-27). This, according to Paul, is consistent with the pattern of God's dealings with Israel in the Scriptures. These chapters also examine how the Gentiles are related to Israel as branches grafted onto the trunk of an olive tree (11:17-24). **(3) *Christian Living and Epilogue*** (12:1-16:23). The final chapters of Romans are a practical application of the theology expounded in earlier chapters. Here Paul considers the obligations of the believer in the Church and society. His catechesis follows the main contours of Jesus' teaching in the Gospels (12:9-21). In this section we find Paul's most explicit instructions on the Christian's relation to the State (13:1-7) and the need for believers to exercise Christian freedom with prudence, lest we cause others to fall (14:12-13).

OUTLINE OF THE LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE ROMANS

1. Prologue ([1:1-15](#))

- A. Greeting ([1:1-7](#))
- B. Prayer of Thanksgiving ([1:8-15](#))

2. Salvation in Christ ([1:16-8:39](#))

- A. Theme: The Righteousness of God ([1:16-17](#))
- B. Condemnation: The Universal Corruption of Gentiles and Jews ([1:18-3:20](#))
- C. Justification: The Gift of Grace and Forgiveness through Faith ([3:21-5:11](#))
- D. Jesus Christ: The New Adam ([5:12-21](#))
- E. Sanctification: Holiness in Christ ([6:1-8:11](#))
- F. Glorification: The Spirit, Sonship, and Suffering ([8:12-39](#))

3. Restoration of Israel ([9:1-11:36](#))

- A. Israel's Election ([9:1-29](#))
- B. Israel's Rejection of the Gospel ([9:30-10:21](#))
- C. Israel's Resurrection and Salvation ([11:1-36](#))

4. Christian Living ([12:1-14:23](#))

- A. Christian Conduct in the Church ([12:1-21](#))
- B. Christian Citizenship ([13:1-7](#))
- C. Love Fulfills God's Law ([13:8-14](#))
- D. Christian Fellowship and Flexibility ([14:1-23](#))

5. Epilogue ([15:1-16:23](#))

- A. Admonition ([15:1-7](#))
- B. Summary of the Epistle ([15:8-13](#))
- C. Paul's Ministry and Travel Plans ([15:14-33](#))
- D. Personal Greetings ([16:1-23](#) [[24](#)])

6. Closing Doxology ([16:25-27](#))

THE LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE

ROMANS

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[The Salvation of All Israel](#)

Salutation

1 * [Paul](#), a servant^a of Jesus Christ, [called to be an apostle](#), set apart for the gospel of God ²which he promised beforehand through his prophets [in the holy Scriptures](#), ³[the](#) gospel [concerning his Son](#), who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴and [designated^{a2}](#) Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about [the obedience of faith](#) for the sake of his name among all the nations, ⁶including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ;

7 To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed [in all the world](#). ⁹For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, ¹⁰asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. * ¹¹For [I long to see you](#), that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, ¹²that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. ¹³I want you to know, brethren, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest * among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. ¹⁴I am under obligation both

to [Greeks](#) and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish: ¹⁵so I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

The Power of the Gospel

¹⁶ For [I am not ashamed](#) of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷For in it the [righteousness of God](#) is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live."^b

God's Wrath against Man's Wickedness

¹⁸ For [the wrath of God](#) is revealed from heaven [against all ungodliness](#) and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. ¹⁹For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰Ever since the creation of the world [his invisible nature](#), namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse; ²¹for although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless [minds were darkened](#). ²²Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³and [exchanged the glory](#) of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles.

²⁴ Therefore [God gave them up](#) in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever! Amen.

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, ²⁷and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with [passion for one another](#), men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error.

²⁸ And since they [did not see fit](#) to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a base mind and to improper conduct. ²⁹They were filled with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, they are gossips, ³⁰slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³²Though [they know God's decree](#) that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those who practice them.

The Righteous Judgment of God

² Therefore you have no excuse, O man, whoever you are, when you judge another; for in passing judgment upon him you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things. ²We know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who do such things. ³Do you suppose, O man, that when you judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself, you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴Or do you presume upon the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not know that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? ⁵But by your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶For he will render to every man according to his works: ⁷to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; ⁸but for those who are factious and do not obey the truth, but obey wickedness, there will be wrath and fury. ⁹There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, ¹⁰but glory and honor and peace for every one who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. ¹¹For God shows no partiality.

¹² All who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. ¹³For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. ¹⁴When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them ¹⁶on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

The Jews and the Law

¹⁷ But if you call yourself a Jew and rely upon the law and boast of your relation to God ¹⁸and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed in the law, ¹⁹and if you are sure that you are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, ²⁰a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—²¹you then who teach others, will you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? ²²You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob

temples? ²³You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? ²⁴For, as it is written, "[The name of God](#) is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

²⁵Circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law; but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. ²⁶So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? ²⁷Then those who are physically uncircumcised but keep the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. ²⁸For he is not a real Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. ²⁹He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and [real circumcision](#) is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal. His praise is not from men but from God.

³ Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? ²Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews are entrusted with [the oracles of God](#). ³What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the [faithfulness](#) of God? ⁴By no means! Let God be true though every man be false, as it is written,

"[That you may be justified](#) in your words,
and prevail when you are judged."

⁵But if our wickedness serves to show the justice of God, what shall we say? That God is unjust to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) ⁶By no means! For then how could God judge the world? ⁷But if through my falsehood God's truthfulness abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? ⁸And why not [do evil that good may come](#)?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.

None Is Righteous

⁹ What then? Are we Jews any better off?^c No, not at all; for I^d have already charged that all men, both Jews and Greeks, are [under the power of sin](#), ¹⁰as [it is written](#):

"None is righteous, no, not one;

¹¹no one understands, no one seeks for God.

¹²All have turned aside, together they have gone wrong;

no one does good, not even one."

¹³"Their throat is an open grave,

they use their tongues to deceive."

"The venom of asps is under their lips."

14"Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness."

15"Their feet are swift to shed blood,

16in their paths are ruin and misery,

17and the way of peace they do not know."

18"There is no fear of God before their eyes."

19 Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. **20**For no human being will be justified in his sight by works of the law, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

Righteousness through Faith

21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, **22**the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction; **23**since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **24**they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, **25**whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins; **26**it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus.

27 Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On the principle of works? No, but on the principle of faith. * **28**For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law. **29**Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, **30**since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of their faith and the uncircumcised through their faith. **31**Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

The Example of the Faith of Abraham

4 What then shall we say about^e Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? **2**For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. **3**For what does the Scripture say?

"[Abraham believed God](#), and it was reckoned to him as righteousness."
⁴Now to [one who works](#), his wages are not reckoned as a gift but as his due.
⁵And to one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness. ⁶So also David pronounces a blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works:

⁷"[Blessed are those](#) whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered;

⁸blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not reckon his sin."

⁹ Is this blessing pronounced only upon the circumcised, or also upon the uncircumcised? We say that faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness. ¹⁰How then was it reckoned to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. ¹¹He received circumcision as a sign or seal of the righteousness which he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the [father of all who believe](#) without being circumcised and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them, ¹²and likewise the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but also follow the example of the faith which our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

[God's Promise Realized through Faith](#)

¹³ The promise to Abraham and his descendants, that they should [inherit the world](#), did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵For [the law brings wrath](#), but where there is no law there is no transgression.

¹⁶ That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants—not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham, for he is the father of us all, ¹⁷as it is written, "[I have made you](#) the father of many nations"—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. ¹⁸[In hope he](#) believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations; as he had been told, "[So shall your descendants](#) be." ¹⁹He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead because he was about a hundred years old, or when he considered the [barrenness](#) of Sarah's womb. ²⁰No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹fully

convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. ²²That is why his faith was "reckoned to him as righteousness." ²³But the words, "it was reckoned to him," were written not for his sake alone, ²⁴but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him that raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, ²⁵who was put to death for our trespasses and [raised for our justification](#).

Results of Justification

⁵ Therefore, since [we are justified](#) by faith, we^f have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ²Through him we have obtained access^g to this grace in which we stand, and we^h rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God. ³More than that, we^h rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

⁶ While we were yet helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man—though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. ⁸But [God shows his love](#) for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. ⁹Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, [shall we be saved](#) by his life. ¹¹Not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received our reconciliation.

Adam and Christ

¹² [Therefore](#) as sin came into the world [through one man](#) and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned *—¹³sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁴[Yet death reigned](#) from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who was a [type](#) of the one who was to come.

¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. * ¹⁶And the free gift is not like the effect of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses

brings justification. ¹⁷If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

18 Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. ¹⁹For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous. ²⁰Law came in, to increase the trespass; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Dying and Rising with Christ

6 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ²By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were buried * therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶We know that our former man was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷For he who has died is freed from sin. ⁸But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. ⁹For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. ¹¹So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. ¹³Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but yield yourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness. ¹⁴For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Slaves of Sin or of Righteousness

15 What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! * **16** Do you not know that if you yield yourselves to any one as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? **17** But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, **18** and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. **19** I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once yielded your members to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now yield your members to righteousness for sanctification.

20 When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. **21** But then what return did you get from the things of which you are now ashamed? The end of those things is death. **22** But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the return you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life. **23** For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Analogy with Marriage

7 Do you not know, brethren—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only during his life? **2** Thus a married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives; but if her husband dies she is discharged from the law concerning the husband. **3** Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

4 Likewise, my brethren, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God. **5** While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. **6** But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.

The Law and Sin

7 What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet, if it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin. I should not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." **8** But sin,

finding opportunity in the commandment, wrought in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law sin lies dead. ⁹[I was once alive](#) apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died; ¹⁰the very commandment which promised life proved to be death to me. ¹¹For sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, [deceived](#) me and by it killed me. ¹²So [the law is holy](#), and the commandment is holy and just and good.

The Interior Conflict between Good and Evil

¹³ Did that which is good, then, bring [death to me](#)? * By no means! It was sin, working death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. ¹⁴We know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. ¹⁵[I do not](#) understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷So then it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me. ¹⁸For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. ¹⁹For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. ²⁰Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me.

²¹ So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. ²²For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, ²³but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to [the law of sin](#) which dwells in my members. ²⁴Wretched man that I am! [Who will deliver me](#) from this body of death? ²⁵Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I of myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh [I serve the law of sin](#).

Life in the Spirit

⁸ [There is therefore](#) now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the [law of the Spirit](#) of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. ³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own Son in [the likeness of sinful flesh](#) and for sin, ⁱ he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the [just requirement](#) of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵For [those who live](#) according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit

set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot; ⁸and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if [the Spirit of God](#) really dwells in you. Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, although [your bodies are dead](#) because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness. ¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to [your mortal bodies also](#) through his Spirit who dwells in you.

¹² So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—¹³for if you live according to the flesh [you will die](#), but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live. ¹⁴For all [who are led by the Spirit](#) of God are sons of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of [sonship](#). When we cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and [fellow heirs with Christ](#), provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

The Glory to Be Revealed

¹⁸ [I consider](#) that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; ^{*} ²⁰for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; ²¹because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the [glorious liberty](#) of the children of God. ²²We know that the whole creation has been [groaning with labor pains](#) together until now; ²³and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have [the first fruits](#) of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in this [hope](#) we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

²⁶ Likewise [the Spirit helps us](#) in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. ²⁷And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the

mind of the Spirit, because^j the Spirit [intercedes for the saints](#) according to the will of God.

28 We know that in everything God works for good^k with those who love him,^l who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also [predestined](#) to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

God's Love in Christ Jesus

31 What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who [did not spare](#) his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him? 33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies; 34 who is to condemn? Is it Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us?^m 35 [Who shall separate](#) us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written,

"[For your sake](#) we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For [I am sure that neither death](#), nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, [nor anything](#) else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God's Election of Israel

9 [I am speaking the truth](#) in Christ, [I am not lying](#); my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were [accursed and cut off](#) from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh. 4 They are Israelites, and [to them belong](#) the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; 5 to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the [Christ, who is God](#) over all, blessed for ever.ⁿ Amen.

6 But it is not as though the word of God had failed. For [not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel](#), 7 and [not all are children](#) of Abraham

because they are his descendants; but "Through Isaac shall your descendants be named." ⁸This means that it is not the [children of the flesh](#) who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are reckoned as descendants. ⁹For this is what the promise said, "About this time I will return and Sarah shall have a son." ¹⁰And not only so, but also when Rebecca had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, ¹¹though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad, in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of [his call](#), ¹²she was told, "The elder will serve the younger." ¹³As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but [Esau I hated](#)."

¹⁴What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? [By no means!](#) ¹⁵For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." ¹⁶So it depends not upon man's will or exertion, but upon God's mercy. ¹⁷For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "I have raised you up for the very purpose of showing my power in you, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth." ¹⁸So then [he has mercy](#) upon whomever he wills, and he hardens the heart of whomever he wills.

God's Wrath and Mercy

¹⁹ * You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" ²⁰But who are you, a man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me thus?" ²¹Has [the potter](#) no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for beauty and another for menial use? ²²What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience the vessels of wrath [made for destruction](#), ²³in order to make known the riches of his glory for the vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?

²⁵As indeed [he says in Hose'a](#),
"Those who were not my people
I will call 'my people,'
and her who was not beloved
I will call 'my beloved.' "

²⁶"And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,'

they will be called 'sons of the living God.' "

²⁷ And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved; ²⁸for the Lord will execute his sentence upon the earth with rigor and dispatch." ²⁹And as Isaiah predicted,

"If the Lord of hosts had not left us children,
we would have fared like Sodom and been made like Gomor'rah."

Israel's Lack of Faith

³⁰ What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, righteousness through faith; ³¹but that Israel who pursued the righteousness which is based on law did not succeed in fulfilling that law. ³²Why? Because they did not pursue it through faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, ³³as it is written,

"Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone that will make men stumble,
a rock that will make them fall;
and he who believes in him will not be put to shame."

¹⁰ Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. * ²I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened. ³For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. ⁴For Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified.

Salvation Is for Believers in Christ

⁵ Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on the law shall live by it. ⁶But the righteousness based on faith says, Do not say in your heart, "Who will ascend into heaven?" (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷or "Who will descend into the abyss?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸But what does it say? The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach); ⁹because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is

saved. ¹¹The Scripture says, "[No one who believes](#) in him will be put to shame." ¹²For there is [no distinction](#) between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him. ¹³For, "[every one who calls](#) upon the name of the Lord will be saved."

¹⁴ But [how are men to call](#) upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? ¹⁵And how can men preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news!" ¹⁶But they have not all heeded the gospel; for Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" ¹⁷So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ.

¹⁸ But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have; for "[Their voice](#) has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world."

¹⁹ Again I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, "[I will make you jealous](#) of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry."

²⁰ Then [Isaiah is so bold](#) as to say, "I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me."

²¹ But of Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people."

Israel's Rejection Is Not Final

¹¹ I ask, then, has God [rejected his people](#)? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. ²God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the [Scripture says](#) of Eli'jah, how he pleads with God against Israel? ³"Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life." ⁴But what is God's reply to him? "I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Ba'al." ⁵So too at the present time there is a [remnant](#), chosen by grace. ⁶But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

7 What then? Israel failed to obtain what it sought. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, **8as it is written,**

"God gave them a spirit of stupor,
eyes that should not see and ears that should not hear,
down to this very day."

9And David says,

"Let their feast become a snare and a trap,
a pitfall and a retribution for them;

10let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see,
and bend their backs for ever."

The Salvation of the Gentiles

11 So I ask, have they stumbled so as to fall? By no means! But through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as **to make Israel jealous.** **12**Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

13 Now I am speaking **to you Gentiles.** Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry **14**in order to make **my fellow Jews** jealous, and thus save some of them. **15**For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but **life from the dead?** **16**If the dough offered as **first fruits** is holy, so is the whole batch; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, **a wild olive shoot,** were grafted in their place to share the richness^o of the olive tree, **18**do not boast over the branches. If you do boast, remember it is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you. **19**You will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." **20**That is true. They were broken off **because of their unbelief,** but you stand fast only through faith. So do not become proud, but stand in awe. **21**For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. **22**Note then **the kindness and the severity of God:** severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you too will be cut off. **23**And even the others, if they do not persist in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. **24**For if you have been cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and

grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree.

Israel Will Be Saved

25 Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brethren: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles come in, **26**and so all Israel will be saved; as it is written,

"The Deliverer will come from Zion,
he will banish ungodliness from Jacob";
27"and this will be my covenant with them
when I take away their sins."

28As regards the gospel they are enemies of God, for your sake; but as regards election they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. **29**For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable. **30**Just as you were once disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, **31**so they have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may^p receive mercy. **32**For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all.

33 O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

34"For who has known the mind of the Lord,
or who has been his counselor?"

35"Or who has given a gift to him
that he might be repaid?"

36For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever. Amen.

The New Life in Christ

12 I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. **2**Do not be conformed to this world^q but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.^r

3 For by the grace given to me I bid every one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him. **4**For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do

not have the same function, ⁵so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶Having [gifts](#) that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Marks of the True Christian

⁹ Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; ¹⁰[love one another](#) with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹Never flag in [zeal](#), be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord. ¹²Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, [be constant in prayer](#). ¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality.

¹⁴ [Bless those who persecute](#) you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵[Rejoice with](#) those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly;^s never be conceited. ¹⁷Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. ¹⁸If possible, so far as it depends upon you, [live peaceably](#) with all. ¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it^t to the wrath of God; for it is written, "[Vengeance is mine](#), I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰No, "[if your enemy](#) is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head." ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Being Subject to Authorities

¹³ [Let every person](#) be subject to the governing authorities. For there is [no authority except from God](#), and those that exist have been instituted by God. ²Therefore he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of him who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear [the sword](#) in vain; he is the servant of God to execute his wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵Therefore one must be subject, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. ⁶For the same reason you also [pay taxes](#), for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing.

⁷Pay all of them their dues, taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due.

Love for One Another

⁸ Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. ⁹The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

An Urgent Appeal

¹¹ Besides this you know what hour it is, how it is full time now for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed; ¹²the night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; ¹³let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Do Not Judge One Another

¹⁴ * As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions. ²One believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables. ³Let not him who eats despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who eats; for God has welcomed him. ⁴Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Master is able to make him stand.

⁵ One man esteems one day as better than another, while another man esteems all days alike. Let every one be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶He who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. He also who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; while he who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. ⁷None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. ⁸If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. ⁹For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

10 Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God; **11**for it is written,

"As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise^u to God."

12So each of us shall give account of himself to God.

Do Not Hinder a Brother

13 Then let us no more pass judgment on one another, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. **14**I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for any one who thinks it unclean. * **15**If your brother is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died. **16**So do not let what is good to you be spoken of as evil. **17**For the kingdom of God does not mean food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit; **18**he who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. **19**Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. **20**Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for any one to make others fall by what he eats; **21**it is right not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother stumble.^v **22**The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God; happy is he who has no reason to judge himself for what he approves. **23**But he who has doubts is condemned, if he eats, because he does not act from faith; for whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.^w

Please Others, Not Yourselves [Map]

15 We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves; **2**let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to edify him. **3**For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me." **4**For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. **5**May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, **6**that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel for Jews and Gentiles Alike

7 Welcome one another, therefore, as [Christ has welcomed you](#), for the glory of God. ⁸For I tell you that Christ became [a servant to the circumcised](#) to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, ⁹and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. [As it is written](#),

"Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles,
and sing to your name";

¹⁰and again it is said,

"Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people";

¹¹and again,

"Praise the Lord, all Gentiles,
and let all the peoples praise him";

¹²and further Isaiah says,

"[The root of Jesse](#) shall come,
he who rises to rule the Gentiles;
in him shall the Gentiles hope."

¹³May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Paul's Reason for Writing So Boldly

¹⁴ [I myself am satisfied](#) about you, my brethren, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another. ¹⁵But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God ¹⁶to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the [offering of the Gentiles](#) may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. * ¹⁷In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. ¹⁸For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has wrought through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed, ¹⁹by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that from Jerusalem and as far round as Illyricum [I have fully preached](#) the gospel of Christ, ²⁰thus making it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on another man's foundation, ²¹

"[They shall see](#) who have never been told of him,
and they shall understand who have never heard of him."

Paul's Plan to Visit Rome

22 This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you. **23** But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, **24** I hope to see you in passing as I go to [Spain](#), and to be sped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a little. **25** At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem with [aid for the saints](#). **26** For Macedonia and Acha'ia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem; **27** they were pleased to do it, and indeed they are in debt to them, for if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. **28** When therefore I have completed this, and have delivered to them what has been raised,^x I shall go on by way of you to Spain; **29** and I know that when I come to you I shall come in the fulness of the blessing^y of Christ.

30 I appeal to you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, **31** that I may be [delivered](#) from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, **32** so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. **33** [The God of peace](#) be with you all. Amen.

Personal Greetings

16 [I commend](#) to you [our sister Phoebe](#), a deaconess of the Church at Cen'chre-ae, ²that you may receive her in the Lord as befits the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a helper of many and of myself as well.

3 [Greet Prisca and Aquila](#), my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, ⁴who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I but also all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks; ⁵greet also [the church in their house](#). Greet my beloved Epae'netus, who was the first convert in Asia for Christ. ⁶Greet Mary, who has worked hard among you. ⁷Greet Andron'icus and [Ju'nias](#), my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners; they are men of note among the apostles, and they were in Christ before me. ⁸Greet Amplia'tus, my beloved in the Lord. ⁹Greet Urba'nus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys. ¹⁰Greet Apel'les, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristob'ulus. ¹¹Greet my kinsman Hero'dion. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcis'sus. ¹²Greet those

workers in the Lord, Tryphae'na and Trypho'sa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord. ¹³Greet [Rufus](#), eminent in the Lord, also his mother and mine. ¹⁴Greet Asyn'critus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patro'bas, Hermas, and the brethren who are with them. ¹⁵Greet Philol'ogus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. ¹⁶Greet one another with [a holy kiss](#). All the churches of Christ greet you. *

Final Instructions

¹⁷ I appeal to you, brethren, to take note of those who create dissensions and difficulties, in opposition to the doctrine which you have been taught; avoid them. ¹⁸For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but [their own appetites](#),^z and by fair and flattering words they deceive the hearts of the simple-minded. ¹⁹For while your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, I would have you wise as to what is good and guileless as to what is evil; ²⁰then the God of peace will soon [crush Satan](#) under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.^a

²¹ [Timothy](#), my fellow worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and Sosip'ater, my kinsmen.

²² I [Tertius](#), the writer of this letter, greet you in the Lord.

²³ [Ga'ius](#), who is host to me and to the whole Church, greets you. Eras'tus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you.^b

Final Doxology

²⁵ Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of [the mystery](#) which was kept secret for long ages ²⁶but is now disclosed and through the prophetic writings is made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about [the obedience of faith](#)—²⁷to the only wise God be glory for evermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Commentary on The Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

1:1-7 Paul adapts and expands the conventional introduction of ancient epistles ("A to B, greetings") by filling it with Christian elements. In addition to his name (1:1) and the destination of the letter (1:7), he states his apostolic calling (1:1), introduces the gospel (1:2-5), and replaces the customary wish for good health with one for **[g]race** and **peace** (1:7). [Back to text.](#)



1:1 Paul: A Roman surname used consistently since the early days of his apostolic ministry (Acts 13:9). Before this he went by his Hebrew birth name, "Saul". Like Paul, many Jews of the NT period had both a Semitic and Hellenistic name (Acts 1:23; 9:36; 12:12; 13:1). **a servant:** Or, "a slave". Paul does not use this term to suggest that his submission to Christ is degrading or inhuman. The point is that Paul has made his entire life a gift to Christ and has placed all of his talents and energies at the service of the mission assigned to him (CCC 876). **an apostle:** An emissary or messenger sent by the risen Jesus to spread the gospel (1 Cor 9:1; Gal 1:1). • Paul right away calls himself an apostle, not to boast of his authority, but so that others will be moved to read the letter more earnestly and attentively (Theodoret of Cyrillus, *Interpretation of Romans*). **set apart:** Even before birth Paul was consecrated for his apostolic mission (Gal 1:15). [Back to text.](#)

1:2 in the holy Scriptures: The gospel message is a biblical message that was prophesied and prefigured long ago in the Hebrew Scriptures (15:4; 16:26). This conviction is amply attested in Romans, where Paul appeals to the OT more than 60 times in the span of 16 chapters (CCC 121-23). [Back to text.](#)

1:3-4 Possibly an excerpt from an ancient hymn or creed of the Church. It does not reflect on the two natures of Christ, human and divine, but delineates two phases of his incarnate life as a man (2 Tim 2:8). The dividing line between these phases is the Resurrection: Jesus was born of the royal line of David according to the flesh (Rom 1:3); then, by his rising from the dead, his humanity was reborn to a heavenly life of kingship by

the power of the Spirit (1:4). These verses build on classic messianic ideas found in the Jewish literature of the period. [Back to text.](#)



1:3 concerning his Son: In the translation, this phrase modifies "the gospel" of v. 1. It can also modify "the holy Scriptures" of v. 2. The latter option would suggest that Paul had specific OT passages about the "Son" in mind. • Two passages fit the description: 2 Sam 7:14 and Ps 2:7, which both refer to a Davidic ruler. In ancient Israel, the kings in David's line were designated the "sons" of Yahweh by a decree of royal adoption on the day of their enthronement. Paul sees this pattern elevated to a new level on Easter morning, when the Davidic humanity of Jesus was anointed for eternal kingship and made to share in the glory of his divine Sonship (Acts 13:33-34). This event, culminating in the enthronement of Jesus in heaven, fulfilled Yahweh's covenant oath to establish the royal throne of David for ever (Ps 89:3-4; 132:11; Lk 1:32-33; Acts 2:29-36). [Back to text.](#)

1:4 designated: Or "appointed". Paul is saying, not that Jesus became the divine Son of God only at his rising, but that the glory of his divine Sonship is now manifest in his resurrected humanity (CCC 445, 648). [Back to text.](#)

1:5 the obedience of faith: Probably means "the obedience that is faith" or "the obedience that springs from faith". The expression stands like two bookends at the beginning and end of Romans (16:26). It holds the epistle together around the central theme of faith, which is the act of trusting in God and entrusting oneself to God. Faith inspires love (Gal 5:6) and is the indispensable basis for a living relationship with Christ (Rom 1:17; Heb 11:6) (CCC 143, 1814). **among all the nations:** Paul was appointed an apostle both to the "Gentiles" (11:13) and to the "sons of Israel" (Acts 9:15). [Back to text.](#)

1:8 in all the world: The Church in Rome was already admired the world over as a living exemplar of Christian faith (16:19). Its reputation continued to grow as Peter and Paul ministered to the Roman Church and were martyred there in the mid 60s. This led the early Christians to shift their attention from Jerusalem to Rome as the new center of apostolic authority and tradition. [See note on Acts 12:17.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:11 I long to see you: An ambition fulfilled when Paul came to Rome as a prisoner around A.D. 60 (Acts 28:14-16). [Back to text.](#)

1:14 Greeks: Cultured peoples of the Mediterranean who spoke Greek. **barbarians:** Peoples of the Mediterranean who spoke languages other than Greek and followed their own indigenous customs. For Paul's missionary encounters with barbarians, see Acts 14:8-18 and 27:1-10. [Back to text.](#)

1:16 I am not ashamed: Paul was neither bashful nor embarrassed when it came to spreading the gospel. Boldness was necessary to overcome the hardened opposition of Jews and Greeks who considered the message scandalous and even ridiculous (1 Cor 1:23). Encouragement came from the gospel itself, as Paul witnessed its power to save bursting forth into lives of believers (1 Cor 1:18). **Jew first and also to the Greek:** Paul preached to Jews and Gentiles equally but sequentially. The conviction that Israel stood first in line for the blessings of the Messiah was also that of Jesus (Mt 15:24) and Peter (Acts 3:26). [See note on Acts 13:5.](#) [Back to text.](#)



1:17 righteousness of God: A towering theme of the Book of Romans. It has two related meanings. **(1)** It denotes the covenant faithfulness of Yahweh revealed through the history and Scriptures of Israel. God shows himself righteous when he keeps his promises and fulfills his covenant commitments to bless the righteous and rain curses upon the wicked (Neh 9:8; Ps 50:6; 143:11; Dan 9:14; Zech 8:8). **(2)** It also denotes an inward grace that establishes the faithful in a right covenant relationship with God (5:17; Phil 3:9). These two meanings work together in Romans, especially in 3:21-26. See word study: [Justified](#) at 2:13. **through faith for faith:** From start to finish, the Christian life advances by faith. The expression that Paul uses here suggests he envisions a steady increase in faith (the same prepositions are used in the same sequence in the Greek versions of Ps 84:7 and Jer 9:3). **He who through faith:** A citation from Hab 2:4. • Habakkuk receives a word of hope in the midst of a message of judgment. Although Yahweh was sending Babylonian hordes to punish Israel for its sins, he promised to spare the just man who keeps faith. Received in faith, Paul's gospel offers the same hope of deliverance in the face of the coming judgment (2:5-11). [Back to text.](#)

1:18-3:20 Paul paves the way for good news with the bad news of human sin. He declares all nations guilty before God, the Gentiles for rejecting the natural revelation of God in the world (1:18-32), and Israel for spurning the

supernatural revelation of God in the Scriptures (2:1-3:20) (CCC 401). [Back to text.](#)



1:18-32 Paul reflects on the moral and spiritual depravity of the Gentiles. Although God placed himself and his law within the reach of their rational minds (1:19), they defiantly turned their backs to him, piling ingratitude upon impiety (1:21) until their sins smothered his truth within their consciousness (1:18). This is the underlying cause of their foolish and idolatrous ways. • Paul's diagnosis of pagan corruption has close affinities with the Jewish assessment in Wis 11-14. [Back to text.](#)

1:18 the wrath of God: Not a surge of anger and emotion that overcomes God, but a fixed response or reflex of divine holiness toward sin. [Back to text.](#)



1:20 his invisible nature: Paul contends that our minds can rise to a knowledge of God's power and divinity by reflecting on the grandeur of the world (Wis 13:5; Acts 17:26-28). Failure to do this is inexcusable since God has made it possible everywhere and at all times (CCC 1147). Atheism and idolatry are thus moral problems and only secondarily intellectual problems (CCC 2125). • Vatican I decreed in 1870 that God's existence can be known with certainty by the light of human reason (*Dei Fiius*, chap. 2). This confirmed centuries of theological tradition, which developed numerous philosophical arguments for the existence of one Supreme Being (CCC 3135). [Back to text.](#)

1:21 minds were darkened: Persistence in sin has damaging effects on the human faculties: the mind gradually darkens to a point of intellectual blindness, and the heart gradually hardens and grows cold to the love and laws of God (Eph 4:17-18). [Back to text.](#)



1:23 exchanged the glory: Idolatry is the most conspicuous error of paganism. It is the sin of worshiping created things in place of the Creator (1:25; Wis 13:10). Gentiles of the biblical period worshiped images of men (Greeks) and animals (Egyptians) (CCC 2112-14). • Paul alludes to Ps 106:20 as a subtle reminder that Israel, too, has stumbled down the path of idolatry. Although Yahweh strictly forbade Israel to manufacture graven

images (Ex 20:4), at its weaker moments the nation venerated figures of men (Ezek 16:17), beasts (Ex 32:4), and reptiles (2 Kings 18:4). [Back to text.](#)

1:24 God gave them up: God does not hold back his judgment on sin until the end of history but manifests it throughout history as well (Ps 81:12; Acts 7:42). One severe form of judgment is for God to allow recalcitrant sinners to continue in their sin. The graces that would have moved sinners to repentance have been rejected. As a consequence, a dulled moral sense and intense, disordered desires are forms of punishment that such hardened sinners often experience when they revel in their sin. Paul sees this sort of punishment at work among the Gentiles, whom God has handed over to a thousand obscenities and sins against nature (1:26, 28) because they would not acknowledge him or his truth (1:21, 25, 28, 32). In effect, God says to them, "Have it your way." [Back to text.](#)

1:27 passion for one another: Homosexual activity is expressly condemned in the OT (Lev 18:22; 20:13) as well as the NT (1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10). It is a grave disorder that victimizes both men and women and turns them away from each other and their natural complementarity. For Paul, sexual rebellion against nature (1:26) is the fallout of spiritual rebellion against God (CCC 2357-59). [Back to text.](#)

1:28-32 One of several lists of vices in Paul's writings (1 Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21). Here Paul is showing how chaos erupts in families and society when the relationship between God and man breaks down (CCC 1852-53). [Back to text.](#)

1:32 they know God's decree: Even the pagans possess a moral awareness of right and wrong. Because of this, they can no more defer responsibility for their wickedness than plead ignorance of God's existence (1:21) (CCC 1776, 1954). **approve those who practice them:** The Gentiles are guilty of adulation, i.e., the sin of applauding others for their wrongdoing. Praising sinners is itself sinful because it emboldens them to continue in their evil ways. [Back to text.](#)

2:1-3:20 Paul narrows his indictment of the world to target the failures of Israel. He charges the Jews with committing the same sins as the Gentiles (3:9), even though they have the light of the Torah to order their worship and guide their behavior. Stylistically, Paul begins in this section to employ a writing technique called a "diatribe", which consists of a lively debate between a writer (Paul) and a hypothetical conversation partner (a Jew,

2:17). Authors in Greek antiquity used this question-and-answer format to explain their ideas and anticipate objections. The technique is utilized throughout Romans (2:17-23; 3:1-9, 27-29; 4:1, etc.). [Back to text.](#)

2:3 escape the judgment of God?: Presumption was a temptation for many Jews in the biblical period, who believed their membership in the Old Covenant and their Israelite descent would exempt them from the judgments of God (Mt 3:9; Jn 8:33). Paul attacks this mind-set and the attitude of superiority that springs from it. [Back to text.](#)



2:4 forbearance: The time that God gives the sinner to repent is a grace (Wis 11:23; 2 Pet 3:9). To make light of this opportunity is to show contempt for his mercy. • Forbearance differs from patience in that God is forbearing to those who sin out of weakness, but he endures with patience those who sin deliberately and brazenly. And this patience has limits, as seen when God finally acts to drown the generation of the flood and destroy the godless of Sodom (Origen, *Commentary on Romans* 2, 3). [Back to text.](#)

2:6 according to his works: Paul looks ahead to the Last Day, when the life of every person is unrolled before God, and every thought (1 Cor 4:5), word (Mt 12:36), and deed (2 Cor 5:10) is weighed in the balance of divine justice. That God will determine his verdict on the basis of human works is a teaching that originates in the OT (Ps 62:12; Prov 24:12). It was later confirmed by Jesus (Mt 16:27) and reiterated by the apostles (2 Cor 5:10; 1 Pet 1:17). Paul is here stressing that Jews and Gentiles will be held to the same standard of judgment (CCC 682). [Back to text.](#)

2:8 those who are factious: Or, better, "those who are selfish". [Back to text.](#)

2:11 no partiality: The Jews can expect no favoritism over the Gentiles on the day God judges the world (Acts 10:34-35). It matters only that people repent of evil in time to live for God (2:7) instead of themselves and their shallow ambitions (2:8). [Back to text.](#)

2:13 not the hearers: Salvation is guaranteed, not to every Jew who hears the Torah read in the synagogue (Acts 15:21), but to those who put what they hear into practice (Jas 1:22-25). [Back to text.](#)



2:14 by nature: The Greek expression can be understood in two ways. (1) If it modifies the verb "do", as in the translation, it means the

Gentiles follow the natural law that God has inscribed on their hearts (CCC 1954, 2070). (2) If it modifies the verb "have", it means the Gentiles were not privileged by birth to possess the Mosaic Law. This is the sense of the expression in 2:27 (rendered "physically"). • When Paul says that the Gentiles keep the Law by nature, he means, not by nature apart from grace, but by nature that is healed and restored by grace (St. Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter* 47). [Back to text.](#)

2:17-29 Paul rails against the Jew who boasts of possessing the Torah but fails to practice it. Already charged with presumption (2:4), he is now charged with hypocrisy (2:23). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Justified ([Rom 2:13](#))

DikaioÅ (Gk.): the verb means to "acquit", "vindicate", or "pronounce righteous" and is used 15 times in Romans and 24 times in the rest of the NT. It can describe how men make themselves out to be righteous (Lk 16:15) or verbally acknowledge the righteousness of God (Lk 7:29). In a legal context, a judge justifies the innocent when he acquits them of unproven charges (Ex 23:7; Deut 25:1; 1 Cor 4:4). Great theological significance is attached to this term when God is the one who justifies. Especially in Paul's writings it describes how God establishes man in a right covenant relationship with himself. This was made possible by the death of Christ (Rom 5:9), which frees us from sin (Acts 13:39; Rom 6:7) through the free gift of grace (Rom 3:24). This grace is received by faith (Rom 3:26; 5:1) in the liturgical context of Baptism (1 Cor 6:11). When God acquits the sinner, he also adopts the sinner as one of his own children, making him an heir of eternal life (Tit 3:7). For Paul, the justifying decree of God effects an inward transformation that makes us holy and righteous in his sight (Rom 5:19) (CCC 654, 1987-95).



2:19 a light . . . in darkness: Israel was called to share its wisdom with the nations as a living witness to the ways of righteousness. • This

missionary vocation has roots in the Pentateuch (Deut 4:5-8) and comes to full expression in Isaiah (Is 42:6; 49:6). Paul charges that the Jews have fallen from this high calling: instead of being a *light* to the Gentiles, they have become *like* the Gentiles through their brazen transgressions of the Law. [Back to text.](#)



2:24 The name of God: A citation from the Greek version of Is 52:5. • Isaiah reminds the people of Israel that because their iniquities drove them into exile and scattered them among the nations, the very name and reputation of Yahweh are dishonored throughout the world. For Paul, continued infidelity to the Torah among the Jews perpetuates this shameful legacy. [Back to text.](#)

2:29 real circumcision: Physical circumcision was the sign of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 17:9-14) and the rite of initiation into the family of Israel (Lev 12:3). However, the Torah itself teaches that circumcision of the body points to a deeper need to circumcise the heart by consecrating it to God and cutting away its rebellious inclinations (Lev 26:41; Deut 10:16). God circumcises the hearts of believers in Baptism (Col 2:11-12), just as he promised Moses he would do in the time of restoration (Deut 30:6). As a result, this **spiritual** procedure makes the **literal** procedure unnecessary and outdated in the new economy of grace (1 Cor 7:19; Gal 6:15; Phil 3:3). **His praise:** A wordplay on the term "Jew", which comes from the Hebrew name "Judah" and is related to the notion of "praise" (Gen 29:35). [Back to text.](#)

3:2 the oracles of God: The Torah spoken to Moses and written down for Israel. This gave a great advantage to the covenant people compared to the rest of the world because it ordered their worship, gave them clear guidelines for living, and drew them closer to God. An inventory of these benefits is listed in 9:4-5. [Back to text.](#)

3:3 faithfulness: Despite the transgressions of Israel, Yahweh never canceled his commitment to the people or his obligations to uphold the terms of his covenants (11:1). [Back to text.](#)



3:4 That you may be justified: A citation from Ps 51:4. • David is pleading for divine mercy. Though crushed by the weight of his sins, he dares not accuse God of wrongdoing but insists the Lord is perfectly just in

sentencing the sinner and making him accountable for his misbehavior. [Back to text.](#)

3:8 do evil that good may come?: Someone has accused Paul of teaching that the end justifies the means. He vigorously denies this, holding that evil actions can never be done in the hope that something good will come of them. Both the act (means) and the intention (end) must be pure for our deeds to be morally acceptable (CCC 1789). [Back to text.](#)

3:9 under the power of sin: Paul builds his argument to a climax with the charge that every nation is in bondage to sin and in need of salvation. Not even the Jews, lavished with so many blessings and advantages, have been able to rise above their fallen nature and crowd sin out of their lives. Supporting testimony is heard from the Scripture passages cited in the following nine verses. [Back to text.](#)



3:10-18 Six citations from the OT confirm the charge that wickedness has flourished in Israel. The chain is made of links from Ps 14:3, Ps 5:9, Ps 140:3, Ps 10:7, Is 59:7-8, and Ps 36:1. •Many of these passages distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, suggesting that Paul is not condemning every single Israelite without exception. His point is that sin has taken hold of the covenant people as it has the rest of the world. He is likewise showing that sin, which has spread throughout the body of mankind, has also spread throughout the body of every man who is prone to use his members as instruments of wickedness (6:13). All but one of these passages highlights a part of the body in this way (**throat, tongues, lips** in 3:13, **mouth** in 3:14, **feet** in 3:15, **eyes** in 3:18). [Back to text.](#)

3:20 works of the law: Paul uses this expression eight times in his writings, twice in Romans (3:20, 28) and six times in Galatians (Gal 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10). Christian scholarship, both ancient and modern, has understood it in different ways. **(1)** Some, like St. Augustine, take it to mean observance of the *entire Law* of Moses, whole and undivided. On this view, Paul contends that no act of obedience to the moral, ceremonial, or juridical commandments of the Torah can bring about the justification of the sinner. **(2)** Others, like St. Jerome, understand the expression to mean the *ceremoniai iaws* of Moses, such as circumcision, dietary laws, feast days, and Sabbath observance. On this view, Paul charges that the ritual works of the Torah, which defined the Jewish way of life during the Mosaic age,

have become obsolete in the New Covenant and thus have no bearing on justification. Both views are correct in their proper context: initial justification in Baptism takes place apart from any observance of the Law whatever (Tit 3:4-7), whereas final justification at the Last Judgment takes place apart from the ceremonial works of the Law, but not apart from observing the moral commandments of the Law (Rom 2:13; Mt 19:16-19; 1 Cor 7:19; Jas 2:8-13). **knowledge of sin:** Because the Torah defines what is good and evil, it acts as a moral informant and makes the sins of Israel stand out in stark clarity (2:17-23; 7:7; Heb 10:1-3). See essay: [The Works of the Law](#) at Gal 3. [Back to text.](#)

3:21-26 Paul turns from the tragic history of sin (1:18— 3:20) to the redeeming work of Christ (3:21-8:39). These transitional verses resume Paul's discussion of the "righteousness of God" introduced in 1:16-17. [Back to text.](#)

3:21 the law and the prophets: The Scriptures prepared Israel for a Messiah who would conquer the devil (Gen 3:15), make atonement for sin (Is 53:10-12), and renew the heart of man (Ezek 36:25-27) through the founding of a New Covenant (Jer 31:31-34). [Back to text.](#)

3:23 all have sinned: Not all without exception (every human being), but all without distinction (Jews and Gentiles alike, 3:9; 10:12). That there are exceptions is clear: Jesus was sinless; children below the age of reason do not willfully commit sin; and tradition holds that Mary, by the grace of God, lived her entire life unstained by sin. [Back to text.](#)

3:24 redemption: A ransom price paid for the release of captives. [See note on Eph 1:7.](#) [Back to text.](#)



3:25 an expiation: A sacrifice that wipes away sin. • The expression is used multiple times in the Greek OT for the mercy seat, or golden lid that covered the Ark of the Covenant (Ex 25:17; Heb 9:5). The high priest of Israel sprinkled blood on the mercy seat once a year on the Day of Atonement to expiate the sins of the people and restore them to fellowship with Yahweh (Lev 16:1-34). For Paul, the mercy seat typifies Christ as the living seat of God's presence and the place where atonement is made with sacrificial blood (CCC 433). • Christ, who became an expiation by blood, teaches us to follow his example by the mortification of our members (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On Perfection*). [Back to text.](#)



3:28 justified by faith: Faith is a gift of grace that moves us toward God (Phil 1:29). It leads to justification because it leads to Baptism (6:3-4; 1 Cor 6:11). The object of justifying faith is both personal and propositional: it embraces God as well as the revealed tenets of the gospel. Catholic theology holds that faith does not act alone in this process but reaches out with hope for divine mercy and love for the Lord. Faith manifests itself in the lives of believers through obedience (1:5), love (Gal 5:6), and good works (Eph 2:10). See essay: [Faith and Works](#) at Jas 2. **works of law:** For possible meanings of this, [See note on Rom 3:20](#). • The Council of Trent decreed in 1547 that man, by his own efforts and works, can never merit the initial grace of justification that makes him a child of God and a member of the New Covenant. This grace is an entirely free gift from Jesus Christ conferred in Baptism (Sess. 6, chap. 8) (CCC 1987-2011). [Back to text.](#)

3:30 God is one: The monotheistic creed of ancient Israel (Deut 6:4). Paul draws an important lesson from it: because Jews and Gentiles have one and the same God, all are justified in one and the same way, i.e., by faith. [Back to text.](#)

4:1-25 Paul expounds the spiritual fatherhood of Abraham. He aims to show from Scripture that *faith*, not *circumcision* or observance of the Mosaic Law, makes us children of Abraham. [Back to text.](#)

4:1 our forefather: Paul continues to engage his rhetorical Jewish opponent (2:17). [Back to text.](#)



4:2 boast: By taking pride in a personal accomplishment. • The one who boasts in his works boasts in himself, but the one who boasts in his faith boasts in God. To observe the laws against stealing and murder is a small thing compared to believing that God can do all things (St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 8). [Back to text.](#)



4:3 Abraham believed God: A citation from Gen 15:6. • Abraham takes God at his word when he embraces the promise of descendants, despite the obstacles of childlessness and old age (Gen 15:1-5). The Lord accepts his faith with an acknowledgment of his righteousness. Paul works

forward from this passage to demonstrate in Rom 4:9-10 that the narrative sequence of the Abraham story in Genesis holds the key to a right understanding of justification: it shows us that Abraham was righteous by faith long before he was circumcised with the flint knife (Gen 17:24). Paul thus debunks a prevalent Jewish perception that circumcision, and the obligation to keep the Mosaic Law that follows from it, is indispensable for a covenant relationship with God (Acts 15:1-5) (CCC 144-46). [Back to text.](#)

4:4 one who works: Justification is a free gift of grace, not a wage that is owed on the principle of justice and fair compensation (6:23; Tit 3:5). **reckoned:** In secular Greek, the verb *iogizomai* is a business term for recording credits and debits. It can also be translated "counted". When Paul stresses that righteousness is booked to our credit as a gift, he does not imply that the gift is merely imputed to the believer in an external way. In his mind, the divine record corresponds to reality, that is, we are *counted* righteous because we are *made* righteous in Christ (5:19). [Back to text.](#)



4:7-8 Paul quotes Ps 32:1-2 to buttress his reading of Gen 15:6, showing again that justification takes place apart from circumcision and observance of the Torah. He is using a Jewish exegetical technique that links passages of Scripture together on the basis of common vocabulary. Note how the excerpts from Genesis and the Psalter both showcase the verb "reckon". • Psalm 32 celebrates divine forgiveness. As Paul points out, the Psalmist does not restrict this blessing to the people of the Mosaic covenant, i.e., to those who are circumcised (4:9) and trace their genealogy back to Abraham (4:12). Forgiveness is an essential part of justification in Pauline theology (Acts 13:38-39). [Back to text.](#)

4:11 father of all who believe: The fatherhood of Abraham is defined by imitation rather than generation. To be a part of his family is to share his faith, not necessarily his physical lineage (4:12, 16). **without being circumcised:** Given Paul's comments about true circumcision in 2:25-29, he is saying that Abraham is the father of true Jews, not all Jews. Jesus makes a similar point in Jn 8:39. [Back to text.](#)

4:13 inherit the world: God promised Abraham a worldwide family through his offspring (Gen 22:16-18) several centuries before the Law was given to Israel (Gal 3:17-18). This was the oath of universal blessing he

swore when the patriarch was tested and found faithful (Sir 44:21) (CCC 705-6). [Back to text.](#)

4:15 the law brings wrath: Violation of the Law brings the curses of the Mosaic covenant upon transgressors (Lev 26:14-33; Deut 27:15-26). [Back to text.](#)



4:17 I have made you: A citation from Gen 17:5. • The passage shows that God had already made Abraham the father of nations *before* he gave him the covenant of circumcision (Gen 17:9-14). In Paul's mind, this took place back in Gen 15:5-6, when the patriarch first believed that God would make him a father. It follows that circumcision, which came *after* his fatherhood was established by faith, cannot be the sign of Abrahamic sonship. **calls into existence:** Reflects the belief that God created all things out of nothing (2 Mac 7:28) (CCC 296). [Back to text.](#)

4:18-24 Paul sees a parallel between Christian faith and Abraham's faith. Abraham believed that God could bring new life (Isaac) from his and Sarah's dying bodies. Christians believe that God brought new life to the crucified body of Jesus by raising him from the dead. [Back to text.](#)



4:18 So shall your descendants: A citation from Gen 15:5. • God promised Abraham that his descendants would outnumber the stars in the sky. [Back to text.](#)

4:19 barrenness: The Greek is literally "death" or "deadness". [Back to text.](#)

4:25 raised for our justification: The Resurrection of Christ is more than a miracle and motive for faith. It is a saving event in its own right, since the dying and rising of Jesus together constitute his victory over sin and death (1 Cor 15:17-22). Baptism gives us a share in this double victory, for through it we *die* to sin and *rise* to new life with Christ (6:3-4). The death and resurrection of our souls will be followed by the death and resurrection of our bodies (8:10-11) (CCC 654-55). [Back to text.](#)

5:1-5 The justified are endowed with theological virtues. By **faith**, they live in peace with God and have access to his grace; in **hope**, they long for the glory of God that awaits them; and through **love**, they show that the charity of the Spirit dwells in their hearts (CCC 1813). Equipped in this

way, believers can become more like Christ through endurance and suffering (CCC 618). [See note on 1 Cor 13:13. Back to text.](#)

5:8 God shows his love: The dying of Christ shows us the depths of God's unconditional love for the world (1 Jn 3:16). This is all the more remarkable since the world, being "ungodly" (5:6) and "enemies" (5:10), did not deserve it (CCC 603-4). [Back to text.](#)

5:10 shall we be saved: Salvation can be described in terms of the past, present, and future. It is *past* with reference to Baptism, which saves us from the filth of our sins (1 Pet 3:21). It is a *present* reality when we allow grace to make us steadily more virtuous and holy (1 Cor 1:18). It is a *future* hope that we will for ever live with the Lord in glory (Heb 9:28) (CCC 169, 1026). [Back to text.](#)

5:12-21 Paul compares and contrasts Adam and Christ. They are similar because their actions have had a great impact on the world, but dissimilar because Adam filled the world with misery and Christ redeemed the world from slavery to sin. Paul is stressing that the grace of Christ more than compensates for the damage done by Adam's rebellion (CCC 385, 388). [Back to text.](#)



5:12 through one man: Sin invaded the world through Adam, who allowed the temptations of his wife and the devil to overpower his commitment to God (Gen 3:1-7; Wis 2:24). **death through sin:** God warned Adam that death was the penalty for disobedience (Gen 2:17). His willful defiance in the face of this threat brought about the immediate death of his soul and the eventual death of his body (Gen 3:19). **all men sinned:** As the father of the human family, Adam turned away from God on our behalf. His rebellion was thus a representative act that not only injured himself, but dragged the entire family of man into suffering and separation from God (CCC 402-5). • The Council of Trent appealed to Rom 5:12 when it defined the doctrine of Original Sin in 1546 (Sess. 5). The doctrine holds that all descendants of Adam are born into the world in a state of spiritual death and in desperate need of salvation. The condition spreads, not by *imitation* (making the same mistake as Adam), but by *propagation* (by virtue of our genealogical link with Adam). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Type (Rom 5:14)

Typos (Gk.): "figure", "example", or "pattern". The word is used twice in Romans and 13 times in the rest of the NT. In general, a type is an impression or stamp made when an instrument strikes an object and leaves a mark that resembles the instrument. The NT uses the term in various ways and contexts. It can describe the nail prints in the hands of Jesus (Jn 20:25), a pattern of catechetical teaching (Rom 6:17), and examples of holiness displayed in the lives of believers (Phil 3:17; 1 Thess 1:7; Tit 2:7). In biblical theology, a type is a person, place, thing, event, or institution in Scripture that points to a future mystery. Romans 5:14 is a classic example: Paul shows that Adam, who shaped the destiny of man for the worst, was a type of Christ, who reverses the tragic effects of sin by his righteousness. Adam thus showed us in advance how the saving work of Jesus, the new Adam, would affect the entire world. Paul likewise interprets the experiences of Israel in the wilderness as warnings or types of the Church's experiences in the world (1 Cor 10:1-6). Peter sees the biblical flood as a prophetic type of Baptism (1 Pet 3:21) (CCC 128-30).



5:14 Yet death reigned: Death was the covenant curse set before Adam (Gen 2:17) and Moses (Deut 30:19). Although no positive law threatening death was issued during the centuries that intervened, men and women continued to suffer and die. This shows that the sin of Adam had a lasting and devastating effect on the world quite apart from the behavior of his first descendants (CCC 396). • Just as all who descend from Adam inherit death, though they do not eat from the tree themselves, so all who are joined to Christ inherit righteousness, though they do nothing to produce it themselves (St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 10). [Back to text.](#)

5:19 made righteous: The essence of justification, which takes effect when God imparts the gift of righteousness to the believer (5:17; Phil 3:9). See word study: [Justified](#) at 2:13. [Back to text.](#)



5:20 to increase the trespass: The Torah aggravated the problem of sin because it defined the boundaries of wrongdoing (7:7) but could not restrain Israel from crossing them (7:12-24). The purpose was to induce

Israel to acknowledge its weakness and cry out for divine help. • The Law was given that grace might be sought; grace was given that the Law might be kept (St. Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter* 34). [Back to text.](#)

6:1-23 Paul addresses a potential misunderstanding: If our sins let loose a flood of divine grace (5:20), then why not continue in sin to unleash ever more grace? Such logic betrays the very purpose of grace, which is to forgive us of past sins and to assist us in avoiding future ones. For Paul, our liberty in Christ is not a license to sin (Gal 5:13). [Back to text.](#)

6:2 By no means!: A strenuous objection voiced often in Romans (3:4, 31; 6:15; 7:7; 9:14; 11:1). **died to sin:** The baptized are freed from the bondage of guilt and so die to their former life apart from Christ. [Back to text.](#)

6:4 by baptism into death: Baptism joins us to Christ crucified and risen, so that united with his death, our sins are put to death, and united with his rising, our souls are filled with life (4:25). Paul is alluding to the liturgy of Baptism, where the recipient is submerged in water as a body is buried in a grave, only to rise again to a new life with God (CCC 537, 628, 1214). [Back to text.](#)

6:6 our former man: The expression "old man" is used elsewhere in Eph 4:22 and Col 3:9. **crucified with him:** Paul makes a personal comment to this effect at Gal 2:20. [Back to text.](#)

6:7 is freed from sin: Literally, "is justified from sin" (CCC 1990). See word study: [Justified](#) at 2:13. [Back to text.](#)

6:9 never die again: Because Christ destroyed death by his own death, his risen humanity is for ever victorious over death (CCC 1085). [Back to text.](#)

6:12 Let not sin . . . reign: Sin is like a tyrant that orders our members into actions of wickedness. This enemy is to be fought, renounced, and subdued through the Spirit (8:13). [Back to text.](#)

6:14 under grace: The new position of the believer, who can master the urges of sin with the assistance of God. This inward strength to suppress our fallen inclinations was a grace not yet available to Israel living under the yoke of the Law (7:18). [Back to text.](#)

6:16 obedient slaves: It would be absurd for a slave, recently purchased to serve a new master (righteousness), to continue to serve the old one (sin). The first master leads to destruction and death (6:23), and the new master to sanctification and life (6:22). **righteousness:** A baptismal gift (5:17) as well

as a future hope (Gal 5:5). Paul here refers to the righteous status that comes with the final justification of the saints at the Judgment (2:13). [Back to text.](#)

6:17 the standard of teaching: Possibly a baptismal creed recited and accepted by the Romans. Paul smiles at the news of their obedience to this standard (16:19). [Back to text.](#)

6:19 speaking in human terms: A mild apology for explaining Christian conversion in terms of commercial slave trading. There are obvious limits to the analogy, but Paul wants to ensure that his teaching is well understood. **sanctification:** Or, "holiness". It is a gift received in Baptism that gradually increases as the Spirit penetrates our hearts and lives over time (8:13-14). See word study: [Sanctified](#) at 1 Cor 6:11. [Back to text.](#)

6:23 the wages of sin: Death is the payment for service to sin, but eternal life is the gift that comes through Christ. [Back to text.](#)

7:1-6 Paul illustrates Christian freedom in terms of death and remarriage. Just as a woman is freed from the law of marriage when her spouse dies, so believers are freed from the Law of Moses (7:6) when they die to sin in Baptism (6:1-11). So, too, as the widow is free to remarry, the baptized are freed for a new marriage with Christ (7:2-4). Note that Paul is using the marital analogy to make the general point that death liberates us from law. The analogy breaks down when we insist that every detail must correlate with Paul's teaching (e.g., note how the surviving spouse remarries in 7:2-3, but the deceased spouse remarries in 7:4). [Back to text.](#)

7:3 called an adulteress: Paul echoes the teaching of Jesus that marriage is lifelong and exclusive (Mk 10:11-12). Remarriage after the death of a spouse is licit (1 Tim 5:14), but remarriage after divorce is forbidden when both spouses are living. For further details, [see note on 1 Cor 7:15](#) and essay: [Jesus on Marriage and Divorce](#) at Mt 19. [Back to text.](#)

7:4 the body of Christ: The crucified humanity of Jesus. In other contexts, this expression denotes the mystical body of Christ, the Church (12:4-5; 1 Cor 12:12; Col 1:24). **bear fruit for God:** The goal of our marital union with Christ. In Paul's theology, this fruit is produced in our lives through the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) (CCC 2074). [Back to text.](#)

7:5 living in the flesh: i.e., living by the impulses of our fallen nature. Paul often speaks of "the flesh", not as the body per se, but as the whole range of weaknesses we inherited from Adam, including **(1)** our corruptible bodies (8:3); **(2)** our darkened minds (1:21); **(3)** our inability to obey God

without grace (8:7); and **(4)** our inclinations toward sin (7:25). The desires of the flesh are directly opposed to the will of the Spirit. [See note on Gal 5:16-24.](#) **our members:** Our bodies can be used as instruments either of wickedness or of righteousness (6:13) (CCC 1995). [Back to text.](#)

7:6 held us captive: The Mosaic Law imprisoned the people of Israel in condemnation, revealing their sins (3:20) and magnifying their guilt (5:20). Although its **written code** made clear distinctions between good and evil, it gave them no assistance to obey it through **the Spirit** (CCC 1963). [Back to text.](#)



7:7-25 Paul contemplates the mystery of sin and man's natural inability to resist it. He defends the Law of Moses as innocent and good (7:12), but accuses sin of murder and enslavement (7:11, 23). To dramatize this, he personifies "sin" as a predator lurking in our members who deceives, kills, and wages war on our desire to follow God. Paul is approaching these issues from a Christian perspective, where the experience of grace magnifies the reality of sin. His consciousness of sin was not nearly so acute when he was a Pharisaic Jew (Phil 3:5). • The Law was given neither to create sin nor to remove sin, but merely to make it known. Thus the Law, in giving the soul a sense of guilt rather than innocence, makes it ready to receive grace (St. Augustine, *To Simplician on Various Questions* 1, 1). [Back to text.](#)



7:7 You shall not covet: The preface to the final two LIU commandments of the Decalogue (Ex 20:17). • The laws against coveting another's wife and property show that the Torah censures not just outward acts, but even interior acts hidden in the heart. So not only do the commandments heighten our awareness of sin (3:20), they show that our vulnerability to sin lies deep within. [Back to text.](#)

7:9 I was once alive: Paul speaks often in Romans 7 in the first person ("I" or "me"). Scholars ancient and modern have wrestled over the rhetorical implications of this. **(1)** Paul may be reflecting on his *personal history*, either as a Jew, confronted with the challenging demands of the Torah, or as a Christian, still fighting the inclination to sin in order to follow the Law. **(2)** Paul may be looking back on *biblical history* as sin was first experienced by Adam, who lived in innocence until he transgressed the

commandment threatening death (Gen 2:17), or by Israel, who no sooner received the Law of the covenant than broke it (Ex 32:1-28). For the insertion of divine commandments into history at these two junctures, see 5:13-14. **(3)** Paul may be thinking of *human history* in general, so that his words describe the universal plight of all men apart from the saving grace of Christ. In the end, the third view is most likely Paul's intended meaning, although allusions at the level of personal and biblical history should not be ruled out. [Back to text.](#)



7:11 deceived: A form of this verb is used in the Greek version of Gen 3:13, where Eve blames the serpent for "beguiling" her into sin. Paul reflects on this tragedy elsewhere in 2 Cor 11:3 and 1 Tim 2:14. [Back to text.](#)

7:12 the law is holy: Because it promotes virtue and prohibits vice. It is likewise "the embodiment of knowledge and truth" (2:20); it is "spiritual" (7:14); and it is full of righteous requirements (cf. 8:4). Paul is here asserting the excellence of its moral commandments. [Back to text.](#)

7:13 death to me?: The Torah is not a murderer of souls. Sin is the real cause of death (5:12), which used the Law like a sword to kill us for our trespasses. [Back to text.](#)

7:15-20 On his own, man is unable to rise above his fallen condition or to close the distance between what he ought to do and what he actually does. This leads to the overwhelming sense of helplessness that Paul verbalizes in these verses (CCC 2542). [Back to text.](#)

7:23 the law of sin: Traditionally called concupiscence, which is the inclination of fallen man to misuse his free will in sinful and selfish ways. It manifests itself as an unremitting desire for pleasure, power, and possessions. Even the baptized have to wrestle with this inner force, although Paul insists that the Spirit can give us victory over its unmanageable urges (8:2, 13). So concupiscence *remains* in the believer, but it need not *rule* us like a tyrant (6:12-14) (CCC 405, 1426, 2520). [Back to text.](#)

7:24 Who will deliver me . . . ?: The desperate cry of humanity apart from Christ. [Back to text.](#)

7:25 I serve . . . sin: Insinuates that believers will continue to struggle with sin throughout their lives. There is thus an ongoing need for confession

(1 Jn 1:9) and forgiveness (Mt 6:12). [Back to text.](#)

8:1-11 Romans 8 unveils the solution to the problem laid out in Romans 7. It is a divine solution orchestrated by the Trinity: The Father sent the Son to redeem the world from sin (8:3) and sent the Spirit to raise the world from death to new life (8:9-13). [Back to text.](#)



8:2 law of the Spirit: The power of grace we receive to counteract the downward pull of concupiscence, which Paul calls the "law of sin" (7:23). It is also the positive force of divine love that the Spirit pours into our hearts (5:5) and enables us to fulfill the righteous law of God (8:4; 13:8-10). Paul mentions the Spirit 18 times in this chapter. • The prophet Ezekiel envisioned Yahweh pouring the Spirit into his people and making them walk in his ways (Ezek 36:27). • The Spirit frees us, not from the Law of Moses, but from the law of sin, and this by slaying sin and helping us in the daily struggle against it (St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 13). [Back to text.](#)



8:3 the likeness of sinful flesh: Christ did not become a ' sinner when he became man, but he did assume our mortal condition (Jn 1:14). This enabled him to die and, by this means, to defeat death and the devil for ever (Heb 2:14). **for sin:** The Greek is identical to a shorthand expression used in the Greek version of Leviticus for a sacrificial sin-offering (Lev 4:24; 6:18; 14:19). If Paul had this in mind, as many hold, he is claiming that Jesus was sent by the Father to be an offering for sin. [See note on 2 Cor 5:21.](#) [Back to text.](#)

8:4 just requirement: Probably the moral precepts of the Mosaic Law (13:8-10). Elsewhere in Romans this Greek term has the sense of moral decrees or righteous conduct (1:32; 2:26; 5:18). [Back to text.](#)

8:5-8 A contrast between two mind-sets, one that is fleshly and centered on self (1:21) and another that is spiritual and focused on God (Col 3:1). Paul implies that the believer will not automatically follow the Spirit but must choose which road he wants to follow in light of their destinations (8:13). [Back to text.](#)

8:9 the Spirit of God . . . of Christ: The Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son in eternity as well as in history (Jn 14:26; 15:26). He is therefore identified with both of them (8:14-15; Gal 4:6). [Back to text.](#)

8:10 your bodies are dead: i.e., still subject to death and decay. [Back to text.](#)

8:11 your mortal bodies also: When God resurrects the bodies of the saints on the Last Day (8:23), he will complete the process of divine adoption that began in Baptism with the infusion of the Spirit into our souls (8:15; Gal 4:4-7; Tit 3:5-7). [Back to text.](#)

8:13 you will die: Spiritually, that is, since everyone dies physically regardless of how he lives. The warning is posted for believers, who are "in the Spirit" (8:9) but who can still submit to the flesh. [Back to text.](#)



8:14-25 Paul reflects on the sonship of believers in Christ. Though Christ is the eternal Son of God by nature, we share in his life and become adopted sons of God by grace. This takes effect through the Spirit, who is poured into our hearts (5:5) and shows us the way to the Father (8:15) (CCC 1996). • Paul's discussion of sonship and suffering has parallels with the Exodus story. The **sonship** of believers (8:15) recalls the sonship of Israel (9:4; Ex 4:22; Is 63:8). Calling God our **Father** (8:15) echoes the title first given to Yahweh at the end of the Exodus journey (Deut 32:6; Is 63:16). Being **led** by the **Spirit** out of **slavery** (8:14-15) calls to mind how Israel was led out of the bondage of Egypt by the pillar of fire (Ex 6:6; 13:21), which biblical tradition sees as an image of the Spirit (Is 63:10-14). Even the **groan** of the believer, still awaiting the fullness of **redemption** (8:23), reminds us of Israel groaning in bondage (Ex 2:23-24; 6:5) for the Lord's redemption (Ex 6:6; 15:13). For the Christian, the Exodus has begun but is still in progress, for he is delivered from slavery to sin (6:6-7, 17) but not yet from the slavery of corruption (8:19-23). For Paul's teaching that the Church relives the Exodus experience of Israel, see 1 Cor 10:1-11. [Back to text.](#)

8:15 sonship: Or, "adoption", as in 8:23. Our kinship with God by covenant adoption entitles us to an inheritance kept in heaven (8:17; 1 Pet 1:3-4). See word study: [Adoption](#) at Gal 4:5. **Abba!:** Aramaic for "Father!", an intimate term of address that Jesus uses in his own prayer life (Mk 14:36). The Spirit makes the prayer of Jesus the prayer of all God's children as they call to the Father for grace and help in times of need (Gal 4:6) (CCC 2779-82). [Back to text.](#)

8:17 fellow heirs with Christ: To suffer with Christ is to share in his inheritance, which Paul understands to be "all things" (8:32; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2). [Back to text.](#)

8:18-25 Paul contends, on the basis of cost-benefit analysis, that even our heaviest burdens of suffering are far outweighed by the glory that awaits us (2 Cor 4:17). Though the afflictions of our time on earth are inescapable, the Spirit helps to make them bearable (8:26). Suffering is all part of God's plan to mold us into the image of Christ (8:29). [Back to text.](#)

8:21 glorious liberty: God's children and God's creation share the same plight and so yearn for the same destiny of life without corruption (CCC 1042-47). [Back to text.](#)



8:22 groaning with labor pains: Paul hears creation crying out like a woman giving birth. The pangs of labor will not subside until the children of God are revealed and the whole material creation is renewed (8:21). See word study: [Unite](#) at Eph 1:10. • The earth groans under the curse of Gen 3:17. The passage shows that Adam's trespass had catastrophic consequences not only for himself but for the world in which he lived. [Back to text.](#)

8:23 the first fruits: An agricultural term for the initial produce reaped at the beginning of the harvest season. When Paul uses a commercial metaphor for this same idea, he describes the Spirit as a "guarantee" or down payment on the full inheritance we expect to receive in heaven (Eph 1:13-14) (CCC 735). [Back to text.](#)

8:24 hope: The earnest desire to share in the glory of God (5:2). Hidden from human eyes, this inheritance is visible only to faith (2 Cor 5:7) and is attained only by love (1 Cor 16:22). The point here is that hope helps us to endure the hardships of life (Rom 8:25) (CCC 1817-20). [Back to text.](#)

8:26 the Spirit helps us: When distress makes prayer difficult, the Spirit makes our groaning and sighing (8:23) an impassioned prayer to the Father (CCC 2729-31, 2739). [Back to text.](#)

8:27 intercedes for the saints: The same is said of the Son in 8:34. Both the Son and the Spirit request from the Father what we need, not necessarily what we want. The will of God for our life is the determining factor. [Back to text.](#)

8:29 predestined: Selected for divine adoption by an eternal decree of God (Eph 1:4). Predestination is a mystery revealed but not fully understood; what we know for certain is that God is free to act as he chooses (Ps 135:6) and man is free to accept or reject his blessings (Rom 2:6-8; Sir 15:11-13). No one is predestined by God for eternal damnation (CCC 1037). [See note on Eph 1:5.](#) **the first-born:** Jesus is the eldest brother in the family of faith. As adopted children, we look up to him as the perfect image of Sonship and the perfect example of filial obedience to the Father (Jn 15:10). See word study: [First-born](#) at Heb 1:6. [Back to text.](#)



8:32 did not spare: Paul takes this expression from the Greek version of Gen 22:12 to compare the Father's surrender of Christ with Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. This memorable event, which took place in Moriah (Gen 22:2), prefigures the sacrifice of Jesus in Jerusalem, which is built in part on Mt. Moriah (2 Chron 3:1) (CCC 2572). [Back to text.](#)

8:35 Who shall separate . . .?: Paul denies *suffering* the power to cut us off from Christ. In his mind, only *sin* can pry us away from his grace (1 Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:4). [See note on 1 Jn 5:16-17.](#) **tribulation . . . or sword?:** Afflictions commonly linked with the curses that God lets loose upon Israel when they abandon the covenant (Lev 26:21-26; Deut 28:48; Jer 29:18). This background sets the stage for 8:36. [Back to text.](#)



8:36 For your sake: A citation from Ps 44:22. • The Psalmist is puzzled that Yahweh permits the righteous of Israel to suffer the curses of exile along with the unrighteous. Covered with shame but convinced of his innocence, he pleads with God for deliverance. For Paul, this is the cry of the believer who lives faithfully *in* Christ but who bears *with* Christ the curses of suffering and death that weigh upon the world (Gen 3:17-19; Gal 3:13). As a result, we are not crushed by suffering; rather, we conquer through it in a redemptive way (Rom 8:37; Acts 14:22). [Back to text.](#)

8:38-39 A rundown of different forces and dimensions of creation: human existence (**death/life**), spirits (**angels/principalities/powers**), time (**things present/things to come**), and astronomical forces (**height/depth**). None of these potential threats is an actual threat to those enveloped in God's love. That principalities and powers are classes of angels, see Eph 3:10 and note on Eph 1:10. [Back to text.](#)

8:39 nor anything: Not a claim that salvation is absolutely assured for believers, but a claim that salvation cannot be threatened by any cosmic force outside of us. For Paul, the only real threat to salvation is our will, which is free to reject God's love and forfeit eternal life through sin (2:5-10; 6:16; 8:13; 11:21-22). [See note on Rom 8:35.](#) [Back to text.](#)

9:1-11:36 The middle section of Romans turns from the salvation of the world in general (chaps. 1-8) to the salvation of Israel in particular (chaps. 9-11). Faced with a theological and pastoral conundrum, Paul takes the opportunity to explain how God's *election* of Israel in the past is perfectly consistent with Israel's widespread *rejection* of the gospel in the present. His discussion is difficult to follow because the argument winds through a dense forest of echoes, allusions, and citations from the OT. In general, Paul follows the story line of Israel's history set forth in the Bible: he starts with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (9:6-13), moves through the Exodus (9:14-18), looks at the Exile (9:25-29), draws on passages about the time of restoration (10:1-21), and ends with a vision of Jacob-Israel saved in the New Covenant (11:26-27). Nearly a third of all Paul's references to the Hebrew Scriptures in the entire collection of his writings are packed into these three chapters. [Back to text.](#)

9:1 I am not lying: An adamant plea of innocence. It may suggest Paul was accused of indifference toward Israel. He uses the same expression to clear away suspicions and rumors in 2 Cor 11:31 and Gal 1:20. [Back to text.](#)



9:3 accursed and cut off: Paul almost wishes he could be set apart for destruction and severed from Christ if it would bring Israel salvation. See word study: [Accursed](#) at Gal 1:8. • Moses voiced a similar sentiment at a similar time of national apostasy (Ex 32:32), when nearly all Israel fell from grace at the golden calf rebellion (Ex 32:1-6). [Back to text.](#)

9:4-5 An inventory of Israel's covenant blessings. These are tokens of God's irrevocable commitment to the people of Israel (11:29) that gave them an "advantage" over other nations (3:12), drawing them closer to God, ordering their worship, and showing them the way of righteousness. Their crowning gift is the Messiah, who came many centuries after the initial endowments had been given through Moses and the patriarchs. [Back to text.](#)

9:5 Christ, who is God: The punctuation of this verse is debated. When a comma is placed between "Christ" and "God", the two are identified and the divinity of Jesus is asserted. When a period is used instead, the two are distinguished and God the Father is extolled by the final blessing. Both renderings are consistent with Pauline theology. [Back to text.](#)

9:6 not all . . . belong to Israel: The thesis statement of Rom 9-11, that *elect* Israel, as a remnant chosen by grace, has always been a subset of *ethnic* Israel (11:6-7). [Back to text.](#)



9:7-13 Paul shows that a pattern of divine selection and L exclusion was already at work before the founding of Israel as a nation. • From Gen 21:12 and 18:10 he shows that God made a distinction between the biological sons of Abraham, choosing **Isaac** over Ishmael to be the channel of his covenant blessings (9:7, 9). Then from Gen 25:23 and Mal 1:2-3 he shows that God made a distinction between the biological sons of Isaac, choosing **Jacob** over Esau to be a channel of covenant blessings (Rom 9:12-13). The point is that natural and biological descent from the patriarchs is not a guarantee of divine blessing, because everything depends on the grace of God's call (9:11; Lk 3:8; Jn 8:33-39). [Back to text.](#)

9:8 children of the flesh . . . the promise: The distinction applies to the sons of Abraham and Isaac. Ishmael and Esau are sons by the flesh but excluded from the covenant plan of God, while Isaac and Jacob are sons called by the Lord to carry his promises forward. [Back to text.](#)

9:11 his call: Or, "the One who calls". That God advances his plan of election through his call is a theme that was introduced in the Genesis quote in 9:7 ("named" is literally "called") and runs throughout the chapter (9:24-26). [Back to text.](#)

9:13 Esau I hated: A Semitic expression that means God loved Esau less than Jacob. It neither asserts nor implies that God predestined him for punishment or damnation. [Back to text.](#)



9:14-18 Paul denies that divine election amounts to divine injustice. • From Ex 33:19 he shows that God's justice is matched by an abundance of mercy (Rom 9:15), as seen when he robed the children of Israel in mercy right after they abandoned him for the golden calf (Ex 32:1-6). From Ex 9:16 he shows that the hardness of Pharaoh during the Exodus was part of

his plan to reveal his power to the world (Rom 9:17). In effect, Paul is defending God's freedom to be *patient and merciful* toward sinners, not his freedom to *punish* sinners. [Back to text.](#)

9:18 he has mercy . . . he hardens: The pattern of God's dealings with Israel (9:15) and Pharaoh (9:17) during the Exodus is a pattern repeated in Paul's day, when a remnant of Israel is shown mercy (9:23-24) and the rest remains hardened (11:7, 25). Divine hardening does not cause a person to sin but is a disciplinary measure for those like Pharaoh who are already stubbornly resisting God (Ex 7:14; 8:15). [Back to text.](#)



9:21 the potter: Illustrates the sovereign freedom of God. • Paul is alluding to Is 29:16, although the same imagery is used elsewhere in the OT (Sir 33:13; Is 45:9; Jer 18:1-11). In Isaiah, Israel is the earthenware vessel that complains to the Lord and dares to question the wisdom of his ways. Rebuked for this audacity, it is reminded that God is the Maker of all things and stands accountable to no one. [Back to text.](#)

9:22 made for destruction: The Greek can mean that the vessels of wrath have prepared themselves for doom by rejecting the gospel. Paul is not saying that God has predestined the unbelievers of Israel for damnation; otherwise he would not be praying (10:1) and working (11:14) for their salvation (CCC 1037). [Back to text.](#)



9:25-29 Citations from Hosea and Isaiah support the assertion in 9:24 that Gentiles and a remnant of Jews constitute the "vessels of mercy" (9:23). • Hosea foretells the restoration of Israel to full covenant sonship after centuries of exile have dissolved the northern tribes into the nations and reduced them to the status of Gentiles (Hos 2:23 in 9:25 and Hos 1:10 in 9:26). Isaiah depicts Yahweh saving a remnant of Israel even as he punishes the rest of the nation for their transgressions. In context, the Isaian passages speak of a remnant saved from the northern and southern tribes of Israel respectively (Is 10:22 in 9:27-28 and Is 1:9 in 9:29). See word study: [Remnant](#) at Rom 11:5. [Back to text.](#)

9:32 through faith: The hardened part of Israel (11:7) pursues, not the wrong object (righteousness), but the right object in the wrong way (by works/without faith). The Law was intended to lead them to their Messiah (10:4). [Back to text.](#)



9:33 Behold, I am laying: A quotation from Is 28:16 with an excerpt from Is 8:14 spliced into the middle. • The passages are linked together by the common image of a **stone**, which is symbolic for the royal Messiah in Jewish tradition (*Targum Isaiah*). Stumbling over the stone dramatizes the folly of unbelief (11:20; 1 Cor 1:23). Paul believes that many in Israel have tripped but have not completely fallen (11:11). He is hopeful that some will regain their balance and come to faith in Jesus (11:23). [Back to text.](#)

10:1-4 Instead of condemning and abandoning his kinsmen, Paul is pained at the unbelief of Israel (9:2) and prays intensely for its salvation. A former Pharisee, he is well acquainted with unenlightened **zeal** for the ancestral traditions of Judaism (Gal 1:14; Phil 3:6) (CCC 579). [Back to text.](#)

10:3 righteousness: A distinction is made between righteousness that comes from the Mosaic Law (Deut 6:25) and righteousness that comes from the Messiah (Rom 5:17; Phil 3:9). The former is real but radically deficient; the latter alone gives us entrance into the messianic kingdom (Mt 5:20). [Back to text.](#)



10:4 the end: The Greek can mean "termination" or "goal". The latter sense is more probable, for Jesus came to fulfill the Law rather than to abolish it (Mt 5:17) (CCC 1953). • Christ is the end that completes, not the end that destroys, for the details of the Law were shadows that prefigured his coming (St. Augustine, *Against the Adversary of the Law and the Prophets* 2, 26-27). [Back to text.](#)



10:5 shall live by it: An excerpt from Lev 18:5. • Israel is urged to follow the Torah and shun the ways of the Egyptians and the Canaanites. Adherence to the Law would have brought life, but Israel needed to learn that obedience was humanly impossible without the grace and help of God that come through faith. [See note on Rom 5:20.](#) [Back to text.](#)



10:6-8 An interpretive paraphrase of Deut 30:12-14. • Moses contends that Israel could not escape responsibility for obeying the **word** of

God, as though the Torah were somewhere beyond its reach. In the spirit of Moses, Paul insists that Israel cannot escape responsibility for obeying the **word** of the gospel, as though it were forced to look high and low for Christ. On the contrary, Israel cannot plead ignorance because the gospel has come to its doorstep through the Scriptures and the missionary efforts of the Church (10:17-19). [Back to text.](#)

10:10 his heart . . . his lips: Paul connects these with the inward conviction (heart) and outward confession (lips) of faith in Jesus. The images are drawn from the Deuteronomy quote in 10:8. [Back to text.](#)

10:11 No one who believes: A reference to Is 28:16, already quoted in Rom 9:33. [Back to text.](#)

10:12 no distinction: All nations are saved together in Christ just as all nations sinned together before his coming (3:9, 2223). [Back to text.](#)



10:13 every one who calls: A quotation from Joel 2:32. • The prophet envisions a time of judgment and salvation in the messianic age, with the Spirit pouring down on all flesh and a remnant of Israel being saved. This text was the springboard of Peter's inaugural sermon in Acts, where calling on "the name" of the Lord was linked with Baptism (Acts 2:21, 38) (CCC 432, 449, 2666). [See note on Acts 2:17-21.](#) [Back to text.](#)



10:14-17 Paul stresses the need to spread the gospel. Unless missionaries are sent and Christ is proclaimed, the world cannot call upon its Savior (CCC 875). • Paul twice excerpts from Isaiah, who foresees both the evangelization of Israel (10:15; Is 52:7) and its tragic rejection of a suffering Messiah (10:16; Is 53:1) (CCC 601). Aware that some in Israel have accepted the message, Paul is careful to say that **not all** have embraced the gospel (10:16). [Back to text.](#)



10:18 Their voice: A quotation from Ps 19:4. • The Psalmist describes how the heavens proclaim the glory of God throughout the world. Paul borrows this image to explain how the gospel has sounded across the earth, telling the dispersed of Israel that the Messiah has come (Col 1:5-6). [Back to text.](#)



10:19 I will make you jealous: A quotation from Deut 32:21. • Deuteronomy 32 is a prophetic song that foresees the rebellion and restoration of Israel long after the Exodus. This will involve the salvation of a **foolish nation** (Gentiles), an event that will anger some in Israel but will make others **jealous** of their blessings, stirring them to emulate their faith (11:11, 14). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Remnant (Rom 11:5)

Leimma (Gk.): a "portion" or "remainder". The biblical concept of a "remnant" refers to the survivors of God's people who escape conquest, catastrophe, and divine chastisement. The Greek OT uses similar terms in contexts where God's judgment on his people stops short of total annihilation. Thus Noah's family was the surviving remnant after the flood (Sir 44:17), and Jacob and his sons were the few who escaped a severe famine (Gen 45:7). When the kingdom of Israel was divided, the remnant came to mean, first, the remainder of the northern Israelites who were spared from Assyrian destruction in 722 B.C. (Is 10:20-22; Jer 31:7; Amos 3:12). It was later applied to the survivors of the Southern Kingdom of Judah who escaped death during the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. (Ezra 9:8; Jer 40:11; Hag 1:12). Several prophets looked forward to God restoring the remnant of Israel and Judah who were scattered across the world, reuniting them as his people (Is 11:11; Jer 50:20; Zech 8:12-13).



10:20-21 A final demonstration that unbelieving Israel is guilty of willful defiance. • Paul examines two sequential verses from Isaiah, applying the first to the Gentiles (10:20; Is 65:1) and the second to wayward Israel (10:21; Is 65:2). The contrast is stark: the nations are responding enthusiastically to the gospel without having sought it, whereas Israel

remains unresponsive despite the Lord's persistent pleas for faith. [Back to text.](#)

11:1 rejected his people?: A question emphatically denied. For Paul, the faithlessness of Israel does not cancel the faithfulness of God, who refuses to abandon his people (1 Sam 12:22; Ps 94:14). Paul is living proof of this as an Israelite who has experienced the grace and mercy of Christ. [Back to text.](#)



11:2-4 Scripture shows that God preserves a remnant of Israel even when most of the nation goes astray. • This was the case in Elijah's day, when nearly all of the Northern Kingdom of Israel abandoned Yahweh for the idolatrous cult of Baal (1 Kings 16:30-32). The prophet despaired that he alone was left, but the Lord had preserved a remnant of believers 7,000 strong that escaped his notice. [Back to text.](#)



11:8-10 Paul summons the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms to witness against hardened Israel. • Moses describes how Yahweh withheld the gifts of spiritual understanding (**eyes** and **ears**) from the wilderness generation of Israel because of its faithlessness, thanklessness, and idolatry (11:8; Deut 29:4). The same scenario was repeated in Isaiah's day when the Lord disciplined Israel with a **spirit of stupor**, making it numb and unresponsive to his warnings and causing it to stagger around in spiritual darkness (11:8; Is 29:10). David invoked such a curse on his enemies in Israel for their injustices (11:9; Ps 69:22-23). [Back to text.](#)

11:11 to make Israel jealous: The stumbling of Israel is temporary for itself and beneficial for the Gentiles. Until Israel regains its footing, a window has been opened for gathering other peoples and nations into the Church (11:17-24). [Back to text.](#)

11:13 to you Gentiles: Paul addresses his Gentile readers directly, cautioning them against pride. Some Gentile converts looked disdainfully upon Israel, as though they had replaced the covenant people in the messianic age. Paul not only rejects this (11:1); he warns that Gentiles, too, can be rejected as easily as they have been accepted. They should rather marvel that God has given them a share in Israel's spiritual blessings (15:27). Pagan anti-Semitism was pervasive in Roman antiquity. [Back to text.](#)

11:14 my fellow Jews: Literally, "my flesh". Paul is thinking of Israelites related to him by race (9:3-4). [Back to text.](#)



11:15 life from the dead?: Like the OT prophets, Paul envisions the spiritual recovery of Israel as a national resurrection (Is 26:19; Ezek 37:1-12; Hos 6:2). [Back to text.](#)

11:16 first fruits: The initial meal offering made to the Lord from each year's grain harvest (Num 15:17-21). **the root:** Anticipates the olive tree metaphor that follows in 11:17-24. The first fruits and the root probably symbolize the patriarchs, who are the founding ancestors of Israel (9:5) and for whose sake Israel is a people beloved by God (11:28). Others interpret the images as references to Christ (15:12; 1 Cor 15:23) or to Jewish Christians (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:15). [Back to text.](#)



11:17-24 Paul pictures the messianic people as an olive tree that is partly natural (believing Israel), partly engrafted (believing Gentiles), and partly dismembered (unbelieving Israel). The horticultural procedure of grafting wild shoots onto a cultivated trunk was meant to reinvigorate an old, exhausted tree that was yielding less and less fruit each season. The analogy shows that Israel is not being *demoted* from its favored-nation status so much as the Gentiles are being *promoted* to share in its blessings (15:27). • The picture of Israel as an olive tree comes from Jer 11:16-17. [Back to text.](#)

11:20 because of their unbelief: Just as Gentiles are grafted into the covenant through faith, so fallen-away Israelites will be regrafted onto the tree through belief in Jesus Christ. [Back to text.](#)

11:22 the kindness and the severity of God: God's justice and mercy are held in delicate balance: he neither withholds forgiveness from the contrite heart nor overlooks the hardness of an impenitent heart. [Back to text.](#)

11:25 mystery: The plan of worldwide salvation hidden in the Scriptures (16:25-26) but now made known through the Spirit (Eph 3:4-6). **part of Israel:** Those in Israel who are unresponsive to the gospel (11:7). Only some in Israel are hardened in this way, since a remnant of ethnic Israelites has come to believe in Jesus as the Messiah (11:5). Paul himself is among this believing remnant (11:1). **the full number of the Gentiles:** The many

people and nations of the world who will come to faith in Christ. Paul played a monumental role in launching the Church's pursuit of this missionary goal (1:5; 11:13). It is not specified when the conversion of the Gentiles will reach the point of fullness determined by God (CCC 674). [Back to text.](#)



11:26 and so: The Greek can mean "and in this way" (modal) or "and then" (temporal). **all Israel:** The entire tribal family of Israel. The point is not that every individual Israelite will be saved, but that a collective group representing all twelve tribes will be saved (Rev 7:1-8). See essay: [The Salvation of All Israel](#) at Rom 12. **it is written:** Paul combines citations from Is 59:20--21 and Is 27:9. • Isaiah envisions the restoration of Jacob-Israel from exile and sin. Yahweh's new **covenant** will bring his people a new abundance of mercy and forgiveness (11:27; Jer 31:31-34). The expression **from Zion** is worded differently in Is 59:20 ("to Zion") and may be taken from Is 2:3, which foresees the word of the Lord going out to the nations from Jerusalem (15:19; Lk 24:47). [Back to text.](#)

11:28 enemies: Temporarily, until their salvation (11:26). **beloved:** God will never revoke his promises to Israel on account of the patriarchs (9:5) but loves his people with an "everlasting love" (Jer 31:3). [Back to text.](#)

11:32 all men to disobedience: God allows all to sin that all might taste salvation (3:9, 23). His saving plan moves forward despite man's rebellion. [Back to text.](#)



11:33-36 Paul's concluding doxology extols the infinite wisdom of God. Overwhelmed and amazed, he gasps at the **unsearchable** and **inscrutable** plan of God to save the world in Christ. • Citations from Is 40:13 (in 11:34) and Job 41:11 (in 11:35) portray God's designs as beyond our comprehension and his greatness as independent of any need or earthly gift. [Back to text.](#)

The Salvation of All Israel

At the climax of Paul's discussion in Rom 9-11 he makes an astonishing claim: "[A]ll Israel will be saved" (Rom 11:26). What he means by this has been the subject of considerable debate. Two questions, crucial both to the meaning of this verse and to the whole discussion of Rom 9-11, must be examined: Who is "all Israel"? and How is all Israel "saved"?

WHO IS ALL ISRAEL?

Several answers are given to this question today. According to some, Paul is talking about *spiritual Israel*, that is, the Church made up of Jews and Gentiles converted to Christianity. According to others, Paul envisions the salvation of *ethnic Jews*, either from every generation or from the last generation of history. It is more likely, however, that "all Israel" is a reference to *ethnic Israel*, that is, the assembly of faithful Israelites from all twelve tribes down through the ages. In other words, Paul is thinking of the whole nation of covenant people descended from the twelve sons of the patriarch Jacob (renamed Israel, Gen 32:28). Several considerations weigh in favor of this third alternative.

1. Romans 9-11 is dominated by the terms "Israel" (eleven times) and "Israelite" (two times). This is in marked contrast to Rom 1-8, where Paul speaks only of "Jews" (nine times). The shift from using "Jews" exclusively to using "Israel" and "Israelite" almost exclusively points to a subtle but significant distinction between these terms. The distinction originated when the tribes of Israel split into two kingdoms after the reign of Solomon (1 Kings 12). Ten tribes from the north broke away and formed the "house of Israel", while the two southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin became the "house of Judah". Over the next several centuries, the northern tribes and then the southern tribes were forced into exile, and most of them never returned. The small remnant that eventually returned from Babylonian captivity and resettled in Palestine in the sixth century B.C. became known as "Jews", taking their name from the dominant tribe (Judah) and occupying the land around

Jerusalem in the south (Judea). By Paul's day, the term "Jew" was used more broadly to mean someone who followed the Mosaic religion of Judaism and looked to the Temple of Jerusalem as the focal point of spiritual life, regardless of whether he lived in Judea or abroad. Most religious Jews traced their lineage to the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi. It seems, then, that when Paul begins talking about "Israel" in Rom 9-11, he is shifting to a larger historical perspective that stretches beyond the compass of "Jews" and evokes memories of "all Israel" as a national family of twelve tribes (Deut 27:9; Josh 3:17; 2 Sam 5:5; 1 Chron 9:1; Ezra 6:17; Tob 1:4-6, etc.). Paul seems aware, in other words, that the classical notion of "Israel" is more inclusive and far-reaching than the contemporary notion of "Jews".

2. As Paul develops his argument in Rom 9-11, he draws from passages of the Old Testament that promise salvation for all the tribes of Israel. Tribes from the Northern Kingdom of Israel are in view in several passages (e.g., Is 10:22-23 at Rom 9:27-28, and 1 Kings 19:10 at Rom 11:4), and tribes from the Southern Kingdom of Judah are in view in others (Is 1:9 at Rom 9:29, and Joel 2:32 at Rom 10:13).

3. When Paul describes himself as an "Israelite" in Rom 11:1, he does so with explicit reference to his tribal affiliation (the tribe of Benjamin).

4. Paul's hope for the salvation of "all Israel" is in line with the prophetic hopes of the Old Testament, where the spiritual restoration of all twelve tribes, after centuries of division and exile among the Gentiles, is one of the towering expectations for the messianic age (Sir 36:11; 48:10; Is 11:11-12; 49:6; Jer 3:18; 50:17-20; Ezek 37:15-28; 48:1-35; Zech 8:13, etc.). The same hope for a restoration of the twelve tribes is expressed in ancient Jewish sources outside the Bible (e.g., *4 Ezra* 13:39-48; *Psalms of Solomon* 17:28, 44; *Testament of Benjamin* 9:2; 10:11; *2 Baruch* 78:4-7).

HOW IS ALL ISRAEL SAVED?

At least two different views of how Israel comes to salvation are current today.

1. The *two-covenant* view, developed in modern times, holds that Israel will be saved apart from Christ and apart from any acceptance of the gospel. In other words, proponents of this view envision a bi-covenantal arrangement where the Mosaic covenant continues in force alongside the New Covenant, with the former intended to save the Jews and the latter to save the Gentiles. In support, advocates contend that "Christ" is never explicitly mentioned in Romans 11, that "the Deliverer" foretold by Isaiah refers to Yahweh rather than the Messiah (Is 59:20 cited in Rom 11:26), and that the "covenant" of forgiveness mentioned by Isaiah is the Mosaic covenant rather than the New Covenant (Is 27:9, alluded to in Rom 11:27).

2. The *New Covenant* view, held by the vast majority of interpreters through the ages, holds that Israel will be saved by the grace of Jesus Christ. This second view is far more probable than the first, as it alone is consistent with the immediate context of Rom 9-11 and the wider context of Paul's theology and writings. In point of fact, the bi-covenantal view collides with the whole message of Romans, namely, that the gospel of Jesus Christ brings "salvation" to Jews and Gentiles alike (Rom 1:16), that one must confess faith in Jesus to be "saved" (Rom 10:9), and that Paul thinks of his missionary efforts among the Gentiles as a means to "save" his Israelite kinsmen (Rom 11:14). There is every reason to suppose, moreover, that Paul is thinking of Christ and the New Covenant when he quotes the words of Isaiah in Rom 11:26-27. For Paul, the risen Jesus is our Deliverer (1 Thess 1:10) and the one who takes away sin through the sacraments of the New Covenant (Rom 6:1-11). By contrast, the Mosaic covenant is something that condemns rather than saves (Acts 13:38-39; Rom 3:20; 2 Cor 3:4-11). In Paul's mind, then, there is no "alternative way" of salvation for Israel apart from the grace of Jesus Christ that comes through the preaching and acceptance of the gospel (Rom 10:14-17; CCC 765; 839-40).

THE CLIMAX of Paul's discussion is the revelation that Israelites from all twelve tribes will be saved by the Messiah through the mercy and forgiveness of the New Covenant (Rom 11:26-27). Seen in this way, the teaching of Paul simply echoes the teaching of Jesus, who not only selected twelve apostles to signify the messianic restoration of Israel (Mt 10:2-5),

but sent them out to recover the "lost sheep" of Israel (Mt 10:6) and promised to seat them on twelve thrones over "the twelve tribes of Israel" (Mt 19:28). None of this is surprising when we consider that the Church, which is the messianic kingdom of Jesus (Mt 16:17-19; Lk 22:28-30), is modeled on the ancient kingdom of David, which unified all twelve tribes under the anointed king (2 Sam 5:1-5; 1 Kings 11:42), even as it stretched beyond the borders of Israel to encompass the Gentiles (1 Kings 4:21; Ps 2:8; 72:8-11). For further details on this theme in the New Testament, [see note on Lk 1:33](#), essay: [Kingdom Restoration](#) at Acts 15, and related passages in Acts 26:7, Jas 1:1, and Rev 7:18; 21:10-14. « [Back to Romans 12:1](#).

12:1-15:13 The final section of Romans is Paul's moral catechesis. His teaching in this section is not an afterthought, but a practical application of the theology expounded in earlier chapters. Instructions are given on matters of worship (12:12), life in the Church (12:3-21), responsibility toward civil governments (13:1-7), and avoiding scandal (14:1-15:13) (CCC 1454, 1971). [Back to text.](#)

12:1-2 The worship Paul describes in these verses is in glaring contrast to the idolatrous worship described in 1:18-32. Believers engage in rational worship; the idolater in irrational (1:22). Believers offer the body to God in sacrifice; idolaters dishonor the body through sexual immorality (1:24). Believers strive to renew their minds with truth; idolaters only darken their minds with error (1:21). Believers discern the divine will; idolaters spurn the divine will in preference to their own (1:32). For Paul, the difference between pagan and Christian worship is the difference between a degrading spiritual free fall (1:18-32) and an ascending spiritual sacrifice (12:1-2) (CCC 2031). [Back to text.](#)



12:1 mercies of God: Divine mercy is a leading theme in the preceding chapters (9:15-16, 18, 23; 11:30-32). **living sacrifice:** Sacrificing the body means putting to death the deeds of the flesh (8:13) so that our members can become instruments of righteousness (6:13). Virtues associated with the body are probably in view (chastity, temperance, etc.). • The body is made a sacrifice when the eye looks at nothing evil, the tongue says nothing filthy, and the hand does nothing lawless. More than this, the hand must give alms; the mouth must bless the one who curses; and the ear must listen to the reading of Scripture (St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 20). **spiritual worship:** Or, "rational worship", that is, service to God that is proper to man as a rational and spiritual being. There may be an implied contrast with the sacrifice of irrational animals under the Old Covenant. [Back to text.](#)

12:2 Do not be conformed: Because worldly wisdom and values are often deformed (1:21, 28), Christians must allow God to transform them into the image of Christ (8:29; 2 Cor 3:18). The grace of the Spirit enables us to interpret our lives and evaluate the influences of our culture with respect to the gospel. In all things, God's **will** should be the central object of

our discernment, for it alone is **acceptable** and **perfect** (CCC 2520, 2826). [Back to text.](#)

12:3 sober judgment: A renewed mind (12:2) is first of all a humble mind (Phil 2:3). **God has assigned:** God has deprived no one of gifts to be used in service to him and others. Ultimately these gifts are meant to build up the Church (12:6-8). [Back to text.](#)

12:4-5 Paul summarizes here what he elaborates more fully in 1 Corinthians 12, namely, that the Church is a mystery of unity and diversity. While all believers are one in Christ, they are individual members with differing gifts and tasks for the good of the whole body. The spiritual gifts, though diverse, are thus complementary. [Back to text.](#)



12:6 gifts: The Greek word (*charismata*) is related to the word "grace" (*charis*). The purpose of spiritual gifts thus falls in line with that of all graces, namely, to facilitate the salvation of ourselves and others. The short list of gifts in 12:68 is representative, not exhaustive, covering instruction and practical service (CCC 2003-4). **in proportion to our faith:** Or, "according to the analogy of faith". Although some connect this with the personal faith of the one who prophesies, it more likely refers to the deposit of Christian faith expressed in early creeds, the teaching of Jesus and the apostles, and the books of the Bible. The Church's doctrinal tradition was the standard for measuring the truthfulness of early prophecies, not vice versa (1 Tim 6:20-21). • Traditionally, the "analogy of faith" denotes the unity and coherence of Christian doctrine. Since no tenet of faith is isolated and independent from others, the whole mystery of God and our salvation can shed light on every part of what Christians believe. This principle was discussed briefly in 1870 at Vatican I (*Dei Filius*, chap. 4) (CCC 114). [Back to text.](#)

12:10 love one another: In actions, not merely in words and emotions (1 Jn 3:18). Sincere and unselfish love marks Christians as true disciples of Christ (Jn 13:34-35). **brotherly affection:** Familial love is rooted in familial relations. Because we are younger brothers and sisters of Christ (8:29), we are spiritual siblings who should love and care for one another in the family of faith. [Back to text.](#)

12:11 zeal: Spiritual energy and enthusiasm. Christians should resist temptations to apathy by responding to the guidance of the Spirit

(8:14). [Back to text.](#)

12:12 be constant in prayer: Conversation with God should be unceasing, whether in times of trial or refreshment (Lk 18:1; 1 Thess 5:17). Prayer can be continuous, too, when our work is done faithfully and for the glory of God (Col 3:17; 4:2) (CCC 2745). [Back to text.](#)

12:14 Bless those who persecute: Recalls the teaching of Jesus (Mt 5:44; Lk 6:28). [Back to text.](#)

12:15 Rejoice with . . . weep with: Paul allows no room for Christian indifference (1 Cor 12:26). United with one another, believers must extend compassion and maintain solidarity among themselves through the "highs" and "lows" of daily life (Sir 7:34). [Back to text.](#)

12:18 live peaceably: Peacemaking is part of the Christian mission (Mt 5:9; Heb 12:14; Jas 3:18). Since harmony is sometimes impossible, Paul qualifies his command, recognizing that peace cannot be forced on others (CCC 2304). [Back to text.](#)



12:19 Vengeance is mine: Reads like a translation of the i Aramaic *Targum Neofiti* at Deut 32:35. It is also possible that Paul has combined the wording of the Hebrew ("Vengeance is mine") and Greek versions ("I will repay") of this passage. • God promised through Moses to avenge his enemies and vindicate the faithful. Paul takes this as a prohibition against private retaliation. Christians must recognize that God overlooks no evil or wrongdoing but will exact justice on the Day of Judgment. Our duty is to extend mercy to our enemies as Jesus did (Lk_23:34). [See note on Mt 5:38.](#) [Back to text.](#)



12:20 if your enemy: A reference to Prov 25:21. • The meaning of the Proverb is mysterious, but it seems to indicate that serving an enemy stores up his future punishment so long as he continues in his ways. • Heaping coals of kindness on one who has wronged you can cure him of vices, burn away his malice, and move him to repentance (St. Jerome, *Homilies on the Psalms* 41). [Back to text.](#)

13:1-7 Paul touches on the relationship between Church and State, challenging every believer to be a model citizen. Since God is the author of the political order, it follows that allegiance to Christ entails reasonable submission to earthly governments (1 Pet 2:13-17). [Back to text.](#)

13:1 no authority except from God: Scripture teaches that God grants political authority to civil rulers (Prov 8:15; Wis 6:1-3; Jn 19:11). By design, governments provide society with goods and securities that individuals and families could not provide for themselves. Note, however, that the State obliges the obedience of the Christian only when it legislates in accord with divine law. If it oversteps its boundaries and frames laws contrary to the law of God, the believer must resort to civil disobedience and seek to change its laws by moral persuasion or other means. Paul urges us to pray for government leaders in 1 Tim 2:1-4 (CCC 1897-1900, 2238). [Back to text.](#)



13:4 the sword: Paul is alluding to the *ius gladii* (Lat. "right of the sword"), the authority of the Roman Empire to administer capital punishment by decapitation. Here and elsewhere Paul accepts that such extreme measures are acceptable if done at the service of justice (Acts 25:11). •Christian tradition asserts that governments have the right to enforce capital punishment for the good of society, eliminating its most dangerous offenders. In modern times, the practice is discouraged in all but extreme cases (CCC 2266-67). [Back to text.](#)

13:6 pay taxes: Financial obligations to the State are consistent with the Christian faith. This and other civil responsibilities have their proper place (13:7) but are subordinate to our supreme duty toward God (CCC 2240). [See note on Mt 22:21.](#) [Back to text.](#)

13:8 Owe no one anything: Obligations to governing authorities (13:7) are surpassed by the duty to **love** others—a debt that always remains outstanding and is never paid off. Our ability to obey the commandments is possible only by the inward help of the Spirit, who pours divine love into our hearts and makes consistent obedience possible (5:5; 8:4) (CCC 1827). [Back to text.](#)

13:9 The commandments: Paul distills four of the seven commandments of the Decalogue (Ex 20:13-17) into one: **love your neighbor as yourself** (Lev 19:18; Gal 5:14). One's "neighbor" has the widest possible application and includes enemies (Mt 5:44) and anyone in need (Lk 10:25-37) (CCC 2196). [Back to text.](#)

13:11 salvation is nearer: With reference to our personal judgment as well as to Christ's future return in glory (Heb 9:27, 28; 1 Pet 1:5). [Back to](#)

[text.](#)

13:12 the night: The present evil age, when death and darkness still pervade the world (Gal 1:4). It is essentially a time for conversion, until the unending **day** of eternity dawns (Rev 22:5). In the meantime, Christians must be on guard against the devil, protecting themselves with the **armor of light** (Eph 6:11-17; 1 Thess 5:8). [Back to text.](#)

13:14 put on the Lord Jesus: That is, renew the commitments you made at Baptism, when you were first clothed with Christ (Gal 3:27). One has to flee the occasions of sin that entice the flesh. [See note on Rom 7:5.](#) [Back to text.](#)

14:1-15:13 Paul's final instructions are directed toward two groups in the Roman Church, called the **weak** (14:1) and the **strong** (15:1). The weak are mainly Jewish Christians; the strong are mainly Gentile Christians. Apparently the strong have a condescending attitude toward the weak that needs correcting. [Back to text.](#)



14:1 weak in faith: A Jewish Christian minority who maintain a distinctive vegetarian diet (14:2), observe the liturgical feast days of Israel (14:5-6), and may adhere to the food laws of the Torah (14:14). • The behavior of the weak, especially their abstinence from meat and wine (14:21), is probably a conscious imitation of biblical heroes who avoided Gentile foods while living in Gentile lands. Among those who maintained this type of Diaspora diet were Tobit, Judith, Esther, and Daniel (Tob 1:10-11; Jud 10:5; 12:2; Esther 14:17; Dan 1:8; 10:3). [Back to text.](#)

14:3 pass judgment: To inflate differences of opinion is to cause division and strife. The strong should accommodate the weak without gloating over their Christian freedom or looking with contempt on them. In this case, preserving peace is a higher priority than the exercise of liberty. The weak and the strong are answerable to God, not to each other (14:10-12). [Back to text.](#)

14:5 one day as better: Refers to the sacred days of the Old Covenant calendar, including the weekly Sabbath. These ceremonial times belonged to the Mosaic age that expired with the coming of the messianic age (Gal 4:10; Col 2:16). For this reason, they are not binding on the Christian conscience, although Jewish converts are still permitted to observe them in the earliest days of the Church. Note that Paul is not indifferent to holy days

as such, but only to the ritual feast days of Judaism. [See note on Acts 21:21.](#) [Back to text.](#)

14:8 we are the Lord's: Christians belong to Christ in both life and death, having been purchased at the price of his blood (1 Cor 6:20; Rev 5:9). Our highest aim is thus to please him—a pursuit that often requires the suppression of our self-interests and opinions. [Back to text.](#)



14:11 As I live: A reference to Is 45:23. • Jewish theology read the passage as a prophecy of the Last Judgment. Paul follows this tradition in an attempt to dissuade the weak and the strong from judging one another (14:3, 10, 13). Paul moves Christ into the center of this Isaian oracle in Phil 2:10 (CCC 679). [Back to text.](#)

14:13 a stumbling block: A moral obstacle that may cause the weak to fall and despise the gospel (14:16). It would be irresponsible and injurious for the strong to flaunt their Christian freedoms before the weak. [Back to text.](#)

14:14 nothing is unclean: Alludes to the dietary distinctions between clean and unclean foods in the Torah (Lev 11). For the nullification of these distinctions in the New Covenant, see notes on Acts 10:14 and 10:15. [Back to text.](#)

14:15 for whom Christ died: Since the weak are loved by God, the strong should support them, not scandalize them. Personal consideration is more important than personal convictions in nonessential matters. [Back to text.](#)

15:1 We who are: Paul counts himself among the strong Christians set free from Mosaic regulations and their claims upon the conscience. **to bear with:** Not just tolerate, but lovingly encourage and uphold. **the failings:** Literally, "the weaknesses". These are not sins, but the scruples of the weak about various foods (14:14). [Back to text.](#)



15:3 The reproaches: A reference to Ps 69:9. • Psalm 69 describes the righteous sufferer who is persecuted for his faithfulness to God. Paul portrays Jesus in these terms, stressing that Christ followed the will of the Father for the benefit of others, even unto death (Mk 14:36; 2 Cor 8:9; Phil 2:8). His example should inspire the strong to lay aside their pride and unselfishly serve the weak. [Back to text.](#)

15:4 encouragement of the Scriptures: The Scriptures of Israel remain essential to the life and liturgy of the Church, being filled with wisdom for Christian living (1 Cor 10:11). The unity of the two Testaments, Old and New, rests on the unity of salvation history and the divine authorship of all the biblical books (2 Tim 3:15-17; 2 Pet 1:20-21) (CCC 121-22). [Back to text.](#)

15:7 Christ has welcomed you: Jesus is the model for Paul's exhortations (14:1, 3) (CCC 520). [Back to text.](#)

15:8 a servant to the circumcised: Jesus mainly confined his ministry to the people of Israel (Mt 15:24). Paul is here challenging the strong in Rome to serve the "weak" of Israel (Rom 14:1). [Back to text.](#)



15:9-12 A chain of OT verses that envision the international make-up of the Church, where Israel and the Gentiles come together to worship the Lord side by side. • The four OT passages are linked together by reference to **Gentiles** (Ps 18:49; the Greek version of Deut 32:43; Ps 117:1; Is 11:10). They support Paul's perspective throughout Romans that the Scriptures of Israel look forward to the full inclusion of the Gentiles in the family of God. [Back to text.](#)

15:12 The root of Jesse: A messianic title for Jesus (Rev 5:5). He was expected to be a descendant of King David (Rom 1:3), whose father was named Jesse (1 Sam 16:1-13). [See note on Rom 11:16.](#) [Back to text.](#)

15:14-16:27 Paul's closing exhortations and greetings. He sketches briefly his plans to evangelize the world further with the enlisted support of the Roman Christians (15:24, 30). [Back to text.](#)



15:16 offering of the Gentiles: Paul views his missionary work as a priestly ministry. His sacrifice is the Gentile world converted to Christ and sanctified by the Spirit. • Paul seems to allude to the missionary prophecy of Is 66:18-20, where God sends out the redeemed to declare his glory among the nations and to bring them back like a sacrificial offering to the Lord. Paul's expressed desire to reach Spain (Rom 15:24, 28) may be influenced by the oracle's reference to the "islands afar off" (Is 66:19), which refers to southern Spain. [Back to text.](#)

15:19 I have fully preached: By the time Paul wrote Romans in the late 50s, he had evangelized the northeast quadrant of the Mediterranean world,

from **Jerusalem** in Judea to the province of **Illyricum** along the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea. [Back to text.](#)



15:21 They shall see: A reference to Is 52:15. • Paul cites the beginning of Isaiah's vision of the Suffering Servant, an oracle that forecasts the rejection and death of the Messiah (Is 52:13-53:12). News of this was expected to startle many nations, opening their eyes and ears to God's message. [Back to text.](#)

15:24 Spain: Generally considered the western limit of the Roman world. Although not mentioned in the NT, Christian tradition holds that Paul preached the gospel to the western extremity of the ancient world before his martyrdom in the mid 60s. [See note on Acts 28:30.](#) [Back to text.](#)

15:25 aid for the saints: A collection was taken up among Gentile churches on Paul's third missionary journey (2 Cor 89). This was an expression of both charity and solidarity between believers of different nationalities. [See note on 1 Cor 16:1-4.](#) [Back to text.](#)

15:31 delivered: Paul was warned of dangers awaiting him in Jerusalem (Acts 20:22-23; 21:10-11). [Back to text.](#)

15:33 The God of peace: A familiar designation in Paul's letters (2 Cor 13:11; Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 5:23). [Back to text.](#)

16:1-27 Some scholars question the authenticity of chapter 16 and consider it a later addition to Romans. This is because the oldest surviving manuscript of Romans places the final doxology (16:25-27) after 15:33 and because shorter editions of the letter are reported to have circulated in Christian antiquity (missing chaps. 15 and 16). Scholars of this opinion regard Romans 16 as an independent letter of recommendation for Phoebe (16:1) or a letter originally sent to the Church at Ephesus. Textual criticism gives little support to the hypothesis and at present accepts the authenticity of Romans 16 as an integral part of the epistle. If shorter editions of Romans did exist, they were probably abridgments of the book adapted for liturgical use. [Back to text.](#)



16:1 our sister Phoebe: Possibly the carrier of Paul's letter. **deaconess:** The Greek *diakonos* can refer to an ordained minister of the Church (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8) or to a "servant" or "assistant" more generally (Rom 13:4; 15:8). Deaconesses in the early Church assisted with the baptism of women and similar tasks. • According to the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325, deaconesses are counted among the laity, not among the ordained clergy (can. 19). [Back to text.](#)

16:3-23 Paul addresses 26 Roman Christians by name, the longest list of greetings in the NT. The etymology of the names reveals a diverse background of believers, including Greeks, Latins, and Jews. [Back to text.](#)

16:3 Prisca and Aquila: A Christian couple who worked closely with Paul (Acts 18:2; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19). [Back to text.](#)

16:5 the church in their house: The earliest Christians met together in private homes to pray and worship (Acts 2:46; 12:12; 1 Cor 16:19). This reflects the similar practice of Jews before separate synagogue buildings were in widespread use. [Back to text.](#)

16:7 Junias: The Greek is feminine, suggesting to many that Junias is a woman and possibly the wife of Andronicus. It could also be a shortened form of the Latin name *Junianus* and thus refer to a man. **among the apostles:** This can be understood to mean that **(1)** Andronicus and Junias

were apostles in the broader sense of the word (messenger, Phil 2:25; 2 Cor 8:23), or that (2) they were esteemed by the original apostles. Either way, they were Jews who became Christians before Paul. [Back to text.](#)

16:13 Rufus: Possibly mentioned in Mk 15:21 as the son of Simon of Cyrene. Note that Paul and the evangelist Mark were both writing to Roman Christians. See introduction to Mark: *Destination*. [Back to text.](#)

16:16 a holy kiss: An expression of fraternal love in the primitive Church (1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; 1 Thess 5:26; 1 Pet 5:14). [Back to text.](#)

16:18 their own appetites: These troublemakers may be (1) some of the "strong" Christians in Rome who were more willing to define the kingdom of God by foods than by harmony with others (14:17; 15:1), or (2) those who practiced some form of Christianity in a vain and self-serving way (Phil 3:19). [Back to text.](#)



16:20 crush Satan under your feet: Paul desires the Roman Christians to understand the true difference between "good" and "evil" (16:19) and so share in Christ's victory over the devil (1 Jn 3:8). • Paul is alluding to the first biblical prophecy, Gen 3:15, which promises that a Redeemer will trample the satanic serpent underfoot. Paul extends this prophecy about the Messiah to the entire messianic people. [Back to text.](#)

16:21 Timothy: A longtime companion of Paul (Acts 16:14) and the recipient of two NT letters, 1 and 2 Timothy. **Jason and Sosipater:** Possibly those mentioned in Acts 17:5 and Acts 20:4. [Back to text.](#)

16:22 Tertius, the writer: Tertius was the secretary who wrote the letter at the dictation of Paul. [Back to text.](#)

16:23 Gaius: One of the first baptized Christians in Corinth (1 Cor 1:14). He graciously opened his home to Paul and other visitors. **Erastus:** Although a common name, probably the figure in Acts 19:22 and 2 Tim 4:20. [Back to text.](#)

16:25 the mystery: Jesus Christ fulfilled the plan of God hidden away in the Scriptures (16:26; 1:2). See word study: [Mystery](#) at Eph 3:3. [Back to text.](#)

16:26 the obedience of faith: The expression stands at the beginning (1:5) and end of the letter (CCC 143, 2087). [See note on Rom 1:5.](#) [Back to text.](#)

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Author and Date Two times the Apostle Paul identifies himself as the author of this letter (1:1; 16:21). Testimony from the Church Fathers as early as St. Clement of Rome (A.D. 95) supports the claim, and modern scholarship has never seriously contested the tradition. Indeed, 1 Corinthians is full of valuable information about Paul that both corroborates and enhances our knowledge of his ministry from the Book of Acts.

According to 16:8, Paul wrote the epistle while staying in Ephesus in Asia Minor (located in what is modern Turkey). This stay most likely corresponds to the apostle's third missionary journey from A.D. 53 to 58, when he spent more than two years instructing the young Church in that city (Acts 19:1-10). Because Paul was writing in anticipation of coming to Corinth after his stay in Ephesus (1 Cor 11:34), we can date its composition during the second part of his third mission, probably in the spring of A.D. 56.

Destination The city of Corinth was a flourishing commercial center of the Mediterranean world. It was the capital of the Roman province of Achaia (southern Greece), and its location between two seaports made the city an ideal trade link between Italy in the west and Asia in the east. History tells us that Corinth attracted droves of entrepreneurs and tourists who wished to benefit from its economic prosperity and enjoy its numerous pagan shrines, its gladiatorial contests, and the popular Isthmian Games held there every two years. Like many cosmopolitan centers, however, Corinth had a reputation for shameless immorality and a ruthless spirit of competition. The Book of Acts informs us that Paul himself planted the young Church there about A.D. 51, but he stayed only long enough to get things up and running (Acts 18:11-18). The social make-up of this budding community emerges from the letter itself: some were wealthy (11:22), others poor (1:26), and others slaves (7:21). Ethnically, the Corinthian Church was

mixed, having a strong presence of both Gentile (8:7; 12:2) and Jewish believers (7:18-20).

Purpose Nearly five years had elapsed between Paul's founding of the Church in Corinth and the arrival of this letter. During his absence the community had fallen prey to a number of vices that were beginning to fracture its unity and drag members away from the faith. Although Paul planned to visit Corinth to disentangle these problems in person (see 11:34b), he sent the letter we know as 1 Corinthians to hold things together until his arrival. His instructions were tailored to address the information he had received about their struggles.

Paul was first informed that a crisis was brewing in Corinth through delegates of a woman named Chloe (1:11; 11:18). Their disturbing report included news of internal divisions (1:12-15), a case of incest (5:1-5), sexual immorality (6:12-20), multiplying lawsuits (6:1-8), and outspoken denials of the Resurrection (15:12). Liturgically, the Corinthians were becoming careless in their celebration of the Eucharist (11:17-34), and some were exercising charismatic gifts in a manner more disruptive than edifying (14:1-40). Paul confronted these problems by censuring the Corinthians' immorality and calling them back to the basics of Christian doctrine.

Paul also gave personal responses to select questions asked by the Corinthians. In a letter unknown to us, the young Church had written to Paul asking for spiritual direction on various matters, such as marriage, celibacy, and food offered to idols (7:1; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1). Much of 1 Corinthians consists of Paul's addressing these issues one by one.

In the end, Paul was deeply concerned for this troubled Church. His pastoral guidance is that of a spiritual father aiming to restore peace and unity among children by fortifying their commitment to Jesus Christ (4:14-15).

Themes and Characteristics First Corinthians reveals more about the struggles and conditions of a young, apostolic Church than any other NT letter. It gives a clear picture of the wide range of pressures that the earliest Christians had to face, pressures both from within their communities and from their surrounding pagan environment. Paul shows himself sensitive to these challenges throughout the letter and offers spiritual direction that is

sometimes bold and confrontational but always full of charity and fatherly wisdom. Because the problems in ancient Corinth are problems that plague the Church in every age, this letter was the most widely cited of Paul's epistles in early Christianity and continues to speak to our situation today.

The leading themes of the letter follow the doctrinal and moral issues that Paul was forced to address, especially those related to immorality, arrogance, liturgical abuse, and erroneous opinions about death and resurrection. These problems shook the local Church in Corinth down to her foundation and made the community look more at times like a pagan society than a spiritual family. To reverse this trend, Paul takes aim throughout the letter at two vices that underlie the Corinthians' multiple struggles: pride and selfishness. **(1) *Pride*** manifested itself among the Corinthians in the form of intellectual arrogance that paid more respect to human knowledge and eloquence than to the humble message of the gospel (1:18-25; 3:18-21; 8:1-3). Paul takes occasion to reprimand their attitude of superiority by appealing to the warnings in Scripture (1:19, 31; 3:19-20) and reminding them that true "wisdom" is imparted through the gospel of the Cross (1:18; 2:6-10). In the apostle's mind, there is no room among believers for arrogance or boasting, because every good thing they possess is a gift from God (4:6-7). **(2) *Selfishness*** manifested itself in various ways among the Corinthians. Lawsuits among believers were a growing problem (6:18); certain believers asserted their freedoms in a reckless way (8:1-13); some were guilty of discrimination toward the poor (11:21-22); and some exercised spiritual gifts as a way of attracting attention to themselves (14:1-40). Paul's prescription for each of these ailments is a return to Christian charity (14:1; 16:14, 22). Only God's love within us "builds up" (8:1) the Church in a way that glorifies Christ. Chapter 13 is the most beautiful in the letter, portraying love as patient, caring, and oriented toward others. This is the supreme law of the New Covenant (Rom 13:8-10) and the crown jewel of the Christian virtues (1 Cor 13:13). For Paul, only the divine love that we receive from Christ can deliver us from the chains of self-centered living and carry us into eternity with God (13:8-12).

OUTLINE OF THE FIRST LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

1. Address and Prologue ([1:1-9](#))

- A. Greeting ([1:1-3](#))
- B. Prayer of Thanksgiving ([1:4-9](#))

2. Corrections to Corinthian Problems ([1:10-6:20](#))

- A. Need for Unity and Maturity ([1:10-4:21](#))
- B. Scandal of Incest ([5:1-13](#))
- C. Lawsuits among Christians ([6:1-11](#))
- D. Sexual Immorality and the Body ([6:12-20](#))

3. Answers to Corinthian Questions ([7:1-14:40](#))

- A. Marriage and Celibacy ([7:1-40](#))
- B. Idol Food and Christian Liberty ([8:1-10:33](#))
- C. Problems with Liturgy and Assembly ([11:1-34](#))
- D. The Body of Christ and the Gifts of His Members ([12:1-14:40](#))

4. Resurrection of the Dead ([15:1-58](#))

- A. Christ's Resurrection ([15:1-11](#))
- B. Resurrection of the Church ([15:12-58](#))

5. Epilogue ([16:1-24](#))

- A. Collection for Jerusalem and Paul's Future Visit ([16:1-12](#))
- B. Final Exhortations ([16:13-24](#))

THE FIRST LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE

CORINTHIANS

Chapters

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [9](#) [10](#) [11](#) [12](#) [13](#) [14](#) [15](#) [16](#)

Essays and Charts

[Shun Immorality, Shun Idolatry.](#)

[Paul, Idol Food, and the Jerusalem Council](#)

Salutation

[1](#) Paul, [called by the will of God](#) to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sos'thenes,

[2](#) [To the Church of God](#) which is at Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints * together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

[3](#) [Grace to you and peace](#) from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[4](#) I give thanks to God^a always for you because of the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵that in every way you were enriched in him with [all speech and all knowledge](#)—⁶even as [the testimony to Christ](#) was confirmed among you—⁷so that you are not lacking in any [spiritual gift](#), as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ; ⁸who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in [the day of our Lord](#) Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Dissension in the Church

[10](#) [I appeal to you](#), brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. ¹¹For it has been reported to me by [Chlo'e's people](#) that there is quarreling among you, my brethren. ¹²What I mean is that each one of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to [Apol'los](#)," or "I belong to Ce'phas," * or "I belong to Christ." ¹³Is Christ

divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴I am thankful^b that I baptized none of you except [Crispus](#) and Ga'ius; ¹⁵lest any one should say that you were baptized in my name. ¹⁶(I did [baptize also the household](#) of Steph'anas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any one else.) ¹⁷For Christ did not send me to baptize but [to preach the gospel](#), and not with eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

Christ the Power and Wisdom of God

¹⁸ For [the word of the cross](#) is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹For it is written,

["I will destroy](#) the wisdom of the wise,
and the cleverness of the clever I will thwart."

²⁰[Where is](#) the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the [wisdom](#) of the world? ²¹For since, in the wisdom of God, the world [did not know God](#) through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. ²²For [Jews](#) demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³but [we preach Christ crucified](#), a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

²⁶ For consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to the flesh, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; ²⁷but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, ²⁸God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹so that no flesh might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰He is [the source of your life](#) in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption; ³¹therefore, as it is written, "[Let him who boasts](#), boast of the Lord."

Proclaiming Christ Crucified

² [When I came to you](#), brethren, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony^c of God in lofty words or wisdom. ²For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. * ³And I was with you in weakness and in much [fear and trembling](#); ⁴and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but [in demonstration](#)

[of the Spirit](#) and of power, ⁵that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

The True Wisdom of God

⁶ Yet among [the mature](#) we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. ⁷But we impart [a secret and hidden wisdom](#) of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. ⁸None of the [rulers of this age](#) understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹But, as it is written,

"[What no eye has seen](#), nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man conceived,
what God has prepared for those who love him,"

¹⁰God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For [the Spirit searches everything](#), even the depths of God. ¹¹For what person knows a man's thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹²Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. ¹³And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit.^d

¹⁴ The [unspiritual^e](#) man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵The [spiritual man](#) judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. ¹⁶"[For who has known](#) the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

On Dissension in the Corinthian Church

³ But I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men, but as [men of the flesh](#), as infants in Christ. ²I fed you with milk, not solid food; for you were not ready for it; and even yet you are not ready, ³for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving like ordinary men? ⁴For when one says, "I belong to Paul," and another, "I belong to Apol'los," are you not merely men?

⁵ What then is Apol'los? [What is Paul?](#) Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. ⁶[I planted, Apol'los watered](#), but God gave the growth. ⁷So neither he who plants nor he who waters is

anything, but only God who gives the growth. ⁸He who plants and he who waters are equal, and each shall receive his wages according to his labor. ⁹For we are God's fellow workers; ^fyou are God's field, God's building.

10 According to the commission of God given to me, like a [skilled master builder](#) I laid a foundation, and another man is building upon it. Let each man take care how he builds upon it. **11**For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. **12**[Now if any one builds](#) on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—**13**each man's work will become manifest; for the Day ^{*} will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. **14**If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a [reward](#). **15**If any man's work is burned up, he will [suffer loss](#), though he himself will be saved, but only [as through fire](#).

16 Do you not know that [you are God's temple](#) ^{*} and that God's Spirit dwells in you? **17**[If any one destroys](#) God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are.

18 Let no one deceive himself. If any one among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. **19**For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. [For it is written](#), "He catches the wise in their craftiness," **20**and again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile." **21**So let no one boast of men. For all things are yours, **22**whether Paul or Apol'los or Ce'phas or the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours; **23**and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

The Ministry of the Apostles

4 This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and [stewards](#) of the mysteries of God. **2**Moreover it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. **3**But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. I do not even judge myself. **4**I am not aware of anything against myself, but [I am not thereby acquitted](#). It is the Lord who judges me. **5**Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then every man will receive his commendation from God.

6 I have applied all this to myself and Apol'los for your benefit, brethren, that you may [learn by us](#) not to go beyond what is written, that none of you

may be puffed up in favor of one against another. ⁷For who sees anything different in you? What have you that you did not receive? If then you received it, [why do you boast](#) as if it were not a gift?

8 [Already you are filled!](#) Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings! And would that you did reign, so that we might share the rule with you! ⁹For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death; because we have become a [spectacle](#) to the world, to angels and to men. ¹⁰We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. ¹¹To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly clothed and buffeted and homeless, ¹²and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; ¹³when slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become, and are now, as the refuse of the world, the dregs of all things.

Fatherly Admonition

14 I do not write this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. ¹⁵For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For [I became your father](#) in Christ Jesus through the gospel. ¹⁶I urge you, then, be imitators of me. ¹⁷Therefore I sent^g to you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church. ¹⁸Some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. ¹⁹But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. ²⁰For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power. ²¹What do you wish? Shall I come to you [with a rod](#), or with love in a spirit of gentleness?

Sexual Immorality Defiles the Church

5 [It is actually reported](#) that there is [immorality](#) among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans; for a man is living with his father's wife. * ²[And you are arrogant!](#) Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.

3 For though absent in body I am present in spirit, and as if present, I have already [pronounced judgment](#) ⁴in the name of the Lord Jesus on the man who has done such a thing. When you are assembled, and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, ⁵you are to [deliver this man to](#)

Satan * for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.^h

6 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens all the dough? 7 Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be new dough, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Paschal Lamb, has been sacrificed. 8 Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Immorality and Judgment

9 I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with immoral men; * 10 not at all meaning the immoral * of this world, or the greedy and robbers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. 11 But rather I wroteⁱ to you not to associate with any one who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of immorality.^{Â§} or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber—not even to eat with such a one. 12 For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the Church whom you are to judge? 13 God judges those outside. " Drive out the wicked person from among you."

Lawsuits among Believers

6 When one of you has a grievance against a brother, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous * instead of the saints? 2 Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? 3 Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, matters pertaining to this life! 4 If then you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who are least esteemed by the Church? 5 I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no man among you wise enough to decide between members of the brotherhood, 6 but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers?

7 To have lawsuits at all with one another is defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? 8 But you yourselves wrong and defraud, and that even your own brethren.

9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, * nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals,^j * 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were

some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Glorifying God in the Body

12 "All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," ¹³but I will not be enslaved by anything. ¹³"Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food"—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for immorality, ^{*} but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. ¹⁵Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two shall become one."^k ¹⁷But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. ¹⁸Shun immorality. ^{*} Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body. ¹⁹Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; ²⁰you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Concerning Marriage

7 Now concerning the matters about which you wrote. It is well for a man not to touch a woman. ²But because of the temptation to immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. ^{*} ³The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. ⁴For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does. ⁵Do not refuse one another except perhaps by agreement for a season, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, lest Satan tempt you through lack of self-control. ⁶I say this by way of concession, not of command. ⁷I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own special gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.

8 To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do. ⁹But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion.

10 To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord, that the wife should not separate from her husband ¹¹(but if she does, let her remain single or

else be reconciled to her husband)—and that the husband should not divorce his wife.

12 To the rest [I say, not the Lord](#), that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. **13**If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. **14**For the unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is consecrated through her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is they are holy. **15**But if the unbelieving partner [desires to separate](#), let it be so; in such a case the brother or sister is not bound. For God has called us¹ to peace. **16**Wife, how do you know whether you will save your husband? Husband, how do you know whether you will save your wife?

Leading the Life the Lord Has Assigned

17 Only, let every one lead [the life which the Lord has assigned](#) to him, and in which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches. **18**Was any one at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to [remove the marks of circumcision](#). Was any one at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. **19**For [neither circumcision](#) counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God. **20**Every one should remain in the state in which he was called. **21**Were you [a slave](#) when called? Never mind. But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.^x **22**For he who was called in the Lord as a slave is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a slave of Christ. **23**You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men. **24**So, brethren, in whatever state each was called, there let him remain with God.

More concerning Marriage

25 [Now concerning the unmarried](#),^{x2} I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. **26**I think that in view of the [impending distress](#)^m it is well for a person to remain as he is. **27**Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek marriage. **28**But if you marry, [you do not sin](#), and if a girl ^{m2} marries she does not sin. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that. **29**I mean, brethren, the appointed time has grown very short; from now on, let those who have wives live as though

they had none, ³⁰and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, ³¹and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the form of [this world is passing away](#).

32 I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord; ³³but the married man is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please his wife, ³⁴and his interests are divided. And the unmarried woman or virgin is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit; but the married woman is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please her husband. ³⁵I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.

36 [If any one thinks](#) that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, ^{m2} if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry—it is no sin. ³⁷But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his betrothed, ^{m2} he will do well. ³⁸So that he who marries his betrothed ^{m2} does well; and he who refrains from marriage will do better.

39 A wife is bound to her husband [as long as he lives](#). If the husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. ⁴⁰But in my judgment she is happier if she remains as she is. And I think that I have the Spirit of God.

Food Offered to Idols

8 [Now concerning food](#) offered to idols: * we know that "[all of us possess knowledge](#)." "Knowledge" puffs up, but love builds up. ²If any one imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. ³But if one loves God, one is known by him.

4 Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "[an idol has no real existence](#)," and that "there is no God but one." ⁵For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"—⁶yet for us there is [one God](#), the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

7 However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through being until now accustomed to [idols](#), eat food as really offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. **8** Food will not commend us to God. We are [no worse off](#) if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. **9** Only take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. **10** For if any one sees you, a man of knowledge, at table in an idol's temple, [might he not be encouraged](#), if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? **11** And so by your knowledge this weak man is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. **12** Thus, sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. **13** Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother's falling, [I will never eat meat](#), lest I cause my brother to fall.

The Rights of an Apostle

9 [Am I not free?](#) [Am I not an apostle?](#) Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my workmanship in the Lord? **2** If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

3 This is my defense to those who would examine me. ***** **4** Do we not have the right to our food and drink? **5** Do we not have the right to be [accompanied by a wife](#), **n** ***** as the other apostles and the brethren ***** of the Lord and Cephas? **6** Or is it only [Barnabas](#) and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? **7** Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?

8 Do I say this on human authority? Does not the law say the same? **9** For it is written in the law of Moses, "[You shall not muzzle an ox](#) when it is treading out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? **10** Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of a share in the crop. **11** If we have sown spiritual good among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefits? **12** If others share this rightful claim upon you, do not we still more?

Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. **13** Do you not know that those who are employed in the [temple service](#) get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial

offerings? ¹⁴In the same way, [the Lord commanded](#) that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

¹⁵ But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing this to secure any such provision. For I would rather die than have any one deprive me of my ground for boasting. ¹⁶For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. [Woe to me](#) if I do not preach the gospel! ¹⁷For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission. ¹⁸What then is my reward? Just this: that in my preaching I may make the gospel free of charge, not making full use of my right in the gospel.

[The Responsibilities of the Apostle](#)

¹⁹ For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. ²⁰To the Jews [I became as a Jew](#), in order to win Jews; to those under the law I became as one under the law—though not being myself under the law—that I might win those under the law. ²¹To those outside the law I became as one outside the law—not being without law toward God but under the law of Christ—that I might win those outside the law. ²²To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become [all things to all men](#), that I might by all means save some. ²³I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

²⁴ [Do you not know that](#) in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. ²⁵Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive [a perishable wreath](#), but we an imperishable. ²⁶Well, I do not run aimlessly, I do not box as one beating the air; ²⁷but I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

[Warnings from Israel's History](#)

¹⁰ [I want you to know](#), brethren, that our fathers were all [under the cloud](#), and all passed through the sea, ²and all were [baptized into Moses](#) in the cloud and in the sea, ³and all ate the same [supernatural^o](#) food ⁴and all drank the same [supernatural^o](#) drink. For they drank from the supernatural^o Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ. ⁵Nevertheless with most of them God was not pleased; for they [were overthrown](#) in the wilderness.

⁶ Now these things are [warnings](#) for us, not to desire evil as they did. ⁷[Do not be idolaters](#) as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down

to eat and drink and rose up to dance." ⁸We must not indulge in immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. ⁹We must not [put the Lord^p](#) to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents; ¹⁰nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by [the Destroyer](#). ¹¹Now these things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down [for our instruction](#), upon whom the end of the ages has come. ¹²Therefore let any one who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. [God is faithful](#), and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

¹⁴ Therefore, my beloved, shun the [worship of idols](#). ¹⁵I speak as to sensible men; judge for yourselves what I say. ¹⁶The [cup of blessing](#) which we bless, is it not a participation^q in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation^q in the body of Christ? ¹⁷Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. ¹⁸Consider the people of Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices partners in the altar? ¹⁹What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? ²⁰No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they [offer to demons](#) and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons. * ²¹You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the [table of the Lord](#) and the table of demons. ²²[Shall we provoke the Lord](#) to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

All to the Glory of God

²³ "[All things are lawful](#)," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up. ²⁴Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor. ²⁵Eat whatever is sold in the [meat market](#) without raising any question on the ground of conscience. ²⁶For "[the earth is the Lord's](#), and everything in it." ²⁷If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience. ²⁸(But if some one says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then out of consideration for the man who informed you, and for conscience' sake—²⁹I mean his conscience, not yours—do not eat it.) For why should my liberty be determined by

another man's scruples? ³⁰If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks?

31 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. ³²Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the Church of God, ³³just as I try to please all men in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of

11 many, that they may be saved. ¹Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

Head Coverings

2 I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you. ³But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. ⁴Any man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, ⁵but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonors her head—it is the same as if her head were shaven. ⁶For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her wear a veil. ⁷For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. ⁸(For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. ⁹Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.) ¹⁰That is why a woman ought to have a veil^r on her head, because of the angels. ¹¹(Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; ¹²for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.) ¹³Judge for yourselves; is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? ¹⁴Does not nature itself teach you that for a man to wear long hair is degrading to him, ¹⁵but if a woman has long hair, it is her pride? For her hair is given to her for a covering. ¹⁶If any one is disposed to be contentious, we recognize no other practice, nor do the churches of God.

Abuses at the Lord's Supper

17 But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸For, in the first place, when you assemble as a Church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and I partly believe it, ¹⁹for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. ²⁰When you meet together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. * ²¹For in eating, each

one goes ahead with his own meal, and one is hungry and another is drunk. ²²What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the Church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.

The Institution of the Eucharist

23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for^s you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵In the same way also the chalice, after supper, saying, "This chalice is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink the chalice, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Partaking of the Eucharist Unworthily

27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. ³⁰That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.† ³¹But if we judged ourselves truly, we should not be judged. ³²But when we are judged by the Lord, we are chastened^u so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

33 So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another—³⁴if any one is hungry, let him eat at home—lest you come together to be condemned. About the other things I will give directions when I come.

Spiritual Gifts

12 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be uninformed. * ²You know that when you were heathen, you were led astray to mute idols, however you may have been moved. ³Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit.

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of

knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another [faith](#) by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of [tongues](#), to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

One Body with Many Members

¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For [by one Spirit](#) we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

¹⁴ For the body [does not consist of one member](#) but of many. ¹⁵If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? ¹⁸But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹If all were a single organ, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. ²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again [the head](#) to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²²On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³and those parts of the body which we think less honorable we invest with the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, ²⁴which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, ²⁵that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶If one member suffers, all [suffer together](#); if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ²⁸And God has appointed in the Church [first apostles](#), second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues. ²⁹Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰Do all possess gifts of healing?

Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹But earnestly desire the higher gifts.

And I will show you a still more excellent way. *

The Way of Love

13 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ²And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned,^v but have not love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; ⁵it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. ⁷Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; ¹⁰but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. ¹¹When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. ¹²For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. ¹³So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Gifts of Prophecy and Tongues

14 Make love your aim, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophecy. ²For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. ³On the other hand, he who prophesies speaks to men for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. ⁴He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the Church. ⁵Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophecy. He who prophesies is greater than he who speaks in tongues, unless some one interprets, so that the Church may be edified.

6 Now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how shall I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching? ⁷If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not

give distinct notes, how will any one know what is played? ⁸And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle? ⁹So with yourselves; if you in a tongue utter speech that is not intelligible, how will any one know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air. ¹⁰There are doubtless [many different languages](#) in the world, and none is without meaning; ¹¹but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a [foreigner](#) to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me. ¹²So with yourselves; since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the Church.

¹³ Therefore, he who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to interpret. ¹⁴For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but [my mind is unfruitful](#). ¹⁵What am I to do? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also. ¹⁶Otherwise, if you bless^w with the spirit, how can any one in the position of an outsider^x say the "[Amen](#)" to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? ¹⁷For you may give thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified. ¹⁸I thank God that I speak in tongues more than you all; ¹⁹nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind, in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

²⁰ Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; be infants in evil, but [in thinking be mature](#). ²¹In [the law](#) it is written, "By men of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord." ²²Thus, tongues are a sign not for believers but for [unbelievers](#), while prophecy is not for unbelievers but for believers. ²³If, therefore, the whole Church assembles and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad? ²⁴But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, ²⁵the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that [God is really among you](#).

Orderly Worship

²⁶ What then, brethren? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. ²⁷[If any speak](#) in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn; and let one interpret. ²⁸But if there is no one to

interpret, let each of them keep silence in church and speak to himself and to God. ²⁹Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others [weigh what is said](#). ³⁰If a revelation is made to another sitting by, let the first be silent. ³¹For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged; ³²and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. ³³For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

As in all the churches of the saints, ³⁴[the women should keep silence](#) in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says. ³⁵If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. ³⁶What! Did the word of God originate with you, or are you the only ones it has reached?

³⁷ If any one thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a [command of the Lord](#). ³⁸If any one does not recognize this, he is not recognized. ³⁹So, my brethren, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues; ⁴⁰but all things should be done decently and in order.

The Resurrection of Christ

¹⁵ [Now I would remind you](#), brethren, in what terms I preached to you the gospel, which you received, in which you stand, ²by which you are saved, if you hold it fast—unless you believed in vain.

³ For [I delivered](#) to you as of first importance what I also received, [that Christ died](#) for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴that [he was buried](#), that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵and that he [appeared to Ce'phas](#), then to the Twelve. ⁶Then he appeared to [more than five hundred](#) brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to [James](#), then to all the apostles. ⁸Last of all, as to one untimely born, he [appeared also to me](#). ⁹For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God. ¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me. ¹¹Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

The Resurrection of the Dead

12 Now if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is [no resurrection of the dead](#)? ¹³But if there is no resurrection of the dead, [then Christ has not been raised](#); * ¹⁴if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and [your faith is in vain](#). ¹⁵We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that [he raised Christ](#), whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. ¹⁷If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are [still in your sins](#). ¹⁸Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied.

20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, [the first fruits](#) of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For as [by a man came death](#), by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then [at his coming](#) those who belong to Christ. ²⁴Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every [rule and every authority and power](#). ²⁵[For he must](#) reign [until](#) he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷"For God^z has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "All things are put in subjection under him," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things under him. ²⁸When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be [everything to every one](#).

29 Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are [people baptized on their behalf](#)? * ³⁰Why am I in peril every hour? ³¹I protest, brethren, by my pride in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! ³²[What do I gain](#) if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." ³³Do not be deceived: "[Bad company ruins good morals](#)." ³⁴Come to your right mind, and sin no more. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.

[The Resurrection of the Body](#)

35 But some one will ask, "[How are the dead raised](#)? With what kind of body do they come?" ³⁶You foolish man! What you sow does not come to

life [unless it dies](#). ³⁷And what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. ³⁸But [God gives it a body](#) as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. ³⁹For not all flesh is alike, but there is one kind for men, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. ⁴⁰There are celestial bodies and there are terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. ⁴¹There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.

[42 So is it with the resurrection of the dead](#). What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. ⁴³It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. ⁴⁴It is sown a physical body, it is raised a [spiritual body](#). If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵Thus it is written, "[The first man](#) Adam became a living soul"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶But it is not the spiritual which is first but the physical, and then the spiritual. ⁴⁷The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall^a also bear the image of the man of heaven. ⁵⁰I tell you this, brethren: [flesh and blood](#) cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

[51](#) Behold! I tell you a mystery. [We shall not all sleep](#), but we shall all be changed, ⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at [the last trumpet](#). For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. ⁵³For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must [put on immortality](#). ⁵⁴[When the perishable puts on the imperishable](#), and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

"Death is swallowed up in victory."

[55](#)"O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?"

⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord [your labor is](#)

[not in vain.](#)

The Contribution for the Saints

16 [Now concerning](#) the contribution for the saints: [* as I directed](#) the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. **2**On the [first day of every week](#), each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that contributions need not be made when I come. **3**And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. **4**If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.

Plans for Travel

5 I will visit you after passing through Macedonia, for I intend to pass through Macedonia, **6**and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may speed me on my journey, wherever I go. **7**For I do not want to see you now just in passing; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. **8**But I will stay in [Ephesus](#) until Pentecost, **9**for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

10 When [Timothy](#) comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am. **11**So let no one despise him. Speed him on his way in peace, that he may return to me; for I am expecting him with the brethren.

12 As for our brother [Apol'los](#), I strongly urged him to visit you with the other brethren, but it was not at all his will^b to come now. He will come when he has opportunity.

Final Message and Greeting

13 Be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. **14**[Let all that you do be done in love.](#)

15 Now, brethren, you know that the household of Steph'anas were the first converts in Acha'ia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints; **16**I urge you to be subject to such men and to every fellow worker and laborer. **17**I rejoice at the coming of [Steph'anas and Fortuna'tus and Acha'icus](#), because they have made up for your absence; **18**for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours. Give recognition to such men.

19 The churches of Asia send greetings. [Aqui'la and Prisca](#), together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord. **20**All the brethren send greetings. Greet one another with [a holy kiss.](#)

21 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. 22If any one has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come!^c 1The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. 24My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Commentary on The First Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

1:1 called by the will of God: Paul's evangelical mission was established on God's initiative, not his own (Acts 9:1-16; Gal 1:12). He asserts his apostolic authority from the outset of the letter because some of the Corinthians either doubted or denied it (9:1-2; 2 Cor 10-12). **Sosthenes:** Possibly the ruler of the Corinthian synagogue named in Acts 18:17. If so, he must have embraced the gospel during Paul's initial stay in the city. [Back to text.](#)



1:2 To the Church of God: Refers to the local congregation in Corinth that is part of the universal Church (CCC 752). Paul's earliest preaching in the city took place in the local synagogue, where both Jews and Greeks accepted his message (Acts 18:4). **those sanctified:** I.e., those made "holy" and "set apart" to serve God. Christians are sanctified by the merits of Christ's sacrifice (Heb 10:10), which first come to us in Baptism (6:11; Eph 5:26). **call on the name:** An act of prayer and worship (Gen 4:26; Ps 116:17). Calling on Christ's name is closely linked with the sacramental liturgy of the Church, as in Baptism (6:11; Mt 28:19; Acts 2:38; CCC 2156). [See note on 1 Cor 16:22.](#) • Invoking Jesus as Lord **in every place** recalls the universal worship of God's name envisioned in Mal 1:11. The early Christians saw this oracle fulfilled in "the pure offering" of the Eucharist (CCC 2643). [Back to text.](#)

1:3 Grace to you and peace: Paul's customary greeting to local Churches (Rom 1:7; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3). [Back to text.](#)

1:5 all speech and all knowledge: Gifts of the Holy Spirit (12:8). Before addressing problems Paul celebrates God's gifts to the Corinthians and expresses confidence that the Lord will continue to bless them until the end (1:8). [Back to text.](#)

1:6 the testimony to Christ: Paul bore witness to the gospel by preaching to the Corinthians (2:1-5), writing letters to them (5:9), and modeling virtues for their imitation (11:1). [Back to text.](#)

1:7 spiritual gift: Anticipates the lengthy discussion in chaps. 12-14 about the appropriate use of charismatic gifts. Such manifestations of the

Spirit come from God and are meant to build up the Church in love (12:7-11; 14:3-5). [Back to text.](#)



1:8 the day of our Lord: Paul reminds readers of the Day of Judgment, when every thought, word, and deed will be weighed in the balance by Christ (Rom 2:5-10; 2 Cor 5:10; CCC 682). • The "day of the Lord" is a recurrent expression in the OT. It is a day of fiery judgment when God takes vengeance on his enemies and vindicates the saints (Joel 2:30-32; Amos 5:18; Obad 15). Sometimes it refers to a day *within* history, as with the day of Jerusalem's devastation in A.D. 70 (Zech 14:1-5; Mt 24); other times it refers to the *last* day of history, when Christ will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead (3:13; 5:5; Acts 10:42). Paul rewords the traditional formula ("day of the Lord") to identify Christ with the divine Judge ("day of our Lord Jesus Christ"). [Back to text.](#)

1:10-4:21 Paul confronts immature believers whose allegiance to various missionaries was dividing the local Church. Factions had already formed around the missionary mentors named in 1:12 (Paul, Apollos, Cephas). Paul rebukes this partisan behavior of rallying behind one minister of the gospel over against others with the reminder that all of these men are servants of the same Jesus Christ, who alone grants salvation (1:13; 3:3-9, 21-23). This background explains why the first four chapters stress the crucial importance of unity among believers and the supreme allegiance we owe to Christ over every minister of the gospel. [Back to text.](#)

1:11 Chloe's people: Nothing is known about this woman or her delegates beyond this verse. [Back to text.](#)

1:12 Apollos: A Christian leader from Alexandria (northern Egypt) who ministered in Corinth after Paul's initial stay in the city (3:5, 22; Acts 18:24-19:1). **Cephas:** The Aramaic name for Peter that is used throughout this letter (3:22; 9:5; 15:5). This is the only mention of the Apostle Peter's association with the Corinthians in the NT. See word study: [Peter](#) at Mt 16. **I belong to Christ:** This slogan suggests that one of the factions distinguished itself from others by its allegiance to Christ rather than to a particular missionary. [Back to text.](#)

1:14 Crispus: The ruler of the Corinthian synagogue who converted to Christianity when Paul first arrived in the city (Acts 18:8). **Gaius:** Possibly

the individual named in Acts 19:29 and / or Rom 16:23, but this is uncertain since "Gaius" was a popular name in the Hellenistic world. [Back to text.](#)

1:16 baptize . . . the household: The Baptism of entire families, including domestic servants and children, was a familiar practice in the early Church (Acts 16:15, 33; CCC 1252). [See note on Lk 18:16.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:17 to preach the gospel: Paul is not minimizing the importance of Baptism so much as stressing his primary obligation to evangelize (9:16; Rom 1:14-15). His words are aimed at certain Corinthians who exaggerated the role of the *minister* of Baptism (1 Cor 1:13-15) and lost sight of the Sacrament's purpose, which is to unite us with Christ (12:13; Gal 3:27). **not with eloquent wisdom:** The power of the gospel to move an audience derives from the message itself, not from the messenger who delivers it (1:18; Rom 1:16). Paul's mission, therefore, is, not to please the ear with the eloquent speaking ability so admired by the Corinthians, but to move the heart by speaking of Christ crucified in clear and simple terms. [Back to text.](#)

1:18 the word of the cross: The gospel divides the destiny of men, leading those who embrace it to salvation and dragging those who reject it to perdition (Lk 2:34). Paul's Greek depicts this as an unfolding process and implies that the final verdict of God's judgment is still open, i.e., there is still hope for **those who are perishing** and still dangers ahead for those **being saved.** [Back to text.](#)



1:19 I will destroy: A reference to Is 29:14. • Isaiah predicts the destruction of every form of human wisdom that asserts itself against the wisdom of God. Originally this was a warning for the leaders of Israel, whose overconfidence in human understanding was manifest when they paid more attention to politicians than to prophets. The same warning is now posted for the Corinthians, who prize the rational wisdom of men over the revealed wisdom of the gospel. [Back to text.](#)

1:20 Where is . . . ?: Paul taunts the intellectual elite of the ancient world. He is convinced that the Greek philosophers (**wise man**), the Jewish experts in the Torah (**scribe**), and the acclaimed public speakers of the day (**debater**) are nothing compared to the power and persuasiveness of the gospel. [Back to text.](#)

1:21 did not know God: Not ignorance of God's existence per se, but ignorance of his ways, especially of his divine plan to save the world through a crucified Messiah (2:8; Acts 17:30; Rom 10:3). Faith perceives what reason alone cannot, namely, the higher wisdom of God (Is 55:9). [Back to text.](#)

1:22 Jews: Israel expected outstanding miracles (**signs**) from the Messiah to authenticate his mission (Mt 16:1; Jn 6:30). **Greeks:** Hellenistic thinkers were always on the lookout for new and compelling explanations of the universe (**wisdom**). [Back to text.](#)

1:23 we preach Christ crucified: Roman crucifixion was normally a sign of disgrace and defeat for its victims. The crucifixion of Christ, however, was a deathblow to the devil and the means of our salvation (CCC 272). **stumbling block to Jews:** For some Jews, such as those who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls, crucifixion was connected with the curse of God in Deut 21:22-23. Paul deals with this apparent difficulty in Gal 3:13, where he insists that Christ endured the curse of death so that Israel and the Gentiles could be blessed with new life. [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Wisdom ([1 Cor 1:20](#))

Sophia (Gk.): "wisdom", "skill", or "insight". The word is used 17 times in this letter and 34 times in the rest of the NT. Paul's use of it resonates against the background of the OT. **(1)** The Torah is viewed as the embodiment of divine wisdom (Deut 4:5-6; Sir 24:23-25). **(2)** The Wisdom Books associated with King Solomon portray wisdom as the art of prudent living. God gave this wisdom to Solomon to instruct Israel and the Gentiles in the way of righteousness (1 Kings 4:29-34). **(3)** Wisdom is also personified in the OT as a craftsman of creation (Prov 8; Wis 7:22) and one who directs human history (Wis 9-11). Wisdom in this sense had its beginning in eternity (Sir 24:9) and is closely associated with the Word of God (Wis 9:1; Sir 24:3) as well as the work of the Holy Spirit (Wis 9:17). Paul relies on these traditions to make a sharp contrast between the wisdom that comes from God and the philosophical wisdom of men celebrated by the Greeks. For the apostle, Jesus Christ is the divine Wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24) that is given to believers through the inpouring of the Spirit (1

Cor 1:30; 2:7-13; Eph 1:17; Col 2:3). As such, it cannot be equated with the ingenuity of philosophers and thinkers.

1:30 the source of your life: Every spiritual blessing comes to us from the Father (Eph 1:3; Jas 1:17; CCC 2813). We must acknowledge this to avoid senseless boasting (1 Cor 1:29) and the delusion of self-sufficiency (4:7). [Back to text.](#)



1:31 Let him who boasts: A paraphrase of the Greek version of Jer 9:24. • Jeremiah challenged the wise, mighty, and rich of Israel to stop boasting about their worldly advantages and to start giving the glory to Yahweh (Jer 9:23). Paul has this passage in mind when he makes the same appeal to the Corinthians. Although few of them were "wise", "powerful", and "noble" in the world's eyes (1 Cor 1:26), they were boasting of their spiritual gifts without giving due credit to the Lord (4:7). [Back to text.](#)

2:1 When I came to you: I.e., when Paul first evangelized Corinth (Acts 18:1-17). [Back to text.](#)

2:3 fear and trembling: A biblical expression for one's reaction to the power and presence of Almighty God (Ex 20:18; Ps 2:11; Ezek 12:18; Phil 2:12). [Back to text.](#)

2:4 in demonstration of the Spirit: Even the most dynamic proclamations of the gospel remain ineffective unless the Spirit moves the minds and hearts of the listeners to accept it (Phil 1:29). Paul implies that his own modest speaking ability was a weakness that enabled God's power to work more perfectly through him (2 Cor 12:9). The idea running throughout this passage is that God saves the world through what is foolish and weak so that he alone can be praised for the result (1 Cor 1:21-29). See word study: [Unskilled](#) at 2 Cor 11. [Back to text.](#)

2:6 the mature: Or, "the perfect". Paul differentiates between Christians who have reached spiritual adulthood and those who are merely "infants" (3:1). Ironically, the immature Corinthians are the ones who consider themselves the most wise and spiritually advanced. [Back to text.](#)

2:7 a secret and hidden wisdom: The divine plan to save the world through a crucified Messiah was once concealed from the Gentiles and only dimly reflected in the OT. [Back to text.](#)

2:8 rulers of this age: The Jewish and Roman authorities who collaborated to execute Jesus were culpable for their crimes and yet ignorant of God's plan to redeem the world through his death (Acts 3:17; 4:27-28; CCC 591, 597). [Back to text.](#)



2:9 What no eye has seen: A paraphrase of Is 64:4. • Isaiah marvels that no one has ever seen or heard a God like Yahweh, who is always faithful to deliver those who hope in him. The final words of this quotation are not from Isaiah but seemingly from Sir 1:10, where God's unsearchable wisdom is a gift promised to **those who love him**. Paul draws Isaiah and Sirach together to stress that what God has long prepared in secret he has now made known to the world through the Spirit (CCC 1027). [Back to text.](#)

2:10 the Spirit searches everything: The Spirit is uniquely qualified to probe the mind of God and make known his wise plans (Dan 4:9). As an interior guide for believers, the Spirit enlightens us about the spiritual gifts and truths that God has given in Christ (1 Cor 2:12-13; CCC 687, 2038). [Back to text.](#)

2:14 unspiritual man: The unredeemed man who lacks both the Spirit and spiritual discernment. [Back to text.](#)

2:15 spiritual man: The mature Christian who has both the Spirit and spiritual wisdom (2:6). [Back to text.](#)



2:16 For who has known: A reference to Is 40:13. • Isaiah's rhetorical question anticipates a negative answer, i.e., no mortal man has access to the mind of God or is capable of informing him of truths he does not already know. Paul concludes from this that divine wisdom is beyond the reach of human understanding and can be known by men only if it is *revealed* by God himself (Wis 9:13-18; CCC 1998). [Back to text.](#)

3:1 men of the flesh: Immature Christians who possess the Spirit but are enslaved to worldly ways of thinking. The "jealousy and strife" (3:3) exhibited in Corinth was proof that many of them were spiritual **infants**. Real Christian maturity produces the fruits of love and unity (Gal 5:22-23; Col 3:12-15). [Back to text.](#)

3:5-23 Paul stresses that success in ministry is primarily the work of God. Teachers of the flock must recognize that **(1)** God alone gives life and growth to the Church and that **(2)** God will test the work of every laborer on

the Day of Judgment. Consequently, the faithful must not overestimate the importance of their teachers but see them as "[s]ervants" (3:5) and "fellow workers" (3:9) of the Lord. Paul illustrates this with two analogies, one agricultural (3:5-9; CCC 755) and one architectural (3:10-17; CCC 756). [Back to text.](#)

3:6 I planted, Apollos watered: Paul first established the Church at Corinth (Acts 18:1-17), while Apollos came afterward to foster the spiritual growth of the community (Acts 18:24-19:1). [Back to text.](#)



3:10 skilled master builder: Or "wise architect". Paul laid the foundation of the Church in numerous cities by evangelization, leaving it to subsequent leaders to build up the congregations in faith and love (Rom 15:19-20). For him, the only stable **foundation** to build upon is the gospel of Christ (1 Cor 3:11). • Architects in the OT were endowed by the Spirit with the wisdom and technical skills necessary to build the wilderness Tabernacle (Ex 35:30-33) and the Jerusalem Temple (1 Kings 4:29; 7:13-14). King Solomon, in particular, was a wise architect who laid the foundation of the Temple (1 Kings 5:17-18) and imparted his wisdom to Israel and the nations alike (1 Kings 10:24; Prov 1:1-2). Paul views himself as a spiritual Solomon who oversees the building of another Temple, the Church, and proclaims the greater wisdom of the gospel to "Gentiles" and the "sons of Israel" (Acts 9:15). [Back to text.](#)



3:12 Now if any one builds: Spiritual leaders are like artisans commissioned to build believers into the Temple of God (3:16-17). The quality of their workmanship is portrayed by a list of building materials ranging from the most valuable to the least—the first three (**gold, silver, stones**) are expensive and durable, while the second three (**wood, hay, straw**) are cheap and flammable. The fiery Day of Judgment will reveal whether they have labored diligently or carelessly, since all substandard work will be consumed in the flames of divine scrutiny (3:15). Although Paul is speaking directly to ministers of the gospel, his words apply to all Christians inasmuch as all are called to "build up" the Church in love (14:4; Eph 4:11-16; 1 Thess 5:11; CCC 2045). • Paul's list of building supplies is similar to those given in the OT for building the Tabernacle (Ex 31:2-5) and the Temple (1 Chron 29:2). Hay and stubble, however, are absent from

these lists—a fact that accentuates their unworthiness as structural materials. [Back to text.](#)



3:14 reward: The same Greek term is translated "wages" in 3:8. It refers to spiritual compensation for apostolic work. • In the back of Paul's mind stands King Solomon, who contracted the laborers of Hiram of Tyre to receive "wages" for building the Jerusalem Temple under his supervision (1 Kings 5:5-6). [See note on 1 Cor 3:10.](#) [Back to text.](#)



3:15 as through fire: Some Christian workers, whose 5 efforts are shabby and imperfect, will pass through God's fiery judgment like a man who barely escapes a burning building with his life. This prelude to salvation will involve painful spiritual consequences, which, though severe, will spare them eternal damnation. • The OT often depicts fire as a testing and refining agent (Sir 2:5; Is 4:4; 6:6-7; Zech 13:9; Mal 3:2-3). • Catholic tradition interprets Paul's teaching in the light of Purgatory, a doctrine defined at the Councils of Lyon II (1274), Florence (1439), and Trent (1563). Purgatory is a final stage of purification for those who are destined for heaven but depart from this life still burdened with venial sins or with an unpaid debt of temporal punishment incurred from past sins (i.e., mortal sins already forgiven but imperfectly repented of). Passing through fire is thus a spiritual process where souls are purged of residual selfishness and refined in God's love (CCC 1030-32). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Suffer Loss ([1 Cor 3:15](#))

Zemio (Gk.): to "forfeit", "sustain loss", or "incur a penalty". The Greek OT uses this verb to denote personal suffering (Prov 22:3) as well as financial penalties (Ex 21:22; Deut 22:19; Prov 17:26). The Gospels use it for the frightful prospective of losing eternal life (Mt 16:26; Mk 8:36; Lk 9:25). In 1 Cor 3:15, it refers to spiritual damage suffered by Christian leaders who are careless and uncommitted in their task of building up the Church. The context suggests that Paul is alluding to labor relations familiar

in the ancient world. Indeed this and related terms were used in building contracts to establish fines for damage or defective workmanship on projects that failed to pass inspection.

3:16 you are God's temple: The Temple in Jerusalem was still standing when this verse was written (A.D. 56). In Paul's mind the stone sanctuary of the Old Covenant had been replaced by the living body of Christ in the New. He viewed this mystery in three dimensions: the body of every individual Christian is a temple (6:19); the body of every local Church is a temple (3:17); and the body of the universal Church is a temple (Eph 2:19-22). [Back to text.](#)

3:17 If any one destroys: The final scenario outlined in Paul's building metaphor: careful builders will receive a heavenly reward (3:14); careless builders will pass through purging fires on their way to salvation (3:15); and destructive workers will themselves be destroyed (3:17). [Back to text.](#)



3:19-20 Paul quotes Job 5:13 and Ps 94:11 to caution those who think they are wise. • The first passage is spoken by Job's friend Eliphaz, who says that while God lifts up the lowly, he also frustrates the proud and ensures that their arrogant schemes fall apart. The second is a plea for Yahweh to chasten the proud who think that their wickedness goes unnoticed by the Lord. [Back to text.](#)

4:1 stewards: House managers in charge of their master's estate. It refers in this context to spiritual ministers who manage the affairs of God's household, the Church (Lk 12:42-48; 1 Tim 3:15; CCC 859). **the mysteries of God:** The revealed truths of the New Covenant, which were hidden in ages past but are now manifest through the gospel. To an extent they remain mysteries because the human mind can understand the divine work of God only in a limited way. [Back to text.](#)

4:4 I am not thereby acquitted: Or, "I am not justified by this." Paul's conscience is clear in the face of criticisms, though not necessarily correct. The final verdict pronounced on his ministry must await the Judgment, when God lays bare the secrets of the "heart" (4:5; cf. Rom 2:16; CCC 678). Before then, pronouncing a definitive judgment on the work of others—and even ourselves—can be hazardous and quite inaccurate. [Back to text.](#)

4:6 learn by us: An appeal to listen to the shepherds of the Church and live according to their example (4:16; 11:1). **not to go beyond what is written:** Paul cautions believers to stay within the limits of personal humility defined by the Scriptures. He is referring specifically to the string of OT warnings about boasting quoted earlier in the letter (1:19, 31; 3:19-20). Paul's purpose here is to halt the damaging effects of arrogance in Corinth, as indicated by the clarification that follows. Interpretations of this verse that suggest Paul is restricting the basis for Christian doctrine and morals to what is explicitly set forth in the books of the Bible (*sola Scriptura*) are misleading and untenable. Nothing in the context points to such a broad concern, and in any case Paul insists elsewhere that even the inspired preaching of the apostles is on a par with the written word of God (1 Thess 2:13; 2 Thess 2:15; 3:6). [Back to text.](#)



4:7 why do you boast: Men are always looking for some good in their wills that is truly theirs rather than a gift received from God. It is unimaginable how any such thing could be discovered (St. Augustine, *On the Remission of Sins* 1, 28). [Back to text.](#)

4:8-13 Paul reprimands self-righteous Christians for their egotism and unfair criticisms. Although he describes them as wise and prosperous, his rhetorical irony implies the opposite, i.e., they are ignorant and impoverished. Their refusal to embrace the foolishness of Christ exposes their pride and reveals how petty their problems look compared to the humiliation of the apostles. [Back to text.](#)

4:9 spectacle: Paul compares the apostles to condemned criminals who are publicly disgraced and executed in a crowded outdoor theater. [Back to text.](#)



4:15 I became your father: Paul's relation to the Corinthians is paternal, having brought them new life through the gospel (2 Cor 12:14). His spiritual fatherhood extends to others as well, such as Titus (Tit 1:4), Onesimus (Philem 10), and Timothy (1 Cor 4:17; Phil 2:22; 1 Tim 1:2, 18). • There was a close connection between paternity and priesthood in the ancient Near East (Israel, Assyria, Babylon). In the patriarchal age, fathers and first-born sons exercised the cultic ministry of building altars and offering sacrifices for their families (Gen 12:8; 22:9-13; 31:54; 46:1;

Job 1:5). In the Mosaic age, God elevated Aaron and his Levitical sons (Ex 40:12-15) to be the fathers and priests of the tribal family of Israel (Judg 17:10; 18:19). The same principle carries over on a spiritual level in the age of the New Covenant, where Christ, our great high priest, ordains men to the ministry of spiritual fatherhood for "the priestly service of the gospel" (Rom 15:16). • Vatican Council II reaffirmed this connection when it stated that priests are preeminently the fathers and teachers of God's people (*Presbyterorum ordinis* 9). [Back to text.](#)

4:21 with a rod: A stern pastoral warning for the troublemakers in Corinth. Ideally, Paul hopes to avoid an unpleasant confrontation when he arrives (16:5-7). [Back to text.](#)

5:1-6:20 Paul addresses specific problems in the Corinthian Church. These include a case of maternal incest (5:1-13), a surge in Christian lawsuits (6:1-11), and an indifference toward sexual promiscuity (6:12-20). He warns throughout these two chapters that the holiness of the Corinthian community is jeopardized by the sins and vices sprouting up among them. [Back to text.](#)

5:1 immorality: The Greek *porneia* refers to sexual misconduct, here specified as an incestuous relationship between a believer and his stepmother. This kind of behavior was censured by Roman society and condemned by the Mosaic Law (Lev 18:8; Deut 22:30). The early Church followed suit, prohibiting incestuous unchastity in the Apostolic Decree (Acts 15:29; CCC 2388). [See note on Acts 15:20.](#) [Back to text.](#)

5:2 And you are arrogant!: Paul is outraged that the Corinthians allowed the incestuous man to continue in their community. Their tolerance toward this crime was a sign of their own spiritual immaturity. **be removed:** I.e., the offender must be expelled from the local Church and barred from participation in their fellowship and liturgy (5:13). [Back to text.](#)

5:3 pronounced judgment: Paul exercises his apostolic authority from a distance by invoking a solemn curse upon the sinner in the name of Christ (16:22). [Back to text.](#)



5:5 deliver this man to Satan: A call to action for the Corinthians, who must execute Paul's ritual curse upon the offender by driving him out of the Church and into the province of Satan. The anticipated destruction of the sinner's body is an extreme form of remedial punishment that Paul

expects will benefit his spirit (1 Tim 1:20). The hidden assumption is that earthly and physical life is a blessing from God cut short by the curse of biological death (Gen 3:19). Similar chastisements befell other Corinthians who failed to discern Christ's presence in the Eucharist (1 Cor 11:29-32). • The man is separated from the community of the faithful and from the sacraments of the Church, by which things a man is protected from the assaults of Satan (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* 5, 1). [Back to text.](#)

5:6 leaven: Yeast is a proverbial symbol of evil and corruptive influence (Mt 16:11; Lk 12:1; Gal 5:9). Here it symbolizes the incestuous man, who must be removed from the Church lest his sins have a damaging impact upon the whole batch of believers. [Back to text.](#)

5:7-8 Paul draws a spiritual lesson from the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Just as every Jewish family cleansed its home of leaven before the feast (Ex 12:14-20), so Paul challenges the Corinthians to rid their Church of sin and even flagrant sinners before their celebration of the liturgy (1 Cor 5:13). He mentions the Paschal sacrifice of Christ because the day of Preparation for the Passover, when the lambs were slaughtered in the Temple, was also the day of Preparation for the festival of Unleavened Bread, when all leaven in Israel was to be discarded. The lesson has eucharistic overtones, inasmuch as Passover was celebrated by *eating* the Paschal Lamb and Unleavened Bread was celebrated by *eating* only unleavened bread for seven consecutive days (10:14-22; 11:17-34). [Back to text.](#)

5:9 my letter: I.e., an earlier letter of Paul to the Corinthians that has not survived. Apparently the Church misunderstood his written instructions because the Corinthians assumed Paul wanted them to keep distant from all sinners without qualification. In fact, the apostle was suggesting they should isolate themselves, *not* from unbelievers in general, but from immoral Christians whose behavior was decidedly inconsistent with their beliefs. Tolerating their fellowship would only dishonor Christ and hamper their witness to the world. [Back to text.](#)

5:11 immorality . . . robber: These same vices are included in the expanded list of 6:9-10, referring to sins that exclude perpetrators from the kingdom of God. [Back to text.](#)



5:13 Drive out the wicked: An expulsion formula from the Greek version of Deut 17:7 and 19:19. • Moses made legal provision in Deuteronomy to purge Israel of its most callous and reprehensible sinners. This authorized the nation to enforce the moral standards of Yahweh and so punish serious offenses. Paul extends this prerogative to the Corinthians. Here the incestuous man (1 Cor 5:1) fell under the curse of Deut 27:20. [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Sanctified ([1 Cor 6:11](#))

HagiazÅ (Gk.): "make holy", "set apart", "consecrate". The verb is used four times in 1 Cor and 24 times in the rest of the NT. Its precise meaning varies depending on its context. When *things* are sanctified, they are separated from the realm of secular life and devoted to a sacred purpose, as when the Tabernacle was set apart for sacred worship (Ex 29:44) and the bronze altar was sanctified for sacrifice (Ex 29:37). Even an ordinary meal can be sanctified by a prayer of thanksgiving (1 Tim 4:5). When *persons* are sanctified, they are set apart to serve God in a holy way. Under the Old Covenant, the Levites were separated from the laity of Israel and ordained for clerical ministry (Ex 28:41), and the nation of Israel as a whole was set apart to be God's representative to the nations (Deut 33:3). Under the New Covenant, believers are set apart through Baptism, which, by the sanctifying power of Christ's blood (Heb 13:12), cleanses us of all sin and makes us inwardly holy (1 Cor 6:11; Eph 5:26). The challenge to grow in sanctity is supported by Jesus' prayer for our consecration in truth (Jn 17:17) and by Paul's prayer that our whole being be preserved in holiness for the last day (1 Thess 5:23).

6:1-8 Paul is distressed by reports of litigation in Corinth. Instead of solving economic and property disputes like brothers, the Corinthians were hauling each other into the Roman courts. Paul rebukes them for this, judging that pagans should not arbitrate the internal affairs of God's covenant family. History suggests that most lawsuits in the Roman world involved cases of the rich and powerful suing the poor and helpless—a

problem that may have characterized the situation in Corinth (11:17-22). [Back to text.](#)

6:1 the unrighteous: I.e., pagan judges. For Paul, unbelievers are entirely unfit to judge God's covenant people. He would rather the Church conduct herself like Israel, which regulated its internal disputes by appointing judges from the twelve tribes (Deut 1:9-17; 16:18-20). [Back to text.](#)

6:3 to judge angels?: Only here in the Bible do we learn that Christians will condemn both unbelievers (6:2) and fallen spirits at the final Judgment (2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6). Related to this, however, is the notion that believers will share in the heavenly reign of Christ (2 Tim 2:12). [Back to text.](#)

6:5 no man among you wise: A sarcastic rebuke. For all their boasting about wisdom, the Corinthians proved themselves incompetent in resolving everyday personal differences. [Back to text.](#)

6:7 Why not rather be defrauded?: It is better, Paul reasons, to suffer wrongdoing than to cause scandal for unbelievers by taking each other to court (1 Pet 3:17). [Back to text.](#)

6:9-10 A catalogue of ten vices radically inconsistent with Christian morality. Paul lists them to remind the Corinthians of their former habits and to dissuade them from slipping back into their old pagan ways. These sins destroy all hope of sharing in God's kingdom (Gal 5:19-21; Rev 21:8; CCC 1852). [Back to text.](#)

6:9 nor homosexuals: The RSV condenses two Greek terms into the single English word "homosexuals". The first term could be rendered "male prostitutes", and the second "male homosexuals". The context makes it clear that Paul is thinking, not of persons merely attracted to others of the same sex, but of those who engage in perverse sexual acts with them. Both Testaments agree that homosexual conduct is gravely disordered and poses a serious threat to eternal salvation (Lev 18:22; 20:13; Rom 1:26-27; 1 Tim 1:10; CCC 2357-59). [Back to text.](#)

6:11 such were some of you: Once prisoners in sin (6:9-10), the Corinthians have been redeemed and renewed by the washing of Baptism. The point is that God's grace and forgiveness can rescue even the worst sinners from their deadly habits. **washed . . . sanctified . . . justified:** Three effects of Baptism, through which sinners are cleansed of guilt (Acts 22:16), made holy (Rom 6:22), and adopted as heirs of eternal life (Tit 3:57). The added mention of Christ's **name** and the work of the **Spirit**

makes it certain that Paul is alluding to Baptism as the sacramental context for the Corinthians' conversion (Acts 2:38; CCC 1227, 2813). See word study: [Justified](#) at Rom 2. [Back to text.](#)

6:12 All things are lawful for me: Probably a slogan coined by certain Corinthians to justify their promiscuous life-style. Like many Greeks, they attached little importance to the body and held that sexual activity was as morally neutral as eating and drinking. This theoretical separation between body and spirit led them to believe that physical urges could be indiscriminately satisfied without harm to the spiritual life. Another view is that these words originated with Paul, but that members of the congregation have distorted his meaning to justify their sin. On this view, Paul is clarifying the expression to exclude a permissive interpretation of his teaching. Either way, participation in cultic prostitution was the disturbing result (6:15). [Back to text.](#)

6:13 The body . . . for the Lord: Paul hints that just as the body of a bride belongs to her husband through the covenant of marriage (7:4), so the body of the believer is consecrated to Christ through Baptism (6:11). Christ's spousal right over the body is thus violated when believers are involved in sexual impurity—a fact that makes promiscuity equivalent to adultery (2 Cor 11:2-3). The general resurrection puts this moral crisis in perspective: because our bodies belong to the Lord and are destined for eternity, they should not be desecrated by evildoing (1 Cor 6:14; CCC 796, 989, 1004). [Back to text.](#)

6:15 members of Christ: A theology developed at length in 12:12-31. **prostitute:** Prostitution was a regular part of Roman society and often took place in a cultic context within pagan temples (CCC 2355). See essay: [Shun Immorality, Shun Idolatry](#) at 1 Cor 6. [Back to text.](#)



6:16 The two shall become one: A reference to Gen 2:24. • According to Genesis, sexual union cements a bond between a man and a woman that makes them one flesh. The proper context of this unifying act is the covenant of marriage, where the bond is meant to be permanent, fruitful, and exclusive. [Back to text.](#)

6:17 one spirit with him: The point is, not that sexual union (6:16) is a mere reflection of our spiritual union with Christ, but that even our bodies become united with Christ through the Spirit (15:45). This union with

Christ's humanity—which is sacramental, not sexual—has its beginning in Baptism (12:13) and is strengthened by the Eucharist (10:16-17). [Back to text.](#)

6:19 your body is a temple: Baptism makes every believer a spouse of God the Son and a sanctuary of God the Spirit (CCC 1265, 1695). [See note on 1 Cor 3:16.](#) If prostitution is a sin of adultery against the former, it is a sin of profanation against the latter. [Back to text.](#)

6:20 bought with a price: The background of this statement, as in 7:23, is the ownership that a master has over a slave once the purchase has been finalized. It is possible too, given the marital theme that runs through the preceding discussion, that Paul considers the price of Jesus' death a dowry paid in advance of our spousal union with him through grace (1 Pet 1:18-19). **glorify God in your body:** There is probably an implied contrast in these words: whereas the Gentiles in Corinth dishonor God in their temples through idolatrous worship and sacred prostitution, believers must glorify God in their bodily temples by offering them to God through chastity (Rom 12:1). [Back to text.](#)

7:1-40 Paul gives spiritual direction on marriage, celibacy, and widowhood. The chapter brings together instructions derived from Christ (7:10-11) and those formulated by Paul (7:12, 25). [Back to text.](#)

7:1 Now concerning: A recurrent expression found throughout the letter (7:25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1). Paul uses it to address specific questions posed to him in a previous (now lost) letter from the Corinthians. **not to touch a woman:** A euphemism meaning, "not to have sexual relations". It may have been a motto of certain Corinthians (ascetics) who frowned upon marriage and the physical pleasures that accompany it (1 Tim 4:13). Paul treats the slogan as a half-truth that is ultimately misleading: Celibacy *is* good, but it does *not* nullify the goodness of marriage or the propriety of sexual relations within marriage. [Back to text.](#)



7:5 Do not refuse one another: The conjugal rights shared by husband and wife provide a safeguard against infidelity (7:3-4). The withdrawal of one spouse from marital relations could lead the other to seek illicit intimacy outside the marriage covenant. **agreement for a season:** Married couples may abstain temporarily from relations. This creates opportunities for prayer and spiritual enrichment. Paul warns, however, that

abstinence should not be unnecessarily protracted, otherwise Satan could manipulate the circumstances for evil. • Catholic teaching permits married couples, for just and serious reasons, to refrain periodically from sexual relations in the interests of child spacing and family planning (Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae* 10, 16). Periodic continence can likewise promote spiritual discipline and self-mastery for both husband and wife (CCC 2368-70). [Back to text.](#)

Shun Immorality, Shun Idolatry

TWICE Paul warns the Corinthians to run away from sin. (In the RSV, the translators used the word *shun*; they could instead have used the word *flee*.) The first time is in 1 Cor 6:18, which literally means "flee from sexual immorality", and the second is in 10:14, which literally means "flee from idolatry". The similar wording of these two passages suggests a connection between them that was probably clear to the original recipients of the letter but is not easily understood by modern readers. How are these two sins related to one another? And how does Paul attempt to dissuade believers from committing them?

To reach a satisfying answer, we must recognize that Near Eastern and Greco-Roman religions were thoroughly idolatrous. Everywhere numerous deities were served in numerous ways and depicted under numerous forms. In many cases, sexual activity was an essential part of this ancient worship. For instance, cultic prostitution was an institutionalized form of unchastity that was performed in idol temples in service to the gods, probably as a fertility rite designed to bring blessings of prosperity upon families, flocks, and fields. In some situations, the hired services of these temple prostitutes were a means of bringing revenue into local idol shrines. In this world of the ancient past—familiar to the Corinthians but unfamiliar to us—*idolatry* officially sanctioned sexual *immorality* in the name of religion, and its liturgy became the context for surrendering the soul to the gods and the body to sexual impurity. It is not surprising that Paul would have to deal with situations like these in the pagan city of Corinth, especially since many believers in the congregation had been former idolaters (1 Cor 8:7; 12:2). Nor is it surprising that Paul should approach this issue from the perspective of biblical tradition, since in many ways the history of Israel is a chronicle of the People of God struggling to overcome these very sins.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE BODY (1 Corinthians 6)

Paul's first line of defense against immorality is to explain the theological meaning of the body. His most striking statement in this regard is in 1 Cor

6:19, where Paul says that the body of the believer is "a temple of the Holy Spirit". It is no accident that this assertion immediately follows a rebuke aimed at certain Corinthians involved in prostitution (6:15). It suggests that the un-chastity in question is connected with temple rituals in Corinth. Paul, it seems, is trying to impress upon his readers that, whereas pagan worship promotes self-indulgence, the proper worship of God demands self-mastery. Aware that pagan temples are places of fornication and idol worship, he challenges the Corinthians to shun these abominations and glorify God "in" their own temples instead (6:20). Paul thus affirms that the body is an instrument designed for worship. But in glaring contrast to the degrading liturgies of the pagans, the body is to be offered to God as a living sacrifice in the form of chastity (Rom 12:1), and the Spirit of holiness that fills our temples forbids any form of fellowship with idols (2 Cor 6:16).

THE EXPERIENCE OF ISRAEL (1 Corinthians 10)

Paul later adds weight to his warnings by appealing directly to the OT. In the course of developing a series of parallels between Israel and the Church, he recalls two episodes of the Exodus period where the congregation lapsed into sin. The first is the golden calf rebellion (1 Cor 10:7), where the Israelites fashioned an idol for worship, consumed food and drink consecrated to the idol, and then rose up to engage in a cultic sexual dance (Ex 32:1-6). The second is the apostasy at Beth Peor (1 Cor 10:8), where the sons of Israel were lured into sexual sin by the daughters of Moab, who then persuaded them to sacrifice and eat in the presence of their idols (Num 25:1-5). In both of these episodes idolatry is closely linked with sexual immorality—at the golden calf, idol worship paved the way for unchastity, and at Beth Peor, unchastity paved the way for idol worship. The alarm that Paul is sounding for the Corinthians could not be clearer when we consider that Yahweh destroyed the perpetrators of these crimes and cut them off from the blessings of the covenant (Ex 32:27-28; Num 25:9). For Paul, the sins of idolatry and sexual impurity are so radically incompatible with true worship of the Lord that they exclude offenders from his kingdom (1 Cor 6:9-10; 10:6-10).

To an extent, the force and coherence of Paul's warnings to shun immorality (1 Cor 6:18) and idolatry (10:14) depend upon our understanding of how these two sins are related. Once we see that prostitution degrades the body just as idolatry degrades the soul, and that often these sins were committed together under the same roof of pagan temples, we can better appreciate Paul's teaching strategy in First Corinthians. Indeed, biblical reflections on the Temple and Israel's apostasy in the wilderness furnished him with a ready means of exposing the dangers of idol worship and the sexual impurity that often went with it. Mindful of the holiness of our bodies, and cautioned by the transgressions of Israel, we too are challenged to glorify God through lives of chastity and sanctity made possible by the grace of Jesus Christ. « [Back to 1 Corinthians 7:1.](#)

7:7 as I myself am: I.e., unmarried (7:8; 9:5). Paul upholds celibacy as the ideal state in life for believers, since its inherent freedom and flexibility are great advantages for serving Christ and his kingdom (CCC 922, 1618). He knows that marriage entails numerous commitments that can divide one's heart between a spouse and the Lord (1 Cor 7:32-35). Unlike certain Corinthians, however, Paul portrays the single life as desirable but not mandatory; he thus *permits* marriage (7:28), even though he *prefers* celibacy (7:38). [See note on Mt 19:12](#). [Back to text](#).

7:9 aflame with passion: Because sexual temptation is a danger for the young and unmarried, marriage is an appropriate station for those unable to restrain their passions. Marriage should nevertheless be pursued as a holy and fruitful partnership, not as an outlet for lust (1 Thess 4:3-5). [Back to text](#).

7:10 not I but the Lord: Paul's teaching on divorce is directly mandated by Christ (Mk 10:2-12; Lk 16:18). Couples are strongly discouraged from seeking divorce because of personal dissatisfaction with marital relations and companionship. Should they choose to separate, their options are twofold: "remain single" or "be reconciled" (1 Cor 7:11). Like Jesus, Paul leaves no legitimate room for remarriage, since the bond of sacramental marriage is lifelong and can be dissolved only by the death of one of the spouses (7:39; Rom 7:2-3; CCC 2364, 2382). See essay: [Jesus on Marriage and Divorce](#) at Mt 19. [Back to text](#).

7:12 I say, not the Lord: Paul offers pastoral direction for situations not addressed by Jesus' teaching, i.e., marriages between baptized Christians and nonbelievers (disparity of cult). Though the difficulties facing these couples are formidable, they are not insurmountable. Indeed, Paul holds out the hope that a Christian spouse can be instrumental in the conversion of an unbelieving partner (7:14; 1 Pet 3:1-2; CCC 1634, 1637). [Back to text](#).



7:15 desires to separate: Paul's ruling on the separation of a believer and a nonbeliever. • Canon Law later developed this principle into the Pauline privilege, which means that a marriage between two nonbaptized persons can be dissolved when one of the spouses is subsequently baptized. The privilege requires that the unbaptized spouse either desires to separate or refuses to cohabit peaceably without insult to the faith of the baptized partner. Also, the baptized spouse must not have

given the other party just cause to desire separation. In virtue of the Pauline privilege a subsequent marriage dissolves the first marriage "in favor of the faith" of the baptized person (see CIC 1143 § 1-2). [Back to text.](#)

7:17-24 Paul encourages Christians to be content with their state in life and set aside anxieties over unchangeable circumstances. To illustrate this for the married (7:1-16) and unmarried alike (7:25-35), he draws a lesson from different social situations: the circumcised and uncircumcised should not seek to change their condition (7:18), nor should slaves or freedmen think their position makes one more or less important to Christ (7:21-22). The state in which God calls them is the state in which they should serve him. [Back to text.](#)

7:18 remove the marks of circumcision: A procedure associated with apostasy (1 Mac 1:15). For Paul, this surgical option would be pointless, since circumcision is not a sign of Christian faith (1 Cor 7:19). [Back to text.](#)

7:19 neither circumcision . . . nor uncircumcision: The sign of circumcision no longer serves as an identity marker for God's people in the New Covenant as it did under the Old (Gal 5:6; 6:15). Along with the entire body of ritual and sacrificial legislation established through Moses, the rite of circumcision came to fulfillment in the messianic age, when God began to circumcise the hearts of the faithful through Baptism (Deut 30:6; Col 2:11-12). Unlike these ceremonial laws, which are now obsolete, the moral **commandments** given through Moses continue to guide the children of God to spiritual maturity (CCC 1968, 1972). [Back to text.](#)

7:21 a slave: Slavery was widespread and accepted in the Roman world. In many instances, slaves suffered maltreatment and hardship; in others, slaves were educated and charged with important administrative tasks. Paul encourages slaves to improve their situation whenever possible, implying that slavery as such is an offense against the dignity of the human person (CCC 2414). [Back to text.](#)

7:25 Now concerning the unmarried: Paul addresses other questions posed to him by the Corinthians. [See note on 1 Cor 7:1.](#) As in 7:12, he offers his own advice on the topic of marriage and is not presenting them with specific instructions from the teaching of Christ. [Back to text.](#)

7:26 impending distress: Or, "the present necessity". It is uncertain whether Paul has something general or specific in mind. **(1)** If general, Paul recommends celibacy because of the perennial troubles that face married couples. The ordinary pressures of daily life can make an undistracted

commitment to Christ a constant struggle. **(2)** If specific, Paul endorses the single life in light of the hostile and pagan environment of Corinth. He knows that persecutions will multiply hardships for married couples who are concerned for the welfare of each other and their children. [Back to text.](#)

7:28 you do not sin: The clarification made here and at 7:36 is aimed at certain Corinthians who either discouraged or denounced marriage. Paul does not want his preference for celibacy to be misunderstood as a rejection of lawful matrimony. See notes on 1 Cor 7:1 and 7:7. [Back to text.](#)

7:31 this world is passing away: Both marriage and its daily concerns will expire when the present age comes to an end (Lk 20:34-36). This puts marital struggles and worldly affairs in perspective, since only one's relationship with the Lord endures forever (CCC 1619). [Back to text.](#)

7:36-38 Paul counsels men engaged to be married and presents them with two options: a man does "well" to marry his fiancée, but he does even "better" if he remains unmarried (7:38). The decision depends on whether he is disciplined enough to control his passions. [Back to text.](#)

7:39 as long as he lives: The marriage bond endures as long as both spouses are living. When one of them dies, the union is dissolved (Rom 7:2-3) and the surviving partner is then allowed to remarry (1 Tim 5:14). [See note on 1 Cor 7:10.](#) [Back to text.](#)

8:1-11:1 Paul addresses the question of whether Christians are permitted to eat idol food. This was a significant moral challenge for many early believers living in the Roman world, since various foods offered to idols were afterward eaten in pagan temples (8:10) or sold in the marketplace and eaten at home (10:25-29). Paul insists that the Corinthians must never eat idol food if the danger of idolatry or scandal is in any way present (10:14, 27-29). See essay: [Paul, Idol Food, and the Jerusalem Council](#) at 1 Cor 8-9. [Back to text.](#)

8:1 all of us possess knowledge: A Corinthian motto. Paul qualifies it by stressing that Christian knowledge is not merely factual or intellectual; it is grounded, rather, on a relational bond of love between the Lord and his people (8:3; Gal 4:9). [Back to text.](#)

8:4 an idol has no real existence: Another Corinthian motto. It is true in a comparative sense that idols are nothing compared to Yahweh (Is 44:6-11), but it is false in an ontological sense, because Paul insists that demonic forces masquerade behind what appear to be lifeless idol images (1 Cor 10:14-22). [Back to text.](#)



8:6 one God . . . one Lord: Paul distinguishes the Christian faith from paganism, which venerated many gods, and from Judaism, which declined to accept the messianic Lordship of Jesus. • Paul alludes to the monotheistic creed of Deut 6:4, but he applies its two divine titles to two distinct Persons. "God" is linked with the **Father**, the divine Source from whom all creation originates, and "Lord" is linked with **Christ**, the divine Mediator through whom all things were made. This is one of the clearest Pauline passages to assert both the deity and divine activity of Jesus Christ (Col 1:15-17). [Back to text.](#)

8:7-13 The idol food controversy involves two groups of people: the "weak", whose conscience is fragile because of their recent conversion from idolatry (8:7), and "the strong", whose conscience is better informed about idols but whose conduct endangers the weak (8:4, 11). In terms of knowledge, the weak appear to think that idols are associated with real divinities, whereas the strong possess the mature knowledge that there is only one God and Lord (8:6). Paul urges the strong to temper their knowledge and freedom (to eat idol food) with love, which does not assert itself in spite of others but looks out for the good of others (13:5). The strong are warned that eating idol food can destroy a weaker brother by drawing him back into sins of idolatry (8:12-13). [Back to text.](#)

8:8 no worse off . . . no better off: Paul is ambivalent toward idol food to the extent that nothing about the food itself is inherently dangerous (10:25). He cautions, however, that although eating idol food is *harmless* in principle, it can be *harmful* in practice, because it can lead both the weak (chap. 8) and the strong (chap. 10) into the grip of idolatry (10:14). [Back to text.](#)

8:10 might he not be encouraged: Literally, "might he not be built up". Presumably some in Corinth ate in public temples because they hoped to build up weaker Christians by demonstrating that idol food was harmless. Paul rebukes them with sarcasm: eating idol food will not build up the weak to spiritual maturity; it will build them up to violate their conscience and fall into sin (8:13). Only love and consideration for the weak will truly build them up in Christ (8:1; 10:23; CCC 1789). [Back to text.](#)

8:13 I will never eat meat: The exercise of Christian love is more important than the exercise of Christian liberty. To assert our freedoms in a

way that puts others in danger is to sin against charity (10:24; Rom 14:15). [Back to text.](#)

9:1-27 Paul portrays himself as a model for imitation (4:16; 11:1). Just as he waives certain apostolic rights to promote the gospel (9:4-6, 12, 18), so the strong in Corinth are challenged to relinquish certain liberties like the right to eat idol food in order to build up their weaker brethren (9:22). The issue of idol food remains uppermost in Paul's mind here, as suggested by several examples that illustrate the right to eat (9:4, 7, 10, 13). [Back to text.](#)

9:1 Am I not an apostle?: A rhetorical question to remind readers of Paul's authority. His credentials are the same as every legitimate apostle, that is, he has **seen** and been commissioned by the risen Jesus (15:8; Acts 9:3-6; CCC 659, 857). [Back to text.](#)



9:5 accompanied by a wife: This statement has been understood in different ways. **(1)** Paul may be stressing his right to be married to a Christian wife. His right to have and travel with a wife would then have included the right to receive living expenses for both spouses from the missionary churches that hosted them. Paul surrendered these privileges by living a celibate life (7:8) and by working as a tentmaker to support himself, instead of relying on material assistance from the Corinthians (9:6; Acts 18:1-3). **(2)** According to a prominent tradition among the Church Fathers, Paul speaks, not of marriage, but of his right to be helped by a traveling female assistant (the word translated "wife" can also be translated "woman"). Precedent for such an arrangement can be traced back to the ministry of Jesus (Lk 8:1-3). [See note on 1 Cor 7:7.](#) • The discipline of clerical celibacy was highly revered in the early Church and was required by the eleventh century for all men ordained in the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church. The celibacy requirement continues in the Latin Rite for deacons, priests, and bishops, although married men may be ordained to the permanent diaconate. The Eastern Rites of the Catholic Church continue to ordain married men to the priesthood and the diaconate (CCC 1579-80). Vatican II reaffirmed the validity of both traditions in 1965 (*Presbyterorum Ordinis* 16). **the other apostles:** Other leaders in the early Church traveled either with their spouses or with a female assistant, including Jesus' kinsmen (**brethren**, Gal 1:19) and Peter (**Cephas**, Mk 1:30). [See note on Mt 12:46.](#) [Back to text.](#)

9:6 Barnabas: One of Paul's earliest associates (Acts 4:36; 13:2). **working for a living:** Paul often refused financial assistance from missionary churches even though he was entitled to it. He instead supported himself to avoid laying any burden or price on them for his apostolic work (9:18; 1 Thess 2:9). [Back to text.](#)

Paul, Idol Food, and the Jerusalem Council

PAUL's teaching on food sacrificed to idols in 1 Corinthians 8-10 has sparked considerable debate among scholars. Many have come to the conclusion that Paul takes a position on this issue that directly contradicts the position of the early Church. It is said that Paul himself considers eating idol food a matter of indifference, and yet the consumption of idol food was forbidden by the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:29; 21:25; Rev 2:14, 20) and by the writings of the early Christian centuries (*Didache*, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria). Is it true that Paul considered idol food *harmless* when the rest of Christianity considered it *dangerous*? Or is it possible that this conflict is more apparent than real and that Paul held a position in agreement with the rest of early Christian teaching?

Attempts to ease the tension between Paul and the Jerusalem Council approach the issue from different directions.

1. Some argue that Paul believed idol food was actually contaminated by demonic influences and thus objectively dangerous (1 Cor 10:20-22). This would seem to move Paul into harmony with the Jerusalem Council, which forbade Gentile Christians to eat it, yet it fails to account for other statements at the beginning and end of his argument. How, for instance, could Paul say that the Corinthians were technically at "liberty" to eat it (1 Cor 8:9)? And why would he permit them to eat idol food that was sold in the marketplace, so long as no one else would be scandalized by it (1 Cor 10:23-30)? Paul could not have made such statements if he believed idol food was always and everywhere dangerous.
2. Others argue that the decree of the Jerusalem Council was primarily concerned about idolatry and not idol food per se, for the decree mandates abstinence from "what has been sacrificed to idols" (Acts 15:29). This view is true to an extent, but it remains a fact that the Council imposed an eating restriction on the Gentiles, not just a ban on false worship.

It is because these solutions prove unsatisfactory that we must look for another. It seems undeniable that Paul sees nothing intrinsically wrong with idol food that makes it objectively different from any other food that God has given us (1 Cor 8:8-9; 10:23-30). What concerns Paul in 1 Cor 8-10 is the danger of participating in conscious idolatry (1 Cor 10:14). The position of the Jerusalem Council, however, is more difficult to assess. According to many scholars, the apostles must have believed that idol food was contaminated with evil. This interpretation is understandable, given the firmness of the prohibition, but it is ultimately unfounded. Nowhere does the NT state that this is the theological rationale underlying the pastoral program of the Council. In fact, from the hindsight of Church history, we can state with certainty that the Council did not hold that eating food consecrated to idols was intrinsically sacrilegious. The Council of Florence declared in 1442 that the Apostolic Decree of Acts 15:22-29 was only a temporary restriction placed upon the Gentiles to encourage fellowship between Jewish and Gentile converts in the early Church. This restriction was lifted once these ethnic circumstances had changed. So the prohibition against idol food in the Apostolic Decree was a temporary rather than a timeless measure to help Gentiles make a clean break with their native pagan culture. Its goal was, not to promote a distinctively Christian diet, but to bring Gentile converts together with Jewish Christians into a single community of fellowship and life.

These clarifications help to demonstrate that Paul and the Jerusalem Council were not in conflict at the theological level. Paul's *theological* assessment that idol food is technically harmless is essentially no different from that of the Jerusalem Decree, since the force of the decree was relaxed later in history when the ethnic situation that made it necessary was no longer a factor. Paul took a different *pastoral* approach, however, because he addressed a different pastoral situation from that envisioned by the Jerusalem Council. The reason Paul sometimes allows what the Council forbids is that the idol food controversy in Corinth was an intramural problem among Gentiles that had nothing to do with Jewish-Gentile relations in the early Christian community. In the end, it is the combined light of biblical exegesis and the Church's dogmatic tradition that points the way toward a solution to this problem. It leads us to see that Paul had a

much deeper insight into the issues underlying the Jerusalem Decree than many have recognized in modern times. « [Back to 1 Corinthians 9:1.](#)



9:9 You shall not muzzle an ox: A reference to Deut 25:4. • As Deuteronomy grants oxen the right to eat some of the grain that is processed by their work, so Christian laborers can rightly expect material support from the churches they tend to (1 Tim 5:18). This is one of many examples where Paul draws spiritual significance out of the OT that goes beyond the literal and historical meaning of the passage and applies it to a new situation in the Church (1 Cor 10:1-6; Gal 4:22-25; CCC 117). [Back to text.](#)

9:13 temple service: Levitical priests who officiated in the Jerusalem Temple received portions of meat from various sacrifices, as well as 10 percent of the Israelites' annual produce (Num 18:8-32; Deut 18:1-5). The analogy implies that ministers of the gospel also exercise a priestly ministry that entitles them to tangible assistance from the People of God (CCC 2122). [See note on 1 Cor 4:15.](#) [Back to text.](#)

9:14 the Lord commanded: Probably a reference to the saying in Lk 10:7, which Paul quotes verbatim in 1 Tim 5:18. [See note on Lk 10:7.](#) [Back to text.](#)

9:16 Woe to me: Paul's ministry is not volunteer work but a mission he received directly from Christ (Acts 9:15-16; Gal 1:1). The responsibility on his shoulders is so great that a frightening prospect of judgment awaits him if he abandons his assignment. [Back to text.](#)

9:20 I became as a Jew: Paul continued to maintain certain Jewish traditions after becoming a Christian (Acts 16:3; 21:17-26). Strictly speaking, this was unnecessary; yet Paul wanted to convert his kinsmen by removing whatever might turn them away from the gospel (1 Cor 10:32). Ethnically, Paul was an Israelite of the tribe of Benjamin (Rom 11:1; Phil 3:5). [Back to text.](#)

9:22 all things to all men: Paul adapts himself to the needs and sensitivities of others. Without diluting the gospel message, he willingly sacrifices certain apostolic privileges that might hamper the effectiveness of his ministry to the world (9:20-21; CCC 24). His personal example should inspire the strong Corinthians to accommodate themselves to **the weak** (8:9-13). [Back to text.](#)

9:24-27 Paul compares the spiritual life to athletic competition. Just as training the body is a necessary part of the quest for excellence, so believers are challenged to exert great effort in the battle against selfishness through

the rigorous discipline of their bodies. This is all the more necessary since the stakes of the Christian life are far higher than any sporting event: to be disqualified (9:27) from this race is to forfeit the award of heaven itself (2 Tim 4:6-8). [Back to text.](#)

9:25 a perishable wreath: Corinth hosted the popular Isthmian Games every other year, where winning athletes were crowned with wreaths made of pine or a species of wild celery called *selinon*. Paul stresses the contrast between this perishable award of dried vegetation and the imperishable crown of eternal life (1 Pet 5:4; Rev 2:10). [Back to text.](#)

10:1-13 Paul urges the Corinthians to learn from the mistakes of Israel. Although the Israelites received blessings comparable to Baptism (Red Sea) and the Eucharist (manna and water), they perished for experimenting with idolatry. With this in mind, the Corinthians, who have received superior blessings in the sacraments, must guard against presumption and overconfidence in the face of anything connected with idolatry (e.g., idol foods, 8:10). Paul intensifies this warning by stressing how **all** the Israelites were delivered from bondage (10:1-4) and yet **most** of them were destroyed in God's wrath for serving other gods (10:5). [Back to text.](#)

10:1 under the cloud: A canopy of divine protection spread over Israel (Ps 105:39). Scripture associates the firecloud of the Exodus journey with the Holy Spirit (Is 63:10-14; CCC 697). [Back to text.](#)

10:2 baptized into Moses: The solidarity of Israel with Moses passing through the Red Sea (Ex 14:21-31) prefigures our union with Christ when we pass through the waters of Baptism (Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27). The deliverance of Israel from slavery is a type of the Church's deliverance from bondage in sin (Rom 6:17-18). [Back to text.](#)

10:3 supernatural food: The manna that rained down upon Israel as bread from heaven (Ex 16:4-31). It prefigures the living bread of the Eucharist, which nourishes us in the wilderness of this life (1 Cor 10:16; Jn 6:31-35). [Back to text.](#)

10:4 supernatural Rock: The rock of Horeb that gushed forth drinking water for Israel by a miracle of Moses (Ex 17:6). Jewish tradition believed that the rock *followed* Israel as a constant source of refreshment on the march through the desert. It is ultimately a type of Christ, who pours out the living waters of the Spirit in Baptism (1 Cor 12:13; Jn 4:14) and the sacramental gift of himself in the Eucharist (1 Cor 10:16; Jn 6:53). [Back to text.](#)



10:5 most . . . were overthrown: Joshua and Caleb were the only two adults of the generation that came up out of Egypt to enter the Promised Land (Num 14:20-35). • Paul is alluding to the great massacre of Israelites who rebelled against Yahweh in the wilderness as described in the Greek version of Num 14:16. [Back to text.](#)

10:6 warnings: Or, "types". The dangers and judgments that Israel experienced between the Red Sea and the Promised Land show us that the Christian life is a probationary period of testing that stretches between our Baptism and our final salvation. Unless we fight the temptations that badger us along the way, we will fail to reach our heavenly homeland, just as many of the Exodus generation perished without crossing over into Canaan. The premise behind this Exodus typology is that the Church relives the experiences of Israel at a spiritual level (CCC 128-30, 1094). See word study: [Type](#) at Rom 5. [Back to text.](#)



10:7-10 Paul draws attention to several transgressions of Israel in connection with food and drink. • In 10:7 Paul recalls how Israel worshiped the golden calf by sitting down **to eat and drink** in the presence of the idol and by getting up to **dance** in sexual revelry (Ex 32:6). In 1 Cor 10:8 Paul alludes to a similar sin at Beth Peor, where Yahweh destroyed **twenty-three thousand** Israelites for involvement in sexual **immorality** that led to eating food sacrificed to the idols of the Moabites (Num 25:1-9). In 1 Cor 10:9 Paul warns the Corinthians not to **put the Lord to the test**, which is a reminder from Deut 6:16 of how Israel complained of thirst and challenged Yahweh to provide water to drink (Ex 17:1-7). In 1 Cor 10:9 Paul recalls how the Israelites were bitten with **serpents** because they despised the manna that God had given them to eat (Num 21:4-6). These food-related episodes are pulled together to caution the "strong" Corinthians that eucharistic communion with Christ is incompatible with eating food sacrificed to idols (1 Cor 10:14-22; CCC 2119). [Back to text.](#)

10:9 put the Lord to the test: Some reliable Greek manuscripts read "Christ" instead of "Lord". [Back to text.](#)

10:10 the Destroyer: The angel(s) who inflicts the wrath of God upon sinners (Ex 12:23; Ps 78:49). [Back to text.](#)

10:11 for our instruction: The OT remains a source of spiritual teaching and encouragement even for NT believers (Rom 15:4). This is because both Testaments bear witness to a unified plan of salvation that began with creation, advanced through the history of Israel, and climaxed with the redeeming mission of the Messiah. **end of the ages:** All previous stages of covenant history have given way to the messianic age of the New Covenant (Heb 1:1-2). This was referred to in the OT as the "latter days" (Num 24:14; Is 2:2; Dan 2:28; Hos 3:5). [Back to text.](#)

10:13 God is faithful: A reminder that even the most severe temptations are bearable when we turn to God for help and look for the escape route that he promises to provide for us (Mt 6:13). Paul is leaving no room for flimsy excuses, as though sin were sometimes unavoidable (CCC 2848-49). [Back to text.](#)

10:14 worship of idols: Idolatry is the real danger facing the Corinthians who eat idol food (8:10). Not only will their behavior lead the "weak" to become again ensnared in pagan worship (8:7), but even the "strong" are setting themselves up for a fall (10:12; CCC 2112-14). See essay: [Shun Immorality, Shun Idolatry](#) at 1 Cor 6. [Back to text.](#)

10:16 cup of blessing: The traditional name for the third ritual cup of wine consumed at the Jewish Passover meal. It is this cup that Jesus blessed and consecrated at the Passover of the Last Supper and made the eucharistic cup of the New Covenant (11:25; CCC 1334, 1340). **participation:** Eucharistic Communion unites believers with Christ and with one another. These two blessings are related inasmuch as the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood is what continues to mold us into the ecclesial Body of Christ, the Church (10:17). [Back to text.](#)



10:20 offer to demons: A warning that unseen powers lurk behind what appear to be lifeless idols. The Corinthians who insist on eating idol food in pagan temples (8:10) are thus in danger of forging an unholy partnership with fallen spirits. •Paul's thinking is shaped by OT passages that link idol worship with service to demons (Deut 32:17; Ps 106:37; Bar 4:7). [Back to text.](#)



10:21 table of the Lord: The altar of the eucharistic liturgy (Heb 13:10). • The prophets of Israel referred to the bronze altar of sacrifice as

the Lord's "table" (Ezek 44:16; Mal 1:7, 12). Paul uses this same language to show that the eucharistic offering of the Church is a holy sacrifice analogous to the Temple offerings of the Mosaic age. He has already hinted at the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist in 1 Cor 10:18 when he compared it to the eaten portions of the Levitical peace offerings (Lev 7:11-36) (CCC 1383). [Back to text.](#)



10:22 Shall we provoke the Lord: Yahweh is a jealous God who forbids idol worship (Ex 20:4-6). • Paul's question serves as a warning because it recalls how the Israelites provoked the Lord to anger by their idolatry in the wilderness (Deut 32:16, 21). [Back to text.](#)

10:23 All things are lawful: A slogan used by the Corinthians to assert their freedom to eat idol food. Paul qualifies it immediately, censuring the kind of unrestrained freedom that looks to ourselves before others (10:24, 33; Phil 2:4). [Back to text.](#)

10:25-30 Paul addresses the issue of idol meat sold in the open market after being sacrificed in a pagan temple. Objectively, his readers are free to eat and need not worry about the past history of market food (10:25) or of meals served in private homes (10:27). In these contexts, the food is safely disconnected from the context of conscious idolatry. However, his readers should abstain from eating when the food's idolatrous origin is pointed out by another; otherwise, the informant may be scandalized and led to think that Christians have a casual attitude toward idolatry. [Back to text.](#)



10:26 the earth is the Lord's: A reference to Ps 24:1. • Paul cites Ps 24 to extol the sovereignty of Christ as the Lord of creation (1 Cor 8:6; 15:27). His divine ownership of all things implies that no food, in and of itself, should be rejected or despised (1 Tim 4:3-4). Later rabbis reasoned from this psalm that a mealtime blessing should be said before eating. [Back to text.](#)

10:32 Give no offense: The overarching lesson of chaps. 8-10. Throughout his discussion, Paul subordinates Christian liberty to Christian love, emphasizing that genuine charity "builds up" (8:1) and "does not insist on its own way" (13:5). [Back to text.](#)

11:1 Be imitators of me: Technically, this verse rounds off the preceding discussion of chaps. 8-10 and is not an introduction to the following

discussion of chaps. 11-14. Note that Paul's original letter had no chapter and verse divisions. [See note on 1 Cor 9:1-27.](#) [Back to text.](#)

11:2-14:40 The next section of the letter concerns issues of liturgical assembly and abuse. Paul deals with improper attire (11:2-16), selfishness and discrimination (11:17-34), and the disorderly exercise of spiritual gifts (chaps. 12-14). [Back to text.](#)

11:2 the traditions: I.e., the beliefs and practices of Christianity stemming from Christ. By extension it refers to the gospel as it was **delivered** to the early Church in person or in writing by the inspired apostles (15:3; 2 Thess 2:15; 3:6). The divine origin of Christian tradition gives it an authority not shared by merely human tradition, which is often unreliable and can be in conflict with revealed truth (Mk 7:3-8; Col 2:8; CCC 81-83). [Back to text.](#)

11:3-16 The precise problem that Paul addresses in these verses is unclear. Scholars are divided over the central issue, i.e., whether it concerns gender differences in general or marital relationships in particular. This is in part because the same Greek terms that mean "man" and "woman" can also mean "husband" and "wife". On balance, Paul is more likely speaking about gender issues in general within the context of public worship. It seems that certain Corinthians have challenged the distinction between the sexes by violating gender-appropriate dress codes in the liturgy. Paul's guidelines imply that the order of *redemption*, where men and women are equal recipients of grace (Gal 3:28), does not obliterate the order of *creation*, where gender differences are written into nature (Gen 1:27). [Back to text.](#)

11:3 the head: The Greek term can be used metaphorically to mean "leader" or "source". It is difficult to determine which is intended here; perhaps Paul is working with both ideas. See word study: [Head](#) at Eph 5. [Back to text.](#)



11:6 veil herself: Many believe the veil symbolizes the subordinate status of women that should be reflected in a liturgical setting (14:34). • The Catholic Church teaches that Paul's counsel on the veiling of women was inspired by the customs of the day. Because this was a matter of discipline, not doctrine, the Pauline directives on covering and uncovering the head are subject to change. They are no longer binding on men and women today

(Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: *Inter insigniores* [1976], 4). [Back to text.](#)



11:7-9 Allusions to the creation stories of Genesis. • Paul reads Gen 1:26-27, where man and woman are made in the image of God, through the lens of Gen 2:21-23, where God fashioned Eve as a helper *for* Adam by creating her *from* the physical substance of Adam. The point is that man has a natural precedence over woman in the created order established by God. [Back to text.](#)

11:10 because of the angels: A warning that gender confusion and improper attire at worship will offend the heavenly hosts. The underlying idea is that (1) angels are ministers of the natural order, and (2) angels are present in the sacramental worship of the Church. [Back to text.](#)

11:14 nature itself: The expression can mean "natural law" or "common custom". Paul intends the latter rather than the former. [Back to text.](#)

11:17-34 Paul confronts liturgical abuse of the Lord's Supper. The Corinthians must have gathered to eat a common meal before celebrating the Eucharist. Although this preliminary meal was meant to promote fellowship, it became a source of tension and disunity between rich and poor Christians that extended into the liturgy. Several factors put this crisis in context. (1) Since early Christian gatherings took place, not in church buildings, but in available homes (16:19), seating arrangements could reinforce the distinctions of social rank among believers, with the wealthy eating together and the poor excluded from their company. (2) The meal itself could accentuate division if the rich brought healthy portions of food for themselves, leaving whatever was left for the poor or not sharing with them at all (11:21). (3) Wealthy persons would have the leisure to arrive early and enjoy their food, while laborers and slaves would have to fulfill their duties before attending (11:33-34). Whatever the precise circumstances, acts of discrimination in Corinth have contradicted the very purpose of these gatherings (10:17). [Back to text.](#)

11:17 I do not commend you: Paul addresses a serious violation of Christian tradition (11:2). [Back to text.](#)

11:18 when you assemble: The early Christians gathered together at least once a week, in particular on Sunday, the Lord's day (16:2; Acts 20:7; Rev 1:10; CCC 1343, 2174-76). [Back to text.](#)

11:19 factions: Some suggest the divisions between poor and prosperous Christians in Corinth may coincide with the factions mentioned in 1:11-13, but this is uncertain. [Back to text.](#)

11:20 not the Lord's supper: Disunity among the Corinthians contradicts the very purpose of the Eucharist to unify believers with Christ and one other (10:17). [Back to text.](#)

11:23 I received from the Lord: Paul learned of the Last Supper through the Church's liturgical tradition stretching back to Jesus and the first apostles. His account agrees in substance with the narratives of the Gospels, especially Luke's version (Lk 22:19-20). Paul is confident that divine revelation is safely passed on through the tradition of the Church. **he was betrayed:** By Judas Iscariot (Mk 14:43-46; Jn 13:26-30). [Back to text.](#)

11:24-25 Through the words of Consecration, Jesus transformed the ordinary bread and wine of the Jewish Passover meal into the Sacrament of his Body and Blood (Jn 6:53-58). See notes on 1 Cor 10:16 and Mt 26:26-29. [Back to text.](#)

11:24 Do this in remembrance: As the original Passover memorialized Israel's deliverance from Egypt through Moses (Ex 12:14), so the new Passover of the Eucharist commemorates the Church's deliverance from sin through Jesus (5:7; CCC 1340). Christ's mandate to continue this liturgical action is linked with his institution of the New Covenant priesthood (CCC 1337, 1341). [See note on Lk 22:19](#) and word study: [Remembrance](#) at Lk 22. [Back to text.](#)

11:26 you proclaim the Lord's death: The separate Consecration of bread and wine is a visible representation of Christ's death, recalling how his blood was separated from his body on the Cross. **until he comes:** The liturgy awaits its fulfillment at the coming of Christ in glory. Anticipating his visible return as Judge (4:5), Christ makes an invisible return as Judge in the eucharistic meal itself (CCC 1402-05). This is why Paul stresses that unworthy reception of Communion brings *judgment* upon the perpetrators (1 Cor 11:29-32). In his mind, the Eucharist is a sacrament, not of Christ's absence, but of his real and holy presence. [Back to text.](#)



11:27 the bread . . . the cup: The Corinthians apparently received the Eucharist under both species, although this was not strictly necessary. • The Church holds that Christ is entirely present under each form of the

Sacrament, so that Communion under one species is communion with the whole Christ in his glorified Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity (CCC 1390). **unworthy manner:** Receiving Eucharistic Communion can be an act of sacrilege and self-condemnation if done in a state of serious (mortal) sin. For Paul, to sin against the **body and blood** in this way is to be liable for the Lord's violent death. The offenders in Corinth incurred this guilt by overeating, drunkenness, and discrimination against the poor. Such carelessness before the Sacrament triggered divine judgments of sickness and even death (11:30). [Back to text.](#)



11:28 examine himself: Self-examination should always precede Communion. The purpose is to avoid an unworthy reception of the Sacrament. • Paul's teaching implies a close connection between the Eucharist and Reconciliation (Jn 20:23; CCC 1385). [Back to text.](#)

11:29 discerning the body: Probably a wordplay on the term "body", which refers to the eucharistic Body of Christ and to the ecclesial Body of Christ made up of believers united to him (10:16-17; 12:12). Recognizing Jesus in the Sacrament is thus coupled with recognizing him in our spiritual brothers and sisters (Mt 25:34-40). [Back to text.](#)

11:32 chastened: Divine discipline is a call to repentance and spiritual growth. Its loving purpose is to avert our final condemnation with the sinners of the world (Heb 12:7-11). [Back to text.](#)

11:34 let him eat at home: Implies that the preliminary fellowship meal is *not* an essential part of the liturgy (11:22). Difficulties like those experienced in Corinth led the early Church eventually to separate eucharistic worship from the context of common meals. **I will give directions:** Paul's written instructions are merely a preface to the oral instructions he hopes to give when he arrives (4:19-21). [Back to text.](#)

12:1-14:40 Paul explains the purpose of spiritual gifts (chap. 12) and theological virtues (chap. 13) in order to regulate charismatic worship (chap. 14). Apparently some in Corinth prized more spectacular gifts like "tongues" to the neglect of other gifts and even liturgical order. To correct their thinking, Paul arranges a hierarchy of spiritual gifts, placing love at the top (13:13), ecclesial ministries in the middle (12:28), and tongues at the bottom (12:28). [Back to text.](#)

12:1 Now concerning: Paul responds to a question that was put to him in an earlier letter from the Corinthians. [See note on 1 Cor 7:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)



12:2 led astray to mute idols: Many Corinthians were I formerly pagans and idolaters (8:7). • Paul's perspective on idols is that of the OT—they are lifeless and therefore speechless (Ps 135:15-18; Hab 2:18-19; CCC 2112). [Back to text.](#)

12:3 Jesus be cursed! The origin of this alarming declaration is uncertain. Among various possibilities, it may be **(1)** an ecstatic utterance spoken by false charismatics, **(2)** a heretical slogan used by some to drive a wedge between the historical Jesus and the risen Christ of faith, or **(3)** the slanderous words of Jewish opponents who attacked the gospel. **Jesus is Lord:** A distinctly Christian confession (Rom 10:9; Phil 2:11). The Spirit empowers us to say it with conviction and live it out through conversion (CCC 449, 683). The title "Lord" (Gk. *Kyrios*) resonates against the background of Jewish and Gentile traditions: **(1)** it is used repeatedly in the Greek OT to translate the divine name "Yahweh"; **(2)** it was used in the Greco-Roman world to address rulers and emperors. [Back to text.](#)

12:4-6 The charismatic gifts flow from the Holy **Spirit**, Christ the **Lord**, and **God** the Father. The unity and diversity within the Trinity is the divine model of the unity and diversity of gifts shared by believers (Eph 4:4-7). [Back to text.](#)

12:4 gifts: Translates the Greek *charismata*, which is theologically and linguistically related to the term "grace" (Gk. *charis*). Charismatic gifts are thus graces given to build up the Church (CCC 799-801, 951). The inventory in 1 Cor 12:8-10 lists extraordinary charisms of instruction and healing. The list in Rom 12:6-8 also includes more ordinary gifts, such as generosity and works of mercy. [Back to text.](#)

12:7 the common good: Charisms are given as personal gifts but not merely for private benefit (12:11). They unite us with the Spirit's mission to build up all members of the Church and bring them to salvation (1 Pet 4:10-11). • Catholic teaching distinguishes between sanctifying grace, which imparts the gift of divine *sonship*, and charismatic or ministerial grace, which equips the saints for *service* to others (CCC 2003). [Back to text.](#)

12:9 faith: Not the gift of saving faith possessed by all Christians (Eph 2:8), but an extraordinary trust in God that encourages others who witness it

(1 Cor 13:2; Mk 11:23). [Back to text.](#)

12:10 tongues: May be the earthly languages of men (Acts 2:1-6) or the heavenly speech of angels (1 Cor 13:1). The gift of **interpretation** is the complement of the gift of tongues, enabling unintelligible utterances to be understood by the assembled community (14:9-19). [Back to text.](#)

12:13 by one Spirit: That is, by the divine action of the Spirit working in Baptism. **one body:** This is not simply a metaphor for the Church, with the focus on her organizational unity, but it expresses the metaphysical reality that every believer is truly united with Christ by the Sacraments (10:17; CCC 790). The Spirit is the soul of this mystical body, giving life, growth, and direction to each of its members (CCC 797). **Jews or Greeks:** Union with Christ makes ethnic and social distinctions irrelevant in the eyes of God (Gal 3:28; CCC 1267). **to drink of one Spirit:** Baptism renews (Tit 3:5) and refreshes us through the Spirit (Jn 7:37-39), as does the spiritual drink of the Eucharist (1 Cor 10:4). [Back to text.](#)



12:14-26 Everyone serves a vital and indispensable function in the Body of Christ. As the constituent parts of a body perform different functions and yet work together in harmony, so every member of Christ's Body is assigned an important task for the good of the whole (CCC 791). Some Corinthians apparently disputed the validity of certain gifts—a presumptuous attitude that called into question God's wise arrangement of the body (1 Cor 12:18) and his free distribution of charisms (12:11). • *Allegorically:* the eyes of the body serve knowledge and signify the contemplative life of the Church, whereas the hands serve movement and signify the active life of the Church. So, too, the head of the body is the clergy in authority over the Church, while the feet are the laity who follow the lead of their head (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* 12, 3). [Back to text.](#)

12:21 the head: Paul visualizes the body as the collective person of Christ, with his members compared to anatomical features of the body from top (ears and eyes, 12:16) to bottom (feet, 12:15, 21). The picture changes somewhat in later Pauline letters, where the "head" represents Christ as distinct from his "body", the Church (Eph 5:23; Col 1:18; 2:19). Paul may have developed the illustration over the years, or perhaps he was using the

imagery in different ways in different letters. For a summary discussion, see word study: [Head](#) at Eph 5. [Back to text.](#)

12:26 suffer together . . . rejoice together: Unity among believers rules out indifference toward others and encourages mutual support and compassion among them (Sir 7:34; Rom 12:15). [Back to text.](#)

12:28 first apostles: Apostleship is given pride of place among the ministerial gifts. This is because the apostles saw Christ risen from the dead (15:5) and were directly charged by him with spreading the gospel (Mt 28:18-20; Acts 9:1-16). Their mission to lay the initial foundations of the Church in the world is essentially unrepeatable (Eph 2:20; Rev 21:14; CCC 858-60). Their work of teaching and sanctifying the world, however, is carried on by their successors, the bishops. [See note on 1 Tim 3:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)

12:31 desire the higher gifts: Paul prepares readers for the following exposition of God's greatest gifts: the virtues of faith, hope, and love (13:1-13). [Back to text.](#)

13:1-13 Chapter 13 is a poetic interlude on "love" that summarizes Paul's moral instructions in the letter (16:14) and stands as the centerpiece of his teaching on spiritual gifts (chaps. 12-14). Because some in Corinth esteemed more spectacular charisms like tongues, Paul writes to temper their charismatic enthusiasm by insisting that charity must inspire and direct the exercise of all ministerial gifts (CCC 800). Without love, the other charisms bring no benefit to the Body of Christ and may even cause divisions among its members. [Back to text.](#)

13:1 clanging cymbal: Possibly an allusion to ecstatic pagan worship. Speaking in tongues can produce the same meaningless noise if its purpose is thwarted by a failure to love. [Back to text.](#)



13:2 I am nothing: Knowledge of saving mysteries and the exercise of extraordinary faith amount to nothing unless coupled with active charity toward others (CCC 1826). • Some believe faith alone is sufficient for salvation; others believe they will be saved by Christ's sacraments alone; others rely on works of mercy alone and think they can sin with impunity. Such people fail to understand that nothing avails without charity (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* 6, 2). [Back to text.](#)

13:3 deliver my body to be burned: A reference to martyrdom by fire (Dan 3:23; 2 Mac 7:1-6). Even such heroic acts are profitless toward eternal life without a supernatural love for God. [Back to text.](#)

13:4-7 Paul personifies **love** to explain its true nature and greatness. Because love (charity) is a virtue that is supernatural and God-given, it cannot be reduced to a feeling or emotion that comes and goes over time. It is foremost the love of God and neighbor that the Spirit pours into our hearts (Rom 5:5; CCC 735). It bears burdens, patiently suffers injuries, restrains pride, and is not self-assertive or oversensitive. Vices contrary to love were displayed by those Corinthians who were **jealous** (1 Cor 3:3), **boastful** (4:7), or **arrogant** (4:18). [Back to text.](#)

13:8 will pass away: The charismatic gifts will expire when "the perfect comes" (13:10), that is, when the Lord comes again in glory to reveal himself to the Church "face to face" (13:12). Interpretations that link the cessation of charismatic grace with the compilation of the NT books have absolutely no footing in the text. [Back to text.](#)

13:12 in a mirror dimly: Ancient Corinth manufactured mirrors of polished bronze. Although known for their excellent quality, their reflected images would nonetheless remain hazy and indistinct. Our present perception of God is similarly imperfect (CCC 163-64, 314). **then face to face:** Life in heaven will consist of a clear and direct vision of God "as he is" (1 Jn 3:2; CCC 1023). [Back to text.](#)



13:13 faith, hope, love abide: The translation is misleading because it fails to render the Greek adverb *nuni* ("now"). Paul is not saying that all three virtues are eternal, but instead he ties them to the present age. Faith and hope will pass away when we *see* the Lord in heaven and *possess* the eternal happiness we yearned for in this life. But love "never ends" (13:8). Rather than passing away, love reaches perfection in the everlasting embrace of the Trinity that awaits the saints beyond this life. A close connection between these virtues is also noted in Rom 5:1-5, Gal 5:5-6, and 1 Thess 1:3. • Catholic tradition calls faith, hope, and love "theological virtues" because they come from God (Gk. *Theos*) and lead us back to God (CCC 1812-29). **the greatest . . . love:** The preeminence of love follows from its permanence, i.e., it outshines other divine gifts precisely because it outlasts them (13:8). [Back to text.](#)



14:1-40 Paul gives pastoral direction on spiritual gifts, building upon the theological and ethical foundations laid in chaps. 12-13. He seeks to regulate the Corinthians' undisciplined exercise of charismatic gifts by stressing the need to build up the congregation (14:3-5, 12, 26). As a rule, gifts exercised in public worship must be publicly beneficial; otherwise disorder and confusion will result (14:33, 40). • Vatican II reaffirmed the enduring validity of charismatic gifts. The Council described their function as one of renewing and building up the Church in the Spirit. Following Paul, it also warned that extraordinary charisms should not be rashly desired (*Lumen Gentium* 12). [Back to text.](#)

14:1 prophesy: The ability to prophesy is the preferred charismatic gift. It can include the power to predict future events (Acts 11:27-28; 21:10-11) but is primarily the ability to encourage the assembled Church in a powerful way (1 Cor 14:3; Acts 15:32). Prophets can also make the gospel compelling to outside observers (1 Cor 14:24-25). Paul promotes this gift over tongues because prophets can speak to others with clear and understandable words. [Back to text.](#)

14:2 speaks in a tongue: Here viewed as human languages that are unknown and thus "foreign" to the local Church (14:10-11). Interpreting them amounts to translating them (14:5; Acts 2:1-11). [Back to text.](#)

14:7-8 Paul compares tongues to musical instruments (14:7) and a military trumpet (14:8). Just as music follows an ordered sequence of notes, and a battle call has a distinctive sound, so the language of tongues has an intelligible meaning in itself. Left untranslated, however, tongues remain incoherent to the congregation, like a string of meaningless noises. [Back to text.](#)

14:10 many different languages: Diversity among human languages can be traced back to the rebellion at the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9). The commercial city of Corinth would be exposed to many foreign dialects, even though its principal language was Greek. [Back to text.](#)

14:11 foreigner: The term is elsewhere translated "barbarian" (Rom 1:14; Col 3:11). Here it refers to someone whose native language is unknown to Greek-speaking Christians. [Back to text.](#)

14:14 my mind is unfruitful: I.e., uninvolved in the heavenly speech. An uninterpreted tongue makes conscious participation in the prayer

impossible both for the individual speaking and for the congregation listening. Even so, the gift engages the **spirit** of the worshiper, enabling him to utter "mysteries in the Spirit" (14:2). [Back to text.](#)

14:16 "Amen": A Hebrew expression meaning "So be it!" or "So it is!". It is a traditional response to liturgical prayers (Rev 5:14). See word study: [Amen](#) at 2 Cor 1. [Back to text.](#)

14:20 in thinking be mature: The Corinthians' preoccupation with tongues was a sign of their immaturity. They should rather seek for themselves the moral innocence of children and the mature judgment of adults (3:1; Eph 4:11-14). [Back to text.](#)



14:21 the law: Refers to the entire OT, not just the Pentateuch (Jn 10:34; 15:25). • Paul paraphrases Is 28:11-12, where the scoffers of Israel mock Isaiah by comparing his prophecies to the unintelligible babble of infants. Isaiah turns their mockery into a warning by saying that Yahweh will rouse foreign armies (Assyria), who speak an alien language, to seek and destroy them (Deut 28:49). This leads Paul to see "tongues" as a "sign" of the judgment that will fall upon sinners (1 Cor 14:22). [Back to text.](#)

14:22 unbelievers: Since this can also be translated "unfaithful", it is uncertain whether Paul is thinking of unbaptized pagans or unfaithful Christians or both. **prophecy is not for unbelievers:** I.e., not *primarily* for unbelievers or the unfaithful. It is foremost a gift to edify the assembled church, although it can benefit visitors and newcomers as well (14:24-25). [Back to text.](#)



14:25 God is really among you: Charismatic prophecy can lead to the conversion of unbelievers who attend a Christian liturgy. • Paul's language recalls OT passages where the Gentiles come to recognize Yahweh as the one true God present among his messianic people (Is 45:14; Zech 8:22-23). [Back to text.](#)

14:27-28 Paul gives three pastoral guidelines for speaking in tongues: **(1)** only a few should exercise the gift at each assembly; **(2)** they should speak in sequence, not simultaneously; **(3)** the utterances should be interpreted. Paul assumes that the gift of tongues lies within the control of the recipient, who can keep silent when appropriate. Should the spontaneity of

charismatic gifts be allowed to override the structures of the liturgy, they will cause disorder and distraction (14:39-40). [Back to text.](#)

14:29 weigh what is said: Prophecies must be measured against apostolic teaching to ensure their consistency with the whole deposit of faith (Rom 12:6). [Back to text.](#)

14:34-35 Paul enjoins **silence** upon Christian **women** in public worship. This is not an absolute restriction, since women can lawfully pray and prophesy in the liturgical assembly (11:5) and are encouraged to teach in other circumstances (Tit 2:3-4). Paul is prohibiting women from instructing the congregation in the official capacity of a pastor or homilist. [See note on 1 Tim 2:12.](#) [Back to text.](#)

14:37 command of the Lord: Paul is giving, not personal advice, but instruction that in some sense comes directly from Christ (7:10). [Back to text.](#)

15:1-58 Paul defends the doctrine of the resurrection against attack and misunderstanding (15:12). Working forward from the Resurrection of Christ, he insists that our bodies will be raised immortal (15:20-23) and glorified for life in heaven (15:35-50). This belief is so important that to deny the resurrection is to destroy the essence of the gospel (15:17-19). [Back to text.](#)

15:3-5 A symbol or creed of the Christian faith that is founded on apostolic testimony (CCC 186, 638). Should Paul's readers reject any of these basic tenets of the gospel, their faith will prove "vain" (1 Cor 15:1-2). [Back to text.](#)

15:3 I delivered . . . I also received: Refers to the transmission of oral and liturgical tradition. A similar formula was used in rabbinical schools for the transfer of Jewish tradition from teacher to student from generation to generation. [See note on 1 Cor 11:2.](#) [Back to text.](#)



15:4 he was buried: This important detail sets the Resurrection of Jesus over against his burial, indicating that his tomb was empty on Easter morning (Jn 20:1-10). The rising of Jesus from the grave is thus proclaimed as a physical and bodily event; it involved much more than the resuscitation of his corpse, but certainly nothing less than this. The Resurrection is a miracle of history that cannot be reduced to a metaphor for new life (CCC 639-40). **the Scriptures:** Belief in a bodily resurrection can be traced back

to the OT (CCC 652). • Several passages affirm that the Lord will raise the dead to live again (Is 26:19; Ezek 37:1-14; Dan 12:2; 2 Mac 7:9). Jesus was the first to benefit from these promises in advance of the messianic people united to him. For biblical background on the **third day** motif, [See note on Lk 24:46. Back to text.](#)

15:5 appeared to Cephas: Jesus appeared alive to Peter (Lk 24:34) and the rest of the apostles on Easter Sunday (Jn 20:19-23). Paul catalogues a total of six appearances (1 Cor 15:5-8), most of which took place within the 40-day interval between the Resurrection and the Ascension (Acts 1:3; CCC 641-42). No mention is made of Christ's appearances to the holy women (Mk 16:1-8), possibly because a woman could not give admissible legal testimony in Jewish tradition. [Back to text.](#)

15:6 more than five hundred: A public appearance mentioned only here in the NT. For Paul, such a large group of eyewitnesses adds to the credibility of the Resurrection, especially since some were still living and could verify the facts. [Back to text.](#)

15:7 James: Known as "James the Lord's brother" (Gal 1:19), a kinsman of Jesus (Mt 13:55) and the first appointed bishop of Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; 15:13). Only here is it stated in Scripture that Christ appeared to him personally. **the apostles:** Probably refers to a wider circle of disciples than the "Twelve" (15:5), as is sometimes the case in the NT (Acts 14:14; 2 Cor 8:23). [Back to text.](#)

15:8 appeared also to me: Paul both saw the risen Christ and received a missionary mandate from him (Acts 9:1-15). His encounter with the resurrected Jesus in visible glory was unique compared with the other apostles, who saw Jesus alive before his Ascension into heaven (CCC 659). Paul felt undeserving of an apostolic mission in light of his former hostility to the Church (1 Cor 15:9; Eph 3:8; 1 Tim 1:15-16). [Back to text.](#)

15:12 no resurrection of the dead?: Such a denial might stem from either a Jewish or a Greek background. (1)The Sadducees held a minority view within Judaism that emphatically denied the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:8). (2)Among the Greeks it was commonly held that the body was a prison or tomb that was destined to decay once the soul was liberated from it at death (Acts 17:32). Whatever the influence, Corinthian skepticism concerning the future of the body led to a denial of Christian doctrine and a sharp decline in morality (1 Cor 6:12-20; 15:34; CCC 996). [Back to text.](#)

15:13 then Christ has not been raised: Paul exposes the inconsistency of the Corinthians' position: they affirm that Christ is risen (past), yet they deny that Christians will rise again as he did (future). To deny the possibility of the latter is to deny the historicity of the former. [Back to text.](#)

15:14 your faith is in vain: The Resurrection of Jesus is a historical foundation so essential to Christianity that, without it, the entire structure of the faith collapses in ruins (CCC 651). [Back to text.](#)

15:15 he raised Christ: I.e., God the Father (CCC 648). Technically, the Resurrection is the work of all three Persons of the Trinity—Father (Rom 6:4), Son (Jn 10:17-18), and Spirit (Rom 1:4). [Back to text.](#)

15:17 still in your sins: If Jesus did not overcome death, then he could not have destroyed sin, for death is the consequence of sin (Gen 3:17-19). It is precisely Christ's victory over death that demonstrates his triumph over the cause of death (1 Cor 15:56-57). [Back to text.](#)

15:20 the first fruits: In the liturgy of ancient Israel the first portion of a crop was offered to God in the Temple as a means of consecrating the whole of the expected harvest (Ex 23:19; Lev 23:10-14). So, too, Christ is not only the first to be raised in glory, but his resurrected humanity is an offering that ensures an entire harvest of believers will be raised as he was (Acts 26:23; Rom 11:15-16). **fallen asleep:** A euphemism for biological death (15:6; 1 Thess 4:15). [Back to text.](#)

15:21-22 Paul compares and contrasts **Adam** and **Christ** as the two individuals whose lives have had the greatest impact on the entire human race. Sin had its beginning with Adam, and because of him the human family enters the world estranged from God and destined to die. Salvation comes to us through Christ, whose triumph over sin reverses the damage done by Adam and gives us the hope that even our mortal bodies will be resurrected to new life. This contrast continues in 15:45-49. [Back to text.](#)

15:23 at his coming: Only when Christ returns in glory (Acts 1:11) will the bodies of the saints be raised in glory (Phil 3:20-21). See word study: [Coming](#) at Mt 24. [Back to text.](#)

15:24 rule . . . authority . . . power: Demonic spirits hostile to God and the advance of his kingdom (Col 2:15; 1 Pet 3:22). [See note on Eph 1:21.](#) [Back to text.](#)



15:25-27 Paul summarizes the drama of the last days, when Christ will *triumph* over his enemies and *transfer* his kingdom over to the Father (CCC 1042-50). He makes use of imagery from Ps 110:1 and Ps 8:6, passages linked by the expression **under his feet** (1 Cor 15:25, 27). • Psalm 110 portrays the Messiah enthroned at Yahweh's right hand and awaiting the subjection of his enemies. Psalm 8 reflects on the original vocation of man to stand above all of creation as its ruler and steward. Christ assumes both of these roles at his Ascension, from which time his reign continues until all creation bows in homage and his final adversary, death, falls in defeat (CCC 668, 1008). [Back to text.](#)

15:25 until: This expression fixes a limit to the conflict between Christ and his enemies, not to his kingship. His rule will be perfected, not terminated, when death is finally destroyed. [Back to text.](#)

15:28 everything to every one: Or, "all things in all". In the end, creation and even the incarnate Son will honor the Father as the Lord of all and the absolute Origin of all life. [Back to text.](#)

15:29 baptized on their [the dead's] behalf: This passage continues to baffle interpreters, since neither the form nor the meaning of this practice is familiar to us today. Perhaps living believers were receiving baptism for the sake of deceased persons, hoping its benefits would accrue to them in the afterlife (cf. 2 Mac 12:39-45). Another possibility, suggested by the verses that follow (1 Cor 15:30-34), is that Paul is talking about people who endure a baptism of suffering for the sake of others who are physically or spiritually dead (Mk 10:38; Lk 12:50). Either way, Paul reasons that such baptisms are pointless apart from belief in a future resurrection. [Back to text.](#)



15:32 What do I gain: Suffering would be meaningless without the prospect of a heavenly reward (4:9-13; 2 Cor 4:11). **Let us eat and drink:** A quotation from Is 22:13. • Isaiah echoes the words of the wicked inhabitants of Jerusalem, who despised the Law of God in their pursuit of selfish enjoyments. Such a carefree philosophy of life makes sense only if there is no hope of life beyond death. [Back to text.](#)

15:33 Bad company ruins good morals: An excerpt from *Thais*, a comedy written by the Greek poet Menander. Paul cites it to warn that

doctrinal error about the resurrection breeds immorality that is both destructive and contagious (6:13-14; Prov 13:20). [Back to text.](#)

15:35-58 Paul moves from defending the resurrection to explaining the constitution of resurrected bodies. For those Corinthians who believed a resurrection was impossible—given the frailty of our bodies at present—Paul insists that risen bodies will be clothed in power, glory, and immortality (15:42-44, 51-53). [Back to text.](#)

15:36 unless it dies: As seeds must decay in order to germinate and bring forth life, so death is merely a prelude to resurrection and new life (Jn 12:24). Paul may be continuing the illustration of 15:23, where the risen body of Christ is the first offering of a crop that consecrates a whole harvest of resurrected saints. [Back to text.](#)



15:38-41 Variations in nature between the dignity of living beings (**men, animals, birds, fish**) and heavenly bodies (**sun, moon, stars**) enable Paul to illustrate the different gradations of glory that will characterize the bodies of risen believers. • Daniel 12:2-3 likewise compares the righteous who rise again with the lights and stars shining in heaven. [Back to text.](#)



15:42-44 Our risen bodies will be the same bodies that we possessed during earthly life, only transformed by new and spiritual qualities. The Resurrection of Christ's crucified body is a demonstration of this (Jn 20:26-28; CCC 999, 1017). • Catholic theology enumerates four qualities that will endow the risen bodies of the saints: *impassibility* (immunity to suffering), *agility* (freedom from weakness), *subtlety* (complete subjection of the body to the soul), and *brightness* (outward radiance in proportion to the degree of inward holiness). [Back to text.](#)



15:44 spiritual body: The body in its risen and glorified state. More than a resuscitated corpse, the resurrected body will be supernaturally transformed by the divine power of Christ (Phil 3:21). • It is not called a "spiritual" body because the body will become a spirit but because the body will remain immortal and incorruptible through the spirit that enlivens it (St. Fulgentius, *On the Faith* 70). [Back to text.](#)



15:45 The first man: The contrast between Adam and Christ shows that by nature we get a body from Adam that is physical, earthly, and mortal; and by grace we expect a body from Christ that is spiritual, heavenly, and immortal (15:21-22). • Paul draws on Gen 2:7 to hint that Adam's creation bears a certain likeness to Christ's Resurrection. Just as Adam's body was raised from the earth by the breath of natural life, so Christ's body was raised from the earth by the Spirit of supernatural life. It is this life-giving Spirit, now channeled to the world through the sacrament of Christ's risen humanity, that will raise our bodies also (Rom 8:11). [Back to text.](#)

15:50 flesh and blood: A Semitic idiom for human beings, weak and subject to corruption (Sir 14:18; Mt 16:17). Paul is not denying that resurrected bodies will have flesh and blood; his point is that our physical bodies cannot enter God's kingdom in their present state of weakness; they must be radically "changed" (1 Cor 15:51). [Back to text.](#)

15:51 We shall not all sleep: The last generation that lives to see Christ return may be spared the experience of bodily death. Some scholars interpret this verse to mean that Paul expected Christ to come again during his own lifetime, since he seems to number himself ("we") among this final generation of Christians. Two considerations, however, suggest these words are rhetorical and should not be taken literally. **(1)** Elsewhere Paul counts himself among those who would be raised ("us") from the dead (1 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 4:14). **(2)** Paul sees death, through either hardship or martyrdom, as a real possibility for himself in several letters (2 Cor 1:8-9; Phil 3:10-11; 2 Tim 4:6). [Back to text.](#)



15:52 the last trumpet: The final blast that will inaugurate the general resurrection (1 Thess 4:16). • Several uses of the trumpet in ancient Israel fill out the background to this image. The trumpet was a *liturgical* instrument that summoned Israel to meet the Lord (Ex 19:16-17), to worship him on the Feast of Trumpets (Lev 23:23-25), and to enjoy his rest every jubilee year (Lev 25:9). The trumpet was also a *military* instrument that called soldiers into battle (Judg 7:19-23; Jer 4:19). These uses overlapped in the conquest of Jericho, where the military operation against the city was itself a liturgical action of processing and blowing trumpets

(Josh 6:1-21). Trumpet imagery is also used in the Prophets to signal Israel's restoration from the covenant death of exile (Is 27:13) and to commence the judgment of the wicked on the "day of the Lord" (Joel 2:1; Zeph 1:15-16). [Back to text.](#)

15:53 put on immortality: Our risen bodies will be robed with undying life, not stripped away like worthless garments. [See note on 2 Cor 5:4.](#) [Back to text.](#)



15:54-55 Paul appeals to Is 25:8 and Hos 13:14 to announce the final demise of death. • Isaiah describes a banquet of rich foods where all nations come to celebrate the end of suffering as the Lord swallows up death for ever. Hosea likewise forecasts that death will one day be robbed of its power and taunted like a defeated enemy. In Paul's mind, this day will dawn with the general resurrection. [Back to text.](#)

15:58 your labor is not in vain: The assurance that God will reward our faithfulness in the resurrection puts the struggles of daily life in perspective. Practically speaking, Paul is summoning us to glorify God in our bodies (6:20; CCC 364). [Back to text.](#)

16:1-4 Paul spent considerable energy on his third missionary journey collecting donations for the poor of Jerusalem (Rom 15:25-27; 2 Cor 8-9). On the one hand, this relief offering was meant to alleviate suffering in the mother Church of Christianity. On the other, Paul was asking his Gentile Churches to make a symbolic gesture of unity and solidarity with Jewish believers in need. The gift was successfully delivered on his final journey to Judea (Acts 24:17). [Back to text.](#)

16:1 Now concerning: Paul is responding to an inquiry from a previous Corinthian letter. [See note on 1 Cor 7:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)

16:2 first day of every week: Sunday, the Lord's day (Acts 20:7; Rev 1:10). Paul is probably directing his readers to collect their donations when they gather for prayer and eucharistic worship. He hopes they will give generously to this charitable campaign (2 Cor 9:6-15; CCC 1351). [Back to text.](#)

16:5 Macedonia: A Roman province in upper Greece, just north of the province of Achaia, where the city of Corinth is located. [Back to text.](#)

16:8 Ephesus: Paul was writing from the capital of the Roman province of Asia (modern Turkey). He eventually made it to Corinth (Acts 20:1-2)

after Pentecost, which was a Jewish festival celebrated in the spring, 50 days after Passover (Lev 23:15-21). [Back to text.](#)

16:10 Timothy: One of Paul's delegates sent ahead to Corinth (4:17). [See note on 1 Tim 1:2.](#) [Back to text.](#)

16:12 Apollos: A missionary who had worked in Corinth but was now in Asia (1:12; 3:5-6). The Corinthians may have requested his return. [Back to text.](#)

16:14 Let all . . . be done in love: This verse is a concise summary of Paul's teaching in the letter (8:1-3; 13:1-13; 14:1; 16:22). [Back to text.](#)

16:17 Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: Possibly the informants from Chloe who updated Paul on the struggles of the Corinthian Church (1:11). They may have also delivered to him the Church's letter of questions (7:1). [Back to text.](#)

16:19 Aquila and Prisca: A Christian couple who worked closely with Paul as tentmakers and missionaries, first in Corinth and then in Ephesus (Acts 18:1-3, 18-19). They opened their home for Christian gatherings (Rom 16:3-5). "Prisca" is an alternative spelling for "Priscilla". [Back to text.](#)

16:20 a holy kiss: A customary sign of peace and brotherly affection among the early Christians (Rom 16:16; 1 Thess 5:26). [Back to text.](#)

16:21 I, Paul, write this: Paul's handwritten signature was a mark of the letter's authenticity (2 Thess 3:17). Most of the letter was probably dictated to a secretary (cf. Rom 16:22). [Back to text.](#)

16:22 Our Lord, come!: A rendering of the Aramaic expression, *marana tha* ("Lord, come!"). This prayer, which is likewise echoed in Rev 22:20, was spoken at the end of one of the the earliest eucharistic liturgies on record (*Didache* 10, 6). Its use in the liturgy indicates what Paul himself asserts in 1 Cor 11:26, namely, that the sacramental worship of the Church is oriented to the coming of Christ in glory (CCC 671). [See note on 1 Cor 11:26.](#) [Back to text.](#)

INTRODUCTION TO

THE SECOND LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Author and Date The Apostle Paul is generally acknowledged as the author of 2 Corinthians. This conclusion is based on the letter's signature (1:1), the subsequent testimony of various Church Fathers, and the decidedly Pauline language and style of the epistle. Some scholars question whether the letter was originally written as a unified whole or is a patchwork of various letters written at different times. Pronounced differences in tone between chapters 1-9 (affectionate) and chapters 10-13 (severe) lead many to posit that two different letters, written under different circumstances, have been sewn together by a later editor into a single epistle. Others dissect the letter further, claiming that 2 Corinthians is a composite of at least three or more fragments of correspondence with the Corinthian Church. Still others defend the unity of the letter, sometimes explaining the changes in topic and tone as the result of Paul's receiving updated information about the situation in Corinth as he was writing the letter. Regardless of whether any of these hypotheses is correct, Paul is still regarded as the author of each and every part of the letter we now possess. Indeed, 2 Corinthians is one of the most personal and autobiographical of the apostle's writings.

Paul wrote 2 Corinthians on his third missionary tour (Acts 18:23-21:16), not long after writing and sending 1 Corinthians. Only now he has left Ephesus (1 Cor 16:8) and traveled to northern Greece into the Roman province of Macedonia (2:13; 7:5; 9:2). It is likely that Paul penned this letter in the fall of A.D. 56, having written 1 Corinthians earlier that same year.

Destination The Church in NT Corinth was young and unstable when Paul wrote this letter. The apostle had established a small community of Christians there about A.D. 51 (Acts 18:1-18). Soon after Paul's departure, however, the Church was bombarded with temptations. Pressures from the

surrounding pagan culture, especially the idolatry and immorality so rampant in ancient Corinth, posed a constant threat to their Christian commitment. Internal strife and divided loyalties were also tearing the community apart from within. By the time Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, the community was further threatened by outside intruders claiming to be legitimate apostles. These troublemakers moved in during Paul's absence and turned a number of the Corinthians against him, claiming that Paul was fickle, inarticulate, and plainly unqualified to be a messenger of Christ. These false teachers created tensions between Paul and the Corinthians that eventually reached a point of crisis. Paul therefore made a brief emergency visit to Corinth to set things straight, but he was unexpectedly attacked by an unnamed offender when he arrived (2:5; 7:12). To the apostle's distress, most of the Corinthians failed to defend him against this outspoken opponent. Only later did the majority of them repent of their guilty silence and again give Paul their full allegiance (7:9). Chapters 10-13 indicate, however, that a minority of the Corinthians remained impenitent and continued to question the validity of Paul's apostleship (12:21).

Purpose Paul wrote 2 Corinthians for several reasons. **(1)** He hoped to strengthen his relationship with loyal supporters in Corinth and prevent them from falling prey to the groundless claims of the "false apostles" (11:13) who were infiltrating the Church and attacking his integrity. **(2)** He wrote to assert and defend his apostolic authority against those who doubted or denied it (10:10; 12:11-12). **(3)** He sought to resume his collection efforts for the poor Christians in Jerusalem and so appealed to the generosity of his readers in this regard (chaps. 8-9). **(4)** The second section of the letter (chaps. 10-13) was written to confront the "false apostles" (11:13) and their Corinthian followers. Paul warns that he will "not spare" (13:2) these detractors if they persist in their opposition to his ministry. **(5)** Paul also wrote to inform the Corinthians of his plan to visit them for a third time (12:14; 13:1).

Themes and Characteristics Second Corinthians is a deeply personal and emotional letter. This makes it sometimes difficult to follow, but it gives us a rare glimpse of both the tenderness and the tenacity of Paul. He was a spiritual father going through the painful experience of his own children rising up against him and going their own way. The highs and lows of this

experience are stamped into the first and second halves of the letter: early on Paul is bursting with joy to hear that some of the Corinthians are turning back to him (chaps. 17), but later his anger and frustration return when he remembers that others are still acting in defiance (chaps. 10-13). Throughout the letter Paul makes use of the rhetorical arts to affirm and encourage the faithful as well as to denounce and expose the malice of his detractors for what it is.

In its content, 2 Corinthians is mainly an apologetic letter. Apart from chapters 8-9, where he urges readers to make a generous donation for the poor, Paul directs most of his energy to a sustained defense of his apostolic authority. He has no desire to do this, but missionary intruders have backed him into a corner and forced him to fight his way out (10:11). First, Paul stresses that God has qualified him for ministry (3:4-6), just as he had qualified Moses to shepherd the people of Israel. This bold comparison actually works to Paul's advantage: through the ministry of Moses, death came to faithless Israel; but through the ministry of the apostle, the Spirit is poured out in a powerful and life-giving way upon the people of the New Covenant (3:7-18). The Corinthians are living proof of this effect, having received the Spirit through the apostolic actions of Paul (3:23). Second, Paul brings up again and again his own experience of suffering as the credentials of which he is most proud (1:5-11; 2:4; 4:7-12; 6:48; 7:5; 11:23-29). This is to emphasize that God alone deserves the credit for his missionary successes (1:21-22; 5:18; 10:17). Unlike the false teachers (11:21), he boasts, not in himself, but in the power of grace made effective through his weaknesses (12:9-10). By reasserting his authority as an ambassador of Christ (5:20), Paul hopes to avoid a further confrontation with the Corinthians, which would force him to use this authority in a disciplinary way (13:10). «

OUTLINE OF THE SECOND LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

1. Address and Prologue ([1:1-11](#))

- A. Greeting ([1:1-2](#))
- B. Thanksgiving ([1:3-11](#))

2. Paul's Apostolic Ministry ([1:12-7:16](#))

- A. Paul's Travel Plans ([1:12-2:17](#))
- B. Ministry of the New Covenant ([3:1-4:18](#))
- C. The Christian's Eternal Destiny ([5:1-10](#))
- D. Ministry of Reconciliation ([5:11-6:10](#))
- E. Paul's Reconciliation with Corinth ([6:11-7:16](#))

3. The Jerusalem Collection ([8:1-9:15](#))

- A. Example of the Macedonians ([8:1-7](#))
- B. Supplying the Needs of Others ([8:8-15](#))
- C. Arrival of Titus and Companions ([8:16-24](#))
- D. Appeal for Generosity ([9:1-15](#))

4. Paul's Apostolic Defense ([10:1-13:10](#))

- A. Paul's Ministry of Divine Power ([10:1-12](#))
- B. Boasting in the Lord ([10:13-11:20](#))
- C. Boasting in Suffering and Weakness ([11:21-33](#))
- D. Paul's Heavenly Journey ([12:1-10](#))
- E. Appeal for Unity and Peace ([12:11-13:10](#))

5. Epilogue ([13:11-14](#))

- A. Farewell ([13:11-13](#))
- B. Trinitarian Benediction ([13:14](#))

THE SECOND LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE

CORINTHIANS

Chapters

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Essays and Charts

[Not Made with Hands \(2 Cor 5:1\)](#)

Salutation

1 Paul, [an apostle](#) of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother.

To the Church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Acha'ia:

2 [Grace to you and peace](#) from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's Thanksgiving after Affliction

3 [Blessed be the God and Father](#) of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, **4**who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. **5**For as we share abundantly in [Christ's sufferings](#), so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.^a **6**If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. **7**Our hope for you is [unshaken](#); for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

8 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of the affliction ***** we experienced [in Asia](#); for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. **9**Why, we felt that we had received the sentence of death; but that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead; **10**he delivered us from so deadly a peril, and he will deliver us; on him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. **11**You also must [help](#)

[us by prayer](#), so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us in answer to many prayers.

12 For our boast is this, the testimony of [our conscience](#) that we have behaved in the world, and still more toward you, with holiness and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God. 13 For we write you nothing but what you can read and understand; I hope you will understand fully, 14 as you have understood in part, that you can be proud of us as we can be of you, on the [day of the Lord Jesus](#).

The Postponement of Paul's Visit

15 Because I was sure of this, I wanted to come to you first, so that you might have [a double pleasure](#);^b 16 I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and to come back to you from Macedonia and have you send me on my way [to Judea](#). 17 [Was I vacillating](#) when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans like a worldly man, ready to say Yes and No at once? 18 As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No. 19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we preached among you, [Silva'nus and Timothy and I](#), was not Yes and No; but in him it is always Yes. 20 For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why we utter the [Amen](#) through him, to the glory of God. 21 [But it is God](#) who establishes us with you in Christ, and has [commissioned us](#); 22 he has put [his seal](#) upon us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

23 But [I call God to witness](#) against me—it was to spare you that I refrained from coming to Corinth. 24 Not that we lord it over your faith; we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in

2 your faith. 1 For I made up my mind not to make you [another painful visit](#). 2 For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained? 3 And [I wrote](#) as I did, so that when I came I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice, for I felt sure of all of you, that my joy would be the joy of you all. 4 For I wrote you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.

Forgiveness for the Offender

5 [But if any one](#) has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure—not to put it too severely—to you all. 6 For such a one this punishment by the majority is enough; 7 so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, [or he may be overwhelmed](#) by excessive sorrow. 8 So I

beg you to reaffirm your love for him. ⁹For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything. ¹⁰Any one whom you forgive, I also forgive. What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, ¹¹to keep Satan from gaining the advantage over us; for we are not ignorant of his designs.

Paul's Anxiety in Troas

¹² When I came to [Troas](#) to preach the gospel of Christ, a door was opened for me in the Lord; ¹³but my mind could not rest because I did not find my brother [Titus](#) there. So I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia.

¹⁴ [But thanks be to God](#), who in Christ always [leads us in triumph](#), and [through us spreads the fragrance](#) of the knowledge of him everywhere. ¹⁵For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, ¹⁶to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. [Who is sufficient](#) for these things? ¹⁷For we are [not, like so many, peddlers](#) of God's word; but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.

Ministers of the New Covenant

³ Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, [letters of recommendation](#) to you, or from you? ²You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on your^c [hearts](#), to be known and read by all men; ³and you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with [the Spirit](#) of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

⁴ Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. ⁵Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; [our sufficiency is from God](#), ⁶who has qualified us to be ministers of a [new covenant](#), not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life.

⁷ Now if the dispensation of death, [carved in letters on stone](#), came with such splendor that the Israelites could not look at [Moses' face](#) because of its brightness, fading as this was, ⁸will not the dispensation of the Spirit be attended with greater splendor? ⁹For if there was splendor in the dispensation of condemnation, the dispensation of righteousness must far exceed it in splendor. ¹⁰Indeed, in this case, what once had splendor has

come to have no splendor at all, because of the splendor that surpasses it. ¹¹For if what faded away came with splendor, what is [permanent](#) must have much more splendor.

¹² Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, ¹³not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not see the end of the fading splendor. ¹⁴But their minds were hardened; for to this day, when they read the old covenant, [that same veil](#) remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵Yes, to this day whenever [Moses is read](#) a veil lies over their minds; ¹⁶but when a man [turns to the Lord](#) the veil is removed. ¹⁷Now [the Lord is the Spirit](#), and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸And we all, with unveiled face, beholding^d the glory of the Lord, are [being changed](#) into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. *

⁴ Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God,^e [we do not lose heart](#). ²We have renounced [disgraceful, underhanded ways](#); we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. ³And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. ⁴In their case [the god of this world](#) has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God. ⁵For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants^f for Jesus' sake. ⁶For it is the God who said, "[Let light shine out](#) of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

[Treasure in Earthen Vessels](#)

⁷ But we have this treasure [in earthen vessels](#), to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. ⁸[We are afflicted](#) in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. ¹¹For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹²So death is at work in us, [but life in you](#). *

13 Since we have the same spirit of faith as he had who wrote, "[I believed, and so I spoke](#)," we too believe, and so we speak, **14** knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. **15** For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

Living by Faith

16 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer man is [wasting away](#), our inner man is being renewed every day. **17** For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal [weight of glory](#) beyond all comparison, **18** because we look not to the things that are seen but to the [things that are unseen](#); for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

5 For we know that if the earthly [tent](#) we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. **2** Here indeed we groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling, **3** so that by putting it on we may not be found naked. **4** For while we are still in this tent, we sigh with anxiety; not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be [further clothed](#), so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. **5** He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit [as a guarantee](#).

6 So we are always of good courage; we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, **7** for [we walk by faith](#), not by sight. **8** We are of good courage, and we would rather be [away from the body](#) and at home with the Lord. **9** [So whether we are at home or away](#), we make it our aim to please him. **10** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive [good or evil](#), according to what he has done in the body.

The Ministry of Reconciliation

11 Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men; but what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. **12** We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to be proud of us, so that you may be able to answer [those who pride themselves](#) on a man's position and not on his heart. **13** For if we are [beside ourselves](#), it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. **14** For [the love of Christ urges us on](#), because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all

have died. ¹⁵And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh; even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation;⁸ the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. ¹⁸All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling^h the world to himself, * not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹For our sake he made him to be sin * who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

6 Working together with him, then, we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain. ²For he says,

"At the acceptable time I have listened to you, and helped you on the day of salvation."

Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. ³We put no obstacle in any one's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, ⁴but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labors, watching, hunger; ⁶by purity, knowledge, forbearance, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love, ⁷truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ⁸in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; ⁹as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as punished, and yet not killed; ¹⁰as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

11 Our mouth is open to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide. ¹²You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. ¹³In return—I speak as to children—widen your hearts also.

The Temple of the Living God

14 Do not be mismated with unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?

¹⁵What accord has Christ with [Be'lial](#)?ⁱ Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶[What agreement](#) has the temple of God with idols? For [we are the temple](#) of the living God; as God said,

"I will live in them and move among them,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.

¹⁷Therefore come out from them,
and be separate from them, says the Lord,
and touch nothing unclean;
then I will welcome you,

¹⁸and I will be a father to you,
and you shall be my sons and daughters,
says the Lord Almighty."

7 Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and [make holiness perfect](#) in the fear of God.

Paul's Joy at the Corinthians' Repentance and Zeal

² Open your hearts to us; we have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have [taken advantage](#) of no one. ³I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that you are in our hearts, to [die together and to live together](#). ⁴I have great confidence in you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. With all our affliction, [I am overjoyed](#).

⁵ [For even when](#) we came into [Macedonia](#), our bodies had no rest but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within. ⁶But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by [the coming of Titus](#), ⁷and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more. ⁸For even if I made you sorry with [my letter](#), I do not regret it (though I did regret it), for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. ⁹As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were [grieved into repenting](#); for you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. ¹⁰For [godly grief](#) produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death. ¹¹For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing,

what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves guiltless in the matter. ¹²So although I wrote to you, it was not on account of [the one who did the wrong](#), nor on account of the one who suffered the wrong, but in order that your zeal for us might be revealed to you in the sight of God. ¹³Therefore we are comforted.

And besides our own comfort we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus, because his mind has been set at rest by you all. ¹⁴For if I have expressed to him some pride in you, I was not put to shame; but just as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting before Titus has proved true. ¹⁵And his heart goes out all the more to you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, and the fear and trembling with which you received him. ¹⁶I rejoice, because I have perfect confidence in you.

Encouragement to Be Generous

8 [We want you to know](#), brethren, about the grace of God which has been shown in the churches of [Macedonia](#), ²for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in [a wealth of liberality](#) on their part. ³For they gave [according to their means](#), as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will, ⁴begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—⁵and this, not as we expected, but first they gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God. ⁶Accordingly we have urged [Titus](#) that as he had already made a beginning, he should also complete among you this gracious work. ⁷Now as [you excel in everything](#)—in faith, in utterance, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in your love for us—see that you excel in this gracious work also.

8 I say this [not as a command](#), but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. ⁹For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though [he was rich](#), yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. ¹⁰And in this matter I give my advice: it is best for you now to complete what a year ago you began not only to do but to desire, ¹¹so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. ¹²For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a man has, [not according to what he has not](#). ¹³I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, ¹⁴but that as a matter of [equality](#) your abundance at the present time should supply their want, so that their abundance may supply your want, that there may be

equality. ¹⁵As it is written, "He who gathered much had nothing over, and he who gathered little had no lack."

Commendation of Titus

16 But thanks be to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. ¹⁷For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest he is going to you of his own accord. ¹⁸With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel; ¹⁹and not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work which we are carrying on, for the glory of the Lord and to show our good will. ²⁰We intend that no one should blame us about this liberal gift which we are administering, ²¹for we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of men. ²²And with them we are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found earnest in many matters, but who is now more earnest than ever because of his great confidence in you. ²³As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker in your service; and as for our brethren, they are messengers^j of the churches, the glory of Christ. ²⁴So give proof, before the churches, of your love and of our boasting about you to these men.

Generosity in Giving

9 Now it is superfluous * for me to write to you about the offering for the saints, ²for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Acha'ia has been ready since last year; and your zeal has stirred up most of them. ³But I am sending the brethren so that our boasting about you may not prove vain in this case, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be; ⁴lest if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we be humiliated—to say nothing of you—for being so confident. ⁵So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren to go on to you before me, and arrange in advance for this gift you have promised, so that it may be ready not as an exaction but as a willing gift.

6 The point is this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work. ⁹As it is written,

"[He scatters abroad](#), he gives to the poor;
his righteousness^k endures for ever."

¹⁰He who [supplies seed](#) to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your resources^l and increase the harvest of your righteousness.^k

¹¹[You will be enriched](#) in every way for great generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God; ¹²for the rendering of this service not only supplies the wants of the saints but also overflows in [many thanksgivings](#) to God. ¹³Under the test of this service, you^m will glorify God by your obedience in acknowledging the gospel of Christ, and by the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others; ¹⁴while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God in you. ¹⁵Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

Paul Defends His Ministry

10 [I, Paul](#), myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ —[I who am humble](#) when face to face with you, but bold to you when I am away! ^{*}—²I beg of you that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing against some who suspect us of acting in worldly fashion. ³[For though we live in the world](#) we are not carrying on a worldly war, ⁴for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. ⁵We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, ⁶being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

⁷ Look at what is before your eyes. If any one is confident that he is Christ's, let him remind himself that as he is Christ's, so are we. ⁸For even if I boast a little too much of [our authority](#), which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I shall not be put to shame. ⁹I would not seem to be frightening you with letters. For they say, "[His letters](#) are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account." ¹¹Let such people understand that what we say by letter when absent, we do when present. ¹²Not that we venture to class or [compare ourselves](#) with some of those who commend themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another, and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding.

13 [But we will](#) not [boast beyond limit](#), but will keep to the limits God has apportioned us, to reach even to you. **14**For we are not overextending ourselves, as though we did not reach you; we were the first to come all the way to you with the gospel of Christ. **15**We do not boast beyond limit, in other men's labors; but our hope is that as your faith increases, our field among you may be greatly enlarged, **16**so that we may preach the gospel in [lands beyond you](#), without boasting of work already done in another's field. **17**"Let him who boasts, [boast of the Lord](#)." **18**For it is not the man who commends himself that is accepted, but the man whom the Lord commends.

Paul and the False Apostles

11 I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do [bear with me](#)! **2**I feel a divine jealousy for you, for [I betrothed you to Christ](#) to present you as a pure bride to her one husband. **3**But I am afraid that as [the serpent deceived Eve](#) by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. **4**For if some one comes and preaches [another Jesus](#) than the one we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you submit to it readily enough. **5**I think that I am not in the least inferior to these [superlative apostles](#). **6**Even if I am [unskilled](#) in speaking, I am not in knowledge; in every way we have made this plain to you in all things.

7 [Did I commit a sin in abasing myself](#) so that you might be exalted, because I preached God's gospel without cost to you? **8**I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. **9**And when I was with you and was in want, I did not burden any one, for my needs were supplied by the brethren who came [from Macedonia](#). So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way. **10**As the truth of Christ is in me, this boast of mine shall not be silenced in the regions of Acha'ia. **11**And why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!

12 And what I do I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. **13**For such men are [false apostles](#), deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. **14**And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as [an angel of light](#). **15**So it is not strange if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. [Their end](#) will correspond to their deeds.

Paul's Sufferings as an Apostle

16 I repeat, let no one think me foolish; but even if you do, accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little. ¹⁷(What I am saying I say not with the Lord's authority but as a fool, in this boastful confidence; ¹⁸since many boast of worldly things, I too will boast.) ¹⁹For you gladly bear with fools, being wise yourselves! ²⁰For you bear it if a man makes slaves of you, or preys upon you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face. ²¹To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that!

But whatever any one dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that. ²²Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. ²³Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. ²⁴Five times I have received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. ²⁵Three times I have been beaten with rods; once I was stoned. Three times I have been shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been adrift at sea; ²⁶on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brethren; ²⁷in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. ²⁸And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches. ²⁹Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?

30 If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. ³¹The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed for ever, knows that I do not lie. ³²At Damascus, the governor under King Ar'etas guarded the city of Damascus in order to seize me, ³³but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped his hands.

Paul's Visions and Revelations

12 I must boast; there is nothing to be gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. ²I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. ³And I know that this man was caught up into Paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—⁴and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not

utter. ⁵On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. ⁶Though if I wish to boast, I shall not be a fool, for I shall be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. ⁷And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, [a thorn *](#) was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. ⁸Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it should leave me; ⁹but he said to me, "[My grace is sufficient](#) for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Paul's Concern for the Corinthian Church

¹¹ I have been a fool! You forced me to it, for I ought to have been [commended by you](#). For I am not at all inferior to these superlative apostles, even though I am nothing. ¹²The [signs of a true apostle](#) were performed among you in all patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works. ¹³For in what were you less favored than the rest of the churches, except that I myself did not burden you? Forgive me this wrong! *

¹⁴ Here for [the third time](#) I am ready to come to you. And I will not be a burden, for I seek not what is yours but you; for children ought not to lay up for their parents, but parents for their children. ¹⁵I will most gladly [spend and be spent](#) for your souls. If I love you the more, am I to be loved the less? ¹⁶But granting that I myself did not burden you, I was [crafty, you say](#), and got the better of you by guile. ¹⁷Did I take advantage of you through any of those whom I sent to you? ¹⁸I urged Titus to go, and sent the brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not act in the same spirit? Did we not take the same steps?

¹⁹ Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves before you? It is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ, and all for your upbuilding, beloved. ²⁰For I fear that perhaps I may come and find you not what I wish, and that you may find me not what you wish; that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, selfishness, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. ²¹I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of

those who sinned before and [have not repented](#) of the impurity, immorality, and licentiousness which they have practiced.

Further Warning

13 This is the third time I am coming to you. Any charge must be sustained by the evidence of [two or three witnesses](#). ²I warned those who sinned before and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again I will not spare them —³since [you desire proof](#) that Christ is speaking in me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful in you. ⁴For he was [crucified in weakness](#), but lives by the power of God. For we are weak in him, but in dealing with you we shall live with him by the power of God.

⁵ Examine yourselves, to see whether you are holding to your faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test! ⁶I hope you will find out that we have not failed. ⁷But we beg God that you may not do wrong—not that we may appear to have met the test, but that you may do what is right, though we may seem to have failed. ⁸For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. ⁹For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. What we pray for is [your improvement](#). ¹⁰I write this while I am away from you, in order that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority which the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down.

Final Greetings and Benediction

11 Finally, brethren, rejoice. Mend your ways, heed my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you. ¹²Greet one another with [a holy kiss](#). ¹³All the saints greet you.

14 [The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ](#) and the love of God and the fellowship ofⁿ the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Commentary on The Second Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

1:1 an apostle: A messenger of the gospel commissioned directly by Christ (Acts 26:12-18) and a witness of his Resurrection (1 Cor 9:1). Throughout this letter Paul asserts and defends his apostolic authority against those who have challenged it. He was established in this office by God's **will** and call, not by his own recommendation (2 Cor 1:21; 2:17). **Timothy:** A faithful companion of Paul (Acts 16:1-3) and a familiar figure to the Corinthians (Acts 18:5; 1 Cor 4:17). [See note on 1 Tim 1:2.](#) **the Church of God:** The local community in Corinth, which is an integral part of the universal Church. Paul himself is the founder of this congregation (Acts 18:1-11). **Achaia:** A Roman province in southern Greece whose capital city was Corinth. Paul is writing just north of Achaia in the province of Macedonia (2:13; 7:5). [Back to text.](#)

1:2 Grace to you and peace: A standard Pauline greeting. [See note on 1 Cor 1:3.](#) [Back to text.](#)



1:3-7 Paul's opening prayer blesses God the Father for the **mercies** and **comforts** he pours out upon his children in need. He not only comforts them with inner consolation but also gives them strength to endure every hardship. The divine comfort that Paul receives overflows to benefit the Corinthians undergoing their own afflictions (1:6-7). • Paul's benediction resembles an OT prayer form that blesses Yahweh for his greatness and thanks him for rescuing the righteous from mortal dangers (1 Chron 29:10-13; Ps 28:6; 66:20; 124:6). [Back to text.](#)

1:5 Christ's sufferings: The mission of the believer is to become like Christ, which means patiently enduring life's most unbearable pain and suffering (Phil 1:29; 1 Pet 2:21). Paul and his missionary team experienced such hardships on a routine basis (2 Cor 4:8-12; 11:23-33). [Back to text.](#)

1:7 unshaken: A timely note of encouragement. Despite Paul's strained relationship with the Corinthians in the past, he remains confident in their present loyalty to the gospel. [Back to text.](#)

1:8 in Asia: A Roman province in western Turkey. The **affliction** Paul suffered in this region is otherwise unknown to us, although some think he is alluding to the riot in Ephesus in Acts 19:23-20:1. Whatever the trial, it

proved to be a learning experience for Paul, helping him to trust more in God and less in himself. [Back to text.](#)

1:11 help us by prayer: Christians united with Christ are also united with one another. This communion of the saints enables them to pray for other believers in need and solicit divine blessings for them. When the Lord answers these prayers, we have further cause for praising him (9:12) (CCC 2634-36). [Back to text.](#)

1:12 our conscience: Paul defends his sincerity against accusers who apparently questioned his motives for pursuing apostolic work. **not by earthly wisdom:** Paul's gospel does not stem from human ingenuity but from God, who revealed it through Christ. The marked difference between worldly knowledge and the wisdom of God was earlier explained in 1 Cor 1:18-4:7. See word study: [Wisdom](#) at 1 Cor 1:20. [Back to text.](#)

1:14 day of the Lord Jesus: Some ancient manuscripts read "our Lord" instead of "the Lord". The day in question is the Day of Judgment, when Christ will scrutinize the thoughts, words, and deeds of all people and nations (5:10). For the background and theology that underlie this Pauline expression, [See note on 1 Cor 1:8.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:15 a double pleasure: Refers to Paul's original plan to visit the Corinthians on his way "to" and "from" the province of Macedonia (1:16). Because tensions were high after a painful, emergency visit (2:1), he changed his itinerary and chose not to visit them again *after* being in Macedonia. He apparently traveled straight back to Asia Minor (Troas, 2:12) instead of making his intended return. [Back to text.](#)

1:16 to Judea: i.e., to deliver funds collected for poor Christians in Jerusalem (chaps. 8-9; Rom 15:25-27). [Back to text.](#)

1:17 Was I vacillating . . . ?: Critics charged Paul with being fickle because he altered his travel schedule from his original plan to make two visits to Corinth (1:16). Paul in fact was not fluctuating between **Yes and No**, as though he were unpredictable or double-minded, but he was making all decisions in the best interests of the Corinthians. In this case, he wished to avoid (1:23) another confrontational visit (2:1) and so withdrew until tensions were eased. [See note on 2 Cor 1:15.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:19 Silvanus and Timothy and I: The original founders of the Corinthian Church (Acts 18:1-18). Silvanus is also known as "Silas" (Acts 18:5). [Back to text.](#)

1:21-22 Paul traces the blessings of the Christian life back to the Trinity —**God** the Father established us in **Christ** the Son and filled our hearts with the living **Spirit**. Notice that Paul also ends the letter with a trinitarian benediction (13:14). [Back to text.](#)

1:21 commissioned us: Literally, "anointed us". As Jesus the Messiah ("Anointed One") was anointed with the Spirit (Acts 10:38), so Christians share in the anointing of the same Spirit through the Sacraments (1 Jn 2:20, 27). [Back to text.](#)



1:22 his seal: An inward stamp of divine ownership. Seals in the ancient world were often impressed in clay or wax by a king, queen, or royal official as a sign of authority, identifying the owner of property or the sender of a letter (1 Kings 21:8; Esther 8:8-10; Dan 6:17). • Paul's teaching points to the indelible "character" imprinted on souls who receive Baptism and Confirmation. This spiritual mark entitles them to God's grace and protection, while its permanent effect makes it impossible to receive these Sacraments of Initiation more than once (CCC 1272-74, 1296). **guarantee:** A commercial term for a "pledge" or "first installment" given in advance of full payment. On earth, believers share in the "first fruits" of the Spirit (Rom 8:23) as they await the full inheritance of divine life and blessing in heaven (2 Cor 5:5; Eph 1:14) (CCC 735, 1107). [Back to text.](#)

1:23 I call God to witness: An oath formula calling on God to confirm the reliability of personal testimony (Rom 1:9; Phil 1:8). Even God could bear witness that Paul's decision to cancel one of his scheduled visits to Corinth was motivated by love, i.e., it was to **spare** them an inevitable confrontation by giving them time to repent and to be reconciled with him (CCC 2154). [Back to text.](#)

2:1 another painful visit: Paul made a hurried and unpleasant visit to Corinth between writing 1 Cor and sending 2 Cor. This must have been the apostle's second visit to Corinth, since he expects to come again for a "third" time (12:14; 13:1). See introduction: *Destination*. [Back to text.](#)

2:3 I wrote: Several times Paul refers to a previous letter of "anguish" and "tears" that he sent to reprimand the Corinthians (2 Cor 2:4, 9; 7:8, 12). This may have been 1 Corinthians but is more likely a personal letter that has not survived. Some think the substance of this correspondence is

preserved in chaps. 10-13, although arguments for this view remain conjectural. [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Amen ([2 Cor 1:20](#))

Amen (Gk.): means "so be it", "so it is", or "truly". Behind it stands a Hebrew term that conveys a sense of firmness or reliability. The term "Amen" appears frequently in the OT, where it is pronounced to confirm a divine oath or curse (Num 5:22; Deut 27:15), attest to the greatness of God (1 Chron 16:36; Neh 8:6), or express a prayerful wish (Tob 8:8). A double "Amen" concludes the first, second, and third divisions of the Psalter (Ps 41:13; 72:19; 89:52). In the NT, "Amen" is a liturgical response arising from the congregation in both the earthly (1 Cor 14:16) and heavenly liturgies (Rev 5:14; 7:12). It expresses a firm belief in God's revealed truth and often comes at the end of doxologies that extol his glory (Rom 11:36; Gal 1:5; Eph 3:21). To say "Amen" is to desire God's promises to be fulfilled and to trust that they will be (2 Cor 1:20). Christ is called the "Amen" because he embodies the reliability and covenant faithfulness of God (Rev 3:14). Jesus often uses this expression as an abbreviated oath formula to insist that his words are incontrovertible declarations of truth (Mt 5:18; 18:3; Jn 1:51) (CCC 1061-65).

2:5-11 These verses hint that Paul's "painful visit" to Corinth (2:1) had something to do with an individual (**such a one**, 2:6; 7:12). The identity of this offender remains a mystery. Ancient commentators identified him as the incestuous man of 1 Cor 5:1-5 who was excommunicated for his shameful behavior. Modern commentators tend to view him as an outspoken critic who slandered and insulted Paul while the rest of the Church stood by in silence. Whatever the precise nature of his crime, the Corinthians are urged to forgive and restore him to their fellowship. [Back to text.](#)

2:7 or he may be overwhelmed: Paul warns that "Satan" (2:11) can turn the experience of church discipline into an occasion for despair. For this reason, remedial punishment for sinners should not be excessively harsh or

indefinitely prolonged but should always leave the door open for sincere repentance. Paul warns believers of the devil's schemes more often in 2 Cor than in any of his other letters (4:4; 6:15; 11:3, 14; 12:7). [Back to text.](#)

2:12 Troas: A port city on the Aegean coast of modern Turkey (Acts 16:8-10; 20:5-6). [Back to text.](#)

2:13 Titus: One of Paul's trusted companions. He was sent to Corinth by the apostle to deliver the letter of "tears" (2:4) and to help resolve the crisis in the Church there. Because Paul was anxious to hear back from Titus, he went to **Macedonia** (northern Greece) in hopes of intercepting him on his way back to Asia Minor. According to 7:5-16, Titus brought encouraging news. Most of the Corinthians responded to Paul's letter with contrition and returned to him their full confidence and support. [Back to text.](#)

2:14-7:4 Paul makes a long digression to explain the significance of his apostolic ministry. He resumes the story of Titus' mission and return in 7:5. Some take this digression as evidence that a separate letter has been incorporated into the text; however, there is no evidence for such an insertion in the surviving manuscripts of 2 Cor, and digressions are common enough in ancient letters to suffice as an explanation for the momentary shift in subject matter. [Back to text.](#)



2:14-16 Paul rejoices that the gospel is being disseminated, like the fragrance of incense, throughout the world as a result of his ministry. It emits the sweet aroma of eternal **life** to believers on the way to salvation and the stench of **death** to those who are headed for spiritual ruin. • The terms **fragrance** and **aroma** are drawn from OT passages that describe the pleasing odor of sacrifices offered to the Lord (Gen 8:21; Ex 29:18; Lev 1:9; Num 15:3). They are also used together in Sir 24:15 to illustrate how the wisdom of Yahweh, embodied in the Mosaic Law, spreads throughout Israel. Paul reinterprets this in light of the New Covenant, where the ministers of the gospel offer themselves as living sacrifices to God (Rom 12:1) and spread the wisdom of the gospel throughout the world (Col 1:23) (CCC 1294). [Back to text.](#)

2:16 Who is sufficient . . . ?: Implied answer: Paul, but only on the basis of God's commission (1:21; 2:17; 3:5-6). [Back to text.](#)

2:17 not, like so many, peddlers: Refers to the missionary intruders in Corinth, later called "false apostles" (11:13). Paul exposes their hidden

agenda, calling them salesmen of the gospel who preach, not for the glory of God, but for the sake of personal profit. Paul is exempt from such a charge since he accepts no financial support at all from the Corinthians (11:7-11; 1 Cor 9:7-15). See introduction: *Destination*. [Back to text](#).

3:1 letters of recommendation: Written referrals were sometimes sent ahead of traveling missionaries to prepare for their arrival in a new Church (Acts 18:27; Rom 16:1; 1 Cor 16:3). Apparently Paul's opponents furnished such resumes for themselves and misled the Corinthians into thinking they were genuine apostles (2 Cor 10:12). In contrast, Paul does not need to reestablish rapport in Corinth by written statements (5:12) but can point to the Church's conversion as proof that his ministry is authentic (Acts 18:1-18). [Back to text](#).

Word Study

Leads Us in Triumph ([2 Cor 2:14](#))

Thriambeuō (Gk.): means "to lead in triumphal procession". The verb is used twice in the NT and has its background in the Roman practice of marching prisoners of war through city streets following a successful military campaign. Spoils of war were displayed during the parade while captives were led along in disgrace and sometimes executed at the end of the march. These ceremonies were intended to honor the god (Jupiter) who gave them victory and the Roman general responsible for commanding the troops. Paul's use of the triumphal imagery is twofold. In Col 2:15, the demonic powers are disarmed and disgraced by the conquering Christ like prisoners of war. In 2 Cor 2:14, the metaphor is more difficult to interpret, since apostles rather than enemies are led forth in triumph. Either Paul pictures the apostles as captives of Christ who are taunted and sometimes killed in the streets of the unbelieving world, or perhaps they are the soldiers who participate in the celebration of Christ's triumph over sin and evil.

3:2 on your hearts: The very lives of the Corinthians are a legible witness that Paul is a true apostle who mediates the Spirit (1:22; Gal 3:2-5).

Some scholars prefer the variant reading "on our hearts" (textual note c). [Back to text.](#)



3:3 the Spirit: Engraved on the tablet of the believing heart. This divine work is even more magnificent than the writing of the Ten Commandments on stone (Ex 31:18). • Paul is drawing from two prophecies about the messianic age. Writing on the heart evokes Jeremiah's promise that God will ratify a new covenant and inscribe his law on the hearts of his people (Jer 31:31-34). The contrast between stone and human hearts evokes Ezekiel's promise that God will replace the stony hearts of his people with fleshly hearts that are ready to obey him through the Spirit (Ezek 11:19; 36:26-27). [Back to text.](#)



3:5 our sufficiency is from God: Paul makes no claim to be qualified for apostleship apart from God's grace (2:17). This is in marked contrast to the false apostles, who display their credentials with written documentation (3:1; 10:12). • Paul is alluding to the call of Moses in the Greek version of Ex 4:10. Like Moses, who complains that his poor speaking ability makes him unfit to be a prophet, Paul sees himself as "unskilled in speaking" (2 Cor 11:6). Nevertheless, he is confident that the grace of God more than compensates for his personal weaknesses (12:9-10). See word study: [Unskilled](#) at 2 Cor 11:6. [Back to text.](#)



3:6 new covenant: Sealed by the redeeming work of Jesus and made present in the Eucharist (Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25). **the written code:** Literally, "the letter", set in contrast to "the Spirit". • Tradition has understood the Pauline antithesis between letter and Spirit in two different ways. **(1)** Some read it as a *historical* contrast between two economies of salvation. The Law of Moses is the letter, which commands us but does not assist us, bringing death and condemnation upon the disobedient. But the Spirit, by a supernatural action of grace, gives us life and blessing along with the moral help we need to obey the Law. Proponents of this view include Tertullian, St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine, and St. Ephrem. **(2)** Others read it as a *hermeneutical* contrast between the literal and spiritual senses of Scripture. The literal sense of the OT describes things and events

of the past, which are shadows and types of the gospel, but these remain lifeless apart from their fulfillmen in Christ. The spiritual sense reveals the spiritual realities of the messianic age that bring us life and grace, realities foretold by the letter but now made present through the Spirit of Christ. Proponents of this view include Origen, St. Athanasius, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and St. Cyril of Alexandria (CCC 115-18, 1094). [Back to text.](#)



3:7-18 The New Covenant ministry of Paul supersedes the Old Covenant ministry of Moses, for he mediates righteousness through the Spirit, not condemnation through the uncompromising standards of the Law. Note that a single Greek term is translated by several different English words throughout this chapter (splendor, 3:7-11; brightness, 3:7; glory, 3:18). [Back to text.](#)

3:7 Moses' face: A reference to Ex 34:29-35, where the glory of God shone from the face of Moses and frightened the Israelites. Most scholars understand Paul this way: Moses veiled himself to prevent Israel from seeing the radiance of his face fade away over time. The gradual disappearance of this brightness, hidden behind the veil, symbolizes the destiny of the Old Covenant, which will itself pass away (2 Cor 3:13). [Back to text.](#)

3:11 permanent: Only the glory of the New Covenant is everlasting. It makes all previous covenants comparatively "old" (3:14). [Back to text.](#)

3:14 that same veil: The divine meaning of Scripture is veiled from unbelieving Israel, just as the divine radiance was veiled from wayward Israel back in Moses' day. The idea is that Paul's kinsmen read the OT without understanding that it points the way to Christ (Lk 24:44-47; Rom 10:1-4). [Back to text.](#)

3:15 Moses is read: I.e., the Torah is read weekly in the synagogues (Acts 15:21). [Back to text.](#)



3:16 turns to the Lord: Recalls how Moses removed the L veil every time he turned to the Lord to receive a new revelation (Ex 34:34). For Paul, this prefigures Christian conversion, which involves turning to the Lord to embrace the new revelation of the gospel. [Back to text.](#)

3:17 the Lord is the Spirit: The Spirit is fully divine, coequal in glory and greatness with the Father and the Son (3:18). His work within us gives

us **freedom** from the condemnation of the Old Covenant (Rom 8:1) and boldness to proclaim the gospel without fear (2 Cor 3:12; Rom 1:16). The title "Lord" is also shared by Christ (2 Cor 4:5) and God the Father (Gen 2:4, etc.) (CCC 693, 1741). [Back to text.](#)



3:18 being changed: Like Moses, whose countenance was transformed by gazing on the glory of the Lord (Ex 34:29). The glory of the Spirit changes believers little by little into the image of Christ (Rom 8:29), who is the image of God (2 Cor 4:4). In the theology of Paul, formation in the **likeness** of Jesus includes suffering and dying (Rom 8:17; Phil 3:10) as well as rising to immortal life (Rom 8:11; Phil 3:21) (CCC 1701). • Images of the People of God radiating with glory can be found in Ps 34:5 and Is 60:5. [Back to text.](#)

4:1 we do not lose heart: God's grace enables Paul to endure opposition and hardships no matter how difficult (12:9). [Back to text.](#)

4:2 disgraceful, underhanded ways: Probably an allusion to the tactics of the "false apostles" (11:14). Paul appeals to the consciences of the Corinthians as proof that he has always been honest and straightforward in his preaching, despite false accusations of being "crafty" (12:16). [Back to text.](#)

4:4 the god of this world: Satan, the chief enemy of God and his people. He is the unseen spirit that deceives men, hardens their hearts, and blinds them to the saving news of the gospel (1 Jn 5:19; Rev 20:2-3). Although defeated by Christ on the Cross (Heb 2:14), he still operates in the present age before his final demise at the end of time (Mt 25:41; Rev 20:10). [Back to text.](#)



4:6 Let light shine out: A paraphrase of Gen 1:3. • Paul views conversion as the beginning of a new creation (5:17). The transformation we experience in Christ thus parallels the transformation effected by the word of God when he first dispelled the darkness with light at the dawn of history. This was already hinted at by Isaiah, who developed the theme of light's victory over darkness as a sign of salvation (Is 9:2; 49:6; 60:1-3). Paul experienced this firsthand when the blinding light of Christ knocked him to the ground on the Damascus road (Acts 9:3; 26:13) (CCC 2583). [Back to text.](#)



4:7 in earthen vessels: At present, our human bodies are frail and corruptible, like jars made of clay. The difference between earthenware and **treasure** points to the distinction between the perishable nature of our bodies and the imperishable riches of grace they contain. Paul fills others with this treasure through his ministry of preaching and administering the Sacraments (CCC 1420). • Paul is using a cultic expression from the OT that refers to the sacred vessels in which sin offerings were cooked (Lev 6:28). In a similar way, we carry the sacrificial "death of Jesus" (2 Cor 4:10) in our suffering bodies. [See note on 2 Cor 5:21.](#) [Back to text.](#)

4:8-11 The grace of apostleship safeguards Paul against despair. Although in constant distress, he is not shattered or overcome by anxiety as a result of it. Hardships conform us to Christ when we follow his example of suffering (Phil 1:29; 1 Pet 2:21), while endurance is inspired by the hope of resurrection (2 Cor 4:14; Heb 11:35). [Back to text.](#)

4:12 but life in you: The sacrifices of Paul are united with the sacrifice of Jesus and, for this reason, unleash the blessings of God (Col 1:24). As Christ's death brought life to the world, so the apostle's ministry of daily "dying" becomes a channel of life for others as well. [Back to text.](#)



4:13 I believed, and so I spoke: A citation from the Greek I version of Ps 116:10. • Psalm 116 is a hymn of thanksgiving in which David recalls his faith in Yahweh during times of distress and remembers how he was rescued. Paul and the other apostles share this faith that God will deliver them from mortal dangers—and even death itself—and expect to thank him in return. [See note on 2 Cor 1:3-7.](#) [Back to text.](#)

4:16 wasting away: Although death gradually overtakes our body (**outer man**) through privations, injuries, and aging, our soul (**inner man**) is increasingly enlivened by the Spirit. Only at the future resurrection will our bodies share in this inward renewal when they too are made alive and glorious. [See note on 1 Cor 15:42-44.](#) [Back to text.](#)



4:17 weight of glory: Alludes to the Hebrew notion of "glory" (*kabod*), which is conceptualized as the heaviness of God's Divine Being. **beyond all comparison:** The trials and tribulations of life, and even its

most crushing misfortunes, will fade into nothing when the glory of heaven dawns on the saints (Rom 8:18). • Paul endured many unbearable hardships as light burdens, not because they were light in themselves, but because he knew they were borne for the sake of the Lord. Joined with the expectation of future glory, the love of God lessens the intensity of our troubles and prevents us from having any sense of them (St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 25, 17). [Back to text.](#)

4:18 things that are unseen: The invisible blessings that await us in heaven are infinite and permanent, unlike the finite and perishable goods of this world. This glory is perceived by faith, yearned for with hope, and finally attained by our love for God and neighbor (Rom 5:1-5; 8:22-25; Heb 11:1). [Back to text.](#)



5:1 tent . . . building: A contrast between mortal bodies and resurrected bodies. • An earthly tent is synonymous with a "perishable body" also in Wis 9:15. Beyond this, Paul has in mind the distinction between the Mosaic Tabernacle, a flimsy and temporary sanctuary used during Israel's trek through the wilderness, and the Solomonic Temple, a building that became the permanent dwelling of God in Jerusalem. This transition from tent to building in biblical history helps to illustrate how our mortal bodies will give way to immortal ones on the last day (1 Cor 15:42-44). **not made with hands:** See essay: [Not Made with Hands](#) at 2 Cor 5. [Back to text.](#)

5:4 further clothed: Paul envisions a future life for Christians that is physical and yet immortal. In heaven we will be neither stripped of our bodies (**unclothed**) nor burdened with their present weaknesses (**mortal**). We will instead be fitted with glorified bodies made ready for heavenly life (1 Cor 15:51-55; Phil 3:20-21). This teaching runs directly against the then-prevalent Greek notion that disembodiment in the next life was the ideal state of existence to be hoped for. For the heavenly state of believers between death and the resurrection of the body, [see note on 2 Cor 5:8](#). [Back to text.](#)

5:5 as a guarantee: Our possession of the Spirit is a down payment on the full inheritance awaiting us in heaven. [See note on 2 Cor 1:22](#). [Back to text.](#)

5:7 we walk by faith: A rule of the Christian life on earth, where Christ is present but hidden in the Scriptures, the Sacraments, and our souls. Only in eternity will our faith give way to the vision of God "face to face" (1 Cor 13:12) (CCC 163-64). [See note on 2 Cor 4:18.](#) [Back to text.](#)

5:8 away from the body: The intermediate state between bodily death and bodily resurrection. During this temporary phase, the souls of the righteous enjoy the presence of God even though their bodies lie buried in a grave (CCC 1005, 1021). It is important to note that, for Paul, *absence* from the body does not mean our *presence* with the Lord will be automatic or immediate. Judgment is the first thing to follow death, and for the saints whose works are judged imperfect, a process of spiritual purification will be needed before they enter the fullness of glory. For more on the transitional state of Purgatory, [see note on 1 Cor 3:15.](#) [Back to text.](#)

5:9-10 In order to possess Christ in heaven we must strive to **please** him on earth. On the Day of Judgment, he will review every one of our thoughts, words, and deeds performed in the body (Mt 25:31-46). [See note on Rom 2:6.](#) [Back to text.](#)

5:10 good or evil: Seems to envision rewards and penalties for the faithful departed, as in 1 Cor 3:12-15. [Back to text.](#)

5:12 those who pride themselves: I.e., Paul's critics in Corinth. They are preoccupied with his **position** (outward appearance), not with the more important intentions of his **heart** (cf. 1 Sam 16:7). [Back to text.](#)

5:13 beside ourselves: Although interpretations of this saying are debated, it probably means one of two things. **(1)** Paul's exceptional zeal for the gospel was viewed by his opponents as madness (Acts 26:24), despite the fact that he was always reasonable and moderate with the Corinthians themselves. **(2)** Paul's charismatic experiences, while times of intense communion with God, did not benefit the Corinthians as much as his sober instruction and spiritual guidance (12:1-7; 1 Cor 14:18-19). [Back to text.](#)

5:14 the love of Christ urges us on: The sacrificial love of Christ displayed on the Cross was overwhelming to Paul as it should be to us (Rom 5:8). This same divine love is poured into our hearts through the Spirit (Rom 5:5) and urges us to spread it among others by word and example (Jn 15:12-13) (CCC 851). [Back to text.](#)

5:15 no longer for themselves: Christians are born to a new life of grace that enables them to conquer selfishness and the tendency to live solely for private, personal interests. Purchased for God at the price of Christ's blood

(1 Cor 6:20), believers should strive to live the rest of their days **for him** (CCC 655, 1269). [Back to text.](#)

5:16 according to the flesh: According to some, this implies that Paul knew the historical Jesus during his earthly ministry. More likely, Paul is claiming that life in the Spirit brings a new perception of things, more penetrating than natural reason (1 Cor 2:12-15). Whereas the crucified **Christ** appears dead and defeated from a human viewpoint, from a spiritual viewpoint his Cross is a powerful sign of victory and life. [Back to text.](#)



5:17 a new creation: Baptism transfers us from the bondage of sin and slavery to the blessings of salvation and sonship. The New Covenant thus begins a **new** order in history where creation is steadily renewed, beginning with our souls and extending into every corner of the cosmos (Rom 8:19-25; Rev 21:1-5). Christ does not destroy the **old** order of creation but heals it, perfects it, and elevates it with supernatural life (CCC 1214, 1265). • The prophets of Israel envisioned this renewal far in advance of Christ's coming. Isaiah announced that Yahweh would restore the world, beginning with Israel (Is 42:6-9; 43:18-21; 65:17; 66:22). Other oracles foretold a return to the conditions of creation in Eden before sin and decay entered in (Is 51:3; Ezek 36:33-35). [Back to text.](#)

Not Made with Hands (2 Cor 5:1)

THE SCRIPTURES often describe the works of God as works "made without hands". Implied in these words is a contrast with the works of human hands. The contrast recurs several times in the Bible because there is no little difference between the two. The products of men's hands, even if they serve a sacred and religious purpose, will always fall short of the perfection and glory of God. They will always be frail and imperfect and part of this world. The works of the Lord, however, are perfect and lasting and pure. They are heavenly and spiritual and will never pass away. Even so, God has arranged to teach us about the works of his own hands through the works of human hands.

Scripture points us to several temporary and visible symbols of the Old Covenant that instruct us about the eternal and invisible blessings of the New.

A NEW CIRCUMCISION

Circumcision of the flesh is a work of human hands (Eph 2:11). With one swipe of the flint knife, a young boy enters the divine covenant made with Abraham (Gen 17:9-14). According to the Torah, however, circumcision was not an end in itself. It was an outward sign of what the people of Israel were supposed to do on the inside: cut away the stubbornness of their hearts (Deut 10:16). Because sin and weakness made this impossible, Moses promised that the Lord himself would reach down and do for the Israelites what they could not do for themselves—circumcise their hearts (Deut 30:6). In Paul's mind, this is precisely what happens in Baptism, which is the circumcision of Christ "made without hands" (Col 2:11).

A NEW KINGDOM

The prophet Daniel was once called upon to interpret the dreams of the Babylonian ruler Nebuchadnezzar. In one of his dreams, the king saw a huge statue of a man made of various metals and clay (Dan 2:31-35).

The statue was impressive to the sight, but the king saw a small stone cut out "by no human hand" (Dan 2:34) smash the statue into pieces and become a gigantic mountain that spread itself over the earth. In his interpretation, Daniel told the king that this stone was a new kingdom that God himself was about to establish that would pulverize the empires built by men and extend its dominion over the world (Dan 2:44-45). What Nebuchadnezzar had seen, in other words, was the messianic kingdom of God.

A NEW TEMPLE

The Temple in Jerusalem is a powerful sign of things eternal. According to the Book of Hebrews, this Israelite sanctuary was a model of the heavenly Temple above, a replica of the true sanctuary "not made with hands" (Heb 9:11) that Jesus entered once for all at his Ascension (Heb 9:24).

On a different level, Jesus linked the Temple with the mystery of his humanity: "Destroy this temple," he said, "and in three days I will raise it up" (Jn 2:19). His enemies misunderstood these words and at his trial accused him of threatening to demolish the Temple "made with hands", only to build another one just like it, though "not made with hands" (Mk 14:58). In fact, Jesus had not threatened to destroy the Jerusalem sanctuary, nor did he intend to build another in its place; rather, he had promised to raise up the temple of his human body in the Resurrection (Jn 2:21). This is a divine work beyond the ability of mere human hands. For Paul, the saints await the same hope of a resurrected body that is eternal and "not made with hands" (2 Cor 5:1).

A NEW JERUSALEM

What was true of the ancient Temple was true also of the city that encompassed it: it was an earthly sign of a heavenly reality. For centuries, the people of Israel looked to Jerusalem as the city where God was honored and worshiped in a special way (Ps 46:4-5). This was the one place in all the earth where God had chosen to make his presence dwell (Deut 12:11). Yet even Jerusalem was an earthly city built of stones that were hewn and stacked by human hands.

According to the Book of Hebrews, the saints of the Old Covenant searched in their hearts for something greater and more lasting. They looked for a better city (Heb 11:16), a city "whose builder and maker is God" (Heb 11:10). This city is the heavenly Jerusalem, where angels and saints gather for worship in the eternal presence of the Lord (Heb 12:22-23). « [Back to 2 Corinthians 5:1.](#)

5:18 ministry of reconciliation: The ministry of the apostles is to reunite the human family with the Father. For this to happen, the barrier of sin that separates them must be torn down by the sacramental and evangelistic actions of the Church (Mt 26:28; Jn 20:23; Acts 2:38) (CCC 981, 1424, 2844). [Back to text.](#)

5:19 not counting their trespasses: Essential to our reconciliation with God but not equivalent to it. Forgiveness, though it includes the nonimputation of sin (Rom 4:6-8), is based on a true removal of guilt (Ps 103:12) by the cleansing power of the Sacraments (Jn 20:23; Acts 22:16; Jas 5:14-15). This is why Paul describes the believer as "a new creation" in Christ (2 Cor 5:17). [Back to text.](#)

5:20 ambassadors: The term refers to envoys who represented Roman emperors in distant territories. These representatives carried the authority of the reigning ruler with them wherever they went. Similarly, Christians in general and the apostles in particular bear, each in their own way, the royal, priestly, and prophetic authority of Christ to the world (Mt 18:18; Rom 15:16; Rev 5:9-10) (CCC 859). [Back to text.](#)



5:21 made him to be sin: Jesus was not made a sinner or personally counted guilty of sin on the Cross. Rather, he bore the curse of death that mankind incurred because of sin (Gal 3:13; 1 Pet 2:22-24), even though he himself **knew no sin**, i.e., committed no sin (Jn 8:46; 1 Jn 3:5) (CCC 602-3). • Paul adopts the idiom of the Greek OT, where "sin" is a shorthand expression for a Levitical "sin offering" (Lev 4:21; 5:12; 6:25). Isaiah uses this same language for the suffering Messiah, who was expected to make himself an "offering for sin" (Is 53:10). **the righteousness of God:** An important expression in Paul's writings. It can refer **(1)** to God's own righteousness that is manifest to the world when he is faithful to his covenants (Rom 3:25-26) and **(2)** to the gift of righteousness that God imparts to the baptized (Phil 3:9). [See note on Rom 1:17.](#) [Back to text.](#)

6:1 in vain: Unless the Corinthians recognize and follow Paul as their apostolic father and founder, the "false apostles" (11:13) could lead them to spiritual ruin. The danger of falling from grace is a reality faced by every believer in this life (Gal 5:4; Heb 6:4-6; 2 Pet 2:20-22). [Back to text.](#)



6:2 At the acceptable time: A citation from the Greek version of Is 49:8. • Isaiah outlines the mission of the Servant Messiah: he will restore the tribal family of Israel and bring the light of salvation to the Gentiles (Is 49:6). Christ fulfills this mission through the apostolic ministry of his servants, like Paul (Acts 13:47). In this context, Paul is stressing that God is ready (**now**) to help the Corinthians in their time of crisis, reminding them that the window for repentance will not always remain open (CCC 859, 1041). [Back to text.](#)

6:3 no obstacle: A central part of Paul's pastoral ministry. It means that he **(1)** always practices what he preaches and that **(2)** he willingly surrenders certain apostolic rights that might burden others or be susceptible to misunderstanding (Rom 14:13; 1 Cor 9:12; 10:33). [Back to text.](#)

6:4-7 A list of Paul's afflictions (6:4-5) and virtues (6:6-7). His countless tribulations reveal his sacrificial love for the Corinthians, and his proven character shows him a genuine servant of Christ. By listing his trials, Paul is boasting that he more closely resembles the suffering and crucified Jesus than any of his critics (11:23-30). [Back to text.](#)

6:6 the Holy Spirit: The Greek can also be rendered "a holy spirit", referring to the virtue of sanctity displayed in the life of the apostle. [Back to text.](#)

6:7 weapons of righteousness: Paul's arsenal against the forces of Satan include truth, righteousness, faith, salvation, and the word of God (10:3-5; Eph 6:13-17; 1 Thess 5:8). Weapons for the **right** hand and the **left** may refer to the sword (offense) and the shield (defense) carried by soldiers of his day. [Back to text.](#)

6:8 treated as impostors: The first of seven accusations hurled at Paul by his opponents (6:8-10). He fights off these false charges with the facts, demonstrating at every step that critics see only his outward afflictions and know nothing of the spiritual motives and joys behind them. [Back to text.](#)

6:12 not restricted by us: Paul defers responsibility for the discord and distrust that has grown up between him and his readers. The Corinthians are the ones who questioned his apostleship in the first place and allowed the "false apostles" (11:13) to take advantage of them. [Back to text.](#)

6:13 I speak as to children: Paul is the spiritual father of the Corinthian Church. [See note on 1 Cor 4:15.](#) [Back to text.](#)



6:14 Do not be mismated: Or, "Do not be yoked together." • Paul's injunction is probably inspired by Deut 22:10, which forbade the Israelites from yoking different kinds of animals together. **with unbelievers:** Paul is not saying that Christians should sever every casual, family, or business relationship with non-Christians (1 Cor 5:9-13). He is urging them to pull away from dangerous relationships that threaten their faith. [Back to text.](#)

6:15 Belial: A Hebrew epithet for "Satan". The term is used only here in the NT but is found elsewhere in Jewish literature of the period (sometimes spelled "Beliar"). [Back to text.](#)



6:16-18 A chain of Scripture passages that remind readers of their *dignity* in Christ and their *duty* to remain pure. The citations are from Ezek 37:27, Is 52:11, Ezek 20:34, and a combination of 2 Sam 7:14 with Is 43:6. • These texts are connected with the founding of the New Covenant and God's effort to rescue Israel from the idolatry and impurity of the Gentiles. Paul sees this as the construction of a new temple out of the men and women God gathers around the Messiah. In ancient Israel, the sacredness of the sanctuary was radically incompatible with the profanities of idolatry, and indeed the entire sacrificial system of the Temple was put in place to destroy Israel's affection for idols. The same principles apply to the living sanctuary of believers. See essays: *Sacrifice in the Old Testament* at Lev 9 and [Shun Immorality, Shun Idolatry](#) at 1 Cor 6. [Back to text.](#)

6:16 we are the temple: The presence of God in the hearts and midst of his people makes them a living sanctuary where true worship and sacrifice rise before him (CCC 797, 1179). [See note on Eph 2:21.](#) [Back to text.](#)

7:1 make holiness perfect: The Corinthians are challenged to rededicate their lives to Christ and restore to Paul their full trust and affection. As a consequence, they must withdraw their support from the false apostles who defiled them with their teaching and poisoned them against Paul. [Back to text.](#)

7:2 taken advantage: Implies that Paul's critics accused him of selfishness and even malice (12:17-18). For this reason, he appeals often to God and the conscience of his readers to testify that his ministry among

them was always sincere and driven by love (1:12, 23; 4:2; 5:11). [Back to text.](#)

7:3 die together . . . live together: An idiom for personal commitment (2 Sam 15:21). [Back to text.](#)

7:4 I am overjoyed: Paul ends the long explanation of his apostolic ministry on a high note (2:14-7:4). He is confident that the tensions between him and the Corinthians are finally easing and nearing their end (1:7). News to this effect was delivered by Titus (7:6-7). [Back to text.](#)

7:5-16 A summary and conclusion to the first part of the letter (chaps. 1-7). It resumes the report of Titus' mission to Corinth, which Paul's digression interrupted at 2:13. [Back to text.](#)

7:5 Macedonia: A Roman province in northern Greece. The afflictions that Paul and his company suffered there are unspecified and otherwise unknown. [See note on 2 Cor 2:13.](#) [Back to text.](#)

7:6 the coming of Titus: Paul was consoled by the arrival of his delegate Titus after sending him on the difficult mission to deliver a letter of rebuke to the Corinthians. His safe return to Macedonia was a cause for joy, as was his glowing report that most of the Corinthians had repented of their wrongdoing and were eager to see Paul (7:7). [Back to text.](#)

7:8 my letter: The severe letter that Paul had sent to Corinth by the hand of Titus. Although Paul wrote it with great anxiety (2:4), he was genuinely concerned for the well-being of the Corinthians and used this written form of correction as a loving means to elicit their repentance. He wanted to test their loyalty and see whether they would be "obedient" (2:9) to his fatherly authority by showing "zeal" (7:12) for him again. [See note on 2 Cor 2:3.](#) [Back to text.](#)

7:9 grieved into repenting: The Corinthians were saddened by Paul's letter and the crisis that made it necessary (7:8). They nevertheless resolved to amend their ways, repudiate the claims of the false apostles, and resubmit themselves to Paul's leadership. For his part, Paul was "overjoyed" (7:4) and again expressed "perfect confidence" in them (7:16). [Back to text.](#)

7:10 godly grief . . . worldly grief: A sharp contrast between sorrow that leads to contrition and excessive sorrow that turns away from God and ends in bitterness and despair. In the Gospels, Simon Peter exemplified the former (Mt 26:75; Lk 22:32) and Judas Iscariot the latter (Mt 27:5). [Back to text.](#)

7:12 the one who did the wrong: I.e., the unnamed offender who may have confronted Paul during his last visit to Corinth. [See note on 2 Cor 2:5-11.](#) [Back to text.](#)

8:1-9:15 The central section of the letter deals with a collection of money that Paul and his associates took up among Gentile Churches during his third missionary journey (Acts 18:23-21:16). The proceeds were gathered to help the poor Christians in Jerusalem (Rom 15:25-27; 1 Cor 16:1-4). The donation was a practical gesture of charity toward fellow believers in need, as well as a symbolic token of unity expressed by Gentile Churches on behalf of their Jewish Christian brethren. Years earlier Paul had delivered similar relief to Judean Christians stricken with famine (Acts 11:28-30). [Back to text.](#)

8:1 Macedonia: A Roman province in upper Greece, just north of Corinth. The Book of Acts indicates that Paul planted the gospel in at least three cities of this region: Philippi, Thessalonica, and Beroea (Acts 16:11-17:14). [Back to text.](#)

8:2 a wealth of liberality: Paul praises the Macedonians for contributing abundantly to the Jerusalem collection despite their destitute circumstances. He thus challenges the Corinthians, who are comparatively wealthy, to follow the lead of their northern neighbors by giving alms in proportion to their prosperity. These contributions are to be set aside every Sunday when they gather for worship (1 Cor 16:2) (CCC 1351). [Back to text.](#)



8:3 according to their means: Giving alms to the poor is prescribed as a work of mercy in the OT (Tob 12:8-9) as well as in the NT (Mt 6:2-4). Here Paul tries to stimulate a healthy rivalry, hoping that the generous example of the Macedonians will draw forth an even greater gift from the Corinthians. • The standard Paul erects for almsgiving is the standard tradition adopts for offerings to the Church. This is stated in the fifth precept of the Church, which obliges us to give a part of our earnings to the Lord, each according to his means (CCC 2043). [Back to text.](#)

8:6 Titus: A close associate of Paul who is coming to oversee the fund-raising efforts that began a year earlier but were never completed (8:10; 9:2). The campaign probably slowed or came to a halt because of the recent tensions that had arisen between Paul and the Corinthians. [Back to text.](#)

8:7 you excel in everything: The Corinthians were blessed in many ways, spiritually and economically. The collection affords them a prime opportunity to (1) express thanksgiving to God for what they have and (2) to lend a helping hand to those who have not. [Back to text.](#)

8:8 not as a command: Donating money to the Jerusalem fund was voluntary, not mandatory. Paul does not force them into charitable giving but invites them to "do" it because they "desire" it (8:10; 9:7). [Back to text.](#)

8:9 he was rich: The life of Jesus Christ is a lesson in generosity. Though infinitely perfect and self-sufficient in his divinity, he became man in the "form of a servant" (Phil 2:7) to save us from sin and enrich us with divine life (Jn 10:10). The contrast between Christ's wealth (divinity) and poverty (humanity) means, not that he *divested* himself of glory in the Incarnation, but that he *disguised* it behind the veil of his human flesh (Col 1:19; 2:9) (CCC 517, 2546). [Back to text.](#)

8:12 not . . . what he has not: Paul does not want the Corinthians to overextend themselves, zealously pledging money they are unable to give. [Back to text.](#)

8:14 equality: Paul envisions a fair distribution of burdens and blessings. Since the spiritual blessings of Israel have spread to all nations in Christ, the Gentiles are obliged to return material blessings in gratitude (Rom 15:27). In this case, the prosperity enjoyed by Corinthian Gentiles should help to alleviate the poverty of Jewish Christians in Jerusalem (CCC 2833). [Back to text.](#)



8:15 He who gathered much: A citation from Ex 16:18. • The Exodus generation of Israel lived on daily rations of manna provided by the Lord. Because he ensured a fair amount of bread to each family, there was no need to hoard it or store it away. To do so would have displayed a lack of trust in his Providence. Paul is urging believers to imitate the Lord by distributing their resources so that no one in the family of faith will lack basic necessities. Prosperity is a blessing meant to be shared. [Back to text.](#)

8:18 the brother who is famous: Unidentified, but apparently well-known. **preaching of the gospel:** The Greek is simply "in the gospel". Some ancient writers identified this "famous" brother with the evangelist Luke and the "gospel" in question with the Gospel of Luke. This is uncertain, and to an extent improbable, since in Paul's letters the word

"gospel" refers to the message of salvation, not to a written narration of Jesus' life and ministry. It is true, in any case, that Luke was one of Paul's missionary associates (2 Tim 4:11; Philem 24). [Back to text.](#)

8:19 appointed: Delegates were specially commissioned to deliver the charitable donations of the Gentile Churches to the poor of Jerusalem. The Jewish theologian Philo uses this same Greek expression for the appointment of envoys to deliver the firstfruits offering of the Diaspora synagogues to the Jerusalem Temple (*Special Laws* 1, 78). For the possibility that Paul viewed the relief offering in a similar way, [see note on Acts 20:16.](#) [Back to text.](#)

8:21 what is honorable: Paul sends a delegation of trusted men to manage the Jerusalem collection in Corinth (Titus and two unnamed brothers; see 8:16-18, 22). This strategy is meant to eliminate suspicions that Paul had initiated the collection because of greed or selfish motives. Entrusting the task to men of proven character ensures that the money will be collected properly, handled honestly, and delivered safely. [Back to text.](#)

8:22 sending our brother: Another anonymous companion of Paul (8:18). [Back to text.](#)

9:1-5 Paul challenges the Corinthians to uphold their previous commitment to his collection (9:2). He has already boasted to others of their zeal and readiness to be generous. Should they fall short of his expectations, they will humiliate Paul for being so confident and especially themselves for being stingy and double-minded (9:4). [Back to text.](#)

9:6 reap bountifully: An agricultural analogy. It illustrates that a direct relationship exists between our present efforts and the future rewards that will accrue to them. Heroic generosity in this case will produce an abundant harvest of blessings, while minimal giving will yield minimal blessings (Prov 22:8-9; Gal 6:7-9). [Back to text.](#)



9:7 God loves a cheerful giver: Charitable gifts must flow from a joyful heart (Sir 35:9; Rom 12:8), not one that hesitates or begrudges the gift (Deut 15:10). Reluctant givers show themselves to be attached to their wealth; their donations, sizable or not, are thus empty before God. • Almsgiving rejoices the giver and renews the receiver. Joyful and cheerful, then, is the one who attends to the poor, for he acquires heavenly treasures by a few small coins; and unlike the taxpayer, who is compelled by

penalties, he is urged by love and invited by rewards (Maximus of Turin, *Sermons* 71). [Back to text.](#)



9:9 He scatters abroad: A citation from Ps 112:9. • The Psalmist is celebrating the greatness of the righteous man. Because he is just and generous toward his neighbor (Ps 112:5), he will be blessed by the Lord and stand secure for ever. [Back to text.](#)



9:10 supplies seed . . . and bread: An allusion to Is 55:10. • Isaiah praises God as the source of every blessing. He is the One who sends rain to awaken life in the fields and provide food for the world. These natural blessings are an image of the spiritual blessings that God rains down upon the generous heart. [Back to text.](#)

9:11 You will be enriched: Sacrificial generosity is richly rewarded by God, who outmatches our earthly gifts with blessings that are lasting and heavenly (Tob 4:7-11; Mt 19:29; Lk 6:38). [Back to text.](#)

9:12 many thanksgivings: As a result of Paul's collection, (1) the poor will receive aid, (2) God will be praised and thanked, and (3) the Corinthians will be greatly blessed. [Back to text.](#)

9:15 his inexpressible gift!: Probably the "surpassing grace" of 9:14. [Back to text.](#)

10:1-13:14 Paul spends the final chapters of the letter aggressively defending his apostleship. While he earlier (chaps. 1-9) addressed the *majority* of the Corinthians who still support him, he turns now to confront the impenitent *minority* who have embraced the "false apostles" (11:13). Throughout this section, Paul unmasks the illegitimacy of these "superlative apostles" (11:5; 12:11) and even threatens to discipline members who refuse to separate from them (10:6; 13:2). This shift of focus between the earlier and latter parts of the letter accounts for the change in Paul's tone, from conciliatory (chaps. 1-9) to confrontational (chaps. 10-13). [Back to text.](#)

10:1 I who am humble: Opponents charged Paul with being bold at a distance but mild and even timid in their presence. This alleged inconsistency was especially true of his discipline: they felt that his written threats were never matched with decisive action in person (1 Cor 4:18-21). Paul, however, imitates the **gentleness of Christ** by reserving severity and

discipline as a last resort; he threatens punishment in his letters to avert the need for it when he visits (10:6; 13:2, 10). [Back to text.](#)



10:3-6 Behind Paul's visible opponents in Corinth lurk powers that are invisible and demonic. He is confident, however, that his ministry leads **divine power** to the world through weapons of spiritual warfare: preaching, prayer, Scripture, and the Sacraments. Not even the **proud** and sophisticated arguments of his rivals can withstand the truth of his gospel, which alone brings **every thought** of man under the Lordship of Christ. [See note on 2 Cor 6:7.](#) • There is no excuse for thinking that some sins are punished while others go unpunished. The apostle says **every proud obstacle** will be punished; and every sin, because it expresses contempt for the divine law, is a proud height that exalts itself against the knowledge of God (St. Basil, *On the Judgment of God*). [Back to text.](#)

10:8 our authority: Paul's apostleship is a constructive mission, not a destructive one. The only reason he defends his authority so vigorously is that his rivals deny it so emphatically. [Back to text.](#)

10:10 His letters . . . his speech: Critics charged that Paul was an assertive and forceful writer but an unimpressive speaker. See word study: [Unskilled](#) at 2 Cor 11. [Back to text.](#)

10:12 compare themselves: The false apostles not only discredit Paul, they compete with one another for prestige in the Corinthian Church. They have to **commend themselves** with letters of recommendation (3:1) because, unlike Paul, they are not commissioned by God (1:21; 2:17; 10:18). [Back to text.](#)

10:13-18 Paul accuses the false teachers of trespassing into his own missionary territory and taking credit for the spiritual growth of the Corinthians. Whatever the claims of these troublemakers, Paul is the true "father" of the Corinthians (1 Cor 4:15) since he was the first to bring them new life in the gospel (2 Cor 10:14; Acts 18:1-18). [Back to text.](#)

10:13 boast beyond limit: This probably has two, interrelated, meanings. (1) Paul and his companions do not invade mission fields for which others are responsible. That is, they stay within the territorial limits assigned to them without taking credit for labors done in "another's field" (10:16; Rom 15:20). (2) Paul and company do not boast beyond the

acceptable limits of humility but give the Lord full credit for their successful ministry (10:17). [See note on 1 Cor 4:6.](#) [Back to text.](#)

10:16 lands beyond you: Paul aspires to carry the gospel to Rome and as far west as Spain (Acts 19:21; Rom 15:24, 28). [Back to text.](#)



10:17 boast of the Lord: A paraphrase of the Greek rendition of Jer 9:24. • Jeremiah warns Israel not to boast of its wisdom, might, or riches (9:23). The Israelites should delight only in the Lord, from whom all these blessings flow. [See note on 1 Cor 1:31.](#) [Back to text.](#)

11:1 bear with me: Paul asks readers to tolerate a little boasting on his part, even though he dislikes it and knows it is foolish. It is because the Corinthians have failed to support him in the face of criticisms that he is forced to defend himself (12:11). Several times he apologizes for engaging in such folly (11:16, 18, 21, 23; 12:1, 6). [Back to text.](#)

11:2 I betrothed you to Christ: Paul is the "father" (1 Cor 4:15) of the Corinthians and thus in charge of safeguarding their purity before marriage. He is preserving them for Christ, the **husband**, who is already betrothed to them by covenant but who waits to receive them into his home as a chaste **bride** (literally, "virgin"). This marital imagery is frequent in the NT (Mt 25:1-13; Eph 5:23-32; Rev 19:7) (CCC 505, 796). [Back to text.](#)



11:3 the serpent deceived Eve: An allusion to Gen 3:1-7. • Paul looks back to the Fall of Adam and Eve to warn readers that the same danger once present in the Garden of Eden is now lurking in Corinth. He fears that the Corinthians, like Eve, will be lured away from Christ by the seductive voice of evil. Satan is once again the intruder, this time disguised as the "false apostles" (11:13). [Back to text.](#)

11:4 another Jesus: A distorted message about Jesus in conflict with the apostolic gospel. [Back to text.](#)

11:5 superlative apostles: A sarcastic title for the counterfeit apostles in Corinth (12:11). It suggests they viewed themselves as superior to Paul. [See note on 2 Cor 11:13.](#) [Back to text.](#)

11:7-11 Paul defends his practice of refusing financial assistance from the Corinthians. He was able to support himself among them by donations from other Churches (11:8) and by manual labor, probably tentmaking (Acts 18:3). The Corinthians unfortunately took this as an insult and an

indication that Paul did not love them (2 Cor 11:11). To counter this, Paul reveals several reasons for this pastoral decision. **(1)** He wished to lay no unnecessary burden on them (11:9). **(2)** He hoped to accentuate the stark difference between his ministry and that of his opponents, who greedily took advantage of the Corinthians' resources (11:20). **(3)** As their spiritual "father" (1 Cor 4:15), he wanted to provide for them in the same way that parents do for their children (2 Cor 12:14). In the end, Paul's tireless labor was a greater expression of love than accepting their monetary gifts (12:15). [See note on 2 Cor 2:17. Back to text.](#)

11:9 from Macedonia: Possibly from the Christians in Philippi (Phil 4:15-18). [Back to text.](#)

11:13 false apostles: The precise identity and mission of these agitators are unknown. Paul provides us with only general information: **(1)** they were Israelites (11:22), **(2)** they furnished letters of recommendation for themselves (3:1), **(3)** they preached a foreign gospel (11:4), **(4)** they accepted financial support for their services (2:17), **(5)** they took advantage of the Corinthians (11:20), **(6)** they were outsiders who invaded Paul's missionary field during his absence (10:13-18), and **(7)** they were severely critical of Paul (6:8; 10:2, 10). Some scholars have argued on the basis of this that the Corinthian impostors were like the Judaizers in Galatia who pressured Christians to accept circumcision and embrace the entire ritual law of the Old Covenant. In this case, they may have come from Judea to collect money (taxes) for the Jerusalem Temple. [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Unskilled ([2 Cor 11:6](#))

Idiōtēs (Gk.): a "layman", "amateur", or "one who is untrained". The word appears only here in 2 Cor and four times in the rest of the NT. Its precise meaning depends upon the context in which it is found. In Acts 4:13, it refers to men who are uneducated. In 1 Cor 14:16, 23-24, it denotes an outsider not initiated into a local Church. Paul uses the word here to admit that he is not trained in the art of professional public speaking. His opponents presumably are and jeer at the lack of eloquence and refinement in his preaching (2 Cor 10:10). This is why Paul compares himself with

Moses, who ministered to Israel despite his own struggles with oral communication (Ex 4:10; note on 2 Cor 3:5). Interestingly, one of Paul's contemporaries, the Jewish historian Josephus, puts this same term in the mouth of Moses when he complained to the Lord of being an "unlearned man" (Gk. *idiotes aner*), unable to persuade the Israelites to follow him (*Antiquities* 2, 271). Like Moses, Paul has a message from the Lord, and its power to save is not lessened by the personal weaknesses of the one who preaches it (Rom 1:16; 1Cor 1:17; 2:1-5).

11:14 an angel of light: Satan is a master of deception, adept at hiding his darkness behind the mask of innocence and light. The "false apostles" (11:13) are intruders who collaborate with the devil and his plan to destroy the Church in Corinth. Jesus warned that such "false prophets" would masquerade as wolves in sheep's clothing (Mt 7:15). [Back to text.](#)

11:15 Their end: The eternal destiny of Paul's opponents will correspond to their present wickedness. [Back to text.](#)

11:20 For you bear it: Paul chides the Corinthians for tolerating the aggressive tactics of his rivals. Their lack of resistance enabled the impostors to exploit them and wield reckless authority in their Church. [Back to text.](#)

11:21-12:10 An impassioned account of Paul's credentials, sometimes called the "Fool's Speech". It falls into two parts: the first recounts the apostle's numerous afflictions (11:22-33), the second his heavenly journeys (12:1-10). Paul boasts of these experiences to counter the claims of his opponents, who brag that their credentials and leadership skills outmatch his own. Paul insists otherwise: unlike them, he follows the footsteps of Christ by suffering and laying down his life in service to others (4:7-12; Lk 9:23; 1 Pet 2:21). [Back to text.](#)

11:22 Hebrews: The term can have a *linguistical* sense, referring to peoples who speak Aramaic (Acts 6:1), or a *genealogical* sense, referring to the descendants of Eber, the great-grandson of Shem (Gen 10:21). Perhaps both senses are intended here. **Israelites:** Descendants of the patriarch Jacob, renamed Israel (Gen 32:28). **So am I:** Paul boasts the same genealogical and linguistic credentials as his adversaries (Acts 21:40; Rom 11:1; Phil 3:4-5). [Back to text.](#)

11:23 imprisonments: Several are mentioned in the NT (Acts 16:23; 24:27; 28:16). [Back to text.](#)

11:24 forty lashes less one: A form of Jewish punishment administered by synagogue officials. Although the Torah prescribed 40 stripes, the Jews generally gave 39 to ensure the maximum penalty was not exceeded (Deut 25:1-3). That Paul endured this treatment five times over displays his unwavering commitment to bring the gospel to Israel, no matter the cost (Acts 9:15-16). [See note on Acts 13:5.](#) [Back to text.](#)

11:25 beaten with rods: A form of Roman punishment that Paul endured at Philippi (Acts 16:22). As a Roman citizen, he should have had legal protection from this abuse (Acts 16:37-40). **I was stoned:** This happened on his first missionary journey in Lystra (Acts 14:19-20). **I have been shipwrecked:** This does not include the shipwreck in Acts 27:13-44, which happened a few years later. The Book of Acts never mentions these earlier hardships, although it does indicate that Paul embarked on numerous sea voyages (Acts 13:4, 13; 14:26; 16:11; etc.). [Back to text.](#)

11:26 false brethren: This may refer **(1)** to those who claimed to be Christians but were not or **(2)** to Judaizing Christians who opposed Paul's ministry and tried to impose the ritual and sacrificial laws of the Old Covenant on Gentile converts to Christianity (cf. Acts 15:1-2; Gal 2:4). The latter meaning would link them to the "false apostles" in Corinth (11:13). [Back to text.](#)

11:30 I will boast: Paul boasts only of his suffering and humiliation, i.e., those things that unite him with Christ, who was "crucified in weakness" (13:4). [Back to text.](#)

11:32-33 Paul had to flee from **Damascus** when Jewish opponents from the synagogue conspired with the city's governor to arrest him and kill him as a troublemaker (Acts 9:23-25). This plot is dated within the reign of the Nabatean ruler **King Aretas IV**, who controlled the city between A.D. 37 and 40. This was Paul's first experience of persecution as a Christian, only a few years after his conversion in the same city (Acts 9:23-25). This dramatic escape is one more example of his weakness, making him look more like a fugitive than like a hero. [Back to text.](#)

12:1-10 Paul remembers a heavenly journey experienced years earlier. Though he is unable to articulate the precise nature of this rapture (in body or simply in spirit), it gave him a foretaste of glory that would encourage him through earthly trials. The NT indicates that Paul received numerous

visions and revelations (12:1) throughout his apostolic career (Acts 9:1-8; 16:9; 18:9; 22:17-18; Gal 1:12). [Back to text.](#)

12:2 I know a man: Although his language is indirect, 12:7 makes it clear that Paul is speaking about his own experience. **fourteen years ago:** Corresponds approximately to A.D. 42, when Paul was in Antioch (Acts 11:25-26) or Jerusalem (Acts 11:30). See introduction: *Author and Date*. **the third heaven:** Reflects a common Jewish tradition that the Lord stacked the "heavens" three levels high: **(1)**the first heaven is the atmosphere of birds and clouds; **(2)** above that stands the realm of the sun and stars; **(3)** and beyond that lies the dwelling of God. Paul's journey took him to the highest heaven, "Paradise" (12:3), where he caught a glimpse of eternal glory. [Back to text.](#)

12:4 cannot be told: Paul was bound to silence by a prophetic restraint. This means he was not *permitted* to disclose the heavenly secrets he saw and heard, not that it was necessarily *impossible* to speak of them with words. [Back to text.](#)



12:7 a thorn: Sometimes interpreted as a sickness or physical disability, such as failing eyesight (Gal 4:13-15; 6:11). Others connect it with the Hebrew idiom used in Num 33:55, where it denotes personal opposition or harassment. Either way, God allowed Paul to suffer so that he would maintain perspective and not take pride in his heavenly experiences. Even the heights of Paul's mystical life were tempered with suffering and weakness. **messenger of Satan:** Like righteous Job, Paul endured afflictions that were permitted by God and administered by the devil (Job 1-2). • Some ask if the devil is good because he is useful. We respond that he is only evil, but God who is good and almighty draws from the devil's malice many just and good things. The devil possesses a will that is bent on evil, not the Providence of God that brings good from him (St. Augustine, *Against the Manichaeans* 2, 28, 42). [Back to text.](#)

12:9 My grace is sufficient: Paul's petition for relief was denied (12:8), indicating that his suffering was serving a higher purpose in the plan of God (Rom 8:28). Grace was given him to endure these trials and make him rely upon the Lord. His experience shows that God gives us what we *need* and not always what we want (CCC 268, 273, 1508). [Back to text.](#)

12:11 commended by you: Paul's boasting would have been unnecessary had the Corinthians defended him against the attacks of the false apostles. [See note on 2 Cor 11:1.](#) **superlative apostles:** A sarcastic reference to the "false apostles" (11:13) who invaded the Corinthian Church (11:5). [Back to text.](#)

12:12 signs of a true apostle: Visible manifestations of divine power. Paul does not specify the exact nature of these extraordinary deeds but appeals to them as confirmation of his apostleship (cf. Mk 16:20; Rom 15:18-19; Heb 2:4). If Paul were a fraud, as his critics claim, such miracles would not have accompanied his message. [Back to text.](#)

12:14 the third time: An announcement of Paul's forthcoming visit (13:1, 10). His first trip to Corinth lasted over 18 months (Acts 18:1-18), while his second proved to be a short and distressing visit (2 Cor 2:1). As before, Paul does not plan to **burden** the congregation by accepting payment for his apostolic work. [See note on 2 Cor 11:7-11.](#) **parents for their children:** Paul is the spiritual father of the Corinthians (6:13). Because he is responsible for their Christian formation, he hopes he will not be humiliated or disappointed by misbehaving children when he comes (12:21). [See note on 1 Cor 4:15.](#) [Back to text.](#)

12:15 spend and be spent: Instead of demanding payment for his labor, Paul is willing to spend himself for the good of souls. His sacrificial zeal for the gospel (Phil 2:17) enables him to endure discomforts that he knows will benefit the wavering Corinthians. [Back to text.](#)

12:16 crafty, you say: Suspicions were apparently raised that Paul was mishandling the funds of the Jerusalem collection (chaps. 8-9). Critics probably accused him of secretly pocketing some of the money for himself, even though he appeared to live in poverty while among them (11:9). These accusations were empty: Paul's conscience was clear (1:12) because his conduct was irreproachable (4:2). [See note on 2 Cor 8:21.](#) [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Paradise ([2 Cor 12:3](#))

Paradeisos (Gk.): a Persian loan word meaning "garden" or "park", used three times in the NT. The term makes its first biblical appearance in the Greek version in Gen 2:8, where it refers to the Garden of Eden. Here,

before his rebellion, man lived enfolded in the blessings and peace of God. Centuries later, the Prophets foretold that the blissful conditions of Eden would reappear in the future (Is 51:3; Ezek 36:35). The NT sharpens this expectation, indicating that the true garden of paradise is supernatural and heavenly, not natural and merely earthly. It is nothing less than the eternal dwelling of God, where Jesus promised to accompany the good thief after death (Lk 23:43) and where Paul was transported in a mystical journey (2 Cor 12:3). This heavenly paradise is the eternal dwelling that awaits the saints (Rev 2:7).

12:21 have not repented: Although most of the Corinthians regained their trust in Paul (7:9), a minority remained impenitent and continued to criticize his apostleship. These unrepentant few likely supported the "false apostles" (11:13) and followed their immoral example. [Back to text.](#)



13:1 two or three witnesses: Judicial criteria drawn from Deut 17:6 and 19:15. • The Mosaic Law forbade Israel to punish crimes on the basis of a single witness. Accused persons were thus assured a fair criminal process and that punishment would not be administered without credible and corroborating testimony. Paul, like Jesus, applies this principle in a New Covenant context (Mt 18:16-17). He thus assures the Corinthians that detractors will not be expelled from their fellowship and liturgy without a just examination of the facts (1 Tim 5:19). Even so, Paul is ready to punish disobedience if necessary (10:6; 13:2). [See note on 1 Cor 5:13.](#) [Back to text.](#)

13:3 you desire proof: This sums up all the criticisms leveled against Paul, since some of the Corinthians, under the deceitful influence of false teachers, doubted and even denied that Christ was **speaking** through him as a genuine apostle. Paul strategically applies this same standard to his critics in 13:5 to test whether or not Christ dwells within them. [Back to text.](#)

13:4 crucified in weakness: The Cross of Christ stands behind many of Paul's references to weakness (1 Cor 1:23-25; 2:2-3; 2 Cor 11:30; 12:5, 10). Just as the humiliating death of Jesus gave way to his powerful Resurrection, Paul and the other apostles willingly embrace suffering and shame so that the risen life of Jesus can flow out to others. The point is that God's power operates through human weakness, not in spite of it (2 Cor 12:9). [Back to text.](#)

13:9 your improvement: Paul wants most to restore his readers to spiritual health. Both Corinthian letters reveal his concern for them and the efforts he was willing to make to bring them from infancy to spiritual maturity (1 Cor 3:1-3). [Back to text.](#)

13:12 a holy kiss: A gesture of affection and Christian brotherhood (Rom 16:16; 1 Pet 5:14). It is a common expression of hospitality in the Near East, equivalent to a friendly handshake in the modern Western world. [Back to text.](#)

13:14 One of the earliest and clearest expressions of faith in the Trinity found in the NT. It has been used for centuries as a liturgical benediction (CCC 249, 1109). [Back to text.](#)

INTRODUCTION TO

THE LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE GALATIANS

Author and Date The opening line of Galatians identifies its author as the Apostle Paul (1:1). With the exception of a few skeptical opinions in modern times, this claim has never been seriously contested. The early Church held this view unanimously, and the contents of the letter, theological and autobiographical, confirm beyond a reasonable doubt that Paul must have written it as he said (6:11).

Dating the composition of the letter is more difficult. The question hinges in part on the identity of Paul's addressees: the "churches of Galatia" (1:2). If the apostle is writing to the churches of South Galatia that he established on his first missionary journey (Acts 14:1-23), then he could have penned the epistle as early as A.D. 48. But if Paul addresses churches in North Galatia that he seems to have founded on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:6), then he could not have written the letter before A.D. 50. These differing dates mean that Paul's visit to Jerusalem mentioned in Gal 2:1-10 is an important factor that must be considered. Those who prefer the earlier date contend that Paul is referring in these verses to the visit to Judea mentioned in Acts 11:29-30. Those who prefer a later date suggest that Paul is describing the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15:1-29, which convened in A.D. 49. On balance, the evidence leans in favor of a later date over an earlier one. Several parallels between Paul's comments in Gal 2:1-10 and the circumstances of the Jerusalem Council suggest that Paul is looking back on this important event ([see note on Gal 2:1-10](#)). Galatians, therefore, was probably written in the early or mid 50s.

Destination The Roman Province of Galatia was established in 25 B.C. in the central territory of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). Prior to this, migrant tribes from Gaul had settled in the northern parts of this territory in the third century B.C. and were long known as the "Galatians". This has made it exceedingly difficult for scholars to identify the Christians whom Paul was

addressing by that name (3:1). Many argue that Paul's letter was written solely for these northern Galatians, since Greco-Roman sources use the title "Galatians" as a purely *ethnic* reference to these tribal immigrants. Others contend that in the NT period, "Galatians" could also be used as a *territorial* reference to anyone living within the boundaries of the province, regardless of whether they lived in the northern or southern regions. The Jewish historian Josephus seems to use it in this more general way. Thus, with the term "Galatians" becoming more inclusive by the first century—at least in Paul's Jewish environment—it is nearly impossible to favor one view over another merely on the basis of the name (3:1). Until decisive evidence surfaces, we can be sure only that Paul was addressing Christians who lived somewhere in the province of Galatia, even though the question of North or South Galatia remains an open one.

Purpose Paul wrote this letter to defend his gospel against opponents and to dissuade the Galatians from receiving circumcision. Apparently rival missionaries, known as Judaizers, infiltrated the ranks of the Galatian churches during Paul's absence and stirred up trouble among his Gentile converts. Internal evidence within the letter suggests they preached a false gospel (1:6-7) that pressured Gentile Christians to embrace circumcision and the ceremonial laws of the Old Covenant as indispensable requirements for salvation (5:2-12; 6:12-13). Although they professed to be Christians, they felt that Paul's gospel of "faith working through love" (5:6) was incomplete without the ritual observances of the Mosaic Law. The success that these Judaizers enjoyed in Galatia forced Paul to respond with a vigorous defense of the gospel (1:11-2:10) and a sophisticated explanation of how the New Covenant inaugurated by Christ dispenses with the ceremonies of the Old (chaps. 3-4). In his view, to add circumcision and other Mosaic requirements to the gospel is to exchange freedom in Christ for spiritual slavery (2:4; 5:1). Stern warnings thus punctuate this letter as Paul appeals to the Galatians to distance themselves from the Judaizers and to disregard their propaganda.

Themes and Characteristics Galatians is clearly the most polemical of Paul's letters. Although it shares much in common with the more formal Letter to the Romans, the apologetic tone of this letter is heated and, at times, even combative. There can be no question that Paul perceived the

Galatian crisis as a great spiritual threat to everyone involved. As he saw it, the issues at stake touched the very heart of Christian identity and demanded a forceful defense of the gospel.

What was the essence of this controversy, and why was it so important for Paul to resolve it quickly and decisively? For the most part, Galatians is Paul's attempt to define the essence of the New Covenant in Christ over against the Old Covenant that gave birth to it. This is why circumcision is the towering issue of the letter, with the Judaizers promoting it, Paul attacking it, and the Galatians caught in the crossfire. Before the coming of Christ, the rite of circumcision was the doorway into God's covenant with Abraham (Gen 17:9-14) and the sacrament of initiation into the family of Israel (Lev 12:3). The Crucifixion of Jesus Christ, however, marks a turning point in covenant history where circumcision is now set aside, along with the entire body of liturgical and ceremonial legislation promulgated by Moses. Through his Cross, Christ has redeemed us from the curses of the Old Covenant (Gal 3:13) and unleashed the divine blessings of the New Covenant in a powerful way, inaugurating a "new creation" (6:15) and a renewed "Israel" (6:16). As Paul shows from the Scriptures, the New Covenant ratified by Christ *fulfills* the Abrahamic covenant of blessing for all nations even as it *terminates* the Mosaic covenant that was confined to the one nation of Israel in the centuries between Abraham and Christ. Now, whoever embraces Christ in faith (3:7) and receives Baptism (3:27) becomes a spiritual descendant of Abraham and an adopted child of God (4:1-7).

Paul's effort in this letter to define the terms of the gospel has made Galatians one of his most important writings. Although storms of controversy have continued to gather around this epistle throughout the centuries, we would be greatly impoverished without it. Galatians still stands as a thunderous defense of the good news, reaffirming for all time that salvation comes only by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. «

OUTLINE OF THE LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE GALATIANS

1. Opening Address ([1:1-9](#))

- A. Salutation ([1:1-5](#))
- B. Condemnation of False Gospels ([1:6-9](#))

2. Paul's Apostolic Authority ([1:10-2:21](#))

- A. Paul's Background and Divine Vocation ([1:10-17](#))
- B. First Visit to Jerusalem ([1:18-24](#))
- C. Second Visit to Jerusalem ([2:1-10](#))
- D. Confrontation with Peter at Antioch ([2:11-21](#))

3. Paul's Apostolic Gospel ([3:1-4:31](#))

- A. Appeal to Galatian Experience ([3:1-5](#))
- B. Faith and the Sons of Abraham ([3:6-9](#))
- C. Covenant Curses and Covenant Promises ([3:10-18](#))
- D. Purpose of the Law (3:19-29)
- E. Divine Adoption in Christ ([4:1-7](#))
- F. Personal Appeal ([4:8-20](#))
- G. Allegory of Sarah and Hagar ([4:21-31](#))

4. Christian Life and Liberty ([5:1-6:10](#))

- A. Freedom in Jesus Christ ([5:1-15](#))
- B. Life in the Spirit ([5:16-26](#))
- C. Life in the Household of Faith ([6:1-10](#))

5. Conclusion ([6:11-18](#))

THE LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE

GALATIANS

Chapters

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#)

Essays and Charts

The Works of the Law

Salutation

1 [Paul an apostle](#)—not from men nor through man, but [through Jesus Christ](#) and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—²and [all the brethren](#) who are with me,

To the churches of Galatia:

3 [Grace to you and peace](#) from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴who [gave himself for our sins](#) to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father; ⁵to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

There Is No Other Gospel

6 [I am astonished](#) that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel— ^{*} ⁷not that there is another gospel, but there are [some who trouble you](#) and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be [accursed](#). ⁹As we have said before, so now I say again, If any one is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.

10 Am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I [trying to please men](#)? If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant^a of Christ. ^{*}

Paul's Vindication of His Apostleship

11 Brethren, I would have you know that the gospel which was preached by me is not man's^b gospel. **12**For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ. **13**For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the Church of God violently and tried to destroy it; **14**and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. **15**But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, **16**was pleased to reveal his Son to^c me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood, **17**nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned to Damascus.

18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Ce'phas, and remained with him fifteen days. **19**But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother. * **20**(In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!) **21**Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cili'cia. **22**And I was still not known by sight to the churches of Christ in Judea; **23**they only heard it said, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." **24**And they glorified God because of me.

Paul and the Other Apostles

2 Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. **2**I went up by revelation; and I laid before them (but privately before those who were of repute) the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, lest somehow I should be running or had run in vain. **3**But even Titus, who was with me, was not compelled to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. **4**But because of false brethren secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy out our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage—**5**to them we did not yield submission even for a moment, that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you. **6**And from those who were reputed to be something (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who were of repute added nothing to me; **7**but on the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised **8**(for he who worked through Peter for the mission to the circumcised worked through me also for the

Gentiles), ⁹and when they perceived the grace that was given to me, [James and Cephas and John](#), who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised; ¹⁰only they would have us [remember the poor](#), which very thing I was eager to do.

Paul Rebukes Peter at Antioch

11 But when Cephas came to [Antioch](#) I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹²For before certain men came from James, he ate with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and [separated himself](#), fearing the circumcision party. ¹³And with him the rest of the Jews acted insincerely, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their insincerity. ¹⁴But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas [before them all](#), "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?" ¹⁵We ourselves, who are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners, ¹⁶yet who know that a man is not [justified^d](#) by works of the law * but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the law, because by works of the law shall no flesh be justified. ¹⁷But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we ourselves were [found to be sinners](#), is Christ then an agent of sin? Certainly not! ¹⁸But if I build up again those things [which I tore down](#), then I prove myself a transgressor. ¹⁹For I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God. ²⁰I have been [crucified with Christ](#); it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification^e were through the law, then Christ [died to no purpose](#).

Law or Faith

3 [O foolish Galatians!](#) Who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? ²Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit * by works of the law, or by [hearing with faith](#)? ³Are you so foolish? Having begun with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh? ⁴Did you [experience](#) so many things in vain?—if it really is in vain. ⁵Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?

6 Thus [Abraham](#) "believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." **7** So you see that it is men of faith who are the sons of Abraham. **8** And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall [all the nations be blessed](#)." **9** So then, those who are men of faith are blessed with Abraham who had faith.

10 For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "[Cursed be every one](#) who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them." **11** Now it is evident that no man is justified before God by the law; for "[He who through faith](#) is righteous shall live"; **12** but the law does not rest on faith, for "[He who does them](#) shall live by them." **13** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, "[Cursed be every one](#) who hangs on a tree"—**14** that in Christ Jesus [the blessing of Abraham](#) might come upon the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

The Promise to Abraham

15 [To give a human example](#), brethren: no one annuls even a man's [will](#), **16** or adds to it, once it has been ratified. **16** Now the promises were made to Abraham [and to his offspring](#). It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many; but, referring to one, "And to your offspring," which is Christ. **17** This is what I mean: the law, which came [four hundred and thirty years](#) afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. **18** For if the inheritance is by the law, it is no longer by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

The Purpose of the Law

19 Why then the law? [It was added](#) because of transgressions, till the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made; and it was ordained by angels through an intermediary. **20** Now [an intermediary](#) implies more than one; but God is one.

21 Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not; for if a law had been given which could make alive, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. **22** But the Scripture [consigned all things to sin](#), that what was promised to faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

23 Now before faith came, we were confined under the law, [kept under restraint](#) until faith should be revealed. **24** So that the law was our [custodian](#) until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. **25** But now that faith

has come, we are no longer under a custodian; ²⁶for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷For as many of you as were [baptized into Christ](#) have put on Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for [you are all one](#) in Christ Jesus. ²⁹And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

⁴ [I mean that](#) the heir, as long as he is a child, is no better than a slave, though he is the owner of all the estate; ²but he is under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father. ³So with us; when we were children, we were slaves to the [elemental spirits](#) of the universe. ⁴But when [the time had fully come](#), God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive [adoption](#) as sons. ⁶And because you are sons, God has [sent the Spirit](#) of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir.

Paul Reproves the Galatians

⁸ [Formerly](#), when [you did not know God](#), you were in bondage to beings that by nature are no gods; ⁹but now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly [elemental spirits](#), whose slaves you want to be once more? ¹⁰You observe [days, and months, and seasons, and years](#)! ¹¹I am afraid I have labored over you in vain.

¹² Brethren, I beg you, [become as I am](#), for I also have become as you are. You did me no wrong; ¹³you know it was because of [a bodily ailment](#) that I preached the gospel to you at first; ¹⁴and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. ¹⁵What has become of the satisfaction you felt? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. ¹⁶Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?^h ¹⁷They make much of you, but for no good purpose; they want to shut you out, that you may make much of them. ¹⁸For a good purpose it is always good to be made much of, and not only when I am present with you. ¹⁹My little children, with whom I am again [in travail](#) until Christ be formed in you! ²⁰I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

The Allegory of Hagar and Sarah

21 Tell me, you who desire to be under law, do you not hear the law?
22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave and one by a free woman. 23 But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, the son of the free woman through promise. 24 Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. 25 Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. 26 But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. 27 For it is written,
"Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear;
break forth and shout, you who are not with labor pains;
for the desolate has more children
than she who has a husband."

28 Now we, brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. 29 But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now. 30 But what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the slave and her son; for the son of the slave shall not inherit with the son of the free woman." 31 So, brethren, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.

Christian Freedom

5 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

2 Now I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. 3 I testify again to every man who receives circumcision that he is bound to keep the whole law. 4 You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. 5 For through the Spirit, by faith, we wait for the hope of righteousness. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love. 7 You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? 8 This persuasion is not from him who called you. 9 A little leaven leavens all the dough. 10 I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view than mine; and he who is troubling you will bear his judgment, whoever he is. 11 But if I, brethren, still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? In that case the

[stumbling block of the cross](#) * has been removed. ¹²I wish those who unsettle you would [mutilate themselves!](#)

13 For you were [called to freedom](#), brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another. ¹⁴For [the whole law](#) is fulfilled in one word, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁵But if you bite and devour one another take heed that you are not consumed by one another.

[The Works of the Flesh and the Fruit of the Spirit](#)

16 [But I say](#), walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would. ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law. ¹⁹Now the [works of the flesh](#) are plain: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, ²¹envy,^k drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things [shall not inherit the kingdom of God](#). ²²But [the fruit of the Spirit](#) is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. ²⁴And those who belong to Christ Jesus have [crucified the flesh](#) with its passions and desires.

25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. ²⁶Let us have no self-conceit, no provoking of one another, no envy of one another.

[Bear One Another's Burdens](#)

6 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should [restore him](#) in a spirit of gentleness. Look to yourself, lest you too be tempted. ²Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil [the law of Christ](#). ³For if any one thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴But let each one [test his own work](#), and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. ⁵For each man will have to bear his own load.

6 Let him who is taught the word [share all good things](#) with him who teaches.

7 Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever [a man sows](#), that he will also reap. ⁸For he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. ⁹And let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall

reap, if we do not lose heart. ¹⁰So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Final Admonitions and Benediction

11 See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. ¹²It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that would compel you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. ¹³For even those who receive circumcision do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh. ¹⁴But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which¹ the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. ¹⁶Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God.

17 Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

Commentary on The Letter of Saint Paul to the Galatians

1:1-9 Unlike most Pauline letters, Galatians omits introductory expressions of praise and thanksgiving. Instead of his usual warmth, Paul opens with a sharp and confrontational tone, followed by an astonished rebuke (1:6-9). This tension is present throughout the epistle and comes to the surface in its many warnings (3:1; 4:11, 20; 5:1-12, 15; 6:7-9). [Back to text.](#)

1:1 Paul an apostle: From the outset Paul defends his apostleship. Because his opponents in Galatia apparently denied him authority on a par with the Twelve, he contends that his commission stems neither from human authority (**from men**) nor even from the original apostles (**through man**). Paul, like the Twelve, received his gospel directly from Jesus Christ (1:12; Acts 26:15-18; CCC 659). [Back to text.](#)

1:2 all the brethren: Not co-authors, but a group of fellow Christian supporters. **the churches:** Galatians is a circular letter directed to several congregations affected by the Judaizing crisis. It is disputed whether Paul was writing to those of North or South Galatia. See introduction: *Destination.* [Back to text.](#)

1:3 Grace to you and peace: A conventional Pauline greeting (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2). [Back to text.](#)

1:4 gave himself for our sins: Anticipates the description of Christ's act of redemption in 3:13-14. Here and elsewhere Paul emphasizes that Jesus willingly offered himself as a sacrifice for our salvation (Gal 2:20; Eph 5:2; CCC 2824). **the present evil age:** Jewish theology distinguished between "this age", which is dominated by sin and death, and the "age to come" (Mt 12:32; Eph 1:21), when peace comes to reign in the cosmos and the powers of darkness are destroyed. Through Christ, the graces of the age to come are already pouring into the lives of believers, rescuing them from sin, selfishness, and Satan. [Back to text.](#)

1:6 I am astonished: Paul is distressed that his readers have been so easily lured into error by false teachers (3:1). His concern for the integrity of the gospel is manifest through the severity of his language. **him who called you:** God, through the mediating grace of Christ (1:15; Rom 8:30). **a different gospel:** I.e., a false gospel at variance with Paul's apostolic teaching. [Back to text.](#)

1:7 some who trouble you: The Judaizers, who labored to bring the Galatians under the yoke of circumcision and other burdensome laws of the Old Covenant (6:12-13). In doing so, they promoted a false gospel that implicitly denied the sufficiency of Christ's death for our salvation (2:21). Although our knowledge about these troublemakers is fragmentary, they seem to share the outlook and aims of Jewish traditionalists from Judea (Acts 15:1-5; 21:20-21). [Back to text.](#)

1:10 trying to please men?: It seems Paul was accused of subtracting circumcision from the requirements of Christian initiation in order to please the Gentiles. Ironically, it is the Judaizers who are the real men-pleasers, since they preach circumcision in order to avoid persecution by their Jewish kinsmen (6:12). Paul's willingness to preach the true gospel in the face of persecution is evidence that he seeks only the approval of God (5:11; Acts 14:19-22). [Back to text.](#)

1:12 through a revelation: Paul received his gospel directly from Christ, independent of apostolic tradition and instruction (Acts 26:12-18; CCC 153, 442). It is thus impossible that his message would conflict with that of the Jerusalem apostles who were also instructed by Christ, and in any case Paul has verified it with them (Gal 2:2; Acts 15:2). Notice that Paul is focusing on the foundational message of faith and salvation in Christ; other things, such as creeds and liturgical traditions, were indeed passed along to him by others (1 Cor 11:23-26; 15:3-7). [Back to text.](#)

1:13 I persecuted the Church: A dark chapter in Paul's pre-Christian life, of which he was later ashamed (1 Cor 15:9; 1 Tim 1:13). His zeal for traditional Judaism spurred him to adopt violent and aggressive tactics that included harassing, imprisoning, and even executing early Christians (Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-2; 26:9-11). After his conversion, Paul's fiery enthusiasm was not lessened but given new direction by Christ. [Back to text.](#)

1:14 traditions of my fathers: I.e., everything that comprised the Jewish way of life. This included biblical customs and institutions as well as Pharisaic practices that were devised to supplement and intensify the demands of the written Law (Mk 7:1-5). Paul studied under the famed Rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22:3) and prided himself on a strict adherence to Jewish law (Phil 3:6). [Back to text.](#)



1:15 set me apart: Paul's apostolic mission was predetermined before his birth. • His language recalls Is 49:1 and Jer 1:5, where the messianic Servant and the prophet Jeremiah were consecrated before birth to be God's messengers. Paul's similar calling places him within this prophetic tradition. [Back to text.](#)

1:16 to reveal his Son: In a vision on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-9; 1 Cor 9:1). It was then that Christ commissioned Paul to announce the gospel to the Gentiles and the sons of Israel (Acts 9:15-16). **I did not confer:** The RSV leaves the adverb "immediately" (Gk. *eutheos*) untranslated. Paul does not deny that he consulted the original apostles about his gospel (2:2, 6-10); he simply underscores that his *certainty* about its truth exempted him from the need to do so immediately after his conversion. **flesh and blood:** A Semitic idiom meaning "human beings" (Sir 14:18; Mt 16:17). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Accursed ([Gal 1:8](#))

Anathema (Gk.): "under a divine curse" or "set apart for destruction". The word is used six times in the NT, twice in Galatians. In the Greek OT, this word often translates a cultic and military term (Heb. *herem*) for the sacred ban that Yahweh placed on the enemy peoples of Canaan. Cities anathematized by the Lord were destined for utter destruction (Deut 20:17), and oftentimes the Israelites were forbidden to confiscate any booty for themselves (Deut 7:26; Josh 6:18). The same anathema was pronounced on cities where false prophets dared to lead God's people astray (Deut 13:12-18). The NT uses this term for a conditional curse that a person invokes upon himself when he swears an oath; it is a curse that will be activated if and when the individual breaks the oath (Acts 23:12-14). In Paul, an anathema is a curse that no Spirit-filled believer can invoke upon Jesus (1 Cor 12:3), yet it is precisely the divine judgment that awaits those who refuse to love the Lord (1 Cor 16:22). In Galatians, Paul pronounces an anathema upon heretical teachers who promote a false gospel. For the Hebrew background, see word study: *Devoted* at Josh 6:17.



1:17 Arabia: Probably the territory of the Nabatean kingdom that stretched from Damascus, north of Palestine, down to the Red Sea, south of Palestine. This was mostly a wilderness region where no one could have instructed Paul but God himself. • The reference to Arabia here and in 4:25 might suggest that Paul journeyed to the traditional site of Mt. Sinai (also called Horeb), where Moses and Elijah spoke intimately with the Lord (Ex 19:2-3; 1 Kings 19:8-18). [Back to text.](#)

1:18 after three years: Corresponds to the "many days" that passed before Paul was forced to flee Damascus (Acts 9:23-25). It was then that he traveled to Jerusalem for the first time as a Christian (Acts 9:26-29). **to visit:** The Greek expression is more precise, indicating that Paul "interviewed" Peter, as well as "made his acquaintance". He must have spent these two weeks gathering information about the life and ministry of Jesus. **Cephas:** Another name for Simon Peter, often used in Paul's letters (2:9, 11; 1 Cor 1:12; 9:5; 15:5). It transliterates an Aramaic word meaning "rock". See word study: [Peter](#) at Mt 16:18. [Back to text.](#)

1:19 James: Tradition reveres James as the first bishop of Jerusalem, being appointed to this position by the apostles. Early Christians called him "the Just" on account of his disciplined, prayerful, and virtuous life (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2, 23; St. Jerome, *On Illustrious Men* 2). [See note on Acts 12:17.](#) **the Lord's brother:** Not a blood brother, but a near kinsman (CCC 500). [See note on Mt 12:46.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:20 before God, I do not lie: A mild oath formula, sworn by Paul to insist on the reliability of his testimony (Rom 9:1; CCC 2154). [Back to text.](#)

1:21 Syria and Cilicia: Paul withdrew first to his native city of Tarsus in Cilicia (Acts 9:30) and was later summoned to the Church of Antioch in Syria (Acts 11:25-26). [Back to text.](#)

2:1-10 Scholars disagree over the precise circumstances of this Jerusalem visit. Some link it with the trip that Paul and Barnabas made to provide famine relief for the Judean Christians in Acts 11:28-30. More probably, Paul is referring to his presence at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15:1-29. Notice that the two accounts concern **(1)** the same people (Paul, Barnabas, and companions, Acts 15:2), **(2)** the same place (Jerusalem, Acts 15:4), **(3)** the same leaders (Peter and James, Acts 15:7, 13), **(4)** the same issue

(circumcision, Acts 15:1), and (5) the same opponents (the circumcision party, Acts 15:5). [Back to text.](#)

2:1 after fourteen years: Probably calculated from the time of Paul's first visit to Jerusalem (1:18). **Barnabas:** A Levite and native of Cyprus. [See note on Acts 4:36.](#) **Titus:** One of Paul's trusted companions (2 Cor 2:13; Tit 1:4). He is mentioned here to illustrate that, although Titus was an uncircumcised Gentile, the Jerusalem apostles welcomed him into their fellowship (Gal 2:3). [Back to text.](#)

2:2 I laid before them: Paul received his gospel directly from Christ (1:12), yet he submitted it for approval to the senior apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 15:2). This was to confirm that his message was in line with the doctrine of the Twelve and to remove suspicions that his missionary efforts were at odds with the authority of the Church's recognized leaders. In the end, the pillar apostles "added nothing" to his message (Gal 2:6) and openly affirmed his ministry by giving him the "right hand of fellowship" (2:9). [Back to text.](#)

2:3 compelled to be circumcised: The Greek expression here and at 6:12 is used by ancient writers like Josephus and Ptolemy to describe forcible circumcision. The idea is historically linked with Jewish military efforts to subjugate neighboring Gentiles during the Maccabean period by forcing them under the yoke of the Mosaic Law (cf. 1 Mac 2:46) and the administration of the Judean State centered in Jerusalem. The Judaizers are doing something analogous in Galatia by insisting that Gentiles submit to circumcision in order to be incorporated into the commonwealth of the covenant people. [Back to text.](#)

2:4 false brethren: Judean believers who promoted circumcision as a necessary prerequisite for salvation (Acts 15:1). **our freedom:** Christ liberates believers from the curses and ceremonies of the Mosaic Law (3:13; 5:6; 6:15). The danger here is that the Judaizers will enslave the Galatians if they successfully persuade them to receive circumcision (5:1-3). [Back to text.](#)

2:6 reputed to be something: The Jerusalem apostles were held in high esteem. Though his tone seems distant and cool, Paul neither affirms nor denies them this honor. [Back to text.](#)

2:7 uncircumcised . . .circumcised: Epithets for Gentiles and Israelites, respectively (Eph 2:11-12). This does not mean the divisions of missionary labor were drawn along purely geographical lines, since Peter traveled

extensively and Paul also evangelized his Israelite kinsmen living among the Gentiles. [See note on Acts 13:5.](#) [Back to text.](#)

2:9 James and Cephas and John: I.e., James, the brother of the Lord (1:19), Simon Peter (Jn 1:42), and John, the son of Zebedee (Mt 10:2). The order of the names is unusual, as Peter is always mentioned first in the apostolic lists of the NT (Mt 10:2; Mk 3:16; Jn 21:2; Acts 1:13). Perhaps Paul lists James first as a way of undercutting the claims of the Judaizers, who, along with other Jewish conservatives, had a deep respect for James as the spiritual shepherd of the Jerusalem Church at this time (after Peter fled the city, Acts 12:17). By stressing that *James* endorsed his gospel, Paul shows that the Judaizers have no official backing from Jerusalem, even from its most conservative leadership. For more on James, [see note on Gal 1:19.](#) **pillars:** Important leaders in the Church, which is pictured as the living Temple of God (Rev 3:12; cf. Eph 2:19-22). [Back to text.](#)

2:10 remember the poor: This was the inspiration behind Paul's effort to collect charitable contributions for the believers in Jerusalem living in poverty (Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 8-9). The Galatians themselves donated to this fund (1 Cor 16:1-3). [Back to text.](#)

2:11 Antioch: The capital of the Roman province of Syria, north of Palestine. The Antiochene Church was the first to bring Christian Jews and Gentiles together in fellowship (Acts 11:19-26) and the first to organize missionary outreaches to the Gentiles (Acts 13:1-3). **Cephas** probably came to the city after the Jerusalem Council, as did Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:35). [Back to text.](#)

2:12 separated himself: Peter reverts to the custom of traditional Judaism, which discouraged social contact, especially shared meals, between Jews and Gentiles (Acts 10:28; *Jubilees* 22, 16). It was feared, among other things, that Gentile food might violate the purity standards of the Torah, i.e., it might be either unclean or improperly prepared (Lev 11:1-47; 17:10-13). The problem here is that Peter has already been informed that the Jewish dietary laws have been set aside in the New Covenant and that Gentiles are now welcome members of the family of faith (Acts 10:9-16, 28). **men came from James:** Either a delegation sent by James or loyal associates of James who came on their own initiative. The former seems more likely, but, for the possibility of the latter, see Acts 15:24. **the circumcision party:** Jewish Christians who discouraged table fellowship

between Jews and Gentiles. Peter had been criticized by them on this issue once before (Acts 11:2-3). [Back to text.](#)



2:14 before them all: It is precisely Peter's authority and influence in the Church that made it necessary for Paul to correct him in public. **to live like Jews:** Literally, "to Judaize", or "to adopt Jewish customs". Peter's conduct implied the very thing he had denied at the Jerusalem Council, namely, that Gentile Christians must adopt the ritual laws of Judaism in order to secure their standing in the covenant and obtain salvation (Acts 15:7-11). • The same expression is used once in the Greek OT, where it describes how Gentiles from Persia were circumcised and Judaized for "fear of the Jews" (Esther 8:17). Here too, in the case of Peter (Gal 2:12) as well as the Judaizers (6:12), fear is once again the driving force behind the impulse to Judaize. [Back to text.](#)



2:16 justified: Established in a right relationship with God. Justification involves the cleansing of sin, the infusion of divine life, and the adoption of the believer into the family of God through Baptism (1 Cor 6:11; Tit 3:5) (CCC 1987-95). See word study: [Justified](#) at Rom 2:13. **works of the law:** See essay: [The Works of the Law](#) at Gal 2. **shall no flesh be justified:** Identical to the statement in Rom 3:20 and probably an allusion to the Greek version of Ps 143:2. • The Psalmist begs the Lord to suspend judgment on his life, for he knows that no one is without fault and thus no one can stand before God in perfect righteousness. • Some claim that if no one is justified by the law, but only by faith in Christ, then the Patriarchs and Prophets who lived before Christ were imperfect. The saints of old, however, were justified by faith in Christ (St. Jerome, *Commentary on Galatians* 2:16). [Back to text.](#)

2:17 found to be sinners: I.e., living like Gentiles, who do not follow the Mosaic Law (2:15). [Back to text.](#)

2:18 which I tore down: The Torah stood as a protective barrier between Israel and the idolatry of the Gentiles (Lev 15:31; 20:26). This dividing wall of separation has now been dismantled by Christ (Eph 2:14), who brings Jews and Gentiles together in the New Covenant (3:28). [Back to text.](#)

2:20 crucified with Christ: United with the Cross, Paul has died to an old order of things, namely, the slavery of sin and the regime of the Old

Covenant. He describes this elsewhere as a sacramental union with Jesus effected through Baptism (Rom 6:3-8). **lives in me:** Believers possess life that is natural and biological (human life) as well as supernatural and theological (divine life). **who loved me:** Jesus endured the torture and shame of the Cross for the entire world collectively and for every person individually (CCC 478, 616). [Back to text.](#)



2:21 died to no purpose: Paul reasons that if the Mosaic Law had been sufficient all along to remove sin, establish us in righteousness, and bring us into God's family, then the Cross would have been completely unnecessary (3:21). • The Law can neither remit sin nor triumph over eternal death nor free those held captive because of sin. Christ died to provide those things that the Law could not (Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on Galatians* 2:21). [Back to text.](#)

3:1 O foolish Galatians: Paul is irked and dismayed that his readers have succumbed to the pressure of the Judaizers (1:6). **portrayed as crucified:** The Galatians did not witness the Crucifixion of Jesus in person but embraced the message of the Cross that Paul so vividly proclaimed (1 Cor 1:18, 23). [Back to text.](#)

3:2 hearing with faith?: The Galatian controversy turns on the question of *when* they received the Holy Spirit. Since this happened when they believed the gospel and were baptized (Acts 2:38), Paul deems it foolish to accept circumcision and other **works** of the Mosaic Law as additional requirements needed to complete their Christian initiation. This is the very logic set forth by Peter at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:8-11). [Back to text.](#)

3:4 experience: This could also be translated "suffer" and may indicate that some, like the Judaizers themselves, were tempted to accept circumcision because of Jewish persecution (6:12). [Back to text.](#)



3:6 Abraham: The great-grandfather of Israel by race and the father of all believers by grace. Paul sees the gospel of justification proclaimed in the life of Abraham, who was righteous by faith completely apart from his circumcision (Rom 4:9-12). **believed God:** A citation from Gen 15:6. • This was a time of testing for Abraham, when God was stretching his faith in a moment of discouragement (1 Mac 2:52). Though faced with

formidable obstacles, such as his age and the barrenness of his wife, he trusted that God could do the impossible by giving him a son. The promise was later fulfilled in the birth of Isaac (Gen 21:1-3). It is clear from the context of Genesis, as well as Heb 11:8-12, that this is not the moment of Abraham's conversion, for it is not the first time he puts his faith in the Lord. For details, See note on Gen 15:6. [Back to text.](#)



3:8 all the nations be blessed: The citation combines the Greek version of Gen 12:3 and Gen 18:18. • God promised blessings for Abraham that extended well beyond both his tribal family and his lifetime. It was a promise of worldwide salvation to come (CCC 59-61). [Back to text.](#)



3:10 Cursed be every one: A citation from Deut 27:26. • This is the final and climactic curse that Israel invoked upon itself in the oath ceremony that ratified the Deuteronomic covenant. In the subsequent context, Moses predicted the rebellion and cursing of Israel (Deut 28:47-68) as well as the eventual restoration and blessing of Israel (Deut 30:1-10). It is possible this passage was used by the Judaizers to insist on the necessity of circumcision, lest nonobservance of the Law result in a curse. Paul, however, uses it against them, charging that everyone who embraces the Law embraces the curse, for not even the Judaizers follow all of its demands to perfection (Gal 6:13). **book of the law:** A technical term for the Book of Deuteronomy (Deut 29:21; 30:10), which was written on a scroll and placed beside the Ark of the Covenant (Deut 31:26). Some read it with reference to the Mosaic Law more generally. [Back to text.](#)

The Works of the Law

EIGHT TIMES in his letters Paul uses the expression "works of the law", twice in Romans (Rom 3:20, 28) and six times in Galatians (Gal 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10). Each time he denies these works the power to save us and subjects them to theological critique. Paul is intent on convincing his Roman and Galatian readers that, unlike faith in Jesus Christ, the "works of the law" neither justify the sinner nor confer the Spirit on believers.

But what are the "works of the law"? According to some, Paul uses this expression to refer to legalism, that is, the misguided attempt to amass favor with God and to earn salvation for oneself by the performance of good works. On this reading, Paul is said to reject all attempts to merit eternal life by sheer human effort. According to others, Paul is talking about obedience to the Mosaic Law as a path that leads to salvation. On this reading, Paul is said to stress the problem of human weakness and man's inability to keep the Law either consistently or comprehensively. Logically, from this perspective, observance of the Law cannot justify the sinner before God because no one can obey the Law without fault.

THE PRIMARY MEANING

These views are true at the theological level, and other passages of Scripture indicate that Paul made important assertions to this effect, but several modern scholars believe Paul had something more specific in mind when he used the "works of the law" formula. According to these scholars, Paul used this phrase to refer primarily to the *Mosaic ceremonial works*. It is mainly the visible expressions of Jewish life and identity, like circumcision, dietary regulations, purity codes, Sabbath observance, and the liturgical calendar of Old Covenant feasts, that Paul contrasts with faith. These are the ritual distinctives that set Jews apart from Gentiles in the Hellenistic world of the first century. In support of this thesis, its advocates note how this issue consistently surfaces when Paul is talking about the salvation of Jews and Gentiles. They likewise point out, from the wider context of Romans and Galatians, that the apostle stresses the irrelevance of ceremonial rites like circumcision

(Rom 2:25-29; 3:30; 4:9-12; Gal 2:3; 5:21-23; 6:12-15), dietary issues (Rom 14:1-23; Gal 2:11-14), and feast-day observances (Rom 14:5-6; Gal 4:10). Though the point is contested, some see corroborating evidence for this view in the Dead Sea Scrolls, where the Hebrew equivalent of "works of the law" (*ma'ase hattorah*) turns up in a context where laws concerning purity, sacrifice, festivals, and foods are the central issues of discussion (scroll fragment 4QMMT).

Interestingly enough, this new perspective on "works of the law" is actually a very old one. The Alexandrian scholar Origen put forth the substance of this interpretation as early as the third century (*Commentary on Romans* 8, 7, 6). Saint Jerome connected the phrase with the ceremonial rituals in the fourth century (*Commentary on Galatians* at Gal 3:2), as did his contemporary Ambrosiaster in his Latin commentary on the Pauline epistles (*Commentary on Romans* at Rom 3:28). The same interpretation was made in the fifth century by the Greek scholar and bishop Theodoret of Cyrrhus (*Commentary on Galatians* at Gal 2:15-16). In medieval times, Saint Thomas Aquinas favored this as the primary meaning, asserting that the theme of Galatians "concerns the termination of the Old Testament sacraments" (*Commentary on Galatians* 1, 1). Select comments from the founders of Protestantism indicate that Catholic theologians were linking the works of the Law with its ceremonies in the sixteenth century as well (see, e.g., John Calvin, *Commentary on Galatians* at Gal 2:15; Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent, Concerning Justification* 3, 5).

Thus, in the history of Catholic scholarship, there has consistently been an identification of the "works" of the Mosaic Law with its ritual "ceremonies". That is not to say that this amounts to a consensus position, as many have taken a broader line of interpretation (e.g., St. Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter* 23). But acceptance of the ceremonial reading remains attractive because it makes excellent sense of Paul's polemical engagement with Jews and Gentiles on the question of salvation and the means of justification. Beyond this, it invites deeper theological reflection on the purpose of these rites in the economy of salvation.

THE THEOLOGICAL MEANING

The theology that underlies the Mosaic ceremonies is rich and manifold. To understand it is to understand better why Paul pits the works of the Law over against faith in Christ. (1) The ceremonial laws expressed a theology of separation that is proper to the Old Covenant. For centuries, works such as circumcision, food restrictions, observance of the Sabbath, etc., functioned as badges of Israel's election that made the Jews a people distinct from the Gentiles. But when Christ came to gather all nations into the fold of the New Covenant, the ceremonial boundaries that divided Israel from the rest of world were set aside as outdated and expired. Because the Church is an international community that includes Jews but does not exclude Gentiles, the rituals exclusive to Judaism are no longer appropriate for marking out the People of God (Rom 1:5, 16; 3:29-30; Gal 3:28). (2) The Mosaic rituals were mere shadows of better things to come in Christ (Col 2:16-17). In other words, the ceremonies of the Law were signs of grace but not sacraments of grace; they pointed the way to the benefits we receive in Christ, but they did not confer those benefits (Heb 7:18-19; 10:1-4). So, for example, circumcision of the flesh prefigured the inward grace that transforms the heart in Baptism (Col 2:11-12). The sacrifices of the Mosaic Law set the stage for the perfect sacrifice of Jesus, which alone effects a true remission of sins (Heb 10:11-18). Festivals such as Passover likewise prepared Israel to receive the true Lamb of God as holy food (1 Cor 5:7-8; 10:16). All the ceremonies, in one way or another, served a prophetic function that was important in the old economy but was no longer necessary once Christ came and fulfilled what had long ago been foreshadowed. (3) The Mosaic ceremonies were symbolic rituals that taught important lessons about divine grace and the inadequacy of human works. In concert with the Mosaic Law as a whole, the ceremonial laws were part of a divine education in humility and the need for grace. Take circumcision, for example. At one level, it is a sign of the righteousness Abraham possessed by faith (Rom 4:11). At another, it is a reminder that God fulfills his plan by grace rather than human works. Recall that circumcision was given (Gen 17:1-17) after Abraham had grown impatient and tried to accomplish by his own efforts (Gen 16:1-6) what only God could do for him by a miracle of grace, namely, give him a son

in old age (Gen 15:4). Circumcision, it would seem, was a painful reminder to Abraham of this important lesson. Likewise, Sabbath observance was a weekly reminder that man's work, accomplished in six days, must desist and give way to a celebration of God's works on the seventh day (creation, Ex 20:11; redemption, Deut 5:15). Sacrifice had a pedagogical purpose as well, serving as an ongoing memorial of human weakness and sin (Heb 10:3). On the one hand, God instituted sacrifice to express his desire to be forgiving to his wayward people. On the other, by ordering the continuous cycle of offerings under the Old Covenant, he was driving home the point that man is weak and powerless to avoid transgressions by his own strength and so stands in need of grace and divine mercy.

ALL OF THIS helps us to bring Paul's teaching into focus. Far from justifying the sinner, the ceremonial "works" declare that man is weak and sinful and in desperate need of God's help. In effect, they show us our needs without meeting our needs. Instead of providing a solution to our problem, they point beyond themselves to the ultimate solution provided by God in the dying and rising of Jesus Christ for our salvation. « [Back to Galatians 3:1.](#)



3:11 He who through faith: A citation from Hab 2:4. • Habakkuk is assured that, despite the coming invasion of Judea by the Babylonians, the one who clings to the Lord in faith will be given the grace of protection and will survive the catastrophe. From this text Paul hails faith, not observance of the Law, as the foundation of justification (3:21-22; Rom 1:17). [Back to text.](#)



3:12 He who does them: A citation from Lev 18:5. • Leviticus promises life to Israel for observing the Torah and shunning the sins of the Gentiles. Yet, as the recurring transgressions of Israel show (Neh 9:29), the Mosaic Law did not come with the grace needed to keep it (Rom 8:4). Paul may be interpreting this passage through the lens of Ezek 20:11, 13, 21, where the Prophet contrasts the Levitical promise of life given at Sinai with the Deuteronomic promises of curse and death issued on the plains of Moab (Ezek 20:25-26). [Back to text.](#)



3:13 Cursed be every one: A citation from Deut 21:23. • This refers to the practice of hanging executed criminals on trees to avert the wrath of God (Num 25:4; 2 Sam 21:9). For Paul, Jesus bore the curses pressing down upon Israel when he mounted the Cross (Gal 3:10). This act enabled the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant, held back for centuries because of the curse, to pour forth upon Israel and the world as a result (3:14; CCC 580). The Dead Sea Scrolls likewise associate crucifixion with the curse of Deut 21:22-23. [Back to text.](#)



3:14 the blessing of Abraham: I.e., the Spirit, which is the messianic blessing revealed by the Prophets (Is 44:3; Ezek 36:26-27; Joel 2:28). • The exact expression is from Gen 28:4, where Isaac confers the blessing of Abraham upon his son Jacob. This shows that Isaac alone was the bearer of the Abrahamic blessing, not Ishmael or any other of

Abraham's sons (Rom 9:7-9). Paul will capitalize on the significance of this in Gal 3:16 and 4:28. [Back to text.](#)

3:15-18 The major premise of Paul's covenant theology in Galatians, namely, that Israel's failure to keep the *Mosaic* covenant did not relieve God of his prior obligation to fulfill the *Abrahamic* covenant ratified centuries earlier. Since even human covenants are inviolable once they are ratified by oath, the covenant oath that God swore to Abraham is even more so (Gen 22:16-18; Heb 6:13-18). Not even the ratification of subsequent covenants under Moses could alter or annul God's unconditional pledge to bless the world through Abraham's offspring. In effect, then, the Abrahamic covenant both precedes and supercedes the Mosaic covenant that came after it. [Back to text.](#)

3:15 will: The term means "testament" or "will" in secular Greek usage but "covenant" in biblical Greek usage. Despite the RSV translation, the biblical sense of "covenant" is probably intended here, since (1) Paul uses the term this way in his other writings (Rom 9:4; 11:27; 2 Cor 3:6, 14; Eph 2:12), (2) he uses it this way elsewhere in Galatians (3:17; 4:24), and (3) it is a known fact that a will in Greco-Roman antiquity could be altered or even annulled after the death of the testator who drafted it, which is the very point Paul denies in this verse. For a similar translation issue in Hebrews, see essay: [Will or Covenant?](#) at Heb 9. [Back to text.](#)



3:16 and to his offspring: A reference to Gen 22:18. I • Paul is alluding to the covenant oath that God swore to Abraham to bless all nations through Isaac and his descendants (Sir 44:21; CCC 706). It is significant for Paul that Abraham's other son, Ishmael, was disinherited in the preceding chapter of Genesis and thus excluded from this covenant (Gen 21:10-12). Thus, when Paul stresses that the word "offspring" is singular rather than plural, he is (1) alluding to the divine election of Isaac over Ishmael in the Genesis narrative (Gal 4:28-31; Rom 9:7-8) and (2) implying that Isaac is a type of Christ, so that the act that elicits the promised blessing (the sacrifice of Isaac) prefigures the act that fulfills it (the sacrifice of Jesus). [See note on Rom 8:32.](#) [Back to text.](#)

3:17 four hundred and thirty years: The duration of Israel's stay in Egypt before the Exodus (Ex 12:40-41). Thus, the Abrahamic covenant, last

confirmed with Jacob (Gen 28:14), preceded the ratification of the Mosaic covenant by more than four centuries (Ex 19-24). [Back to text.](#)

3:19 It was added: The Torah was inserted into history between the Abrahamic covenant and the New Covenant. **because of:** The Greek can indicate either the goal ("for the sake of") or the cause ("by reason of") for adding the Law. Paul may have both ideas in mind: the *goal* of the Law was to expose transgressions and heighten Israel's awareness of sin (Rom 3:20; 5:20; 7:7); the *cause* for adding the Law, at least the bulk of its sacrificial and ceremonial rites, was the rebellion of Israel during the Exodus period, particularly the golden calf transgression (see, e.g., Christian theologians St. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 18-22; St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4, 15; St. Aphrahat, *Demonstrations* 15, 8; St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 102, 3). **ordained by angels:** Jewish tradition based on the Greek version of Deut 33:2 held that Moses received the Torah from the hands of the angels (Acts 7:53; Heb 2:2; Josephus, *Antiquities* 15, 136). [Back to text.](#)

3:20 an intermediary: Moses, who delivered the Torah to Israel (Ex 20:18-22; Deut 5:4-5). That the Mosaic covenant involved a mediator implied that **more than one** party was responsible for fulfilling the terms of the covenant—God and Israel. The Abrahamic covenant, by contrast, was a unilateral arrangement, i.e., God alone swore an oath and assumed the responsibility of blessing the world through Abraham's offspring (Gen 22:16-18). **God is one:** The monotheistic creed of ancient Israel (Deut 6:4). [Back to text.](#)

3:22 consigned all things to sin: Scripture declares all peoples, Jews and Gentiles alike, prisoners of sin. Paul spells this out in Rom 3:9-19 and Rom 11:32. [Back to text.](#)

3:23 kept under restraint: The mass of ethical, juridical, and ceremonial laws codified in the Torah was designed to keep Israel in temporary protective custody, lest it imitate the depravity of the Gentiles (CCC 1963-64). [Back to text.](#)

3:27 baptized into Christ: Baptism is the sacrament of faith (3:26) and the rite of Christian initiation that replaces circumcision (Col 2:11-12). It cleanses us of sin, joins us with Christ, and makes us righteous children of God (Acts 22:16; Tit 3:5; 1 Pet 3:21; CCC 1226-27). Paul's description of this mystery reflects early liturgical practice where the newly baptized **put**

on a white garment to symbolize their purity in **Christ** (cf. Rom 13:14; Eph 4:24; CCC 1243, 2348). [Back to text.](#)

3:28 you are all one: All peoples, irrespective of ethnic, gender, and social distinctions, are equal candidates for salvation and sonship in Christ (Col 3:11; CCC 791). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Custodian ([Gal 3:24-25](#))

Paidagōgos (Gk.): a "tutor" or "disciplinarian" or "guide". The word is used twice in the NT, here and at 1 Cor 4:15. It refers to a household slave in Hellenistic society who was charged by a father to oversee the moral formation of his son. This tutelage normally lasted from the time the child was a minor until he reached maturity. The tutor would accompany the youth to and from school, supervise his daily activities, protect him from dangers, and administer discipline whenever necessary. Paul used this familiar custom to explain how the Mosaic Law served a similar function in Israel. It was an instructor and guide for the nation, yet one that was temporary and destined to pass away. The coming of Christ meant that Israel could now be freed from the supervision and restraints of the Mosaic Law to embrace the full inheritance awaiting it in the New Covenant (Gal 4:4-7; CCC 708).

4:1-7 Paul reads the history of Israel as the story of a minor who has grown to maturity and is ready to receive his inheritance. During the Exodus, Israel was a rebellious son (Ex 4:22) whom Yahweh placed under the guardianship of the Mosaic Law (Gal 3:24) and the servile discipline of covenant curses (3:13). The coming of Christ marks the appointed time when the curses and ceremonies of the Mosaic Law are finally set aside and Israel can receive the full inheritance of sonship through the Spirit (Rom 8:14-15; CCC 1972). [Back to text.](#)

4:3 elemental spirits: The Greek word is simply "elements", which can denote **(1)** the first principles of education (Heb 5:12), **(2)** the physical elements of the world (2 Pet 3:10), **(3)** the heavenly bodies and luminaries, which were deified by the pagans (cf. Deut 4:19), or **(4)** the spirits that

control the cosmic elements and were likewise worshiped by the pagans (cf. Wis 13:2). Each of these has connections with the religious culture of the Hellenistic world. In this context, however, life under the elements is connected with life under the Law (Gal 3:23-25). The point is not that Judaism is no different from paganism, but that both constitute a state of bondage under cosmic forces from which Christ has freed us (4:4-5, 8-9; Col 2:8, 20). Perhaps the Torah is classified with the elements because it teaches rudimentary principles of religion; its legal observances make use of physical substances; its cultic calendar follows the movements of the sun and moon; and the Law is mediated by angelic spirits (Gal 3:19), who, according to Jewish tradition, also stand in charge of the physical elements and seasonal cycles of the world (*Jubilees* 2, 2). [Back to text.](#)

4:4 the time had fully come: History reached a climax with the birth and death of the Messiah (Mk 1:15; Eph 1:10). This was the predetermined date "set" by God the Father to confer the blessing of divine sonship upon both Israel and the Gentiles (Gal 4:2; CCC 422, 484). **born of woman:** Emphasizes that Jesus shared in the human condition (Job 14:1; Mt 11:11). Giving birth and flesh to the Son of God makes Mary the Mother of God (CCC 495, 723). [See note on Lk 1:43.](#) **born under the law:** Emphasizes Jesus' link with Judaism and his messianic mission to rescue Israel from the slavery of the Law and its covenant curses (3:13; CCC 580). [Back to text.](#)

4:6 sent the Spirit: As the Father sent the Son to redeem all nations from sin (4:4), he likewise sent the Spirit to renew them for a life of sanctity. The joint mission of the Son and Spirit is to bring blessing to the whole human family and unify them in the divine family of God (CCC 689). **into our hearts:** The Spirit fills us with God's presence and love (Rom 5:5; 2 Cor 1:22). His divine assistance enables us to live righteously as sons and daughters of the Father (Rom 8:4; 1 Jn 3:7; CCC 1265-66, 1695). **Abba!:** Aramaic for "Father!" It bespeaks a new level of intimacy with the Father that Jesus opened (Mk 14:36) for the children of God (Rom 8:15) (CCC 683, 2766). [Back to text.](#)

4:8-11 Paul's personal appeal to the Galatians. Having refuted the logic of the Judaizers in 3:1-4:7, he now urges readers to repudiate their propaganda. The pastoral tone of this section reveals the depth of Paul's affection for the Galatians and indicates how earnestly he wants to restore them to spiritual health. [Back to text.](#)

4:8 you did not know God: The Galatians were once pagans, ignorant of the God of Israel (Ps 79:6; 1 Thess 4:5). In accepting the gospel, they turned away from lifeless idols to be known and loved by the living God (Gal 4:9; 1 Thess 1:9). [Back to text.](#)

4:9 elemental spirits: For the meaning of this, [see note on Gal 4:3.](#) [Back to text.](#)

4:10 days . . . months . . . seasons . . . years: Refers to the liturgical calendar of Israel, which was regulated by the cycles of the sun and moon (Gen 1:14). Apparently the Judaizers persuaded some of the Galatians to begin celebrating the weekly (Sabbath, Ex 20:8-11), monthly (New Moon, Num 28:11-15), seasonal (Passover, Pentecost, etc., Deut 16:1-17), and yearly (New Years, see note on Lev 23:24) festivals of the Old Covenant (Col 2:16). [Back to text.](#)

4:12 become as I am: Imitating Paul in this context means putting aside the ritual ordinances of the Mosaic Law to "live like a Gentile and not like a Jew" (2:14). [Back to text.](#)

4:13 a bodily ailment: The infirmity is not specified, but Paul's comments in 4:15 and 6:11 suggest it may have been a visual handicap. [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Adoption ([Gal 4:5](#))

Huiiothesia (Gk.): means "adoption as sons" and can refer to the process of entering a new family or to its lasting result. Paul uses the term five times in the NT. In Rom 9:4, he lists it among the privileges that Israel enjoyed by virtue of its covenant bond with Yahweh (Ex 4:22; Hos 1:11). Every other use of the word is connected with Christians. For Paul, the divine adoption of the believer takes place in two stages: first, our souls are raised to new life and filled with the grace of divine sonship (Rom 8:15; Eph 1:5) and, finally, our bodies will be raised to new life and filled with the glory of divine sonship (Rom 8:23). Divine adoption results from an infusion of the divine life of the Spirit (Gal 4:5-6). Historically, the gift of sonship once possessed in part by Israel is now granted in full to all nations united with Christ through faith and Baptism (Gal 3:26-27). While Christ alone is the

natural Son of God, we are made to share in his filial life as adopted "sons in the Son".

4:19 in travail: Paul describes himself as a mother who begot Christ in the lives of the Galatians (cf. 2:20). His labor pains continue as he groans to see his sons and daughters turning back to bondage (CCC 526, 562). [Back to text.](#)

4:22 two sons: Abraham's oldest son, Ishmael, was born of his concubine, Hagar (Gen 16:15), while his younger son, Isaac, was born of his wife, Sarah (Gen 21:1-3). Hagar was Sarah's personal slave (Gen 16:1). [Back to text.](#)

4:23 through promise: The birth of Isaac was the result of God's promise and miraculous intervention, since Sarah was barren and elderly at the time (Gen 15:2-4; 17:15-19). Ishmael was conceived by purely natural means, that is, according to **the flesh** (Gen 16:3-4). [Back to text.](#)

4:24-31 The mothers of Isaac and Ishmael represent two distinct covenants and thus two ages of salvation history. The slave woman, **Hagar**, is linked with **Mount Sinai**, where the Torah was given to Israel; the essence of this covenant was practiced and promoted in **Jerusalem**. The free woman, Sarah, is symbolic of the heavenly **Jerusalem above**, where the saints worship God in the freedom of the New Covenant (Heb 12:22-23) without the burdensome yoke of the Mosaic Law (Gal 5:1). A contrast is thus set up between the Judaizers and the Galatians: the former are sons of the earthly Jerusalem, who are born into religious slavery through the Law (like Ishmael, from Hagar), while the latter are sons of the heavenly Jerusalem (CCC 757), who are born into freedom and blessedness through the gospel (like Isaac, from Sarah). [See note on Gal 3:15-18.](#) [Back to text.](#)



4:24 this is an allegory: An example of spiritual exegesis, which expounds the prophetic meaning of OT persons, places, events, and institutions in light of the New Covenant. Whereas literal exegesis interprets the words of the Bible, spiritual exegesis interprets the realities and events of the Bible described by its words (CCC 115-17). • The author of Holy Scripture is God, who can signify his meaning, not only by words, as even man can do, but also by things. The first signification whereby words signify things belongs to the historical or literal sense. The

signification whereby things signified by words also have their own signification is the spiritual sense, which is based on the literal and presupposes it (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, 1, 10). [Back to text.](#)

4:25 in Arabia: Paul naturally links Hagar with Arabia, since the descendants of her son, Ishmael (Arabs), dwelt in this desert region. [Back to text.](#)



4:27 Rejoice, O barren one: A citation from the Greek version of Is 54:1. • Isaiah compares Jerusalem, destroyed and desolate after the Exile (586 B.C.), to a barren woman made fruitful by God and to a tent that will spread out to make the nations her children (Is 54:2-3). Historically, the text is an allusion to the matriarch Sarah, who was barren but miraculously gave birth to Isaac. Prophetically, it points to the heavenly Jerusalem, which is the mother city made fruitful by God to bear children from all nations through the gospel. [Back to text.](#)

4:28 children of promise: Paul concludes that those in Christ (3:27) share the Abrahamic blessings that were promised to come through Isaac to the world (3:14). [See note on Gal 3:16.](#) [Back to text.](#)

4:29 persecuted: Paul follows a Jewish tradition that interprets the "playing" of Abraham's sons in Gen 21:9 as a power struggle between the boys, with the older Ishmael taunting the younger Isaac. The current harassment by the Judaizers links them with Hagar and the Ishmaelites, whose descendants were among the traditional enemies of the covenant people (1 Chron 5:10; Ps 83:5-6). [Back to text.](#)



4:30 Cast out the slave: A citation from Gen 21:10. • This is the moment when Ishmael is expelled from Abraham's family and disqualified from being a rightful heir. It refutes the logic of the Judaizers that circumcision is the sign that entitles one to a share in the blessings of Abraham. In effect, Paul is reminding them that Ishmael and Isaac were *both* circumcised, yet Ishmael was disinherited and Isaac alone received his father's blessing. [See note on Jn 8:35.](#) [Back to text.](#)



5:1 yoke of slavery: An image of the Mosaic Law, with its burdensome ceremonial requirements (Acts 15:10). It stands in stark contrast to the **freedom** of faith in Jesus Christ (Mt 11:29-30), who alone liberates us from sin and death (Acts 13:38-39; CCC 1972). For Paul, the two are mutually exclusive, since to *accept* the yoke of the Law as a requirement for salvation is to *reject* Christ as the sole foundation of our redemption and spiritual life (Gal 2:21). • The Council of Florence (1442) declared that Christians cannot observe the Mosaic ceremonies of the Old Covenant as necessary for salvation without sinning gravely (Session 11). Although it was permitted for Jewish converts to maintain their ancestral traditions in the earliest days of the Church, this grace period ended with the wide dissemination of the gospel. Thereafter neither Jews nor Gentiles could lawfully uphold circumcision, animal sacrifices, or dietary distinctions as legitimate practices in the New Covenant. [Back to text.](#)

5:3 keep the whole law: Circumcision is the doorway into the Old Covenant, and so those who embrace it are obligated to observe the Mosaic Law in its entirety. Ironically, the Judaizers are hypocrites in this regard (6:13). [Back to text.](#)

5:6 faith working through love: Faith alone is insufficient to justify the sinner. If it stands by itself and fails to join with love in acts of generosity and service, it is empty and vain (1 Cor 13:2; Jas 2:14-26). The parallel passage in 1 Cor 7:19, which likewise asserts the irrelevance of circumcision, suggests that Paul associates the labor of faith and love with keeping the moral commandments of God. Love has precisely this focus in Pauline theology (Gal 5:13-14; Rom 13:8-10) (CCC 162, 1814). [Back to text.](#)

5:9 A little leaven: Symbolic of a hidden but evil influence (Mt 16:12; 1 Cor 5:6-8). If even a few of Paul's readers submit to circumcision at the insistence of the Judaizers, it could have a disastrous effect upon all the Galatian Christians. [Back to text.](#)

5:11 stumbling block of the cross: In the eyes of the Judaizers, this would consist in the exemption of converts from the ritual demands of the Mosaic Law. [Back to text.](#)

5:12 mutilate themselves: Paul wishes sarcastically that the Judaizers, in their zeal to promote circumcision, would go even farther by castrating

themselves (Phil 3:2). [Back to text.](#)

5:13 called to freedom: Christian liberty is not a license to indulge in sin and selfishness. We are free, rather, to mature in grace and become the saints we are called to be (Jn 8:31-32). Once Christ has freed us from sin (Rom 6:20-22), the ceremonies of the Old Law (Acts 15:1-11), the curses of the Law (Gal 3:13), and the tyranny of our fallen nature (Rom 8:2), it is grossly irresponsible to despise his grace by reverting to the old ways. This would lead again to spiritual slavery, putting offenders in a worse position than ever before (2 Pet 2:19-22) (CCC 1740-42). [Back to text.](#)



5:14 the whole law: The chief aim of the Torah is to promote the love of God, neighbor, and self (Mt 22:34-40; Rom 13:8-10). Jesus lived this intention of the Law to perfection, so that the law of love has become the "law of Christ" (Gal 6:2; 1 Cor 9:21). Our ability to fulfill this law is made possible by the grace of the Spirit (Rom 5:5; 8:4). **You shall love your neighbor:** A citation from Lev 19:18. Observance of this law was sorely needed in Galatia, where the Judaizing crisis spawned bitterness and strife between fellow Christians (Gal 5:15). • It may be asked why the apostle mentions love of neighbor but not love of God. Yet who can love his neighbor if he does not love God, since it is only by the gift of God that one can love his neighbor? Since neither precept can be observed unless the other is observed, it suffices to mention one of them (St. Augustine, *Exposition of Galatians* 45). [Back to text.](#)

5:16-24 Paul alerts readers that a hidden war is waged in the heart of every Christian. It is a struggle between the **Spirit** and our **flesh**, i.e., our fallen nature that inclines us toward evil (Rom 8:5-8). Unless we follow the Spirit's lead, the lusts of the flesh (concupiscence) will dominate our lives and enslave us in sin. When we respond to grace, we enable the Spirit to work powerfully in us by clearing out the vices that lead us away from God. Because of our weaknesses, victory in this struggle is possible but not easy (1 Cor 9:25-27) (CCC 2515-16; 1426; 2744). [Back to text.](#)

5:19 works of the flesh: The sins of the flesh include more than just sins of the body (5:19-21). They consist of every act of immorality and injustice that stems from a disordered love of the world (Jas 4:1-5; 1 Jn 2:15-17). These grave sins sever offenders from Christ (Gal 5:4) and will block their

entrance into heaven if repentance is neglected (CCC 1470, 1855). [Back to text.](#)

5:21 shall not inherit the kingdom: Even Christians can forfeit their salvation if they stifle the Spirit and submit to the flesh (Rom 6:15-16). Paul posts this warning in several of his letters (Rom 8:12-13; 1 Cor 6:9-10; Eph 5:5). [Back to text.](#)

5:22 the fruit of the Spirit: The indwelling of the Spirit produces holiness in the lives of believers (Mt 12:33; Jn 15:1-6). The first fruit of this divine presence is love, the source of all that is good and the virtue upon which others are built (Rom 5:5; 2 Cor 1:22). It may be significant that Paul says "fruit" (singular) instead of "fruits" (plural), suggesting that life in the Spirit is integrated and whole, not fragmented or divided (CCC 736, 1695, 1832). [Back to text.](#)

5:24 crucified the flesh: Baptism unites believers with the saving death of Jesus, so much so that Paul says we are "crucified with Christ" (2:20; cf. Rom 6:3-4). In addition to receiving forgiveness, we die to our former way of life through the Spirit, who gives us new strength to master our **passions** and selfish **desires** (Rom 7:21-8:2) (CCC 2543, 2848). [Back to text.](#)

6:1 restore him: Fraternal correction is an unpleasant but necessary task to promote the welfare of fellow Christians and, beyond that, the whole Body of Christ. This must be an act of mercy and encouragement, not severity. Paul speaks from experience in this regard (2:11-16). [Back to text.](#)

6:2 the law of Christ: The entire life of Jesus is the law of Christian living (Mt 11:29). It is summarized in the commandment of love (Jn 13:34-35) and calls us to carry the **burdens** of others as Christ did for us (1 Pet 2:24). Christian charity prohibits indifference toward our neighbor but encourages us instead to bear up with his weaknesses (Rom 15:1) and make his joys and sorrows our own (Rom 12:15; 1 Cor 12:26; CCC 196570). [Back to text.](#)

6:4 test his own work: It is important to examine our lives before God and not to compare ourselves with others (2 Cor 13:5). In the end, everyone is responsible for his own actions and will give an account to the Lord (1 Cor 4:5). [Back to text.](#)

6:6 share all good things: This probably refers to material and financial support that local congregations rightfully owe their spiritual leaders (Lk 10:7; 1 Cor 9:11-14). [Back to text.](#)

6:7-9 The principle of sowing and reaping is an inflexible law of the spiritual life (Job 4:8; Jer 17:10). Just as farmers invariably harvest the same crop they planted, so every thought, word, and deed sown in this life has a consequence that springs directly from it in the next. Those who sow in the **Spirit** will reap holiness and heavenly glory; those who sow in the **flesh** can expect nothing but death and decay. Since Paul speaks of a lifetime of **well-doing**, patience and perseverance are needed to see the fruit of our labors (Mt 24:13; Rom 2:6-7; Heb 3:14). [Back to text.](#)

6:11 I am writing: Paul penned the postscript of Galatians himself, whereas the body of the letter was dictated to a secretary, as in Rom 16:22 and 2 Thess 3:17. He writes with **large letters** either for emphasis or because of poor eyesight (4:15). [Back to text.](#)

6:12-13 The Judaizers were driven by fear of persecution, probably from Jewish nationalists who pressured them to make circumcision the focus of their missionary efforts. Paul accuses them of abandoning the true gospel, not out of conviction, but out of cowardice. See notes on Gal 2:3 and 2:14. [Back to text.](#)

6:14 crucified to me: Paul reiterates what he said in 2:20 and 5:24, that in Christ our sins and worldly passions are put to death. Paul thus emphasizes that the Cross—not circumcision—is the sign of our salvation (6:15; 1 Cor 1:18). [Back to text.](#)

6:15 a new creation: The indwelling of the Spirit renews us from within and makes us sharers in the divine life (2 Pet 1:4; CCC 1214). The regenerating grace of the New Covenant will eventually permeate the entire cosmos (Rom 8:19-23; Rev 21:1). [See note on 2 Cor 5:17.](#) [Back to text.](#)

6:16 Peace and mercy: For similar benedictions, see Ps 128:6 and Sir 50:22-23. **the Israel of God:** The covenant family of believing Israel united with the Gentiles. See essay: [Kingdom Restoration](#) at Acts 15. [Back to text.](#)

6:17 the marks of Jesus: Property and slaves in the ancient world were branded with a mark of ownership. Paul views himself as a slave of Christ (Rom 1:1) who bears physical scars from the many persecutions that accompanied his apostolic work (Acts 14:19; 16:22; 2 Cor 11:23-29). [Back to text.](#)

INTRODUCTION TO

THE LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE EPHESIANS

Author The author of Ephesians twice identifies himself as the Apostle Paul, once at the beginning of the letter (1:1) and once in the middle (3:1). This claim was universally accepted by the early Church and remained an unquestioned tradition until Erasmus of Rotterdam first raised doubts about it in the sixteenth century. Since then, many have either questioned or denied that Paul wrote Ephesians, alleging that the tone and style of the letter differ so markedly from Paul's undisputed letters that it could not have come from the same author. It is widely held today that Ephesians was written in Paul's name by a Pauline disciple who wished to honor the apostle by developing his doctrine and applying it to new situations in the Church.

Although the distinctiveness of Ephesians among the letters of Paul should not be minimized or overlooked, it need not imply that Paul was not the author. Stylistic differences between Ephesians and Paul's other letters can largely be explained by the circumstances of his readers. No doubt Paul writes with a more terse and aggressive style in his other epistles, where he is wrestling with doctrinal and moral problems that plagued his missionary churches. His Ephesian readers, however, were not entrenched in controversy at this time, so it is not surprising that this letter has a more calm and lyrical style than is found elsewhere in Paul's writings. Claims that theological differences set Ephesians apart from the genuine Pauline writings are likewise overdrawn, since the presence of numerous Pauline ideas in the letter is precisely what leads scholars to insist that it must have been written by one of Paul's disciples. If anything, the NT collection of Paul's letters shows him to be an exceptionally versatile writer who can adapt both his manner and his message to the needs of his audience. It is important, therefore, not to exaggerate the uniqueness of Ephesians at the expense of other factors that cohere nicely with the traditional view.

Date The question of when Ephesians was written depends upon the prior question of authorship. Supporters of Pauline authorship naturally date the letter within the time frame of the apostle's ministry. Most correlate the imprisonment mentioned in 3:1, 4:1, and 6:20 with Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, where he lived under house arrest from A.D. 60 to 62, awaiting trial before the tribunal of Caesar (Acts 28:16, 30). This would imply a date for Ephesians in the early 60s alongside Paul's other "Captivity Epistles": Philippians (Phil 1:12-14), Colossians (4:3), and Philemon (Philem 9). Scholars who contend the letter was written by one of Paul's admirers date it as late as the 90s, long after the apostle's martyrdom in the mid 60s.

Destination The intended readership of Ephesians is more difficult to establish than it first appears. This is because the textual tradition underlying the letter's opening verse is uncertain: the words "in Ephesus" are missing from some of the most ancient manuscripts of the epistle in existence and, for this reason, may have been added *after* the letter was originally written (see textual note *a* on Eph 1:1). Identification of the readers thus depends on whether or not the disputed words are original. **(1)** If the phrase "in Ephesus" is authentic, then Paul was writing to Christians in the leading metropolis of the Roman province of Asia (southwest Turkey). This would not be surprising, as Paul spent several years ministering to the Ephesians and disseminating the gospel throughout the region (Acts 19:1-10; 20:31). **(2)** If the phrase was not part of the original letter, as many scholars maintain, then it seems the intended audience was more general than specific. Advocates of this position often describe Ephesians as a circular letter that Paul intended for several churches in Asia Minor. In this case, the Church at Ephesus was probably only one of several churches he expected to receive the letter.

Themes and Characteristics Ephesians sets before us a vision of Christ *reigning* in heaven next to the Father (1:20) and *renewing* the earth through his Church (3:10). Though Paul often attacks doctrinal error and moral laxity in his letters, he seizes the opportunity in Ephesians to step back from these controversies to contemplate and articulate in a more reflective way God's saving work in Jesus. Instead of pastoral surgery, then, Paul gives the Ephesians a dose of preventative medicine, hoping that a deeper

appreciation of God's blessings will lead them to a more mature commitment to the gospel. Since many of Paul's readers are recent converts, Ephesians might best be described as Paul's mystagogical catechesis for the newly baptized.

The towering theme of Ephesians is the "mystery" of Jesus Christ once concealed but now revealed (1:9; 3:4, 9). This is first of all the mystery of Christ the Redeemer, whose violent death on the Cross was a vicarious sacrifice for the redemption of Israel and the Gentiles alike (1:7; 2:16; 5:2). Having died to restore peace between the Father and the human family, Christ now reigns supreme over all things at the right hand of the Father in heaven (1:20). So far is he exalted above creation that even the angels find themselves under his feet (1:21-22). As Paul reflects upon these redeeming achievements of Christ, he is not content to view them as events confined to the past. Rather, the Resurrection, Ascension, and Enthronement of Christ are saving mysteries that continue to grace our lives and souls in the present, making us participants in his royal, priestly, and prophetic mission to the world (2:4-6; 5:2).

The mystery of Christ is also the mystery of his ecclesial body, the Church. Nowhere does Paul give a more majestic presentation of this truth than in Ephesians. The Church he describes is nothing less than God's new creation in Christ (2:10, 15; 2 Cor 5:17). She is a holy and universal community that shines out to a world shattered by sin. Her life comes from the divine Trinity, as her members are made the children of the Father (1:5), the body and bride of the Son (5:22-32), and the temple of the Holy Spirit (2:21-22). Her dimensions are international, as she gathers together all peoples and nations into the family of the New Covenant (2:11-22; 3:4-6). The grace that unites the Church with her Lord is the grace of being "in Christ" (1:3; cf. 1:7, 10, 13). This union between Christ in his glorified body and Christ in his mystical body was first revealed to Paul at his conversion (Acts 9:3-5). Now, after many years of preaching and meditation, he is able to explain its heights and depths in simple yet profound terms for those newly acquainted with the gospel. «

OUTLINE OF THE LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE EPHESIANS

1. Opening Address ([1:1-2](#))

2. Doctrinal Exposition ([1:3-3:21](#))

- A. Divine Origin of the Church ([1:3-14](#))
- B. Prayer for the Church ([1:15-23](#))
- C. Building Up the Church ([2:1-22](#))
- D. Mystery of the Church ([3:1-13](#))
- E. Prayer for the Church ([3:14-21](#))

3. Moral Exhortation ([4:1-6:20](#))

- A. Unity of the Church ([4:1-16](#))
- B. Moral Maturity in the Church ([4:17-5:20](#))
- C. Household Life in the Church ([5:21-6:9](#))
- D. Spiritual Warfare in the Church ([6:10-20](#))

4. Closing Farewell ([6:21-24](#))

THE LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE

EPHESIANS

Chapters

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#)

Essays and Charts

[The Four Marks of the Church](#)

Salutation

1 [Paul](#), an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

To the saints who are [*](#) also faithful^a in Christ Jesus:

2 [Grace to you and peace](#) from God our [Father](#) and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Blessings in Christ

3 [Blessed be the God](#) and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us [in Christ](#) with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be [holy and blameless](#) before him. ⁵[He destined us](#) in love^b to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷In him we have [redemption](#) through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸which he lavished upon us. ⁹For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight [the mystery](#) of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰as a plan for the fulness of time, to [unite](#) [*](#) all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

11 In him, according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹²[we](#) who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory. ¹³In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were [sealed](#) with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is

the [guarantee](#) of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Paul's Prayer

15 For this reason, because [I have heard](#) of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love^c toward all the saints, **16**I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, **17**that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, **18**having the eyes of [your hearts](#) enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, **19**and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe, according to the working of his great might **20**which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him [sit at his right hand](#) in the heavenly places, **21**far above all [rule and authority](#) and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come; **22**and he has put all things [under his feet](#) and has made him the head over all things for the Church, **23**which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all.

From Death to Life with Christ

2 [And you](#) he made alive, when [you were dead](#) through the trespasses and sins **2**in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the [power of the air](#), the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. **3**Among these we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so we were by nature [children of wrath](#), like the rest of mankind. **4**But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, **5**even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive [together with Christ](#) (by grace you have been saved), **6**and raised us up with him, and made us [sit with him](#) in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, **7**that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. **8**For by [grace](#) you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—**9**not because of works, [lest any man should boast](#). **10**For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for [good works](#), which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

One in Christ

11 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called [the uncircumcision](#) by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the

flesh by hands—¹²remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall * of hostility, ¹⁵by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end. ¹⁷And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; ¹⁸for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; ²²in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Paul's Ministry to the Gentiles

3 For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—²assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³how the mystery. * was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. ⁴When you read this you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; ⁶that is, how the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

7 Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace which was given me by the working of his power. ⁸To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in^d God who created all things; ¹⁰that through the Church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. ¹¹This was according to the eternal purpose which he has realized in Christ Jesus our

Lord, ¹²in whom we have boldness and confidence of access through our faith in him. ¹³So I ask you not to^e lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

Prayer for the Ephesians

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fulness of God.

20 Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, ²¹to him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

Unity in the Body of Christ

4 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, ³eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all. ⁷But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸Therefore it is said,

"When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men."

⁹(In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) ¹¹And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; ¹⁴so that we may no longer be children, tossed back and forth and carried about with every wind

of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles. ¹⁵Rather, [speaking the truth](#) in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, [joined](#) and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love.

The Old Life and the New

¹⁷ Now this I affirm and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer [walk as the Gentiles walk](#), in the futility of their minds; ¹⁸they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart; ¹⁹they have become callous and have given themselves up to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness. ²⁰You did not so learn Christ! —²¹assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus. ²²Put off the old man that belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, ²³and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴and [put on](#) the new man, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Rules for the New Life

²⁵ Therefore, [putting away falsehood](#), let every one speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶[Be angry but do not sin](#); do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing [honest work](#) with his hands, so that he may be able to give to those in need. ²⁹Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for edifying, as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear. ³⁰And do not [grieve the Holy Spirit](#) of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice, ³²and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, [forgiving](#) one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

⁵ Therefore be [imitators of God](#), as beloved children. ²And walk in love, as Christ loved us and [gave himself up](#) for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Renounce Pagan Ways

³ But [immorality](#) and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is fitting among saints. ⁴Let there be no filthiness, nor silly talk, nor levity, which are not fitting; but instead let there be

thanksgiving. ⁵Be sure of this, that no immoral or impure man, or one who is covetous (that is, [an idolater](#)), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. ⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for it is because of these things that the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷Therefore do not associate with them, ⁸for once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ¹⁰and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹²For it is a shame even to speak of the things that they do in secret; ¹³but when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. ¹⁴Therefore it is said,

"[Awake, O sleeper](#), and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." *

¹⁵ Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, ¹⁶[making the most](#) of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸And [do not get drunk](#) with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, ²⁰always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.

The Christian Household

²¹ Be [subject to one another](#) out of reverence for Christ. ²²[Wives, be subject](#) to your [husbands](#), as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the [head](#) of the Church, his body, and is himself its Savior. ²⁴As the Church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. ²⁵[Husbands, love](#) your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the [washing of water](#) with the word, ²⁷that he might present the Church to himself in splendor, [without spot or wrinkle](#) or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹For no man ever hates his own flesh, but [nourishes](#) and cherishes it, as Christ does the Church, ³⁰because we are members of his body. ³¹"For

this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the [two shall become one](#) flesh." ³²This is a great [mystery](#), and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church; ³³however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Children and Parents

6 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²"[Honor your father and mother](#)" (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³"that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth." ⁴[Fathers, do not provoke](#) your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Slaves and Masters

5 [Slaves, be obedient](#) to those who are your earthly masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as to Christ; ⁶not in the way of eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as servants^f of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, ⁷rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to men, ⁸knowing that whatever good any one does, he will receive the same again from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free. ⁹Masters, do the same to them, and forbear threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

The Whole Armor of God

10 Finally, [be strong in the Lord](#) and in the strength of his might. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹²For we are not contending against [flesh and blood](#), but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. ¹³Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. ¹⁴Stand therefore, having fastened the belt of truth around your waist, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵and having shod [your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace](#); ¹⁶besides all these, taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the Evil One. ¹⁷And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸[Pray at all times](#) in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹and also for me, that utterance may be

given me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰for which I am an [ambassador in chains](#); that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

Personal Matters and Benediction

21 Now that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, [Tych'icus](#) the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. ²²I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts.

23 Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love undying.

Commentary on The Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians

1:1 Paul: Named as the sender of the letter. For a discussion of Pauline authorship, see introduction: *Author* and notes on Eph 3:8 and 6:20. **apostle of Christ:** Paul was formally commissioned by Jesus to carry the gospel to "the Gentiles" and "the sons of Israel" (Acts 9:15; cf. Rom 11:13-14). **the saints:** I.e., those who are baptized and set apart to serve God (1 Cor 6:11). The majority of surviving manuscripts include the words "in Ephesus" in this verse, but they are lacking in some of the most ancient copies of the letter we possess (see textual note a). For the implications of this, see introduction: *Destination*. [Back to text.](#)

1:2 Grace . . . and peace: A customary greeting in Paul's letters (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; Gal 1:3). [Back to text.](#)

1:2 Father: The preeminent title for God in Ephesians (1:3, 17; 2:18; 3:14; 4:6; 5:20; 6:23). [Back to text.](#)



1:3-14 A panoramic view of salvation that stretches from the past (election, 1:4) to the present (adoption, 1:5) to the future (recapitulation, 1:10). Like an orchestral overture, it introduces many themes to be developed in subsequent chapters. Structurally, Paul has organized this benediction around the work of the Trinity (CCC 257-58). The Father chooses us (Eph 1:4), the Son redeems us (1:7), and the Holy Spirit seals us (1:13). Notice, too, that Paul celebrates blessings traditionally linked with Baptism, such as sonship (1:5), grace (1:6), forgiveness (1:7), and sealing (1:13). These 12 verses comprise only one sentence in the original Greek. • Paul's benediction follows the format of a Hebrew *berakah*, i.e., a prayer of blessing and praise to God in elevated language (1 Chron 29:10-13; Tob 13:1-18; Dan 3:3-68) (CCC 1078, 2627). [Back to text.](#)

1:3 in Christ: A description of our union with Jesus through grace. Similar expressions of incorporation punctuate the letter and culminate in Paul's vision of Christ as the "head" of his mystical "body", the Church (1:22-23; 2:16; 5:23). **the heavenly places:** I.e., the spiritual realm where believers sit enthroned with Christ (1:20; 2:6) and where angels and demons move about unseen (3:10; 6:12). [See note on Eph 2:6.](#) [Back to text.](#)



1:4 holy and blameless: The standard of spiritual perfection that God desires for his children (5:27; Col 1:22). • Paul employs cultic terminology from the OT, where holy means "set apart" for the Lord and blameless means "unblemished" or "fit for sacrifice". This recalls how animals were set apart for priestly inspection, and only those free of physical defects could be sacrificed to Yahweh (Lev 1:3, 10). These offerings were mere shadows of the Christian vocation to offer ourselves as holy and living sacrifices to the Father (Rom 12:1) (CCC 1426, 2807). [See note on Eph 5:2.](#) [Back to text.](#)



1:5 He destined us: The Father predestined believers for divine adoption (1:4). This eternal decree springs from his love and unfolds in history as the elect are saved by grace (Gal 4:5) and eventually brought to glory (Rom 8:23). Because the doctrine of predestination holds together two mysteries, one of divine sovereignty and one of human freedom, it should be an incentive for Christians to confirm their election through works of righteousness (2 Pet 1:10), rather than an excuse for spiritual indifference or moral laxity. We cannot gain access to God's hidden *plan*, but we do know the *precepts* he has revealed for our salvation (Deut 29:29). As with the election of Israel, God took no consideration of our merits or worthiness when he predetermined our adoption in Christ (Deut 7:7; Rom 9:10-11) (CCC 381, 600). [See note on Rom 8:29.](#) • Predestination can have no other cause than the will of God alone. And the sole motive for God's predestinating will is to communicate his divine goodness to others (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Ephesians* 1, 1). [Back to text.](#)



1:7 redemption: Freedom purchased for a slave or prisoner by a ransom price. Christ redeemed us *from* sin and *for* divine sonship (Gal 4:5) at the expense of his own blood (Rev 5:9; CCC 517). • Divine redemption is first displayed in the Bible in the Exodus (Ex 15:13; Deut 7:8). We participate in a new and spiritual Exodus when Christ rescues us from the bondage of guilt and the tyranny of the devil (Rom 6:15-18). [Back to text.](#)

1:9 the mystery: A central theme in Ephesians, introduced here and developed more fully in 3:1-19. See word study: [Mystery](#) at Eph 3:3. [Back](#)

[to text.](#)

1:12-13 Here and elsewhere Paul alternates between **we** and **you**. Among the options, **(1)** "we" could refer to Jewish Christians (us, 2:14), and "you" to Gentile Christians (2:11); or **(2)** "we" might refer to Christians known by Paul, and "you" to those unacquainted with Paul personally (1:15; 3:2); or **(3)** "we" might refer to believers long since converted (1:12), and "you" to more recent converts. None of these possibilities is mutually exclusive of another, so it is quite possible the groups in question fall into more than one category. [Back to text.](#)



1:13 sealed: In the ancient world, seals were marks of ownership and protection (4:30; Ezek 9:4-6; Rev 7:4). Believers are divinely sealed by the Spirit. The Church Fathers employed this language to describe the indelible mark impressed upon the soul in Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders (CCC 698, 1272-74, 1296). [See note on 2 Cor 1:22.](#) •In Pauline theology, Baptism does to the soul what circumcision did to body: it marks it with the sign and seal of the covenant (Rom 4:11). [See note on Col 2:11.](#) [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Unite ([Eph 1:10](#))

AnakephalaioÅ (Gk.): "recapitulate" or "sum up under one head". The verb is rarely used in antiquity and appears only twice in the NT. It can refer to the placement of a numeric sum over a list of figures that have been added or, more generally, to a gathering together of scattered elements. In Rom 13:9, Paul uses this Greek word to explain how the moral commandments of the Law all add up to one: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." In Eph 1:10, he asserts that God's supreme plan for the universe is to put Jesus Christ at the summit of all things seen and unseen. Present in the background is Adam, whose headship over the human family left the world in a state of chaos and sin. Christ comes as the new Adam to be established as the new "head" over all things (Eph 1:22; see also 5:23). He reverses the damage done by Adam's rebellion by piecing creation back together again and by summoning a family reunion of all God's children:

Israel, the Gentiles, and even the angels. This grand work of reunification is already under way and will continue until Christ subdues his enemies (1 Cor 15:24-28) and the grace of redemption permeates the entire universe (Rom 8:19-23) (CCC 518, 1042-43).

1:14 guarantee: An expression derived from a Hebrew term meaning "pledge" or "down payment" (Gen 38:17-18). The Spirit received in Baptism (Acts 2:38) is thus a first installment of the fullness of God's life and blessing we hope to possess in heaven (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; CCC 1107). [Back to text.](#)

1:15 I have heard: The comment here and at 4:21 suggests that Paul has never met his intended readers in person. [Back to text.](#)

1:18 your hearts: In biblical thinking, the heart is the center of the person, where thinking, willing, and feeling originate. See word study: *Heart* at Deut 30:6. **enlightened:** By the grace of faith in Christ (5:14). Early theologians described Baptism as the sacrament of "enlightenment" (CCC 1216). [Back to text.](#)



1:20 sit at his right hand: A position of royal honor and sovereignty. • Paul alludes to Ps 110:1, which describes the coronation and enthronement of the Messiah in heaven. Now reigning beside the Father, Christ wields authority to govern the cosmos (Mk 16:19; CCC 668). Psalm 110 is the most frequently cited passage of the OT in the NT (Mt 22:44; Acts 2:34-35; 1 Cor 15:25; Heb 1:13). [Back to text.](#)



1:21 rule and authority and power: Names given in Jewish and Christian tradition to different choirs or orders of angels. They can refer to blessed angels or to demons who fell from their ranks (Eph 3:10; 6:12; Col 2:15; 1 Pet 3:22). Paul's point is that God has elevated Christ far above all creation, including things visible and material as well as things invisible and spiritual (Col 1:16; CCC 331-36, 395). • Catholic theologians have traditionally recognized nine choirs of angels arranged in three levels or hierarchies. The first consists of the Seraphim, Cherubim, and Thrones; the second of the Dominions, Authorities, and Powers; and the third of the Rulers, Archangels, and common Angels. Theologians classify these

angelic orders according to their divinely given tasks. **this age:** Jewish tradition distinguished between the *present* evil age and the *coming* messianic age. Just as Christ's coming marked the transition from Old Covenant era to the New, so he will come again in glory to close the present age of history and open the future age of eternity (Mk 10:30; Lk 20:34-36). [Back to text.](#)



1:22 under his feet: A position of subjection and defeat. • Paul alludes to Ps 8:6, where David marvels that God crowned Adam and his descendants as rulers of his creation (Gen 1:26). Although this government was frustrated because of sin, Jesus reclaims Adam's dominion over the visible world and extends it over the angelic realms as well (Heb 2:5-9). All will acknowledge Christ's kingship when he subdues his last remaining enemies—the devil, the demons, and death. [See note on 1 Cor 15:25-27.](#) • It is an awesome fact that the whole power of creation will bow before a man, in whom is the divine Word (St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Ephesians* 3, 1). **the head:** Christ reigns supreme over the cosmos and the universal Church, which is his "body" (1:23). See word study: [Head](#) at Eph 5:23. • God has set over all creation one and the same head, the incarnate Christ. That is, he has given to angels and men one and the same government (St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Ephesians* 1, 1). [Back to text.](#)

2:1-22 A tragic picture of man without God. The chapter falls into two halves: the first explains how Christ reconciles men with God (2:1-10), and the second how Christ reconciles men and nations with one another (2:11-22). Notice that Paul stresses the radical difference between living "by grace" (2:5) and living "by nature" (2:3). [Back to text.](#)

2:1 you were dead: Spiritual death is the consequence of sin (Rom 5:12), and those who are dead in sin cannot recover the life and grace of God for themselves any more than a corpse can revive itself to live again. Believers are brought from spiritual death to spiritual life through Baptism (Eph 2:5; Jn 5:24; Rom 6:4, 23). [Back to text.](#)

2:2 power of the air: Paul assumes the ancient belief that demonic spirits crowd the atmosphere, posing an ominous and ongoing threat to our spiritual lives. The **prince** among them is Satan, the archenemy of God, who is veiled from our sight but is not thereby any less real or dangerous

(4:27; 6:11; Jn 8:44). Man is powerless to resist the domination of the devil without the assistance of grace (Eph 6:11-17). [See note on Eph 6:10-17.](#) **sons of disobedience:** A Hebraism meaning "rebels" or "sinners" (5:6). [Back to text.](#)



2:3 children of wrath: I.e., enemies of God liable to judgment. This results **(1)** from the dismal inheritance of Original Sin, which spreads to every living person by natural generation (by nature, 2:3), and **(2)** from the actual sins and ongoing rebellion of the human family against God (trespasses and sins, 2:1) (CCC 402-5). [See note on Rom 5:12.](#) • Through the sin of the first man, which came from his free will, our nature became corrupted and ruined; and nothing but the grace of God alone restores it (St. Augustine, *On the Grace of Christ* 55). [Back to text.](#)

2:5-6 By grace we share in the exaltation of Christ: his rising from the dead, his ascent into heaven, and his enthronement at the Father's right hand. Paul articulates this theology of participation by using the preposition **with** three times in these verses (in Greek, the verbal prefix *syn-*). [Back to text.](#)

2:6 sit with him: I.e., we are made to share in the heavenly reign of Christ (CCC 1003). [Back to text.](#)

2:8 grace: The biblical term for **(1)** God's favor and **(2)** God's supernatural life. The former designates the *conditions* of its bestowal (a free and undeserved gift, Rom 6:23), and the latter designates the *content* of the gift we receive (a share in the divine nature, 2 Pet 1:4) (CCC 1996-2003). **have been saved:** Salvation is here described as a present state resulting from a past action. The preceding context indicates that deliverance from sin and spiritual death is in view (2:1-3). That salvation is not thereby assured but is also a future hope; [see note on Rom 5:10.](#) **through faith:** Faith is instrumental in saving us and uniting us with Christ. In the context of conversion, salvation is *conferred* through the instrument of Baptism (1 Pet 3:21), and salvation is *received* through the instrument of faith (Rom 3:24-25). For Paul, belief in Jesus Christ is a divine gift (Phil 1:29) that we exercise when we adhere to God with trust (personal aspect) and assent to the truth he has revealed in the gospel (propositional aspect) (CCC 177). [Back to text.](#)

2:9 lest any . . . boast: Because salvation is neither a payment for services rendered nor a personal achievement, there is no room for pride or boasting on our part (1 Cor 4:7). [Back to text.](#)



2:10 good works: Works of righteousness that pertain to salvation (Rom 2:6-7). These are made possible by the grace of God empowering us from within (Phil 2:12-13; Heb 13:20-21). • The Second Council of Orange decreed in A.D. 529 that man, weakened by the Fall of Adam, is incapable of performing works worthy of eternal life by his own natural strength. Only by the supernatural help of the Spirit can we be humble, obedient, and loving in a way that truly pleases the Lord (Canons 1-25) (CCC 2008-11). [Back to text.](#)

2:11 the uncircumcision: A Jewish epithet for Gentiles, who were excluded from the covenant and blessings God gave to Israel in ages past (2:12; Rom 9:4-5). **in the flesh:** Circumcision of the foreskin was a procedure done by human hands as a sign of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 17:9-14). This is in contrast to the circumcision of the heart, which Christ performs without human hands in the waters of Baptism (Rom 2:28-29; Col 2:11-12). [Back to text.](#)

2:14 he is our peace: The peace of Christ is not worldly tranquillity but a spiritual peace rooted in our reconciliation with the Father (Jn 14:27; Rom 5:1; CCC 2305). See word study: [Peace](#) at Col 3:15. **dividing wall:** Paul alludes to a wall in the Jerusalem Temple that separated the outer court of the Gentiles from the inner courts, where Israel alone could pray and sacrifice. Gates leading into the inner precincts were posted with signs warning that Gentile trespassers would face the death penalty. For Paul, this wall of separation represents the OT theology of separation that required Israel to insulate itself from the idolatry and immorality of the nations (Lev 20:26). Christ dismantled this barricade when, having fulfilled the Law to perfection, he abolished the legal precepts (2:15) that set Israel apart from the Gentiles (e.g., circumcision, animal sacrifice, dietary laws, festival days). As a result, the age when Jew and Gentile were divided has given way to the messianic age, when all nations are united in Christ (Rom 15:7-12; Gal 3:28). [Back to text.](#)



2:17 far off . . . near: Signifies spiritual distance from God. •Paul is paraphrasing Is 57:19, where peace is proclaimed both to Israel, the people nearest the Lord, and to the Gentiles, the people of distant lands who once lived far from God. [Back to text.](#)

2:18 access: The way to the Father passes through Christ (3:11-12). Perhaps Paul is contrasting Jesus with the veil of the Temple, which, in the old economy, greatly restricted access to the Lord. The interpretation is not certain, but Temple imagery fills the surrounding context, and elsewhere links are forged between Christ and the sanctuary veil (Mk 15:37-38; Heb 10:19-20). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Mystery ([Eph 3:3](#))

Mysterion (Gk.): "mystery" or "secret". The term is used six times in Ephesians and 22 times in the rest of the NT. Like Jesus, who revealed the mysteries of his kingdom through parables (Mt 13:11; Mk 4:11), Paul often teaches his readers about the hidden plan of God now manifest in the reign of Christ (Rom 16:25; 1 Cor 15:51; Eph 5:32; Col 2:2; 1 Tim 3:16). The most likely background for this notion is the Book of Daniel, where "mystery" (Aramaic *raz*) appears eight times in a single chapter (Dan 2:18-19, 27-30, 47). Here the mystery is described in a dream to the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, who envisioned a huge statue of a human body that symbolized the great empires of the earth. Though the king himself was the "head" (Dan 2:38) of the statue who received his empire from the Lord (Dan 2:37), Daniel went on to describe how the statue would be destroyed and replaced by the messianic kingdom of God. This is the mystery of the kingdom revealed in Ephesians (Eph 1:9; 3:4, 9). It is the mystery of another body, the Church, with its head, Jesus Christ (CCC 772, 1066).

2:19 members: I.e., family members by virtue of divine adoption (1:5; Gal 4:5). [Back to text.](#)



2:20 apostles and prophets: The foundation stones of the universal Church, here viewed as a spiritual temple (1 Pet 2:4-8). Both fulfilled the unrepeatable mission of establishing Christ's kingdom in the world for all time. For other references to NT prophets, see Eph 4:11, Acts 13:1, and 1 Cor 12:28 (see also CCC 857). **cornerstone:** The first stone set in place when beginning construction on a new building, in this case a temple. It served as the square to line up the rest of the structure and was part of the foundation at the base of the edifice. The honored position of the cornerstone is a fitting description of Christ's role as the immovable foundation of the Church (1 Cor 3:11). Some prefer to visualize Christ as the keystone that holds together a Roman archway, but cornerstones are generally foundation stones in Semitic architecture (Job 38:6; Jer 51:26). • The term used here for cornerstone is found only in Is 28:16 in the Greek OT. Jewish tradition expressed in the Aramaic *Targum of Isaiah* viewed this stone as a symbol of the messianic "king" of Israel. [Back to text.](#)

2:21 a holy temple: The Church is a spiritual sanctuary that is living and inclusive. Its foundation is Christ, his apostles, and the early Christian prophets (2:20); its walls are believers from every nation fitted and bonded together by grace (2:22); and its holiness comes from the sanctifying presence of the Spirit who dwells within (2:22) (CCC 756, 797). [Back to text.](#)

3:1 Paul, a prisoner: Probably in Rome, possibly under house arrest (Acts 28:16, 30). [Back to text.](#)

3:2 stewardship: The administrative tasks of a servant in charge of the household and finances of his master. Paul is a steward of divine mysteries (1 Cor 4:1) chosen to manage the household affairs of the Church (1 Tim 3:15). The grace of God has come to him on its way to others—the "Gentiles" and the "sons of Israel" (Acts 9:15). [Back to text.](#)

3:3 written briefly: Points back to earlier comments about the mystery revealed in Christ (1:9-10) and the salvation of the Gentiles (2:11-22). [Back to text.](#)

3:6 Gentiles are fellow heirs: The OT revealed *that* the nations would be blessed, but it remained unclear *how* this would take place (Gen 22:16-18; Sir 44:21; Is 49:6; Zech 2:11). It was also not clear before the

proclamation of the gospel whether the Gentiles would be saved on an equal footing with Israel (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11). [Back to text.](#)

3:8 I am the very least: Paul is overcome by a sense of unworthiness and overawed that God could transform a sinner like himself into a servant of the gospel (1 Cor 15:9; 1 Tim 1:15). [Back to text.](#)

3:10 through the Church: Christ continues to teach, heal, and save the world through his mystical body. This mystery was once hidden from the angels (1 Pet 1:12) but is now manifest for the **principalities** and **powers** to look on and learn the plan of salvation. To the blessed angels, it is a glorious vision of an ever-expanding family; to the demons, it is a frightful spectacle of their own achievements toppling over with the triumph of the gospel. Elsewhere Paul portrays the Church as a pillar that upholds the truth for all to see (1 Tim 3:15). See note on 1:21. [Back to text.](#)

3:14 bow my knees: Kneeling is a gesture of submission and worship (Ps 95:6; Acts 20:36). It is a way of expressing through the body the inner attitude of the heart (CCC 2702-3). [Back to text.](#)

3:15 family: The term (Gk. *patria*) refers to a group of related individuals who trace their origin to a common father or forefather and is linguistically related to the word "Father" (Gk. *pater*) in the preceding verse. Because God is the supreme Father of men and angels, his life-giving Paternity is the reality of which created fatherhood and family life are only a reflection (CCC 239, 2214). [Back to text.](#)



3:18 breadth . . . length . . . height . . . depth: Many connect these dimensions with the limitless scope of Christ's love, which surpasses understanding (3:19). Others see a reference to the untraceable vastness of God and his wisdom (Job 11:7-9) or to the cubic proportions of the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev 21:16). • The four dimensions are the four extensions of the Cross. By height is meant heaven, by depth the underworld, by length and breadth the cosmic order in between. In each of these realms, devotion to the Lord is rendered (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Three Days*). [Back to text.](#)

3:20 more abundantly: God can accomplish things far beyond expectation if only we pray with faith (Jas 1:6-8) and remove from our lives the hindrances of sin (Ps 66:18; 1 Pet 3:7). [Back to text.](#)

4:1-6:20 Paul completes his doctrinal exposition (chaps. 13) with moral exhortation (chaps. 4-6). The first half of the letter thus works in tandem with the second, showing how the standards of Christian belief are inseparable from the standards of Christian behavior (CCC 1971). [Back to text.](#)

4:3 unity of the Spirit: The towering theme of 4:1-16 and of the letter in general. Because believers are baptized into one body (1 Cor 12:13), their union is displayed in the oneness of their faith (creed), life (code), and sacramental worship (cult). The Church is equipped to preserve this unity through the hierarchical leadership appointed by Christ (Eph 4:11-12). Paul's vision of a unified Church mirrors that of Jesus in Jn 17:6-26 (CCC 172-73, 814). [Back to text.](#)

4:7 given to each: Every baptized believer is given spiritual gifts or charisms to be exercised for the good of the Church (1 Cor 12:4-11; 1 Pet 4:10). In this context, Paul focuses on the varied graces connected with ecclesiastical offices (Eph 4:11) (CCC 913). [Back to text.](#)



4:8 When he ascended: A reference to Ps 68:18. Although the wording of Paul's citation differs from both the Hebrew and Greek versions of this text known to us, it approximates other renditions of the psalm in Aramaic and Syriac. • Psalm 68 celebrates the triumphal procession of biblical history, when Israel, filing out of Egypt behind Yahweh, was led on its march to the summit of Mt. Zion in Jerusalem. The victories won by the Lord along the way earned him the right to distribute gifts and spoils of war to the Israelites. For Paul, the psalm points forward to the ascent of Jesus into the heavenly Jerusalem after disarming the forces of evil on the Cross (Col 2:15). The Church began to share in this victory when Christ poured out the gifts of the Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2:33). [Back to text.](#)



4:9-10 A parenthetical explanation of how Jesus fulfills Ps 68. Interpretations differ over the meaning of **lower parts of the earth**. **(1)** Some view this expression as a reference to earth itself, to which Christ descended in his Incarnation (Jn 3:13). **(2)** Others take it to mean the underworld, to which Jesus descended on Holy Saturday before rising again on Easter Sunday. The second view is more likely correct in light of similar expressions in the Greek versions of Ps 63:9 and 139:15 that clearly refer to

the underworld of the dead. In this case, Paul is stressing that Christ has charted the extremities of the cosmos, descending to its deepest depths in his Passion and rising above its highest heights at his Ascension. This is not simply a journey through space; rather, it is an expression of Christ's supreme humiliation and exaltation. • Several Church Fathers connected this verse with Christ's descent to the dead, in which he released the captive souls of the righteous and led them up to heaven (1 Pet 3:18-19; CCC 632-33). [Back to text.](#)

4:11 apostles . . . teachers: Ecclesial ministries associated with the proclamation of the Word. These positions are established to promote unity in the Church by **(1)** preserving doctrinal purity, **(2)** warding off false teaching (4:14), and **(3)** sanctifying people in truth (Jn 17:17-19). These spokesmen of the gospel build up the Body of Christ when they bring believers from immaturity to spiritual adulthood (Eph 4:15; CCC 1575, 2003-4). Other ministerial graces are listed in Rom 12:68 and 1 Cor 12:4-11. [See note on 1 Cor 12:28.](#) [Back to text.](#)

4:15 speaking the truth: Or, "doing the truth". By bracing ourselves with the truth, we can resist the wind and waves of false teaching that unsettle the faith of immature believers. Paul is urging readers to grow in their knowledge of Christ (1:17; 4:23; Rom 12:2); otherwise their minds will remain childish, underdeveloped, and vulnerable to dangerous novelties that are contrary to the gospel (Eph 4:14). Here and elsewhere Paul insists that **love** is the surest means to build up the Church (4:16; 1 Cor 8:1; 13:1-13). [Back to text.](#)

4:16 joined . . . growth: The same Greek verbs, which here describe the unity and growth of a body, also appear in 2:21, where they describe the integrated construction of a temple. The double use of this language in Ephesians points to a close connection between "body" and "temple" in Pauline theology (see also 1 Cor 6:19). This connection originates with Jesus, whose human body was the temple of his divinity (Jn 2:19-21). Applied to the living assembly of believers, it implies that the Church is a mystical extension of the Incarnation. [Back to text.](#)

4:17 walk as the Gentiles walk: Believers must repudiate the behavior of pagans, whose minds are blind to gospel truth and whose wills are bent on evil rather than good. The same predicament of moral and intellectual depravity is outlined in Rom 1:18-32. [Back to text.](#)

4:24 put on: Alludes to early liturgical practice in which catechumens were clothed in white robes immediately after Baptism. Metaphorically, Paul challenges us to put our baptismal commitments into practice by stripping off sinful habits (vices) and putting on the new garments of Christ (virtues) (Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27; CCC 1473). [Back to text.](#)

The Four Marks of the Church

Of all the epistles of Paul, none speaks more eloquently or extensively of the Church than Ephesians. This unique letter outlines the essential characteristics of the Church, which the ancient creeds summarized as "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic". The Church is *one* because she has one source, the Blessed Trinity, and is unified in her faith, worship, and leadership. The Church is *holy* because Christ has separated her from sin and consecrated her to the Father. The Church is *catholic* because she bears within herself the fullness of grace and she embraces all nations. The Church is *apostolic* because she was founded upon the apostles, she preserves their apostolic doctrine, and she perpetuates a direct line of apostolic succession that stretches back to those first appointed by Christ. Paul touches directly or indirectly upon each of these marks in Ephesians.

The Church is **one**
"one Lord, one faith, one baptism"
([Eph 4:5](#))

The Church is **holy**
"that she might be holy and
without blemish"
([Eph 5:27](#))

The Church is **catholic**
"you [Gentiles] are fellow citizens with the
saints and members of the household of God"
([Eph 2:19](#))

The Church is **apostolic**
"built upon the foundation of the apostles
and prophets"
([Eph 2:20](#))



4:25 putting away falsehood: Words should be spoken to help others and build them up, not to harm them or beat them down. Speech that is careless, slanderous, vulgar, or untruthful threatens the unity of the Church (4:29; Mt 12:36-37; Jas 3:1-12). The Lord despises a lying tongue (Prov 6:16-17) (CCC 2475-86). **Speak the truth:** An excerpt from Zech 8:16. • The prophet is urging his people to reform their lives, beginning with a renewed effort to use truthful and reliable speech. [Back to text.](#)



4:26 Be angry but do not sin: Not all anger is sinful or harmful. Righteous indignation is an appropriate response to offenses committed against God (Ps 119:53; Mk 3:5). In the case of personal insults, we should strive for reconciliation with the offender before the day's end. Otherwise the rift will begin to widen as resentment, bitterness, and hatred consume us. • Paul is alluding to Ps 4:4, where the Psalmist calls us to examine our hearts in silence before going to bed. [Back to text.](#)

4:28 honest work: Generosity is urged as appropriate reparation for thievery. Reformed burglars should now work to provide for themselves and also for others in need (Lk 3:11; Acts 20:35) (CCC 2444, 2487). [Back to text.](#)



4:30 grieve the Holy Spirit: A warning to avoid sin and the occasions that lead to it. Paul is thinking primarily of destructive speech that disrupts unity and fellowship in the body of Christ (4:29, 31). Theologically, this comment confirms the "Personhood" of the Spirit, since only a person can be saddened or insulted by the faults of another. • Paul is alluding to Is 63:10, where the Prophet recalls how the Exodus generation of Israel grieved the Spirit by grumbling against the Lord and Moses in the wilderness. **Day of redemption:** I.e., the day when our bodies will be redeemed at the general resurrection (Rom 8:23). [Back to text.](#)

4:32 forgiving: We thank God for his mercy by showing mercy to others (Mt 6:14-15; 18:23-35; CCC 2842). [Back to text.](#)

5:1 imitators of God: A challenge to love as God loves and to forgive as God has forgiven us (Mt 5:44-48; Lk 6:36; CCC 1694). [Back to text.](#)



5:2 gave himself up: Jesus died as a priest who made his life a willing sacrifice. Paul explains this in cultic terms drawn from the OT. • Just as the priests of biblical history burned animals upon altars as a pleasing aroma to the Lord (Gen 8:20-21; Ex 29:18), so Jesus offered himself on the Cross as an ascending sacrifice of love to the Father (Heb 7:26-27; 10:8-10). We share in Christ's priestly ministry by offering to the Father acceptable sacrifices of our time, talents, and treasures in the liturgy of everyday life (Rom 12:1; 2 Cor 2:15) (CCC 614). [Back to text.](#)

5:3 immorality: The Greek expression refers to fornication or sexual misconduct. Christians are forbidden to practice, think about, speak about, or even joke about such obscenities (5:4, 12). Christ has erected a high standard of chastity that restricts all sexual activity to the private quarters of lawful marriage (Heb 13:4). [Back to text.](#)

5:5 an idolater: Any time we love and desire the world more than we love God, we make it an idol (Mt 6:24). The equation between covetousness and idolatry is also made in Col 3:5. **has any inheritance:** Sins of impurity are so grave that sexual offenders risk forfeiting heaven altogether. So unless the transgressor repents, he will perish with his illicit pleasures when "the wrath of God comes" at the Last Judgment (5:6). Notice that Paul is warning believers of this danger, implying that salvation, once attained, can still be lost (CCC 1861, 2351-59). [Back to text.](#)

5:14 Awake, O sleeper: Possibly an excerpt from an ancient baptismal hymn. It resonates with the surrounding themes of light, symbolic of purity and truth, and darkness, symbolic of sin and ignorance (5:7-13). The summons to **arise from the dead** is a call to break away from the sinful world and live as children of light (5:7-8; 2 Cor 6:14) (CCC 1695). [Back to text.](#)

5:16 making the most: Paul urges us to make prudent use of our time by seizing every opportunity to do good. Although we cannot lengthen time or add to our span of life, we can discipline ourselves to use our time more wisely and to fill it more fully (Col 4:5). [Back to text.](#)



5:18 do not get drunk: Christians are called to live sober and respectable lives. For drunkenness opens the door to all kinds of dissipation (Prov 20:1), but sobriety enables us to live under the influence of the Spirit (Rom 8:5-11). Note that Paul advocates temperance and not strict abstinence from alcohol (1 Tim 5:23; CCC 1809). • The command is taken from the Greek version of Prov 23:31. [Back to text.](#)

5:21 subject to one another: This verse marks a transition into Paul's teaching on family life. He calls for mutual submission within the network of relationships that follow: husbands and wives (5:22-25), parents and children (6:1-4), slaves and masters (6:5-9). The submission Paul enjoins in these various circumstances is reciprocal although not strictly identical, for the commands given to husbands, fathers, and masters are different from those given to wives, children, and slaves. For similar household codes, see Col 3:18-4:1 and 1 Pet 2:13-3:12 (CCC 1642). [Back to text.](#)



5:22-33 Paul views Christian marriage through the lens of Christ's covenant love for the Church. This analogy of faith highlights **(1)** the *indissolubility* of Christian marriage, since Christ will never withdraw from the Church or disown her, **(2)** the *sacramentality* of Christian marriage, since marital love is a living sign of Christ's love for the Church, and **(3)** the *reciprocity* of Christian marriage, since the Church submits to Christ's leadership even as Christ the bridegroom acquiesces to the prayers of his beloved bride. • The marital union between Christ and the Church in the New Covenant (2 Cor 11:2; Rev 19:7-9) recalls the marriage covenant between Yahweh and Israel in the Old Covenant (Is 54:5-8; Hos 2:16-20) (CCC 1612, 1641). [Back to text.](#)

5:22 Wives, be subject: The Greek implies her submission is free and voluntary, not degrading, servile, or coercive (Col 3:18; Tit 2:5; 1 Pet 3:1). Since a wife entrusts herself to her husband as part of her devotion to the Lord, her submission cannot be unconditional, especially if her husband commands what God expressly forbids (Acts 5:29). Though ancient society often viewed wives as the property of their husbands, Paul sees marriage as a loving partnership between spouses of equal dignity (Gal 3:28). [Back to text.](#)

5:25 Husbands, love: The husband's mission is to build up his marriage and family, not to dominate or demean them for selfish ends. His model is Christ, whose love was put into action by sacrifice. Again, Paul confronts prevailing customs, where husbands often reigned like tyrants over their household (Col 3:19; 1 Pet 3:7). [Back to text.](#)



5:26 washing of water: A reference to Baptism, which cleanses the soul of sin and beautifies it with grace (Acts 22:16; 1 Cor 6:11; Tit 3:5). The accompanying **word** refers to the baptismal formula spoken as the sacrament is administered (Mt 28:19) or possibly to the cleansing power of the gospel (Jn 15:3). According to Jewish marital custom, brides were presented to their bridegrooms after bathing and adorning themselves (CCC 1228). • Paul's comments recall the symbolic imagery of Ezek 16:8-14, where Yahweh entered a covenant of marriage with Jerusalem after bathing her in water and clothing her with beautiful garments. In the new economy, Christ weds the Church to himself after cleansing her in Baptism and clothing her with the fine linen of righteous deeds (Rev 19:78) (CCC 1617). [Back to text.](#)

5:27 without spot or wrinkle: Evokes the image of a garment that is clean and pressed. [Back to text.](#)



5:29 nourishes: The concern of a husband to meet his physical needs should likewise bring him to cherish his wife. • The close connection drawn between a man's flesh and a man's wife stems from Genesis, where the Lord used Adam's own flesh and bone to form his bride, Eve (Gen 2:21-23). • Paul's allusion to Adam and Eve implies a greater truth about Christ. He, too, fashions his bride, the Church, by giving her the sacramental substance of his own flesh and blood in the Eucharist. This is what makes the Church his **own flesh** (CCC 757, 1003). [See note on Jn 19:34.](#) [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Head ([Eph 5:23](#))

Kephalä“ (Gk.): "head". The term is found 75 times in the NT and numerous times in the Greek OT. It can refer to the physical "head" of a man (Mt 5:36), animal (Gen 3:15), or statue (Dan 2:32). It can also mean "ruler" or "leader", as when King David is called the head of the nations (Ps 18:43) and when Christ is called the head of all things (Eph 1:22). Other ancient texts attest the meaning "source" or "origin", as when Herodotus refers to the headwaters of a river (*Histories* 4, 91), when the Jewish philosopher Philo describes Esau as the progenitor of his entire clan (*On the Preliminary Studies* 12, 61), and when the Jewish author of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs identifies deceitful spirits as the source of youthful misbehavior (*Testament of Reuben* 2, 2). Paul uses this term in his teaching on marriage to encourage husbands to be heads or leaders within the home as Christ is head over the Church (1 Cor 11:3; Eph 5:23). As the context of these passages shows, Paul views marital headship through the creation narratives of Genesis, where Adam was both the head and source of his wife, Eve (Gen 2:21-23), just as Christ is the head and source of the Church (Eph 4:15-16; Col 2:19). For Paul, then, the Body of Christ can be pictured as the *torso* of Christ (anatomical image) as well as the *bride* of Christ (marital image). For more on this Pauline theme, [see note on 1 Cor 12:21](#).



5:31 two shall become one: A citation from Gen 2:24. • Genesis recounts the institution of marriage, between the first couple, Adam and Eve. Despite God's intention that this covenant be a permanent, fruitful, and exclusive bond of companionship, numerous deviations from the divine plan have marred its beauty over the centuries (e.g., polygamy, divorce, adultery, concubinage). Christ came to redeem marriage from these aberrations, restore its original dignity, and enrich it with sacramental grace (Mt 19:3-9) (CCC 1605, 1615-16). [Back to text.](#)

5:32 mystery: Marriage is an earthly image of the heavenly union between Christ and the Church. This spiritual symbolism was hidden from the beginning in the marital covenant and is now manifest in the New Covenant. Saint Jerome rendered the Greek word for "mystery" as *sacramentum* (sacrament) in the original Latin Vulgate (CCC 774-76). See word study: [Mystery](#) at Eph 3:3. [Back to text.](#)



6:2 Honor your father and mother: A citation from Deut 5:16. • This is the fourth commandment of the Decalogue and the first of the ten directed toward loving our neighbor (CCC 2214-18). It comes with a blessing of happiness and longevity (Eph 6:3) for those who obey their parents and care for them in old age (Sir 3:1-16). Rebellion against parental authority was commonplace among the pagans (Rom 1:30) and a capital offense in ancient Israel (Ex 21:17; Deut 21:18-21). [Back to text.](#)

6:4 Fathers, do not provoke: A warning not to discourage children by unreasonable discipline or restraint (Col 3:21). Parents must instead take responsibility for the moral (**discipline**) and intellectual formation (**instruction**) of their children in accordance with the gospel. Just as parents provide their children's bodies with food, clothing, and shelter, so they must nourish their children's souls with loving correction and Christian truth (Deut 6:6-7; Prov 13:24; Heb 12:7-11) (CCC 2221-30). [Back to text.](#)

6:5 Slaves, be obedient: Slavery was widely accepted in the ancient world and was often cruel and inhumane. For this reason, Paul stresses the equal dignity of slaves and their masters before God (6:8) and seeks to improve the relationship between them (6:9). Slaves are summoned to serve their masters willingly and honestly, while masters are called to respect their servants and refrain from harsh treatment. Although Paul does not challenge the institution of slavery directly, the principles of his gospel work indirectly against it (Gal 3:28; Philem 16). [See note on 1 Cor 7:21.](#) [Back to text.](#)



6:10-17 Paul warns readers of the spiritual warfare that rages unseen in the Church. For Christ's kingdom does not spread free of opposition or enemies; rather, it is daily attacked by malevolent spirits under the command of Satan. Our first defense is the **armor of God**, i.e., the graces given to protect us in times of temptation. Our weaponry is both offensive (sword) and defensive (breastplate, shield, helmet, protective footwear), enabling us to ward off the powers of darkness and to guard ourselves from exposure to their tactics (2 Cor 6:7; 10:3-5; 1 Thess 5:8). Although the devil and his demons were defeated by Christ on the Cross (Col 2:15), they remain dangerous until he comes again to destroy them (1 Cor 15:24-25; Rev 20:10). • Paul alludes to Wis 5:17-20 and Is 59:17. Both

passages depict Yahweh as a warrior suiting up for battle against the ungodly. The Church joins him in this holy war as believers are enlisted among his troops and equipped with his divine armory. This OT background suggests that Paul's imagery is more closely linked with Yahweh's spiritual armor than with the military gear of a Roman soldier. • To put on the armor of God is to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Called truth and righteousness, our Savior is our belt and our breastplate. Called the living Word of God, he is the sword who is sharp on both sides (St. Jerome, *Commentary on Ephesians* 3, 6). [Back to text.](#)

6:12 flesh and blood: A Semitic idiom for what is merely human (Mt 16:17; 1 Cor 15:50). **principalities . . . powers . . . rulers:** Ranks of demonic spirits opposed to the Church. [See note on Eph 1:21.](#) [Back to text.](#)



6:15 your feet . . . gospel of peace: An allusion to Is 52:7. • Isaiah envisions Yahweh reigning on Mt. Zion after crushing his enemies and redeeming his people. News of his victory travels on foot as messengers bring "good tidings" of "peace" and "salvation" (Is 52:7) to the ends of the earth. Paul sees this prophecy unfolding in the lives of believers as they carry the gospel to the world. It is assumed that the steady advance of God's kingdom means the steady retreat of all opposing forces. [Back to text.](#)

6:18 Pray at all times: A command closely linked with Paul's preceding instruction on spiritual warfare (CCC 2633, 2742). It indicates that our perseverance in prayer must match the relentless persistence of the devil (Lk 18:1; 1 Thess 5:17). We can expect no truce between God's family and God's enemies before the Day of Judgment (2 Pet 2:4). [Back to text.](#)

6:20 ambassador in chains: Paul is likely writing as a prisoner under house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:16), where he was given freedom to preach to the crowds who came to him (Acts 28:23-31). This would explain why he asks readers to pray on his behalf for the grace of evangelical boldness (Eph 6:19). [Back to text.](#)

6:21 Tychicus: The courier Paul assigned to deliver this letter and also Colossians (Col 4:7-8). If he is the same person from "Asia" mentioned in Acts 20:4, he would already be familiar with the cities of Ephesus and Colossae in Asia Minor (southwest Turkey). [Back to text.](#)

INTRODUCTION TO

THE LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Author and Date The Apostle Paul is widely regarded as the author of Philippians (1:1). Only a few scholars have ever challenged this tradition, and their attempts to offer alternative theories of authorship have failed to convince the majority of interpreters to follow their lead. Internal evidence bears out the traditional view, for its many personal references cohere well with the life and experiences of Paul known from the Book of Acts and his other epistles. The style and theology of Philippians are likewise Pauline, although the letter shows a friendly side of the apostle that is sometimes hidden in his more formal and polemical writings.

That being said, several modern scholars debate the unity of the letter as it now stands. Changes in tone and subject matter suggest to some that Philippians is a composite of two, or possibly three, Pauline letters that have been merged together into a single work. For example, the abrupt transition between 3:1, which sounds like a natural conclusion, and 3:2, which spins the discussion off in a new direction, is read as an internal clue that separate letters, presumably written on different occasions, have been joined together. Nevertheless, hypotheses of this sort are not accepted by all. Many continue to defend the unity of Philippians on the grounds that similar ideas and expressions run across the alleged divisions and give the canonical form of the letter a sufficient degree of thematic consistency to warrant acceptance as a single composition.

Attempts to date Philippians generally begin with Paul's stated imprisonment (1:7, 13-14, 17). Though Paul was jailed a number of times in different places (2 Cor 11:23), this likely refers to his first imprisonment in Rome between A.D. 60 and 62, where he lived with a Roman soldier under house arrest (Acts 28:16, 30). References to the "praetorian guard" (Phil 1:13) and "Caesar's household" (4:22) lend credence to Rome as the setting of the letter, and Paul's expectation of an imminent trial (1:26; 2:24) points to A.D. 62 as a likely date for its composition. Alternative views maintain

that Paul was writing from Ephesus, Corinth, or Caesarea and propose earlier dates for the letter in the middle or late 50s.

Destination Philippi was the leading city of eastern Macedonia (northern Greece) in the first century and held a strategic position on the Egnatian Way, the major travel route connecting Italy and the West with Asia Minor and the East. The city was named after Philip II of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, and was established by Caesar Augustus as a Roman military colony in the first century B.C. Its inhabitants were mainly retired army veterans who enjoyed the status of Roman citizenship and other civic privileges. Unlike many prestigious cities of the Roman world at this time, Philippi had only a small Jewish population. Paul and his companions founded the Church here on his second missionary journey about A.D. 50 (Acts 16:11-40) and made one or more return visits on his third missionary journey (Acts 20:1-6). It is difficult to determine how long Paul stayed in Philippi on these occasions, but it was long enough to develop a close relationship with the young community. The Philippian Church was the first to be established by Paul on the mainland of Europe.

Purpose Philippians does not address any doctrinal or disciplinary crisis; rather, it is a letter of thanks and encouragement to a congregation of dear friends. The gratitude that Paul expresses throughout the letter is a response to their generosity. The Philippians supported the imprisoned apostle through their constant prayers (1:19), as well as by sending him financial assistance by the hand of Epaphroditus (4:18). The Philippians had come to Paul's assistance several times in this way, acquiring for themselves a reputation as one of his most gracious congregations (4:15-16). Paul sent this letter back to them by the same messenger, Epaphroditus (2:25-30), to thank them for their gift, to update them on personal matters, and to assure them of God's rich blessings in return (2:25-30; 4:19). The only real concerns that Paul addresses in the letter have to do with resolving a personal conflict between two Philippian women (4:2-3) and with putting the congregation on guard against Judaizing missionaries, who, should they make their way to Philippi, would likely pressure them to receive circumcision (3:2-3). Lastly, Paul wrote to prepare the Philippians for the arrival of Timothy (2:19-23) and to express his own desire to see them if possible (2:24).

Themes and Characteristics Philippians follows an informal structure and is marked by a joyous and personal tone. The letter is almost entirely positive, with only brief warnings and almost no polemics. Because Paul is not formulating an extended argument on a controversial issue, his thoughts sometimes skip from one topic to another, much as a personal letter is loosely arranged according to the wishes of the sender. Doctrine is present in the letter but is not predominant. Paul gives most of his attention to exhortation and encouragement.

Much of this letter challenges the Philippians to grow in spiritual maturity by imitating both their Savior and their founding apostle. For this reason, Paul holds up Jesus Christ as the model of humility and selfless love and himself as a model of patient endurance. **(1) *Jesus the Servant.*** The example of Christ comes in 2:1-11, where Paul admonishes readers to serve one another in the Lord. To overcome pride and disunity, he summons them to live like Jesus by putting their neighbors' interests above their own (2:4). This calls for a spirit of sacrifice and humility (2:3). Inspiration for this is drawn from a poetic account of the humiliation and exultation of Jesus (2:5-11). Although divine and infinitely glorious, Christ freely "emptied himself" to become a man (2:7). He lived entirely at the service of others, and his heroic obedience to the Father carried him all the way to the Cross. This, says Paul, was so pleasing in God's eyes that he exalted Christ to the highest summit of heavenly glory. A similar inheritance awaits believers who tread the same path of suffering and obedience marked out by their Lord (2:12-18). **(2) *Paul the Servant.*** Paul is likewise a worthy model for imitation (3:17; 4:9). Though in prison, his apostolic zeal emboldens others to witness to the faith as he did (1:14). Though persecuted, his joy and optimism go forth to encourage readers undergoing their own struggles (4:4-7). Paul's confidence reaches its peak in his devotion to Jesus Christ, whom he is prepared to honor with his whole life, whether by preaching the gospel after his release or by marching to his death as a martyr (1:19-26). The secret of Paul's serenity is in the Lord, who sustains his spirit even in the most trying circumstances of life. He shares this secret with the Philippians, urging them to follow his lead by taking everything in stride—be it prosperity or persecution—confident that Jesus will supply the strength needed to live every moment for the glory of God (4:10-13). «

OUTLINE OF THE LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS

1. Opening Address ([1:1-11](#))

- A. Salutation ([1:1-2](#))
- B. Prayer and Thanksgiving ([1:3-11](#))

2. Paul's Imprisonment ([1:12-30](#))

- A. The Advance of the Gospel ([1:12-18](#))
- B. Personal Update ([1:19-26](#))
- C. Exhortation to Stand Firm ([1:27-30](#))

3. Imitating Jesus Christ ([2:1-18](#))

- A. Christ's Humility and Obedience ([2:1-11](#))
- B. Living like Christ ([2:12-18](#))

4. The Arrival of Timothy and Epaphroditus ([2:19-30](#))

5. Striving for the Goal ([3:1-21](#))

- A. Warning against Judaizers ([3:1-11](#))
- B. Pursuing the Heavenly Prize ([3:12-21](#))

6. Final Instructions and Praise ([4:1-20](#))

- A. Working for Unity ([4:1-3](#))
- B. Rejoicing in the Lord ([4:4-9](#))
- C. Gratitude for the Philippians' Assistance ([4:10-20](#))

7. Conclusion ([4:21-23](#))

THE LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE

PHILIPPIANS

Chapters

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#)

Salutation

[1](#) [Paul](#) and Timothy, servants^a of Christ Jesus,

To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philip'pi, with the bishops^b and deacons:

[2](#) [Grace to you and peace](#) from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's Prayer for the Philippians

[3](#) [I thank my God](#) in all my remembrance of you, [4](#)always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with [joy](#), [5](#)thankful for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. [6](#)And I am sure that he who [began a good work](#) in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. [7](#)It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. [8](#)For [God is my witness](#), how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. [9](#)And it is my prayer that your [love](#) may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, [10](#)so that you may approve what is excellent, and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, [11](#)filled with the fruits of righteousness which come through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Paul's Present Circumstances

[12](#) I want you to know, brethren, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, [13](#)so that it has become known throughout the whole [praetorian guard](#)^c and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ; [14](#)and most of the brethren have been made confident in the Lord because of my imprisonment, [*](#) and are much more bold to speak the word of God without fear.

15 Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. 16The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel; 17the former proclaim Christ out of partisanship, not sincerely but [thinking to afflict me](#) in my imprisonment. 18What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in that I rejoice.

To Live Is Christ

19 Yes, and I shall rejoice. For I know that through your prayers and the help of the [Spirit of Jesus](#) Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, 20as it is my eager expectation and hope that I shall not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, * whether by life or by death. 21For to me [to live is Christ](#), and to die is gain. 22If it is to be life in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. 23I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and [be with Christ](#), for that is far better. 24But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. 25Convinced of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, 26so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my [coming to you again](#).

27 Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, 28and not frightened in anything by [your opponents](#). This is a clear omen to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. 29For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only [believe in him](#) but also suffer for his sake, 30engaged in the same conflict which you saw and now hear to be mine.

Imitating Christ's Humility

2 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, 2complete my joy by being of [the same mind](#), having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. 4Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus, 6[who, though he was](#) in the form of

God, ^{*} did not count equality with God [a thing to be grasped](#), ⁷but [emptied himself](#), ^{*} taking the form of a servant, ^d being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even [death on a cross](#). ⁹Therefore God has highly [exalted him](#) and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus [every knee should bow](#), in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue [confess](#) that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Shining as Lights in the World

¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, [work out your own salvation](#) with fear and trembling; ¹³for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

¹⁴ Do all things without grumbling or questioning, ¹⁵that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and [perverse generation](#), among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶holding fast the word of life, so that in [the day of Christ](#) I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. ¹⁷Even if I am to be poured [as a libation](#) upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

Timothy and Epaphroditus

¹⁹ I hope in the Lord Jesus to send [Timothy](#) to you soon, so that I may be cheered by news of you. ²⁰I have no one like him, who will be genuinely anxious for your welfare. ²¹They all look after their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. ²²But Timothy's worth you know, how as a [son with a father](#) he has served with me in the gospel. ²³I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me; ²⁴and I trust in the Lord that shortly [I myself shall come](#) also.

²⁵ I have thought it necessary to send to you [Epaphroditus](#) my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, ²⁶for he has been longing for you all, and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. ²⁷Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. ²⁸I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. ²⁹So

receive him in the Lord with all joy; and honor such men, ³⁰for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete your service to me.

Loss of All to Gain Christ

3 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is not irksome to me, and is safe for you.

2 Look out for the dogs, look out for the evil-workers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. ³For we are the true circumcision, who worship God in spirit,^e and glory in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh. ⁴Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If any other man thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law a Pharisee, ⁶as to zeal a persecutor of the Church, as to righteousness under the law blameless. ⁷But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith; ¹⁰that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Pressing toward the Goal

12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. * ¹³Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵Let those of us who are mature be thus minded; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, God will reveal that also to you. ¹⁶Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

17 Brethren, join in imitating me, and mark those who so walk as you have an example in us. ¹⁸For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹Their end is destruction, their god is the belly, and they glory in their shame, with

minds set on earthly things. ²⁰But [our commonwealth](#) is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who will change our lowly body to be [like his glorious body](#), by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Exhortations

4 Therefore, my brethren, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in this way in the Lord, my beloved.

2 I entreat Eu-o'dia and I entreat Syn'tyche to [agree in the Lord](#). ³And I also ask you, who are a true [co-worker](#), help these women, for they have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

4 [Rejoice](#) in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵Let all men know your forbearance. [The Lord is at hand](#). ⁶Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And [the peace of God](#), which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any [excellence](#), if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you.

Acknowledgment of the Philippians' Gifts

10 I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me; you were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. ¹¹Not that I complain of want; for I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content. ¹²I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. ¹³[I can do all things](#) in him who strengthens me.

14 Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. ¹⁵And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving except you only; ¹⁶for even in Thessaloni'ca you sent me help^f once and again. ¹⁷Not that I seek the gift; but I seek the fruit which increases to your credit. ¹⁸I have received full payment, and more; I am filled, having received from Epaphrodi'tus [the gifts you sent](#), a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable

and pleasing to God. ¹⁹And my [God will supply](#) every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Final Greetings and Benediction

21 Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The [brethren who are with me](#) greet you. ²²All the saints greet you, especially those of [Caesar's household](#).

23 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Commentary on The Letter of Saint Paul to the Philippians

1:1 Paul: Both the author of the letter and the founder of the Philippian Church. Paul has no need to assert his apostolic authority because the Philippians already revere him as their spiritual father. He stresses instead his service to Christ. **Timothy:** A member of Paul's missionary team when he first established the congregation in Philippi (Acts 16:1-40). Already acquainted with Timothy (Phil 2:22), readers will soon see him again (2:19). **bishops and deacons:** The spiritual leaders of the Philippian Church. Because the titles of bishop ("overseer") and presbyter ("priest") were sometimes used interchangeably in the earliest days of the Church, it is possible these Philippian bishops were simply the local priests in charge of the congregation (Acts 20:17, 28; Tit 1:5-7). In any case, they fulfilled the priestly and pastoral ministries of teaching, governing, and presiding at worship, while the deacons served as their assistants and devoted themselves to charitable works (1 Tim 3:1-16). This is the only time that Paul addresses the hierarchy as distinct from the laity in his letters. [Back to text.](#)

1:2 Grace to you and peace: A standard greeting in the epistles of Paul (Rom 1:7) and the seven letters of John in Revelation (Rev 1:4). [Back to text.](#)

1:3-11 Paul opens most of his letters with thanksgiving and prayer. Here he is overjoyed at the Philippians' faithful commitment to his ministry expressed through their prayer support, encouragement, and tangible assistance (1:19; 4:14-18). His gratitude for the Philippians rises to God (1:6) along with intercessions for their spiritual growth (1:9) (CCC 2632, 2636). [Back to text.](#)

1:4 joy: One of several themes that punctuate the letter (1:18; 3:1; 4:4, 10). Elsewhere Paul lists joy among the fruits produced in us by the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22; CCC 1832). [Back to text.](#)

1:6 began a good work: Paul is confident that his readers' end will correspond to their beginning, i.e., that the graces of their Baptism will lead them to the glory of eternal life. Though God initiates and completes this whole process (2:13), he also asks us to cooperate with his help by striving for holiness (Heb 12:14) and working toward salvation (Phil 2:12). Paul is

not saying that the Philippians can be absolutely assured of their salvation any more than he is (3:12-14; 1 Cor 9:24-27) (CCC 1996, 2008-10). **day of Jesus Christ:** The Day of Judgment, when the Lord will come again in glory to reward or punish every thought, word, and deed done in this life. [See note on 1 Cor 1:8.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:8 God is my witness: An abbreviated oath-formula that Paul uses to assure readers of his sincere affection for them (Rom 1:9; 2 Cor 1:23). [Back to text.](#)

1:9 love: Not a passing emotion or sentiment, but the grace that moves us to lay down our lives for others as Christ did for the world (Rom 5:8; 1 Jn 3:16). Its opposite is "selfishness" (Phil 2:3). Here and elsewhere Paul prays for an increase of love in the hearts of his readers (1 Thess 3:12; 4:10) (CCC 1822-26). [Back to text.](#)

1:13 praetorian guard: An assembly of elite troops stationed in the palace of the Roman emperor. The soldiers apparently know that Paul has been imprisoned as a Christian and not as a criminal. Members of the imperial household are likewise acquainted with his cause and may have converted as a result (4:22). Despite Paul's chains, the gospel he preaches continues to spread unfettered (2 Tim 2:9). [Back to text.](#)

1:17 thinking to afflict me: Paul's imprisonment sparks opposite reactions: some are emboldened to defend the gospel as he does (1:14), while others try to worsen Paul's hardship by undermining his ministry (1:15). Nevertheless, even pretentious competition cannot dampen Paul's joy at the success of the gospel (1:18). It is important to recognize that these insincere preachers are not false teachers, otherwise Paul would never rejoice in the spread of their message (Gal 1:7-8). [Back to text.](#)



1:19 Spirit of Jesus: Because the Spirit proceeds from both the Father (Jn 14:26) and the Son (Jn 15:26), he is called both the Spirit of the Father (Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 2:11) and the Spirit of the Son (Rom 8:9; Gal 4:6; CCC 244-46). **turn out for my deliverance:** A subtle but distinct echo of the Greek version of Job 13:16. • Job is defending himself against the accusations of his companions, who reasoned that his many hardships and afflictions must be punishments for his sins. Paul, in the midst of his own trials, shares the confidence of Job that the Lord will vindicate his

innocence despite the chains that bind him and the charges laid against him. [Back to text.](#)

1:21 to live is Christ: Paul places himself entirely in the hands of God. This alone gives him confidence to face the uncertain outcome of his trial. Whether the legal proceedings bring him release or execution, he believes that Christ will be honored through him. Paul's dilemma is that both alternatives will turn out for the good: either he will come to know Christ in the fullest way possible as a martyr, or he will continue to make Christ known as a missionary (1:22-24) (CCC 1010, 1698). [Back to text.](#)



1:23 be with Christ: Paul does not hide his preference for martyrdom, since death is the doorway to eternal happiness. • According to Catholic teaching, the souls of the faithful departed enter immediately into God's presence for personal judgment (Heb 9:27). They now rest in the interim period between bodily death and bodily resurrection, which is followed by the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) (CCC 1005, 1011, 1021). [Back to text.](#)

1:26 coming to you again: Should Paul be released, he plans to celebrate his vindication with a visit to Philippi (2:24). [Back to text.](#)

1:28 your opponents: Possibly the Roman veterans of Philippi, as they would be fiercely loyal to Caesar and thus critical of those who honor Jesus as "Lord". [See note on Phil 2:11.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:29 believe in him: Even our faith is a gift of divine grace (Acts 18:27; Eph 2:8). **suffer for his sake:** Suffering brings great benefit to ourselves and others. On the one hand, it purifies us of selfishness and makes us sharers in Christ's redemptive work (3:10; 2 Cor 1:5; Col 1:24; 1 Pet 1:6-7). On the other, it pushes the gospel into the world as believers bear witness to the Lord Jesus through persecution and martyrdom (1 Cor 4:9-13; 2 Cor 5:11). Scripture depicts suffering as a privilege (Acts 5:41) and so challenges us to embrace it and not simply endure it (Rom 8:17; 1 Pet 4:12-16). [Back to text.](#)

2:2 the same mind: An appeal to share a common outlook on Christian living and a common vision for Christian unity. This ideal can become real only if humility and service take the place of pride and selfishness among them (2:3-4) (CCC 2842). [Back to text.](#)



2:6-11 Possibly an early Christian hymn. Christ is the focus of the meditation, which follows the storyline of his Incarnation (2:7), his humiliation (2:8), and his exaltation (2:9-11). The lines are rich in theological as well as moral content, as they articulate the mystery of Christ and set him forth as the model for Christian living. Reflection on Christ the "servant" (2:7) is meant to inspire us to be servants of one another (2:4; CCC 461, 520). • The hymn depicts Jesus as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah. In the disturbing vision of the prophet, this messianic figure submitted himself to the violence and abuse of his people until he poured out his life in sacrifice for human iniquity (Is 52:13-53:12). Some theologians also detect a subtle contrast between Jesus, who humbled himself to become man, and Adam, who asserted himself in order to become like God (Gen 3:5; CCC 411) (CCC 713). [Back to text.](#)



2:6 though he was: Could also be translated, "because he was". • There is a close relationship between the divine and human life of Jesus, so that the human actions of Christ in history reveal the mystery of his divine activity in eternity. By pouring himself out to the Father in death, he displays how his love is poured out to the Father in the dynamism of life within God. The loving obedience of Christ is thus an act of divine revelation, showing the world the life-giving love that flows from Person to Person in the hidden embrace of the Trinity. See note Jn 14:31. **the form:** The Greek term *morphē*, used here to assert the divinity of Christ, is used again in the next verse to assert his full humanity (2:7). Some take the "form of God" to be equivalent to the human "image" of God in Gen 1:26, but this is unlikely because the passage concerns the preexistent life of Christ before he entered the world as a man. [Back to text.](#)



2:7 emptied himself: The Greek verb *kenōō* means "empty out" or "render void". The idea is, not that Christ divested himself of divinity when he united himself with humanity, but that he restricted his rightful exercise of certain divine abilities during his earthly life and accepted certain limitations of the human condition. In effect, the Son of God made himself poor in order to make us rich with his grace (2 Cor 8:9) (CCC 472). • Christ

emptied himself by compressing the glory of his Godhead within our smallness. What he always was remained perfect and incomprehensible, but what he assumed was in proportion to the measure of our nature (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Apollinarius*). [Back to text.](#)

2:8 death on a cross: The ultimate indignity. Death by crucifixion was the most awful and degrading form of criminal execution in the ancient world. The Romans reserved it for slaves and insurrectionists. [See note on Mk 15:24.](#) [Back to text.](#)

2:9 exalted him: By raising him from the dead, enthroning him in heaven, and clothing his humanity with divine glory. A similar destiny awaits all who humble themselves as Jesus did (3:21; Lk 14:11). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

A Thing to Be Grasped ([Phil 2:6](#))

Harpagmos (Gk.): A rare term that is never used in the Greek OT and is found only here in the NT. Occurrences of the word in secular Greek refer to "robbery". Its meaning in Phil 2:6 is a matter of considerable debate. Four interpretations represent the leading views of ancient and modern times. **(1)** Some, like the Latin Fathers, take it to mean "something seized". Jesus did not consider equality with God something he had aggressively acquired for himself, since it belonged to him by nature and right. **(2)** Others, like several Greek Fathers, understand it to mean "something held fast". On this reading, Jesus did not regard his divine prerogatives as a prize possession to which he needed to cling at all costs. **(3)** Still others prefer the meaning "something to be seized that is not already possessed". The point here is that Jesus, as a man, did not see the prerogatives of God as something he should reach for or seek to acquire. **(4)** Lastly, and perhaps most convincingly, some interpret this term as part of a Greek idiom that means "something to be exploited for personal gain". This reading would indicate that Jesus, unlike so many ambitious rulers of the ancient world, did not view his divine dignity as something to be used for selfish purposes. Rather, the eternal Son lowered himself into history to come among us as a servant (Lk 22:27; Rom 15:3, 8; Phil 2:7).



2:10 every knee should bow: An allusion to the divine oath in Is 45:23. • Yahweh swore that all peoples, to the very end of the earth, would acknowledge his Lordship and bow before him in homage. Paul moves Christ into the center of this prophecy as the divine Lord destined to be revered by all. **heaven . . . earth . . . under the earth:** The three principal realms in the world view of ancient Israel (Ex 20:4). Homage will come from all creatures great and small—the angels and saints above, the family of man and beasts spread over the earth, and the dead and the demons of the underworld. [Back to text.](#)

2:11 confess: I.e., acknowledge. Included in this open declaration is the account we give of our lives on the Day of Judgment (suggested by Paul's interpretation of Is 45:23 in Rom 14:10-12). The Hebrew version of Isaiah indicates that this confession will be given in the form of an oath. **Lord:** The divine title given to Yahweh throughout the Greek OT. The same title was used for Roman emperors. Neither the divine honor it accords to Christ nor the challenge this poses to Caesar would be lost on Paul's readers (CCC 446-50). [Back to text.](#)



2:12 work out your own salvation: I.e., make continued efforts at living the gospel and pursuing your heavenly reward. The statement assumes that while our *initial* salvation had nothing to do with our works (Eph 2:8-9), our *final* salvation depends on a lifetime of keeping the faith (2 Tim 4:7-8), following the commandments (Mt 19:17), persevering in good works (Rom 2:7), striving for holiness (Heb 12:14), praying in earnest (1 Thess 5:17), and fighting against the forces of evil (Eph 6:11) and the selfish demands of the flesh, which drag us down (Rom 8:13; 1 Cor 9:24-27). This obligation is so serious that we pursue it with **fear and trembling**, i.e., with a sense of awe at serving the living God and a sense of dread at the prospect of sinning against him (Ex 20:18-20; Ps 2:11-12). Encouragement comes in the next verse, where Paul reminds readers that God's grace is working actively within them both to desire (intention) and do (act) what pleases him (Heb 13:20-21; CCC 308) (CCC 1949). • When Paul commands them to "work", he addresses their free will. When he adds "with fear and trembling", he cautions them against boasting as if their good deeds were their own. If you fear and tremble, you will not boast of your

good works, since it is God who works them within you (St. Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will* 21). [Back to text.](#)



2:15 perverse generation: An excerpt from Deut 32:5. • Deuteronomy 32 is the famous "Song of Moses", a poetic lawsuit that begins by indicting Israel for its apostasy and ingratitude during the Exodus. Paul's appeal to do all things "without grumbling" (Phil 2:14) is a reminder of how the Exodus pilgrims murmured and complained through the wilderness (Ex 15:24; 16:2; 17:3; etc.). Learning from their mistakes, we are challenged to live luminous lives in the midst of an unbelieving world (Mt 5:14-16). [Back to text.](#)

2:16 the day of Christ: The Day of Judgment. [See note on Phil 1:6.](#) [Back to text.](#)

2:17 as a libation: Drink offerings of wine and oil were poured out to the Lord every morning and evening as lambs were sacrificed on the Temple altar in Jerusalem (Ex 29:40-41; Num 28:7). For Paul, martyrdom is a more perfect act of worship (2 Tim 4:6) and the fullest expression of what it means to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1) in imitation of Christ (Eph 5:2; CCC 1070). [Back to text.](#)

2:19 Timothy: One of Paul's trusted companions (1:1) present with him in Rome. He hopes to send Timothy to Philippi to encourage the Church and report back on their circumstances. His proven character and genuine interest in others make him well suited for the task (2:4, 21). The Philippians already know Timothy, because he was one of the founding missionaries of their Church (Acts 16:1-40). [Back to text.](#)

2:22 son with a father: Paul sees himself as a spiritual father. Converts like Timothy are "sons" who were "brought to life" through his ministry. [See note on 1 Cor 4:15.](#) [Back to text.](#)

2:24 I myself shall come: Paul plans to visit Philippi if and when he is released (1:25-26). [Back to text.](#)

2:25 Epaphroditus: The messenger who carried the Philippians' financial gift to Paul in prison (4:18). He is now sent back to Philippi to update the congregation on the apostle's situation and deliver this epistle. He endured a near-fatal sickness while visiting Paul in Rome (2:27). **messenger:** The Greek reads "apostle". Its meaning here is broader than usual (2 Cor 8:23). [Back to text.](#)

3:1 the same things: Refers either to the preceding instructions or, more likely, to the following warnings (3:2-21). Paul had apparently addressed the dangers of false teaching with his readers in person or in a previous letter. His purpose here is more to protect them than to correct them, since no indication is given that the Philippians themselves have embraced any dangerous teaching. [Back to text.](#)

3:2 mutilate the flesh: An allusion to the Judaizers, a band of Jewish Christian missionaries who demanded circumcision and adherence to the ancestral traditions of the Old Covenant as indispensable requirements for salvation (Acts 15:1-5). Paul opposes their effort to bring believers under the yoke of the Mosaic Law. [See note on Gal 5:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)



3:3 true circumcision: The spiritual circumcision of the heart performed in Baptism (Col 2:11-12). • This covenant procedure was prefigured by the ritual circumcision of the foreskin (Gen 17:9-14) and was announced in advance by Moses as a sign of the messianic restoration (Deut 30:6). [See note on Rom 2:29.](#) [Back to text.](#)

3:4-5 Paul boasts impeccable credentials in the face of Judaizing missionaries trying to discredit his theology and mission. He was **circumcised** in accordance with the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 17:9-14); his tribal affiliation with **Benjamin** makes him a true Israelite (2 Cor 11:22); his ancestry as a **Hebrew** (from Eber, Gen 11:16) makes him a pure-blooded Semite (from Shem, Gen 11:10); and his zeal as a **Pharisee** linked him with one of the strictest renewal movements in Judaism (Acts 22:3; Gal 1:14). Paul is confident these facts will silence the rival claims of any Judaizing competition that makes its way to Philippi. [See note on 2 Cor 11:22.](#) [Back to text.](#)



3:6 zeal: Sometimes expressed through violent action in the OT. Ancient defenders of Israel like Phinehas and the Maccabees were revered for their commitment to this philosophy (Num 25:6-13; Sir 45:23; 1 Mac 2:23-26; 3:8). Paul's zeal as a Pharisee was unleashed on the early Christians, whom he persecuted as traitors to the hopes and ideals of Judaism (Acts 8:3; 1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13). After his conversion, he realized this zeal was tragically unenlightened (Rom 10:2). **blameless:** Faultless in his outward commitment to the Jewish way of life (Lk 1:6). God asked this

of Abraham in his preface to the covenant of circumcision (Gen 17:1). • Paul could have fulfilled the Law outwardly, for fear of punishment, and still transgressed the Law inwardly through evil desire (St. Augustine, *Answer to Two Pelagian Letters* 1, 15). The apostle lived innocently according to the external righteousness of the Law, not according to the righteousness of faith, which pertains to the heart and makes a man pure (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Philippians* 3, 1). [Back to text.](#)

3:7 I counted as loss: Paul renounces the resume he built up in Judaism. The benefits of being a Pharisee are counted as trash compared to the blessings he received from Jesus (3:8). The point is that God's gifts to us in Christ far exceed in greatness and worth anything we can give back to him (CCC 428). [Back to text.](#)

3:9 righteousness: A distinction is made between *legal* righteousness, which persons under the Old Covenant tried to attain by faithfulness to the Law (Deut 6:25), and *divine* righteousness, which we receive through faith in Jesus Christ under the New Covenant (Rom 5:17). For Paul, legal righteousness is not a saving righteousness because it depends on human effort apart from the inward grace of God. This distinction is also set forth in Rom 9:30-32 and 10:3. [See note on Mt 5:20.](#) [Back to text.](#)

3:12 made me his own: Christ took possession of Paul on the Damascus road (Acts 9:3-19). [Back to text.](#)

3:14 I press on: The life of faith is compared to a race, where the prize of salvation has yet to be won since the competition is still in progress. Paul is encouraging readers to summon their energy and charge ahead after holiness (Heb 12:14). [See note on 1 Cor 9:24-27.](#) [Back to text.](#)



3:17 imitating me: Paul knows that his witness will leave a more lasting impression than his words. He appeals to readers to follow his example as he models his own life after Christ (4:9; 1 Cor 11:1). • Imitation of the saints is a practice long revered in the spiritual tradition of the Church. The heroism of holy men and women can inspire a deeper commitment in others who contemplate their extraordinary faith and generosity of life. [Back to text.](#)

3:18-19 Paul attacks unidentified opponents. Whoever they are, they are slaves of gluttony, shamelessness, and worldly ways of thinking. Paul

weeps because their indulgence in earthly pleasures is holding them back from heaven and hastening their doom (1 Cor 6:9-10). [Back to text.](#)

3:20 our commonwealth: Many residents of Philippi are honored recipients of Roman citizenship. Civil privileges such as these are only a dim reflection of the benefits they possess as Christians. Believers are citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, enrolled among the angels and saints in the family of God (Heb 12:23) (CCC 2796). See introduction: *Destination*. [Back to text.](#)

3:21 like his glorious body: Christ will complete his work of salvation in us when he transforms our frail and mortal bodies into glorious and immortal ones like his own (CCC 999). [See note on 1 Cor 15:42-44.](#) [Back to text.](#)

4:2 agree in the Lord: Paul bids two individuals, **Euodia** and **Syntyche**, to resolve their personal differences before tensions become more serious. The cause of this friction is left unspecified, and the two women are otherwise unknown. [Back to text.](#)

4:3 co-worker: The Greek, here rendered as a descriptive title, can also be translated as a personal name, "Syzygus". Whatever the case, Paul is asking a particular individual to facilitate a peaceful resolution to the conflict between Euodia and Syntyche (4:2). **Clement:** Otherwise unmentioned in the NT. Early Christian tradition identifies him as Clement of Rome, the fourth bishop of Rome (after Peter, Linus, and Anacletus) and the author of an ancient epistle known as *1 Clement* (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3, 15-16; St. Jerome, *On Illustrious Men* 15). **the book of life:** A registry of the saints kept in heaven (Dan 12:1; Lk 10:20). God alone knows the complete list of names since he alone made the entries (Ex 32:32). [Back to text.](#)

4:4 Rejoice . . . Rejoice: Repeated for emphasis. The joy of the Lord is produced in believers by the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22) and can flourish despite trying circumstances and even crushing misfortunes (Mt 5:11-12; Jas 1:2). Paul exemplifies this in Philippians, where a spirit of gladness dominates the tone of his letter even though he is writing from prison. [Back to text.](#)

4:5 The Lord is at hand: Probably refers to the near presence of Christ at all times rather than to his scheduled return at the end of time (Ps 145:18; Mt 28:20). This ready access to Jesus through prayer should encourage believers to seek his help and consolation in times of need (Phil 4:6; Eph 6:18; Heb 4:16). [Back to text.](#)

4:7 the peace of God: The tranquility of heart and soul that comes from Christ (Jn 14:27). Paul insists that if we pray about our problems rather than worry about them, God will post a guard around our minds to protect us from the doubts and disturbances that weaken our confidence in his fatherly care (1 Pet 5:7). Jesus gives similar instructions in Mt 6:25-34 (CCC 2633). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Excellence ([Phil 4:8](#))

Arete (Gk.): means "goodness" or "moral virtue". The term is found only four times in the NT but was commonly used by the philosophers and moralists of Greek antiquity. Peter uses it to describe the "wonderful deeds" of the Lord displayed in the gospel (1 Pet 2:9). In another place, he specifies that God's power works in us to produce lives of "excellence" and "virtue" through grace (2 Pet 1:3, 5). When Paul uses the term, he challenges us to ponder all that is virtuous in order to crowd every impure and unworthy thought out of our minds (Phil 4:8). This implies a close relationship between contemplation and conduct, so that wholesome meditation can be an inspiration for exemplary living (Wis 8:7) (CCC 1803).

4:13 I can do all things: I.e., Paul can endure the extremes of earthly life, from peace and prosperity to affliction and destitution. The hidden source of his strength is not in himself but in the Lord Jesus, who enables him to take everything in stride and live detached from the need for physical comforts (Mt 19:26; Jn 15:5). [Back to text.](#)

4:18 the gifts you sent: The tangible assistance delivered to Paul by Epaphroditus. His appreciation goes out to the Philippians for this sacrifice of their resources (Heb 13:16). Paul's situation in Rome, where he lived as a prisoner in his own rented quarters, would have made their monetary assistance all the more welcome (Acts 28:16, 30). According to Phil 4:15-16, the Philippians were consistently generous in supporting his ministry in this way. [Back to text.](#)

4:19 God will supply: Generosity is richly rewarded by the Lord (Lk 6:38; 2 Cor 9:6-8). [Back to text.](#)

4:21 brethren who are with me: This wording includes Timothy (1:1) and others not mentioned by name. [Back to text.](#)

4:22 Caesar's household: The gospel was gaining ground not only among the emperor's soldiers (1:13), but also among his hired servants. Paul must have been proud to say that the gospel of Christ's Lordship was echoing throughout the halls of the Imperial palace. This detail lends solid support to the view that *Philippians* was written from Rome. See introduction: *Author and Date.* [Back to text.](#)

INTRODUCTION TO THE LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS

Author The author of Colossians twice identifies himself as the Apostle Paul, once at the opening of the letter (1:1) and once at its closing (4:18). The Church Fathers accepted this claim from earliest times, and Christian scholarship continued to uphold the tradition of Pauline authorship until the early nineteenth century, at which time some began to question the link between Paul and Colossians. Modern scholarship remains divided over whether Colossians came from the hand of Paul or from one of Paul's admirers writing in his name. The case against Pauline authorship is built on perceived differences of style and theology that make Colossians stand out from the acknowledged writings of the apostle. This type of comparative analysis is easily overdrawn, however, since Colossians addresses an altogether unique situation in the early Church, and this could well account for the unique approach of the letter. In any case, the undeniable presence of Pauline themes in the letter is precisely what leads more skeptical scholars to assign the letter to one of Paul's disciples.

In favor of Paul's authorship, the letter appears to have been written under the same set of circumstances as the NT letter to Philemon, a work that scholarship continues to accept as authentically Pauline. Both letters have Paul in prison (Col 4:3; Philem 1); both are sent jointly by Paul and Timothy (Col 1:1; Philem 1); both have Paul surrounded by the same circle of friends (Col 4:10-14; Philem 23-24); and both mention the return of a runaway slave named Onesimus back to the area (Col 4:9; Philem 12). In light of this and other evidence that links the letter to Paul's personal situation, it is best to appreciate the uniqueness of Colossians without dissociating the letter from the apostle.

Date Advocates of Pauline authorship generally date the letter between A.D. 60 and 62, when Paul spent two years under house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:16, 30). This judgment puts Colossians alongside his other "Captivity

Epistles" (Ephesians, Philippians, Philemon), which are traditionally dated within this same time frame. Some, however, think that Colossians was written during the mid-50s, while Paul was in Ephesus. Scholars who read Colossians as a non-Pauline letter tend to date it much later, usually in the 80s.

Destination The city of Colossae was built along the Lycus River in the Roman province of Asia (western Turkey). It was once a thriving industrial center positioned on a major trade route that stretched across Asia Minor from the western city of Ephesus to the eastern city of Tarsus. By NT times, Colossae had considerably declined in importance. More prominent in this region were the cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis, both located within 15 miles of Colossae (4:13). Interestingly, Paul had neither founded nor visited the Church he addresses in this letter (2:1). A native Colossian named Epaphras was the first to bring the gospel to the city years earlier (1:7). He was likely converted while Paul was preaching in Ephesus and gaining a wide hearing from Jews and Greeks all over Asia Minor (Acts 19:10). Despite an established Jewish population in the region, the Colossian Church was comprised mainly of uncircumcised Gentiles (Col 2:13).

Purpose The same Epaphras who founded the Colossian Church (1:7) also traveled to Rome to update Paul on their recent successes and struggles (4:12). Among other things, he informed Paul that certain agitators were planting doubts in the minds of the Colossians about their new faith. Paul wrote to address this danger and to reassure these believing Gentiles of their Christian inheritance (1:12, 21-22). Unfortunately, commentators have reached no clear consensus on the precise identity of these Colossian troublemakers. Some view them as proponents of pagan religion, while others contend they were teachers of an early form of Gnosticism that combined religious and philosophical elements from Jewish and Hellenistic thought. More probably, Paul is addressing the growing friction between Jewish and Christian communities in Colossae. This would explain why Paul gives focused attention to controversies over Jewish legal rites like circumcision, dietary restrictions, and adherence to the liturgical feast days of the Old Covenant (2:11-13, 16-18). Apparently the local Colossian Jews were outspoken critics of the new Christian movement and dismissed the

claim that Gentiles could enjoy full membership in God's covenant family apart from the legal observances handed down through Moses.

Themes and Characteristics In many ways Colossians is unique among Paul's letters. Its closest parallel is the Letter to the Ephesians, with which it shares several common themes and expressions and sometimes even identical teachings. Both letters were written to young believers unknown to Paul personally, and both were probably composed during Paul's imprisonment in Rome in the early 60s. Nevertheless, while Ephesians has a calm and contemplative tone, Paul's stance in Colossians is more aggressive, as he confronts false notions that are making inroads into the local Church and muddling the thinking of many young Christians.

Since Paul does not address his opponents directly, we are left to infer from his comments the basic thrust of their teaching. It may be said, along these lines, that Paul in Colossians is engaged in constructive apologetics, as he spends most of his energy clarifying the truth of Christian doctrine rather than attacking in detail the errors he deems so dangerous. Two motifs stand out in Paul's preaching. **(1) The Supremacy of Christ.** Towering above every theme in Colossians is the doctrine of Jesus Christ's preeminence over all things (1:18). Paul stresses this point by sketching for his readers a map of the cosmos, positioning Christ at its very summit. Every person, every nation, every angel—indeed, every created thing—is subject to the Lord Jesus and is compelled to acknowledge him as King. No corner of the universe lies outside his dominion because Jesus is the Creator who brought it into being and the Redeemer who renews it with the grace he pours out through the Church. Paul soars to these heights especially in the hymn of 1:15-20, but elsewhere too he proclaims the divinity of Christ (2:9) and reminds us that the crucified Christ has triumphed over the entire army of demonic spirits (2:15). We can assume from Paul's emphasis on these matters that his Jewish opponents tried to depreciate the person and position of Jesus Christ in the minds of the Colossian Christians. **(2) The Completeness of Christians in Christ.** The practical side of Christ's supremacy is, for Paul, Christ's sufficiency. This is something he needs to stress to the Colossian Gentiles, who are bending under the pressure of local Jews to adopt the Jewish way of life. Paul warns them against this in 2:8-23, where he drives home the point that Christians have no future in their Jewish past and that Judaism has nothing to offer them that they do not

already possess in greater abundance in Jesus Christ. In a word, the baptized Colossians are already complete in Christ (2:12); they have no need for the shadows of the Old Covenant when they already possess the "substance" of the New (2:17). Fully furnished, then, with God's rich blessings, the Colossians are challenged to conform their lives to the gospel (3:5-17) and to allow Christ to transform their homes into places of love, forgiveness, and harmony (3:18-4:1). «

OUTLINE OF THE LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS

1. Opening Address ([1:1-14](#))

- A. Greetings ([1:1-2](#))
- B. Prayer and Thanksgiving ([1:3-14](#))

2. Christian Belief ([1:15-2:23](#))

- A. The Preeminence of Christ ([1:15-23](#))
- B. The Ministry of Paul ([1:24-2:7](#))
- C. The Cross and the Circumcision of Christ ([2:8-15](#))
- D. The Shadows of the Old Covenant ([2:16-23](#))

3. Christian Behavior ([3:1-4:6](#))

- A. A New Mind in Christ ([3:1-4](#))
- B. A New Life in Christ ([3:5-17](#))
- C. Family Life in Christ ([3:18-4:1](#))
- D. Prayer and Conversation in Christ ([4:2-6](#))

4. Closing Farewell ([4:7-18](#))

- A. The Commendation of Tychicus and Onesimus ([4:7-9](#))
- B. Final Greetings and Instructions ([4:10-18](#))

THE LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE

COLOSSIANS

Chapters

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#)

Salutation

1 [Paul](#), an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ at Colos'sae:
[Grace to you and peace](#) from God our Father.

Gratitude for the Colossians' Faith

3 [We always thank God](#), the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, **4**because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love which you have for all the saints, **5**because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the [word of the truth](#), the gospel **6**which has come to you, as indeed in [the whole world](#) it is bearing fruit and growing—so among yourselves, from the day you heard and understood the grace of God in truth, **7**as you learned it from [Ep'aphras](#) our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on our^a behalf **8**and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

9 And so, from the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, **10**to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, [bearing fruit](#) in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. **11**May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, **12**giving thanks to the Father, who has [qualified us^b](#) to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. **13**He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and [transferred us](#) to the kingdom of his beloved Son, **14**in whom [we have redemption](#), the forgiveness of sins.

The Supremacy of Christ

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born * of all creation; ¹⁶for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸He is the head of the body, the Church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he * might be pre-eminent. ¹⁹For in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

²¹ And you, who once were estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²²he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him, ²³provided that you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which has been preached to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Paul's sufferings and Ministry

²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking * in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church, ²⁵of which I became a minister according to the divine office which was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, ²⁶the mystery hidden for ages and generations^c but now made manifest to his saints. ²⁷To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸Him we proclaim, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature in Christ. ²⁹For this I toil, striving with all the energy which he mightily inspires within me.

² For I want you to know how greatly I strive for you, and for those at La-odice'a, and for all who have not seen my face, ²that their hearts may be encouraged as they are knit together in love, to have all the riches of assured understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, of Christ, ³in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴I say this in order that no one may delude you with beguiling speech. ⁵For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

Fulness of Life in Christ

6 As therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so live in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Warnings against False Teachers

8 [See to it](#) that no one makes a prey of you by [philosophy](#) and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the [elemental spirits](#) of the universe, and not according to Christ. ⁹For in him the whole fulness of [deity dwells bodily](#), ¹⁰and you have come to fulness of life in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. ¹¹In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the [circumcision of Christ](#); ¹²and you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³And you, who were dead in trespasses and the [uncircumcision of your flesh](#), God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴having canceled [the bond](#) which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵He disarmed the [principalities and powers](#) and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him.^d

¹⁶Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of [food and drink](#) or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a sabbath. ¹⁷These are only a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. ¹⁸Let no one disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement and [worship of angels](#), taking his stand on visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, ¹⁹and not holding fast to the [Head, from whom the whole body](#), nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

²⁰If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the universe, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world? Why do you submit to regulations, ²¹"[Do not handle](#), Do not taste, Do not touch" ²²(referring to things which all perish as they are used), according to [human precepts and doctrines](#)? ²³These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting [rigor of devotion](#) and self-abasement and severity to the body, but they are of no value in checking the indulgence of the flesh.^e

New Life in Christ

3 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the [right hand of God](#). ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴[When Christ who is our life appears](#), then you also will appear with him in glory.

⁵ [Put to death](#) therefore [what is earthly](#) in you: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶On account of these the [wrath of God](#) is coming.^f ⁷In these you once walked, when you lived in them. ⁸But now put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth. ⁹Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old man with his practices ¹⁰and have [put on the new](#) man, who is being renewed in knowledge after the image of his creator. ¹¹Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scyth'ian, slave, free man, but [Christ is all](#), and in all.

¹² Put on then, as God's [chosen ones](#), holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, ¹³forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; [as the Lord has forgiven](#) you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴And over all these put on [love](#), which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵And let the [peace](#) of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let [the word of Christ](#) dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Rules for Christian Households

18 * [Wives, be subject](#) to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. ²⁰Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. ²¹Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. ²²Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord. ²³Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men, ²⁴knowing that from the Lord you will receive [the inheritance](#) as your reward; you are serving the

Lord Christ. ²⁵For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.

4 Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

Further Instructions

2 Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving; ³and pray for us also, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison, ⁴that I may make it clear, as I ought to speak.

5 Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. ⁶Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer every one.

Final Greetings and Benediction

7 Tych'icus will tell you all about my affairs; he is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. ⁸I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts, ⁹and with him Ones'imus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of yourselves. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here.

10 Aristar'chus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas * (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, receive him), ¹¹and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me. ¹²Ep'aphras, who is one of yourselves, a servant^g of Christ Jesus, greets you, always remembering you earnestly in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. ¹³For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in La-odice'a and in Hi-erap'olis. ¹⁴Luke the beloved physician * and Demas greet you. ¹⁵Give my greetings to the brethren at La-odice'a, and to Nympha and the church in her house. ¹⁶And when this letter has been read among you, have it read also in the Church of the La-odice'ans; and see that you read also the letter from La-odice'a. ¹⁷And say to Archip'pus, "See that you fulfil the ministry which you have received in the Lord."

18 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

Commentary on The Letter of Saint Paul to the Colossians

1:1 Paul: Ancient epistles opened with the sender's name, unlike modern letters, which identify the sender at the end. Paul presents himself as an **apostle** or ambassador of the Lord Jesus (2 Cor 5:20) whose mission is to preach to the "Gentiles" and to the "sons of Israel" living among them (Acts 9:15). The focus of his teaching is **Christ**, the Messiah, whom Paul addresses by this title 25 times in Colossians. **Timothy:** One of Paul's closest associates now present with him, probably in Rome. Like the apostle, he was a man of great pastoral abilities (Phil 2:19-23). [Back to text.](#)

1:2 Grace . . . peace: A standard Pauline greeting. [Back to text.](#)

1:3-8 Nearly every Pauline epistle opens with a prayer of thanksgiving. Here Paul is grateful that the Colossians received the gospel (1:6) and that God is producing in their lives a full measure of **faith, hope, and love** (Rom 5:1-5; Gal 5:5-6). Although unacquainted with his readers personally (Col 1:4), Paul intercedes for them on a regular basis (1:3, 9) and encourages them to return the favor (4:3) (CCC 2632). [See note on 1 Cor 13:13.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:5 word of the truth: The gospel liberates us from both ignorance and error (Jn 8:31-32). To disregard or repudiate the revealed truth of God is to prefer darkness to light and blindness to spiritual sight (2 Cor 4:3-4; Eph 4:17-20). [Back to text.](#)

1:6 the whole world: The whole Roman world, at least (Rom 1:8). With stunning success, the Christian message was finding believers everywhere it went and blessing their lives in remarkable ways. Colossae likewise embraced the truth and became part of the worldwide harvest of the gospel. [Back to text.](#)

1:7 Epaphras: The founder of the Colossian Church and Paul's informant on their situation. He was a native of the region who also ministered in the nearby cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis (4:12-13). Paul considers Epaphras' missionary work among Gentiles an extension of his own (1:7-8). [Back to text.](#)

1:10 bearing fruit: Paul prays often that God will bless the Colossians with spiritual wisdom and a deeper desire to grow in faith. He wants them

to honor the Father with their lives and allow the Spirit to work unhindered within them (Gal 5:16-24; Phil 2:13). [Back to text.](#)

1:12 qualified us: I.e., by the grace of divine adoption. For Paul, it is our sonship in Christ that makes us heirs of all that the Father desires and intends to give us (Rom 8:16-17; Gal 4:4-7). **inheritance of the saints:** Salvation in the heavenly kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9-10). Even now believers possess a first installment of this inheritance through the indwelling of the Spirit (Eph 1:13-14). An equivalent expression occurs in the Dead Sea Scrolls ("the lot of the saints", 1QS 11, 7-8). [Back to text.](#)



1:13 transferred us: Christ removes us from the darkness of evil into the light of faith and friendship with God. Scripture often portrays the effects of salvation in these terms (Jn 12:35-36; Eph 5:11-14; 1 Pet 2:9). • The Council of Trent declared in 1547 that our justification in Christ, which takes place in Baptism, transfers us from the fallen family of Adam to the glorious family of God (Sess. 6, chap. 4) (CCC 1250). [Back to text.](#)

1:14 we have redemption: Believers have been rescued from the slavery of sin and the debt of guilt by the ransom price of Christ's blood (CCC 517, 2839). [See note on Eph 1:7.](#) [Back to text.](#)



1:15-20 An ancient hymn that extols Christ's deity and supremacy over creation. Emphasis is placed on his role as Creator, through whom all things were made (1:15-17), and as Redeemer, who renews all things with his grace (1:18-20). As the preeminent Lord, Christ is enthroned far above every power on earth and every order of angels in heaven. He has neither rival nor peer, and his redeeming work transforms the old creation into a new creation through his body, the universal Church (1:18; 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). • The preexistence of Christ from eternity and his active role as Creator together recall biblical poetry that personifies God's "Wisdom" as the divine architect of heaven and earth (Prov 8:22-31; Wis 7:22-28). Paul associates Christ with "wisdom" also in Col 2:3 and 1 Cor 1:24, 30 (CCC 299). [Back to text.](#)



1:15 He is the image: Christ makes visible the life and love of the invisible God (Jn 1:18; Rom 5:8). His humanity is thus the sacrament

that brings the Father into view (Jn 14:9). Although man was created *in* God's image, something more is said of Christ, who *is* that image in the most perfect sense (2 Cor 4:4; Heb 1:3). • The hymn may allude to the creation of Adam, the first man to bear the image of God (Gen 1:26) and pass it along to his progeny (Gen 5:3). Because the image Adam bequeathed to the human family was damaged and disfigured by sin, Christ comes to reverse what Adam did by reshaping our image in the likeness of his own (Col 3:10; Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49). • Christ is the image because he is of one substance with the Father. He comes from the Father, and not the Father from him, since the nature of an image is to copy the original and to be named after it (St. Gregory Nazianzen, *Orations* 30). **the first-born:** The term for an eldest child, with emphasis on his legal right of inheritance (Deut 21:15-19). Since Christ is the first and only (natural) Son begotten of the Father, he is the designated heir of the Father's estate, which is the entire cosmos (Heb 1:2). Paul's point is not that Jesus is the noblest part of creation, but that Jesus has the filial right to possess all of creation as his inheritance. See word study: [First-born](#) at Heb 1:6. • The apostle calls him the first-born of all creation. Notice he says first-born, not first created, that we may believe he is begotten in virtue of his nature and first in virtue of his eternity (St. Ambrose, *On the Faith* 1, 7). [Back to text.](#)

1:16 thrones . . . dominions . . . principalities . . . authorities: Names for various classes of angels. No distinction is made here between blessed angels and demonic spirits, since Paul's point is that Christ reigns supreme over the entire host of benevolent and malevolent spirits (CCC 331). For the order of the angelic choirs in Catholic tradition, [see note on Eph 1:21](#). [Back to text.](#)

1:18 He is the head: Points to Christ's union with the Church, who as head directs and oversees the activities of his members. Paul's analogy can likewise stress that the head and body share the same life (Rom 12:5) and that each member of the body is assigned a particular task for the good of the whole (1 Cor 12:12-26) (CCC 753, 792). See word study: [Unite](#) at Eph 1:10. **first-born from the dead:** Christ was the first to be raised immortal from the grave (Rev 1:5). This mystery of faith is reproduced in the lives of believers as their souls are resurrected in grace through the sacraments (Col 3:1; Rom 6:4) and their bodies are raised in glory on the last day (Col 3:4; Rom 8:11) (CCC 658). [Back to text.](#)

1:19 the fulness of God: Christ is fully divine because the plenitude of divine life, power, and holiness resides within him (2:9; Jn 1:16). This is one of the clearest assertions of Christ's deity in the NT (Jn 1:1; Tit 2:13). [Back to text.](#)

1:20 to reconcile: The death of Jesus restores peace between the Father and the human family (2 Cor 5:18-19; Eph 2:13-18). This friendship was interrupted by the rebellion of Adam, who stripped the family of man of its inheritance and caused disorder and corruption to prevail throughout the world (Gen 3:1-24; Rom 5:12). Harmony is now being restored as the grace of the New Covenant permeates and renews the cosmos (Rom 8:19-23) (CCC 2305). [Back to text.](#)

1:22 holy and blameless: Once pagans and enemies of God, the baptized Colossians have been separated from sin and consecrated to the Lord. [See note on Eph 1:4.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:23 preached to every creature: Rhetorical exaggeration for the first century, but nevertheless the goal of Christ's missionary mandate (Mk 16:15). Paul is describing the future as though it has already happened, perhaps as a way of emphasizing its certainty in the plan of God. See note on 1:6. [Back to text.](#)



1:24 my sufferings: The many afflictions that Paul endured throughout his missionary career (2 Cor 11:23-29). Joy in the midst of suffering is a common NT theme (Mt 5:11-12; Acts 5:41; 1 Pet 4:13). **what is lacking:** I.e., the suffering that remains for believers in the trials of life. Suffering is a mission for all the faithful as a means of conforming ourselves to Christ (Rom 8:17; Phil 3:10), but suffering is a special calling for ministers of the gospel like Paul, who endure many afflictions in the effort to bring salvation to others (2 Cor 1:6; 4:11-15) (CCC 307, 618, 1508). • These words could be misunderstood to mean that the suffering of Christ was not sufficient for redemption and that the suffering of the saints must be added to complete it. This, however, would be heretical. Christ and the Church are one mystical person, and while the merits of Christ, the head, are infinite, the saints acquire merit in a limited degree. What is "lacking", then, pertains to the afflictions of the entire Church, to which Paul adds his own amount (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Colossians* 1, 6). [Back to text.](#)

1:26 the mystery: The plan of salvation, long concealed in the Scriptures but now revealed in the gospel (Rom 16:25-26). It is the deliverance of man from sin and the spread of Christ's worldwide kingdom through the Church. Paul here stresses that believing Gentiles possess the indwelling presence of Christ, which is a pledge or down payment toward their future resurrection in glory (Col 1:27; Rom 8:10-11) (CCC 772). See word study: [Mystery](#) at Eph 3:3. [Back to text.](#)

1:28 mature: Or "perfect". Paul aims to bring believers to a deeper understanding of the gospel and to a deeper commitment to apply it to their daily lives (4:12). Perfection is a goal that requires both effort and endurance (1:29; Phil 3:12-15). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Elemental Spirits ([Col 2:8](#))

Stoicheia (Gk.): "elements" or "rudiments". The term is used seven times in the NT and is common in Greek literature. It can refer to the material elements of the cosmos, like earth, air, water, and fire, or to heavenly bodies, like the sun, moon, and stars (Wis 7:17). It can also refer to angels or demons that regulate the course and movement of these elements. These ideas are closely connected with ancient forms of worship. For idolatrous Gentiles, the elements were deified and worshiped as "gods" (Wis 13:1-2; Gal 4:8). For ancient Israel, the liturgical calendar was determined by the rhythm of the elements, especially by the cycles of the sun and moon (Gen 1:14; Sir 43:1-8). Paul groups the worship of Israel and the nations together, since both are subservient to these visible and invisible elements of the natural order (Gal 4:9). In contrast to this old order, Paul stresses that Christ is seated far above all things seen and unseen (Col 3:1-3). United with him, believers no longer worship within the confines of the created world, but through the sacraments they enter a new order of worship that is supernatural and heavenly, where Christ lifts them far above the created elements of the cosmos (Jn 4:21-24; Gal 4:3; Heb 12:22-24; Rev 4-5).

2:1 Laodicea: A neighboring city in the same region. Because Paul wrote both to the Colossians and to the Laodiceans, he directs them to

exchange his letters with one another after reading them (4:16). **not seen my face:** Paul was personally unknown to his readers. [Back to text.](#)

2:3 treasures of wisdom: Jesus embodies the fullness of divine Wisdom in himself (1 Cor 1:24, 30). Paul makes this statement to prepare readers for the following warning about dangerous teachings that deviate from Christian truth (2:4, 823). See note on 1:15-20. [Back to text.](#)

2:8-23 Paul confronts the teaching of Jewish troublemakers in Colossae. His comments suggest **(1)** they denied the full deity of Christ, and **(2)** they promoted the rituals of the Mosaic Law as indispensable requirements for living in covenant with God. Paul corrects these misunderstandings for his readers by asserting the divinity of Christ (2:9) and stressing that Gentile believers are already "complete" in Christ apart from the ceremonial works of the Old Covenant (circumcision, dietary laws, Sabbath observance, Temple festivals, etc.). [Back to text.](#)

2:8 philosophy: Although this term can refer to speculative theories about God, man, and the universe, it was also used by Hellenistic Jewish writers such as Josephus and Philo to refer to the Jewish way of life. This is probably Paul's meaning here. It is true, nevertheless, that every philosophy is vain that disregards or denounces what God has revealed as good, true, and beautiful through Jesus Christ. **human tradition:** Religious customs produced and promoted by men, not God. Perhaps Paul is following the example of Jesus by cautioning readers of human traditions passed on by Pharisees and synagogue elders (Mk 7:1-8). For Paul, only divinely instituted traditions that stem from Jesus and the apostles demand obedience from the Church (1 Cor 11:2; 2 Thess 2:15). [Back to text.](#)

2:9 deity dwells bodily: A powerful assertion of the full humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ (1:19; Jn 1:14). The mystery of the God-made-man was a stumbling block for many in Israel, who were skeptical that Yahweh's presence could reside in a man and who were scandalized that the Messiah should suffer the curse of crucifixion (1 Cor 1:23; Gal 3:13) (CCC 242, 515). [Back to text.](#)



2:11 circumcision of Christ: The circumcision of the heart (Rom 2:28-29). The procedure is performed in Baptism, the sacrament of spiritual rebirth (2:12). • The Israelites were marked with the covenant sign of circumcision, but their rebellion over the centuries proved that their

hearts remained uncircumcised (Jer 9:25-26). Moses realized that this would continue until Yahweh circumcised the hearts of his people himself (Deut 30:6). Paul interprets this vision of Moses in sacramental terms, insisting that Christ accomplishes in Baptism what circumcision only signified in ancient Israel. It is the moment when God cuts away from our hearts the fleshly desires that keep us from loving and obeying him as we should. • Paul lays a biblical foundation for infant Baptism, inasmuch as circumcision was administered to newborn babies eight days after birth (Gen 17:9-14). Tradition bears this out, as St. Cyprian recounts that a council held in North Africa in the third century declared that Christians need not delay the Baptism of infants until the eighth day. Behind this assertion lies the assumption that the early Christians saw in Baptism what the Israelites saw in circumcision: the sacrament of initiation into God's covenant people, open to adults and infants alike. [Back to text.](#)

2:13 uncircumcision of your flesh: Indicates that most or all of the Colossians are Gentiles (Eph 2:11). [Back to text.](#)

2:14 the bond: A list of charges filed against the sinful human family. Christ destroyed this legal certificate on the Cross, when he canceled our debt of guilt and won pardon for our crimes. Paul is probably thinking of the Mosaic Law, which, as the written expression of God's precepts, pronounces divine curses upon sin (Deut 27:15-26). In this scheme, Jesus mounted the Cross to bear the curses of the Old Covenant so that the blessings of the New could flow forth to the world (Gal 3:13-14). As a further benefit, Christ frees us from the ceremonial observances of the Old Covenant, which merely signified our need for salvation in the first place (Eph 2:14-16). [Back to text.](#)

2:15 principalities and powers: Legions of demonic spirits (Eph 6:12). Christ conquered these Satanic powers decisively and dramatically on the Cross. Paul depicts this in terms of a victory march, recalling how Roman generals dragged prisoners of war through city streets to be disgraced and ridiculed after a successful military campaign. See word study: [Leads Us in Triumph](#) at 2 Cor 2:14. [Back to text.](#)

2:16 food . . . drink . . . festival . . . new moon . . . sabbath: Jewish ceremonial practices that are often grouped together in the Bible (Is 1:13-14; Hos 2:11; Judg 8:6; 1 Mac 10:34). The first two concern kosher dietary restrictions, and the last three refer to liturgical feast days celebrated yearly (festivals), monthly (new moons), and weekly (Sabbaths). These ritual

practices of the Old Covenant were mere "shadows" of the greater "substance" to come with Christ and the sacraments of the New Covenant (Col 2:17). [Back to text.](#)

2:18 worship of angels: This expression can be understood in different ways. (1) Many take it to mean "worship directed to angels" (objective genitive). If, in fact, a cult of the angels was popular at Colossae, it must have been a pagan element in the otherwise Jewish piety of the Colossian opponents, for Judaism censures the worship of any creature in place of God the Creator. (2) Others take it to mean "worship performed by angels" (subjective genitive). Interest in the worship of the angels is indeed present in Jewish mystical and apocalyptic writings of the period, and perhaps the Colossian Jews, like the authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls, viewed their synagogue worship as a participation in the angelic liturgy of heaven. History also knows of Jewish mystics who claimed to ascend into heaven, receive visions and revelations, and worship the Lord alongside the angels. [Back to text.](#)

2:19 Head . . . whole body: An image of Christ's union with the Church. The expansion of Christ's kingdom is here compared to the growth of a human body (CCC 794). [See note on Col 1:18.](#) [Back to text.](#)

2:21 Do not handle . . . taste . . . touch: A sarcastic strike at the Jewish agitators in Colossae, for whom physical contact with corpses, lepers, and unclean foods was an act of ritual defilement (Lev 11; 13:45-46; Num 19:11-22). Paul implies that since the purity codes of the Old Covenant have now been set aside, it would be a worse act of defilement for Christians to readopt the very practices that Christ died to nullify (Mk 7:14-23; Eph 2:15). Jesus launched a similar critique on the Pharisees in Lk 11:37-44. [Back to text.](#)



2:22 human precepts and doctrines: An allusion to the Greek version of Is 29:13. • Isaiah rails against the leaders of Jerusalem for their pretentious worship: they are paying lip service to God but failing to devote their hearts and lives to him. According to the prophet's diagnosis, this is the result of giving more attention to human traditions than to the Torah. Jesus hurls this same oracle against his Pharisees in Mt 15:7-9. [Back to text.](#)

2:23 rigor of devotion: Refers to ascetical practices such as fasting and abstaining from certain kinds of foods. These bodily disciplines are not

wrong in themselves, so long as the body is subdued but not despised. Without grace, however, asceticism cannot restrain the selfish urges of our fallen nature. This is possible only through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:13; 1 Cor 9:27; Gal 5:16). In Jewish mystical tradition, asceticism was a necessary form of preparation to receive visions and embark on heavenly journeys. [See note on Col 2:18.](#) [Back to text.](#)

3:1 right hand of God: Where Christ is enthroned in heaven and where believers are seated with him through the grace of Baptism (Eph 2:6). This must be the focus of our thoughts as we struggle to lift our minds above the concerns of the world (Rom 8:5-6) (CCC 664, 1003). [See note on Eph 1:20.](#) [Back to text.](#)

3:4 When Christ . . . appears: I.e., at his Second Coming. His return will initiate the general resurrection of the dead, when the bodies of the righteous will radiate the glory of the Lord. [See note on 1 Cor 15:42-44.](#) [Back to text.](#)

3:5-8 The catalogue of vices that Paul enumerates in 3:5 and 3:8 overlaps with other lists in Rom 1:29-31, Gal 5:19-21, and Eph 4:31. He implies here what he insists elsewhere: no one who fails to repent of these sins has any inheritance in heaven (1 Cor 6:9-10; Eph 5:5) (CCC 1852-53). [Back to text.](#)



3:5 Put to death: Paul urges us to crucify the old man, Adam, who lives on in our fallen nature and inclines us toward evil, and to conform our lives to the new Adam, Jesus Christ, who draws us toward greater and greater sanctity (Rom 6:15-19; 8:29). **covetousness:** Equated with idolatry here and in Eph 5:5. Perhaps the link was inspired by the teaching of Jesus in Mt 6:24. • Covetousness is a kind of idolatry, not expressly, but by resemblance. It is idolatry when someone gives to an image the honor owed to God, but the person who covets gives to money the honor owed to God when he builds his entire life around it (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Colossians* 3, 1). [Back to text.](#)

3:6 wrath of God: The fixed response of God to sin. [See note on Rom 1:18.](#) [Back to text.](#)

3:10 put on the new: A challenge to live out our baptismal commitments. Paul compares this to the daily routine of changing our clothes. [See note on Eph 4:24.](#) [Back to text.](#)

3:11 Christ is all: Believers are drawn together into a worldwide family where the distinctions between language, nationality, and social standing are no longer relevant (Gal 3:28). In this list, **barbarian** is a resident of the Roman world who speaks no Greek, and a **Scythian** belongs to the tribal people living north of the Black Sea. [Back to text.](#)



3:12 chosen . . . holy . . . beloved: Believers have a special relationship with Christ that entitles them to receive from the Father every grace and blessing that is needed to follow the gospel. • The same descriptions are applied to the children of Israel in Deut 7:6-7. If Paul has this text in mind, he is driving home the point that Gentile believers are now part of the covenant people of God. Elsewhere he describes the Gentiles as wild branches grafted onto the olive tree of Israel (Rom 11:17-24). [Back to text.](#)

3:13 as the Lord has forgiven: We express gratitude to the Lord by imitating his mercy in our relationships with others. In fact, extending forgiveness to others is necessary if we hope to receive the ongoing forgiveness of the Father (Mt 6:14-15; 18:23-35). [Back to text.](#)

3:14 love: The crowning virtue of the Christian life and the one that holds all others together (CCC 1827). [See note on 1 Cor 13:4-7.](#) [Back to text.](#)

3:16 the word of Christ: The full scope of Jesus' teaching and example passed down through tradition or inscribed in the canonical Gospels. It is meant to shape every area of our lives (Mt 11:28-30). **psalms and hymns:** Honoring the Lord in song is a tradition that reaches back to the worship of Israel. The early Church continued this by adopting the Psalter as her songbook and by singing new hymns to Jesus Christ as God. Musical praise is particularly appropriate for the eucharistic liturgy as well as for everyday circumstances (Eph 5:19) and even for times of distress (Acts 16:25). The Book of Revelation lets us listen to numerous songs from the heavenly liturgy of the angels and saints (Rev 4:8, 11; 5:9-10; 7:10-12; 11:17-18; etc.) (CCC 1156, 2641-42). [Back to text.](#)

3:18-4:1 Paul gives pastoral instruction on family life. He is challenging every household to be transformed with the "peace of Christ" (3:15). The apostle's vision for domestic life stands in stark contrast to the godlessness of the pagan society, especially the tyranny of husbands and fathers, as well

as the inhuman treatment of household slaves. See notes on Eph 5:22, 5:25, 6:4, 6:5, and 6:22. [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Peace ([Col 3:15](#))

Eirēnē (Gk.): "peace" or "harmony". The word is used 92 times in the NT and often carries the OT sense of *shalom*, "well-being". The biblical notion of peace has more to do with spiritual welfare than the mere cessation of warfare. Peace is one of the great blessings that Jesus Christ has given to the world (Jn 14:27). It is rooted in our reconciliation with God (Lk 2:14; Rom 5:1). It is an inward peace (Rom 15:13; Gal 5:22) that can branch out to establish peace between individuals, families, and even nations (Eph 2:14-18). Unless it is grounded in the peace of Christ, worldly peace can only be shallow and shortlived. For this reason, believers are called to spread Christ's peace throughout the world by sharing the gospel and working for justice in earthly societies (Mt 5:9; Heb 12:14; Jas 3:18). Behind all of this stands the OT expectation that the Messiah, the Prince of Peace (Is 9:6), would come to establish a worldwide covenant of peace with Israel and all nations (Ezek 34:23-25; Zech 9:9-10) (CCC 2305).

3:24 the inheritance: Heaven awaits the baptized, who, as heirs, already possess the Spirit as a pledge of their future heritage (1:5). The life of God that is now possessed in part we hope to possess in full (Eph 1:13-14). [Back to text.](#)



4:2 prayer: Paul promotes prayer that is vigilant and thankful. He wants readers to seek every grace necessary to withstand temptation and to express gratitude to God for every spiritual and material blessing we have received. The more we recognize both our needs and our blessings, the more frequently we will approach the Lord on our knees (Lk 18:1; 1 Thess 5:17). • Paul knows that continuance in prayer can make us restless, so he tells us to be "watchful", that is, to be sober and avoid wandering. For the devil knows the power of a good prayer, and thus he presses heavily upon

us when we pray. Paul is also aware how careless many can be at prayer, and so he says "continue" in prayer to remind us that it is hard work (St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Colossians* 10). [Back to text.](#)

4:3 I am in prison: Paul is probably writing from Rome, where he lived for two years under house arrest. See introduction: *Date*. [Back to text.](#)

4:6 seasoned: As salt preserves food and enhances its taste, our conversations should be wholesome, edifying, and pure (3:8). This is one way that Christians can live as "the salt of the earth" (Mt 5:13). [Back to text.](#)

4:7 Tychicus: One of Paul's personal envoys, in charge of delivering this epistle and informing the Colossian Church of the apostle's situation back in Rome (2 Tim 4:12; Tit 3:12). [See note on Eph 6:21.](#) [Back to text.](#)

4:9 Onesimus: A runaway slave who fled to Rome but converted to Christianity during Paul's imprisonment (Philem 10, 16). Paul is sending him back to his master, Philemon, who may have lived in Colossae or one of the nearby cities of Laodicea or Hierapolis. [Back to text.](#)

4:10-17 A list of final instructions and personal greetings. Many of these names at the end of Colossians are also listed in Philemon, indicating that the two letters were probably written and delivered at the same time (Philem 2, 10, 23). Traditionally, the **Mark** (Col 4:10) and **Luke** (4:14) here mentioned are identified with the evangelists who wrote the second and third Gospels, respectively. Both men were among Paul's traveling companions (Acts 12:25; 16:10), and both assisted the apostle in the closing years of his life (2 Tim 4:11). [Back to text.](#)

4:10 Aristarchus: A believer from Thessalonica. He was a member of Paul's missionary team (Acts 19:29; 20:4) and traveled with him all the way to Rome (Acts 27:2). [Back to text.](#)

4:16 read among you: Most likely in a liturgical context. Very early on Paul's epistles were recognized as authoritative and even scriptural (2 Pet 3:15-16). **the letter from La-odicea:** The identity of this letter is uncertain. It may be (1) a letter that Paul wrote to the La-odicea Church that has not survived or (2) another of Paul's epistles that was circulating in the region, possibly Ephesians. In any case, the Colossians are encouraged to exchange letters with the neighboring La-odiceans. See introduction to Ephesians: *Destination*. [Back to text.](#)

4:17 fulfil the ministry: Archippus may have been a pastor in the Colossian Church. [Back to text.](#)

4:18 I, Paul, write this: It was customary for Paul to dictate his letters to scribes, waiting until the end to pen the farewell himself (1 Cor 16:21; 2 Thess 3:17). These handwritten remarks authenticated the letter, much as a signature does today. [Back to text.](#)

INTRODUCTION TO

THE FIRST LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS

Author First Thessalonians is a genuine letter of the Apostle Paul. His name opens the epistle (1:1); tradition from earliest times supports this ascription; and only a few modern scholars have ever questioned its authenticity. Indeed, the letter is covered from beginning to end with the unmistakable fingerprints of Paul's language, style, and character known from his other writings. Internal evidence shows us that Paul is writing as the leader and spokesman of his missionary team, which at this time included Silvanus and Timothy (1:1). This explains why so many of his comments and instructions are formulated in the first person plural ("we"/"us"/"our", 1:2; 2:1; 3:1; 4:1; etc).

Date It is widely held that 1 Thessalonians is the oldest letter we have from Paul and may be the oldest book in the entire canon of the NT. By coordinating the report in 3:1-5 with the historical record of Acts 17:1-18:5, most scholars agree that Paul must have penned this letter in the winter months of late A.D. 50 or early 51, soon after Silvanus and Timothy rejoined him in Corinth (Acts 18:5).

Destination Thessalonica was a bustling commercial city founded in 316 B.C. and established by the Romans as the provincial capital of Macedonia (northern Greece) in 146 B.C. The city was ideally situated for trade, having a port into the Aegean Sea and positioned on the Egnatian Way, an overland highway that linked the eastern and western parts of the Mediterranean. Paganism and idolatry dominated the religious environment in Thessalonica, although it was also home to a Jewish colony with at least one synagogue. Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy (1:1) founded the Thessalonian Church in A.D. 50 on the apostle's second missionary tour (Acts 17:1-9). Initially, they spent several weeks preaching in the synagogue and saw the conversion of Jews, Greeks, and several leading women from the city (Acts

17:4). However, enraged by the missionaries' success, certain Jews from the city incited riots and forced the missionaries out of Thessalonica only weeks (or possibly months) after their arrival, causing them trouble as far as Beroea (Acts 17:5, 13). The community left behind remained a target of local persecution (1 Thess 1:6; 2:14; 2 Thess 1:4). A majority of the community were Gentiles who had abandoned idolatry for Christianity (1:9).

Purpose and Themes First Thessalonians is a predominantly pastoral letter with a pastoral focus. Paul wrote out of a deep concern for these recent converts who were unexpectedly left alone to withstand the rising tide of persecution and the constant pressures of paganism. Absent in person and eager to return (3:10), Paul sent the epistle in his place to strengthen them through these difficult times (3:3-5), to encourage them to be chaste and charitable (4:1-12), and to console the bereaved among them with the hope of resurrection (4:13-14). Expressions of joy, gratitude, and encouragement punctuate the letter as Paul affirms them for their astonishing growth (1:8) in faith, hope, and love (1:3; 3:6; 5:8). There are no rebukes for the Thessalonians, only appeals to stay on the same course (4:1; 5:11).

The substance of the letter, though more personal than theological, is not lacking in doctrinal content. This is evident in Paul's emphasis on eschatology (teaching concerning the end times). At least once in every chapter he mentions the return of Jesus Christ in glory. According to Paul, Christ will come again from heaven to deliver us "from the wrath to come" (1:10) and give us the final "salvation" for which we yearn (5:9). His prayer is that Christ will perfect the "love" of his readers (3:12) and establish them forever in "holiness" at his arrival (3:13; cf. 5:23). The apostle is confident he will be proud of the Thessalonians on that day and expects to wear them like a "crown" before the Lord (2:19). The subject of eschatology has pressing importance for certain readers who are anxious about the fate of their deceased relatives and friends (4:13). Paul assures them that, as God raised Jesus from the dead and carried him into heaven, so too he will raise the righteous at the blast of the final trumpet and escort them into glory (4:14-18). Because the last day will "come like a thief" (5:2), Paul challenges readers to stay awake both morally and spiritually in anticipation of the Second Coming (5:1-11). Otherwise they will be caught unprepared when Jesus returns as Judge to avenge the wicked for their evil deeds (4:6).

In Paul's mind, this itinerary for the end of days is revealed to give comfort and hope to the saints struggling on earth (4:18). «

OUTLINE OF THE FIRST LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS

1. Opening Address ([1:1](#))

2. Memories of the Past ([1:2-3:13](#))

- A. Thanksgiving ([1:2-10](#))
- B. Paul's Thessalonian Ministry ([2:1-16](#))
- C. The Mission and Report of Timothy ([2:17-3:10](#))
- D. Prayer for Sanctification ([3:11-13](#))

3. Instructions for the Future ([4:1-5:22](#))

- A. An Appeal for Purity ([4:1-8](#))
- B. An Appeal for Love and Labor ([4:9-12](#))
- C. The Return of Jesus ([4:13-18](#))
- D. The Day of the Lord ([5:1-11](#))
- E. Final Exhortations ([5:12-22](#))

4. Conclusion ([5:23-28](#))

THE FIRST LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE

THESSALONIANS

Chapters

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#)

Salutation

[1](#) [Paul](#), Silva'nus, and Timothy, [*](#)

To the Church of the Thessalo'nians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

Grace to you and peace.

The Thessalonians' Faith and Example

[2](#) [We give thanks](#) to God always for you all, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, [3remembering](#) before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. [4](#)For we know, brethren beloved by God, that [he has chosen you](#); [5](#)for our gospel came to you not only in word, but [also in power](#) and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. [6](#)And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much [affliction, with joy](#) inspired by the Holy Spirit; [7](#)so that you became an example to all the believers in [Macedonia and in Acha'ia](#). [8](#)For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Acha'ia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. [9](#)For they themselves report concerning us what a welcome we had among you, and how you [turned to God from idols](#), to serve a living and true God, [10](#)and to wait for [his Son from heaven](#), whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

Paul's Ministry in Thessalonica

[2](#) For you yourselves know, brethren, that our visit to you was not in vain; [2](#)but though we had already suffered and been [shamefully treated at Philip'pi](#), as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the face of great opposition. [3](#)For our appeal does not

spring from error or uncleanness, nor is it made with guile; ⁴but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please men, but to please God who tests our hearts. ⁵For we never used either words of flattery, as you know, or a cloak for greed, as God is witness; ⁶nor did we seek glory from men, whether from you or from others, though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. ⁷But we were gentle^a among you, like a nurse taking care of her children. ⁸So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

⁹ For you remember our labor and toil, brethren; we worked night and day, that we might not burden any of you, while we preached to you the gospel of God. ¹⁰You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our behavior to you believers; ¹¹for you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you ¹²to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

¹³ And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers. ¹⁴For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus which are in Judea; for you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, ¹⁵who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all men ¹⁶by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they may be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But God's wrath has come upon them at last!^b

Paul's Desire to Visit the Thessalonians Again

¹⁷ But since we were deprived of you, brethren, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face; ¹⁸because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, * again and again—but Satan hindered us. ¹⁹For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? ²⁰For you are our glory and joy.

³ Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone, ²and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's

servant in the gospel of Christ, to establish you in your faith and to exhort you, ³that no one be moved by [these afflictions](#). You yourselves know that this is to be our lot. ⁴For when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction; just as it has come to pass, and as you know. ⁵For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent that I might know your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and that our labor would be in vain.

Timothy's Good Report

⁶ But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you—⁷for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith; ⁸for now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord. ⁹For what thanksgiving can we render to God for you, for all the joy which we feel for your sake before our God, ¹⁰praying earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply [what is lacking](#) in your faith?

¹¹ Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you; ¹²and may the Lord make you increase and [abound in love](#) to one another and to all men, as we do to you, ¹³so that he may establish your hearts unblamable in [holiness](#) before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

A Life Pleasing to God

⁴ [Finally, brethren](#), we beg and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you learned from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, you do so more and more. ²For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. ³For this is the will of God, your [sanctification](#): * that you abstain from immorality; * ^{4/sup}>that each one of you know how to control [his own body](#) in holiness and honor, ⁵not in the passion of lust like heathens who [do not know God](#); ⁶that no man transgress, and [wrong his brother](#) in this matter,^c because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we solemnly forewarned you. ⁷For God has not called us for uncleanness, but in holiness. ⁸Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives [his Holy Spirit](#) to you.

⁹ But concerning [love of the brethren](#) you have no need to have any one write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one

another; ¹⁰and indeed you do love all the brethren throughout Macedonia. But we exhort you, brethren, to do so more and more, ¹¹to aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we charged you; * ¹²so that you may command the respect of outsiders, and be dependent on nobody.

The Coming of the Lord

13 But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. * ¹⁴For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁵For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; ¹⁷then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord. * ¹⁸Therefore comfort one another with these words.

5 But as to the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need to have anything written to you. ²For you yourselves know well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³When people say, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a woman with child, and there will be no escape. ⁴But you are not in darkness, brethren, for that day to surprise you like a thief. ⁵For you are all sons of light and sons of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. ⁶So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. ⁷For those who sleep sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. ⁸But, since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰who died for us so that whether we wake or sleep we might live with him. ¹¹Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

Final Exhortations, Greetings, and Benediction

12 But we beg you, brethren, to respect those who labor among you and are [over you in the Lord](#) and admonish you, **13**and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.^{c2}
14And we exhort you, brethren, [admonish the idle](#), encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. **15**See that none of you repays [evil for evil](#), but always seek to do good to one another and to all.
16Rejoice always, **17**[pray constantly](#), **18**give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. **19**[Do not quench the Spirit](#),
20do not despise prophesying, **21**but test everything; hold fast what is good,
22abstain from every form of evil.

23 May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your [spirit and soul and body](#) be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. **24**He who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

25 Brethren, pray for us.

26 Greet all the brethren with [a holy kiss](#).

27 [I adjure you](#) by the Lord that this letter be read to all the brethren.

28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Commentary on The First Letter of Saint Paul to the Thessalonians

1:1 Paul: The author of the letter (2:18) as well as the founding apostle of the Thessalonian Church (Acts 17:1-9). **Silvanus:** A Latin transcription of the name "Silas", a Christian prophet from Jerusalem (Acts 15:32) who accompanied Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 15:40). He was a co-founder with Paul of the church in Thessalonica. **Timothy:** A young man selected by Paul to minister with him and Silas on their missionary adventures (Acts 16:1-4). Without stating it explicitly, Acts implies that Timothy played a secondary role with Paul and Silas in evangelizing Thessalonica (Acts 17:1, 14). He was later sent to encourage the community and report back to Paul on their situation (1 Thess 3:1-6). [See note on 1 Tim 1:2. in . . . the Father and the Lord:](#) The Church family in Thessalonica is united "in" the divine family of the Trinity. The heavenly Father has made this possible by choosing believers for adoption (1:4), giving them the Holy Spirit (4:8), and promising to raise even their bodies from the dead (4:14) when his Son returns in glory (1:10; 4:15-17) (CCC 2014). **Grace to you and peace:** A standard Christian greeting used by Paul and other writers in the NT (1 Pet 1:2; 2 Jn 3; Rev 1:4). [Back to text.](#)

1:2 We give thanks: Nearly every Pauline epistle opens with expressions of gratitude (Rom 1:8; 1 Cor 1:4; etc.). Paul is particularly thankful for the Thessalonians, who have admirably committed themselves to living out the gospel (1 Thess 1:8; 3:6; 4:1, 10). [Back to text.](#)

1:3 remembering: Paul recalls the time he first spent with his readers. What stands out in his mind are the theological virtues that changed their lives: in **faith** they abandoned their idols and embraced the living God (1:9); in **hope** they endured suffering and expressed longing for the final salvation that Jesus will bring when he returns (1:10; 5:9); and in **love** they served one another in generous and sacrificial ways (4:9-10). These virtues will protect them like armor in the challenging days ahead (5:8). Paul often reflects on this triad of Christian virtues in his writings (Rom 5:1-5; 1 Cor 13:8-13; Gal 5:5-6; Col 1:4-5) (CCC 1812-29). [See note on 1 Cor 13:13. Back to text.](#)

1:4 he has chosen you: Before the founding of the world, the Father chose believers for salvation (5:9) and divine sonship (Eph 1:4-5) (CCC

759). [See note on Rom 8:29.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:5 also in power: The power of God bursts forth through the gospel to save sinners who accept it with faith (Rom 1:16). It is also possible that Paul is referring to the powerful signs and miracles that accompanied his preaching and gave incentive for faith (2 Cor 12:12; Gal 3:5). [Back to text.](#)

1:6 affliction, with joy: Suffering for the gospel is a sign of blessedness and divine approval (Mt 5:10; 1 Pet 3:14). It makes the believer more like Christ (1 Pet 2:21) and his apostles (1 Thess 3:3-4). [Back to text.](#)

1:7 Macedonia . . . Achaia: Two Roman provinces that correspond to northern and southern Greece. Paul is writing from the Achaian city of Corinth in the south, while his readers are residents of the Macedonian city of Thessalonica in the north. [Back to text.](#)



1:9 turned to God from idols: Suggests most of the Thessalonians were Gentile converts, although some Jewish converts were made in the local synagogue (Acts 17:4). • Paul is voicing a traditional Jewish critique of idolatry. In the Scriptures, Yahweh is acknowledged and praised as the only *living* God in contrast to the *lifeless* idols of the pagans (Tob 14:6; Ps 135:13-18; Jer 10:6-10; Hab 2:18-20). Regarding belief in the one true God, the faith of Israel (Deut 6:4) remains the faith of the Church (1 Cor 8:6). This was the cutting edge of Paul's preaching among Gentile audiences immersed in polytheistic cultures (Acts 14:15; 17:22-31) (CCC 212). [Back to text.](#)

1:10 his Son from heaven: The first of several references in the letter to the return of Jesus (2:19; 3:13; 4:16; 5:23). [See note on 1 Thess 4:13-18.](#)

the wrath to come: The final unleashing of God's power against evil on Judgment Day (Rom 2:8). The faithful in Christ will be spared the condemnation and everlasting destruction in store for the wicked (2 Thess 1:7-10) (CCC 681). [Back to text.](#)

2:2 shamefully treated at Philippi: Just before coming to Thessalonica, Paul and Silas were hauled before the city magistrates of Philippi, stripped of their clothes, beaten with rods, and thrown into prison (Acts 16:19-24). This might have disheartened or terrified them into silence, but God gave them the **courage** to keep moving and preaching despite aggressive opposition (Rom 1:16). [Back to text.](#)

2:3 error . . . uncleanness . . . guile: Perhaps Paul, in defending his motives, is countering slanderous charges circulated by his enemies. Despite such calumnies, his missionary team at all times lived and worked above reproach (2:10). [Back to text.](#)

2:6 apostles: Refers to Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy (1:1). In the NT, the term "apostle" is used in several different ways. It can refer to **(1)** Jesus, the One sent by the Father (Heb 3:1), **(2)** the twelve disciples chosen by Jesus (Lk 6:13), **(3)** a group of witnesses to the Resurrection (1 Cor 15:7), and **(4)** messengers sent on missions by churches (2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25). [Back to text.](#)

2:7 like a nurse: Or, "like a nursing mother". The idea is that Paul and his companions developed a tender affection for the Thessalonians and made every effort to encourage them and serve their needs (2:8). [Back to text.](#)

2:9 labor and toil: As apostles, Paul and his coworkers are entitled to financial and material support from the communities under their care (Lk 10:7; 1 Cor 9:13-14). But during their brief stay with the Thessalonians, they waived this right to avoid loading the Church down with burdens and to show that their ministry was not driven by greed or self-interest. It is not specified how the missionaries supported themselves, but we know that Paul was a tentmaker by trade (Acts 18:3). **night and day:** Accentuates how tirelessly the apostles worked in order to provide for themselves and to continue their ministry at the same time. Paul, for one, was glad to spend himself in this way (2 Cor 12:15). [Back to text.](#)

2:11 like a father: With great fatherly care, Paul has overseen the moral and spiritual formation of his Thessalonian children begotten through the gospel. The comparisons used here and in 2:7 highlight both the maternal and paternal sides of Paul's ministry. [See note on 1 Cor 4:15.](#) [Back to text.](#)

2:12 God, who calls you: The Father summons his children to a royal inheritance kept in heaven (1 Pet 1:14). The saints will be given the fullness of this heavenly kingdom, but those unworthy of the calling will be denied it (1 Cor 6:9-10; Eph 5:5). [Back to text.](#)



2:13 the word of God: The revealed gospel (1 Pet 1:25). This saving message was written down in the books of the NT and delivered orally in the form of apostolic preaching (2 Thess 2:15; CCC 104, 1349). •

The ministry of the apostles parallels the ministry of the Hebrew Prophets, who received the word of the Lord and announced it to Israel by word of mouth and in writing (1 Kings 17:1-2; Jer 1:4; Ezek 1:3; Hos 1:1). [Back to text.](#)

2:14-16 Paul has some unusually harsh words for the perpetrators of Christian persecution. He traces this madness back to Jerusalem, whose long history of mistreating the Prophets (Mt 23:37) reached a new and diabolical level when its leaders murdered Jesus the Messiah (1 Thess 2:15; Acts 2:23). The Thessalonians got a taste of this when Jewish zealots, fiercely loyal to the aims and outlook of Judean Judaism, stirred up a horde of angry locals to raid the house church where Paul and his companions were staying (Acts 17:5-9). Similar forms of harassment continued even after the missionaries fled (1 Thess 3:3; 2 Thess 1:5). Notice that Paul is criticizing Jewish persecutors, not the Jewish people in general. Years later Paul still insisted that Jews have first claim to the gospel (Rom 1:16), and he expected that "all Israel" would be saved (Rom 11:26) (CCC 597). See essay: [The Salvation of All Israel](#) at Rom 11. [Back to text.](#)

2:14 in Judea: Attacks on the infant Church began with the martyrdom of Stephen in Jerusalem (Acts 7:58-8:1). Even Paul, by his own admission, was a persecutor of Christians before his conversion (Gal 1:22-23; 1 Cor 15:9). **your own countrymen:** Macedonian pagans, but also hostile opponents from the Thessalonian synagogue (Acts 17:5). **the Jews:** I.e., the Palestinian Jews responsible for terrorizing Judean churches. [Back to text.](#)

2:16 fill up the measure: Paul imagines a cup that is full of iniquity and is about to brim over. Jesus used the same image against the Pharisees when he prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem within the first Christian generation (Mt 23:32). **wrath has come upon them:** Perhaps in the form of divine abandonment of the people to sin (Rom 1:18, 24, 26, 28), which is an ominous prelude to the final manifestation of divine wrath in A.D. 70 with the downfall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the Temple, and the dispersion of unbelieving Israel (Lk 21:23). A nearly identical statement appears in Jewish tradition that describes the violent conquest of the city of Shechem (*Testament of Levi* 6, 11). For Paul, the wrath poured out on Jewish persecutors prefigures the "wrath to come" upon sinners at the final return of Jesus (1 Thess 1:10; 2 Thess 1:7-9). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

At Last ([1 Thess 2:16](#))

Eis telos (Gk.): a phrase that can mean "finally", "until the end", or "to the utmost". It is used six times in the NT, usually in the Gospels. In Matthew and Mark, Jesus says that the believer who keeps the faith and endures "to the end" will be saved (Mt 10:22; 24:13; Mk 13:13). In Luke, Jesus describes an oppressed widow who will "finally" or "eventually" wear out an unrighteous judge by her continual pleas for justice (Lk 18:5). In John, Jesus assures the disciples he has loved them "to the fullest extent" (Jn 13:1). Paul's intention in using the expression in 1 Thess 2:16 is a matter of interpretation. **(1)** It could mean "to the utmost degree" and describe how the full retribution of heaven is coming upon unbelieving Jews in Judea. **(2)** It could also mean "finally" and express how the wrath they have coming to them has at long last arrived. **(3)** Finally, it could mean "to the end" and describe how divine wrath will press upon unbelieving Jews for the rest of history. Deciding among these options is difficult, though one of the first two possibilities makes the most sense of the passage within its context.

2:17 deprived: The Greek can mean "orphaned", a reference to Paul's hurried departure from Thessalonica (Acts 17:10). [Back to text.](#)

2:18 Satan hindered us: The nature of the obstruction is left unspecified. It may be linked with the Jewish and pagan opposition Paul faced in Thessalonica (Acts 17:5). Now, the same evil that forced him to flee also prevents him from returning. [Back to text.](#)

2:19 crown of boasting: The expression Paul uses is found in the Greek OT at Prov 16:31 and Ezek 16:12. Here it signifies the pride that Paul will take in his readers when the day of rewards has come. **his coming:** Several times the word "coming" (Gk. *parousia*) is used in the Thessalonian letters for the anticipated return of Christ in glory (3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess 2:1, 8). For some of its background and meaning, see word study: [Coming](#) at Mt 24:3. [Back to text.](#)

2:20 our glory and joy: Paul had similar sentiments for the Philippian Church (Phil 4:1). [Back to text.](#)

3:1 at Athens: According to Acts 17:10-15, Paul and his missionary team escaped Thessalonica by night, traveled overland to Berea, and then

Paul went on by himself to Athens. Apparently Silas and Timothy rejoined him in Athens shortly thereafter. [Back to text.](#)

3:2 we sent Timothy: Restless and anxious for the welfare of the Thessalonians, Paul and Silas sent Timothy on a mission to encourage and reassure the recently abandoned community. He returned after Paul had left Athens for Corinth (Acts 18:5). He brought a glowing report of how fast the believers were growing in virtue and how deeply they longed to see Paul again (1 Thess 3:6). This heartening news was a comfort to the suffering apostle (3:7). [Back to text.](#)

3:3 these afflictions: Tribulation and distress are the inevitable lot of the true apostle (1 Cor 4:9-13). In this way, Jesus reproduces his own experience of suffering in the lives of his ordained shepherds (2 Cor 4:8-12). The Thessalonians are also sharing in these afflictions (1 Thess 2:14). [Back to text.](#)

3:10 what is lacking: Gaps remain in the catechetical instruction of the Thessalonians. Paul hopes to fill these gaps by returning to complete the process of Christian formation in person (3:11). [Back to text.](#)

3:12 abound in love: I.e., in the divine love that Christ pours into our hearts through the Spirit (Rom 5:5). It reaches out to **one another** in the family of faith as well as to **all** persons in the family of man, friends and enemies alike (Mt 5:43-48). Because the Lord is the Giver of this gift, only he can make it increase and overflow (CCC 1825). [Back to text.](#)

3:13 holiness: Moral and spiritual sanctity. [See note on 1 Thess 4:3.](#) **the coming:** The third mention of Christ's return so far in the letter (1:10; 2:19). [See note on 1 Thess 2:19.](#) **all his saints:** Or, "all his holy ones". This could refer to the blessed angels or the victorious saints or both. Most likely, Paul is saying that Christ will descend from heaven with an army of holy angels. This is the picture drawn by Jesus (Mk 8:38), by the OT (Zech 14:5), and by Paul himself in his follow-up letter (2 Thess 1:7). [Back to text.](#)

4:1-5:22 The second half of the letter turns from memories of the past to moral exhortations for the days ahead. Paul is pleased with the moral progress being made in Thessalonica and urges them to grow still more (4:1; 5:11). [Back to text.](#)



4:3 sanctification: Holiness of life is willed by God. Growth in holiness, or progressive sanctification, is a process that begins with God's

work in Baptism (1 Cor 6:11) and continues when believers abound in love (1 Thess 3:12-13) and exert the moral effort needed to overcome sinful and selfish habits (Rom 6:19). Paul here demands the sanctification of the body through chastity, though the ultimate goal is a complete sanctification of the person (1 Thess 5:23). Holiness is not optional for believers but is a condition for salvation (Heb 12:14) (CCC 2348-50, 2813). • Vatican II issued a universal call to holiness for clergy and laity alike that is expressed through the perfection of love (*Lumen Gentium* 39). **abstain from immorality:** Specifically, from the various forms of sexual immorality widely accepted in pagan environments such as Thessalonica. The Greek expression used here is also found in the apostolic decree issued by the Jerusalem Council in A.D. 49 (Acts 15:20, 29). Paul, Silas, and Timothy (1 Thess 1:1) went about delivering this decree on the second missionary tour in Acts (Acts 16:4). [See note on Acts 15:20.](#) [Back to text.](#)

4:4 his own body: Literally, "his own vessel". Both ancient and modern interpreters are divided over the precise meaning of the term "vessel", which could refer to one's *body* (2 Cor 4:7) or one's *wife* (1 Pet 3:7). If the former, Paul is advocating chastity and self-control in contrast to the lust of the pagans (Tertullian, St. John Chrysostom); if the latter, Paul is advocating the honorable pursuit of marriage, not as an outlet for lust, but as a pure and holy partnership in the Lord (St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas). Either way, Paul is urging readers to master the passions associated with human sexuality. [Back to text.](#)

4:5 do not know God: Pagans live in darkness and ignorance until the gospel enlightens their way (Ps 78:6; Jer 10:25; Gal 4:8). [Back to text.](#)

4:6 wrong his brother: The context suggests Paul is thinking of adultery, a form of bodily "uncleanness" (4:7). Not only are the involved partners defiled by this impurity, but they wrong their spouses and bring shame on their families as well (CCC 2380-81). [Back to text.](#)

4:8 his Holy Spirit: Unchastity is an outrage against God, whose presence dwells in our bodies and makes them temples of holiness (1 Cor 6:18-20; CCC 2351-56). [Back to text.](#)

4:9 love of the brethren: Fraternal love for brothers and sisters in the faith is the mark of a true disciple of Christ (Jn 13:35). The Thessalonians are learning this lesson well as their charity is spreading throughout the province of Macedonia (1 Thess 4:10). [See note on 1 Thess 3:12.](#) [Back to text.](#)

4:11 mind your own affairs: A humble and quiet life is all the more necessary in Thessalonica, where disciples are living under clouds of suspicion and distrust (Acts 17:5-9). **work with your hands:** Paul frowns upon idleness (5:14). Believers must be dependable and hard-working people who labor for the Lord and not just their employers (Col 3:23). This not only leads to personal sanctification, but it will earn the respect of coworkers and neighbors as well (CCC 2427). [Back to text.](#)

4:13-18 Paul comforts the bereaved with the hope of resurrection. Apparently some were concerned that the faithful departed would be left behind when Jesus returns to bring the saints to heaven. Paul insists otherwise: the righteous dead will be raised in glory and gathered to Christ even before the generation of believers still living on the earth in the last days. [Back to text.](#)

4:13 asleep: A metaphor for death. In Scripture, the expression hints that death is only a temporary state that will end when the righteous are awakened at the resurrection (Is 26:19; Dan 12:2). The gospel tells us that death is not extinction or the end of all things, but a step closer to eternal life (CCC 1010, 1016). For the state of the soul after bodily death, [see note on 2 Cor 5:8](#). **may not grieve:** It is human to mourn the death of a loved one; it is Christian to keep our sadness from sliding down to despair. Every sorrow in life can be softened by the joyful hope that the dead will live again when Jesus returns (CCC 1001). [Back to text.](#)



4:14 Jesus died and rose again: The guarantee of our own bodily resurrection (Rom 8:11; CCC 989). [See note on Lk 24:39](#). • Christ is the pattern of our resurrection because he assumed flesh and rose again embodied in flesh. He is also the cause of our resurrection, for what was done by Christ's humanity was done, not only by the power of his human nature, but also in virtue of his divinity. It was not merely his body that rose, but a body united to the Word of life (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on 1 Thessalonians* 4, 2). [Back to text.](#)

4:15 we who are alive: In contrast to "those who are asleep" (4:13). The distinction is between living and deceased Christians and the order in which they will ascend to meet Christ at his coming. Some infer from Paul's use of "we" that the apostle believed Christ would come again soon, perhaps within his own lifetime. If Paul cherished such a hope, the text does not

assert this explicitly. Paul professes to know nothing precise about the timing of the Lord's return beyond its suddenness (5:1-2). Other passages indicate that Paul envisioned death as a real possibility for himself (Phil 3:10-11; 2 Tim 4:6) and numbered himself among those who would be raised from the dead (1 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 4:14). [See note on 1 Cor 15:51.](#) [Back to text.](#)



4:16-17 Paul depicts the coming of Jesus with apocalyptic imagery that was widely used in Jewish literature from this period. • Several dramatic scenes in the Bible also use this imagery and prepare the way for this final event of history. **(1)** During the Exodus, the Lord *descended* upon Sinai with a fiery *cloud* and a blaring *trumpet*, and all Israel went forth to *meet* him (Ex 19:16-20). **(2)** During the Conquest, Israel joined forces with the *angels* of the Lord to bring down the walls of Jericho with a blast of seven *trumpets* and a loud *cry* from the people (Josh 5:13-14; 6:15-20). **(3)** In the visions of Daniel, a court sits in *judgment* as it watches the Messiah riding the *clouds* into heaven and receiving from God an eternal *kingdom* that he shares with the saints (Dan 7:10-14, 18, 27). [Back to text.](#)

4:16 the Lord himself: Christ will descend to earth "in the same way" that he ascended into heaven, i.e., enveloped in a glorious cloud (Acts 1:11). **cry of command:** The voice of the Son of man that calls forth the dead from their tombs and summons them to the judgment (Jn 5:28-29). **archangel's call:** Possibly the voice of Michael, the guardian of the people of God (Dan 12:1) and the leader of the angelic army (Jude 9; Rev 12:7). **the trumpet:** The final blast that inaugurates the resurrection and glorification of the saints. For its biblical background, [see note on 1 Cor 15:52.](#) **the dead in Christ:** The faithful departed, though temporarily deprived of their bodies, live on in spiritual union with the Lord as they await the resurrection (2 Cor 5:8). [Back to text.](#)

4:17 caught up: Or, "raptured". Believers living on the earth when Christ returns will be drawn up to join the saints of the ages as they ascend into glory. Paul seems to assert, not that the final generation will die and then be raised, but that their bodies will be instantly glorified and made immortal. This is how Paul was understood by the Greek Fathers of the Church, and this agrees with the prophetic outlook of 1 Cor 15:51-53. [Back to text.](#)

5:1-11 Continuing his reflections on the Second Coming, Paul adds a warning that believers must be watchful and ready. Christ will return unexpectedly, so unless we live in the light and arm ourselves with divine virtues (5:8), we will be taken by surprise and delivered to sudden destruction (5:3). His words discourage attempts to speculate about the precise timing of Christ's return (CCC 672-73, 2849). [Back to text.](#)



5:1 the times and the seasons: An expression used elsewhere in Acts 1:7 in the NT and Dan 2:21 in the OT. In both contexts, it refers to predetermined dates when God establishes kingdoms. [Back to text.](#)

5:2 day of the Lord: The appointed day when Christ the Lord will come again as Savior (Heb 9:28) and Judge (Mt 25:31-46). Paul does not know when this day will arrive; he knows only some of the signs that will lead up to it (2 Thess 2:1-12). Liturgically, this final and fateful day is anticipated every Lord's day, when believers gather for eucharistic worship (Rev 1:10) and receive either blessings or curses at Christ's table (Jn 6:54; 1 Cor 11:27-32). Historically, it is prefigured by the return of Jesus to judge Israel and Jerusalem in A.D. 70. **like a thief:** I.e., suddenly and unexpectedly (Mt 24:43-44; Rev 3:3). [Back to text.](#)

5:3 peace and security: The slogan of the foolish and unprepared (Jer 6:14). **destruction:** Not annihilation or extinction, but eternal separation from God (2 Thess 1:9). **labor pains:** The wicked will be seized with sudden contractions of pain that will intensify and never subside (Hos 13:12-13). [Back to text.](#)

5:5 sons of light: A Semitic way of saying "sons of goodness, righteousness, and truth" (Eph 5:8-9). The struggle between light and darkness as forces of good and evil is a prominent theme in Jewish tradition (Dead Sea Scrolls) and the NT (Jn 1:4-9; Acts 26:18; Rom 13:12-13; 1 Jn 1:5-7) (CCC 1216). [Back to text.](#)

5:8 breastplate . . . helmet: The virtues of faith, hope, and love are the defensive gear of the believer, protecting the head and heart during the battles of life. These conflicts are engaged not only with the passions and enticements of the world, but also with demonic spirits that seek our demise (Eph 6:13-17). Paul often reminds readers of their spiritual armory in Christ (Rom 13:12; 2 Cor 6:7; 10:3-4). [See note on 1 Thess 1:3.](#) [Back to text.](#)

5:10 who died for us: Even in a letter dominated by the hope of Christ's return, Paul never loses sight of Christ's redemptive death. [Back to text.](#)



5:12 over you in the Lord: A hierarchical ministry of leadership was already in place in Thessalonica. This is not surprising, since it was Paul's policy to ordain presbyters (priests) to shepherd the flock in his missionary churches (Acts 14:23; Tit 1:5). The spiritual oversight of these pastors entitles them to the respect and submission of the laity (CCC 1269).

- Love priests as children love their fathers. Through them you have received an eternal generation, you have obtained the kingdom, and the gates of heaven are swung open to you. If you love Christ and the kingdom of heaven, then acknowledge through whom you obtained it (St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 1 Thessalonians* 10). [Back to text.](#)

5:14 admonish the idle: Paul has no sympathy for freeloaders who expect to eat but are unwilling to work. This is an embarrassing problem in Thessalonica and needs to be addressed firmly by the congregation (2Thess 3:6-13). [See note on 1 Thess 4:11.](#) [Back to text.](#)

5:15 evil for evil: The gospel forbids personal retaliation (Mt 5:38-42; Rom 12:17-19). [Back to text.](#)

5:17 pray constantly: I.e., pray regularly, but we should also allow the spirit of prayer and praise to envelop our work and daily activities (Eph 6:18). Whatever we do can be done for the greater glory of God (Col 3:17) (CCC 1174, 2743). [Back to text.](#)



5:19 Do not quench the Spirit: I.e., by resisting the movement of the Spirit and the exercise of his gifts (1 Cor 12:4-11). Paul's only proviso is that they test prophecies and alleged revelations to make sure they line up with the truths of the gospel (Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 14:29) (CCC 696, 799-801).

- When a person is moved by the Spirit to do something generous, and someone else impedes him, the one who impedes quenches the Spirit. Also, when someone commits mortal sin, the Spirit ceases to abide in him. A third way to quench the Spirit is to conceal our gifts instead of using them for the benefit of others (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on 1 Thessalonians* 5, 2). [Back to text.](#)

5:23 spirit and soul and body: Paul is emphasizing the wholeness of the person without intending to make precise distinctions between his

component parts. A certain distinction can be made, however, if we understand the *body* as the material frame, the *soul* as its immaterial principle of life, and the *spirit* as the human capacity for prayer and worship (Rom 1:9; 1 Cor 14:15; CCC 367). [Back to text.](#)

5:26 a holy kiss: An outward sign of fraternal affection (Rom 16:16; 1 Pet 5:14). [Back to text.](#)

5:27 I adjure you: Paul is putting his readers under oath to ensure that his written instructions are made known to every member of the Church. The eucharistic liturgy was the most suitable context for a public reading of the letter (1 Tim 4:13). [Back to text.](#)

INTRODUCTION TO

THE SECOND LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS

Author Second Thessalonians is a genuine letter from the Apostle Paul. His name stands at the beginning of it (1:1); his personal signature stands at the end of it (3:17); and Christian tradition has universally accepted its authenticity from earliest times. Despite this, a surprising number of scholars have come to doubt or even deny the apostolic authorship of 2 Thessalonians. They claim instead that an admirer of Paul, hiding behind the name of the apostle, penned the epistle toward the end of the first century. Among other things, the argument is made **(1)** that 2 Thessalonians has a different perspective on the timing of Christ's return (still distant) from that of 1 Thessalonians (imminent) and **(2)** that the remarkable similarities between 1 and 2 Thessalonians raise suspicions that the second letter was written in conscious imitation of the first. Neither of these objections is sufficiently strong to topple the traditional view. On the timing of Christ's coming, it must be stressed that Paul never claimed in 1 Thessalonians that Jesus would return immediately, only that he would come suddenly (1 Thess 5:2). This, it would seem, is the very misunderstanding that Paul sets out to correct in 2 Thessalonians (2 Thess 2:1-3). On the similarities between the two epistles, it must be recognized that Paul's distinctive style is a blade that cuts both ways. In theory, similarities of expression could mean that someone was trying to imitate Paul; but it is far more natural to suppose that the apostle himself was simply writing in his usual style. Finally, it would be exceedingly odd for someone impersonating Paul to warn the Thessalonians not to accept fabricated letters purporting to come from the apostle (2 Thess 2:2). For the use of the plural "we" and "us" throughout this letter (2 Thess 1:3, 11; 2:1; 3:1; etc.), see the introduction to First Thessalonians: *Author*.

Date and Destination Scholars who hold the traditional view of Pauline authorship agree that 2 Thessalonians was written about the same time (A.D.

50 or 51) and probably from the same place (Corinth) as 1 Thessalonians. Reference is made to the first epistle in 2:15, but it is uncertain how much earlier it was sent off. The situation of the Church seems to be the same, and Paul's focus on the return of Jesus in both letters suggests the second could have been written within weeks or months of the first. In any case, both Thessalonian letters were sent to the same Church in Macedonia (northern Greece) that Paul and his coworkers had founded on his second missionary tour (Acts 17:19). See introduction to First Thessalonians: *Destination*.

Purpose and Themes Paul sent 2 Thessalonians as a follow-up letter to 1 Thessalonians, which was partly ignored and partly misunderstood by his readers. There was need now to correct the way certain believers were thinking and living in light of Christ's expected return. The letter addresses this twofold problem with doctrinal exposition and moral exhortation. **(1) Doctrinal Exposition:** As in his first letter, Paul gives readers an eschatological vision of things to come. This is necessary because some of the Thessalonians are shaken by an alarming idea, based on a misunderstanding of his first letter (1 Thess 4:13-5:12) and reinforced by another letter forged in Paul's name (2 Thess 2:2), that the end times have arrived and the Second Coming of Jesus is just around the corner. Paul considers this a deception (2:3) because Christ will not return in glory until a whole series of events have taken place first. Specifically, Paul insists that a nefarious "man of lawlessness", an agent of Satan, must first be allowed to spread confusion throughout the world and impress the wicked with signs and wonders of his power (2:3, 9-10). This villain has yet to arrive because a mysterious force restrains him from showing his face until the appointed time (2:7-8). Only after this period of turmoil and tribulation will Christ come again as the divine Warrior and Judge to slay the offender and condemn the ungodly (2:8). **(2) Moral Exhortation:** Confusion about the timing of Christ's coming has led certain believers into strange and disorderly conduct. We can infer from Paul's comments in 3:6-15 that some in Thessalonica were so convinced that Jesus would return at any moment that they had quit their jobs and stopped working for a living. Paul has nothing good to say about this behavior and seems annoyed that his readers have not heeded his earlier appeals to "work" diligently (1 Thess 4:11) and "admonish the idle" (1 Thess 5:14). The congregation is charged with

addressing this problem decisively but charitably (2 Thess 3:14-15). In Paul's mind, these freeloaders who live on the charity of others will better prepare themselves for Christ's return by working than by sitting around waiting. «

OUTLINE OF THE SECOND LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS

- 1. Opening Address ([1:1-2](#))**
- 2. Personal Encouragement from Paul ([1:3-12](#))**
 - A. Thanksgiving ([1:3-4](#))
 - B. The Day of Judgment ([1:5-10](#))
 - C. Prayer for Spiritual Progress ([1:11-12](#))
- 3. The Coming Day of the Lord ([2:1-17](#))**
 - A. The Rebellion Comes First ([2:1-12](#))
 - B. Thanksgiving and Appeal ([2:13-15](#))
 - C. Prayer for Comfort ([2:16-17](#))
- 4. Exhortations to Love and Labor ([3:1-15](#))**
 - A. Prayers for and from Paul ([3:1-5](#))
 - B. Admonishing the Idle ([3:6-15](#))
- 5. Conclusion ([3:16-18](#))**

THE SECOND LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE

THESSALONIANS

Chapters

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#)

Salutation

[1](#) [Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,](#)

To [the Church](#) of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

[2](#) [Grace to you and peace](#) from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving

[3](#) We are bound to [give thanks](#) to God always for you, brethren, as is fitting, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. [4](#)Therefore we ourselves boast of you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all [your persecutions](#) and in the afflictions which you are enduring.

The Judgment at Christ's Coming

[5](#) [This is evidence](#) of the righteous [judgment](#) of God, that you may be made worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering—[6](#)since indeed God deems it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, [7](#)and to grant rest with us to you who are afflicted, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in [flaming fire](#), [8](#)[inflicting vengeance](#) upon those who do not know God and upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. [9](#)They shall suffer the punishment of [eternal destruction](#) and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, [10](#)when he comes on [that day](#) to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at in all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. [11](#)To this end [we always pray](#) for you, that our God may make you worthy of his call, and may fulfil every good resolve and work of faith by his power, [12](#)so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of [our God and the Lord Jesus Christ](#).

The Man of Lawlessness

2 Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling to meet him, we beg you, brethren, ²not to be quickly shaken in mind or excited, either by spirit or by word, or by letter purporting to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. * ³Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness^a * is revealed, the son of perdition, ⁴who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. ⁵Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you this? ⁶And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. ⁷For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. * ⁸And then the lawless one will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by his appearing and his coming. ⁹The coming of the lawless one by the activity of Satan will be with all power and with pretended signs and wonders, ¹⁰and with all wicked deception for those who are to perish, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. ¹¹Therefore God sends upon them a strong delusion, to make them believe what is false, ¹²so that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Chosen for Salvation

13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning^b to be saved through sanctification by the Spirit^c and belief in the truth. ¹⁴To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter.

16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, ¹⁷comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.

Request for Prayer

3 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed on and triumph, as it did among you, ²and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men; for not all have faith. ³But the Lord is faithful; he will

strengthen you and guard you from evil.^d ⁴And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things [which we command](#). ⁵May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.

Warning against Idleness

⁶ [Now we command you](#), brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. ⁷For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you, ⁸we did not eat any one's bread without paying, but with [toil and labor](#) we worked night and day, that we might not burden any of you. ⁹It was not because we have not that right, but to give you in our conduct an example to imitate. ¹⁰For even [when we were with you](#), we gave you this command: If any one will not work, let him not eat. ¹¹For we hear that some of you are walking in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. ¹²Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work in quietness and to earn their own living. ¹³Brethren, do not be weary in well-doing.

¹⁴ If any one refuses to obey what we say in this letter, note that man, and have nothing to do with him, that he [may be ashamed](#). ¹⁵Do not look on him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

Final Greetings and Benediction

¹⁶ Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with you all.

¹⁷ [I, Paul, write this](#) greeting with my own hand. This is the mark in every letter of mine; it is the way I write. ¹⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Commentary on the Second Letter of Saint Paul to the Thessalonians

1:1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy: The missionaries who founded the Church in Thessalonica. This is the second epistle they have sent to the congregation. [See note on 1 Thess 1:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:1-2 Paul describes the relation between God and the Thessalonian Church with two small but significant prepositions. Believers are united **in** the Father and the Son (1:1) by the grace and peace that come **from** the Father and the Son (1:2). In effect, the triune God is both the locus and source of every spiritual blessing (Eph 1:3-14). [Back to text.](#)

1:2 Grace to you and peace: An early Christian greeting used by Paul and other NT writers (1 Pet 1:2; 2 Jn 3; Rev 1:4). [Back to text.](#)

1:3 give thanks: Nearly every Pauline epistle opens with words of gratitude (Rom 1:8; 1 Cor 1:4; etc.). His thankfulness rises to God for the Thessalonians because their **faith** and **love** are growing steadily in direct answer to his prayers (1 Thess 3:12). [Back to text.](#)

1:4 your persecutions: Trials began within weeks of Paul's arrival in Thessalonica when a band of embittered Jews instigated an uproar against the apostle, his missionary team, and their friends (Acts 17:5-9). Local antagonism has continued unabated since then (1 Thess 1:6; 2:14). Paul is proud to advertise how well the young Church is weathering these storms. [Back to text.](#)

1:5-10 An apocalyptic preview of the Day of Judgment. Here Paul focuses on the outcome of the proceedings rather than the process: to the saints, Christ will give eternal life and rest, but to sinners, he will give a sentence of eternal death and retribution. This closing act of human history will forever separate the sheep and the goats, sending them their separate ways (Mt 25:31-46; CCC 1038-41). [See note on Rom 2:6.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:5 This is evidence: Even before the Judgment, clear distinctions between the righteous and the wicked are emerging in Thessalonica: on one side, believers are suffering and yet holding fast to their faith; on the other, persecutors are harassing and abusing them in godless ways. This is a sign of blessedness for Paul's readers (Mt 5:9-10) and a frightening omen for their oppressors (2 Cor 2:15-16). **righteous judgment:** God will judge the world through Christ (Acts 17:31) with perfect justice and impartiality

(Rom 2:9-11; 1 Pet 2:23; CCC 682). **the kingdom of God:** The heavenly inheritance of the saints. In Paul's theology, fidelity through suffering is a means of sanctification, i.e., it helps to make us worthy of the kingdom (Acts 14:22; Rom 8:17). [See note on 1 Thess 2:12.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:7 flaming fire: Symbolic of divine scrutiny and judgment (Is 66:16; 1 Cor 3:13-15). [Back to text.](#)

1:8 inflicting vengeance: Assurance that Christ will right every wrong and repay the wicked for their malice should encourage believers to refrain from avenging themselves by personal retaliation (Rom 12:19; 1 Thess 5:15). **do not know God:** Unenlightened pagans (1 Thess 4:5). **do not obey the gospel:** Such as the unbelievers of Israel (Rom 10:16). [Back to text.](#)

1:9 eternal destruction: Not annihilation or the termination of existence, but an everlasting state of spiritual death, disinheritance, and damnation. For Paul, hell is nothing less than eternal separation from the peace and presence of the living God. Other biblical ideas and images fill out the picture of this terrifying prospect: the damned will endure "tribulation and distress" (Rom 2:9), "eternal punishment" (Mt 25:46), and "unquenchable fire" (Lk 3:17; cf. Is 66:24) (CCC 1033-36). See word study: [Hell](#) at Mk 9:43. [Back to text.](#)

1:10 that day: The final "day of the Lord" (2:2). **his saints:** Or, "his holy ones". This could refer to the redeemed People of God (Jude), but it is more likely a reference to the holy angels (1:7; Ps 89:7). Either way, their appearance in glory will magnify the glory of Christ, whose divine splendor shines through them (Phil 3:21; Col 3:4). [See note on 1 Thess 3:13.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:11 we always pray: Paul and his coworkers practice what they preach on the subject of continuous prayer (1 Thess 5:17). [Back to text.](#)

1:12 our God and the Lord Jesus Christ: Several times Paul mentions the close relationship between the Father and the Son in his Thessalonian letters (1:1, 2; 2:16; 1 Thess 1:1; 3:11). [Back to text.](#)

2:1-12 Paul combats misinformation in Thessalonica that the day of the Second Coming is at hand. This appears to be the teaching of doomsday prophets who may have gotten the idea from a misreading of 1 Thessalonians (especially 1 Thess 5:2). In any case, they apparently forged a letter to this effect in Paul's name and claimed to have had personal revelations to back it up. To silence these troublemakers and steady his shaken readers, Paul lays out the eschatological sequence of events that

must take place *before* the "day of the Lord" dawns on the world (2 Thess 2:2). Though the basic outline of this prophecy is clear, no clear consensus exists in ancient or modern scholarship on how to understand many of its details (CCC 673-74). [Back to text.](#)

2:1 the coming of our Lord: The return of Christ, who will come again in glory (Acts 1:11) to judge the living and the dead (Acts 10:42). **our assembling:** Believers, both living and deceased, will be taken up with the Lord into heavenly glory (1 Thess 4:16-17). [Back to text.](#)

2:2 shaken . . . or excited: False prophets are unsettling Paul's readers, whose suffering and affliction seem to reinforce allegations that the tribulation of the last days is under way and is about to give way to the Second Coming (1:6; 1 Thess 2:14). **by spirit or by word:** I.e., by charismatic revelations. These need to be measured against apostolic teaching in order to test their authenticity (1 Cor 14:29; 1 Thess 5:20-21). **by letter:** I.e., by a forged document claiming to come from Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy (1:1). Paul considers this a form of deception (2:3). **the day of the Lord:** The Day of Judgment. [See note on 1 Thess 5:2.](#) [Back to text.](#)

2:3 the rebellion: Or, "the apostasy". Paul envisions a time of terrible confusion and massive falling away from God at the end of days (1 Tim 4:1-2; 2 Tim 3:1-5). **the man of lawlessness:** A man of extraordinary evil. When he comes, he will *deify* himself, claiming to be God (2:4); he will *dazzle* the wicked with displays of his power (2:9); and he will *deceive* the world with falsehoods of every kind (2:10). Most identify this figure with "the antichrist" prophesied by John (1 Jn 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 Jn 1:7) (CCC 675-77). **son of perdition:** A Semitic way of saying "one who is doomed to destruction". Jesus gave this title to his betrayer, Judas Iscariot (Jn 17:12). [Back to text.](#)



2:4 exalts himself: The Antichrist will declare himself God and demand to be worshiped. **the temple of God:** Identified differently by different interpreters. **(1)** Some (e.g., St. Irenaeus, St. Cyril of Jerusalem) see it as a reference to the Jerusalem Temple. This view entails a belief that the sanctuary, which now lies in ruins, will be rebuilt in the end times. **(2)** Others (e.g., St. John Chrysostom, St. Ephraem the Syrian) see a reference to the Church, since in Paul's theology, believers make up the true Temple of God (1 Cor 3:16; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21). **(3)** It is also possible to

understand the expression metaphorically, i.e., as a visual description of the Antichrist's supreme arrogance in putting himself in the place of God. • Paul's portrait of the Antichrist is modeled on the blasphemous villains of biblical history, such as the king of Babylon, who wanted to make himself like the Most High and sit enthroned in heaven (Is 14:13-14), the prince of Tyre, who claimed to be a god and sit in the seat of the gods (Ezek 28:2), and the Syrian ruler Antiochus Epiphanes IV, who exalted himself above every god and desecrated the Jerusalem Temple with a pagan altar and idol (Dan 11:36; 1 Mac 1:20-24, 54). [Back to text.](#)

2:7 mystery of lawlessness: The secret operation of evil in the world. Readers are already getting a taste of this through the bitter experience of persecution (1:4). The steady build-up of iniquity throughout history is paving the way for an explosion of evil in the last days (CCC 385). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Restraining ([2 Thess 2:6](#))

KatechÅ (Gk.): a verb meaning "hinder", "restrain", or "retain". It is used three times in the Thessalonian letters and 14 times elsewhere in the NT. Its usage in 2 Thessalonians is challenging to interpret. In 2 Thess 2:6, Paul speaks of a mysterious *power* (neuter) that holds back the man of lawlessness and delays his appearance in the world. Then, in 2 Thess 2:7, he seems to speak of a *person* (masculine) who performs this function until, at last, he steps out of the way and the man of lawlessness makes his terrifying debut. The identities of this force and figure have been greatly debated in both ancient and modern times. For many, the restraining power is the law and order enforced by the Roman Empire, and the restrainer is the Roman emperor himself. Others contend that the Holy Spirit (neuter in Greek) is the restraining power and that God the Father (masculine in Greek) is the Person who issues the restraining order. Still others interpret the restraining force as the missionary efforts of the Church and the figure who embodies this mission as Paul. Unfortunately for us, Paul felt no need to describe further the restrainer because he had already instructed his readers on this point when he was with them in person (2 Thess 2:5-6).



2:8 Jesus will slay him: Christ will descend from heaven as a divine Warrior to destroy the man of lawlessness with a word and trample the last remnants of evil underfoot (1 Cor 15:24). **the breath of his mouth:** Or, "the Spirit of his mouth". • Paul is alluding to Is 11:4, where the Messiah appears as a judge who vindicates the poor and oppressed and slays the wicked with his powerful word. [Back to text.](#)

2:9 activity of Satan: Suggests the man of lawlessness is an instrument in the hands of the devil. **pretended signs:** Displays of demonic power that will captivate sinners and lead them blindly astray. These are not miracles in the strict sense, which are properly the work of God, but illusions that make sinners think the power of God is being witnessed. [Back to text.](#)



2:11 a strong delusion: God will respond to the wicked by worsening their problem. Because they will defy God and willfully reject the truth, he will permit them to love their evils and errors without the merciful restraint of his grace (Is 6:9-10; 29:9-10). [See note on Rom 1:24.](#) • Paul says "God will send" because, by his own just judgment, God will permit the devil to do these things. Being judged in this way, sinners will be deceived; and being deceived, they will be judged (St. Augustine, *City of God* 20, 19). [Back to text.](#)

2:13 God chose you: By an eternal decree of love (Eph 1:5). **sanctification:** The processes of becoming "holy", which Paul naturally links with the Holy Spirit's work within us. [See note on 1 Thess 4:3.](#) [Back to text.](#)



2:15 the traditions: The teaching that Paul handed over to his readers, whether in writing or by oral instruction. This was the standard against which doctrinal claims (2:5) and moral behavior (3:6) were to be measured and judged. Even Paul's personal example was a form of apostolic catechesis (3:79; 1 Cor 11:2; 2 Tim 1:13) (CCC 75-76, 82). • The apostles did not hand down everything in writing; many unwritten things were handed down as well, and both written and unwritten are worthy of belief. So let us also regard the tradition of the Church as worthy of belief (St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 2 Thessalonians* 4). [Back to text.](#)

3:1-2 Paul requests intercession for the progress of the gospel and the protection of missionaries entrusted with it. It is because Paul lived and worked in the midst of constant danger that he relied on his churches to pray for a safe and successful ministry (Rom 15:30-31; 2 Cor 1:11; 1 Thess 5:25). [Back to text.](#)

3:1 the word of the Lord: The gospel message itself. [See note on 1 Thess 2:13.](#) [Back to text.](#)

3:4 which we command: Whether in person (3:10) or in writing (3:6, 12). [Back to text.](#)

3:6-15 Paul addresses an embarrassing situation in the Thessalonian Church. Certain believers, perhaps enamored with the idea that Christ could return at any moment, became *idlers*, who stopped working for a living, *freeloaders*, who relied on the charity of others to support themselves, and *busybodies*, who started meddling in the affairs of everyone else. Paul insists they should return to work, earn their own living, and mind their own business (3:12). He urges the Church to get involved in correcting this problem by warning such brothers (3:15) and, if necessary, shunning them if they refuse correction (3:14). See introduction: *Purpose and Themes.* [Back to text.](#)

3:8 toil and labor: Paul and companions supported themselves with a trade or some other form of employment on top of their missionary work. Paul was teaching the Thessalonians by example about the dignity and necessity of human labor (CCC 2427). See notes on 1 Thess 2:9 and 4:11. [Back to text.](#)



3:10 when we were . . . with you: Suggests idleness was already an issue when Paul ministered among them. This is why his earlier letter urges the Church to "admonish the idle" (1 Thess 5:14). **let him not eat:** I.e., let him not live off the labor of others without contributing efforts of his own. • Manual labor aims at obtaining food, removing idleness, curbing fallen desires, and enabling almsgiving. As a means of acquiring food, work is commanded as a precept, so that one who has no other means of livelihood is bound to work. This is signified by the words of the apostle (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 187, 3). [Back to text.](#)

3:14 may be ashamed: Disciplinary exclusion from the life and liturgy of the Church would serve **(1)** to deter others from living or contemplating a

life of idleness and **(2)** to induce repentance from the offenders in the hope of restoring them to full fellowship. [Back to text.](#)

3:17 I, Paul, write this: Paul takes up the pen to write the final greeting with his own hand, having dictated the rest of the letter to a secretary. His personal signature and remarks authenticate the epistle as a genuine apostolic work (1 Cor 16:21; Col 4:18). He stresses the point here because the Thessalonians may have received a forged letter that alleged to be from Paul but was not (2 Thess 2:2). **every letter of mine:** Implies that Paul was in the habit of sending out letters. The statement strikes many scholars as odd, since the Thessalonian letters are the two earliest NT writings that come from Paul. Some take this as evidence that someone other than the apostle—most likely a later disciple, familiar with the corpus of Pauline epistles—must be the real author of this letter. The argument is ingenious, but it must be remembered that not all of Paul's correspondence necessarily made its way into the collection of NT books. It is possible that some of his letters were neither canonized nor preserved (see, e.g., 1 Cor 5:9 and Col 4:16). The existence of noncanonical letters written during Paul's early ministry is not established with certainty, but it cannot be ruled out. [Back to text.](#)

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO TIMOTHY

Author First Timothy purports to be a letter from the Apostle Paul (1:1), as do the letters of 2 Timothy (2 Tim 1:1) and Titus (Tit 1:1). These three epistles, closely related to one another in theme and purpose, are collectively known as the Pastoral Epistles. From earliest times, Christians accepted these letters as authentic compositions of Paul. Bishops such as Clement of Rome (A.D. 95) and Polycarp (A.D. 120) allude to the Pastoral Epistles as genuine Pauline writings, and later theologians such as Irenaeus (A.D. 180), Tertullian (A.D. 200), and Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 200) make direct assertions to this effect.

Despite the constancy of this view in early Christian times, the tradition of Pauline authorship came under fire in the nineteenth century. Increasingly scholars began to regard the Pastoral Epistles as pseudepigraphical letters that were written in Paul's name by one or more of his disciples several decades after his death. This position, which continues to dominate much of modern scholarship, contends that the Pastoral Epistles are conspicuously different from Paul's undisputed letters in vocabulary, style, and emphasis, and for this reason, they cannot be regarded as genuine writings of the apostle. Regarding their historical content, some insist these writings bear witness to an advanced stage of Church government that did not exist in Paul's day and that the details they claim to provide of Paul's missionary efforts are inconsistent with his travels known from the Book of Acts and the other Pauline epistles. These and other arguments provide the basis for the pseudepigraphical hypothesis.

That being said, the distinctiveness of the Pastoral Epistles is a factor that must be weighed carefully, for the evidence can be interpreted in different ways. For instance, even critics who deny Pauline authorship generally recognize traces of Paul's thinking throughout these letters, and this leaves open the possibility of a closer relationship to the apostle than that envisioned by pseudepigraphical advocates. Stylistic differences between

the Pastorals and Paul's undisputed writings, while undeniable, probably have more to do with differences in purpose and subject matter than anything else. After all, the Pastoral Epistles are written to pastors (Timothy and Titus) who are already well-seasoned and educated leaders in the Church, while Paul's other letters are written to instruct young congregations in the basics of Christian faith. Allegations that the ecclesiastical hierarchy outlined in the Pastorals was unknown to the Church of Paul's day are likewise overdrawn, since several passages in the undisputed letters of Paul point to a structured system of leadership already in place during the earliest days of the Church (1 Cor 12:28; Phil 1:1; 1 Thess 5:12; cf. Acts 14:23; 20:17). As for Paul's travel itinerary, one must admit that these letters claim to give us information about Paul's career that is otherwise uncorroborated in the NT. Nevertheless, this can be taken as an earmark of Pauline authorship, since it is more likely that a literary forgery would stay within the outline of Paul's life set forth in the Book of Acts and his genuine letters rather than depart from it. Otherwise, the attempt to pass off these letters as authentic Pauline writings would surely fail to convince the original recipients that they were reading the words of the apostle. In the end, the case against Pauline authorship is neither airtight nor immune to criticism, and the tradition that Paul himself composed the Pastoral Epistles can still be critically and convincingly defended.

Date Proponents of Pauline authorship generally date 1 Timothy in the mid 60s, between Paul's first Roman imprisonment (A.D. 60 to 62) and his martyrdom at the hands of Emperor Nero (ca. A.D. 67). It is likely that during this intervening time Paul resumed his missionary activities in the eastern parts of the Roman world and then turned his attention west toward a new mission in the province of Spain (Rom 15:24). Timothy's placement in "Ephesus" and Paul's movements in "Macedonia" put the letter somewhere in the eastern phase of this period (1 Tim 1:3). Scholars who deny the Pauline authorship of 1 Timothy date it much later, between A.D. 80 and 110.

Destination and Themes The letter was written to Paul's associate Timothy, who was stationed in Ephesus on special assignment (1:3). The Ephesian Church was at this time threatened by a serious pastoral crisis, with teachers and shepherds leading the flock away from the certainties of

divine revelation into the mists of conjecture and speculation (1:3-7; 6:3-5). Timothy was charged with the difficult task of repairing the damage done by these troublemakers, two of whom Paul was forced to excommunicate (1:20) when he passed through on his way to Macedonia (1:3). Unable to return immediately, Paul wrote to admonish Timothy and authorize his mission to help this struggling congregation to safety.

The bulk of the letter, which is personal in tone and informal in arrangement, covers the gamut of Timothy's pastoral responsibilities. Paul was counting on him to stabilize the Church with sound doctrine (4:6-7; 6:20) and the appointment of reliable pastors to shepherd the flock (3:1-13; 5:22). Among the congregation, he was to encourage prayer (2:1-8), set limits on the dress and conduct of women (2:9-15), attend to his liturgical duties (4:13), show respect for parishioners of all ages (5:1-2), manage the support of widows (5:3-16), take a public stand against wrongdoers (5:20), and, above all, keep himself unstained by sin (4:12; 5:22; 6:11-14). As a loyal friend and traveling assistant of the apostle, Timothy was well suited for this task, as he had been sent on previous assignments to other young Churches in Corinth (1 Cor 4:17), Philippi (Phil 2:19), and Thessalonica (1 Thess 3:2). «

OUTLINE OF THE FIRST LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO TIMOTHY

1. Opening Address ([1:1-2](#))
2. False Teaching in Ephesus ([1:3-11](#))
 - A. Speculation and God's Law ([1:3-7](#))
 - B. The True Purpose of the Law ([1:8-11](#))
3. Paul's Conversion and Charge ([1:12-20](#))
4. Paul's Pastoral Instructions ([2:1-6:2](#))
 - A. Prayer and Intercession in Christ ([2:1-7](#))
 - B. Men and Women in the Liturgy ([2:8-15](#))
 - C. Ordaining Bishops and Deacons ([3:1-13](#))
 - D. Timothy as Teacher and Shepherd ([3:14-4:16](#))
 - E. Ministering to Widows, Elders, and Slaves ([5:1-6:2](#))
5. Final Admonitions ([6:3-19](#))
 - A. The Dangers of Error and Wealth ([6:3-10](#))
 - B. Faithfulness and Generosity ([6:11-19](#))
6. Closing Appeal ([6:20-21](#))

THE FIRST LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO

TIMOTHY

Chapters

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#)

Essays and Charts

[The Threefold Pastoral Ministry](#)

Salutation

1 [Paul](#), an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,

2 To [Timothy](#), my true child in the faith: *

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Warning against False Teachers

3 [As I urged you](#) when I was going to [Macedonia](#), remain at Ephesus that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, **4** nor to occupy themselves with [myths](#) and endless genealogies * which promote speculations rather than the divine training^a that is in faith; **5** whereas the aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith. **6** Certain persons by swerving from these have wandered away into vain discussion, **7** desiring to be [teachers of the law](#), without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make assertions.

8 Now we know that [the law](#) is good, if any one uses it lawfully, **9** understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but [for the lawless](#) and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, **10** [immoral persons](#), sodomites, kidnapers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, **11** in accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

Gratitude for Mercy

12 [I thank him](#) who has given me strength for this, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful by appointing me to his service, ¹³though I formerly blasphemed and persecuted and insulted him; but I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, ¹⁴and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And I am the [foremost of sinners](#); ¹⁶but I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience for an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. ¹⁷[To the King of ages](#), immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever.^b Amen.

18 This charge I commit to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the [prophetic utterances](#) which pointed to you, that inspired by them you may wage the good warfare, ¹⁹holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting [conscience](#), certain persons have made shipwreck of their faith, ²⁰among them [Hymenae'us and Alexander](#), whom I have delivered to Satan * that they may learn not to blaspheme.

[Instructions concerning Prayer](#)

2 [First of all](#), then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, ²for [kings and all who are in high positions](#), that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way. ³This is good, and it is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴who [desires all men to be saved](#) and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵For there is [one God](#), and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶who [gave himself](#) as a ransom for all, * the testimony to which was given at the proper time. ⁷For this I was appointed a preacher and apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

8 I desire then that in every place the men should pray, [lifting holy hands](#) without anger or quarreling; ⁹also that women should adorn themselves [modestly and sensibly](#) in seemly apparel, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly attire ¹⁰but by good deeds, as befits women who profess religion. ¹¹Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. ¹²[I permit no woman to teach](#) or [to have authority](#) over men; she is to keep silent. ¹³For Adam was formed first, then Eve; ¹⁴and Adam was not deceived, but

the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. ¹⁵Yet woman will be saved through bearing children,^c if she continues^d in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.

Qualifications of Bishops

3 The saying is sure: If any one aspires to the office of bishop, * he desires a noble task. ²Now a bishop must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, dignified, hospitable, an apt teacher, ³no drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and no lover of money. ⁴He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way; ⁵for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's Church? ⁶He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil;^f ⁷moreover he must be well thought of by outsiders, or he may fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.^f

Qualifications of Deacons

8 Deacons likewise must be serious, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for gain; ⁹they must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰And let them also be tested first; then if they prove themselves blameless let them serve as deacons. ¹¹The women * likewise must be serious, no slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things. ¹²Let deacons be the husband of one wife, and let them manage their children and their households well; ¹³for those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

The Mystery of Our Religion

14 I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that, ¹⁵if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth. ¹⁶Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion:

He^h was manifested in the flesh,
vindicatedⁱ in the Spirit,
seen by angels,
preached among the nations,
believed on in the world,

taken up in glory.

False Asceticism

4 Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by giving heed to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, ²through the pretensions of liars whose consciences are seared, ³who forbid marriage * and enjoin abstinence from foods * which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. ⁴For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving; ⁵for then it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.

A Good Minister of Jesus Christ

6 If you put these instructions before the brethren, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the words of the faith and of the good doctrine which you have followed. ⁷Have nothing to do with godless and silly myths. Train yourself in godliness; ⁸for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. ⁹The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance. ¹⁰For to this end we toil and strive, ^j because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.

11 Command and teach these things. ¹²Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. ¹³Till I come, attend to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching, to teaching. ¹⁴Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophetic utterance when the elders laid their hands upon you. ¹⁵Practice these duties, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. ¹⁶Take heed to yourself and to your teaching; hold to that, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Duties toward Believers

5 Do not rebuke an older man but exhort him as you would a father; treat younger men like brothers, ²older women like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity.

3 Honor widows who are real widows. * ⁴If a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn their religious duty to their own family and make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God. ⁵She who is a real widow, and is left all alone, has set her hope on

God and continues in supplications and [prayers night and day](#); ⁶whereas she who is self-indulgent is [dead](#) even while she lives. ⁷Command this, so that they may be without reproach. ⁸If any one does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his own family, he has disowned the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

⁹ Let a widow be [enrolled](#) if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband; ¹⁰and she must be well attested for her good deeds, as one who has brought up children, shown hospitality, [washed the feet](#) of the saints, relieved the afflicted, and devoted herself to doing good in every way. ¹¹But refuse to enrol younger widows; for when they grow wanton against Christ they desire to marry, ¹²and so they incur condemnation for having violated their first pledge. * ¹³Besides that, they learn to be idlers, gadding about from house to house, and not only idlers but gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not. ¹⁴So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, rule their households, and give the enemy no occasion to revile us. ¹⁵For some have already strayed after Satan. ¹⁶If any believing woman¹ has relatives who are widows, let her assist them; let the Church not be burdened, so that it may assist those who are real widows.

¹⁷ Let [the elders](#) who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching; ¹⁸for the [Scripture says](#), "You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages." ¹⁹Never admit any charge against an elder except on the evidence of [two or three witnesses](#). ²⁰As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. ²¹In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without favor, doing nothing from partiality. ²²[Do not be hasty](#) in the laying on of hands, nor participate in another man's sins; keep yourself pure.

²³ No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and [your frequent ailments](#).

[Men's Deeds, False Teaching, and True Riches](#)

²⁴ The sins of some men are conspicuous, pointing to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. ²⁵So also good deeds are conspicuous; and even when they are not, they cannot remain hidden.

6 Let all who are under the yoke of [slavery](#), regard their masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be defamed. ²Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brethren; rather they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their service are believers and beloved.

Teach and urge these duties. ³[If any one teaches](#) otherwise and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching which accords with godliness, ⁴he is puffed up with conceit, he knows nothing; he has a morbid craving for controversy and for disputes about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, base suspicions, ⁵and wrangling among men who are depraved in mind and bereft of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. ⁶There is great gain in godliness with contentment; ⁷for we brought [nothing into the world](#), and^m we cannot take anything out of the world; ⁸but if we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content. ⁹But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For [the love of money](#) is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs.

[The Good Fight of Faith](#)

11 But as for you, man of God, shun all this; aim at righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. ¹²Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made [the good confession](#) in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³In the presence of God who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus who in his testimony [before Pontius Pilate](#) made the good confession, ¹⁴I charge you to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until [the appearing](#) of our Lord Jesus Christ; ¹⁵and this will be made manifest at the proper time by the blessed and only Sovereign, the [King of kings](#) and Lord of lords, ¹⁶who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

17 As for the rich in this world, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on uncertain riches but on God who richly furnishes us with everything to enjoy. ¹⁸They are to do good, to be rich in good deeds, liberal and generous, ¹⁹thus laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life which is life indeed.

Personal Instructions and Benediction

20 O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge, ²¹for by professing it some have missed the mark as regards the faith.

Grace be with you.

Commentary on The First Letter of Saint Paul to Timothy

1:1 Paul: The sender of the letter, traditionally identified as the great apostle to the Gentiles (2:7; Rom 11:13). As an ambassador of Christ Jesus, Paul is divinely authorized to announce the gospel to Israel and all nations (Acts 9:15). His mission stems, not from his own initiative, but from a direct command of the risen Lord (Gal 1:1, 15-16). **our Savior:** Six times in the Pastoral Epistles this title is given to God the Father (2:3; 4:10; Tit 1:3; 2:10; 3:4), and four times to Jesus Christ (2 Tim 1:10; Tit 1:4; 2:13; 3:6). [Back to text.](#)

1:2 Timothy: One of Paul's associates and a member of his missionary team. He was a native of Asia Minor instructed in the Scriptures by his Jewish mother, Eunice (2 Tim 1:5; 3:15). After his conversion, Paul recruited Timothy as a traveling companion (Acts 16:1-3) and ordained him to the priestly ministry (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6). Thereafter, Timothy spent most of his time at Paul's side, as suggested by the six NT letters that identify him as a co-sender with the apostle (2 Cor; Phil; Col; 1 and 2 Thess; Philem). Though Timothy's youth might sometimes have been a liability (1 Tim 4:12), his health unstable (5:23), and his disposition timid and unassertive (2 Tim 1:7), Paul always thought very highly of him and considered him a dear friend (Phil 2:19-23). According to tradition, Timothy was the first bishop of Ephesus and was martyred there in old age. **my true child:** Similar expressions occur in 1 Tim 1:18, Phil 2:22, and 2 Tim 1:2. They imply that Paul's apostleship is a ministry of spiritual fatherhood: through preaching and administering the sacraments, he begets the supernatural life of God in others and makes them his children. Timothy is a spiritual son who received the priesthood through Paul (2 Tim 1:6), and, as the apostle's successor, he is to communicate the gift of that ministry to others as well (1 Tim 5:22; 2 Tim 2:1-2). [See note on 1 Cor 4:15.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:3-11 Timothy's first assignment is to halt the spread of false teaching in Ephesus (1:3). Proponents of these novelties are not missionary invaders but misguided individuals from within the Ephesian congregation. Aspiring to be teachers of the Torah (1:7), they occupy themselves with imaginative theories about the mysteries and genealogies of the books of Moses (1:4).

Timothy is to silence them and preach sound doctrine that inspires love and faith (1:5). For Paul, it is unbecoming for teachers of the faith to neglect the certainties of revelation in order to revel in the uncertainties of speculation. [Back to text.](#)

1:3 Macedonia: A Roman province in northern Greece. **Ephesus:** Capital of the Roman province of Asia (Minor) in southwest Turkey. Paul established the Church there in the mid 50s on his third missionary tour (Acts 19:1-20:1). Although Ephesus is a flourishing center of Christianity in the first century, the apostle foresees doctrinal troubles heading their way (Acts 20:17, 28-29). [Back to text.](#)

1:4 myths: Probably legendary stories about OT figures that are found in Jewish apocryphal writings before the dawn of Christianity (Tit 1:14). **divine training:** The Greek *oikonomia* can also mean "arrangement of God" or "household management of God". The latter sense would connect with a theme developed later in the letter, namely, that the Church is the "household of God" (3:15). [Back to text.](#)

1:7 teachers of the law: Elsewhere in the NT this title is used of scribal (Lk 5:17) and rabbinic teachers (Acts 5:34). [Back to text.](#)



1:8 the law: The Torah or Law of Moses is "good" because it promotes virtue and prohibits vice (Rom 7:12, 16). Since many of the sins in the following verses are direct violations of the Decalogue (Ex 20:1-17), it is clear that the moral precepts of the Old Covenant are carried over into the New and, in Paul's mind, are part of what constitutes "sound doctrine" (1 Tim 1:10). This is consistent with his teaching elsewhere in Rom 13:8-10, 1 Cor 7:19, and Gal 5:14. **lawfully:** I.e., according to its true intent. Improper use of the Law was made by false teachers, whose useless conjectures spread confusion instead of religious conviction among believers. The purpose of the Torah is not to satisfy our curiosity but to encourage justice, mercy, and faith (Mt 23:23) (CCC 1962). • The person who thinks he understands the Scriptures but is unable to build up the double love of God and neighbor does not truly understand them (St. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* 1, 36). [Back to text.](#)

1:9 for the lawless: I.e., for those who need moral direction and restraint in order to become just. [Back to text.](#)

1:10 immoral persons: Literally, "fornicators". **sodomites:** The Greek refers to "male homosexuals", i.e., men who perform sexual acts with other men. For Paul's condemnation of this perversity, see Rom 1:26-27 and 1 Cor 6:9. [Back to text.](#)

1:12-17 An autobiographical aside. Paul stands as a living exemplar of Christ's redemptive work, i.e., an example of how the Lord can transform even rebellious sinners into remarkable saints. In the end, the tragic tale of Saul the Pharisee became the epic story of Paul the Apostle because of one fact: the grace and mercy of God was poured out upon him (1:13; 1 Cor 15:10) (CCC 545). [Back to text.](#)

1:15 foremost of sinners: The grace given to Paul at his conversion magnified his awareness of past faults. The comment is suggestive of the letter's authenticity, since it is unlikely that an admirer of Paul would describe him in more humiliating terms than the apostle himself did (1 Cor 15:9). See introduction: *Author.* [Back to text.](#)

1:17 To the King of ages: Possibly a Jewish doxology that passed into the liturgy of the ancient Church. Others like it punctuate the letters of Paul (6:15-16; Rom 16:27; Phil 4:20; Eph 3:21). [Back to text.](#)

1:18 prophetic utterances: This may indicate that Timothy's ordination was accompanied by a revelation of his precise mission to the Ephesian Church (4:14). A similar missionary calling is outlined in Acts 13:1-3. [Back to text.](#)

1:20 Hymenaeus and Alexander: Ringleaders of the erring teachers in Ephesus. So dangerous was their teaching that Paul surrendered them to **Satan**, i.e., he excommunicated them from the life and liturgy of the Church. This drastic measure is not an irreversible condemnation but a form of disciplinary correction designed to bring about their repentance. Nothing more is known of them unless Hymenaeus is the same person mentioned in 2 Tim 2:17 and unless this Alexander can be linked with the individual in Acts 19:33 or 2 Tim 4:14-15. [See note on 1 Cor 5:5.](#) [Back to text.](#)

2:1-15 The entire chapter is devoted to prayer, the first half concerning intercessory prayer for ecclesiastical and government leaders (2:1-7), and the second with liturgical prayers offered by men and women (2:8-15). Timothy's task is to reorder public worship in Ephesus according to Paul's directives. [Back to text.](#)

2:2 kings . . . high positions: Prayer for civic officials is a continuation of the Jewish custom to offer prayers and sacrifices for secular rulers (Ezra

6:10; 1 Mac 7:33; CCC 1900). [Back to text.](#)

2:4 desires all men to be saved: The Father wants all to repent and receive the salvation offered by Christ (4:10; 2 Pet 3:9). It is wrong, therefore, to contend that Jesus died to redeem only select individuals and not the human family as a whole (1 Jn 2:2). Believers act on this conviction when they intercede for the temporal and spiritual needs of "all men" (1 Tim 2:1) (CCC 851, 1821). **knowledge of the truth:** A summary of this knowledge is formulated in the very next sentence (2:5-6), where saving truth is linked with the substance of the gospel (Gal 2:5; Col 1:5). [Back to text.](#)



2:5 one God: The monotheistic faith of Israel (Deut 6:4), which remains a standing truth of the gospel (Jn 17:3; 1 Cor 8:6) (CCC 200-202). **one mediator:** A middleman or negotiator who makes friends of enemies. Jesus Christ is the mediator who reconciles the world to the Father in the bonds of the New Covenant (2 Cor 5:18; Heb 9:15). The distance once separating man from God is now bridged by the Incarnation, in which divinity and humanity are forever united in God the Son. In this sense, the mediation of Christ is absolutely unique. Still, the mediation of angels and saints is not ruled out, since union with Christ enables others to share in the saving work of Christ in subordinate and participatory ways. Paul assumes as much in the immediate context, for he urges Timothy and company to *pray* for civil authorities, i.e., to intercede as mediators between God and their governors in the course of the liturgy (1 Tim 2:1-3) (CCC 618, 970, 1349, 2636). • A mediator brings together those who are separated, for extremes are united at a midpoint. Uniting men with God is the office of Christ, through whom men are reconciled to God. However, nothing forbids others from being called mediators inasmuch as they cooperate in uniting men with God by directing their way or by ministerial actions (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III, 26, 1). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Conscience ([1 Tim 1:19](#))

Syneidēsis (Gk): "moral consciousness". The term is used six times in the Pastoral Epistles and 24 times in the rest of the NT. It refers to a hidden law in the heart that obliges us to do good and avoid evil (Rom 2:15). As an interior judge, it either approves our actions as praiseworthy (2 Cor 1:12) or accuses us of sins committed (Wis 17:11). Habitual sin can cause the voice of conscience to be muffled over time, making sinners responsible for their own inability to distinguish right from wrong (Tit 1:15). Conversely, to serve God with a good or clear conscience is to listen to its guidance and act in accord with its directives (Acts 24:16; Heb 13:18). Baptism plays an important part in this, as it gives us a new start by cleansing our conscience of past failures (Heb 10:22; 1 Pet 3:21). For Paul, our concern for conscience must also extend to our neighbor. He warns that when Christians act irresponsibly, they can cause the consciences of weaker believers to be wounded (1 Cor 8:12; 10:27-29) (CCC 1776-89).

2:6 gave himself: The Crucifixion of Jesus was a voluntary act of sacrifice and thus a death he freely accepted (Eph 5:2). **ransom:** A price paid for the release of captives. See word study: [Ransom](#) at Mk 10. [Back to text.](#)

2:8 lifting holy hands: Raising the hands in prayer was a revered custom in ancient Israel (Ps 141:2; Is 1:15). Artwork discovered in the Roman catacombs indicates that this practice continued into the early centuries of the Church. By calling the hands "holy", Paul is saying that reverent posture must be coupled with an inward desire for personal holiness. **without anger:** Peace between believers makes worship acceptable to the Lord (Mt 5:23-24). Sin and strife can thwart the effectiveness of our prayers (Ps 66:18; 1 Pet 3:7). [Back to text.](#)

2:9 modestly and sensibly: Decorum guidelines for the liturgy. Female attire should be modest, not overrevealing or fitted to arouse the base passions of men in attendance. It should also be sensible, not a vain display of fashion, wealth, or social status, which are ultimately unimportant in God's eyes. Dressing for worship demands consideration for others as well as a humble reverence for the Lord. Similar instructions are given in 1 Pet 3:3-4 (CCC 2521-24). [Back to text.](#)



2:12-16 Paul's teaching on women and gender roles has its basis in Genesis 2-3. • The creation of Adam **first** appears in Gen 2:7, and **then** Eve

is formed in Gen 2:21-22. Mention that Eve was **deceived** is a reference to her words in Gen 3:13. Also, the subordination of woman to the **authority** of man, along with her difficult task of **bearing children**, recalls the penitential curse laid upon Eve in Gen 3:16. Note that Paul is not attempting to downplay the sin of Adam by shifting attention to Eve; he is fully aware of the disaster caused by the rebellion of the first man (Rom 5:12-21; 1 Cor 15:22). [Back to text.](#)



2:12 I permit no woman to teach: Not an absolute prohibition that applies to all circumstances, but one that excludes women from the teaching ministry exercised by ordained clergymen (1 Cor 14:34-35). Paul is not denying the equal dignity of men and women in Christ (Gal 3:28) or the propriety of women in praying and prophesying within the context of worship (1 Cor 11:5). Women perform an invaluable service when they teach the faith in other contexts by their words and Christian example (Tit 2:3-4). • According to Church teaching, Paul forbids women to exercise the official function of teaching in the Christian assembly (Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Inter insigniores* [1976], 4). [Back to text.](#)

2:15 bearing children: Motherhood can be a means of sanctification and salvation, provided the woman exemplifies feminine virtues. Emphasis on the dignity of motherhood may be aimed at certain teachers who denied the goodness of marriage (4:3) or at women who found masculine roles more appealing (2:12). Notice that marriage and child rearing are not the only paths open to women, for Paul also extols the excellence of the single life (1 Cor 7:25-35) (CCC 1652-53). [Back to text.](#)

3:1-13 Paul turns to the topic of Christian leadership, considering bishops (3:1-7) as well as deacons and deaconesses (3:8-13). He outlines not their duties so much as the human virtues expected of them, such as integrity, sobriety, and respectability. Timothy must take this to heart as he selects and ordains worthy candidates for these positions (5:22). [Back to text.](#)



3:1 bishop: An overseer or spiritual shepherd who carries on the mission of the original apostles. Note that the titles "bishop" and "elder/presbyter" were somewhat fluid in the earliest years of the Church, and it seems that they could be used interchangeably (Acts 20:17, 28; Tit

1:5-7). Soon, however, the distinction between bishops (1 Tim 3:1), elders (5:17), and deacons (3:8) was clearly defined and their respective titles were standardized. • As if to say that the traditions of the apostles were taken from the Old Testament, bishops, presbyters, and deacons occupy in the Church the same positions that Aaron, his sons, and the Levites occupied in the Temple (St. Jerome, *Letters* 146). • The Church recognizes these offices as three degrees of the Sacrament of Holy Orders: the episcopate (bishops), the presbyterate (elders or priests), and the diaconate (deacons) (CCC 1554-71). [Back to text.](#)

3:2 one wife: Candidates for pastoral ministry should not be married more than once in their lifetime (3:12). Paul does not specify why, but his teaching elsewhere suggests (1) that widowers who remain unmarried will be better able to devote themselves to the Lord's work (1 Cor 7:8, 32-34) and (2) that widowers who pursue remarriage may be lacking the self-control expected of a minister of the gospel (1 Cor 7:9, 36-38). On the question of clerical celibacy, [see note on 1 Cor 9:5](#) (CCC 1579-80). [Back to text.](#)

3:5 his own household: The assumption is that bishops are spiritual fathers. Failure to supervise well the affairs of their own families and households suggests they will lack the necessary virtues to shepherd the household of God, which is the Church (3:15; Gal 6:10). [Back to text.](#)

3:8 Deacons: Ministers who assist the bishops (Phil 1:1) and serve the needs of the poor, sick, and widowed. They probably had limited liturgical responsibilities as well. The beginning of this office is sometimes traced to the seven men ordained for service in Acts 6:1-6. [See note on Acts 6:6](#) (CCC 1569-70). [Back to text.](#)

3:9 mystery of the faith: The full range of revealed truths given through Christ. Paul regularly connects this with the Father's overarching plan to bring all nations into the kingdom of God (Rom 16:25-26; Eph 1:9-10). See word study: [Mystery](#) at Eph 3:3. [Back to text.](#)



3:11 women likewise: Either a reference to the wives of the deacons (3:8) or to deaconesses, who assisted with the catechetical instruction and Baptism of women (Rom 16:1). • The Church recognizes that deaconesses were *appointed* for special tasks but not *ordained* for sacramental ministry in the strict sense. The First Council of Nicaea decreed in A.D. 325 that

women deacons are numbered among the laity and not among the ordained clergy (Canon 19) (CCC 1577). [Back to text.](#)

3:14 I am writing: Paul intends to rejoin Timothy in Ephesus at his earliest convenience (1:3). [Back to text.](#)

3:15 pillar and bulwark: The terms refer to structural supports that hold up a building. The Church is set in place to support the edifice of gospel truth. The Spirit makes this possible by enabling the successors of the apostles to preserve the apostolic faith from corruption and distortion as the centuries pass. Without this protective grace, the bishops of the Church would be no more than fallible human teachers unequipped to fulfill the mission granted to them by the Lord. Other passages suggest that Paul may envision the leaders of the Church as the pillars and foundation stones of God's living Temple (Gal 2:9; Eph 2:20; CCC 171, 768, 2032). [See note on Jn 16:13.](#) [Back to text.](#)

3:16 He was manifested: Several features in the Greek text suggest Paul is quoting from an ancient Christian hymn. It touches on key moments in the incarnate life of Christ: his coming as a man (**manifested**), his Resurrection (**vindicated**), his adoration in heaven (**seen by angels**), the spread of his message (**preached**), its acceptance in the world (**believed on**), and his Ascension into glory (**taken up**) (CCC 463, 2641). [Back to text.](#)

4:1 in later times: Applies not only to the closing days of history, but also to the present age of the New Covenant, which for Paul already stands at the "end of the ages" (1 Cor 10:11). The explosion of error and confusion expected in these days is likewise mentioned in 2 Pet 3:3 and Jude 18 (CCC 672). [Back to text.](#)

4:3 forbid marriage: Timothy is put on guard against teachers who deny the goodness of marriage. Even Paul, who actively promotes celibacy (1 Cor 7:25-26), firmly upholds the propriety and sanctity of married life (Eph 5:21-33). [See note on 1 Cor 7:1.](#) **abstinence from foods:** Possibly a reference to the dietary restrictions of the Old Covenant (Lev 11). The warning is issued because these laws are no longer binding upon believers in the New Covenant (Mk 7:18-19; Acts 10:9-16). Some suggest this twofold ban on marriage and certain foods reflects an incipient form of Gnosticism, a second-century heresy that saw the material world as evil and called adherents to rise above the demands of their physical life as far as possible. Timothy is cautioned, not against asceticism itself, but against

deviant forms of it that develop when the goodness of creation is denied (4:4; Gen 1:31). [Back to text.](#)

The Threefold Pastoral Ministry

Scripture tells us that Jesus Christ transformed and fulfilled the institutions of the Old Covenant once entrusted to Israel. The hierarchy of covenant leadership is no exception to this rule. Yahweh established three tiers of Levitical ministry to lead the sacrificial worship of the Temple, and later three levels of leadership were established in the Jewish synagogue to preach the Scriptures and serve the community of faith. The liturgies that revolved around sacrifice (Temple) and Scripture (synagogue) were eventually brought together in Christian worship, where the Word is proclaimed and the Sacraments are administered. For good reason, then, the three-tiered leadership of the Temple and synagogue was a fitting model for the threefold structure of the Church's own pastoral ministry, established to lead, teach, and sanctify the People of God.

Temple

High Priest
Priests
Levites

Synagogue

Ruler of Synagogue
Board of Elders
Servants

Church

Bishop
Presbyters (Priests)
Deacons

4:5 consecrated by . . . prayer: Mealtime prayers are a regular feature of both Jewish and Christian tradition. [Back to text.](#)

4:7 silly myths: Useless speculation about OT figures. [See note on 1 Tim 1:4. Back to text.](#)

4:8 bodily training: Spiritual wellness is more important than bodily health. Nevertheless, the training regiment of athletes is a fitting model for the discipline and commitment necessary to advance in the spiritual life. [See note on 1 Cor 9:24-27. Back to text.](#)



4:10 Savior of all: Paul does not mean that everyone will escape damnation in the end. He is stressing that God's call to salvation is universal so that all who respond will find eternal life, regardless of their sex, age, language, or nationality (Acts 10:34-35; Gal 3:28; CCC 1058, 1261). [See note on 1 Tim 2:4.](#) • Vatican II affirms the possibility that even those who know nothing of the gospel may be saved by the grace of Christ, provided they seek God sincerely, follow the dictates of their conscience, and cooperate with the help given to them by divine Providence (*Lumen Gentium* 16). [Back to text.](#)

4:12 your youth: There was a danger that young Timothy, probably in his thirties, would be intimidated or not held in respect by the elders of the Ephesian Church whom he was sent to correct (5:20). He is reminded that his reform efforts will succeed only if he practices the charity he preaches. [Back to text.](#)

4:13 reading of Scripture: One of the earliest references to the recitation of Scripture in the course of the liturgy (1 Thess 5:27; Rev 1:3). This practice passed into the ancient Church from the synagogue (Lk 4:16; Acts 15:21). [Back to text.](#)



4:14 the elders: Includes Paul, along with the assembled bishops of the Ephesian Church (2 Tim 1:6). **laid their hands upon:** The imposition of hands is a gesture with various meanings in the Bible. It was done to (1) perform healings (Mk 16:18), (2) confer blessings (Mt 19:13), (3) appoint missionaries (Acts 13:1-3), (4) bestow the Spirit on believers (Acts 8:17; 19:6), (5) unload the sins of Israel onto sacrificial beasts (Lev 16:21), (6)

transfer religious authority from one leader to another (Num 27:18-23; Deut 34:9), and (7) appoint the Levites for sacred ministry (Num 8:10-11). • These last two examples (6 and 7) provide the immediate background for the New Covenant rite of priestly ordination. Timothy's consecration as a bishop gives him the fullness of priestly and apostolic authority to ordain others, as well (1 Tim 5:22). Jewish rabbis were similarly appointed by a council of synagogue elders who laid hands on the candidate (CCC 1573-76). [Back to text.](#)

5:1-6:2 Paul instructs Timothy on how to treat older and younger believers (5:1-2), widows (5:3-16), elders (5:17-25), and slaves (6:1-2). He leads in with a reminder that every Christian under his care is a member of the spiritual family of Christ (5:1-2). [Back to text.](#)

5:3-16 Widows had special needs in ancient society, where no economic or governmental programs were in place to assist them. Paul advises different support systems for different circumstances. **(1)** Widows with a surviving family should be cared for by their children and relatives (5:4). **(2)** Older widows without family or wealth are to receive material support from the local church (5:16). **(3)** Younger widows are advised to remarry, lest their energies and idle time be spent in unwholesome conduct and conversation (5:14). [Back to text.](#)

5:5 prayers night and day: A good example is the aged widow Anna in Lk 2:37. [Back to text.](#)

5:6 dead: Spiritually lifeless (Eph 2:1; Rev 3:1). [Back to text.](#)

5:9 enrolled: Either added to a list of widows who qualify to receive assistance or registered among an organized group of widows committed to prayer (5:5) and works of service (5:10). The character expected of these women is comparable to that of a prospective bishop (3:2) or deacon (3:8). [Back to text.](#)

5:10 washed the feet: An act of hospitality common in societies where sandals are worn and dusty roads are traveled on foot (Lk 7:44). Jesus made it a symbol of Christian service (Jn 13:14-17). [Back to text.](#)

5:17 the elders: Or "presbyters" (priests). Being servants of the gospel, they deserve our highest respect as well as a share of our material resources. Only in extreme cases where sin is at issue should Timothy rebuke an elder in public (5:20). See chart: *The Threefold Pastoral Ministry* at 1 Tim 3. [Back to text.](#)



5:18 Scripture says: By the time Paul wrote 1 Timothy, certain books of the NT were apparently being revered as part of holy Scripture. In this passage, Paul seems to assume that the citations from Deuteronomy and the Gospel of Luke share the same authority as inspired writings. Some of his own letters were esteemed in this way as well (2 Pet 3:15-16). **You shall not muzzle:** A quotation of Deut 25:4. For Paul, permitting animals to eat while they work carries a hidden significance now revealed by the gospel, so that what is true for oxen is even truer for ordained elders: their work entitles them to a share in the community's food and provisions (1 Cor 9:9-10). The allegorical meaning of this OT passage corresponds to the literal meaning of the NT passage that follows. **laborer deserves his wages:** A verbatim quotation of Lk 10:7, where Jesus insists that ministers of the Word have a right to fair compensation for their preaching (CCC 2122). [See note on Lk 10:7.](#) [Back to text.](#)

5:19 two or three witnesses: Judicial criteria in a Jewish court of law (Deut 19:15). [See note on 2 Cor 13:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)

5:22 Do not be hasty: Timothy is told to screen candidates for pastoral ministry before ordaining them by the sacramental imposition of hands. Otherwise, the hurried promotion of immature or poorly formed believers might have ruinous consequences (3:6). [See note on 1 Tim 4:14.](#) [Back to text.](#)

5:23 your frequent ailments: Timothy's fragile health was a concern to Paul. He is advised to consume wine in moderation and so benefit from its medicinal properties. Wine can sometimes offset the uncomfortable effects of drinking impure water. [See note on Eph 5:18.](#) [Back to text.](#)

6:1 slavery: The conversion of slaves and their masters in the early Church raised questions of how these relationships should be handled by believers (Col 3:22-4:1). Paul insists that slaves must honor their masters and that masters must respect their slaves, lest Christians acquire a reputation for being either insubordinate or inhumane. Without approving the institution of slavery as such, he is stressing that every station in life provides opportunities to serve the Lord. [See note on Eph 6:5.](#) [Back to text.](#)

6:3-10 Paul resumes his criticism of false teachers wreaking havoc in Ephesus (1:3-11). He contends that the driving force behind their novelties is pride, an infatuation with controversy, and a distorted view of leadership.

Not only that, but they exact a price for their preaching in order to accumulate wealth for themselves (6:10; Tit 1:11). [Back to text.](#)

6:7 nothing into the world: Recalls similar statements in Job 1:21 and Eccles 5:15. [Back to text.](#)



6:10 the love of money: Paul reproves, not the wealthy, but lovers of wealth. So dangerous is the allurement of riches that he warns in the strongest possible terms against piling it up for ourselves. Unless we become "poor in spirit" (Mt 5:3), the downward pull of money and material possessions will eventually lead to destruction (Lk 12:15-21). • What evils are caused by wealth! There are frauds, robberies, miseries, enmities, contentions, battles. Take away the love of money, and you put an end to war, conflict, enmity, strife, and contention (St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 1 Timothy* 17). [Back to text.](#)

6:12 the good confession: Probably Timothy's profession of faith enunciated at his Baptism. Paul is urging him to live out his baptismal promises to the full (CCC 2145). [Back to text.](#)

6:13 before Pontius Pilate: Refers to Jesus' testimony to the truth at his trial before the governor (Mk 15:1-2; Jn 18:33-37). [Back to text.](#)

6:14 the appearing: The visible manifestation of Christ at his Second Coming (1 Thess 4:16; Tit 2:13). [Back to text.](#)

6:15 King of kings . . . Lord of lords: A reference to God's superiority over every earthly ruler (Ps 136:2-3; Dan 2:47; 2 Mac 13:4). These titles are applied directly to Christ in Rev 17:14 and 19:16. [Back to text.](#)



6:20 O Timothy, guard: The faith that Timothy holds and teaches is a sacred trust given to him for safekeeping (2 Tim 1:14; 2:2; Jude 3). The duty to preserve it intact is all the more important in places such as Ephesus, where counterfeit doctrines are vying for the hearts and minds of local believers (1 Tim 1:3-7) (CCC 84). • What is entrusted to you is not what you have discovered. It is what you have received, not what you have thought up for yourself. It is a matter, not of ingenuity, but of doctrine; not of personal opinion, but of public tradition. You are not the author, but the guardian. So preserve inviolate and undamaged the trust of the Catholic faith (St. Vincent of Lérins, *The Commonitory* 22). **falsely called knowledge:** The perverted teachings of the Ephesian troublemakers.

Interpreters have often taken this to mean that the false teachers are Gnostics, i.e., proponents of a second-century religious system that viewed the possession of "secret knowledge" as a pathway to salvation. This verse alone cannot support the conclusion, but [see note on 1 Tim 4:3](#). [Back to text](#).

6:21 Grace be with you: Since the best Greek manuscripts have "you" in the plural, many have reasoned that the letter, while primarily sent to Timothy, was also intended to be read before the Ephesian congregation. [Back to text](#).

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO TIMOTHY

Author This letter claims to be authored by the Apostle Paul (1:1), as do the other Pastoral Epistles, 1 Timothy and Titus (1 Tim 1:1; Tit 1:1). Orthodox Christianity accepted this claim from earliest times, and it was not until the nineteenth century that the apostolic authorship of these letters was seriously questioned. This modern surge of skepticism has gained ground ever since and continues to dominate the thinking of many biblical scholars today. Nevertheless, there are still those who insist that Paul himself is the author of all three Pastoral Epistles. Consideration of the internal evidence of these letters, balanced with the external testimony of tradition, supports their Pauline origin with a reasonable degree of certainty. For details, see introduction to 1 Timothy: *Author*.

Date Fixing a date for 2 Timothy must account for the historical circumstances described in the letter, namely, Paul's imprisonment (1:8) in the metropolis of Rome (1:17), along with his realization that death is imminent (4:6). The NT mentions one Roman imprisonment from A.D. 60 to 62, but it says nothing about what happened to Paul after this two-year detainment (Acts 28:16). Early tradition extends the story by claiming that Paul was released after this first imprisonment but was incarcerated again in Rome a few years later and martyred under Emperor Nero around A.D. 67 (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2, 22). Scholars who accept the historicity of this second incarceration often view it as the context in which 2 Timothy was written, and this is most likely correct. Other defenders of Pauline authorship date 2 Timothy to the time of his first Roman imprisonment as recorded in the Book of Acts, presuming it ended with his execution rather than his release. Scholarship that attributes the letter to an unknown author writing in Paul's name usually dates the letter soon after the apostle's death (the late 60s) or near the end of the first century (in the 80s or 90s).

Purpose Paul writes this letter to encourage his younger colleague Timothy and to summon him to Rome. At this point, Timothy is still in Ephesus, where Paul has stationed him to help reform the local Church (1 Tim 1:3). Since problems once facing this congregation have steadily worsened, the apostle urges Timothy to fulfill his teaching mission with all the zeal and endurance he can muster (2 Tim 2:1-3; 4:2-5). Youthful and reserved by nature, Timothy must now be manly and strong in the grace of God (1:7; 2:1). Paul himself is learning that loyalty is a rare commodity in times of distress. In fact, the earliest persecution of Christians in Rome (beginning in ca. A.D. 64) is so fierce that many of his companions have deserted him outright (1:15; 4:10-11). Abandoned and on trial for his life, the aged apostle wants a trusted companion like Timothy at his side (4:9, 21).

Themes and Characteristics In many ways, 2 Timothy reads like a last will and testament. It is a moving account of how Paul, like a runner crossing the finish line, has reached the end of his apostolic career, with only the crown of martyrdom awaiting him (4:6-8). Young Timothy, instructed by the apostle for more than 15 years, is now asked to take up the mantle of his mentor and continue his ministry of preaching. With death at his doorstep, Paul hurriedly sends a letter filled with fatherly wisdom and warnings to prepare Timothy for the struggles ahead.

Of particular concern for Paul is the transmission of sound doctrine (1:13-14; 4:2-3). The apostle assures Timothy that he will have to contend with new and novel teachings that spread confusion and erode the faith of otherwise strong believers. Timothy's mission is to guard the gospel (1:14) and to continue in earnest the responsible work of an evangelist (2:2; 4:2-3). The Ephesian congregation under Timothy's care has already faced controversies and quarrels (1 Tim 1:3-7), and the spread of falsehood has taken its toll on certain housewives (2 Tim 3:6-7) and others whom Paul mentions by name (2:17-18). So, too, as Christian persecutions begin to intensify and spread more widely in the Empire, Timothy is assured that suffering is inevitable for an outspoken defender of truth (2:3; 3:12). Nevertheless, Paul urges Timothy to find courage in the apostle's own endurance (3:10-14) and in the inspired Scriptures he has known since childhood (3:15-17). The time will come when Timothy, too, must pass the torch to others who will teach and defend the gospel for future generations (2:2).

In all of this, Paul gives a sense of what is most important in Christian ministry. The truth of the gospel was for him a sacred gift entrusted to the apostles and their successors by the Holy Spirit (1: 14). It is therefore not to be tampered with or falsified by those whose ears cannot endure what is contrary to their personal liking (4:3). Paul himself has defended the Lord for years in the face of persecution (3:11) and is now ready to give his life for him who has empowered him to preach the Christian message (4:6, 17).

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OUTLINE OF THE SECOND LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO TIMOTHY

1. Opening Address ([1:1-2](#))

2. Perseverance in Suffering ([1:3-2:13](#))

- A. Thanksgiving ([1:3-5](#))
- B. Admonitions for Timothy ([1:6-14](#))
- C. Update on Paul ([1:15-18](#))
- D. Personal Endurance ([2:1-13](#))

3. Perseverance in Sound Doctrine ([2:14-4:8](#))

- A. Responsible Preaching ([2:14-26](#))
- B. Times of Distress ([3:1-9](#))
- C. Following Paul and Scripture ([3:10-17](#))
- D. The Mission of an Evangelist ([4:1-8](#))

4. Conclusion ([4:9-22](#))

- A. Final Instructions and Warnings ([4:9-18](#))
- B. Greetings and Benediction ([4:19-22](#))

THE SECOND LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO

TIMOTHY

Chapters

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#)

Salutation

1 [Paul, an apostle](#) of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of the life which is in Christ Jesus,

2 To [Timothy](#), my beloved child:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Thanksgiving and Encouragement

3 I thank God whom I serve with a clear conscience, as did my fathers, when I remember you constantly in my prayers. **4**As I remember [your tears](#), I long night and day to see you, that I may be filled with joy. **5**I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in [your grandmother](#) Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you. **6**For this reason I remind you to [rekindle the gift](#) of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; **7**for God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a [spirit of power](#) and love and self-control.

8 Do not be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord, nor of me [his prisoner](#), but take your share of suffering for the gospel in the power of God, **9**who saved us and called us with [a holy calling](#), not in virtue of our works but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago, **10**and now has manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. **11**For this gospel I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, **12**and therefore I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know [whom I have believed](#), and I am sure that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.^a **13**Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus; **14**[guard the truth](#) that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.

15 You are aware that all who are in [Asia](#) * turned away from me, and among them Phy'gelus and Hermog'enes. 16 May the Lord grant mercy to the household of [Onesiph'orus](#), for he often refreshed me; he was not ashamed of my chains, 17 but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me eagerly and found me—18 may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that Day—and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.

A Good Soldier of Christ

2 You then, [my son](#), be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, 2 and what you have heard from me before many witnesses [entrust to faithful men](#) who will be able to teach others also. 3 Take your [share of suffering](#) as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No soldier on service gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to satisfy the one who enlisted him. 5 An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. 6 It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. 7 Think over what I say, for the Lord will grant you understanding in everything.

8 [Remember Jesus](#) Christ, risen from the dead, descended from David, as preached in my gospel, 9 the gospel for which I am suffering and wearing chains like a criminal. But [the word of God is not chained](#). 10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which in Christ Jesus goes with [eternal glory](#). 11 [The saying](#) is sure:

[If we have died](#) with him, we shall also live with him;
12 if we endure, we shall also reign with him;
if we deny him, he also will deny us;
13 if we are faithless, he remains faithful—
for he cannot deny himself.

A Workman Approved by God

14 Remind them of this, and charge them before the Lord^b to [avoid disputing](#) about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. 15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling [the word of truth](#). 16 Avoid such godless chatter, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, 17 and their talk will eat its way like gangrene. Among them are [Hymenae'us](#) and Phile'tus, 18 who have swerved from the truth by holding that [the](#)

[resurrection is past](#) already. * They are upsetting the faith of some. ¹⁹But [God's firm foundation](#) stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let every one who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."

²⁰In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and earthenware, and some for noble use, some for ignoble. ²¹If any one purifies himself from what is ignoble, then he will be a vessel for noble use, consecrated and useful to the master of the house, ready for any good work. ²²So [shun youthful passions](#) and aim at righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call upon the Lord from a pure heart. ²³Have nothing to do with stupid, senseless controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. ²⁴And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to every one, an apt teacher, [forbearing](#), ²⁵correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth, ²⁶and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.^c

Godlessness in the Last Days

³ [But understand this](#), that in [the last days](#) there will come times of stress. ²For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, fierce, haters of good, ⁴treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵holding the form of religion but denying the power of it. Avoid such people. ⁶For among them are those who make their way into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and swayed by various impulses, ⁷who will listen to anybody and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth. ⁸As [Jan'nes and Jam'bres](#) opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of corrupt mind and counterfeit faith; ⁹but they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men.

Paul's Charge to Timothy

¹⁰ [Now you have observed](#) my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, ¹¹my persecutions, my sufferings, what befell me at [Antioch, at Ico'nium, and at Lystra](#), what persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. ¹²Indeed all

who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³while evil men and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived. ¹⁴But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the Sacred Writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is inspired by God and^d profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, * ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

⁴ I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ²preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching. ³For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, ⁴and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths. ⁵As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry.

⁶ For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; * the time of my departure has come. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸From now on there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

Personal Instructions

⁹ Do your best to come to me soon. ¹⁰For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia,^e Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you; for he is very useful in serving me. ¹²Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. ¹³When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments. ¹⁴Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will pay him back for his deeds. ¹⁵Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message. ¹⁶At my first defense no one took my part; all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! ¹⁷But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength to proclaim the word fully, that all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the

lion's mouth. ¹⁸The Lord will rescue me from every evil and save me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Final Greetings and Benediction

19 Greet [Prisca and Aquila](#), and the household of Onesiph'orus. ²⁰Eras'tus remained at Corinth; Troph'imus I left ill at Mile'tus. ²¹Do your best to come before winter. Eubu'lus sends greetings to you, as do Pudens and [Linus*](#) and Claudia and all the brethren.

22 The Lord be with your spirit. [Grace be with you.](#)

Commentary on The Second Letter of Saint Paul to Timothy

1:1 Paul, an apostle: The sender of the letter, not the addressee, is named first in ancient epistles. Paul was appointed an ambassador of Jesus Christ and commissioned to spread the gospel to Israel and all nations (1:11; Acts 9:15; 1 Cor 1:17). Paul's apostleship ranks him alongside the original Twelve selected by Jesus (Lk 6:13-16) (CCC 858). **promise of the life:** Eternal life, which we receive now as grace (1 Jn 5:13) and will possess more abundantly in the state of heavenly glory (Col 3:4; 1 Tim 4:8). Christ offers this life to the world through the preaching of the gospel and communicates it through the sacramental actions of the Church to those properly disposed to receive it (CCC 2, 1114-16). [Back to text.](#)

1:2 Timothy: A friend and companion of Paul ever since his recruitment on the apostle's second missionary tour (Acts 16:13). [See note on 1 Tim 1:2.](#) **Grace, mercy, and peace:** A slight expansion of Paul's customary greeting of "grace" and "peace". [Back to text.](#)

1:4 your tears: Probably shed at the last parting of Paul and Timothy in Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3). Since then, the apostle has not laid eyes on his coworker, despite intentions to rejoin him (1 Tim 3:14). This original plan probably fell through as a result of Paul's arrest and imprisonment (2 Tim 2:9). [Back to text.](#)

1:5 your grandmother Lois: Otherwise unknown. **your mother Eunice:** A convert from Judaism who had instructed her son in the OT Scriptures since his childhood (3:15). Timothy's father was a Greek and may not have become a Christian (Acts 16:1). In any case, Paul is encouraged by the faith that Timothy inherited from the godly women of his family (CCC 2220). [Back to text.](#)



1:6 rekindle the gift: Refers to the grace of priestly ministry. Timothy received the fullness of this grace when Paul and a gathering of elders ordained him as bishop by the imposition of hands (CCC 1558, 1577). He is now urged to make use of this divine help in order to complete his mission in Ephesus. [See note on 1 Tim 4:14.](#) • Zeal is required to stir up the gift of God, for it lies within our power to kindle or quench this grace.

By laziness and carelessness it is extinguished, and by attentiveness and diligence it is kept aflame (St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 2 Timothy* 1). [Back to text.](#)

1:7 spirit of power Timothy is urged to yield himself to the supernatural strength of the Spirit, and this in order to be an effective teacher and shepherd. [Back to text.](#)

1:8 his prisoner: Paul is nearly alone (4:10-11) and chained up like a criminal (2:9), suggesting this does not refer to his first Roman imprisonment, where he lived more comfortably under house arrest and was surrounded by friends and crowds eager to listen to him (Acts 28:16-31). Most likely, this refers to his second Roman imprisonment, which is attested by early traditions that supply details about the end of Paul's life. See introduction: *Date.* [Back to text.](#)

1:9 a holy calling: Salvation is a process initiated by God, so that the grace we receive is entirely free and unmerited by our efforts (Rom 6:23; Tit 3:5). At the same time, God calls us to cooperate with his grace in order to become holy and reach our heavenly home (Phil 2:12; Heb 12:14) (CCC 1996, 2008). **ages ago:** The plan of salvation, now manifest through the historical events of Christ's life, was formulated in the hidden counsel of God before creation came into being (Jn 17:3-5; Eph 1:4). [Back to text.](#)

1:12 whom I have believed: Christ, whom Paul calls his "Savior" (1:10). **that Day:** An abbreviated reference to the Day of Judgment (1:18; 4:8). **entrusted to me:** Paul did not invent the gospel, nor did he receive it from the original band of apostles. It was given to him directly from the risen Jesus (Gal 1:11-12). [Back to text.](#)

1:14 guard the truth: The gospel that Paul received from Jesus is a sacred deposit now entrusted to Timothy for safekeeping (1 Tim 6:20). His highest responsibility is to preserve it from corruption, to defend it from attack, and to pass it along complete and intact to his successors (2:2) (CCC 84, 256). See introduction: *Themes and Characteristics.* [Back to text.](#)

1:15 Asia: A Roman province in what is today southwestern Turkey. Its leading city, Ephesus, is the city where Timothy is presently stationed as bishop (1 Tim 1:3). Nothing specific is known of the cowardly Asian Christians who abandoned Paul for fear of persecution. **Phygelus and Hermogenes:** Otherwise unknown, but presumably known to Timothy. [Back to text.](#)

1:16 Onesiphorus: He and his family may have lived in Ephesus (1:18). His diligent search for the imprisoned Paul was an expression of loyalty and courage, especially since Christians in Rome were at this time targets of fierce persecution (1:17). Some commentators infer that Onesiphorus died before 2 Timothy was written, since **(1)** Paul does not indicate that Onesiphorus is with him any longer; **(2)** he prays that the Lord will grant him mercy at the final Judgment (1:18); and **(3)** he asks Timothy to greet the household of Onesiphorus, but not Onesiphorus himself (4:19). If, in fact, Onesiphorus had died before Paul wrote this letter, then the apostle's prayer in 1:18 would be an early example of the Christian practice of praying for the dead. [Back to text.](#)

2:1 my son: Paul is Timothy's spiritual father in the faith. [See note on 1 Cor 4:15.](#) [Back to text.](#)



2:2 entrust to faithful men: Timothy is the second link in a chain of succession that stretches from the apostles of the first century to the bishops of the present day. Having received Paul's authority and mission, he is charged with passing on both the priestly ministry and the apostolic faith to the next generation. Timothy must transmit these traditions in the same way he received them from Paul: through public instruction, the sacramental imposition of hands, and the witness of his life (1:6, 13-14; 3:10; 1 Tim 5:22; 6:20). • Apostolic succession takes place through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, when bishops receive and then transmit to others the fullness of their apostolic ministry. In this way, the authority that Jesus gave his apostles to preach, teach, administer the Sacraments, and govern the Church is passed on to successive generations until his glorious return (CCC 861-62, 1576). [Back to text.](#)

2:3 share of suffering: Timothy must be brave and steadfast under trial, especially since the gospel he preaches will inevitably spark opposition from those offended by the Cross and uncomfortable with the harsh reality of sin (3:12; Gal 6:12). The commitment expected of him is exemplified in the soldier (2 Tim 2:4), the athlete (2:5), and the farmer (2:6), all of whom receive rewards for their toil and dedication. [Back to text.](#)



2:8 Remember Jesus: Christ is the center of Paul's gospel. Through his natural birth in the line of King David and his miraculous rebirth in the

Resurrection, the Jesus that Paul preaches is none other than the Messiah (CCC 436-37). • In Paul's mind, Jesus fulfills God's covenant oath to raise up the Messiah from David's descendants and enthrone him over an eternal kingdom (2 Sam 7:12-16; Ps 89:3-4; 110:1; Lk 1:32-33). [See note on Rom 1:3-4.](#) [Back to text.](#)

2:9 the word . . . not chained: Paul himself is shackled in prison, but his saving message continues to spread through trustworthy preachers such as Timothy. In this context, the "word of God" is equivalent to the gospel proclaimed by word of mouth (1 Thess 2:13; 1 Pet 1:25). [Back to text.](#)

2:10 eternal glory: Everlasting life in heaven, where the saints enter the fullness of their inheritance (Mt 25:34; Col 3:23-24). [Back to text.](#)

2:11-13 Possibly an excerpt from an ancient Christian hymn (CCC 2641). It sets forth in conditional propositions the blessings and curses that await us at the Judgment: those who persevere in faith will live and reign with Christ, but those who deny him will be disowned and disgraced in the end. Our ultimate certainty is that Christ will follow through on his promises and threats and so exercise his justice and mercy in perfect faithfulness to the terms of the New Covenant. Several of these statements echo Jesus' teaching in the Gospels (Mt 25:31-46; Mk 8:38; 13:13). [Back to text.](#)

2:11 If we have died: Refers **(1)** to Baptism, where we die to sin and are filled with new life (Rom 6:2-4; CCC 1262-64), **(2)** to the Christian life, where we struggle with God's help to put to death our selfish and sinful inclinations (Rom 8:13), and **(3)** to death itself, which admits us into the presence of Christ our Judge (Phil 1:21) (CCC 1010). [Back to text.](#)

2:14 avoid disputing: Timothy must silence errant teachers who are fascinated with useless speculation and become contentious when it comes to defending their private opinions before others (2:23; 1 Tim 1:3-7; 6:3-5). This is a matter of urgency since their novelties are already spreading like an infectious disease (2 Tim 2:17). [Back to text.](#)

2:15 the word of truth: The gospel message, which is "heard" through preaching (Eph 1:13; Col 1:5). Uppermost in Paul's mind is the word of God orally proclaimed (1 Thess 2:13), not the word of God written in the Scriptures (Rom 15:4), though the latter is often central to Christian teaching and evangelism (2 Tim 3:16). [Back to text.](#)

2:17 Hymenaeus: Possibly the same person Paul had already excommunicated for blasphemy (1 Tim 1:20). His partner **Philetus** is

otherwise unknown. [Back to text.](#)

2:18 the resurrection is past: The precise nature of this error is unclear. Perhaps false teachers affirmed a "spiritual resurrection" in connection with Baptism (Rom 6:3-4; CCC 1002) but denied the Pauline doctrine of a "bodily resurrection" of the whole person in the future (Rom 8:11; Phil 3:20-21; CCC 989). According to some, this denial smacks of early Gnosticism, an ancient heresy that reached its full development in the second and third centuries and was known to repudiate the body and the material world in general. [Back to text.](#)



2:19 God's firm foundation: The gospel message, or perhaps the Church, which upholds the truth (1 Tim 3:15). **this seal:** Of the two quotations that follow, the first is from the Greek version of Num 16:5, and the second is drawn from an unknown source, though its wording resembles parts of Sir 35:3 and Is 26:13. • The context of the first excerpt is Korah's rebellion against Moses and the Aaronic priesthood, for which he and his fellow dissenters are destroyed by the Lord. Paul hints that a similar crisis is afoot in Ephesus, where Timothy is the legitimate priest and shepherd of God's people, while the false teachers are doomed to face God's judgment. **names the name of the Lord:** An act of prayer and worship (Gen 4:26; Acts 9:14; 1 Cor 1:2), unless the divine name is taken in vain (Ex 20:7; Lev 24:10-16). [Back to text.](#)

2:22 shun youthful passions: Timothy is still a young man by ancient standards, probably in his mid-to-late thirties (1 Tim 4:12). Despite his age, he must flee from immaturity and pursue the virtues that befit a seasoned minister of the gospel. [Back to text.](#)

2:24 forbearing: Timothy must deliver the truth at all times and refute errors whenever they arise. There is hope that straying sheep will return to the fold, so long as his pastoral teaching is matched by a life of integrity and patience (2:25; Jas 5:19-20). [Back to text.](#)

3:1-9 Paul cautions Timothy about the moral depravity that is rampant among false teachers. Although they operate behind the mask of religion (3:5), they themselves are captives of bitterness, greed, pride, and a host of vile practices that offend God. Special concern is expressed for certain women who have already been victimized by their deceptions (3:6-7).

Despite apparent success, Paul insists that their mischief will be exposed for what it truly is (3:9) (CCC 1852). [Back to text.](#)

3:1 the last days: The final age of covenant history that began with the first coming of Jesus and will close with his Second Coming in glory (Acts 2:17; 1 Cor 10:11). Although the iniquity prevalent in these days will intensify as the end nears, it is already thriving here in the apostolic era (1 Tim 6:3-5). [Back to text.](#)

3:8 Jannes and Jambres: Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses and Aaron (Ex 7:11). They are not named in the OT but are identified as such in Jewish tradition (e.g., in the Dead Sea Scrolls, CD 5, 18-19, and in an apocryphal work titled *Jannes and Jambres*). [Back to text.](#)

3:10-14 Paul contrasts his own ministry of suffering with the self-indulgence of the false teachers (3:1-9). Timothy is to model himself on the example set by Paul, both in word and deed, so that past memories of the apostle will help him through the struggles that lie ahead (1:13; 2:8-10). Once a disciple of Paul, Timothy must now carry the torch as his successor. [Back to text.](#)

3:11 Antioch . . . Iconium . . . Lystra: Cities in southern Asia Minor (modern Turkey) that Paul visited on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:14-14:23). Timothy, as a resident of Lystra, probably embraced the Christian faith at this time and may have witnessed the persecutions that Paul endured there (Acts 14:19; 16:1). [Back to text.](#)



3:12 will be persecuted: Antagonism toward the gospel often strikes those who preach it. The inevitability of Christian suffering is a recurring theme in this letter (1:8; 2:3; 4:5) and in the NT generally (Jn 16:2-3; Acts 14:22; 1 Pet 4:12-14). • Persecution is not only what attacks Christian piety by sword, fire, and torments. Persecution is also inflicted through personal conflict, the perversity of the disobedient, and the sharp point of slanderous tongues (St. Leo the Great, *Letters* 167). [Back to text.](#)

3:15 the Sacred Writings: I.e., the writings of the OT. The NT had not yet been written when Timothy was a young boy. Jewish children often began instruction in the Torah at age five (Mishnah, *Aboth* 5, 21). **for salvation:** The books of the OT point the way to Christ (Rom 1:2-3) and continue to instruct his disciples for life in the New Covenant (Rom 15:4) (CCC 121-23, 128-30). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Inspired by God ([2 Tim 3:16](#))

Theopneustos (Gk.): A compound adjective that means "God-breathed" and is found only here in the NT. It is formed from the noun "God" (*Theos*) and a verb meaning "blow" or "breathe out" (*pneō*). Applied to the Scriptures, it means that everything written down in the Bible has been breathed forth from the mouth of the Lord. God is thus the ultimate source of Scripture and, indeed, its principal Author. The similar passage in 2 Pet 1:20-21 adds to this teaching that God collaborated with human authors in producing the biblical books. Inspiration thus means that the Holy Spirit acted in and through the human writers as they wrote, so that the words they left behind are truly sacred expressions of God's instructions to his People. Finally, because the Bible enshrines the very words of God, its message is as truthful as God himself is (Jn 17:17; Tit 1:1-2) and is thus a reliable guide for Christian living, able to instruct us for every good work (2 Tim 3:17) (CCC 105-8).

3:16 All Scripture is inspired: Some prefer to translate this "All inspired Scripture", which is grammatically possible but contextually and statistically unlikely. For one thing, it would allow the possibility that some Scriptures might not be inspired, and neither Paul nor any other theologian in the early Church accepted such a proposition. Also, parallel constructions in Greek almost always treat the second modifier as a predicate (Scripture is inspired) rather than an attributive (inspired Scripture). [Back to text.](#)



3:17 complete: Paul extols Scripture as a preeminent guide for the moral life. He does not claim, however, that Scripture supplies us with comprehensive instruction in all matters of Christian doctrine, worship, and ecclesial government. Besides the divine authority of the biblical books, he also acknowledges the authority of apostolic tradition (1 Cor 11:1; 2 Thess 2:15) and sees the Church, built on the foundation of Christ and the apostles (1 Cor 3:11; Eph 2:20), as the bearer of God's truth to the world (1 Tim 3:15). For the role of tradition and the teaching office of the Magisterium, see notes on Jn 14:26, 16:13, and 2 Thess 2:15. • Sacred Scripture is

extremely profitable for the soul. Like a tree planted near a stream, the soul that is watered by Scripture grows hearty and bears fruit in due season. It is fitted with leaves that are always green, with actions pleasing to God (St. John of Damascus, *Orthodox Faith* 4, 17). [Back to text.](#)

4:1 in the presence of God: Paul speaks as if testifying in a courtroom where God is present and Jesus Christ presides as judge. He issues a final and solemn appeal for Timothy to fulfill his mission as a teacher of God's people. [Back to text.](#)

4:2 in season and out of season: Timothy must proclaim the gospel, making the most of his time to correct or encourage his flock as each situation demands (Eph 5:16). [Back to text.](#)

4:4 wander into myths: Already a problem in Ephesus (1 Tim 1:4; 4:7), where erring teachers have exchanged the revealed truth of God for the uncertainties of their own speculation—and hear only what suits their liking (2 Tim 4:3). [Back to text.](#)

4:6 the point of being sacrificed: Or "being poured out as a libation". The description alludes to the cultic liturgy of Israel, where daily drink offerings of wine were poured out at the base of the Temple altar (Ex 29:38-40; Num 28:7). Evoking this imagery, Paul sees martyrdom as an act of sacrifice and liturgical worship (Phil 2:17) (CCC 2473). **my departure:** A metaphor for death, which in Paul's case is both imminent and personally desirable (Phil 1:23). According to tradition, Paul was condemned during the Neronian persecution that began in the mid 60s and was beheaded just outside the city of Rome along the Ostian Way. [Back to text.](#)



4:8 crown of righteousness: The reward of everlasting righteousness (Gal 5:5) that awaits the saints, who have persevered in the grace of God (Jas 1:12; 1 Pet 5:4). The image alludes to the garland or victory wreath used to crown winning athletes in the ancient Olympics (1 Cor 9:25). Paul's confidence that such a reward awaits him rests on his sense of accomplishment, since after 30 years of ministry, toil, and suffering, he has remained firm in the faith without straying from the course set for him by Christ (2 Tim 4:7; Acts 20:24). He was not nearly so assured of his salvation while the race was still in progress (1 Cor 9:16). • Is not a crown the reward of good deeds? Yet, this is possible only because God accomplishes good works in men. It is through his mercy that we perform

the goods works to which the crown is awarded (St. Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will* 21). **that Day:** The Day of Judgment. **his appearing:** Either the future return of Christ in glory (4:1) or, possibly, his first coming in the flesh (1:10). [Back to text.](#)

4:9 come to me soon: The nearness of Paul's death adds a sense of urgency to his request (1:4). Timothy must not delay because the onset of winter (4:21) will make sea travel impossible, and Paul needs his cloak to stay warm in prison (4:13). [Back to text.](#)

4:10 Demas: One of Paul's associates, but one whose attachment to worldly comforts tore him away from the apostle. He was once a loyal companion (Col 4:14; Philem 24). [Back to text.](#)

4:11 Luke: The physician and evangelist who wrote the Gospel of Luke and its sequel, the Book of Acts. He traveled with Paul on parts of his second and third missionary tours and was present with him at his first Roman imprisonment (Col 4:14; Philem 24). See introduction to Acts: *Author.* **Mark:** John Mark, the evangelist who wrote the Gospel of Mark. Once estranged from Paul for abandoning his missionary team (Acts 13:13; 15:39), he later rejoined the apostle's company and was present with him at his first Roman imprisonment (Col 4:10; Philem 24). [Back to text.](#)

4:12 Tychicus: One of Paul's personal couriers (Eph 6:21; Col 4:7-9; Tit 3:12). [Back to text.](#)

4:13 books . . . parchments: Two forms of writing material, the first referring to papyrus scrolls and the second to sheets made from animal skins. No hint is given of their contents, but they may have included Paul's personal copies of OT books. [Back to text.](#)

4:14 Alexander the coppersmith: Possibly a heretic Paul excommunicated for blasphemy (1 Tim 1:20). [Back to text.](#)

4:17 strength to proclaim: Paul's preliminary hearing before the Roman court was disappointing because his companions abandoned him; nevertheless, it was successful because an opportunity was given to expound the gospel in the imperial capital (CCC 2471-72). **the lion's mouth:** Metaphorically, "a verdict of condemnation". Because Paul was a Roman citizen, he would not have been thrown to the lions in the Roman circus. [Back to text.](#)

4:19 Prisca and Aquila: A distinguished Christian couple who worked alongside Paul (Acts 18:2-3) and went on to minister in the churches of

Rome (Rom 16:3-5) and Ephesus (Acts 18:24-26; 1 Cor 16:19). The name "Prisca" is also spelled "Priscilla". [Back to text.](#)

4:21 Linus: Quite possibly Peter's first successor as pope. Saint Irenaeus gives us a running list of the bishops of Rome from the apostolic age down to the late second century, and the first in succession after Peter is named "Linus" (*Against Heresies* 3, 3, 3). [Back to text.](#)

4:22 Grace be with you: All the Pastoral Epistles end with a benediction that has the word "you" in the plural (1 Tim 6:21; Tit 3:15). This suggests that while Paul addressed his letters to Timothy and Titus privately, he intended his correspondence to be read publicly to the congregations under their care. [Back to text.](#)

INTRODUCTION TO

THE LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO TITUS

Author Titus claims to be a letter from the Apostle Paul (1:1), as do the other Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1). Christian writers accepted this claim from earliest times, and it was not until the nineteenth century that biblical scholars began to dispute and then deny the Pauline authorship of Titus. Many exegetes today continue to attribute this epistle to a devoted follower of Paul who wrote a decade or more after the apostle's death. Nevertheless, reasons for upholding its authenticity remain strong, and there is much in the letter that lends credence to the tradition that Paul himself composed the epistle. Indeed, Titus gives us valuable insights into Paul's ministry and movements during the final years of his life that we would not otherwise know. See introduction to 1 Timothy: *Author*.

Date It is difficult to establish an exact date for Titus. Information within the letter about Paul's situation is sparse, and the little there is does not fit into the travel itinerary of his three missionary journeys described in the Book of Acts. This has led many to posit that Paul must have embarked on a fourth missionary tour in the eastern Mediterranean sometime *after* his Roman imprisonment recorded in Acts 28:16 (from A.D. 60 to 62) yet *before* his martyrdom a few years later (ca. A.D. 67). The possibility of a fourth missionary campaign in the mid 60s is accepted by many scholars and is supported by the testimony of early Christian tradition. This would mean that Paul wrote Titus sometime between A.D. 63 and 66, around the same time he wrote 1 Timothy. Scholars who deny the Pauline authorship of the letter tend to date it much later, between A.D. 80 and 110.

Destination and Purpose The letter was sent to Titus on the Mediterranean island of Crete. Although Crete had an established Jewish community (1:10; Acts 2:11), its inhabitants were mostly Gentiles and pagans infamous for their moral decadence (Tit 1:12). Paul and Titus had previously evangelized parts of the island together, but Titus was left behind while

Paul continued to travel. Titus was charged with organizing the converts into communities and ensuring that elders or presbyters (i.e., priests) were appointed to lead the flock (1:5). Paul now writes to encourage Titus and to authorize his spiritual and organizational efforts (2:15). He places full confidence in Titus, who has already proven himself a capable delegate in even the most sensitive situations in Corinth (2 Cor 7:6, 13-15; 8:16-23). Once Titus fulfills his mission and is relieved of his duty by a replacement, he is to rejoin Paul in Nicopolis for the winter (Tit 3:12).

Themes and Characteristics The letter to Titus shares much in common with 1 Timothy, although its instructions are less detailed and its tone is less personal. Still, both letters are addressed to young bishops on temporary assignment: Titus on the island of Crete (1:5) and Timothy in the city of Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3). Both of these men have been handed the challenging task of supervising communities that are threatened by false teaching (Tit 1:10-16; 1 Tim 1:3-7), in need of sound doctrine (Tit 2:1; 1 Tim 4:11-16), and lacking in qualified leadership (Tit 1:5-9; 1 Tim 3:1-13). These are men Paul can trust. These are the men he is grooming to continue his ministry after his death.

The themes of the letter follow the instructions that Paul is giving to Titus, whose mission is to organize both the pastoral leadership and the personal lives of the believers on Crete. **(1) Pastoral Leadership.** The first assignment given to Titus is to ordain qualified elders (priests) in every town, lest Christians on the island be like wandering sheep without shepherds to lead them (1:5). This is not to be done arbitrarily but with discernment. In Paul's mind, the only fitting candidates for spiritual leadership are men of proven character and deep convictions (1:7-8). A practical element is also involved in this, and so Titus must take account of how well a prospective clergyman manages his own family and household when considering his selection (1:6). As a final note, Paul stresses that candidates must be competent instructors and defenders of the truth, able to lead the faithful as teachers and apologists (1:9). This is all the more necessary in Crete, where dangerous teachings are already taking hold in the Christian communities spread across the island (1:10-16). **(2) Personal Living.** Paul reasons that because Christianity is advertised to the world through our actions, it is important that our behavior be consistent with our beliefs, lest the Church of God be discredited in the eyes of nonbelievers.

There is thus a strong emphasis in Titus that believers should be zealous for every good work (2:7, 14; 3:1, 8, 14). This includes not only acts of charity toward fellow Christians (2:2-10), but also a respectful posture toward government authorities and fellow Cretans more generally (3:1-2). The immediate aim of such works is to assist the needy (3:14), while their ultimate purpose is to honor the Lord Jesus in anticipation of his glorious return (2:11-13). «

OUTLINE OF THE LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO TITUS

1. Opening Address ([1:1-4](#))

2. Christian Leadership ([1:5-16](#))

- A. Appointing Shepherds in Crete ([1:5](#))
- B. Qualifications for Pastors ([1:6-9](#))
- C. The Problem of False Teachers ([1:10-16](#))

3. Christian Living ([2:1-3:11](#))

- A. Instructions for All Ages ([2:1-10](#))
- B. Foundation of the Christian Commitment ([2:11-15](#))
- C. Life with and without Christ ([3:1-7](#))
- D. Avoiding Trouble and Troublemakers ([3:8-11](#))

4. Conclusion ([3:12-15](#))

- A. Final Instructions ([3:12-14](#))
- B. Benediction ([3:15](#))

THE LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO

TITUS

Chapters

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#)

Salutation

1 [Paul](#), a servant^a of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth which accords with godliness, ²in hope of eternal life which [God, who never lies](#), promised ages ago ³and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by command of God [our Savior](#);

4 To [Titus](#), my true child in a common faith:

Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

Titus in Crete

5 This is why [I left you in Crete](#), that you might amend what was defective, and appoint elders ^{*} in every town as I directed you, ⁶if any man is blameless, the [husband of one wife](#), and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery and not being insubordinate. ⁷For a bishop, as [God's steward](#), must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, ⁸but hospitable, a lover of goodness, master of himself, upright, holy, and self-controlled; ⁹he must hold firm to the sure word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it. ¹⁰For there are many insubordinate men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially [the circumcision party](#); ¹¹they must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for base gain what they have no right to teach. ¹²One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, "[Cretans](#) are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." ¹³This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴instead of giving heed to [Jewish myths](#) or to commands of men who reject the truth. ¹⁵[To the pure](#) all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure; their very minds and consciences are corrupted. ¹⁶They profess to know

God, but they deny him by their deeds; they are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good deed.

Teach Sound Doctrine

2 But as for you, teach what befits sound doctrine. ²Bid the older men be temperate, serious, sensible, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. ³Bid the older women likewise to be reverent in behavior, not to be slanderers or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good, ⁴and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, ⁵to be sensible, chaste, domestic, kind, and submissive to their husbands, that the word of God may not be discredited. ⁶Likewise urge the younger men to control themselves. ⁷Show yourself in all respects a model of good deeds, and in your teaching show integrity, gravity, ⁸and sound speech that cannot be censured, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say of us. ⁹Bid slaves to be submissive to their masters and to give satisfaction in every respect; they are not to talk back, ¹⁰nor to pilfer, but to show entire and true fidelity, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

11 For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, ¹²training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world, ¹³awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior^c * Jesus Christ, ¹⁴who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

15 Declare these things; exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

Maintain Good Deeds

3 Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for any honest work, ²to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all men. ³For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by men and hating one another; ⁴but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, ⁶which he poured out upon us

richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷so that we might be [justified](#) by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life. ^{*} ⁸The saying is sure.

I desire you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to apply themselves to good deeds; ^d these are excellent and profitable to men. ⁹But avoid stupid controversies, [genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels over the law](#), for they are unprofitable and futile. ¹⁰[As](#) for [a man who is factious](#), after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him, ¹¹knowing that such a person is perverted and sinful; he is self-condemned.

Final Messages and Benediction

12 When I send [Ar'temas or Tych'icus](#) to you, do your best to come to me at Nicop'olis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. ¹³Do your best to speed [Ze'nas the lawyer and Apol'los](#) on their way; see that they lack nothing. ¹⁴And let our people learn to apply themselves to good deeds, ^d so as to help cases of urgent need, and not to be unfruitful.

15 All who are with me send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith.

[Grace be with you all.](#)

Commentary on The Letter of Saint Paul to Titus

1:1 Paul: The author (and sender) is always named first, according to the ancient letter format. As a servant, Paul devotes all of himself and his energies to the service of the Lord, and, as an apostle (Rom 1:1), he is commissioned to preach that God is reconciling the world to himself through Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5:18-20). [Back to text.](#)



1:2 God . . . never lies: Hope that is anchored in God will never be disappointed, for his word is ever truthful, and his promises are entirely trustworthy (Num 23:19; Jn 17:17; Heb 6:17-18). The same cannot be said for the pagan Cretans (Tit 1:12) or for the devil, the father of every falsehood (Jn 8:44) (CCC 214-17). • Let us bind ourselves to him who is ever true and just in his judgments. He who has forbidden us to lie can much less be a liar himself, for deception is impossible for God (St. Clement of Rome, *1 Clement* 27). [Back to text.](#)

1:3 our Savior: A title three times given to God the Father (1:3; 2:10; 3:4) and three times applied to Christ the Son (1:4; 2:13; 3:6). [See note on 1 Tim 1:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:4 Titus: A Gentile believer (Gal 2:3) and a devoted member of Paul's missionary team (2 Cor 8:23). He is never mentioned by name in the Book of Acts. According to the Pastoral Epistles, Titus was in Dalmatia near the end of Paul's life (2 Tim 4:10), and, according to tradition, he eventually returned to Crete to minister to the churches on the island until his death.

my true child: The spiritual sonship of Titus points to the spiritual fatherhood of Paul. It may mean that Paul converted Titus to the Christian faith, as he had the Corinthians (1 Cor 4:14-15), or that Paul ordained Titus to the pastoral ministry, as he had done with Timothy (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6). In Scripture, spiritual fatherhood is connected with the priestly ministry (Judg 17:10) as it passed from fathers to sons under the Old Covenant (Ex 40:12-15) (CCC 1541). [See note on 1 Cor 4:15.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:5 I left you in Crete: Implies that Paul and Titus evangelized the island together before the apostle's departure. Nothing more is known of this missionary effort. **appoint elders:** An essential step in organizing and

stabilizing young Christian communities (Acts 14:23). That Titus is charged with this duty indicates that he is already a bishop and thus qualified to ordain others to priestly ministry by the sacramental imposition of hands (1 Tim 5:22) (CCC 1573, 1576). Notice that in this letter, as in the earliest days of the Church, the titles "elder" (Tit 1:5) and "bishop" (1:7) seem to be used interchangeably (Acts 20:17, 28). See notes on 1 Tim 3:1 and 1 Tim 4:14. [Back to text.](#)

1:6 husband of one wife: I.e., married only once during his lifetime. Paul allows younger widows to remarry (1 Tim 5:14). However, he holds prospective clergymen to a more stringent standard (1 Tim 3:2, 12). On possible reasons for this, [see note on 1 Tim 3:2.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:7 God's steward: A steward is an administrator over the household of another. Paul is suggesting that if a candidate for pastoral ministry is unable to manage his own home and children, he is unfit to oversee the affairs of God's household, which is the Church (1 Tim 3:15). Titus is to look for men whose family life (Tit 1:6) and personal life (1:7-8) are well ordered and whose zeal for sound doctrine is beyond question (1:9). For a similar list of qualifications, see 1 Tim 3:1-7. [Back to text.](#)

1:10 the circumcision party: Jewish Christian troublemakers in Crete. They adhered to unscriptural myths (1:14), made speculative conjectures about biblical genealogies, and haggled over minor points of the Mosaic Law (3:9). Because their teaching was unsettling the faith of young believers, Titus is authorized to silence (1:11) and rebuke them (1:13). [Back to text.](#)



1:12 Cretans are . . . gluttons: A quotation from the Cretan poet Epimenides, who lived in the sixth century B.C. He was revered as a prophet by several writers in antiquity (not necessarily by Paul). Cretans were so noted for untruthfulness that the verb "to Cretanize" meant "to lie or cheat" in Greek literature. Paul apparently thinks their infamous reputation is justified, for he declares that the poet's proverb is still "true" in his own day (1:13). Paul cites another quotation from Epimenides in Acts 17:28. • One who is learned in Sacred Scripture accepts the truth wherever he finds it. This is why Paul, on several occasions, refers to the sayings of pagans. It does not follow that all their teaching is approved, but what is good is drawn out and retained. For truth comes from the Holy Spirit, no matter

who speaks it (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Titus* 1, 3). [Back to text.](#)

1:14 Jewish myths: Probably legends about biblical heroes that are preserved in Jewish apocryphal writings near the end of the OT period (1 Tim 1:4; 4:7). [Back to text.](#)

1:15 To the pure: Reads like a response to the "Jewish" propaganda in the preceding verse (1:14). If so, perhaps troublemakers were promoting the dietary distinctions between clean and unclean foods (Lev 11:1-47) as well as the non-biblical laws of purity formulated within Pharisaic Judaism (compare the "commands of men" in Tit 1:14 with Mk 7:1-8). Paul insists, however, that because Christians are themselves purified (Tit 2:14), they are not bound to follow the purity legislation of the Old Covenant or of Jewish tradition in general (Acts 10:15; Rom 14:14). Notice that Paul is addressing a misunderstanding about ritual purity and defilement; he is not saying that believers are immune to the pollution of sin. [Back to text.](#)

2:1-10 Titus must counsel believers in accordance with their age (young/old), gender (men/women), and station in life (slave/free). Faith and life are meant to form a unity, and so the behavior Paul expects of them is part of "sound doctrine" (2:1). In effect, Paul wants the Cretan believers to rise above the dishonorable reputation that plagues their country (1:12), lest the gospel be discredited before unbelievers (2:5). [Back to text.](#)

2:1 But as for you: The Greek is emphatic, drawing a sharp contrast between Titus, whose mission is to propagate true doctrine, and the Jewish teachers, whose destructive ideas were denounced in the preceding context (1:10-16). [Back to text.](#)

2:7 model of good deeds: Titus' own life must be consistent with his preaching, otherwise opponents will make his personal defects a cause for public disgrace (2:8). [Back to text.](#)

2:9 slaves: Slavery was an accepted institution in Roman society. Paul did not attack it directly in his letters, but he sought to improve the relationship between masters and slaves and stressed that both stand on an equal footing in Christ (Gal 3:28; Col 3:22-4:1). Here he implies that the dependability of slaves will help to advertise the gospel to the world. [See note on Eph 6:5.](#) [Back to text.](#)

2:11-14 This paragraph spells out the basis of Paul's ethical instructions in the previous ten verses. Emphasis is placed on the purpose of grace, not

only to cleanse us of unrighteousness (2:14), but to raise us up to a higher standard of moral living (2:12). [Back to text.](#)

2:11 the salvation of all: The grace of Christ invites every person and nation into the covenant family of God. [See note on 1 Tim 2:4.](#) [Back to text.](#)

2:13 our blessed hope: The return of Jesus in glory, which Paul often describes as the "appearing" of Christ from heaven (2 Thess 2:8; 1 Tim 6:14; 2 Tim 4:1, 8; CCC 1130, 1404). **our great God and Savior Jesus:** The syntax of this statement in Greek indicates that Paul is asserting the divinity of Jesus (Jn 10:33-38; Col 2:9; 2 Pet 1:1). Less likely translations make a distinction between God and Christ in this verse (see textual note c). [Back to text.](#)



2:14 to redeem us: I.e., to purchase us from the bondage of sin and to purify us for a life of divine sonship. [See note on Eph 1:7.](#) **people of his own:** The expression is taken from the Greek OT. • Both Ex 19:5 and Deut 7:6 use these words to describe Israel as Yahweh's special possession by covenant. The nation was set apart as a holy and priestly people called to draw other nations closer to God (Deut 4:6-8; Is 49:6). But since the persistence of sin and weakness prevented Israel from fulfilling this vocation under the Old Covenant, Christ came to reconstitute his covenant people in the Church (1 Pet 2:9) and to empower them to fulfill the mission once given to Israel (Mt 5:14-16). Paul's words are also reminiscent of the New Covenant oracles of Ezekiel, especially Ezek 37:23. [Back to text.](#)

2:15 exhort and reprove: This is the third time Paul challenges Titus to make an aggressive stand against the false teachers who plague the Cretan communities (1:11, 13). [Back to text.](#)

3:1 submissive to rulers: Titus must remind his flock that public life is to be as shaped by the gospel as is private life. A Christian's allegiance to civil government is part of this, as is working for justice and the betterment of society. The saints, Paul is saying, must also be exemplary citizens (Rom 13:1-7; 1 Pet 2:13-17; CCC 2238-42). [Back to text.](#)

3:2 be gentle: Or "meek". Paul asks believers to bear injuries and restrain anger even when provoked, so that Christian charity will shine out in even the most hostile environments. Jesus exemplified this virtue in his own life (Mt 11:29; 2 Cor 10:1). [Back to text.](#)

3:3 once foolish: A snapshot of the moral and spiritual depravity that plagues the human race. More detailed reflections on this condition are found in Rom 1:18-32 and Eph 4:17-19. [Back to text.](#)

3:5 he saved us: Salvation springs entirely from the mercy and grace of God. It is not an achievement on our part or a payment rendered for services. Apart from grace, even our most heroic efforts to please God fall short of his glory and his plan for our lives (Rom 3:23). Both the *faith* to believe in Christ and *grace* to live the gospel are undeserved gifts (Eph 2:8; Phil 1:29). Only after God has bestowed these gifts can we begin to please our heavenly Father through a lifetime of service and good works (Tit 2:14; Eph 2:10; Heb 11:6) (CCC 1996-2002). [Back to text.](#)



3:7 justified: Cleansed from sin and made righteous in the sight of God. See word study: [Justified](#) at Rom 2:13. **become heirs:** Through the grace of divine adoption, which makes us children of God and thus heirs of all that the Father desires to give us (Rom 8:14-17; Gal 4:3-7). **hope of eternal life:** Even now we possess eternal life in the form of grace (Eph 2:5; 1 Jn 5:13), but the full possession of glory in heaven is a future hope rather than a present assurance (Tit 1:2; Rom 8:24-25; Eph 1:13-14, 18; 1 Tim 6:18-19). • If someone asks whether we have been saved by Baptism, one should not deny it, for the apostle says as much. But if he should ask whether that same washing has already saved us in every respect, one should have to say no, for the apostle says we are saved "in hope" (St. Augustine, *Answer to Two Pelagian Letters* 3, 3). [Back to text.](#)

3:9 genealogies . . . quarrels over the law: Disputes of this kind erupted among the Jewish controversialists about whom Titus was warned in 1:10-16. [Back to text.](#)

3:10-11 A pastoral plan for dealing with divisive Christians. Attempts must first be made to correct the offender and warn him of the consequences of his actions. Should he persist in his stubborn ways, Titus is to exclude him from the community's life and liturgy (Mt 18:15-18). Concrete examples of this corrective discipline are found in 1 Cor 5:1-5 and 1 Tim 1:19-20 (CCC 1463). [Back to text.](#)

3:10 a man who is factious: The Greek expression would later become a technical term for a "heretic" whose teachings were contrary to the truth and condemned by the Church. [Back to text.](#)

3:12 Artemas or Tychicus: One of these two men was to be Titus' replacement, freeing him to rejoin Paul for the winter. The former is otherwise unknown in the NT, but the latter is mentioned several times in Paul's letters (Eph 6:21; Col 4:7; 2 Tim 4:12). **Nicopolis:** Probably the city in Roman Epirus, on the western coast of Greece. Titus must have traveled north into Dalmatia following this rendezvous with Paul (2 Tim 4:10). [See note on Tit 1:4.](#) [Back to text.](#)

3:13 Zenas the lawyer and Apollos: Possibly the bearers of this letter. The former is otherwise unknown in the NT, but the latter was a renowned convert from Alexandria, Egypt (Acts 18:24-26), who later ministered in Corinth (Acts 19:1; 1 Cor 1:12; 3:4-6). [Back to text.](#)

3:15 Grace be with you all: Paul is addressing the entire community, not just Titus. The intent is to show the Cretans that Titus is Paul's official representative on the island. No one who reads the letter will doubt that he is commissioned by the apostle to teach, organize, and discipline with full authority (2:15). Paul employs a similar strategy on Timothy's behalf in 1 Tim 6:21 and 2 Tim 4:22. [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Regeneration ([Tit 3:5](#))

Palingenesia (Gk.): refers to a "rebirth", "restoration", or "renewal". The term is used only twice in the Bible, here and in Mt 19:28, though it appears several times in non-biblical writings. Stoic philosophers, for instance, believed that a renewed world order would emerge after a fiery purgation of the cosmos. The Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria spoke in a similar way about the rebirth of the world after the flood in Noah's day (*Life of Moses* 2, 65). The Jewish historian Josephus employs the term for the restoration of Israel after the tragedy of exile (*Antiquities* 11, 66). In Titus, Paul links the idea of regeneration with a baptismal washing that cleanses us of sin and gives us a new birth into the family of God (cf. Jn 3:5; Eph 5:26). He is saying that the washing of the body is an efficacious sign of the invisible work of the Spirit, whose action in the sacrament renews and renovates our souls with divine grace (Acts 2:38; 1 Pet 3:21) (CCC 1215, 1265).

INTRODUCTION TO

THE LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO PHILEMON

Author and Date Three times the author of Philemon identifies himself as the Apostle Paul (1, 9, 19). Because the letter also bears the distinctive imprint of Paul's personality and style, the vast majority of ancient and modern scholars have accepted this claim without hesitation. Only a handful of critics have ever challenged the authenticity of Philemon as a genuine letter from Paul.

There is less agreement on the date of the epistle. It is clear that Paul is writing the letter from prison (1, 9, 10, 13, 23); and, for this reason, Philemon is classified as one of the "Captivity Epistles" of Paul, the others being Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. It is unclear, however, whether this corresponds to his detainment in Caesarea (Acts 23:31-35), Rome (Acts 28:16-31), or some other place (2 Cor 11:23). All things considered, the most likely background for the epistle is Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, where he lived under house arrest from A.D. 60 to 62 (Acts 28:16, 30).

Destination Paul addressed this letter to a believer and slave owner named Philemon, as well as to Apphia (possibly his wife) and to a Christian leader named Archippus (possibly his son). Nothing in the letter specifies where these individuals lived, but the close connection between this epistle and Colossians suggests that Philemon resided either in Colossae itself or in a neighboring city of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). In support of this, it is commonly held that the slave Onesimus mentioned in verse 10 is the same man that Paul sent along with Tychicus to hand deliver the Letter to the Colossians (Col 4:7-9). Presumably they would have delivered this epistle as well.

Purpose The letter is Paul's impassioned appeal to Philemon, urging him to welcome back one of his runaway slaves, Onesimus (10). Formerly, Onesi-

mus was a useless servant who not only deserted his master but may have stolen money or property from him, as well (11, 18). In the meantime, Onesimus has become a Christian through an encounter with Paul. The apostle is now sending him back to Philemon and asking that he be received, no longer as a bondservant, but as a beloved brother in Christ (16). Secondly, Paul asks that preparations be made for his own arrival, pending his expected release from prison (22).

Themes and Characteristics Philemon is the shortest of Paul's surviving letters and certainly one of his most personal. Throughout the epistle, Paul shows himself adept at the art of persuasion, as he tries to win over both the head and heart of Philemon. So insistent are his pleas on behalf of Onesimus that Paul is barely able to hold back from demanding that Philemon comply with his requests (8-9). Theological and spiritual themes, so prominent in Paul's other writings, are more often assumed than asserted in Philemon.

The impact of this short letter cannot be felt without some understanding of its background. Slavery was an accepted institution in the Roman civilization of the first century. In fact, the slave population in Paul's day outnumbered the population of free citizens. This unbalanced situation was kept under control by Roman law, which made runaway slaves liable to the death penalty. Aware that such consequences could be in store for Onesimus, Paul decides to intercede for the life and well-being of this newly baptized slave. Paul insists that he return to his master to make amends for his desertion and thievery, and the apostle is even willing to pay Philemon whatever Onesimus owes him to ensure that justice is served (18-19). On the other end, Paul is challenging Philemon with a standard far higher than any Roman law. It is a standard of Christian mercy. Not only should this master forgive and forget the wrongdoing of his returning slave, but Paul drops several hints that Philemon should emancipate him entirely (16, 21)! Since Philemon himself has experienced the mercy and freedom of Christ in his own life, Paul reasons it is now time for him to extend that gift to Onesimus, who has likewise been freed by Christ and is coming home as a brother in the Lord. «

OUTLINE OF THE LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO PHILEMON

- 1. Opening Address ([1-3](#))**
- 2. Thanksgiving for Philemon ([4-7](#))**
- 3. Paul's Appeal for Onesimus ([8-22](#))**
- 4. Closing Greetings and Benediction ([23-25](#))**

THE LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO

PHILEMON

Salutation

1 [Paul, a prisoner](#) for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,

To Phile'mon our beloved fellow worker ²and [Ap'phia](#) our sister and Archip'pus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house:

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Philemon's Love and Faith

4 [I thank my God](#) always when I remember you in my prayers, ⁵because I hear of your love and of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and all the saints, ⁶and I pray that the sharing of your faith may promote the knowledge of all the good that is ours in Christ. ⁷For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because [the hearts](#) of the saints have been refreshed through you.

Paul's Plea for Onesimus

8 Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, ⁹yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an [ambassador^a](#) and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus—¹⁰I appeal to you for [my child, Ones'imus,^b](#) whose father I have become in my imprisonment. ¹¹(Formerly he was [useless to you, but now he is indeed useful](#) to you and to me.) ¹²I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. ¹³I would have been glad [to keep him](#) with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel; ¹⁴but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own free will.

15 Perhaps this is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back for ever, ¹⁶[no longer as a slave](#) but more than a slave, as a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. ¹⁷So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. ¹⁸If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. ¹⁹[I, Paul, write this](#) with my own hand, I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. ²⁰Yes,

brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.

21 Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. ²²At the same time, prepare a [guest room](#) for me, for I am hoping through your prayers to be granted to you.

Final Greetings and Benediction

23 [Ep'aphras, my fellow prisoner](#) in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, ²⁴and so do Mark, Aristar'chus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.

25 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Commentary on The Letter of Saint Paul to Philemon

1 Paul, a prisoner: Probably in Rome, where he lived for two years under house arrest (Acts 28:16-31). He was imprisoned, not for any crime, but for his commitment to Jesus Christ (Phil 1:13). See introduction: *Author and Date*. **Timothy:** A trusted companion of Paul and joint sender of several Pauline letters. [See note on 1 Tim 1:2](#). **Philemon:** The primary recipient of the letter. That Paul considers him a fellow worker suggests he is involved in Christian ministry (7). [Back to text](#).

2 Apphia: Possibly Philemon's wife. **Archippus:** Possibly Philemon's son. He is a soldier for Christ who exercises some form of pastoral ministry (Col 4:17). **church in your house:** The word "your" is singular and probably refers to Philemon. Recall that the earliest Christians gathered for liturgy and fellowship in private homes (Acts 2:46; 1 Cor 16:19). [Back to text](#).

4 I thank my God: This verse marks a transition where Paul, previously speaking in the plural ("our"), begins to speak in the singular ("I"). The effect is a heightened sense that Paul is addressing Philemon in a deeply personal and heartfelt way. [Back to text](#).

7 the hearts: Literally, "the bowels" or "internal organs", a Semitic idiom for the place where emotions reside. The expression is used also in verses 12 and 20. [Back to text](#).

10 my child, Onesimus: Implies that Onesimus became a believer through the ministry of Paul, who has thus become his spiritual father in the faith. [See note on 1 Cor 4:15](#). [Back to text](#).

11 useless . . . useful: A wordplay on the name Onesimus, which means "useful" or "beneficial". Although he had proven himself useless when he deserted his master, Onesimus has experienced a new birth in Christ and is now ready to live up to his name. [Back to text](#).

13-14 Paul wants to keep Onesimus at his side, but he dares not presume upon the kindness of his lawful master, Philemon. It is more honorable that Philemon should give his free consent to Paul's requests than be compelled by his apostolic authority (8-9). [Back to text](#).

16 no longer as a slave: Philemon is faced with a dilemma. As a slave owner, he is entitled by law to punish the returning Onesimus to the fullest

extent (death). As a Christian, however, he must acknowledge that the recent conversion of Onesimus has put him and his slave on an equal footing in the eyes of God (Gal 3:28). In Paul's mind, there is only one recommended option: Philemon must embrace Onesimus as his brother in the faith, forgive him his wrongdoing, and give him his freedom. Christ has made them brothers, and this creates a new situation that overrides the social and legal expectations that would normally apply when a delinquent slave returned to his owner. These men were once members of the same household, with one in authority over the other; but now they are children of equal standing in the household of God the Father (Philem 3). This is one example of how Paul, who never condemned the institution of slavery directly, worked against it with the gospel (CCC 2414). [See note on 1 Cor 7:21](#). • Sometimes evil circumstances become an occasion for good, and God turns the evil plans of men toward a righteous end. If Onesimus had not fled his master, he would not have come to Paul in prison and there received faith in Christ (St. Jerome, *Commentary on Philemon* on Philem 15). [Back to text](#).

Word Study

Ambassador ([Philem 9](#))

Presbytēs (Gk.): refers to an "elderly man" in his early to mid 50s or possibly older. The term is used two other times in the NT (Lk 1:18; Tit 2:2). By using this word in Philem 9, Paul is describing himself as an elderly prisoner in order to elicit respect from Philemon and to gain his favorable response. The reminder of his age is thus an appeal to his emotions and sense of compassion. The RSV's "ambassador" is not a translation in the strict sense but is actually a conjecture made by scholars that Paul must have written a very similar word that was miscopied at an early date (Gk. *presbeutēs*). This alternative also makes good sense of the passage; however, the term for "ambassador" does not appear in any surviving manuscript of the book.

19 I, Paul, write this: Adds a note of solemnity to the apostle's words. **I will repay:** Paul is ready to compensate Philemon for any losses incurred by the desertion of Onesimus. At the same time, Philemon is reminded of

his own debt to Paul, who was instrumental in the slave owner's conversion. [Back to text.](#)

22 guest room: Paul anticipates his eventual release from prison (Phil 2:24). It is unknown whether his plan to revisit Philemon was ever fulfilled. However, it is more likely than not, since it is difficult to explain the preservation of this letter unless Philemon did, in fact, comply with Paul's requests and give the apostle a warm reception after his release. [Back to text.](#)

23-24 The same five companions of Paul listed here are also found in Col 4:10-14. This suggests that Philemon and Colossians were written at the *same time* (probably A.D. 60-62) and from the *same place* (probably Rome). Mention of the *same mail carrier* named "Onesimus" in Philemon 10 and Col 4:9 also implies that Paul sent these letters to believers in the *same region* (Asia Minor). [Back to text.](#)

INTRODUCTION TO THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

Author The authorship of the Letter to the Hebrews has long been a matter of debate. This is hardly surprising, since the work is formally anonymous and it stands out as one of the most unique writings in the NT. Early on, Eastern Christianity believed that the Apostle Paul authored the book, either in the strict sense that he wrote it himself (Pantaenus, St. John Chrysostom) or in the broad sense that someone else—a secretary or disciple— either translated the work from a Semitic original or expressed the substance of Paul's theology in his own personal way (St. Clement of Alexandria, Origen, St. John of Damascus). The Western Church, by contrast, did not initially accept the letter as the work of Paul. Some quietly excluded Hebrews from the collection of Paul's writings (Muratorian Canon, St. Cyprian), while others openly denied its attribution to the apostle (Tertullian). The fourth century, however, witnessed a decisive shift of opinion in the West. Several theologians, including St. Augustine and St. Jerome, came to embrace the Eastern tradition. Subsequently, the Pauline authorship of Hebrews became the most widely accepted view in medieval Christendom (St. Thomas Aquinas, etc.). It was not until the sixteenth century that serious doubts about Paul's authorship of Hebrews resurfaced. Martin Luther claimed that Hebrews had been written by Paul's contemporary Apollos of Alexandria (Acts 18:24). A few Catholic scholars, such as Erasmus and Cajetan, also denied Pauline authorship. Nevertheless, the Council of Trent (Fourth Session) listed Hebrews among the letters of Paul, although that statement does not amount to a dogmatically binding attribution.

The majority of scholars today reject a strict view of the Pauline authorship of Hebrews. These scholars underscore that Hebrews does not claim Paul as its author, as do the letters he is known to have written. Furthermore, many scholars contend that the polished style of the letter, along with its unique subject matter, differs so markedly from Paul's recognized letters that it must be the work of someone else. At the same

time, there is no consensus among biblical specialists regarding who did write Hebrews. Popular suggestions include Luke, Barnabas, Apollos, Silas, and Clement of Rome, among a few others. Unfortunately, these alternative proposals rest on limited evidence, both internal and external; they therefore remain conjectural.

It would seem that a balanced assessment of authorship must neither deny the uniqueness of Hebrews nor overemphasize the distinctiveness of the work at the expense of its notable affinities with Paul's recognized writings. Several similarities in thought, expression, and theology make it all but certain that some connection exists between Hebrews and the Pauline tradition. Some read the reference to Timothy in 13:23 as confirmation that its author stands within the circle of Paul and his missionary associates (Acts 16:1-3; Phil 2:19-24). For the vast majority of modern scholars, the combination of traces of Pauline thought and elements of non-Pauline style is best explained by the hypothesis that identifies the author with a Pauline disciple. Thus, the tradition of Pauline authorship remains reasonable, if we take it to mean that Hebrews' doctrinal *content* is Paul's, even if its literary *composition* is the work of an unnamed collaborator who expressed Paul's teaching in a particularly elegant way. In this way, the "Pauline origin" of Hebrews can be maintained without defining the exact nature of Paul's relationship to the work.

Date It is difficult to date the Letter to the Hebrews with precision, but it seems likely that the Jerusalem Temple was still standing at the time of its composition. This is suggested by the combined weight of several factors. **(1)** The present tense is used in 10:1-3, implying that the sacrificial services of the Temple were still being conducted at the time of writing. **(2)** The comment at 8:13 indicates that the Old Covenant was on the verge of disappearing but had not yet vanished from sight. **(3)** The author says nothing about the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and the consequent cessation of animal sacrifice that occurred in A.D. 70. This silence speaks loudly, especially since the demise of the sanctuary would have been the book's strongest argument that the Old Covenant had now been superseded by the New and that its ancient forms of worship were obsolete, not just in principle, but in fact. It is probable, then, that Hebrews was written in the 60s of the first century. Many scholars, it should be noted, read this evidence differently and prefer to date it in the 80s of the first century.

Destination and Purpose The Letter to the Hebrews neither identifies its readers nor specifies their whereabouts at the time of writing. Information on these counts must be gleaned from hints within the letter itself. It is clear that the recipients were believers who "share in Christ" (3:14) and who had already suffered persecution for their faith (10:32-34). The traditional view is that these believers were Jewish Christians living in Palestine. This is supported in part by the overall perspective of the book, especially its sustained comparison between the Old Covenant and the New, as well as its extensive and sophisticated use of the OT. Repeated emphasis on priestly and sacrificial issues throughout the work may further indicate that Hebrews was written to a community of Levitical priests who had recently converted to Christianity (cf. Acts 6:7). Others contend, on a particular understanding of Heb 13:24, that Hebrews was written to a Jewish Christian community in Italy. Either way, the letter is presumably addressed to Jewish converts, who, because of persecution from without and nagging doubts from within, were tempted to revert to traditional Judaism and its Temple-centered worship (3:12). The epistle attempts to dissuade them by stressing the inability of the Old Covenant to free us from sin (10:1-4). This is in sharp contrast to the absolute sufficiency of the New Covenant to cleanse our consciences and bring us into God's presence through the covenant mediation of Jesus Christ (10:19-22).

Themes and Characteristics The Letter to the Hebrews reads more like a homily than a letter. With the exception of its epistolary ending (13:22-25), it lacks the formal features of an ancient letter, such as an introduction by the sender to the recipients and an opening word of thanksgiving. The view that Hebrews resembles a homily is also borne out by the literary rhythm of the work, which alternates back and forth between doctrinal exposition and moral exhortation, just as oral preaching tends to do. Curiously, the author calls his work a "word of exhortation" (13:22), an expression used elsewhere in the NT for a synagogue sermon (Acts 13:15). Whether the Letter to the Hebrews was preached before it was written is uncertain. Nearly all scholars agree, however, that it follows a carefully planned literary structure and is expressed with a rhetorical finesse that is unmatched in the other writings of the NT.

Distinctive in its style, Hebrews is also unique in its subject matter. Of all the NT writings, none reflects more deeply on the priesthood of Jesus

Christ, and none gives more attention or puts more emphasis on covenant theology. **(1) The Priesthood of Christ.** Hebrews envisions Jesus Christ as the high priest of heaven (4:14), where he offered his blood once for all for our redemption (9:11-14) and now intercedes to the Father on our behalf (7:25). His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary (8:1-6) was made possible by his rising to an immortal life (7:16) and his ascension into the presence of God (9:24). He is the coming One who fits the description of the eternal priest of Ps 110:4, who is enthroned as a king next to the Lord and ordained as a priest in the likeness of Melchizedek (Heb 7:1-19). This Melchizedekian priesthood of Christ is in every way superior to the priesthood of Aaron and his descendants established under Moses. Among the deficiencies of the Aaronic order: its ministers officiate on earth (8:4); they are beset with sin (5:3); they are continually replaced with successors because of death (7:23); their office is not guaranteed by oath (7:21); and their sacrifices are powerless to take away sin (7:27; 10:1-4). Christ, by contrast, ministers in the sanctuary of heaven (8:1-2); he is completely sinless (4:15); his immortality eliminates the need for successors (7:24); his priesthood is established by divine oath (7:20-21); and his single sacrifice is the definitive means of expiating sin (10:5-18). **(2) Covenant Theology.** The superior excellence of the New Covenant over the Old is extensively developed in Hebrews. For the author, this is rooted in the saving mission of Christ, who bore the curses of death triggered by the broken covenants made with Adam (2:5-15) and Israel (9:15-17) and who poured out the blessings of the divine covenants made with Abraham (2:16-18; 6:12-18) and David (1:5; 5:5-6). Attention is thus given to those momentous occasions in biblical history when God himself swore a covenant oath to bless the world through the offspring of Abraham (Gen 22:16-18) and to consecrate the royal Messiah from David's line as an eternal priest (Ps 110:4). As argued throughout the sermon, this is something already envisioned in the OT, which speaks of a New Covenant (Heb 8:8-12; Jer 31:31-34), a new priest (Heb 7:11-17; Ps 110:4), a new form of sacrifice (Heb 10:5-7; Ps 40:6-8), and a new invitation to enter God's rest (Heb 3:7-11; Ps 95:7-11). «

OUTLINE OF THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

1. Exordium ([1:1-4](#))

2. A Name Superior to the Angels ([1:5-2:18](#))

- A. Christ, the First-Born ([1:5-14](#))
- B. A Great Salvation ([2:1-4](#))
- C. Christ, Our Elder Brother ([2:5-18](#))

3. A Merciful and Faithful High Priest ([3:1-5:10](#))

- A. A High Priest Worthy of Faith ([3:1-4:14](#))
- B. A High Priest Abundant in Mercy ([4:15-5:10](#))

4. High Priest of a New and Better Covenant ([5:11-10:39](#))

- A. Exhortation to Christian Maturity ([5:11-6:12](#))
- B. God's Oath to Abraham ([6:13-20](#))
- C. The Priesthood of Melchizedek ([7:1-28](#))
- D. The New Covenant Is Superior to the Old ([8:1-9:28](#))
- E. The Efficacy of Christ's Priesthood ([10:1-18](#))
- F. Holding Fast in Faith ([10:19-39](#))

5. Faith and Endurance ([11:1-12:13](#))

- A. The Faithful of the Old Covenant ([11:1-40](#))
- B. Appeal for Endurance ([12:1-13](#))

6. Walking the Straight Paths ([12:14-13:18](#))

- A. Holiness and Worship ([12:14-28](#))
- B. Charity, Chastity, and Contentment ([13:1-6](#))
- C. Submission to Leaders ([13:7-19](#))

7. Doxology and Conclusion ([13:20-25](#))

THE LETTER TO THE

HEBREWS

Chapters

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Essays and Charts

[The Order of Melchizedek](#)

[Will or Covenant?](#)

God Has Spoken by His Son

1 In [many and various ways](#) God spoke [of old](#) to our fathers by the prophets; **2**but in [these last days](#) he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the ages. **3**He [reflects the glory](#) of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, **4**having become as much superior to angels as the [name he has obtained is more excellent](#) than theirs. *****

The Son's Superiority to Angels

5 For to what angel did [God ever say](#),

"You are my Son,
today I have begotten you"?

Or again,

"I will be to him a father,
and he shall be to me a son"?

6 And again, when he brings the [first-born](#) into the world, he says,

"Let all God's angels worship him."

7 Of the angels he says,

"Who makes his angels winds,
and his servants flames of fire."

⁸But of the Son he says,
"Your throne, O God,^a is for ever and ever,
the righteous scepter is the scepter of your^b kingdom.
⁹You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness;
therefore God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of gladness beyond your comrades."

¹⁰And,
"You, Lord, founded the earth in the beginning,
and the heavens are the work of your hands;
¹¹they will perish, but you remain;
they will all grow old like a garment,
¹²like a cloak you will roll them up,
and they will be changed.^c
But you are the same,
and your years will never end."

¹³But to what angel has he ever said,
"Sit at my right hand,
till I make your enemies
a stool for your feet"?

¹⁴Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?

Warning to Pay Attention

2 Therefore we must pay the closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. ²For if the message declared by angels * was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, ³how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, ⁴while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will.

Exaltation through Suffering

5 For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. ⁶It has been testified somewhere,

"What is man that you are mindful of him,
or the son of man, that you care for him?

⁷You made him for a little while lower than the angels,

you have crowned him with glory and honor,^d
⁸putting everything in subjection under his feet."

Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. ⁹But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might [taste death](#) for every one.

10 For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make [the pioneer](#) of their salvation perfect through suffering. * ¹¹For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have all [one origin](#). That is why he is not ashamed to call them brethren, ¹²[saying](#),

"I will proclaim your name to my brethren,
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you."

¹³And again,

"I will put my trust in him."

And again,

"Here am I, and the children God has given me."

14 Since therefore the children share in [flesh and blood](#), he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵and deliver all those who through [fear of death](#) were subject to lifelong bondage. ¹⁶For surely it is not with angels that he is concerned but with the [descendants of Abraham](#). ¹⁷Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful [high priest](#) in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.

Moses a Servant, Christ a Son

3 [Therefore, holy brethren](#), who share in a heavenly call, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession. ²He was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in^e [God's house](#). ³Yet Jesus has been counted worthy of as much [more glory](#) than Moses as the builder of a house has more honor than the house. ⁴(For every house is built by some one, but the builder of all things is God.) ⁵Now [Moses was faithful](#) in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken

later, ⁶but Christ was faithful over God's^f house as a son. And we are his house if we hold fast our confidence and pride in our hope.^g

Warning against Unbelief

7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,

"Today, when you hear his voice,

⁸do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,
on the day of testing in the wilderness,

⁹where your fathers put me to the test
and saw my works for forty years.

¹⁰Therefore I was provoked with that generation,
and said, 'They always go astray in their hearts;
they have not known my ways.'

¹¹As I swore in my wrath,

'They shall never enter my rest.' " *

¹²Take care, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴For we share in Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end, ¹⁵while it is said,

"Today, when you hear his voice,

do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."

¹⁶Who were they that heard and yet were rebellious? Was it not all those who left Egypt under the leadership of Moses? ¹⁷And with whom was he provoked forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸And to whom did he swear that they should never enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? ¹⁹So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

The Rest That God Promised

4 Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest remains, let us fear lest any of you be judged to have failed to reach it. ²For good news came to us just as to them; but the message which they heard did not benefit them, because it did not meet with faith in the hearers.^h ³For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said,

"As I swore in my wrath,

'They shall never enter my rest,' "

although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. ⁴For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way, "And [God rested](#) on the seventh day from all his works." ⁵And again in this place he said,

"They shall never enter my rest."

⁶Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, ⁷[again he sets a certain day](#), "Today," saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted,

"Today, when you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts."

⁸For if Joshua had given them rest, Godⁱ would not speak later of another day. ⁹So then, there remains a sabbath rest for the people of God; ¹⁰for whoever enters God's rest also ceases from his labors as God did from his.

¹¹ Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, that no one fall by the same sort of disobedience. ¹²For [the word of God](#) is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³And before him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

[Jesus the Great High Priest](#)

¹⁴ Since then [we have a great high priest](#) who has [passed through the heavens](#), Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet [without sinning](#). ¹⁶Let us then with [confidence](#) draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

⁵ [For every high priest](#) chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ²He can deal gently with the [ignorant and wayward](#), since he himself is beset with weakness. ³Because of this he is bound to offer sacrifice for [his own sins](#) as well as for those of the people. ⁴And one does not take the honor upon himself, but he is called by God, just as Aaron was.

⁵ So also [Christ did not exalt himself](#) to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him,

"You are my Son,
today I have begotten you"; *

⁶as he says also in another place,
"You are a priest for ever,
according to the order of Melchiz'edek."

⁷In the [days of his flesh](#), Jesus^j offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear. ⁸Although he was a Son, he [learned obedience](#) through what he suffered; ⁹and being [made perfect](#) he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, ¹⁰being designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchiz'edek.

Spiritual Growth

¹¹About this we have much to say which is hard to explain, [since you have become dull of hearing](#). ¹²For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need some one to teach you again the first principles of God's word. You need milk, not solid food; ¹³for every one who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a child. ¹⁴But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish [good from evil](#).

The Peril of Falling Away

⁶Therefore [let us leave the elementary doctrines of Christ](#) and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ²with instruction^k about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. ³And this we will do if God permits.¹ ⁴[For it is impossible *](#) to restore again to repentance those who have once been [enlightened](#), who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶if they then [commit apostasy](#), since they crucify the Son of God on their own account and hold him up to contempt. ⁷For land which has drunk the rain that often falls upon it, and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. ⁸But if it bears [thorns and thistles](#), it is worthless and near to being cursed; its end is to be burned.

⁹Though we speak thus, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of [better things](#) that belong to salvation. ¹⁰For God is not so unjust as to overlook your work and the love which you showed for his sake in serving the saints, as you still do. ¹¹And we desire each one of you to show the same

earnestness in realizing the full assurance of hope [until the end](#), ¹²so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

The Certainty of God's Promise

13 [For when God made a promise](#) to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he [swore by himself](#), ¹⁴saying, "[Surely I will bless](#) you and multiply you." ¹⁵And thus Abraham,^m having [patiently endured](#), obtained the promise. ¹⁶Men indeed swear by a greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. ¹⁷So when God desired to show more convincingly to the [heirs of the promise](#) the unchangeable character of his purpose, he interposed with an oath, ¹⁸so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize [the hope](#) set before us. ¹⁹We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into [the inner shrine](#) behind the curtain, ²⁰where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever according to the order of Melchiz'edek.

The Priestly Order of Melchizedek

7 For this [Melchiz'edek](#), king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him; ²and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, [king of righteousness](#), and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. ³He is [without father](#) * or mother or genealogy, and has neither beginning of days nor end of life, * but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest for ever.

4 [See how great he is!](#) Abraham the patriarch gave him a tithe of the spoils. ⁵And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment in [the law to take tithes](#) from the people, that is, from their brethren, though these also are descended from Abraham. ⁶But this man who has not their genealogy received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. ⁷It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior. ⁸Here tithes are received by [mortal men](#); there, by one of whom it is testified that he lives. ⁹One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, ¹⁰for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchiz'edek met him.

Another Priest, according to the Order of Melchizedek

11 Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise according to the order of [Melchiz'edek](#), rather than one named according to the order of Aaron? **12**For when there is a [change in the priesthood](#), there is necessarily a change in the law as well. **13**For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. **14**For it is evident that our Lord was descended [from Judah](#), and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.

15 This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchiz'edek, **16**who has become a priest, not according to a legal requirement concerning bodily descent but by the power of an indestructible life. **17**For it is witnessed of him,

["You are a priest for ever,](#)

according to the order of Melchiz'edek."

18On the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness **19**(for the law made nothing perfect); on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.

20 And it was not without an oath. **21**Those who formerly became priests took their office [without an oath](#), but this one was addressed with an oath,

"The Lord has sworn

and will not change his mind,

'You are a priest for ever.' "

22This makes Jesus [the surety](#) of a better covenant.

23 The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; **24**but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues for ever. **25**Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always [lives to make intercession](#) for them.

26 For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens. **27**He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices [daily, first for his own sins](#) and then for those of the people; he did this once for all when he offered up himself. **28**Indeed, the law appoints [men in their weakness](#) as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect for ever.

Mediator of a New Covenant

8 Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, ²a minister in the sanctuary and the true tentⁿ which is set up not by man but by the Lord. ³For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; hence it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. ⁴Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. ⁵They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary; for when Moses was about to erect the tent,ⁿ he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain." ⁶But as it is, Christ^o has obtained a ministry which is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. ⁷For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for a second.

8 For he finds fault with them when he says:

"The days will come, says the Lord,
when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah;

⁹not like the covenant that I made with their fathers
on the day when I took them by the hand
to lead them out of the land of Egypt;
for they did not continue in my covenant,
and so I paid no heed to them, says the Lord.

¹⁰This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel
after those days, says the Lord:

I will put my laws into their minds,
and write them on their hearts,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.

¹¹And they shall not teach every one his fellow
or every one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,'
for all shall know me,
from the least of them to the greatest. *

¹²For I will be merciful toward their iniquities,

and I will remember their sins no more."

¹³In speaking of a new covenant he treats the first as obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is [ready to vanish](#) away.

The Earthly and the Heavenly Sanctuaries

9 [Now even the first covenant](#) had regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary. ²For a tent^p was prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of offering;^q it is called the [Holy Place](#). ³Behind the [second curtain](#) stood a tent^p called the Holy of Holies, ⁴having the golden [altar of incense](#) and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, which contained a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; ⁵above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the [mercy seat](#). Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

6 These preparations having thus been made, the priests go continually into the outer tent,^p performing their ritual duties; ⁷but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but [once a year](#), and not without taking blood which he offers for himself and for the errors of the people. ⁸By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the sanctuary is [not yet opened](#) as long as the outer tent^p is still standing ⁹(which is symbolic for the [present age](#)). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, ¹⁰but deal only with food and drink and various baptisms, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.

11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come,^r then through the [greater and more perfect tent^p](#) (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹²he entered [once for all](#) into the Holy Place, taking^s not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. ¹³For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the [ashes of a heifer](#) sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through [the eternal Spirit](#) offered himself without blemish to God, purify your^t conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

15 Therefore he is the [mediator](#) of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred which redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant.^u ¹⁶For where a will^u is involved, the death of the one who made it

must be established. ¹⁷For a will ^u [takes effect](#) only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. ¹⁸Hence even the [first covenant was not ratified](#) without blood. ¹⁹For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, ²⁰saying, "[This is the blood](#) of the covenant which God commanded you." ²¹And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent^p and all the vessels used in worship. ²²Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without [the shedding of blood](#) there is no forgiveness of sins.

Christ's Sacrifice Takes Away Sin

23 Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary [made with hands](#), a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵Nor was it to offer himself [repeatedly](#), as the high priest enters the Holy Place yearly with blood not his own; ²⁶for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the [end of the age](#) to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷And just as it is appointed for men [to die once](#), and after that comes judgment, ²⁸so Christ, having been offered once to [bear the sins of many](#), will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Christ's Sacrifice Once for All

10 * For since the law has but [a shadow](#) of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices which are continually offered year after year, make perfect those who draw near. ²Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered? If the worshipers had once been cleansed, they would no longer have any consciousness of sin. ³But in these sacrifices there is a [reminder of sin](#) year after year. ⁴For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.

5 [Consequently, when Christ^v](#) came into the world, he said,

"Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body have you prepared for me;

⁶in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.

⁷Then I said, 'Behold, I have come [to do your will](#), O God,'
as it is written of me in the roll of the book."

⁸When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), ⁹then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your will." He abolishes [the first in order to establish the second](#). ¹⁰And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

¹¹ And every priest [stands daily at his service](#), offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹²But when Christ^w had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³then to wait until his enemies should be made a stool for his feet. ¹⁴For by a single offering he has [perfected](#) for all time those who are sanctified. ¹⁵And [the Holy Spirit](#) also bears witness to us; for after saying,

¹⁶"[This is the covenant](#) that I will make with them

after those days, says the Lord:

I will put my laws on their hearts,
and write them on their minds,"

¹⁷then he adds,

"I will remember their sins and their misdeeds no more."

¹⁸Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

[A Call to Persevere](#)

¹⁹ Therefore, brethren, since [we have confidence to enter the sanctuary](#), by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by the new and living way which he opened for us through [the curtain](#), that is, through his flesh, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us [draw near](#) with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful; ²⁴and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵not neglecting to [meet together](#), as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

²⁶ For if we [sin deliberately](#) after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷but a fearful prospect of

judgment, and a fury of fire which will consume the adversaries. ²⁸A man who has violated the law of Moses dies without mercy at the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the man who has spurned the Son of God, and profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace? ³⁰For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." ³¹It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

³² But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, ³³sometimes being publicly exposed to abuse and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. ³⁴For you had compassion on the prisoners, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. ³⁵Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶For you have need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is promised.

³⁷"For yet a little while,

and the coming one shall come and shall not tarry;

³⁸but my righteous one shall live by faith,

and if he shrinks back,

my soul has no pleasure in him."

³⁹But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and keep their souls.

The Meaning of Faith

¹¹ Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ²For by it the men of old received divine approval. ³By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear.

The Examples of Abel, Enoch, and Noah

⁴ By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he received approval as righteous, God bearing witness by accepting his gifts; he died, but through his faith he is still speaking. ⁵By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was attested as having pleased God. ⁶And without faith it is impossible to please

him. For whoever would draw near to God [must believe](#) that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. * ⁷By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, took heed and constructed an ark for the saving of his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness which comes by faith.

The Faith of Abraham

⁸ [By faith Abraham obeyed](#) when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go. ⁹By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. ¹¹By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. ¹²Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

¹³ These all died in faith, not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and [exiles on the earth](#). ¹⁴For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only-begotten son, ¹⁸of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your descendants be named." ¹⁹He considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead; hence he did receive him back and this was [a symbol](#). ²⁰By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. ²¹By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of [his staff](#). ²²By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his burial.^x

The Faith of Moses

²³ [By faith Moses](#), when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful; and they were not

afraid of the king's edict. ²⁴By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the [fleeting pleasures](#) of sin. ²⁶He considered abuse [suffered for the Christ](#) greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he looked to the reward. ²⁷By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king; for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. ²⁸By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the first-born might not touch them.

The Faith of Other Heroes in Israel's History

²⁹ [By faith the people](#) crossed the Red Sea as if on dry land; but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned. ³⁰By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. ³¹By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given friendly welcome to the spies.

³² And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of [Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets](#)—³³who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. ³⁵Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life. ³⁶Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. ³⁷They were stoned, they were sawn in two,^y they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated— ³⁸of whom the world was not worthy—wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

³⁹ And all these, though well attested by their faith, [did not receive](#) what was promised, ⁴⁰since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

The Example of Jesus

12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a [cloud of witnesses](#), let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, ^{*} ²[looking to Jesus](#) the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. 4In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. 5And have you forgotten the exhortation which addresses you as sons?—

"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor lose courage when you are punished by him.

6For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

7It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are [illegitimate children](#) and not sons. 9Besides this, we have had [earthly fathers](#) to discipline us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10For they disciplined us for a short time at their pleasure, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. 11For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Exhortation to Be Strong and Avoid Sin

[12 Therefore](#) lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, [13](#)and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. [14](#)[Strive for peace](#) with all men, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. [15](#)See to it that no one fail to obtain the grace of God; that no "[root of bitterness](#)" spring up and cause trouble, and by it the many become defiled; [16](#)that no one be immoral or irreligious like [Esau](#), who sold his birthright for a single meal. [17](#)For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.

[18](#) [For you have](#) not come to [what may be touched](#), a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, [19](#)and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers entreat that no further messages be spoken to them. [20](#)For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." [21](#)Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear." [22](#)[But you](#) have come to [Mount Zion](#) and to the city of the living God, the heavenly

Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, ²³and to [the assembly](#)² of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, ²⁴and to Jesus, the [mediator](#) of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled [blood that speaks](#) more graciously than the blood of Abel.

[25 See that you do not refuse him](#) who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less shall we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. ²⁶His voice then [shook the earth](#); but now he has promised, "[Yet once more](#) I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven." ²⁷This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of what is shaken, as of what has been made, in order that what cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe; ²⁹for our God is [a consuming fire](#).

[Sacrifices Well-Pleasing to God](#)

13 * Let brotherly love continue. ²Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have [entertained angels](#) unawares. ³Remember those who are in prison, as though [in prison](#) with them; and those who are ill-treated, since you also are in the body. ⁴Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let [the marriage bed](#) be undefiled; for God will judge the immoral and adulterous. ⁵Keep your life free from [love of money](#), and be content with what you have; for he has said, "I will never fail you nor forsake you." ⁶Hence we can confidently say,

["The Lord is my helper,](#)

I will not be afraid;

what can man do to me?"

7 [Remember your leaders](#), those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith. ⁸Jesus Christ is [the same](#) yesterday and today and for ever. ⁹Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings; for it is well that the heart be strengthened by grace, [not by foods](#), which have not benefited their adherents. * ¹⁰We have [an altar](#) from which those who serve the tent^a have no right to eat. ¹¹For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. ¹²So Jesus also suffered [outside the gate](#) in order to sanctify the people through his own

blood. ¹³Therefore let us go forth to him outside the camp, bearing abuse for him. * ¹⁴For here we have no lasting city, but we seek [the city which is to come](#). ¹⁵Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. ¹⁶Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

¹⁷ [Obey your leaders](#) and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully, and not sadly, for that would be of no advantage to you.

¹⁸ Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. ¹⁹I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner.

Benediction

²⁰ Now may the God of peace who brought again [from the dead](#) our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you [b](#) that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Final Exhortation and Greetings

²² I appeal to you, brethren, bear with my [word of exhortation](#), for I have written to you briefly. ²³You should understand that our brother [Timothy](#) has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon. ²⁴Greet all your leaders and all the saints. [Those who come from Italy](#) send you greetings. ²⁵Grace be with all of you. Amen.

Commentary on The Letter to the Hebrews

1:1-4 Hebrews opens with a contrast between two periods of history: the *past*, where the revelation of God through the prophets was piecemeal and provisional, and the *present*, where the disclosure of his plan through the Son is complete and definitive. No new revelation will be given to supplant or surpass the faith that was "once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). All has been finalized through Christ, who is the divine Creator (Heb 1:2), Sustainer (1:3), and Redeemer of the world (1:3) (CCC 65, 320). [Back to text.](#)

1:1 many and various ways: OT revelation came at many different times (primeval, patriarchal, Mosaic, etc.) and in many different ways (dreams, visions, theophanies, etc.). **God spoke:** A towering theme in Hebrews, linked with divinely sworn oaths (3:11; 6:17-18; 7:21) and with the divine voice speaking in the Scriptures (1:5, 7, 13; 2:11-12; 3:7; 4:3-5; etc.). [Back to text.](#)



1:2 these last days: An expression used in the Greek OT for the messianic age (Num 24:14; Is 2:2; Dan 10:14; Hos 3:5). **heir of all things:** As all things were created through the Son as an instrument, so they return to him as an inheritance. Christ is thus the legal "first-born" (1:6) who inherits the cosmic estate of the Father (Col 1:15-16). See word study: [First-born](#). • If the Son is the heir of all things, then he must be distinct from all things. If God created the world through him, then he cannot be one of its creatures, since he existed before them. No creature has its origin before the foundation of the world but is created in time. Only the Son exists timelessly with the Father and the Holy Spirit (cf. St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Treasury of the Trinity* 32). **the ages:** Or "the world"—the Greek term can refer to space as well as to time (e.g., in 11:3, the world/ages refers to all that is "seen" in the visible universe). [Back to text.](#)



1:3 reflects the glory: Christ is the divine "brightness" or "radiance" that shines forth from the Lord. As such, he is Light from Light, true God

from true God (CCC 464). • The author is using a term from Wis 7:26, where the divine Wisdom of God is described as the "reflection of eternal light". [See note on Col 1:15-20](#). stamp of his nature: Also testifies to the divinity of Christ, who is said to bear the "character" or "imprint" of God's eternal Being. his word: The context implies that Christ himself is the Word of God, in contrast to the fragmentary expressions of God's word that came through the prophets (1:1). See word study: [Word](#) at Jn 1:1. purification . . . sat down: Jesus is both priest and king. Later chapters will show that his enthronement is not his retirement, but merely the beginning of his royal-priestly ministry in heaven (7:23-25; 9:24; CCC 662). [Back to text](#).

1:4 name . . . more excellent: The superior name is "Son" (1:5, 8). However, since the angels are collectively called "sons of God" in Scripture (Job 1:6; 38:7), it is possible that the author is thinking specifically of Christ as the "first-born" Son (Heb 1:6), as this would certify his unique preeminence over the angels. See word study: [First-born](#). [Back to text](#).



1:5-13 Seven quotations from the OT are cited to support the exalted description of Christ in the opening verses: he is the Son and heir of the Father (1:2 and 1:5), the mediator of creation (1:2 and 1:10), the eternal God (1:3 and 1:8, 11), and the enthroned king (1:3 and 1:13). • The passages cited are Ps 2:7, 2 Sam 7:14, the LXX Greek version of Deut 32:43, Ps 104:4, Ps 45:6-7, Ps 102:25, and Ps 110:1. Together these texts affirm the divinity (Son of God) and royal dignity (son of David) of Jesus Christ. [Back to text](#).



1:14 ministering spirits: The angels are protectors of the saints, mediators of grace, and ministers who offer the prayers of God's people in heaven (Ps 91:11; Acts 12:11; Rev 8:3-4) (CCC 331-36). • All angels have the same nature among themselves; nevertheless, some of them stand over nations, while others are present beside each one of the faithful (St. Basil the Great, *Against Eunomius* 3, 1). [Back to text](#).

2:1-18 Hebrews 1 established the exaltation of Christ *above* the angels; Hebrews 2 looks back on the humiliation of Christ when he stooped *lower* than the angels. There is also a contrast between the angels as mediators of the Old Covenant and the Lord Jesus as the mediator of the New Covenant (2:1-4). Later chapters will show that Christ is superior to other covenant

mediators, such as Moses and Joshua (chaps. 3-4), as well as Aaron and the Levitical priests (chaps. 5-7). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

First-born ([Heb 1:6](#))

Prḗ totokos (Gk.): "first-born" or "oldest son". The term is used three times in Hebrews (1:6; 11:28; 12:23) and five times in the rest of the NT (Lk 2:7; Rom 8:29; Col 1:15, 18; Rev 1:5). In Israel, primogeniture, or first-born sonship, was a mark of fraternal distinction. Socially, the first-born of an Israelite family was entitled to the largest share of his father's inheritance (Deut 21:15-17; 2 Chron 21:3). In patriarchal times, the first-born son succeeded his father as the ruling and religious head of the family. This helps to explain why first-born sonship and priesthood are closely associated in Scripture. Through the Mosaic covenant, Yahweh consecrates his "first-born son" Israel (Ex 4:22) to be a "kingdom of priests" over the family of nations (Ex 19:6). Through the Davidic covenant, Yahweh established David and Solomon as his "first-born" sons (Ps 89:27) to act as kings and priests over Israel (2 Sam 6:12-19; 1 Kings 3:15; 8:62-63). This sets the stage for messianic times, when the Father enthrones his Son as the first-born, priest, king, and heir of all things (Heb 1:2-13; 5:5-6). In union with the First-born, other brothers and sisters in the faith (Heb 12:23) become fellow heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17), as well as a royal and priestly people (1 Pet 2:9; Rev 1:6). [See note on Rom 8:29.](#)

2:1 lest we drift: Warnings against falling away and forsaking the Christian faith punctuate the Letter to the Hebrews (3:12-14; 4:1-2; 6:4-12; 10:26-31; 12:15-17). [Back to text.](#)



2:2 declared by angels: Jewish and Christian tradition held that angels delivered the Torah to Moses at Sinai (Acts 7:53; Gal 3:19; Josephus *Antiquities* 15, 136). For the author, this implies that NT revelation, which came directly from the divine Lord Jesus, is not only superior to OT revelation, but comes with more severe consequences for those who reject

it. • Angelic mediation of the Law is connected with the Greek version of Deut 33:2, where the "flaming fire" burning around Yahweh on Sinai is rendered "angels". [Back to text.](#)

2:3 attested to us: The apostles of Jesus were the primary witnesses to all that he had said and done (Acts 1:21-22; 10:39). The author of Hebrews was not among this original group, but he was part of a second wave of missionary preachers whose message was derived from them. Many read this as evidence against the tradition of Pauline authorship. The argument is not decisive, however, since Paul was not an eye-and-ear witness to the earthly ministry of Jesus; in fact, his preaching had to be confirmed by the original apostles (Gal 2:1-6) and was partly derived from them in the form of apostolic tradition (1 Cor 11:23; 15:3). [Back to text.](#)

2:4 signs . . . wonders . . . miracles: The proclamation of the gospel was sometimes accompanied by dramatic displays of God's power (Mk 16:17-18; Acts 4:29-30). The list here corresponds to the same three signs that, according to Paul, authenticate a genuine apostle (2 Cor 12:12) (CCC 156). [Back to text.](#)



2:5 subjected the world: The angels are ministers of the created order according to Jewish tradition (e.g., *Jubilees* 2, 2). Jesus, now enthroned above heaven and earth, is the sovereign Lord of creation, not merely one of its servants (Heb 1:6-14). • Christ is shown to be Lord by the fact that God has subjected the earth to him. The earth is not subject to angels as to a lord but as to a vice-regent, for the whole of visible creation is administered by angels (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Hebrews* 2, 2). [Back to text.](#)



2:6-8 The Greek version of Ps 8:4-6. It differs from most modern translations of the psalm at two points. First, the Hebrew expression normally rendered "little less" is taken in a temporal sense to mean **little while**. Second, the Hebrew term most often translated "God" or "gods" is read as a reference to **angels**. Both are legitimate as interpretive translations of the original text. • The Psalmist marvels that man, so small and frail, was created to share in God's dominion over the world (Gen 1:28). The Greek version envisions two distinct stages in this human vocation: man is first **made** in subordination to the angels, yet he is destined to be **crowned** and

elevated over the angels. This vocation is fully realized only in Jesus, who experienced in his human nature both humiliation and subsequent exaltation (Heb 2:8-9). Many scholars detect a contrast between Jesus and Adam, because of whom man never reached the goal for which he was made (cf. Rom 5:12-21). [Back to text.](#)



2:9 taste death: A Semitic expression (Mt 16:28; Jn 18:52). • Perhaps it recalls how Adam, in choosing to *taste* the forbidden fruit, subjected the human race to spiritual and biological *death* (Gen 3:17-19). **for every one:** Jesus died on behalf of the entire human family. This was a representative act of consenting to death in filial obedience to the Father (Phil 2:8) and out of fraternal love for us (Eph 5:2) (CCC 624). [Back to text.](#)

2:10 the pioneer: The Greek expression refers to a "forerunner", who leads the way for others to follow (12:2; Acts 5:31). God, in glorifying his first-born Son, has opened the way for other sons to attain glory as well. **make . . . perfect through suffering:** See word study: [Made Perfect](#) at Heb 5:9. [Back to text.](#)

2:11 one origin: Christ and his brethren have one and the same Father and so form one covenant family (Jn 17:11; Rom 8:29). [Back to text.](#)



2:12-13 Three quotations from the OT. • In the first, the righteous man recounts to his kinsmen how God delivered him from the affliction of his enemies (Ps 22:22). In the second and third, the prophet Isaiah, being warned against fearing earthly threats more than the Lord, resolves to trust in God and to teach his children to do the same (Is 8:17-18). The author of Hebrews puts these oracles on the lips of Jesus, not as a claim that he uttered them during his lifetime, but as a literary device to illustrate how Christ is both a brother (Heb 2:12) and father figure to the children of God (2:13). [Back to text.](#)

2:14 flesh and blood: A Semitic idiom for "human beings" or "human nature", with some emphasis on man's weakness and limitations (Mt 16:17; 1 Cor 15:50). **partook of the same:** The Son of God assumed our mortal nature in order to die and, through this means, to rob the devil of his claim over our lives (Wis 2:24; 1 Jn 3:8; CCC 635, 2602). [Back to text.](#)

2:15 fear of death: Human nature cowers from pain, privation, and death. This can overpower our desire to love and obey God in the face of suffering. Even Jesus feared death as a man; nevertheless, he gave consent to suffering and death out of a reverential fear of God (5:7). In this respect, he was prefigured by those saints of the OT who preferred persecution and martyrdom to apostasy (11:17-38). Such heroism speaks directly to the original readers, who had already endured hostility for their faith (10:32-39) and were edging closer to shedding their blood (12:4). [Back to text.](#)

2:16 descendants of Abraham: This could be taken in a biological sense, referring to the family of Israel descended from Abraham, or, more likely, in a Christian sense of the family of Jews and Gentiles who together imitate the faith of Abraham (Rom 4:9-13) and inherit the blessings that Yahweh pledged to the patriarch by oath (Gen 22:16-18; Gal 3:6-29). Either way, the point is that Jesus came to rescue, not angels, but fallen men. [Back to text.](#)



2:17 high priest: The first of many passages in Hebrews that expound the priestly ministry of Christ. The emphasis is on his credentials: as one experienced in human suffering, Jesus is able to show sympathy and mercy to his brothers undergoing their own trials (4:15); as one victorious over temptations, he can give his brothers the grace and help needed to triumph as he did (4:16). • The description evokes 1 Sam 2:35, where God promised to raise up a "faithful priest" to do his will. The oracle was read as a messianic prophecy in Jewish tradition. **to make expiation:** I.e., "to wipe away sin". For related terms, [see note on Rom 3:25](#) and word study: [Expiation](#) at 1 Jn 2:2. [Back to text.](#)

3:1-5:10 The next section of the letter develops the description of Christ introduced in 2:17, showing him to be a "faithful" (3:1-4) and merciful high priest (4:14-5:10). [Back to text.](#)

3:1 holy brethren: Believers are "holy" because they are sanctified (2:11) and "brethren" because they share in the Sonship of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity (2:14, 17). **a heavenly call:** A summons that comes from heaven and leads us to heaven (Phil 3:14). **the apostle:** I.e., the One sent by God. This is the only time the NT gives this title to Christ, though the notion that Jesus is the One sent into the world by

the Father is expressed in other terms (Mt 10:40; Lk 10:16; Jn 3:17, etc.). [Back to text.](#)

3:2 God's house: A reference to the People of God (3:6). In Hebrew usage, a father's family is often called his "house" or "household" (e.g., Num 1:2; Josh 7:14). [Back to text.](#)

3:3 more glory . . . honor: Just as Jesus was crowned with glory and honor over the angels (2:9), so too he is elevated above Moses, whom Judaism revered as the greatest saint of biblical times, even "equal in glory" to the holy angels (Sir 45:2). In stressing the superiority of Christ to other covenant mediators, the author is preparing to show in later chapters how the New Covenant surpasses the Old (Heb, chaps. 8-10; 2 Cor 3:4-11). [Back to text.](#)



3:5-6 Moses and Jesus are compared. • The backdrop is Num 12:7, where Moses is honored as the Lord's "servant", who is put in charge of his "house", i.e., the whole covenant people. Jesus is also a father figure over the household of God's people, not as a servant, however, but as the faithful first-born Son (1:4-6). Some perceive an additional allusion to Nathan's oracle, where the messianic heir of David is designated the "son" of God and the one who will "build" a "house" for God (2 Sam 7:13-14; 1 Chron 17:13-14). [Back to text.](#)



3:7-11 A citation from Ps 95:7-11. • The Psalmist reflects on the apostasy of the Exodus generation. The Hebrew version of Ps 95 focuses on the defiance of Israel at Massah and Meribah (Ex 17:1-7), but the Greek version quoted here laments the rebellion at Kadesh, where the Israelites, paralyzed by fear of the Canaanites, refused to seize possession of the Promised Land (Num 14:1-38). For this, the Lord swore an oath of disinheritance that condemned that entire generation (except Joshua and Caleb) to die in the wilderness without setting foot in Canaan. The readers of Hebrews face the same critical decision: like the Exodus generation, they too have experienced the salvation of God and now stand on the threshold of a heavenly inheritance; only by a faith in God that overcomes fear will they enter the eternal rest that awaits them. [Back to text.](#)

3:14 firm to the end: The Letter to the Hebrews is adamant that even true believers can forfeit their salvation by forsaking the Lord (6:4-8; 10:26-

31; 12:14-17). This warning applies to genuine Christian "brethren", who can "fall away" from God if they allow their hearts to become "evil" and "unbelieving" (3:12). [Back to text.](#)

3:15 Today, when you hear: The author, alluding to Psalm 95 (quoted in 3:7-11), identifies the **voice** of God with the gospel message spoken through his Son (1:2; 2:3; 4:2) (CCC 1165). [Back to text.](#)

3:19 because of unbelief: The Exodus generation refused to believe that God could give them a land occupied by fearsome Canaanite warriors (Num 13:25-33). [See note on Heb 3:7-11.](#) [Back to text.](#)



4:1-11 A theological explanation of **rest**, a term held in common by Ps 95:11 (3:11; 4:3-4) and Gen 2:2 (4:4). • The interpretation of these passages is typological, i.e., the land of Canaan in the psalm and the Sabbath day in Genesis are interpreted as spatial and temporal representations of heaven. Life itself is like a wilderness journey toward a better land and like a week of labor that leads to a day of refreshment. Readers are urged to persevere in faith lest they fail to enter the rest prepared for them by God (4:11) (CCC 624, 1720). • There are three rests of which he speaks: the first is the Sabbath, in which God rested from his works; the second is Palestine, in which the Jews found rest from their hardships; and the third is rest indeed—the kingdom of heaven—in which those who obtain it rest from their labors and troubles (St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Hebrews* 6). [Back to text.](#)

4:1 the promise . . . remains: The opportunity to take hold of salvation remains "today" but will soon pass by (3:13; cf. 2 Cor 6:2). [Back to text.](#)



4:4 God rested: A citation from Gen 2:2. • God rested on the seventh day after creating the world in six days. The point is not that God was tired and needed a break; rather, he was showing us *our* need to live and work for the rest that lies ahead. The call to enter his rest is a call to unite ourselves with God—weekly on the Sabbath (Ex 20:8-11) and ultimately in the attainment of salvation (Rev 14:13) (CCC 345). [Back to text.](#)



4:7-8 The author demonstrates that the land of Canaan was only an earthly sign of a heavenly country (11:16). • His logic is historical: had **Joshua** given Israel the fullness of rest promised by God (Josh 1:10-13), **David** would not have reissued the invitation to enter God's rest long after the tribes had settled down in the land (Ps 95:7-11). [Back to text.](#)



4:12 the word of God: Penetrates into the hidden recesses of the heart. If God finds the heart hard and unbelieving (3:8, 10, 12, 15), his word becomes a weapon that destroys. If he finds it full of faith, his word becomes a pledge and help toward salvation (2:3; 4:2). **living and active:** Emphasizes that God's word is the instrument of his will, i.e., he always does what he declares (Gen 1:3; Is 55:11). **sword:** A sword with both sides of the blade sharpened can maim and kill, but the divine word is more lethal still, for it can bring eternal death and destruction (10:26-31). • The danger that readers could "fall" by the sword (4:11) recalls the rebellion of the Exodus generation, which has dominated the thoughts of the author since 3:7. The sword imagery seems to be drawn from this episode: because Israel feared it would "fall by the sword" if the people followed the Lord into Canaan (Num 14:3), the word of God descended upon them as an oath of disinheritance and death (Num 14:20-34). Unable to reverse this tragedy, Moses had to warn the people not to advance into Canaan lest they "fall by the sword" (Num 14:43). Note that the oath Yahweh swears at the end of the Exodus period compares his word to a sharpened "sword" that cuts down his enemies (Deut 32:40-41; Ezek 21:8-17). **soul and spirit:** The spiritual elements of man. These are not hidden from God any more than the interior components of his body, such as his **joints and marrow**. [See note on 1 Thess 5:23.](#) [Back to text.](#)

4:14-7:28 The next section of the letter examines the Melchizedekian priesthood of Jesus, showing how it supersedes the Levitical priesthood of Aaron. [Back to text.](#)

4:14 passed through the heavens: Christ ascended into the most intimate presence of God in heaven (9:24). Jewish tradition sometimes speaks of multiple levels of heaven. [See note on 2 Cor 12:2.](#) [Back to text.](#)

4:15 without sinning: One of several NT passages that assert the sinlessness of Jesus (2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:22; 1 Jn 3:5). Having triumphed

over temptation as a man (Mt 4:1-11), he understands our struggles and is able to help us through them (2:18; 4:16) (CCC 612, 2602). [Back to text.](#)



4:16 confidence: Or, "boldness" (CCC 2778). **the throne of grace:** The heavenly throne of the Father (8:1; 12:2), in whose presence Christ intercedes for us as high priest (7:25). • In ancient Israel, the Lord sat enthroned on the wings of the cherubim over the Ark of the Covenant (2 Sam 6:2; Is 37:16). Given the Tabernacle imagery that permeates the theology of Hebrews, the throne of the Father is probably envisioned as the Ark of the heavenly sanctuary (Rev 11:19). It is here that God gives us **mercy** after we sin and **grace** to keep us from sin (CCC 2795). [Back to text.](#)

5:1-4 Priests are mediators between man and God. As such, they must be united with men and called by God. The priests of Israel, who traced their lineage to Aaron and his sons, were united with men in the weakness of human sin and were called by God to an earthly priesthood (Ex 28:1-4; 40:12-15). Jesus, too, was united with men in his human nature (Heb 2:14); however, unlike the Aaronic priests, he was free from sin (4:15) and was called by God to a heavenly priesthood (5:5-6; 8:14). Priestly ministry is a vocation from God, not volunteer work that men can take upon themselves (CCC 1539, 1578). [Back to text.](#)

5:2 ignorant and wayward: May refer to two classes of sin distinguished in the Torah: those committed unwittingly (Num 15:27-29) and those committed willfully (Num 15:30-31). [Back to text.](#)



5:3 his own sins: The author has in mind the Day of Atonement, the annual feast when the high priest of Israel carried sacrificial blood into the presence of God to expiate his own personal sins (Lev 16:11), as well as those of the people (Lev 16:15). [Back to text.](#)



5:5-6 Two enthronement psalms concerning the Davidic Messiah. • In the first, Yahweh declares the anointed king to be his own **Son** (Ps 2:7). In the second, Yahweh swears an oath to ordain the anointed king as a **priest** in the order of Melchizedek (Ps 110:4). For the implied link between sonship and priesthood, see essay: [The Order of Melchizedek](#) at Heb 7:1-28. [Back to text.](#)

5:7 days of his flesh: Recalls the agony of Jesus in Gethsemane (Mk 14:32-42) and possibly his suffering and prayers on the Cross (Mk 15:34; Lk 23:34, 46). **offered up:** The Greek term is closely linked with priestly sacrifices in Hebrews (5:1, 3; 8:3-4; 9:7, 9; etc.). **able to save him:** Jesus acknowledged that the Father, had he willed it, could have delivered him from torment and death (Mt 26:53; Mk 14:36). **he was heard:** The Father heeded the prayers of the Son, not by sparing him the experience of death, but by rescuing him from death in the Resurrection (13:20). **godly fear:** The reverential fear of God that proved stronger in Jesus than his human fear of death. His reverence was manifest as heroic obedience to the will of the Father (Mt 26:39; Phil 2:8) (CCC 612, 2606). [Back to text.](#)



5:8 learned obedience: Not by trial and error, but from the experience of passing through the human trials and ordeals that test our commitment to God. • Christ, being eternally divine, possessed the fullness of knowledge from the first instant of his conception as a man. He was ignorant of nothing, so he could not learn anything new by simple recognition. But there is also knowledge acquired by experience, and in this sense he learned obedience through what he suffered. Having accepted our weakness, he learned how difficult it is to obey, for he obeyed in the most difficult of circumstances, even unto death on a cross (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Hebrews* 5, 2). [Back to text.](#)

5:11-14 Readers are reprimanded for culpable immaturity. In terms of Christian formation, they are more like infants than the mature believers they should be (1 Cor 3:2). The author exhorts them with words of warning (Heb 6:1-8) and encouragement (6:9-20). [Back to text.](#)

5:14 good from evil: Points to a childish and underdeveloped moral sense (Deut 1:39). [Back to text.](#)

6:1-2 A summary of Christian catechesis in a Jewish context. It was necessary to explain **(1)** how sacramental Baptism differed from other **baptisms**, such as the baptism of John (Acts 1:5) and the ritual washings of the Torah (Num 19:11-13), **(2)** how the imposition of hands in conferring the Spirit (Acts 8:17; 19:6) and priestly ordination (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6) differed from other forms of the **laying on of hands** in ancient Judaism (Num 8:10; Deut 34:9), and **(3)** how the traditional Jewish doctrines of

resurrection and **judgment** (Dan 12:2) must now be understood in relation to Christ (2 Cor 5:10; 1 Thess 4:16) (CCC 1288). [Back to text.](#)

6:4-8 Even a baptized Christian can forfeit salvation and end up cursed rather than blessed (6:8). This dreadful prospect is noted elsewhere in Hebrews at 10:26-31 and 12:15-17. Some interpret this passage as if the author envisions, not a genuine believer, but one who only *seems* to be a Christian. This has no basis in the text. The person described has come to enlightenment, has partaken of the Spirit, and is capable of falling away through apostasy. Moreover, the illustration in 6:6-7 is meaningless if the individual has not already been showered with heaven's gifts like a field doused with rain (CCC 679). [Back to text.](#)



6:4 enlightened: Perhaps a reference to Baptism, which was called "enlightenment" in early Christian times. This developed from the notion that incorporation into Christ, which is the effect of Baptism (Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27), is described in the NT as an enlightening of the believer (2 Cor 4:6; Eph 5:14; 1 Pet 2:9) (CCC 1216). • We are enlightened when we are baptized. The rite is called enlightenment since by it we behold the holy light of salvation, that is, we come to see God clearly (St. Clement of Alexandria, *Christ the Teacher* 1, 6, 26). **heavenly gift:** Probably a reference to the Eucharist. The life-giving humanity of Jesus received in the sacrament is the Father's gift of manna from heaven (Jn 6:32-58). **partakers of the Holy Spirit:** I.e., sharing the indwelling presence of the Spirit (Acts 2:38; Rom 8:11) and endowed with his spiritual gifts (Heb 2:4; 1 Cor 12:4-11). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Made Perfect ([Heb 5:9](#))

Teleioō (Gk.): means "to complete" or "to perfect". The verb is used nine times in Hebrews and 14 times elsewhere in the NT. It can describe a mission accomplished (Lk 13:32), a prophecy fulfilled (Jn 19:28), a faith brought to completion (Jas 2:22), or the perfection of unity and love (Jn 17:23; 1 Jn 4:12, 17-18). In the Letter to the Hebrews, the author uses the term to stress that the ritual observances of the Old Covenant cannot

penetrate beyond the body to perfect the soul (Heb 7:19; 9:9; 10:1; 12:23). He also uses the verb with reference to Jesus, who was perfected through his Passion (Heb 2:10; 5:9; 7:28). At one level, the humanity of Jesus, being fired in the furnace of human suffering, came out a perfect image of filial obedience as well as a perfect instrument of our salvation. At another level, the author seems to adopt the language of the Greek OT, where *teleioō* often renders a Hebrew idiom ("fill up the hands") for the rite of priestly ordination (Ex 29:29, 35; Lev 8:33; 16:32; 21:10; etc.). It can be said that, viewed against this backdrop, obedient suffering ordained the humanity of Christ for priestly ministry, which he now exercises in heaven above (Heb 8:1-2; 9:24) (CCC 609).

6:6 commit apostasy: The Greek verb means "to fall away" in the sense of failing to make good on a commitment. Here the apostate is compared to an executioner who crucifies and humiliates Jesus all over again (CCC 598). [Back to text.](#)



6:8 thorns and thistles: Brushwood is good for nothing but firewood. Jesus uses a similar analogy in Jn 15:5-6. • The expression comes from Gen 3:18, where the sin of Adam brings a curse upon the ground, making it yield "thorns and thistles". [Back to text.](#)

6:9 better things: Shows that the author was cautioning his readers, not condemning them, in the preceding verses (6:48). Their works of service and love show that they are indeed bearing some fruit (6:10). [Back to text.](#)

6:11 until the end: A call to perseverance (6:12). [See note on Heb 3:14.](#) [Back to text.](#)

6:13-20 Readers are urged to press ahead in the faith by considering the reliability of God. Because God never lies (Tit 1:2), he can always be taken at his word (Jn 17:17). Nevertheless, because of human weakness, God not only made a verbal *promise* to bless the world through Abraham (Gen 12:3), but later he strengthened that promise by swearing an irrevocable *oath* (Gen 22:16-18). In this way, God gave his people a double assurance of what he intended to do (Heb 6:18). [Back to text.](#)

6:13 swore by himself: Oaths involve calling upon God to be a witness and guarantor of the pledge being made (6:16). However, when God swears

an oath, he has no superior, so he can invoke only himself (Is 45:23; Jer 22:5). [Back to text.](#)



6:14 Surely I will bless: An excerpt from Gen 22:17. • This is the historic moment when the promise of God to bless the world through Abraham (Gen 12:3) is upgraded to a divinely sworn oath (Gen 22:16-18). The occasion is Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, who is rescued at the last minute and chosen to be the instrument of worldwide blessing. Christian tradition sees the sacrifice of Isaac as a prophetic preview of the sacrifice of Jesus, whose death fulfilled God's oath to bless all nations through the offspring of Abraham (Acts 3:25-26; Gal 3:14-16). [See note on Rom 8:32.](#) [Back to text.](#)

6:15 Abraham . . . patiently endured: The patriarch waited about 25 years between God's promise to bless him with countless descendants (Gen 15:4-5) and the birth of his first descendant, Isaac (Gen 21:1-5). [Back to text.](#)

6:17 heirs of the promise: The family of Abraham by faith. [See note on Heb 2:16.](#) [Back to text.](#)

6:18 the hope: The confident desire for "glory" (2:10), "rest" (4:1), and "blessing" (6:7). It can keep the believer from drifting (2:1), just as an anchor secures a boat (6:19) (CCC 1820). [Back to text.](#)

6:19 the inner shrine: The dwelling place of God in the heavenly sanctuary. Its earthly counterpart is the "Holy of Holies" (9:3), also called the "most holy place", the innermost chamber of the Tabernacle where the presence of God was curtained off by a decorated veil (Ex 26:31-34). [Back to text.](#)

7:1-28 The priesthood of Christ is examined at two levels: it is *connected* with the royal priesthood of Melchizedek and *contrasted* with the Levitical priesthood of Aaron (CCC 1544). [Back to text.](#)

7:2 king of righteousness: The meaning of "Melchizedek" in Hebrew. **king of peace:** The city name "Salem" is related to the Hebrew term for "peace". [Back to text.](#)

7:3 without father . . . mother: Not literally, but in contrast to the requirements for priestly ministry in Israel, where a prospective candidate had to show proof of Aaronic descent on his father's side and a compatible genealogy on his mother's side. Failure to meet these requirements rendered

aspiring men ineligible for priestly service (Ezra 2:61-63; Neh 7:63-65). Neither Melchizedek nor Jesus was bound by these restrictions; indeed, neither had a Levitical genealogy (Heb 7:6, 14). Some take the silence of Scripture about the life-span and parents of Melchizedek as an allegorical sign of the eternal generation of God the Son. This is a valid theological point, but it is not the point being made in Hebrews. **neither beginning . . . nor end:** Not literally, but in contrast to the age limits set for the Aaronic priesthood, where ministry began at 30 and ended at 50 (Num 4:3, 43). Melchizedek was not limited to two decades of ministry, for no such age restriction was in force in pre-Levitical times. Jesus likewise exercises his priesthood for as long as he lives— for ever (Heb 7:24). **for ever:** The Greek expression here is both different and weaker than the one translated "for ever" in 6:20 and 7:17, 21, 28. The sense is that Melchizedek was priest "for a long time", whereas Jesus remains a priest "for all eternity". [Back to text.](#)



7:4-10 Genesis implies that Melchizedek outranks Abraham, first, because he **blessed** the patriarch (Heb 7:6; Gen 14:19) and, second, because he received a **tithe** from the patriarch just as a priest receives offerings from the laity (Heb 7:4; Gen 14:20). [Back to text.](#)



7:5 the law to take tithes: A reference to Num 18:21-29. • The tribe of Levi was given no land inheritance in Israel but was supported by the lay tribes in return for its ministerial service. A tithe is 10 percent of a family's produce and income. [Back to text.](#)

7:8 mortal men: Levitical priests (7:23). **he lives:** Melchizedek (7:3). [Back to text.](#)

7:11-19 God's oath to reestablish the priesthood of Melchizedek (7:17) implies that the priesthood of Aaron was deficient and destined to pass away. The problem: its laws and liturgies were powerless to cleanse and perfect the worshiping People of God (7:19; 9:9-10; 10:1-4). For a similar line of reasoning, [See note on Heb 8:7.](#) [Back to text.](#)

7:12 change in the priesthood: Insofar as Ps 110:4 envisions a change from the Levitical priesthood of Aaron to the Melchizedekian priesthood of Christ, it follows that the Mosaic laws of worship must also give way to the messianic laws of worship (7:18-19). Essentially this is a change from

sacrificial rites that involve the blood of animals (10:4) to sacramental rites such as Baptism (10:22) and the Eucharist (6:4; 13:10), whose efficacy derives from the blood of Christ (9:11-14). In all probability, the maxim that a new priesthood brings new laws is based on a pattern established in the Bible. In fact, when the family priesthood of patriarchal times gave way to the clerical priesthood of Aaron in Mosaic times, this change was followed by the promulgation of an extensive code of law concerning the rites of liturgical worship (mainly in the Book of Leviticus). For more details, see essay: *Priesthood in the Old Testament* at Num 18. [Back to text.](#)

7:14 from Judah: Jesus was not a Levite of the priestly family of Aaron but a Judahite of the royal family of David (Mt 1:1-16). [Back to text.](#)



7:17 You are a priest for ever: The words of Ps 110:4. • This is the oath of perpetual priesthood that Yahweh swore to confer on the royal heir of David. It has provisional reference to Solomon, who exercised a limited priestly ministry (1 Kings 3:15; 8:63; 9:25), just as David had done (2 Sam 6:12-19). But only the Davidic Messiah, risen to an immortal life (Heb 7:16), qualifies for the everlasting priesthood envisioned by the psalm (Heb 7:23-25). [Back to text.](#)

7:21 without an oath: The priesthood of Aaron, established without a divine oath, is a revocable and changeable arrangement. [Back to text.](#)

7:22 the surety: A legal term for someone who puts his life on the line for someone else (Sir 29:15; cf. Gen 43:9). [Back to text.](#)

7:25 lives to make intercession: Jesus exercises an ongoing priestly ministry in heaven, where he intercedes for the saints at the Father's right hand (8:1-2; Rom 8:34; CCC 519, 662). [Back to text.](#)



7:27 daily . . . his own sins: The author appears to telescope the *daily* sacrifices offered by priests every morning and evening (Num 28:1-8) and the *annual* sacrifices of the Day of Atonement, which the high priest offered for the sins of Israel, including his own (Lev 16:11-19). This is in contrast to Christ, who offered only one sacrifice, and that for his people and not for himself. For a similar use of this technique, [see note on Heb 9:12](#). **once for all:** Several times Hebrews stresses how the single sacrifice of Jesus is definitive and unrepeatable (9:12, 26) (CCC 1085). [Back to text.](#)

The Order of Melchizedek

ONLY four verses in the OT mention the royal priest Melchizedek (Gen 14:18-20; Ps 110:4). Given such minimal attention, one might think him an insignificant figure in the great drama of biblical history. Yet, in the Letter to the Hebrews, the priesthood of Melchizedek looms large as an anticipation of the priesthood of Jesus Christ. Some investigation into the background of this mysterious priest-king is called for if we are to understand and appreciate the Melchizedek argument in Hebrews.

MELCHIZEDEK THE PRIEST

Let us begin with some basic facts. Melchizedek is the first person in Scripture who is explicitly called a "priest" (Gen 14:18). Indeed, he is the only figure in Genesis who is identified as a priest of "God Most High", the same God that Abraham knows as "the LORD" who made "heaven and earth" (Gen 14:22). The only others to bear the title "priest" in Genesis are pagan clerics who served the idol gods of Egypt (Gen 41:45, 50; 46:20; 47:22, 26). Secondly, Melchizedek is identified as the king of "Salem" (Gen 14:18). Psalm 76:2 identifies this city as Zion, i.e., Jerusalem, as does a long stream of Jewish tradition. This is the holy city that would later become the spiritual center of Israelite religion and the political capital of the Davidic kings. Thirdly, Melchizedek ministers to Abraham as a priest, not only by blessing him (Gen 14:19), but also by bringing forth "bread and wine" (Gen 14:18). These are probably the elements of a thank offering made to God Most High in gratitude for a successful mission, and as such they would constitute a communion sacrifice to be consumed by the priest and participants alike (cf. Lev 7:12-15). Abraham reciprocates these actions by giving a tithe of his spoils to Melchizedek (Gen 14:20), suggesting that a priestly and spiritual service has indeed been performed for the patriarch and his company (cf. Num 18:21).

MELCHIZEDEK'S PRIESTLY ORDER

The Letter to the Hebrews finds theological significance, not only in the person of Melchizedek as an individual, but also in his priesthood. This is why the phrase "the order of Melchizedek" appears five times in the span of three chapters (Heb 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:11, 17). The expression itself is taken from Psalm 110, where the Lord swears an oath of ordination to the Davidic Messiah, making the *king* at his right hand (Ps 110:1) a *priest* after the order of Melchizedek (Ps 110:4). The statement is striking, since for well over a thousand years, Israel knew only the Levitical priesthood of Aaron and his descendants established by the Mosaic covenant (Ex 40:12-15). No other priesthood was acknowledged by the Law or permitted to officiate on behalf of the covenant people (Num 17:1-13; 18:1-7). So what is this "order" linked with Melchizedek?

Genesis implies that the order of Melchizedek is the patriarchal order of priesthood that functioned for many centuries before the ordination of Aaron and his sons took place at Mount Sinai (Lev 8:1-36). In other words, it is the original, pre-Levitical form of the priesthood that was exercised during the long stretch of pre-Mosaic history. This was the age of natural religion, an era when priestly authority was rooted in the authority structure of the family. In these ancient times, the father of the family conducted public rites of worship, and his sons became his successors in the ministry. In particular, the first-born son, by the natural right of primogeniture, was the primary heir who stood to receive the full measure of his father's priestly and ruling responsibility. This is what we see throughout Genesis, where the Patriarchs—not a professional class of clerical priests—exercised spiritual leadership by building altars (Gen 12:7-8; 13:18), calling upon the Lord in prayer (Gen 21:33; 26:25), consecrating natural landmarks (Gen 28:18-22), pouring out libations (Gen 35:14), and offering sacrifice on behalf of the family (Gen 8:20; 46:1; Job 1:5).

MELCHIZEDEK'S IDENTITY

Such is the historical context in which Melchizedek exercised his priesthood. Being a patriarch, he possessed ruling authority as a "king" as well as religious authority as a "priest" (Gen 14:18). Beyond this, it is

interesting to note that the link between Melchizedek and the patriarchal priesthood is even closer according to Jewish and Christian tradition. Several ancient sources identify Melchizedek with the patriarch Shem, the first-born of Noah (Gen 6:10), whose genealogy in Genesis indicates that he lived into and beyond the lifetime of Abraham (Gen 11:10-11). This tradition appears in the oldest translations of Genesis into Aramaic (*Targum Neofiti* and *Fragmentary Targum* at Gen 14:18), in rabbinic commentaries on the Pentateuch (*Genesis Rabbah* 43, 6; *Leviticus Rabbah* 25, 6; *Numbers Rabbah* 4, 8), in the Babylonian Talmud (b. *Nedarim* 32b), and in other religious works as well (e.g., *Pirque de Rabbi Eliezar* 8, 2). It was also aired in ancient Christian writings, such as those of St. Ephraem the Syrian (*Commentary on Genesis* 11, 2), St. Jerome (*Letters* 73), and St. Thomas Aquinas (*Commentary on Hebrews* 7, 1). Noted theologians such as Alcuin, Peter Lombard, and Nicholas of Lyra also found insight in the identification of Melchizedek as Shem, as did the *Glossa Ordinaria*, the running commentary that filled the margins of the medieval Latin Bible. Martin Luther accepted this interpretation as late as the sixteenth century (*Lectures on Genesis* 14, 18). Admittedly, it is uncertain whether the author of Hebrews ever knew or accepted this tradition, but it would certainly enhance the parallelism between Melchizedek and Jesus, who is hailed as the Father's "first-born" (Heb 1:6).

MELCHIZEDEK TYPOLOGY IN THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

With this background in mind, let us examine how the priesthood of Christ is linked with the order of Melchizedek. (1) *Royal Priesthood*. In the theology of Hebrews, Jesus is both king and high priest, just like Melchizedek. For much of the Old Testament period, these two offices were entrusted to two different families: Aaron and his descendants from the tribe of Levi were the priests, while David and his descendants from the tribe of Judah were the kings. However, in the ancient order of Melchizedek, the patriarch, and eventually his first-born heir, wore the two crowns of ruling and religious authority. (2) *Priesthood in Salem*. The ministry of Melchizedek in the earthly Salem foreshadows the ministry of Jesus in the "heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb 12:22). According to Hebrews, this is the celestial city that the Lord has "prepared" for the

saints (Heb 11:16); it is the city high above, whose "builder and maker is God" (Heb 11:10). There Jesus ministers as king and high priest of the People of God (Heb 8:1-5), having entered into heaven when he ascended into glory (Heb 4:14; 9:24). (3) *Inheritance of the Son*. The patriarchal form of the priesthood, based in the natural order of the family, is an earthly model of what is now established in the divine family of God. The Father has raised up Jesus as a Son, indeed, as the "first-born" Son (1:6), exalting him over the angels (Heb 1-2) as well as over the Levitical mediators of the Mosaic covenant (Heb 5-10). Being the Father's eldest Son in the family of faith (Rom 8:29), he is the designated heir who is given authority over the entire created order (Heb 1:23). His relational identity is thus akin to a father figure, for he ministers to believers both as his "brethren" (Heb 2:11) and as his "children" (Heb 2:13). (4) *Signs of Bread and Wine*. In the heavenly sanctuary, Jesus offers the Father his "body" (Heb 10:10) and his "blood" (Heb 9:12). This messianic sacrifice is perceived by faith but is veiled from our senses. So for us who eat from his "altar" (Heb 13:10), these have the sacramental appearance of bread and wine (Mt 26:26-28), the very elements once offered in thanksgiving by the royal priest Melchizedek (Gen 14:18). « [Back to Hebrews 8:1](#).

7:28 men in their weakness: The high priests of Israel were sinful (7:27) and mortal (7:23), and the Law they administered brought nothing to perfection (7:19). The high priest of the New Covenant is sinless (7:26) and immortal (7:24), and he embodies the perfection of humanity (5:9) made possible in the new economy of grace (10:14; 12:23) (cCC 1540). [Back to text.](#)

8:1-10:39 The climax of Hebrews, where the author demonstrates the superior excellence of the New Covenant over the Old. He shows that the cultic and liturgical traditions of Israel, especially the Tabernacle and the rites of the Day of Atonement, are earthly and historical signs that teach us about heavenly realities and help us to understand the priestly work of Christ (CCC 522). [Back to text.](#)



8:1 the point: The main idea of the book. **the right hand:** An allusion to Ps 110:1, also referred to in Heb 1:3 and cited explicitly in 1:13. • Psalm 110 provides the template for the presentation of Jesus in Hebrews. It is a messianic psalm that describes how the Lord will *enthron*e the anointed One in *heaven* and ordain him an eternal *priest* in the order of Melchizedek (Ps 110:1-4). [Back to text.](#)

8:2 true tent: The sacred dwelling place of God in heaven. The Mosaic Tabernacle was only a model and reflection of this eternal reality (8:5), also called his "holy tent" (Wis 9:8). [Back to text.](#)

8:3 something to offer: Levitical priests offered the blood of bulls and goats in the earthly sanctuary (Lev 16:14-15). In a similar but superior way, Christ offers his own humanity, his body (10:10) and blood (9:12-14), as an atonement sacrifice in the sanctuary of heaven (9:24). [Back to text.](#)

8:4 he would not be a priest: Because Jesus descended, not from the priestly tribe of Levi, but from the royal tribe of Judah (7:14). [Back to text.](#)



8:5 See that you make: A citation from Ex 25:40. • Moses spent 40 days on Sinai (Ex 24:18) receiving instructions on how to build the Tabernacle and its furnishings (Ex 25:1-27:19). Its blueprint was based on a vision of the heavenly sanctuary that God had shown him (Acts 7:44). [Back to text.](#)

8:7 first covenant: The Mosaic covenant ratified at Sinai (Ex 19-24) and administered by the Levitical priests (Lev 1-16). Because the prophet Jeremiah later spoke of a "new covenant" (Heb 8:8), which the author calls a **second** covenant, he infers that the first is deficient and destined to pass away. For a similar line of reasoning, see note at Heb 7:11-19. [Back to text.](#)



8:8-12 A citation from Jer 31:31-34. • Jeremiah gives one of the clearest prophecies of the New Covenant in the OT. He defines it over against the Mosaic covenant established during the Exodus period. The Old Covenant was engraved on stone tablets (Ex 31:18) and transgressed by Israel (Ex 32:1-6); it prescribed sacrifices to remind the people of their sins (Heb 10:3). The New Covenant, by contrast, is inscribed on the heart (8:10), makes a deeper knowledge of God possible (8:11), and wipes away the memory of sin through an efficacious remission of guilt (8:12) (CCC 580, 1965). [Back to text.](#)

8:13 ready to vanish: This is the strongest hint in Hebrews that the sanctuary (Jerusalem Temple) and apparatus (Levitical cult and priesthood) of the Old Covenant were still operating when the letter was written. Other passages, such as 8:4-5 and 10:1-3, give the same impression. The overall perspective of the letter confirms this, as well: it is inconceivable that readers would be tempted to revert to the system of Levitical worship after the Temple and priestly leadership of Jerusalem were destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. See introduction to Hebrews: *Date*. [Back to text.](#)



9:1-14 The layout of the Mosaic Tabernacle. The sanctuary proper was composed of two chambers: the outer tent or Holy Place, where the priests of Israel performed regular duties, and the inner tent or Holy of Holies, where the high priest alone could enter once a year. For the author, the first and second chambers of the Tabernacle symbolize the first (Mosaic) and second (New) covenants (8:7), as well as earth and heaven. Thus, the Aaronic high priest, who passed from the first tent to the second once a year, is a type of Christ, who passed from the Old Covenant into the New once for all time when he ascended into the presence of God in heaven (4:14; 9:24). • The distinction between the first and second tents can be explained in two ways. In one sense, the first tent represents the Old Covenant, and the second tent the New. In another, the first signifies the

Church, and the second the glory of heaven (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Hebrews* 9, 1). [Back to text.](#)

9:2 Holy Place: The outer tent where priests performed daily and weekly rituals (9:6). It was furnished with a lampstand (Ex 25:31-37), a table overlaid with gold (Ex 25:23-29), and 12 loaves of the bread of Presence (Ex 25:30; Lev 24:5-8). [Back to text.](#)

9:3 second curtain: The embroidered veil that hung as a partition between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies (Ex 26:31-33). A similar veil separated the Holy Place from the outer courtyard. **Holy of Holies:** The most sacred chamber of the Tabernacle, inaccessible to all but the high priest once a year (9:7). It housed the Ark of the Covenant, the golden chest that served as the earthly throne of Yahweh (Ex 25:10-15). The Ark was topped with the mercy seat and its two cherubim (Ex 25:17-22), and inside it were the tablets of the covenant (Ex 25:16), a jar of manna (Ex 16:33), and the rod of Aaron (Num 17:8-10). [Back to text.](#)

9:4 altar of incense: Scripture normally puts the incense altar in the Holy Place, not the Holy of Holies (Ex 30:1-10; 40:26). Perhaps the author is alluding to the Day of Atonement liturgy, when incense was taken from the altar into the presence of the Ark (Lev 16:12-13). [Back to text.](#)

9:5 mercy seat: The slab of pure gold that formed the lid of the Ark (Ex 25:17-22). [Back to text.](#)



9:7 once a year: On the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:29-34). • On this day, the high priest offered sacrifices for himself (bull calf) and the people (goat) and took the blood of the victims into the Holy of Holies to sprinkle it on the mercy seat of the Ark (Lev 16:14-15). The event was an annual renewal of the Mosaic covenant ratified at Sinai, which Aaron promptly broke when he fashioned the golden calf (Ex 32:4) and which the people continued to break by worshiping goat idols in the Sinai wilderness (satyrs, Lev 17:7). See note on Lev 9:1-24. [Back to text.](#)

9:8 not yet opened: The definitive passage from the old order to the new, and thus from earth to heaven, was pioneered by Christ, who leads the way for his people to follow (2:10; 4:14-16). [Back to text.](#)

9:9 present age: The age of the Old Covenant, which at the time of the author was nearing its end (8:13; 9:26). [Back to text.](#)

9:11 greater . . . tent: The heavenly sanctuary that Christ entered when he ascended to the right hand of the Father (4:14; 8:1; 9:24) (CCC 662). **not made with hands:** I.e., not earthly. See essay: [Not Made with Hands](#) at 2 Cor 5. [Back to text.](#)

9:12 once for all: In marked contrast to the "once a year" (9:7) entrance of the high priests of Israel (9:25). **Holy Place:** The Greek is better rendered "sanctuary", as in 8:2 and 9:24. **blood of goats and calves:** The author appears to telescope two different liturgical events: the *ratification* of the Mosaic covenant at Sinai, where the Greek OT specifies that young calves were sacrificed (Ex 24:5), and the *renewal* of the Mosaic covenant on the Day of Atonement, when a goat was sacrificed for the transgressions of the people (Lev 16:15). The effect is to show that the sacrificial blood of Christ both ratifies a New Covenant and truly atones for the sins committed under the Old (Heb 9:15) (CCC 592). For a similar use of this technique, [See note on Heb 7:27.](#) [Back to text.](#)



9:13 ashes of a heifer: The ashes of a red heifer, burned with its blood, were mixed with water in order to purify persons defiled by contact with the dead (Num 19:1-13). In a more powerful way, the blood of Christ cleanses us from the guilt of "dead works" (Heb 9:14). [Back to text.](#)

9:14 the eternal Spirit: The Spirit carried the risen humanity of Jesus beyond the veil of creation into the heavenly sanctuary (Acts 1:9-11). **offered himself:** Jesus is both priest and sacrificial victim. **without blemish:** Animals offered in sacrifice had to be free of physical defects (Lev 1:3, 10; 3:1, 6; etc.). Christ is free of every moral and spiritual defect (Heb 7:26; 1 Pet 1:19). **to serve:** Redemption from sin brings a new freedom for worship (12:28; 13:15-16). [Back to text.](#)

9:15 mediator: One who brings God and his people together. See word study: [Mediator](#) at 12:24. **promised . . . inheritance:** The heavenly blessings pledged to the world through Abraham (6:17; Gen 22:16-18). [Back to text.](#)

9:17 takes effect: Or, "is confirmed". [Back to text.](#)

9:18 Refers to the ratification of the Sinai covenant described in Ex 24:3-8. [Back to text.](#)



9:20 This is the blood: A citation from Ex 24:8. • Since the Hebrew and Greek versions of this passage begin with the word "Behold" instead of "This", it is likely that the author of Hebrews has deliberately adjusted the words of Moses to evoke the eucharistic words of Jesus: "[T]his is my blood of the covenant" (Mt 26:28). If so, then he is drawing a parallel between the founding of the Old Covenant at Sinai and the founding of the New Covenant at the Last Supper (Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25). [See note on Heb 13:10.](#) [Back to text.](#)

9:22 the shedding of blood: Blood was a key element in the atonement and purification rites of Israelite religion. This was especially so on the Day of Atonement, when blood was used to purify the priests and people as well as the Tabernacle and its furnishings (Lev 16:11-19). [Back to text.](#)

9:24 made with hands: The Mosaic Tabernacle was an earthly tent, i.e., part of this creation (9:11). [Back to text.](#)

Will or Covenant?

SEVENTEEN times the Letter to the Hebrews uses the Greek term *diathēkē*, which is normally and rightly translated "covenant". Most modern translations, however, make an exception for Heb 9:16-17, where this same word is rendered either "will" or "testament" in two successive verses.

This shift in translation reflects an interpretive shift on the part of many scholars, who hold that the author of Hebrews jumps momentarily from a theological discussion about "covenants" to establish a legal analogy with last "wills" and "testaments". The aim is to illustrate how the death of Jesus was necessary in order for Israel to receive its Christian inheritance. In support of this, scholars point out that in secular Greek, *diathēkē* does indeed refer to a last will and testament. Moreover, it is said that a person's will, once documented in writing, had no legal force while the person who drafted it was still alive; only when he died would the terms and benefits of the will go into effect. This testamentary view, which interprets Heb 9:16-17 against the backdrop of secular Hellenistic culture, represents the majority opinion among biblical scholars today.

There is reason to believe, however, that the author may be thinking of a "covenant" in these two verses and not a person's "will". The literary context of Hebrews supports this, as does the historical context of testamentary practice in the New Testament period:

(1) Literary Context Scholars are united in holding that every occurrence of *diathēkē* in the Letter to the Hebrews, outside of these two disputed verses, refers to a covenant. No one doubts, in other words, that its author stands firmly within the stream of Jewish tradition represented by the Greek Septuagint, where *diathēkē* is the standard translation for the Hebrew term *berit*, "covenant". This is especially pronounced in Hebrews 8-9, where the author is drawing lines of comparison and contrast between the Old Covenant ratified under Moses and the New Covenant sealed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Since Heb 9:16-17 is woven into the fabric of this discourse on covenant theology, there is every reason to believe that the author has a biblical background in mind when he speaks of a *diathēkē* rather than a secular and Hellenistic one.

(2) *Historical Context* Another strike against the testamentary reading of Heb 9:16-17 is that the author's statements do not correspond precisely to accepted legal practice. For instance, Hebrews insists that a *diathēkē* is confirmed only at death; yet history is clear that a last will and testament was considered valid before death, that is, as soon as it was properly drafted, publicly witnessed, and officially notarized. Hebrews likewise contends that a *diathēkē* is not in force as long as the one who made it is living; yet history again shows that sometimes a testamentary inheritance was distributed to beneficiaries while the testator who drafted it was still alive. This too makes it unlikely that the author of Hebrews is thinking of a "will" instead of a "covenant" in Heb 9:16-17.

The real benefit of translating *diathēkē* as "covenant" in Heb 9:16-17 is that it makes superior sense of the theological point being made. In other words, these verses are meant to explain how the death of Jesus redeemed Israel from its "transgressions" of the Mosaic covenant (Heb 9:15). According to covenant practice in ancient Israel, parties who enter a covenant swear an oath that invokes a curse upon anyone who would dare to violate the covenant. This is precisely what Israel did at the foot of Mount Sinai when the nation entered its covenant with Yahweh. The ratification ceremony, which involved the slaying of oxen in a symbolic blood ritual, was a visible and tangible sign of the oath curse, signifying that Israel chose to accept the same deadly fate should it transgress the covenant (Ex 24:1-8; Heb 9:18-20). In other words, the animals slain by the covenant maker signified the curse of death that God would impose on the covenant breaker. Thus, as soon as Israel betrayed the covenant at Sinai, falling down in worship before the golden calf (Ex 32:1-6), the nation placed itself under the curse of death (Ex 32:27-28). However, instead of activating the full force of the curse then and there, God mercifully allowed Israel to live (Ex 32:30-34) and instituted the annual Day of Atonement (Lev 16:1-34) to hold the curse of death at bay until such time as he would deal with the transgressions of his people in a definitive way (Heb 9:24-26).

Understood in these terms, the crucial text in Heb 9:16-17 refers directly and specifically to the Sinai covenant and may be paraphrased as follows: "Where there is a covenant (like the one made at Sinai), the death of the (unfaithful) covenant partner must be endured (once it is broken). For a

covenant is confirmed (as being in effect) when death occurs, since it is never in force when the (guilty) covenant partner is living." The author is thus explaining how Israel, despite being guilty of transgressing the Mosaic covenant, was spared the curse of national death it had invoked upon itself. Instead, Jesus took this curse upon himself, finally putting the sanctions of the Mosaic covenant into full effect and bringing it all to an end (Heb 9:15). This is the atonement theology of the Letter to the Hebrews, which is a covenant theology through and through. It shows us that Christ gave consent to death, not only to seal a new *diathēkē* with the world, but to deal with the unfinished business of the old *diathēkē* broken by Israel. « [Back to Hebrews 9:1.](#)

9:25 repeatedly: The continuous cycle of high priests offering sacrifices and going in and out of the Holy of Holies year after year stands in contrast to Christ, who appeared once for all (9:26), died once for all (7:27; 9:28), and entered the heavenly sanctuary once for all (9:12). [Back to text.](#)

9:26 end of the age: The final stretch of the Old Covenant era, which the author perceives is "ready to vanish away" (8:13). See introduction: *Date.* [Back to text.](#)

9:27 to die once: No man dies twice, and so neither does Christ, who shared fully in our humanity (2:14; Rom 6:9) (CCC 1013). **judgment:** Everyone will experience a personal judgment by God immediately after death (CCC 1021-22). [Back to text.](#)



9:28 bear the sins of many: An allusion to Is 53:12. • Isaiah describes the rejection and death of the Messiah, who makes himself a sin offering for the transgressions of his people (Is 53:10). The oracle resonates with several of the same themes that echo throughout Hebrews. **a second time:** Christ will come again from heaven to retrieve the saints destined for glory (1 Thess 4:16-17). [Back to text.](#)

10:1 a shadow: The sacrifices of the Law merely prefigured the perfect sacrifice of Christ (Col 2:16-17) (CCC 128). **the true form:** Or, "the true image". The expression implies that the liturgy of the New Covenant, which celebrates the saving work of Christ, still utilizes visible and sacramental signs for worship. So, for example, the ceremonial "food and drink", as well as the "baptisms" of the Levitical order (Heb 9:10), foreshadow the sacraments of the Eucharist (13:10) and Baptism (10:22) (CCC 1145-52). See notes on Heb 6:4 and 13:10. [Back to text.](#)

10:3 reminder of sin: The annual repetition of sacrifice on the Day of Atonement (10:4; Lev 16) is evidence that the Levitical cult was not a true solution to the problem of sin (Heb 10:2). Under the Old Covenant, sins are remembered but not removed; under the New Covenant, sins are removed and thus no longer remembered (8:12; 10:17) (CCC 1539-40). See word study: [Remembrance](#) at Lk 22:19. [Back to text.](#)



10:5-7 The Greek version of Ps 40:6-8. • The Psalmist views the human body as an instrument of sacrifice; it was created to be offered in obedience to the will of God. This is a form of worship more pleasing to the Lord than offering the flesh and blood of animals in the Temple (1 Sam 15:22). Jesus lives out the psalm to the utmost because his sinless life as a man, totally conformed to the divine will, made the priestly offering of his body and blood the perfect sacrifice that supersedes all others (Heb 9:12; 10:10) (CCC 614, 2100). • Four things must be considered with every sacrifice: to whom it is offered, by whom it is offered, what is offered, and for whom it is offered. Christ, the one Mediator, remained one with God, to whom he offered sacrifice, made those for whom he offered it one in himself, and acted as one in being both the one who offers and the offering (St. Augustine, *On the Trinity* 4, 19). [Back to text.](#)

10:7 to do your will: The will of the Father was the focus of the Son's mission in life, even to the point of death (5:8; Mk 14:36; Phil 2:8; CCC 606-7). [Back to text.](#)

10:9 the first . . . the second: The Old Covenant and the New (8:7, 13). [Back to text.](#)



10:11-13 The author contrasts the posture of Levitical priests (**stands**, 10:11) with that of Jesus (**sat down**, 10:12). His point: the work of the former was perpetually unfinished, while the work of the latter has been definitively accomplished. This applies to the earthly dimension of Christ's priesthood, since his ministry as a heavenly priest and intercessor is ongoing (7:25; 8:2). [Back to text.](#)

10:14 perfected: Christ accomplishes what the Mosaic ceremonies could not—the inward transformation of the worshiper (9:9-10; 10:1). This involves the cleansing of the conscience from guilt (9:14; 10:22) and the engraving of his Law on the heart (8:10; 10:16). See word study: [Made Perfect](#) at 5:9. [Back to text.](#)

10:15 the Holy Spirit: The divine author of the Scriptures (3:7; Acts 1:16; 2 Pet 1:21). [Back to text.](#)

10:16-17 Excerpts from the New Covenant prophecy of Jer 31:31-34. [See note on Heb 8:8-12.](#) [Back to text.](#)

10:19-25 Readers are urged to enter the heavenly sanctuary of God's presence. It is implied that this entry into heaven is a sacramental entry through the eucharistic **flesh** and **blood** of Jesus, whose glorified humanity gives us priestly access to the Father (4:16). Readers are also urged to grow in the virtues of **faith**, which perceives heavenly realities hidden to the eyes (11:1), **hope**, which is anchored in heaven and yearns to dwell there (6:18-19), and **love**, which reaches out to serve God and others (6:10; 13:1). [Back to text.](#)

10:20 the curtain: I.e., the humanity of Christ, which is the sanctuary veil that parts to give us entrance into the celestial Holy of Holies (9:3). [Back to text.](#)



10:22 draw near: I.e., into the presence of God, who sits enthroned in the innermost chamber of heaven (4:16). Believers draw near for prayer and worship, as the Israelites did in coming to the Mosaic Tabernacle (10:1). **hearts sprinkled . . . bodies washed:** An allusion to Baptism. Its waters make outward contact with the body but effect an inward cleansing of the heart (Acts 22:16; Eph 5:26; 1 Pet 3:21). • Sprinkling with blood and washing with water are liturgical rites associated with the ordination of Aaronic priests (Ex 29:4, 21; Lev 8:6, 30). In a similar way, Baptism consecrates us into the universal priesthood of believers (1 Pet 2:9; Rev 1:5-6). This qualifies us to enter the heavenly Tabernacle (Heb 10:19) and enables us to make pleasing sacrifices to the Lord (13:15-16) (CCC 1268). [Back to text.](#)

10:25 meet together: As a liturgical assembly. Exclusively private worship apart from the family of faith is discouraged (CCC 2178). **the Day:** The Day of Judgment. In its original context, this may have particular reference to the approaching judgment of Israel and the passing away of the Old Covenant with its sanctuary and priesthood. [Back to text.](#)

10:26 sin deliberately: By reverting to the worship of traditional Judaism with its ineffectual ceremonies and sacrifices (9:9-10). This amounts to exchanging the perfect sacrifice of Christ (10:14) for the animal sacrifices of the Law, which had no power to take away sin (10:1-4). [Back to text.](#)



10:28 two or three witnesses: A reference to Deut 17:6 and 19:15. • Moses required corroborative testimony from several witnesses before a man could be charged with a capital crime and put to death. For the author of Hebrews, the penalty for rejecting the gospel is far worse than for any infraction of the Torah (2:1-3). [Back to text.](#)



10:30 Vengeance is mine. . . . The Lord will judge: Two citations from Deuteronomy. • The first, at Deut 32:35, reads like a translation of the Aramaic *Targum Neofiti*, which differs from the Hebrew and Greek versions but is identical to Paul's citation of the passage in Rom 12:19. The second is from the Greek version of Deut 32:36. [Back to text.](#)

10:32-36 A flashback to the days when readers suffered persecution (12:4). [Back to text.](#)

10:32 enlightened: Possibly an allusion to Baptism. [See note on Heb 6:4.](#) [Back to text.](#)

10:34 a better possession: A heavenly inheritance, beyond the reach of thieves and looters (9:15; 11:16; Mt 6:20). [Back to text.](#)



10:37-39 The Greek version of Hab 2:3-4. • Habakkuk, who prophesied the conquest of Judea in the sixth century B.C., taught that **faith** is a protection against the judgment of God. The point is now made to Christians who are tempted to **shrink back** from the gospel and return to a Jewish way of life. [Back to text.](#)

11:1-40 The faith of the OT saints is celebrated. The chapter follows the story of the Bible from creation (11:3), to the days before the flood (11:4-7), to the patriarchal age (11:8-22), to the Exodus (11:23-29), to the Conquest of Canaan (11:30-31), to the Judges and the Monarchy (11:32-34), all the way to Maccabean times (11:35-38). The author intends to show how faith looks upward as well as forward, perceiving the anagogical (things in heaven) as well as the eschatological (things in the future). Because it sees beyond the hardships of this life, faith can also conquer the fear of suffering and death (CCC 147, 163). For a similar survey of biblical heroes, see Sir 44:1-50:21. [Back to text.](#)



11:1 things not seen: Such as the heavenly Jerusalem (11:10, 16; 12:22), where Jesus ministers in the heavenly sanctuary (4:14; 8:1-2; 12:2).
• Faith is distinct from all other acts of the intellect. It is defined as **assurance**, which distinguishes it from opinion, suspicion, and doubt; it adheres to **things not seen**, which distinguishes it from science, whose object is something apparent; and it is directed toward **things hoped for**, by which the virtue of faith is distinguished from popular notions of faith, which have no reference to the beatitude we hope to attain (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 4, 1). [Back to text.](#)

11:3 the world was created: The universe of time and space was not fashioned out of preexisting materials, but was spoken into existence by the Father (Gen 1:3; Ps 33:6-9) through the mediation of the Son (Heb 1:2) (CCC 286). [Back to text.](#)



11:4-7 The faithful who lived before the flood. • **Abel** was more righteous than his older brother, Cain, because he offered his sacrifice with faith, as testified by the voice of his innocent blood (11:4; Gen 4:1-10). **Enoch** walked by faith and not by sight for 300 years, as testified by his assumption into heaven (11:5; Gen 5:21-24). **Noah** put faith into action when he built the ark at a time when rain had not yet fallen on the earth (11:7; Gen 2:4-6; 6:5-22). [Back to text.](#)



11:6 must believe: Faith makes a relationship with God possible. • Faith is the foundation of everything and the beginning of human salvation. Apart from faith, one can neither be numbered among the sons of God nor obtain the grace of justification. Without faith, every human effort is empty (St. Fulgentius, *On the Faith* 1). [Back to text.](#)



11:8-22 The faithful of the patriarchal age. • **Abraham** stands out as the man of faith par excellence. He kept faith when the Lord called him to leave his homeland (Heb 11:8; Gen 12:1-4), to roam around Canaan like a nomad (Heb 11:9; Gen 12:5-9; 13:2-18), and to sacrifice his son as a holocaust (Heb 11:17-19; Gen 22:1-14). **Sarah** overcame doubts with faith,

believing that God could reverse the barrenness of her womb with the blessing of a son (Heb 11:11; Gen 21:1-3). **Isaac** and **Jacob** blessed their sons and gave them visions of the future (Heb 11:20-21; Gen 27:26-40; 48:8-20). **Joseph** peered into the future by faith, foreseeing the Exodus and the transfer of his bones out of Egypt (Heb 11:22; Gen 50:24-25; Ex 13:19) (CCC 2570-73). [Back to text.](#)

11:13 exiles on the earth: The Patriarchs realized that earth was not their true home and so longed for a dwelling more glorious and lasting (11:10). Hebrews pictures this as a heavenly land (11:15-16), city (11:10; 12:22), and sanctuary (8:5; 9:24). These transcendent realities were symbolized by the concentric zones of sacred space revered in ancient Judaism: the *land* of Israel, encompassing the *city* of Jerusalem, encompassing the *sanctuary* of Moses. [Back to text.](#)



11:19 a symbol: Isaac's escape from death (Gen 22:9-12) on the third day after God decreed it (Gen 22:4) prefigures the third-day Resurrection of Jesus (1 Cor 15:4). Abraham's faith in the power of God to rescue Isaac from death shines through his words spoken on the occasion: "I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you" (Gen 22:5). [Back to text.](#)

11:21 his staff: Follows the Greek version of Gen 47:31. The Hebrew reads "his bed". [Back to text.](#)



11:23-28 The faith of Moses and his parents. • Here the author brings out how faith conquers fear. This is seen when the **parents** of Moses dare to conceal his birth (11:23; Ex 2:1-2); when **Moses** himself chooses to side with his people instead of to commit sin (11:25-26; Ex 2:11-14); and when he leads them in the celebration of the Passover (11:28; Ex 12:21-28). [Back to text.](#)

11:25 fleeting pleasures: The luxuries of life open to Moses in the royal palace of Pharaoh. [Back to text.](#)

11:26 suffered for the Christ: Moses preferred to suffer with his people rather than cling to his possessions as an Egyptian prince. For the author, solidarity with the Hebrews is solidarity with the Hebrew Messiah destined to come from them. This speaks directly to the original readers, who also

suffered affliction and sustained losses of their property (10:32-34). [Back to text.](#)



11:29-31 The faithful of the Exodus and Conquest periods. • It took faith for the **people** of Israel to walk across the floor of the Red Sea with walls of water on both sides (11:29; Ex 14:21-31), just as faith was needed to level the city of **Jericho** with a liturgical procession rather than a military operation (11:30; Josh 6:1-20). **Rahab** displayed faith when she hid the scouts of Israel and professed belief in the God of Israel (11:31; Josh 2:1-21; 6:23). [Back to text.](#)



11:32-38 The faithful judges, kings, prophets, and martyrs. • In addition to those named in 11:32, allusion is made to others: Daniel stopped the **mouths of lions** (11:33; Dan 6:16-24); Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood unharmed while **fire** danced around them (11:34; Dan 3:23-27, 24-27); the widow of Zarephath and the Shunammite woman received their children back from the **dead** (11:35; 1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:32-37); the Maccabean martyrs were **tortured** as they professed faith in the resurrection (11:35; 2 Mac 7); the priest Zechariah was **stoned** in the Temple (11:37; 2 Chron 24:20-22); the prophet Isaiah was **sawn in two** (11:37; follows Jewish tradition); and the prophet Elijah wore animal **skins** (11:37; 2 Kings 1:8). [Back to text.](#)

11:39 did not receive: Not until Jesus opened the way to glory did the righteous of the OT enter the inheritance they saw from a distance. See topical essay: [Christ and "The Spirits in Prison"](#). [Back to text.](#)



12:1 cloud of witnesses: The heroes of biblical history enumerated in Hebrews 11. They are pictured crowded into a stadium, looking down on believers still running the race of faith and urging them on to victory. At the finish line stands Jesus, waiting to reward us (12:2). • Images of the faithful departed cheering us on hints at the communion and intercession of the saints. It shows that the Church in heaven is neither cut off from nor disinterested in the pilgrim Church on earth but is actively solicitous of her salvation (CCC 2683). **every weight:** As a runner sheds whatever might restrict his movements or hamper his performance, so the believer must rid

himself of every encumbrance in life that will jeopardize his chances for winning the eternal prize. **run with perseverance:** Life is more like a distance race than a short sprint. Endurance is therefore necessary to keep moving toward the finish without losing faith along the way (10:36). For the comparison between Christian living and athletic competition, [See note on 1 Cor 9:24-27.](#) [Back to text.](#)

12:2 looking to Jesus: Christ was victorious because he looked beyond the Cross to the crown of glory prepared for him by the Father (2:9). This is meant to encourage readers growing weary in the midst of persecution. **the shame:** Of the Crucifixion. [See note on Mk 15:24.](#) **seated at the right hand:** The position of the triumphant priest-king of Ps 110:1. [Back to text.](#)



12:5-6 A citation from Prov 3:11-12. • The proverb teaches that divine discipline is inspired by divine love. Without this wisdom, one might mistake the trials of life (such as persecution; Heb 10:32-36) for signs of God's anger hammering down on every fault and failure. On the contrary, God is a wise and caring Father who desires only to make his children better. It is because he loves them too much to overlook their sins and selfishness that he sends difficulties to train them in righteousness and to raise them to spiritual adulthood. In point of fact, the sons of God are being forged in the image of God the Son, who "learned obedience through what he suffered" (5:8) (CCC 2825). [Back to text.](#)

12:8 illegitimate children: Those with no rights of inheritance in Roman society. [Back to text.](#)

12:9 earthly fathers: Literally, "fathers of our flesh", which sets up a contrast with God as the Father of spirits. [Back to text.](#)



12:12-13 Continuing the race metaphor in 12:1, the author pictures his discouraged readers as a runner slouched over with exhaustion and swerving back and forth along the track. Like a coach, he urges them to summon their energies and charge ahead toward the finish line. • His words allude to the Greek versions of Is 35:3 (**drooping hands, weak knees**) and Prov 4:26 (**straight paths**). Isaiah encourages the fearful of Israel with news that God is coming to their rescue, and the proverb is a father's instruction to his son to follow the straight and narrow way of righteousness. [Back to text.](#)

12:14 Strive for peace: So far as it depends on the believer, who might be tempted to return evil for evil to his persecutors (Rom 12:14-18). **holiness:** Personal sanctification is required for attaining the vision of God in heaven (Mt 5:8; Rev 22:4). This includes being made holy or sanctified by the grace of God, first of all in Baptism (1 Cor 6:11). However, the Lord also wills us to "strive" for an increase in sanctification by the exertion of our will in living the gospel to the full (Rom 6:19; 1 Thess 3:12-13; 4:3). The text declares this second aspect of holiness to be indispensable for reaching heaven. [Back to text.](#)



12:15 root of bitterness: Someone who spreads discouragement and doubt among believers. Readers must guard against anyone having such an evil influence on others. • The expression comes from Deut 29:18, where it refers to an idolater who leads Israel away from the Lord. [Back to text.](#)



12:16 Esau: Despised his birthright and traded it in for momentary pleasure. • Esau, being a first-born, was entitled to the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant that passed through the line of Isaac (Gen 22:16-18; 26:1-5). However, he relinquished this inheritance when he exchanged his birthright for a mere meal (Gen 25:27-34), and though he later regretted his losses, he was never able to recover them (Gen 27:30-40). This tragedy stands as a warning for readers, who share in the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant (Heb 6:13-18) but who are tempted to relinquish their faith for temporary relief from persecution. [Back to text.](#)

12:18-24 The Old Covenant is contrasted with the New: they are represented by different mountains (Sinai/Zion), different assemblies (Israel/Church), different responses (fear/ worship), different locations (earth/heaven), and different mediators (Moses/Jesus). The author is launching his final appeal to keep readers from sliding back into Judaism. See introduction: *Destination and Purpose.* [Back to text.](#)



12:18-21 Israel's experience at Mount Sinai. • What **may be touched** refers to the mountain itself as the Lord descended upon it with a dramatic display of fire and smoke and blaring trumpets (12:18; Ex 19:16-20; Deut 4:11). Terrified by this, the people begged to hear **no further**

messages directly from Yahweh after he had uttered the Decalogue in a thunderous voice (12:19; Ex 19:19; 20:18-20; Deut 5:4). No man or **beast** was permitted to touch the mountain (Heb 12:20; Ex 19:12-13) except for Moses, who later admitted to trembling **with fear** (Heb 12:21; Deut 9:19). [Back to text.](#)

12:22-24 The celestial liturgy of heaven, where angels and saints are gathered to worship God and to celebrate the redeeming work of Christ (Rev 4-5; 7:9-17; 14:1-5; etc.). Readers are invited to join in this eternal liturgy (Heb 12:28) by entering the heavenly sanctuary through prayer and sacramental worship (10:19-22) (CCC 2188). [Back to text.](#)

12:22 Mount Zion: The heavenly summit (Rev 14:1) whose counterpart is the earthly mountain where Jerusalem has stood for centuries (Ps 76:2; Is 2:3). **heavenly Jerusalem:** Alluded to earlier as the city whose foundations were laid by God in eternity (11:10, 16). Other passages refer to this as the Jerusalem "above" (Gal 4:26) and the "holy city" from heaven (Rev 21:2, 10). [Back to text.](#)

12:23 the assembly: Or, "the Church". **the first-born:** The saints in heaven (the Greek is plural) united with Christ the first-born Son (1:6). **enrolled:** I.e., registered by name in the heavenly Book of Life (Lk 10:20; Rev 21:27). **spirits of just men:** Perhaps the righteous men and women of OT times who were perfected by Christ (11:40) and led into heaven (Eph 4:8). Like all the faithful departed, only their "spirits" are present with God as they await the resurrection of their bodies at the end of history (1 Cor 15:51-55). [Back to text.](#)

12:24 blood that speaks: The spilled blood of Abel cried out for vengeance (11:4; Gen 4:10), but the sprinkled blood of Jesus calls for forgiveness and peace (Heb 9:12; Col 1:20). [Back to text.](#)

12:25 The argument that a greater message lays greater responsibility on the hearers also appears in 2:1-3 and 10:28-29, where the same contrast is made between the Law of Moses and the gospel of Christ. [Back to text.](#)

12:26 shook the earth: Mount Sinai quaked and rumbled in the presence of God (Ex 19:18; Ps 68:8). [Back to text.](#)



12:26 Yet once more: A citation from Hag 2:6. • Haggai speaks in apocalyptic terms about a dramatic intervention of God to overthrow the kingdoms of the earth (Hag 2:21-22). The point here is that God is about to

shake "the world" of the Old Covenant to the ground, so that only the unshakable kingdom of Christ will be left standing amidst the rubble (Heb 12:28). [See note on Heb 8:13](#) and essay: *End of the World?* at Matthew 24. [Back to text.](#)



12:29 a consuming fire: God is a raging fire of love and holiness, which is warming and purifying to the saints (Lk 3:16; 1 Pet 1:6-7) but searing and punishing to the sinner (Heb 10:26-27). • The imagery comes from Deut 4:24. [Back to text.](#)



13:2 entertained angels: Hospitality is encouraged by recalling how OT figures such as Abraham (Gen 18:121), Lot (Gen 19:1-3), Gideon (Judg 6:11-24), and Tobias (Tob 5:4-9) welcomed heavenly messengers without realizing it. [Back to text.](#)

13:3 in prison: Visiting the imprisoned is a charitable work of mercy (Mt 25:36; CCC 2447). [Back to text.](#)

13:4 the marriage bed: Prohibits every form of sexual immorality inside (e.g., adultery) and outside (e.g., fornication) the boundaries of lawful wedlock. This standard of chastity applies to the married and unmarried alike. [See note on Eph 5:3.](#) [Back to text.](#)



13:5 love of money: A deadly vice that, left unchecked, can destroy our hope of salvation (Mt 6:24; 19:23). **I will never fail you:** Encouragement once given to Joshua (Deut 31:6, 8; Josh 1:5). It inspires contentment in the Providence of God, who can always be trusted to meet our needs (Mt 6:25-34; 1 Tim 6:6-10). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Mediator ([Heb 12:24](#))

Mesitēs (Gk.): a middleman who tries to resolve differences between two parties or help them work together toward a common end. The term is used six times in the NT, twice in reference to Moses (Gal 3:19-20) and four times for Christ (Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24; 1 Tim 2:5). Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant who stood in the gap between Israel and Yahweh. He

spoke the word of God to Israel in the Law (Ex 20:19; Deut 5:5), and he spoke to God on behalf of Israel as an intercessor (Ex 32:30-32; Num 14:13-19). Christ is a more perfect mediator between God and his people because he unites in himself both humanity and divinity. He therefore mediates and administers a more excellent covenant than did Moses and the priests of Israel, a covenant that brings the Father and the human family together through an eternal redemption from sin (Heb 9:11-14) and perpetual intercession in heaven (Heb 7:25).



13:6 The Lord is my helper: A citation from Ps 118:6. • Recalling how the Lord delivered him from distress in times past, the Psalmist bursts out with a prayer of confidence in God in the face of new enemy threats. [Back to text.](#)

13:7 Remember your leaders: The original pastors of the community. [Back to text.](#)

13:8 the same: Jesus Christ is unchanging because he is divine, i.e., he is the Lord who is more ancient and more permanent than the visible universe (1:12). [Back to text.](#)

13:9 not by foods: The eaten portions of Temple sacrifices are probably in view (1 Cor 9:13; 10:18). [Back to text.](#)

13:10 an altar: Many interpret this as a reference to the Cross or to the sacrifice of Jesus in general. More likely, it refers to the eucharistic altar of the Church, which is off-limits to the non-Christian priests serving at the sanctuary altar in Jerusalem. In favor of this reading, several considerations suggest that the Eucharist is a significant, albeit submerged, element in the theology of Hebrews. **(1)** The towering importance of the New Covenant throughout the letter points in this direction, since Jesus mentioned "the new covenant" only in the context of the Last Supper (Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25). This would not go unnoticed by readers familiar with the Gospels' traditions. **(2)** At one point, the author seems to allude to the eucharistic words of Jesus ([See note on Heb 9:20](#)). Not only so, but the allusion leads to a significant point about the relationship between shedding blood and the forgiveness of sins (9:22), a point that Jesus himself also made in the words of institution (Mt 26:27-28). **(3)** A reference to the Eucharist probably occurs in 6:4, where Christian initiation involves tasting a "heavenly gift".

(4) The typology in 7:1-3 invites us to consider the links between Jesus and the priest Melchizedek. Christian readers would naturally see a prefiguration of the sacrament in the "bread and wine" offered by Melchizedek (Gen 14:18). (5) Hebrews teaches that we draw near to God and actually enter his heavenly sanctuary "by the blood of Jesus" (10:19) and "through his flesh" (10:20). It is difficult to know how the humanity of Christ enables us to accomplish this in the present apart from Eucharistic Communion (CCC 1182). [Back to text.](#)



13:12 outside the gate: A final connection is made between the sacrifice of Jesus and the Day of Atonement liturgy developed in Heb 9-10.

- After the sin offerings were slain in the outer court of the Tabernacle, the carcasses of the victims were dragged outside the camp of Israel to be burned (Lev 16:27). This signifies how the body of Jesus was disgraced outside the city walls of Jerusalem (Mk 12:8; Jn 19:17-20). Readers are challenged to follow him out, leaving behind the city and sanctuary of the Old Covenant and ready to suffer for the gospel as he did (Heb 13:13-14). [Back to text.](#)

13:14 the city . . . to come: The heavenly Jerusalem (12:22; CCC 2796). [Back to text.](#)

13:17 Obey your leaders: The pastors who replaced the original leaders of the community remembered in 13:7 (CCC 1269). [See note on 1 Thess 5:12.](#) [Back to text.](#)

13:20 from the dead: The only explicit mention of Jesus' Resurrection in the letter, although the fact is often assumed (2:14; 5:7; 7:16; etc.). [Back to text.](#)

13:22 word of exhortation: The same expression is used in Acts 13:15 to refer to a synagogue sermon. For this and other reasons, many scholars maintain that the Letter to the Hebrews is a homily that came to be written down. See introduction: *Themes and Characteristics.* [Back to text.](#)

13:23 Timothy: A mutual friend of the author and his readers. He is commonly identified with Paul's missionary coworker of this name from Asia Minor (Acts 16:1-4). If that is who he is, this is the only indication in the NT that he spent time in prison. For his background, [see note on 1 Tim 1:2.](#) [Back to text.](#)

13:24 Those who come from Italy: This could mean that Hebrews was written either *from* Italy or *to* Italy, depending on the present location of the author's Italian companions. Traditionally it was held that Hebrews was sent from Italy to a community of believers in Palestine; many modern scholars, however, interpret the geographical reference the other way around. [Back to text.](#)

INTRODUCTION TO THE LETTER OF SAINT JAMES

Author The author of the epistle identifies himself as "James" (1:1). Because several persons in the NT bear this name, it is necessary to settle on his identity by a process of elimination. Two men of this name were among the apostles of Jesus: James the son of Zebedee (Mk 1:19; 3:17) and James the son of Alphaeus (Lk 6:15; Acts 1:13). No doubt these figures possessed the requisite authority to instruct the Church in writing, but most scholars think it improbable that either one wrote the Letter of James—the former was martyred in A.D. 44, probably too early to have been the author (Acts 12:2), and very little is known about the latter beyond the fact of his enrollment among the Twelve. Instead, scholars through the centuries have given preference to a third figure of the apostolic age: James of Jerusalem, also known as "the Lord's brother" (Gal 1:19). This James was a kinsman of Jesus (Mk 6:3). He was also a witness to the Resurrection (1 Cor 15:7) and later became one of the "pillars" (Gal 2:9) of the earliest Christian community in Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; 15:13-21; 21:17-18). Tradition refers to him as "James the Just" and remembers him as a man of exceptional piety and prayerfulness. Ancient sources tell us that he was martyred in Jerusalem in A.D. 62 by order of the Jewish high priest, having been either stoned, clubbed, or thrown from the pinnacle of the Temple (Josephus, *Antiquities* 20, 200; Hegesippus, as quoted in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2, 23). Tradition also relates that James was the first bishop of Jerusalem and the first in a line of fifteen Hebrew Christians to hold that position in succession (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2, 1, and 4, 5).

Modern scholarship often distinguishes this James from the author of the letter bearing his name. In other words, despite general agreement that 1:1 refers to James of Jerusalem, it is held that a later admirer of James wrote in the name of this revered figure in order to instruct believers near the end of the first century. Often the proponents of pseudonymity contend **(1)** that the Greek style of the letter is too smooth and sophisticated to be the work of a Galilean Jew, whose first language must have been Aramaic, and **(2)** that its

mention of "elders" in 5:14 reflects a stage in the development of Church leadership more advanced than what existed in James' lifetime. Neither argument is decisive. For one thing, scholarship continues to produce evidence that Galilee was thoroughly bilingual during the NT period (Aramaic and Greek), so the ability of a Palestinian Jew, especially one who was intellectually gifted, to write in excellent Greek is far from impossible (e.g., the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus was educated in first-century Jerusalem and acquired an impressive command of Hellenistic Greek, as well as classical Greek literature). Second, unless one disregards the Book of Acts as a witness to history, it is clear that a hierarchical system of leadership (with "elders" or "presbyters") had emerged well before the end of the first century (Acts 14:23; 20:17; cf. 1 Pet 5:1-2). Beyond these objections, it may be said that the opening self-description of James as a "servant" of the Lord Jesus (Jas 1:1) is best explained if James himself is the author of the letter. In other words, it presupposes that he is already known to his readers and feels no need to assert his authority or credentials. A pseudonymous author, hoping to borrow the reputation of James for himself, would more likely have described him in exalted rather than humble terms. Or, at least, he would have given a sufficiently explicit description of James to help readers identify which of the ancient Jameses he was claiming to be.

Date It is difficult to date the Letter of James because it contains very little information about the historical circumstances of its author and readers. If the epistle was written by James of Jerusalem, the "brother of the Lord", then it must have been composed before his death in the early 60s. How much earlier than this it can be dated is all but impossible to determine. Evidence within the letter is generally supportive of an early date: it is markedly Jewish in its outlook; it addresses believers who gather together in an assembly (literally, "synagogue", 2:2); and its illustrations drawn from nature and experience are suggestive of a Palestinian setting (1:11; 3:6, 12; 5:7). Of course, no one of these considerations proves that the letter must have been written in the days of James of Jerusalem, but together they create an impression that its author was living in the earliest decades of the Church, i.e., at a time when the mission field of the gospel was still concentrated in Israel and its environs and before Christianity and Judaism had irrevocably distinguished themselves from one another (the parting of

the two is clear by the late first century). Scholars who maintain that an unknown Christian wrote the letter using "James" as a pseudonym usually assign it a date between A.D. 80 and 100.

Destination James wrote this epistle, not to a single congregation, but to "the twelve tribes in the Dispersion" (1:1). This may refer to Hebrew Christians who were exiled from Palestine and had settled throughout the Mediterranean world. This living situation beyond the borders of Israel was known in Jewish tradition as the Dispersion, or Diaspora. Others read this as a reference to the universal Church, the family of Christian Jews and Gentiles who together formed "the Israel of God" (Gal 6:16). Still another possibility is that James was addressing Israelite Christians who had once been residents of Jerusalem and members of the earliest community of believers, but who had been dispersed throughout the land of Palestine and beyond because of persecutions that arose in the holy city (Acts 8:1; 11:19). There is some indication in the NT that descendants of various Israelite tribes (not just Jews from the tribe of Judah) had been present in first-century Jerusalem (Lk 2:36; Acts 2:5; 4:36; Rom 11:1), and it is reasonable to infer that James could have written to encourage them in their trials as the shepherd of the scattered Jerusalem flock (Acts 15:13-21; 21:17-26). In any case, James is traditionally listed among the seven "Catholic Epistles" (along with 1 and 2 Peter; 1, 2, and 3 John; and Jude). These letters, rather than being sent to individual churches, like most of Paul's epistles, were intended to circulate broadly within the Christian community (the adjective "catholic" means "universal").

Themes and Characteristics In many ways the Letter of James is an amalgam of literary forms. Its opening greeting is reminiscent of a personal *letter*; its multiple exhortations are like those of a *homily*; its conversational style gives it the flavor of a *diatribe*; its proverbial sayings and illustrations have close affinities with Jewish *wisdom literature*; and its powerful warnings bring to mind the *judgment oracles* of the Hebrew Prophets. James also combines the excellent Greek style of a Hellenistic intellectual with the distinctively Semitic style of a Jewish sage.

In terms of content, the letter is thoroughly devoted to ethical catechesis. At least three factors form the backbone of its moral and spiritual instruction. **(1)** Many scholars have called the Letter of James an example

of Christian wisdom literature, since the wisdom traditions of the OT deal in a similar way with the practical aspects of religious faith and life. Not only does James maintain the same focus on principles of righteous conduct, but even his didactic approach mimics certain wisdom books, such as the Wisdom of Solomon and Sirach, in their use of concrete illustrations, parallelism, and a rhythmic style that glides gracefully from topic to topic. **(2)** If James draws inspiration from the wisdom traditions of Israel, he is equally indebted to the teaching of Jesus Christ. He is especially familiar with the stream of tradition that eventually flowed into Matthew's Gospel. Echoes of the voice of Jesus can be heard on an array of subjects in almost every chapter of the epistle. This stands out most clearly in the sayings about the poor and the kingdom (2:5; Mt 5:3), the tree and its fruit (3:12; Mt 7:16), the peacemakers (3:18; Mt 5:9), humility and exaltation (4:10; Mt 23:12), the rusted and moth-eaten wealth (5:2-3; Mt 6:19), the Judge standing at the doors (5:9; Mt 24:33), and the precept against oath swearing (5:12; Mt 5:33-37). **(3)** Finally, the moral instruction delivered by James is set within the framework of a coming judgment (2:13; 4:12; 5:1-11). His urgent appeal to align one's confession and one's conduct is driven by the prospect that Jesus, the messianic Judge, is already at hand (5:8) and is about to lead the righteous and the unrighteous on their separate ways. «

OUTLINE OF THE LETTER OF SAINT JAMES

1. Opening Address ([1:1](#))

2. Introduction of Themes ([1:2-27](#))

A. Patience in Trials and Temptations ([1:2-15](#))

B. Being Born of the Word ([1:16-25](#))

C. True Religion ([1:26-27](#))

3. Discussion of Themes ([2:1-5:18](#))

A. Partiality and the Law of Charity ([2:1-13](#))

B. Faith and Works ([2:14-26](#))

C. Taming the Tongue ([3:1-12](#))

D. Wisdom and Worldliness ([3:13-4:17](#))

E. The Coming of the Lord ([5:1-12](#))

F. Anointing and Prayer for the Sick ([5:13-18](#))

4. Conclusion ([5:19-20](#))

THE LETTER OF

JAMES

Chapters

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#)

Essays and Charts

[Faith and Works](#)

[The Teaching of James and Jesus](#)

Salutation

1 [James](#), a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
To the twelve tribes [*](#) in the Dispersion:
Greeting.

Faith and Wisdom

2 [Count it all](#) joy, [my brethren](#), when you meet various trials, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

5 If any of you lacks [wisdom](#), let him ask God, who gives to all men generously and without reproaching, and it will be given him. ⁶But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ^{7, 8}For that person must not suppose that a [double-minded](#) man, unstable in all his ways, will receive anything from the Lord.

Poverty and Riches

9 [Let the lowly brother](#) boast in his exaltation, ¹⁰and [the rich](#) in his humiliation, because like the flower of the grass he will pass away. ¹¹For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

Trial and Temptation

12 Blessed is the man who endures trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive [the crown of life](#) which God has promised to those who love him. ¹³Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for [God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one](#); ¹⁴but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown brings forth death.

16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. ¹⁷Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from [the Father of lights](#) with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.^a ¹⁸Of his own will he brought us forth by the [word of truth](#) that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

19 Know this, my beloved brethren. [Let every man be quick to hear](#), slow to speak, slow to anger, ²⁰for [the anger of man](#) does not work the righteousness of God. ²¹Therefore put away all filthiness and rank growth of wickedness and receive with meekness the [implanted word](#), which is able to save your souls.

22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ^{*} ²³For if any one is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who observes his natural face in [a mirror](#); ²⁴for he observes himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵But he who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer that forgets but a doer that acts, he shall be blessed in his doing.

26 If any one thinks he is religious, and does not [bridle his tongue](#) but deceives his heart, this man's religion is vain. ²⁷[Religion](#) that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

[Warning against Partiality](#)

2 ^{*} [My brethren](#), show no partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. ²For if a man with gold rings and in fine clothing comes into your [assembly](#), and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, ³and you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "Have a seat here, please," while you say to the poor man, "Stand there," or, "Sit at my feet," ⁴have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? ⁵Listen, my beloved brethren. Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in

faith and [heirs of the kingdom](#) which he has promised to those who love him? ⁶But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you, is it not they who drag you into court? ⁷Is it not they who blaspheme [that honorable name](#) by which you are called?

8 If you really fulfil [the royal law](#), according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well. ⁹But if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰For whoever keeps the whole law but [fails in one point](#) has become guilty of all of it. * ¹¹For he who said, "[Do not commit adultery](#)," said also, "Do not kill." If you do not commit adultery but do kill, you have become a transgressor of the law. ¹²So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. ¹³For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy; yet [mercy triumphs](#) over judgment.

Faith without Works Is Dead

14 What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? [Can his faith save him](#)? * ¹⁵If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and in lack of daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? ¹⁷So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

18 But [some one will say](#), "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith. ¹⁹You believe that [God is one](#); you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder. ²⁰Do you want to be shown, you foolish fellow, that faith apart from works is barren? ²¹Was not Abraham our father [justified](#) by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? ²²You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by works, ²³and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "[Abraham believed God](#), and it was reckoned to him as righteousness"; and he was called the friend of God. ²⁴You see that a man is justified by works and not by [faith alone](#). ²⁵And in the same way was not also [Ra'hab](#) the harlot justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? ²⁶For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead.

Taming the Tongue

3 [Let not](#) many of you become [teachers](#), my brethren, for you know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness. ²For we all make many mistakes, and if any one makes no mistakes in what he says he is a

perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also. ³If we put bits into the mouths of horses that they may obey us, we guide their whole bodies. ⁴Look at the ships also; though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. ⁵So the tongue is a little member and boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire!

6 And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is an [unrighteous world](#) among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the cycle of nature,^b and set on fire by hell.^c ⁷For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ⁸but no human being can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹With it [we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men](#), who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brethren, this ought not to be so. ¹¹Does a spring pour forth from the same opening fresh water and brackish? ¹²Can a fig tree, my brethren, yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can salt water yield fresh.

Two Kinds of Wisdom

13 [Who is wise](#) and understanding among you? By his good life let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. ¹⁵This wisdom is not such as comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. ¹⁶For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. ¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without uncertainty or insincerity. ¹⁸And the harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Friendship with the World

4 What causes [wars](#), and what causes fightings among you? Is it not your passions that are at war in your members? ²You desire and do not have; so you kill. And you covet^d and cannot obtain; so you fight and wage war. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³[You ask and do not receive](#), because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. ⁴[Unfaithful creatures!](#) Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you suppose it is in vain that the Scripture says, "He yearns

jealously over the spirit which he has made to dwell in us"? ⁶But he gives more grace; therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." ⁷Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you men of double mind. ⁹Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to dejection. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you.

Warning against Judging Another

¹¹ Do not speak evil against one another, brethren. He that speaks evil against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. ¹²There is one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you that you judge your neighbor?

Boasting about Tomorrow

¹³ Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and get gain"; ¹⁴whereas you do not know about tomorrow. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. ¹⁵Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and we shall do this or that." ¹⁶As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

Warning to Rich Oppressors

⁵ Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. ²Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. ³Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure^e* for the last days. ⁴Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. ⁵You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. ⁶You have condemned, you have killed the righteous man; he does not resist you.

Patience in Suffering

⁷ Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it until it receives the early and the late rain. ⁸You also be patient. Establish your

hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. ⁹Do not grumble, brethren, against one another, that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the doors. ¹⁰As an example of suffering and patience, brethren, take [the prophets](#) who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹Behold, we call those happy who were steadfast. You have heard of [the steadfastness of Job](#), and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

¹² [But above all](#), my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath, but let your yes be yes and your no be no, that you may not fall under condemnation.

The Prayer of Faith

¹³ * Is any one among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise. ¹⁴Is any among you sick? Let him call for the [elders](#) of the Church, and let them pray over him, [anointing](#) him with oil in the name of the Lord; ¹⁵and the prayer of faith will [save the sick man](#), and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶Therefore [confess your sins to one another](#), and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects. ¹⁷[Eli'jah](#) was a man of like nature with ourselves and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. ¹⁸Then he prayed again and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth its fruit.

¹⁹ My brethren, if any one among you wanders from the truth and some one brings him back, ²⁰let him know that whoever [brings back a sinner](#) from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

Commentary on The Letter of Saint James



1:1 James: A Greek form of the Hebrew name "Jacob". He is probably James of Jerusalem, known as "the Lord's brother" (Gal 1:19). See introduction: *Author*. **servant:** Or "slave". This title is used for other apostolic writers, such as Peter (2 Pet 1:1) and Paul (Rom 1:1), just as it was for earlier biblical figures, such as Jacob (Ezek 28:25), Moses, (Mal 4:4), Joshua (Josh 24:29), David (2 Sam 7:8), and the Prophets (Jer 7:25; Ezek 38:17). **Jesus Christ:** Mentioned by name only here and in 2:1. **the twelve tribes:** Descendants of the twelve sons of Jacob (Gen 35:22-26) who have accepted Jesus as the Messiah (Jas 2:1). These Israelites may have been residents of Jerusalem who were dispersed throughout Palestine and neighboring territories because of persecutions in the city. For this and other interpretations, see introduction: *Destination*. • The opening address recalls the Greek version of Is 49:1-6, where *Jacob* is the *servant* of the Lord who calls out to the *tribes* of Israel in their *dispersion* with a message of salvation. [Back to text.](#)

1:2-27 Chapter 1 is an overview of the themes developed in the rest of the letter. These include encouragement during trial (1:2-4; 5:7-11), the need for wisdom (1:5; 3:13-18), the necessity of faith (1:5-8; 5:13-18), the treatment of the rich and poor (1:9-11; 2:1-7; 4:13-5:6), the call to put faith into action (1:22-25; 2:14-26), and the need for a controlled tongue (1:26; 3:1-12). [Back to text.](#)

1:2 my brethren: Nineteen times James addresses his readers as spiritual brothers (1:9, 16, 19; 2:1, 5, etc.). This high concentration of kinship language shows that James viewed himself and his readers as a family of spiritual siblings gathered around God as their Father (1:17) (CCC 1, 1655). **various trials:** A reminder that every hardship and suffering in life can be a cause to rejoice (Mt 5:11-12; Rom 5:3). These trials are part of God's plan to strengthen our faith, prove our fidelity, and bring us closer to perfection (1 Pet 1:6-7). Similarities between the Greek text of Jas 1:3-4 and 2:21-22 hint at how this process was played out in the life of Abraham when his

own faith reached perfection in the difficult ordeal of sacrificing Isaac. [Back to text.](#)

1:5 wisdom: Not human insight or ingenuity, but a heavenly gift that gives us a right understanding of life in relation to God (3:13-18). It is given generously to those, like Solomon (1 Kings 3:5-12), who ask for it with sincere faith (Jas 1:6-8) (CCC 2633). [Back to text.](#)

1:8 double-minded: Literally, "having two souls". Such a person holds back from a complete trust in God because inside he wavers between conviction and doubt (Sir 1:28). This makes prayer less fervent and answers to prayer less certain (CCC 2734). [Back to text.](#)

1:9-10 The prospect of "eschatological reversal" is in view. The poor and humble of the Lord look forward to **exaltation**, while the rich and prosperous of the world face future **humiliation** unless God is embraced as their true wealth (Lk 1:52-53; 6:20-26). [Back to text.](#)



1:10 the rich: Material wealth is destined to wither away like the beauty of a wild flower. The same is true of the wealthy person whose heart is attached to his belongings (5:16; Prov 11:28). • Isaiah used this imagery to contrast the eternal word of God with the temporal life of man, who is destined to wilt and die like grass (Is 40:6-8). This allusion to Isaiah explains why James goes on to say that God's "word" brings us unending life and blessedness (Jas 1:18, 21; 1 Jn 2:17). [Back to text.](#)

1:12 the crown of life: The Greek is appositional ("the crown which is life"). It refers to the eternal life that awaits the saints who have patiently and faithfully endured the trials of life (2 Tim 4:8; Rev 2:10). **those who love him:** A biblical description of those who keep God's commandments (Deut 5:10; 7:9; Jn 14:15). James will later stress that salvation and life are for those who not only believe in the Lord, but who love and obey him through faithful deeds (Jas 2:14-26). [Back to text.](#)

1:13 God . . . tempts no one: God tests us by putting us in situations that invite us to trust him (Gen 22:1). However, he never tempts us to turn away from him as Satan does (Mt 4:1). James is adamant that God is neither the author nor the promoter of evil, nor can he himself be tempted or overpowered by it. Sin is our own doing; it is conceived when we desire evil and is born when we act upon those desires (Jas 1:14-15) (CCC 2846-47). [Back to text.](#)

1:17 the Father of lights: I.e., the Creator of the sun, moon, and stars (Gen 1:14-19). Unlike these heavenly luminaries, which are constantly changing in brightness and position due to eclipses, lunar cycles, and the alternation of days, God is eternally unchanged and is ever consistent in blessing those who love him (Jas 1:12) (CCC 212). [Back to text.](#)

1:18 word of truth: The gospel of new life in Christ (Eph 1:13; 1 Pet 1:23-25). **first fruits:** James compares believers of the first generation (1:1) to the first sheaf of spring wheat that was cut from the field and offered to God in the Temple (Lev 23:9-11). This first portion was meant to thank the Lord for his gifts and to seek his blessing for an abundant harvest. Paul uses this image for Israelite believers (Rom 11:16). [Back to text.](#)

1:19-25 Two kinds of hearing are distinguished: in conversation, listening is more important than speaking (Sir 5:11-12), but in responding to the gospel, obeying is more important than merely listening (Lk 11:28; Rom 2:13). [Back to text.](#)

1:20 the anger of man: In biblical wisdom literature, anger is vented, not by the wise, but by the foolish (Prov 29:11; Eccles 7:9). Meekness is the virtue of gentleness and inner strength that restrains it (Jas 3:13; Mt 11:29). [Back to text.](#)

1:21 implanted word: The gospel is compared to a seed that is planted in the soul, where it can sprout and bear fruit for salvation. This may be an allusion to Jesus' parable of the Sower (Mt 13:1-9, 23). [Back to text.](#)

1:23 a mirror: One who merely hears the gospel is like one who merely *glances* at his reflection and soon forgets what he has seen (1:24). One who hears and obeys the gospel is like one who *gazes* into the law of Christ and sees there the path to blessing and life that he desires to follow (1:25). [Back to text.](#)

1:26 bridle his tongue: A warning treated in detail in 3:112. [Back to text.](#)



1:27 Religion: The Greek term is *thrēskeia*, which generally denotes religious acts of worship. For James, proper service to God is not reducible to a set of beliefs or liturgical rites; it includes prudent speech (1:26) as well as practical service to others. **visit orphans and widows:** Pure religion reaches out to the needy and takes practical steps to provide for their welfare. Charity of this sort was expected of Israel (Deut 14:29)

and is exemplified most perfectly by Yahweh (Ps 68:5) (CCC 2208). • Religion involves two kinds of acts. Some are directed immediately to God, such as sacrifice, adoration, etc. Others are directed to honoring God by means of the virtues he commands. Thus, visiting the fatherless and widows is an act of religion, as is the effort to keep oneself unstained by the world (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, 81, 1). [Back to text.](#)

2:1-7 James cautions believers not to favor the rich and discriminate against the poor. Though the world despises and oppresses the poor, God honors and blesses them with abundant faith (2:5; 1 Cor 1:26-31). These verses are followed by a warning that partiality and prejudice against the less fortunate violate the Levitical law of charity (Jas 2:8-13). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Assembly ([Jas 2:2](#))

Synagōgē (Gk.): can refer to a "gathering" of people or to a building used as a "synagogue". The word is used 56 times in the NT; it is also commonly found in the Greek OT, where it often refers to the assembled "congregation" of Israel (Num 16:3; Josh 22:16; Ps 74:2). Though the word is never wholly disconnected from gatherings of people, by NT times the term can also refer to the physical structure where religious gatherings took place. Synagogues in this sense were built both in Israel (Lk 7:5) and in the Diaspora (Acts 13:14; 17:17). These were houses of Jewish worship and instruction in the Scriptures (Mt 6:5; Lk 4:16; Acts 15:21), as well as places of judicial deliberation and discipline (Mt 10:17; 23:34; Lk 12:11). The use of the word in Jas 2:2 is ambiguous. It may refer to a synagogue building as the *place* where early believers assembled, either as a church community or as a Jewish Christian presence alongside non-believing Jews (Acts 9:2). Or, too, it may refer to a congregation of *people* gathered for worship and prayer but without direct reference to the physical location as such. In any case, language traditional to Judaism is here employed with reference to Christian believers.

2:5 heirs of the kingdom: Echoes the beatitude spoken by Jesus in Lk 6:20. The point is not that poverty itself is a blessing, but that those with

little in the world are better prepared to rely on God for their needs. It is the attitude of a child who trusts in his heavenly Father (Jas 1:17) that secures our inheritance in the kingdom of heaven (Mt 18:1-4) (CCC 2546-47). [Back to text.](#)

2:7 that honorable name: Presumably the name is "Christ", on account of which believers are called "Christians" (Acts 11:26; 1 Pet 4:16). [Back to text.](#)



2:8 the royal law: The law of Christ's kingdom (2:5), which incorporates the Mosaic laws of charity (2:8; Mt 22:34-40) and the commandments of the Decalogue (2:11; Mt 19:16-19) into the gospel teaching of Jesus (Mt 5-7; CCC 1972). **You shall love your neighbor:** A citation from Lev 19:18. • The precept of love is the summation of every commandment in the Torah dealing with our neighbor (Rom 13 :8-10). Beyond the quotation here, there are several allusions to Lev 19 throughout the Letter of James. This is clearest in the warnings against partiality (2:9; Lev 19:15), slander (4:11; Lev 19:16), withholding wages (5:4; Lev 19:13), and oath swearing (5:12; Lev 19:12). [Back to text.](#)

2:10 fails in one point: To trespass even a single commandment makes one a transgressor of the royal law of Christ and a sinner in the eyes of the Lawgiver. The challenge is to follow the laws of charity comprehensively, not selectively, realizing that God will judge both our speech and our actions by this standard (2:12) (CCC 578, 2069). [Back to text.](#)



2:11 Do not commit adultery . . . kill: Two of the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:13-14). [Back to text.](#)

2:13 mercy triumphs: Our conduct in this life sets the terms for our judgment in the next. Thus, the extent to which we have shown mercy to others is the extent to which we will receive mercy from the Lord (Mt 5:7; 6:14-15; 18:21-35). The following verses show that mercy is more than an attitude—it is expressed concretely through works of mercy and charity (Jas 2:14-16; Sir 16:14; Mt 25:34-40) (CCC 2447). [Back to text.](#)

2:14 Can his faith save him?: The form of the question in Greek implies a negative answer. It makes explicit what James teaches implicitly throughout the rest of the chapter: that our willingness to put faith into

action has a direct bearing on whether or not we will be saved in the end (CCC 162). [Back to text.](#)



2:18 some one will say: James makes use of a teaching style called "diatribe", where an imaginary conversation partner poses questions and raises objections that the author answers for his audience (2:20; 4:13-16). It cannot be assumed, given the use of this literary device, that James is debating an actual opponent who was harassing his readers. See also note on Rom 2:1-3:20. **You have . . . I have:** The issue is whether faith and works represent two different but equal ways to be justified before God. James denies the proposition and insists that faith that is not expressed in works is dead faith, not saving faith (2:26). If one has faith but no good works, he is no better off than the demons, who believe yet face the certainty of condemnation rather than justification (2:19). • Just as faith apart from works is dead, so works apart from faith are dead. If we have right doctrine but fail in right living, our doctrine is useless. So too, if we are careful about life but careless about doctrine, that will not benefit us either (St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 2, 14). [Back to text.](#)

2:19 God is one: The monotheistic faith of Israel (Deut 6:4). The demons are proof that it is possible to have merely intellectual faith without works of charity (Mk 3:11) (CCC 181416). [Back to text.](#)



2:21 justified: The doctrine of justification includes an initial action, whereby God makes the believer righteous by an infusion of grace, and an ongoing process, whereby the believer grows in righteousness by exercising his faith through good works. The latter sense is highlighted here (CCC 198795). See word study: [Justified](#) at Rom 2. **offered his son:** A reference to the sacrifice of Isaac in Gen 22:1-19. • Abraham had long believed in the Lord (Gen 15:6) before his faith was tested by the command to burn Isaac on the altar (Gen 22:12). This was not the first test he had faced as God's servant (1 Mac 2:52), nor was it the first time he had put his faith into action (Heb 11:8-9). It was rather the high point of Abraham's spiritual journey and the climactic ordeal that tested his trust in Yahweh like never before (Heb 11:17-19). Having passed the test in heroic fashion, his faith was at last "completed" (Jas 2:22). [See note on Jas 1:2.](#) [Back to text.](#)



2:23 Abraham believed God: A quotation from Gen 15:6. • This is the one explicit text in Genesis that refers to Abraham's faith, though his belief and trust in God are evident throughout. Here he believes in the promise of a son, despite his old age and the barrenness of his elderly wife (Gen 16:1; 18:11). Reading the passage in light of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac, James concludes that belief and behavior go together. So *faith* in God is inseparable from *faithfulness* to God, even in the most trying circumstances of life. **friend of God:** The background of this title is probably found in 2 Chron 20:7 and Is 41:8. [Back to text.](#)

2:24 faith alone: Faith by itself is "dead" (2:17), "barren" (2:20), and has no power to "save" anyone (2:14). In the NT, the expression "faith alone" occurs only in James, where it is rejected as false teaching. Paul often stresses the importance of "justification by faith", but he nowhere speaks of justification by faith alone (Rom 3:28; Gal 2:15-16). [Back to text.](#)



2:25 Rahab: The heroine of Josh 2:1-21. • Rahab of Jericho I offered hospitality and protection to Israelite scouts spying out the land of Canaan. Her assistance, coupled with a confession of faith in Yahweh (Josh 2:11), was rewarded as she and her family were rescued from the violent destruction of the city (Heb 11:31). [Back to text.](#)



3:1-12 An appeal for prudent and wholesome speech (1:19). Several illustrations are marshaled to demonstrate how an unbridled tongue can cause considerable damage in the world (Prov 16:27; Sir 28:17-26). Examples of misusing the tongue include blasphemy (Jas 2:7), cursing (3:9), slander (4:11), boasting (4:16), grumbling (5:9), and illicit oath swearing (5:12) (CCC 2148, 2479-81). • James shows how great an evil is man's tongue, so great that it cannot be tamed, even though men have tamed wild animals. He spoke, not with the intention that we should tolerate this evil, but in order that we might ask God for the grace to tame our tongues (St. Augustine, *On Nature and Grace* 15). [Back to text.](#)

3:1 teachers: Christian educators bear great responsibility for their teaching and influence. Since their mission involves extensive speaking, they are at greater risk than most for making "mistakes" in what they say

(3:2). The prospect of a stricter judgment should restrain them from uttering careless words (Mt 12:33-37) and teaching what they themselves do not understand (Sir 5:11-13). [Back to text.](#)

3:6 unrighteous world: The tongue is a microcosm of the fallen world, where sin and hurt prevail. It is extraordinarily difficult to bring under control. **cycle of nature:** Every stage of life, from youth to old age. **hell:** Literally, "Gehenna". See word study: [Hell](#) at Mk 9:43. [Back to text.](#)

3:9 we bless . . . we curse: Using the tongue in worship is contradicted by abusing the tongue in conversation. Despite our praise, the Father is not truly honored when our neighbor is dishonored and discouraged by harmful words. [Back to text.](#)

3:13-18 These verses continue to address the teachers mentioned in 3:1. The teacher who claims to be wise but is controlled by "jealousy and selfish ambition" (3:14) is really a fool whose wisdom stems from the world (3:15). True wisdom transforms the mind and heart of the teacher and is manifest through a pure and peaceable life (3:17). It is a divine gift that comes down from the Father above (1:17). [See note on Jas 1:5.](#) [Back to text.](#)

4:1-2 Wars among men are a symptom of the spiritual war within man, whose incessant drive for power and possessions spreads envy and violence throughout the world. The root problem is that our members too easily yield to the inclinations of our fallen nature (1 Pet 2:11). [See note on Rom 7:23.](#) [Back to text.](#)

4:3 You . . . do not receive: Prayers go unanswered when we seek what will gratify our cravings instead of the help we need to better ourselves. Corrupt motives impede our petitions in the same way that doubt does (1:5-8) (CCC 2737). [Back to text.](#)



4:4 Unfaithful creatures!: Literally, "Adulteresses!" • The Prophets used this epithet for the idolaters of Israel, whose infidelity to the covenant was considered spiritual adultery against Yahweh (Jer 3:6-10; 31:32; Hos 3:1). James charges some of his own readers with idolatry because their love for created things has overpowered their love for the Creator (see 1 Jn 2:15). Their **friendship with the world** stands in stark contrast to righteous Abraham, who became a "friend of God" because he was willing to

surrender even his most beloved possession (Isaac) to please the Lord (Jas 2:21-23). [Back to text.](#)

FAITH AND WORKS

The Letter of James presents many challenges to readers of the Bible. For one thing, what James teaches about faith and works can seem to contradict what Paul teaches on the same subject in Romans and Galatians. Both discuss topics such as faith, works, and justification, yet they seem to draw different conclusions, with Paul asserting the saving power of *faith* over works and James defending the saving value of *works* as an expression of faith. Martin Luther believed Paul and James to be in such sharp disagreement that he relegated the Letter of James to an appendix in his 1522 edition of the New Testament. This is not an option for Catholics, who maintain the inspiration and authority of the book, nor have other Christians followed Luther on this point. Still, the question remains how to reconcile the teaching of Paul and James on faith and works. Consider the following quotations.

Romans 3:28 *"For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law."*

James 2:24 *"You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone."*

On the surface, it seems as if Paul affirms what James denies, and James affirms what Paul denies. However, when we delve below the surface and examine these statements in their proper contexts, we discover that Paul and James are not in disagreement at all. In fact, they share a common doctrine on faith and works, though they draw attention to different aspects of it. This is not surprising, since they address different pastoral situations in the early Church.

FAITH First, when Paul speaks of justifying faith in Rom 3:28, he is talking about the faith of the convert that leads to Baptism. In other words, the apostle is making a general statement about how man is brought from sin to salvation. This process begins with faith and leads the believer to Baptism, which Paul teaches is the sacrament of our justification in Christ

(1 Cor 6:11; Gal 3:25-27; Tit 3:5-7). James, on the other hand, is dealing with a much different situation. He is talking, not about the faith of the convert, but about the faith of the professing Christian. He is making a general statement about those who already "hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jas 2:1). The point, then, is that Paul and James discuss the role of justifying faith in two different contexts, namely, before and after the believer is incorporated into Christ.

WORKS Second, it is important to notice that Paul, when he denies justification by works in Rom 3:28, is speaking very specifically about works of the Mosaic Law. His point is that no one can earn or merit the free gift of grace by obedience to the Torah. Whether one observes its moral commandments, such as those of the Decalogue, or its ritual and ceremonial obligations, such as circumcision, dietary laws, or Sabbath observance, none of these works—apart from the grace of Christ—can bring about the justification of the sinner. There is no reason to think that James would disagree with this. After all, when James affirms justification by works, he is talking, not about works of the Mosaic Law performed apart from grace, but about works of mercy performed by those who are already established in grace (Jas 1:27; 2:15-16). Again, Paul and James are discussing different scenarios. Paul denies the saving power of Mosaic works, performed on the strength of human nature, while James affirms the value of Christian works, performed by the grace and power supplied by Jesus Christ.

JUSTIFICATION Third, since Paul in Rom 3:28 is addressing issues related to conversion, it follows that he is talking about our initial justification in Christ, that is, the critical moment when God makes the believer righteous by an infusion of his Spirit and life. Apart from this divine action in the believer, human works—even those done in compliance with the Mosaic Law—are simply unable to merit the grace of our first justification in Christ, which is rather the free gift of his grace. James, we must recognize, is not contradicting this teaching when he says that believers are "justified by works" (Jas 2:24). Unlike Paul, he is not talking about the initial justification of the sinner at all; nor is he referring to works of the Mosaic Law undertaken to establish one's standing before God. Rather, he is discussing the ongoing justification of believers who put their faith into action and strive to live the gospel in practical and charitable

ways. These are works of Christian obedience undertaken in response to the grace of Christ. In this context, where Christian living is made possible by the grace of God, works do indeed contribute to our increase in righteousness and justification. This teaching of James is in full harmony with the teaching of Paul (Rom 2:13; 6:12-19).

More could be said about this issue, and additional distinctions could be made. Suffice it to say, there is no real discrepancy between Paul and James on the matter of faith and works. James does not contradict Paul. In fact, many scholars believe that James is refuting a popular misunderstanding of Paul's doctrine of justification. Is it merely a coincidence that Paul and James both discuss faith, works, and justification? Or is it merely happenstance that these doctrines are illustrated by turning to the figure of Abraham, whom Paul hails as a man of faith (Rom 4:1-12) and James hails as a man of faithfulness (Jas 2:21-23)? Probably not. James is correcting those who took Paul out of context and minimized the importance of works as a proper and necessary expression of faith in the Christian life. This is why he stresses that faith in Christ entails the obligation to live faithfully in Christ through good works. Thanks to the preservation of both Paul and James' writings in the New Testament, we have the benefit of having this clarification and of responding to the full message of the gospel. « [Back to James 4:1.](#)



4:5 He yearns jealously: This saying is not found verbatim in any extant text of the OT. It is probably a paraphrase of several biblical verses and ideas. • According to the RSV translation of the passage, God has given us a spirit to inhabit our bodies (Gen 6:3), and he jealously forbids allegiance to any other gods besides him (Ex 20:5). Another, perhaps preferable, translation is the following: "The spirit he has made to dwell in us yearns enviously." Read in this way, the passage stresses that envy corrupts the spirit of man and makes it a friend of the world rather than a friend of God, who gave it (4:4; Gen 8:21). [Back to text.](#)



4:6 God opposes the proud: A citation from Prov 3:34. The point is that pride, because it blinds us to our deepest needs, keeps us from the grace that is necessary to meet those needs (1 Pet 5:5). • God punishes thieves, perjurers, gluttons, and other sinners because they despise his commandments. However, he resists the proud in a special way, because they rely on their own strength as if they could save themselves without help from above. On the other hand, God gives grace to the humble because they recognize their need and ask God for help in overcoming their sins (St. Bede, *On the Seven Catholic Epistles* at Jas 4:6). [Back to text.](#)

4:7 Resist the devil: Resistance is possible only because the power of God within us is greater than the power of the Evil One present in the world (1 Jn 4:4). For similar exhortations, see Eph 6:11-17 and 1 Pet 5:8-9. [Back to text.](#)

4:8 Draw near to God: A call to return to the covenant and reestablish friendship with God (Zech 1:3; Mal 3:7). **Cleanse your hands:** The priests of Israel used to wash their hands before ministering in the sanctuary (Ex 30:17-21). James speaks, not of cultic purity, but of moral purity, exhorting readers to wash themselves of evil deeds and intentions. Purification is demanded of everyone who approaches the all-holy God (Ps 24:4-5; Is 1:15-16). [Back to text.](#)

4:9 mourn and weep: A call to shed tears of repentance (Mt 5:4). Catholic tradition refers to this as "compunction" of heart. [Back to text.](#)

4:10 Humble yourselves . . . exalt you: Echoes the saying of Jesus in Mt 23:12, which is likewise paraphrased in 1 Pet 5:6. [Back to text.](#)



4:11 Do not speak evil: Believers are forbidden to malign each other with either true (detraction) or false information (calumny). This behavior is injurious because it uses words to put others down and lift oneself up. James warns that one who speaks evil vaults himself above the law and therefore into the place of God, who alone is the "lawgiver and judge" of our neighbor (4:12) (CCC 2477). • This is probably an allusion to the prohibition against slander in Lev 19:16. [See note on Jas 2:8.](#) [Back to text.](#)

The Teaching of James and Jesus

Several times in the Letter of James we hear the voice of Jesus. The Lord's words are never quoted verbatim, but many instructions read like paraphrases of the teachings of Jesus, especially those preserved in the Gospel of Matthew. The majority echo sayings from the Sermon on the Mount in Mt 5-7. Below are some of the more obvious parallels.

Jas 1:4 "And . . . that you may be *perfect* and complete, lacking in nothing."

Mt 5:48 "You, therefore, must be *perfect*, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Jas 1:5 "[L]et him *ask* God, who *gives* to all men generously. . . ."

Mt 7:7 "Ask, and it will be *given* you. . . ."

Jas 1:22 "But be *doers* of the word, and not *hearers* only. . . ."

Mt 7:24 "Every one . . . who *hears* these words of mine and *does* them. . . ."

Jas 2:5 "Has not God chosen those who are *poor* . . . to be . . . heirs of the *kingdom*"

Mt 5:3 "Blessed are the *poor* in spirit, for theirs is the *kingdom* of heaven."

Jas 2:13 "For judgment is without *mercy* to one who has *shown* no *mercy*. . . ."

Mt 5:7 "Blessed are *the merciful*, for they shall obtain *mercy*."

Jas 3:18 "And the harvest of righteousness is sown . . . by *those who make peace*."

Mt 5:9 "Blessed are *the peacemakers*, for they shall be called sons of God."

Jas 5:2-3 "[G]arments are moth-eaten . . . gold and silver have *rusted* . . . laid up *treasure*"

Mt 6:19 "Do not lay up for yourselves *treasures* . . . where *moth* and *rust* consume. . . ."

Jas 5:10 "As an example of suffering and patience, brethren, take *the prophets*. . . ."

Mt 5:12 "[F]or so men persecuted *the prophets* who were before you."

Jas 5:12 "[D]o *not swear* . . . but let your *yes be yes* and your *no be no* . . ."

Mt 5:34, 37 "Do *not swear* at all . . . Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'. . . ."

4:14 you are a mist: A rebuke for those who plan their lives without consideration of God's will. Such behavior is actually arrogant (4:16), because it fails to acknowledge how short and uncertain life really is and how God alone has the absolute power to determine whether our plans come to pass or fall apart. [Back to text.](#)

4:17 Whoever knows . . . and fails: Knowledge of the truth makes one responsible for acting in accord with it (1:22; 2:14-26). Failure to act on the truth is a sin of omission (CCC 1853). [Back to text.](#)



5:1-6 James rails against wealthy landowners who love their belongings more than God (1 Tim 6:9). The disastrous end of their wealth is so near and so certain that James describes it as already perishing (5:2-3). • Echoes can be heard of sayings from the OT (Job 13:28; Is 51:8), as well as the teaching of Jesus (Mt 6:19-21; Lk 12:15-21). [Back to text.](#)

5:3 for the last days: Literally, "in the last days", an expression that refers to the Christian age (Acts 2:17) as it builds up toward a time of widespread chaos and deception (2 Tim 3:1; cf. 2 Pet 3:3; Jude 18). James is alarmed that the rich are senselessly hoarding wealth for themselves in the final calm before the storm of divine judgment (CCC 675-77). [Back to text.](#)



5:4 by fraud: A warning that economic injustice does not go unnoticed or unpunished by the Lord. • This is probably an allusion to Lev 19:13, which forbids the exploitation of hired workers and demands that their wages be given by the end of the day (CCC 1867, 2434). [See note on Jas 2:8.](#) [Back to text.](#)



5:5 day of slaughter: An expression taken from Jer 12:3. • Jeremiah prayed that the corrupt of Israel would no longer prosper and grow strong but would meet the end they justly deserved. His petition was answered the day Yahweh sent Babylon to slaughter the rebels of Judah and Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Judgment likewise awaits the oppressive and over-indulgent who

have fattened themselves on moneys unjustly withheld from workers. [Back to text.](#)

5:6 you have killed: Graphic but figurative language for the oppression of the poor and defenseless (Wis 2:10-20). To deprive them of their pay (5:4) is to take away their living (Sir 34:21-22) (CCC 2446). [Back to text.](#)

5:7-11 An appeal for patient endurance in the midst of suffering. Encouragement is drawn from the past experience of Job (5:11) and the Prophets (5:10), the present experience of farmers (5:7), and the future coming of Christ (5:7-9). [Back to text.](#)

5:7 the coming of the Lord: The return of Christ as Judge (5:9). Perhaps James is referring to the Second Coming of Jesus at the end of history (Acts 1:11; 1 Thess 4:16-17). It is also possible, given his stress on the nearness of judgment (Jas 5:8), along with the image of Jesus "standing at the doors" (5:9, alluding to Mt 24:33 and Mk 13:29), that James is referring to the coming judgment of Israel and Jerusalem within the first Christian generation (A.D. 70). If so, this may suggest that the "suffering" (5:10) endured by readers was caused by the unbelievers of Israel. Suffering at the hands of others is also a possibility. **the early . . . the late rain:** The fall and winter rains that were necessary to make the spring (grain) and summer (olives, grapes) harvests abundant in Palestine (Deut 11:14; Jer 5:24; Joel 2:23-24). [Back to text.](#)

5:10 the prophets: The suffering of the Prophets was proverbial (Mt 5:12; Acts 7:52; Heb 11:32-38). [Back to text.](#)



5:11 the steadfastness of Job: This example is part of the warning against grumbling (5:9). • James may be thinking of how Job endured even the most crushing misfortunes without cursing God or sinning with his lips (Job 2:9-10). [Back to text.](#)

5:12 James cautions readers against the abuse of oath swearing, echoing the words of Jesus recorded in Mt 5:33-37 (CCC 2153-55). Condemnation results when oaths, which are intended for sacred and public contexts, are sworn in secular and private settings. The gravity of this sin is not lessened when the binding force of an oath is thought to be reduced by invoking **heaven** and **earth** instead of God's holy name. [See note on Mt 5:33.](#) [Back to text.](#)



5:14 anointing: Oil was used as a medicinal agent in Jewish antiquity (Is 1:6; Lk 10:34). However, James envisions something more than a simple healing rite: the invocation of the Lord's **name**, which results in forgiveness (Jas 5:15), makes the anointing a truly sacred and sacramental action. Its institution goes back to Jesus and is hinted at in Mk 6:13. • The Council of Trent (1551) interprets this text as a reference to the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, which is administered by priests (presbyters) to the aged and seriously ill. Its purpose is to cleanse them of sin, to strengthen them through the spiritual struggles that come with illness, and, in some cases, to prepare them for death. Restoration to health can also result if God wills it (CCC 1510-20). [Back to text.](#)

5:15 save the sick man: Probably refers to eternal salvation. James uses the verb "save" consistently in this fashion throughout the letter (1:21; 2:14; 4:12; 5:20). [Back to text.](#)



5:16 confess . . . to one another: This command must be interpreted within the context of the anointing rite, where the elders (i.e., priests) presumably hear the confession of the sick person before his sins are remitted through the sacrament (5:14-15). • Such confession has its roots in the liturgical practice of Israel (Lev 5:5-6; Num 5:5-10) and is implicitly mandated by the teaching of Jesus (Jn 20:23). [Back to text.](#)



5:17 Elijah: An example of personal righteousness and powerful prayer (Sir 48:1-3; Rev 11:6). • James recalls how the prophet Elijah, who remained faithful to Yahweh when most of Israel went astray, caused a three and a half year drought (Lk 4:25) by his petitions to God (1 Kings 17:1; 18:1, 41-46). The point is that God hears and answers the prayers of a humble and upright heart (Sir 35:17) but refuses to listen to the petitions of an evil and divided heart (Jas 1:6-8; 4:3) (CCC 2582-83, 2738). [Back to text.](#)



5:20 brings back a sinner: Fraternal correction is a work of mercy that is sometimes awkward but is urgently necessary for one who has

strayed from the truth (Gal 6:1). The language of "turning back" signifies repentance both in the OT (Hos 6:1; Joel 2:12) and in the NT (Lk 1:16; Acts 3:19). **his soul:** I.e., the soul of a person who has formerly gone astray but has come to repentance. **cover a multitude of sins:** Perhaps an allusion to Prov 10:12 (similar wording appears in 1 Pet 4:8). The notion of "covering" sins is a Hebrew idiom for forgiveness (Neh 4:5; Ps 32:1). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Elders ([Jas 5:14](#))

Presbyteros (Gk.): an "elder", "elderly man", or "presbyter". The word is used 66 times in the NT. It has its primary background in the OT and Jewish tradition, where "elders" (Heb., *zeqenim*) referred to the tribal leaders of Israel appointed by Moses (Ex 24:1; Num 11:16) and to the members of a city's judicial council (Josh 20:4). By the first century, it was a collective name for Pharisaic teachers (Mt 15:2), for a group within the Jewish high court, the Sanhedrin (Mt 26:3), and for the senior officials of a Jewish synagogue. This notion of ruling and religious elders carried over into Christian tradition and was applied to its own appointed leaders (Acts 14:23; 15:2; 20:17; 21:18). An "elder" or "presbyter" thus came to refer to an ordained shepherd of the Church who preached the gospel and administered the sacraments (1 Tim 5:17; Tit 1:5; Jas 5:14). The English word "priest" is derived from this Greek term.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST LETTER OF SAINT PETER

Author The letter claims to come from the apostle Peter, whose name stands in its first verse (1:1) and whose witness to the life and suffering of Jesus is mentioned in its final chapter (5:1). Early Christianity accepted these statements without argument and is virtually unanimous in ascribing the letter to Simon Peter. A quite different verdict is rendered by much of modern scholarship, which has often questioned and sometimes rejected the apostolic authorship of 1 Peter. Among the various arguments used to disassociate the epistle from the apostle is the claim **(1)** that the Greek style of the letter is too smooth and sophisticated to be the work of an unlettered fisherman like Simon (Acts 4:13), whose first language was Aramaic; **(2)** that the epistle's many references to Christian suffering (1:6; 2:19; 4:12-16; 5:9-10) reflect a time in the late first century when imperial persecution of the Church by Roman authorities was first evidenced in Asia Minor; and **(3)** that the letter displays affinities with the theology of Paul to a degree that some think would be unlikely during the lifetime of two rival apostles. On the force of these and other objections, many scholars today claim that 1 Peter is a pseudepigraphical work, i.e., a letter written in Peter's name by one of his admirers or possibly by a representative of a school of Peter's disciples based in Rome. Either way, according to this theory, the letter is not a composition of the apostle but the work of a literary impersonator who used Peter's name to give authoritative guidance to Christians in Asia Minor.

Despite the prominence of the pseudepigraphical view today, its foundation is far from secure. For one thing, the consistent tradition of early Christianity is thereby dismissed out of hand, despite the fact that no one before modern times ever ascribed the letter to an author other than Peter. Likewise, the objections listed above can be answered to reasonable satisfaction on the working assumption of Peter's authorship. **(1)** It is hazardous to insist that Peter could not have written elegant Greek at the time 1 Peter was written. First-century Galilee was thoroughly bilingual;

most persons involved in commerce (such as the fishing industry), in addition to speaking Aramaic, would also have spoken Greek well enough to conduct business. Nevertheless, even if Peter's fluency in Greek were limited during his fishing days, that would not necessarily settle the issue. For if Peter did compose the letter bearing his name, then he had already been engaged in missionary preaching for over thirty years after leaving behind his fishing nets. Three decades is more than sufficient time to improve one's command of a second language. Peter's competence in writing Greek, however, may be a moot point in any case. The notation at 5:12 seems to imply that 1 Peter was actually penned by Silvanus. This is significant, since the secretarial practices of antiquity often gave scribes generous latitude in adding polish and precision to the thoughts of an author with less facility in the language. If indeed there was this kind of working relationship between the apostle and his secretary, there is no problem with crediting Peter with the content of the letter and Silvanus with its literary expression. **(2)** As for the suffering of the original readers, the many references to persecution that appear in the letter are simply too general and nonspecific to insist that State-sponsored attacks on the Church are in view. If the recipients of the letter were hounded by unbelievers and sometimes pressed to explain their Christian commitment (3:15-16), there is no clear evidence that links this with official persecutions instigated by a Roman emperor such as Domitian (A.D. 81 to 96) or Trajan (A.D. 98 to 117). The text requires us to envision nothing more than the usual fare of harassment and hostility that is faced by the Church in every age. **(3)** The presence of Pauline elements in the letter is all but irrelevant to an impartial consideration of authorship. The objection in this case rests on the dubious presupposition that Peter and Paul represent two competing forms of Christianity. Quite simply, this is a legacy of eighteenth-century German scholarship that has nothing substantial to commend it. The confrontation at Antioch in Gal 2:11-16, though sometimes made to support this paradigm, does not amount to a lifelong rivalry; indeed, Paul's argument with Peter on the occasion rests on the fact that Peter and Paul shared a common understanding of the gospel message. In point of fact, there is no evidence from which to conclude that Peter would have shunned or rejected useful expressions of Christian teaching that had originally been formulated by Paul. Not only that, but if Silvanus was the secretary who penned the letter for Peter, the Pauline themes in the epistle would have a ready explanation,

for Silvanus (also called Silas) had once been a missionary companion of Paul's and was surely influenced by his preaching (Acts 15:40; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1).

In the end, modern objections to Peter's authorship of 1 Peter are insufficiently strong to overturn the traditional ascription. The external testimony of the ancient Church, along with a careful handling of the internal evidence of the text, combine to support the apostolic authorship of the letter beyond a reasonable doubt. The epistle can thus be read and defended as the work of Simon Peter, the foremost apostle of Christ.

Date The question of "when" the letter was written is bound up with the question of "who" wrote it. Scholars who maintain its apostolic authorship usually date it in the early 60s. In other words, it must have been written *before* Peter's martyrdom in Rome in the middle 60s and yet *after* a sufficient period of missionary activity brought the Churches addressed in 1:1 into existence. Scholars who favor pseudepigraphical authorship naturally date the epistle after Peter's death. Most are content with a window of possible dates between A.D. 70 and 100.

Origin The letter was written from "Babylon" (5:13). This is not a literal reference to the city of that name in lower Mesopotamia, but a figurative reference to Rome, the imperial capital of the Mediterranean world. Mark's presence with Peter at the time of writing (5:13) coheres nicely with this interpretation, for Paul seems to indicate that Mark was in Rome at the time of his first imprisonment in the early 60s (Col 4:10). Additional support comes from Christian writers who identify Peter, along with Paul, as a cofounder of the Roman Church (St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3, 3) and as one who spent the latter years of his life there (St. Jerome, *On Illustrious Men* 1). Archaeological evidence has likewise given reason to believe that Peter spent his final days in the capital, for it has convincingly established that the apostle was and remains buried on Vatican Hill. Finally, there are parallel uses of "Babylon" as a pseudonym for Rome in Jewish texts written in early Christian times (4 *Ezra* 3, 1; 2 *Baruch* 11, 1; *Sibylline Oracles* 5, 143).

Destination The first recipients of the letter were Christians living in northern Asia Minor (1:1). Peter addresses them as "exiles of the

Dispersion". Because the terms "exile" and "Dispersion" were closely associated with the Jewish people living beyond the borders of Palestine, it was held by some in the early Church that Peter had addressed the letter to circumcised believers (e.g., Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3, 4). More likely, however, this opening description refers to Christians in general, irrespective of their ethnic or religious background. Indeed, one of the key metaphors of the letter depicts believers as aliens and sojourners living in temporary exile from their true homeland in heaven (1 Pet 1:17; 2:11-12). It is quite possible that Peter expected Hebrew Christians to be among his readers, but statements such as the one in 4:3 suggest that Gentile converts from paganism are primarily in view.

Themes First Peter is a pastoral letter written to encourage young churches perplexed by growing hostility toward Christians. With the tide of persecution steadily rising, the dangers of being a Christian in an unbelieving world were being felt more and more acutely. For some, pagan disdain for believers might cause a crisis of faith; for others, it could quickly lead to discouragement and confusion about God's purpose for these trials. This painful situation called forth from Peter, an eyewitness to the sufferings of Christ (5:1), the pastoral wisdom to see hardships as integral to God's design for making us more like Christ. One might say that 1 Peter is to the NT what the Book of Job is to the OT—an effort of faith to see innocent suffering within the framework of God's plan for our lives.

Peter's counsel to these churches is warm and pastoral in tone as well as theological and ethical in content. **(1) Theologically:** Peter informs readers that suffering for the name of Christ is not a curse but a blessing (3:14; 4:14). Instead of being disheartened by abuse, they should count it a privilege to suffer the same maltreatment endured by their Lord (4:13). This, he implies, is evidence that Jesus is replicating his own life in the experiences of the faithful, leading them down the path that he himself once walked (2:21; 4:1). The purpose of this is not to weaken or injure their faith, but to strengthen and refine it as something precious in the eyes of God (1:6-7). Though trials like these require patience, they last only "a little while" (5:10). The challenge is to look beyond the test of suffering to the salvation (1:9) and glory that await them on the other end (1:21; 4:13). **(2) Ethically:** Peter gives practical guidance for living the gospel in an unfriendly environment. The supreme example for this is set by Christ:

because he "did not revile" those who slandered him (2:23), neither should believers "return evil for evil or reviling for reviling" (3:9). Though abused by the godless and immoral (4:3-4), readers must fight their fallen "passions" (2:11) and cling to "the will of God" in everything they do (4:2). Hence, the proper response to suffering is to entrust oneself entirely to God (4:19), who will come to "restore, establish, and strengthen" everyone who holds fast to the faith under fire (5:10). In all of this, Christians must live above reproach. The saints are urged to be model citizens (2:13-17); servants are to endure with patience any unjust treatment from their masters (2:18-20); wives are to serve their unbelieving husbands (3:16); and husbands are to honor their wives (3:7). And Christians must be ready to give an intelligent defense of the faith to anyone who interrogates them (3:15-16). In these ways, believers show forth the image of Christ in their lives, and the grandeur of the gospel is displayed before the world. «

OUTLINE OF THE FIRST LETTER OF SAINT PETER

1. Opening Address ([1:1-2](#))

2. Dignity of the Christian Vocation ([1:3-2:10](#))

- A. New Birth in Christ ([1:3-9](#))
- B. Testimony of the Prophets ([1:10-12](#))
- C. Be Holy Yourselves ([1:13-2:3](#))
- D. Christ the Living Stone ([2:4-10](#))

3. Duties of the Christian Life ([2:11-3:12](#))

- A. Civil Duties of the Saints ([2:11-17](#))
- B. Suffering like Christ ([2:18-25](#))
- C. Household Duties of the Saints ([3:1-7](#))
- D. Moral Duties of the Saints ([3:8-12](#))

4. Difficulties of Christian Persecution ([3:13-5:11](#))

- A. Conduct during Persecution ([3:13-22](#))
- B. Living for the Last Days ([4:1-11](#))
- C. Suffering and Christian Glory ([4:12-19](#))
- D. Shepherds and the Flock ([5:1-5](#))
- E. Humility and Vigilance ([5:6-11](#))

5. Closing Benediction ([5:12-14](#))

THE FIRST LETTER OF

SAINT PETER

Chapters

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#)

Essays and Charts

[Christ and "The Spirits in Prison"](#)

Salutation

1 * [Peter, an apostle](#) of Jesus Christ,

To the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappado'cia, Asia, and Bithyn'ia, ²chosen and destined [by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ](#) and for sprinkling with his blood:

May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

A Living Hope

3 [Blessed be the God](#) and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been [born anew](#) to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who by God's power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in [the last time](#). ⁶In this you rejoice,^a though now for a little while you may have to [suffer various trials](#), ⁷so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸Without having seen^b him you^c love him; though [you do not now see](#) him you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy. ⁹As [the outcome](#) of your faith you obtain the salvation of your souls.

10 The prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired about this salvation; ¹¹they inquired what person or time was indicated by [the Spirit of Christ](#) * within them when predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory. ¹²It was revealed to them that

they were serving not themselves but you, in the things which have now been announced to you by [those who preached](#) the good news to you through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

A Call to Holy Living

13 Therefore [gird up your minds](#), be sober, set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 15but as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; 16since it is written, "[You shall be holy](#), for I am holy." 17And if you [invoke as Father](#) him who judges each one impartially according to his deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile. 18You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a [lamb without blemish](#) or spot. 20He was destined before the foundation of the world but was made manifest at [the end of the times](#) for your sake. 21Through him you have confidence in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.^d

22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere love of the brethren, [love one another](#) earnestly from the heart. 23You have been born anew, [not of perishable seed](#) but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; 24for

["All flesh is like grass](#)

and all its glory like the flower of grass.

The grass withers, and the flower falls,

25but the word of the Lord abides for ever."

That word is the good news which was preached to you.

The Living Stone and a Chosen People

2 So put away all malice and all guile and insincerity and envy and all slander. 2Like [newborn infants](#), long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation; 3for you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

4 [Come](#) to him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God's sight chosen and precious; 5and like living stones be yourselves built into a

spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶For it stands in Scripture:

"Behold, I am laying in Zion a [stone](#), a cornerstone chosen and precious,

and he who believes in him will not be put to shame."

⁷To you therefore who believe, he is precious, but for those who do not believe,

"The very stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,"

⁸and

"A stone that will make men stumble, a rock that will make them fall";

for they stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

⁹ [But you](#) are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people,^e that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰Once you were [no people](#) but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy.

Live as Servants of God

¹¹ Beloved, I beg you as [aliens and exiles](#) to abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul. ¹²Maintain good conduct among the Gentiles, so that in case they speak against you as wrongdoers, they may [see your good deeds](#) and glorify God on the day of visitation.

¹³ [Be subject for the Lord's sake](#) to every human institution,^f whether it be to the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. ¹⁵For it is God's will that by doing right you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. ¹⁶[Live as free men](#), yet without using your freedom as a pretext for evil; but live as servants of God. ¹⁷Honor all men. Love [the brotherhood](#). Fear God. Honor the emperor.

The Example of Christ's Suffering

¹⁸ [Servants](#), be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to the kind and gentle but also to the overbearing. ¹⁹For one is approved if, mindful of God, he endures pain while suffering unjustly. ²⁰For what credit

is it, if when you do wrong and are beaten for it you take it patiently? But if when you do right and suffer for it you take it patiently, you have God's approval. ²¹For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. ²²[He committed no sin](#); no guile was found on his lips. ²³When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he trusted to him who judges justly. ²⁴He himself bore our sins in his body on [the tree](#),^g that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the [Shepherd and Guardian](#) of your souls.

[Wives and Husbands](#)

3 * [Likewise](#) you wives, [be submissive to your husbands](#), so that some, though they do not obey the word, may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, ²when they see your reverent and chaste behavior. ³Let not yours be the [outward adorning](#) with braiding of hair, decoration of gold, and wearing of robes, ⁴but let it be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. ⁵So once the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves and were submissive to their husbands, ⁶as Sarah obeyed Abraham, [calling him lord](#). And you are now her children if you do right and let nothing terrify you.

7 Likewise you [husbands](#), [live considerately](#) with your wives, bestowing honor on the woman as the weaker sex, since you are joint heirs of the grace of life, in order that your prayers may not be hindered.

[Suffering for Doing Right](#)

8 Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love of the brethren, a tender heart and a humble mind. ⁹[Do not return evil](#) for evil or reviling for reviling; but on the contrary bless, for to this you have been called, that you may obtain a blessing. ¹⁰For

["He that would love life](#)

and see good days,

let him keep his tongue from evil

and his lips from speaking guile;

¹¹let him turn away from evil and do right;

let him seek peace and pursue it.

¹²For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous,
and his ears are open to their prayer.

But the face of the Lord is against those that do evil."

¹³ Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is right?

¹⁴ But even if you do [suffer for righteousness' sake](#), you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵but in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to [make a defense](#) to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence; ¹⁶and keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are abused, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷For it is better to suffer for doing right, if that should be God's will, than for doing wrong. ¹⁸[For Christ also died](#)^h for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit; ¹⁹in which he went and preached to the spirits in prison, ²⁰who formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. ²¹[Baptism](#), which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an [appeal](#) to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²²who has gone into heaven and is at the [right hand](#) of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him.

[Good Stewards of God's Grace](#)

⁴ Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh,ⁱ arm yourselves with the same thought, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ^{*}²so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer by human passions but by the will of God. ³Let the time that is past suffice for doing what the Gentiles like to do, living in licentiousness, passions, drunkenness, revels, carousing, and lawless idolatry. ⁴They are surprised that you do not now join them in the same wild debauchery, and they abuse you; ⁵but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. ⁶For this is why the gospel was preached even to the dead, that though judged in the flesh like men, they might live in the spirit like God.

⁷ The [end of all things](#) is at hand; therefore keep sane and sober for your prayers. ⁸Above all hold unfailling your love for one another, since [love covers a multitude of sins](#). ⁹Practice hospitality ungrudgingly to one

another. ¹⁰As [each has received a gift](#), employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹whoever speaks, as one who utters oracles of God; whoever renders service, as one who renders it by the strength which God supplies; in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Suffering as a Christian

¹² Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴If you are [reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed](#), because the spirit of glory^j and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a wrongdoer, or a mischief-maker; ¹⁶yet if one suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but under that name let him glorify God. ¹⁷For the time has come for judgment to begin with [the household of God](#); and if it begins with us, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸And

"[If the righteous man](#) is scarcely saved, where will the impious and sinner appear?"

¹⁹Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will do right and entrust their souls to a faithful Creator.

Tending the Flock of Christ

⁵ So I exhort [the elders](#) among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed. ²Tend the flock of God that is your charge,^k not by constraint but willingly,¹ not for shameful gain but eagerly, ³not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock. ⁴And when the chief Shepherd is manifested you will obtain the unfading crown of glory. ⁵Likewise you that are younger [be subject to the elders](#). Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

⁶ [Humble yourselves](#) therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time he may exalt you. ⁷Cast [all your anxieties](#) on him, for he cares about you. ⁸Be sober, be watchful. [Your adversary the devil](#) prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour. ⁹Resist him, firm in your faith,

knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world. ¹⁰And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, and strengthen^m you. ¹¹To him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Final Greetings and Benediction

12 By [Silva'nus](#), a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God; stand fast in it. ¹³[She](#) who is at Babylon, [*](#) who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings; and so does my son Mark. ¹⁴Greet one another [with the kiss of love](#).

Peace to all of you that are in Christ.

Commentary on The First of Saint Peter

1:1 Peter, an apostle: Simon, the leader of the Twelve (Mt 10:2). Jesus renamed him "Peter", from the Greek *petros*, meaning "rock". The Aramaic equivalent of Peter is rendered "Cephas" (Jn 1:42) (CCC 552). See word study: [Peter](#) at Mt 16:18. **exiles:** Sojourners separated from their homeland (Heb 11:13-14). See introduction: *Destination*. **Pontus . . . Bithynia:** The names of several provinces in northern Asia Minor (modern Turkey). [Back to text.](#)



1:2 Peter coordinates three aspects of redemption with the three Persons of the Trinity: the Father elects us for salvation, the Spirit makes us holy, and the Son consecrates us for service by his blood (CCC 258). Other trinitarian passages in the NT include Mt 28:19, Lk 1:35, 1 Cor 12:4-6, and 2 Cor 13:14. **sprinkling with . . . blood:** Associated with rites of priestly ordination in ancient Israel. • In Ex 24:8, Moses sprinkled the people of Israel with the blood of the Sinai covenant, binding them to Yahweh and consecrating them to be a holy and priestly nation to the world (Ex 19:6). Similarly, in Lev 8:30, Aaron and his sons were ordained to the priesthood by the ritual sprinkling of blood. This background anticipates the description of believers as members of the "royal priesthood" of Jesus (1 Pet 2:9). **grace and peace:** A common Christian greeting in NT times (Rom 1:7; 2 Pet 1:2; Rev 1:4). [Back to text.](#)

1:3 Blessed be the God: A traditional prayer form, called a *berakah* (Hebrew for "blessing"), in which the Lord is praised for his saving deeds and thanked for his wonderful gifts (1 Chron 29:10-13; Tob 13:1-18; Dan 3:3-22). For other NT examples, see Lk 1:68-79 and Eph 1:3-14 (CCC 2626-27). **living hope:** Not mere optimism or wishful thinking, but the earnest desire, made possible by grace, for the unseen glory of heaven (1:13, 21; Rom 8:24-25). Notice that Peter's benediction makes reference to all three theological virtues: "faith" (1:9), "hope" (1:3), and "love" (1:8). [See note on 1 Cor 13:13.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:5 the last time: The climactic end of history, when the definitive salvation of believers will take place in connection with the Second Coming

(described in 1:7 as "the revelation of Jesus Christ"). [Back to text.](#)



1:6 suffer various trials: Endurance of suffering and persecution is frequently mentioned in the letter (2:19-22; 4:1, 12-19; 5:9-10). It is here compared to a smelting process that removes alloys and impurities from precious metals such as gold (1:7; Job 23:10; Sir 2:4-5). Suffering, Peter says, is the fire that refines our faith and makes us more like Christ, whose own endurance of torment was an expression of filial obedience to the Father (1 Pet 2:21; Phil 2:8; Heb 5:8) (CCC 618, 1031). • The saints, perceiving the benefits of divine fire, did not shrink from trials or become discouraged by them. Instead of suffering injury, they were improved by what they endured, gleaming like gold refined in fire (St. Athanasius, *Festal Letters* 10). [Back to text.](#)

1:8 you do not now see: Peter affirms readers for living by faith and not by sight (2 Cor 5:7; cf. Jn 20:29). Faith will eventually bring believers face to face with the Lord (1 Cor 13:12). [Back to text.](#)

1:9 the outcome: Salvation is here described as a future event, which means it cannot be reduced to an event or experience already completed in the past. [See note on Rom 5:10.](#) **salvation of your souls:** The expression is a Semitic way of saying "your salvation". The term "soul" is used in the Hebrew sense of a whole living "person" (as in 1 Pet 3:20). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Born Anew ([1 Pet 1:3](#))

Anagennaō (Gk.) means "regenerate" or "cause to be born again". It occurs in the NT only in 1 Pet 1:3 and 1:23, but parallel notions are expressed in similar words in Jn 3:3-5, Tit 3:5, and 1 Jn 3:9. For Peter, the rebirth of Jesus from the dead (resurrection) gives believers a spiritual rebirth by grace (regeneration). The idea is that God fathers or begets us anew, not in the natural way of biological parentage, but in a supernatural way that gives us a share in his own divine life (cf. 2 Pet 1:4). The benefit of this grace is a new birth into the family of God, so that believers united with Christ become "newborn infants" (1 Pet 2:2) and "children" (1 Pet 1:14) united in

a "brotherhood" of faith (1 Pet 5:9). It is their privilege to invoke God as "Father" (1 Pet 1:17) and to await heaven as their "inheritance" (1 Pet 1:4).



1:11 the Spirit of Christ: The Holy Spirit (1:12), who is sent into the world by the Father (Jn 14:26) and the Son (Jn 15:26). The activity of the Spirit is here linked with the inspiration of the Prophets, who spoke the word of God to Israel and foretold the suffering of the Messiah (e.g., Is 52:13— 53:12; Dan 9:26). Peter will return to this subject in his second letter, where he describes the Prophets being "moved" by the Spirit to speak messages that come "from God" (2 Pet 1:21). • In the Nicene Creed, the Spirit is identified as the Divine Person "who has spoken through the prophets" (CCC 687, 702). [Back to text.](#)

1:12 those who preached: The apostles and prophets of the Church spoke by the same Spirit that had once inspired the Prophets of Israel (1:10-11). The result is a divinely established unity between OT and NT revelation (CCC 128-29). **angels long to look:** The salvation of men, worked out through the suffering and glorification of Christ, was once a mystery hidden in God (Eph 3:9). It is now revealed to the Church through the Spirit and to the angels through the ministry of the Church (Eph 3:10). [Back to text.](#)

1:13 gird up your minds: A metaphor for mental preparedness. In biblical times, to "gird up" meant to tuck a long garment into a belt so that one could run or move more quickly (Ex 12:11; Lk 12:35). [Back to text.](#)



1:16 You shall be holy: A recurring mandate from Leviticus (Lev 11:44; 19:2; 20:7). •Yahweh often demanded holiness from Israel; that is, he bid the people to draw close to him and to shun the vile practices of the Gentiles. Peter's readers are likewise surrounded by pagans, yet they are urged to serve God in holiness of life. [Back to text.](#)

1:17 invoke as Father: Refers to addressing God as "Abba" or "Father" in prayer (Mt 6:9; Rom 8:15; CCC 2780-82). **impartially:** I.e., with absolute fairness. Because God exercises perfect justice, he cannot be bribed to show favoritism toward some and not others (Deut 10:17). **according to his deeds:** The standard of judgment established in the OT

(Ps 62:12; Prov 24:12) and maintained in the NT (Mt 16:27; Rom 2:5-11) (CCC 682). **your exile:** I.e., your time on earth. See introduction: *Destination*. [Back to text.](#)



1:19 lamb without blemish: Depicts Jesus as a Passover lamb (1 Cor 5:7). • Exodus stipulates that lambs chosen for Passover must be free from all physical defects (Ex 12:5). The point here is that Jesus is free from every blemish of sin (1 Pet 2:22). Other details reminiscent of the Passover tradition include the notion that Jesus "ransomed" us from sinful ways (1:18), just as Israel was redeemed from sinful Egypt (Ex 15:13), and that the "blood" of Jesus was shed for our salvation (1 Pet 1:19), recalling how the blood of the paschal lamb was shed as the sign of God's deliverance at the first Exodus (Ex 12:21-23) (CCC 602). [Back to text.](#)

1:20 the end of the times: The manifestation of Christ in the flesh marks the beginning of the end of history. Paul refers to this final era as "the end of the ages" (1 Cor 10:11). [Back to text.](#)

1:22 love one another: Echoes the new commandment of Jesus in Jn 13:34-35. [Back to text.](#)

1:23 not of perishable seed: The imperishable seed of grace and new life comes through the gospel. It begets children of God destined to live forever (CCC 1228, 2769). See word study: [Born Anew](#) at 1:3. [Back to text.](#)



1:24 All flesh is like grass: A quotation from Is 40:6-8. • Isaiah contrasts the fleeting existence of men with the abiding word of the Lord. Peter connects this with the gospel, the word that gives eternal life to all who accept it (1:25; Jas 1:18). [Back to text.](#)



2:2 newborn infants: The imagery of new birth is applied to new converts (1:3), who need the milk of sound instruction to grow and mature in their faith (Heb 5:12). • The simple elements of faith can be sought from the breasts of Mother Church, that is, from the teachers of the Old and New Testaments (St. Bede, *On the Seven Catholic Epistles* at 1 Pet 2:1-2). [Back to text.](#)

2:4-10 The Church is pictured as a spiritual temple under construction. Believers are like living stones built up securely on Christ, who is the

cornerstone of the entire structure (Eph 2:19-22). Since temples are not only dwelling places for God but also houses of worship and sacrifice, Peter can also describe Christians as a priestly people who make acceptable offerings to God through Christ. These truths are supported by a series of OT citations: 2:4 is elucidated by the quotations in 2:6-8, and 2:5 by references in 2:9-10 (CCC 901, 1141, 1179). [Back to text.](#)



2:6-8 Three OT texts that make reference to a "stone", which Peter interprets as an image of the Messiah. • The first is Is 28:16, where the foundation stone of a new edifice is laid down by the Lord as an invitation to faith. The second is Ps 118:22, which refers to a stone that was rejected by some but is chosen by God to be the cornerstone of a new building. The third is Is 8:14, where the Lord describes himself both as a sanctuary to the faithful of Israel and as a stumbling stone to the unfaithful. Similar use of these passages is made by Jesus (Lk 20:17-18), Paul (Rom 9:33), and Peter himself in Acts (Acts 4:10-11) (CCC 756). [Back to text.](#)



2:9 But you: Contrasts believers in Christ with those who reject the Messiah (2:8). The rest of the verse is a patchwork of expressions drawn from the Greek OT. • Two come from Is 43:20-21, where Israel is the **chosen race** commissioned by Yahweh to declare his **wonderful deeds** to the nations. Another comes from Mal 3:17, where the faithful of Israel are called **God's own special people**. Two more come from Ex 19:6, where Israel is gathered at Sinai and consecrated as a **royal priesthood** and a **holy nation**. These titles and privileges, once the exclusive prerogative of Israel, are now extended to the whole messianic people, who have come to share in the blessings of a covenant relationship with God (Rom 11:17-24; 15:27). One responsibility entailed in this relationship is the missionary vocation to announce God's goodness and salvation to the world. • Here we learn of the "priesthood of all believers", the doctrine that Baptism makes every member of the Church a sharer in the priesthood of Christ (CCC 1268, 1546). This grace, which differs in kind and not merely degree from the grace of ministerial priesthood possessed by bishops and priests, enables every Christian to minister to the spiritual needs of others (1 Pet 4:10) and to offer sacrifices of love and praise to God in his daily life (2:5; Rom 12:1; Heb 13:15-16). [Back to text.](#)



2:10 no people: An allusion to the Greek version of Hos 2:23. • Hosea is speaking about the restoration of Israel, specifically the northern tribes, who had rejected the Lord's covenant and had thereby reduced themselves to the status of the nations. Their return to covenant standing is thus equivalent to the conversion of Gentiles, which is now taking place through the preaching of the gospel and the ingathering of all nations into the Church (Rom 9:25). [Back to text.](#)

2:11 aliens and exiles: Heaven is the fatherland of the believer, making life in this world a journey away from home. See introduction: *Destination*. **wage war:** The internal conflict that rages in fallen human nature (Gal 5:16-24; CCC 2516). [See note on Rom 7:23.](#) [Back to text.](#)

2:12 see your good deeds: Echoes the teaching of Jesus in Mt 5:16. **the day of visitation:** A biblical expression for the day of divine judgment, when God vindicates the righteous (Wis 3:7; Sir 18:20) and wreaks vengeance on the wicked (Is 10:3 LXX). Jesus spoke in these terms about the judgment of Jerusalem (Lk 19:44). [Back to text.](#)

2:13-17 Peter urges the saints to be model citizens. Submission to civil authorities is part of one's submission to God, by whose will earthly government is established (Wis 6:1-3). Justice demands that we give honor and taxes to these authorities in return for the benefits of a stable society that would not exist without them (Rom 13:1-7) (CCC 2238-42). [Back to text.](#)

2:16 Live as free men: Christians are free from absolute servitude to the State because they are servants of the Lord (1 Cor 7:22; Gal 5:13). [See note on Acts 5:29.](#) [Back to text.](#)

2:17 the brotherhood: The community of believers united as brothers and sisters in the Lord (5:9). **Honor the emperor:** Caesar Nero, who reigned from A.D. 54 to 68 and who launched a savage persecution of Christians after a fire swept through Rome in A.D. 64 (Tacitus, *Annals* 15, 44). The fact that Peter exhorts readers to honor the emperor in this unqualified way is a strong indication that he is writing *before* the days of government-sponsored persecution against the Church, which began in the mid-60s and intensified toward the end of the first century. His words would certainly be susceptible to misunderstanding in the late first century

when the public display of devotion to the emperor was a life-and-death issue for Christians. [Back to text.](#)

2:18 Servants: Encouraged to bear unjust treatment with patience. Neither slavery nor physical abuse is thereby condoned; the point is only that innocent suffering can make one more like Christ (2:21). On slavery in NT times, see notes on 1 Cor 7:21 and Eph 6:5. [Back to text.](#)



2:22-25 Peter reflects on the Passion of Jesus. His thoughts are dominated by Isaiah's vision of the Suffering Servant (especially Is 53:5-11). • The prophet foresees the rejection and agony of the Messiah. Though he is reviled, the lips of the Servant are silent and free from deceit (Is 53:7, 9). Though wounded, he brings healing and forgiveness to others (Is 53:5, 11). Though an innocent lamb led to the slaughter, he gives his life for other sheep who have strayed from the Lord's pasture (Is 53:6-7) (CCC 601). [Back to text.](#)

2:22 committed no sin: The sinlessness of Jesus is an established doctrine of the NT (Jn 8:46; Heb 4:15; 1 Jn 3:5; CCC 612). [Back to text.](#)

2:24 the tree: The Cross, perhaps alluding to the words of Deut 21:22-23 (Acts 5:30; Gal 3:13). [Back to text.](#)

2:25 Shepherd and Guardian: The terms are roughly synonymous, both expressing Jesus' vigilant oversight of the Church (Jn 10:1-16; Heb 13:20). [Back to text.](#)

3:1-7 The responsibilities of married life are outlined. Similar codes for Christian households and spouses are given in Eph 5:21-6:2 and Col 3:18-4:1 (CCC 2204). [Back to text.](#)

3:1 Likewise: Begins a third application of the submission principle introduced in 2:13 and continued in 2:18. **wives, be submissive:** Christian wives are counseled to obey their husbands, some of whom were non-Christians. Peter envisions this as a dignified submission that earns a husband's respect rather than a degrading servitude that quietly endures personal abuse or insults to the faith. The social order of the day, where husbands ruled over their wives as the supreme authorities of the household, is not directly challenged or criticized. Instead, existing norms are infused with gospel charity: in this case, Peter urges Christian brides to exercise heroic love and service within the context of marriage. Paul gives similar counsel to married women (Eph 5:22-24; Col 3:18), though he

addresses situations in which husband and wife are both believers (an important exception is 1 Cor 7:12-16). [See note on Eph 5:22.](#) **without a word:** The witness of a loving and supportive wife can win unbelieving husbands over to the faith. For the example of St. Monica and the eventual conversion of her husband, see St. Augustine, *Confessions* 9, 19-22. [Back to text.](#)

3:3 outward adorning: Preoccupation with physical appearance is discouraged (1 Tim 2:9). Outwardly, a woman should content herself with modest dress; inwardly, she should adorn herself with the virtues of Christian womanhood. Peter's insistence that interior beauty is precious "in God's sight" (1 Pet 3:4) indicates that his pastoral counsel is based on fixed spiritual principles, not on fluctuating standards of cultural acceptability. [Back to text.](#)



3:6 calling him lord: A reference to Gen 18:12, where Sarah calls Abraham "my husband". The expression is literally "my lord" (Heb., 'adoni). Peter concludes from this that Sarah acknowledged Abraham's leadership in marriage. Genesis gives no indication that Abraham, for his part, lacked respect for Sarah or considered her a mere slave under his authority. **her children:** Not by generation, but by imitation (cf. Mt 5:44-45; Jn 8:39-40). **let nothing terrify you:** Wives exposed to mistreatment from pagan husbands are admonished to take courage. The implication is not that Christian women are expected to tolerate such things without complaint. On the contrary, Peter anticipates that a holy and deferential wife will find herself respected and honored by her husband. [Back to text.](#)

3:7 husbands, live considerately: Christian husbands must be respectful and understanding toward their wives. Paul makes the additional demand that husbands should be models of Christ's sacrificial love (Eph 5:25). **the weaker sex:** The statement is made in reference to a woman's physical constitution, not her moral character or intellectual ability. Because a man's natural strength exceeds that of a woman, the husband is called to honor his bride, lest he misuse his physical advantage to intimidate or abuse her. **joint heirs:** Men and women are persons of equal dignity in God's eyes, for they are equal recipients of his salvation and love (Gal 3:28). **prayers . . . hindered:** A husband's prayers will go unanswered if he fails to honor and cherish his wife (3:12). He can expect the same result if he prays with doubt

(Jas 1:5-8) or selfish motives (Jas 4:3) or cherishes iniquity in his heart (Ps 66:18). [Back to text.](#)

3:9 Do not return evil: The summons to bless those who curse you is made several times in the NT (Lk 6:28; Rom 12:14, 17; 1 Thess 5:15). [Back to text.](#)



3:10-12 A quotation from Ps 34:12-16. • Blessings are promised to those who shun evil, for the Lord is good to those who fear him, seek him, and direct their prayers to him. Peter offers these words of encouragement to readers being persecuted for their faith (3:14). [Back to text.](#)

3:14 suffer for righteousness' sake: Echoes the eighth beatitude given by Jesus in Mt 5:10. [Back to text.](#)

3:15 make a defense: I.e., make a reasoned articulation of the faith and be ready to disarm any attacks mounted against it. Essential to the task is an attitude of calm self-composure, so that the truth will always be honored and spoken in love (Eph 4:15). The word "defense" (Gk. *apologia*) often refers to a legal case presented before a judge and jury (Acts 25:16; 2 Tim 4:16). It is the basis of the word "apologetics", which involves explaining and defending Christian truth (Acts 22:1). [Back to text.](#)

3:18-20 On these verses, see essay: [Christ and "the Spirits in Prison"](#) at 1 Pet 3:18-20. [Back to text.](#)



3:21 Baptism . . . saves you: The clearest statement in the NT that Baptism brings us salvation. It is not only a sign of forgiveness and renewal, but an instrument of grace that actually regenerates (Jn 3:5; Tit 3:5). The Greek word translated as **corresponds** means "the fulfillment of a type" (Gk. *antitypos*). See word study: [Type](#) at Rom 5:14. • The flood is a type of Baptism: the raging waters that cleansed the earth of wickedness (Gen 7:17-24) prefigure the sacramental waters that cleanse the believer of sin (Acts 2:38; 22:16). In both cases, the water that brings judgment on sin is also the water that saves. It is unclear how far Peter intends us to see parallels beyond this basic level of correspondence. Certainly the story line itself is meaningful in a Christian context: Noah and his family, having built the ark in faith, passed through the waters of judgment (1 Pet 3:20) into a new life and a new covenant with God (Gen 9:8-17). So, too, Baptism is the sacrament of faith (Mk 16:16) that brings us new life (Rom 6:4) and makes

us members of the New Covenant (CCC 1219). **not as a removal of dirt:** This clarification makes it certain that Peter is referring to the Sacrament of Baptism, an actual washing of the body that could be misunderstood because its effects on the soul are unseen (Heb 10:22). Some scholars read this statement as an allusion to circumcision, which entails the removal of flesh from the body as something unclean (Gen 17:9-14). In this case, Peter would be setting forth a contrast between the physical effect of circumcision and the spiritual effect of Baptism, much as Paul did in Col 2:11-13. [Back to text.](#)



3:22 right hand: An allusion to Ps 110:1, which envisions the enthronement of the Messiah (Lord) in heaven beside Yahweh (Lord). Every hostile opponent is then trampled underfoot—an idea that Peter connects with the subjugation of demons from the ranks of the **angels**, the **authorities**, and the **powers** (1 Cor 15:24-25; CCC 671). [See note on Eph 1:21.](#) [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Appeal ([1 Pet 3:21](#))

Eperōtēma (Gk.) refers to an "answer", "decision", or "pledge". The term is rarely used in the Bible, only once in the Greek OT (Dan 4:17, Theodotian) and once in the NT (1 Pet 3:21). In secular Greek, it often refers to the formal acceptance of a contract or covenant using solemn words. The procedure followed a question-and-answer format that involved the terms of the agreement being spoken and the appropriate party pledging his compliance. In early Christian times, a similar procedure was used in the liturgy of Baptism. Most likely, this is the background of its use in 1 Pet 3:21, where the "appeal" to God for a clear conscience is best understood as a "pledge" made to God at Baptism to maintain a clear conscience by living in accord with the gospel. Thus, the sacrament not only cleanses the conscience of evil (Heb 10:22), but it entails a solemn commitment to follow a Christian way of life (for possible allusions to such a pledge, see Pliny the Younger, *Epistles* 10, 96; St. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 61; St.

Jerome, *Letters* 14, 2). Peter thus equates "good behavior in Christ" with the effort to "keep your conscience clear" (1 Pet 3:16).

CHRIST AND "THE SPIRITS IN PRISON"

FEW passages of the NT are as difficult to interpret as 1 Pet 3:18-20. The history of interpretation, beginning in patristic times, has witnessed numerous attempts to unravel its meaning. In the early third century, St. Clement of Alexandria took these verses to mean that Christ, during the silence of Holy Saturday, descended to the dead to make a final offer of salvation to the deceased sinners of Noah's day (*Stromata* 6, 6, 44-46). In the fifth century, St. Augustine proposed a different interpretation: Christ, by an exercise of his preexistent divinity, preached to the ancient world through the person of Noah, urging the wicked to repent before the floodwaters of judgment came to sweep them away (*Letters* 164). Much later, near the turn of the seventeenth century, St. Robert Bellarmine reconnected the passage with Holy Saturday, only he proposed that Christ descended to the dead to announce his salvation to those sinners who had privately repented just before the onset of the flood (*Disputations on Christ* 2, 4, 13). Modern times have seen the rise of yet another interpretation: the passage concerns, not the descent of Christ to the realm of the dead, but his Ascension into glory. On his way up, it is said that he presented himself as Victor and Conqueror to a company of demons imprisoned in the lower heavens.

In view of this diversity of opinion, even among great theologians of the Church, a definitive interpretation of the passage seems out of the question. Still, it is worthwhile to wrestle with the difficulties of the text and to offer a reasonable judgment as to its meaning. This might best be achieved by keeping one eye on the history of interpretation and the other on contemporary insights of biblical scholarship. Below is a brief examination of these verses and the challenges they present to the interpreter.

1 Peter 3:18

It is clear that Peter refers to the Crucifixion when he says that Jesus was "put to death in the flesh". What is more difficult to interpret is the statement that he was "made alive in the spirit". At first sight, this would seem to refer to the Resurrection, for this is how the verb "make alive" (Gk.

zōopoiēō) is often used in the New Testament (Jn 5:21; Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 15:22). Not all agree, however. Given the tradition that links these passages with the descent of Jesus into Hades (i.e., Sheol, the realm of the dead, visualized as a chamber of souls hidden deep in the underworld), some take the expression "made alive in the spirit" to mean that Christ was "kept alive in his soul". The question is whether Peter is talking about the activity of Jesus on Holy Saturday, when his soul descended to the dead without his body, or at some time subsequent to Easter Sunday, when his body and soul were forever reunited. No firm answer can be given until we consider what follows.

1 Peter 3:19-20

Here we come to the crux of the matter, to the question of when and where Christ went to preach "to the spirits in prison" (1 Pet 3:19) who were disobedient "in the days of Noah" (1 Pet 3:20). Historically, the spirits in this verse have been identified with the souls of the wicked that perished in the flood. The problem, however, is that "spirits" (Gk. *pneumata*) is not a word that is normally used in Scripture for the souls of the dead (the lone exception is Heb 12:23). Beyond that, it is difficult to see why Jesus should single out these particular sinners as his audience for preaching in Hades. Surely they could not experience a saving conversion after death, and none of the ancient texts or traditions known to us indicates that any of Noah's contemporaries repented at the last moment. On the contrary, the generation that drowned in the flood is taken as an example of a generation condemned by God (Lk 17:26-27; 2 Pet 2:5).

Modern scholarship has, thankfully, recovered Jewish traditions about the flood that had long been forgotten, traditions that were no doubt known to the earliest Jewish Christians. These ancient accounts have since helped to bring the picture of Christ's preaching to the spirits into focus. The main element of interest concerns an interpretation of the "sons of God" mentioned in Gen 6:2. According to several Jewish texts, these are rebel angels (called "the Watchers") who corrupted the world of men before the flood (*1 Enoch* 6-21; *Jubilees* 5, 1-11). Being spirits, they could not be destroyed by the waters of the deluge, so the Lord thrust them into the prisons of the underworld to await their final doom (*1 Enoch* 14, 5 and 18,

14). One tradition has them locked up, not in the depths of the earth, but in the lower heavens (2 *Enoch* 7, 1-3).

The benefit of retrieving this forgotten perspective is obvious for interpreting 1 Pet 3:18-20. It seems now that "the spirits in prison" are not human souls at all, but fallen angels whose wickedness was closely connected with the flood in Jewish tradition. This accords well with the frequent use of "spirits" for angels in the NT (Mt 12:45; Lk 10:20; Heb 1:14). The question remains whether Peter locates these demons in heaven above or in the netherworld below. Some, as stated above, connect these verses with the Ascension; the idea would be that Christ proclaimed himself Victor over evil as he passed by the spirits bound in the lower regions of heaven. More likely, however, Peter is referring to Christ's descent into the darkness and gloom of Hades, for that is where the disobedient angels are kept in chains, according to other biblical texts that allude to this Jewish tradition (2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6). Thus, in addition to liberating the righteous dead of the OT for entrance into heaven, he also proclaimed himself Conqueror of evil to the infernal spirits whose power had just been shattered by his redeeming death.

In this way, insights from the history of interpretation can be coupled with modern findings to produce a new and more plausible—though not definitive—interpretation of 1 Pet 3:18-20. Readers faced with the hardships of persecution would be led to see that Jesus was victorious over evil, not in spite of his death, but precisely in his death. For at that moment, lowered into the darkness of Hades, Jesus Christ descended as the victorious Savior of the world (CCC 632-37). « [Back to 1 Peter 3:1.](#)

4:1 ceased from sin: Suffering gives added incentive to break away from sinful habits, which often lose their attraction when times get tough and especially when life is threatened. [Back to text.](#)

4:2 the will of God: This was the driving force behind Jesus' earthly mission (Mk 14:36; Jn 4:34) as it should be of ours (Rom 12:2). The task is difficult because our fallen inclinations and passions are constantly competing for our allegiance (1 Pet 2:11; Jas 4:1-2). [Back to text.](#)

4:3 the Gentiles like to do: The godless ways of the pagans must be shunned (Rom 13:13; Gal 5:19-21). Peter cautions, however, that efforts to live heroic and holy lives can be a cause of persecution, that is, once the heathens discover that Christian purity is a moral protest against their own depravity (4:4). [Back to text.](#)

4:5 the living and the dead: Every member of the human race, the vast majority of whom will have died before the end of history (Rev 20:12-13). That Christ is their Lord and Judge is stated several times in the NT (Acts 10:42; Rom 14:9; 2 Tim 4:1). Only the last generation will live to see Christ return as Judge (1 Thess 4:15-17). [Back to text.](#)

4:6 the gospel was preached: The RSV translation implies a link between this verse and 3:19, in which case "the dead" would seem to be identified with "the spirits in prison". However, the statement in Greek does not have a specified subject (the RSV adds "the gospel"). As scholars have pointed out, the subject could just as well be Christ (translating "he was preached"), in which case the text refers to the evangelization of Christians who have since died (**judged in the flesh**) in the hope of a future resurrection (**in the spirit**). [Back to text.](#)



4:7 end of all things: Another indication that Christ has ushered the world into its final phase of history (see also 1 Pet 1:5 and 1:20). • This is said so that no one will be deceived into thinking that the future judgment is far off. Though length of life is uncertain, it is clear that no one can live for very long in this mortal life (St. Bede, *On the Seven Catholic Epistles* at 1 Pet 4:7). [Back to text.](#)



4:8 love . . . multitude of sins: A quotation from Prov 10:12. • The proverb contrasts the damaging effects of hate with the healing power of love, which builds up and restores relationships because it forgives and forgets the offenses of another (1 Cor 13:4-7). [Back to text.](#)

4:10 each has received a gift: Charismatic and ministerial graces are bestowed on believers, not merely for their private edification, but for the building up of the Church as a whole (CCC 2003). [See note on 1 Cor 12:7.](#) [Back to text.](#)

4:14 reproached . . . blessed: Echoes the words of Jesus in Mt 5:11. [Back to text.](#)



4:17 the household of God: Or, "the house of God", possibly alluding to the Church as a spiritual temple (2:6). • Even now judgment begins with the Lord's house, that is, with the Church, which is prepared for the joys to come by enduring the afflictions of the present. The condemned, for their part, are living securely in this transitory life, in contrast to the future punishment that awaits them (St. Bede, *On the Seven Catholic Epistles* at 1 Pet 4:17). [Back to text.](#)



4:18 If the righteous man: A quotation from the Greek version of Prov 11:31. • The proverb reasons from the lesser to the greater, implying that if the saints pass into glory only with great effort and through many difficulties, sinners can expect only doom if they persist in their wanton revelry until the Judgment (cf. Mt 7:13-14). [Back to text.](#)

5:1 the elders: The shepherds of the local Churches addressed by Peter (1:1). Their pastoral authority to guide, instruct, and protect the flock under their care is derived from the supreme pastoral authority of Christ the "chief Shepherd" (5:4; Acts 20:28-32). And because they stand accountable for the welfare of the Lord's sheep, Peter warns them not to misuse their authority grudgingly, greedily, or oppressively (5:2-3). In modern terms, the elder is equivalent to a "presbyter" or "priest" (CCC 1551, 1567). See word study: [Elders](#) at Jas 5:14. **fellow elder:** Peter shares in the grace of pastoral ministry that is possessed by the clergymen he is addressing. This does not imply, as some have claimed, that Peter saw himself on the same level as

these local pastors, as though he possessed no special authority over them. This is a misunderstanding. At the very least, Peter was numbered among the apostles, who were designated "first" in authority over the Church (1 Cor 12:28). Not only that, but Peter held the distinction of being "first" in relation to the twelve apostles hand-picked by Jesus (Mt 10:2). Evidence for Peter's headship over the Church has a clear and solid basis in the NT, for he alone was singled out to wield "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 16:19) and to tend the entire flock of Christ's "sheep" (Jn 21:15-17). See essay: [Peter, Prince of the Apostles](#) at Acts 2. **a witness:** Means both that Peter witnessed some of Christ's sufferings and that he bears witness to them when he preaches the gospel (Acts 5:29-30; 10:34-43). [Back to text.](#)



5:5 be subject to the elders: The flock must heed the ordained shepherds of the Church (1 Thess 5:12; CCC 754). **God opposes the proud:** A quotation from the Greek version of Prov 3:34. • The proverb pleads for humility with the promise that God will exalt us in his favor. Peter is encouraging humble submission to clergymen, who represent the Lord to his people (Acts 20:28). The proud, who are puffed up and insubordinate, will one day be humiliated (Jas 4:6-7). [Back to text.](#)

5:6 Humble . . . exalt you: Echoes the saying of Jesus in Mt 23:12. [Back to text.](#)

5:7 all your anxieties: Like any good father, God invites his children to unload their worries upon him so that peace and comfort can be given in return (Phil 4:6-7; CCC 322). [Back to text.](#)

5:8 Your adversary the devil: Peter points the finger at Satan, accusing him of being the unseen perpetrator of Christian persecutions (5:9). His deadly intentions and predatory tactics make him comparable to a ravenous lion on the hunt for food. Lions were greatly feared in biblical times (2 Kings 17:25-26) and were sometimes made a symbol of one's enemy (Ps 7:1-2; 10:8-9) (CCC 2851-54). [Back to text.](#)

5:12 Silvanus: Also known in the NT as "Silas". He was once a member of Paul's missionary team (Acts 15:40; 2 Cor 1:19) and a co-sender of two of his letters (1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1). Most likely, Silvanus is mentioned here because Peter employed him as the writer or drafter of the epistle. It is also possible that he delivered the letter to its original recipients (1 Pet 1:1). [Back to text.](#)

5:13 She: I.e., the Church, which is a feminine noun in Greek. **Babylon:** The place of writing where the letter originated. Most agree it is a code name for the city of Rome, in central Italy. See introduction: *Origin*. **my son Mark:** John Mark, an early believer from Jerusalem (Acts 12:12) whom Christian tradition identifies as the author of the Gospel of Mark. Here associated with Peter, he was also a onetime companion of Paul (Col 4:10; 2 Tim 4:11). [Back to text.](#)

5:14 the kiss of love: A customary form of greeting in Jewish antiquity (Gen 33:4; Lk 15:20). It was adopted by the early Christians as a sign of their fraternal affection as brothers and sisters in the faith (Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 16:20). [Back to text.](#)

INTRODUCTION TO

THE SECOND LETTER OF SAINT PETER

Author The writer of the letter identifies himself as "Simon Peter" (1:1). He claims to have been an eye- and earwitness to the Transfiguration of Jesus (1:16-18); he presumes to speak on behalf of the other apostles who witnessed the event (1:18); he alleges to have written an earlier epistle to the same readers (3:1); and he regards himself a colleague of the apostle Paul (3:15). Second Peter is thus presented as a composition of the Apostle Peter. Nevertheless, ancient and modern scholars alike have raised questions about the reliability of these claims.

In the early Church, there was much hesitation regarding the authenticity of the letter. Evidence shows that a few prominent churchmen were quoting or alluding to 2 Peter in the early part of the third century (Origen, St. Hippolytus), but it was not until the fourth century that the letter was widely accepted as a canonical and apostolic writing of the New Testament. The reason for its delayed acceptance is probably twofold. First, the letter differs in style and vocabulary from 1 Peter, inclining many to think that the two epistles must have come from two different authors. Second, a number of writings appeared in the second century under the name of Peter that were obviously pious forgeries (e.g., *Gospel of Peter*, *Apocalypse of Peter*, *Acts of Peter*). With the Church on guard against the proliferation of such inauthentic works, it is understandable that a letter such as 2 Peter, which displayed some notable differences from 1 Peter, would have to face an uphill battle on its way to canonical recognition. Still, it is telling that 2 Peter, unlike those works that were falsely attributed to the apostle, was never rejected as spurious. Its status was disputed by orthodox theologians, but the Church never placed it in the same class as the apocryphal Petrine literature of the second century.

Disputes about the authorship of 2 Peter erupted again with the advent of modern scholarship. Today a majority of exegetes maintain that 2 Peter is a pseudepigraphical work, a letter written by an unknown figure several decades after the apostle's death in the mid-60s. Perhaps the author was a

onetime disciple of Peter, but this is uncertain. What is critically established, say advocates of this view, is that he borrowed Peter's name and reputation to add authority to his own pastoral instructions. Several facts have been put forward to support this position, such as the stylistic differences between 1 and 2 Peter, as well as the hesitation of the early Church to accept the letter as apostolic. Beyond this, literary analysis indicates that the author borrowed thoughts and expressions from two other New Testament letters: 1 Peter and Jude. Inasmuch as scholars often date those two epistles in the late first century, 2 Peter could not, then, have been written within the lifetime of the apostle. Not only that, but some scholars feel it is highly improbable that someone of Peter's stature and authority would ever have stooped to rely on the work of a lesser-known figure such as Jude. Finally, confirmation of the pseudepigraphical hypothesis is said to come from 3:16, where the author refers to a collection of Paul's letters. Again, the argument goes, it is unlikely that all of the Pauline epistles were gathered together and venerated as a collection of scriptural writings before the late first century, well after the time of Peter.

Despite the doubts that have historically surrounded the epistle, conservative scholarship continues to maintain the apostolic authorship of 2 Peter. It is not that the difficulties of holding this position are minimized or ignored; rather, the historical and literary evidence is evaluated differently. **(1)** The divergence in style between 1 and 2 Peter is real but does not amount to proof that the two letters come from different authors. There is reason to think that 1 Peter was penned by Peter's associate Silvanus (1 Pet 5:12); in which case, Peter may well have written the second letter himself, or perhaps he did so with the help of a different scribe. Either way, this would provide a reasonable explanation for the different writing styles evident in the two letters. **(2)** Acknowledgment of differences must be balanced by a consideration of the similarities between 1 and 2 Peter (compare 2 Pet 1:2 with 1 Pet 1:2; 2 Pet 1:20-21 with 1 Pet 1:10-12; and 2 Pet 2:5 with 1 Pet 3:20). Of course, one could explain these points of contact as the literary borrowing of a later writer, but it is more natural to suppose that a single author wrote both works in question. **(3)** The dependence of 2 Peter on the letters of 1 Peter and Jude is fairly well established. However, the dates of these letters are themselves disputed, so it is precarious to use them as fixed chronological points from which to make judgments about the authorship of 2 Peter. Moreover, the assertion

that Peter would think it below his dignity to utilize the work of someone less prestigious than himself (Jude) lacks supporting evidence. Its working assumption—that Peter was more controlled by pride and a sense of superiority than by a desire to communicate Christian truth in ways that had already proven effective for other ministers of the gospel—is itself highly questionable. **(4)** The author assumes in 3:16 that his readers are familiar with Pauline letters that were circulating in the early Church. However, there is simply no historical evidence to substantiate the claim that such a collection could not have come together before the late first century. In point of fact, Paul encouraged communities to exchange his letters even in his own lifetime (Col 4:16).

On balance, Peter's authorship of 2 Peter has more in its favor than the modern theory of pseudepigraphical authorship. It is not strictly impossible that an unnamed and unknown author wrote the epistle posing as the Apostle Peter, but neither is it likely. The fact that 2 Peter was included in the canon of Scripture shows that the Church distinguished this letter from the corpus of pseudepigraphical writings that were falsely attributed to Peter in the second century. The sound use of literary and historical analysis can be used to confirm this distinction and to support the Petrine authorship of the letter even today.

Date Efforts to date 2 Peter hinge entirely on the question of authorship. If the letter is authentic and comes from Peter himself, then it must have been written before his martyrdom in Rome in the mid-60s. The statement in 2 Pet 1:14, in which the author anticipates that his death will come soon, implies that it was written shortly before this time. On the other hand, if the letter was written by someone impersonating Peter, then the question of dating is more open-ended. Proponents of pseudepigraphical authorship regularly claim that 2 Peter was the last book of the New Testament to have been written. Though some would date it around A.D. 80, most scholars of this persuasion date the book in the second century, some as late as A.D. 140.

Destination There are no explicit statements in 2 Peter that specify either its place of origin or its destination. Answers to these questions can only be inferred and for this reason remain tentative. The most likely location for its origin is Rome, the place from which Peter sent his first letter in the early 60s (1 Pet 5:13) and the place where tradition says he died in the mid-60s.

Evidence is lacking that he left the imperial capital in Italy at any time between these two events. The most likely location of its recipients is northern Asia Minor (modern Turkey), assuming that 3:1 is referring to 1 Peter (1 Pet 1: 1) and not to a now-lost letter that had been sent to the same readership.

Themes and Characteristics Second Peter was written to Christians dangerously exposed to an outbreak of false teaching. News had reached Peter that deceivers and scoffers were starting to infiltrate missionary Churches with their errors and were openly challenging the orthodox faith taught by the apostles. Peter's letter, which he describes as his parting words (1:14-15), responds to this situation both offensively and defensively. **(1) Offensively:** Peter vigorously attacks both the claims and the conduct of these false prophets. Their most conspicuous error was the denial that Jesus would come again in glory as the Judge of the world. The apparent delay of the Christ's return was ridiculed (3:3-7). Other "destructive heresies" were propagated as well (2:1) and were used to justify and promote degenerate behavior. Far from being respectable teachers, these troublemakers, as depicted by Peter, led lives dominated by licentiousness (2:2), greed (2:3, 14), lust (2:10, 14, 18), insubordination (2:10), and irreverence toward angels (2:10-11). So heinous were their sins that Peter groups them together with the fallen angels, the wicked generation of Noah's day, and the depraved inhabitants of ancient Sodom (2:4-6). Readers are assured throughout the letter that certain destruction is in store for such troublemakers (2:1, 4-9, 20; 3:7). **(2) Defensively:** Peter attempts to immunize his readers against deceptive ideas that could lead them astray. The best protection against error, he insists, is a firm understanding and commitment to apostolic doctrine. He thus reminds them of truths they already know (1:12-15; 3:1) and challenges them to grow still more in their knowledge of God and his ways (1:3; 3:18). And to faith they must add virtue, so that the truth of the gospel will shine forth through their lives as godliness (1:5-11). All of this has been made possible by Jesus Christ, who has provided every grace we need to escape the corruption of the world before the coming Judgment (1:3-4; 3:11). The greatest of these is a participation in "the divine nature" of God himself (1:4). «

OUTLINE OF THE SECOND LETTER OF SAINT PETER

- 1. Opening Address ([1:1-2](#))**
- 2. God's Precious Promises ([1:3-21](#))**
 - A. The Vocation to Virtue ([1:3-11](#))
 - B. The Sure Prophetic Word ([1:12-21](#))
- 3. Denunciation of False Teachers ([2:1-22](#))**
 - A. The Presence of Deceivers ([2:1-3](#))
 - B. The Punishment of Deceivers ([2:4-10](#))
 - C. The Poison of Deceivers ([2:11-22](#))
- 4. The Promised Return of Christ ([3:1-17](#))**
 - A. The Skepticism of Scoffers ([3:1-7](#))
 - B. The Day of the Lord ([3:8-13](#))
 - C. Final Exhortation ([3:14-17](#))
- 5. Closing Doxology ([3:18](#))**

THE SECOND LETTER OF

SAINT PETER

Chapters

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#)

Salutation

1 [Simon](#) Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,
To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours in the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:^a

2 [May grace and peace](#) be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

The Christian's Call and Election

3 His divine power has [granted to us all things](#) that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to^b his own glory and excellence, ⁴by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may [escape](#) from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature. ^{*}
⁵For this very reason make every effort to supplement your faith with [virtue](#), and virtue with knowledge, ⁶and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸For if these things are yours and abound, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹For whoever lacks these things is blind and shortsighted and has forgotten that he was [cleansed from his old sins](#). ¹⁰Therefore, brethren, be the more zealous to confirm [your call and election](#), for if you do this you will never fall; ¹¹so there will be richly provided for you an entrance into [the eternal kingdom](#) of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

12 [Therefore I intend always to remind you](#) of these things, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. ¹³I think it right, as long as I am in [this body](#),^c to arouse you by way of reminder, ¹⁴since I know that the putting off of my body^c will be soon, as our Lord Jesus [Christ](#)

[showed me](#).¹⁵ And I will see to it that after [my departure](#) you may be able at any time to recall these things.

[Eyewitnesses of Christ's Glory](#)

16 * For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were [eyewitnesses](#) of his majesty. ¹⁷For when he received honor and glory from God the Father and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son,^d with whom I am well pleased," ¹⁸we heard this voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on [the holy mountain](#). ¹⁹And we have the prophetic word made more sure. You will do well to pay attention to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until [the day dawns](#) and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of [one's own interpretation](#), ²¹because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men [moved by the Holy Spirit](#) spoke from God.^e

[False Prophets and Their Punishment](#)

2 [But false prophets](#) also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive [heresies](#), even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. ²And many will follow their licentiousness, and because of them the way of [truth will be reviled](#). ³And in their greed they will exploit you with false words; from of old their condemnation has not been idle, and their destruction has not been asleep. *

4 [For if God](#) did not spare [the angels](#) when they sinned, but cast them into hell^f and committed them to pits of deepest darkness to be kept until the judgment; ⁵if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved [Noah, a herald](#) of righteousness, with seven other persons, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; ⁶if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomor'rah to ashes he condemned them to extinction and made them an example to those who were to be ungodly; ⁷and if he rescued righteous [Lot, greatly distressed](#) by the licentiousness of the wicked ⁸(for by what that righteous man saw and heard as he lived among them, he was vexed in his righteous soul day after day with their lawless deeds), ⁹then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, ¹⁰and especially those who [indulge in the lust](#) of defiling passion and despise authority.

Bold and wilful, they are not afraid to revile the glorious ones, ¹¹whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a reviling judgment upon them before the Lord. ¹²But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and killed, reviling in matters of which [they are ignorant](#), will be destroyed in the same destruction with them, ¹³suffering wrong for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their dissipation,^g [carousing with you](#). ¹⁴They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children! ¹⁵Forsaking the right way they have gone astray; they have followed [the way of Balaam](#), the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, ¹⁶but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless [donkey spoke](#) with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.

¹⁷ These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm; for them the deepest gloom of darkness has been reserved. ¹⁸For, uttering loud boasts of folly, they entice with licentious passions of the flesh men who have barely escaped from those who live in error. ¹⁹They [promise them freedom](#), but they themselves are slaves of corruption; for whatever overcomes a man, to that he is enslaved. ²⁰For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, [they are again entangled](#) in them and overpowered, the last state has become worse for them than the first. ²¹For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from [the holy commandment](#) delivered to them. ²²It has happened to them according to the [true proverb](#), The dog turns back to his own vomit, and the sow is washed only to wallow in the mire.

The Promise of the Lord's Coming

³ This is now [the second letter](#) that I have written to you, beloved, and in both of them I have aroused your sincere mind by way of reminder; ²that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through [your apostles](#). ³First of all you must understand this, that scoffers will come in [the last days](#) with scoffing, following their own passions ⁴and saying, "[Where is the promise of his coming](#)? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things have continued as they were from the beginning of creation." ⁵They deliberately

ignore this fact, that by [the word of God](#) heavens existed long ago, and an earth formed out of water and by means of water, ⁶through which the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. ⁷But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist have been stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

⁸ [But do not ignore this one fact](#), beloved, that with the Lord [one day is as a thousand years](#), and a thousand years as one day. ⁹The Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, ^hnot wishing that any should perish, but that [all should reach repentance](#). ¹⁰But [the day of the Lord](#) will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up.

¹¹ Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in [lives of holiness](#) and godliness, ¹²waiting for and [hasteningⁱ](#) the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be kindled and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire! ¹³But according to his promise we wait for [new heavens and a new earth](#) in which righteousness dwells.

[Final Exhortation and Doxology](#)

¹⁴ Therefore, beloved, since you wait for these, be zealous to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. ¹⁵And count the forbearance of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother [Paul wrote to you](#) according to the wisdom given him, ¹⁶speaking of this ^{*} as he does in [all his letters](#). There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. ¹⁷You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, beware lest you be carried away with the error of lawless men and lose your own stability. ¹⁸But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. [To him be the glory](#) both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Commentary on The Second Letter of Saint Peter

1:1 Simon: Several ancient manuscripts list the name as *Symeon*, a Greek rendering of the Hebrew name "Simeon" (Lk 2:25; Rev 7:7). Symeon is probably the original reading, though it is unclear why the name is used here but not in 1 Pet 1:1. It appears elsewhere only in Acts 15:14. **Peter:** The name Jesus gave to Simon, meaning "rock". See word study: [Peter](#) at Mt 16:18. **To those who:** The readers are not identified beyond the fact that they are Christians. See introduction: *Destination*. **our God and Savior:** The expression in Greek indicates that both titles are given to Christ, the former affirming his divinity and the latter affirming his redemptive mission. This same construction is used elsewhere in the letter to assert that he is both "our Lord and Savior" (2 Pet 1:11; 2:20; 3:18). Some translate the phrase "our God and the Savior", thereby distinguishing the Father from the Son, but this rendering is less likely to represent the author's intention (see textual note *a*). [Back to text.](#)

1:2 May grace and peace: The identical formula appears in 1 Pet 1:2 but nowhere else in the NT. In general, however, opening wishes of grace and peace are standard in early Christian letters (Rom 1:7; Phil 1:2; Rev 1:4). **knowledge:** A key concept of the letter (1:3, 8; 2:20; 3:18). Growth in knowledge means increasing our understanding of God's ways and deepening our relationship with him. True knowledge is emphasized because false knowledge was beginning to seep into the Christian community (2:1-3; 3:17). [Back to text.](#)

1:3-11 Everything necessary to mature in godliness and attain glory is made available by God to believers. Our proper response is to supplement the gift of faith with a full range of virtues that conform us to Christ and grant us admittance to his kingdom (1:11) (CCC 1810-13). For similar lists that begin with "faith" and end with "love", see Rom 5:1-5 and 2 Cor 8:7. [Back to text.](#)



1:4 escape: The aim of Christian living is to rise above the sinful and decaying world toward an imperishable life with God (2:20). **partakers of the divine nature:** This does not mean that believers are made deities or come to stand on an equal footing with God. Similar expressions were used

in the Hellenistic world to say that man was made in the likeness of divine immortality (Wis 2:23), that a king could imitate the divine nature by governing men as God does (Philo, *On Abraham* 144), or that some had come to share in the divine nature by possessing extraordinary wisdom and foresight (Josephus, *Against Apion* 1, 232). Here it denotes human participation in the divine life of God, a mystery of grace that Paul describes as the indwelling of the Son (Rom 8:10; Gal 2:20) and the Spirit (Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 6:19). Believers thus become sons and daughters of God by sharing in the divine Sonship of Christ (Rom 8:14-16; Gal 4:4-7). This doctrine of "deification" or "divinization" is grounded on the truth that Jesus Christ assumed our humanity in order to fill it with his divinity (CCC 460). • Participation in the divine life is a gift that comes to us through the sacraments (CCC 1692). It is especially in the Eucharist that we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity (CCC 1129, 19962000). • Since he granted us his image and his Spirit, and we failed to guard them, he took to himself our poor and weak nature in order to cleanse us, to make us incorruptible, and to establish us once again as partakers of his divinity (St. John of Damascus, *Orthodox Faith* 4, 13). [Back to text.](#)

1:5 virtue: I.e., a life of moral excellence. See word study: [Excellence](#) at Phil 4:8. [Back to text.](#)

1:9 cleansed from . . . sins: Experienced first in Baptism (Acts 22:16) and then in an ongoing way by confessing our faults and seeking the Lord's mercy (Mt 6:12; 1 Jn 1:9). The point here is that forgiveness obliges us to mend our ways and to make progress in holiness (2 Pet 1:3). [Back to text.](#)

1:10 your call and election: Believers are chosen and called by God to be his own people in Christ (1 Pet 2:9). This status is maintained and confirmed by living the faith and attaining the virtues of gospel morality outlined in 2 Pet 1:5-7. It is jeopardized, however, if one becomes reentangled in a life of sin (2:20-22). The danger that one might **fall** shows that confirming one's election is a matter of real and crucial importance, i.e., it cannot be reduced to a merely subjective or personal reassurance that one's salvation has already been eternally secured. [Back to text.](#)

1:11 the eternal kingdom: Union with God in heaven is the kingdom of God in its fullness and perfection (2 Tim 4:18). [Back to text.](#)

1:12-15 Peter wants readers to remember what he taught them after his death. This focus on the future leads some scholars to claim that 2 Peter

exhibits characteristics of a "testament", a popular literary form in Judaism in which great figures of biblical history bequeath to posterity a series of prophecies and ethical instructions on their deathbeds. [Back to text.](#)

1:13 this body: Literally, "this tent", an image that signifies the temporary duration of our bodily life on earth (Wis 9:15; Is 38:12). For the saints, these tents are folded away at death and give way to a permanent dwelling in resurrected bodies. [See note on 2 Cor 5:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:14 Christ showed me: Jesus warned Peter that he would die as a martyr in old age (Jn 21:18-19). Now that Peter is an elderly man writing in the early or mid-60s, he knows that the end of his life is drawing near. Some think that Peter is referring to a personal revelation from Christ that is not recorded in the NT but concerns the timing of his death. [Back to text.](#)

1:15 my departure: Or, "my exodus". See word study: [Departure](#) at Lk 9:31. [Back to text.](#)

1:16 eyewitnesses: The apostles Peter, James, and John accompanied Jesus on the mountain of Transfiguration (Mt 17:18). Their testimony to Christ was therefore based on the facts of history and firsthand experience, quite unlike the imaginative tales spun by the false teachers denounced in the letter (2 Pet 2:3). This *past* revelation of Christ's glory is considered a preview of the *future* revelation of Christ's glory at his Second Coming (CCC 554-55). [Back to text.](#)

1:18 the holy mountain: Traditionally identified as Mount Tabor in lower Galilee. Perhaps an analogy is implied with Mount Sinai, which was likewise sanctified or made holy by the manifestation of God's glory (Ex 3:1-5). [See note on Mt 17:1-8.](#) [Back to text.](#)



1:19 the day dawns: The eschatological "day of the Lord". For its meaning, [see note on 2 Pet 3:10.](#) **morning star:** Ancient writers used this expression for the planet Venus, which is sometimes visible in the morning sky just before daybreak. • In addition, the expression is probably an allusion to Num 24:17, where the star that rises out of Jacob is seen in Jewish and Christian tradition as a prophetic image of the Messiah (Rev 22:16). Peter connects this with the return of Christ in glory, an event that will dawn upon the world at the end of history and bring joy to the heart of every believer who is eagerly awaiting him (Heb 9:28). [Back to text.](#)

1:20 one's own interpretation: The Spirit who inspired the prophecies of the OT is alone capable of interpreting them. By contrast, merely human intelligence can never ascertain their proper meaning without the divine assistance of the Spirit. The ramifications of this teaching are implied rather than stated, for Peter does not identify those who are authorized to give a correct interpretation of Scripture. Some contend that every believer who possesses the Spirit is automatically qualified for this task, but no such teaching can be found in the NT. On the contrary, we learn from other passages that the Spirit guides the Church into all truth through her apostolic leaders and their successors (Jn 14:26; 16:13), who serve as teachers and guardians of the Christian faith (1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:14; 2:2). This explains why Peter, being an apostle, expects readers to accept his teaching on Scripture as authoritative and reliable, whereas the false teachers among them are denounced for twisting its meaning (2 Pet 3:15-16) (CCC 104, 109-14). [See note on Jn 14:26.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:21 by the Holy Spirit: A description of prophetic inspiration, whereby God uses the prophet to speak his divine message to others. Peter's stress on this point may suggest that the false teachers disputed such inspiration or at least made interpretive claims at variance with it. History knows of heretical Jewish-Christians, called Ebionites, who claimed that the biblical Prophets spoke of their own accord, apart from divine assistance or influence (CCC 105-107). For the related mystery of biblical inspiration, see word study: *Inspired by God* at 2 Tim 3:16. [Back to text.](#)

2:1-22 Peter cautions readers against false teachers who are out to corrupt and deceive the faithful. Lest believers be led astray by their novelties, he insists that a frightful doom awaits them (2:4-9) for their perversity (2:10-22). Many scholars maintain that 2:1-18, along with 3:1-3, draws material from Jude 4-13 and 16-18. This is certainly possible, though some think that Jude is the one who borrowed from 2 Peter, and others that Jude and 2 Peter made independent use of a common source. None of these possible scenarios need imply that Peter himself could not have written the letter, as though it were beneath his dignity as the preeminent apostle to utilize the work of a lesser figure such as Jude. [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Moved ([2 Pet 1:21](#))

Pherō (Gk.): a verb meaning "carry", "bring", "bear", or "move". It is used 66 times in the NT. The term can describe how one person carries another (Mk 9:17) or how Christ, by his divine power, upholds the universe (Heb 1:3). Likewise, God is said to endure or bear with sinners (Rom 9:22), and a vine is said to bear fruit in its time (Jn 15:2). The word can even describe how wind rushes or moves along (Acts 2:2) to drive ships across the water and waves of the sea (Acts 27:15, 17). Peter uses it to recount how the voice of the Father was carried or borne to Jesus at the Transfiguration (2 Pet 1:17). Only a few verses later, he explains how the Prophets of the Bible were moved by the Spirit to speak words that came directly from God (2 Pet 1:21).

2:1 heresies: The Greek term can refer to such things as political parties, schools of thought, and distinctive opinions. Peter is referring to false doctrines that deviate from Christian truth (CCC 2089). See word study: [Sect](#) at Acts 24:5. [Back to text.](#)

2:2 truth . . . reviled: The faith is discredited when those who profess it deny the Lord by their lawless behavior (Tit 1:16). On the other hand, the gospel can gain ground in the world when believers lead exemplary lives of honesty, integrity, and holiness (Tit 2:11-12). [Back to text.](#)

2:4-10 To demonstrate that the wicked face certain punishment, Peter recalls God's **judgment** on the fallen angels (2:4), on the sinners of Noah's generation (2:5), and on the perverse cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (2:6). These same Genesis stories also illustrate God's mercy, which reached down to deliver the families of Noah (2:5) and Lot (2:7). [Back to text.](#)



2:4 the angels: Probably a reference to Jewish traditions I surrounding Gen 6:1-4, according to which the "sons of God" are rebel angels, called the Watchers, who had sexual relations with women and begot a generation of giants (*1 Enoch* 6-21; *Jubilees* 5, 1-11). See note on Jude 6. **into hell:** Literally, "into Tartarus", the lower region of the underworld, where, according to Greek mythology, the wicked are imprisoned. Scripture elsewhere refers to the netherworld as Sheol, Hades, the Abyss, or the Pit. • The scenario described by Peter recalls one of the

visions of Isaiah, in which the ungodly of heaven (angels) and earth (kings) are hurled as prisoners into a pit to await their final punishment (Is 24:21-22). [Back to text.](#)



2:5 Noah, a herald: Sometimes, Jewish retellings of Genesis portray Noah as a preacher of righteousness before the onset of the flood (Josephus, *Antiquities* 1, 74; *Jubilees* 7, 20-39; *Sibylline Oracles* 1, 128). • This tradition probably developed from the biblical description of Noah as a godly man favored by the Lord (Gen 6:8-9; 7:1). **seven other persons:** I.e., Noah's wife along with his three sons and their wives (Gen 7:13; 1 Pet 3:20). [Back to text.](#)



2:7 Lot, greatly distressed: Genesis does not elaborate on Lot's character by stating that he was outraged or offended by the depravity of Sodom. • Nevertheless, his righteousness is presupposed in Abraham's dialogue with the Lord in Gen 18:22-33 and is later asserted in Wis 10:6. [Back to text.](#)

2:10 indulge in the lust: The false teachers were known to engage in sexual impurity (2:14, 18). Peter implied as much when he selected the wicked angels (2:4) and the Sodomites (2:6) to exemplify sinners headed for destruction. See note on Jude 7. **the glorious ones:** I.e., the angels (Jude 8). It seems the deceivers are guilty of an irreverent arrogance that presumes to denounce, not merely sinners, but even fallen creatures of a higher order of being. This is all the more shocking when we consider that not even angels pronounce judgment on sinful men (2 Pet 2:11). [Back to text.](#)

2:12 they are ignorant: On the basis of this and similar verses, some identify Peter's opponents as Gnostics—heretics of the second century who claimed to possess a knowledge (Gk. *gnosis*) of secret revelation unknown to the Church. At most, the troublemakers in view are only forerunners of the Gnostics. [Back to text.](#)

2:13 carousing with you: Or, "feasting with you". This may be an allusion to Christian fellowship meals called "love feasts" (Jude 12). [Back to text.](#)



2:15 the way of Balaam: The way of stubbornness and greed. • Numbers 22-24 tell how the Moabites hired Balaam to place a curse on Israel (cf. Deut 23:5; Neh 13:2). Though Balaam was unsuccessful after several persistent attempts, his willingness to do evil for pay makes him a prototype of the false teachers, who peddle their errors in order to pocket the proceeds (2 Pet 2:3). [Back to text.](#)

2:16 donkey spoke: Not by nature but by the miraculous power of God (Num 22:28). [Back to text.](#)

2:19 promise them freedom: Presumably they offered freedom from the moral restraints of the gospel (1 Cor 6:12-13). The promise is empty, however, because the deceivers cannot give what they themselves do not have. Having misused their freedom, they have become slaves to sin all over again (Rom 6:15-18; 1 Pet 2:16). [Back to text.](#)

2:20-21 Peter warns that genuine believers can fall from God's grace and ultimately lose their salvation. The false teachers exemplify such a danger, for they have slid back into wicked ways, even though they were "bought" by the Lord (2:1; 1 Cor 6:19-20) and once "washed" clean of their iniquities (2:22; Acts 22:16). One who has never known the Christian message is better off than one who has previously embraced it but later chooses to reject it (Mt 12:45; Lk 11:26). [Back to text.](#)

2:21 the holy commandment: The gospel with its moral and religious demands (Jn 13:34). [Back to text.](#)



2:22 the true proverb: The first saying comes from Prov 26:11, and the second is a variation on a familiar maxim from the Hellenistic world. In this context, the point of both is that sinners once saved can again become defiled in sin. Jewish tradition disliked dogs and swine as filthy and objectionable animals (Ex 22:31; Lev 11:7; Mt 7:6). [Back to text.](#)

3:1 the second letter: The first letter was probably 1 Peter. [Back to text.](#)

3:2 your apostles: Probably refers to the missionary apostles who evangelized the readers. Included in this group is the Apostle Paul (3:15). [Back to text.](#)

3:3 the last days: An expression taken from the Greek OT that often refers to messianic times (Dan 2:28; Hos 3:5; Mic 4:1). Early Christian prophecy warned that skeptics would arise in the last days to spread

confusion and doubt among believers (2 Tim 3:1-5; Jude 18). Thus, ironically, the appearance of scoffers who mock the reliability of prophecy is itself a fulfillment of prophecy. As a result, confidence in apostolic predictions should be strengthened rather than weakened by their activity. [Back to text.](#)

3:4 Where is . . . his coming?: The apparent delay in Christ's return led skeptics to doubt the promise of the Second Coming altogether. In their minds, the stability of the world since the dawn of creation is proof that God has no plans to intervene in a dramatic way in the affairs of natural and human history. Peter disproves this thinking that "nothing ever changes" with a reminder of the biblical flood: for this was a cosmic judgment by God that affected the entire inhabited world and forever altered the course of human history (3:6). Here and elsewhere Scripture gives the name "scoffers" to those who deny that God's judgments are heading their way (Prov 19:29; Is 28:14-15; Zeph 2:8-11). **the fathers:** This title is normally given to the Patriarchs and Prophets of Israel (Jn 7:22; Heb 1:1). Others interpret this to mean the apostles and the first generation of the Church, though the expression is never used in this way in the earliest Christian literature. **fell asleep:** A euphemism for death (1 Cor 15:20). [Back to text.](#)



3:5 the word of God: Peter recalls the creation traditions of the Bible, in which God spoke the universe into existence (Gen 1:3; Ps 33:6) and caused the earth to emerge from the waters that engulfed it in the beginning (Gen 1:2, 9-10). Fashioning the world "out of" and "by means of" water is probably a reference to God separating and gathering the primeval waters in order to make the earth a place of habitation and life (Gen 1:6-7, 20; Ps 33:7). [Back to text.](#)



3:8-13 Peter foresees the final catastrophe of history, when the structure of the visible universe will melt down in flames. The goal of this judgment is not annihilation of the world per se; rather, it is the dramatic prelude to the "new heavens" and "new earth" that God will unveil in the end (3:13). • Scenes of cosmic catastrophe were used by the OT Prophets as metaphorical depictions of spiritual and political upheaval. In a sense, the ultimate end of the world was prefigured on a smaller scale every time Yahweh laid waste to a wicked nation. Judgments on the ungodly are

thus envisioned as world-shaking events, e.g., the destruction of Babylon (Is 13:9-13), the fall of Edom (Is 34:1-5), the overthrow of kingdoms (Hag 2:21-22), and the devastation of Judah and Jerusalem (Jer 4:23-28). Peter employs the same type of apocalyptic language used by the Prophets, only he foretells the end of the world as we know it on a truly cosmic scale. • God delays the destruction of the world on account of Christians. Were it not so, the fire of judgment would come down and dissolve all things, just as in former times the flood left no survivor except Noah and his family. Thus we claim that there will be a conflagration (St. Justin Martyr, 2 *Apology* 7). [Back to text.](#)



3:8 one day . . . thousand years: A reminder that God's plan will unfold according to his timing, not ours. In point of fact, the Lord is being patient—not procrastinating—when he holds back his judgment long enough for sinners to repent (3:9; Rom 2:4). • Peter is alluding to Ps 90:4, which contrasts the eternal perspective of God, who stands outside of history, with the brief existence of man. [Back to text.](#)

3:9 all should reach repentance: God desires every person to be saved (CCC 1037). [See note on 1 Tim 2:4.](#) [Back to text.](#)



3:10 the day of the Lord: A biblical expression for times of divine judgment on the world. • It is used repeatedly in the OT for those turning points in history when God called nations to account for their sinful ways, whether it be Israel (Amos 5:18-24; Joel 2:1-11; Zeph 1:7-13) or one of its Near Eastern neighbors (Jer 46:10; Joel 3:11-15; Obad 15-18). Even the holy city of Jerusalem was the recipient of the Lord's justice on more than one occasion (Lam 2:22; Zech 14:1-5; Mal 3:15; 4:1-6). Each of these localized judgments serves as a foreshadowing of the universal judgment of the world envisioned by Peter. **like a thief:** I.e., unexpectedly and without warning. The simile goes back to Jesus (Mt 24:43-44) and was also used by Paul (1 Thess 5:2) and the Book of Revelation (Rev 3:3; 16:15). **the elements:** Writers in antiquity often used this Greek term for the foundational substances of the material world (Wis 7:17), usually thought to be earth, air, water, and fire (e.g., Josephus, *Antiquities* 3, 183). It can also refer to heavenly bodies. See word study: *Elemental Spirits* at Col 2:8. [Back to text.](#)

3:11 lives of holiness: The coming judgment provides incentive for heroic Christian living. [Back to text.](#)

3:12 hastening: In the sense that God is quick to respond to human repentance. Usually it is God himself who is said to hasten the day of his judgments (Sir 36:8) and blessings (Is 60:22). [Back to text.](#)



3:13 new heavens . . . new earth: Peter borrows words from Isaiah to describe the future transformation and renewal of the cosmos. • Isaiah used this language to promise a new beginning of peace and blessedness for Israel and the world (Is 65:17-25). The universal worship of Yahweh by all flesh will be one of its defining characteristics (Is 66:22-23). Like Peter, the Book of Revelation makes use of these prophetic oracles in its description of the glorified heaven and earth that awaits the saints (Rev 21:1-5). Paul too anticipates a future liberation of the created order from its bondage to death and decay (Rom 8:19-21) (CCC 1042-48, 1405). • Our Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven with glory on the last day. For there will be an end to this world, and the creation will be made new again. To prevent this dwelling from remaining forever filled with iniquity, this world will pass away to make way for a more beautiful world (St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis* 15, 3). [Back to text.](#)

3:15 Paul wrote to you: The recipients of 2 Peter were also among the recipients of at least one Pauline epistle. It could be a letter now lost (like the one mentioned in 1 Cor 5:9) but is more likely a letter in the NT canon. If the previous letter implied in 2 Pet 3:1 is 1 Peter, an epistle written to believers in Asia Minor, then the list of candidates can be reduced to Galatians and possibly Ephesians and Colossians, each of which was written to congregations in Asia Minor. [Back to text.](#)

3:16 all his letters: Peter is aware that Paul wrote several epistles and is knowledgeable about their contents. Some think this mention of "letters" refers to a purportedly well-known collection of Pauline writings that was put together in the late first century. Unfortunately, there is no real evidence to confirm this hypothesis, nor is there a convincing reason why the epistles of Paul could not have been assembled earlier, even within the apostle's lifetime. After all, Paul encouraged his Churches to share and exchange his letters among themselves (Col 4:16). **hard to understand:** I.e., susceptible to misinterpretation. **the ignorant:** Or, better, "the uninstructed". The idea

is that Paul's teaching is not easily or rightly understood by those who lack sound formation in apostolic doctrine. The false teachers denounced in the letter are a case in point: most likely, they are the primary culprits guilty of twisting Paul's doctrine to fit the mold of their own heretical beliefs. There is no insinuation in this verse that Peter himself found the letters of Paul particularly difficult or obscure. **the other Scriptures:** Indicates that Paul's epistles were revered and credited with the same level of authority as the books of the OT. Concretely, this probably means they were being read aloud in the context of the Christian liturgy. [Back to text.](#)

3:18 To him be the glory: Ascribing glory to Christ presupposes his divinity (1:1; Rev 5:12). A similar doxology appears in 1 Pet 4:11. **Amen:** It is uncertain whether this final "Amen" was in the original letter or not. [Back to text.](#)

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST LETTER OF SAINT JOHN

Author The First Letter of Saint John nowhere reveals the name of its author. Twelve times the epistle purports to come from an individual ("I am writing", 2:1, 7, 8, etc.), and one passage indicates that the author was writing as a spokesman on behalf of others ("we are writing", 1:4). The earliest traditions we have about the letter identify the author as the Apostle John, son of Zebedee (Mk 3:17). This was widely accepted in early Christian times and coheres well with the author's claim to give us eyewitness testimony about Jesus (1 Jn 1:1-3). The apostolic authorship of the letter has also been supported by an extensive list of verbal, conceptual, and thematic parallels between 1 John and the Gospel of John, keeping in mind that the latter work was universally attributed to the same apostle by the Church Fathers. Despite the strength and antiquity of this tradition, voices have been raised in modern times that call into question the apostolic authorship of 1 John. A popular alternative theory attributes the letter to a contemporary of the apostle named John the "elder" or "presbyter", a figure mentioned briefly by the second-century bishop Papias of Hierapolis (quoted in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3, 39). Not only does the author of 2 and 3 John use this exact title to introduce himself to readers (2 Jn 1; 3 Jn 1), but the activity of another noteworthy John in first-century Asia Minor could explain how the name "John" came to be attached to the letter in the first place, even if subsequent generations mistook it to mean the apostle. Scholars of this opinion thus do not account for the many parallels between 1 John and the Gospel of John in the traditional way. Some concede that both works came from the hand of the same writer, but they identify this figure as someone other than the Apostle John. Others ascribe the Gospel and the epistle to two different authors and explain the similarities between them in terms of stylistic and theological influence.

In the end, the question of authorship cannot be decided conclusively. The issue is one of probability rather than provability. That said, the tradition of apostolic authorship more adequately explains the evidence than existing theories of non-apostolic authorship. Not only does early Christian

testimony weigh in favor of this position, but alternative views generally lack sufficient support to overturn the tradition. For instance, it would be quite natural for the Apostle John to describe his personal encounters with Christ in the terms given in 1:1-3. However, there is no evidence to indicate that John the Elder was an eyewitness to the historical ministry of Jesus in Palestine. Of course, he could have been, but no testimony to this effect survives from antiquity. Likewise, one has to account for the preservation and eventual canonization of this letter among the writings of the New Testament. Again, it is within the realm of possibility that someone other than John the Apostle could have written 1 John; but how was its authority so readily granted in the ancient Church if its author was a non-apostle whose identity was so soon forgotten? The question has force when we consider that no rival tradition circulated in early Christianity that attributed the letter to anyone other than the apostle. So too, the testimony of Papias fails to indicate that John the Elder had ever been known as an author, much less the author of a New Testament book. On the basis of historical probability, then, it remains likely that 1 John is an authentic writing of the Apostle John.

Date Scholars tend to date 1 John after the publication of the Gospel of John. Admittedly, the evidence for this order of composition is slight, but most are inclined to think that the epistle reflects historical circumstances that arose slightly later than those that prompted the writing of the Gospel. The widespread belief that John's Gospel was written in the 90s of the first century has thus resulted in the common view that 1 John was composed around A.D. 100. Of course, an earlier date for the Gospel could mean an earlier date for 1 John as well, but support for this remains inconclusive. See introduction to the Gospel of John: *Date*.

Destination The author never identifies his readers or their location. The dominant tradition is that John eventually left the assembly of apostles in Jerusalem and made his way to Ephesus in Asia Minor, where he spent the rest of his days overseeing the churches in the region. Scholars who accept this tradition infer that John is addressing members of his flock living in Ephesus and its environs. The sense running throughout the letter that John is personally acquainted with his readers and their situation makes this a strong possibility (2:1, 12:14; 3:11).

Purpose The letter aims to strengthen believers threatened by a heretical group that broke away from their community (2:19). These individuals—whom John calls antichrists, liars, deceivers, and false prophets—denied that Jesus was "the Christ" (2:22; 5:1) and "the Son of God" (2:23; 5:5) who had truly "come in the flesh" (4:2). Attempts have been made to identify these apostates with various heretical groups that cropped up in the second century, such as the *Docetists*, who denied the reality of Christ's humanity, the *Gnostics*, who had a deep aversion to the physical and material element of man, or the *Cerinthians*, who claimed that the Divine Person of Christ descended on the man Jesus at his Baptism but withdrew from him just before the Passion. Others see them as former converts from *Judaism* who became increasingly troubled by the doctrine of the Incarnation and the messianic title that Christians gave to Jesus. Whatever the background of these opponents, John wanted to expose their propaganda as contrary to the apostolic faith handed down since the beginning.

Themes and Characteristics The formalities of correspondence that usually characterize ancient letters are absent from 1 John. That is, it never identifies the sender or the recipients, nor does it contain a personal greeting or farewell. Perhaps more than any other New Testament book, 1 John resembles a short catechetical treatise. Still, the work appears to be more spontaneous than systematic in its presentation of Christian doctrine, and its warm, pastoral tone has notable affinities with the canonical letters of Peter, Paul, and James. We might think of it more as a pastoral exhortation than a formal letter. Nevertheless, in terms of literary form, it is undeniable that 1 John is something unique, something that resists a neat and tidy classification among other works of its kind. Be that as it may, longstanding tradition counts 1 John as one of the seven "Catholic Epistles" of the New Testament.

The content of the letter focuses on authentic fellowship with God. Faced with innovators who broke away from Christian orthodoxy, John's readers need assurance that they have embraced the true gospel that comes from the apostles. He therefore stresses that they—and not other rival groups—possess what was passed down from "the beginning" (1:1; 2:7, 13, 24; 3:11). They are the ones whose faith is victorious (5:4) and whose fellowship with God is certain (1:3; 3:24), provided they walk in the light (1:7), confess their sins (1:9), keep the commandments (2:3), and love one

another in word and deed (3:18). The difference between true and false believers emerges as John divides the world into light and darkness (1:5), truth and error (4:6), love and hate (2:10-11), life and death (3:14), Christ and the antichrists (2:22). The line that runs between these contrasts is also the line that distinguishes the children of God from the children of Satan (3:10). At the height of all these reflections stands the triune God, who is light, life, and love (1:5; 4:8; 5:11). The fellowship that believers enjoy with the Father rests on the grace of divine life that is given us by the Son (5:12) and abides in us by the indwelling of the Spirit (3:24). This gives John the boldness to insist that we are truly "children of God" (3:1) born of the Father (3:9) for eternal life (5:13). «

OUTLINE OF THE FIRST LETTER OF SAINT JOHN

1. Prologue ([1:1-4](#))

2. Living in the Light ([1:5-3:10](#))

- A. Fellowship with God and One Another ([1:5-2:6](#))
- B. Loving God and One Another ([2:7-17](#))
- C. Exposing the Antichrist ([2:18-29](#))
- D. Revealing the Children of God ([3:1-10](#))

3. Living in Love ([3:11-5:12](#))

- A. Loving the Brethren ([3:11-24](#))
- B. Discerning the Spirits ([4:1-6](#))
- C. God Is Love ([4:7-21](#))
- D. Faith and Life in God the Son ([5:1-12](#))

4. Conclusion ([5:13-21](#))

THE FIRST LETTER OF

SAINT JOHN

Chapters

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#)

The Word of Life

[1](#) * [That which](#) was from [the beginning](#), which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—[2](#)the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was [with the Father](#) and was made manifest to us—[3](#)that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have [fellowship](#) * with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. [4](#)And we are writing this that our^a joy may be complete.

God Is Light

[5](#) This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that [God is light](#) and in him is no darkness * at all. [6](#)If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth; [7](#)but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. [8](#)If we say [we have no sin](#), we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. [9](#)[If we confess](#) our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. [10](#)If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Christ Is Our Advocate

[2](#) [My little children](#), I am writing this to you so that you may not sin; but if any one does sin, we have an [advocate](#) with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; [2](#)and he is the [expiation](#) for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the [sins of the whole world](#). [3](#)And by this we may be sure that we know him, if we [keep his commandments](#). * [4](#)He who says "I know him" but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him; [5](#)but whoever keeps his word, in him truly love for God is perfected. By this we

may be sure that we are in him: ⁶he who says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

A New Commandment

⁷ Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment which you had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. ⁸Yet I am writing you a new commandment, which is true in him and in you, because^b the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. ⁹He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in the darkness still. ¹⁰He who loves his brother abides in the light, and in it^c there is no cause for stumbling. ¹¹But he who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

¹² I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his sake. ¹³I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the Evil One. I write to you, children, because you know the Father. ¹⁴I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the Evil One.

¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides for ever.

Warning against the Antichrist

¹⁸ Children, it is the last hour; * and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come; therefore we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out, that it might be plain that they all are not of us. ²⁰But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all know.^d ²¹I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and know that no lie is of the truth. ²²Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. ²³Any one who denies the Son does not have the Father. He who confesses the Son has the Father

also. ²⁴Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you will abide in the Son and in the Father. ²⁵And this is what he has promised us,^e eternal life.

26 I write this to you about those who would deceive you; ²⁷but the anointing which you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that any one should teach you; as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in him.

Children of God

28 And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. ²⁹If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that every one who does right is born of him.

3 See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ²Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. ³And every one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

4 Every one who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. ⁵You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. ⁶Any one who abides in him does not sin; * any one who sins has not seen him, nor has he known him. ⁷Little children, let no one deceive you. He who does right is righteous, as he is righteous. ⁸He who commits sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. ⁹Any one born of God does not commit sin; for God's^f seed abides in him, and he cannot sin because he is^g born of God. ¹⁰By this it may be seen who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not do right is not of God, nor he who does not love his brother.

Love One Another

11 For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, ¹²and not be like Cain who was of the Evil One and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. ¹³Do not wonder, brethren, that the world hates you. ¹⁴We know that we have passed out of death into life,

because we love the brethren. He who does not love remains in death. ¹⁵Any one who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. ¹⁶By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. ¹⁷But if any one has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? ¹⁸Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth.

¹⁹ By this we shall know that we are of the truth, and reassure our hearts before him ²⁰whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. ²¹Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God; ²²and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. ²³And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. ²⁴All who keep his commandments abide in him, and he in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us.

Testing the Spirits

⁴ Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits * to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, ³and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God. This is the spirit of antichrist, of which you heard that it was coming, and now it is in the world already. ⁴Little children, you are of God, and have overcome them; for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. ⁵They are of the world, therefore what they say is of the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶We are of God. Whoever knows God listens to us, and he who is not of God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

God Is Love

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. ⁹In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins. ¹¹Beloved, if God so loved

us, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

¹³By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit. ¹⁴And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. ¹⁵Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶So we know and believe the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. ¹⁷In this is love perfected with us, that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so are we in this world. ¹⁸There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love. ¹⁹We love, because he first loved us. ²⁰If any one says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot^h love God whom he has not seen. ²¹And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also.

Faith Conquers the World

⁵Every one who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and every one who loves the parent loves the one begotten by him. ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. ³For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. ⁴For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith. ⁵Who is it that overcomes the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Testimony concerning the Son of God

⁶This is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. ⁷And the Spirit is the witness, because the Spirit is the truth. ⁸There are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree. * ⁹If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has borne witness to his Son. ¹⁰He who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. He who does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne to his Son. ¹¹And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in

his Son. ¹²He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son of God has not life.

Epilogue

13 I write this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that [you have eternal life](#). ¹⁴And this is the confidence which we have in him, that [if we ask anything](#) according to his will he hears us. ¹⁵And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have obtained the requests made of him. ¹⁶If any one sees his brother committing what is not [a deadly sin](#), he will ask, and Godⁱ will give him life for those whose sin is not deadly. There is sin which is deadly; I do not say that one is to pray for that. ¹⁷All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin which is not deadly.

18 [We know](#) that any one born of God [does not sin](#), but He who was born of God keeps him, and the Evil One does not touch him.

19 We know that we are of God, and the whole world is in the power of the Evil One.

20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, to know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is [the true God](#) and eternal life. ²¹Little children, keep yourselves from [idols](#).

Commentary on The First Letter of Saint John



1:1-4 The prologue gives witness to the mystery of the Incarnation. John speaks for all the apostles ("we") when he testifies that Jesus is the **life** and **Son** of God who manifested himself in a visible, audible, and tangible way when he came in the flesh as a man (4:2). • John describes the Incarnation in terms also applicable to the sacraments of the Church. Through these liturgical signs and actions, Christ continues to give his life to the world in ways perceptible by our senses (CCC 1145-52). This is particularly true of the Eucharist, which gives us the human "flesh" (1 Jn 4:2) and "blood" (5:6) of Jesus in its risen and glorified state. [Back to text.](#)

1:1 the beginning: I.e., when the Christian message first reached the original readers (2:7, 24; 3:11). There is also an allusion to "the beginning" mentioned in Jn 1:1, where the reference points back to the dawn of creation, when God brought all things into being through his divine Son (1 Jn 2:13-14; 3:8). **the word of life:** The good news of the gospel. Its focus is the personal "Word" of the Father, Jesus Christ (Jn 1:1; Rev 19:13). See word study: [Word](#) at Jn 1:1. [Back to text.](#)

1:2 with the Father: Christ embodies the eternal life (5:11) that he shares with the Father in his divinity (Jn 5:26). This means that Christ himself is "true God" (1 Jn 5:20; Jn 1:1) and that he reveals to us the mystery of God's inner life as a Trinity (Jn 1:18). [Back to text.](#)

1:3 fellowship: The interpersonal communion that believers have with God and with one another (1:6-7). It is based on a common participation in divine life that establishes us as God's children (3:1). The apostles extend this gift to others by their preaching and sacramental ministry (1 Cor 10:16-17; CCC 425). [Back to text.](#)

1:5 God is light: Means that God is infinite goodness, purity, and truth. **darkness:** Stands for all things evil and erroneous that are churned out by the devil (Jn 3:19-21). Fellowship with God is impossible unless believers live in the light—loving as God loves and staying pure from sin as God is pure (1 Jn 1:6-7). This black-and-white vision of the world is also shared by

the Jewish authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls, who made similar contrasts between spiritual realities in terms of light and darkness. [Back to text.](#)

1:8 we have no sin: An outrageous claim. John cautions readers that stubborn refusal to admit sin is a delusion and at the same time an insult to God (1:10) (CCC 827). [Back to text.](#)



1:9 If we confess: John envisions, not a general admission of weakness or even sinfulness, but the confession of specific acts of wrongdoing (Ps 32:3-5). God, for his part, is eager to show mercy to the contrite spirit (Ps 51:17). Contrary to the teaching of some, the need for repentance, confession, and forgiveness is ongoing throughout the Christian life; otherwise, the Lord would not urge believers to seek forgiveness on a continuing basis (Mt 6:12; Lk 11:4). Note that in biblical terms "confession" (Gk. *homologeō*) is something you do with your *lips* and not simply in the silence of your heart (Mk 1:5; Rom 10:10; Jas 5:16) (CCC 2631). • The Church encourages the private confession of sins to God. Ordinarily, however, this should lead us to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Jesus implies as much in Jn 20:23, where he gives the apostles his own authority to remit or retain sins according to their discretion. This discretion could not be exercised apart from knowledge of specific sins acquired by the verbal confession of sinners (CCC 1461, 2839). • Priestly confession is not a Christian innovation but an extension and sacramental elevation of a practice long observed in Israel (Lev 5:5-6; Num 5:510). [Back to text.](#)

2:1-6 John recognizes that sin can be a nagging problem in the lives of believers. It is not a problem without a solution, however, since Jesus Christ is our advocate (2:1), our sin-offering (2:2), and our moral example (2:6). [Back to text.](#)

2:1 advocate: Refers to an "attorney" or "defense lawyer" in contemporary Greek literature. Jesus spoke of himself (Jn 14:16) and of the Spirit in this way (Jn 14:26; 15:26). Advocacy is needed before the Father when our sins prompt the devil to bring accusations against us (Rev 12:10) (CCC 519). See word study: [Counselor](#) at Jn 14:16. [Back to text.](#)



2:2 sins of the whole world: The redeeming work of Christ embraces all times, all places, and all peoples (Jn 1:29). Not a single individual has lived or will live for whom Christ did not die (2 Cor 5:15;

CCC 605). [See note on 1 Tim 2:4](#). • One makes satisfaction for an offense when he offers the person offended something of equal or greater value. Christ, by suffering in a spirit of love and obedience, offered to God more than the recompense required for all the offenses of the human race. His Passion was not only sufficient but superabundant satisfaction for the world's sins (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, 48, 2). [Back to text](#).

2:3 keep his commandments: The Father gives guidance to his children (3:1) for living and growing in maturity. Obedience to his commandments gives us the moral certitude that we are living as true sons and daughters. In essence, this amounts to imitating Christ (2:6), who showed us how to follow the Father's commandments without exception or fault (Jn 15:10). [Back to text](#).

2:6 the same way . . . he walked: Assumes readers are familiar with the life and ministry of Jesus, probably from the Gospel of John (CCC 2470). [Back to text](#).

2:7 no new commandment: John's teaching is not a recent innovation unfamiliar to his readers. It is, rather, the commandment to love one another (2:10) that they received with the gospel and that ultimately goes back to Jesus (Jn 13:34). The point is that John's catechesis is an authentic expression of apostolic doctrine (CCC 2822). [See note on Jn 13:34](#). [Back to text](#).

2:8 the true light: Refers to the gospel in general and to Jesus Christ in particular (Jn 1:9). [Back to text](#).

2:9 He who says . . . and hates: A believer's conduct must agree with his confession for his fellowship with God to be genuine. Faith without faithfulness is not a saving faith at all (Jas 2:14-17). [See note on Jn 3:36](#). [Back to text](#).

2:12-14 Readers are assured that Christ's blessings have come upon them: their sins are **forgiven** (2:12), they **know** the living God (2:13-14), and they are victorious over the **Evil One** (2:13-14). It is possible that John's address to children, fathers, and young men refers, not to various age groups, but to three levels of spiritual maturity (1 Cor 3:1; Heb 5:12-14). [Back to text](#).

2:15-17 John urges readers to let go of the world and embrace the Father (4:4). Although God made (Gen 1:1) and loves the world (Jn 3:16), the human family turned against him and surrendered itself to the devil (1 Jn

5:19). Since then, the propensity of fallen man is to love the world in selfish and disordered ways—feeding his **flesh** with its pleasures, his **eyes** with its possessions, and his spirit with its **pride**. Christians are called to renounce the world, not as something evil or detestable, but as something that threatens to consume our attention and turn our affections away from God. The ascetical disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are venerated in Jewish and Christian tradition as practical ways to express our love for God and lessen our love for the world (Tob 12:8-10; Mt 6:2-18) (CCC 377, 2514). For different meanings of the term "world" in the writings of John, [see note on Jn 1:10](#). [Back to text](#).

2:18 the last hour: The final phase of salvation history set in motion by Christ. Paul refers to this last epoch as "the end of the ages" (1 Cor 10:11), just as Peter calls it "the end of the times" (1 Pet 1:20). These and similar expressions underscore the need for Christians to remain vigilant as they wait in joyful hope for the Lord's return in glory (CCC 670). **antichrist:** Or, "anti-messiah". Here the title applies to anyone who denies that Jesus is the anointed "Christ" or "Messiah" of Jewish expectation (1 Jn 2:22; 4:3; 2 Jn 7). In a restricted sense, the "Antichrist" is a blasphemous figure expected to appear at the end of days. His coming will thrust the Church into a time of persecution and set off an explosion of evil and deception in the world at large (CCC 675-77). For a description of this eschatological villain, see 2 Thess 2:3-11. [Back to text](#).

Word Study

Expiation ([1 Jn 2:2](#))

Hilasmos (Gk.): a term that can mean "propitiation" with reference to God or "expiation" with reference to sin. The word is used only twice in the NT (1 Jn 2:2; 4:10) but is related to other biblical terms with a similar meaning (Lk 18:13; Rom 3:25; Heb 2:17). In all of these instances, the notion of removing or wiping away sin is in view. The basis for this understanding comes from the Greek OT, where *hilasmos* is a cultic term that refers to an expiatory sacrifice of atonement (Num 5:8; Ezek 44:27; 2 Mac 3:33). John interprets the death of Jesus along the same lines: the shedding of his blood on the Cross was an act of sacrifice that takes away the sins of the world (Jn 1:29; 1 Jn 1:7) (CCC 457, 614).

2:19 They went out: I.e., the heretical secessionists, who broke away from the Church in order to follow their corrupt ways. For John, their departure is a sure sign of their deviation from the apostolic faith. The comment at 2:26 suggests the apostates were not content simply to leave, but were making active attempts to carry others astray with them. [Back to text.](#)



2:20 anointed: Refers to a special grace of the Holy Spirit, which instructs believers in the truth and alerts them to false teaching (2:26-27). There is a close relationship between confessing Jesus as the Messiah (Gk. *Christos*, 2:22) and receiving his anointing (Gk *chrisma*, 2:27), for the same Spirit who anointed Jesus (Acts 10:38) dwells in the hearts of all who are baptized in his name (Acts 2:38) (CCC 695). • Isaiah foresaw the anointing of the Messiah, not with oil, like the prophets, priests, and kings of Israel, but with the Spirit of Yahweh (Is 61:1). The descending Spirit brings many gifts with him, including wisdom, understanding, and knowledge (Is 11:2). • Vatican II teaches that all the faithful, clergy and laity alike, are anointed with a supernatural insight into the gospel (known in Latin as the *sensus fidei*). Graced in this way, the Church as a whole, guided by the teaching authority of the pope and bishops, will always give universal consent to the truth about Christian faith and life (*Lumen Gentium* 12) (CCC 91-93). **the Holy One:** Probably refers to Jesus (Mk 1:24; Jn 6:69), though the Father bears this title, as well (Job 6:10; Is 1:4). [Back to text.](#)

2:28 confidence: Faithfulness to Christ shelters us from condemnation both now (Rom 8:1) and when he comes again to judge the world (Acts 10:42). Although individuals cannot have absolute assurance of their final salvation, they can be certain that perseverance in faith and active charity will be approved by God (Mt 25:31-46). See word study: [Confidence](#) at 1 Jn 4:17. [Back to text.](#)

3:1 children of God: Believers become sons and daughters of God by the grace of divine generation, which is received by faith (Jn 1:12-13) through the water and Spirit of Baptism (Jn 3:5). Those who are blessed in this way are entitled to God's love and protection (Jn 16:27; 17:15), empowered to love others as Jesus did (1 Jn 3:16-18; Jn 13:34), and encouraged to direct their hearts, hopes, and prayers to the Father through

Christ (Lk 11:1-14; Jn 14:2-3). Note that believers are born of God by grace (1 Jn 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:4), whereas Christ is the "only Son" of the Father by nature (4:9; Jn 1:18; 3:16). Paul implies such a distinction when he describes our sonship in Christ in terms of divine adoption (Gal 4:4-7) (CCC 460, 1692). **and so we are:** Our dignity as children of God is not in *name* only. It is the result of truly sharing in his divine *nature* (1 Jn 3:9; 2 Pet 1:4). [Back to text.](#)

3:2 see him as he is: The glory that awaits believers is nothing less than a direct vision of Christ. John implies in 3:3 what Jesus states explicitly in the Beatitudes: the vision of God is a blessing reserved for those who are pure (Mt 5:8; CCC 163, 2519). [See note on 1 Cor 13:12.](#) [Back to text.](#)

3:5 there is no sin: Refers to the absolute sinlessness of Jesus (Jn 8:46; Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 2:22). [Back to text.](#)



3:6 does not sin: The point is not that sinless perfection is required to call oneself a Christian, but that true believers refuse to lead lives dominated by sin. Instead, they strive to break free from godless habits, and, whenever necessary, they seek God's mercy through confession (1:9; 2:1). This focus on the moral life leads John into a discussion about family likeness: the children of the devil act like the devil, while the children of God imitate the love of God (3:7-10). • Even now we are the children of God because we possess the firstfruits of the Spirit. However, since we are not yet fully saved or renewed, we are also children of the world. This explains why we are still able to sin. Insofar as we are sons of God by the regenerating Spirit, we cannot commit sin; and yet, if we say that we have no sin, we are only deceiving ourselves (St. Augustine, *On the Merits and Remission of Sins* 2, 10). [Back to text.](#)

3:7 righteous: Believers share in the righteousness of Christ as a free gift of grace (Rom 5:17). However, once established in grace, obedience to the gospel leads to a greater possession of righteousness (Rom 6:16) inasmuch as the Spirit enables us to fulfill the righteous demands of God's law (Rom 8:4). Scripture can thus speak of righteousness as an "unmerited" gift as well as something progressively "merited" through obedience, which is itself the work of grace. [Back to text.](#)



3:12 like Cain: The only direct reference to the OT in 1 John. • The actions of Cain constitute the first example of fraternal hatred in the Bible (Gen 4:1-16). His envy of Abel mirrored the devil's envy of Adam (Wis 2:24); so the murderous act that ensued made him a child of the devil, who was a "murderer from the beginning" (Jn 8:44). John is saying that hatred among fellow Christians is on a par with homicide (1 Jn 3:15). [Back to text.](#)

3:14 death into life: A transfer from one spiritual state to another (Jn 5:24). Spiritual death is a state of separation from God caused by sin (Rom 5:12; 6:23). Spiritual life, by contrast, is a state of union with God effected by the infusion of divine life into the believer (1 Jn 4:4, 9, 13, 16; 5:11-12). [Back to text.](#)

3:16 lay down our lives: The supreme expression of love according to Jesus (Jn 15:13). Some are called to a *dying* martyrdom, which consists of the total surrender of human life in a generous act of love and fidelity to the faith. Everyone, however, is called to a *living* martyrdom, which involves a lifetime of sacrifice for the love and benefit of others. John's plea to help the needy with tangible assistance is one such way of giving ourselves to others (1 Jn 3:17-18) (CCC 459, 2447). [Back to text.](#)

3:19-20 These verses are difficult to translate. Another possibility is: "By this we shall know that we are of the truth, and we shall persuade our hearts before him, if our hearts condemn us, that God is greater than our hearts and knows everything." The idea seems to be that Christians, despite being conscious of their shortcomings in life, can stand before God at the Judgment with confidence in the superabundance of his mercy. [Back to text.](#)

3:20 condemn us: The heart that convicts a believer of sin is beating with the truth. It responds with contrition and immediately seeks forgiveness from Christ (1:9). The refusal to admit sin is a sure sign of deception and alienation from the truth (1:8) (CCC 1781). **God is greater:** God has the power to cleanse our conscience and restore our confidence to approach him prayerfully with our needs (3:22; CCC 208). [Back to text.](#)

3:23 his commandment: The demands of faith and love that direct us to God (Jn 14:1) and our neighbor (Jn 15:12). **believe in the name:** I.e., believe in the Person signified by the name. Faith in the name of Jesus implies acceptance of the truth of his identity, namely, that he is "the Christ"

(5:1) and "the Son of God" (5:5). The same teaching appears in the Gospel of John (e.g., Jn 1:49; 7:41; 11:27; 20:31). [Back to text.](#)

4:1 test the spirits: An appeal for spiritual discernment. Readers must distinguish lying spirits, who whisper words of deceit into the ears of the false prophets, from the Holy Spirit, whose voice is heard in the teaching of the apostles (Jn 14:26; 16:13). As a practical test, John proposes that one's confession of faith—especially in Christ's Incarnation (1 Jn 4:2)—must measure up to the apostolic gospel to be genuine and true. To confess otherwise is to contradict the Spirit (1 Cor 12:3). **false prophets:** The heretics who deserted John's community (2:19). Both Jesus and the apostles warned of their arrival (Mt 24:11; 1 Tim 4:1; 2 Pet 2:1). [Back to text.](#)

4:2 come in the flesh: The most serious denial of the false teachers (2 Jn 7). John makes several emphatic assertions about the physical reality of Jesus' humanity to counter this rejection (1 Jn 1:1-2; 4:14; 5:6-8; Jn 1:14). Denial of the Incarnation of Christ took many forms in Christian antiquity (CCC 465). See introduction to 1 John: *Purpose*. [Back to text.](#)

4:3 spirit of antichrist: A mentality hostile to the messianic dignity of Jesus. [See note on 1 Jn 2:18.](#) [Back to text.](#)

4:4 he who is in you: The indwelling Spirit, who empowers us to resist deception by the strength of the truth (3:24; 4:13). This is one way believers share in Christ's victory over the devil (3:8), who still holds the unbelieving world captive in ignorance and error (5:19). [Back to text.](#)

4:6 listens to us: I.e., to the apostles (1:3-4). [Back to text.](#)

4:8 God is love: God exists as an eternal act of love, with the Father, Son, and Spirit giving themselves to one another in an everlasting embrace. This love of the Trinity, which has its eternal source in the Father, spills over into history through the sacrificial love of the Son (Rom 5:8) and the sanctifying love of the Spirit (Rom 5:5). For John, we can be sure that God lives in us if we love others as God loves—genuinely, sacrificially, unconditionally. In this way, God's trinitarian love is reflected on earth as it is in heaven (CCC 221). [See note on Jn 14:31.](#) [Back to text.](#)

4:9 his only-begotten Son: The Greek can refer either to the "divine generation" of the Son or to his "uniqueness". Both senses may be intended, for neither is exclusive of the other (Jn 1:18) (CCC 444). [Back to text.](#)

4:10 expiation: An atoning sacrifice for sin. See word study: [Expiation](#) at 1 Jn 2:2. [Back to text.](#)

4:12 has ever seen God: The divine essence of God is invisible spirit (Jn 4:24). His divine love, however, is made visible in the humanity and mission of Jesus (Jn 14:9) and in the selfless charity of his followers (Jn 13:35; CCC 516). [See note on Jn 1:18.](#) [Back to text.](#)

4:18 love casts out fear: The more we love God and one another, the more our ability to love increases and the closer we draw to the Source of love (4:7). Over time, the exercise of charity instills a sense of moral security that expels anxiety about our fate at the final Judgment (2:28; 4:17). [Back to text.](#)

4:19 because he first loved us: The love we receive from God gives us the capacity to return his love and spread it to others. So what was *impossible* for sinners alienated from God's love is now *possible* because of God's initiative and forgiveness (4:10, 21). True love, John is saying, originates, not in the human heart, but in God (Rom 5:5) (CCC 604, 733). [Back to text.](#)

5:1 Jesus is the Christ: For a confession of faith to be orthodox, it must affirm that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah anointed by Yahweh (2:22). The same standard applies to belief in Jesus' divine Sonship (5:5) (CCC 436, 454). [See note on 1 Jn 2:18.](#) [Back to text.](#)

5:3 the love of God: Love for God is an act of the will that expresses itself in obedience to his commandments (Jn 14:15). It directs us to fulfill his law by loving one another (1 Jn 3:23) and adhering to the Ten Commandments (Rom 13:8-10). [Back to text.](#)

5:4 our faith: Faith opens the way to salvation and rescues us from the sinful world. The towering importance of faith is stressed in 1 John (3:23; 5:10, 13), as well as in the Gospel of John (Jn 1:12; 3:16-18; 5:24, etc.). [See note on Jn 3:36.](#) [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Confidence ([1 Jn 4:17](#))

Parrēsia (Gk.): means "boldness", "courage", or "outspokenness". The term is found four times in 1 John and 27 times in the rest of the NT. Often used in the context of speech, it describes words that are clear and straightforward (Jn 11:14; 16:25), as well as words that are spoken openly and publicly (Jn 7:26; Acts 28:31). In a similar way, it refers to the

confidence that believers have when they approach God with their prayers (Heb 4:16; 1 Jn 5:14). The term is used several times in 1 John for the sense of security that Christians have in their relationship with God. It is not presumption, but the filial boldness of a child before his Father that allows us to live on open terms with the Lord without a servile or inordinate fear of his judgment (1 Jn 2:28; 3:21; 4:17) (CCC 2778).

5:6 by water and blood: Alludes to the historical ministry of Jesus, which began with a baptism of water in the Jordan (Lk 3:21) and ended with a baptism of blood in Jerusalem (Lk 12:50). Again, John is emphasizing the full reality of Christ's humanity (CCC 463). [Back to text.](#)

5:7-8 A handful of late Greek manuscripts, along with a few medieval Vulgate manuscripts and the Clementine Vulgate of 1592, expand these verses with the line: "There are three who give witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and Holy Spirit, and these three are one" (inserted either in 5:7 or in 5:8 with minimal variation). This is known as the "Johannine Comma" or the "heavenly witnesses" text. Despite the fact that this line is a clear expression of trinitarian doctrine, the Holy Office decreed in 1927 that Catholic scholarship, after careful examination of the manuscript evidence, is not bound to accept the text as part of the original wording of 1 John. The reading does not appear in the *Nova Vulgata*, the updated edition of the Latin Vulgate Bible approved by Pope John Paul II (1979). [Back to text.](#)



5:8 three witnesses: Evidence of Christ's humanity is present in the liturgy, where the **Spirit** never ceases to bring Christ to the world through the **water** of Baptism and the **blood** of the Eucharist. Faith in the Incarnation is thus supported by the joint testimony of history and liturgy. John was uniquely qualified to insist on this: he not only engaged in sacramental ministry, but he was the sole apostle to witness the Spirit, the water, and the blood come forth from the crucified body of Jesus (Jn 19:30, 34) (CCC 1108, 1225). [See note on Jn 19:34.](#) • The Mosaic Law requires joint testimony from two or three witnesses to uphold a claim in court (Deut 19:15). For other uses of this legal standard in the NT, see Jn 5:30-47 and 2 Cor 13:1. • The three witnesses become one in Baptism, for if you eliminate one of them, the sacrament ceases to be. Without the Cross of Christ, water is simply a natural element. Without water, there is no mystery of

regeneration. And unless one is baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, there is neither remission of sins nor reception of spiritual grace (St. Ambrose, *On the Mysteries* 4, 20). [Back to text.](#)

5:13 you have eternal life: John is certain, not that his readers will make it to heaven, but that they are filled with the living presence of Christ. This is how John understands "eternal life" throughout the letter (1:2; 3:14-15; 5:1-12, 20). Readers are thus assured that they *possess* Christ, not that they will *persevere* in his grace until the end. The danger still exists that the saints on earth can fall into deadly sin (5:16). [Back to text.](#)

5:14 if we ask anything: The children of God (3:1) can approach the Father with the filial confidence that he hears us and desires to meet our needs (Lk 11:9-13). This is made possible through Christ, whose holy name gives us access to the heavenly throne (Jn 14:13-14; Heb 4:16; CCC 432). [Back to text.](#)



5:16-17 John distinguishes between sin that is **deadly** (Gk., "unto death") and sin that is **not deadly** (Gk., "not unto death"). The reference is to spiritual death rather than physical death. Sinning unto death means sinning so grievously that one forfeits the indwelling "life" of Christ (5:12) and lapses back into a state of "death" (the reverse of 3:14). The evil in view is probably "apostasy", i.e., the sin of the heretical secessionists who denied the truth of apostolic doctrine (2:22) and severed themselves from the life and liturgy of the apostolic Church (2:19). Sin that does not lead to death weakens one's fellowship with God and requires cleansing and forgiveness (1:6-9) but does not extinguish the divine life abiding within (3:24). It is unclear why John does not ask believers to pray for persons guilty of deadly sins. Whatever the reason, his words do not imply that such a one is beyond the reach of God's mercy or incapable of future repentance.

- Catholic moral theology adopts this distinction between mortal and non-mortal (venial) sins. Venial offenses can be forgiven by prayers of contrition and other means, but, ordinarily, mortal sins cannot be forgiven apart from the absolution and restorative grace of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (CCC 1854-64). [See note on 1 Jn 1:9.](#) [Back to text.](#)

5:18-20 John concludes with a synopsis of several themes from the letter. Each verse in succession declares what believers "know" with the certitude of faith. [Back to text.](#)

5:18 does not sin: On the meaning of this, [see note on 1 Jn 3:6](#). [Back to text](#).

5:20 the true God: An assertion of Christ's divinity that balances John's persistent emphasis on Christ's humanity (1:1-2; 4:2; 5:6-8; CCC 464). These words could describe the Father, but they more likely refer to **his Son Jesus Christ** in the preceding sentence. **eternal life:** Also a reference to Christ, who is the embodiment of divine life (1:2). [Back to text](#).

5:21 idols: The confession that Christ is the "true God" (5:20) implies that every pagan deity is a false god unworthy of worship. Idolatry was everywhere present in Asia Minor, where John's readers probably lived (CCC 2112). [Back to text](#).

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND LETTER OF SAINT JOHN

Author and Date The writer refers to himself, not by name, but by his title: "the elder" (2 Jn 1). Because the author of 3 John describes himself in the same way, and because the Johannine letters are doctrinally and stylistically quite similar to each other, Christian tradition has generally attributed all three of these epistles to a single author, namely, the Apostle John, son of Zebedee, one of the Twelve (Mk 3:17). Nevertheless, some scholars dispute both the apostolic and common authorship of 1, 2, and 3 John. Even in the ancient Church, an opinion circulated that 2 and 3 John did not come from the pen of the apostle. The basis for this judgment was a primitive tradition, traceable to the second-century bishop Papias of Hierapolis, that someone named "John the Elder" lived at the same time as John the Apostle and apparently in the same region of Ephesus in Asia Minor (quoted in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3, 39). Though plausible, given the author's self-description in the opening verse, the evidence for attributing 2 John to this otherwise unknown figure is too slight to overturn the traditional ascription. On the other hand, the long-held conviction that all three letters come from the Apostle John is supported, not only by the strength of the evidence for John's authorship of 1 John, a view that was never seriously challenged in early Christian times, but also by an extensive list of similarities among the Johannine letters, especially between 1 and 2 John (e.g., compare 2 Jn 5 with 1 Jn 2:7; 2 Jn 7 with 1 Jn 2:18-22 and 4:1-2; and 2 Jn 12 with 1 Jn 1 : 4). These and other parallels suggest that 2 John not only comes from the same author as 1 John but was probably written about the same time, perhaps around A.D. 100. See introduction to 1 John: *Author and Date*.

Destination and Purpose The letter is written to a young missionary church under John's pastoral care. The location of this community is not specified, but presuming the reliability of the tradition that John spent his later years in Ephesus (see Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3, 1, 1), it is safe to

conclude that the community was somewhere within the range of John's influence and authority in Asia Minor (southwestern Turkey). The letter warns believers of an approaching band of deceivers whose doctrines openly contradict apostolic tradition. Their denial that God became man in Jesus Christ is the most serious and disturbing of all (2 Jn 7). Readers are to stand guard against these incoming propagandists, who will likely attempt to spread confusion by infiltrating the house church where the community gathers for worship and instruction (10-11). John hopes the epistle will arrive in time to prevent just such a disaster.

Themes and Characteristics The Second Letter of John is one of the shorter writings in the NT. It is a brief pastoral letter from a shepherd to an endangered community of sheep. Though space did not allow for the development of theological or spiritual themes, John has managed to blend the right amount of commendation and caution to make a powerful impact on his readers. *Commendation* is in order for this church, called the "elect lady" (1), because the apostle is encouraged by their commitment to the truth and their persistent efforts to live out Jesus' commandment of love (4). John appeals to them to continue on the same course (5-6). *Caution* also is in order because false prophets are marching around Asia Minor with the erroneous idea that Jesus Christ never actually came "in the flesh" (7). These deceivers, under the guise of traveling missionaries, are bound to reach this area and attempt to worm their way into the community. Readers are forbidden to host them or even to greet them (10-11). The brief counsel delivered in this letter is only a prelude to the in-depth instruction that John hopes to give them in person (12). «

OUTLINE OF THE SECOND LETTER OF SAINT JOHN

1. Opening Address ([1-3](#))

2. Body of the Letter ([4-12](#))

A. Loving One Another ([4-6](#))

B. Warning against Deceivers ([7-11](#))

C. Hope for a Future Visit ([12](#))

3. Closing Greeting ([13](#))

THE SECOND LETTER OF

SAINT JOHN

Salutation

1 The elder * to the elect lady * and her children, whom I love in the truth, and not only I but also all who know the truth, **2**because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us for ever:

3 Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love.

Truth and Love

4 I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children following the truth, just as we have been commanded by the Father. **5**And now I beg you, lady, not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning, that we love one another. **6**And this is love, that we follow his commandments; this is the commandment, as you have heard from the beginning, that you follow love. **7**For many deceivers have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh; such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. **8**Look to yourselves, that you may not lose what you^a have worked for, but may win a full reward. **9**Any one who goes ahead and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God; he who abides in the doctrine has both the Father and the Son. **10**If any one comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into the house or give him any greeting; **11**for he who greets him shares his wicked work.

Final Greetings

12 Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink, but I hope to come to see you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete.

13 The children * of your elect sister greet you.

Commentary on The Second Letter of Saint John

1 The elder: Or, "the presbyter". The Greek term can refer to an elderly man or to an ordained shepherd of the Church, such as an apostle (1 Pet 5:1) or priest (Acts 14:23). John was both an apostle and an older man at the time of writing. See word study: [Elders](#) at Jas 5:14. **the elect lady:** Some think the addressee is an individual matron, named Electa or Kyria (the Greek is *eklektē kyria*). More likely, it is a local Church, as suggested by the greeting from a sister community in verse 13. John envisions this local congregation in the same way that Paul envisions the universal Church: as feminine and maternal (Eph 5:23; CCC 2040). See introduction to 2 John: *Themes and Characteristics*. [Back to text](#).

3 Grace, mercy, and peace: The same greeting is used in 1 and 2 Timothy and represents an expansion of the more usual formula, "grace and peace" (Rom 1:7; 1 Pet 1:2; Rev 1:4). [Back to text](#).

4 some of your children: The implication of this statement is uncertain. Either John had made contact with only "some" of his readers, and these he found obeying the gospel, or else he implies that only "some" of those he encountered were doing well, while others were not. The absence of any rebuke in the letter, along with the general affirmation in verse 8, seems to favor the former interpretation. [Back to text](#).

5 from the beginning: John's teaching about love is not new but is traceable back to the initial catechesis of his readers (6; 1 Jn 3:11). **love one another:** The supreme mandate that Christ has laid upon his disciples (Jn 13:34). The meaning of his words is explained by his example, which shows us that Christian love is not an emotion, but an act of the will that adheres to the commandments of God (Jn 14:31) and expresses itself through heroic generosity and sacrifice, even to the point of death (Jn 15:13). [Back to text](#).

7 many deceivers: Heretical teachers who denied that God the Son came **in the flesh** as a man. In doing so, they exchanged the truth of the gospel for lies and became "false prophets" who streamed out "into the world" with their errors (1 Jn 4:1) (CCC 465). Behind this warning is John's concern that these troublemakers might destroy the faith of others, as well (1 Jn 2:26). [See note on 1 Jn 4:2](#). **the antichrist:** A title given to anyone who

denies the Father and the Son and attacks the messianic claims of Jesus (1 Jn 2:22; CCC 675). [See note on 1 Jn 2:18.](#) [Back to text.](#)

8 what you have worked for: The attainment of salvation (Phil 2:12) as well as additional rewards bestowed for faithful service (1 Cor 3:14). [Back to text.](#)

9 one who goes ahead: The Greek text envisions someone who "goes beyond" the limits of authentic Christian doctrine. No hint is given as to their motives, but such individuals are often described as "progressives" who not only embrace novel teachings, but who leave behind the truths of apostolic faith in the process. **does not have God:** Faith in God and fellowship with God go hand in hand. John is insistent on this point and warns that breaking away from the true faith means breaking away from the one true God. [Back to text.](#)

10 into the house: A house church used for Christian assembly. Private homes were a common venue for fellowship, catechesis, and liturgy in apostolic times (Acts 2:46; 1 Cor 16:19). John wants to block deceivers (2 Jn 7) from gaining admittance to these gatherings and disseminating their errors. Hospitality could prove harmful in this extreme situation. [Back to text.](#)

12 paper: Literally, "papyrus". The limited writing space on a single sheet of papyrus probably determined the length of the letter. **face to face:** John voices his preference for personal rather than written instruction. The same sentiment is expressed in 3 Jn 13-14 and by Paul in 1 Cor 11:34. [Back to text.](#)

13 your elect sister: An unnamed sister Church (possibly Ephesus) in the region. [Back to text.](#)

INTRODUCTION TO THE THIRD LETTER OF SAINT JOHN

Author The Third Letter of John is nearly identical in style, structure, and length to 2 John, and both have close affinities with 1 John. Interrelations of this type among the Johannine epistles support the common authorship of all three letters, which tradition generally attributes to John the Apostle, son of Zebedee and one of the Twelve (Mk 3:17). Indeed, it would be hard to account for the inclusion of such a short and incidental letter as 3 John in the canon of Scripture unless the epistle had a strong claim to apostolic authenticity in the ancient Church. Even on internal grounds, the Apostle John emerges as the most likely of any proposed candidate for authorship.

Date The same factors that suggest a single author wrote 1, 2, and 3 John also suggest the letters were written about the same time, probably around A.D. 100. A number of scholars contend that 3 John was actually the first of the three Johannine letters to be written, but this has not been determined with certainty. See introduction to 2 John: *Author and Date*.

Purpose Third John was written for several reasons: **(1)** to encourage the addressee, "Gaius" (1), in his efforts to show hospitality toward traveling preachers in need of temporary food and lodging (5-8); **(2)** to expose a certain "Diotrephes", whose heavy-handed leadership over a local Church was not to be endorsed or imitated (9-11); and **(3)** to recommend to Gaius a faithful brother named "Demetrius", who probably delivered this letter by hand (12).

Themes and Characteristics Third John holds the distinction of being the shortest writing in the NT. Its tone is generally warm and pastoral, and its contents are straightforward and practical. What is most distinctive about 3 John is the problem it addresses: jurisdictional rivalry among leaders in the primitive Church.

On the one side stands John, the apostle and shepherd over several Church communities, which tradition locates in Asia Minor. On the other

side is Diotrephes, a leader in one of these local Churches, who is behaving more like a dictator than a pastor. When delegates or missionaries arrive from John, Diotrephes shuts them out. When opinions are voiced about John, he slanders the apostle with damaging words. When parishioners express their loyalty to John by hosting his emissaries, he drives them out of his community (9-10). John deals with this distressing situation by asking Gaius, already reputed for his hospitality (5-6), to keep both his heart and his home open to authentic preachers of the gospel (8, 12). Hope is held out that John might soon make an appearance to visit Gaius face to face (14) and to call Diotrephes to account for his tyrannical ways (10). «

OUTLINE OF THE THIRD LETTER OF SAINT JOHN

1. Opening Address ([1-4](#))

2. Body of the Letter ([5-12](#))

A. Gaius Encouraged ([5-8](#))

B. Diotrephes Exposed ([9-11](#))

C. Demetrius Commended ([12](#))

3. Closing Greeting ([13-15](#))

THE THIRD LETTER OF

SAINT JOHN

Salutation

1 [The elder](#) to the beloved Ga'ius, whom I love in the truth.

Gaius Commended for His Service

2 Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may [be in health](#); I know that it is well with your soul. **3**For I greatly rejoiced when some of the brethren arrived and testified to the truth of your life, as indeed you do follow the truth. **4**No greater joy can I have than this, to hear that [my children](#) follow the truth.

5 Beloved, it is a loyal thing you do when you render any service to the brethren, especially to strangers, **6**who have testified to your love before the Church. You will do well to send them on their journey as befits God's service. **7**For they have set out [for his sake](#) and have accepted nothing from the heathen. **8**So we ought to [support such men](#), that we may be fellow workers in the truth.

Diotrephes and Demetrius

9 [I have written](#) something to the Church; but [Diotrephes](#), who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge my authority. **10**So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, accusing me falsely with evil words. And not content with that, he refuses himself to welcome the brethren, and also stops those who want to welcome them and puts them out of the Church.

11 Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. He who does good is of God; he who does evil has [not seen God](#). **12**Deme'trius * has testimony from every one, and from the truth itself; [I testify to him](#) too, and you know my testimony is true.

Final Greetings

13 I had much to write to you, but I would rather not write with [pen and ink](#); **14**I hope to see you soon, and we will talk together face to face.

15 Peace be to you. [The friends](#) greet you. Greet the friends, every one of them.

Commentary on The Third Letter of Saint John

1 The elder: The same pastoral title is used by the author of 2 John. Early Christian tradition generally identifies him as the Apostle John. **beloved:** An endearing tone runs through the letter, suggesting that John and his addressee have developed a deep, spiritual friendship (2, 5, 11). **Gaius:** Several persons of this name appear elsewhere in the NT, one from Macedonia (Acts 19:29), one from Derbe (Acts 20:4), and one from Corinth (1 Cor 1:14). The individual addressed in 3 John could be one of these men, but evidence is lacking to establish such a link with certitude. Nothing certain is known of this Gaius beyond his glowing reputation for holiness (3 Jn 3) and hospitality (56). Perhaps he was a recognized Church leader or simply a wealthy believer who gave food and lodging to preachers passing through the area. [Back to text.](#)

2 be in health: Hellenistic letters commonly opened with a wish for good health. Gaius' spiritual health is something of which John is already confident (3). [Back to text.](#)

4 my children: John speaks as a spiritual father who rejoices over the good behavior of his sons and daughters (1 Jn 2:1; 2 Jn 4). [Back to text.](#)

7 for his sake: Literally, "for the name". Traveling preachers invite others to believe in the name of Jesus Christ (Jn 1:12). [See note on 1 Jn 3:23.](#) **from the heathen:** Pagans are not solicited to support the Church's ministers and missionaries, who are entitled to support from the community of believers. [See note on Lk 10:7.](#) [Back to text.](#)

8 support such men: Gaius is urged to continue welcoming traveling teachers of the faith and equipping them with the basic necessities of life (6). In this way, he will help to facilitate the spread of gospel truth throughout the region. [Back to text.](#)

9-10 A disturbing character sketch of Diotrephes. He is *insubordinate* to John's authority, he speaks *inappropriate* words against John, he is *inhospitable* to traveling preachers, and he is *intolerant* of any member of his congregation who welcomes them. Such audacious misuse of authority is merely a symptom of Diotrephes' pride and selfish quest to be "first" (9). [Back to text.](#)

9 I have written: Some think this refers to 2 John. Others envision a letter of correction that John had addressed to the Church where Diotrephes held authority. It is no surprise that such a letter would not have survived, for the authority of its sender was rejected by the primary recipient. [Back to text.](#)

11 not seen God: The notion of "seeing" has a theological rather than literal meaning. That is, one who has come to trust and obey Christ has come to "see" the Father and his love in the Son (Jn 14:9). Conversely, the one who remains in sin lacks this perception of God (1 Jn 3:6). [Back to text.](#)

12 I testify to him: Demetrius appears to be the bearer of 3 John. If so, the letter also serves as a letter of recommendation for him. Many such letters were written in the ancient Church to prepare the way for traveling missionaries going from place to place (Acts 18:27; Rom 16:1-2; 2 Cor 3:1). John hopes Gaius will welcome godly men like Demetrius (3 Jn 8), whom Diotrephes turns away (10). [Back to text.](#)

13 pen and ink: John has additional instruction for Gaius, but he prefers to communicate it in person rather than in writing (14; cf. 1 Cor 11:34; 2 Jn 12). [Back to text.](#)

15 The friends: The members of John's Church, probably in Ephesus, and also the members of Gaius' Church, to whom their greetings are sent. [Back to text.](#)

INTRODUCTION TO THE LETTER OF SAINT JUDE

Author The writer of the letter calls himself "Jude" (in Greek, *Ioudas*) and was known to his readers as the "brother of James" (Jude 1). Several persons mentioned in the NT share this popular Jewish name, including the early Christian prophet "Judas called Barsabbas" (Acts 15:22) and the two apostles "Judas the son of James" (Lk 6:16), also called "Thaddaeus" (Mk 3:18), and "Judas Iscariot" (Mt 10:4; Lk 6:16). Though some have attributed the letter to the first or second of these figures, and others have declared him to be otherwise unknown, the majority of scholars identify the author with still another "Judas", who is listed in the Gospels as one of the four kinsmen of Jesus (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3). This is the only Judas in the NT who is known to have had a brother named James. This also explains how readers could be expected to identify the author simply by the mention of his brother's name. James, after all, was a prominent figure in apostolic times as the leader of the Jerusalem Church following the departure of Peter from the city (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18). He was popularly known as "the Lord's brother" (Gal 1:19).

One objection raised against this view concerns the literary quality of the epistle. All agree that the Letter of Jude is a well-written and skillfully organized composition. Some think it unlikely that Jude, assuming he was a Galilean tradesman of some sort, would have possessed the education necessary to produce a Greek document of such high caliber. The objection has some force, supposing that Jude, like his kinsman Jesus, stood among the lower social classes of the day. However, the linguistic question is more difficult to access, since a growing body of evidence indicates that Greek language and culture had made significant inroads into first-century Galilee. The situation described by scholars is that of a thoroughly bilingual society, in which Aramaic and Greek were both spoken among the working classes. So there is good reason to think that Jude, quite apart from any formal education in Hellenistic studies, would have been conversant in Greek. How well he commanded the language beyond that is all but impossible to

tell, given the number of variables involved (his personal intelligence and aptitude for languages, the linguistic competence of his fellow laborers and/or clientele, the number of years he spoke the language before the epistle was written, etc.). For this reason, the objection on literary grounds that Jude himself could not have written the epistle bearing his name is inconclusive. Ascribing the letter to a different Jude, or to an unknown author writing in Jude's name, is therefore not required by the data.

Date It is difficult to determine when the Letter of Jude was written. The range of suggested dates has spanned from the 50s to the early second century. This divergence of opinion is due, not only to the disagreements over authorship noted above, but also to the absence of dateable historical information within the letter. Attempts to narrow the range of possible dates usually focus on three questions of interpretation. **(1)** One concerns the identity of Jude's opponents. Those who identify them as Jewish or Jewish-Christian propagandists tend to date the letter earlier, when Jewish concerns were felt most acutely in the Church. On the other hand, those who identify them as either Gnostics or their forerunners are inclined to date it later, since the problem of Gnosticism erupted with full force only in the second century. **(2)** Another question concerns the literary relationship that seems to exist between Jude and 2 Peter. Scholars generally hold that one of these letters draws material from the other, either Jude from 2 Peter or, more likely, 2 Peter from Jude. Either way, the date one assigns to 2 Peter has a direct bearing on the date one assigns to Jude. **(3)** Still another issue concerns statements made in Jude 3 and 17-18 and whether they imply a date for the epistle later than the apostolic age. Some claim they do, though neither passage strictly requires such an interpretation. In the end, the little evidence one has to work with tilts toward an earlier date, perhaps in the 50s or 60s. Not only is it probable that 2 Peter was written in the early to mid-60s, thus requiring a still earlier date for Jude, but the prominence of Jewish themes and traditions utilized by the author are better accounted for if the letter was written in a Jewish-Christian environment toward the middle of the first century.

Destination Jude addresses a Christian community that is threatened by the intrusion of false teachers. Its location is uncertain because Jude never identifies his whereabouts or that of his readers. It is clear only that Jude is

informed about the troubles these believers are facing (Jude 8, 12, 16) and that he regards them as "beloved" (3, 17, 20). Apparently the Churches involved were founded by the original apostles (17-18). The most likely hypothesis, given the Jewish tone and outlook of the letter, is that Jude is writing to Jewish-Christians in Palestine who are expected to know the Hebrew Scriptures, as well as the apocryphal literature of Judaism (9, 14-15).

Themes and Characteristics The Letter of Jude is an emergency dispatch that issues both a solemn appeal and a stern warning to an endangered community of Christians. The *appeal* is for believers to fight for the true faith against an incoming hoard of deceivers (Jude 3-4). In practical terms, Jude urges readers to deepen their grasp of apostolic doctrine (20), to wait prayerfully and patiently upon the Lord (21), and to steady the faith of others who are either wavering in doubt or overcome by deception (22-23). The *warning* is that believers must raise their guard against the corruption of the recently arrived false prophets. Though their doctrinal errors are only hinted at, it is clear that Jude regards these troublemakers with intense disapproval and sees their influence as a significant threat to the faith. Most of the letter is a denunciation of these deceivers (5-19).

Distinctive of this short letter is the careful arrangement that Jude gives to an array of traditions that foretell the judgment of the wicked. Drawing from biblical (5-7, 11), apocryphal (9, 14-15), and apostolic teachings (17-18), Jude illustrates how certain events in biblical history foreshadow the disastrous end of the ungodly (argument from typology), while oracles uttered by Enoch and the apostles foretell their demise in more explicit terms (argument from prophecy). Interspersed among these are brief applications that Jude adds to demonstrate that the sayings of the past are taking shape in the present threat of the false teachers. The exegesis of Scripture that lies behind Jude's argument is quite sophisticated and bears a certain likeness to the techniques of biblical interpretation exhibited in the Dead Sea Scrolls. «

OUTLINE OF THE LETTER OF SAINT JUDE

1. Opening Address ([vv. 1-2](#))
2. Initial Appeal ([vv. 3-4](#))
3. Condemnation of False Teachers ([vv. 5-19](#))
 - A. Three Biblical Warnings ([vv. 5-8](#))
 - B. One Extrabiblical Warning ([vv. 9-10](#))
 - C. Three Biblical Warnings ([vv. 11-13](#))
 - D. One Extrabiblical Warning ([vv. 14-16](#))
 - E. One Apostolic Prophecy ([vv. 17-19](#))
4. Parting Appeal ([vv. 20-23](#))
5. Closing Doxology ([vv. 24-25](#))

THE LETTER OF
SAINT JUDE

Salutation

1 Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James,
To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus
Christ:

2 May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.

Occasion of the Letter

3 Beloved, being very eager to write to you of our common salvation, I
found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith which
was once for all delivered to the saints. ⁴For admission has been secretly
gained by some who long ago were designated for this condemnation,
ungodly persons who pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness and
deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.^a

Judgment on the Ungodly

5 Now I desire to remind you, though you were once for all fully
informed, that he^b who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward
destroyed those who did not believe. ⁶And the angels that did not keep their
own position but left their proper dwelling have been kept by him in eternal
chains in the deepest darkness until the judgment of the great day; ^{* 7}just as
Sodom and Gomor'rah and the surrounding cities, which likewise acted
immorally and indulged in unnatural lust, serve as an example by
undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

8 Yet in like manner these men in their dreamings defile the flesh, reject
authority, and revile the glorious ones.^c ⁹But when the archangel Michael,
contending with the devil, disputed about the body of Moses, he did not
presume to pronounce a reviling judgment upon him, but said, "The Lord
rebuke you." ^{* 10}But these men revile whatever they do not understand, and
by those things that they know by instinct as irrational animals do, they are
destroyed. ¹¹Woe to them! For they walk in the way of Cain, and abandon
themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error, and perish in Ko'rah's
rebellion. ¹²These are blemishes^d on your love feasts, as they boldly

carouse together, [looking after themselves](#); waterless clouds, carried along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; ¹³wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars for whom the [deepest darkness](#) has been reserved for ever.

14 [It was of these also that Enoch](#) in the seventh generation from Adam prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with myriads of his holy ones, ¹⁵to execute judgment on all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness which they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." ¹⁶These are [grumblers](#), malcontents, following their own passions, loud-mouthed boasters, flattering people to gain advantage.

Warnings and Exhortations

17 But you must remember, beloved, the [predictions of the apostles](#) of our Lord Jesus Christ; ¹⁸[they said to you](#), "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions." ¹⁹It is these who set up divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. ²⁰But you, beloved, [build yourselves up](#) on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; ²¹keep yourselves in the love of God; wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. ²²And convince some, who doubt; ²³save some, by snatching them [out of the fire](#); on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.^e

Benediction

24 [Now to him](#) who is able to keep you from falling and to present you without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing, ²⁵to the only God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and for ever. Amen.

Commentary on The Letter of Saint Jude

1 Jude: Literally, "Judas", which is a Greek form of the Hebrew name "Judah". For his identity, see introduction: *Author.* **servant:** Or, "slave". **brother of James:** Jude's brother is the James who assumed pastoral leadership over the Jerusalem Church after the Apostle Peter left the city for missionary lands (Acts 12:17). Both men were kinsmen of Jesus (Mt 13:55). See also introduction to James: *Author.* **called . . . beloved . . . kept:** Believers are called by God (Rom 8:30), embraced by his love (1 Jn 3:1), and kept sound and blameless (1 Thess 5:23). [Back to text.](#)

2 mercy, peace, and love: Expands on the traditional Jewish greeting of *shalom*, "peace". [Back to text.](#)



3 I found it necessary: Circumstances forced Jude to caution readers against the dangers of false teachers (4, 8). **the faith:** Not the personal faith of believers, but the deposit of faith that comes from the apostles and serves as the standard of orthodox teaching (Rom 6:17). The deposit is entrusted to the Church for safekeeping (1 Tim 6:20) (CCC 17075). **once for all delivered:** The final installment of God's revelation came through Christ and the Spirit in the apostolic age. [See note on Heb 1:1-4.](#) • Vatican II thus decrees that the Church expects to receive no new public revelation from Christ before his return in glory (*Dei Verbum* 4). [Back to text.](#)

4 admission . . . secretly gained: The false teachers were intruders who smuggled their errors into unsuspecting communities. **designated:** Literally, "written beforehand". Jude evokes the biblical image of heavenly books filled with the names and deeds of both saints and sinners (Ex 32:32; Ps 69:28; Phil 4:3; Rev 20:12). **pervert the grace:** The intruders misinterpret "freedom in Christ" as a license to do evil (8, 10, 16). The problem of shirking the moral responsibilities of the gospel, often called antinomianism, was the target of several apostolic warnings (Rom 6:15; Gal 5:13; 1 Pet 2:16). Perhaps the perpetrators radically distorted Paul's teaching on Christian freedom, or possibly they embraced proto-Gnostic ideas that sanctioned immoral behavior on the basis of a theoretical

separation between matter (the body) and spirit (the soul). **deny our only Master:** They either denied the Lordship of Christ by their shameful behavior (Tit 1:16) or promoted a defective understanding of who Christ really is (1 Jn 2:22). [Back to text.](#)

5-19 Jude denounces heretical teachers in the strongest possible terms. The aim of this thunderous attack is to unmask them as the sinners of the last days whose demise is foreshadowed in Scripture (5-8, 11-13) and foretold in Jewish and apostolic tradition (9-10, 14-18). [Back to text.](#)



5 saved . . . destroyed: Refers to the rescue of Israel from Egypt (Ex 12-14) and its subsequent downfall in the wilderness (Num 13-14). • The death and disinheritance of the Exodus generation stand as a warning to all who receive God's mercy but later return to their evil ways (1 Cor 10:1-12). [Back to text.](#)

6 left their proper dwelling: Alludes to a Jewish tradition based on Gen 6:1-4 that rebel angels, called Watchers, came down from heaven to have sexual relations with women (*1 Enoch* 6-21; *Jubilees* 5, 1-11; Josephus, *Antiquities* 1, 73). Their wickedness brought swift punishment, as God imprisoned them in the dark chambers of the underworld to await their final doom. Jude reasons that if God punishes even angels, he will not hesitate to condemn godless men (CCC 391-95, 1033-39). [Back to text.](#)



7 Sodom and Gommorah: Cities destroyed by fire for their wickedness, especially homosexual perversion (Gen 19:1-11, 24-29). • This episode is a reversed image of that in the preceding verse: just as fallen angels once desired sexual intimacy with human women (see above commentary on Jude 6), so human men once desired sexual union with the angels who came to Sodom in disguise (Gen 19:5). Jewish tradition likewise noted the connection between these episodes (*Testament of Naphtali* 3, 4-5). [Back to text.](#)

8 in like manner: Because the sins of the heretics resemble those enumerated in 5-7, the punishments in store for them are comparable as well. **dreamings:** Suggests the errant teachers justified their behavior on the basis of alleged visions. **revile the glorious ones:** I.e., blaspheme the angels. [Back to text.](#)



9 archangel Michael: The guardian angel of the People of God (Dan 10:21; 12:1). He leads the angelic armies of heaven into war against Satan and his hosts (Rev 12:7-9). **The Lord rebuke you:** The dispute between Michael and the devil derives from a Jewish legend called *The Assumption of Moses*. The extant version of this work lacks a conclusion, stopping before the death of Moses, but several Church Fathers tell us that the story comes from this source. Note that when biblical writers quote from non-biblical works, they do not thereby endorse these writings as uniformly acceptable; nor are citations from them an implicit claim that such texts are on a par with inspired Scripture. Reference to noncanonical literature is sometimes used for the sake of illustration or to help communicate truth in terms that are familiar to the original readers (cf. Acts 17:28; 1 Cor 15:33; Tit 1:12). • A similar rebuke was uttered against Satan in Zech 3:2. [Back to text.](#)



11 Woe to them!: Often a preface to prophetic oracles of judgment (Is 5:8-23; Amos 6:1; Hab 2:6-20). **Cain . . . Balaam's . . . Korah's:** Three infamous sinners of the OT. • Cain was the first murderer in the Bible (Gen 4:1-16). Balaam tried to curse Israel (Num 22-24) and later counseled the women of Moab to seduce Israel into sin (Num 31:15-16). Korah headed a rebellion against the authority of the Israelite priesthood and was consumed in God's wrath (Num 16:1-40). [Back to text.](#)

12 your love feasts: In the ancient Church, the eucharistic liturgy was sometimes celebrated in the context of a fellowship meal, called an *agape* (Gk. "love feast"), which was an expression of Christian unity and charity between believers from every walk of life and social class. Another reference to this tradition in the NT appears in 1 Cor 11:17-22. [Back to text.](#)



12-13 Epithets aimed at false teachers. Like shepherds **looking after themselves**, they leave the Lord's sheep hungry and unprotected. Like **waterless clouds**, they promise refreshment but leave their victims parched. Like **fruitless trees**, they are barren and lack every sign of life. Like **wild waves** that cough up debris on the beach, they pollute their listeners with falsehoods and filthy behavior. Like **wandering stars**, they lead others

astray in the darkness. • Several images in these verses are drawn from the OT (Prov 25:14; Is 57:20; Ezek 34:2). [Back to text.](#)

13 deepest darkness: I.e., in the deepest, gloomy prisons of the underworld where Jewish tradition assigned the rebel angels (6). The point is that false teachers will share in the condemnation of the fallen angels. [Back to text.](#)



14-15 An excerpt from the Jewish apocryphal work *1 Enoch* 1, 9. Many traditions grew up around the figure of Enoch (Gen 5:18-24) that described him as a visionary and recipient of divine secrets. His warning here is that the ungodly will meet certain destruction. • The canonical status of Jude was often disputed in the early Church because of this non-biblical quotation. Misgivings were finally laid to rest in the fourth and fifth centuries, when the canon of the NT was established in a series of North African synods. Since then, Jude has been formally accepted as an inspired book of the Bible, although doubts about its canonicity lingered on in Syriac Christianity until the early Middle Ages (CCC 120). See note on Jude 9. [Back to text.](#)

16 grumblers . . . boasters: The intruders are a band of arrogant, immoral, and irreverent leaders who were taking advantage of believers for their own selfish ends. [Back to text.](#)

17 predictions of the apostles: Disruptions caused by deceivers were already foreseen by the apostles (Acts 20:29-30; 1 Tim 4:1-3; 2 Pet 3:3). [Back to text.](#)

18 they said to you: Implies that Jude's readers were evangelized and catechized by one or more of the Twelve. [Back to text.](#)

20 build yourselves up: Believers must build their lives on the foundation of apostolic faith in order to stand firm against error. The Spirit will then strengthen them through prayer to steady the doubters (22) and recover the deceived (23). [Back to text.](#)



23 out of the fire . . . garment spotted: Allusions to Zech 3:2-5. • Zechariah sees the high priest Joshua indicted by Satan. Despite accusations of guilt, the Lord delivered Joshua from the fire of judgment and disrobed him of the filthy garment of his iniquity. With this example of God's mercy in mind, Jude urges readers to extend mercy to the victims of

false teachers, who had placed themselves under judgment by staining their innocence with transgression. • The spotted garment is the flesh. We hate, not our flesh as such, but the fact that sin has stained it, and so we work to make what is carnal into something spiritual. This cannot be done on our own, however, but only by the power of God, as Jude says in his final blessing (St. Bede, *On the Seven Catholic Epistles* at Jude 23). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Blemishes ([Jude 12](#))

Spilas (Gk.): A noun used to mean "stain" or "submerged rock". It appears only here in the NT. Some hold that 2 Pet 2:13, which employs a similar word, is dependent upon Jude 12 and takes it to mean "stain". However, it is also possible that Jude is comparing his opponents to an offshore reef that was hazardous to ships coming into port because it was hidden just below the surface of the sea. Understood in this way, the heretical teachers infiltrating Christian communities were an unseen danger to the faith of unsuspecting believers.

24-25 For a similar doxology, see Rom 16:25-27 (CCC 2641). [Back to text.](#)

INTRODUCTION TO THE REVELATION TO SAINT JOHN

Author Four times the author of Revelation calls himself "John" (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8). He claims to be living in exile on the island of Patmos (1:9), where he received heavenly visions along with instructions to record them in a book (1:11, 19; 2:1, etc.). Christian tradition generally identifies him as the Apostle John, son of Zebedee (Mk 3:17) and the reputed author of the Gospel and epistles of John. Testimony supporting the apostolic authorship of Revelation comes from an array of ancient writers, including St. Justin Martyr (A.D. 165), St. Irenaeus (A.D. 180), St. Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 200), St. Hippolytus (A.D. 225), and St. Athanasius (ca. A.D. 350).

It must be noted, however, that this majority report is not the only report to have come down to us from Christian antiquity. Skepticism about whether the Apostle John authored the Book of Revelation surfaced in the middle of the third century, when Dionysius of Alexandria argued that the Greek idiom of Revelation differs so markedly from the other writings of John that it could not have been penned by the same author. He also noted that several key concepts in John's writings are absent from Revelation (e.g., life, truth, grace, joy) and that this absence weighs against a common authorship of Revelation and the other NT books attributed to the apostle (for the arguments of Dionysius, see Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 7, 25). Most modern scholars agree with this assessment and therefore discount the tradition that connects Revelation to John the Apostle. Alternative theories of authorship have thus been formulated, though no consensus has been reached. The John of Revelation has been identified as **(1)** John the Baptist, **(2)** John Mark, the author of the Second Gospel, **(3)** an unknown prophet from Palestine named John, **(4)** John the Presbyter, a figure that some ancient writers contend was a contemporary of the Apostle John in Ephesus, and **(5)** an unidentified writer who used the apostle's name as a pseudonym in order to lend authority to his work. In the main, critical scholarship is content to think of the author of Revelation as a Christian prophet about whom nothing else is known.

Unfortunately, these alternative proposals require varying degrees of imagination and conjecture and are not without problems of their own. Hence there are still scholars who find the tradition of apostolic authorship historically credible and who argue that reasonable explanations can be given for the differences between Revelation and the other Johannine writings. Among the features of the book that fit well with the thesis of apostolic authorship, consider the following. **(1)** The mere mention of the name "John" without further specification suggests that the author was well known and had no need to assert his credentials or authority (1:1). It is assumed that readers would know who he was and would accept his words of instruction and correction without question. Conversely, if someone had simply been using the name John as a pseudonym, he would most likely have attached a title such as "apostle", lest it be unclear to readers whose authority was being invoked under that name. **(2)** The seven churches from Asia Minor addressed in Rev 2-3 are all within the region of Ephesus in Asia Minor where tradition says the Apostle John ministered in the later years of his life. **(3)** It is undeniable that the Book of Revelation reads quite differently from the Gospel and epistles of John. In itself, this does not rule out the possibility that a single author is responsible for all the books in question; after all, one should not expect works written in different literary genres to be very similar. But discrepancies in writing style and theological concepts are not so easily explained. This problem is especially acute for those scholars who assume all the writings traditionally ascribed to John to have been composed near the end of the first century. However, if Revelation appeared in the late 60s (as argued below), then as many as 30 years could stand between it and the publication of the Gospel and epistles in the late 90s. This could well explain why Revelation is written in a rough and heavily Semitic Greek, whereas the Gospel and epistles are written in smoother and more accurate Greek, yet still with a noticeable Semitic flavor. Such stylistic improvement is precisely the scenario one would expect from a Semitic speaker who learned Greek as a second language and whose command of its native idioms increased over the course of many years. As for theological concepts, it is true, as pointed out by Dionysius, that several key themes in the Fourth Gospel are not found in Revelation. Even so, this is not proof against their common authorship, for it is uncertain how much freedom the author of Revelation had in shaping the account of his visions. Presuming that he actually saw what he wrote down

and that the prophetic and apocalyptic scenes he describes are not reducible to a literary device, we have little reason to think that the visionary had enough creative license to allow him to showcase his favorite theological concepts. Given this situation, it is remarkable that Revelation *does* share a number of common elements with the other Johannine writings, particularly the Gospel of John, that have no parallel in other NT writings. These include calling Jesus "the Word" (Rev 19:13; Jn 1:1, 14); describing the spiritual blessings of Jesus as "living water" (Rev 7:17; Jn 7:38); referring to Mary, the Mother of Jesus, as "woman" (Rev 12:1; Jn 19:26); and appealing to Zech 12:10 in reference to Jesus as the "pierced" Messiah (Rev 1:7; Jn 19:37).

None of the above considerations is sufficient by itself to support the apostolic authorship of Revelation. It is, rather, their cumulative force that is significant. Though one alleged author or another might seem plausible on the basis of a portion of the evidence, the apostle himself appears to correspond with all the evidence better than any other. Couple this with the widespread testimony of the early Church, and we continue to have solid reasons for attributing Revelation to the Apostle John.

Date No background information is more critical to the interpretation of Revelation than the date when the book was written. After all, much of its meaning is determined by the historical events and circumstances that John purports to explain. For the most part, ancient and modern scholars are divided between two alternatives: a clear majority date the book in the mid 90s of the first century, and a significant minority date it in the late 60s. **(1)** The majority view dates Revelation near the end of the reign of Emperor Domitian (A.D. 81 to 96). Support for this date is attested by ancient writers, including St. Irenaeus (A.D. 180), Victorinus of Pettau (A.D. 270), and St. Jerome (A.D. 370). Most modern scholars adopt this view, as well, and explain the symbolism of the book in terms of Christianity's life-and-death struggle with imperial Rome in the late first century. The demise of the harlot city in Rev 17-18 is often interpreted as God's judgment on pagan Rome. **(2)** The minority view dates Revelation near the end of the reign of Emperor Nero or shortly thereafter (A.D. 54 to 68). Ancient testimony to this date comes from the titles of Syriac versions of Revelation, which claim that John received these visions after being sent to the island of Patmos by Caesar Nero. Also, Andreas of Caesarea, a bishop in Cappadocia in the fifth

century, says that several scholars in his day both dated and interpreted the Book of Revelation in connection with the Roman siege and destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Scholars who embrace this earlier date usually explain the theme of Christian suffering in terms of Jewish opposition to the gospel as well as the Neronian persecution that erupted in the mid 60s. They tend to see the fiery destruction of the harlot city in Rev 17-18 as the fall of Jerusalem. Despite the majority view, which puts the composition of Revelation around A.D. 96, much of the internal evidence can be read to support a date before A.D. 70. All things considered, a date around A.D. 68 may be said to bring the greatest amount of clarity to the otherwise bewildering visions of the book.

Literary Background Revelation is the only book of its kind in the New Testament. On the one hand, it is a work of Christian prophecy that has much in common with the prophetic books of the Old Testament, especially Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah. On the other, it is also an apocalyptic book with clear affinities to Jewish religious writings called apocalypses, which date from the same general time period (e.g., *1 Enoch*, *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch*, *Apocalypse of Abraham*). These works display a comparable range of cosmic symbolism, heavenly visions, judgment scenes, and angelic mediators. Still, the Book of Revelation differs from its Jewish counterparts on several points. **(1)** Its author, John, writes in his own name (Rev 1:1) rather than using the name of a revered figure from the past, such as Enoch, Ezra, or Baruch. **(2)** Its focus on the triumph of Jesus Christ, the slain and risen Lamb, is utterly unique when compared to other apocalyptic writings (5:6-8; 19:11-21). **(3)** It makes unprecedented use of liturgical hymns in revealing the worship that takes place in heaven (4:8, 11; 5:9-10, 13; 11:17-18; 15:3-4, etc.).

Being dominated by apocalyptic and prophetic symbolism, the Book of Revelation is notoriously difficult to interpret. Even St. Jerome, the most learned biblical scholar in the early Church, was compelled to admit that the Revelation of John "has as many mysteries as words" (*Letters* 53, 8). Its visions of hideous beasts and terrifying judgments seem part of a nightmare, while its scenes of worship, victory, and everlasting happiness seem part of a dream come true. These many sights and sounds are heavy with meaning, not least because John has worked a myriad of Old Testament allusions into the wording and structure of the book that

constantly call readers back to the prophecies and types of biblical history. For these reasons, the book does not yield its secrets without effort. Only after prolonged study and contemplation of its mysteries in the light of Christian faith does one discover the powerful message of Revelation. Even then, many things remain obscure and invite us to further prayer and reflection about their intended meaning.

Interpretive Views Interpretations of Revelation usually follow one of five approaches that seek to explain the book by placing it within a particular frame of reference. **(1)** The *critical* view held by many scholars today situates the book within the cultural and historical context of its original readers. They tend to see in Revelation a reflection of the struggle between Church and State at the end of the first century. Its visions of judgment are often read as a Christian protest against the arrogance of secular Roman power and its pretensions to divine honor. So understood, the book proclaims that God will inevitably triumph over every human institution that opposes him and uses its authority for evil. **(2)** The *preterist* view likewise maintains that much of the book concerns events within the lifetime of its original readers. Scholars of this persuasion often assert that Revelation describes both the beginning of the New Covenant, sealed by the dying and rising of Christ, and the dramatic end of the Old Covenant, attested a generation later by the destruction of Jerusalem and the cessation of its Temple worship. The book is said to proclaim Christianity as the grand fulfillment of Old Testament hopes and the inauguration of salvation history's final and climactic phase. **(3)** The *historicist* view claims that Revelation offers a panorama of the Church's life as she marches through history. The successive visions of the book are said to correspond to successive stages of the Church's pilgrimage in the world, and its symbols are taken to represent important figures and institutions that determine the course of that history on a grand scale. In this view, the scope of the book can be said to encompass all of salvation history rather than to focus on a particular point in history. **(4)** The *idealist* view asserts that Revelation uses signs and symbols to dramatize the never-ending struggles of the spiritual life. Its visions of war between good and evil, angels and demons, etc., are said to represent the conflict that rages in every Christian's life. Though some would allow that Revelation refers to concrete events in the author's day, these are thought to typify the spiritual struggles between the Church

and the world more generally. In this interpretation, Revelation offers a timeless message rather than a temporal message restricted to events of either the past or the future. (5) The *futurist* view, which seems to hold the greatest fascination in the popular mind, interprets the book as a preview of the end of history, the return of Christ, the Last Judgment, and the final demise of evil. Advocates thus claim that Revelation, either in whole or in part (e.g., chaps. 4-22), remains a book of prophecy for the Church today, for its many visions and promises still await their fulfillment in the days ahead.

In the final analysis, all these perspectives have something to offer and draw attention to important aspects of Revelation. What is needed is an *integrative* view that recognizes the presence of multiple themes and perspectives that complement one another and add richness and depth to the book. Christianity's struggle against the mighty Roman Empire is certainly part of the picture, as are the spiritual challenges to faith and fidelity that confront believers bombarded by the claims of the world. So too, one can hardly deny that Revelation offers a message of ultimate hope that looks ahead to the consummation of history and the heavenly glorification of the saints. Less commonly appreciated is the attention Revelation gives to the First Coming of Christ, whose death and Resurrection constitute the theological basis of the book, as well as the coming of Christ in judgment against unbelieving Jerusalem, which was known to the early Christians as the city "where their Lord was crucified" (11:8). «

OUTLINE OF THE REVELATION TO SAINT JOHN

1. The Account of "What You See" ([1:1-20](#))

- A. Introduction ([1:1-8](#))
- B. Inaugural Vision ([1:9-20](#))

2. The Account of "What Is" ([2:1-3:22](#))

- A. Letters to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, and Thyratira ([2:1-29](#))
- B. Letters to Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea ([3:1-22](#))

3. The Account of "What Is to Take Place" ([4:1-22:21](#))

- A. The Heavenly Liturgy of Creation and Redemption ([4:1-5:14](#))
- B. The Seven Seals ([6:1-8:5](#))
- C. The Seven Trumpets ([8:6-11:19](#))
- D. The Seven Spiritual Figures ([12:1-14:20](#))
- E. The Seven Bowls of Wrath ([15:1-16:21](#))
- F. The Fall of the Harlot City ([17:1-18:24](#))
- G. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb ([19:1-10](#))
- H. The Judgment of the Beasts, the Devil, and the Dead ([19:11-20:15](#))
- I. The New Heavens, New Earth, and New Jerusalem ([21:1-22: 5](#))

4. Epilogue ([22:6-21](#))

THE REVELATION TO SAINT JOHN

Chapters

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [9](#) [10](#) [11](#) [12](#) [13](#) [14](#) [15](#) [16](#) [17](#) [18](#) [19](#) [20](#) [21](#) [22](#)

Essays and Charts

[Who Is Babylon?](#)

Introduction and Salutation

1 The [revelation](#) of Jesus Christ, which God [gave him](#) to show to his servants what must soon take place; and he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, ²who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. ³[Blessed](#) is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written therein; for the time is near.

4 John to [the seven churches](#) that are in Asia: *

[Grace to you and peace](#) from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, [the first-born](#) of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ⁶and made us a [kingdom, priests](#) to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. ⁷Behold, [he is coming](#) with the clouds, and every eye will see him, every one who pierced him; and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

8 "I am the [Alpha and the Omega](#)," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

A Vision of Christ

9 I John, your brother, who share with you in Jesus the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called [Patmos](#) on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. ¹⁰I was [in the Spirit](#)

on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet ¹¹saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Per'gamum and to Thyati'ra and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to La-odice'a."

¹² [Then I turned to see](#) the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw [seven golden lampstands](#), ¹³and in the midst of the lampstands one like a Son of man, * clothed with a [long robe](#) and with a golden sash across his chest; ¹⁴his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, ¹⁵his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters; ¹⁶in his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

¹⁷ When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand upon me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, ¹⁸and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the [keys of Death and Hades](#). ¹⁹Now write [what you see, what is and what is](#) to take place hereafter. ²⁰As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are [the angels](#) of the seven churches and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

[The Message to Ephesus \[Map\]](#)

2 "[To the angel of the Church in Ephesus](#) write: 'The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

2 " 'I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear evil men but have tested those who call themselves apostles but are not, and found them to be false; ³I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. ⁴But I have this against you, that you have [abandoned the love](#) you had at first. ⁵Remember then from what you have fallen, repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and [remove your lampstand](#) from its place, unless you repent. ⁶Yet this you have, you hate the works of [the Nicola'itans](#), which I also hate. ⁷He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To [him who conquers](#) I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'

[The Message to Smyrna](#)

8 "And to the angel of the Church in [Smyrna](#) write: 'The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.'

9 " 'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a [synagogue of Satan](#). **10**Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for [ten days](#) * you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. **11**He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who conquers shall not be hurt by [the second death](#).'

The Message to Pergamum

12 "And to the angel of the Church in [Per'gamum](#) write: 'The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.'

13 " 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; you hold fast my name and you did not deny my faith even in the days of [An'tipas](#) my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. **14**But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the [teaching of Balaam](#), who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice immorality. **15**So you also have some who hold the teaching of [the Nicola'itans](#). **16**Repent then. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth. **17**He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who conquers I will give some of [the hidden manna](#), and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone which no one knows except him who receives it.'

The Message to Thyatira

18 "And to the angel of the Church in [Thyati'ra](#) write: 'The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.'

19 " 'I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. **20**But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman [Jez'ebel](#), who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practice immorality * and to eat food sacrificed to idols. **21**I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her immorality. * **22**Behold, I will throw her on a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her doings; **23**and I will strike her children

dead. And all the churches shall know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you [as your works deserve](#). ²⁴But to the rest of you in Thyati'ra, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call [the deep things of Satan](#), * to you I say, I do not lay upon you any other burden; ²⁵only hold fast what you have, until I come. ²⁶He who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, I will give him power over the nations, ²⁷and he shall rule them with a [rod of iron](#), as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received power from my Father; ²⁸and I will give him the [morning star](#). * ²⁹He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

[The Message to Sardis](#)

3 "And to the angel of the Church in [Sardis](#) write: 'The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.

" I know your works; you have the name of being alive, and you are dead. ²Awake, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death, for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God. ³Remember then what you received and heard; keep that, and repent. If you will not awake, I will come [like a thief](#), and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you. ⁴Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not [soiled their garments](#); and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy. ⁵He who conquers shall be clothed like them in white garments, and I will not blot his name out of [the book of life](#); I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. ⁶He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

[The Message to Philadelphia](#)

7 "And to the angel of the Church in [Philadelphia](#) write: 'The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens.

8 " I know your works. Behold, I have set before you [an open door](#), which no one is able to shut; I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. ⁹Behold, I will make those of the [synagogue of Satan](#) who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and learn that I have loved you. ¹⁰Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from [the hour of trial](#) which is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell upon the earth. ¹¹I am coming soon;

hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. ¹²He who conquers, I will make him a [pillar in the temple](#) of my God; never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. * ¹³He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

The Message to La-odicea

¹⁴ "And to the angel of the Church in [La-odice'a](#) write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.

¹⁵ " 'I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! ¹⁶So, because you are [lukewarm](#), and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth. ¹⁷For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. ¹⁸Therefore I counsel you to [buy from me](#) gold refined by fire, that you may be rich, and white garments to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. ¹⁹Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent. ²⁰Behold, [I stand at the door](#) and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. ²¹He who conquers, I will grant him to [sit with me](#) on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. ²²He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.' "

The Heavenly Worship

⁴ [After this](#) I looked, and behold, in heaven an open door! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." ²At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with [one seated](#) on the throne! ³And he who sat there appeared like jasper and carnelian, and round the throne was [a rainbow](#) that looked like an emerald. * ⁴Round the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were [twenty-four elders](#), * clothed in white garments, with golden crowns upon their heads. ⁵From the throne issue [flashes of lightning](#), and voices and peals of thunder, and before the throne burn [seven torches](#) of fire, which are the seven spirits of God; ⁶and before the throne there is as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.

And round the throne, on each side of the throne, are [four living creatures](#), * full of eyes in front and behind: ⁷the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle. ⁸And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all round and within, and day and night they never cease to sing,

"[Holy, holy, holy](#), * is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come!"

⁹And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives for ever and ever, ¹⁰the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne, singing,

¹¹"Worthy are you, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created."

The Scroll and the Lamb

⁵ And I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a [scroll](#) * written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals; ²and I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" ³And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, ⁴and I wept much that no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. ⁵Then one of the elders said to me, "Weep not; behold, [the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root](#) of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."

⁶ And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, [I saw a Lamb](#) standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, * which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth; ⁷and he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. ⁸And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a [harp](#), and with golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints; ⁹and they sang [a new song](#), saying,

"[Worthy are you](#) to take the scroll and to open its seals,
for you were slain and by your blood you ransomed men for God
from every tribe and tongue and people and nation,
¹⁰and have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they shall reign on earth."

¹¹Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures
and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering [myriads of myriads](#)
and thousands of thousands, ¹²saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb
who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and
honor and glory and blessing!" ¹³And I heard every creature in heaven and
on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all therein, saying, "To him
who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory
and might for ever and ever!" ¹⁴And the four living creatures said, "Amen!"
and the elders fell down and worshiped.

The Seven Seals

6 * [Now I saw](#) when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I
heard [one of the four](#) living creatures say, as with a voice of thunder,
"Come!" ²And I saw, and behold, a white horse, and its rider had a bow;
and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

3 When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say,
"Come!" ⁴And out came another horse, bright red; its rider was permitted to
take peace from the earth, so that men should slay one another; and he was
given a great sword.

5 When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say,
"Come!" And I saw, and behold, a black horse, and its rider had a balance *
in his hand; ⁶and I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four
living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a [denarius](#),^a and three quarts
of barley for a denarius;^a but do not harm oil and wine!"

7 When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living
creature say, "Come!" ⁸And I saw, and behold, a pale horse, and its rider's
name was [Death, and Hades](#) followed him; and they were given power over
a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence
and by wild beasts of the earth.

9 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under [the altar](#) the souls of those
who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne;
¹⁰they cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, [how](#)

[long](#) before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?" ¹¹Then they were each given a [white robe](#) and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

¹² [When he opened the sixth seal](#), I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, ¹³and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale; ¹⁴the sky vanished like a scroll that is rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. ¹⁵Then the [kings of the earth](#) and the great men and the generals and the rich and the strong, and every one, slave and free, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶calling to the mountains and rocks, "[Fall on us and hide us](#) from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; ¹⁷for the great day of their wrath has come, and [who can stand](#) before it?"

The 144,000 of Israel Sealed

⁷ [After this](#) I saw four angels standing at [the four corners](#) of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. ²Then I saw another angel ascend from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, ³saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, till we have [sealed](#) the servants of our God upon their foreheads." ⁴And I heard the number of the sealed, [a hundred and forty-four thousand *](#) sealed, out of every tribe of the sons of Israel, ⁵[twelve thousand](#) sealed out of the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand of the tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand of the tribe of Gad, ⁶twelve thousand of the tribe of Asher, twelve thousand of the tribe of Naph'tali, twelve thousand of the tribe of Manas'seh, ⁷twelve thousand of the tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand of the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand of the tribe of Is'sachar, ⁸twelve thousand of the tribe of Zeb'ulun, twelve thousand of the tribe of Joseph, twelve thousand sealed out of the tribe of Benjamin.

The Multitude from Every Nation

⁹ After this I looked, and behold, [a great multitude](#) which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes,

with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!" ¹¹And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹²saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen."

¹³ Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" ¹⁴I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; * they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

¹⁵Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night within his temple; and he who sits upon the throne will shelter them with his presence.

¹⁶They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.

¹⁷For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

The Seventh Seal and the Golden Censer

8 When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. ²Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. ³And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer; and he was given much incense to mingle with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar before the throne; ⁴and the smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of the saints from the hand of the angel before God. ⁵Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth; * and there were peals of thunder, loud noises, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

The Seven Angels and Seven Trumpets

6 Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets made ready to blow them.

7 The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, which fell on the earth; and a third of the earth was burnt up, and a third of the trees were burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

8 The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea; **9**and a third of the sea became blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

10 The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the fountains of water. **11**The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became [wormwood](#), and many men died of the water, because it was made bitter.

12 The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light was darkened; a third of the day was kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night.

13 Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice, as it flew in midheaven, "[Woe, woe, woe](#) to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets which the three angels are about to blow!"

9 And [the fifth angel blew his trumpet](#), and I saw [a star *](#) fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key of the shaft of the bottomless pit; **2**he opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft. **3**Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth; **4**they were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green growth or any tree, but only those of mankind who have not [the seal of God](#) upon their foreheads; **5**they were allowed to torture them for [five months](#), but not to kill them, and their torture was like the torture of a scorpion, when it stings a man. **1**And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death will fly from them.

7 In appearance the locusts were like horses arrayed for battle; on their heads were what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces, **8**their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lions' teeth; **9**they had scales like iron breastplates, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle. **10**They have tails like scorpions, and stings, and their power of hurting men for five months lies in their tails. **11**They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit; [his name](#) in Hebrew is Abad'don, and in Greek he is called Apol'lyon.^{**b**}

12 The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still to come.

13 Then [the sixth angel blew his trumpet](#), and I heard a voice from the four horns of [the golden altar](#) before God, ¹⁴saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great [river Euphra'tes](#)." * ¹⁵So the four angels were released, who had been held ready for the [hour, the day, the month, and the year](#), to kill a third of mankind. ¹⁶The number of the troops of cavalry was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard their number. ¹⁷And this was how I saw the horses in my vision: the riders wore breastplates the color of fire and of sapphire^c and of sulphur, and the heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and fire and smoke and sulphur issued from their mouths. ¹⁸By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulphur issuing from their mouths. ¹⁹For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; their tails are like serpents, with heads, and by means of them they wound.

20 The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, [did not repent](#) of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot either see or hear or walk; ²¹nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their immorality * or their thefts.

The Angel with the Little Scroll

10 [Then](#) I saw [another mighty angel](#) coming down [from heaven](#), wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire. ²He had a [little scroll](#) open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land, ³and called out with a loud voice, like [a lion roaring](#); when he called out, the seven thunders sounded. ⁴And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down." ⁵And the angel whom I saw standing on sea and land lifted up his right hand to heaven ⁶and [swore by him](#) who lives for ever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there should be no more delay, ⁷but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, [the mystery of God](#), * as he announced to his servants the prophets, should be fulfilled.

8 Then the voice which I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, "Go, take the scroll which is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land." 9 So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll; and he said to me, "[Take it and eat](#); it will be bitter to your stomach, but sweet * as honey in your mouth." 10 And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it; it was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter. 11 And I was told, "You must [again prophesy](#) about many peoples and nations and tongues and kings."

The Two Witnesses

11 * Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told: "Rise and [measure the temple](#) of God and the altar and those who worship there, 2 but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will [trample over the holy city](#) for forty-two months. * 3 And I will grant my [two witnesses](#) * power to prophesy for one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."

4 These are the [two olive trees](#) and the two lampstands which stand before the Lord of the earth. 5 And if any one would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes; if any one would harm them, thus he is doomed to be killed. 6 They have power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to afflict the earth with every plague, as often as they desire. 7 And when they have finished their testimony, [the beast](#) that ascends from the bottomless pit will make war upon them and conquer them and kill them, 8 and their dead bodies will lie in the street of [the great city](#) * which is allegorically^d called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified. 9 For three days and a half [men from the peoples](#) and tribes and tongues and nations gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb, 10 and those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth. 11 But after the three and a half days a [breath of life](#) from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. 12 Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here!" And in the sight of their foes they went up to heaven [in a cloud](#). 13 And at that hour there was a great [earthquake](#), and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand

people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

14 The second woe has passed; behold, [the third woe](#) is soon to come.

The Seventh Trumpet

15 [Then the seventh angel](#) blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." 16 And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17 saying,

"We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, [who are and who were](#), that you have taken your great power and begun to reign.

18 The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth."

19 Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the [ark of his covenant](#) was seen within his temple; and there were flashes of lightning, loud noises, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.

The Woman and the Dragon

12 * [And a great sign](#) appeared in heaven, [a woman](#) clothed with the sun, with [the moon](#) under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; 2 she was with child and she cried out in her [pangs of birth](#), in anguish for delivery. 3 And another sign appeared in heaven; behold, a great [red dragon](#), with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems upon his heads. 4 His tail swept down [a third of the stars](#) of heaven, and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, that he might devour her child when she brought it forth; 5 she brought forth a [male child](#), one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, 6 and the woman [fled into the wilderness](#), where she has a place prepared by God, in which to be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

Michael Defeats the Dragon

7 Now war arose in heaven, [Michael](#) and his angels fighting against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, 8 but they were defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. 9 And the great dragon

was thrown down, [that ancient serpent](#), who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. ¹⁰And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "[Now the salvation](#) and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. ¹¹And they have [conquered him](#) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. ¹²Rejoice then, O heaven and you that dwell therein! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!"

[The Dragon Makes War against the Woman's Offspring](#)

¹³ And when the dragon saw that [he had been thrown down](#) to the earth, he pursued the woman who had borne the male child. ¹⁴But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. * ¹⁵The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with the flood. ¹⁶But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river which the dragon had poured from his mouth. ¹⁷Then the dragon was angry with [the woman](#), * and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus. And he stood^e on the sand of the sea.

[The Beast from the Sea](#)

¹³ [And](#) I saw [a beast](#) * rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems upon its horns and a blasphemous name upon its heads. ²And the beast that I saw was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority. ³[One of its heads](#) seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth followed the beast with wonder. ⁴Men worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"

⁵ And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for [forty-two months](#); ⁶it opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name

and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. ⁷Also it was allowed to make [war on the saints](#) and to conquer them.^f And authority was given it over every tribe and people and tongue and nation, ⁸and all who dwell on earth will worship it, every one whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in [the book of life](#) of the Lamb that was slain. ⁹If any one has an ear, let him hear:

¹⁰[If any one](#) is to be taken captive,
to captivity he goes;
if any one slays with the sword,
with the sword must he be slain.

Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

The Beast from the Earth

¹¹ Then I saw [another beast](#) * which rose out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. ¹²It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. ¹³It works [great signs](#), even making fire come down from heaven to earth in the sight of men; ¹⁴and by the signs which it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast, it deceives those who dwell on earth, bidding them make [an image](#) for the beast which was wounded by the sword and yet lived; ¹⁵and it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast so that the image of the beast should even speak, and to cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain. ¹⁶Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, ¹⁷so that no one can buy or sell unless he has [the mark](#), that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. ¹⁸This calls for wisdom: let him who has understanding reckon the number of the beast, for it is a human number, its number is [six hundred and sixty-six](#).^g *

The Lamb and the 144,000

¹⁴ Then I looked, and behold, on [Mount Zion](#) stood the Lamb, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. ²And I heard a voice from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder; the voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their [harps](#), ³and they sing [a new song](#) before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the

elders. No one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who had been redeemed from the earth. ⁴It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for [they are chaste](#); ^h * it is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes; these have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb, ⁵and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are spotless.

The Messages of the Three Angels

6 Then I saw [another angel flying in midheaven](#), with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; ⁷and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water."

8 Another angel, a second, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is [Babylon](#) * the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of her impure passion."

9 And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If any one worships the beast and its image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰he also shall drink the wine of God's wrath, poured unmixed into the [cup of his anger](#), and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹And the smoke of their torment goes up for ever and ever; and [they have no rest](#), day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name."

12 Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: [Blessed are the dead](#) who from now on die in the Lord." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"

Reaping the Earth's Harvest

14 [Then I looked](#), and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a [son of man](#), with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand. ¹⁵And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat upon the cloud, "Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe." ¹⁶So he who sat upon the cloud swung his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

17 And another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. ¹⁸Then another angel came out from the altar, the angel who

has power over fire, and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Put in your sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe." ¹⁹So the angel swung his sickle on the earth and gathered the vintage of the earth, and threw it into the great [wine press](#) of the wrath of God; ²⁰and the wine press was trodden outside [the city](#), and blood flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle, for one thousand six hundred stadia.ⁱ

The Angels with the Seven Last Plagues

[15](#) [Then I saw another sign](#) in heaven, great and wonderful, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is ended.

[2](#) [And I saw](#) what appeared to be a [sea of glass](#) mingled with fire, and those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. [3](#)And they sing the song of Moses, [*](#) the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

"Great and wonderful are your deeds,

O Lord God the Almighty!

[Just and true are your ways](#),

O King of the ages!^j

[4](#)Who shall not fear and glorify your name, O Lord?

For you alone are holy.

All nations shall come and worship you,

for your judgments have been revealed."

[5](#) After this I looked, and [the temple](#) of the tent of witness in heaven was opened, [6](#)and out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues, robed in pure [bright linen](#), and with golden sashes across their chests. [7](#)And one of the four living creatures gave the seven angels [seven golden bowls](#) full of the wrath of God who lives for ever and ever; [8](#)and the temple was [filled with smoke](#) from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were ended.

The Bowls of God's Wrath

[16](#) [Then I heard](#) a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."

[2](#) So the first angel went and poured his bowl on the earth, and foul and evil sores came upon the men who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image.

[3](#) The second angel poured his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a dead man, and every living thing died that was in the sea.

[4](#) The third angel poured his bowl into the rivers and the fountains of water, and they became blood. ⁵And I heard the angel of water say,

"Just are you in these your judgments,

[you who are and were](#), O Holy One.

⁶For men have shed the blood of [saints and prophets](#),

and you have given them blood to drink.

It is their due!"

⁷And I heard [the altar cry](#),

"Yes, Lord God the Almighty,

true and just are your judgments!"

[8](#) The fourth angel poured his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch men with fire; ⁹[men were scorched](#) by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues, and they did not repent and give him glory.

[10](#) The fifth angel poured his bowl on the [throne of the beast](#), and its kingdom was in darkness; men gnawed their tongues in anguish ¹¹and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores, and did not repent of their deeds.

[12](#) The sixth angel poured his bowl on the great [river Euphrates](#), and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east. [13](#)And I saw, issuing from the mouth of the dragon and from the mouth of the beast and from the mouth of the [false prophet](#), three foul spirits like frogs; ¹⁴for they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day ^{*} of God the Almighty. ¹⁵("Behold, I am coming like a thief! [Blessed is he](#) who is awake, keeping his garments that he may not go naked and be seen exposed!")

¹⁶And they assembled them at the place which is called in Hebrew [Armaged'on](#). ^{*}

[17](#) [The seventh angel poured his bowl](#) into the air, and a great voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" ¹⁸And there were flashes of lightning, loud noises, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake

such as had never been since men were on the earth, so great was that earthquake. ¹⁹The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered great Babylon, to make her drain the cup of the fury of his wrath. ²⁰And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found; ²¹and great hailstones, heavy as a hundredweight, dropped on men from heaven, till men cursed God for the plague of the hail, so fearful was that plague.

The Great Whore and the Beast

17 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot * who is seated upon many waters, ²with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and with the wine of whose fornication * the dwellers on earth have become drunk." ³And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns. ⁴The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication; ⁵and on her forehead was written a name of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of harlots and of earth's abominations." ⁶And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.

When I saw her I marveled greatly. ⁷But the angel said to me, "Why marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her. ⁸The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is to ascend from the bottomless pit and go to perdition; and the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will marvel to behold the beast, because it was and is not and is to come. ⁹This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven hills on which the woman is seated; ¹⁰they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he comes he must remain only a little while. ¹¹As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to perdition. ¹²And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast. ¹³These are of one mind and give over their power and authority to the beast; ¹⁴they will make war on the Lamb, and

the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful."

15 And he said to me, "The waters that you saw, where the harlot is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues. 16And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the harlot; they will [make her desolate and naked](#), and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire, 17for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and giving over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. 18And the woman that you saw is the great city which has [dominion](#) over the kings of the earth."

The Fall of Babylon

18 [After this I saw](#) another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority; and the earth was made bright with his splendor. 2And he called out with a mighty voice,

"Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!

It has become a dwelling place of demons,

a haunt of every foul spirit,

a haunt of every foul and hateful bird;

3for all nations have [drunk](#) the wine of her impure passion,

and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her,

and the merchants of the earth have grown rich with the wealth of her wantonness."

4Then I heard another voice from heaven saying,

"[Come out of her](#), my people,

lest you take part in her sins,

lest you share in her plagues;

5for her sins are heaped high as heaven,

and God has remembered her iniquities.

6Render to her as she herself has rendered,

and repay her double for her deeds;

mix a double draught for her in the cup she mixed.

7As she glorified herself and played the wanton,

so give her a like measure of torment and mourning.

Since in her heart she says, 'A queen I sit,

I am no widow, mourning I shall never see,'

⁸so shall her plagues come in a single day,
pestilence and mourning and famine,
and she shall be burned with fire;
for mighty is the Lord God who judges her."

[9](#) [And the kings of the earth](#), who committed fornication and were wanton with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning; ¹⁰they will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say,

"Alas! alas! you great city,
you mighty city, Babylon!
In one hour has your judgment come."

[11](#) * And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo any more, [12](#)cargo of gold, silver, jewels and pearls, fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet, all kinds of scented wood, all articles of ivory, all articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble, ¹³cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human souls.

¹⁴"The fruit for which your soul longed has gone from you,
and all your delicacies and your splendor are lost to you, never to be found again!"

[15](#)The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud,

¹⁶"Alas, alas, for the great city
that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet,
adorned with gold, with jewels, and with pearls!

[17](#)In one hour all this wealth has been laid waste."

And all shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far off ¹⁸and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning,

"What city was like the great city?"

[19](#)And they threw dust on their heads, as they wept and mourned, crying out,

"Alas, alas, for the great city
where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth!
In one hour she has been laid waste.

[20](#)Rejoice over her, O heaven,
O saints and apostles and prophets,

for God has given judgment for you against her!"

21 Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying,

"So shall Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence,
and shall be found no more;

22 and the sound of harpists and minstrels, of flute players and trumpeters,

shall be heard in you no more;

and a craftsman of any craft

shall be found in you no more;

and the sound of the millstone

shall be heard in you no more;

23 and the light of a lamp

shall shine in you no more;

and the voice of bridegroom and bride

shall be heard in you no more;

for your merchants were the great men of the earth,

and all nations were deceived by your sorcery.

24 And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints,
and of all who have been slain on earth."

The Rejoicing in Heaven

19 After this I heard what seemed to be the mighty voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying,

"[Hallelujah](#)! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,

2 for his judgments are true and just;

he has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication,

and he has avenged on her the blood of his servants."

3 Once more they cried,

"Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever."

4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who is seated on the throne, saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!"

5 And from the throne came a voice crying,

"Praise our God, all you his servants,
you who fear him, small and great."

⁶Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying,

"Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.

⁷Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory,

for the marriage of the Lamb * has come,

and his Bride has made herself ready;

⁸it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure"—
for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

⁹ And the angel said¹ to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are true words of God." ¹⁰Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God." For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

The Rider on the White Horse

¹¹ Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹²His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed which no one knows but himself. ¹³He is clothed in a robe dipped in^m blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴And the armies of heaven, wearing fine linen, white and pure, followed him on white horses. ¹⁵From his mouth issues a sharp sword with which to strike the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, King of kings and Lord of lords.

The Beast and Its Armies Defeated

¹⁷ Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly in midheaven, "Come, gather for the great supper of God, ¹⁸to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great." ¹⁹And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who sits upon the horse and against his army. ²⁰And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had worked the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who

worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with brimstone. ²¹And the rest were slain by the sword of him who sits upon the horse, the sword that issues from his mouth; and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

The Thousand Years

20 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain. ²And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, ³and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years were ended. * After that he must be let out for a little while.

4 Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom judgment was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life, and reigned with Christ a thousand years. ⁵The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. ⁶Blessed and holy is he who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years.

Satan's Doom

7 And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸and will come out to deceive the nations which are at the four corners of the earth, that is, Gog and Ma'gog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. ⁹And they marched up over the broad earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city; but fire came down from heavenⁿ and consumed them, ¹⁰and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

The Dead Are Judged

11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who sat upon it; from his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹²And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the

dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done. ¹³And the sea gave up the dead in it, [Death and Hades](#) gave up the dead in them, and all were judged by what they had done. ¹⁴Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is [the second death](#), the lake of fire; ¹⁵and if any one's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

[The New Heaven and the New Earth](#)

²¹ [Then I saw](#) a [new heaven and a new earth](#); for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. * ²And I saw the holy city, [new Jerusalem](#), coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; ³[and I heard](#) a great voice from the throne saying, "Behold, [the dwelling](#) of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people,^o and God himself will be with them;^p ⁴he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away."

⁵ And he who sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." ⁶And he said to me, "It is done! I am [the Alpha and the Omega](#), the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water without price from the fountain of the water of life. ⁷He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and [he shall be my son](#). ⁸But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is [the second death](#)." *

[Vision of the New Jerusalem](#)

⁹ [Then came one of the seven angels](#) who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." ¹⁰And [in the Spirit](#) he carried me away to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. ¹²It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed; ¹³on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west

three gates. ¹⁴And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of [the twelve apostles](#) of the Lamb.

¹⁵ And he who talked to me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. ¹⁶The city lies foursquare, its [length the same as its breadth](#); and he measured the city with his rod, twelve thousand stadia;⁹ its length and breadth and height are equal. ¹⁷He also measured its wall, a hundred and forty-four cubits by a man's measure, that is, an angel's. ¹⁸The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass. ¹⁹The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every jewel; the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, ²⁰the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. ²¹And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass.

²² And I saw no temple in the city, for [its temple is the Lord](#) God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴By its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it, ²⁵and its gates shall never be shut by day—and there shall be no night there; ²⁶they shall bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. ²⁷But nothing unclean shall enter it, nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

River of the Water of Life

²² Then he showed me the river of [the water of life](#), bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ²through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, [the tree of life](#)^r with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him; ⁴they [shall see his face](#), and his name shall be on their foreheads. ⁵And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.

6 [And he said to me](#), "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place. **7** And behold, [I am coming soon](#)."

Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.

Epilogue and Benediction

8 [I John](#) am he who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me; **9** but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. [Worship God](#)."

10 And he said to me, "[Do not seal up](#) the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. **11** Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy."

12 "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done. **13** I am [the Alpha and the Omega](#), the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

14 [Blessed](#) are those who wash their robes,^s that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. **15** [Outside](#) are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and every one who loves and practices falsehood.

16 "I Jesus have sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am [the root and the offspring](#) of David, the bright morning star."

17 The Spirit and [the Bride](#) say, "Come." And let him who hears say, "Come." And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price.

18 [I warn every one](#) who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if any one adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, **19** and if any one takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. [Come, Lord Jesus!](#)

21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints.^t Amen.

Commentary on The Revelation to Saint John



1:1 gave him: In classic apocalyptic fashion, the revealed message comes from God through the mediation of heavenly beings, in this case through Jesus Christ and his angel (1:12-20; 22:16). **must soon take place:** A note of immediacy rings throughout the book, especially in the opening (1:3) and closing chapters (22:6-7, 10, 12, 20). The initial fulfillment of the book was thus expected within the lifetime of its first-century readers. • The expression alludes to the Greek version of Dan 2:28, where Nebuchadnezzar sees in a dream "what will be" in the latter days of the Messiah. The implication: what was still far off in Daniel's day is on the verge of fulfillment in John's day. **John:** Probably the Apostle John, a son of Zebedee (Mk 3:17). See introduction to Revelation: *Author*. [Back to text.](#)

1:3 Blessed: The first of seven benedictions invoked upon those who heed the injunctions of the book (14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14) (CCC 2626). **he who reads . . . those who hear:** The distinction between a single reader and multiple listeners implies a public reading of the book. Most likely this would take place in a liturgical setting, where the book would be read by a lector to a congregation assembled for worship. **prophecy:** As in the prophetic books of the OT, Revelation combines disclosures about the future with reflections on the past and appeals to remain faithful in the present. [Back to text.](#)



1:4 the seven churches: Identified by name in 1:11 and addressed individually in chaps. 2-3. **Asia:** A Roman province in southwestern Turkey. **Grace . . . and peace:** A standard greeting in Christian correspondence (Rom 1:7; 1 Pet 1:2). By adding the farewell formula in Rev 22:21, John gives the entire book the character of a letter to be read in the liturgy (Col 4:16; 1 Thess 5:27). **him who is:** Implies that God is the eternal Lord of history. • The expression expands on the name of Yahweh revealed at the burning bush (Ex 3:14) (CCC 206, 212). [Back to text.](#)

1:4-5 Grace and peace flow out from the Trinity, as seen in the threefold repetition of **from**, which is linked to the Father (**him who is**), the Son (**Christ**), and the Holy Spirit (**the seven spirits**). Christian interpreters have often read the "seven spirits" of Revelation as an allusion to the Spirit and his sevenfold gifts mentioned in Is 11:2 LXX (e.g., St. Ambrose, *On the Holy Spirit* 1, 16). Symbolic reflections of the Trinity also appear at Rev 5:6 and 22:1. [Back to text.](#)



1:5 the first-born: The risen humanity of Jesus is the **1** first specimen of God's new creation (21:5). • Jesus is described in the words of Ps 89:27, where Yahweh promises to exalt the messianic heir of David over every world ruler. This was fulfilled in Christ, who became "King of kings" (Rev 19:16) through his Resurrection and Ascension into heaven (Acts 2:29-36). [See note on Rom 1:3.](#) • Christ is called the first-born of the dead, not because he died before we did, but because he suffered death for us and was the first to rise again. Since he has risen, we too shall rise again through him (St. Athanasius, *Discourses against the Arians* 2, 61). [Back to text.](#)



1:6 kingdom, priests: Believers share in the royal priesthood of Christ. This common priesthood of the faithful differs in kind and not simply in degree from the ministerial priesthood of the Church (CCC 1546). [See note on 1 Pet 2:9.](#) • Since the King of kings and Priest of heaven united us with his body when he offered himself for us, there is not one among the saints who does not possess the office of priesthood, for each is a member of the eternal Priest (St. Bede, *Explanation of the Apocalypse* 1, 6). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Revelation ([1:1](#))

Apokalypsis (Gk.): a noun meaning "revelation" or "unveiling". In the Bible, the term always refers to a disclosure of something that was previously unknown, whether it be secrets (Sir 22:22), works (Sir 11:27), the knowledge of God (Eph 1:17), or the plan of salvation (Eph 3:3).

Mysteries can be made known in the present, such as Christ's glory and Lordship (Gal 1:12), or await disclosure until the future, when God will judge the world (Rom 2:5) and bestow glory on his children (Rom 8:19). The word *apokalypsis* serves as a title for the Book of Revelation, sometimes called the Apocalypse on the basis of this Greek term (Rev 1:1). The title is well chosen inasmuch as Revelation removes the veil from God's plan for the future, drawing back the curtain that hides Christ's glory, kingship, and control over history from the naked eye (Rev 4-5) (CCC 50).



1:7 he is coming: The towering expectation of the book, here described in the words of Dan 7:13 and Zech 12:10. • Daniel sees the Son of man riding the clouds into heaven, where the divine court grants him an everlasting kingdom that results in the destruction of his enemies. Zechariah portrays Israel mourning the death of its pierced and rejected Messiah. John blends these visions into one: Christ is the Son of man whose exaltation as king brings a sentence of judgment on those who pierced him. The passage may have provisional reference to the coming of Christ in judgment against unbelieving Jerusalem, the city that pierced him (Rev 11:8) and within a generation lay in ruins (Mt 22:7; 24:1-34). Ultimately, however, its fulfillment awaits the return of Christ in glory, when all peoples will behold his splendor and lament their participation in sin (Acts 1:11). [Back to text.](#)



1:8 Alpha . . . Omega: The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. They signify that God is the origin and destiny of all creation, as well as its sovereign Lord (22:13). • The same idea is expressed in a similar way in Is 41:4, 44:6, and 48:12. [Back to text.](#)

1:9 Patmos: A small island in the southern Aegean Sea that was used by the Romans as a penal colony for criminals. John was banished there for being a Christian. [Back to text.](#)



1:10 in the Spirit: John is seized by the Spirit while engaged in prayer and worship (see Jn 4:23-24). He is carried off into heaven (Rev 4:2), into the wilderness (17:3), and then to the summit of a high mountain

(21:10). • Ezekiel was similarly transported to various locations by the Spirit (Ezek 2:2; 3:14; 11:1; 40:2). **the Lord's day:** Sunday, the first day of the week, when Christians gather for liturgy (Acts 20:7) to commemorate the Resurrection of Jesus (Lk 24:1-7) (CCC 1166-67). [Back to text.](#)



1:12-17 The inaugural vision of Revelation. Borrowing **1** images from Ezekiel and Daniel, it describes Jesus in both divine and human terms. • His hair is white like that of the Lord, the Ancient of Days (Dan 7:9), and his voice is like the rumbling of God's glory when it draws near (Ezek 43:2). His appearance also resembles a man (Dan 7:13) whose eyes are torches and whose feet gleam like bronze fired in a furnace (Dan 10:6). John, like the prophets before him, falls prostrate before the exalted Lord (Rev 1:17; Ezek 1:28; 44:4; Dan 10:9). [Back to text.](#)



1:12 seven golden lampstands: Each one is modeled on the branched candelabra, or *menorah*, that flickered in the sanctuaries of Israel (Ex 25:31-39). They symbolize the seven Churches addressed by John (Rev 1:20). • The passage evokes Zech 4:2, where a Temple menorah burns with the oil of the Spirit. This is a reminder that the seven Churches remain aglow with the Spirit and depend on him to enlighten others. • The Church's preaching is steady and true, and through it one and the same salvation radiates throughout the world. Announcing the truth everywhere, the Church is the seven-branched candlestick that bears the light of Christ (St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5, 20, 1). [Back to text.](#)

1:13 long robe: A vestment worn by a high priest (Ex 28:4; Sir 45:8). Similar attire is worn by the heavenly angels (Rev 15:6). Jesus ministers to the needs of the seven Churches just as the Temple priests tended the *menorah* lamps by trimming their wicks and replenishing their oil (Ex 27:20-21) (CCC 662). [Back to text.](#)

1:18 keys of Death and Hades: Symbolizes that Christ has royal and judicial power over life and death (3:7), which is the power to lock and unlock the gates of the underworld, called Hades (9:1; 20:1, 13; Wis 16:13-14) (CCC 633-35). [See note on Mt 16:18.](#) [Back to text.](#)

1:19 what . . . what . . . what: A basic outline of the book. What John sees is chap. 1, what *is* refers to the present state of the Churches addressed

in chaps. 2-3, and what is about to unfold *hereafter* is narrated in chaps. 4-22. [Back to text.](#)

1:20 the angels: Perhaps a reference to the bishops or pastors of the seven churches, for each of the seven letters that follow is sent to an "angel" of the community (2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14). [Back to text.](#)

2:1-3:22 John addresses seven churches in Asia Minor that lie within a 50-mile radius of one another. **(1)** Traditionally, it is held that the Apostle John settled in this area and ministered to these very churches in the later years of his life. **(2)** Geographically, the sequence of churches moves clockwise from Ephesus to Laodicea and may reflect the postal route of the day. **(3)** Structurally, each letter begins with an image that appeared in chap. 1 and ends with an allusion to chaps. 19-22. **(4)** Spiritually, the zeal of these churches is declining, with Ephesus in the best shape and Laodicea in the worst. **(5)** Historically, these letters allude to concrete circumstances and experiences of Asian Christians in the first century. [Back to text.](#)

2:1 Ephesus: The most prestigious cultural, commercial, and religious center in the Roman province of Asia. Paul established the Church there (Acts 19:1-10) and later commissioned Timothy to build on his foundation (1 Tim 1:3). It is uncertain as to when John assumed pastoral responsibility over Ephesus and the other churches in the region. [Back to text.](#)

2:4 abandoned the love: The Ephesians had turned their hearts away from Christ and let their enthusiasm for Christian living die down (Mt 24:12). According to Jesus, this constitutes a spiritual "fall" from which they must recover (Rev 2:5). [Back to text.](#)

2:5 remove your lampstand: The price of impenitence is divine judgment. The threat of removal may recall the historical plight of Ephesus, a city that was twice forced to relocate because of the silting of its river and harbor. [Back to text.](#)

2:6 the Nicolaitans: Early tradition links these heretics with Nicolaus, one of the seven deacons ordained in Acts 6:5. Whatever their background and origin, the Nicolaitans are said to have had a dangerously casual attitude toward idolatry and sexual immorality. Their corruptive influence was already at work among believers in Pergamum (Rev 2:15). [Back to text.](#)



2:7 him who conquers: The one whose commitment to Jesus triumphs over every temptation to compromise or lose faith. The seven letters reveal the eternal rewards that await the saints who persevere (2:11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). **tree of life:** Signifies everlasting life and communion with Christ (22:14). Perhaps the promise is a strike at the Greek fertility goddess, Artemis, whose temple was located in Ephesus and who was sometimes depicted as a fruitful tree. • Humanity was barred from the tree of life after the rebellion in Eden (Gen 3:22), but access has been regained through Christ, who gives a foretaste of its blessings in the Eucharist. [See note on Jn 6:58.](#) [Back to text.](#)

2:8 Smyrna: Thirty miles north of Ephesus. Smyrna was fiercely loyal to Rome, a supporter of emperor worship, and home to a large Jewish community openly hostile to Christianity. Destroyed in 600 B.C. and refounded in 300 B.C., the city is addressed by him who truly **died** and **came to life** again. [Back to text.](#)

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2:9 synagogue of Satan: The perpetrators of Christian persecution in Smyrna are Jewish. Because Jews were the only ones in the Roman Empire legally exempt from worshiping the emperor and participation in the imperial cult, they could easily betray Christians to the Roman authorities for confessing Jesus as Lord (instead of Caesar) and practicing what was still an unauthorized religion in the eyes of Rome (Acts 14:2; 17:5-8). For Paul's estimate of what constitutes a true Jew, see Rom 2:17-29. [Back to text.](#)



2:10 ten days: Possibly an allusion to the pagan rites of Niobe, practiced in Smyrna, whose devotees underwent ten days of mourning. • Daniel and his friends were also tested for ten days lest they compromise their faith by eating foods contaminated by idolatry (Dan 1:8-14). **the crown of life:** Means the crown that is (eternal) life. [See note on Jas 1:12.](#) [Back to text.](#)

2:11 the second death: The eternal death of hell, described as a "lake of fire" (20:14; 21:8). [Back to text.](#)

2:12 Pergamum: Forty-five miles northeast of Smyrna. Pergamum distinguished itself as the earliest and most enthusiastic center of emperor worship in the region. This and other forms of pagan religion made it the seat of "Satan's throne" (2:13). [Back to text.](#)

2:13 Antipas: An early Christian martyr of whom nothing else is known. [Back to text.](#)



2:14 teaching of Balaam: Certain troublemakers were permitting what the Jerusalem Council had prohibited: the consumption of idol food and the practice of sexual immorality (Acts 15:29). On the relation between this prohibition and Paul's teaching in 1 Cor 8-10, see essay: [Paul, Idol Food, and the Jerusalem Council](#) at 1 Cor 9. • Balaam appears in Num 22-24 as a Mesopotamian magician who counseled Moabite women to seduce the men of Israel into sexual and idolatrous sin (Num 25:1-3; 31:16). The warning that perpetrators of sin will face Christ's word of judgment, symbolized as a sword (Rev 2:16), recalls how Balaam was eventually slain with the sword (Num 31:8). [Back to text.](#)

2:15 the Nicolaitans: [See note on Rev 2:6.](#) [Back to text.](#)



2:17 the hidden manna: Refers to Christ himself, whose glory is concealed in heaven but whose coming in history (Incarnation) and liturgy (Eucharist) was foreshadowed in the gift of the manna given to Israel. [See note on Jn 6:32.](#) • Manna was the bread that Yahweh gave to the pilgrims of the Exodus, a sample of which was hidden away in the Ark of the Covenant (Ex 16:31-34; Heb 9:4). **a white stone:** Used in the ancient world to cast a vote of acquittal or carried as a pass to gain entrance into invitation-only assemblies. The believer is thus shown to be righteous or innocent, as well as invited to the marriage feast of the Lamb (19:7-9). **a new name:** A new identity in Christ (19:12) that admits believers into the heavenly presence of the Lord and the Lamb (22:3-4; Is 62:2) (CCC 2159). [Back to text.](#)

2:18 Thyatira: Forty miles southeast of Pergamum. Thyatira was originally a military outpost that evolved into a commercial city famous for its trade guilds (Acts 16:14). These guilds had patron deities that its members were expected to honor in idolatrous ways. Failure to do so could mean both social disgrace and financial disaster for the conscientious Christian objector. [Back to text.](#)



2:20 Jezebel: A false prophetess leading believers astray into religious idolatry and sexual impurity. These sins are direct violations of the pastoral decree issued by the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:29). • The "Jezebel" of Revelation harkens back to Jezebel, the Sidonian wife of Ahab, king of Israel (1 Kings 16:31), and the chief adversary of the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-2). Jezebel ruthlessly slaughtered the innocent (1 Kings 21:1-16) and was infamous for her harlotries and sorcery (2 Kings 9:22). [Back to text.](#)

2:23 as your works deserve: Christ will judge the churches for their deeds, rewarding the righteous with eternal life and repaying the wicked with everlasting death (20:12). The doctrine of judgment according to works is also taught by Paul (Rom 2:6-8) and the OT (Ps 62:12) (CCC 679). [Back to text.](#)

2:24 the deep things of Satan: May suggest that the followers of Jezebel dabbled in sorcery and astrology, i.e., occult arts that lead practitioners to spiritual ruin (21:8). [Back to text.](#)



2:27 rod of iron: Conquerors will possess in full what they already possess in part: a share in Christ's reign over the world (5:10; 22:5). • The iron rod calls to mind Ps 2:8-9, where David's royal heir is offered dominion over all nations. Solomon's empire, though the largest of any Davidic king in the OT, was only a faint approximation of the worldwide kingdom ruled by Christ (Mt 28:18-19; Rom 1:3-5). A rod or scepter figures in other messianic prophecies, as well (Gen 49:10; Num 24:17). [Back to text.](#)

2:28 morning star: A name for the planet Venus, visible just before daybreak. It was a symbol of victory in pagan antiquity that later became a symbol of Christ's Resurrection and victory over death (22:16; 2 Pet 1:19). The promise here is a bodily resurrection and may also allude to the believer's triumph over the dark forces at work in pagan astrological practices. [Back to text.](#)

3:1 Sardis: Thirty miles southeast of Thyatira. Sardis was once a wealthy and powerful city struggling to recover its former glory. Though a fortified city, it was twice conquered by surprise nighttime attacks. Christ may allude to this history when he warns readers to stay "awake" lest he come like a "thief" and the Church fare as badly as the unprepared city (3:3). [Back to text.](#)

3:3 like a thief: This image can be traced back to Jesus (Mt 24:43; Lk 12:39). [Back to text.](#)

3:4 soiled their garments: The white garments worn by angels and saints (4:4; 6:11; 7:9; 19:14) symbolize both purity and victory (Dan 11:35; 12:10) and were used in the ancient Church to clad the newly baptized. Some in Sardis had stained their robes by reverting to sinful ways and renewing their friendship with the world. [Back to text.](#)

3:5 the book of life: A heavenly register of the saints. To be erased from this book is to lose the inheritance of eternal life (Ex 32:32; Ps 69:28). [See note on Rev 20:12.](#) [Back to text.](#)



3:7 Philadelphia: Twenty-eight miles southeast of Sardis. Philadelphia served as a base for spreading Greek culture throughout the highlands of central Asia Minor. It was also home to a synagogue community hostile to Christians. **key of David:** A symbol of royal Davidic

authority. Jesus holds this key as a descendant of David (Rom 1:3) and the messianic heir to his throne (Lk 1:32). • The expression comes from Is 22:22, where the keys of the house of David pass from one prime minister to another. Being the Davidic king, Christ possesses the fullness of royal power, yet the Church is given a share in his authority. [See note on Mt 16:19.](#) [Back to text.](#)

3:8 an open door: Either missionary opportunities (1 Cor 16:9; Col 4:3) or access to the heavenly liturgy where God is perpetually worshiped (Rev 3:20; 4:1). [Back to text.](#)

3:9 synagogue of Satan: Harassment from local Jews was a problem in Philadelphia as well as in Smyrna. [See note on Rev 2:9.](#) **before your feet:** The synagogue will be forced to acknowledge that the Church is the beloved people of the New Covenant (Is 60:14). [Back to text.](#)

3:10 the hour of trial: A time of tribulation that will test the faith of believers. Jesus says it will seize the whole *oikoumene*, a Greek term that often refers to the Mediterranean world ruled by Rome (cf. Lk 2:1; Acts 24:5). The warning may refer to the spiritual confusion, political chaos, and natural catastrophes that swept over the Roman world in the late 60s (Mt 24:4-13; Tacitus, *Histories* 1, 2). However, if one dates Revelation in the 90s, the best candidate is the persecution of Christianity under Emperor Domitian (A.D. 81 to 96). Believers in ancient Philadelphia are promised the Lord's protection from the widespread suffering. There is no hint that the text envisions a "rapture" of the Church into heaven before the onset of earthly distress. [Back to text.](#)

3:12 pillar in the temple: Believers form a living temple indwelt with the Spirit and glory of God (Eph 2:19-22). To be a pillar is to stand in an honored position (Gal 2:9). The stability of a pillar contrasts with the instability of the city, which was leveled by an earthquake in A.D. 17. **my God:** Jesus is not denying his own divinity but speaks from the standpoint of his humanity, which he shares in common with us (as in Jn 20:17). **the name:** The righteous will bear the names of the Father and the Son (14:1) and be identified as citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem (21:2-4). This may recall how Philadelphia was renamed (Neo-Caesarea) after the earthquake. [Back to text.](#)



3:14 Laodicea: Forty miles southeast of Philadelphia. Laodicea was a prosperous commercial city that rebuilt itself without the aid of government subsidies after an earthquake around A.D. 60. It was known for its banking establishments, its medical academy, and its exported products, such as eye ointment and black wool textiles. According to Jesus, its material prosperity merely disguised its spiritual poverty (3:17). **the Amen:** A Hebrew acclamation used as a title for Christ. Expressing a sense of reliability and trustworthiness, it indicates that Jesus embodies the covenant faithfulness of God, for through him all the promises of God are carried to fulfillment. See word study: [Amen](#) at 2 Cor 1:20. • The title comes from Is 65:16, where the Hebrew text underlying "the God of truth" is literally "the God of Amen" (CCC 1063-65). **the beginning:** The Greek term is capable of several meanings, ranging from "starting point" to "first cause" to "ruler". Christ is the divine Alpha, or first cause, that brought all creation into being (22:13). Identical language is used of God the Father (21:6). [Back to text.](#)

3:16 lukewarm: Unlike nearby Colossae, Laodicea had no cold drinking water, and unlike nearby Hierapolis, it had no hot medicinal springs. On a spiritual level, the Church had become so complacent that the Lord promises to spit them out like a mouthful of tepid water. [Back to text.](#)

3:18 buy from me: Ironically, local industries cannot provide what the Laodicean Church lacks most, since even a surplus of money, black wool, and eye salve cannot compare to the spiritual wealth, white garments, and supernatural sight supplied by Jesus. [See note on Rev 3:14.](#) [Back to text.](#)



3:20 I stand at the door: Jesus is pictured standing outside the door of the Laodicean Church. • An allusion is made to Song 5:2, where the bridegroom knocks lovingly on the door of his bride's chamber. Similar imagery appears in Rev 19:7-9. [Back to text.](#)

3:21 sit with me: The conqueror is promised the fullness of a blessing he already enjoys in part, namely, a share in Christ's reign over the world (5:10; 20:4, 6; cf. Eph 2:6). Christ is already reigning with the Father in his risen humanity (11:15; 12:5; 22:1). [Back to text.](#)



4:1-5:14 The third phase of the book (1:19) begins as the Spirit lifts John into heaven at the invitation of Christ. He is bombarded with a spectacular display of angels and saints worshiping the Lord and the Lamb. The two chapters divide according to this dual focus of worship: Rev 4 praises the Father as the Maker of all (liturgy of creation), and Rev 5 praises the Son as the Savior of all (liturgy of redemption). • The liturgical setting in heaven alludes to the cultic figures and fixtures of the Jerusalem Temple. Familiar sights and sounds include the throne (ark, 2 Sam 6:2), the seven torches (menorah, Ex 25:31-39), the winged creatures (cherubim, Ezek 1:10), the 24 elders (24 priestly divisions, 1 Chron 24:1-19), the glassy sea (molten sea, 1 Kings 7:23-26), the musical praise (psalms, 1 Chron 25:1-8), the golden bowls (dishes for incense, 1 Kings 7:50), and the sacrificial Lamb (Passover, Ex 12:21). This and similar scenes throughout the book (Rev 7:9-15; 8:1-5; 11:19; 15:28) express the ancient belief that the Temple of Jerusalem was a visible replica of the invisible sanctuary of God in heaven (Ex 26:30; Ps 11:4; Wis 9:8) (CCC 1137-39, 2642). [Back to text.](#)

4:2 one seated: The glory of Yahweh is refracted through precious gems (4:3; 1 Tim 6:16). His throne is the focus of nearly all the activity of the book. From it come judgments (Rev 16:17; 20:11-12) and declarations of truth (21:3, 5), and around it stands an entourage of men and angels engaged in never-ending worship (4:9-10; 5:11-12; 7:9-15; 14:3; 22:3). [Back to text.](#)



4:3 a rainbow: A spectrum of color encircles the divine throne. • The rainbow, which also appears in Ezekiel's vision of the enthroned Lord (Ezek 1:28), is a sign of the Noahic covenant that God established with creation after the flood (Gen 9:8-13). [Back to text.](#)



4:4 twenty-four elders: Represent the saints, who are dressed like priests (in white) and kings (with crowns). [See note on Rev 1:6.](#) • Their number symbolizes the 24 priestly rotations that David established to minister in the Temple (1 Chron 24:1-31). In Jewish tradition, the heads of the 24 divisions were called "elders". Some see the elders representing the fullness of the royal priestly people of God: the 12 tribes of the sons of

Israel (saints of the OT) plus the 12 apostles of Christ (saints of the NT), as in the vision of 21:12-14. [Back to text.](#)



4:5-6 Streaks of lightning and booming thunder (4:5) feature in revelations of Yahweh's glory to Israel (Ex 19:16) and Ezekiel (Ezek 1:4, 13). The glassy sea recalls the clear sapphire pavement (Ex 24:10) and crystal flooring (Ezek 1:22) spread beneath the Lord on both occasions. [Back to text.](#)



4:5 seven torches: Represent the Holy Spirit (1:4). • The number seven recalls Zech 4:1-6, where the Spirit keeps the seven flames of the lampstand burning, and also Is 11:2, where the Greek OT enumerates seven gifts of the Spirit given to the Messiah (CCC 1831). [Back to text.](#)



4:6 four living creatures: Angels that appear as animals. They symbolize the glory of God expressed in creation, e.g., divine authority (lion), strength (ox), intelligence (man), and swiftness (eagle). • Their animal appearance (4:7) resembles the cherubim seen by Ezekiel (Ezek 1:10; 10:1), and their six wings (4:8) recall the seraphim seen by Isaiah (Is 6:2). • Traditional exegesis connects the four living creatures with the four evangelists. Matthew is the *man* whose Gospel begins with the human genealogy of Jesus; Mark is the roaring *lion* whose Gospel begins with the voice crying out in the wilderness; Luke is the sacrificial *ox* whose Gospel begins in the Temple; and John is the soaring *eagle* whose Gospel begins with the highest mystery of Jesus' divinity (e.g., St. Jerome, *Against Jovinianus* 1, 26). • The living creatures also refer to the whole Church. Her courage is seen in the lion, her sacrificial service in the ox, her humility in the man, and her sublimity in the flying eagle (St. Bede, *Explanation of the Apocalypse* 4, 6). [Back to text.](#)



4:8 Holy, holy, holy: The *Sanctus* as chanted in the heavenly liturgy. • The hymn resembles the song of the Seraphim in Is 6:3, where the threefold repetition of "holy" is a Hebrew way of saying that Yahweh is the holiest of all (superlative degree). [Back to text.](#)



5:1 scroll: A covenant document whose written decrees are put into effect in 6:1-17 and 8:1-5. • The scroll is sealed like the prophetic visions of Daniel (Dan 8:26; 12:4) and has writing on both sides like the tablets of the Decalogue (Ex 32:15) and the judgment oracles of Ezekiel (Ezek 2:9-10). Christ qualifies as the executor of the Old Covenant (Rev 5:9) with divine authority to administer its blessings and curses. • The sealed book refers to Sacred Scripture, for it was opened by no one except Christ, whose death, Resurrection, and Ascension opened access to all the mysteries it contained. None but the Lord could reveal the hidden meanings of the sacred word (St. Gregory the Great, *Dialogues* 4, 44). **seven seals:** Wax seals prevent access to a rolled-up scroll (Is 29:11). [Back to text.](#)



5:5 the Lion . . . the Root: Messianic titles for Jesus I (22:16). • The first is from Gen 49:9, where the Messiah comes from Judah, the tribe symbolized by a "lion". The second is from Is 11:10, where the Messiah appears as the "root" of David's father, Jesse. [Back to text.](#)

5:6 I saw a Lamb: John expects to see a Lion (5:5) but turns to see a wounded Lamb. This is the first of 28 times that Christ is depicted as a Lamb in Revelation (CCC 608, 1137). [See note on Rev 5:9-10.](#) **slain:** Christ forever appears as a sacrificial victim, having taken the scars of his Crucifixion with him into heaven (Jn 20:27). Standing upright, his posture symbolizes his victorious rising from death to life (Rev 1:18). **seven horns . . . seven eyes:** Represent the totality of power (Ps 89:17) and knowledge (Zech 4:10) possessed by Christ. [Back to text.](#)

5:8 harp: Traditional accompaniment for liturgical song (Ps 33:2). **bowls full of incense:** The saints in heaven mediate the praises and petitions of the saints on earth (Rev 8:3). The rising smoke of incense is a visible sign of prayers ascending to God (Ps 141:2). [Back to text.](#)



5:9-10 The Lamb receives the same worship given to **I** the Lord God (4:11), indicating that he, too, is divine (19:10). • The words of the song recall the Exodus, when Yahweh redeemed Israel (Ex 15:13) by the shed blood of paschal lambs (Ex 12:21-27) to be a kingly and priestly nation (Ex 19:6). Here it celebrates the new Exodus accomplished by

Christ, the new Passover Lamb, whose blood ransoms all nations from sin and consecrates them to serve him as a royal priesthood (Rev 1:6; 1 Pet 2:9) (CCC 608, 1546). [Back to text.](#)

5:9 a new song: New songs are composed and sung every time the Lord acts in a new way to save his people (Ps 33:3; 40:3; 144:9; Is 42:10). This song is new as compared to the old victory song sung by Israel after the first Exodus (Ex 15:1-18) (CCC 2642). [Back to text.](#)

5:11 myriads of myriads: Countless angels gather to praise the Lord (Dan 7:10) and the Lamb (Heb 1:6). [Back to text.](#)



6:1-8:5 The breaking of the seals brings judgment upon the earth, which is stained with the righteous blood of the martyrs (6:11). These judgments parallel the eschatological woes that Jesus warned would lead up to the fall of Jerusalem: wars (6:2; Lk 21:9), international strife (6:4; Lk 21:10), famine (6:6; Lk 21:11), pestilence (6:8; Lk 21:11), persecution (6:9; Lk 21:12), earthquakes (6:12; Lk 21:11), and cosmic disturbances (6:12-14; Lk 21:25-26). History tells of an explosion of warfare, calamities, and upheaval in the years leading up to A.D. 70 and the final devastation of the city. • Conquest, sword, famine, pestilence, and wild beasts (6:2, 4, 8) are forms of the sevenfold covenant curse stipulated in the Torah (Lev 26:14-26). Though devastating, these catastrophes are merely a prelude to the worst judgment of all—the utter devastation of the land of Israel and the dispersion of its survivors (Lev 26:27-33). This sevenfold vengeance of Yahweh is also the backdrop for the seven trumpets (Rev 8:6-11:19) and the seven bowls of wrath (Rev 15:1-16:21). [Back to text.](#)



6:1-8 The vision of the four horsemen. Each one symbolizes the divine judgment he is authorized to execute, whether it be conquest (white horse), bloodshed (red horse), famine (black horse), or death (pale horse). • The vision draws from Zech 1:8-17 and 6:1-8, where four chariots with colored horses patrol the earth after the Babylonian conquest of Israel in 586 B.C. Here the events that ensue are strangely reversed: Zechariah announced an end to the punishment of Israel, but Revelation envisions a new beginning of divine chastisement. [Back to text.](#)

6:6 denarius: A full day's wage (Mt 20:2) buys only a day's ration of wheat for one person and a ration of barley for a small family. Limited food

supplies and inflated prices are sure signs of famine. **oil and wine:** Crops harvested in late summer (olives and grapes) are not to be devastated like the crops harvested in late spring (wheat and barley). A limit is set, lest the famine overrun the entire harvest season. [Back to text.](#)



6:8 Death . . . Hades: Personify the satanic forces that bring death and destruction into the world. Both are under the authority of Christ, who conquered them by his rising (1:18) and doomed them to everlasting destruction (20:13-14). **sword . . . famine . . . pestilence . . . beasts:** The judgments of the fourth horsemen. • The same four curses ravaged Jerusalem in the sixth century B.C. (Ezek 14:21) as punishment for its infidelity to the Lord (Deut 32:23-25). [Back to text.](#)

6:9 the altar: The heavenly counterpart to the bronze altar of sacrifice in the Jerusalem Temple (2 Chron 4:1). **slain for the word** The martyrs bear the likeness of Christ, the slain Lamb (12:11; Mt 23:34-35). Their pleas for justice sound from beneath the altar, recalling how the lifeblood (Lev 17:11) of sacrificial victims was poured out at the base of the Temple altar (Lev 4:7). Martyrdom is thus portrayed as a priestly act of sacrificing one's life to God (Rom 12:1; Phil 2:17; 1 Pet 2:5). [Back to text.](#)



6:10 how long: The martyrs long for God to redress their murders. • They pray, not out of hatred for their enemies, but out of love for justice. Being near the Judge, they agree with him and pray for the coming judgment, in which the reign of sin shall be destroyed and their lifeless bodies raised (St. Bede, *Explanation of the Apocalypse* 6, 10) (CCC 2817). [Back to text.](#)

6:11 white robe: Symbolic of victory and spiritual purity (3:5; 7:9, 14). White vestments were also worn by the high priests of Israel. [See note on Rev 3:4.](#) **should be complete:** Jewish tradition spoke of a quota of martyrs determined in advance by God (1 *Enoch* 47, 1-4). [Back to text.](#)

6:12-14 Scenes of apocalyptic disaster may be understood literally, as describing the end of the world and the consummation of history (2 Pet 3:10-13), or symbolically, as representing spiritual and political upheaval within history (Is 13:10-13; 34:4; 50:3; Joel 2:30-32; Hag 2:21-22). Though a literal fulfillment cannot be ruled out for the future, the woes unleashed by the seven seals are parallel to the eschatological woes that Jesus warned

would seize the world just before the Roman conquest of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (see Lk 21:5-28). [Back to text.](#)



6:15 kings . . . and free Judgment will fall on men of every rank. **hid in the caves:** Recalls the sinners in Is 2:19, who hide themselves in caves from the terror of God's majesty. [Back to text.](#)



6:16 Fall on us . . . hide us: Cries of distress from those engulfed in the tribulation seizing the world. [See note on Rev 3:10.](#) • These cries come from Hos 10:8, where the people of Samaria groan in travail over the violent destruction of their city. On one occasion, Jesus put Hosea's words on the lips of those doomed to witness the overthrow of Jerusalem (Lk 23:28-30). [Back to text.](#)



6:17 who can stand: Standing is a sign of vindication on the Day of Judgment (Dan 12:13; Eph 6:13). The Lamb (Rev 5:6), the angels (7:11), and the saints (7:9) all appear in this posture in Revelation. • Passages such as Nahum 1:6 and Mal 3:2 indicate that the question "Who can stand?" is rhetorical, implying that no sinner can hope to stand before the wrath of the divine Judge. [Back to text.](#)

7:1-17 Chapter 7 is an interlude that follows the sixth seal and delays the opening of the seventh, just as 10:1-11:14 is an **interlude that follows the sixth trumpet and delays the blowing of the seventh. John sees the remnant of Israel (7:1-8) and the saved of all nations (7:9-17).** [Back to text.](#)

7:1 the four corners: Perhaps the earth is pictured as a four-cornered altar (cf. 9:13) upon which the martyrs shed their blood in sacrifice (6:9-11). [Back to text.](#)



7:3 sealed: A seal is a mark of ownership and protection (9:4). Here the seal of God is related to the seals of the scroll, giving protection to the believing remnant of Israel, who will pass through the tribulation. This may refer to a grace of spiritual perseverance rather than a guarantee of physical survival. In the broader context of Revelation, there is a contrast between

the *seal* of God stamped on the foreheads of the righteous (7:2) and the *mark* of the beast inscribed on the brows of the wicked (13:16). The former bears the divine name of God (14:1; 22:4), while the latter bears the demonic name of the beast (13:17) (CCC 1296). [See note on 2 Cor 1:22](#). • The entire scene parallels Ezek 9:1-7, where a messenger seals the foreheads of the righteous in Israel to protect them from the wrath of God poured out on Jerusalem. The seal was shaped like the Hebrew letter tau, which in ancient script looked like a cross (x or +). Marks of divine protection can be traced as far back as Cain in Gen 4:15. [Back to text](#).

7:4 a hundred and forty-four thousand: The number of the tribes of Israel squared (12 x 12) and then multiplied by a thousand, signifying completeness (144 x 1000). [Back to text](#).

7:5-8 Two irregularities stand out in the enumeration of the twelve tribes. **(1)** The tribe of Judah heads the list, even though Judah was the fourth son of Jacob. The descent of Christ from Judah probably accounts for this (5:5; Mt 1:2-16). **(2)** The tribe of Dan is missing. It is possible that Dan was cut from the list because of the tribe's infamous love for idolatry (Judg 18:16-19). Others suggest that John is following an ancient tradition that held that the Antichrist would come from Dan. Whatever the reason for the omission, Israel was technically a family of 13 tribes (the tribe of Joseph splitting into the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, Gen 48:1-20), and so one of the tribes had to be dropped to keep the symbolism of the number 12 intact (Rev 21:12). [Back to text](#).



7:9 a great multitude: The saints in heaven who passed through the great tribulation without compromising their faith (7:14). **no man could number:** The uncountable throng represents the spiritual offspring of Abraham, i.e., those who imitated his faith (Rom 4:11-17). • The Lord had promised to make Abraham the father of many nations (Gen 17:5) and to give him progeny too numerous to count (Gen 15:5). **white robes:** The garments of the faithful who endured the purifying trials of tribulation (Dan 11:35; 12:10). [See note on Rev 3:4](#). **palm branches:** Waved at the annual Feast of Tabernacles (Booths) in the liturgy of ancient Israel (Lev 23:40; 2 Mac 10:67). • The international celebration of Tabernacles has its background in Zech 14:16. [Back to text](#).

7:12 Blessing . . . and might: The seven acclamations signify that God deserves the totality of praise from his creation. [Back to text.](#)



7:14 great tribulation: A time of unprecedented distress triggered by the opening of the seals (6:1-17; Dan 12:1). Some link this with the "great tribulation" that Jesus warned would engulf the Roman world in connection with the violent conquest of Jerusalem (Mt 24:21); others link it with the Domitianic persecution of Christians near the end of the first century. [See note on Rev 3:10.](#) **they have washed:** The blood of Christ whitens the robes of the saints (6:11). • The rite of priestly ordination in Israel included the purification of priestly garments with blood (Lev 8:30). The sacrificial blood of Jesus likewise consecrates believers for service in the heavenly temple (5:9-10; 7:15). [Back to text.](#)



7:15-17 The unending benefits of heaven. • These blessings correspond to Isaiah's visions of the messianic age: God's sheltering presence (Is 4:5-6), immunity to hunger, thirst, and heat (Is 49:10), and the divine consolation that wipes away every tear (Is 25:8). [Back to text.](#)

7:15 his temple: The heavenly sanctuary of God (11:19). [See note on Rev 4:1-5:14.](#) [Back to text.](#)

8:1 silence in heaven: Recalls the *liturgical* silence that fell over the Jerusalem Temple when the priests offered incense and the multitudes prayed quietly in the outer courts (Lk 1:8-10). Jewish tradition also speaks of an *angelic* silence in the heaven when Israel prays and when the judgments of God are about to fall (Hab 2:20; Zeph 1:7). Here an angel offers the prayers of the saints with incense (Rev 8:3-4) just before curses descend upon the earth (8:7-9:21; 11:15-19). [Back to text.](#)

8:2 the seven angels: Seven archangels minister in the presence of God according to Scripture (Tob 12:15) and Jewish tradition, which names them Uriel, Raphael, Raguel, Michael, Saraqael, Gabriel, and Remiel (*1 Enoch* 20, 1-8; 81, 5). They are known as the angels of the Lord's presence (*Testament of Levi* 3, 7; cf. Lk 1:19). [Back to text.](#)



8:3 prayers of all the saints: Like priests on earth, the angels in heaven are liturgical ministers as well as covenant mediators between God

and his people. They are vested like priests according to 15:6, and here they offer as incense the petitions of the faithful. The company of *all* the saints probably includes those in heaven, such as the martyrs (6:9-11) and the multitudes (7:13-14) who praise God for his mercy and plead for the judgment of the wicked. • The Communion of the Saints is the basis for the intercession of the saints. Just as the faithful pray for one another on earth, so the faithful departed pray for us as they look down from heaven (CCC 954-56). **the golden altar:** The heavenly counterpart to the altar of incense in the Temple (2 Chron 4:19; Lk 1:11). [See note on Rev 4:1-5:14.](#) [Back to text.](#)



8:5 threw it on the earth: An act of divine judgment on the earth. • The gesture recalls Ezek 10:2, where a heavenly messenger scatters burning coals over Jerusalem. [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Shelter ([Rev 7:15](#))

Skēnoō (Gk.): a verb meaning "to dwell" or "pitch a tent". It appears once in the Gospel of John and four times in Revelation. Its usage is inspired by memories of the Tabernacle pitched in the wilderness during the Exodus period. For a time, this large tent served as the place where Yahweh dwelt among the people of Israel (Ex 25:8; Lev 26:11). From John's perspective, the Tabernacle was a prophetic sign of the incarnate Christ, whose humanity is a sanctuary filled with the glory of his divinity (Jn 1:14). Revelation uses the verb to describe God spreading a tent of protection over the saints (Rev 7:15) so that he might dwell with them (Rev 21:3) and they in him (Rev 13:6; cf. 21:22). Thus, the same verb that expresses the mystery of God dwelling on earth in the Gospel of John (bodily sanctuary) also expresses the mystery of God's dwelling on high in Revelation (heavenly sanctuary).



8:7-11:19 The seven trumpets blast the earth with sevenfold judgment. The second of three cycles of chastisement in Revelation, the trumpets wreak havoc more severe than the seven seals (6:1-8:5) but less severe than the following seven bowls (16:1-21). [See note on Rev 6:1-8:5.](#) • The first four trumpets, which devastate a third of the land, sea, freshwater, and sky, are modeled on the Exodus plagues that ravaged Egypt: recall the fiery **hail** (8:7, seventh plague, Ex 9:23-25), the sea made **blood** (8:9, first plague, Ex 7:20-21), the **darkened** sky (8:12, ninth plague, Ex 10:21-23), and the **locusts** (9:3, eighth plague, Ex 10:12-15). [Back to text.](#)



8:11 Wormwood: The name of a bitter plant that symbolizes the sorrow and distaste of human affliction (Jer 9:15; Lam 3:19). **made bitter:** I.e., undrinkable. • This plague recalls but reverses the story in Ex 15:22-25, where God made the bitter waters sweet. [Back to text.](#)

8:13 Woe, woe, woe: A prophetic warning that judgment is about to rain down upon sinners (Is 5:8-23; Amos 5:18; Nahum 3:1). These woes correspond to the plagues unleashed by the final three trumpets (Rev 9:12; 11:14). [Back to text.](#)



9:1-12 The fifth trumpet unlocks the abyss, releasing volcanic smoke and swarms of warrior locusts. These are demonic forces let loose to torture and terrorize the earth. Four restrictions are placed on this first woe: **(1)** vegetation is to be left unharmed (9:4); **(2)** only the wicked are to be targeted for torment (9:4); **(3)** victims are not to be killed (9:5); and **(4)** the plague is to end in five months (9:5). Limitations such as these suggest that God is administering remedial or corrective punishment that is aimed at bringing about repentance (9:20-21). • The prophet Joel once described an invasion of locusts that overran Judea in OT times. As in John's vision, he compared them to an army of war horses (9:7; Joel 2:4) with lion's teeth (9:8; Joel 1:6) and wings that sounded like chariots (9:9; Joel 2:5). This, too, was a plague from the Lord intended to induce repentance (Joel 2:12-16). [Back to text.](#)

9:1 a star fallen: A demon or fallen angel (8:10; 12:4, 9). **the bottomless pit:** Or "the abyss", which corresponds to the Hebrew *Sheol* and

the Greek *Hades*. In the cosmology of Israel, this is the gloomy underworld where the spirits of men sink down after death to await the final Judgment (20:13; Ps 9:17; Wis 16:13-14). It is also the dwelling of infernal spirits that crawl up to bring death, destruction, and deception into the world of the living (11:7; 20:1-3; Lk 8:29-31; 2 Pet 2:4). Christ has authority over this realm because he holds the "keys" to the abyss and can order angels and demons to lock and unlock it at his discretion (1:18; 20:1). [Back to text.](#)

9:4 the seal of God: A mark of protection on the righteous of Israel. [See note on Rev 7:3.](#) [Back to text.](#)

9:5 five months: Roughly equivalent to the life cycle of an actual locust. [Back to text.](#)



9:11 his name: *Abaddon* is a Hebrew term that means "destruction", and *Apollyon* is a Greek term that means "destroyer". • The former is associated with the underworld in Job 26:6, Ps 88:11, and Prov 15:11. [Back to text.](#)

9:13-21 The sixth trumpet unbinds four demons who rouse an army of fire-breathing horses into battle. Unlike the locusts (9:5), these beasts with lion heads and serpent tails are given permission to kill masses of human life (9:18). [Back to text.](#)

9:13 the golden altar: The heavenly altar of incense, where the prayers of the saints ascend before God (8:3). Like its earthly counterpart, it has four horns protruding from its four corners (Ex 37:25-28). [Back to text.](#)

9:14 river Euphrates: The longest river in ancient Mesopotamia. Along its banks lived the Babylonians, one of the traditional archenemies of Israel. [Back to text.](#)

9:15 hour . . . day . . . month . . . year: The plan of God unfolds according to a precise timetable determined in advance. **a third of mankind:** The same fraction is applied to the plagues unleashed by the earlier trumpets (8:7, 9-10, 12). [Back to text.](#)

9:20 did not repent: The survivors of the sixth trumpet remain hardened in their wickedness (16:9, 11) despite the merciful purpose of these judgments to discipline sinners and bring them back to God (Lev 26:14-33). **worshipping demons and idols:** The Bible equates idolatry with service to fallen spirits (Deut 32:16-17; Ps 106:36-37). Taunts against idols as lifeless

and motionless images were proverbial (Ps 115:4-7; Dan 5:23; Hab 2:18-19). [Back to text.](#)

10:1-11:14 An interlude separates the sixth (9:13-21) and seventh trumpet (11:15-19), just as an interlude separated the sixth and seventh seal (7:1-17). This one sets in motion the second half of the book by renewing the commission to John, charged at the beginning of the book with writing down the prophetic visions (1:11), to prophesy "again" (10:11). [Back to text.](#)



10:1-11 An enormous angel descends to earth, its legs straddling the shoreline and its right arm raised to swear an oath. Its appearance radiates the glory of the Father (rainbow, 4:3), the Son (wrapped in clouds, 1:7; face like the sun, 1:16), and the Holy Spirit (pillars of fire, Ex 13:21). Perhaps this is the Lord's angel who conveys to John the revelations of the book (1:1; 22:6). • Elsewhere in Scripture the "angel of the Lord" swears an oath in the name of God (Gen 22:15-18) and commissions both Prophets and Judges (Ex 3:210; Judg 6:11-14; 1 Chron 21:18). The immediate background is Dan 10-12, where Daniel encounters a heavenly figure who stood over the Tigris River. This messenger, too, had a glorious appearance (Dan 10:5-6) and swore an oath that God's plan would be fulfilled in the future (Dan 12:7). John stands at the other end of this prophetic pledge: what was far distant in Daniel's day is fast approaching in his own (10:6). • The angel takes an oath, not because of any defect in himself, as if one could not trust his word, but in order to show that his utterance proceeds from an infallible ordinance of God (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 89, 10). [Back to text.](#)

10:1 another mighty angel: Distinct from the first "strong angel" (5:2) who cried out in a "loud voice" (10:3). [Back to text.](#)

10:2 little scroll: Seemingly a different scroll from that in 5:1 (the Greek terms are different). [Back to text.](#)

10:3 a lion roaring: The angel speaks the words of Christ, the Lion of Judah (5:5; cf. Is 31:4; Hos 11:10; Amos 3:8). **seven thunders:** The mighty voice of the Lord (Ps 29:3-9). It may be linked with the Spirit, who earlier appears as "seven spirits" (1:4) and "seven torches" (4:5). [Back to text.](#)

10:6 swore by him: The posture of the angel (10:5) is related to the oath: his hand touches heaven, and his feet span land and sea when he swears to

the Creator of heaven, earth, and sea. Raising the hand is one of many gestures connected with oath swearing in the biblical world (Deut 32:40). [Back to text.](#)



10:7 the mystery of God: Unveiled as the kingdom of God that comes with the blast of the seventh trumpet (11:15). • The link between "mystery" and the messianic "kingdom" is forged in Daniel (Dan 2:28, 44-47; 7:13-14). [Back to text.](#)



10:9 Take it and eat: A renewal of John's prophetic mission to speak the word of God (10:11). The message he receives is sweet because it promises hope but turns sour because it entails suffering for saints and sinners alike. • The scene is modeled on Ezek 2:8-3:3, where the prophet consumed a scroll inscribed with judgments against Israel. At first, the scroll was sweet (Ezek 3:3), but its words of lamentation and woe made his task a bitter one (Ezek 3:14). [Back to text.](#)

10:11 again prophesy: John is to prophesy what is recorded in the visions of chaps. 11-22. [Back to text.](#)



11:1 measure the temple: A prophetic action in which John measures the sanctuary with a reed but excludes the outer court. There is broad agreement that his action is symbolic and that a spiritual distinction is implied, e.g., believing Israel (or believers in general) is marked out for protection, while unbelieving Israel (or unbelievers in general) is given over to judgment. The *measuring* that precedes the seventh trumpet (11:15) thus parallels the *sealing* that took place before the seventh seal (7:1-8). There is less agreement over what is measured. Some take it to be the Herodian Temple in Jerusalem, which was encompassed by an outer courtyard called the Court of the Gentiles. Others note that John elsewhere speaks of the temple of God in heaven (11:19; 14:17; 15:5), in which case the trampling of the outer court may symbolize the Church being persecuted by the unbelieving world. • Measuring the dimensions of the temple with a reed draws on imagery from Ezek 40-42. [Back to text.](#)



11:2 trample over the holy city: Taken literally, this would refer to the Roman conquest of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, as in Lk 21:24. Though mass numbers of Jews perished in the calamity, the Christians of Jerusalem fled safely to the Transjordan town of Pella (Lk 21:20-21; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3, 5). Taken symbolically, this could refer to the persecution of the saints, whose destiny is the holy city above (Rev 21:2, 10). • Jerusalem and its sanctuary were twice before trampled down by the Gentiles, once by the Babylonians (Is 63:18) and then again by the Syrians (1 Mac 3:45). **forty-two months:** A time of tribulation (13:5), also described as three and a half years (12:14) or 1,260 days (11:3; 12:6). Some interpret these figures literally; others read them figuratively, indicating a limited period of persecution or as representing the entire course of Church history. • The time frame is drawn from Daniel's vision of a tribulation to come upon the People of God in the future (Dan 7:25; 9:27; 12:7). This was foreshadowed by the Syrian desecration of Jerusalem from 167 to 164 B.C. [Back to text.](#)



11:3 two witnesses: Represent the Church's witness to Israel and, more specifically, her conviction that the Law and the Prophets bear witness to Christ. So understood, the fate of the two witnesses symbolize the rejection of the gospel by unbelieving Israel (11:10), as well as the Church's conformity to Christ in his dying, rising, and exaltation (11:7, 11-12). Some see the witnesses as two historical individuals, either as two unknown martyrs or as two figures from the OT, such as Moses and Elijah or Enoch and Elijah. • The actions of the witnesses recall those of Moses and Elijah: they "shut the sky" (11:6; 1 Kings 17:1); they turn water "into blood" (11:6; Ex 7:20); they are taken up to "heaven" (11:12; 2 Kings 2:11); and they give "testimony" to Jesus (11:7; Lk 9:28-31). **sackcloth:** A coarse garment of goat hair worn as a sign of mourning and repentance (Dan 9:3; Joel 1:13). [Back to text.](#)



11:4 two olive trees: An image drawn from Zech 4:11-14. • Zechariah saw two olive trees that symbolized the anointed leaders of Israel who helped to rebuild the nation after the Babylonian exile: the royal governor

Zerubbabel and the high priest Joshua. Here they represent the twofold mission of the Church to be a royal and priestly witness to the gospel (1:6; 5:10). [Back to text.](#)

11:7 the beast: Later mentioned in 13:1 and 17:8. [Back to text.](#)



11:8 the great city: The city of Jerusalem (Jer 22:8), which crucified the Lord Jesus and took the lives of numerous early Christians (Acts 5:28-30; 7:58-60; 12:2; 26:10). Some interpret this verse figuratively as a reference to the unbelieving world and its hostility toward the Church. This is the first of several references to the "great city" in Revelation (17:18; 18:10, 16, 18, 19, 21). **Sodom and Egypt:** Places infamous in the Bible for their moral depravity and oppressive slavery (Gen 18:20; Ex 1:8-14). • Occasionally the Prophets compared the iniquity of Jerusalem to that of Sodom and Egypt (Is 3:9; Jer 23:14; Ezek 23:27). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Witnesses ([Rev 11:3](#))

Martyrs (Gk.): a noun meaning "witness". The term is used in a variety of ways in the NT. **(1)** In a legal sense, a witness is "one who testifies" before a court or panel of authorities (Acts 6:13; 2 Cor 13:1; 1 Tim 5:19). **(2)** A witness can be an "eyewitness", referring to one who has seen or heard something and who may be called upon to vouch for it (Acts 22:15; 1 Thess 2:10). Paul invokes God in this way as a witness to his intentions and interior actions (Rom 1:9; 2 Cor 1:23). **(3)** A witness can be a "messenger". In this sense, the apostles are witnesses who tell the world of the dying and rising of Jesus (Acts 1:8, 22; 10:39). **(4)** In early Christian times, the word acquired the specialized meaning of "martyr", referring to someone who testifies to Christ to the point of death (Acts 22:20). This is the sense of the term in Revelation, where Jesus is the prototype of the martyrs (Rev 1:5; 3:14) who choose to die for him rather than deny him and his gospel (Rev 2:13; 11:3; 17:6).

11:9 men from the peoples: The Gentiles in general or perhaps Diaspora Jews living among them throughout the Roman world. The world applauds Jerusalem's violent attempt to halt the advance of the gospel. [Back to text.](#)



11:11 breath of life: An allusion to Ezek 37:1-14, where the restoration of faithful Israel is portrayed as a resurrection of bodies by the breath of the Spirit. [Back to text.](#)

11:12 in a cloud: Recalls how Jesus ascended to heaven in a cloud (Acts 1:9) and anticipates how the saints, too, will ascend into glory after the general resurrection (1 Thess 4:16-17). [Back to text.](#)

11:13 earthquake: The murderous city experiences the first tremor of divine judgment. **tenth of the city:** The figure of 7,000 casualties, indicative of sevenfold judgment, suggests Jerusalem is still in view. [See note on Rev 6:1-8:5.](#) **gave glory:** This is the only chastisement in Revelation that leads some to repentance (contrast with 9:20-21 and 16:9, 11). [Back to text.](#)

11:14 the third woe: The seventh trumpet (11:15). [See note on Rev 8:13.](#) [Back to text.](#)



11:15-19 The seventh trumpet, which ends the second I series of judgments delayed since 10:1. With this final blast, the kingdom of Christ appears, judgment begins, and destruction overtakes the wicked. • The biblical backdrop is twofold. **(1)** The collapse of Jericho, an event that gave Israel a decisive hold on the Promised Land, likewise followed seven trumpet blasts (Josh 6:1-21). **(2)** The declaration in 11:15 recalls the dream of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 2:31-36), in which the eternal kingdom of God destroys the godless kingdoms of the world (Dan 2:44-45). [See note on Rev 10:7.](#) [Back to text.](#)

11:17 who are and who were: A shortened form of the title in 1:4, 8 and 4:8. The omission of the future element "who is to come" here and in 16:5 is deliberate, signaling that God has at last come as King and Judge over the earth (11:15). The manifestation of God's kingdom may be linked with the trampling down of Jerusalem, as in Lk 21:31 (cf. Zech 14:1-9). [Back to text.](#)



11:19 ark of his covenant: The throne of God in the heavenly temple. From its base issue divine judgments symbolized by violent thunderstorms and earthquakes (4:5; 16:17-18). • John sees the heavenly counterpart to the ancient ark where Yahweh sat invisibly enthroned in the sanctuaries of Israel (2 Sam 6:2; Is 37:16). [Back to text.](#)

12:1-14:20 A narrative interlude between the judgment of the seven trumpets (8:6-11:19) and the judgment of the seven bowls (15:1-16:21). This central section may be seen as developing around seven spiritual figures (woman, 12:1; dragon, 12:3; male child, 12:5; Michael, 12:7; sea beast, 13:1; land beast, 13:11; the Lamb, 14:1). [Back to text.](#)



12:1-6 The **woman** of Revelation 12 is both an individual person and a collective symbol. She is Mary, the Mother of the Messiah and the spiritual mother of his disciples (Jn 19:26-27). But she also represents the faithful of Israel, crying out for the Messiah (Rev 12:2), as well as the Church, attacked by the devil for witnessing to Jesus (12:17) (CCC 501, 507, 1138). • The depiction of the woman is rich in biblical symbolism. **(1)** Antagonism between the woman and the **dragon**, the "ancient serpent" (12:9), recalls Gen 3:15, the first prophecy in Scripture to foretell the demise of the devil through the offspring (Messiah) of a woman (a new Eve). **(2)** Images of the **sun, moon, and stars** call to mind Gen 37:9-10, where they symbolize the family of Israel, namely, Jacob, his wife, and his twelve sons. **(3)** The **pangs** and **anguish** of childbirth recall Isaiah's description of Daughter Zion, a maternal figure that represents the holy remnant of Israel groaning for redemption (Is 26:17; Mic 4:9-10). **(4)** Because the woman is a queen who wears a **crown** and a mother who bears a royal **male child**, she is also the Queen Mother of the Davidic kingdom reestablished by Jesus, the Davidic male child (1 Kings 2:19-20; Jer 13:18) (CCC 489). See essay: *Queen Mother* at 1 Kings 2. • The woman is clearly the Church, endowed with the Word of the Father, whose brightness outshines the sun. Like the moon she is adorned with heavenly glory, and her crown of twelve stars points to the twelve apostles who founded the Church (St. Hippolytus, *On the Antichrist* 61). The vision speaks of the Mother of our Savior, depicting her in heaven, not on earth, as pure in body and soul, as equal to an angel, as one of heaven's citizens, as one who

brought about the Incarnation of God. She has nothing in common with this world and its evils but is exalted and worthy of heaven, despite her descent from our mortal nature (Oecumenius, *Commentary on the Apocalypse* 6, 19). [Back to text.](#)

12:1 the moon: Can symbolize both maternal dignity (Gen 37:9-10) and feminine beauty (Song 6:10). **twelve stars:** Represent both the twelve tribes of Israel (21:12) and the twelve apostles of Jesus (21:14). [Back to text.](#)

12:2 pangs of birth: This is probably related to the Passion of Jesus, which pierced the heart of his Mother (Lk 2:35) and seized his disciples with the distress of a woman in labor (Jn 16:20-22). [Back to text.](#)



12:3 red dragon: Represents Satan, the murderous arch enemy of God (Jn 8:44). His **horns** are symbols of his strength (Dan 7:7), and his **diadems** (crowns) are symbols of his ruling power over the fallen world (Jn 12:31). He is doomed to burn forever in the lake of fire (Rev 20:10). • The draconic serpent was a mythological symbol of evil in the ancient Near East. Called Leviathan (Is 27:1) or Rahab (Job 26:12-13), he was pictured as a sea monster with multiple heads (Ps 74:14). [Back to text.](#)

12:4 a third of the stars: A flashback to the fall of the angels at the dawn of creation (2 Pet 2:4). The imagery hints at how Satan led the rebellion, dragging a host of demons down with him (CCC 391-92). In the Bible, stars often represent angels (Rev 1:20; 9:1; Judg 5:20; Job 38:7). [Back to text.](#)



12:5 male child: His coming forth symbolizes both the birth and rebirth (Resurrection) of Jesus as the Davidic Messiah. • The **rod of iron** alludes to Ps 2:9, a coronation psalm that celebrates the enthronement and royal adoption (i.e., divine birth) of the Davidic kings of Israel. It is ultimately fulfilled in Christ, who rose to an immortal life of kingship (Acts 13:33) when he ascended into glory (Heb 1:5-8). **caught up to God:** Refers to the Ascension, which culminated with the heavenly enthronement of Christ next to the Father (3:21; Mk 16:19). [Back to text.](#)

12:6 fled into the wilderness: Many interpret this as the safe escape of Jewish Christians from Jerusalem when they fled to a place called Pella. [See note on Rev 11:2.](#) [Back to text.](#)

12:7 Michael: The heavenly warrior and archangel (Jude 9) who protects the People of God (Dan 12:1). Here he leads the heavenly army in the attack against Satan and his hoards. [Back to text.](#)

12:9 that ancient serpent: Satan, who took the form of a reptile when he instigated the fall of man in Gen 3:1-13. His name in Greek is the **Devil**, meaning "slanderer", and his name in Hebrew is **Satan**, meaning "adversary". **the deceiver:** Satan is the father of every lie and falsehood (Jn 8:44). [Back to text.](#)

12:10 Now the salvation: Heaven celebrates the expulsion of the devil and his angels. This is not the fall of the angels at the dawn of time (12:4), but the defeat of evil at the turning point of salvation history, when Christ mounted the Cross and cast out the ruler of this world (Jn 12:31-32; Col 2:15). **the kingdom:** [See note on Rev 11:15-19.](#) **accuser of our brethren:** The devil is a prosecuting attorney who makes damning accusations against the saints (Job 1:6-11; Zech 3:1). [Back to text.](#)

12:11 conquered . . . unto death: The martyrs appear defeated by death but are actually victorious. They, most of all, have shown the greater love (Jn 15:13) that makes them like Christ, even in his death (Phil 3:10). [Back to text.](#)



12:13-17 Slammed down to earth, the devil storms off after the woman, but God protects her from his evil intentions. • The imagery recalls how Yahweh was said to have rescued Israel from Egypt on eagle's **wings** (12:14; Ex 19:4). Other allusions include the salvation of Noah's family from the **flood** (12:15; Gen 6-8) and the destruction of Korah and his rebel supporters when the earth **opened its mouth** to swallow them alive (12:16; Num 16:1-34). [Back to text.](#)



12:17 the woman . . . her offspring: An allusion to Gen 3:15, which stands as a backdrop for the entire chapter. Here the woman's offspring is not only the Messiah (individual, 12:5), but also his disciples (collective, Rom 16:20). [See note on Rev 12:1-6.](#) [Back to text.](#)

13:1-18 Chapter 13 introduces two agents of the dragon: one is a beast from the **sea** (13:1), and another is a beast from the **earth** (13:11). The sea beast is surely the Roman Empire, while the land beast seems to represent a corrupt religious authority. [See note on Rev 13:11.](#) [Back to text.](#)



13:1-2 a beast rising out of the sea: Several parallels indicate that the sea beast, as a demonic rival, mimics the Lamb. **(1)** The Lamb is worshiped by angels and saints (5:14), while the beast is worshiped by the wicked (13:4); **(2)** the Lamb was slain and rose again (5:6), while the beast was mortally wounded and recovered (13:3); **(3)** the Lamb sits on the throne of his Father (3:21), while the beast shares a throne with the dragon (13:2); **(4)** the Lamb redeems believers from every tribe and nation (5:9), while the beast has temporal authority over every tribe and nation (13:7); **(5)** the Lamb is worthy of power and glory from God (5:12), while the beast receives power and authority from the dragon (13:2); **(6)** the name of the Lamb is stamped on the foreheads of the saints (14:1), while the number of the beast is branded on brows of sinners (13:16-18). • The imagery comes from Dan 7:1-7, where the pagan empires that oppressed Israel in exilic and postexilic times appear as four beasts rising up out of the sea— a lion, a bear, a leopard, and a creature with ten horns. Their animal features are here combined into an image of imperial Rome, who embodies the power and ferocity of them all. [Back to text.](#)

13:3 One of its heads: The seven heads of the beast represent seven Roman kings, according to 17:9-10. **mortal wound . . . healed:** The wounded head is probably Caesar Nero, who committed suicide in June A.D. 68. He was the last of Julius Caesar's dynastic line, and his death threw Rome into political chaos and civil war. Though many thought the Empire had ended with the demise of Nero, a new claimant gained control of the throne (Galba), and the Empire lived on. Others read this as an allusion to the Nero *redivivus* legend, an ancient belief the Nero would someday return and reclaim his authority as Roman dictator. See notes on Rev 13:18 and 17:10. [Back to text.](#)

13:5 forty-two months: A time of limited but intense tribulation. [See note on Rev 11:2.](#) [Back to text.](#)

13:6 his dwelling: The heavenly sanctuary inhabited by the saints (7:15). [Back to text.](#)



13:7 war on the saints: Believers become martyrs when they refuse to worship the beast and its image (13:15; 20:4). According to some, this alludes to the Neronian persecution of the Church in the mid 60s; for others,

the Domitian persecution of the late first century is in view (CCC 2113). • The passage recalls the violence of the fourth beast in Dan 7:21. [Back to text.](#)

13:8 the book of life: A heavenly registry of the saints. [See note on Rev 20:12.](#) [Back to text.](#)



13:10 If any one: An allusion to Jer 15:2 and 43:11, where Jeremiah learns that tragedy was certain to befall the sinners of Judah and Jerusalem, for Yahweh had decreed their captivity and death. In this context, the oracle is an exhortation to endurance, either assuring believers that God will bring judgment on their persecutors or calling them to remain faithful in spite of imprisonment (captivity) and martyrdom (sword). **slays with the sword:** Another manuscript reading has this in the passive voice: "is to be slain with the sword". [Back to text.](#)

13:11 another beast: A land beast as distinct from the sea beast of 13:1. Because its power is used to promote false worship (13:12), most think that it represents a religious entity subordinate to the secular State embodied in the first beast. It is identified differently by different scholars. **(1)** Those who date Revelation in the 60s tend to identify this beast with the religious leadership of Israel centered in Jerusalem. This is the priestly and juridical body that rejected the kingship of Christ and pledged its allegiance to Caesar (Jn 19:15). Thereafter it was primarily Jewish leaders who aroused opposition against the early Christians and accused them before Roman authorities (Rev 2:9; 3:9; Acts 14:2; 17:5-7; 18:12-13; 24:9; 25:1-7, 24). Also, the land beast is later called a "false prophet" (Rev 16:13; 19:20; 20:10). This may be significant in light of Jesus' warning that false prophets would arise to deceive and perform signs in the days before Jerusalem's doom (compare Rev 13:13-14 with Mt 24:11, 24). **(2)** Those who date the book in the 90s identify the land beast with the custodians of Roman civil religion, specifically, the cult of the emperors. Its basis was the deification of the Roman Caesars, to whom temples were dedicated and whose images were placed throughout the Empire. Loyalty to the divine ruler was expressed by worship, with each citizen making a small offering of wine and incense before the ruler's statue. Refusal to participate was not only frowned upon but was gradually regarded as a punishable crime. History shows that Christians were faced with this option of religious apostasy or

Roman punishment from at least the second century A.D. (Pliny the Younger, *Epistles* 10, 96). [Back to text.](#)



13:13 great signs: The land beast is empowered to dazzle the wicked with displays of its power (cf. 2 Thess 2:9-10). **fire . . . from heaven:** A demonic replication of the miracles of Elijah (1 Kings 18:38; 2 Kings 1:10-14). [Back to text.](#)



13:14 an image: An idol to be worshiped. • Allusion is made to Dan 3:1-7, where King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon erected a colossal image and decreed that all must bow in worship before the idol under pain of death. The pious Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego became protomartyrs when they refused and were cast into the fiery furnace (Dan 3:8-23). [Back to text.](#)

13:17 the mark: A sign of apostasy. By demanding the mark, the beast forces believers to choose between prosperity and poverty, material wealth and martyrdom. It is uncertain what historical circumstances underlie this description. However, standard coinage minted in Tyre and used throughout Syria-Palestine was discontinued in the late 50s, eventually passing out of circulation. In its place, new coins were minted in Antioch with an image of Emperor Nero ([See note on Rev 13:18](#)). This may in part explain "buying and selling" in connection with "the beast", especially since the Greek term for "mark" can refer to an image struck on a coin. [Back to text.](#)



13:18 six hundred and sixty-six: A number directly linked with the "name" of the beast (13:17). It is probably a cryptogram for Nero Caesar, whose name written in Hebrew adds up to 666. Interestingly, when the Greek word for "beast" is written in Hebrew letters, it too adds up to 666. A few ancient manuscripts list the number as 616, which is the value of Nero's name according to its Latin spelling. In any case, describing Nero as the beast is entirely apt: he was a man of exceeding cruelty and moral depravity and was the first emperor to order a bloody persecution of Christians (Tacitus, *Annals* 15, 44). See notes on Rev 13:3 and 17:10. • The numeral 666 appears in the Bible only here and in connection with Solomon, who received 666 talents of gold in a single year (1 Kings 10:14; 2 Chron 9:13).

This was the beginning of Solomon's end, for his wealth turned him away from the Lord. Solomon typifies the beast to the extent that he allowed material prosperity to corrupt the People of God. [Back to text.](#)



14:1 Mount Zion: The heavenly summit crowned with the heavenly Jerusalem (21:2). The earthly Zion, where the historical city of Jerusalem was first made an Israelite settlement (2 Sam 5:7), is a visible model of this celestial height (Gal 4:26; Heb 12:22). • Zion looms large in the OT as the focal point of Israel's brightest hopes for the future. It is the glorified city and mountain where the redeemed will be gathered to the Lord (Is 4:2-6; Joel 3:17; Obad 21; Mic 4:1-7). John's vision of a remnant without a "lie" in their mouths (Rev 14:5) connects directly with this tradition (Zeph 3:11-13). **hundred and forty-four thousand:** The faithful of Israel sealed on their foreheads. [See note on Rev 7:4.](#) **his name . . . Father's name:** In contrast to the numerical name of the beast branded on the foreheads of the wicked (13:16-17) (CCC 2159). [Back to text.](#)

14:2 harps: Traditional accompaniment for liturgical song (Ps 33:2). [Back to text.](#)

14:3 a new song: A song of praise that celebrates the salvation of God. [See note on Rev 5:9.](#) [Back to text.](#)



14:4 they are chaste: Literally, "they are virgins." This probably has two levels of meaning. **(1)** The assembly is made up of celibate men whose *bodies* have never been given to women. **(2)** The assembly is made up of holy men whose *souls* have not been defiled by the impurities of the harlot city (17:1-6; 18:3) (CCC 1618-19). • "The Lamb walks the way of virginity. Follow him there, you virgins, for on this count you follow him wherever he goes. . . . The masses of the faithful, unable to follow the Lamb to this blessing, will rejoice with you; but they will not be able to sing that new song which is for you alone" (St. Augustine, *On Holy Virginity* 29). [Back to text.](#)

14:6 another angel flying in midheaven: Seven angels have already been described in chaps. 8-10. The first flying in midheaven appears in 8:13 as an eagle. **eternal gospel:** The invitation to fear and worship the one true God, the Creator of all (14:7). It is a call for the followers of the beast to abandon their idols before judgment falls (14:18). [Back to text.](#)



14:8 Babylon: The ancient city and superpower of Mesopotamia built along the Euphrates River (modern Iraq). It was infamous for its moral decadence and is remembered in Scripture as the blasphemous power that destroyed Jerusalem in the sixth century B.C. See essay: [Who is Babylon?](#) at Rev 18. • Proclamation that Babylon has fallen draws from Is 21:9 and Jer 51:7-8 and anticipates the vision in Rev 18:124. As in these oracles, the angel speaks of something about to happen (prophecy) as if it were already accomplished (past history). [Back to text.](#)



14:10 cup of his anger: The wicked will be forced to drink God's wrath like bitter wine from a cup (Ps 75:8; Is 51:17; Jer 25:15). **fire and brimstone:** An advance glimpse of the lake of fire and sulfur that burns eternally (20:10). • The damnation of the godless evokes memories of the fiery destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24; Ps 11:6). [Back to text.](#)

14:11 they have no rest: In contrast to the righteous, who die in Christ (14:13). [Back to text.](#)

14:13 Blessed are the dead: The second of seven beatitudes in Revelation. [See note on Rev 1:3.](#) [Back to text.](#)



14:14-20 The judgment of the righteous and the wicked is described in terms of a great harvest. The saints are gathered up like sheaves of wheat to be stored in a granary (14:16; Jn 4:35-38), while sinners are severed like grapes from the vine to be thrown into a mill press and crushed (14:19). • Similar scenes of divine judgment appear in the prophets (Is 63:1-6; Jer 51:33; Lam 1:15; Joel 3:13). [Back to text.](#)

14:14 son of man: Jesus Christ, described as the royal figure from Dan 7:13. [See note on Rev 1:7](#) and essay: [Jesus, the Son of Man](#) at Lk 17. [Back to text.](#)

14:19 wine press: A stone trough used to trample or otherwise squeeze the juice from grapes. [Back to text.](#)

14:20 the city: Called "Babylon" (14:8). **one thousand six hundred stadia:** About 185 miles. Some take this to mean that divine judgment will extend over the land of Israel, which is roughly this distance measured

north to south. Others read the number as symbolic of completeness (40 x 40 stadia) and envision a worldwide judgment. Either way, the horrific quantity of blood indicates the severity of God's wrath on those who defy him. [Back to text.](#)

15:1-16:21 The final cycle of judgments in Revelation are the seven bowls of wrath, which douse the earth with plagues poured down from heaven. Though parallels can be traced between the seven bowls and the seven trumpets (8:6-11:19), the bowl judgments are more devastating and extensive. [Back to text.](#)

15:1 another sign: Following the sign of the woman and the dragon in 12:1-3. [Back to text.](#)



15:2-4 John sees and hears the martyrs of heaven standing beside the glassy sea and singing praises to God. • They sing an adaptation of the **song of Moses** from Ex 15:1-18. This was the victory song chanted by the Israelites as they celebrated their deliverance from Egypt on the shores of the Red Sea. Here the saints celebrate a new Exodus from the sin and slavery of the world. For the Exodus theme, [see note on Rev 5:9-10](#). • The entire Exodus from Egypt was a type of the Church's coming forth from the Gentiles. In the end, the Lord will lead her out of this world into his own inheritance, which was not conferred by Moses, the servant of God, but by Jesus, the Son of God (St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4, 30, 4). [Back to text.](#)

15:2 sea of glass: [See note on Rev 4:5-6](#). **conquered:** The martyrs attacked by the dragon and the sea beast reign victorious through the blood of the Lamb (12:11; 13:7). [Back to text.](#)

15:3 Just and true are your ways: Probably an allusion to the Greek version of Deut 32:4, which is part of another OT canticle called the Song of Moses (Deut 32:1-43). [Back to text.](#)

15:5 the temple: Perhaps the inner chamber of the **tent of witness**, which is the heavenly counterpart to the earthly Tabernacle erected by Moses (Heb 8:1-5). For the liturgical imagery and setting of John's visions, [see note on Rev 4:1-5:14](#). [Back to text.](#)

15:6 bright linen: Priestly garments (Lev 16:4) that symbolize purity and righteousness (19:8). **golden sashes:** Another article of priestly attire. Jesus wears a golden sash as the heavenly high priest in 1:13. [Back to text.](#)

15:7 seven golden bowls: Liturgical bowls like the ones used to carry incense in 5:8. The use of holy vessels to pour out the plagues reinforces the idea that God's judgments are holy and just (15:4). [Back to text.](#)



15:8 filled with smoke: Entrance into the heavenly throne room is cut off by the glorious cloud of God's presence. • This recalls how the fiery cloud of the Lord filled the Mosaic Tabernacle (Ex 40:34-35) and the Solomonic Temple (1 Kings 8:10-11), making entrance temporarily impossible. Isaiah experienced this firsthand when he saw the Lord enthroned in the Temple (Is 6:1-4). [Back to text.](#)



16:1-21 One by one, the seven angels are summoned to dump the seven bowls of wrath upon the world. Unlike the sequence of seven seals and seven trumpets, where an interlude separated the sixth and seventh calamity, the seven bowls are poured in direct succession, without an intermission above or relief for those below. • Several of the seven bowls are modeled on the Exodus plagues that ravaged Egypt. This can be seen in the **sores** (16:2, sixth plague, Ex 9:8-12), the water sources turned into **blood** (16:3-4, first plague, Ex 7:17-21), the **darkness** (16:10, ninth plague, Ex 10:21-23), the demonic **frogs** (16:13, second plague, Ex 8:2-6), and the heavy **hail** (16:21, seventh plague, Ex 9:18-35). For similar connections with the trumpets, [see note on Rev 8:7-11:19.](#) [Back to text.](#)

16:5 you who are and were: Part of the threefold title of God in 1:4, here without the future element: "who is to come". For the significance of this, [see note on Rev 11:17.](#) [Back to text.](#)

16:6 saints and prophets: Martyred in the "great city" destined to be destroyed (18:24). [Back to text.](#)

16:7 the altar cry: The pleas of the martyrs are at last answered as God avenges their blood on those who killed them (6:9-11). [Back to text.](#)

16:9 men were scorched: The wicked are seared by the sun, while the righteous are protected in the shade of God's presence (7:16). **did not repent:** Even the crushing weight of divine curses did not bring the wicked to their knees and induce them to mend their ways (16:11). [Back to text.](#)

16:10 throne of the beast: The throne of the dragon, which he shares with the beast from the sea (13:2). Historically, the darkness that ensues

may be linked with the death of Nero, whose suicide in June A.D. 68 sparked considerable upheaval in the Empire. [See note on Rev 13:3.](#) [Back to text.](#)

16:12 river Euphrates: Runs through Mesopotamia, to the **east** of Israel beyond the northern Arabian desert. The Babylonian army had to cross this river when it advanced toward Jerusalem to destroy it in the sixth century B.C. [Back to text.](#)

16:13 the false prophet: The land beast of 13:11. [Back to text.](#)

16:15 Blessed is he: The third of seven beatitudes in Revelation. [See note on Rev 1:3.](#) [Back to text.](#)



16:16 Armageddon: Means "mountain of Megiddo" in Hebrew. Megiddo was a fortified settlement in central Israel overlooking a broad plain that was used as a battlefield in biblical times. Revelation envisions another conflict staged near Megiddo, one destined to end with the devastation of the harlot city (chaps. 17-18) along with the defeat of the beast and the false prophet (19:11-21). Ultimately, this catastrophic event serves as a preview of the final battle between good and evil scheduled for the end of time (20:7-10). •The plain of Megiddo evokes memories of victory and defeat. Here Israel routed the Canaanites and secured several decades of peace in the time of the Judges (Judg 5:19-21). Here, too, King Josiah of Judah stubbornly refused to stay out of a foreign skirmish and, as a result, fell on the battlefield and caused great mourning in Israel (2 Chron 35:20-25; Zech 12:11). [Back to text.](#)

16:17-21 The seventh bowl brings the final crushing blow upon wicked Babylon. Forced to swallow every last drop of God's **wrath** (16:19), it is at last shaken apart by an **earthquake** (16:18) and pounded to the ground with huge **hailstones** (16:21). [Back to text.](#)

17:1-18:24 The visions that follow are directly related to the seventh bowl of wrath in 16:17-21, giving a more in-depth look at this final calamity. [Back to text.](#)



17:1-6 John sees a seductive **harlot** riding atop a **scarlet beast**. The woman, popularly known as the whore of Babylon, is said to be "the great city" (17:18), a title earlier given to the city where Jesus was crucified (11:8). The beast, having seven heads and ten horns, was earlier described as the beast from the sea (13:1) and appears to be the Roman Empire, with

its capital city Rome represented by seven hills (17:9). For background, see notes on Rev 11:8, 13:1-2, and essay: *Who Is Babylon?* at Rev 18. • Sinful cities are sometimes described as harlots in the Bible. On two occasions, this is said of a pagan metropolis, one being Tyre (Is 23:17) and the other Nineveh (Nahum 3:4). However, the charge is proverbially made against Jerusalem for her spiritual promiscuity with pagan nations (Is 1:21; Jer 2:20; Ezek 16:1-25; 23:1-4, 11, 30). [Back to text.](#)



17:1 seated: Symbolizes the unholy alliance between the harlot city and the pagan power with whom she is united in opposition to the Christian message. Multiple images are used to depict these partners in crime but always with the same posture: John sees a harlot *seated* on the waters (17:1, 15), a woman *sitting* on a beast (17:3), and a woman *seated* on seven hills (17:9). Violent action was taken against early Christians by both the harlot city (17:6; 18:24) and the beast (11:7; 13:7). **many waters:** Symbolic of the Gentile world, according to 17:15. It fittingly stands for the multinational Roman Empire. • Allusion is made to the Greek version of Jer 51:13, which depicts ancient Babylon dwelling upon "many waters". [Back to text.](#)

17:2 fornication: The language of sexual immorality is symbolic of spiritual immorality. In the Bible, acts of harlotry point to transgressions of the covenant, such as idolatry and alliances with godless nations (cf. Ex 34:15-16; Ezek 16:26-29; 23:30; Hos 1:2). **wine:** Sins of violence have filled the harlot's cup with the innocent blood of Christians (17:6). [Back to text.](#)

17:3 in the Spirit: The Greek expression, which also appears in 1:10 and 21:10, is ambiguous. As rendered in the RSV, it suggests John's visions are granted by the Holy Spirit and consist of mystical experiences perceived to be in different locations. It could also be translated "in spirit" and refer to John's interior awareness of the revelations he received. **scarlet beast:** Resembles the Satanic dragon in color (red, 12:3) and appearance (seven heads and ten horns, 12:3). [Back to text.](#)



17:4 scarlet . . . gold: Jeremiah once described Judah and Jerusalem as a harlot (Jer 2:20) dressed in scarlet and decked in gold finery (Jer 4:30). Ezekiel likewise pictured Jerusalem as a young woman arrayed in gold and fine linen (Ezek 16:13) who became a harlot (Ezek 16:2, 15). **golden cup:**

The image comes from Jer 51:7, which depicts Babylon as a golden cup filled with the wine of madness. [Back to text.](#)

17:5 her forehead: Recalls the mark of the beast (13:1618). [Back to text.](#)



17:6 drunk with the blood: I.e., guilty of murderous bloodshed (18:24). • The vision recalls OT laws that declare the consumption of blood an abomination before the Lord (Lev 3:17; 17:10). [Back to text.](#)

17:8 was, and is not, and is to ascend: The description of the beast is a parody of the Lord's name in 1:4, 8, and 4:8. Some interpret this as an allusion to the Nero *redivivus* legend, a popular belief in the first century that Nero, despite reports of his death, had secretly escaped to Parthia and would return with an army to reclaim the Roman Empire. Ultimately, it seems to refer to the "coming" of the Antichrist at the end of time (2Thess 2:8-10), the lawless one whom Paul calls "the son of perdition" (2 Thess 2:3). **bottomless pit:** The abyss. [See note on Rev 9:1.](#) **perdition:** The beast is destined for the lake of eternal fire (19:20). **book of life:** A heavenly registry of the saints. [See note on Rev 20:12.](#) [Back to text.](#)

17:9 seven hills: A representation of Rome, the city that sprawls over seven hills, according to the writers of classical antiquity (e.g., Virgil, *Aeneid* 6, 783; Cicero, *To Atticus* 6, 5; Martial, *Epigrams* 4, 64). Many interpreters, ancient and modern alike, identify the harlot city with Rome on the basis of this tradition, though some see a reference to Jerusalem, noting that it, too, was said to rest on seven hills according to one rabbinic tradition (*Pirque de Rabbi Eleazar* 10). Interestingly, there is reason to think that two historical referents are in view here rather than one and that Jerusalem and Rome both form part of the picture. Throughout the chapter, the apocalyptic symbolism is stacked so that the upper images (harlot-city-woman) are distinguished from the lower images (beast-hills-waters). It is thus possible to identify Jerusalem as the harlot city who joins forces with the beastly power of Rome in opposition to Christianity. See notes on Rev 17:1 and 17:16. [Back to text.](#)

17:10 seven kings: Numerous interpretations of this have been offered. Read symbolically, it is said to represent all earthly kings, all the Roman emperors, or all the empires of history until the end of time. Read literally, it is often said to stand for seven Roman emperors, the sixth in succession being either Nero (A.D. 54 to 68) or Domitian (A.D. 81 to 96), both of whom

were followed by emperors who ruled only a short time. For the most part, ancient Roman and Jewish authors counted Julius Caesar as the first emperor, in which case Nero is the sixth of Rome's first seven dictators (e.g., Suetonius, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*; Josephus, *Antiquities* 18, 32; 4 *Ezra* 12, 14-15). [Back to text.](#)

17:12 ten kings: Presumably rulers of a lower rank than the Caesars mentioned in 17:10. Their identity is a mystery, but their destiny is made clear in 19:17-21. **one hour:** Corresponds to the "hour" of divine judgment (14:7, 15) when the harlot city is destroyed (18:10, 17, 19). [Back to text.](#)



17:16 make her . . . naked: A public disgracing of the harlot. • It recalls how the Lord, in OT times, punished the "brazen harlot" Jerusalem (Ezek 16:30) by sending her Gentile lovers to strip her naked and stone her (Ezek 16:35-43; 23:22-31). **burn her up with fire:** If the harlot is Jerusalem, this symbolizes the Roman conquest of the city in A.D. 70. Interpreters who see the main referent throughout the chapter as Rome (or Jerusalem) exclusively often read this in terms of self-destruction caused by infighting or civil war. [Back to text.](#)

17:18 dominion: The language of political sovereignty points to a corruptive spiritual influence that leads other nations into deception (18:23). (1) If the city is Jerusalem, this could refer to the effort of official Judaism to slander the Christian movement and turn the Gentile world against it. (2) If the city is Rome, its political dominance over the Mediterranean world is in view, along with the spread of spiritual corruption through the cult of the emperors. [See note on Rev 13:11.](#) [Back to text.](#)



18:1-24 A dirge over the death of the harlot city Babylon. • Several images and expressions in this chapter are taken from the judgment oracles of the Prophets, especially Jeremiah's condemnation of ancient Babylon in Jer 50-51. The cry that Babylon is **fallen** (18:2) recalls Jer 51:8; the charge that nations have **drunk her wine** (18:3) recalls Jer 51:7; the call to come **out of her** (18:4) recalls Jer 50:8 and 51:45; the vision of her sins **heaped high as heaven** (18:5) recalls Jer 51:9; the judgment by **fire** (18:8) recalls Jer 50:32 and 51:30; the rejoicing of **heaven** (18:20) recalls Jer 51:48; the image of a stone hurled **into the sea** (18:21) recalls Jer 51:63-64; and scenes of the **slain** (18:24) filling the city recalls Jer 51:49. • Babylon

and the harlot, whose smoke goes up forever, are none other than the lustful, the adulterous, and the arrogant. If you wish to escape such punishments, have no desire to commit such grave sins. For in the present age, Babylon is always going to destruction and burning up in part (St. Caesarius of Arles, *Exposition of the Apocalypse*, homily 18). [Back to text.](#)

18:3 drunk the wine: The maddening wine mixed in the cup of the harlot (17:4; 18:6). [Back to text.](#)

18:4 Come out of her: A call to escape the harlot city before its demise (cf. Gen 19:12-14; Tob 14:4, 8). Some read this as an echo of Jesus' warning to flee Jerusalem when the time of its judgment draws near (Lk 21:20-21). Others, identifying the city as Rome, read this as a call to escape the godless corruption of the capital, much as Paul emphasizes the moral imperative in a similar prophetic passage (2 Cor 6:17, quoting Is 52:11).

her plagues: The divine curses of the seven seals (6:1-8:5), the seven trumpets (8:6-11:19), and the seven bowls (15:1-16:21). [Back to text.](#)



18:9-19 The clients of the harlot, represented by kings (18:9), merchants (18:11), and sailors (18:17), look on in tears as the wicked city melts down in flames. They are saddened, not for her, but for themselves, being pained at the loss of their illicit pleasures and wealth. • This subsection of the chapter draws mainly from the lamentation over Tyre in Ezek 27. More than a dozen commodities listed in 18:12-13 are taken from Ezek 27:12-22. [Back to text.](#)

Who Is Babylon?

THE CITY destroyed by God in the Book of Revelation goes by several names: "Babylon the great" (Rev 14:8; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21), the "great harlot" (17:1, 15; 19:2), and the "great city" (16:19; 17:18; 18:10, 16, 18, 19, 21). Most scholars through the centuries have identified this as Rome, a city infamous in the ancient world for its power, wealth, idolatry, and immorality. In modern times, other scholars have identified the city, not as Rome, but as apostate Jerusalem, for it too had degenerated into a place of godless corruption and bloodshed by the first century. Resolving the issue depends on the date one assigns to the book, how one reads the symbolism of the book, and whether one sees the two interpretations as mutually exclusive. The main arguments in favor of both positions are considered below.

BABYLON AS ROME

The interpretation of Babylon as Rome draws support from external and internal evidence.

(1) The most ancient tradition that survives from the early Church, that of St. Irenaeus, appears to say that John received the visions of Revelation near the end of the reign of Domitian (ca. A.D. 96). If this is accepted, the harlot city must be imperial Rome, though a few have suggested that John could be looking back on the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. See introduction to Revelation: *Date*.

(2) Rome is several times called "Babylon" in Jewish apocalyptic texts that date back to the early second century (e.g., *4 Ezra* 3, 1; *2 Baruch* 2, 1). The logic behind this description is precisely the fact that Rome, like Babylon of old, conquered and destroyed the city of Jerusalem. Peter also appears to use Babylon as a code name for the city of Rome (1 Pet 5:13). Conversely, no contemporary text outside the NT uses the name Babylon for Jerusalem.

(3) The harlot city of Babylon is seated on seven hills— a traditional description of the imperial city of Rome. One rabbinic tradition makes this same assertion about Jerusalem, but it dates to a time well after the NT period ([See note on Rev 17:9](#)).

(4) The harlot city is drunk with the blood of Christian martyrs and saints (Rev 17:6). This, too, is an apt description of Rome, for at least two emperors unleashed a bloody persecution against the Church in the first century, Nero and Domitian.

(5) Babylon is said to exercise dominion over many kings (Rev 17:18; 18:3) and peoples (17:15) and is pictured at the center of a vast trading empire that enriched many nations (18:11-19). Interpreted literally, these statements are easily applicable to the Roman Empire of the first century. It is less clear how these verses could be said to describe Jerusalem.

(6) Occasionally, the book describes the harlot city with the help of OT passages that refer to God's judgment on pagan cities of the past, such as Tyre (see notes on Rev 17:1-6; 18:9-19) and ancient Babylon itself (see notes on Rev 14:8; 17:1; 18:1-24). Again, Rome quite easily fits the profile of a pagan metropolis that is destined to face the wrath of the Almighty.

BABYLON AS JERUSALEM

The interpretation of Babylon as Jerusalem draws its support mainly from the internal evidence of the text, though some external evidence gives support to it as well (see introduction to Revelation: *Date*).

(1) The Book of Revelation tells us that the "great city" is the city where Jesus was crucified (11:8). Since this is the first use of the expression in the book, there is reason to think that Jerusalem is the identification intended throughout. At least, John gives no indication that more than one "great city" is in view as the book unfolds.

(2) The streets of the harlot city run red, not only with the blood of Christian martyrs and saints (17:6), but also with the blood of "prophets" (18:24). This, too, sounds like a reference to Jerusalem, a city that spilled the blood of the earliest martyrs (11:7-8; Acts 7:58; 12:2; 26:10) and had a

long history of murdering God's prophets (Mt 23:37; Lk 13:33), including the Messiah (Mt 27:25-26).

(3) Babylon is portrayed as a "harlot" who seduces other nations (17:1-6). This could apply to a city such as Rome, for the OT uses this imagery for Gentile cities such as Tyre and Nineveh. However, the image of the harlot city is extensively developed in the OT with reference to Jerusalem. She was the city accused by the Prophets of prostituting herself to the nations by various transgressions of the covenant (see notes on Rev 17:1-6; 17:16; 18:22-23). Not only so, but the harlot's attire in Revelation recalls prophetic texts that describe sinful Jerusalem bedecked in the same way ([See note on Rev 17:4](#)).

(4) A voice from heaven summons the faithful to flee from sinful Babylon (18:4), lest they be destroyed by the "plagues" and "fire" that are soon to ravage the city (18:8). It is difficult to see how this fits the historical situation in Rome, a city that has maintained an uninterrupted Christian presence extending to the present day. However, in the case of Jerusalem, we know that Jesus urged his disciples to flee the city before its demise (Lk 21:20-21), and history confirms that they heeded his warning in time (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3, 5).

(5) The harlot city is destined for a fiery destruction (17:16; 18:8, 18). This is one of many things in the book expected to take place "soon" (1:1, 3; 22:6, 7, 10, 12). Now, supposing it possible that John wrote the book in the late 60s, the burning of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 would fit the prophetic time frame perfectly (Mt 22:7). However, Rome was not set ablaze and trampled into obscurity until the city was overrun by Visigoth barbarians in A.D. 410, more than three hundred years after the warning in Revelation was issued. Confirmation that John expects an imminent fulfillment of his oracles comes near the end of the book. In contrast to the prophet Daniel, who was told to seal up the account of his visions because their fulfillment awaited a time in the distant future (Dan 12:4), John is told *not* to seal up his visions because the time of fulfillment is near (22:10). Historically, then, it is easier to account for the urgent tone of the book if the city in question is Jerusalem rather than Rome.

(6) The destruction of the harlot city (chaps. 17-18) is followed by visions of a heavenly city (chaps. 21-22). Clearly these cities are portrayed as the spiritual antithesis of one another, as several contrasting parallels show ([See note on Rev 21:2](#)). The most natural interpretation views the *new* Jerusalem, which comes down from *heaven*, as the successor to the *old* Jerusalem, which was built on *earth*, as elsewhere in the NT (Gal 4:24-27). Of course, it is not impossible that the new Jerusalem could be taken as the counterimage of Rome, as many scholars hold, but the fit is less perfect. For this involves a split antithesis that defines the heavenly city over against two different earthly cities, i.e., the celestial Jerusalem is "new" in relation to the old Jerusalem, but "heavenly" in relation to the earthly city of Rome. Strictly speaking, then, either interpretation is possible. But the new Jerusalem in heaven is more readily envisioned as the counterpart and successor to the old Jerusalem on earth.

WHAT IS curious about the above is the strength of both interpretations. Some details seem to fit a description of Rome, while others are more clearly applicable to Jerusalem. This being the case, one might argue that these opposing views are not mutually exclusive but that both are legitimate in different ways. In our judgment, a stronger case can be made for Jerusalem as the city whose demise is apocalyptically presented in Revelation. But this does not mean that other readings of the book are thereby ruled out. Jerusalem was the first city to fit the description in Revelation, but it is by no means the only city. What was true of apostate Jerusalem—that it became a center of godlessness, violence, and corruption to the point of defying God and shedding the blood of his servants—holds true of countless cities down through the ages. History is clear that Rome stood next in line to carry on the legacy of Jerusalem by its ruthless persecution of Christianity, so Revelation's warnings of divine judgment apply to it as well. Indeed, Rome's bloodguilt is very much part of the message of the book, even in its literal sense (e.g., 13:7). So even if John intended us to think first and foremost of Jerusalem, God's judgment serves as a warning to any and every city thereafter that would choose to turn against the Lord and his disciples. Thus, when one surveys the history of interpretation, it is not surprising to learn that Rome and, indeed, many other earthly powers, political as well as religious, have been identified as

the Babylon of Revelation. We must not restrict the meaning of apocalyptic events to exclude later historical applications. Revelation's theological message is a timeless message, and its pastoral application is one of perennial relevance. It was as meaningful in the first century as in every century since, even to the end of time. [Back to Revelation 18:1.](#)«

18:16 purple . . . scarlet . . . gold . . . jewels . . . pearls: The finery of a harlot (17:4). [Back to text.](#)



18:21 a great millstone: Recalls the words of Jeremiah about Babylon (Jer 51:63), as well as the teaching of Jesus about one who leads others to sin (Mt 18:6; Mk 9:42; Lk 17:2). [Back to text.](#)



18:22-23 The **millstone** falling silent, the lighted **lamp** going dark, and the **bridegroom and bride** no longer heard singing are scenarios drawn from Jeremiah's oracles prophesying the desolation of Jerusalem (Jer 7:34; 16:9; 25:10). [Back to text.](#)



18:24 blood of prophets . . . saints: The harlot city is a murderous city, stained with the blood of the Lord's faithful ones (17:6). **all . . . slain on earth:** A prophetic hyperbole, stressing that the city's bloodguilt has reached an extreme level. • The wording is borrowed from Jer 51:49, where "the slain of all the earth" were said to have fallen in Babylon. [Back to text.](#)

19:2 avenged . . . the blood: In answer to the pleas and petitions of the martyrs in 6:9-10 (CCC 2642). [Back to text.](#)

19:4 twenty-four elders: Heavenly saints. [See note on Rev 4:4.](#) **four living creatures:** Heavenly angels. [See note on Rev 4:6.](#) [Back to text.](#)



19:7-9 Christ and the Church are forever united in a covenant of marital love. In one sense, this is a present reality for the Church, who is joined to the Bridegroom by the grace of Baptism (Eph 5:22-32); but it is also a future hope, inasmuch as that union will reach perfection in the glory of heaven (Mt 25:1-13). John envisions the Church dressed in a bridal gown sewn by a life of purity and righteousness. Later, the Bride of the Lamb is described as the heavenly Jerusalem, the virgin city gilded with gold and adorned with precious stones (21:9-21) (CCC 757, 865). • The marriage of the bridal city recalls Ezek 16:8-14, where the Lord joined himself in wedlock to ancient Jerusalem, having cleansed her in water and clothed her

in gold, jewelry, and fine linen. Similar images of glorified Zion appear in Is 61:10 and 62:5. [Back to text.](#)

19:9 Blessed are those: The fourth of seven beatitudes in Revelation. [See note on Rev 1:3.](#) [Back to text.](#)

19:10 Worship God: The worship of any created thing is idolatry. John, of course, is not an idolater but is overcome by the heavenly glory radiating from the angel (22:8-9). He receives no such rebuke when he falls prostrate before the glorified Christ (1:17). [Back to text.](#)



19:11-21 Christ appears as the warrior Messiah, riding into battle with a full cavalry of angels trailing behind him. His mission: to execute judgment on the beast and the false prophet who allied themselves against him and his followers. This is the battle of Armageddon, for which preparations were made in 16:14-16. • The depiction of Christ dressed in a robe covered with **blood** (19:13) and treading the **wine press** of wrath (19:15) recalls Is 63:1-6, where the Lord marches forth to war, his garments splattered with enemy blood and his feet stomping down the nations in a wine press. The depiction of Christ as the **Word** (19:13) who swings a sharp **sword** (19:15) recalls Wis 18:15-16, where the divine word leaps down from heaven as a warrior armed with a sword. [Back to text.](#)

19:12 many diadems: Jesus is crowned with many crowns, symbolizing the plentitude of his royal authority as "King of kings" (19:16). **a name inscribed:** Either on his crowns or possibly on his forehead, like the saints who bear his name (14:1). [Back to text.](#)

19:13 The Word of God: Jesus, the divine Word of the Father (Jn 1:1), enacts the divine word of judgment (Jn 5:22) against those who reject his gospel (Jn 12:48). [Back to text.](#)

19:15 a rod of iron: The scepter of the Davidic Messiah (Ps 2:9). [See note on Rev 12:5.](#) [Back to text.](#)



19:17-21 Jesus condemns his enemies to a dreadful destiny. The judgment in question is spiritual, leading to the eternal **lake of fire**, though it is possible that historical events of the first century lie in the background. For instance, the overthrow of the **beast** may be linked to the suicide of Nero in A.D. 68. Not only was his name the number of the beast (note on Rev 13:18), but he had waged a violent war against the Church (11:7; 13:7).

Likewise, the judgment of the **false prophet** may be linked to the massacre of Judea's religious leadership in the first Jewish revolt against Rome (A.D. 67 to 70). So understood, this is a vision of divine punishment being imposed on the first persecutors of Christianity. Ultimately, however, it foreshadows the final battle of history, when Christ returns and destroys the powers of evil once and for all (20:7-10; 2 Thess 1:5-10; 2:1-12). • The imagery of the **great supper** comes from the apocalyptic war scenes of Ezek 38-39. After the Lord destroys those who assault his people, birds are invited to gorge themselves on the flesh and blood of fallen enemies strewn across the battlefield (Ezek 39:17-20). [Back to text.](#)

19:20 the lake of fire: The molten sea of hell, where the damned are destined to writhe in everlasting torment (21:8). Eventually the devil himself will be hurled into its flames (20:10) (CCC 1033-37). [Back to text.](#)

Word Study

Hallelujah ([Rev 19:1](#), [3](#), [4](#), [6](#))

Hallēluia (Gk.): A transliteration of two Hebrew terms meaning "Praise the Lord!" It occurs only four times in the NT but is often used in the OT as a liturgical acclamation, especially in the Psalter. Certain psalms, for instance, are framed by this expression, which serves as an opening and closing line (Ps 135, 146-50). It is also a recurrent acclamation in the Hallel Psalms that were traditionally sung during the Jewish Passover meal (Ps 113-18). Some scholars thus maintain that the Passover liturgy is the background of the repeated "Hallelujah" in Rev 19:1-6, since the song builds up to the "marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev 19:9). This is the triumphal banquet celebrated by the redeemed of the new Exodus, saved by the blood of Christ, the new Passover Lamb (Rev 5:6-10; 15:2-3). The "Hallelujah" has since passed into the liturgical vocabulary of the Church, where the Eucharist is celebrated as a memorial of the new Exodus accomplished through Christ (CCC 1340).



20:1-6 The binding of Satan and the millennial reign of Christ. Three views of the millennium have dominated theological discussion over the centuries. **(1) Premillennialism** is the view that Christ, when he comes again, will establish his reign on earth for 1,000 years. Also called *chiliasm* (from the Greek word for "one thousand"), this interpretation was popular in the second and third centuries (e.g., St. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 80). A modern version, advanced by Protestant dispensationalists, holds that the Church will be gathered into heaven at the Second Coming, after which Christ will restore the theocratic kingdom of David in Jerusalem for 1000 years and fulfill all of God's promises to ethnic Israel. **(2) Postmillennialism** interprets the 1000 years as symbolizing that period of history during which the gospel goes forth and gradually has its full effect of Christianizing the world. Once this global process is complete, Christ will return in glory. Advocates generally hold that the length of the millennium is beyond our ability to calculate. **(3) Amillennialism**, like postmillennialism, holds to a symbolic view of the 1000 years and does not envision Christ reigning on earth in visible form. The millennium is said to represent the entire stretch of history between the First and Second Coming, that time when Christ reigns in a spiritual and sacramental way through the Church. Rising to prominence in the fourth and fifth centuries, this has probably been the most widely held view among Catholic theologians throughout history (beginning with St. Augustine, *City of God* 20, 9). • The background of the millennium may be traced to the period of the Davidic covenant, which was established almost exactly 1000 years before the coming of Christ. This age began with David extending his rule over Israel and other nations (2 Sam 5-8) and with Solomon instructing the nations in the ways of righteousness (1 Kings 10:1-10, 23-24). It is also a time when the faithful of Israel first experienced martyrdom for their faith (Dan 3:16-23; 2 Mac 7:1-42). The images in 20:1 also have links with Davidic traditions: the **key** recalls the key of David in 3:7; the **pit** of the netherworld was believed to be sealed off by the foundation stone of Solomon's Temple; and the **chain** that prevents deception may reflect the tradition that a chain hung in Solomon's courtroom and was used to verify the truthfulness of testimony given under oath. These and other features of the Davidic age prefigure the messianic age, during which Christ reigns

over the Church and the world as the royal Davidic Messiah. • The Catholic Church rejects all forms of millenarianism (i.e., *chiliasm*), which contends that Christ will come again to establish a visible kingdom on earth and to inaugurate a golden age of peace and prosperity within human history (Decree of the Holy Office, 1944) (CCC 676). [Back to text.](#)

20:1 the bottomless pit: Or, "the abyss". [See note on Rev 9:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)

20:2 that ancient serpent: The devil as disguised in Gen 3:1-14 and exposed in 12:9. [Back to text.](#)



20:4 I saw thrones: A heavenly court, or possibly the thrones of apostolic government in the Church, as in Mt 19:28 and Lk 22:28-30. • The scene recalls Dan 7:9-11, where the beast from the sea is condemned and thrown into the fire, and Dan 7:26-27, where the kingdom of the Son of man is given to the saints. **beheaded for their testimony:** Martyrs such as John the Baptist (Mk 6:27) and the apostles James (Acts 12:1-2) and Paul (Christian tradition). These and others killed for their faith reign with Christ in a special way (Rev 20:6), even though all believers share in the royal-priestly reign of Christ, whether in heaven (Rev 2:26-27) or on earth (Rev 5:10). [Back to text.](#)

20:5 the first resurrection: The meaning of the two resurrections is uncertain. The first may refer to a spiritual resurrection to new life through faith and Baptism (Jn 5:25; Rom 6:3-4), followed by a bodily resurrection at the return of Christ (Jn 5:28-29; 1 Thess 4:15-16). Or perhaps both resurrections are bodily, the first being that of Christ and the saints of the OT (Mt 27:52-53) and the second involving the rest of humanity Rev (20:12-13; 1 Cor 15:22). [Back to text.](#)

20:6 Blessed: The fifth of seven beatitudes in Revelation. [See note on Rev 1:3.](#) **the second death:** The spiritual death of hell (20:14). The first death is bodily death (20:5). [Back to text.](#)



20:8 Gog and Magog: Names that symbolize the coalition of evil nations summoned by Satan to besiege the Church of the last days. This will be the final explosion of the devil's fury before his consignment to hell (20:10). • The two names come from the apocalyptic war vision of Ezek 38-39, where Gog and the land of Magog assemble an international army to

plunder the beloved People of God. Their plans are foiled, however, when fire and brimstone rain down from the Lord and destroy them (Rev 20:9). [Back to text.](#)

20:9 camp of the saints: Like the Exodus generation of Israel, the pilgrim Church on earth is still journeying toward the rest of the Promised Land. **the beloved city:** Another image for the Church, this time pictured as the heavenly Jerusalem (21:2). [Back to text.](#)

20:10 the lake of fire: Hell, where the devil joins his former agents, burning since 19:20. **tormented:** The damned are not annihilated or disintegrated, but kept alive to be tortured for eternity (Mt 25:46; Mk 9:47-48). [Back to text.](#)

20:11-15 The Last Judgment, when the souls of the dead are rejoined to their bodies (the second resurrection) to stand before Christ the Judge. Their secrets will be revealed, and every thought, word, and deed catalogued in the heavenly books will be reviewed. This is the Last Day, when both the righteous and the wicked will be raised (Acts 24:15) and sent their separate ways (Dan 12:2; Mt 25:31-46; Jn 5:29) (CCC 677, 103841). [Back to text.](#)

20:11 great white throne: The judgment seat of Christ (2Cor 5:10), the description of which recalls the ivory throne of Solomon (1 Kings 10:18). Elsewhere in Revelation, Jesus appears with white hair (1:14), wears a white garment (3:5), moves on a white cloud (14:14), and rides a white horse (19:11). The angels and saints are also robed in white (4:4; 6:11; 7:9; 15:6; 19:14). [Back to text.](#)



20:12 the book of life: A listing of all the saints destined for glory (3:5). It will be opened for the final roll call of the righteous at the Last Judgment, with the names of the saved read aloud (21:27) and the names of damned nowhere to be found (20:15). • The book of life is a metaphor based on a comparison with human affairs. For it is common practice among men to inscribe in a book those who are chosen for an office. Now, since all the predestined are chosen by God for eternal life, the enrollment of the predestined is called the book of life (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, 24, 1). [Back to text.](#)

20:13 Death and Hades: See notes on Rev 6:8 and 9:1. [Back to text.](#)

20:14 the second death: The state of spiritual death and damnation (20:6). [Back to text.](#)

21:1-22:5 The final vision of the book unveils the Bride of the Lamb, the heavenly city of Jerusalem, which awaits the saints. It depicts the state of glory in terms of a marital union (21:2), a holy city (21:10), a divine temple (21:22), and a garden of paradise (22:2). [Back to text.](#)



21:1 new heaven . . . new earth: Not entirely new, but entirely renewed (21:5). John sees all creation transformed and made radiant with the glory of God. It is no longer a world subject to death and decay and suffering the damaging effects of human sin (Gen 3:17-18; Rom 8:20-22). The process of cosmic regeneration has begun in the New Covenant as believers are made part of the new creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17), but John is presented with heaven and earth once this process is complete (CCC 1042-48). • The imagery comes from Isaiah, who prophesies a new beginning for Israel and the world in terms of a new creation (Is 65:17). He envisions this in connection with the universal worship of the Lord by all flesh (Is 66:22-23). **the sea was no more:** The abode of death and evil will be drained away (13:1; 20:13; 21:4). In apocalyptic and poetic texts, the sea often represents chaos and the habitation of all things dreadful and demonic (Job 7:12; Ps 74:13; Is 27:1; Dan 7:3). [Back to text.](#)

21:2 new Jerusalem: The heavenly city, whose builder and maker is God (Heb 11:10). It touches down to earth so that the worshiping Church can join in the heavenly liturgy of the angels and saints, who never cease to praise the Lord and the Lamb (Heb 12:22-25). Visions of this eternal liturgy punctuate the Book of Revelation (4:1-5:14; 7:9-8:5; 11:15-19; 14:1-5; 15:1-8) (CCC 757). Also, there are several antithetical parallels between the new Jerusalem and the harlot city stricken with judgment in chaps. 17-18. **(1)** In 17:1, John is invited by an angel to "come" and see the harlot; in 21:9, he is invited by an angel to "come" and see the heavenly city. **(2)** In 17:3, John is carried by the Spirit to see the wicked city in the wilderness; in 21:10, he is carried by the Spirit to see the holy city from a high mountain. **(3)** In 17:4, the woman city is dressed like a prostitute, wearing gold, jewels, and pearls; in 21:11, 18, and 21, the woman city is adorned like a virgin bride, bedecked with gold, jewels, and gates made of pearl. **(4)** In 18:2, Babylon appears as a dwelling place of demons; in 21:3, the new Jerusalem appears as the dwelling place of God. **(5)** In 18:7, Babylon is accused of glorifying herself; in 21:23, the new city is wrapped in the glory

of God. (6) In 18:23, the harlot city deceives the nations with her sorcery; in 21:24, the holy city leads the nations by her light. **prepared as a bride:** The Church is made ready for her everlasting union with Christ the Bridegroom. [See note on Rev 19:7-9.](#) [Back to text.](#)



21:3-4 The saints look forward to a joyous and painless existence with God. • The hope that God will **dwell** with **his people** restates the promise of the New Covenant in Ezek 37:27. The wiping away of **every tear** and the elimination of **death** recall the vision of the messianic banquet in Is 25:8. [Back to text.](#)

21:3 the dwelling: Or, "the Tabernacle" (15:5). [Back to text.](#)

21:6 the Alpha . . . the Omega: God created all things in the beginning, and he calls them back to himself in the end. [See note on Rev 1:8.](#) **the water of life:** The supernatural life of the Spirit (Jn 4:14; 7:37-39; 1 Cor 12:13). Note the contrast with Rev 21:8—here the saints are refreshed with living water; there the wicked are scorched with deadly fire (CCC 694). [Back to text.](#)



21:7 he shall be my son: The words of 2 Sam 7:14. • The promise of divine sonship was made to David's royal heirs and is ultimately fulfilled in Christ as the Davidic Messiah (Rom 1:3-4; Heb 1:5). Believers become sons and daughters of God by grace (Rom 8:15-16), but the full blessing of divine sonship awaits the resurrection of the saints and the glorification of their bodies, an event that coincides with the renewal of the cosmos (Rom 8:21-23). [Back to text.](#)

21:8 the second death: The spiritual death of the wicked (20:14). For similar lists of damning vices, see 1 Cor 6:9-10 and Gal 5:19-21. [Back to text.](#)



21:9-22:5 A dazzling description of the heavenly Jerusalem. • The vision draws from the architectural blueprint of the glorified Temple-city in Ezek 40-48. The city is seen from a **high mountain** (21:10; Ezek 40:2); it is filled with divine **glory** (21:11; Ezek 43:5); it has twelve **gates** named after the **sons of Israel** (21:12; Ezek 48:30-34); it is measured with a **measuring rod** (21:15; Ezek 40:3); its dimensions are **foursquare** (21:16; Ezek 42:15-

19); it is the place of God's **throne** (22:1; Ezek 43:7); and it is the source of life-giving **water** (22:1; Ezek 47:1-9), which causes the trees along its banks to bear fruit **each month** and put forth **healing** leaves (22:2; Ezek 47:12). Other visions of Jerusalem adorned with **gold** and **every jewel** (21:18-21) are found in Tob 13:16-17 and Is 54:11,12, and as a city bathed in **light** with **gates** always open (21:23-25) in Is 60:1-3, 11. [Back to text.](#)

21:10 in the Spirit: On this expression, [see note on Rev 17:3.](#) [Back to text.](#)

21:14 the twelve apostles: The apostolic foundations laid by Christ (Mt 16:18; Eph 2:20). Inscribed with the names of the OT tribes and the NT apostles, heaven is the dwelling of all the righteous of covenant history. [Back to text.](#)



21:16 length . . . breadth . . . height are equal: The eternal city is pictured as an enormous cube, each side measuring nearly 1,500 miles and its walls measuring over 200 feet thick. • The city is modeled after the innermost room of the Temple, the Holy of Holies, which was an all-gold chamber with a cubic shape (1 Kings 6:20). [Back to text.](#)

21:22 its temple is the Lord: The Trinity is the sanctuary of the heavenly city, which is encompassed by the Father (Lord) and the Son (Lamb) and filled with the glory of the Spirit (light). If the old Jerusalem was built around the Temple, the new Jerusalem stands within a Temple, and one that no longer has partitions or veils to prevent access. In theological terms, this means that communion with God in heaven will be unmediated, exceeding in closeness and directness the access to God's presence once enjoyed in the sanctuary of Israel. [Back to text.](#)



22:1 the water of life: Symbolic of the Spirit flowing through the main street of the city (21:6; Jn 7:38-39). • The imagery alludes to the river of Eden (Gen 2:10), the river that gladdens the city of God (Ps 46:4), and the fountain of living water springing from Jerusalem (Zech 14:8). For the primary allusion to Ezek 47:1-9, [see note on Rev 21:9-22:5.](#) • The water issuing from the Lord and the Lamb is an apocalyptic expression of a trinitarian mystery: in eternity, the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. [See note on Jn 15:26.](#) • A single stream issues from the throne of God, and that is the grace of the Holy Spirit in the stream of the Scriptures.

That stream has two banks, the Old Testament and the New, and the tree planted on either side is Christ (St. Jerome, *Tractate on the Psalms* 1). **the throne:** According to 3:21, the Father and the Son share the same throne. [Back to text.](#)



22:2 the tree of life: The reappearance of this tree, not seen in the Bible since Gen 3:24, hints that heaven is the celestial counterpart to Eden, i.e., a place of intimate fellowship with God, uncorrupted by sin and death. [See note on Rev 2:7.](#) [Back to text.](#)

22:4 shall see his face: The direct vision of God is the great hope of biblical spirituality (Ps 11:7; 42:2) and the preeminent blessing of heaven (Mt 5:8; 1 Cor 13:12). Seeing the face of God points to a profound personal intimacy with him; it is an experience of knowing God that is the fulfillment of human existence. Tradition calls this the Beatific Vision (CCC 102328). [Back to text.](#)

22:6-9 The book draws to a close by restating ideas from the introduction (1:1-3). Once again, the sense that Christ is fast approaching dominates the tone (22:6-7, 10, 12, 20). [See note on Rev 1:1.](#) [Back to text.](#)

22:7 I am coming soon: Jesus is speaking, as also in 22:12 and 22:20. **Blessed:** The sixth of seven beatitudes in Revelation. [See note on Rev 1:3.](#) [Back to text.](#)

22:8 I John: Probably John the Apostle. See introduction: *Author.* [Back to text.](#)

22:9 Worship God: Recalls the earlier incident in 19:10. [Back to text.](#)



22:10 Do not seal up: John is forbidden to seal the scroll shut. The urgency of his message makes reading it a top priority for his churches. • This is in deliberate contrast to Dan 12:4, where the prophet was instructed to seal up his prophecy because the time of its fulfillment was still in the distant future. [Back to text.](#)

22:13 the Alpha . . . the Omega: Christ gives himself the same title given to God in 1:8, showing that he, too, is the divine Lord over history and the world. [Back to text.](#)

22:14 Blessed: The last of seven beatitudes in Revelation. [See note on Rev 1:3.](#) [Back to text.](#)

22:15 Outside: The heavenly city is protected from sinful contamination, with evildoers kept far outside its walls. [Back to text.](#)



22:16 the root and the offspring: Jesus is the Davidic Messiah (5:5). • The heir to David's throne is called the "root" of Jesse in Is 11:10 and the "offspring" of David in 2 Sam 7:12. **morning star:** See notes on Rev 2:28 and 2 Pet 1:19. [Back to text.](#)

22:17 the Bride: The Church wedded to Christ (19:7-8). She joins the Spirit in summoning the world to salvation (CCC 2550). [Back to text.](#)



22:18-19 A warning not to tamper with the Book of Revelation, whose contents were carefully dictated by heavenly visions (1:11). Strictly speaking, this is not a general warning against tampering with the Bible, though that, too, is certainly wrong. Moreover, it does not exclude the possibility that there may be Christian revelation outside the books of Scripture, such as in unwritten traditions handed down by the apostles (1 Cor 11:2; 2 Thess 2:15). • Moses used similar words to caution Israel against adding or subtracting from the Book of Deuteronomy (Deut 4:2). [Back to text.](#)

22:20 Come, Lord Jesus!: The cry of the saints, who long for Christ's return. It is probably connected with the liturgical acclamation in 1 Cor 16:22, preserved in Aramaic as *marana tha*, "Our Lord, come!" (CCC 451, 671). [Back to text.](#)

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St. John the Evangelist wrote that "there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (Jn 21:25). Below is a list of the miracles of Jesus that were recorded in the Bible.

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The purpose of this index is to provide readers with New Testament references to certain Catholic doctrines. This index is not exhaustive. Nor is it the case that the Catholic Church requires every doctrine she teaches to have a specific biblical reference to support it, even though Catholic teaching is the full expression of the New Testament faith and as such is entirely consistent with the Bible. Some truths revealed by God in Jesus Christ are not made explicit in the pages of the New Testament, although nothing taught as Catholic doctrine is contrary to the teaching of the New Testament. Catholics hold fast to the teaching of Jesus and the apostles—the full Apostolic Tradition—which is found in the divinely-inspired-but-non-exhaustive form of the New Testament. They also rely on the Holy Spirit's ongoing guidance of the Church's chief pastors, the bishops united with the successor of Peter, to teach and faithfully to hand on the Apostolic Faith. It is the same Spirit-guided Tradition and teaching authority (Magisterium) in the Church that authoritatively determined the canon of divinely-inspired books that make up the New Testament. Consequently, by reading the Bible in light of the Church's ongoing teaching of the divine Word, the faithful can authentically understand the Bible, in which that faith is found in its earliest authoritative written expression.

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Holiness: [Eph 1:22](#); [5:27](#); [1 Pet 2:9](#)

Household (Family) of God: [Eph 2:19](#); [1 Tim 3:14-15](#); [1 Pet 2:5](#); [4:17](#)

Kingdom of God begun on earth in the Church: [Mt 3:2](#); [12:28](#); [16:18-19](#); [Lk 17:21](#); [Rom 14:17](#); [1 Cor 4:20](#); [Col 1:13](#)

Light of the world: [Mt 5:14](#)

Motherhood of the Church: [Gal 4:26](#); [Rev 21:2](#)

Pillar and bulwark of the truth: [1 Tim 3:15](#)

People of God: [Heb 4:9](#); [11:25](#); [1 Pet 2:10](#); [Rev 21:3](#)

Royal priesthood: [1 Pet 2:5, 9](#); [Rev 1:6](#); [5:10](#); [20:6](#)

Salt of the earth: [Mt 5:13](#)

Structured community with government: [Mt 16:18-19](#); [18:17-18](#); [28:19-20](#); [Jn 21:15-17](#); [Acts 1:22-26](#); [2:42](#); [6:2-6](#); [14:23](#); [1 Cor 12:4-11](#); [Eph 2:20-21](#); [4:11-13](#); [Phil 1:1](#); [1 Tim 3:8-13](#); [2 Tim 2:2](#); [Tit 1:5-9](#); [Heb 13:7, 17](#)

Temple of God: [1 Cor 3:9-17](#); [6:19](#); [2 Cor 6:16](#); [1 Pet 2:4-8](#)

Teaching authority in the Church: [Mt 10:40](#); [16:18-19](#); [18:17-18](#); [28:19-20](#); [Lk 10:16](#); [Jn 14:26](#); [15:26-27](#); [16:13](#); [Acts 2:42](#); [15:28](#); [Lk 22:32](#); [Acts 2:42](#); [15:22-29](#); [1 Cor 12:28](#); [2 Thess 2:15](#); [Eph 4:11-12](#); [1 Tim 3:15](#); [5:17](#); [2 Tim 1:11, 13-14](#); [2:2](#); [Tit 3:10-11](#); [Heb 13:7, 17](#); [1 Jn 4:6](#)

Unity of the Church: [Jn 17:21-23](#); [Gal 3:27-28](#); [Eph 1:9-10](#); [2:11-22](#); [4:4](#); [Col 3:15](#)

See also Apostles; Authority; Intercession of the Saints; Saints

Communion, Holy. *See* Eucharist

Communion of Saints. *See* Church; Intercession of Saints; Saints

Confession of sins: [Mt 3:6](#); [Mk 1:5](#); [Jas 5:16](#); [1 Jn 1:9](#).

See also Penance

Confession, Sacrament of. *See* Penance; Reconciliation; Salvation

Confirmation, Sacrament of: [Acts 8:17-19](#); [19:6](#); [2 Cor 1:22](#); [Eph 1:13-14](#); [Heb 6:2](#)

Conscience

Basis for action: [1 Tim 1:19](#)

Conscience must be informed by the Word of God: [Lk 6:47-48](#); [2 Tim 1:13-14](#)

Good conscience gives confidence before God: [Acts 24:16](#); [2 Cor 1:12](#); [1 Tim 3:9](#); [1 Jn 3:21](#); [Heb 13:18](#); [1 Pet 3:16, 21](#)

Not an absolute standard: [1 Cor 4:3-5](#); [Tit 1:15](#); [Heb 9:14](#); [10:22](#)

Respect for the consciences of others: [1 Cor 8:7-13](#); [10:25-29](#)

Standard by which God will condemn or excuse: [Jn 9:40-41](#); [15:22-23](#); [Rom 2:15](#)

See also Ignorance

Covenant

Jesus' Eucharistic blood of the covenant: [Mt 26:28](#); [Mk 14:24](#); [Lk 22:20](#);
[1 Cor 11:25](#)

Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant: [Heb 9:15](#); [12:24](#)

Ministers of a new covenant: [2 Cor 3:6](#)

New Covenant: [Lk 22:20](#); [1 Cor 11:25](#); [2 Cor 3:14](#); [Heb 8:8-10](#), [13](#); [9:15](#);
[12:24](#)

Old Covenant: [2 Cor 3:14](#); [Heb 8:6-7](#), [13](#)

Two covenants: [Gal 4:24](#)

See also Atonement; Jesus; Redemption

Council of Jerusalem: [Acts 15:6-31](#)

Crucified Jesus

Association of the crucifixion of Jesus with the Eucharist: [1 Cor 11:26](#)

Christ crucified should be proclaimed: [1 Cor 1:23-24](#); [2:2](#); [Gal 3:1](#); [6:14](#)

Damnation. *See* Hell; Judgment; Salvation; Sin

Deacons: [Acts 6:1-6](#); [Phil 1:1](#); [1 Tim 3:8-13](#)

Death

After death comes judgment: [Heb 9:27](#)

Body in death appears to be asleep: [1 Cor 15:51](#)

Dead are aware: [Lk 16:22-31](#); [23:42-43](#); [2 Cor 5:6](#), [8-9](#); [12:2-4](#); [Phil 1:23](#);
[Heb 12:22-23](#); [1 Pet 3:18-20](#); [Rev 6:9-11](#); [20:4-5](#)

Resurrection: *see* Resurrection

Some Christians go on to be with Christ: [2 Cor 5:8](#); [Phil 1:23](#)

Some Christians undergo purgation: *see* Purgatory

Devil

Ancient serpent: [Rev 12:9](#); [20:2](#)

Appears as angel of light in order to deceive: [2 Cor 11:14](#)

Behind Judas' betrayal of Jesus: [Lk 22:3](#); [Jn 6:70-71](#); [13:2](#)

Capable of possessing a human being by means of demons: [Mt 8:28-34](#);
[15:22](#); [Mk 1:23-28](#); [5:1-20](#); [Lk 11:14-20](#); [Acts 19:13-16](#)

Cast into the lake of fire: [Rev 20:10](#)

Defeated by Christ: [1 Jn 3:8](#)

Devil has angels under his control: [Mt 25:41](#)

Enemy of the Christian: [Eph 6:11](#); [1 Pet 5:8](#)

Fallen angel: [Lk 10:18](#)

Murderer from the beginning: [Jn 8:44](#)

Satan: [Rev 12:9](#)

Tempted Christ: [Mt 4:1-11](#); [Mk 1:13](#); [Lk 4:2-13](#)

See also Angels

Discernment of spirits

Spiritual gift enabling the possessor to distinguish divine activities from merely natural or diabolical activities: [1 Cor 12:10](#); [1 Jn 4:1-6](#)

Divorce: [Mt 5:31-32](#); [19:3-9](#) ("except" clause); [Mk 10:2-12](#); [Lk 16:18](#); [1 Cor 7:10-16](#)

See also Adultery; Marriage

Divinity of Christ. *See* Jesus

Drunkenness

Can lead to damnation: [1 Cor 6:10](#); [Gal 5:21](#)

Contrary to Christian living: [1 Cor 5:11](#); [Eph 5:18](#); [1 Pet 4:3](#)

Impairs one's alertness to imminent judgment: [Mt 24:49](#); [Lk 21:34](#); [Rom 13:13](#)

Not all use of alcoholic drinks is wrong: [Mt 26:27-29](#); [Mk 14:23-25](#); [Lk 7:33-34](#); [22:17-18](#), [20](#); [Jn 2:3-10](#); [1 Tim 5:23](#)

Elders

NT office of elder ("presbyter" or, later, "priest"): [Acts 15:2](#), [6](#), [22-23](#); [1 Tim 4:14](#); [5:17-19](#); [Tit 1:5](#); [1 Pet 5:1-5](#); [Jas 5:14-15](#); [2 Jn 1](#); [3 Jn 1](#)

Twenty-four elders in heaven: [Rev 4:4](#), [10](#); [5:5-6](#), [8](#), [11](#), [14](#); [7:11](#), [13](#); [11:16](#); [14:3](#); [19:4](#)

Election

Baptized persons must confirm their election: [2 Pet 1:10](#)

Israel's election by grace: [Rom 11:28](#)

God's New People: [1 Pet 2:9-10](#)

Paul's election: [Gal 1:15](#)

Paul's suffering for the sake of the elect: [2 Tim 2:10](#)

See Freedom; Grace; Predestination

Envy

Can lead to damnation: [Gal 5:21](#)

Defiles a man: [Mk 7:21-22](#)

Incompatible with Christian discipleship: [Gal 5:26](#); [1 Pet 2:1](#)

Motive of Jesus' enemies in condemning him: [Mt 27:18](#); [Mk 15:10](#)

Eternal Life

Attained by keeping the commandments: [Mt 19:16-17](#); [25:46](#); [Lk 10:25-28](#); [Jn 12:50](#); [Rom 2:7](#)

Attained through faith in Jesus: [Jn 3:15-16](#), [36](#); [17:3](#); [Rom 5:21](#)

Assurance of eternal life, if one abides in Jesus, which includes obedience: [Jn 6:54-56](#); [8:51](#); [1 Jn 2:24-25](#); [3:14](#); [5:13](#)

Future reality that is to be obtained through fidelity in this life: [Mt 25:46](#); [1 Tim 6:12](#); [1 Jn 2:24-25](#)

Gift of Jesus: [Jn 10:27-28](#); [Rom 6:23](#)

Harvest of the Holy Spirit: [Gal 6:8](#)

Hope of eternal life: [Tit 1:2](#); [3:7](#)

Jesus himself is called eternal life or is closely identified with it: [Jn 11:25](#); [17:3](#); [1 Jn 1:2](#); [5:11](#), [20](#)

Kind of life that of itself is not subject to ending, unless repudiated through disobedience in this life: [Jn 3:36](#); [4:14](#); [6:27](#); [10:28](#); [12:50](#); [Rom 2:7](#); [Gal 6:8](#); [1 Jn 3:15](#); [Jude 21](#)

Lost through disobedience and unbelief: [Jn 3:36](#); [Acts 13:46](#); [2 Tim 2:12](#); [1 Jn 3:15](#)

Participation in eternal life now in a limited, provisional way through faith in Jesus: [Jn 5:24](#); [6:47](#); [1 Jn 5:13](#)

Participation in eternal life now in a limited, provisional way through the Eucharist: [Jn 6:54](#)

Promised to those who remain faithful: [1 Jn 2:25](#); [Jude 21](#); [Rev 2:10](#)

Reward of love: [1 Cor 2:9](#); [2 Tim 4:8](#); [Jas 1:12](#); [2:5](#)

Sanctification's goal: [Rom 6:22](#)

See also Resurrection; Salvation

Eucharist, Sacrament of the Holy

Body and Blood of Christ: [Mt 26:26-29](#); [Mk 14:22-25](#); [Lk 22:19-20](#); [1 Cor 11:23-26](#)

Bread from heaven: [Jn 6:33](#), [50-51](#)

Bread of Life: [Jn 6:35](#), [38](#), [51](#)

Compared and contrasted with pagan and Jewish sacrifices: [1 Cor 10:18-21](#); [Heb 13:10](#)

Danger of unworthy reception of the Eucharist: [1 Cor 11:27-30](#)

Death of the Lord is proclaimed by the Eucharist: [1 Cor 11:26](#)

Flesh and blood of Jesus: [Jn 6:51](#); 53-56

Judas' rejection of the Eucharist: [Jn 6:64](#)

Necessity of eating the Flesh of Jesus and drinking his Blood: [Jn 6:51](#), [53-58](#)

Participation in (communion with) the Body and the Blood of Christ: [1 Cor 10:16-17](#), [21](#)

Sacrifice: [Mt 26:26-29](#); [Mk 14:22-25](#); [Lk 22:19-20](#); [1 Cor 10:16-17](#), [21](#); [11:23-26](#); [Heb 13:10](#)

Source of eternal life: [Jn 6:54](#)

True food and drink: [Jn 6:55](#)

Truth of the Eucharist requires faith given by the Holy Spirit in order to be accepted: [Jn 6:63-64](#)

See also Body; Flesh

Evangelization

Apologetics, or being ready to give a reasoned account (literally, "defense" or "explanation") for one's hope in Christ: [1 Pet 3:15](#)

Jesus' commissioning of his disciples to evangelize the whole world: [Mt 28:19-20](#); [Mk 16:15](#); [Lk 24:47-48](#); [Acts 1:8](#)

Mission of evangelization directed to Jew and Gentile alike: [Mt 24:14](#); [Mk 13:10](#); [Acts 13:47](#); [14:15](#); [17:30-31](#); [Rom 2:10](#); [10:12-18](#); [11:12](#), [15](#), [25-26](#); [1 Cor 1:24](#); [12:13](#)

See also Church; Gospel; Jews

Faith

Assurance of things hoped for: [Heb 11:1](#)

Body of belief: [Phil 1:27](#); [Col 1:23](#); [1 Tim 1:2](#); [3:9](#); [4:1](#), [6](#); [5:8](#); [6:10](#), [12](#), [21](#); [2 Tim 4:7](#); [Tit 1:13](#); [Jude 3](#)

Completed by works: [Jas 2:22](#)

Dead without works of love: [Jas 2:17](#), [23-24](#)

Degrees of faith: [Lk 17:5-6](#)

Faith is a form of obedience to God's Word: [Jn 3:36](#); [Rom 1:5](#); [16:26](#); [1 Jn 3:23](#)

Justification by faith in Jesus Christ apart from works of the Law but not by faith alone: [Gal 2:16](#); [Jas 2:24](#)

Love completes faith: [Gal 5:6](#)

Necessary for salvation: [Mk 16:16](#); [Jn 3:16](#); [8:24](#); [Acts 16:31](#); [Heb 11:6](#)

No absolute assurance of salvation because apostasy and other grave sin remains possible in this life: [Rom 11:20-22](#); [Heb 6:4-6](#). [2 Pet 2:20-22](#)

Salvation by grace through faith: [Eph 2:8](#)

Walk by faith, not by sight: [2 Cor 5:7](#)

See also Grace; Justification; Salvation; Works

False doctrine

Danger of false prophets: [Mt 7:15](#); [24:11](#), [24](#); [Mk 13:22](#)

Warning concerning those who reject or distort apostolic doctrine: [Rom 16:17](#); [Eph 4:14](#); [1 Tim 1:3, 10; 4:1](#); [2 Tim 4:3-4](#); [Heb 13:9](#); [2 Pet 2:1](#)

Family

Baptism of whole families: [Acts 16:33](#); [1 Cor 1:16](#)

Derived from God's fatherhood: [Eph 3:14-15](#)

Fathers not to provoke their children to anger but to instruct them in the Lord: [Eph 6:4](#); [Col 3:21](#)

Founded on marriage: [Mt 19:5-7](#)

Mothers should exercise rulership of their households: [1 Tim 5:14](#)

Mutual submission of husband and wife to one another in Christ: [Eph 5:21-33](#)

Obedience of children to parents commanded: [Eph 6:1-3](#); [Col 3:20](#)

Obligation to provide for one's family: [1 Tim 5:8](#)

See also Church; Fatherhood; Marriage; Motherhood

Fasting: [Mt 6:16-18](#); [Lk 2:37](#); [Acts 13:2-3](#); [14:23](#)

Fatherhood

Fatherhood of apostolic ministry and, by extension, of priestly ministry: [1 Cor 4:14-15](#); [Phil 2:22](#); [1 Thess 2:11](#)

Fathers exhorted to raise their children properly and not to provoke them: [Eph 6:4](#); [Col 3:21](#)

God alone is Father in the absolute sense: [Mt 23:9](#); [Eph 3:14-15](#)

Men may also be called "father": [Mt 1:1-16](#); [15:4-5](#); [21:31](#); [Lk 2:33](#); [Acts 26:6](#); [Rom 4:16](#); [1 Cor 4:14-17](#); [1 Thess 2:11](#); Philem 10; [1 Jn 2:13-14](#)

Older men to be exhorted as fathers by younger men: [1 Tim 5:1](#)

See also Family; God; Trinity

Flesh

All of mortal humanity as such: [Lk 3:6](#); [Jn 17:2](#); [Acts 2:17](#); [1 Pet 1:24](#)

Aspect of man that is subject to death, illness, weakness, and suffering: [2 Cor 4:11](#); [12:7](#); [Gal 3:20](#); [4:13](#) ("bodily ailment: literally, in Greek, "weakness of the flesh"); [Col 1:24](#); [Phil 1:22, 24](#); [Heb 5:7](#); [1 Pet 3:18](#); [4:1](#)

Aspect of man that is under the domination of sin, sinful impulses, and evil outlooks ("the flesh"): [Mt 26:41](#); [Jn 1:13](#); [6:63](#); [Rom 7:18](#); [8:3-9](#), [12-13](#); [13:14](#); [1 Cor 5:5](#); [Gal 5:16-17](#), [19](#); [1 Pet 2:11](#)

Bodily aspect of the human person or the embodied person: [Mt 19:5-6](#); [Lk 24:39](#); [Jn 3:6](#); [Rom 8:3](#); [Acts 2:31](#); [Eph 5:28-31](#); [Phil 3:2](#); [Col 1:11](#), [13](#), [22](#); [Jude 8](#)

Complementary element of human life to "blood", the two of which represent man in his limitations: [Mt 16:17](#); [1 Cor 15:50](#); [Gal 1:16](#); [Eph 6:12](#); [Heb 2:14](#)

Contrasted with spirit or the Spirit: [Jn 3:6](#); [Rom 8:4-10](#), [13](#)

Jesus came in the flesh, i.e., possessing human nature: [Jn 1:14](#); [Eph 2:15](#); [1 Tim 3:16](#); [Heb 5:7](#); [10:20](#); [1 Jn 4:2](#); [2 Jn 7](#)

Jesus' term, used in conjunction with "blood", to refer to the reality of his embodied presence in the Eucharist: [Jn 6:51-56](#)

Life of man according to the order of the present world: [Jn 8:15](#); [1 Cor 1:26](#), [29](#); [Eph 6:5](#) ("earthly masters", literally, in Greek, "masters according to the flesh"); [Phil 3:4](#); [Gal 6:12](#); [2 Cor 5:16](#); Philem 16

One-flesh union of husband and wife: [Mt 19:5-6](#); [Mk 10:8](#); [Eph 5:31](#)

Principle of biological generation, descent, and kinship: [Rom 1:3](#); [4:1](#); [9:3](#), [8](#); [11:14](#) ("my fellow Jews", literally, in Greek: "my flesh")

See also Body; Eucharist; Resurrection; Soul; Spirit

Forgiveness

Dependent on one's forgiveness of others: [Mt 6:12](#), [14-15](#); [18:35](#); [11:25](#); [Lk 6:37](#); [11:4](#); [Col 3:13](#)

Jesus' prayer of forgiveness of those who rejected him: [Lk 23:34](#)

No forgiveness for blasphemy against the Holy Spirit: [Mt 12:31-32](#); [Mk 3:28-29](#); [Lk 12:10](#)

Seventy times seven acts of forgiveness (i.e., limitless forgiveness): [Mt 18:21-22](#); [Lk 17:3-4](#)

Through the death and resurrection of Christ: [Mt 26:28](#); [Lk 24:47](#); [Acts 13:38](#); [Eph 1:7](#); [Col 1:14](#); [1 Jn 2:12](#)

See also Absolution; Baptism; Penance; Reconciliation; Redemption; Salvation

Fornication

Among the "works of the flesh" condemned by Paul: [Gal 5:19-21](#)

Can lead to damnation: [Eph 5:5](#) ("immoral" man, literally in Greek, "fornicator"); [Heb 13:4](#) ("immorality", literally in Gk, "fornication"); [Rev 21:8](#); [22:15](#)

Condemned by Jesus: [Mt 15:19-20](#)

Contrary to Christian discipleship: [Eph 5:3-5](#); [Col 3:5](#) ("immorality", literally in Greek, "fornication")

See also Adultery; Chastity; Lust; Sexual sin

Freedom

Call to repentance, which implies freedom to repent: [Mt 4:17](#); [23:37](#); [Jn 1:12-13](#); [2 Pet 3:9](#)

Human freedom was damaged by sin but was redeemed by grace: [Jn 8:32](#); [Rom 6:18-23](#); [7:15-25](#); [8:2](#), [21](#); [2 Cor 3:17](#); [Gal 5:1](#), [13](#); [1 Pet 2:16](#)

Power to obey and to choose: [Lk 6:46](#); [Jn 14:15](#); [Rom 2:9-10](#); [Gal 5:13](#); [1 Pet 2:16](#)

Resistance to grace is possible: [Jn 15:1](#); [Acts 7:51](#); [2 Cor 6:1](#)

See also Election; Predestination; Sin; Redemption; Salvation; Works

Gluttony: [Phil 3:19](#); [Heb 12:16](#)

God

All-knowing: [Mt 6:6](#), [8](#); [10:29-30](#); [Rom 11:33](#); [Heb 4:13](#); [1 Jn 3:19-20](#)

Almighty (omnipotence): [2 Cor 6:18](#); [Rev 1:8](#); [4:8](#); [11:17](#); [15:3](#); [16:7](#), [14](#); [19:6](#), [15](#); [21:22](#)

Alpha and Omega: [Rev 1:8](#); [21:6](#); [22:13](#)

Alone to receive worship of divine honor: [Mt 4:10](#); [Lk 4:8](#); [Acts 10:25-26](#); [14:11-15](#); [Rev 22:9](#)

Creator: [Acts 14:15](#); [17:24-26](#); [Rom 11:36](#); [1 Cor 8:5-6](#); [Heb 1:2-3](#), [10](#); [1 Tim 4:4](#); [6:13](#); [Rev 4:11](#)

Eternal: [Rom 1:20](#); [16:26](#); [1 Tim 1:17](#); [Heb 1:10-12](#)

Faithful: [1 Cor 1:9](#); [10:13](#); [1 Thess 5:24](#); [2 Thess 3:3](#); [2 Tim 2:13](#); [1 Jn 1:9](#)

Father: [Mt 5:45](#); [6:6-9](#); [7:11](#); [Eph 3:14-15](#); [Rev 21:7](#)

Father of spirits: [Heb 12:9](#)

Goodness: [Lk 18:19](#)

Holy: [1 Pet 1:16](#); [Rev 4:8](#); [6:10](#)

Judge: [Rom 2:6-8](#), [16](#); [3:6](#); [Heb 10:30](#); [1 Pet 1:17](#); [Rev 20:12](#)

Just: [Rom 2:6-8](#); [2 Cor 5:10](#)

Knowledge of God's existence through reason's reflection on creation: [Acts 14:15-17](#); [17:24-28](#); [Rom 1:19-20](#)

Love: [Jn 3:16](#); [Rom 5:5](#), [8-10](#); [8:35-39](#); [2 Cor 13:14](#); [2 Thess 2:16](#); [1 Jn 4:10-12](#)

Omnipresent: [Mt 6:6](#), [8](#), [18](#); [10:29-31](#); [18:20](#); [Acts 17:24-28](#); [Rom 10:6-7](#)

One: [Jn 17:3](#); [1 Cor 8:4](#); [Gal 3:20](#); [Eph 4:6](#); [1 Tim 1:17](#); [2:5](#)

Perfect: [Mt 5:48](#)

Provident: [Mt 10:29-31](#); [Lk 12:6-7](#); [1 Cor 2:7](#); [Eph 1:9-12](#); [2 Tim 1:9-10](#); [1 Pet 3:20](#)

Revealed fully in Jesus: [Mt 11:27](#); [Lk 10:22](#); [Jn 1:1](#); [14:9-10](#); [20:28](#); [Col 1:15](#); [Heb 1:1-3](#)

Rich in mercy: [Lk 6:36](#); [Eph 2:4](#); [Jas 5:11](#)

Savior: [Lk 1:47](#); [1 Tim 2:3](#); [4:10](#)

Salvation of all men is willed by God: [Mt 18:14](#); [Jn 3:16](#); [2 Cor 5:19](#); [1 Tim 2:3-4](#); [2 Pet 3:9](#)

Source of creaturely goodness: [Rom 11:36](#); [1 Tim 4:4-5](#)

Spiritual: [Jn 4:24](#); [Rom 8:9](#); [1 Cor 2:10-11](#); [Eph 3:14-16](#)

Unchanging: [Heb 6:17](#); [Jas 1:17](#)

Wise: [Rom 16:27](#); [1 Cor 1:19-30](#)

Works all things for the good of those who love him: [Rom 8:28](#)

See also Jesus; Holy Spirit; Trinity

Gospel

Eternal gospel: [Rev 14:6](#)

False teaching is "another gospel": [Gal 1:6-12](#)

Good news about the kingdom of God/heaven: [Mt 4:23](#); [24:14](#); [Mk 1:14-15](#)

Good news about Jesus Christ: [Mk 1:1](#); [Rom 1:3](#), [9](#); [2 Cor 2:12](#); [1 Thess 3:2](#)

Power of God unto salvation: [Rom 1:16](#)

Preached to the dead: [1 Pet 4:6](#)

See also Evangelization

Government. *See* Authority; Church

Grace

Basis of salvation through faith in Christ and opposed to unaided human efforts at salvation: [Rom 4:4-5](#); [11:6](#); [Gal 2:21](#); [Eph 2:8-9](#)

Brings forgiveness of sins: [Eph 1:7](#)

Cooperation in obedience with grace for salvation: [Phil 2:12-13](#)

Eternal life is the gift of God's grace through Jesus: [Rom 6:23](#)

Falling away from grace: [Gal 1:6](#); [5:4](#)

Given through baptism: [Jn 3:5-9](#); [Rom 6:1-4](#); [Gal 3:27](#); [Col 2:12](#); [Tit 3:5-7](#)

Grace of justification is the gift of God: [Rom 3:24](#); [5:15](#)

Growth in grace: [2 Pet 3:18](#)

Indwelling life of grace incompatible with serious sin: [1 Jn 3:6](#), [9](#), [15](#); [5:16](#), [18](#)

Jesus the fullness of grace: [Jn 1:14](#)

Justification by grace: [Tit 3:7](#)

Life of Jesus indwelling the believer: [Gal 2:20](#); [Col 2:10](#); [3:4](#)

Mary the Mother of Jesus was full of grace: [Lk 1:28](#)

Participation in the divine nature through grace of Jesus Christ: [2 Pet 1:1-4](#)

Principle of divine adoption: [Rom 8:14-16](#)

Receiving grace "in vain" is possible: [2 Cor 6:1](#); [Gal 2:21](#)

Salvation through the grace of Jesus: [Acts 15:11](#)

Strengthens the heart of the believer: [Heb 13:9](#)

See also Faith; Freedom; Election; Love; Justification; Salvation; Works

Greed: [Mt 23:25](#); [Mk 7:22](#); [Lk 12:15-21](#); [Rom 1:29](#); [1 Cor 5:11](#); [6:10](#); [Eph 5:5](#); [1 Tim 6:9-10](#)

See also: Poor; Wealth

Heaven

Awareness of earthly events in heaven: [Lk 15:7](#), [10](#); [1 Tim 5:21](#); [Rev 5:8](#); [6:10](#); [8:3-4](#)

Christ now lives in heaven, where he intercedes for his followers on the basis of his death and resurrection, and his eternal priesthood: [Heb 7:24-28](#); [8:1-6](#); [9:11-14](#), [24](#); [10:11](#)

City of God/New Jerusalem image: [Gal 4:26](#); [Phil 3:20](#); [Heb 12:22](#); [13:14](#); [Rev 3:12](#); [21:2](#), [10-27](#)

Citizenship of heaven: [Eph 2:19](#); [Phil 3:20](#)

Fulfillment of human life: [Mt 5:19-21](#); [2 Cor 4:17-18](#); [5:1-5](#), [8](#); [Rev 7:15-17](#); [22:1-5](#)

Holiness of heaven's inhabitants: [Mt 13:41-43](#); [Heb 12:14](#), [22-24](#); [Rev 7:13-17](#); [8:3-5](#); [21:27](#)

Liturgical elements used to describe heavenly worship: [Rev 4:2-11](#); [5:8-13](#); [6:9](#); [8:3-5](#); [16:7](#)

New heaven(s) and a new earth: [2 Pet 3:13](#); [Rev 21:1](#)

Presence of God: [Heb 12:22](#); [Rev 10:1-2](#); [21:3-4](#)

Rejoicing in heaven: [Lk 15:7](#), [10](#)

Saints in heaven: [Heb 12:22-24](#); [Rev 4:4](#), [10](#); [5:8-10](#)

"Third" heaven: [2 Cor 12:2](#)

Throne of God: [Mt 5:34](#); [Heb 8:1](#); [12:2](#)

See also Angels; Intercession of the Saints; Saints

Hell

Abyss: [Lk 8:31](#); [Rev 9:1](#), [2](#), [11](#); [11:7](#); [17:8](#) ("bottomless pit")

Body and soul destroyed in hell: [Mt 10:28](#); [Jn 5:29](#)

Broad road that leads to destruction: [Mt 7:13](#)

Damned persons perish because they refuse to love the truth: [2 Thess 2:10-11](#)

Darkness imagery: [Mt 8:12](#); [22:13](#); [25:30](#) ("outer darkness"); [2 Pet 2:4](#); [Jude 6](#)

Descent of Christ into hell: [Acts 2:27](#) ("Hades"); [Rom 10:7](#); [1 Pet 3:18-20](#); [4:6](#)

Eternity of hell: [Mt 25:41, 46](#); [Mk 9:43, 48](#); [Jude 7](#)

Fire imagery: [Mt 3:10, 12](#); [5:22-29](#); [7:19](#); [13:42, 50](#); [18:8-9](#); [25:41](#); [Mk 9:43, 48](#); [Lk 3:9, 17](#); [Jas 3:6](#); [Jude 7](#); [Rev 17:16](#); [18:18](#)

Gehenna imagery: [Mt 5:22](#); [29-30](#); [18:9](#); [23:15, 33](#); [Mk 9:43-48](#); [Lk 12:5](#); [Jas 3:6](#) ("hell", literally, "Gehenna")

Lake of fire imagery: [Rev 14:10-11](#); [19:20](#); [20:10, 14-15](#)

Second death: [Rev 2:11](#); [20:14](#)

Suffering proportionate to sin: [Lk 12:47-48](#); [16:25](#)

Tartarus: [2 Pet 2:4](#) ("hell")

Weeping and gnashing of teeth: [Mt 8:12](#); [13:42, 50](#); [22:13](#); [24:51](#), [25:30](#)

See also Forgiveness; Judgment; Salvation; Sins

Heresy. *See* False doctrine

Hope

Anticipates but does not fully possess what is hoped for: [Rom 8:24-25](#)

Hope of sharing the glory of God: [Rom 5:2](#)

In hope of eternal life: [Tit 1:2](#)

Rejoice in hope: [Rom 12:12](#)

Saved in hope: [Rom 8:24](#)

Theological virtue, along with faith and love: [1 Cor 13:13](#)

Holy Orders, Sacrament of

Bestowed by the imposition of hands: [Acts 6:6](#); [13:3](#); [1 Tim 4:14](#); [2 Tim 1:6](#)

Instituted by Christ: [Lk 22:19](#); [Jn 20:21-23](#); [1 Cor 11:24-25](#)

Holy Spirit

Baptism and new birth/regeneration in the Holy Spirit: [Mt 3:11](#); [Mk 1:7-8](#); [Lk 3:16](#); [Jn 1:33](#); [3:5](#); [Acts 1:5](#); [2:38](#); [19:6](#), [1 Cor 12:12-13](#); [Tit 3:5](#).

See also Baptism.

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable: [Mt 12:31-32](#); [Mk 3:29](#)

Counselor ("another Counselor"; Paraclete): [Jn 14:16](#); [15:26](#)

Distinct Person, not a force or emanation from God: [Acts 5:3, 32](#); [Rom 8:27](#); [Eph 4:30](#)

Distributes spiritual gifts as he wills: [1 Cor 12:11](#)
Divine: [2 Cor 3:17-18](#)
Eternal: [Heb 9:14](#)
Fellowship of the Holy Spirit: [2 Cor 13:14](#)
Fruit of the Spirit: [Gal 5:22-23](#)
Gifts of the Spirit: [1 Cor 12:4-30](#); [Heb 2:4](#)
Grieving the Holy Spirit: [Eph 4:30](#)
Guarantee or "down payment" of salvation: [2 Cor 1:22](#); [Eph 1:14](#)
Guidance of the Church: [Jn 14:26](#); [15:26](#); [16:13-14](#); [Acts 15:28](#)
Helps believers to pray: [Rom 8:26-27](#); [Jude 20](#)
Indwells the baptized: [Jn 14:17](#); [Acts 2:4](#), [38](#); [Rom 5:5](#); [8:9](#); [1 Cor 3:16](#); [6:19](#); [Heb 6:4](#)
Intercedes for us: [Rom 8:27](#)
Knows the thoughts of God as a man's spirit knows his thoughts: [1 Cor 2:10-11](#)
Makes us sons of God through Jesus Christ: [Rom 8:12-17](#); [Gal 4:6-7](#)
Sent from the Father by the Son: [Jn 14:16](#); [15:26](#)
Seal of the Holy Spirit: [2 Cor 1:22](#); [Eph 1:13](#); [4:30](#)
Speaks: [Acts 13:2](#); [1 Cor 2:10](#); [Gal 4:6](#); [Heb 3:7-9](#); [Rev 2:7](#)
Spirit of Christ: [Rom 8:9](#)
Spirit of the Father: [Mt 10:20](#)
Spirit of truth: [Jn 14:17](#); [16:13](#)
Sword of the Spirit: [Eph 6:17](#)
Testimony about the Son: [Jn 15:26](#)
See also God; Jesus; Trinity

Homosexual acts

Are sinful: [Rom 1:26-27](#); [1 Cor 6:9-10](#); [1 Tim 1:10](#).

See also Chastity; Sexual sin

Human nature. *See* Man

Hypocrisy

Condemned by Jesus: [Mt 6:1-6](#); [23:13-36](#)

To be avoided: [Jas 3:17](#); [1 Pet 2:1](#)

Idolatry

Confusing the Creator with the created: [Acts 14:11-18](#); [17:23-31](#); [Rom 1:23](#), [25](#); [Rev 19:10](#)

Expressing the divine by using created forms is not idolatry, so long as the divine is not reduced to the created or confused with it: [Jn 1:14](#); [Acts](#)

[7:56](#); [Col 1:15](#); [Rev 4:2-3](#); [5:1](#), [7](#); [20:11](#)

Gravely sinful nature of idolatry: [Rom 1:23](#), [25](#); [1 Cor 5:11](#); [10:14](#), [19-21](#);
[2 Cor 6:16](#); [Gal 5:20](#); [1 Jn 5:21](#); [Rev 9:20](#); [21:8](#); [22:15](#)

Idols are nothing in themselves but their link to false worship involves demonic beings: [1 Cor 8:4](#), [10:19-21](#)

Involves treating any created thing—including creaturely pleasure—as if it were the supreme reality (God): [Eph 5:5](#); [Col 3:5](#); [1 Pet 4:3](#)

Leads to other sins: [Rom 1:26-31](#)

Ignorance

Can be a punishment for sin: [Eph 4:18](#); [1 Pet 2:15](#)

Can excuse sin for those in good faith: [Jn 9:41](#); [15:22](#), [24](#); [Acts 17:30](#);
[Rom 2:15](#); [5:13](#)

Fails to excuse one otherwise blameworthy: [Lk 12:48](#)

Can lead to mercy from God: [Lk 23:34](#); [Acts 3:17](#); [17:30](#); [1 Tim 1:13](#)

Can lead to sin: [Lk 23:34](#); [Acts 3:17](#); [Rom 10:3](#); [2 Pet 2:12](#); [3:16](#)

See also Conscience; Natural law; Sin

Immortality

Divine immortality: [1 Tim 1:17](#); [6:15-16](#)

Human immortality: [Lk 20:36](#); [Rom 2:7](#); [1 Cor 15:53](#); [2 Cor 5:1-4](#); [2 Tim 1:10](#)

See also Resurrection

Incarnation. *See* Jesus

Infant baptism

Baptism is the sign of the New Covenant as circumcision (administered to infants) was sign of the Old Covenant: [Col 2:11-12](#)

Children included in the promise of baptism: [Acts 2:38-39](#)

Households (which generally included infants) baptized: [Acts 11:13-14](#);
[16:15](#), [33](#); [1 Cor 1:16](#)

Infants brought to Jesus for a blessing: [Mk 10:13-16](#); [Lk 18:15](#), [17](#)

New birth through baptism and the Spirit: [Jn 3:5](#)

See also Baptism

Intercession of the Saints

Christians are said to have approached (entered into communion with) angels in heaven, the firstborn enrolled in heaven, and the spirits of just men made perfect: [Heb 12:1](#), [22-24](#)

Moses and Elijah appear to Jesus and Peter, James, and John: [Mt 17:3-4](#);
[Mk 9:4-5](#); [Lk 9:30-33](#)

Heavenly beings are aware of things on earth: [Lk 15:7, 10](#); [1 Tim 5:21](#);
[Rev 5:8](#); [6:10](#); [8:3](#)

Twenty-four elders in heaven intercede with God for Christians on earth:
[Rev 5:8](#)

Angels offer to God the prayers of Christians on earth: [Rev 8:3](#)
See also Angels; Church; Saints

Jesus

Alpha and Omega: [Rev 22:13](#)

Ascension of Jesus: [Mk 16:19](#); [Lk 24:51](#); [Acts 1:9-11](#); [Heb 4:14](#); [Rev 12:5](#)

Author of Life: [Acts 3:15](#)

Baptism of Jesus: [Mt 3:16-17](#); [Mk 1:9-11](#); [Lk 3:21-22](#); [Jn 1:32-34](#)

Born in Bethlehem: [Mt 2:1](#); [Lk 2:4-7](#)

Carpenter (Greek, *tekton*): [Mk 6:3](#)

Christ (Messiah; "Anointed One"): [Mt 1:1](#); [16:16](#); [26:63-64](#); [Mk 1:1](#);
[8:29](#); [Lk 2:11](#); [9:20](#); [24:26](#); [Jn 1:17](#); [17:3](#); [Acts 2:36](#); [Rom 1:1](#); [Rev 11:15](#)

Church's guidance by Jesus: [Mt 23:10](#); [28:20](#); [Jn 14:20](#); [17:21](#), [23](#); [Acts 9:3-6](#); [Eph 1:22](#)

Creator: [Jn 1:3](#); [1 Cor 8:6](#); [Col 1:16](#); [Heb 1:2](#), [10-12](#); [2:10](#); [Rev 3:14](#)
("beginning of God's creation" as in its source)

David's descendant: [Mt 1:6-16](#), [20](#); [Mk 10:47-48](#); [Lk 1:27](#), [32](#), [69](#); [2:4](#);
[3:31](#); [Jn 7:42](#); [Rom 1:3](#); [2 Tim 2:8](#); [Rev 5:5](#); [22:16](#)

Descent into hell: [1 Pet 3:18-20](#)

Died for the sins of all men: [Jn 3:16](#); [Rom 5:18](#); [2 Cor 5:14](#); [1 Tim 2:3-6](#);
[4:10](#); [Heb 2:9](#); [9:28](#); [1 Pet 3:18](#); [1 Jn 2:1-2](#)

Eternal life: [Jn 17:3](#); [1 Jn 1:2](#); [5:20](#)

Exorcized demons: [Mt 8:31-32](#); [15:22-28](#); [Mk 1:25-26](#); [5:8-13](#); [Lk 11:18-22](#)

First-born (pre-eminent) of creation in his human nature: [Col 1:15](#)

First-born from the dead: [Col 1:18](#); [Rev 1:5](#)

First-born Son of God: [Heb 1:6](#)

Forgives sins: [Mt 9:6](#); [Mk 2:5](#); [Lk 5:23-24](#); [7:47-50](#); [Jn 8:10-12](#); [20:23](#)

Fullness of revelation: [Mt 11:25-27](#); [24:35](#); [Lk 10:22](#); [Jn 1:1](#), [9](#), [14](#), [17](#);
[14:9](#); [Heb 1:1-3](#); [Jude 3](#)

God (Greek, "theos"): [Mt 1:23](#); [28:18](#); [Jn 1:1](#), [14](#); [8:58](#); [10:30](#); [16:15](#);
[17:5](#); [20:28](#); [1 Cor 8:4-6](#); [Phil 2:5-11](#); [Col 1:19](#); [2:9](#); [1 Tim 1:17](#); [Tit](#)

[2:13](#); [Heb 1:2-4](#), [5-14](#); [Rev 22:13](#)
Good Shepherd: [Jn 10:11](#), [14](#)
Grew in his human life and wisdom: [Lk 2:40](#)
Healing miracles: [Mt 4:23-24](#); [9:2-8](#), [18-25](#), [27-30](#); [Jn 11:38-44](#)
High priest and sacrifice present now in heaven: [Heb 4:14-15](#); [5:5](#), [10](#);
[9:11-14](#), [24-27](#); [10:11-12](#), [21](#)
Holy One of God: [Mk 1:24](#); [Lk 4:34](#); [Jn 6:69](#); [Rev 3:7](#)
Image of the Invisible God: [Col 1:15](#)
Incarnation: [Jn 1:1](#), [14](#); [Phil 2:5-11](#); [1 Tim 3:16](#); [Heb 10:5-7](#); [1 Jn 1:1-3](#);
[4:2-3](#); [2 Jn 7](#)
Jewish: [Mt 1:1-17](#); [Mk 10:47-48](#); [Lk 3:23-33](#); [Jn 4:9](#); [Rom 1:3](#); [9:5](#); [2 Tim](#)
[2:8](#)
Judge of the living and the dead: [Jn 5:22](#); [Acts 10:42](#); [1 Cor 4:4](#); [2 Tim](#)
[4:1](#), [8](#)
Kenosis: [Phil 2:7](#)
King of kings and Lord of lords: [1 Tim 6:15](#); [Rev 17:14](#); [19:16](#)
Lamb of God: [Jn 1:29](#), [36](#); [1 Cor 5:7](#); [1 Pet 1:19](#); [Rev 5:6](#), [8](#), [12-13](#); [6:1](#),
[16](#); [7:9](#), [10](#), [14](#), [17](#); [8:1](#); [12:11](#); [13:8](#); [14:1](#), [4](#), [10](#); [15:3](#); [17:14](#); [19:7](#), [9](#);
[21:9](#), [14](#), [22](#), [23](#), [27](#); [22:1](#), [3](#)
Light of the world: [Jn 8:12](#); [9:5](#)
Lord: [Rom 1:4](#); [5:1](#); [10:9](#); [1 Cor 2:8](#); [8:6](#); [12:3](#); [Eph 4:5](#); [Phil 2:11](#); [2](#)
[Thess 2:1](#); [Jas 2:1](#); [1 Pet 1:3](#); [Jude 21](#)
Lord of the living and the dead: [Rom 14:9](#)
Makes us God's children through the Holy Spirit: [Jn 1:12](#); [Rom 8:12-17](#);
[Gal 4:6-7](#)
Man: [Mt 1:20-21](#); [Jn 1:14](#); [Acts 2:22](#); [17:31](#); [Phil 2:7-8](#); [1 Tim 2:5](#); [3:16](#);
[2 Jn 7](#)
Mediator between God and man: [Jn 14:6](#); [Rom 8:34](#); [1 Tim 2:5](#); [Heb 9:15](#);
[12:24](#); [1 Jn 2:1-2](#)
Obedience to the Father out of love: [Mt 26:39-44](#); [Jn 14:31](#); [Heb 5:8](#)
Power of God: [1 Cor 1:24](#)
Pre-existent: [Jn 1:1](#), [14](#); [8:58](#); [17:5](#); [Phil 2:5-11](#)
Rock: [1 Cor 10:4](#); [1 Pet 2:8](#)
Savior: [Lk 2:11](#); [Jn 4:42](#); [Acts 4:12](#); [5:31](#); [13:23](#); [Eph 5:23](#); [Phil 3:20](#); [Tit](#)
[2:13](#); [1 Jn 4:14](#)
Sinless: [Jn 8:46](#); [2 Cor 5:21](#); [Heb 4:15](#); [1 Pet 2:22](#)

Son of God: [Mt 2:15](#); [3:17](#); [4:3](#), [6](#); [8:29](#); [11:27](#); [16:16](#); [26:63](#); [27:43](#), [54](#); [Mk 1:1](#), [11](#); [3:11](#); [Lk 1:35](#); [Jn 3:16](#); [Rom 1:4](#); [2 Cor 1:19](#); [Heb 4:14](#); [1 Jn 4:15](#); [Rev 2:18](#)

Son of Man: [Mt 9:6](#); [10:23](#); [11:19](#); [25:31](#); [26:64](#); [Mk 9:31](#); [Jn 9:35-37](#); [Acts 7:56](#); [Rev 1:13](#)

Suffering: [Mt 26:28](#), [67-68](#); [27:28-31](#), [34-36](#), [44](#), [46-50](#); [Mk 14:33-41](#), [65](#); [15:17-20](#), [23-37](#); [Lk 22:42-45](#), [63-65](#); [23:11](#), [22](#), [32-46](#); [Jn 19:1-3](#), [5](#), [16-18](#), [28-30](#); [Heb 5:7-8](#); [12:2](#)

Tested by the devil: [Mt 4:1-11](#); [Mk 1:12-13](#); [Lk 4:1-13](#); [Heb 2:18](#); [4:15](#)

Transfiguration of Jesus: [Mt 17:1-8](#); [Mk 9:2-8](#); [Lk 9:28-36](#)

Virginally conceived: [Mt 1:18](#), [20](#), [23](#); [Lk 1:26-35](#)

Way, the Truth, and the Life: [Jn 14:6](#)

Wisdom of God: [1 Cor 1:24](#)

Word of God: [Jn 1:1](#), [14](#); [14:24](#); [1 Jn 1:1](#); [5:7](#); [Rev 19:13](#) *See also* Authority; God; Holy Spirit; Resurrection of Jesus Christ; Second Coming; Trinity

Jews

"All Israel" will eventually be saved: [Rom 11:1](#), [11](#), [15](#), [25-32](#)

Apostolic mission initially only to the Jewish people: [Mt 10:6](#), [23](#); [Acts 2:36-39](#); [4:8-12](#); [5:31](#)

Jesus Christ should be proclaimed to Jew and Gentile alike: [Mt 28:19-20](#); [Mk 16:15](#); [Lk 24:47](#); [Jn 3:16](#); [Acts 1:8](#); [2:36-39](#); [3:12](#); [4:8-12](#); [5:31](#); [9:15](#), [19-22](#); [10:34-36](#), [43](#); [13:23](#); [Rom 1:16](#); [10:1](#), [12-13](#); [1 Cor 1:24](#); [Gal 3:28](#); [Col 3:11](#)

Jesus' earthly mission was primarily directed to the House of Israel: [Mt 10:6](#); [15:24](#); [27:11](#); [Acts 10:39](#); [13:23-24](#), [32-33](#)

New Covenant of Jesus Christ includes Jews who accept him as the Messiah: [Acts 4:8-12](#); [Rom 11:27](#); [1 Cor 12:13](#); [Eph 2:13-16](#); [Heb 8:8-10](#)

Permanence of God's covenant promises with Israel: [Rom 11:1-2](#), [11-12](#), [15](#), [23](#), [26](#), [28-29](#)

Persecution of the Church by some of the Jewish leadership: [Mt 10:17](#); [Mk 13:9](#); [Jn 16:2](#); [Acts 4:1-21](#); [5:17-18](#), [27-33](#), [40](#); [6:12-15](#); [7:1](#), [54-60](#); [8:1-3](#); [9:12](#); [12:1-5](#); [13:45](#), [50](#); [14:2](#); [17:13](#); [21:30-35](#); [22:30](#); [23:2-3](#), [12-15](#); [1 Thess 2:14-16](#)

Possessors of a special mission from God: [Rom 3:2](#); [9:4-5](#)

Salvation comes from the Jewish People: [Jn 4:22](#); [Acts 13:23](#); [Rom 9:4-5](#)

Scandalized by the crucifixion of Jesus: [1 Cor 1:23](#)

United with Gentiles in the community of the one Church: [1 Cor 12:13](#);
[Gal 3:28](#); [Eph 2:11-22](#); [Col 3:11](#)

See also Church; Evangelization

John the Baptist

Ascetic: [Mt 3:1, 4](#); [9:14](#); [11:19](#); [Mk 1:4, 6](#); [Lk 1:15](#); [3:2](#); [7:33](#)

Baptized Jesus Christ: [Mt 3:13-17](#); [Mk 1:9-11](#); [Lk 3:21-22](#); [Jn 1:32-34](#)

Baptized others in Israel in preparation for the Messiah: [Mt 3:11-12](#); [Mk 1:7-8](#); [Lk 3:16-16](#); [Jn 1:26-27](#)

Criticized many of the Pharisees and Sadducees: [Mt 3:7-10](#)

Filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb: [Lk 1:15](#)

Fulfilled the role of Elijah but was not Elijah: [Mt 11:14](#); [Mk 9:11-13](#); [Lk 1:17](#); [Jn 1:21](#)

Greatest among the Old Covenant prophets: [Mt 11:11](#)

Imprisoned and martyred by Herod Antipas: [Mt 14:3-12](#); [Mk 6:17-29](#); [Lk 3:19-20](#); [9:9](#)

Prophet: [Mt 14:5](#); [Mk 6:15](#); [11:32](#); [Lk 1:76](#); [7:26](#)

Relative of Jesus: [Lk 1:36](#)

Son of Zechariah and Elizabeth: [Lk 1:5-25](#), [57-66](#)

Teaching of John: [Lk 3:3](#), [7-19](#); [Jn 1:20-27](#)

Joseph

Angelic communication with Joseph: [Mt 1:20](#); [2:13](#), [19](#)

Betrothed to Mary before the conception of Jesus: [Mt 1:18](#); [Lk 1:27](#)

Carpenter (Greek, *tekton*): [Mt 13:55](#)

Descendant of David: [Mt 1:20](#); [Lk 1:27](#)

Foster-father of Jesus: [Mt 1:16](#); [Lk 3:23](#); [Jn 1:45](#); [6:42](#)

Just (righteous) man: [Mt 1:19](#)

Judgment

After death: [Heb 9:27](#)

Christians to be judged by the Lord: [1 Cor 3:13-17](#); [4:3-5](#); [1 Cor 11:32](#);
[Col 3:23-24](#); [2 Tim 1:18](#)

Jesus Christ is the Judge: [Mt 16:27](#); [Jn 5:22](#); [Acts 10:42](#); [1 Cor 4:4](#); [2 Cor 5:10](#) ("judgment seat of Christ"); [2 Tim 4:1](#), [8](#)

Judgment by God on the basis of one's works and intentions: [Mt 7:21-23](#);
[16:27](#); [24:45-51](#); [25:34-46](#); [Rom 2:16](#); [1 Cor 3:8-9](#), [12-15](#); [Gal 6:7-9](#);
[Col 3:23-24](#); [1 Pet 1:17](#); [Rev 22:12](#)

Judgment of the nations: [Mt 25:31-46](#)

Saints will be involved with judgment of the world, including angels: [1 Cor 6:2-3](#)

Justice

Basis for God's judgment of the nations: [Acts 17:30-32](#); [Rom 2:6-8](#)

Central, along with mercy and faithfulness, to doing God's will: [Mt 23:23](#); [Lk 11:42](#)

Christians should be just and not show preference for the rich over the poor: [Jas 2:1-7](#), [9](#)

Mercy triumphs over justice for those who have been merciful: [Mt 5:7](#); [Lk 6:36](#); [Jas 2:13](#)

Proclaimed to the nations by the Messiah: [Mt 12:1](#)

Justification

By faith in Christ and not works of the Law: [Rom 3:28](#), [30](#); [4:5](#); [5:1](#); [Gal 2:16](#); [3:8](#); [Phil 3:9](#); [Tit 3:5](#)

By the grace through faith: [Acts 15:11](#); [Rom 3:22-25](#); [Eph 2:8](#); [Tit 3:7](#)

Involving genuine obedience and love of God: [Mt 7:21](#); [24:31-46](#); [Rom 6:13-18](#); [1 Cor 2:9](#); [Jas 2:17](#), [24](#); [1 Jn 2:29](#); [3:7](#)

Not by "faith alone": [Jas 2:24](#)

Resurrection of Jesus and justification: [Rom 4:25](#)

Righteousness or justification can be increased: [Rom 6:19-22](#); [1 Tim 6:11](#); [2 Tim 2:22](#); [3:16](#) ("training in righteousness"); [4:8](#); [Heb 12:11](#) (discipline yields the "fruit of righteousness"); [1 Jn 3:7](#); [Rev 22:11](#)

See also Merit; Salvation; Sanctification; Works

Law

Jesus distinguished between the written Law of Moses, which is the Word of God, and human traditions: [Mt 15:1-9](#); [Mk 7:1-13](#)

Jesus fulfills the Law of Moses: [Mt 5:17](#); [Lk 16:16](#); [24:44](#); [Jn 1:45](#); [5:39](#); [8:17](#); [10:34-36](#); [15:25](#); [Eph 2:15](#)

Justification apart from works of Law and through faith in Christ: [Rom 3:28](#); [Gal 2:16](#); [Phil 3:9](#)

Law given by God through Moses, complemented by the writings of the prophets: [Mt 5:17](#); [7:12](#); [Lk 2:22-27](#), [39](#); [16:16](#); [24:44](#); [Jn 1:45](#); [7:19](#); [Acts 13:15](#)

Law gives man awareness of his sin and his weakness: [Rom 5:20](#); [7:9](#); [2 Cor 3:6](#); [Gal 3:19](#)

Law of Christ (love): [1 Cor 9:21](#); [Gal 6:2](#)

Law of liberty: [Jas 1:25](#); [2:12](#)

Law of the Spirit of life: [Rom 8:2](#)

Love fulfills the Law: [Rom 13:8-10](#); [Gal 5:14](#)

Love of God and love of neighbor sums up the Law: [Mt 22:34-40](#); [Mk 12:28-34](#); [Lk 10:25-28](#)

Moral law of the commandments is necessary: [Mt 19:17](#); [Mk 10:19](#); [Jn 14:15](#); [Rom 2:13-16](#); [1 Cor 7:19](#)

Mosaic Law prepared the way for the order of justification by grace through faith in Christ: [Gal 3:23-25](#)

Natural law: [Jn 1:9](#); [Rom 2:12-16](#)

Royal law (love): [Jas 2:8](#)

Weightier matters of the Law: justice, mercy, and faith: [Mt 23:23](#)

See also Salvation; Works

Love

Disciples were commanded to love each other: [Jn 13:34-35](#); [15:12](#), [17](#); [1 Jn 3:11](#), [23](#); [4:21](#)

Disciples will keep Jesus' commandments out of love: [Jn 14:15](#), [21](#), [23-24](#); [15:12](#)

Enemies should be loved: [Mt 5:44](#); [Lk 6:27](#); [23:34](#); [Acts 7:60](#); [Rom 12:14](#), [17](#), [20](#); [13:8-10](#); [1 Pet 3:9](#)

First great commandment is love of God: [Mt 22:37-38](#); [Mk 12:30](#)

Fruit of the Spirit includes love: [Gal 5:22](#)

Fulfills the Law: [Mk 12:33](#); [Rom 13:8-10](#); [Gal 5:14](#)

God is love: [1 Jn 4:8,10](#)

God's love for us: [Jn 3:16](#); [Rom 5:5](#), [8-11](#); [8:31-39](#); [Eph 2:4-7](#)

Greatest act of love is to lay down one's life for one's friends: [Jn 15:13](#)

Greatest of the virtues is love: [1 Cor 13:13](#)

Hatred of neighbor is incompatible with love of God: [1 Jn 4:20](#)

Love realized in obedience to God's commandments: [Jn 14:15](#); [15:10](#); [1 Jn 2:5](#); [5:2-3](#)

Necessity of love: [1 Cor 2:9](#); [13:2-3](#); [16:22](#); [Gal 5:6](#); [Jas 1:12](#); [2:5](#); [1 Jn 5:3](#)

Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ: [Rom 8:35-39](#)

Paul's hymn regarding love: [1 Cor 13:1-13](#)

Second great commandment is love of neighbor: [Mt 22:39](#); [Mk 12:31](#); [1 Jn 4:11](#), [21](#)

Truth in love: [Gal 4:16](#); [Eph 4:15](#)

Lust

Adultery in the heart: [Mt 5:28](#)

Abstain from lust: [1 Thess 4:5](#)

Earthly qualities to be "put to death": [Col 3:5](#)

See also Chastity; Sexual sin

Man

Affected deeply by sin: Mt 7:11; [Jn 1:10-12](#); [Rom 3:23](#); [5:12-19](#); [7:18-20](#);
[1 Jn 1:8](#)

Body and soul unity of the human person: [Mt 10:28](#)

Christ the perfect image of God: [Col 1:15](#)

Created male and female: [Mt 19:4](#)

Fundamental equality of all human beings: [Acts 17:26](#); [Gal 3:28](#); [Eph 6:9](#);
[Col 3:11](#); Philem 16

Image of God: [1 Cor 11:7](#)

New creation in Christ: [2 Cor 5:17](#)

Redeemed by Christ: [Rom 3:24](#); [1 Cor 1:30](#); [Gal 3:13-14](#); [Col 1:13-14](#)

Redeemed man conformed to the image of Christ: [Rom 8:29](#); [1 Cor 15:45-49](#); [Col 3:10](#)

See also Reason; Sin; Soul

Magic (Sorcery)

Condemned: [Acts 13:6-11](#); [19:19](#); [Gal 5:20](#); [Rev 21:8](#); [22:15](#)

Magisterium. *See* Apostles; Authority; Church

Marriage (Matrimony)

Challenges of the spiritual life for married couples: [1 Cor 7:25-28](#), [32-35](#)

Honorable: [Heb 13:4](#)

Husbands are to love their wives as Christ self-sacrificially loved the Church: [Eph 5:25-33](#); [Col 3:19](#); [1 Pet 3:7](#)

Jesus' teaching on marriage and divorce: [Mt 19:5](#); [Mk 10:7](#); [Lk 16:18](#)

Marriage must be between a man and a woman: [Mt 19:4-5](#); [Mk 10:6-8](#)

Marriage reflects the union of Christ and the Church: [Eph 5:25](#), [31](#)

Mutuality of: [1 Cor 7:3-5](#); [Eph 5:21](#); [1 Pet 3:7](#)

No marriage in the resurrection of the dead: [Mt 22:24-30](#); [Mk 12:19-25](#);
[Lk 20:28-36](#)

Paul's teaching on marriage, divorce: [1 Cor 7:10-11](#)

Remarriage after death of spouse is permitted: [1 Cor 7:8-9](#), [39](#)

Spouses are joint heirs of the life of grace: [1 Pet 3:7](#)

Unbaptized person married to a baptized person: [1 Cor 7:12-16](#)

Wives are to subject themselves to their husbands for the love of Christ:

[Eph 5:22-24](#); [Col 3:18](#); [1 Pet 3:1](#)

See also Divorce

Mary, Mother of Jesus

All generations will call Mary blessed: [Lk 1:48](#)

Annunciation: [Lk 1:26-38](#)

Asked Jesus to work his first miracle: [Jn 2:3-5](#), [7-11](#)

At the crucifixion of Jesus: [Jn 19:25-27](#)

Faithful believer of God's Word: [Lk 1:38](#), [45](#)

Full of grace: [Lk 1:28](#)

Humble: [Lk 1:38](#), [48](#)

Mother of the disciples of the Lord: [Jn 19:26-27](#); [Rev 12:1-2](#), [4-6](#), [13-17](#)

Mother of God ("the Lord"): [Lk 1:43](#)

Mother of Sorrows, who suffers along with Jesus: [Lk 2:35](#)

Overshadowed by the Holy Spirit: [Lk 1:35](#)

Purified according to the Law: [Lk 2:22](#)

Saved by God: [Lk 1:47](#)

Venerated by Spirit-filled Elizabeth: [Lk 1:41-45](#)

Venerated by the angel Gabriel: [Lk 1:28](#)

Virgin Mother of Jesus: [Mt 1:18](#), [20](#), [23](#), [25](#); [2:13](#); [Lk 1:27](#), [34-35](#)

Visitation with her kinswoman Elizabeth: [Lk 1:39-56](#)

With the apostles and other disciples after the Ascension of Jesus: [Acts 1:14](#)

Woman Clothed with the Sun: [Rev 12:1-2](#)

See also Motherhood

Mass. *See* Eucharist

Mediator. *See* Covenant; Jesus

Mercy

Compassion: [Col 3:12](#)

God desires mercy: [Mt 9:13](#); [18:23-35](#)

Merciful people shall receive a reward: [Mt 10:42](#)

Those who are merciful will obtain mercy: [Mt 5:7](#)

Merit

God rewards our works done for the right reason: [Mt 5:12](#), [46](#); [6:4](#), [5](#), [18](#), [19-21](#); [10:41-42](#); [19:28](#); [Rom 2:5](#); [1 Cor 3:8](#), [14](#); [9:24](#); [Col 3:23-24](#); [1 Tim 6:17-19](#); [2 Tim 4:7](#); [Heb 6:10](#); [10:35-36](#); [2 Jn 8](#); [Rev 22:12](#)

Our works of obedience are themselves the result of God working in us:
[Phil 2:13](#)

See also Grace; Salvation; Works

Motherhood

Church's motherhood: [Gal 4:26](#); [Rev 21:2](#)

Mary's motherhood: [Mt 1:18, 20, 23, 25](#); [2:13](#); [Lk 1:27, 34-35, 43](#); [Jn 19:26-27](#); [Rev 12:1-2, 4-6, 13-17](#)

Mothers to be honored: [Eph 6:2](#)

Mothers to rule their households: [1 Tim 5:14](#)

Older women to be treated as mothers: [1 Tim 5:2](#)

Paul's use of the mother metaphor: [Gal 4:19](#)

Salvific value of motherhood: [1 Tim 2:15](#); [5:14](#)

See also Family; Woman

Natural Law. *See* Conscience; Law

New Covenant. *See* Covenant

Original sin

All human beings affected by the sin of the first man: [Rom 5:12-19](#)

Fallen man's disposition to sin: [Rom 7:13-25](#)

Universality of sin among humanity: [Rom 3:9-12, 22-23](#)

See also Sin

Papacy. *See* Peter

Paul

Apostle to the Gentiles: [Rom 11:13](#); [1 Cor 9:1](#); [Gal 2:7](#)

Benjaminite: [Phil 3:5](#)

Called to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ: [Rom 1:1](#); [Gal 1:1, 12](#); [1 Cor 1:1](#); [9:1](#); [15:8](#); [Eph 1:1](#); [Col 1:1](#); [1 Tim 1:1](#); [2 Tim 1:1](#)

Conversion story: [Acts 9:1-19](#); [22:6-16](#); [26:12-18](#)

Disagreement with Barnabas regarding Mark: [Acts 15:36-40](#)

Disagreement with Peter: [Gal 2:11-14](#)

Former persecutor of the Church: [Acts 7:58](#); [8:1-3](#); [9:1-2](#); [22:4](#); [26:9-11](#); [1 Cor 15:9](#); [Gal 1:13](#); [Phil 3:6](#)

Former Pharisee: [Acts 23:6](#); [26:5](#); [Phil 3:5](#)

From Tarsus: [Acts 21:39](#); [22:3](#)

His letters referred to by Peter: [2 Pet 3:15-17](#)

Knew James the kinsman of Jesus: [Gal 1:19](#); [2:9](#)

Knew John: [Gal 2:9](#)

Knew Peter (Cephas): [Gal 1:18](#); [2:9, 11-21](#)

Roman citizen: [Acts 16:37-38](#); [22:25-29](#); [23:27](#)

Submitted his teaching to the other apostles, including Peter: [Gal 2:2](#), [6-10](#)

Student of Gamaliel: [Acts 22:3](#)

Teacher of the Gentiles: [1 Tim 2:7](#)

See also Apostles; Peter

Peace

Among the fruit of the Spirit: [Gal 5:22](#)

Christians called to live peaceably with all: [Rom 12:18](#); [14:19](#); [2 Tim 2:22](#); [Heb 12:14](#)

God of peace: [Rom 15:33](#); [1 Cor 14:33](#); [Phil 4:9](#); [Heb 13:20](#)

Good news of peace: [Acts 10:36](#); [Eph 6:15](#)

Jesus' call for people to be at peace with one another: [Mk 9:50](#)

Jesus did not come to establish a worldly peace, but to distinguish those who embrace the Kingdom of God from those who do not: [Mt 10:34-36](#)

Jesus is the peace of believers: [Eph 2:14-17](#); [Col 1:20](#)

Peace is an aspect of the kingdom of God: [Rom 14:17](#)

Peacemakers are blessed: [Mt 5:9](#); [Jas 3:18](#)

Peace of Christ: [Jn 14:27](#); [16:33](#); [Col 3:15](#)

Peace with God through Jesus Christ: [Rom 5:1](#)

Son of peace: [Lk 10:6](#)

Penance, Sacrament of

Authority to forgive sins given by God to men: [Mt 9:8](#)

Authority to forgive sins given by Jesus to Peter ("binding and loosing"): [Mt 16:18-19](#)

Authority to forgive sins given to the Twelve ("binding and loosing"): [Mt 18:15-18](#); [Jn 20:19-23](#)

Paul was given a ministry of reconciliation: [2 Cor 5:18](#)

Satisfaction for sins repented of: [Mt 3:8](#); [Lk 3:8](#); [Acts 8:22-23](#)

See also Confession of sins; Reconciliation; Salvation

Perseverance. *See* Salvation

Peter

Authority to bind and loose: [Mt 16:18-19](#)

Brother of Andrew: [Mt 4:18](#); [Lk 6:14](#); [Jn 1:40](#); [6:8](#)

"Cephas" was another form of Peter's name: [Jn 1:42](#); [1 Cor 15:5](#)

Commendation of Paul's letters: [2 Pet 3:15-16](#)

Denied Jesus three times: [Mt 26:69-75](#); [Jn 18:15-18, 25-27](#)
First to proclaim Christ to the Gentiles: [Acts 10:25-48](#)
Fisherman by trade: [Mt 4:18-22](#); [Mk 1:16-20](#); [Lk 5:1-11](#); [Jn 1:40-42](#)
Healing of Peter's mother-in-law by Jesus: [Mt 8:14-15](#)
Identifies Jesus as the Christ: [Mt 16:16](#); [Mk 8:29](#); [Lk 9:20](#)
Jesus changed his name from Simon to Peter (Cephas): [Mt 16:18](#); [Mk 3:16](#); [Lk 6:14](#); [Jn 1:42](#)
Jesus prays for him that his faith would not fail: [Lk 22:31-32](#)
Keys to the Kingdom of Heaven were given to Peter by Jesus: [Mt 16:18-19](#)
Martyrdom prophesied by Jesus: [Jn 21:18-19](#)
Primacy among the Twelve: [Mt 10:2](#); [16:18-19](#); [Lk 22:31](#); [Jn 21:15-19](#); [Acts 1:15-22](#); [2:14-36](#); [15:7-11](#)
Rebuked Jesus: [Mt 16:22-23](#)
Rock on whom the Church of Christ is built: [Mt 16:18](#)
Simon Bar-Jona/Simon Son of John was his original name: [Mt 16:17](#); [Jn 1:42](#)
Shepherd of Christ's flock: [Jn 21:15-19](#); cf. [Jn 10:11, 14](#)
Special resurrection appearance of Jesus to Peter: [Lk 24:34](#); [1 Cor 15:5](#)
Spokesman for and leader of the disciples: [Mk 16:7](#); [1 Cor 15:5](#)
Wrote 1 Pet from Rome, cryptically referred to as "Babylon": [1 Pet 5:13](#)
See also Paul

Poor

Blessedness of the righteous poor: [Lk 6:20-21](#)
Blessing of detachment from belongs ("poor in spirit"): [Mt 5:3](#)
Christians should be concerned about the poor: [Mt 19:21](#); [Mk 14:7](#); [Lk 14:13](#); [18:22](#); [Rom 15:26](#); [Gal 2:10](#); [1 Tim 6:18](#); [Heb 13:16](#)
Church's ministry with the poor: [Acts 6:1-3](#); [Rom 15:26](#); [1 Cor 16:1-4](#); [2 Cor 8:1-5, 11-13](#); [Gal 2:10](#); [Eph 4:28](#)
God's concern for the poor: [Mt 11:5](#); [Lk 4:18](#); [6:20](#); [14:13, 21](#); [16:19-31](#); [Jas 2:5](#)
Jesus' identification with the poor: [2 Cor 8:9](#)
Love of the poor linked to love of God: [1 Jn 3:17](#)
Not to be oppressed or discriminated against: [Jas 2:2-6](#)
Poor are people to whom Jesus proclaimed the gospel message: [Lk 4:18](#); [7:22](#)

Righteous poor are blessed because they are heirs of God's kingdom: [Mt 5:3](#); [Lk 6:20](#); [16:19-25](#); [Jas 2:5-6](#)

See also Greed; Wealth

Pope. *See* Peter

Prayer

Benedictus ("Prayer of Zechariah"): [Lk 1:68-79](#)

Christ's prayer for his disciples ("High Priestly Prayer"): [Jn 17:1-26](#)

Constant prayer: [Rom 12:12](#); [Eph 5:20](#); [6:18](#); [1 Thess 5:17](#)

Faith-filled prayer: [Mt 21:22](#); [Mk 11:24](#); [Jas 1:6-8](#)

For enemies: [Mt 5:44](#)

Hail Mary ("Ave Maria"): [Lk 1:28](#), [42](#)

Ineffectiveness of prayer without faith: [Jas 1:6-8](#)

Intercessory prayer: [Acts 7:60](#); [12:5](#); [Col 1:9-12](#); [4:12](#); [Heb 13:18-19](#); [Jas 5:16-17](#)

Jesus' practice of prayer: [Mt 11:25-26](#); [14:23](#); [26:36-44](#); [Mk 1:35](#); [6:46](#); [14:32-39](#); [Lk 3:21](#); [5:16](#); [6:12](#); [9:18](#), [28-29](#); [11:1](#); [22:32](#); [22:41-45](#); [Jn 11:41-42](#); [17:1-26](#); [Heb 5:7](#)

Jesus' teaching on prayer: [Mt 6:5-13](#); [7:7-11](#); [Lk 11:2-4](#)

Magnificat ("Prayer of Our Lady"): [Lk 1:46-55](#)

Non-Christian's prayers: [Acts 10:4](#)

Nunc Dimittis ("Prayer of Simeon"): [Lk 2:29-32](#)

Our Father ("Pater Noster"; "The Lord's Prayer"): [Mt 6:9-13](#); [Lk 11:2-4](#)

Persistence in prayer: [Mt 7:7-8](#); [Lk 2:37](#); [6:12](#); [11:5-13](#)

Prayers for the dead: [2 Tim 1:16-18](#)

Repetition in prayer is not wrong in itself: [Mt 26:44](#); [Rev 4:8-11](#)

Warning against verbose or unnecessarily repetitive prayer: [Mt 6:7-8](#)

See also Intercession of the Saints

Predestination

Election to salvation by the eternal knowledge and plan of God: [Mt 20:23](#); [Jn 10:29](#); [Acts 4:28](#); [Rom 8:28-30](#); [Eph 1:3-14](#); [2 Tim 1:9](#)

Mystery of human freedom must be affirmed: [Mt 4:17](#); [23:37](#); [Jn 1:12-13](#); [Phil 2:12-13](#); [2 Pet 1:10](#); [3:9](#)

Universal salvific will must be affirmed: [Mt 18:14](#); [Jn 3:16](#); [2 Cor 5:19](#); [1 Tim 2:3-4](#); [2 Pet 3:9](#)

See also Election; Freedom; God; Salvation; Works

Pre-existence. *See* Jesus

Presbyters (later called priests). *See* Elders

Pride

Appropriate pride: [Rom 15:17](#); [1 Cor 15:31](#); [2 Cor 1:14](#); [5:12](#); [7:4](#), [14](#); [Phil 2:16](#); [Heb 3:6](#)

Sinful pride: [Mk 7:21-22](#); [Lk 1:51](#); [Rom 11:20](#); [2 Cor 10:5](#); [2 Tim 3:2](#); [Jas 4:6](#); [1 Jn 2:16](#)

Priesthood

Church as a royal priesthood: [1 Pet 2:5](#), [9](#); [Rev 1:6](#); [5:10](#); [20:6](#)

Jesus Christ's priesthood. *See* Jesus

Ministerial priesthood. *See* Elders

Prophet

Jesus: [Mt 13:57](#); [21:11](#); [Lk 4:24](#); [Jn 4:44](#)

John the Baptist: [Mt 14:5](#); [Mk 6:15](#); [11:32](#); [Lk 1:76](#); [7:26](#)

Prophets in the early Church: [Acts 11:27](#); [13:1](#); [15:32](#); [21:9-11](#); [Rom 16:26](#); [1 Cor 12:28-29](#); [14:37](#); [Eph 2:20](#); [3:5](#); [1 Tim 1:18](#); [4:14](#)

Purgatory

Christians' works are tested by "fire" in judgment, and Christians may "suffer loss": [1 Cor 3:12-15](#)

Prayer for the deceased Onesiphorus implying possibility of purification after death: [2 Tim 1:15-18](#)

Need for purification to dwell in heaven implies purgation before entering into God's heavenly presence: [Heb 12:14](#); [Rev 21:27](#)

Temporal punishment as discipline leading to purification: [Heb 12:6-11](#), [23](#)

Temporal punishment for sin: [Mt 5:25-26](#); [12:32](#); [Lk 12:58](#)

Ransom. *See* Atonement; Redemption; Salvation

Real Presence. *See* Eucharist

Reason

Can know of God's existence and the moral law: [Jn 1:9](#); [Acts 14:17](#); [17:27](#); [Rom 1:20](#); [7:23-25](#)

Damaged by sin and inclined to error as a result of sin: [Jn 3:19](#); [Acts 14:15](#); [17:29-30](#); [Rom 1:21](#), [28](#); [2 Cor 4:4](#); [Col 2:8](#); [Tit 1:15](#)

Not the ultimate basis for the Christian's understanding of God: [1 Cor 1:19-24](#); [2:1-13](#); [2 Cor 5:7](#); [Col 2:8](#)

Renewed mind in Christ: [Rom 12:2](#); [Eph 4:23](#)

Reconciliation

All things reconciled through Christ: [Col 1:19-20](#)

Jew and Gentile reconciled through Christ: [Eph 2:15-16](#)

Ministry of reconciliation: [2 Cor 5:18](#)

Sinners reconciled by God through Christ: [Rom 5:11](#); [11:15](#); [2 Cor 5:18-21](#)

With neighbor: [Mt 5:24](#)

Reconciliation, Sacrament of. *See* Penance, Sacrament of
Redemption

Christ became sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God: [2 Cor 5:21](#)

From the curse of the Law: [Gal 3:13](#)

Future aspect of redemption: [Rom 8:23](#); [Eph 4:30](#)

Ransomed by Christ: [Mt 20:28](#); [1 Tim 2:6](#); [1 Pet 1:18](#); [Rev 5:9](#)

Redemption through the death of Christ: [Rom 3:24](#); [1 Cor 1:30](#); [Gal 3:13](#); [4:4-5](#); [Eph 1:7](#); [Col 1:14](#); [Tit 2:14](#); [Heb 9:12](#), [15](#)

See also Atonement; Sacrifice; Salvation

Regeneration

New birth through water of baptism and the Spirit: [Jn 3:3](#), [5](#)

Washing of regeneration: [Tit 3:5](#)

See also Baptism

Reincarnation

Contrary to biblical teaching regarding what occurs after death: [Lk 16:23](#); [2 Cor 5:8](#); [Phil 1:23](#); [Heb 9:27](#); [12:23](#); [Rev 6:9-11](#); [20:4-5](#)

Relics

Fringe of Christ's garment healed a woman who touched it in faith: [Mt 9:20](#); [Lk 8:44](#)

Healing power mediated through Peter's shadow shows that things associated with holy people can have miraculous effects: [Acts 5:15](#)

Paul's handkerchiefs and aprons healed the sick: [Acts 19:11-12](#)

Some of Jesus' disciples anointed his body for burial, which shows veneration for the body of the holy dead: [Mk 16:1](#); [Lk 24:1](#); [Jn 19:39](#)

Spittle and clay used to heal a blind man: [Jn 9:1-7](#)

Reprobation. *See* Hell; Judgment

Resurrection

Imperishable mode of existence: [Lk 20:36](#); [1 Cor 15:42](#), [50](#)

Jesus debated the Sadducees regarding the resurrection of the dead, which they denied: [Mt 22:23-32](#); [Mk 12:18-27](#); [Lk 20:27-38](#)

No marriage in the resurrected state: [Mt 22:30](#); [Mk 12:25](#); [Lk 20:35](#)

Resurrection of the baptized at the Second Coming: [1 Cor 15:23](#); [1 Thess 4:15-17](#)

Righteous and wicked both resurrected but to different fates: [Jn 5:29](#); [Acts 24:15](#); [1 Cor 15:12](#), [20-22](#), [23](#), [35-57](#); [2 Cor 5:1-4](#); [Phil 3:21](#); [Rev 20:11-15](#)

Transformation to a new kind of spiritualized physical (bodily) existence: [Rom 8:11](#), [23](#); [1 Cor 15:35-57](#); [2 Cor 5:1-5](#)

See also Body; Immortality; Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Resurrection of Jesus Christ

All the apostles saw the resurrected Jesus: [Lk 24:36-53](#); [1 Cor 15:8](#)

Appearance by the Sea of Tiberias: [Jn 21:1-23](#)

Bodily nature of Jesus' resurrection: [Lk 24:37-40](#); [Jn 2:19](#), [21](#); [20:17](#), [27](#); [21:12-13](#); [Acts 1:3](#); [Rom 10:9](#); [1 Cor 15:4-8](#), [20](#); [2 Tim 2:8](#); [1 Pet 3:21](#); [Rev 1:5](#), [18](#)

Eleven in Galilee saw him: [Mt 28:16-20](#)

Five hundred witnesses at once saw him: [1 Cor 15:6](#)

James, a relative of Jesus ("brother of the Lord"), saw him: [1 Cor 15:7](#)

Mary Magdalene and the other women saw him: [Mt 28:9](#); [Mk 16:9](#); [Lk 23:55](#)

Paul saw the risen Jesus: [Acts 9:27](#); [1 Cor 9:1](#); [15:8](#)

Peter (Cephas) saw the risen Jesus: [1 Cor 15:5](#)

Thomas saw the risen Jesus: [Jn 20:24-29](#)

Twelve Apostles saw the risen Jesus: [Jn 20:26-29](#); [1 Cor 15:5](#); [Acts 1:26](#)

Two disciples on the road to Emmaus saw him: [Mk 16:12](#); [Lk 24:13-32](#)

See also Jesus; Resurrection

Revelation

Apostles communicated revelation: [Acts 10:10-16](#), [27-29](#); [15:28](#); [Gal 1:11-12](#), [16](#); [2 Pet 3:2](#); [Jude 17-18](#)

Communication of hidden things: [Mt 11:25](#); [Eph 3:8-9](#)

Finality and fullness of Revelation in Jesus Christ: [Mt 11:25-27](#); [24:35](#); [Mk 13:31](#); [Lk 10:22](#); [21:33](#); [Jn 1:1](#), [14](#); [14:9](#); [Heb 1:1-3](#); [Jude 3](#)

Holy Spirit reveals and leads to the truth of Christ: [Jn 14:26](#); [15:26](#); [16:13-14](#)

Made known through the Church: [Mt 28:18-20](#); [Eph 3:10](#); [1 Tim 3:15](#)

Paul's received revelation of the mystery revealed through the apostles: [Eph 3:3](#)

Paul's revelation to go up to Jerusalem: [Gal 2:2](#)

See also Jesus; Scripture; Tradition; Truth; Word of God

Reward. *See* Merit

Riches. *See* Wealth

Righteousness. *See* Justification; Merit; Salvation; Sanctification; Works

Sacraments. *See entries under each sacrament:* Baptism; Confirmation; Eucharist; Penance (Confession/Reconciliation); Marriage (Matrimony); Holy Orders; and Anointing of the Sick

Sacrifice

Christians are to present themselves as living sacrifices to God: [Rom 12:1](#)

Eucharist is a sacrifice: [Mt 26:26-29](#); [Mk 14:24](#); [Lk 22:19-20](#); [Jn 6:51](#); [1 Cor 10:16-22](#); [Heb 13:10](#)

Expiation for sin: [Heb 9:22](#)

Jesus's death was a sacrifice for sins: [Mk 14:22-24](#); [1 Cor 11:23-26](#); [Eph 5:2](#); [Heb 7:27](#); [9:26](#); [10:12](#); [Rev 5:6](#), [12](#)

Obedience is better than physical sacrifices: [Mt 9:13](#); [12:7](#)

Sacrifice of praise: [Heb 13:15](#)

Spiritual sacrifices: [1 Pet 2:5](#)

See also Atonement; Eucharist; Reconciliation; Redemption; Salvation

Saints

Angels called "holy" (i.e., saints): [Mk 8:38](#); [Lk 9:26](#); [Acts 10:22](#); [Rev 14:10](#)

Angels venerated (not given divine worship, but shown respect and honor) because they are in the presence of God and are his messengers: [Mk 8:38](#); [Lk 9:26](#); [24:5](#)

Apostles called "holy" (i.e., saints): [Eph 3:5](#)

Baptized persons are "saints" in that they have been consecrated in the Holy Spirit: [Acts 9:13](#); [Rom 1:7](#); [8:27](#); [1 Cor 1:2](#); [6:11](#); [Eph 1:1](#); [2:19](#)

Dead holy people are also called saints: [Mt 27:52](#); [Eph 2:19-20](#); [2 Thess 1:10](#); [Rev 11:18](#)

Fullness of holiness makes one a complete saint: [Lk 1:28](#); [Phil 1:10](#); [1 Thess 5:23](#); [Heb 12:14](#); [Rev 21:27](#)

Imitation of holy people commanded: [1 Cor 4:15-16](#); [11:1-2](#); [Phil 3:17](#); [1 Thess 1:6-7](#); [2 Thess 3:7-9](#); [Heb 6:12](#); [11:32-38](#); [13:7](#); [Jas 5:10-11](#)

Mary, the Mother of Jesus, was venerated by the angel Gabriel, who proclaimed her to be full of grace, and she was venerated by Elizabeth: [Lk 1:28](#), [1:41-45](#)

Prophets called "holy" (i.e., saints): [Lk 1:70](#); [Acts 3:21](#); [2 Pet 3:2](#)

As holy ones in heaven: [Mk 8:38](#); [Lk 9:26](#); [1 Thess 3:13](#); [Heb 12:1, 22-23](#); [Rev 4:4](#); [5:8-10](#); [7:9-17](#)

See also Intercession of the Saints; Sanctification

Salvation

Assurance in hope: [2 Thess 2:16](#); [1 Jn 2:28](#)

Assurance is not absolute: [Jn 8:51](#); [1 Cor 9:24-27](#); [1 Jn 2:28](#)

Belief and baptism bring salvation: [Mk 16:16](#); [1 Pet 3:21](#)

By grace through faith: [Acts 15:11](#); [16:31](#); [Rom 3:22-24](#); [10:10](#); [Eph 2:8](#); [Phil 3:9](#)

By grace, man can contribute to his salvation: [Rom 6:16-18](#); [Phil 2:12-13](#)

Hope: [Rom 8:24](#); [1 Thess 5:8](#); [Tit 1:2](#); [3:7](#)

New creation: [2 Cor 5:17](#)

Obedience necessary for salvation: [Jn 8:51](#); [Rom 6:16-18](#); [Heb 5:9](#); [1 Pet 1:22](#)

Perseverance, endurance, and steadfastness required for salvation: [Mt 10:22](#); [24:13](#); [Lk 21:19](#); [Rom 2:7](#); [15:4](#); [1 Cor 15:58](#); [Eph 6:18](#); [Heb 3:6](#), [12-13](#); [10:23](#), [36](#); [12:1](#); [Jas 1:4](#), [25](#); [Rev 13:10](#)

Physical salvation: [Mt 27:42](#); [Lk 7:50](#); [Acts 27:31](#); [1 Pet 3:20](#); [Jude 5](#)

Possibility of losing salvation: [Mt 6:14-15](#); [12:31-32](#); [Mk 11:25](#); [Rom 11:20](#); [1 Cor 9:24-26](#); [Gal 5:21](#); [Phil 3:12-14](#); [2 Tim 2:12](#); [Heb 6:4-6](#); [2 Pet 2:20-22](#); [1 Jn 3:15](#); [Rev 2:5](#), [10](#), [16](#), [25](#)

Spiritual salvation: [Lk 8:12](#); [Jn 3:16](#); [Acts 4:12](#); [1 Cor 5:5](#); [Eph 2:8](#); [Tit 3:5](#); [1 Pet 3:21](#)

Salvation as a future event: [Rom 5:9-10](#); [13:11-12](#); [Phil 3:12-14](#); [Heb 9:28](#); [1 Pet 1:5](#), [9](#); [2:2](#)

Salvation as a past event: [Rom 8:24](#); [Eph 2:8-9](#); [2 Tim 1:9](#); [Tit 3:5](#)

Salvation as a present event: [1 Cor 1:18](#); [15:2](#); [2 Cor 2:15](#); [4:16-18](#)

Universal salvific will: [Jn 3:16](#); [12:32](#); [Col 1:20](#); [1 Tim 2:3-6](#); [2 Pet 3:9](#); [1 Jn 2:2](#)

Working of faith through love is important for salvation: [Gal 5:6](#)

Working out one's salvation: [Phil 2:12-13](#)

See also Atonement; Eternal life; God; Grace; Justification; Merit; Predestination; Reconciliation; Redemption; Works

Sanctification

Holy Spirit affects sanctification: [2 Thess 2:13](#)

Justification/righteousness linked to sanctification: [Rom 6:19](#); [1 Cor 6:11](#)

Necessary in order to see God: [Mt 5:48](#); [2 Cor 7:1](#); [1 Thess 5:23](#); [Heb 12:14](#); [1 Pet 1:15](#); [Rev 21:27](#)

Ongoing process in which the baptized can grow: [Rom 6:19-22](#); [2 Cor 3:18](#); [4:16](#); [7:1](#); [1 Thess 3:13](#); [4:3](#), [7](#); [5:23](#); [2 Tim 2:21](#); [Heb 2:11](#); [10:14](#); [12:14](#); [1 Pet 1:15](#), [22](#)

Past action linked to baptism: [1 Cor 6:11](#); [1 Pet 1:15](#)

Salvation is linked to the process of sanctification: [Rom 6:19-22](#); [2 Cor 7:1](#); [Phil 2:12](#); [Col 1:22-23](#); [1 Thess 4:3](#), [7](#); [2 Thess 2:13](#)

Satan. See Devil

Scripture

Divinely inspired: [2 Tim 3:16-17](#); [2 Pet 1:20-21](#)

Instructive: [Rom 15:4](#); [2 Tim 3:16-17](#)

Not a matter of private interpretation: [2 Pet 1:20-21](#)

Not the only place the Word of God is found: [Jn 20:30](#); [21:25](#); [Acts 1:3](#); [2 Thess 2:15](#); [2 Tim 1:13-14](#)

Omissions in the Bible: [Jn 20:30](#); [21:25](#); [2 Thess 2:15](#)

Saving power of Scripture through Jesus Christ: [2 Tim 3:15](#)

Spiritually nourishing: [Mt 4:4](#)

Testify to Jesus Christ: [Lk 24:44-47](#); [Jn 5:39](#); [1 Cor 15:3-4](#); [1 Pet 1:10-12](#)

See also Church; Revelation; *Sola Scriptura*; Tradition

Second Coming of Christ

Blessed hope of Christians: [Tit 2:13](#)

Coming of the Lord: [1 Thess 5:23](#); [Jas 5:7](#)

Judgment: [Mt 25:31-46](#); [26:64](#); [Mk 13:26](#); [1 Thess 3:13](#); [2 Thess 2:8](#); [2 Tim 4:1](#); [2 Pet 3:12](#); [1 Jn 2:28](#); [Jude 14-15](#); [Rev 22:12](#)

New heavens and a new earth to follow: [2 Pet 3:10](#), [12-13](#); [Rev 21:1](#)

No one knows the hour of the Second Coming: [Mt 24:36](#); [Mk 13:32](#); [Acts 1:6-7](#)

Preceded by definite events: [Acts 3:20-21](#); [2 Thess 2:3-8](#)

Resurrection will follow: [1 Cor 15:23](#); [1 Thess 4:14-17](#); [Phil 3:20-21](#)

Salvation for those who await Christ: [Heb 9:28](#)

Surprising to the unwatchful; unsurprising to the watchful: [Mt 24:42-43](#); [25:13](#); [Mk 13:33-37](#); [Lk 12:35-40](#); [1 Thess 5:2](#), [4-8](#); [2 Pet 3:10](#); [Rev 3:3](#); [16:15](#)

Visible: [Mt 24:27](#); [25:31](#); [Acts 1:11](#); [2 Thess 2:8](#); [2 Tim 4:1](#), [8](#); [Tit 2:13](#); [1 Pet 1:7](#), [13](#); [Rev 1:7](#)

Sexual sin

Begins in the heart: [Mt 5:28](#); [15:19](#)

Incompatible with Christian discipleship: [Rom 13:13-14](#); [1 Cor 6:9-10](#); 18-20; [Gal 5:19-21](#); [1 Thess 4:3](#); [Eph 5:3](#)

See also Adultery; Chastity; Fornication; Homosexual acts; Lust

Sin

Against the Holy Spirit: [Mt 12:31-32](#); [Mk 3:39](#)

Antithesis of saving faith: [Rom 14:23](#)

Degrees of sin: [Lk 12:47-48](#); [Jn 19:11](#); [Gal 5:19-21](#); [1 Jn 5:16](#)

Enslaves the sinner: [Jn 8:34](#)

Forgiveness of sins through repentance, faith, and baptism: [Acts 2:38](#); [22:16](#)

Forgiven through the death and resurrection of Jesus: [Mt 26:28](#); [Jn 1:29](#); [Acts 5:31](#); [13:38](#); [Rom 4:25](#); [Eph 1:7](#); [Col 1:13-14](#)

Grave or mortal sins, which exclude sinner from the Kingdom: [1 Cor 6:9-10](#); [Gal 5:19-21](#); [Eph 5:5-6](#)

Incompatible with heaven: [Mt 13:41](#); [1 Thess 5:23](#); [Heb 12:14](#); [Rev 21:27](#)

Lighter sins: [Jas 3:2](#); [1 Jn 1:8](#); [5:16-17](#)

Wages of sin is death: [Rom 6:23](#)

See also Baptism; Faith; Forgiveness; Hell; Judgment; Original sin; Penance; Reconciliation; Redemption; Salvation; Sanctification; Sexual sin

Sola Scriptura

Apostolic interpretation of Scripture needed, contrary to *sola scriptura*: [2 Thess 2:15](#); [2 Pet 1:20-21](#)

Pharisees and others misinterpret Scripture without an authoritative interpretation: [Mt 15:2-9](#); [Mk 7:1-13](#); [Jn 5:39](#); [Acts 8:30-32](#); [2 Pet 3:16](#)

Revelation communicated apart from writing: [Mt 28:19](#); [Mk 16:15](#); [Jn 21:24-25](#); [1 Cor 11:2](#); [2 Thess 2:15](#); [3:6](#); [2 Tim 1:13](#); [2:2](#)

See also Apostles; Authority; Church; Tradition

Soul

Sometimes soul refers to the deepest aspect of the human person: [Mt 22:37](#); [26:38](#); [Lk 1:46](#); [Jn 12:27](#); [Acts 4:32](#)

Sometimes the soul, as the principle of natural life, is distinguished from the spirit, which is open to the divine life of the Holy Spirit: [Rom 8:16](#); [1 Thess 5:23](#); [Heb 4:12](#)

Spiritual aspect of man, distinct from the body: [Mt 10:28](#); [Lk 12:20](#); [Acts 2:27](#); [Rev 6:9](#); [20:4](#)

Term can also be used for the whole person: [Lk 12:19](#); [Acts 2:41, 43](#); [7:14](#)
See also Body; Man; Spirit

Spirit

Angels, good and bad, are spirits: [Mt 8:16](#); [10:1](#); [12:43-5](#); [Mk 1:23, 26](#); [3:11](#); [5:13](#); [Lk 6:18](#); [Acts 16:16, 18](#); [19:15](#); [Gal 4:3](#); [Eph 2:2](#); [Col 2:8](#); [Heb 1:14](#); [1 Tim 4:1](#); [1 Jn 4:1-3](#); [Rev 16:13-14](#); [18:2](#)

Attitude or outlook is sometimes be referred to as spirit: [Mt 5:3](#); [26:41](#); [Lk 1:80](#); [1 Cor 4:12](#); [2 Cor 4:13](#); [Gal 6:1](#); [Eph 1:17](#); [2 Thess 2:2](#); [2 Tim 1:7](#); [1 Pet 3:8](#)

God is Spirit: [Jn 4:24](#); [1 Cor 2:10](#)

"Ghost" is another sense of the term *spirit*: [Lk 24:37, 39](#)

Deepest aspect of man: [Mt 27:50](#); [Mk 2:8](#); [8:12](#); [Jn 4:24](#); [11:33](#); [Acts 17:16](#); [18:25](#); [Rom 1:9](#); [1 Cor 2:11](#); [5:5](#); [6:17](#); [7:34](#); [14:14-15](#), [32](#); [16:18](#); [Phil 3:3](#); [4:23](#)

Nonmaterial aspect of man: [Lk 8:55](#); [23:46](#); [24:37, 39](#); [Jn 19:30](#); [Acts 7:59](#); [23:8-9](#); [1 Cor 7:34](#); [Heb 12:23](#)

Sometimes soul is distinguished from spirit: [1 Thess 5:23](#); [Heb 4:12](#); [1 Pet 3:18-20](#)

Sometimes spirit is used in a sense akin to soul, distinguished from the body: [Mt 27:50](#); [Lk 8:55](#); [23:46](#); [24:37, 39](#); [Jn 19:30](#); [Acts 7:59](#); [23:8-9](#); [1 Cor 7:34](#); [2 Cor 7:1](#); [Heb 12:23](#); [Jas 2:26](#); [1 Pet 3:19](#)

See also Body; Holy Spirit; Man; Soul

Suffering

Christian participation in the suffering of Christ on behalf of others: [2 Cor 1:5](#); [Eph 3:13](#); [Phil 3:10](#); [Col 1:24](#); [1 Pet 4:13](#)

Part of Christian discipleship: [Mt 16:24](#); [Mk 8:34](#); [Heb 12:3-11](#)

Redemptive value of suffering: [Mt 10:38](#); [Jn 3:16](#); [Rom 5:3-5](#); [8:17](#); [1 Cor 3:15](#); [2 Cor 4:16](#); [Phil 2:8-10](#); [3:8-11](#); [2 Thess 1:5](#); [Heb 12:4-14](#); [1 Pet 1:6-7](#); [4:13](#)

Rejoicing in suffering: [Rom 5:3](#); [Col 1:24](#)

See also Redemption; Salvation

Temptation

Curse upon those who deliberately bring temptation to others: [Mt 18:7](#); [Lk 17:1](#)

God does not tempt people: [Jas 1:13](#)

God limits the extent of temptation we face: [1 Cor 10:13](#)

Jesus' overcoming of temptation: [Mt 4:1-11](#); [Mk 1:12-13](#); [Lk 4:1-13](#); [Heb 2:18](#); [4:15](#)

Prayer to overcome temptation: [Mt 6:13](#); [26:41](#); [Mk 14:38](#); [Lk 11:4](#); [22:40](#), [46](#); [1 Cor 7:5](#)

Tradition (Apostolic)

Human tradition criticized when valued over divine revelation: [Mt 15:2-9](#); [Mk 7:1-13](#); [Col 2:8](#)

Tradition as the deposit of truth: [2 Tim 1:13-14](#)

Tradition as handing on the truth about Jesus from the eyewitnesses: [Lk 1:2](#); [1 Cor 12:23](#); [15:3-4](#); [2 Pet 1:16-19](#); [1 Jn 1:1-3](#); [Jude 3](#)

Unwritten apostolic teaching as a norm for faith and practice: [Mt 28:20](#); [1 Cor 11:2](#), [23](#); [2 Thess 2:15](#); [3:6](#); [2 Tim 1:13](#); [Tit 1:9](#)

See also Apostles; Authority; Church; Revelation; *Sola Scriptura*; Word of God

Trinity

Baptism in the Name of the Triune God: [Mt 28:19](#)

Baptism of Jesus manifests the three Persons of the Triune God: [Mt 3:16-17](#); [Mk 1:9-11](#); [Lk 3:21-22](#)

The Father (God) is divine and a distinct Person: [Mt 6:9-13](#); [Jn 1:18](#); [3:16](#); [14:28](#); [15:26](#); [16:28](#); [1 Cor 1:3](#); [15:24](#); [2 Tim 1:2](#); [Tit 1:4](#); [Heb 1:1-2](#); [Jude 1](#)

The Son (Jesus; Lord) is divine and a distinct Person: [Jn 1:1](#), [14](#), [18](#); [10:29-30](#); [14:28](#); [1 Cor 8:6](#); [Phil 2:6-11](#); [Col 2:9-10](#); [1 Tim 1:17](#); [2 Tim 1:2](#); [Tit 1:4](#); [Heb 1:5-14](#); [Jude 1](#); [Rev 3:12](#), [21](#)

The Holy Spirit is divine and a distinct Person: [Jn 14:25-26](#); [15:26](#); [16:13-14](#); [Acts 5:3](#); [28:25-26](#); [2 Cor 3:16-17](#); [Eph 4:4](#), [30](#)

Paul's use of Trinitarian language: [1 Cor 12:4-6](#); [2 Cor 13:14](#); [Eph 3:14-19](#); [4:4-6](#)

See also God; Holy Spirit; Jesus

Truth

All men have some awareness of the truth: [Jn 1:9](#)

Freedom comes from the truth: [Jn 8:32](#)

Jesus is the truth: [Jn 14:6](#); [18:37](#); [18:37](#); [Rev 3:7](#); [19:11](#)

Love should be linked to truth that is spoken: [Eph 4:15](#)

Obligation of the Christian to speak the truth: [Eph 4:25](#)

Pilate's question regarding the truth: [Jn 18:38](#)

Sin obscures the truth: [Jn 3:19](#); [Rom 1:18-25](#); [2 Thess 2:12](#); [1 Jn 1:6](#)

Spirit of truth leads the Church: [Jn 14:17](#); [15:26](#); [16:13](#); [1 Jn 5:7](#)

Upheld by the Church: [1 Tim 3:15](#)

Word of God is truth: [Jn 17:17](#)

Worship involves truth: [Jn 4:23-24](#)

See also Conscience; God; Jesus; Holy Spirit; Revelation; Word of God

Typology

Adam was a "type" of Christ: [Rom 5:14](#)

Exodus is a "type" of baptism and Christian life: [1 Cor 10:1-5](#)

Flood of Noah was a "type" or foreshadowing of baptism: [1 Pet 3:20-21](#)

Hagar and Sarah are "types" of two covenants: [Gal 4:22-26](#), [30-31](#)

Manna in the desert was a "type" of the Eucharist: [Jn 6:48-51](#)

Melchizedek was a "type" of Christ: [Heb 6:20-7:28](#)

Veneration. *See* Saints

War

Armed force can be legitimate when exercised in the interest of justice and peace: [Rom 13:4](#)

Love of enemies: [Mt 5:44](#); [Lk 6:27](#), [35](#)

Jesus depicted as a warrior in battle against evil: [Rev 2:16](#); [19:11-16](#), [19-21](#)

Jesus' use of military parable: [Lk 14:31](#)

Military personnel not required to abandon their positions, which seem to be seen as honorable in themselves: [Mt 8:5-13](#); [Lk 3:14](#); [7:8](#); [Acts 10:1-6](#); [Rom 13:4](#); [Heb 11:32-34](#)

Paul's use of war imagery: [2 Cor 10:3-4](#)

Personal retaliation to be rejected: [Mt 5:38-45](#); [Rom 12:17-21](#)

Violence as a way of life rejected: [Mt 26:52-53](#); [Rev 13:10](#)

See also Authority

Wealth

Conflict between serving God and loving (serving) money: [Mt 6:24](#)

Dangers of wealth: [Mt 13:22](#); [19:23-24](#); [Lk 6:24](#); [16:19-31](#); [1 Tim 6:9](#); [Jas 1:11](#); [2:6](#); [5:1-2](#)

Love of money is the root of all evil: [1 Tim 6:10](#)

See also Greed; Poor

Woman

Equal to and yet distinct from man: [Mt 19:4](#); in Christ: [1 Cor 7:2-4](#); [11:3](#), [11-12](#); [Gal 3:28](#); [Eph 5:21-33](#)

Title for the mother of Jesus: [Jn 2:4](#); [19:26-27](#)

See also Man; Marriage; Motherhood

Word of God

Believed by Mary: [Lk 1:45](#); cf. [Lk 11:27-28](#)

Body of doctrine is taken from the Word of God: [2 Tim 1:13](#); [3:16-17](#); [Tit 1:9](#)

Cleansing through the water of baptism and the Word proclaimed: [Eph 5:26-27](#)

Jesus as the complete Word, the Word made flesh: [Jn 1:1, 14](#); [1 Jn 1:1](#); [5:6-12](#); [Rev 19:13](#)

New birth through the Word of God: [1 Pet 1:23](#)

Not to be tampered with: [Rev 22:18-19](#)

Sharper than a two-edged sword: [Heb 4:12](#)

Spiritual and life-giving: [Jn 6:63](#); [8:51](#)

Unchangeable: [Mt 24:35](#); [1 Pet 1:25](#)

See also Revelation; *Sola Scriptura*; Scripture; Tradition

Works

Exhortation to do good works: [Mt 5:16](#); [Eph 2:10](#); [Heb 10:24](#)

Inadequacy of works of the Law for salvation: [Rom 3:20](#); [Phil 3:9](#)

Inadequacy of unaided human works for salvation: [Rom 10:3](#); [Phil 3:9](#); [2 Tim 1:9](#)

Necessity for salvation of doing works of Christian obedience (love): [Mt 5:20](#); [6:14-15](#); [7:21](#); [12:36-37](#); [19:16-26](#); [Mk 11:25](#); [Lk 10:28-37](#); [Jn 3:36](#); [8:51](#); [Rom 8:16-17](#); [10:10](#); [13:8-10](#); [2 Cor 2:9](#); [Gal 6:8](#); [Phil 2:12-15](#); [Col 3:23-24](#); [Heb 5:9](#); [1 Pet 1:17, 22](#); [Jude 20-21](#); [Rev 2:5, 23](#); [22:12](#)

Works of the flesh: [Gal 5:19-21](#)

See also Grace; Law; Merit; Salvation

World

Created order of God: [Mt 16:26](#); [Mk 16:15](#); [Jn 1:10](#); [17:5](#); [21:25](#); [Acts 17:24](#); [Rom 1:20](#); [4:13](#); [5:12](#); [Eph 1:4](#); [Heb 1:2](#); [11:3](#)

Enemies of God who do not truly know God: [Lk 16:8](#); [Jn 1:10](#); [7:7](#); [12:31](#); [14:17](#); [15:18-19](#); [17:25](#); [Rom 12:2](#); [1 Cor 1:20-29](#); [2:12](#); [2 Cor 5:19](#); [Gal 6:14](#); [Jas 4:4](#); [1 Jn 3:13](#); [2 Jn 7](#)

Those for whom Jesus died: [Jn 3:16](#); [6:51](#); [12:47](#); [2 Cor 5:19](#); [1 Tim 1:15](#); [3:16](#); [1 Jn 2:2](#); [4:9, 14](#)

Sign of God's invisible nature, power: [Rom 1:20](#)

World as the realm of Satanic domination: [Mt 4:8-9](#); [18:7](#); [Jn 14:30](#); [1 Cor 2:12](#); [2 Cor 4:4](#); [Eph 2:12](#); [6:12](#); [Col 2:20](#); [2 Pet 1:4](#); [1 Jn 4:4-5](#); [5:19](#); [Rev 12:9](#)

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[Leads Us in Triumph](#)

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[A Thing to Be Grasped](#)

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The Holy Land in Modern Times





The Roman Empire in New Testament times

circa A.D. 60 to A.D. 85

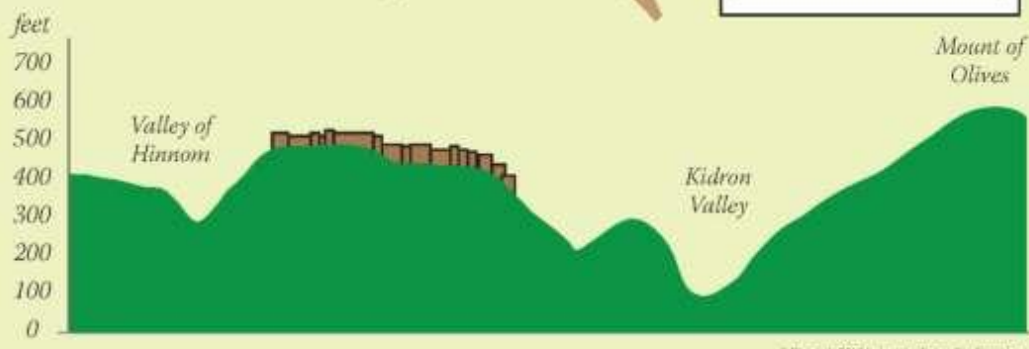
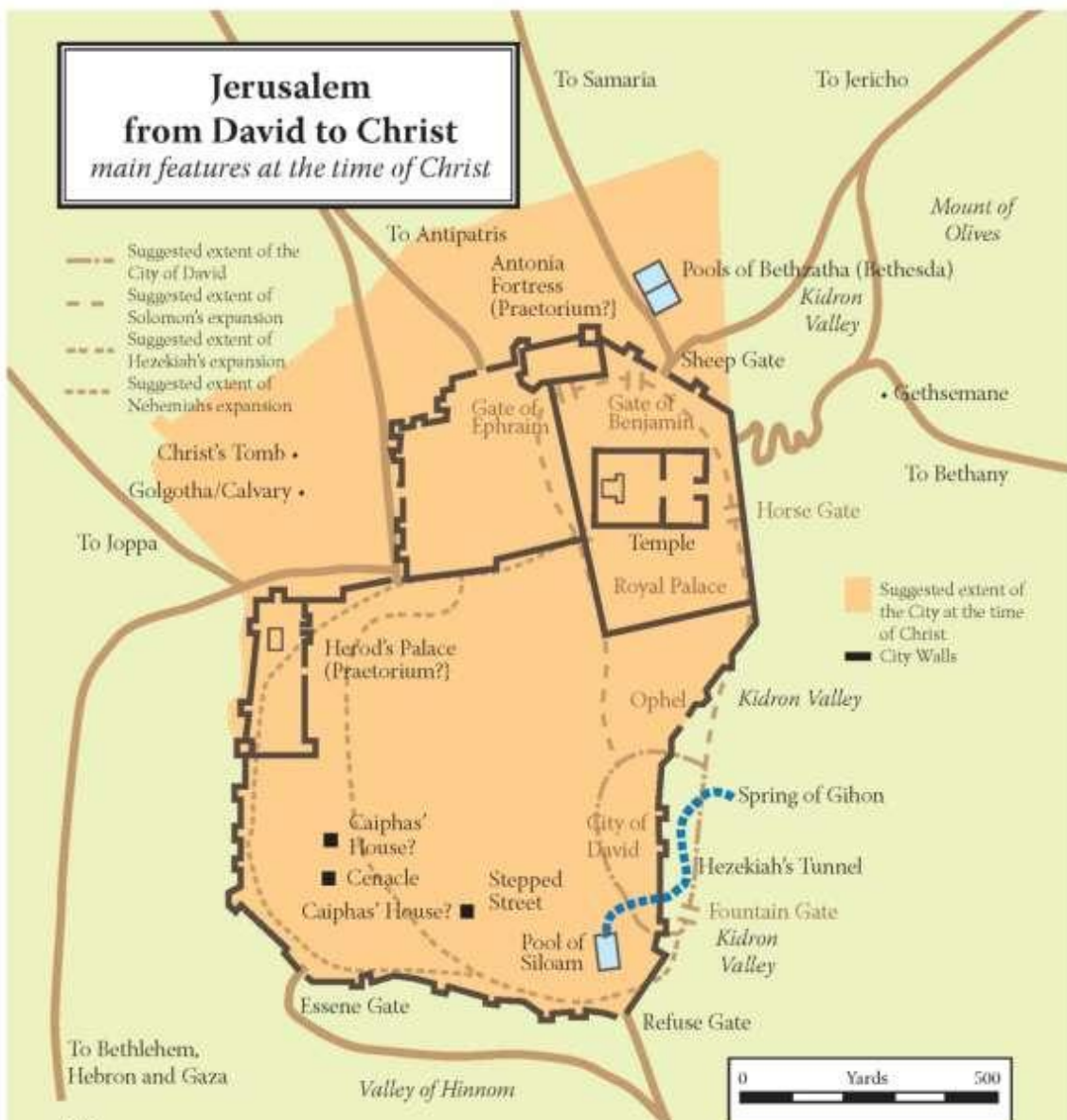


Jerusalem

from David to Christ

main features at the time of Christ

- Suggested extent of the City of David
- - - Suggested extent of Solomon's expansion
- Suggested extent of Hezekiah's expansion
- Suggested extent of Nehemiah's expansion







• Rome

Adriatic Sea

• Puteoli

ITALY

SICILY

MALTA

The Churches of the New Testament

Churches mentioned in Acts, Paul's letters, and the Book of Revelation

Philippi

Thessalonica
Beroea

Troas

Pergamum

Thyatira

Sardis

Philadelphia

Antioch

Smyrna

Ephesus

Laodicea

Colossae

Iconium

Lystra

Perga

CRETE

Corinth

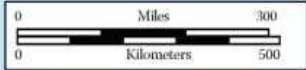
Athens

Cenchreae

CYPRUS

*The Great Sea
(Mediterranean Sea)*

The Black Sea



Antioch
(in Syria)

SYRIA

Sidon

Caesarea

Samaria

Jerusalem

PALESTINE

NOTES

Introduction to the Gospels

¹ One minor exception comes around A.D. 200, when the Roman presbyter Gaius denied the apostolic authorship of the Gospel of John. It is clear, however, that Gaius was not claiming to pass on an independent historical tradition. Rather, he felt that John's presentation of Jesus as "the Word" was problematic (Jn 1:1, 14), and so he ascribed the Gospel to a Gnostic heretic named Cerinthus. [Back to text.](#)

² The Book of Hebrews provides a counterexample. Because its author is never identified in the book, and no name is supplied in its title, there was much speculation in the early centuries about who wrote it. No such speculation surrounded the authorship of the four Gospels. [Back to text.](#)

PARALLEL NOTES

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

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Mt 1:3-6: Ruth 4:18-22; 1 Chron 2:1-15. [Back to text.](#)

Mt 1:11: 2 Kings 24:14; Jer 27:20. [Back to text.](#)

Mt 1:18: [Lk 1:26-38.](#) [Back to text.](#)

Mt 1:21: [Lk 2:21;](#) [Jn 1:29;](#) [Acts 13:23.](#) [Back to text.](#)

Mt 1:23: Is 7:14. [Back to text.](#)

Mt 2:1: [Lk 2:4-7;](#) [1:5.](#) [Back to text.](#)

Mt 2:2: Jer 23:5; Zech 9:9; [Mk 15:2;](#) [Jn 1:49;](#) Num 24:17. [Back to text.](#)

Mt 2:5: [Jn 7:42.](#) [Back to text.](#)

Mt 2:6: Mic 5:2. [Back to text.](#)

Mt 2:11: [Mt 1:18;](#) [12:46.](#) [Back to text.](#)

Mt 2:12: [Mt 2:22;](#) [Acts 10:22;](#) [Heb 11:7.](#) [Back to text.](#)

Mt 2:15: Hos 11:1; Ex 4:22. [Back to text.](#)

Mt 2:18: Jer 31:15. [Back to text.](#)

Mt 2:19: [Mt 1:20;](#) [2:13.](#) [Back to text.](#)

Mt 2:23: [Lk 1:26;](#) Is 11:1; [Mk 1:24.](#) [Back to text.](#)

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1 Cor 5:5: [Mt 4:10](#); [1 Cor 1:8](#). [Back to text.](#)
1 Cor 5:6: [Gal 5:9](#). [Back to text.](#)
1 Cor 5:8: Ex 12:19; 13:7; Deut 16:3. [Back to text.](#)
1 Cor 5:9: [2 Cor 6:14](#). [Back to text.](#)
1 Cor 5:10: [1 Cor 10:27](#). [Back to text.](#)
1 Cor 5:11: [2 Thess 3:6](#); [1 Cor 10:7](#), [14](#), [20-21](#). [Back to text.](#)
1 Cor 5:12: [Mk 4:11](#). [Back to text.](#)
1 Cor 5:13: Deut 17:7; [1 Cor 5:2](#). [Back to text.](#)
1 Cor 6:1: [Mt 18:17](#). [Back to text.](#)
1 Cor 6:7: [Mt 5:39-40](#). [Back to text.](#)
1 Cor 6:9: [1 Cor 15:50](#). [Back to text.](#)
1 Cor 6:11: [Acts 22:16](#); [Rom 8:30](#). [Back to text.](#)
1 Cor 6:12: [1 Cor 10:23](#). [Back to text.](#)
1 Cor 6:15: [Rom 12:5](#); [1 Cor 12:27](#). [Back to text.](#)
1 Cor 6:16: Gen 2:24; [Mt 19:5](#); [Mk 10:8](#); [Eph 5:31](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 6:17: [Jn 17:21-23](#); [Rom 8:9](#); [Gal 2:20](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 6:19: [1 Cor 3:16](#); [Jn 2:21](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 6:20: [1 Cor 7:23](#); [Acts 20:28](#); [Rom 12:1](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 7:5: [Ex 19:15](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 7:7: [1 Cor 7:8](#); [9:5](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 7:9: [1 Tim 5:14](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 7:12: [2 Cor 11:17](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 7:16: [1 Pet 3:1](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 7:17: [Rom 12:3](#); [1 Cor 14:33](#); [2 Cor 8:18](#); [11:28](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 7:18: [1 Mac 1:15](#); [Acts 15:1-8](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 7:19: [Gal 5:6](#); [6:15](#); [Rom 2:25](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 7:22: [Jn 8:32](#), [36](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 7:23: [1 Cor 6:20](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 7:29: [Rom 13:11-12](#); [1 Cor 7:31](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 7:32: [1 Tim 5:5](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 7:39: [Rom 7:2](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 7:40: [1 Cor 7:25](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 8:1: [Rom 15:14](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 8:2: [1 Cor 3:18](#); [13:8](#), [9](#), [12](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 8:3: [Gal 4:9](#); [Rom 8:29](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 8:4: [1 Cor 10:19](#); [Deut 6:4](#). [Back to text.](#)

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1 Cor 8:7: [1 Cor 8:4-5](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 8:8: [Rom 14:17](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 8:9: [1 Cor 8:10-11](#); [Rom 14:1](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 8:11: [Rom 14:15](#), [20](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 8:12: [Mt 18:6](#); [Rom 14:20](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 8:13: [Rom 14:21](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 9:1: [1 Cor 9:19](#); [2 Cor 12:12](#); [1 Thess 2:6](#); [Acts 9:3](#), [17](#); [1 Cor 15:8](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 9:4: [1 Cor 9:14](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 9:5: [1 Cor 7:7-8](#); [Mt 12:46](#); [8:14](#); [Jn 1:42](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 9:6: [Acts 4:36](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 9:9: [Deut 25:4](#); [1 Tim 5:18](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 9:10: [2 Tim 2:6](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 9:11: [Rom 15:27](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 9:12: [2 Cor 6:3](#). [Back to text](#).
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1 Cor 9:18: [2 Cor 11:7](#). [Back to text](#).
1 Cor 9:20: [Rom 11:14](#). [Back to text](#).
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1 Cor 10:3: Ex 16:4, 35. [Back to text](#).
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1 Cor 10:5: Num 14:29-30. [Back to text](#).
1 Cor 10:6: Num 11:4, 34. [Back to text](#).
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1 Cor 10:8: Num 25:1-18. [Back to text](#).
1 Cor 10:9: Num 21:5-6. [Back to text](#).
1 Cor 10:10: Num 16:41, 49. [Back to text](#).
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1 Cor 10:23: [1 Cor 6:12](#); [Phil 2:21](#). [Back to text](#).
1 Cor 10:26: Ps 24:1; 50:12. [Back to text](#).
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1 Cor 10:32: [1 Cor 8:13](#). [Back to text](#).
1 Cor 10:33: [1 Cor 9:22](#); [Rom 15:2](#); [1 Cor 13:5](#). [Back to text](#).
1 Cor 11:1: [1 Cor 4:16](#). [Back to text](#).
1 Cor 11:2: [2 Thess 2:15](#). [Back to text](#).

1 Cor 11:3: [Eph 1:22](#); [4:15](#); [5:23](#); [Col 1:8](#); [2:19](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 11:5: [Lk 2:36](#); [Acts 21:9](#); [1 Cor 14:34](#). [Back to text.](#)

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1 Cor 11:9: [Gen 2:18](#). [Back to text.](#)

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1 Cor 13:5: [1 Cor 10:24](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 13:7: [1 Cor 9:12](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 14:15: [Eph 5:19](#); [Col 3:16](#). [Back to text.](#)

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1 Cor 14:21: [Is 28:11-12](#). [Back to text.](#)

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1 Cor 14:34: [1 Tim 2:11-12](#); [1 Pet 3:1](#). [Back to text.](#)

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1 Cor 15:4: [Mt 16:21](#); [Ps 16:8-9](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 15:5: [Lk 24:34](#); [Mt 28:17](#). [Back to text.](#)

1 Cor 15:8: [1 Cor 9:1](#); [Gal 1:16](#); [Acts 9:3-6](#). [Back to text.](#)

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1 Cor 15:27: Ps 8:6; [Eph 1:22](#). [Back to text](#).
1 Cor 15:28: [Phil 3:21](#). [Back to text](#).
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1 Cor 15:31: [Rom 8:36](#). [Back to text](#).
1 Cor 15:32: [2 Cor 1:8](#), [9](#); Is 22:13. [Back to text](#).
1 Cor 15:33: Menander, *Thais*. [Back to text](#).
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1 Cor 15:45: Gen 2:7. [Back to text](#).
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1 Cor 16:5: [Rom 15:26](#); [Acts 19:21](#). [Back to text](#).
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1 Cor 16:8: [Acts 18:19](#). [Back to text](#).
1 Cor 16:9: [Acts 19:9](#). [Back to text](#).
1 Cor 16:10: [Acts 16:1](#). [Back to text](#).
1 Cor 16:12: [Acts 18:24](#). [Back to text](#).
1 Cor 16:13: Ps 31:24; [Eph 6:10](#). [Back to text](#).
1 Cor 16:19: [Acts 18:2](#); [Rom 16:5](#). [Back to text](#).
1 Cor 16:20: [Rom 16:16](#). [Back to text](#).
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1 Cor 16:22: [Rom 9:3](#). [Back to text](#).
1 Cor 16:23: [Rom 16:20](#). [Back to text](#).

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2 Cor 1:20: [1 Cor 14:16](#); [Rev 3:14](#). [Back to text.](#)

2 Cor 2:12: [Acts 16:8](#). [Back to text.](#)

2 Cor 3:1: [Acts 18:27](#); [Rom 16:1](#); [1 Cor 16:3](#). [Back to text.](#)

2 Cor 3:3: [Ex 24:12](#); [31:18](#); [32:15-16](#); [Jer 31:33](#). [Back to text.](#)

2 Cor 3:6: [Jer 31:31](#). [Back to text.](#)

2 Cor 3:7: [Ex 34:29-35](#). [Back to text.](#)

2 Cor 3:17: [Is 61:1-2](#). [Back to text.](#)

2 Cor 4:4: [Jn 12:31](#); [Col 1:15](#). [Back to text.](#)

2 Cor 4:6: [Gen 1:3](#). [Back to text.](#)

2 Cor 4:13: [Ps 116:10](#). [Back to text.](#)

2 Cor 4:14: [1 Thess 4:14](#). [Back to text.](#)

2 Cor 5:10: [Mt 16:27](#). [Back to text.](#)

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2 Cor 5:14: [Rom 5:15](#); [6:6-7](#). [Back to text.](#)

2 Cor 5:17: [Rom 16:7](#); [Gal 6:15](#). [Back to text.](#)

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2 Cor 5:20: [Eph 6:20](#). [Back to text.](#)

2 Cor 5:21: [Heb 4:15](#); [7:25](#); [1 Pet 2:22](#); [1 Jn 3:5](#); [Acts 3:14](#). [Back to text.](#)

2 Cor 6:2: [Is 49:8](#). [Back to text.](#)

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2 Cor 6:9: [Rom 8:36](#). [Back to text.](#)

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2 Cor 6:11: [Ezek 33:22](#); [Is 60:5](#). [Back to text.](#)

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2 Cor 6:17: [Is 52:11](#). [Back to text.](#)

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2 Cor 8:15: Ex 16:18. [Back to text.](#)

2 Cor 8:18: [2 Cor 12:18](#). [Back to text.](#)

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2 Cor 9:1: [2 Cor 8:4](#). [Back to text.](#)

2 Cor 9:2: [Rom 15:26](#); [2 Cor 8:10](#). [Back to text.](#)

2 Cor 9:3: [1 Cor 16:2](#). [Back to text.](#)

2 Cor 9:7: Prov 22:8 Septuagint. [Back to text.](#)

2 Cor 9:8: [Eph 3:20](#). [Back to text.](#)

2 Cor 9:9: Ps 112:9. [Back to text.](#)

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2 Cor 10:1: [2 Cor 10:10](#). [Back to text.](#)

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2 Cor 10:6: [2 Cor 2:9](#). [Back to text.](#)

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2 Cor 11:25: [Acts 16:22](#); [14:19](#). [Back to text](#).
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1 Pet 2:4: Ps 118:22; Is 28:16. [Back to text.](#)

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DOCTRINAL NOTES

Matthew

* [Mt 1:1](#): The genealogy is given to show that Jesus had the descent required for Messiahship, i.e., from Abraham and, in particular, from David the King.

* [Mt 1:16](#): Joseph's, not Mary's, descent is given here, as the Jews did not usually reckon descent through the mother. Joseph was the legal and presumed father, and it was this fact that conferred rights of inheritance, in this case, the fulfilment of the Messianic promises.

* [Mt 1:25](#): This means only that Joseph had nothing to do with the conception of Jesus. It implies nothing as to what happened afterward.

* [Mt 3:2](#): *Repent* implies an internal change of heart.

* [Mt 3:6](#): Not a Christian baptism but a preparation for it.

* [Mt 3:15](#): Though without sin, Jesus wished to be baptized by John, as this was the final preparation for his mission as Messiah.

* [Mt 5:17](#): Jesus came to bring the old law to its natural fulfilment in the new, while discarding what had become obsolete; cf. [Jn 4:21](#).

* [Mt 5:29](#): An exaggeration to emphasize the need to avoid occasions of sin.

* [Mt 5:32](#), *unchastity*: The Greek word used here appears to refer to marriages that were not legally marriages because they were either within the forbidden degrees of consanguinity (Lev 18:6-16) or contracted with a Gentile. The phrase *except on the ground of unchastity* does not occur in the parallel passage in [Lk 16:18](#). See also [Mt 19:9](#) ([Mk 10:11-12](#)), and especially [1 Cor 7:10-11](#), which shows that the prohibition is unconditional.

* [Mt 6:6](#): This does not, of course, exclude public worship but ostentatious prayer.

* [Mt 6:24](#), *mammon*: i.e., riches.

* [Mt 8:3](#): The miracles of Jesus were never performed to amaze people and shock them into belief. They were worked with a view to a real strengthening of faith in the recipient or beholder, from whom the proper dispositions were required.

* [Mt 8:29](#), *before the time*: Before the day of judgment the demons are permitted by God to tempt men and even to possess them.

* [Mt 10:5](#): The gospel, the Messianic salvation, had first to be preached and offered to the chosen people, Israel. Later it would be offered to the Gentiles.

* [Mt 11:3](#): The Baptist expected more obvious signs of the Messiah. By quoting the prophet Isaiah, Jesus showed that he was indeed inaugurating the Messianic kingdom—but by doing good rather than by glorious manifestations or sudden punishments.

* [Mt 11:27](#): This shows a profound relationship between the Son and the Father, far superior to adoptive sonship.

* [Mt 12:14](#): The Pharisees regarded healing as work and so forbade it on the sabbath.

* [Mt 12:24](#), *Beel-zebul*: Name of a Canaanite god meaning "the Prince-god." The Jews interpreted this name as "Prince of demons," because for them all false gods were demons. The form "Beel-zebub" is a contemptuous adaptation meaning "Lord of the flies."

* [Mt 12:31](#): To attribute to the devil the works of the Holy Spirit seems to imply a hardness of heart that precludes repentance.

* [Mt 12:46](#), *brethren*: The Greek word or its Semitic equivalent was used for varying degrees of blood relationship; cf. Gen 14:14; 29:12; Lev 10:4.

* [Mt 12:48](#): Jesus puts the work of salvation before family relationships. It is not said, however, that he refused to see them.

* [Mt 13:12](#): To those well-disposed Jews who have made good use of the old covenant will now be given the perfection of the new. On the other hand, from those who have rejected God's advances will now be taken away even that which they have, because the old covenant is passing away.

* [Mt 13:52](#): This is Matthew's ideal: that the learned Jew should become the disciple of Jesus and so add the riches of the new covenant to those of the old, which he already possesses; cf. [verse 12](#).

* [Mt 13:55](#): See note on [Mt 12:46](#).

* [Mt 14:33](#): Their realization of his Godhead was the prelude to Peter's confession of faith at Caesarea Philippi ([Mt 16:16](#)).

* [Mt 15:5](#): By dedicating his property to God, i.e., to the temple, a man could avoid having to help his parents, without actually giving up what he had. The scribes held such a vow to be valid without necessarily approving it.

* [Mt 15:24](#): See note on [Mt 10:5](#).

* [Mt 16:14](#): The title of prophet had a Messianic significance because the gift of prophecy, which had been extinct since Malachi, was expected to return at the beginning of the Messianic era, especially by an outpouring of the Spirit as foretold by the prophet Joel and as realized in [Acts 2:16](#).

* [Mt 16:16](#): The context shows that Peter recognizes the sonship of Jesus as divine and not adoptive like ours. Mark and Luke in the parallel passages mention only the confession of the Messiahship.

* [Mt 16:18](#): The name "Peter" comes from the Greek word for "rock." Jesus makes him the foundation on which the church is to be built. The word "church" means "assembly" or "society" of believers. The Hebrew equivalent is used in the Old Testament to indicate the chosen people. In applying it to the church, Jesus shows it to be the Messianic community foretold by the prophets.

* [Mt 16:19](#), *the kingdom of heaven*: Peter has the key to the gates of the city of God. This power is exercised through the church. "Binding" and "loosing" are rabbinic terms referring to excommunication, then later to

forbidding or allowing something. Not only can Peter admit to the kingdom; he also has power to make authoritative decisions in matters of faith or morals.

* [Mt 16:26](#), *life* (both times): A play on the word "life"—natural and supernatural; cf. [Mk 8:35-36](#).

* [Mt 17:4](#): Peter thought the glorious Messianic kingdom had come. In fact, Jesus allowed this glimpse of his glory to strengthen them for the coming passion.

* [Mt 18:9](#): Gehenna (see footnote [b](#)) was the name of a valley south of Jerusalem where human sacrifice had once been practiced; cf. 2 Chron 33:6. Later it became a cursed place and a refuse dump, and the name came to symbolize the Christian place of punishment.

* [Mt 18:18](#): To the other apostles is given a share in the authority given to Peter.

* [Mt 19:9](#): This appears to refer to the case in [Mt 5:32](#), though the Greek word for "except" is different.

* [Mt 19:11-12](#): Jesus means that a life of continence is to be chosen only by those who are called to it for the sake of the kingdom of God.

* [Mt 21:9](#): The crowd openly recognizes Jesus as the Messiah and he allows it for the first time.

* [Mt 21:23](#): They object to the assumption of authority implicit in the manner of his entry into the city and in his expulsion of the sellers from the temple.

* [Mt 21:33-44](#): This parable is really an allegory in which almost every detail represents something in God's dealings with Israel.

* [Mt 22:11](#): The wedding garment represents the dispositions necessary for admission to the kingdom.

* [Mt 23:5](#), *phylacteries*: Little leather boxes containing, on a very small scroll, the principal words of the law; cf. Deut 6:4-9. Taking the command literally, they fastened these to their arms and their foreheads.

* [Mt 23:9](#): i.e., "Do not use the title without reference to God's universal fatherhood." He cannot mean that the title is never to be used by a son to his father.

* [Mt 24:1—25:46](#): The "Eschatological Discourse," as it is called, deals with the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the world. The two themes seem to be inextricably intermingled in the Gospel as we now have it, but it is possible that originally they were in separate discourses. However, the

fusion of the two does bring out their connection. The one prefigures the other. Moreover, in the reverse direction, so to speak, the language used to describe the day of the Lord in Joel and elsewhere is here applied to the fall of Jerusalem, the details of which must therefore not be taken too literally ([24:29](#)).

* [Mt 25:29](#): See note on [Mt 13:12](#).

* [Mt 26:17](#): The passover supper was eaten this year on the Friday evening ([Jn 18:28](#)). Jesus must have anticipated the passover meal because he would be dead the following day and because the meal prefigured his death.

* [Mt 26:26](#): The details of the Eucharist are superimposed on the ritual of the passover.

* [Mt 26:51](#): It was Peter, as John in his later Gospel tells us ([Jn 18:10](#)), though Matthew is reluctant to say so.

* [Mt 26:59](#): They sought evidence against him and this was necessarily false.

* [Mt 26:64-65](#): For the first time Jesus speaks clearly of his own identity. Caiaphas evidently understands him to claim divinity.

* [Mt 27:46](#): Jesus applies Psalm 22 (Vulgate 21) to himself.

* [Mt 27:66](#): The sealing and guarding only helped to make the subsequent resurrection more obvious.

* [Mt 28:1-20](#): The resurrection appearances. There are divergent traditions in the gospels, Galilean and Judean. Paul adds his own record ([1 Cor 15](#)). The accounts do not easily fit together, but this is surely evidence of their genuineness. There is no attempt to produce an artificial conformity.

Mark

* [Mk 1:34](#): Throughout his ministry Jesus forbade the demons and those he healed of their infirmities to reveal his identity as Messiah, because the people, with their ideas of a national leader to come, were only too prone to mistake his true mission.

* [Mk 2:14](#), *Levi*: Mark does not identify him with Matthew the apostle; cf. [Mt 9:9](#).

* [Mk 3:31](#), *brethren*: See note on [Mt 12:46](#).

* [Mk 4:12](#), *so that . . .*: One might rephrase this: "so that the Scripture might be fulfilled"; cf. [Jn 18:32](#); [19:24](#), [28](#). It was not God's intention to prevent their understanding. Matthew avoids this difficulty by writing, "I speak to them in parables, *because seeing they do not see*" [Mt 13:13](#)).

* [Mk 5:43](#): Knowing their nationalistic views about the Messiah to come, Jesus wished to avoid a tumult.

* [Mk 7:3](#): Mark, writing for Gentiles, explains these Jewish customs.

* [Mk 8:36](#), *life*: See note on [Mt 16:26](#).

* [Mk 9:13](#), *Elijah has come*: i.e., in the person of the Baptist [Mt 11:14](#)).

* [Mk 10:24](#), *amazed at his words*: The Old Testament often records God's offers of material rewards for observance of his laws. This was because the future life was not yet revealed. It was therefore taken for granted, in spite of contrary evidence, that riches were a sign of God's favor.

* [Mk 10:30](#): Some of the reward will be given in this life.

* [Mk 14:13](#): It was unusual for a man to carry water; it was a woman's task.

* [Mk 14:51-52](#): This young man is usually supposed to have been the evangelist himself.

* [Mk 15:1](#): The Jews could not execute Jesus without the Roman governor's permission.

* [Mk 15:40](#), *the younger*, or "the Less."

* [Mk 16:1](#): There had been no time on the Friday to anoint him before the sabbath rest.

* [Mk 16:9-20](#): This passage is regarded as inspired and canonical Scripture even if not written by Mark. As it is missing from some important manuscripts, it is possible that Mark did not write it. On the other hand, he would hardly have left his Gospel unfinished at verse 8. Many think that the original ending was lost at a very early date and that this ending was composed at the end of the apostolic period to take its place.

Luke

* [Lk 1:3](#): Theophilus is again referred to in [Acts 1:1](#), but nothing is known of him.

* [Lk 1:5—2:52](#): The "Infancy Gospel," as it is called, is written in a markedly Semitic style, which differs from that of the rest of the Gospel. It appears to be based on the reminiscences of Mary.

* [Lk 1:30](#): The words of the angel are drawn from Messianic passages in the Old Testament.

* [Lk 1:34](#): *How can this be*: alternate reading is *How will this be*.

* [Lk 1:46-55](#): The Magnificat is based on the Song of Hannah (1 Sam 2:1-10), and other Old Testament passages that describe God's favor toward Israel and especially toward the poor and lowly.

- * [Lk 1:69](#), *a horn of salvation*: i.e., a mighty savior.
- * [Lk 2:7](#), *first-born*: The term connotes possession of certain rights, privileges, and obligations; cf. Ex 13:1-2, 11-16. The word is used even in modern times without necessarily implying subsequent births.
- * [Lk 2:34](#), *for the fall*: i.e., in the sense that by rejecting his claims many would sin grievously.
- * [Lk 2:49](#): Jesus stresses the priority of his duty to his Father, which involves a high degree of independence of earthly ties.
- * [Lk 3:2](#): See [note on Jn 18:13](#).
- * [Lk 3:7](#), *brood of vipers*: This epithet seems to have been directed mainly at the Pharisees; cf. [Mt 3:7](#).
- * [Lk 3:23](#): This genealogy is more universalist than that of Matthew. Like Matthew, however, it gives the genealogy of Joseph, though Mary may well have been of the family of David.
- * [Lk 4:16-30](#): This account of the visit to the synagogue seems to be composed of the details of more than one visit. Luke is trying here to underline the contrast between Christ's offer of salvation and the people's refusal of it.
- * [Lk 6:20-49](#): Luke's discourse is shorter than that of Matthew because it does not contain Matthew's additional material collected from other occasions, or his details that would interest only Jews.
- * [Lk 7:28](#): John, by virtue of his office, belonged to the old dispensation, the time of preparation for the kingdom. In terms of spiritual status, even the humbler members of the kingdom were superior to him.
- * [Lk 7:47](#): The preceding parable suggests that she loved much because she had been forgiven much. Jesus now implies that her love is a sign rather than a cause of forgiveness, thus confirming the point of the parable.
- * [Lk 8:19](#), *brethren*: See note on [Mt 12:46](#).
- * [Lk 8:39](#): There was no reason for secrecy (to avoid popular disturbance) in a non-Jewish area.
- * [Lk 9:51](#): Here begins the "Travel Narrative" of Luke, which continues up to the passion.
- * [Lk 9:51](#): *received up*: i.e., into heaven; cf. 2 Kings 2:9-11; [Acts 1:2](#), [11](#). The term here includes his passion, death, resurrection, and ascension.
- * [Lk 9:51](#), [53](#): The Samaritans worshiped on Mount Gerizim, while orthodox Jews, of course, went to Jerusalem, and to Jerusalem only, for sacrifice.

* [Lk 10:18](#): Jesus refers to the fall of the angels (cf. [Rev 12:9](#)), while he speaks of his conquest of the forces of evil.

* [Lk 14:26](#): Christ's disciples must be prepared to part from any one who prevents them from serving him.

* [Lk 16:8](#): The master commended his foresight without approving what he actually did.

* [Lk 17:20](#): At that time many persons were expecting to see the kingdom inaugurated with striking manifestations; cf. [19:11](#).

* [Lk 19:41-44](#): These moving words spoken over the city are full of scriptural allusions. Moreover, the details given could apply as well to the siege of 587 B.C. as to that of A.D. 70. It is not safe, therefore, to argue from this passage that the fall of the city had already taken place when Luke wrote his Gospel.

* [Lk 20:37](#): As elsewhere ([1 Cor 15:13-19](#)), survival after death is linked with the resurrection of the body.

* [Lk 21:24](#), *the times of the Gentiles*: i.e., those during which the Gentiles will take the place of the unbelieving people of Israel. Evidently, therefore, the end of the world does not coincide with the fall of Jerusalem. St. Paul says that the Jews will be converted before the end ([Rom 11:26](#)).

* [Lk 22:52](#): Matthew and Mark describe the arrest first, before Christ's words. Luke and John both put his address to the soldiers and officials before the arrest, doubtless to stress his command over events.

* [Lk 23:2](#): They purposely produce political charges, as these alone would interest Pilate.

* [Lk 23:14](#): Luke, writing for Gentiles, makes it clear that Pilate wanted to release Jesus.

* [Lk 23:31](#): One does not burn green wood. The meaning is that, if an innocent man is thus punished, what must the guilty (dry wood) expect?

* [Lk 24:38](#): Luke stresses this episode for the benefit of his Greek readers, for whom the resurrection of the body was both impossible and absurd; cf. [Acts 17:32](#).

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

* [Jn 1:1](#): John begins by giving his Gospel a theological background. By speaking at once of "the Word" he implies that his readers are familiar with the term. To Gentiles it indicated some form of divine revelation or self-expression. Jews would equate it with the divine Wisdom described in Proverbs, which already appears as something more than a divine quality

and has some relationship with the visible world. In Sirach and Wisdom the idea is further developed. In the last-named book, Wisdom appears as a pre-existing person, taking part in the creation of the world and having a mission to reveal God to his creatures; cf. Wis 7:22—8:1.

* [Jn 1:5](#), *light . . . darkness*: One of the familiar themes of the Gospel.

* [Jn 1:29](#): John applies to Jesus the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 53:6-7, perhaps worded more explicitly by the evangelist in later years.

* [Jn 2:4](#), *What have you to do with me?:* What is that to you or to me? While this expression always implies a divergence of view, the precise meaning is to be determined by the context, which here shows that it is not an unqualified refusal, still less a rebuke.

* [Jn 2:12](#), *brethren*: See note on [Mt 12:46](#).

* [Jn 3:22](#), *baptized*: A baptism like that of John. The time for baptism "in the Spirit" had not yet come.

* [Jn 3:24](#): From the other Gospels we learn that, after John was arrested, Jesus withdrew from Judea.

* [Jn 4:20](#), *this mountain*: Gerizim, on which the Samaritans worshiped.

* [Jn 5:18](#), *broke the sabbath*: i.e., broke the sabbath as interpreted by them; see note on [Mt 12:14](#).

* [Jn 6:51](#): Jesus is the "living bread" both as Word of God ([verses 32ff.](#)) and as sacrificial victim for the salvation of man.

* [Jn 6:52](#): A natural question to ask. Jesus answers, not by explaining it away, but by reemphasizing the reality, though not, of course, in the crude sense implied in their question.

* [Jn 6:62](#): When Jesus ascends into heaven they will know that he spoke the truth.

* [Jn 7:3](#), *brethren*: See note on [Mt 12:46](#).

* [Jn 7:53—8:11](#): This passage, though absent from some of the most ancient manuscripts, is regarded as inspired and canonical by the Church. The style suggests that it is not by St. John, and that it belongs to the Synoptic tradition.

* [Jn 8:21](#), *die in your sin*: Theirs is that sin against the truth which is the sin against the Spirit; cf. Mt 12:31.

* [Jn 8:41](#): They mean, "We are not idolaters," and protest their fidelity to God their Father; see notes on [Rev 14:4](#) and [17:2](#).

* [Jn 8:56](#), *he saw it* either in prophetic vision while on earth or by some special privilege after death.

- * [Jn 8:58](#): The present tense indicates Christ's eternal existence as God.
- * [Jn 9:3](#): Jesus explains in advance the purpose of the miracle.
- * [Jn 10:14](#), *the good shepherd*: The name has Messianic significance; cf. Ezek 34.
- * [Jn 10:18](#): Throughout the Gospel, Jesus insists that he is master of his own life and no one takes it from him; cf. [18:6](#) (at his arrest); [19:11](#) (before Pilate); [19:30](#) (on the cross).
- * [Jn 11:6](#), *stayed two days longer*: This is explained in [verse 15](#).
- * [Jn 11:50](#): Caiaphas agreed that, as Jesus was not (in their opinion) the Messiah, any popular insurrection now could end only in disaster; so it was better, he argued, to do away with him. He was unconscious of the deeper meaning of his words, namely that Jesus must die for the salvation of man.
- * [Jn 12:1](#): Here begins the last week of Jesus' public life. This is described in great detail, as was the first week in chapter 1.
- * [Jn 12:32](#), *lifted up*: i.e., on the cross; but the words also contain a reference to his going up into heaven. The two mysteries are inseparable.
- * [Jn 13:1](#): John begins here to unfold the mystery of the love of Jesus for "his own." Note the solemn introduction to the "hour" of his passion and death.
- * [Jn 13:34](#), *new commandment*: Jesus gives a new depth to the familiar commandment of the Old Testament. The standard now is, "as I have loved you."
- * [Jn 14:26](#), *all things*: After Jesus has gone to his Father, the Holy Spirit will complete his revelation to the world.
- * [Jn 15:18](#): Jesus contrasts the love his disciples have with the hatred the world bears them.
- * [Jn 16:10](#): Jesus is taken from them because they did not receive him.
- * [Jn 17:1-26](#): The priestly prayer of Jesus, before his sacrifice.
- * [Jn 17:5](#) declares his pre-existence.
- * [Jn 18:13](#): According to Jewish law the high-priesthood was for life. The Romans had deposed Annas, the legal holder, in A.D. 15, and appointed another in his place, but many Jews continued to recognize Annas.
- * [Jn 18:28](#): They would have contracted a legal impurity by entering the house of a pagan.
- * [Jn 18:29](#): See note on [Lk 23:2](#).
- * [Jn 18:31](#): Crucifixion was a Roman, not a Jewish, punishment.

* [Jn 19:7](#): At last, because of Pilate's reluctance, they produce the real charge.

* [Jn 19:8-9](#): Pilate is afraid and asks Jesus where he comes from—not his country, but his mysterious origins, as implied in the charge.

* [Jn 19:27](#), *took her to his own home*: Joseph must now have been dead.

* [Jn 20:17](#): The death and resurrection of Jesus had put an end to the ordinary familiar relationships of human life, and the time of lasting companionship had not yet come.

* [Jn 21:1-25](#): This chapter was added later, either by the evangelist or by a disciple; cf. [20:3-31](#) and [21:24](#).

* [Jn 21:7](#): John remembered a similar miracle before; cf. [Lk 5:6](#).

* [Jn 21:15-17](#): The threefold question addressed to Peter alone corresponds to the threefold denial. Jesus gives Peter charge over his flock.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

* [Acts 1:1](#), *the first book*: i.e., St. Luke's Gospel.

* [Acts 1:14](#), *brethren*: See note on [Mt 12:46](#).

* [Acts 1:22](#): An apostle must be a witness to Christ's resurrection.

* [Acts 2:14](#): Peter assumes the leadership in public. In this discourse we have the earliest form of the apostolic preaching.

* [Acts 3:1](#): In the early days, the first Christians observed the prescriptions of the Jewish law.

* [Acts 4:2](#): The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead.

* [Acts 4:32](#), *everything in common*: They freely shared what was theirs individually; cf. [Acts 5:4](#).

* [Acts 5:11](#), *Church*: i.e., the Christian and Messianic community; a term borrowed from the Old Testament.

* [Acts 5:20](#), *Life*: cf. [Acts 9:2](#), "the Way." These terms recall the words of Jesus, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" ([Jn 14:6](#)).

* [Acts 5:34](#), *Gamaliel*: Teacher of St. Paul; cf. [Acts 22:3](#).

* [Acts 6:1](#), *Hellenists*: Greek-speaking Jews of the Dispersion, who had their own synagogues in Jerusalem and read the Scriptures in Greek.

* [Acts 8:20](#): Hence the word "simony," meaning "buying and selling spiritual powers and privileges."

* [Acts 9:5](#): Jesus identifies himself with his followers.

* [Acts 9:13](#), *saints*: i.e., Christians, made holy by baptism.

* [Acts 10:16](#): The vision was to prepare Peter for his reception of Cornelius the Gentile and his household into the Church; cf. also [Acts 15](#).

- * [Acts 12:1](#): The second wave of persecution: cf. [Acts 8:1](#).
- * [Acts 13:16-41](#): This first recorded sermon of Paul is similar to that of Peter in [Acts 2:14-36](#).
- * [Acts 16:10](#): This is the first of the passages in Acts in which the story is told in the first person plural, indicating that Luke, the author, was there. The manuscript Codex Bezae, however, has a "we" passage in 11:28.
- * [Acts 16:13](#): Being a Roman colony, Philippi had no synagogue within its walls.
- * [Acts 19:35](#), *the sacred stone* or statue of the goddess which, according to legend, came down from heaven. Possibly a meteorite.
- * [Acts 20:7](#): Celebration of the Eucharist on the Lord's day, i.e., Saturday evening, according to the Jewish way of reckoning a day from sunset to sunset.
- * [Acts 20:34](#): Paul insisted on working for his living, though recognizing the apostle's right to support by the faithful; cf. [1 Cor 9:4-7](#).
- * [Acts 21:4](#), *told Paul not to go*: This was not a command. The Holy Spirit enlightened them about what lay before Paul and they naturally wished to spare him; cf. [verse 11](#).
- * [Acts 22:20](#), *your witness*: Greek, "martyr." Witnessing by one's death (i.e., martyrdom) is the supreme example.

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

- * [Rom 1:1-7](#): The opening address and salutation are very much in the style of contemporary letter-writing, giving the name of the sender and recipient, and following this with greetings.
- * [Rom 1:10](#): Paul did not found the church at Rome.
- * [Rom 1:13](#), *harvest*: Perhaps those who founded the church at Rome had confined themselves largely to Jews and had not made much headway with Gentiles.
- * [Rom 3:27](#): Above all, it is faith, not works alone, that will justify both Jew and Gentile, and (as is made clear later) faith in Jesus.
- * [Rom 5:12](#): Physical death is a sign of spiritual death; though physical death remains after justification.
- * [Rom 5:15](#): The *felix culpa* praised in the *Exsultet* at the Easter Vigil.
- * [Rom 6:4](#), *buried*: Immersed in the water of baptism.
- * [Rom 6:15](#): As before, in the case of the law ([Rom 2:17-29](#)), so now, in the case of grace, Paul says it is not a license to sin.

* [Rom 7:13-25](#): Man under the law of Moses and perhaps man under the natural law too.

* [Rom 8:19](#): Material creation, too, shares man's destiny, made as it was for him. Many ancient philosophers thought matter to be evil and that the spirit should be freed from it.

* [Rom 9:19-24](#): Paul's words here, taken by themselves, seem to leave no room for moral responsibility, but they must be taken in conjunction with other passages; see chapters [1](#) and [2](#).

* [Rom 10:1](#): Paul is afraid he has spoken too strongly of their sins, so he declares his love for Israel.

* [Rom 14:1—15:13](#): Paul is tolerant of the Jewish Christians' reluctance to abandon the ritual prescriptions of the law of Moses, while being equally insistent that these shall not be forced on Gentile Christians.

* [Rom 14:14](#): Conscience is the ultimate guide.

* [Rom 15:15-16](#): Paul again justifies his writing to a church he did not found.

* [Rom 16:16](#), *All the churches of Christ greet you*: A remarkable salutation, not used elsewhere.

THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

* [1 Cor 1:2](#), *saints*: A word commonly used for Christians in Paul's letters and in Acts.

* [1 Cor 1:12](#), *Cephas*: i.e., Peter. It does not follow from this that he had even been to Corinth, but it does indicate his authority there.

* [1 Cor 2:1-2](#): Paul's failure at Athens convinced him that lofty words and worldly wisdom were less effective than Jesus crucified.

* [1 Cor 3:13](#), *the Day*: i.e., the day of the Lord, God's searching judgment.

* [1 Cor 3:16](#), *God's temple*: The dignity of the Christians.

* [1 Cor 5:1](#), *father's wife*: Evidently his stepmother.

* [1 Cor 5:5](#), *to Satan*: Not only excommunicated, but in some sense given over to suffering, for his own good.

* [1 Cor 5:9-10](#), *immoral*: Literally, "fornicators."

* [1 Cor 5:11](#), *guilty of immorality*: Literally, "a fornicator."

* [1 Cor 6:1](#), *the unrighteous*: i.e., civil courts in which the judges were, of course, pagan.

* [1 Cor 6:9](#): *the immoral*: literally, "fornicators."

* [1 Cor 6:9](#): *homosexuals*: Greek has "effeminate nor sodomites." The apostle condemns, not the inherent tendencies of such, but the indulgence of them.

* [1 Cor 6:12](#): This saying is possibly an exaggeration of the freedom from the Mosaic law that Christians enjoyed. The saying has been applied to sinful practices, as is clear from the following verses.

* [1 Cor 6:13](#), [18](#), *immorality*: i.e., sexual immorality.

* [1 Cor 7:2](#): Note Paul's insistence on equality of man and woman in certain aspects of Christian marriage, and his recognition that the unmarried state is also a gift from God.

* [1 Cor 8:1-13](#): Animals sacrificed to pagan gods were often sold as meat in the market. Could Christians buy such meat? Paul allows it so long as scandal is avoided.

* [1 Cor 9:3](#): Paul set great store by the fact that he has earned his living and waived his right to support by the faithful. He used this as an authentication of his apostolate.

* [1 Cor 9:5](#), *wife*: Greek, a "woman," a "sister." This could mean either a woman who is a Christian or a wife who is a Christian. There were pious women who ministered to the apostles ([Lk 8:3](#)). As many of the apostles must have been married, they may have been ministered to by their wives, though it is possible they had left their wives in answer to the Lord's command to leave all ([Lk 18:28-29](#)).

* [1 Cor 9:5](#), *brethren*: See note on [Mt 12:46](#).

* [1 Cor 10:20](#): Paul appears to forbid partaking in sacrificial meals. In [verse 27](#) he says they may eat meat offered to idols if it is at an ordinary meal, unless it would cause scandal to anyone present.

* [1 Cor 11:20](#): There was apparently a common meal before the Eucharist at which food and drink were to be shared. Paul condemns the abuses that had crept in.

* [1 Cor 12:1](#): The spiritual gifts here referred to were common in the first age of the Church and helped to establish it on a firm basis.

* [1 Cor 12:31](#): Love, however, is far superior to these gifts.

* [1 Cor 15:13](#): Again, the resurrection of the dead is linked with Christ's resurrection; cf. [Rom 8:11](#).

* [1 Cor 15:29](#): Apparently a custom of vicarious baptism for those who had died without it. Paul mentions it without approving it.

* [1 Cor 16:1](#): The collection to be made everywhere for the poor Christians in Jerusalem.

THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

* [2 Cor 1:8](#), *affliction*: Possibly the disturbance at Ephesus ([Acts 19:23-41](#)), or perhaps a serious illness.

* [2 Cor 3:18](#): Cleansed in baptism through the power of the Holy Spirit, our soul shines with the reflected glory of God.

* [2 Cor 4:7](#), *this treasure*: i.e., the apostolate.

* [2 Cor 4:12](#): i.e., we suffer, if necessary, even unto death, that you may have (spiritual) life.

* [2 Cor 5:19](#): Or, "God was reconciling the world to himself through Christ."

* [2 Cor 5:21](#), *made him to be sin*: i.e., "sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh" ([Rom 8:3](#)).

* [2 Cor 9:1](#), *superfluous*: Yet Paul goes on to do so at some length, exhorting them to be generous.

* [2 Cor 10:1](#): Paul is referring ironically to what some people are saying about him; see [verse 10](#).

* [2 Cor 12:7](#), *a thorn*: Perhaps some form of sickness or disability, or the opposition of Israel to his teaching.

* [2 Cor 12:13](#): Paul ironically asks forgiveness for not being a charge on them as the other apostles were.

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE GALATIANS

* [Gal 1:6](#): After the greeting there is no commendation, as was usual, but rather strong rebuke.

* [Gal 1:10](#): No doubt Paul was accused of exempting Gentile converts from the law of Moses in order to curry favor.

* [Gal 1:19](#), *Lord's brother*: See the note on *brethren* at [Mt 12:46](#) above.

* [Gal 2:16](#), *works of the law*: Paul is contrasting not faith with good works but faith in Jesus Christ with observance of the law of Moses.

* [Gal 3:2](#), *Spirit*: He probably refers to the outward manifestations of the Spirit, such as the gift of tongues.

* [Gal 5:11](#), *stumbling block of the cross*: So far as the Jews were concerned, this would consist largely in the exemption of converts from the obligations of the law of Moses.

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE EPHESIANS

* [Eph 1:1](#), *To the saints who are*: The addition "at Ephesus" is doubtful. The letter may have been a form of encyclical.

* [Eph 1:10](#), *to unite*: Or, "to sum up." This is one of the chief themes of the letter. Men are to be under Christ as head of the Mystical Body, and even irrational creatures must be in some way under him as the cornerstone of creation.

* [Eph 2:14](#), *dividing wall*: A metaphor taken from the wall that divided the court of the Gentiles from the court of the Israelites in the temple.

* [Eph 3:3](#), *the mystery*: i.e., that the Gentiles were to be admitted to the Church on the basis of equality.

* [Eph 5:14](#): Apparently a fragment of an early Christian hymn; cf. [1 Tim 3:16](#).

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS

* [Phil 1:14](#), *because of my imprisonment*: i.e., because I continue to preach in their midst, though in prison.

* [Phil 1:20](#), *honored in my body*: i.e., through my sufferings.

* [Phil 2:6](#), *in the form of God*: The Greek shows that divine attributes, and therefore nature, are implied here. It is not the divine nature he set no store by, but equality of treatment and recognition of his divinity.

* [Phil 2:7](#), *emptied himself* of this external recognition, which was his right.

* [Phil 3:12](#), *made me his own*: On the road to Damascus.

* [Phil 3:19](#): These Judaizers made holiness a question of distinction of foods and set great store by circumcision.

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS

* [Col 1:15](#), *first-born*: Born of the Father before all ages. The reference here is to the divine person of the Word; see [verse 16](#).

* [Col 1:18](#): His human nature.

* [Col 1:24](#), *what is lacking*: Christ's sufferings were, of course, sufficient for our redemption, but all of us may add ours to his, in order that the fruits of his redemption be applied to the souls of men.

* [Col 3:18—4:5](#): The whole passage corresponds closely to [Eph 5:22—6:9](#).

* [Col 4:10](#): Mark, the evangelist, and, probably, the John Mark of [Acts 12:12, 25](#).

* [Col 4:14](#): Luke, the evangelist.

THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS

* [1 Thess 1:1](#): Paul joins with himself two who had evangelized Thessalonica with him.

* [1 Thess 2:18](#), *I, Paul*: He distinguishes himself from Silvanus and Timothy.

* [1 Thess 4:3](#), *sanctification*: With special reference to the practice of purity, specially difficult to those newly converted from paganism.

* [1 Thess 4:3](#), *immorality*: i.e., sexual immorality.

* [1 Thess 4:11](#): The Thessalonians thought that the second Coming of Christ was at hand and tended to neglect their daily duties. He corrects this misconception.

* [1 Thess 4:13](#): Paul tells them that those who died before Christ's second Coming are no worse off than those who will still be alive at his coming.

* [1 Thess 4:17](#): i.e., we who are alive shall go out to meet him and accompany him back on his return to this earth.

THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS

* [2 Thess 2:2](#): Paul warns against over-eagerness to expect the second Coming, and specifies various signs to be looked for first.

* [2 Thess 2:3](#), *the man of lawlessness*: i.e., Antichrist.

* [2 Thess 2:7](#): Evil will operate secretly till the final unmasking.

THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO TIMOTHY

* [1 Tim 1:2](#): Timothy, son of a Greek father and a Jewish mother, was already a Christian when Paul met him ([Acts 16:1](#)). A close association ensued.

* [1 Tim 1:4](#), *myths and endless genealogies*: A reference to the Jewish legends and spurious pedigrees added by false Judaizers to the Biblical narratives; cf. the Book of Jubilees.

* [1 Tim 1:20](#), *delivered to Satan*: A form of excommunication; see note on [1 Cor 5:5](#).

* [1 Tim 2:6](#), *ransom for all*: This is why Paul wants prayers for all ([verse 1](#)).

* [1 Tim 3:1](#), *bishop*: At this time an office probably not distinct from that of priest.

* [1 Tim 3:11](#), *women*: i.e., deaconesses.

* [1 Tim 4:3](#), *forbid marriage*: As some Gnostics did.

* [1 Tim 4:3](#), *abstinence from foods*: As practiced by Judaizers.

* [1 Tim 5:3](#), *real widows*: i.e., with no one to help and support them.

* [1 Tim 5:12](#): Paul had no objection to widows marrying again; cf. [1 Cor 7:8-9](#). But the widows here had clearly made some sort of vow or promise to serve the Church in singleness. Paul recommended that younger widows should marry again ([verse 14](#)).

THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO TIMOTHY

* [2 Tim 1:15](#), *Asia*: The Roman province of that name, now in western Turkey.

* [2 Tim 2:18](#): They explained the resurrection by saying it was the rising to newness of life in baptism, thus ignoring a bodily resurrection, a doctrine the Greeks found very hard to accept; cf. [Acts 17:32](#).

* [2 Tim 3:16](#): Paul refers to the Old Testament Scriptures.

* [2 Tim 4:6](#), *on the point of being sacrificed*: Literally, "poured out in sacrifice" as a drink-offering or libation.

* [2 Tim 4:21](#), *Linus*: According to tradition, the successor of Peter in the see of Rome.

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO TITUS

* [Tit 1:5](#), *elders*: Each Christian community was ruled by a body of elders.

* [Tit 2:13](#), *God and Savior*: Both terms appear to refer to Jesus Christ.

* [Tit 3:5-7](#): A brief and clear statement of the doctrine of justification.

THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

* [Heb 1:1-4](#): A contrast between the progressive and piecemeal revelation of the old dispensation and the complete revelation of the new given by a single representative—no mere prophet but the Son of God himself.

* [Heb 2:2](#), *angels*: The covenant of Sinai was thought to have been given through the angels.

* [Heb 2:10](#), *suffering*: The divinely appointed means of progress toward God; cf. [verse 18](#).

* [Heb 3:11](#): Those who murmured against God in the desert were excluded from the promised land (the "rest"). Christians should beware lest, by offending God, they be excluded from heaven, the true rest, of which the promised land was a type.

* [Heb 5:1-5](#): If Jesus was to be mediator, he had to have a human nature like ours, and, moreover, he could not appoint himself, but had to be appointed by God.

* [Heb 6:4](#), *impossible*: The apostasy referred to in [verse 6](#) is clearly thought of as so deliberate as to preclude any real possibility of repentance; or there may be a reference here to the impossibility of being baptized a second time.

* [Heb 7:3](#), *without father*: i.e., the father is not mentioned in Scripture.

* [Heb 7:3](#), *neither beginning of days nor end of life*: So too here, they are not mentioned in Scripture either. Thus his priesthood can be taken to foreshadow or symbolize the Christian priesthood. "You are a priest for ever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Ps 110:4; cf. [Heb 7:17](#)).

* [Heb 8:11](#): This verse means merely that knowledge of God will be commonly shared. It does not exclude the existence of a ministry of teaching in the Messianic times.

* [Heb 10:1ff.](#): The sacrifices of the old law, being imperfect, were repeated and did at least keep alive a sense of sin. Contrast with Christ's sacrifice (verse [14](#)).

* [Heb 11:6](#): Here is stated the minimum necessary for salvation.

* [Heb 12:1ff.](#): After explaining in the preceding chapters how we are redeemed through faith in Jesus Christ, the author now exhorts his readers to run the race with perseverance.

* [Heb 13:1ff.](#): Moral exhortation.

* [Heb 13:9](#): Again the warning against false doctrine, especially the Judaizers' teachings; cf. [Phil 3:19](#); [1 Tim 1:4](#); [4:3](#).

* [Heb 13:13](#): i.e., "Let us leave the observance of Judaism behind us."

THE LETTER OF JAMES

* [Jas 1:1](#), *twelve tribes*: i.e., Jewish Christians outside Palestine.

* [Jas 1:22](#): This is the main theme of the letter.

* [Jas 2:1-7](#): These are hard words, but no harder than those of Jesus.

* [Jas 2:10](#): In keeping the law, we must keep *the whole law*. We cannot pick and choose.

* [Jas 2:14](#): Good works are necessary besides faith.

* [Jas 5:3](#): The "treasure" they have laid up is described in the following verses.

* [Jas 5:13-15](#): This passage is the scriptural basis for the sacrament of anointing the sick.

THE FIRST LETTER OF PETER

* [1 Pet 1:1](#): See note on [Jas 1:1](#). Baptism is the main theme of this letter which, in fact, may have been a baptismal address.

* [1 Pet 1:11](#), *Spirit of Christ*: Christ, as the eternally existing Word, is envisaged as inspiring the prophets of old.

* [1 Pet 3:1-6](#): Peter's teaching on the behavior and status of women corresponds to that of Paul, though without Paul's forthrightness.

* [1 Pet 4:1](#), *ceased from sin*: Peter means that a continual acceptance of suffering is incompatible with a proneness to sin.

* [1 Pet 5:13](#), *Babylon*: Rome was as full of iniquity as ancient Babylon; cf. [Rev 17:9](#).

THE SECOND LETTER OF PETER

* [2 Pet 1:4](#), *partakers of the divine nature*: A strong expression to describe the transformation of human nature by divine grace.

* [2 Pet 1:16-18](#): A reference to the transfiguration.

* [2 Pet 2:3](#): Much of the material of this chapter appears to be from the Letter of Jude.

* [2 Pet 3:16](#), *this* seems to refer to the theme of the end of the world and the second Coming of Christ, about which Paul had written in his letters to the Thessalonians.

THE FIRST LETTER OF JOHN

* [1 Jn 1:1-7](#): Note the likeness with John's Gospel [1:1-18](#).

* [1 Jn 1:3](#), *fellowship*: A Johannine theme.

* [1 Jn 1:5](#), *light . . . darkness*: Another familiar theme in John's Gospel.

* [1 Jn 2:3](#): Cf. the words of Jesus, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" ([Jn 14:15](#)).

* [1 Jn 2:18](#), *the last hour*: John exhorts his readers to hold fast, as though the end were at hand.

* [1 Jn 3:6](#), *sins*: i.e., remains in sin, or has a habit of sin.

* [1 Jn 4:1](#), *test the spirits*: i.e., examine those who claim to have special gifts from the Holy Spirit; cf. [1 Cor 14:32](#).

* [1 Jn 5:8](#): This reads as follows in the Vulgate: " ⁷There are three who give testimony in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. ⁸And there are three that give testimony on earth: the spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three are one." The "Three Heavenly Witnesses," as the first sentence is called, is first found in the Latin (fourth century) and does not appear in any Greek manuscript until the fifteenth century. It is probably a marginal gloss that found its way into the text.

THE SECOND LETTER OF JOHN

* [2 Jn 1](#): *The elder*: Perhaps the head of the group or "college" of elders that presided over each Christian community. John was head not only of the Ephesus community but of all the communities in the province of Asia.

* [2 Jn 1](#): *the elect lady*: Probably not an individual lady but a particular church or community in Asia.

* [2 Jn 13](#): *children*: i.e., the Christians of Ephesus.

THE THIRD LETTER OF JOHN

* [3 Jn 12](#): *Demetrius*: Evidently a leading Christian, recommended to Gaius.

THE LETTER OF JUDE

* [Jude 6](#): It is not clear to what Jude refers. Perhaps Gen 6:2 or the apocryphal Enoch 6-15.

* [Jude 9](#): Apparently a reference to another apocryphal work, the Assumption of Moses.

THE REVELATION TO JOHN

* [Rev 1:4-8](#): Describes the glorious coming and reign of the Messiah.

* [Rev 1:13](#), *Son of man* refers to Dan 7:13. The Messiah is described in symbolic terms.

* [Rev 2:10](#), *ten days*: Not literally. It means the persecution will be short.

* [Rev 2:20-21](#), *immorality* here seems to mean idolatry rather than sexual excess.

* [Rev 2:24](#), *deep things of Satan*: The doctrines of the Nicolaitans. *They* called them the "deep things of God."

* [Rev 2:28](#), *morning star*: Probably Christ himself.

* [Rev 3:12](#), *new name*: cf. Is 62:2. Perhaps it was "the Word," or perhaps it is not to be revealed till the last day.

* [Rev 4:3](#): John describes God in symbolic terms.

* [Rev 4:4](#), *elders*: They perform a priestly and royal task, since they praise God and share in the government of the world.

* [Rev 4:6](#), *four living creatures*: cf. Ezek 1:4-25: the four angels who preside over the government of the world. But in Christian tradition these symbols are used for the four evangelists.

* [Rev 4:8](#), *Holy, holy, holy*: Quoted in the *Sanctus* at Mass.

* [Rev 5:1](#), *a scroll*: This contained God's designs, kept secret till now; being written on both sides, nothing could be added.

* [Rev 5:6](#): The seven horns and seven eyes symbolize Christ's full power and knowledge.

* [Rev 6:1](#): Begins the account of the destruction of the Roman Empire (chapters 6-9).

* [Rev 6:5](#), *balance*: Symbol of famine. The balance was to measure rations.

* [Rev 7:4](#), *a hundred and forty-four thousand*: A symbolic number, i.e., twelve (the sacred number) squared and multiplied by 1,000 to denote a multitude. It is the Church, the spiritual Israel, that is meant.

* [Rev 7:14](#), *the great tribulation*: The Neronian persecution?

* [Rev 8:5](#): Coals from the altar of burnt offering were brought to the altar of incense.

* [Rev 9:1](#), *star*: A fallen angel.

* [Rev 9:14](#), *Euphrates*: The region of the Parthians.

* [Rev 9:21](#), *immorality*: See note on [2:20-21](#).

* [Rev 10:7](#), *mystery of God*: i.e., the establishment of the kingdom of God following on the destruction of Israel's enemies.

* [Rev 10:9](#), *bitter . . . sweet*: The scroll related both the sufferings and the victories of Christ's Church.

* [Rev 11:1-19](#): The Jerusalem here described stands for the Church, which is to be persecuted by the Romans.

* [Rev 12:2](#): The three and a half years' persecution of the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes, 168-165 b.c., had become the standard time of a persecution. Three and a half years equals 42 months equals 1,260 days ([verse 3](#)).

* [Rev 11:3](#), *two witnesses*: As they have yet to die, possibly they are Elijah and Enoch.

* [Rev 11:8](#), *the great city*: i.e., Rome.

* [Rev 12:1-6](#): The *child* brought forth is the Messiah; the *dragon* is the devil; the *woman* who gave birth to the Messiah is Israel, and then becomes the Christian Church, which continually gives birth to the faithful.

* [Rev 12:14](#), *a time, and times, and half a time*: This is the three and a half years of [11:2](#).

* [Rev 12:17](#): Mary, the mother of the Messiah, must also be included in the meaning.

* [Rev 13:1](#), *a beast*: This symbolizes the material forces of evil, arrayed against the Church.

* [Rev 13:11](#), *another beast*: i.e., the false prophets.

* [Rev 13:18](#), *six hundred and sixty-six*: The letters of Nero's name plus the title of Caesar, given their numerical meaning in Hebrew and added together, make 666.

* [Rev 14:4](#): Although tradition tends to take this literally, the context and Old Testament metaphor suggest that it means they have kept free from idolatry.

* [Rev 14:8](#), *Babylon*: i.e., Rome.

* [Rev 15:3-4](#): The song of Moses in Ex 15:1-18 celebrated victory over Pharaoh. This is seen as foreshadowing the triumph of the Lamb.

* [Rev 16:14](#), *the great day*: On which all the Gentile armies shall be gathered to give battle.

* [Rev 16:16](#), *Armageddon*: i.e., Megiddo, where Josiah was defeated by the king of Egypt, cf. 2 Kings 23:29.

* [Rev 17:1](#), *great harlot*: i.e., Rome.

* [Rev 17:2](#), *fornication*: i.e., idolatry.

* [Rev 18:11-20](#): The description abruptly assumes the language of Ezekiel's prophecy of the destruction of Tyre, another city notorious for its sins (Ezek 27:1—28:19).

* [Rev 19:7](#), *marriage of the Lamb*: i.e., final establishment of the kingdom of God. The spouse is the Church.

* [Rev 20:3](#): The destruction of the dragon must coincide in time with that of the beast ([19:20](#)), so that the first resurrection with the reign of the martyrs refers to the revival and expansion of the Church after the years of persecution.

* [Rev 21:1](#): Creation will be renewed one day, freed from corruption and illumined by God's glory.

* [Rev 21:8](#), *second death*: i.e., eternal damnation.

EXEGETICAL NOTES

Matthew

^a Greek *Aram*. [Back to text.](#)

^b Greek *Asaph*. [Back to text.](#)

^c Other authorities read *Amon*. [Back to text.](#)

^d Greek *Salathiel*. [Back to text.](#)

^f Other ancient authorities read *of the Christ*. [Back to text.](#)

^g Other ancient authorities add *to him*. [Back to text.](#)

^h Or *my Son, my (or the) Beloved*. [Back to text.](#)

- i Other ancient authorities insert *without cause*. [Back to text.](#)
- j Greek says *Raca to* (an obscure term of abuse). [Back to text.](#)
- k Greek *Gehenna*. [Back to text.](#)
- l Or *Evil*. [Back to text.](#)
- m Or *our bread for the morrow*. [Back to text.](#)
- n Or *the evil one*. Other authorities, some ancient, add, in some form, *For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, for ever. Amen*. [Back to text.](#)
- o Or *worm*. [Back to text.](#)
- p Or *to his stature*. [Back to text.](#)
- q Other ancient authorities read *for the way is wide and easy*. [Back to text.](#)
- r Greek *to them*. [Back to text.](#)
- s Other ancient authorities read *with no one*. [Back to text.](#)
- t Other ancient authorities read *Gergesenes*; some, *Gerasenes*. [Back to text.](#)
- u Other ancient authorities read *seeing*. [Back to text.](#)
- v Greek *reclined*. [Back to text.](#)
- w Other ancient authorities add *much* or *often*. [Back to text.](#)
- x Other ancient authorities read *Lebbaeus* or *Labbaeus called Thaddaeus*. [Back to text.](#)
- y Or *slave*. [Back to text.](#)
- z Greek *Gehenna*. [Back to text.](#)
- a Or *What then did you go out to see? A man. . . .* [Back to text.](#)
- b Other ancient authorities read *What then did you go out to see? A prophet?* [Back to text.](#)
- c Or *has been coming violently*. [Back to text.](#)
- d Other ancient authorities omit *to hear*. [Back to text.](#)
- e Other ancient authorities read *children* (Luke 7:35). [Back to text.](#)
- f Or *so it was well-pleasing before you*. [Back to text.](#)
- g Other ancient authorities insert verse 47, *Some one told him, "Your mother and your brethren * are standing outside, asking to speak to you"*. [Back to text.](#)
- h Other ancient authorities add here and in verse 43 *to hear*. [Back to text.](#)
- i Or *stumbles*. [Back to text.](#)

- j Or *slaves*. [Back to text.](#)
- k Other ancient authorities read *the prophet Isaiah*. [Back to text.](#)
- l Other ancient authorities read *his brother's wife*. [Back to text.](#)
- m Other ancient authorities read *was out on the sea*. [Back to text.](#)
- n Other ancient authorities read *strong wind*. [Back to text.](#)
- o Or *an offering*. [Back to text.](#)
- p Other ancient authorities read *law*. [Back to text.](#)
- q Or *is evacuated*. [Back to text.](#)
- r Other ancient authorities omit the following words to the end of verse 3. [Back to text.](#)
 - s Greek *Petros*. [Back to text.](#)
 - t Greek *petra*. [Back to text.](#)
 - u Or *the powers of death*. [Back to text.](#)
 - v Greek *stumbling block*. [Back to text.](#)
 - w Or *my Son, my (or the) Beloved*. [Back to text.](#)
 - x Other ancient authorities insert verse 21, "*But this kind never comes out except by prayer and fasting*." [Back to text.](#)
 - y Other ancient authorities read *abode*. [Back to text.](#)
 - z Greek *causes . . . to stumble*. [Back to text.](#)
 - a Greek *stumbling blocks*. [Back to text.](#)
 - b Greek *Gehenna*. [Back to text.](#)
 - c Other ancient authorities add verse 11, *For the Son of man came to save the lost*. [Back to text.](#)
 - d Other ancient authorities read *your*. [Back to text.](#)
 - e Or *seventy-seven times*. [Back to text.](#)
 - f This talent was more than fifteen years' wages of a laborer. [Back to text.](#)
 - g This denarius was a day's wage for a laborer. [Back to text.](#)
 - h Greek *torturers*. [Back to text.](#)
 - i Greek *one flesh*. [Back to text.](#)
 - j Other ancient authorities, after *unchastity*, read *makes her commit adultery*. [Back to text.](#)
 - k Other ancient authorities omit *and he who marries a divorced woman, commits adultery*. [Back to text.](#)
 - l Other ancient authorities read *manifold*. [Back to text.](#)

- m** The denarius was a day's wage for a laborer. [Back to text.](#)
- n** Or *is your eye evil because I am good?* [Back to text.](#)
- o** Other ancient authorities insert *Lord*. [Back to text.](#)
- p** Other ancient authorities omit *of God*. [Back to text.](#)
- q** Other ancient authorities omit verse 44. [Back to text.](#)
- r** Greek *a denarius*. [Back to text.](#)
- s** Other ancient authorities add *of God*. [Back to text.](#)
- t** Or *David in the Spirit*. [Back to text.](#)
- u** Other ancient authorities omit *hard to bear*. [Back to text.](#)
- v** Other ancient authorities add here (or after verse 12) verse 14, *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you devour widows' houses and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive the greater condemnation.* [Back to text.](#)
- w** Greek *Gehenna*. [Back to text.](#)
- x** Other ancient authorities omit *and desolate*. [Back to text.](#)
- y** Or *stumble*. [Back to text.](#)
- z** Or *vultures*. [Back to text.](#)
- a** Other ancient authorities omit *nor the Son*. [Back to text.](#)
- b** Or *cut him in pieces*. [Back to text.](#)
- c** Other ancient authorities add *and the bride*. [Back to text.](#)
- d** This talent was more than fifteen years' wages of a laborer. [Back to text.](#)
- e** Other authorities omit *disciples*. [Back to text.](#)
- f** Or *Rabbi*. [Back to text.](#)
- g** Other ancient authorities insert *new*. [Back to text.](#)
- h** Or *keep awake*. [Back to text.](#)
- i** Or *Rabbi*. [Back to text.](#)
- j** Or *do that for which you have come*. [Back to text.](#)
- k** Other ancient authorities read *Jesus Barabbas*. [Back to text.](#)
- l** Other ancient authorities omit *righteous* or *man's*. [Back to text.](#)
- m** Or *earth*. [Back to text.](#)
- n** Other ancient authorities insert *And another took a spear and pierced his side, and out came water and blood.* [Back to text.](#)
- x** Or *a son*. [Back to text.](#)
- o** Or *Take a guard*. [Back to text.](#)

p Greek *know*. [Back to text.](#)

q Other ancient authorities read *the Lord*. [Back to text.](#)

Mark

a Other ancient authorities omit *the Son of God*. [Back to text.](#)

b Other ancient authorities read *in the prophets*. [Back to text.](#)

c Other ancient authorities read *John was baptizing*. [Back to text.](#)

d Or *my Son, my (or the) Beloved*. [Back to text.](#)

e Other ancient authorities read *they*. [Back to text.](#)

f Greek *to them*. [Back to text.](#)

g Greek *he*. [Back to text.](#)

h Other ancient authorities read *and*. [Back to text.](#)

i Other ancient authorities add *and drink*. [Back to text.](#)

j Other ancient authorities omit *but new wine is for fresh skins*. [Back to text.](#)

k Other ancient authorities add *whom also he named apostles*. [Back to text.](#)

l Other early authorities add *and your sisters*. [Back to text.](#)

m Or *stumble*. [Back to text.](#)

n Other ancient authorities read *Gergesenes, some Gadarenes*. [Back to text.](#)

o Greek *he*. [Back to text.](#)

p Greek *him*. [Back to text.](#)

q Or *overhearing*. Other ancient authorities read *hearing*. [Back to text.](#)

r Or *stumbled*. [Back to text.](#)

s Greek *his*. [Back to text.](#)

t Other ancient authorities read *he*. [Back to text.](#)

u The denarius was a day's wage for a laborer. [Back to text.](#)

v One Greek word is of uncertain meaning and is not translated. [Back to text.](#)

w Other ancient authorities read *baptize*. [Back to text.](#)

x Other ancient authorities add *and beds*. [Back to text.](#)

y Greek *walk*. [Back to text.](#)

z Or *an offering*. [Back to text.](#)

a Other ancient authorities add verse 16, "*If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.*" [Back to text.](#)

- b** Or *is evacuated*. [Back to text.](#)
- c** Other ancient authorities omit *and Sidon*. [Back to text.](#)
- d** Other ancient authorities read *Magadan* or *Magdala*. [Back to text.](#)
- e** Other ancient authorities read *the Herodians*. [Back to text.](#)
- f** Or *Rabbi*. [Back to text.](#)
- g** Or *my Son, my (or the) Beloved*. [Back to text.](#)
- h** Greek *he*. [Back to text.](#)
- i** Other ancient authorities add *with tears*. [Back to text.](#)
- j** Other ancient authorities omit *and fasting*. [Back to text.](#)
- k** Other ancient authorities add *who does not follow us*. [Back to text.](#)
- l** Greek *stumble*. [Back to text.](#)
- m** Greek *Gehenna*. [Back to text.](#)
- n** Verses 44 and 46 (which are identical with verse 48) are omitted by the best ancient authorities. [Back to text.](#)
- o** Other ancient authorities add *and every sacrifice will be salted with salt*. [Back to text.](#)
- p** Other ancient authorities omit *and be joined to his wife*. [Back to text.](#)
- q** Other ancient authorities read *one*. [Back to text.](#)
- r** Other ancient authorities omit *for those who trust in riches*. [Back to text.](#)
- s** Other ancient authorities read *to one another*. [Back to text.](#)
- t** Or *Rabbi*. [Back to text.](#)
- u** Other ancient authorities read *he*. [Back to text.](#)
- v** Or *Rabbi*. [Back to text.](#)
- w** Other ancient authorities add verse 26, "*But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your trespasses.*" [Back to text.](#)
- x** Greek *a denarius*. [Back to text.](#)
- y** Greek *his brother*. [Back to text.](#)
- z** Or *himself, in*. [Back to text.](#)
- a** Other ancient authorities omit *and pray*. [Back to text.](#)
- b** The denarius was a day's wage for a laborer. [Back to text.](#)
- c** Other ancient authorities insert *new*. [Back to text.](#)
- d** Or *keep awake*. [Back to text.](#)

^e Or *Rabbi*. [Back to text.](#)

^f Or *fore-court*. Other ancient authorities add *and the cock crowed*. [Back to text.](#)

^g Other ancient authorities insert verse 28, *And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "He was reckoned with the transgressors."* [Back to text.](#)

^h Or *earth*. [Back to text.](#)

ⁱ Other ancient authorities insert *cried out and*. [Back to text.](#)

^x Or *a son*. [Back to text.](#)

^j Other ancient authorities read *whether he had been some time dead*. [Back to text.](#)

^k Other ancient authorities omit verses 9-20. Some ancient authorities conclude Mark instead with the following: *But they reported briefly to Peter and those with him all that they had been told. And after this, Jesus himself sent out by means of them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.* [Back to text.](#)

Luke

^a Or *accurately*. [Back to text.](#)

^b Greek *Zacharias*. [Back to text.](#)

^{b2} Or *O favored one*. [Back to text.](#)

^c Other ancient authorities add *"Blessed are you among women!"* [Back to text.](#)

^d Other ancient authorities add *of you*. [Back to text.](#)

^e Or *believed, for there will be*. [Back to text.](#)

^f Or *whereby the dayspring will visit*. Other ancient authorities read *since the dayspring has visited*. [Back to text.](#)

^g Other ancient authorities read *peace, good will among men*. [Back to text.](#)

^h Or *in the Spirit*. [Back to text.](#)

ⁱ Or *years*. [Back to text.](#)

^j Or *my Son, my (or the) Beloved*. [Back to text.](#)

^k Other ancient authorities read *today I have begotten you*. [Back to text.](#)

^l Greek *Salathiel*. [Back to text.](#)

^m Or *let us alone*. [Back to text.](#)

ⁿ Other ancient authorities read *Galilee*. [Back to text.](#)

^o Greek *to them*. [Back to text.](#)

- p** Other ancient authorities read *was present to heal them*. [Back to text.](#)
- q** Greek *him*. [Back to text.](#)
- r** Greek *reclining*. [Back to text.](#)
- s** Other ancient authorities read *better*. [Back to text.](#)
- t** Other ancient authorities read *On the second first sabbath* (on the second sabbath after the first). [Back to text.](#)
- v** Other ancient authorities read *despairing of no man*. [Back to text.](#)
- w** Other ancient authorities read *founded upon the rock*. [Back to text.](#)
- x** Or *valuable*. [Back to text.](#)
- y** Other ancient authorities read *Next day*. [Back to text.](#)
- z** Other ancient authorities read *him*. [Back to text.](#)
- a** Other ancient authorities read *Gadarenes*, others *Gergesenes*. [Back to text.](#)
- b** Other ancient authorities omit *and had spent all her living upon physicians*. [Back to text.](#)
- c** Other ancient authorities add *and those who were with him*. [Back to text.](#)
- d** Other ancient authorities read *my Beloved*. [Back to text.](#)
- e** Other ancient authorities add *as Elijah did*. [Back to text.](#)
- f** Other ancient authorities add *and he said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of; for the Son of man came not to destroy men's lives but to save them."* [Back to text.](#)
- g** Other ancient authorities read *seventy-two*. [Back to text.](#)
- h** Or *so it was well-pleasing before you*. [Back to text.](#)
- i** The denarius was a day's wage for a laborer. [Back to text.](#)
- j** Other ancient authorities read *few things are needful, or only one*. [Back to text.](#)
- k** Or *our bread for the morrow*. [Back to text.](#)
- l** Other ancient authorities insert *bread, will give him a stone; or if he asks for*. [Back to text.](#)
- m** Greek *Gehenna*. [Back to text.](#)
- n** Or *to his stature*. [Back to text.](#)
- o** Other ancient authorities read *Consider the lilies; they neither spin nor weave*. [Back to text.](#)
- p** Other ancient authorities read *God's*. [Back to text.](#)

- q** Other ancient authorities omit *would have been awake and*. [Back to text.](#)
- r** Or *cut him in pieces*. [Back to text.](#)
- s** Other ancient authorities read *a donkey*. [Back to text.](#)
- t** The drachma, rendered here by *silver coin*, was about a day's wage for a laborer. [Back to text.](#)
- u** Other ancient authorities read *filled his belly with*. [Back to text.](#)
- v** Other ancient authorities add *treat me as one of your hired servants*. [Back to text.](#)
- w** Greek *age*. [Back to text.](#)
- x** Greek *stumbling blocks*. [Back to text.](#)
- y** Greek *stumble*. [Back to text.](#)
- z** Or *within you*. [Back to text.](#)
- a** Other ancient authorities omit *in his day*. [Back to text.](#)
- b** Other ancient authorities add verse 36, *"Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left."* [Back to text.](#)
- c** Or *vultures*. [Back to text.](#)
- d** Greek *a kingdom*. [Back to text.](#)
- e** The mina, rendered here by *pound*, was about three months' wages for a laborer. [Back to text.](#)
- f** Greek *denarius*. [Back to text.](#)
- g** Greek *his brother*. [Back to text.](#)
- h** Greek *he*. [Back to text.](#)
- i** Other ancient authorities read *never eat it again*. [Back to text.](#)
- j** Other ancient authorities omit *which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.*" ²⁰*And likewise the chalice after supper, saying, "This chalice which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."* [Back to text.](#)
- k** The Greek word for *you* here is plural; in verse 32 it is singular. [Back to text.](#)
- l** Other ancient authorities omit verses 43 and 44. [Back to text.](#)
- m** Here, or after verse 19, other ancient authorities add verse 17, *Now he was obliged to release one man to them at the festival*. [Back to text.](#)
- n** Other ancient authorities omit the sentence *And Jesus . . . what they do*. [Back to text.](#)

o Other ancient authorities add *in letters of Greek and Latin and Hebrew*. [Back to text.](#)

p Greek *kingdom*. [Back to text.](#)

q Or *earth*. [Back to text.](#)

r Or *the sun was eclipsed*. Other ancient authorities read *the sun was darkened*. [Back to text.](#)

s Greek *was dawning*. [Back to text.](#)

t Other ancient authorities add *of the Lord Jesus*. [Back to text.](#)

u Other ancient authorities omit *He is not here, but has risen*. [Back to text.](#)

v Other ancient authorities omit verse 12. [Back to text.](#)

w Greek *sixty stadia*; some ancient authorities read *a hundred and sixty stadia*. [Back to text.](#)

x Other ancient authorities omit *and said to them, "Peace be to you."* [Back to text.](#)

y Other ancient authorities omit verse 40. [Back to text.](#)

z Or *nations. Beginning from Jerusalem you are witnesses*. [Back to text.](#)

a Other ancient authorities omit *and was carried up into heaven*. [Back to text.](#)

b Other ancient authorities omit *worshiped him, and*. [Back to text.](#)

John

a Or *was not anything made. That which has been made was life in him*. [Back to text.](#)

b Other ancient authorities read *God*. [Back to text.](#)

c From the word for *rock* in Aramaic and Greek, respectively. [Back to text.](#)

d Greek *him*. [Back to text.](#)

e Or *from above*. [Back to text.](#)

f The same Greek word means both *wind* and *spirit*. [Back to text.](#)

g Other ancient authorities add *who is in heaven*. [Back to text.](#)

h Some interpreters hold that the quotation continues through verse 21. [Back to text.](#)

i Some interpreters hold that the quotation continues through verse 36. [Back to text.](#)

j Other ancient authorities read *Bethesda*, others *Bethsaida*. [Back to text.](#)

k Other ancient authorities insert, wholly or in part, *waiting for the moving of the water; ⁴for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and troubled the water; whoever stepped in first after the troubling of the water was healed of whatever disease he had.* [Back to text.](#)

l The denarius was a day's wage for a laborer. [Back to text.](#)

m Greek *twenty-five or thirty stadia.* [Back to text.](#)

n Or *Judeans.* [Back to text.](#)

o Other ancient authorities add *yet.* [Back to text.](#)

p Or *this man knows his letters.* [Back to text.](#)

q Or *let him come to me, and let him who believes in me drink. As. . . .* [Back to text.](#)

r Some ancient authorities insert 7:53—8:11 either at the end of this Gospel or after Luke 21:38, with variations of the text. Others omit it altogether. [Back to text.](#)

s Other ancient authorities read *the Father.* [Back to text.](#)

t Or *Why do I talk to you at all?* [Back to text.](#)

u Other ancient authorities read *has Abraham seen you?* [Back to text.](#)

v Other ancient authorities read *the Son of God.* [Back to text.](#)

w Other ancient authorities read *What my Father has given to me.* [Back to text.](#)

x Greek *he.* [Back to text.](#)

y Greek *fifteen stadia.* [Back to text.](#)

z Other ancient authorities omit *and the life.* [Back to text.](#)

a Greek *our place.* [Back to text.](#)

b The denarius was a day's wage for a laborer. [Back to text.](#)

c Other ancient authorities omit *except for his feet.* [Back to text.](#)

d Or *slave.* [Back to text.](#)

e Or *you believe.* [Back to text.](#)

f Other ancient authorities read *where I am going you know, and the way you know.* [Back to text.](#)

g Other ancient authorities add *me.* [Back to text.](#)

h Or *slaves.* [Back to text.](#)

i Or *slave.* [Back to text.](#)

j Greek *a human being.* [Back to text.](#)

k Or *from evil.* [Back to text.](#)

l Or *slaves*. [Back to text.](#)

m Greek *two hundred cubits*. [Back to text.](#)

Acts

a Or *eating*. [Back to text.](#)

b Or *swelling up*. [Back to text.](#)

c Or *child*. [Back to text.](#)

d Greek *him*. [Back to text.](#)

e Or *Christ*. [Back to text.](#)

f Or *slaves*. [Back to text.](#)

g Or *at noon*. [Back to text.](#)

h Other ancient authorities add all or most of verse 37, *And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."* [Back to text.](#)

i Other ancient authorities read *Hellenists*. [Back to text.](#)

j Or *were guests of*. [Back to text.](#)

k Other ancient authorities read *to*. [Back to text.](#)

m Other ancient authorities read *cared for* (Deut 1:31). [Back to text.](#)

n Other early authorities omit *and from what is strangled*. [Back to text.](#)

o Other ancient authorities insert verse 34, *But it seemed good to Silas to remain there*. [Back to text.](#)

x The Greek text is uncertain. [Back to text.](#)

p Or *sabbaths*. [Back to text.](#)

q Other early authorities read *Titus*. [Back to text.](#)

r Other ancient authorities add *from the fifth hour to the tenth*. [Back to text.](#)

s The meaning of the Greek is uncertain. [Back to text.](#)

t Other ancient authorities read *about other matters*. [Back to text.](#)

u Other ancient authorities add *after remaining at Trogyllium*. [Back to text.](#)

v Other ancient authorities read *of God*. [Back to text.](#)

w Or *with the blood of his Own*. [Back to text.](#)

x Other ancient authorities add *and Myra*. [Back to text.](#)

y Other early authorities omit *and from what is strangled*. [Back to text.](#)

z Other ancient authorities add *and we would have judged him according to our law.* ⁷*But the chief captain Lysias came and with great violence took*

him out of our hands, ⁸commanding his accusers to come before you. [Back to text.](#)

a Or *southwest and northwest*. [Back to text.](#)

b Other ancient authorities read *Clauda*. [Back to text.](#)

c Greek *helps*. [Back to text.](#)

d Other ancient authorities read *seventy-six* or *about seventy-six*. [Back to text.](#)

e Greek *place of two seas*. [Back to text.](#)

f Or *honored us with many honors*. [Back to text.](#)

g Other ancient authorities add verse 29, *And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, holding much dispute among themselves*. [Back to text.](#)

h Or *in his own hired dwelling*. [Back to text.](#)

The Letter of Paul to the Romans

a Or *slave*. [Back to text.](#)

a2 Or *constituted*. [Back to text.](#)

b Or *The righteous shall live by faith*. [Back to text.](#)

c Or *at any disadvantage?* [Back to text.](#)

d Greek *we*. [Back to text.](#)

e Other ancient authorities read *was gained by*. [Back to text.](#)

f Other ancient authorities read *let us*. [Back to text.](#)

g Other ancient authorities add *by faith*. [Back to text.](#)

h Or *let us*. [Back to text.](#)

i Or *and as a sin offering*. [Back to text.](#)

j Or *that*. [Back to text.](#)

k Other ancient authorities read *in everything he works for good, or everything works for good*. [Back to text.](#)

l Greek *God*. [Back to text.](#)

m Or *It is Christ Jesus . . . for us*. [Back to text.](#)

n Or *Christ, God who is over all be blessed for ever*. [Back to text.](#)

o Other ancient authorities read *rich root*. [Back to text.](#)

p Other ancient authorities add *now*. [Back to text.](#)

q Greek *age*. [Back to text.](#)

r Or *what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God*. [Back to text.](#)

- s** Or *give yourselves to humble tasks*. [Back to text.](#)
- t** Greek *give place*. [Back to text.](#)
- u** Or *confess*. [Back to text.](#)
- v** Other ancient authorities add *or be upset or be weakened*. [Back to text.](#)
- w** Other authorities, some ancient, insert here Ch. 16:25-27. [Back to text.](#)
- x** Greek *sealed to them this fruit*. [Back to text.](#)
- y** Other ancient authorities insert *of the gospel*. [Back to text.](#)
- z** Greek *their own belly* ([Phil 3:19](#)). [Back to text.](#)
- a** Other ancient authorities omit this sentence. [Back to text.](#)
- b** Other ancient authorities insert verse 24, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen*. [Back to text.](#)

THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

- a** Other ancient authorities read *my God*. [Back to text.](#)
- b** Other ancient authorities read *I thank God*. [Back to text.](#)
- c** Other ancient authorities read *mystery* (or *secret*). [Back to text.](#)
- d** Or *interpreting spiritual truths in spiritual language; or comparing spiritual things with spiritual*. [Back to text.](#)
- e** Or *natural*. [Back to text.](#)
- f** Or *fellow workers for God*. [Back to text.](#)
- g** Or *am sending*. [Back to text.](#)
- h** Other ancient authorities omit *Jesus*. [Back to text.](#)
- i** Or *now I write*. [Back to text.](#)
- j** Two Greek words are rendered by this expression. [Back to text.](#)
- k** Greek *one flesh*. [Back to text.](#)
- l** Other ancient authorities read *you*. [Back to text.](#)
- x** Or *make use of your present condition instead*. [Back to text.](#)
- x2** Greek *virgins*. [Back to text.](#)
- m** Or *present*. [Back to text.](#)
- m2** Greek *virgin*. [Back to text.](#)
- n** Greek *woman, sister*. [Back to text.](#)
- o** Greek *spiritual*. [Back to text.](#)
- p** Other ancient authorities read *Christ*. [Back to text.](#)
- q** Or *communion*. [Back to text.](#)
- r** Greek *authority* (the veil being a symbol of this). [Back to text.](#)

- ^s Other ancient authorities read *broken for*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^t Greek *have fallen asleep* (as in 15:6, 20). [Back to text.](#)
- ^u Or *when we are judged we are being chastened by the Lord*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^v Other ancient authorities read *body that I may glory*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^w That is, *give thanks to God*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^x Or *him that is without gifts*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^z Greek *he*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^a Other ancient authorities read *let us*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^b Or *God's will for him*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^c Greek *Maranatha*. [Back to text.](#)

THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

- ^a Or *For as the sufferings of Christ abound for us, so also our comfort abounds through Christ*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^b Other ancient authorities read *favor*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^c Other ancient authorities read *our*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^d Or *reflecting*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^e Greek *as we have received mercy*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^f Or *slaves*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^g Or *creature*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^h Or *in Christ God was reconciling*. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁱ Greek *Beliar*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^j Greek *apostles*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^k Or *benevolence*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^l Greek *sowing*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^m Or *they*. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁿ Or *and participation in*. [Back to text.](#)

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE GALATIANS

- ^a Or *slave*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^b Greek *according to man*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^c Greek *in*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^d Or *reckoned righteous; and so elsewhere*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^e Or *righteousness*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^f Or *the righteous shall live by faith*. [Back to text.](#)

g Or *covenant* (as in verse 17). [Back to text.](#)

h Or *by dealing truly with you*. [Back to text.](#)

i Other ancient authorities read *For Sinai is a mountain in Arabia*. [Back to text.](#)

j Other ancient authorities read *you*. [Back to text.](#)

k Other ancient authorities add *murder*. [Back to text.](#)

l Or *through whom*. [Back to text.](#)

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE EPHESIANS

a Other ancient authorities read *who are at Ephesus and faithful*. [Back to text.](#)

b Or *before him in love, having destined us*. [Back to text.](#)

c Other ancient authorities omit *your love*. [Back to text.](#)

d Or *by*. [Back to text.](#)

e Or *I ask that I may not*. [Back to text.](#)

f Or *slaves*. [Back to text.](#)

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS

a Or *slaves*. [Back to text.](#)

b Or *overseers*. [Back to text.](#)

c Greek *in the whole praetorium*. [Back to text.](#)

d Or *slave*. [Back to text.](#)

e Other ancient authorities read *worship by the Spirit of God*. [Back to text.](#)

f Other ancient authorities read *money for my needs*. [Back to text.](#)

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS

a Other ancient authorities read *your*. [Back to text.](#)

b Other ancient authorities read *you*. [Back to text.](#)

c Or *from angels and men*. [Back to text.](#)

d Or *in it* (that is, the cross). [Back to text.](#)

e Or *are of no value, serving only to indulge the flesh*. [Back to text.](#)

f Other ancient authorities add *upon the sons of disobedience*. [Back to text.](#)

g Or *slave*. [Back to text.](#)

THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS

a Other ancient authorities read *infants*. [Back to text.](#)

b Or *completely, or for ever*. [Back to text.](#)

^c Or *defraud his brother in business*. [Back to text.](#)

^{c2} Or *with them*. [Back to text.](#)

THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS

^a Other ancient authorities read *sin*. [Back to text.](#)

^b Other ancient authorities read *as the first converts*. [Back to text.](#)

^c Or *of spirit*. [Back to text.](#)

^d Or *the Evil One*. [Back to text.](#)

THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO TIMOTHY

^a Or *stewardship, or order*. [Back to text.](#)

^b Greek *to the ages of ages*. [Back to text.](#)

^c Or *by the birth of the child*. [Back to text.](#)

^d Greek *they continue*. [Back to text.](#)

^f Or *slanderer*. [Back to text.](#)

^h Greek *Who*; other ancient authorities read *God*; others, *Which*. [Back to text.](#)

ⁱ Or *justified*. [Back to text.](#)

^j Other ancient authorities read *suffer reproach*. [Back to text.](#)

^l Other ancient authorities read *man or woman*; others, simply *man*. [Back to text.](#)

^m Other ancient authorities insert *it is certain that*. [Back to text.](#)

THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO TIMOTHY

^a Or *what I have entrusted to him*. [Back to text.](#)

^b Other ancient authorities read *God*. [Back to text.](#)

^c Or *by him, to do his (that is, God's) will*. [Back to text.](#)

^d Or *Every Scripture inspired by God is also*. [Back to text.](#)

^e Other ancient authorities read *Gaul*. [Back to text.](#)

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO TITUS

^a Or *slave*. [Back to text.](#)

^c Or *of the great God and our Savior*. [Back to text.](#)

^d Or *enter honorable occupations*. [Back to text.](#)

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO PHILEMON

^a Or *an old man*. [Back to text.](#)

^b The name Onesimus means *useful* or (compare verse [20](#)) *beneficial*. [Back to text.](#)

THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

- a Or God is your throne. [Back to text.](#)
 - b Other ancient authorities read *his*. [Back to text.](#)
 - c Other ancient authorities add *like a garment*. [Back to text.](#)
 - d Other ancient authorities insert *and set him over the works of your hands*. [Back to text.](#)
 - e Other ancient authorities insert *all*. [Back to text.](#)
 - f Greek *his*. [Back to text.](#)
 - g Other ancient authorities insert *firm to the end*. [Back to text.](#)
 - h Other manuscripts read *they were not united in faith with the hearers*. [Back to text.](#)
 - i Greek *he*. [Back to text.](#)
 - j Greek *he*. [Back to text.](#)
 - k Other ancient authorities read *of instruction*. [Back to text.](#)
 - l Other ancient authorities read *let us do this if God permits*. [Back to text.](#)
 - m Greek *he*. [Back to text.](#)
 - n Or *tabernacle*. [Back to text.](#)
 - o Greek *he*. [Back to text.](#)
 - p Or *tabernacle*. [Back to text.](#)
 - q Or *the Presence*. Greek *the presentation of the loaves*. [Back to text.](#)
 - r Other manuscripts read *good things to come*. [Back to text.](#)
 - s Greek *through*. [Back to text.](#)
 - t Other manuscripts read *our*. [Back to text.](#)
 - u The Greek word here used means both *covenant* and *will*. [Back to text.](#)
 - v Greek *he*. [Back to text.](#)
 - w Greek *this one*. [Back to text.](#)
 - x Greek *bones*. [Back to text.](#)
 - y Other manuscripts add *they were tempted*. [Back to text.](#)
 - z Or *angels, and to the festal gathering and assembly*. [Back to text.](#)
 - a Or *tabernacle*. [Back to text.](#)
 - b Other ancient authorities read *us*. [Back to text.](#)
- THE LETTER OF JAMES
- a Other ancient authorities read *variation due to a shadow of turning*. [Back to text.](#)
 - b Or *wheel of birth*. [Back to text.](#)

- ^c Greek *Gehenna*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^d Or *you kill and you covet*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^e Or *will eat your flesh, since you have stored up fire*. [Back to text.](#)

THE FIRST LETTER OF PETER

- ^a Or *Rejoice in this*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^b Other ancient authorities read *known*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^c Or omit *you*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^d Or *so that your faith is hope in God*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^e Greek *a people for his possession*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^f Or *every institution ordained for men*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^g Or *carried up . . . to the tree*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^h Other ancient authorities read *suffered*. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁱ Other ancient authorities add *for us*; some *for you*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^j Other ancient authorities insert *and of power*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^k Other ancient authorities add *exercising the oversight*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^l Other ancient authorities add *as God would have you*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^m Other ancient authorities read *restore, establish, strengthen, and settle*.

[Back to text.](#)

THE SECOND LETTER OF PETER

- ^a Or *of our God and the Savior Jesus Christ*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^b Or *by*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^c Greek *tent*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^d Or *my Son, my (or the) Beloved*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^e Other authorities read *moved by the Holy Spirit holy men of God spoke*.

[Back to text.](#)

- ^f Greek *Tartarus*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^g Other ancient authorities read *love feasts*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^h Other ancient authorities read *on your account*. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁱ Or *earnestly desiring*. [Back to text.](#)

THE FIRST LETTER OF JOHN

- ^a Other ancient authorities read *your*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^b Or *that*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^c Or *him*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^d Other ancient authorities read *you know everything*. [Back to text.](#)

e Other ancient authorities read *you*. [Back to text.](#)

f Greek *his*. [Back to text.](#)

g Or *for the offspring of God abide in him, and they cannot sin because they are*. [Back to text.](#)

h Other ancient authorities read *how can he*. [Back to text.](#)

i Greek *he*. [Back to text.](#)

THE SECOND LETTER OF JOHN

a Other ancient authorities read *we*. [Back to text.](#)

THE LETTER OF JUDE

a Or *the only Master and our Lord Jesus Christ*. [Back to text.](#)

b Ancient authorities read *Jesus or the Lord or God*. [Back to text.](#)

c Greek *glories*. [Back to text.](#)

d Or *reefs*. [Back to text.](#)

e The Greek text in this sentence is uncertain at several points. [Back to text.](#)

THE REVELATION TO JOHN

a The denarius was a day's wage for a laborer. [Back to text.](#)

b Or *Destroyer*. [Back to text.](#)

c Greek *hyacinth*. [Back to text.](#)

d Greek *spiritually*. [Back to text.](#)

e Other ancient authorities read *And I stood*, connecting the sentence with [13:1. Back to text.](#)

f Other ancient authorities omit this sentence. [Back to text.](#)

g Other ancient authorities read *six hundred and sixteen*. [Back to text.](#)

h Greek *virgins*. [Back to text.](#)

i About two hundred miles. [Back to text.](#)

j Other ancient authorities read *the nations*. [Back to text.](#)

k Other ancient authorities read *fallen by*. [Back to text.](#)

l Greek *he said*. [Back to text.](#)

m Other ancient authorities read *sprinkled with*. [Back to text.](#)

n Other ancient authorities read *from God, out of heaven, or out of heaven from God*. [Back to text.](#)

o Other ancient authorities read *peoples*. [Back to text.](#)

p Other ancient authorities add *and be their God*. [Back to text.](#)

q About fifteen hundred miles. [Back to text.](#)

- ^r Or *the Lamb. In the midst of the street of the city, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life*, etc. [Back to text.](#)
- ^s Other ancient authorities read *do his commandments*. [Back to text.](#)
- ^t Other ancient authorities omit *all*; others omit *the saints*. [Back to text.](#)